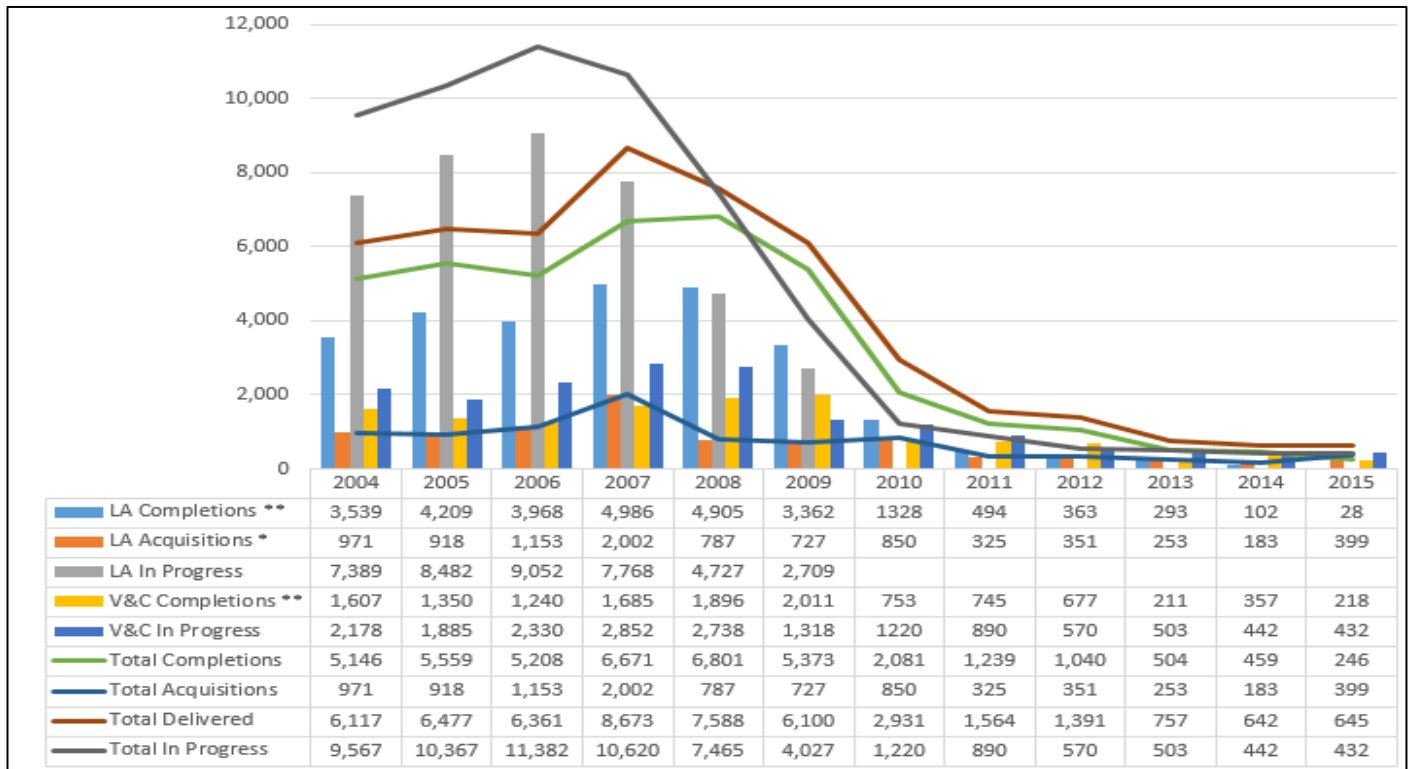


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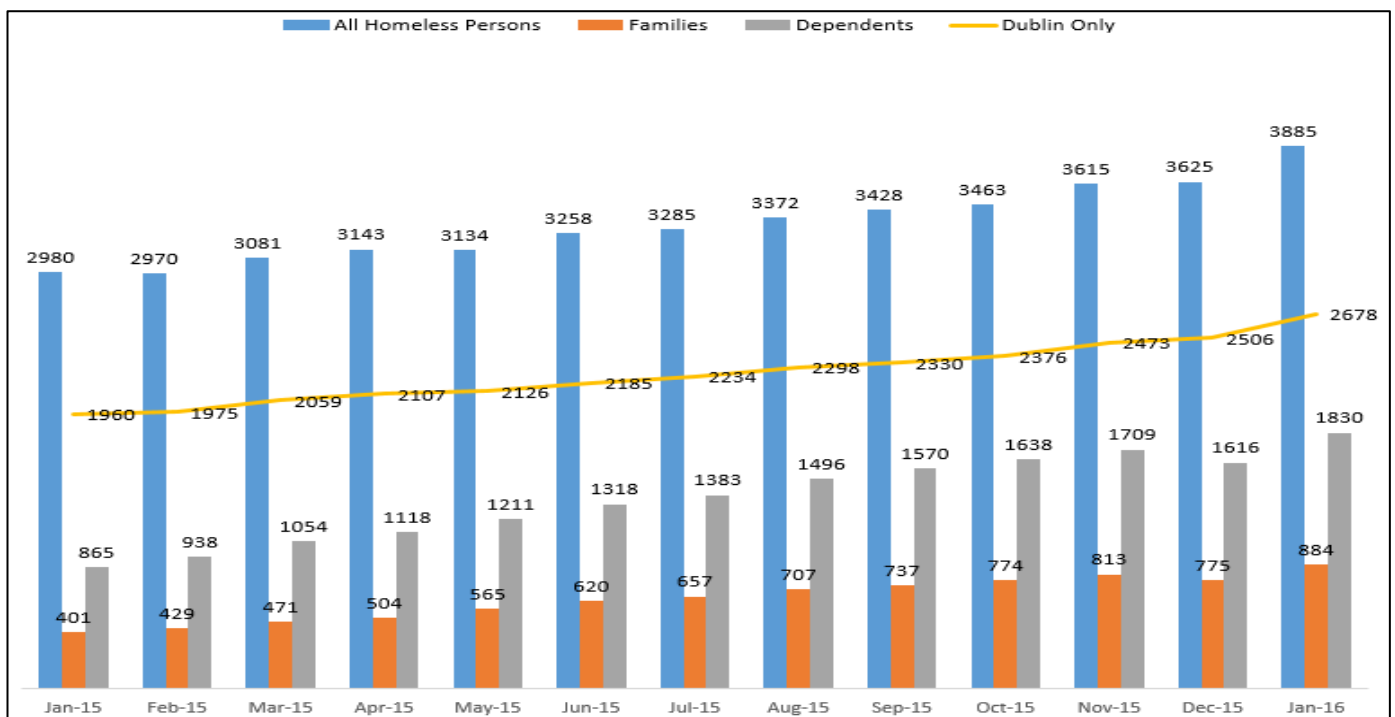
HOUSING

Chart 1: Social Housing Output 2004 to 2015



Source: Extracted from Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, *Housing Statistics, Overall Social Housing Statistics 2004 to 2015*
*acquisitions by local authorities of second hand houses **includes units acquired under Part V, Planning and Development Acts 2000-2008 for rental purposes. V&C (Voluntary and Cooperative) housing consists of housing provided under the capital loan and subsidy and capital assistance schemes.

Chart 2: Homeless accessing Emergency Accommodation, January 2015 to January 2016



Source: Extracted from Breakdown of Homeless Persons in Emergency Accommodation tables, January 2015 to January 2016, Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, <http://www.housing.gov.ie>

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HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

The right to appropriate accommodation should be a basic human right recognised and respected by every State. Unfortunately, there is no legal entitlement to housing in Ireland.

In its Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2013, the Housing Agency identified 89,872 households which were assessed as qualifying for social housing. Of these 60% (54,045) were on the housing list for more than two years and 55% (49,179) were families.

Chart 1 shows social housing output has been in decline since 2007/2008, reaching its lowest rate in 2015. In 2015 local authorities completed just 64 housing units, voluntary and cooperative approved housing bodies completed 401. These figures give an indication of the scale of the problem and the need for significant Government investment in building social housing units.

With the latest social housing waiting list figures (Housing Agency, 2013) indicating 2499 households awaiting housing due to homelessness, and local authority returns suggesting that this number is rising (see chart 3.2), Government needs to ensure that construction of social housing is targeted to those areas with the greatest need.

Securing sufficient finance to provide the scale of social housing required is a major challenge. The Government's Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is the largest and most comprehensive attempt to address Ireland's housing needs that any Government has published for several decades.

Despite the plan's scale it falls far short of planning to produce the number of houses required if Ireland is to eliminate its housing need. A new approach is required to secure the necessary finance if Ireland's social housing needs are to be met comprehensively.

The key challenge is to increase the supply of housing generally and of social housing in particular.

It is clear that the Exchequer cannot provide the funding necessary to deal with the current demand and more sustainable solutions are required. *Social Justice Ireland* recommends that Government put in place an off-balance sheet mechanism that could access low-cost finance required to address the lack of supply of social housing sufficient to eliminate waiting lists.

One possibility might be to use a vehicle such as NAMA which has expertise in developing such a mechanism. Given the fact that there are about 107,000 social housing units owned by Local Authorities and paying rent regularly it should be possible to put together a proposal that meets the Eurostat conditions for an acceptable off-balance sheet initiative.

Policy Priorities

- Put off-balance sheet financing structures in place to generate sufficient capital to finance the supply of new social housing needed to eliminate current waiting lists and also meet the additional demand that will emerge as Ireland's population grows.
- Explore the utilisation of NAMA as a housing agency with the ability to access and distribute appropriate off-balance sheet funding and to take an active role in the direction and support of Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) in the provision of social housing.
- Reduce the time spent by anyone on a waiting list for social housing to a maximum of one year by 2021.