**Press Release – Mercy Law Resource Centre’s Report on Mental Health and Social Housing Supports to be launched by Mary Butler, Minister of State at the Department of Health**

In summary:

* Report will be launched at a multidisciplinary conference ‘Mental Health and Social Housing Supports’ on 16 February 2023
* Mary Butler, Minister of State at the Department of Health with special responsibility for Mental Health and Older People, will formally launch the report;
* The backdrop to the report is that national statistics[[1]](#footnote-1) show that since 2016, among social housing allocations based on disability, the share attributed to mental health grew from 16% to 24%;
* Together, intellectual and mental health disabilities now account for the largest category of disability recorded on social housing waiting lists;[[2]](#footnote-2)
* Mercy Law’s casework experience is that people with mental health needs face particular barriers when trying to access social housing and/or homeless accommodation;
* The report incorporates the results of a survey of people with mental health and housing needs and frontline workers who support them;
* All respondents to that survey believe that people with mental health difficulties face barriers when trying to access social housing supports;
* 89% of respondents believe that these barriers extend to people with mental health difficulties seeking access to emergency homeless accommodation;
* The report analyses the survey results and MLRC’s casework experience against the legal and policy framework and makes practical recommendations for change;
* The report’s recommendations include:
  + Improving supply of housing suitable to difference mental health needs;
  + More training for staff involved in the provision of social housing supports and emergency accommodation;
  + Revisions to applicable laws and procedures; and
  + A clear procedure for recognising mental health needs in respect of emergency homeless accommodation.
* The report and conference were funded under the Mental Health Ireland Grant Scheme 2022.

Mercy Law Resource Centre (MLRC) launches its Report on Mental Health and Social Housing Supports on 16 February 2023. MLRC extends sincere thanks to Minister Mary Butler TD for formally launching the report. The report and conference were funded under the Mental Health Ireland Grant Scheme 2022.

Managing Solicitor **Aoife Kelly-Desmond** said:

*“The report reinforces the experience of MLRC - that people with mental health difficulties face particular barriers when seeking access to suitable social housing supports and emergency homeless accommodation.*

*This report is centred on the lived experiences of people with mental health difficulties seeking to have their housing needs met. A recurring theme in the report is that where housing services are trained and resourced to understand and respond to different mental health needs people feel more supported and outcomes are improved. Conversely, rigid procedures, lack of staff training, stigma and silo-ing of services compound to create real barriers.*

*Housing is a fundamental human need and lack of suitable housing can heighten mental health difficulties. One issue that highlights this problem is delayed hospital discharges – there are a number of examples in the report of people who were deemed clinically well being forced to remain in in-patient mental health treatment due to lack of housing, despite engaging extensively with housing services.*

*In the report, MLRC identifies and examines those barriers and presents practical recommendations for changes to the law and administrative practices in relation to the provision of social housing and emergency homeless accommodation that, in our view, may alleviate some of these issues and contribute to a fairer, more compassionate approach to housing for all.”*

**ENDS**

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**Notes to editors**

1. Mercy Law Resource Centre (MLRC) is an independent law centre, registered charity and company limited by guarantee. MLRC provides free legal advice and representation for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. It also seeks to advocate for change in laws, policies and attitudes which unduly and adversely impact people who are at the margins of our society.  MLRC provides five key services: free legal advice clinics; legal representation in the areas of housing and social welfare law; legal support and training to organisations working in the field of homelessness; policy work; and a befriending service.  MLRC’s clients are local authority tenants and people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. They include people who are trying to move away from homelessness who may be struggling with issues often linked to homelessness e.g. discrimination, addiction, leaving prison, mental illness and relationship breakdown.
2. MLRC has built strong working relationships with other organisations working in the field of homelessness, including Focus Ireland, Crosscare Advocacy Service, and the Citizens Information Centres. Since our inception in 2009, MLRC has provided free legal advice and/or representation to over 10,000 individuals and families.  For more about our work, see [www.mercylaw.ie](http://www.mercylaw.ie)

1. National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027, pg 15 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022 – 2027, pg 18 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)