



The “Residential Halfway Programme” in Malta

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The “Residential Halfway Programme” is intended to assist persons living in shelters in Malta to be able to return to independent living by offering subsidised accommodation to those of them who have completed a therapeutic programme and who have managed to secure regular employment.

Description

The Residential Halfway Programme (RHP) commenced officially in the beginning months of 2016. It was launched by the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS), which was established on the 24th March 1998 with responsibility in the fields of social services. The aim of RHP is to help individuals and families who are currently living in shelters (which include Domestic Violence victims shelters, Homeless shelters, Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Centres and Youth Institutions, whether they are run by the State or by the Catholic Church) and other NGO institutions (i.e. homes and shelters in the community run by a particular NGO) working with the homeless to move into employment and independent living. RHP will support individuals confronted with psychological, emotional or other social difficulties as well as ex-convicts and ex-drug addict convicts in order to help them reintegrate in society and simultaneously improve the turnover in the number of beds in these institutions.

Rental levels in the private sector are prohibitive for the group addressed by RHP, and those who would try this path soon return to institutionalised care. In the past, these individuals would have been eligible and applied for social housing, hence creating more pressure on the Housing Authority. The Authority, which falls under the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, is now

being relieved of its responsibilities in respect of this group. RHP is offering a number of furnished apartments in various sizes and areas in Malta. Clients who successfully complete a programme in either Aġenzija Appoġġ or Aġenzija Sedqa (two governmental agencies which are part of FSWS) or a recognised NGO with an approved therapeutic programme, are allocated an apartment as his/her first step towards independent living and total re-integration into society. The RHP’s eligibility criteria stipulate that the applicant needs to be in adequate and stable employment (irrespective if on a full or part-time basis).

Apart from allocating and providing a suitable residence, RHP also provides subsidies to the persons using its services to cover the renting costs to facilitate their eventual transition to private renting, as follows: 1st Year 65% of rent, 2nd Year 50% of rent and 3rd Year 25% of rent.

Outlook & Commentary

The RHP represents a very positive development that will provide a shortcut to persons who have taken steps to rehabilitate themselves to be able to start living in the community. So far, the programme has not received any negative criticism from any quarter. Housing in Malta is indeed problematic: social housing provision is limited since the financial situation of current tenants

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is not always reassessed meaning that when their situation improves they may then continue to live in their accommodation, whilst private rental costs are increasing very fast.

Providing subsidised housing is therefore very important to avoid lengthy institutionalisation. But, it needs to be remembered that the persons using the RHP services continue to be at risk and need to be followed up through personal social services in order to ensure that the process of rehabilitation continues.

Further reading

Stqarrija maħruġa mill-ministeru għall-familja u s-solidarjetà soċjali: Imnedija l-Fondazzjoni Dar il-Hena (Statement issued by the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity: Launch of the Foundation 'Dar il-Hena' [Serenity Home])
<https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Press%20Releases/Pages/2015/Dec/11/pr152818.aspx>

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