

# Council plan to end homelessness by 2030

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Laois County Council is trying to end homelessness in the county by 2030, with projects like the Portlaoise Convent apartments highlighted by CEO Michael Rainey.

While 30 people declared themselves homeless in Laois in May, and 38 were in emergency accommodation, the council says it is working to eliminate homelessness within five years.

Fionnuala Daly is the social worker in Laois County Council's housing section.

"We have a policy to eliminate homelessness by 2030. The causes are complex; economic hardship, mental health, addition, domestic violence and the shortage of affordable housing," she said.

Their new plan includes building new houses, improving supports and prevention, and cooperating with the HSE, Mental Health



Pictured: File photo of Laois County Council offices, James Fintan Lalor Avenue in Portlaoise.

and Disability Services, Addiction Services, Laois Domestic Abuse Service and TUSLA.

Ms Daly presented the new draft Midlands Region Homelessness Action Plan to councillors at the May council meeting. It also covers Offaly, Westmeath and Longford.

Her team give emergency accommodation to rough sleepers, homeless youths, vulnerable groups such as Travellers, people who are given notices to quit, who are in family disputes, and those exiting foster care or prison.

hostels. We spent €6m in the Midlands region, that's low in comparison to Dublin at €50m. We rely either on B&Bs or regional shelters. Laois County Council do not tend to put families outside the county," Ms Daly said.

Laois County Council CEO Michael Rainey said they are focusing on building 1 and 2 bedroom social homes.

"This reflects demand and the opportunity to move from 3 and 4 bedroom homes, it's a win win for everyone. The convent project in Portlaoise is a really good example. There will be a few people taking accommodation in the convent as a result of rightsizing," he said.

The draft Homelessness Action Plan covers Laois, Offaly, Westmeath and Longford. Over the four counties, there were 172 homeless people and families in May. Last December that figure was up at 207, with 151 being Irish citizens, 24 from the EU, and 15 from outside the EU. It included 41 families. Over half of them were aged between 25 and 44.

Cllr Paschal McEvoy proposed the approval of the draft plan.

"They can be in emergency accommodation from anything from one night to six months," Ms Daly said.

They also help anyone in private accommodation facing eviction, to find a place to rent.

There is no homeless hostel in Laois, but there are in Offaly, Longford and Westmeath. Midlands Simon and the Peter McVerry Trust have 27 supported houses in Laois for homeless people.

Laois spent the second lowest out of the four counties on homelessness accommodation, at €894,000 in 2024, with Longford the lowest. Westmeath spent the most at €2.73m.

"We are at the lowest because we don't have

## Street sleeping in Laois a 'choice' says councillor

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A Laois councillor says anyone sleeping on the Laois streets does it "by choice", while approving a plan to eliminate homelessness in the county by 2030.

Fianna Fáil Cllr Paschal McEvoy says Laois people make a choice if they sleep on the street.

"In fairness we all come across situations where people have to move, but once they come to the homeless section they are dealt with quickly. You never see anyone on the street in Laois. If you do, it's by choice. They are given every opportunity to get off the street," he claimed.

Many other councillors also praised Laois County Council's homelessness team, on hearing a report on the draft Homelessness Action Plan from 2025 to 2029.

Rather than rent private B&Bs, Cllr Aisling Moran suggests they buy a building for a homeless shelter.

Fine Gael Cllr Barry Walsh said he "somewhat supports" her idea.

"In general we're doing a great job, you don't see any evidence of people on the street," he said.

Cllr Caroline Dwane Stanley said that single people living in three bedroom social houses should "have to downsize".

"They should be asked to go into a one bedroom property," she said.

Later in the meeting, she clarified that she means older tenants who bought out their council house and wish to downsize.

Cllr Paddy Bracken asked if people are coming from other counties to present as homeless in Laois.

"We all know the great work being done and houses being built in Laois. Thankfully the figures in Laois are not as bad as other counties," he said.

In reply, Ms Daly said there would be "obviously legal issues with forcing people to leave a tenancy" in a house too large for their needs.

She said that a "new national policy is being created so people can only present as homeless in their own counties".

## Homeless dad's 'blood boils' at Laois council

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A homeless Laois dad insists that he has had no choice but to sleep in tents and couch surf and is annoyed with comments made at a Laois County Council meeting that rough sleeping happens only by choice in Laois.

Keith Carton, aged 41, is a separated father of a boy with autism. He became homeless in 2024 when his relationship broke down and now insists he has no choice but to sleep in tents at locations in Portlaoise and Portlaoise.

He has custody of his child three days a week. On those days, he can stay with friends but must sleep on the couch. He claims that the only accommodation provided to him by Laois County Council was in Cashel, Co Tipperary.

He stayed there on two separate occasions. He

claims that he had to leave in January 2024 because he had not occupied his room for three consecutive nights over Christmas, when he said he was in Laois visiting his son, who used to stay with him in Cashel.

"When I went back there was a woman with a baby in my room," he told the Leinster Express/Laois Live.

The second time was during Storm Eowyn when the council provided emergency accommodation to anyone without a home. On this occasion, he says he was assaulted by people who were drinking.

Mr Carton claims that since then there has been no help from the council other than a return to Cashel but he says he is afraid to go back.

He was also told he cannot return because he would not be allowed to have his child at the accommodation.

He is entitled to HAP, but

he says he has received hundreds of refusals because he needs a house where his child can stay with him three days a week.

He claims the council will not help him to find a place to live through the HAP system.

He says he has stayed in tents in Corrig Wood, Port and the People's Park in Portlaoise before being moved to Cashel again since.

"I have no accommodation. I sleep in the tent or on rainy nights I stay with my friend on a couch. If he has family staying I cannot stay with him," he said.

He is adamant that Laois County Council approved him for social housing six months ago.

"The council sent me a letter saying that, having assessed me, I am entitled to a two-bed house for me and my child," he said.

He said he has been in

tears, begging the council's housing department for help in person. On one occasion, he says he was advised to attend Portlaoise hospital.

"I think I've had two or three breakdowns because of this...I'm like this because no matter where I turn I can't get help," he said.

He says he has never been evicted from council housing in Laois. While he says he has experienced some mental health issues, he insists he has no drink or substance abuse problems.

Mr Carton says he has contacted Brian Stanley TD who says is trying to help.

However, he is upset at comments made at a Laois County Council meeting where it was stated that anyone on the streets in Laois is there by choice.

"It really made my blood boil. They are trying to say they are helpful when they really are not," he claimed.



### COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LAOISE LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

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### NOTICE OF INTENTION TO ACQUIRE DERELICT SITE COMPULSORILY UNDER DERELICT SITES ACT, 1990 (as amended by the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended)

Notice is hereby given that Laois County Council (hereinafter referred to as the 'Local Authority') in exercise of the powers conferred on them by Section 14 of the Derelict Sites Act 1990, as amended, intend to acquire compulsorily under the said Act, the derelict site described hereunder.

A map of the said derelict site has been deposited at the offices of Laois County Council, Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co. Laois and may be inspected there during office hours. A copy of the map is also available to view online via the online consultation portal at <https://consult.laois.ie/>

Any owner, lessee or occupier (except a tenant for a month or a period less than a month) may, on or before 2nd day of July 2025 submit to the Local Authority an objection to the proposed compulsory acquisition of the derelict site. Any such objection must be in writing stating the grounds of the objection and addressed to Joanne Dunne, Staff Officer, Laois County Council, Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise in the County of Laois.

The Derelict Sites Act 1990 as amended by the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended provides that if an objection is made to the proposed compulsory acquisition of a derelict site and the objection is not withdrawn, the derelict site shall not be acquired compulsorily by the Local Authority without the consent of An Bord Pleanála.

#### DESCRIPTION OF DERELICT SITES PROPOSED TO BE ACQUIRED

1. Compulsory Purchase Order No. 3/2025  
The site and premises at 55 Broomville, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, comprised in Folio L514603F comprising 0.053 Hectares approximately.
2. Compulsory Purchase Order No. 4/2025  
The site and premises at Cooltederry, Portarlinton, Co. Laois comprised in Folio L517280 comprising 0.052 Hectares approximately.

Dated this 27th day of May 2025.

Pamela Tynan, County Secretary.

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL  
"IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY"



AN COIMISIÚN PLEANÁLA

09 JUL 2025

LTR DATED FROM

LDG: 322987-25

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