

Galway County PPN Housing Linkage Group meeting 15 Dec 2020 @2.30pm

The Galway County Housing SPC PPN reps are:

- Cathy McGrath (Disability Federation of Ireland)
- Marcella Conneely (Cluid Housing)

Attendees: Nora Corcoran (GTM family and accommodation officer), Cathy McGrath (DFI), Marcella Conneely (Cluid Housing), Lisa Fenwick (DFI), Cliona Geoghegan, (Ability West)

Agenda:

1. Introduction to Housing linkage group
2. Housing SPC – what is it, who is on it and how does it work?
3. Overview of meetings in 2020 – what has been covered, reports to PPN and what engagement we are looking for from PPN members?
4. Draft Housing SPC workplan 2021 & schedule of meetings
5. Introduction to Lisa Fenwick
6. Plan for next Linkage groups meetings if possible
7. AOB

1) All attendees introduced themselves.

2) Marcella explained what a Linkage Group is and what happens at an SPC meeting and who is on the Housing SPC.

She mentioned that for next year, ahead of each Housing SPC, they will look to host a linkage group meeting so that community groups can feed into these and be informed about what is going on at them.

Cathy and Marcella have attended 4 meetings last year. Covid did effect the meetings and when the were held.

The Housing SPC is a vocal group has elected representatives from Tuam and Clifden and Kinvara. A schedule of work commitments is shared ahead of the SPC linkage groups.

3) Cathy explained that discussions had are at a policy level. Over the last meetings held, the discussions reflected on key policies that need to be amended or implemented. Wording was discussed and approved.

Throughout the year, the SPC looks at policy documents, plans and strategies. Reps have to digest the documents ahead of the meetings, get the input from PPN members ahead of the SPC meetings and feed this feedback into the SPC meeting.

For example, the Housing Allocation Scheme, if this is on the agenda for this next meeting, the PPN members need to think about how it effects them and what they want to bring to the table about this certain issue.

Cathy gave technical and practical examples of her input as a PPN Rep on the Housing Allocation Scheme and how tenancies/beds are allocated and if it was possible to share this.

Another example Cathy gave was that she posed the question about what happens if a housing applicant fall ill and their application is effected b this, ie they fail to finish an application. The SPC members referred Cathy to the very useful compliant/appeals mechanism.

Cathy emphasized that it is important to note that the issues discussed/that can be raised at SPC level are thematic, rather than personal, individual queries or issues.

The SPC are very capable group and have a lot of expert knowledge about housing issues. Any issues are readily addressed at the table.

The Anti-social behavior Strategy was also recently discussed. There was a community- led approach taken by the Council to formulate the approach/ strategy.

Nora addressed some issues with the housing tenant's handbook and that some tenants have issues with/cant afford to make certain payments but would prefer to have this taken out of the rent. Nora has identified some concerns in her community that she hopes the Reps might be able to help her address with the SPC.

Marcella agreed that this is the right forum to raise the questions by Nora on behalf of her clients, such as planned programmes, asset management schemes, cyclical maintenance, grounds maintenance, estate management.

Nora also addressed the issue of the threshold for housing and the insufficient accommodation available for large families.

Lisa Fenwick also noted that the problem of the 'threshold' which also effects many people with disabilities. It needs to be questioned when the threshold was last updated.

Cathy noted that there is also a Housing and Disability Steering Group within the Council and that it would be beneficial to highlight innovative models from abroad when raising issues.

Marcella reported that the Capital Assistance Process is a long, complicated process, GCC has not made full use of this opportunity. Marcella gave an overview of her experience with this system, it's a lengthy process. Quality of housing is essential. **As regards the threshold issues, Marcella noted this was an important issue and will be brought to the next SPC meeting.**

Cathy said there are 2 levels of input to the Reps, the individuals concerns of your clients, community and the second one is, what future direction is needed for my community. PPN

members need to provide evidence of need and bring a solution/ best practice. If this is brought to the Reps they can then put this forward.

Marcella, gave Nora an overview of the way families are referred to by the Council to approved housing bodies.

Nora also noted that there are a lot of issues around the HAP scheme, landlords uncontactable, inappropriate accommodation. Nora asked where is the intermediary?

4. Overview of work and Schedule of meetings for 2021.

Cathy and Marcella were sent an overview document by CLLR Byrne.

Marcella shared the overview document/ meeting schedule on the screen. This shows what will be addressed at the next meetings in 2021.

Marcella went through this list of topics. This list is non-exhaustive and will be adapted over the year.

There are usually 4-5 meetings a year. A schedule of meetings will be shared soon.

Nora asked for the schedule, but **Marcella said it first needs to be agreed and they need to check if it can be shared.**

Cathy noted there is an opportunity to contribute as an external organization and present at the SPC- this is a possibility that will be explored.

The plan is to host a linkage group meeting to accord with the schedules SPC meeting to gather feedback.

5. Lisa Fenwick from DFI is a community development officer. Lisa works closely with DFI and development partnerships, GRD and GCP and advocacy groups, ILMI, Access for All. Lisa also sits on the Housing Disability Steering Group in Galway City and County Council.

Lisa will also run training on the UNCRPD.

Charlotte asked about the Housing and Disability Steering Group and if Lisa would present on this at the next Galway Disability Forum.

Nora shared some of her personal experiences with the group.

6. When the Reps have a schedule of meetings the next Linkage groups will be planned with Charlotte.

7. Charlotte asked if the recording could be shared. All agreed.

End of meeting