



L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty for Social Wellbeing

The Next Step in Housing Profiling

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A most basic of needs

Housing is an essential and basic need in our community. Social housing is one way of responding to this need. Social policy is to be provided with empirical data that will be able to channel the social and public policy resources so that people who are asking for the service get it as expediently as possible and in the most efficient of ways. The notion around this study is innovative. It not only speaks about increasing our social housing stock but also supports this service through a program of initiatives intended to address the shortfalls of the person/s asking for a housing unit. In this way a holistic approach to providing support is developed with the intention of helping the individual/s improve their quality of life. I commend the team who have worked on this project both from the Faculty and the Housing Authority's end. These collaborations are crucial in ensuring we are addressing social exclusion.

Prof. Andrew Azzopardi

Dean

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The number of applicants for social housing in Malta has seen a considerable reduction in recent years, with the waiting list decreasing by 42% since 2017 (Times of Malta, 2021). Nonetheless, the latest available data indicate that there are still 3,382 individuals who have applied for social housing (The Malta Independent, 2021). A recent study by Marmarà and Brown (2021) engaged in an exercise to socially profile such housing applicants, revealing the prevalent sociodemographic characteristics of individuals in need of social housing. The results of this social profiling exercise provide useful data which enable policymakers to obtain an understanding of the socio-demographics of social housing applicants.

It is important to understand, and respond to, the particular needs of social housing applicants, since such individuals are often at a higher risk of social exclusion and other collateral problems. Across countries, governments and policymakers are increasingly recognising that many of those in need of social housing require assistance which goes beyond the provision of housing, if they are to be successful in attaining an increased quality of life:

“Working age tenants in social housing often face additional challenges in securing employment and decent earnings; factors which are so important in enabling households to thrive and plan for their future. The social housing sector can create social mobility, but it does need support to do so consistently and evenly across the country, working with local and national partners to improve opportunities for all.” (Gibb et al., 2020, p. 5)

An example of such an approach is described in a recent report from the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Housing and Social Mobility, an initiative carried out in the United Kingdom. This report detailed the results of an inquiry, which found that social housing providers are becoming increasingly vital in supporting people in social housing. The effectiveness of social housing providers in supporting people to improve their circumstances has also been demonstrated through the growing corpus of evidence collected through monitoring and evaluation of such support (Gibb et al., 2020).

The adoption of a personalised approach to supporting individuals in need of social housing was further justified through a study by Bitter et al. (2016), which set out to explore the subgroups of service users in need of social housing. The research exercise was based on the awareness that, for social housing service users with mental health issues, “As the level of recovery differs between service users, the quality of life and care needs also might vary. However, the type and amount of care and support that service users receive do not always match their recovery” (p. 1). The study assessed three dimensions of ‘recovery’, relating to individual’s clinical, personal, and social needs. Their results revealed that three main subgroups existed within this cohort of service users, with each group differing significantly with regard to quality of life and unmet needs. The authors also stated that, even among the subgroup with the best evaluations, their quality of life is lower than that found in the average population. They also concluded that service users of social housing should be provided with care which targets all dimensions of ‘recovery’ at the same time, through the collaboration of mental health organisations working towards an integrated approach to service delivery.

Furthermore, researchers have expressed concern that the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to present greater challenges for social housing users, in terms of their ability to secure and maintain gainful employment (Gibb et al., 2020). Hence, there is an even greater need to identify solutions and recommendations for individuals who rely on social housing.

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The study conducted by Marmarà and Brown (2021) also highlighted the need for a 'transitional policy' within social accommodation, in order to address the significant number of individuals who require social accommodation due to experiencing some kind of transition at that time, "such as getting separated or divorced, return to employment after a period of not being employed, or moving out from living with kin" (p. 40). These findings clearly demonstrate that a rationale exists for developing an approach which caters to such transitional needs of social accommodation applicants, as well as those applicants who require social accommodation due to other (non-transitional) needs.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to follow up on the research findings by Marmarà and Brown (2021) in order to identify relevant packages which may be utilised to support social accommodation applicants and beneficiaries to improve their situation with regards to accommodation, as well as overall wellbeing. Such improvements will aim to identify short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes, with expected positive impacts in areas of employment, life skills, physical and emotional health, amongst others. Moreover, recommendations will be made for the required participation of key stakeholders in order to achieve the expected outputs.



Both primary and secondary data were utilised in order to design a programme of packages, including electives (“add-on” elements), as well as developing a model of application for such packages. Primary data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with a select group of participants, consisting of individuals with extensive professional experience related to the recipients or applicants of social accommodation. Secondary data involved reviewing the relevant existing literature, in order to gain an in-depth understanding of empirical research, policies, and initiatives relevant to the present study. The research questions guiding the study were:

- What are the support needs of social accommodation applicants and beneficiaries?
- How can a portfolio of support packages be developed in order to meet the different needs of social accommodation applicants?
- What criteria can be considered as relevant in the evaluation of the packaged support services?

2.1 SOCIAL PROFILES OF SOCIAL HOUSING APPLICANTS

According to the data presented by Marmarà and Brown (2021), several sociodemographic characteristics were identified as representing a significant proportion of social housing applicants. This section will discuss these characteristics, with respect to the identification of potential support packages.

2.1.1 Gender

The majority (75%) of social housing applicants were female, with only 25% of applicants being male.

2.1.2 Age

The most commonly represented age groups of social housing applicants were those aged between 26 and 45 (29.7% from the 26-35 age group; 24.4% from the 36-45 age group). These were followed by applicants aged 46 and 55 years of age (14.7%); those aged between 18 and 25 years of age (11.3%), those aged between 56 and 65 (10.8%), and those who are 66 years and above (9%).

2.1.3 Marital Status

This sociodemographic category revealed that just over half (50.6%) of social housing applicants were single, whilst 27% were divorced or separated, and 15.8% were married. Furthermore, a large proportion of applicants (62.6%) were single parents.

2.1.4 Employment Status

The greatest proportion of applicants were unemployed (39%), however, a large number were also employed on a full-time basis (29.2%), with 9.9% employed on a part-time basis.

With regard to the unemployed applicants, further data revealed the reasons for such unemployment; The most commonly-cited reason for applicants being unemployed was that they have no one to take care of their children, according to 26.4% of respondents. A similar reason reported by 8.4% of respondents also related to childcare, who stated that they are unemployed because they are ‘Taking care of his/her child/ren’. It should be noted that respondents who stated that they are unemployed because they do not have anyone to take care of their children differed from those who are taking care of their child/ren due to

a personal preference: The former group struggled to find childcare 'due to working hours, mobility limitations, amongst other [reasons]', whereas the latter were not in employment since they have made a personal preference to instead look after their child/ren. 'Health problems' was the second-most common reason for respondents' unemployment status, with 16.8% unable to work due to issues with their health. The remainder of respondents were unemployed because they 'cannot find a job' (6.7%), are 'taking care of an elderly person' (5.3%), 'have a disability' (4.9%) or have 'kid/s with health problems' (4.1%).

Smaller proportions of respondents were unemployed because of issues with transportation (4.1%), 1.2% due to being pregnant at the time of the study, 1.1% were currently studying, whilst a small number stated that they 'do not want to work' (1.1%), that working is 'not worth it due to social benefits' (0.5%) or that they are unable to find work due to their police conduct (0.3%). Importantly, more than half (58.5%) of respondents said that they would be willing to work if they were given help with the above-mentioned reasons.

2.1.5 Applicants' Children

Just under a third of the respondents (31.3%) did not have any dependent children living with them. Amongst those applicants who had dependent children living with them, the average number of children was 1.3 children. The residential districts of 'Northern Harbour' and 'Southern Harbour' had the greatest percentages of respondents with dependent children (72.6% and 71% respectively).

2.1.6 Applicants' Income

For those respondents who were in full-time employment, the average income was €872 per month, whereas those employed on a part-time basis were earning an average of €438 per month.

2.1.7 Needs of Applicants

2.1.7.1 Housing Needs

Respondents expressed a desire for various needs which were either directly or indirectly related to their housing situation. Needs directly related to housing revealed that participants desired housing that is "affordable, autonomous and independent, family friendly housing, guaranteed and/or inheritable housing" (p. 12). Desired changes to social policy and legislation included the ability to access social benefits, conjugal law needs, as well as needs related to employment, family, health, rent reform, salaries, and transitional policy. Further qualitative analysis also revealed that a subsection of the respondents who had a need for residential independence from relatives or other persons, did not simultaneously express a need for family-friendly or guaranteed/inheritable housing. On the other hand, an overlap was found between respondents expressing a need for affordable housing as well as family-friendly housing.

2.1.7.2 Social Welfare Needs

In addition to housing needs, the study also revealed that social housing applicants have an array of social welfare needs which interact with their experience of applying for social housing.

The social welfare needs of respondents were classified as falling under three possible sub-categories: Employment, family, and health. A lack of wellbeing was found to intersect with employment needs and access to other benefits, as in the



case of respondents who perceived reduced-hours working arrangements as posing a threat to their employment. Specifically, social housing applicants experienced a lack of wellbeing due to factors such as high private rents, health issues, and unfair employment conditions. Applicants' wellbeing was also negatively impacted due to health issues of their family members, including close relatives' drug addictions, which further exacerbate their life circumstances.

Furthermore, applicants for social housing explained the measures they require in order to facilitate their leap towards becoming affordable housing applicants. These measures revolved around addressing "applicants' caregiving commitments, employment, salary and mobility limitations" (p. 50).

2.1.7.3 Older Applicants' Needs

The data presented by Marmarà and Brown (2021) also shed light on the needs of social housing applicants over the age of 60 years. Respondents falling within this age group were asked to indicate what kind of assistance they required in order to live comfortably in their home. The majority of responses related to physical aspects of their accommodation (e.g., the need for a smaller home or general maintenance), as well as financial aspects (e.g., rent subsidy or housing benefit). However, a portion of respondents indicated the need for more socially-oriented assistance: 11.1% expressed a desire for community housing, whilst 7.2% desired the assistance of a social worker. These results provide an indication that older social housing applicants have a need for support with regard to social needs, in order to strengthen their sense of belonging in the community.

2.2 SOCIAL HOUSING APPLICANTS - CLUSTERS ACCORDING TO PROFILING EXERCISE

The findings presented by Marmarà and Brown present the possibility of identifying particular 'clusters' of the various profiles of social housing applicants. These clusters may be grouped according to:

- Gender
- District of Residence
- Age Group
- Marital Status
- Employment Status
- Barriers to Employment / Career Progression
- Dependent Children / Caring Responsibilities
- Income Level

These clusters may be utilised as a guide in determining the most suitable Packages to be included in each applicant's support package, providing a flexible yet individualised approach.

3. Background Research

Individuals who occupy social accommodation and are of working age often experience a disadvantage in terms of their successful employment, when compared to their peers who do not require social accommodation. Research has demonstrated that such disadvantages are essentially due to two factors - personal attributes and factors on the one hand, and contextual or structural factors on the other. These factors, while separate and distinct, are often intertwined and reinforce one another (Gibb et al., 2020).

Personal factors which have been commonly found among social accommodation occupants, and which may account for lower rates of labour market participation, include having “long-term illness or disability, dependent children (including single parents), and lower level qualifications” (Judge, 2019, as cited in Gibb et al., 2020, p. 16). Contextual or structural factors which partly explain the need for social accommodation include certain geographical areas where the labour market is weaker, as well as the disadvantages associated with social accommodation residents who possess fewer digital skills and have weaker support networks.

Research conducted by Wilson et al. (2015) looked into the important elements which help in supporting social housing tenants who are not in work, whilst being of working age and forming part of a disadvantaged group. Their conclusions state that:

“Research points to the critical importance of personalised, intensive, face to face support. Typically, this includes support to: Prepare for work – building confidence and motivation, setting goals, referral to specialist support, preparing for interviews and applications; Look for work – assessing skills and capabilities, understanding where and how to look, support to then find jobs, overcoming setbacks/ maintaining confidence; Get into work – through engaging employers and then brokering between them and candidates, supporting with application processes; and Stay in work – particularly through the first few days and weeks.” (p. 35)

Wilson et al. (2015) further explain how they identified specific interventions for supporting social housing tenants, all of which generate a positive cost-to-benefit ratio. These interventions help individuals to improve their current employment situation, improve their employability prospects and also reduce any economic disadvantages which exist for those who are most marginalised. These interventions include:

“skills academies i.e. workforce training and work experience; jobs-plus i.e. intensive saturation approaches to support people into work; intensive support to help people prepare for and find work; intermediate labour market work with e.g. temporary jobs to act as a stepping stone into more long-term employment; and, targeted financial incentives in the form of return to work bonuses.” (Wilson et al., 2015, as cited in Gibbs et al., 2020, p. 28).

In addition to practical support, such as help with finding a job or identifying suitable training opportunities, data analysed by the Report on Housing and Social Mobility also revealed the importance of offering emotional support and assistance with any mental health issues. For instance, emotional support may be particularly relevant for social housing applicants who lack the necessary elements of aspiration for the future, or self-confidence in their abilities. These findings further underscore the need for providing tailored support which places importance on understanding the unique situation of each individual, in order to develop a realistic and appropriate plan for supporting them.

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Another study looked into the profiles of social housing tenants, whilst identifying the features which are linked to their lower rates of earnings and employment (Tunstall & Pleace, 2018). These features were broadly categorised into: Education and skills; Digital skills; Mental and physical health; Aspirations, and; Other personal factors.

Education and skills reflect the evidence that many social housing tenants lack educational qualifications and are thus in a weaker position within the labour market. This has been referred to as the largest barrier to employment, particularly regarding basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, basic qualifications, or both. Digital skills and the lack thereof are another barrier to employment, since such skills are necessary to apply for, or to perform, a number of jobs. Mental and physical health refers to the employment limitations posed by poor physical or mental health, including the presence of a disability, especially given the long-term nature of health conditions. Aspirations highlights the personality and motivational aspects which are also important parts of employability. Finally, other personal factors refer to issues of “class, social housing stigma, adverse consequences of addiction, domestic abuse, family breakdown and adverse childhood experiences, among others” (Gibb et al., 2020, p. 20).

As well as the above, individual-level, factors, a number of barriers for social housing tenants were identified at the structural or contextual level. Some of these barriers are specific to the context of the United Kingdom, however, a few are also relevant to the Maltese context. These factors include: Transport; Childcare; Ethnic Minority, and; Benefits, employment terms and work disincentives

Transport is the most frequently-mentioned barrier to employment, with unaffordable or inaccessible transport limiting the employment options of social housing tenants. The cost and availability of childcare was considered to be just as important as transport and is also interlinked due to the increased cost and time required to travel in order to drop off or pick up children in addition to commuting to and from work. Ethnic Minority refers to the additional disadvantages faced by social housing tenants who are minorities who experience biases when attempting to find employment or progress in their work. Benefits, employment terms and work disincentives refers to the instability which occurs due to the relationship between social benefits and insecure work conditions, particularly for those with fewer skills, of an older age, and in poor health, who are more likely to be in work that is insecure, low-paid, or part-time.

The above-mentioned barriers provide further support for the needs of social housing applicants as identified by Marmarà and Brown (2021), whilst also making reference to additional personal- and contextual-level factors which need to be considered in supporting applicants and recipients of social accommodation.

Another relevant social housing policy to the current study is Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW, a 10-year plan devised by the New South Wales Government in Australia in 2016. The plan, which “aims to transform the social housing system and break the cycle of disadvantage” (NSW Government, 2016, p. 3), is underpinned by three strategic priorities: the provision of more social housing; the creation of more support, opportunities and incentives for persons to exit or avoid social housing, and; fostering a better social housing experience. In order to support social housing clients, the policy identified various programs to facilitate clients’ work and educational goals.



For governments to succeed in supporting persons in need of social housing, this has required an approach which is personalised and tailored to the individual's needs. This shift towards a more personalised approach has occurred across various countries, due to the realisation that individuals have increasingly complex support needs, as well as due to the rapid and significant societal and economic changes seen over recent decades. Such individualised approaches have also been successful in areas other than housing, such as mental health provision, among others.

An example of such an approach may be found in the form of Individualised Client Support Packages (ICSPs), which are utilised to support Australian residents with mental health needs. The packages can be designed for an individual or a group, depending on the client's preference and support needs. Through collaboration with their ICSP provider, individuals are given the opportunity to develop a 'recovery plan', which may include the following aspects: mental health self-care and self-management; daily living skills; physical health; housing and living arrangements; social relationships; family and carer relationships; social connections; education, vocational training and employment; parenting and carer/family support needs, and; needs of vulnerable children.

Another similar example emanating from Canada refers to Individual Support Planning (ISP) (Alberta Government, 2018). The policy is rooted in a vision to support individuals so that "that they have the resources and skills to optimize their quality of life, that they are protected and safe in their homes and communities, and that they are enabled and empowered to be successful." (p. 3). Although ISPs are primarily designed for persons with disabilities, the guiding principles are also applicable to persons in need of social housing. The ISPs are flexible whilst taking into consideration the strengths and needs of individuals, by creating support objectives to facilitate the individual's achievement of their identified needs. Notwithstanding the flexible nature of ISPs, these Plans are required to include the following aspects:

- Individual's desired vision and outcomes
- Individual's and program's outcomes and goals
- Important or relevant support needs
- Specific support strategies
- Measurable support objectives
- A responsible person/entity to implement the support strategies
- Timelines for review

3.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Across various countries, policies have been adopted with the aim of providing care and support to vulnerable populations. Such policies typically consist of an approach which includes a set of assessment criteria, designed to enable relevant professionals to assist their clients with meeting their needs. For example, according to section 9 of the Care Act 2014 in the United Kingdom, a number of outcomes are detailed, which determine whether an individual is eligible for housing or other necessary support services. These outcomes are:

- (a) managing and maintaining nutrition;
- (b) maintaining personal hygiene;
- (c) managing toilet needs;
- (d) being appropriately clothed;
- (e) being able to make use of the adult's home safely;
- (f) maintaining a habitable home environment;
- (g) developing and maintaining family or other personal relationships;
- (h) accessing and engaging in work, training, education or volunteering;
- (i) making use of necessary facilities or services in the local community including public transport, and recreational facilities or services; and
- (j) carrying out any caring responsibilities the adult has for a child."

(The Care and Support (Eligibility Criteria) Regulations 2015, no. 313, Regulation 2)

3.2 NEEDS CATEGORIES

The following broad categories of needs of social housing applicants were identified through careful analysis of the report authored by Marmarà and Brown, related to the following areas:

- Opportunity & Training
- Caregiving
- Health
- Life Skills
- Social Participation
- Retirement Literacy & Capability

The above needs categories emerged as being the main overarching areas which applicants for social housing require assistance with, in order to progress towards greater independence and a better quality of life. The main packages being proposed to address these categories of needs will be described in detail in the following section of this report, along with a description of the various elective packages which may be used in conjunction with the main packages.

3.2.1 Opportunity & Training Needs

This category refers to the needs of individuals who are either unemployed or currently in employment but require assistance in order to improve their career prospects or progress in their existing career. Such assistance may take the form of providing opportunities for work exposure, recommending relevant training courses, or both, depending on the individual's particular circumstances.

3.2.2 Caregiving Needs

This category emerged from the data presented from the Social Profiling exercise that revealed how a significant proportion of social accommodation applicants were unable to improve their career situation due to having caregiving responsibilities (e.g. single parents



or those who are caring for relatives who are elderly or suffering from a health condition). The barriers posed by a lack of support with such caregiving responsibilities need to be addressed, in order to help such individuals towards improving their situation.

3.2.3 Health Needs

Some participants from the Social Profiling study reported that they were unable to work due to the presence of an existing health condition. Such needs require careful consideration in order to support the individual to attain an improved sense of physical, mental, and emotional, wellbeing, whilst also investing in sustainable growth and development, to the best of their ability or situation.

3.2.4 Life Skills Needs

This category refers to the basic skills required for a variety of life aspects, such as skills relating to literacy, numeracy, media and ICT usage, interpersonal skills, etc. Such skills, whilst being related to Opportunity & Training Needs, are distinct given their relevance to areas of one's life which extend beyond employment potential.

3.2.5 Social Participation Needs

This category represents the areas related to social wellbeing and participation in one's community or society at large. Packages relating to these needs will seek to guide social accommodation applicants towards socially-oriented activities, which are likely to have indirect benefits towards other areas, such as improved social skills, gaining of transferable skills for employment, and overall improved health and wellbeing.

3.2.6 Retirement Literacy & Capability Needs

These needs refer to those social accommodation applicants who require support in order to navigate the life stage of retirement and old age. Relevant elective packages may consist of training in literacy, numeracy, and ICT, as well as social participation through volunteering programmes.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were held with a purposive sample of participants, with experience from a variety of backgrounds relevant to the present study. The participants' backgrounds included the areas of social work, education, as well as youth and community studies. This section will provide a summary of the salient findings from these interviews.

4.1 TRANSITIONAL ACCOMMODATION NEEDS

The particular needs of individuals who find themselves at a transitional stage of their lives was highlighted as being a particularly important consideration in supporting social accommodation applicants. Such transitions may relate to young people who are moving out of care, as well as survivors of domestic violence who are beginning their independent lives. These transitions could also refer to persons who are attempting to reintegrate back into society after serving time in prison or other institutional settings such as homeless shelters.

One participant, with extensive experience in the social work field, stressed the crucial role of providing specialised support for persons in such transitional situations, remarking that a lack of adequate support can often result in their situation deteriorating to a significant extent.

4.2 NEED FOR RESOURCES

Participants emphasised that sufficient consideration is made with regard to the existing resources of available relevant support professionals, such as social workers or youth and community workers. Adequate resources must be available to successfully implement the proposed packages and support system. Moreover, it is necessary to ensure that those professionals, who will be responsible for overseeing and managing the proposed system, possess the necessary training and experience, as evidenced by one participant who lamented that particular initiatives to support transitional accommodation were not as successful as envisaged due to the responsible persons not having sufficient professional training required to successfully execute the role.

Another participant expressed that, according to their personal experience, the existing cohort of social workers were often over-burdened with their caseload and thus did not have the necessary time to adequately support clients in need of specialised support. The participant therefore maintained that youth and community workers may be particularly useful, since they could reduce the caseload of social workers, whilst providing specialised and thorough support to social accommodation applicants and tenants.

4.3 NEED FOR HOME SKILLS

One example of the specialised support which may be required by some individuals in need of social accommodation was in the area of home skills. It was pointed out that persons may not previously have resided in home environments where they could indirectly learn skills related to taking care of the home, as well as personal hygiene and maintenance skills. The participant referred to how “there are certain things we learn from living in a family environment” and provided examples of their experience as a social worker supporting young people who were in the process of transitioning out of a care home into independent living situations. Such individuals may not have learnt essential skills for taking care of their home, such as the regular cleaning of bedding or appropriate attire for particular situations. However, this would only become apparent through personal visits to the individual's home, by a trusted social

care professional who can respectfully inquire about how the individual is coping with certain aspects related to personal hygiene, maintenance, and home skills.

4.4 NEED FOR COLLABORATION

Participants also cautioned against unnecessary duplication of existing support services or initiatives, stating that “many applicants for social housing already have social workers, so we shouldn’t duplicate”. The need for collaboration also exists with regard to external organisations (e.g. YMCA, Dar Merhba Bik) by allocating resources so that they can continue to provide the support which they are already equipped to provide, rather than creating support packages independently.

4.5 SETTING REALISTIC GOALS

A participant also pointed out that any goals which are agreed upon with the social accommodation applicant/tenant should be financially realistic and attainable, as opposed to adhering to the notion that all individuals would eventually become homeowners; Setting a goal of moving into a privately rented accommodation may be more realistic considering the circumstances of some individuals.

4.6 MONITORING AND REVISING SUPPORT NEEDS

It was noted that it is important to avoid ‘labelling’ persons who need social accommodation as needing this for the rest of their lives. The participant who mentioned this gave an example of a domestic violence survivor who achieves a sufficient level of functioning such that they no longer require specialised support. Any professional working with social accommodation clients should be mindful of such progress being achieved, in order to recognise when an individual no longer stands to benefit from further support, beyond the type of support that one would seek in the same way as others would, such as from friends and family.

4.7 CONTINUITY OF CARE

Individuals who have been followed by a social care professional at some stage in their life, such as being followed at school, or in a shelter accommodation (e.g. homeless shelter, domestic violence shelter) would greatly benefit from having continuity of care. This would allow for any existing support to be built on, in particular to avoid a sense of helplessness from the individual due to their care being abruptly stopped. Support initiatives should therefore aim to empower such individuals in their life transition, to help them with basic tasks (e.g. accompanying them to purchase furniture for their new accommodation). This is important because some individuals who are recovering from difficult living situations may have the skills to accomplish such tasks, but they may have lost confidence in their own opinions and preferences due to the abusive environments or partners in their past.

4.8 PREVENTING CLUSTERS

Another topic which came up during interviews was the issue of areas containing “clusters of social housing, which then bring about ghettos”. This was described as a problem which mainly occurred in the past, with housing estates being predominantly occupied by a large number of people who had significant social difficulties, resulting in the area becoming a type of ‘slum’.



This issue has also been mentioned in the literature from international contexts, which describes how important the socio-economic make-up of a neighbourhood is for social housing tenants' wellbeing and career opportunities (i.e. through facilitating informal networks for informal recruitment opportunities (Gibb et al., 2020)). It is therefore advisable that such clustering of social housing should be avoided, if at all possible, whilst noting that the system of allocating housing on a priority basis renders this a difficult task.

4.9 COMPASSIONATE APPROACH

With regard to the evaluation of an individual's needs, as well as implementing the proposed system in general, one participant stressed the importance of adopting an approach which is open and collaborative, as expressed in the following quote:

"The individual plan has to be done delicately and sensitively, and with respect - for example, a social worker would need to determine any issues with a person's progress by asking [themselves], "is this complacency, or an inability to move forward?" and figuring out what can be provided in a way that is respectful to the person's reality."

The same participant elaborated to warn against adopting a system similar to that in the United Kingdom, which is unnecessarily bureaucratic and impersonal, in their opinion. Therefore, whilst there is a need to adopt a system which allows for evaluation of needs and monitoring of progress, it is important to maintain a compassionate approach which is person-centred whilst also practical and applicable.

An example of this may be found in the method of assessing a social accommodation applicant's needs: Whilst it may be more efficient and practical to develop a self-administered form, this approach would risk missing out on the identification of important information from the individual. This is because a one-to-one approach, where the applicant has a discussion with a trained professional, would be more appropriate and more likely to elicit accurate information about the skills gaps or support needs of the applicant. In this way, the professionals can act as 'sounding boards' to facilitate the process of identifying which needs are lacking, etc.

This section will outline the proposals for various packages which may be offered to social housing applicants/residents in order to support them in improving their life circumstances. Apart from the main packages (e.g. Social Participation Package, Opportunity and Training Package, Transitional Support Package etc), a number of 'elective packages' have also been proposed, which are intended to be incorporated in conjunction with the main packages, depending on each individual's particular needs. It should be noted that some of the identified packages are not currently in existence at the local level and it is therefore being proposed that the relevant authorities should create such packages - these packages are marked with an asterisk (*). Other packages or add-on packages are already available from various entities and should therefore be offered through a collaboration between the Ministry for Social Accommodation and such organisations.

5.1 NEEDS CATEGORIES

Each package has been designed to address one or more 'Needs Categories', referring to the main types of needs of social accommodation applicants, as identified through analysis of the profiling exercise carried out by Marmarà and Brown (2021) as well as data from interviews and empirical literature. These needs consist of the following categories: Education & Training; Caregiving; Health; Life Skills; Financial; Retirement Literacy & Capability, and; Social Participation. A description of each category is provided below. Furthermore, a table containing a matrix of the various categories, along with the relevant packages, may be found in the Appendix.

5.1.1 Education & Training Needs

This category refers to individuals' needs regarding the provision of both formal and informal educational services, which would improve their opportunities for employment. For example, unemployed individuals may benefit from training in order to find suitable employment. Individuals who are currently in employment may benefit from acquiring further skills or certifications in order to improve their current work performance, or to enable them to qualify for promotions or improved employment opportunities.

5.1.2 Caregiving Needs

This category is based upon the needs of those individuals applying for social accommodation who have dependent children. These individuals may require additional specialised assistance in order to manage their caregiving responsibilities whilst succeeding in employment. Additionally, some individuals may benefit from assistance that is directly related to improving their caregiving skills.

5.1.3 Health Needs

Physical, as well as psychological and emotional health, is considered by this category. The findings from Marmarà and Brown evidence the prevalence of health issues amongst applicants for social accommodation, such as chronic health conditions and mental illness. Therefore, individuals' quality of life could be improved through the provision of targeted support in relation to their psychological and/or physical health. Such improvements could potentially help in overcoming certain barriers with regard to areas such as employment, community engagement, and social relationships, among others.

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5.1.4 Life Skills Needs

This category refers to various skills which may be helpful for an individual to acquire, in order to improve their quality of life. For example, as one interview participant noted, some people who are transitioning out of an institution or care facility, may not have had the opportunity to learn certain skills such as those related to housekeeping or personal hygiene. The category also refers to certain packages which may have the primary aim of facilitating another need, (e.g. Education & Training Needs), whilst having the added benefit of improving an individual's skills in other areas.

5.1.5 Financial/Economic Needs

Financial needs refer to any needs which an individual may have, which are related to financial aspects. This could include training with regard to managing one's finances, improving one's employment situation, or receiving monetary support in order to achieve particular goals related to employment or accommodation.

5.1.6 Retirement Literacy & Capability Needs

This category relates specifically to older applicants for social accommodation, whose needs may be qualitatively different from those of applicants at other life stages. As noted in the profiling exercise by Marmarà and Brown (2021), social accommodation applicants who are of retirement age expressed distinct needs related to their life stage. Such needs may include skills training in digital literacy, assistance from a community worker, or emotional support groups, among others.

5.1.7 Social Participation Needs

The final category refers specifically to packages designed to enhance an individual's sense of connectedness to their community, through opportunities for social interaction and participation. Although this category may be applicable for any individual, it may be particularly relevant for those who find themselves at a transitional stage of their lives. Such individuals may benefit greatly from assistance in navigating social participation, in order to build and/or strengthen their sense of belonging and, therefore, their overall wellbeing and motivation.

5.2 MAIN PACKAGES

Each of the main packages is described below, including the relevant needs categories to which they are applicable.

A. Social Participation Package

Life Skills / Retirement Literacy & Capability / Social Participation

The primary aim of this package is to increase social wellbeing by guiding applicants toward socially-oriented activities. Moreover, indirect benefits can also result due to improved social skills, which would improve applicants' ability to progress in their career and social relations.

B. Opportunity & Training Package

Education & Training / Life Skills / Financial

Through partnerships between the Housing Authority and suitable NGOs or other



Government Entities, this package will offer tailored, flexible support to social housing applicants/recipients so that they can progress towards their employment goals. These packages would target social housing applicants or residents who are looking for a job, wish to increase the number of working hours, or seeking an improvement to their current employment situation.

C. Physical & Emotional Wellbeing Package

Health / Life Skills / Social Participation

This package will consist of tailored advice and plans which aim to improve or manage any issues relating to physical or emotional health.

D. Numeracy & Literacy Skills Package

Education & Training / Life Skills / Financial v Retirement Literacy & Capability / Social Participation

This package will consist of training courses related to basic numeracy and literacy skills, including financial literacy, basic media literacy, basic citizenship education & political literacy, and multicultural relations skills. A number of relevant courses may be identified from the Lifelong Learning Centres, which range from short courses (maximum 14 weeks) or longer courses (approx. 32 weeks). The individual's level of literacy and needs would be assessed in order to gauge the best training skills required.

E. Transitional Support Package

Education & Training / Health v Life Skills / Financial / Retirement Literacy & Capability
Social Participation

Individuals who are going through a life transition would be the main candidates for this package, including (but not limited to) young people leaving care facilities, survivors of domestic violence moving towards independent living, persons moving on from prison or other institutions, including drug rehabilitation treatment.

5.3 ELECTIVE PACKAGES

The Elective Packages, which will be used to make up the Main Packages, are each described below. An asterisk next to some packages denotes that these packages are not currently available, with further details regarding these proposed packages provided in the Conclusions & Recommendations section of this report. For further details regarding the associated Needs Categories for each package, please refer to the Table located in the Appendix.

1. Extended Childcare Services

The Government-run free childcare service has recently announced that the opening hours of such services will be extended, with an earlier start time (from 7:30am to 6am) and closing time (from 4:30pm to 6pm). A selection of childcare centres will also be opening on Saturdays. It is being proposed (whilst understanding that similar plans may already be in development at present) that these childcare services, or similar add-on services, are further extended with a view to providing childcare for social housing applicants and

residents. These extended services would consist of: Evening opening hours for parents working outside of normal business hours; Discounted rates for childcare services catering for children aged 3-16.

2. Youth Voluntary Work Scheme

This package, which has just recently been announced, can be offered to applicants between the ages of 16 to 30 years. The scheme would allow applicants to register for voluntary work placements with a licensed Voluntary Organisation of their choice. Successful applicants will be given financial assistance in addition to benefiting from improved skills and employment prospects, as well as fostering a sense of community and active citizenship.

3. Digital Literacy Course - ICT 4 the Elderly

This project aims to facilitate a pathway for the up-skilling individuals between the ages of 55 and 74 years in their above basic digital competencies and to make them aware of some of the many opportunities that the Internet offers.

4. Sharing Lives Service

This is a volunteer service that allows volunteers (aged 16+) to engage in outreach activities by befriending persons with disabilities. Volunteers are provided with necessary training and are also awarded a certificate upon completing 30 hours of service.

5. Volunteering with FSWS

This service is open to anyone and consists of various opportunities for voluntary work within the FSWS.

6. Community Worker Package*

A specific number of regular meetings with a community worker, with the intention of fostering a stronger sense of community belonging for those social housing applicants who are isolated or disconnected from their community.

7. Bridging the Gap Scheme

This JobsPlus Scheme provides a period of work exposure for persons with disabilities or those in disadvantaged situations, in order to demonstrate the skills required for a particular job.

8. Work Exposure Scheme

This JobsPlus Scheme provides individuals with opportunities to obtain first-hand experience in their chosen job, whilst building confidence and facilitating their transition into employment.

9. Work Placement Scheme

A JobsPlus Scheme which provides practical training to trainees who are following a JobsPlus course.

10. Work Programme Initiative

This JobsPlus Scheme is aimed at long-term unemployed persons to assist them with re-entering the labour market. Participants are given training to improve their employability skills, followed by an employment placement.

11. Youth Guarantee Scheme

Aimed at young people (15 - 24 years old), this JobsPlus Scheme involves the participation in initiatives that increase prospects for employment and education.

12. Financial Literacy & Capability Education

Introductory Maths skills courses from Lifelong Learning options may be utilised to develop financial literacy skills.

13. Basic Media Literacy Training

Introductory ICT skills courses from Lifelong Learning options.

14. Citizenship Education & Political Literacy*

A training course should be devised with the aim of improving individual's knowledge of civic and citizenship participation, possibly based on the existing IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS).

15. Multicultural Skills*

Although a number of initiatives have been implemented to promote multicultural integration at the educational level, it is proposed that a similar initiative is set up for persons who are no longer in educational settings, in order to ensure that multiculturalism is tackled at all ages.

16. Numeracy & Literacy Skills Training

Literacy skills courses can be identified from the relevant Lifelong Learning courses, including English or Maltese courses.

17. Healthy Living Courses

A number of courses are available to assist individuals in the skills and knowledge required for aspects such as healthy eating and cooking techniques, health wellbeing and successful ageing, basic home care, child and adolescent development, and personal empowerment.

18. Mental Health Support

A treatment plan drawn up in collaboration with mental health professional to support the individual in managing mental health issues. This could involve a partnership with Richmond Foundation.

19. Physical Health Support*

Improvement or treatment plan drawn up by medical practitioner (possible subsidies for private GP visits to reduce time waiting for public healthcare appointments)

20. Sobriety Assistance

Improvement or treatment plan drawn up by medical practitioner (possible subsidies for private GP visits to reduce time waiting for public healthcare appointments)

21. Societal Reintegration Support

Social care professional, in liaison with RiSe Foundation, to provide specialised support for those social accommodation applicants who experience difficulties reintegrating into society following release from prison.

22. Home Skills Support*

One-to-one sessions with an experienced social worker to understand the skills required for taking care of oneself and the home, e.g. grocery shopping, budgeting, cleaning - followed by practical advice and training on the relevant skills. Note: May be particularly helpful for young people transitioning out of care, as well as others transitioning towards independent living.

23. POW-R Self-empowerment programme

Group therapy sessions for survivors of domestic violence, offered by Victim Support Malta in collaboration with SOAR. This programme is delivered online and aims to enable victim/survivors to: recognise the abuse and its impacts on them and their children; recover from the abuse and support their children to do so; develop resilience by building on the strengths of the victim/survivors and addressing challenges in order to build a better sustainable safe future for themselves and their families.

24. Peer mentoring

This is a service offered by St Jeanne Antide Foundation, SOAR, offering peer mentoring for survivors of domestic violence.

25. RO-SE Support Group

This support group, offered by Caritas Malta, is aimed at widowed and separated individuals who are given a place to discuss coping strategies for dealing with their realities. Sessions are held weekly. Furthermore, the group also organises social, educational, and cultural activities.

26. Young Separated Support Group (YSSG)

This support group, facilitated by Caritas Malta, is aimed at persons who have gone through a process of marital separation, or are going through it. The Group seeks to empower members to face their personal issues and challenges with greater courage and determination, and to enable them to get on with their lives more at peace with themselves. During meetings, members address common matters that influence them as separated people, also covering parenting and family issues, and relationships with in-laws and families-of-origin.

27. Thursday Club (Mental Health Aftercare)

This support group, run by Caritas Malta, aims to help the persons seeking help to reintegrate in society. The meetings are held once a week and activities include the teaching of social skills, and social activities.

28. Emotions Anonymous

This is a weekly support group run by Caritas Malta, which brings together people who are working towards recovery from emotional difficulties. EA members come from many walks of life and are of diverse ages, economic status, social and educational backgrounds. The only requirement for membership is a desire to become well emotionally. There are no fees whatsoever.

29. Social Activity Advice*

Assistance from a social care professional to identify interests or potential new hobbies/activities, specific to the individual, in order to help improve social relationships





The initial step in determining how best to support an applicant for social accommodation is to conduct a thorough evaluation of the individual's situation, as well as understanding their specific needs and existing skills. An assessment form, as suggested in this report, can be used to assist relevant professionals and social housing applicants in identifying the best combination of main and elective packages. This would allow applicants to be provided with a combination of main and elective packages which are designed to provide them with a personalised support plan, geared towards improving their overall quality of life. Such a plan may also be initiated prior to the provision of social housing, where possible, in order to support applicants as early as possible, thereby empowering them to improve their wellbeing and reap the benefits without being required to wait for the allocated housing.

For example, applicants may be provided with specific packages according to their employment status. This would create a filter whereby those who are unemployed are assigned a main package consisting of the Opportunity & Training Package, in addition to elective packages that are based on their stated reasons for unemployment; those who are unemployed due to childcare needs would be given support through elective packages related to childcare services, whereas unemployed applicants without childcare needs would be supported through other elective packages.

The assessment form should be completed by a social worker or similarly qualified professional, in collaboration with the social accommodation applicant. There should be agreement between the two parties vis-a-vis details regarding targets, goals, and evaluation criteria for the plan. Care should also be taken in order to ensure that any goals and timeframes are realistic and achievable.

6.1 HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE SYSTEM

It is being proposed that the Ministry for Social Accommodation works together with trained social workers in order to implement the new system. Such a partnership would also have the added benefit of social housing applicants working with a professional who is familiar with their unique situation, thereby potentially leading to a greater chance for successful outcomes.

Each social housing applicant should be assigned a social care professional with whom they will work to identify the applicant's particular needs, existing skills, and future goals - all of which will form part of that individual's Personalised Support Plan (PSP).

6.2 WHAT IS A PERSONALISED SUPPORT PLAN (PSP)?

The purpose of a Personalised Support Plan is to create a written tool which describes an individual's desired personal goals and outcomes, as well as outlining how such goals will be attained through the provision of appropriate supportive measures. The PSP is formulated with the active involvement of the individual and aims to identify the individual's existing supports and strengths, as well as serving as a source of inspiration and motivation. Through developing the PSP, the social care professional and individual client will seek to identify what is important to the individual, based on the person's stated goals and desires, as well as what is important for the individual, based on the professional's identified recommendations for measures that are likely to improve the individual's quality of life.

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In developing the PSP, the professional will need to consider the following:

- Where possible, planning should include the individual's existing support network (i.e. family, social network, etc) and any existing service providers with whom the individual is already involved (e.g. social worker, youth worker, etc).
- The importance of identifying and agreeing upon priorities together with the individual and any other relevant persons/service providers.
- The identification of goals, and the necessary steps required to achieve such goals, described in a way which is clear, measurable and attainable, whilst supporting the unique needs of the individual.
- The responsibilities and role of each party involved in the PSP (i.e. the social housing applicant, the social work professional, and any other relevant stakeholders).
- Establishment of a clear and realistic time frame for reaching the identified goals, including timely and ongoing reviews of the PSP.
- Description of the indicators and outcomes which will assist in determining when the goals have been achieved.
- Goals should include not only input goals, such as attending a program to learn job skills, but also outcome goals, such as obtaining and keeping a job.

6.3 ASSURING WELL-COORDINATED AND WELL-IMPLEMENTED PERSONALISED SUPPORT PLANS (PSPS)

- The plan will be signed by both the social worker or other professional acting as Support Co-ordinator on the one hand, and the user on the other.
- The general terms of the agreement should be carefully worded to reflect a commitment but not to legally imply unsustainable obligations.
- It will be essentially an inter-agency plan, involving also the providers of packages of care, and possibly other agencies, all working in genuine partnership together and with the user. The plan will be such as to leave room for and be supplemented by the sub-goals and review dates of the package providers, all subsumed under the overall PSP. All will be acknowledging the role of the Support Co-ordinator, who chairs the joint care planning and reviews and has a monitoring role.
- PSPs give prominence not only to the transitions that accompany the start of the use of social housing but also, wherever appropriate and beneficial, the transition to better conditions, such as being able to move from social to 'affordable' housing or other aspects of positive social mobility.
- PSPs should be one of the tools to make sure that the idea of 'moving out of social housing' is undertaken only where it is realistic, and is supported by policies and helps to make this a feasible step, while avoiding the danger of trapping people in impossible expectations or regrettably unrealistic moves.
- Part of the work of the Support Co-ordinator will be to take note of resource gaps. So, for example, if it is found that transport difficulties or the separation of workers' residences from where jobs are found, create obstacles to taking jobs, this is flagged to the authorities for a remedy and prevention to be provided or facilitated.
- Support plan templates, with the help of IT, are to have built-in functions that facilitate evaluation in terms of goals set.



- Some support plans may have a conditionality, such as making specific progress in suitability as condition to leasing an apartment. Plans involving conditionality are to be carefully guided and vetted by an ethical board made up of suitably qualified persons.

6.4 ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION FORM

The following may serve as a template form, to be filled in by a social worker or similarly qualified social care professional together with the person applying for social accommodation.

This form is intended to find out some details about you, in order to understand what your needs are, and how you can be supported to meet those needs. We will fill in the form together. Space is provided for where a longer answer is needed (please refer to the question number). Please feel free to let me know if you have any questions or would like to add anything. The details which we enter in this form will not be set in stone - meaning that any progress or developments will be evaluated on a regular basis which we agree on together.

Name & surname of applicant: _____

Name & surname of social/social care worker: _____

Date: [dd/mm/yyyy] _____

Applicant's details:

1. Contact information:

2. Telephone/mobile number _____

3. Email address _____

4. Current residential address _____

5. Date of birth: [dd/mm/yyyy] _____

6. Gender:

Female

Male

Other

7. Nationality: _____

8. Marital status:

Single

Married

Separated/Divorced

Widowed

Cohabiting

9. Highest level of education applicant has completed:

Primary or lower

Secondary

Post-secondary non-tertiary

Tertiary

10. Occupational status (tick all that apply):

Employed full-time

Employed part-time

Student

Registered unemployed (specify duration: _____)

Inactive

Retired

Other inactive

11. If employed, what is your occupation: _____

11a. Are you receiving any social benefit? If yes, please specify which benefits and for how long:

No

Yes

12. Dependent children: [0 / 1 / 2 / 3 / 4+]

13. Living situation: Are you currently living:

With parent(s)/guardian(s) (including foster parents)

With spouse/partner

With son(s)/daughter(s)

With other family members

With other persons

Alone

Other - please specify _____

Skills & Education

14. Can you provide some more details about your education and training? [E.g. Which O' and A' Levels you obtained, any school subjects you had a passion for, any skills which you obtained from training courses or from other forms of training such as work experience or apprenticeship]

15. Do you have any wishes to continue your education? Y / N

15a. [If yes] Can you provide some more details? What are the barriers preventing you from doing so? _____



6. Are there any skills or qualifications which you would like to learn? Y / N

16a. [If yes] What are these skills or qualifications? What are the barriers preventing you from doing so? _____

17. Can you give me a brief summary of the jobs which you have worked in?

18. Which job(s) did you like the most and why?

19. Which job(s) did you like the least and why?

20. What feedback have you received from employers or managers in the past about your job performance? _____

[For applicants currently in employment]

21. How long have you been working in your current position? _____

22. Do you wish to get promoted to another position, or to find a different job? [If yes, please provide some more information]

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23. Are there any improvements you would like to have regarding your job? (e.g. working more hours, getting further training, etc)

24. What kind of support do you think would help you to improve your employment situation?

[For applicants not currently employed]

25. For how long have you not been in employment? _____

26. What is the reason for not being able to work? _____

27. Do you wish to find employment? Why or why not?

28. Have you been employed in the past? [If yes, can you provide some more information]

[All applicants]

29. Do you enjoy reading and/or writing?

30. How do you feel about meeting new people?

31. Do you feel that it is easy to be self-motivated?



32. Are you happy with how you manage your time?

33. What kinds of hobbies and activities do you enjoy?

34. What do other people say that you are good at, or qualities they like about you?

35. What things do you do to take care of your home, or what things would you do if you were to take care of your own home?

36. What would you consider as areas that you would like to improve in yourself?

37. Are there any other skills or experiences to mention, such as travel experiences, participating in community organisations, etc.?

Physical & Emotional Wellbeing

38. How would you rate your general physical health?

- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Bad
- Very bad

39. Have you been diagnosed with any long-term chronic health conditions? (Including mental health conditions) Y / N

[If yes, can you please provide some more details?]

40. Was there a negative experience in your life that you feel had an impact on your social housing requirement?

Yes

No

40a. If yes, can you please provide some more details?

41. How would you rate your mental health at the present time?

- a. Excellent
- b. Very good
- c. Good
- d. Fair
- e. Poor

42. Can you tell me about any support system that you have? E.g. friends, family, co-workers, etc

43. Have you ever had difficulties with maintaining social relationships? [If yes, provide more details]

44. Do you feel that you have a strong bond with your community? Give examples.

45. Are there any skills you would like to improve? E.g. In the workplace, at home, with your personal appearance?

46. Do you have any issues with alcohol, gambling, or drugs, that you need help with?

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Goals / Outcomes	Needs Category	Support Needs	Support Packages	Indicators	Review Timeline	Status
<i>Describe each specific goal - what does the person wish to work on?</i>	<i>Referring to the Needs Categories of the proposed Packages</i>	<i>What support is required to achieve each goal?</i>	<i>Description of relevant main and elective Packages to help the person achieve the goal.</i>	<i>Tangible indicators of progress in achieving the goal.</i>	<i>Monthly/ Every X months/ etc - including date for next review.</i>	<i>In progress / Achieved / Not achieved / Revised</i>
To gain skills in order to find a better job.	Education & Training	To learn computer skills in order to qualify for jobs.	Opportunity & Training Package (B) + (13) Basic Media Literacy Training course	a) Regular attendance and successful completion of course.	Every 3 months. Next review: [Date]	In progress
Improve housekeeping skills to live independently.	Life Skills	One-to-one visits to identify skills gaps and offer advice.	(22) Home Skills Support	a) Keeping home tidy and clean. b) Obtain and keep a job.	Monthly.	In progress
Making friends and being more social.	Social Participation	Help to develop social skills and connections.	(29) Social Activity Assistance.	a) Attend one social activity per month. (b) Feel more comfortable	Every 3 months.	In progress.



7. Conclusion & Recommendations

This report has made reference to various schemes and initiatives, which may be utilised to construct support packages for social accommodation applicants. In addition, this report has proposed a model of application for the implementation of such support packages, including evaluation and regular assessment of clients' progress towards an improved quality of life.

Whilst the vast majority of such proposed packages refer to existing schemes, some gaps were noted in the currently available service provision. In these cases, packages have been proposed with the view that such services should be created and made available for individuals to use. These proposed packages are described in further detail below.

7.1 PROPOSED SUPPORT PACKAGES

Individuals with caregiving responsibilities would benefit from the provision of Extended Childcare Services. This could consist of childcare service facilities to be available outside of the current opening hours of childcare centres. Alternatively, financial support with payment of such out-of-hours support through private childcare providers could be considered, up to a maximum number of hours per week.

A Community Worker Package is needed, whereby a trained and experienced community worker is assigned to attend regular meetings with the social accommodation applicant for a specified period. Such meetings would have the aim of identifying ways in which the applicant can engage with members of their community, as well as identifying and resolving any issues that may exist in the individual's immediate neighbourhood.

The Physical Health Support package would involve a comprehensive assessment of the individual's health status by a trained medical professional, with the goal of advocating for and supporting the individual to attain an improved quality of life. This would involve referrals to existing health and wellbeing services, therefore, the primary goal of such a package would be to ensure that any available services are being correctly utilised.

A Home Skills Support package is required to ensure that the necessary support is provided to individuals who require personalised assessment and advice in the area of home keeping skills. Whilst this form of support could theoretically be provided by a social worker, it is proposed that additional resources are allocated to the social work profession, to allow for the required time and care is available to undertake such tasks.

The Social Activity Advice package is proposed to offer specialised support services to individuals who would benefit from identifying and engaging in new hobbies or activities but requires additional support to do so. Community workers or youth workers, depending on the individual, may be well placed to provide such services. The setting up of a specific service of this kind would also entail the merging of local knowledge and resources of the various social activities that are available, therefore improving the success of such support overall.

With regard to existing schemes which were proposed as support packages, it is important that these are offered in close collaboration with the relevant entities and organisations which are already providing such services. In addition to collaboration, such entities should be provided with additional funding in order to ensure that they are well-resourced to take on any additional caseloads.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH & POLICY

During consultation with various experts engaged in the present study, a number of recommendations for further research and policy proposals were made.

In addition to the provision of social accommodation, it is also imperative that policy actions are made to address the issue of affordable accommodation. As noted in a previous review of policies regarding housing, “the needs of those who are ineligible for social housing but are unable to obtain a loan that can secure them a property from the market were the least addressed by existing policies and schemes” (National Audit Office, 2020, p. 184). The provision of affordable accommodation would effectively reduce the need for social accommodation amongst existing applicants and tenants, whilst also serving to benefit another significant proportion of society (i.e. the growing number of people who are above the earning threshold for social accommodation but still struggling with housing costs).

Further research and associated policy actions are also needed on the element of a ‘support agreement’ in which social accommodation applicants are entered into. It is proposed that a qualitative study on the support agreement ‘arrangement’ is carried out in order to strengthen this existing arrangement. Specifically, the below quote describes the need for further efforts with regard to this aspect of social accommodation provision:

“The element of... contract - it is already there but needs to be strengthened and made more clear and visible - Today, certain areas of properties pertaining to the Authority (particularly blocks of apartments) are responsible for their common areas. In fact, one of the tenants must be the administrator and the Housing Authority has nothing to do with such common parts. Possibly this form of... contract in terms of rights and obligations is not being made clear to tenants and/or prospective tenants. Thus, my suggestion lies in the need to make information relating to rights and obligations much more clear.”

Furthermore, future efforts should be made to carry out research and improve policy measures aimed at addressing the needs of social accommodation applicants with regard to commuting and the elderly population. Such efforts should seek to conduct a deeper investigation into the transportation requirements of social accommodation applicants, building upon the findings of Marmara and Brown (2021) in order to propose a plan to effectively address such needs through policy measures. In addition, the needs of the elderly population warrant further investigation to understand any changes in existing needs of this population and implement measures accordingly.

Besides, the present report should be used as a source of direction by the persons participating in this program, because it contains many implicit and explicit recommendations as to its rationale and spirit, its activities and policies as well as their organisation and effective safeguarding.

Finally, it is important that a comprehensive strategy is formulated to outline how the Government should address various groups within the social sector. Such a strategy should be based on in-depth empirical research evidence, and should seek to obtain an understanding of relevant factors (e.g. existing resources, the foreign population, criminality rates, etc) with a view to developing a vision and plan to address any needs that exist. It is equally important that the necessary leadership is continuously present and taking necessary actions within the social sector, in order to ensure future success.

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		Needs Category							Packages	Description	Existing Scheme(s)?
Education & Training	Caregiving	Health	Life Skills	Financial	Retirement Literacy & Capability	Social Participation	ID				
			X		X	X	A	Social Participation Package	The primary aim of this package is to increase social wellbeing by guiding applicants toward socially-oriented activities. Moreover, indirect benefits can also result due to improved social skills, which would improve applicants' ability to progress in their career and social relations.		
X			X	X			B	Opportunity & Training Package	Through partnerships between the Housing Authority and suitable NGOs or other Government Entities, this package will offer tailored, flexible support to social housing applicants/recipients so that they can progress towards their employment goals. These packages would target social housing applicants or residents who are looking for a job, wish to increase the number of working hours, or seeking an improvement to their current employment situation.		
		X				X	C	Physical & Emotional Wellbeing Package	This package will consist of tailored advice and plans which aim to improve or manage any issues relating to physical or emotional health.		
X			X	X	X	X	D	Numeracy & Literacy Skills Package	This package will consist of training courses related to basic numeracy and literacy skills, including financial literacy, basic media literacy, basic citizenship education & political literacy, and multicultural relations skills. A number of relevant courses may be identified from the Lifelong Learning Centres, which range from short courses (maximum 14 weeks) or longer courses (approx. 32 weeks). The individual's level of literacy and needs would be assessed in order to gauge the best training skills required.		
X		X	X	X	X	X	E	Transitional Support Package	Individuals who are going through a life transition would be the main candidates for this package, including (but not limited to) young people leaving care facilities, survivors of domestic violence moving towards independent living, persons moving on from prison or other institutions, including drug rehabilitation treatment.		
Education & Training	Caregiving	Health	Life Skills	Financial	Retirement Literacy & Capability	Social Participation		Electives	Description	Existing Scheme(s)?	



Education & Training	Caregiving	Health	Life Skills	Financial	Retirement Literacy & Capability	Social Participation	Electives	Description	Existing Scheme(s)? Y/N
X			X			8	Work Exposure Scheme	This JobsPlus Scheme provides individuals with opportunities to obtain first-hand experience in their chosen job, whilst building confidence and facilitating their transition into employment.	Y
X			X			9	Work Placement Scheme	A JobsPlus Scheme which provides practical training to trainees who are following a JobsPlus course.	Y
X			X			10	Work Programme Initiative	This JobsPlus Scheme is aimed at long-term unemployed persons to assist them with re-entering the labour market. Participants are given training to improve their employability skills, followed by an employment placement.	Y
X			X			11	Youth Guarantee Scheme	Aimed at young people (15 - 24 years old), this JobsPlus Scheme involves the participation in initiatives that increase prospects for employment and education.	Y
X			X	X	X	12	Financial Literacy & Capability Education	Introductory Maths skills courses from Lifelong Learning options may be utilised to develop financial literacy skills.	Y
X			X		X	13	Basic Media Literacy Training	Introductory ICT skills courses from Lifelong Learning options.	Y
X			X		X	14	Citizenship education & Political Literacy	A training course should be devised with the aim of improving individual's knowledge of civic and citizenship participation, possibly based on the existing IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS).	N
X			X		X	15	Multicultural Skills	Although a number of initiatives have been implemented to promote multicultural integration at the educational level, it is proposed that a similar initiative is set up for persons who are no longer in educational settings, in order to ensure that multiculturalism is tackled at all ages.	N
X			X	X	X	16	Numeracy & Literacy Skills Training	Literacy skills courses can be identified from the relevant Lifelong Learning courses, including English or Maltese courses	Y
	X	X	X		X	17	Healthy Living Courses	A number of courses are available to assist individuals in the skills and knowledge required for aspects such as healthy eating and cooking techniques, health wellbeing and successful ageing, basic home care, child and adolescent development, and personal empowerment.	Y
		X	X		X	18	Mental Health Support	A treatment plan drawn up in collaboration with mental health professional to support the individual in managing mental health issues.	Y
Education & Training	Caregiving	Health	Life Skills	Financial	Retirement Literacy & Capability	Social Participation	Electives	Description	Existing Scheme(s)? Y/N

