

INTRODUCTION

Tackling Ireland's housing crisis is one of the Social Democrats' highest priorities. While we must ensure that the pressing short term housing needs are addressed; it is vital that reforms take a long-term, sustainable approach to ensure that the kind of housing crises we see today can never be repeated.

Our approach is to transform Ireland's housing policy through harnessing the State's vital co-ordinating role.

We want to ensure that vibrant, sustainable, mixed-tenure communities are brought about so that every person and every family will be able to access the right type of housing, in the right location at the right time of life. Critical to this is ensuring that all types of housing are affordable.

We recognise that the State's role in ensuring adequate housing supply steadies the market, insulates it against economic shocks and helps our communities develop in a sustainable, coordinated way; well-served by physical and social infrastructure, so that the optimal quality of life can be achieved.

PRIORITIES

- It is imperative that we reduce housing waiting lists according to a target-specific objective. The Social Democrats are committed to reducing the numbers on housing waiting lists by 10,000 per annum.
- We need a housing system that neither relies on high house price inflation nor reductions in standards. We need a housing system that is able to supply affordable housing where and when it is needed, and one that creates attractive, sustainable new communities with reliable access to local services.
- We have to tackle massive inefficiencies. We must create viable alternatives for over-accommodated people and reduce high vacancy rates with targeted measures to ensure developments are mixed tenure, and communities are socially diverse.
- We need to make our towns and cities attractive places to live - ones that can sustain communities through all stages of life, and for generations to come.
- We are committed to ending homelessness. We support the Housing First approach in seeking to tackle the increasing numbers of people who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness.

SUMMARY OF MEASURES

	Private Rented Sector	Social Housing	Social Housing
Measures to increase efficiency of governance, efficiency of supply and delivery.	<p>New Department of Communities, Housing and Planning.</p> <p>Move PRTB under aegis of Housing Ireland.</p> <p>Improve inspections regime.</p>	<p>New Department of Communities, Housing and Planning.</p> <p>Establish Housing Ireland with overall responsibility for Social Housing, overseeing target-led approach to reducing waiting lists.</p> <p>Housing Ireland to support delivery of mixed-type, mixed tenure developments in conjunction with developers, Local Authorities and Housing Associations.</p> <p>State Land/NAMA land to be bundled for delivery of new communities/new developments.</p> <p>VAT rebate for builders of Social Housing.</p>	<p>New Department of Communities, Housing and Planning.</p> <p>Housing Ireland to better achieve delivery of private housing at scale in order to reduce costs.</p> <p>Housing Ireland to support delivery of mixed-type, mixed tenure developments in conjunction with developers, Local Authorities and Housing Associations.</p> <p>State Land/NAMA land to be bundled for delivery of new communities/new developments.</p> <p>Halve vacancy rates.</p> <p>Reducing cost of risk measures.</p>
Measures to increase affordability	Rent certainty measures.	Increasing Rent Supplement/HAP payments.	Build to scale to reduce risk, costs and ultimately price.
Measure to increase equity and choice; measures to enhance consumer confidence.	Address deficiencies in reasons for termination in Residential Tenancies Act 2004.	<p>Delivery of social housing should be mixed in with delivery of private housing. Mono-tenure delivery is to be avoided.</p> <p>Introduce new tenure options (e.g. temporal ownership).</p>	<p>Price transparency (sales prices etc at outset).</p> <p>Planning reforms.</p>

1. THE STATE'S VITAL COORDINATING ROLE

The Social Democrats recognise that greater coordination of housing delivery is needed to ensure better outcomes for people. Key to this strategy will be reforming how the State's housing, planning and communities policy is designed and implemented.

A NEW DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING, PLANNING AND COMMUNITIES

The State has a vital role to play in ensuring our communities develop in sustainable ways, and that housing - public and private - is delivered in the best long-term interests of citizens, with due regard to the built and natural environment that each generation shapes.

At present, housing policy is spread across too many Departments and State Agencies to be coherent and effective.

The Social Democrats propose the establishment of a new Department - the Department of Housing, Planning and Communities. This Department will bring all housing related policy together under one Minister and Civil Service team.

HOUSING IRELAND - A NEW NATIONAL HOUSING AGENCY

To ensure an effective link between housing policy development and efficient delivery, the Social Democrats propose to reform the Housing Agency. To this new entity, Housing Ireland, we would add a greatly expanded coordinating function for the procurement, planning, design and delivery of new, sustainable, communities, working in conjunction with the Housing Finance Agency, Local Authorities, Approved Housing Bodies and private builders. Housing Ireland's overriding objective would be to ensure a steady supply of the right kind of housing exists, to use its substantial role to challenge boom-and-bust construction pressures, and to mitigate against future economic shocks to housing supply.

Housing Ireland would be given a specific remit to:

1. Develop and ensure implementation of innovative finance models to increase delivery of new housing.
2. Coordinate and bundle housing delivery in order to achieve sufficiently advantageous scale, to drive down costs, reduce risk and create a more stable housing supply. We recognise, however, that a one-size-fits-all approach is not necessarily appropriate for all areas of the country - it would be a duty of Housing Ireland to determine the most appropriate response based on the differing housing needs across the State.
3. Oversee the State's target-led approach to reducing the numbers on housing waiting lists by 10,000 per annum.

4. Set the design and density, and specify the the number of housing units built that relate to housing waiting lists.
5. Receive, manage, and ensure sustainable development of State/NAMA land banks, in conjunction with Local Authorities, Approved Housing Bodies and private developers. Tackle land hoarding and land speculation.
6. Tender for new housing at scale to take advantage of economies-of-scale, and reduce building cost and sale price. Where appropriate, tenders would be issued to Irish builders (and EU wide above a certain value).
7. Build specific and clear requirements for a mix of tenure into tenders, along with requirements for necessary physical and social infrastructure.
8. Lead a multi-Departmental approach towards halving vacancy rates within four years of establishment.
9. Develop responsive and best-practice housing policy for an Irish context.
10. Monitor and report on trends and developments within Irish housing stock.
11. Coordinate production of master plans for individual sites, with appropriate public consultation.

REDUCING RISK, REDUCING COSTS

A significant driver of costs and a barrier to supply is the high risks associated with building in Ireland. Housing Ireland could significantly reduce risks for builder in two key areas.

As a central coordinating body, it would be better placed to address financing difficulties by engaging with all interested parties, and to arrange for innovation where necessary. Though unable to borrow itself off balance sheet, it would have specific remit to facilitate other financial solutions - from both private sources, the State, pension funds, credit unions, the European Investment Bank etc.

In addition, the process producing Local Area Plans, which should in theory help reduce planning risk, has become far too slow and labour intensive. Housing Ireland would have the specific remit of coordinating the speedy delivery of master plans, with appropriate public consultation, for any significant housing site. The process would still entail meaningful public consultation but could be finalised much quicker than the current statutory process.

Housing Ireland could employ the planning expertise to work on master plans in conjunction with Planning Authorities, and significant benefit would accrue from the certainty such plans would provide to all stakeholders involved in construction, therefore reducing the cost of risk.

The State's Vital Coordinating Role

INCREASING SUPPLY IN THE SHORT-TO-MEDIUM TERM

This document takes a long-term view to the reform of housing delivery in Ireland, however there are a number of short-to-medium term measures also proposed which are essential if we are to effectively tackle the current supply crisis:

1. Increasing Rent Supplement/Housing Assistance Payment.
2. Fiscal Measures to free up Vacant Units, making Vacant Site Levy more robust and bringing forward implementation.
3. Reintroducing the Financial Contribution Scheme for Older People
4. Ensuring that new developments deliver Part V 10% social housing and an additional 10% starter homes.
5. Introducing partial VAT rebate for builders supplies and construction materials where they are used to construct social housing.

VACANCY RATES

Through short-term fiscal measures, we can tackle the excessively high vacancy rate in Ireland, and in particular in the Greater Dublin Area. Conor Skehan, Chairperson of the Housing Agency, has made policy suggestions in this area which the Social Democrats endorse:

- Incentivising over-accommodated owners to downsize.
- Providing tax incentives for the conversion of vacant space, or modernisation of existing unused residential space.
- Introducing an Over-The-Shop tax incentive to encourage development of unused urban space.
- Offering term-limited tax credits for landlords who retain tenants with only cost-of living rent increases.
- Encouraging pension funds to invest in Irish social housing.
- Legislating to facilitate tax efficiency in temporal ownership.
- Examining the Fair Deal Scheme to eliminate disincentives to renting in a situation where a person is in a nursing home.

A NEW FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

First and foremost, we want to make our communities attractive places to live. Places with cohesive, interwoven neighbourhoods with strong social solidarity; places where quality of life and sustainable living are the overarching guiding principles.

GETTING IT RIGHT FROM THE START: VARIETY AND CHOICE OF TENURE

The Social Democrats believe that wherever the State becomes involved in the coordination of housing delivery, a fundamental guiding principle should be to guarantee as far as practicable that all developments be of mixed tenure and be socially diverse. We believe that vibrant, strong communities grow where diversity exists, and that it is in the common good to tackle geographic exclusion and ghettoisation.

International experience shows time and again - better outcomes, socially and economically, derive from designing our communities in the right manner from the outset.

INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES

Garden Cities (Netherlands; UK)
Adopting a local-led approach to community planning allowing local residents to partner with Local Authorities and Housing Ireland to decide the strategic development of their built environments.

London Borough of Haringey, where the Borough Council set community-specific targets of emissions reduction, renewable energy use and micro generation – though setting up retrofit cooperatives, establishing low carbon business zones, investing in transport and strengthening community organisations.

We want to make the choice of living in a village, town or city an attractive one in order to reduce demand for one-off rural housing, keeping that option for those who require to live in the countryside.

Housing solutions in the past have all too often focused on short-term measures, which themselves bring problems of their own. In times of crisis and housing shortage, emergency measures are deemed necessary, often compromising standards to address an immediate need for shelter. In times of housing boom, deficient and lax Government oversight, poor planning decisions and disproportionate sectoral lobby power have helped to create unsustainable communities, badly served by essential physical and social infrastructure.

Indeed, community planning in Ireland has in many places been an afterthought, and this is not without consequences:

- Hinterland communities become detached from city centres. Residents are more car-dependent, and commuting times impact dramatically on quality of life outside work.
- Emergency accommodation tends to become semi-permanent.
- Relaxations in standards and oversight lead to poor quality housing; high energy bills and more oil, gas and coal used in the home.
- Urban sprawl is fuelled, not contained.

The Social Democrats would task the proposed new Department of Housing, Planning and Communities with developing strategies to avoid this pattern being repeated in the future:

1. By ensuring sustainable community planning is stated strongly in national planning law, and reflected in County & City Development Plans.
2. Working with Local Authorities, we propose the establishment of Carbon Commissions across the country modelled on the example set by the London Borough of Haringey.

The State's Vital Coordinating Role

3. By resourcing Local Authorities to help deliver on these commitments.
4. By insisting that the plans for all new medium and large scale developments take into account necessary physical infrastructure - roads, water, sewage, telecommunications, transport links; and the necessary social infrastructure - schools, health services, community services, leisure services and amenity space, etc.
5. By insisting that, wherever practicable, new developments be of mixed tenure, and by encouraging diverse forms of tenure, e.g. temporal ownership models.
6. By making our city centres liveable spaces again, through utilising term-limited tax incentives to tackle the high vacancy rate in urban centres, by strengthening the vacant site levy and by removing height restrictions in certain high-density areas to free up space currently utilised for commercial purposes which was originally built for residential.

CITIZEN-LED PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN COMMUNITIES

Failures in how our planning law is designed, and how in practice those laws have been implemented, played a central role in the property crash of the late 2000s. Legacy issues remain for homeowners right across the country - unfinished estates, estates not taken in charge, defunct management companies and so on.

Unscrupulous builders and developers, representing a minority of the construction industry, created legacy issues of their own - poorly constructed homes in badly planned neighbourhoods. In some of the worst examples, homeowners have not had adequate water and wastewater services, lighting, or footpaths.

The Social Democrats would reform planning law to make it more citizen-focused. We would:

1. Reform how Management Companies are formed and operate in respect of both traditional housing developments and apartment complexes, to better protect residents' interests.
2. Amend the Multi Unit Developments Act 2010 to remove unnecessary cost placed on homeowners and developers.
3. Introduce a Builder's Register along the lines of the model used in New South Wales.
4. Introduce a publicly accessible National Planning Compliance Register.
5. Introduce a publicly accessible National Schedule of Development Contributions, and ensure that developments of 5 houses or more are included.
6. Simplify the means by which Local Authorities can redeem bonds and take in charge housing developments that are left unfinished in a timely manner.

The newly-constituted Department of Housing, Planning and Communities would be responsible for setting, and enforcing, building construction standards by ensuring the resources and staff exist to properly engage in enforcement.

The Social Democrats would further reform planning law to incentivise the construction of homes to extremely high standards of insulation and energy-efficiency.

We would encourage and support the adoption of efficient heating systems, home microgeneration, and rainwater harvesting where appropriate.

NEW SOUTH WALES HOME BUILDING LICENCE

All construction professionals and tradespeople must obtain licence to carry out works in excess of AUS\$5,000 (€3,318).

Homeowners can do a simple online background check on proposed contractors.

Information available to the public includes any previous insurance claims paid over defective works, contractual breaches or adverse findings against works carried out.

Builders' Representative Associations strongly support the scheme, as it improves trade and confidence.

Consumers gain substantial advantage.

2. SOCIAL HOUSING

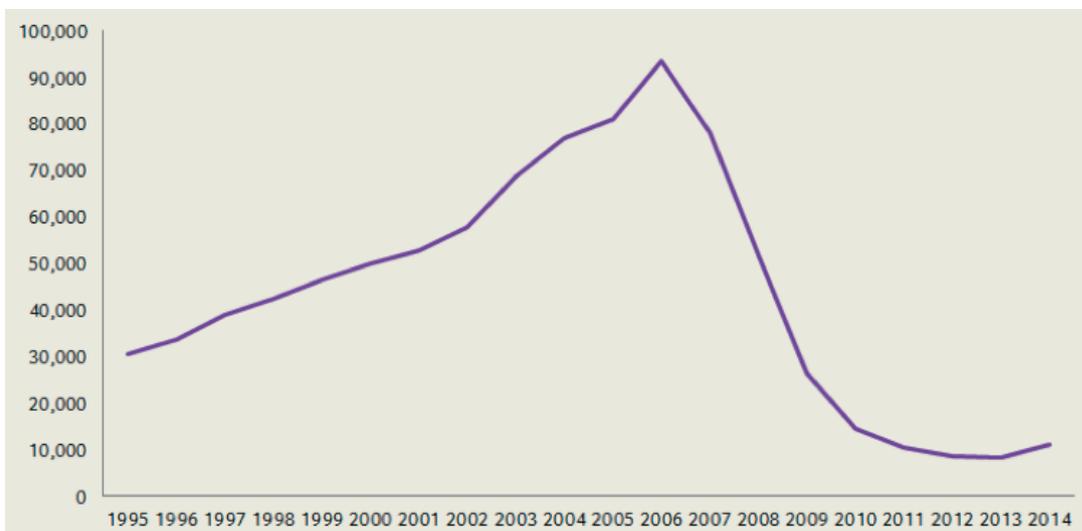
The necessity for the State to play an active and coordinating role in the provision of social housing has never been greater. With approximated 140,000 people on Local Authority Housing waiting lists, the Government’s Social Housing Plan will not deliver the scale of new social housing needed. Coupled with poor governance of the private rented sector, there is little to suggest that the housing crisis is being effectively tackled at present.

GREATER SUPPLY; GREATER AFFORDABILITY; GREATER CHOICE

In seeking to increase the rate of delivery of social housing the Social Democrats propose to change the way social housing is financed in the long term so a constant stream of social housing can be provided irrespective of how the exchequer or wider housing market is performing.

Due to borrowing restrictions under the European Fiscal Compact, Local Authorities will need to raise the required financing ‘off-balance sheet’, either through the formation of Local Authority Trusts or other appropriate special purpose vehicles. While there is an obvious role for Approved Housing Bodies and the private sector (through Part V) in the delivery of social housing units, the majority of new social housing will have be delivered directly through Local Authorities in conjunction with Housing Ireland.

State intervention in the delivery end of social housing is needed to ensure a consistent, affordable supply of housing for social need regardless of what the broader housing market is doing. By increasing State activity in home provision, we can additionally better insulate the housing market against economic shocks; indeed with greater State coordination it is arguable that the private housing construction bubble of the mid 2000s would have been less severe.



New builds per annum, 1995-2014 (Dept. Environment)

CAPITAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME

The Social Democrats will reinvigorate the Capital Assistance Scheme for Approved Housing Bodies. Funds would specifically earmarked for four categories: older people, people with disabilities, people with special needs and victims of domestic violence. homeless

In seeking to provide housing to individuals and families in each of these four categories, we believe that the 1991 UN Principles for Older Persons offer a comprehensive basis to model housing provision on which extends beyond older people - independence, participation, care and self-fulfillment.

3. PRIVATE RENTAL SECTOR REFORM

Unlike other areas, no national policy strategy has been put in place for the private rented sector. This sector has doubled in size since the onset of the economic downturn, now accounting for one in five households in Ireland, rising to a one in three in some urban areas.

Unfortunately, renting has now become the most expensive form of housing tenure. It is also the least secure. For many, the cost and availability of rental accommodation impacts severely on their lives.

While these difficulties affect many thousands of renters, and hit the most vulnerable most acutely, they also have an impact on the wider economy and society. A range of bodies including business and employers' groups, property professionals and investment agencies have stated that shortcomings in the private rented sector pose a threat to Ireland's future economic health.

Students may opt to defer third-level courses because of difficulties securing affordable accommodation. One parent in a family may choose not to work, owing to the costs of maintaining a car to commute long distances, or lack of convenient child care nearby. Conversely, both parents may have to work in order to afford high rental costs, which brings additional costs in childcare and transport.

The numbers of people now in private rentals presents an opportunity for Government to encourage a greater diversity of tenure through specific policy vehicles.

The Social Democrats favour the development of a national strategy to provide Ireland with a modern, affordable and inclusive private rented sector which will include the following elements:

1. SECURE OCCUPANCY

We need a review of current security of tenure provisions to robustly strengthen tenure security, including ensuring that tenancies don't end with the sale of the property.

Tenancy security is also of critical importance for landlords and in shaping the long-term role of the rental sector, especially in terms of attracting long-term investment. Limited security of tenure, combined with the risk of rent increases, is undermining the viability of renting as a long-term housing option.

We propose amending the Residential Tenancies Act to remove the ability of landlords to evict in the first six months without justifiable cause, and restate security of tenure in stronger terms. We want to ensure that there is a well-resourced and timely dispute resolution process to deal with tenants or landlords who are not fulfilling their legal obligations.

2. RENT CERTAINTY

We will link future rent increases to the cost of living, as is the case in many other European countries. Rent certainty measures are an essential component of a well-regulated housing market, and benefit both landlords and tenants by ensuring that rent increases (and indeed decreases) are foreseeable, predictable, and reasonable.

3. REFORM OF HOUSING PAYMENTS

In conjunction with the introduction of rent certainty measures we will link Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) levels to real levels in current market rents. Rent Supplement was introduced as a short-term measure but quickly became an essential, if badly conceived, support for people struggling to find affordable accommodation. Despite being no substitute for actual new builds, the basic idea in Rent Supplement has persisted in the form of HAP.

In reforming these benefits, it is critical that payments be as reflective as possible of the real levels of rent available in a functional community, rather than an administrative community. Rent price pressures don't respect county boundaries, so we believe support levels shouldn't either. In this model, it is crucial that supports rise as well as fall to reflect the true nature of the market and do not lead to inadvertent distortions.

We support the idea that payments should have a streamlined administration system, that landlords are paid directly and in advance and that poverty traps should be removed by ensuring that all recipients will be able to work full time.

We will undertake a review of the effectiveness of the HAP delivery system to ensure that it is properly resourced.

4. IMPROVING AFFORDABLE SUPPLY

As stated earlier, the responsibility of Housing Ireland will be to secure as diverse a tenure profile as possible in all new developments, including undertaking steps to increase the availability of affordable rental housing.

Housing Ireland will identify key policies that are needed to attract institutional investment into the rental market to build up a well-managed and stable rental sector for all income levels.

5. PROTECTING TENANTS' RIGHTS DURING RECEIVERSHIPS AND REPOSSESSION PROCEEDINGS

The impact of the mortgage arrears crisis is not limited to homeowners. Often it is a sitting tenant in the property who loses their home and potentially faces homelessness by the enforcement of a repossession order, rather than the person who actually owns property.

A change to the law to ensure that both receivers appointed to mortgaged properties and lenders who have initiated repossession proceedings, are regarded as the landlord in relation to existing tenancies, is needed.

We propose amending the Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Act to achieve this.

Such a change will provide sitting tenants with clear legal protection and clarity in terms of provision of adequate notice, upkeep of the property, deposit return and adherence to the existing terms of the tenancy.

6. MAKING LONG-TERM RENTAL A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE

Ireland, historically, has extremely low rates of longer-term rental. This tenure option has never seriously been supported through Government policy. Under our plan, it would be a function of Housing Ireland to ensure that, where possible, long-term rental forms a critical component of the tenure mix that we have mandated for new developments.

7. FAIR TREATMENT FOR 'ACCIDENTAL' LANDLORDS

After the economic crash, many people who found themselves in negative equity, or people who could not afford mortgage repayments, were forced into renting out their homes. The Social Democrats propose reducing the burden of tax on rental income derived in these circumstances.

4. PRIVATE HOUSING

Private ownership is the most common form of tenure in Ireland. Recent pressures in the private housing sector have seen potential buyers face increasing costs and more expensive mortgages, indeed many people find themselves not being able to afford mortgages.

The Social Democrats want to alleviate this pressure by encouraging the delivery of new builds at scale to drive down costs. This will be a primary function of Housing Ireland, working with private builders in conjunction with Local Authorities, Approved Housing Bodies etc. to deliver the kind of diverse communities envisaged by this policy document.

LIFECYCLE HOUSING

The Social Democrats also seek to introduce greater mobility and choice of tenure to ensure that a supply of the right kind of home is available at the right time, in the right location, and for the right price.

1. Our aim is to reduce the constant upward pressure on price by making viable alternatives available.
2. By freeing up greater accommodation options where they already potentially exist, we can challenge never-ending pressures towards urban sprawl.
3. We look to increasing community cohesiveness by encouraging a greater diversity of residents.
4. We want to lessen the demands on the exchequer to fund new transport infrastructure, new schools, new hospitals by encouraging the use of accommodation opportunities near to where this infrastructure already exists. It is prudent that where public infrastructure exists, it be given a second lifespan.
5. We need to move to a system that delivers housing per-room, instead of per number of bedrooms. This reflects the fact that rooms have multiple uses, and discourages a narrow focus in how homes are presented for sale.

TEMPORAL OWNERSHIP

Temporal ownership is where a property is transferred (by sale) from one owner to another for a specified period of time (five to twenty years), after which it passes back to the original seller.

Temporal ownership could address a key blockage in the housing system - many families are stuck in private housing that is no longer suitable for their needs in terms of size or location, but due to negative equity or the expense of losing a tracker mortgage can't sell up or move on. Many of them are now 'reluctant' landlords and tenants in the private rented sector.

Private Housing

Being able to move to secure housing through a temporal ownership arrangement in a larger or more suitably located accommodation, could address a number of issues, especially if the owner selling is a retired couple whose children have left home, including:

1. Enabling those stuck in negative equity to be housed more appropriately.
2. Helping rejuvenate suburbs/communities with a disproportionate number of retired people.
3. Helping develop a market for high quality apartments for retired people within their own communities close to services and social supports, while enabling them to retain ownership over their principal asset.
4. Freeing up original small apartments for temporal ownership or long term leasing for single people or couples who are living with their parents.
5. Provide secure and affordable accommodation for international workers in the multinational sector who move to Ireland for a short number of years, thus adding to Ireland's competitiveness.
6. Allowing students to be housed appropriately and affordably, helping many to attend third level education who presently are deferring courses due to extreme accommodation costs.

10% STARTER HOMES

In addition to the 10% Part V requirement for Social Housing on new developments, we favour the requirement that another 10% be reserved as 'starter homes' for first time buyers.

VACANT SITE LEVY

We want to strengthen the Vacant Site Levy by introducing it before 2019 and closing off loopholes to non-payment.

STRENGTHENING HOMEOWNERS PROTECTIONS

In addition to measures to enhance the diversity of tenure in Ireland and improve the availability of the right kind of housing in the right areas, the Social Democrats propose much-needed reforms to the private housing sector to strengthen the rights of homeowners where problems occur.

As mentioned earlier, the new Department of Housing, Planning and Communities will ensure that the poorly planned private housing developments seen through much of the 2000s, and earlier, will be tackled.

We favour reforming how management companies are governed to rebalance the rights in favour of unit owners.

We want to introduce new citizen safeguards to rein in unscrupulous builders and developers.

We need to legislate to avoid the mistakes of the past whereby Local Authorities could not take estates in charge for years, nor redeem a bond where a developer was unable to finish an estate.

5. HOMELESSNESS

The profile of those who have become homeless has changed in recent years. Increases in numbers of homeless individuals and families, and those at imminent risk of homelessness, have been directly fuelled by the housing crisis. For many people with more traditional problems that correlate with homelessness, services have been cut or removed entirely and this has worsened the problem.

The Social Democrats believe that the measures outlined in this document thus far would, if implemented, combine to drastically reduce the numbers of people who present as homeless annually, but this is not a solution by itself.

Direct measures to reduce the unprecedentedly high numbers of people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or sleeping rough are needed urgently.

HOUSING FIRST

Responses to homelessness at a governance level have been haphazard; where acute problems have historically existed, investment has been made in providing responsive and coordinated services, such as the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, or the Cork Homeless Persons Unit. However this model does not extend to other cities or high-populated commuter belt areas where homelessness has become a serious issue in recent years.

Local Authorities, who are charged with providing homeless accommodation under the Housing Act 1988, nevertheless do not have an obligation to do so. In many areas, services are extremely inadequate, or non-existent.

The Social Democrats are committed to retaining the 'housing first' model of tackling homelessness. Durable, high-quality homes must be made available to people on a basis of need; past focus on providing emergency accommodation, or treating addiction or mental health issues without adequate shelter have not borne fruit.

We must continue to balance the allocation of social housing towards those most in need. In supporting families out of homelessness, our public housing is a key asset – that is why we are committed to expanding the supply.

Finally we must commit resources to the prevention of homelessness. This must be underpinned by putting into legislation a requirement for local authorities to proactively support individuals and families who at immediate risk of homelessness rather than waiting until they are experiencing homelessness to deal with them and a requirement on all arms of the state to prioritise policies that will support the goal of ending homelessness.

We favour:

- Creating a National Homelessness Response oversight body, as part of Housing Ireland, with responsibility for the development of policy to tackle homelessness, including monitoring and annual reporting of statistics.
- Creating dedicated Homeless units modelled on the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive at regional level across the State.
- Amending Section 10 of the Housing Act 1988 to create a statutory obligation on Local Authorities to provide accommodation for homeless people.
- Implementing the multi-agency approach as advocated by the Housing First policy towards tackling the accommodation needs of homeless people, but also problems which fuel homelessness such as addiction or mental health issues.