

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a set of keys. The hand is positioned in the center-left of the frame, with fingers slightly curled. The keys are silver and include a large circular keychain with the word 'NOVAS' embossed on it. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue and white gradient.

NOVAS

Housing | Health | Recovery

STRATEGIC PLAN
2023–2027

NOVAS HAS A VISION

...that everyone has their own sustainable home.

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For more than 20 years NOVAS has been there for people experiencing homelessness in a way that recognises their journey, their strength, and their potential. With more than 10,000 people currently registered as Homeless in Ireland, a growing cost of living problem and a housing crisis with no end in sight we at NOVAS are ready to meet the challenge of the coming years.

This strategic plan has been developed with our clients and tenants at its heart. Through broad ranging consultation we have arrived at a set of strategic goals that we believe are ambitious, innovative and impactful for those we serve.

I want to thank our staff in particular, for the brave and dedicated support they have provided to our clients and tenants through the last number of very challenging years. Our staff never give up, they see the potential in every client and tenant and they will stand beside them on their journey, offering support, kindness, guidance, advice, skills and resources so that they can live in a world where everyone has their own sustainable home.

Una Deasy
Chief Executive Officer



What can we do to reverse the homeless crisis? So started the introduction to our last strategic plan six years ago. Has anything changed? Yes. But, unfortunately, not all for the better.

So, can we be confident over the next five years? We are fully committed to achieving our key goals within the framework of our targeted objectives. We are confident that our managers will have the leadership skills and enthusiasm to work with our staff and volunteers to deliver on these objectives. However the country needs an improved housing strategy with a qualitative shift to prioritise new social house building. Social housing must be the core of a revised national housing strategy.

Our capacity to meet our targets will also depend on adequate levels of state funding. This has been problematic for a decade. The period has witnessed unprecedented increases in the numbers of people who are homeless, yet in many projects funding remains frozen at levels of 10 years ago. Increasing costs affect everyone.

We also need the state to acknowledge that there are shortfalls in some critical health services. We have pledged to continue to work with clients with complex needs but are greatly limited without speedy access to improved mental health services. The gaps in the health service are well known and disproportionately affect people who are homeless.

We are ambitious for the future. We are developing our own fundraising strategies and hope to gain public and corporate support to enable us to develop new initiatives and refine existing services. This requires increased accountability to our donors.

To reflect the ambitions we have for the next timeframe, we will also be reviewing our governance arrangements to ensure they are at best practice.

Politicians continue to debate the housing crisis, although discourse is largely political. The reality of the crisis is understood by others especially the hundreds of thousands who are affected. Rather than arguing it would be reassuring for the future to see politicians act together.

All political parties are committed to meeting the obligations of the EU Lisbon Anti-Poverty Protocol. This means that by 2030 all persons in emergency accommodation when ready to move on are guaranteed by the state a 'move on to a permanent housing solution'. This will require the most radical improvement in social housing provision in the history of the state. We hope this is not one of the hollow political 'promises' to end homelessness (made twice in the last nine years). Politicians now have common cause to act together. They all agree that the housing crisis is the biggest issue facing the country; it is now time for them to now act together in the national interest. The country urgently needs all party agreement on a national housing strategy.

Greg Maxwell
Chairperson

NOVAS
VISION

Everyone has their own sustainable home.

NOVAS
MISSION

Promoting social inclusion through housing, health and recovery and providing lasting solutions to homelessness

**Equality,
Diversity,
Dignity,
Strengths-based,
Rights-based**

This Strategic Plan outlines four key goals and 16 associated objectives that we will deliver over the next five years. These actions have been carefully crafted based on feedback from our stakeholders about what they need in order to achieve success. NOVAS recognises that the collaboration between our internal and external stakeholders is vital to the achievement of our goals and in turn, our goals are designed to serve the needs of our stakeholders.

THE CONTEXT WE WORK IN

The perspective of our stakeholders reflects the context we operate in. Ireland currently has more than 10,000 people registered as homeless¹. This doesn't account for the hidden homeless in our communities, or the almost 60,000 households on social housing waiting lists² around the country. Outside of Dublin, the next largest homeless population in Ireland is in Limerick. Single adults make up about 55% of the people on social housing waiting lists and about 65% of people experiencing homelessness are men. The 2016 census found that people experiencing homelessness were twice as likely as the general population to have had a family breakdown, 31% were employed with a further 69% looking for work.

The most recent figures show that there are more than 750 deaths³ as a result of drug use in Ireland annually of which over 375 occurred due to overdose while more than 400 resulted from medical emergencies after substance use (e.g. heart failure). Poly drug use was the cause of three in five deaths and the same proportion of deaths also occurred while the person was alone.

Disabilities are double the national average in the homeless populations at 28%⁴. A study of Homeless people in Ireland found that 47% of participants had a diagnosed mental health need⁵ and 100% of homeless participants had either a mental or physical health concern. A review of 13 studies from developed countries found that 30 to 40% of homeless people have a cognitive impairment, including traumatic brain injury, learning difficulties, intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.⁶

1 <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/80ea8-homelessness-data/>

2 <https://www.housingagency.ie/data-hub/households-qualified-social-housing-support>

3 <https://www.hrb.ie/data-collections-evidence/alcohol-and-drug-deaths>

4 <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/14992/>

5 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282281504_Homelessness_An_unhealthy_State_Health_Status_Risk_Behaviours_and_Service_Utilisation_among_Homeless_People_in_Two_Irish_Cities

6 <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12815>

NOVAS Clients & Tenants

Our clients & tenants feel that NOVAS staff provide a sense of safety and have a caring approach. They value the advice and guidance that our staff offer. They appreciate the wide ranging services we provide, the high quality and variety of the food we serve and the emotional support they receive from responsive staff. Clients would like us to create more opportunities to exit homeless services into their own independent home that meets their needs. While in emergency services, clients would like more in person one to one key working sessions with project workers, more engaging activities and events, an opportunity to develop independent living skills and prepare for managing a tenancy of their own and more representation of their voice and their lived experience.

Our Partners in Government

Our partners in government praised the level of determination and perseverance that NOVAS staff demonstrate to resolve issues for clients and tenants and our collaboration with local authority and health staff to find innovative solutions. They recognised NOVAS' reputation in the sector for welcoming the opportunity to support the most complex and marginalised cases. Our dynamic and experienced approach to meeting the needs of homeless clients with disabilities was especially recognised. NOVAS is admired for its enthusiasm for supporting people that others have turned away from. In Dublin our speciality in supporting women experiencing homelessness is applauded. Our partners in government would like more tenancy sustainment work, an expansion of our health and wellbeing delivery, increased social housing units, enhanced case management and expanded models of care for people experiencing mental health, learning difficulties, addiction and disabilities.

Our Sector Peers & Partners

NOVAS has increased its involvement in research and public policy advocacy in collaboration with our partners and networks across the sector. Our greatest impact can come from active engagement with peers to lobby for change in public policy on behalf of our clients and tenants. Our peers in the sector have been actively engaged in lobbying for multi annual and adequate funding to enable us to meet the unprecedented need our clients and tenants are facing. Increases in inflation and the recruitment crisis make delivering our challenging work ever more difficult. The sector has the skills, experience and enthusiasm to respond to this crisis, but we require adequate funding to meet this need while adhering to ever-increasing obligations for reporting, compliance and regulation.

Our Team

Our staff feel that the lack of pathways for clients to exit homelessness and the increasing numbers presenting to our services are the greatest challenges we face as an organisation. Their greatest wish was for more social housing units to be made available. Staff noted that we need to invest in developing life skills and tenancy preparation skills, to give our clients the best opportunities for success. Staff are proud of our Trauma Informed Practice approach to recognising the trauma that may be influencing behaviours. Our staff had a strong desire to see innovation in the support of clients with complex diagnosis including the areas of addiction and mental health. More interpersonal connection with each other at all levels of the organisation in order to build synergy and momentum around our goals was sought. Attracting and retaining the right employees through excellent working conditions and compensation is very important.

1. Provide innovative and effective solutions for clients with complex needs to prevent and address homelessness.

2. Generate viable pathways out of homelessness and equip our clients with the skills for sustainable independent living.

3. Increase our Social Housing provision while providing excellent tenant support and engagement.

4. Develop our organisation and people through structures and systems to serve our clients now, and in the future.

1.

Provide innovative and effective solutions for clients with complex needs to prevent and address homelessness.

NOVAS prides itself on working with the most complex cases. More than 20 years' experience has highlighted to us the unique needs of the most vulnerable people experiencing homelessness, including additional challenges of physical disabilities, intellectual and learning difficulties, mental health issues, chronic illness, addiction and involvement in the criminal justice system. Each of these issues on their own presents a challenge. When clients experience dual or multi diagnosis at the same time, life can be an uphill battle. To make matters worse, services often only cater for one challenge at a time, meaning that if you have an addiction as well as mental illness or a significant disability you may not be able to access a place in a recovery service. NOVAS wants to change this reality for people in Ireland to affect better outcomes in the lives of the most vulnerable.

1.A

Expand the delivery of our **Health & Wellbeing programme** nationally bringing TOPPLE (The Overdose Prevention Peer Learning Experience), psychosocial supports, counselling and recovery orientated services to more clients, through a trauma informed lens.

1.B

Establish a **Tenancy Sustainment Service** in each county we work in, to work in partnership with statutory partners and our housing team to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.

1.C

Engage with peers in the sector to **research roadblocks to supports** for clients with complex needs, and identify innovations needed to meet their requirements.

1.D

Pilot a post-treatment stepdown house to support NOVAS clients who experienced homelessness before accessing recovery and treatment services, in order to provide a supportive environment post-treatment to live independently with peers on a pathway to their own home.

“

THE TOPPLE¹ PROGRAMME GAVE ME BACK HOPE THAT I COULD BEAT MY OWN ADDICTION AND SOMEDAY HELP OTHERS IN THE POSITION I FOUND MYSELF IN.

– Ger



1 The Overdose Prevention Peer Learning Experience

2. Generate viable pathways out of homelessness and equip our clients with the skills for sustainable independent living.

NOVAS is proud to support those experiencing homelessness and recognises that for most clients, the best solution is their own sustainable home. To achieve this, NOVAS aims to effectively support clients with a focus on preparing for, finding and securing their own home with the skills to sustain it.

2.A

Embed a **culture of 'finding a home'** for clients in all our activities, by all our staff and volunteers from the moment a client enters our services.

2.B

Design and launch a new **NOVAS Life Skills Programme** to prepare and support our clients to live fulfilling connected lives in their own sustainable home.

2.C

Launch a revised **NOVAS Case Management** structure to be delivered and recorded in all services to all clients, informed by quality standards.

2.D

In collaboration with our peers in the sector and academia, **conduct research to inform our public policy advocacy** work to achieve better results for our clients and tenants.

“

THE BEST THING ABOUT THE FLAT IS KNOWING I HAVE A ROOF OVER MY HEAD, A PLACE OF MY OWN WHERE I CAN RELAX AND WATCH TV. SINCE MOVING INTO MY OWN PLACE I HAVE MORE CONTACT WITH MY FAMILY.

– Alec



3. Increase our Social Housing provision while providing excellent tenant support and engagement.

NOVAS recognises the challenges caused by the current housing crisis and will endeavour to alleviate the issue by increasing our social housing provision as an Approved Housing Body. In line with the AHBRA (Approved Housing Body Regulatory Authority), we aim to deliver and maintain excellent properties alongside effective tenant engagement. NOVAS will prepare for including our tenants in our leadership and governance structures.

3.A

NOVAS will develop a programme of **tenant engagement** through feedback initiatives, residents associations, and participation in the leadership and governance of the organisation.

3.B

Deliver an additional **200 units of social housing** over the life of the plan, ringfencing 10% for our most vulnerable clients

3.C

Evaluate all current emergency homeless congregated living properties to identify development options for improved configuration for clients.

3.D

Maintain excellent standards of **asset management and property maintenance** with timely repairs and upkeep while planning for future preservation.



I HAVE LEARNT TO DEAL WITH MY TRAUMA SINCE HAVING A SECURE ENVIRONMENT. I HAVE MY OWN HOME NOW, EVERYONE IS WORTHY OF THEIR OWN HOME. I HAVE A COMMUNITY NOW. THIS IS A NEW CHAPTER OF MY LIFE.

– Sonia



4. **Develop our organisation and people through structures and systems to serve our clients now, and in the future.**

As NOVAS prepares to enter its next phase of growth we want to secure our foundations and build on our strengths. We will examine our structures, invest in our people and processes and align our vision and culture within the organisation.

4.A

Demonstrate our **commitment to our people** by being an employer of choice that offers competitive terms and conditions, learning and development and career opportunities.

4.B

Secure and grow **sustainable funding** to provide quality services for our clients and tenants and develop a fundraising function to generate additional income.

4.C

Support the achievement of our strategic goals by ensuring our **systems, processes and policies** comply with legislation and quality standards, where we record the relevant data in order to measure and monitor progress.

4.D

Provide effective **governance and oversight** of our activities at every level of the organisation.



NOVAS found me a temporary home in St Marys Park where I am originally from. I was finally back in a familiar place with family, friends and good neighbours. I stayed there for a total of 2 years while still getting support from NOVAS for myself and my 2 girls.

– Laura



VISION,
MISSION,
VALUES

Who we are

During the process to develop this strategic plan we refined our vision statement to affirm that NOVAS envisions a world where **everyone has their own sustainable home**. As a charity supporting those at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, and an Approved Housing Body, this is the world we want to contribute to through our efforts.

During our reflections we realised that we have reached a stage of our development where we need to revisit and examine who we are. As we strengthen our foundations and prepare for growth, we need to examine our identity, including our vision, mission, values and culture.

Our work to date has served us well and we have made significant impacts in the lives of those at risk of and experiencing homelessness. We now need to look to the future, for today's clients and tomorrow's, how will we engage with them to best meet their needs.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

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- 2.** Generate viable pathways out of homelessness and equip our clients with the skills for sustainable independent living.
- 3.** Increase our Social Housing provision while providing excellent tenant support and engagement.
- 4.** Develop our organisation and people through structures and systems to serve our clients now, and in the future.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Innovating to serve

The 16 objectives detailed in our four overarching strategic goals are ambitious. However, our staff and board of directors have the energy and passion to fulfil this plan with the needs of our clients at the heart of our efforts. This strategic plan and its goals aim to fundamentally improve the outcomes for our clients and tenants while also strengthening our organisation in preparation for the future.

To successfully achieve this plan, each of us will need to make use of reflective practice to examine how our roles contribute to these goals and conscientiously plan the use of our resources to be most effective. Our projects, plans and interactions must also be informed by our Trauma Informed Practice approach, considering the impact our actions will have on our clients and tenants and how we can better design our service to help lift people up.

HOUSING

- > Increased social housing units from 245 to 405 houses.
- > Created 140 new tenancies.
- > 96% tenant satisfaction rate among our tenants.

SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

- > Developed innovative supports and programmes for clients with dual diagnosis of mental health and addiction including; grief counselling, addiction counselling and psychotherapy interventions.
- > Created new disability services reflecting the level of disability among the people we support.
- > Developed new & responsive services to meet rising demand for more than 5,000 people annually.

INNOVATION & CLIENT CENTRED APPROACHES

- > Co-produced and delivered Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) training for all NOVAS staff.
- > Created TOPPLE (The Overdose Prevention Peer Learning Experience) programme.
- > Completed a Social-Return-On-Investment (SROI) evaluation on our young adult residential service.
- > Kept clients safe and services operational during pandemic including 24/7 on-call service.

COMMUNICATIONS, ADVOCACY & FUNDRAISING

- > Extended website and social media platforms.
- > Expanded advocacy for our clients and tenants through presenting to Joint Oireachtas Committees, pre-budget submissions and informing policy development.
- > Grew participation in sector networks and multi-agency groups.
- > Extended fundraising and charity partnership opportunities.
- > Extended volunteer participation and range of volunteering opportunities.

FINANCE

- > All returns to revenue, state bodies and funders submitted on a timely basis.
- > Worked with other departments in accessing funding for both capital and revenue projects.
- > Rent management system rolled out in conjunction with Housing Department.
- > Strengthened department with recruitment of additional qualified accountants.

QUALITY & COMPLIANCE

- > Transformed all our operational systems from paper to secure cloud based software.
- > All systems designed to be measured against standards and regulations.
- > Developed auditing and monitoring tools to measure each project against standards.
- > Set out new procedures for the management of incidents and complaints.

HR

- > Recruited suitably qualified personnel within the HR Department to reflect growing workforce.
- > Developed internal communications platforms as a means of building internal connection.
- > Oversaw broad ranging Covid-19 pandemic recruitment drive.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- > Developed new health & safety statements and risk assessments for all projects.
- > Complied with all health and safety legislation & communicated changes to all staff.
- > New required training identified and delivered for the safety of staff and clients.
- > Implemented real time reporting of all accidents and incidents through digital systems.



NOVAS
Housing | Health | Recovery

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NOVAS works to support those at risk of, or experiencing homelessness through specialised services and as an approved housing body.

Registered Charity Number: 20041533 | CHY Number: 13390 | Company Registration Number: 330018