

A young child with light hair and blue eyes, wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white shirt, and a red bow tie, is leaning over a pink circular table. The child is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows a wooden floor and colorful chairs (blue, green, yellow).

Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023

Summary



respond

building homes,
improving lives



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building homes, improving lives

Preface

Since its establishment in 1982 by Fr. Pat Cogan ofm and other concerned citizens in Waterford City, Respond has achieved a great deal in the provision of social housing in Ireland and more recently in the development of homelessness services. Housing and decent accommodation in the areas in which people want to live are key and basic factors in improving people's lives and in enhancing the overall health and well-being of society. On every level the lack of housing or very insecure accommodation can have a very detrimental and devastating impact on people. In this context Respond is proud to be of service to many thousands of people in 2019 through providing some 4,502 houses and apartments, which are rented to people on low/modest incomes, presently accommodating over 8,965 people, and through the Family Hubs which provide transitional short-term accommodation for families and individuals as they await more secure long-term accommodation.

Respond has been a pioneer of social housing development in Ireland, often putting emphasis on certain categories of acute need and always with support for tenants to lead fruitful lives in vibrant communities. In addition to housing and related work we currently provide quality Day Care services for older people, Early Education, Childcare, Family Support and Resettlement services through Respond Support.

More generally in advanced democracies, non-government not-for-profit housing bodies are now the main providers of social and

affordable housing. With appropriate support and cooperation from central and local Government, housing associations motivated by social equality, can set good housing standards, achieve high levels of tenant satisfaction, deliver professional standards of housing management (including rent collection) and sustain a valuable social asset.

In considering the next five years from 2019 to 2023 it is clear that there are significant challenges both in relation to housing and homelessness in Ireland and in the ways that Respond might make its most effective contribution towards alleviating the current housing and homelessness crisis in Ireland. The nature of this crisis has been well-documented and is reflected in the ways the numbers of people in social housing need have increased considerably over recent years. It is also reflected in the shortage of housing supply, the sharp decline in the number of rental properties and the escalating rents being charged to tenants in the private rental sector. Respond's primary challenge over the next five years will be to increase its social housing stock by over 50% and to provide more homelessness services (primarily through setting up more Family Hubs) whilst, at the same time, maintaining its existing housing stock.

While general social housing needs will continue to be our main focus during the period of this strategic plan, we think that the provision of housing for the population requires a holistic approach. There is a tendency to view housing in an overly segmented way when in reality

it is a continuum. What happens in one segment of the market usually affects the market as a whole and has implications for other segments. In our view the concept of affordability is central and we are anxious to work with Government and other bodies to devise a methodology for, and pilot the provision of, affordable housing.

Over the course of the last 36 years, Respond has always risen to the challenges which have presented themselves at the national level and within various cities, towns and local communities in Ireland. It has made a major contribution towards the provision of social housing in Ireland and has always been to the fore amongst Approved Housing Bodies.

This Strategic Plan spells out how Respond sees its role over the next 5 years. We see Respond as a body focussed on finding practical solutions, delivering more homes for people that need them and maintaining comfortable homes for our existing tenants. We currently provide quality Day Care services for older people, Early Education, Childcare, Family Support and Resettlement services. Hence, the title of this document: 'Building Homes Improving Lives'. This is also the motto on our new logo – a house within a stylized thumbprint – which represents each person's need for a home and for pathways to the wider community.

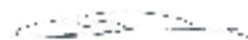
In the current housing and homelessness crisis Respond will 'step up to the mark' once again through providing up to 2,500 new social housing units over the next 5 years, by setting up at least 3 more Family Hubs, by displaying innovation and imagination through devising new models and new arrangements to tackle the housing and homelessness crisis and through partnering and collaborating, in a practical and meaningful way, with Government Departments, local authorities, other Approved Housing Bodies, builders and developers.

Respond is convinced that the current housing and homelessness problems can be overcome. We intend to play a significant role in ensuring that very substantial progress will have been made in reducing housing lists and in providing decent housing and accommodation for many thousands of people by the time that this Strategic Plan concludes in 2023.

We wish to thank the Directors of the company, the management and staff and tenants throughout the organisation for their considerable work they have put into reviewing the present situation and the preparation of this strategic plan. We would like to thank all of the stakeholders who met with the Board and Stephen Rourke and contributed their views to the development of this strategy; the Department of Housing, Community and Local Government, the Housing Agency, Local Authorities, the Housing Finance Agency, the Dublin Regional Homelessness Executive (DRHE) and the Health Service Executive (HSE) for their continued support in achieving our targets for delivery of additional social housing and providing homeless services. We would like to thank Stephen Rourke who conducted most of the consultations with staff, tenants and other stakeholders and prepared textual material. Also Rita Burtenshaw for her input and ongoing work with the resident support team and finally Red Dog for designing our new corporate identity logo.



John O'Connor
Chairperson



Declan Dunne
Chief Executive Officer

February 2019



We will strive to contribute to an Ireland where everyone can have a home to call their own and where individuals, families and communities are empowered to reach their full potential.

Our Mission

Street party to celebrate the official opening of 14 new social housing developments in Moyglas, Lucan.

Our Vision, Mission and Values



Our Vision

That every family and individual in Ireland will have high-quality housing as part of a vibrant and caring community.

Our Mission

Respond will play an enhanced role in effectively addressing the specific housing and homelessness crisis in Ireland by expanding and improving the housing services we provide.

We will significantly increase our housing stock, all the while seeking to maintain our focus on the alleviation of poverty. Respond estates will be well-designed, vibrant communities with new developments prioritising mixed tenure to ensure true social integration and inclusion.

We will strive to contribute to an Ireland where everyone can have a home to call their own and where individuals, families and communities are empowered to reach their full potential.

Our Guiding Principles

A Human Right to Housing:

Respond believes that every human being is equal in rights and dignity and has the right to a secure, affordable home which meets their needs throughout their lifetime.

Respond will strive to ensure that the services we provide are inclusive, empowering and value the human rights of the people we work with and support.

Social Justice: All our initiatives will focus on creating a more just and equal society. We will seek to identify the root cause of social problems and, where we can, seek to address these through the deployment of our resources, expertise and energies. As a not-for-profit organisation, Respond will be measured by the positive impact we have on the lives of the individuals, families and communities we serve and our wider contribution to the well-being of Irish society.

Our Core Values

Listening: We will consult with and listen to our tenants, service users and staff. We will reflect their opinions in the planning, design and delivery of housing and housing support services.

Empathy: In all our work we will try to see the situation from the point of view of the tenant or the community with which we are engaging; we will be non-judgemental, regardless of past or current difficulties, we will listen to and value their stories and experiences and endeavour to have a positive influence on their lives.

Integrity: Honesty, truthfulness and transparency of purpose and method will be our constant watchwords.

Trust: We will aim to be a trusted and reliable social landlord to our tenants and service users, a trusted partner for those with whom we collaborate and a trustworthy employer for Respond employees.

Sustainability: All our developments will endeavour to enhance the natural world around us and not adversely impact the environment without redress. Through the design of our housing and communities we will be mindful of our ethical obligations to pursue national goals of sustainable development through energy efficiency and the reduction of carbon emissions.

Quality design: All our developments will be based on principles of place-making and creating sustainable and safe living environments. We will seek to follow best practice to deliver integrated housing developments designed to high quality standards capable of being used by all including those with specific needs.

Value for Money: Conscious at all times that we utilise state-backed loans and tenants' rental income to finance our building and service-delivery programme, we will ensure that all our expenditure and investment provides clear value for money with evidence-based, testable outcomes.



92% of tenants like living in their Respond housing estate. There is a great deal of positivity and goodwill upon which to build and develop into the future.

Strategic Goals

Goal 1

Building social housing

Respond, with Government support, will, through a programme of multi-faceted delivery, have increased the number of social homes in Ireland by at least 2,500 over the lifetime of the Strategic Plan.

Strategies

- To increase the number of new housing units which are owned and managed by Respond by at least 2,500 between 2019 and 2023.
- To provide and develop new social housing in Ireland through a combination of new build, acquisition, lease and refurbishment.
- To access government schemes and programmes which have been set up to increase the supply of new housing in Ireland.
- To continue to develop effective and meaningful relationships with the Department of Housing, Local Authorities, developers landowners and stakeholders.
- To place emphasis on the provision of housing for groups which have particular difficulties in accessing housing and/or who have special housing needs.
- To maintain relationships with religious congregations and other landowners who are in possession of significant buildings that could be developed into social housing units.



Goal 2

Tenants, residents and service users at the centre of our work

In seeking to improve lives, Respond will place our tenants, residents in emergency accommodation and service users at the centre of our work and we will focus on positive outcomes and satisfaction for tenants and service users.

Strategies

- To respond in a prompt and efficient manner to requests and concerns raised by tenants in relation to issues concerning their housing units and/or estates.
- To carry out planned and mandatory remedial and upgrading improvement work in line with statutory standards and available resources.
- To develop and create a sense of community and neighbourliness in Respond housing estates through community events and optimum utilisation of community buildings.
- To proactively promote the well-being of tenants and facilitate access to support services.
- To liaise regularly with tenants on an individual and collective basis so as to get a sense of their concerns and their assessment of the services they receive from Respond.
- To ensure that clarity and common understanding exists in relation to the relative roles and responsibilities of Respond and of the tenants on issues concerning maintenance of properties and upkeep of estates.
- To support the concept and practice of tenant participation in decision-making in relation to policies, individual estates, and the development of every day procedures.



Goal 3

Homeless services



To support households and individuals experiencing homelessness on their journey back to independent living, Respond will provide safe and secure housing in the short-term in the form of supported temporary emergency accommodation.

Strategies

- To continue to manage Family Hubs in an efficient, professional and person-centred manner.
- To develop a number of additional Family Hubs between 2019 and 2023 with a particular focus on urban centres.
- To strive towards ensuring that families and individuals stay in Respond Family Hubs and other Respond emergency accommodation projects/centres for the shortest possible period of time prior to moving on to more long term secure homes.
- To develop wrap-around and progressive supports which will involve a holistic and integrated range of supports for people living in Family Hubs and other emergency accommodation projects and which will also seek to involve residents progressing from Respond Family Hubs to Respond long-term housing schemes.
- To collaborate and work with other Approved Housing Bodies and homelessness organisations to co-ordinate activities and projects in the best interests of homeless families and individuals.
- In addition to Family Hubs, Respond will also seek to identify other ways in which it might support people to move out of homelessness and into more permanent and secure accommodation e.g. Housing First.
- To promote means of avoiding the repossession of homes due to mortgage default.

Goal 4

Affordable housing

We will seek to develop an expertise in and deliver affordable housing for those for whom the market rates are too high.

Strategies

- To research and identify viable models of affordable housing.
- To co-operate and collaborate with other Approved Housing Bodies in devising schemes for affordable housing which have the potential to be effective and successful.
- To pilot models for the provision of affordable housing and, if successful, to roll out these models to various locations.
- To seek to put in place housing schemes and projects which have an integrated mix of social housing, affordable rental and cost rental housing and private housing.
- To assist in the development of a financial model for affordable housing.



Goal 5

Financial sustainability

Respond will maintain a strong and prudent financial foundation underpinned by a risk-conscious approach to our business.

Strategies

- To carry out due diligence and comprehensive, systematic assessments on any new developments which are being explored by Respond or being presented to Respond by local authorities and developers.
- To make adequate provision within annual budgets for costs relating to asset management and to the maintenance and upgrading of current housing stock.
- To collaborate and maintain excellent relationships with the HFA and other private funders to ensure optimum terms and conditions for funding facilities are available to achieve the goals set by this strategic plan.
- To explore new funding options and opportunities (especially in relation to private finance) and, in conjunction with other relevant Approved Housing Bodies, to develop new funding models which might involve a multiplicity of different funders.
- To continue to operate a risk management framework and risk register as part of Respond's process for the identification, evaluation, mitigation and management of risk.
- To comply fully with financial requirements set out by the Housing Regulator and other regulatory and auditing authorities.
- To be open and transparent in the ways in which Respond presents and shares information and analyses concerning its financial performance.



Goal 6

Accountability



In pursuit of social justice Respond will be a high-performing, results-driven, accountable organisation which values our staff and those we work with.

Strategies

- To continuously work towards improving and enhancing communications and information flows within the staff team in Respond.
- Respond will encourage and develop leaders at every level in the organisation.
- Respond will work to maintain quality in our services and systems.
- To develop a strong sense of organisational camaraderie and organisational spirit/pride within the staff team in Respond.
- To put in place performance management and appraisal systems which are appropriate to an organisation the size of Respond and to the types of work being undertaken by Respond.
- To operate best practice employment policies and procedures for staff members and operate a pay/salary system which is fair, objective and transparent.
- To attract and retain high quality employees which will enable Respond to achieve the ambitious targets which it has set for itself in the period from 2019 to 2023.
- To ensure that Respond is fully compliant at governance and operational levels with the guidelines and requirements of various regulatory bodies (e.g. Housing Regulator, Charities Regulatory Authority, Data Protection Commissioner) and with good practice codes/guidelines such as the Governance Code and the Voluntary Regulation Code for Approved Housing Bodies.

Goal 7

Advocates for change

Respond will be an effective voice with and for people in need of housing, homelessness and support services in order to effect positive change in their lives and will be respected and trusted by our partners.

Strategies

- To work with relevant umbrella organisations in the sector to bring about positive change in relation to issues concerning housing and homelessness.
- To develop relationships with key influencers and decision makers around the issues of housing and homelessness.
- To research and analyse causal factors, options and opportunities for supporting people to move out of homelessness and inadequate accommodation.
- To contribute towards assessing and analysing the impact and importance of social housing in Ireland and ways in which social housing might be enhanced into the future.
- To play a strong role in lobbying and advocating for the provision of adequate housing, accommodation and supports for vulnerable and/or marginalised groups.
- To provide thought leadership and contribute to discussions and debates which are taking place at the national and local levels in relation to issues concerning housing and homelessness.





As a not-for-profit organisation, Respond will be measured by the positive impact we have on the lives of the individuals, families and communities we serve.

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