Dear Ms. Conroy

I have been asked by Mr. Darragh O’Brien T.D., Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage to refer to your correspondence dated 21st October 2021 and the delay in responding is regretted.

As you would be aware the role of the Department in relation to homelessness involves the provision of a national framework of a policy, legislation and funding to underpin the role of local authorities in addressing homelessness at local or regional level. Responsibility for the provision of emergency accommodation and related services for homeless persons rests with the local authorities.

In Dublin, the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, provided by Dublin City Council, is the lead statutory local authority to respond to homelessness in Dublin and adopts a shared service approach across the four Dublin authorities.  A homelessness consultative forum has been established in each region in accordance with the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2009.  In Dublin, this forum comprises representatives of the four Dublin authorities, the HSE, Tusla, the Irish Prison and the Irish Probation Service, the Department of Social Protection, the Department of Justice, the Irish Council for Social Housing, Threshold, and the Dublin Homeless Network.  In consultation with the management group of this joint homeless consultative forum, the DRHE are responsible for the administration and operation of services, including the monitoring of standards in emergency accommodation.

Exchequer funding provided by the Department is governed by a protocol agreement between the Department and the lead authority in each region. This protocol sets out the funding arrangements and structures to ensure adherence with statutory and public financial procedures. The protocol agreement requires that local authorities and their service delivery partners, including voluntary NGOs and private operators, comply with all statutory codes including the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, the Fire Services Acts and the National Vetting Bureau (children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016.

In respect of Garda Vetting, the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016 sets out the legal requirements for Garda vetting and the parameters for same. While many of the NGOs working within the homeless sector have members of staff and volunteers that are vetted under the Act, homeless services are not currently specifically identified in the relevant legislation whereby vetting is mandatory. The Department has actively engaging with the Garda National Vetting Bureau and the Department of Justice in this regard with the objective of ensuring that where it is needed, Garda vetting is made available under the Act. The Department has engaged with the Garda Vetting Review Group which was put in place by the Department of Justice to review provisions under the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons Act) 2012-2016. The work of this Group is ongoing at present.

The Department also hosted a workshop in late 2021 between the Garda National Vetting Bureau and local authorities. The workshop allowed for engagement on the practical operation of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-2016 as it relates to services provided to homeless persons, and in particular the role of local authorities and homeless service providers. Should further events be needed the Department will facilitate this between the Garda National Vetting Bureau and local authorities.

Yours sincerely

**Niamh Redmond**

**Private Secretary**