

## **30% jump in people seeking housing support**

By Dan Collins

THE number of EU citizens in need of social housing has risen 141% and the number of households seeking support has jumped 30%, according to a three-yearly assessment by local authorities.

Foreigners account for nearly 25% of households in need of housing. Single adult households account for 45% of the households in need of housing support in 2008 compared with 43% in 2005. There has been a hike in the numbers of non-Irish people in need of social housing with non-EU numbers rising by 82%.

Figures released yesterday by Housing Minister Michael Finneran show that at the end of March this year more than 56,000 households were in need of social housing support compared with nearly 43,000 in 2005.

Mr Finneran highlighted homeless households (those in assisted accommodation) and special needs households, such as older people and people with a disability.

Results of the 2008 assessment suggest the number of homeless households is decreasing since 2005 and special needs households are showing a substantial increase, said Mr Finneran.

"The increase in the number of older people and people with a disability is partly a result of efforts by my department and the housing authorities to identify households which may have been underrepresented in previous counts. Particular attention was paid to these groups to ensure they were properly captured in the 2008 assessment," he said.

While the number of homeless households has decreased since 2005, "this figure represents the number of homeless households who have applied for and who have been considered eligible for social housing support, and it clearly cannot represent the total number of homeless households in the country as a whole".

Mr Finneran reiterated initiatives including the wider use of long-term leasing arrangements to increase the supply of social housing support and the incremental purchase scheme, which will open up an avenue to home ownership for those on social housing waiting lists.

"Local authorities have, over the past number of years, recorded significant levels of housing output culminating in a record output of over 9,000 units in 2007.

"Indications are that the public housing programme will provide over 9,000 new dwellings again in 2008 through a combination of local authority construction and acquisition programmes, the programmes of voluntary and co-operative housing bodies and by long-term arrangements with private property owners under the rental accommodation scheme," he said.