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Minister for Health welcomes additional funding of €5.1 million in homeless supports

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The Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD, has welcomed the provision of an additional €5.1 million for health supports for people who are homeless.

The Minister said:

“This winter is expected to be particularly challenging for our health services due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. People who are homeless are at higher risk of COVID-19 and are more likely to require emergency healthcare services during the winter. To support those who are homeless in Dublin, the government is providing an additional €2.4 million for health services as part of the HSE winter plan. A further €2.7 million will be provided in other regions.”

The additional funding will continue and enhance the following health measures for people who are homeless in Dublin during the winter months:

- operate a 110 bed isolation unit for homeless families and single people, including nursing, GP and social care support
- provide a health supports team of nurses and mental health social care workers to care for 250 people who are cocooning and the people who are in private emergency accommodation
- operate a 18 bed unit for single homeless people with complex needs
- provide mobile testing, tracing and self-isolation facilities for people who are homeless with suspected cases of COVID-19
- continue 7 day dedicated homeless response team

The Minister for Health was speaking at a visit to a HSE-run self-isolation facility for people who are homeless in Dublin city. During the visit he met the Dublin COVID-19 homeless response team.

The coordinated response led by the HSE, in partnership with the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive and voluntary homeless services, has been effective in protecting those who are homeless during the COVID-19 pandemic in Dublin.

He said:

“I want to pay tribute to all the frontline health and social care workers in homeless services who have worked so hard to protect people who are homeless. Without doubt, your actions have saved many lives.”

The Minister said:

“The winter plan is a first step in delivering on the commitment in the Programme for Government to increase HSE funding for targeted interventions for people who are homeless and in addiction.”

Budget 2021 provides additional funding of €11 million for once off measures to protect vulnerable people who are homeless under the Winter and Pandemic plans.

Minister of State for Public Health, Well Being and National Drugs Strategy Frank Feighan said:

“People who are homeless and in addiction can be particularly vulnerable and have many complex needs. As part of our response to COVID-19, a number of measures were put in place to protect people who are homeless. This has greatly minimised the number of positive cases and kept the number of deaths very low. It is imperative that we continue to protect the most vulnerable from COVID-19.”

The Minister continued:

“The €11 million in funding in Budget 2021 will also provide for the development of customised health care plan for more than 1,000 single people living in emergency accommodation. This money will ensure the COVID-19 protective and responsive measures for people who are homeless are continued for all of 2021.”