

BRIEF 15

VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE Focus Ireland

Ireland, nationwide

ID CARD



Ireland

PROJECT TITLE.

Voter Registration Drive

MAIN OBJECTIVE.

An Irish national campaign run by Focus Ireland using recent legislative changes to help people without an address to register to vote. Voter registration drives were held throughout the country to register as many people as possible for elections.

TARGET AUDIENCE.

People without an address who were otherwise eligible to vote.

IN NUMBERS.

16.098 **individuals** relying on state-funded emergency accommodation in Ireland as of July 2025. This figure does not include those in 'own-door' temporary accommodation, domestic violence refuges, asylum seekers, people sleeping rough, and hidden homeless.

32.725 **individuals** seeking international protection accommodated in centres run by the International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) as of May 2025, eligible to vote in local elections.

SUMMARY.

This 10-week nationwide voter registration campaign helped and encouraged people without an address, asylum seekers, and others affected by homelessness to register and to vote. Backed by An Post, the national postal service, and launched with the support of the Electoral Commission, the campaign featured national media coverage, staff training, and partnerships with NGOs. It aimed to empower marginalised communities, influence policy, and make homelessness a key political issue in the run up to the elections.

CONTACT.



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Project description

Opening the Ballot Box to All

In early 2024, a 10-week national campaign was launched by Focus Ireland to help people experiencing homelessness register to vote, using new legislation that allows registration without a fixed address. The campaign targeted over 10,000 homeless individuals, 30,000 asylum seekers, and others affected by housing insecurity. It aimed to empower marginalised communities to engage in the democratic process and push for policy changes to end homelessness.

The initiative involved training frontline staff on the Irish PR-STV voting system and voter registration processes. Staff held registration drives across the country and incorporated voter education into daily service delivery. The campaign launched with support from An Post and The Electoral Commission. The campaign's main investment was staff time, alongside resources provided by An Post to support the launch.

From Barriers to Ballots: A New Pathway

In practical terms, The Electoral Reform Act 2022 enacted the simplification of the voting registration procedure and the introduction of online registration. Previously, the lack of a permanent address was a significant barrier to registration due to requirements to provide proof of address. This was a severe form of disenfranchisement for marginalised people, excluding those most in need of state services from the democratic process.

Since the reform, registration is more accessible, requiring a personal public service number, email address and an Eircode (postal code). For people without a permanent address, they can utilise the free Address Point service offered by An Post. It enables people without a fixed home to receive regular post, access essential services and crucially, provides an Eircode. A person can choose a post office within the area that they spend the most time, they will be assigned an Eircode, and thereafter they can register to vote in that constituency.

TIMELINE

December 2023

Staff training using 'train the trainer' methodology, whereby key staff could translate the learning back to their own teams for implementation.

March 2024

Launch of campaign.

March – May 2024

Campaign ran up to the date of the local elections.

October 2025

The campaign will run again in the lead-up to the Irish Presidential elections.

Inspiration note

Turning Voter Registration into Lasting Change

The Voter Registration campaign by Focus Ireland fostered civic empowerment, improved advocacy leverage, and positioned homelessness as a pressing electoral issue, increasing political accountability. While no formal evaluation has yet been conducted, the long-term goal is to embed voter engagement in services and make political participation a norm. The initiative is now fully sustainable through ongoing work in normal key working sessions with service users and with specific, targeted campaigns when an election is called. Focus Ireland intends to implement the practice again in October 2025 in light of the Irish Presidential elections.

Homelessness as a Political Force

Policymakers need to see people experiencing homelessness as not just rights holders, but as a significant political lobby. As the housing crisis deepens in Ireland, many people are acutely aware that a Notice of Termination can leave them at risk of homelessness. It is not just the 15,000+ people who are currently experiencing homelessness, but the 120,000 other households who are on the social housing list and the 60,000 households in receipt of HAP (Housing Assistance Payment) and are in the private rental sector. Harnessing the full political power of this group will ensure ending homelessness is prioritised. Helping people to register to vote and to engage with democracy is empowering for individuals in this position.

Three Wins for Democracy

There are 3 main benefits from running a campaign such as this. 1. It offers service users an opportunity to feel engaged and involved in positive change. 2. It allows Focus Ireland, as an advocacy organisation, to better engage with politicians when they can say they have a significant cohort of voters supporting their key asks. 3. Politicians will know that votes are available if they make ending homelessness one of their priorities. The original campaign included '4 Asks' for candidates, which accompanied the registration drive, and can be read in the [Spring 2024 issue of the FEANTSA Magazine](#).



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A project that demonstrates the importance of providing the right frameworks for people experiencing homelessness, enabling them to participate on an equal footing in democratic processes, while at the same time challenging the assumption that citizens in homelessness are incapable of taking part in ordinary situations such as forming political positions and influencing the political system at both local and national levels.

