

HOUSING, PART TWO / THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE PLAN

300,000 HOMES.
WHO WILL BUILD THEM?

Nine painters qualified in 2024. The modelled need is over 1,000 a year.
Ireland’s housing plan needs a workforce to match.

300,000

homes targeted in the Government’s 2025-2030 housing plan [1]

36,284

new homes completed in 2025 across Ireland [2]

+20.4%

increase in completions from 2024 to 2025 [2]

The training gap, trade by trade

Selected construction apprenticeships [3]

Apprenticeship	Qualified in 2024	Annual requirement modelled for 2030*	Times current output (2024)
Painting & decorating	9	1,066	118×
Plastering	11	696	63×
Brick & stone laying	23	651	28×
Stonecutting & stonemasonry	1	28	28×
Carpentry & joinery	326	2,645	8×
Plumbing	483	2,378	5×
Refrigeration & air conditioning	52	253	5×
Electrical	1,692	2,830	1.7×
Total, these eight trades	2,597	10,547	4.1×

*Annual completions in Indecon’s “trend productivity” scenario: output per worker continues improving at its recent trend. This is a modelled domestic training response across construction, including infrastructure and retrofitting. It is not a count of vacancies, a housebuilding-only forecast or an adopted Government apprenticeship target. Baseline: 2024, not 2025. [3]

The workforce question

More completed homes are welcome. But a housing plan also needs enough people with the right skills, at the right time.

Training takes years. The useful question is whether recruitment, training places and qualifications are keeping pace with the work planned.

Part one: what rent costs in your county - Issue 3, page 3.

Read the comparison correctly

The table compares annual qualifications with a future annual requirement. It does not suggest that apprentices alone build every home.

Existing tradespeople, other workers and more productive building methods also matter.

CARE WITHIN REACH

122

Forensic examinations recorded in Limerick from 2020 to 26 May 2026.
Still no dedicated Mid-West treatment unit. → **Page 3**

PAGE 2 / A TRAINING PLAN

Five measures that show whether capacity is growing.

PAGE 4 / WOMEN’S SAFETY

Should pepper-spray restrictions be reviewed?

SOURCES & READING

[1] Government: Delivering Homes, Building Communities 2025-2030 · [2] CSO: New Dwelling Completions Q4 2025, 29 January 2026 · [3] Indecon: Construction Workforce Delivery Framework, Tables 3.3 and 5.3 (pp. 31 and 61).

FROM RECRUITMENT TO QUALIFICATION

A HOUSING PLAN NEEDS A TRAINING PLAN.

Counting people who start an apprenticeship is only the beginning. Ireland needs to know how many progress, qualify and stay in the industry.

Starts are not qualifications

SOLAS recorded 9,461 new apprentice registrations in 2025, across 78 programmes. These are starts across the apprenticeship system, not 9,461 newly qualified construction workers. [1]

A credible workforce plan must follow people through training and into skilled employment. A headline registration figure cannot show whether particular trades will have enough qualified people.

The four-year clock

Many established construction apprenticeships, including carpentry and joinery, take a minimum of four years. All required training and assessments must be completed. [2]

Recruiting today helps build future capacity. It does not produce fully qualified tradespeople overnight.

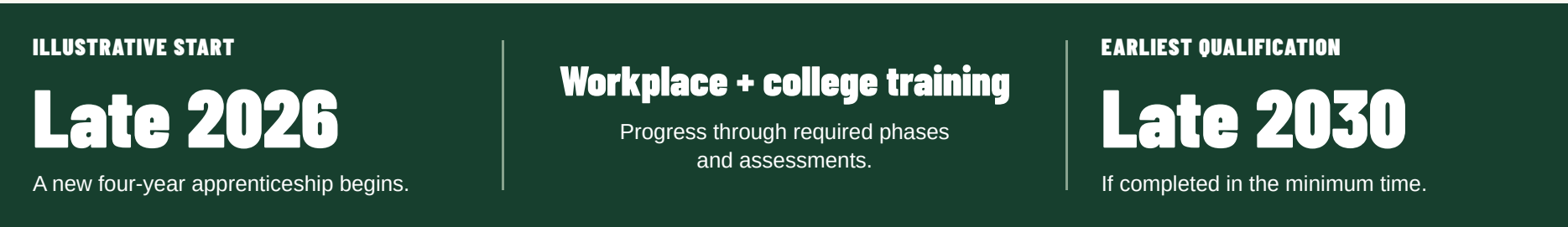


Illustration based on a four-year minimum, not a promised completion date. Training capacity and scheduling can affect when apprentices move between phases. Apprentices also contribute while learning under supervision. [2, 3]

Five measures worth publishing

Measure	The question it should answer	Why it matters
01 / Starts	How many people enter each trade?	Shows whether recruitment matches the skills needed.
02 / Progress	How long does each training phase take?	Identifies delays before they become lost years.
03 / Qualifications	How many finish, by trade and year?	Measures the flow of newly qualified tradespeople.
04 / Retention	How many remain in the industry?	Tests whether training translates into lasting capacity.
05 / Training places	Are employers, instructors and facilities ready?	Checks that places exist to deliver the planned growth.

Government

Publish a yearly plan by trade, linked to housing and infrastructure delivery. Show who is responsible for recruitment, training capacity and progress.

Employers & training bodies

Plan apprentice places, supervision and college capacity together. Make it easier to complete training and remain in skilled work.

Readers & communities

Ask local employers and training providers about opportunities. Encourage trades as a career and ask TDs for qualification figures, not just announcements.

The test is whether the homes promised can be matched by the people trained to build them.

SOURCES & READING

[1] SOLAS: Annual Report and Accounts 2025, pp. 4, 7 and 11 · [2] Generation Apprenticeship: Carpentry and Joinery programme · [3] Generation Apprenticeship: Craft Apprenticeship Training Durations
The five measures above are proposed public accountability measures.

WOMEN'S SAFETY / PROTECTION BEFORE. CARE WHEN NEEDED.

CARE AFTER SEXUAL ASSAULT SHOULD BE WITHIN REACH

A group of concerned women in the Mid-West is calling for a dedicated Sexual Assault Treatment Unit in the region.

6

DEDICATED UNITS

No dedicated Mid-West unit

The HSE lists units in Cork, Dublin, Galway, Letterkenny, Mullingar and Waterford. [1]

A local service does exist

Limerick has a separate out-of-hours service providing forensic examinations. The campaign seeks a full local treatment unit. [1]

Specialist care, closer to home

After a sexual assault, getting specialist care should be straightforward. The campaigners want a local service combining medical treatment, forensic examination and access to continuing support.

What does a treatment unit do?

A Sexual Assault Treatment Unit, usually called a SATU, can treat injuries, provide medicines to prevent pregnancy or infection, collect forensic evidence and arrange further support.

Care is free. A health check does not require a forensic examination. The HSE also provides an option to collect and store evidence while someone considers whether to report the assault to Gardaí. [2]

What the local figures show

An HSE response to Deputy Ryan O'Meara records these forensic medical examinations at University Hospital Limerick. [3]

Year	Examinations
2020	21
2021	13
2022	15
2023	12
2024	27
2025	19
2026, to 26 May	15
Total	122

These are examinations recorded by this service, not all sexual assaults in the Mid-West. They do not include care provided elsewhere. The 2026 figure is partial, as reported on 26 May.

Consultation began. When will a decision follow?

In a response dated **9 June 2026**, the HSE told Deputy Conor Sheehan that consultation had begun on whether a dedicated Mid-West unit was required.

HSE Primary Care, the National Clinical Lead for SATUs and the Rape Crisis Centre are involved. The criteria for local need were still being set, and no completion date could be given. [4]

On 4 August, the Department of Health said **no decision had been made** on a unit for Limerick or the Mid-West. [5]

FOUR QUESTIONS FOR THE HSE & GOVERNMENT

01

When will the assessment be completed and published?

02

Will it count residents who travel elsewhere, as well as those treated locally?

03

How will travel, access difficulties and unmet need be measured?

04

What funding, staffing and opening timetable would a dedicated unit require?

A funded service. A clear timetable.

Those are the campaign's requests. Readers can ask their TDs to seek a published update on the June response, including the assessment criteria and the next decision date.

FINDING CARE NOW

Contact details for the six units are at **hse.ie**: search "SATU". Phone before attending unless Gardaí have arranged your appointment.

The HSE directs people in Limerick to **112 or 999** to access its separate out-of-hours service. [1]

THE CAMPAIGN'S QUESTION

When will the Mid-West have a dedicated treatment unit?

SOURCES & READING

[1] HSE: SATU locations and contact details · [2] HSE: What happens at a SATU · [3] HSE: PQ 30158/26, 26 May 2026 · [4] HSE: PQ 39911/26, 9 June 2026 · [5] Irish Examiner, 4 August 2026: Department of Health response to Deputy Sheehan

Campaign requests: briefing supplied to The Irish Future by local campaigners. *The Irish Future's editor is involved with this campaign.* Figures from the HSE. The August statement is the latest position we could find.

PERSONAL PROTECTION / A CALL FOR AN EVIDENCE-BASED REVIEW

SHOULD THE LAW ON PEPPER SPRAY BE REVIEWED?

Campaigners are calling for a public review of whether tightly regulated pepper spray should be permitted for personal protection.

CSO / SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVEY 2022

52%

of women had experienced sexual violence during their lifetime. This includes childhood or adulthood and contact or non-contact experiences. It is not an annual assault rate. [1]

CSO / CRIME & VICTIMISATION 2019

36%

WOMEN

13%

MEN

felt unsafe walking locally at night. These are historical figures about feelings of safety, not a current measure of crime. [2]

What the campaigners are asking

Alongside their call for a Mid-West treatment unit, the campaigners want women’s concerns about personal safety to receive a practical response. Their proposal is to examine a regulated system with a minimum age, approved products, limits on strength and a short compulsory training course.

What the law says now

Pepper spray remains illegal to possess in Ireland. Do not buy or carry it.

Pepper spray is treated as a prohibited weapon under Irish firearms law. Department of Justice guidance states that importing or possessing it is illegal. Ordinary members of the public cannot lawfully carry it simply because they want it for personal protection. [3]

The campaign’s proposal does not change the law as it stands.

Evidence should guide the answer

The CSO figures establish the importance of women’s safety. They do not, by themselves, establish whether changing pepper-spray laws would reduce violence.

How other countries regulate it

France: Adults may buy and own category-D irritant sprays up to 100 ml; carrying them outside the home requires a legitimate reason, assessed case by case. [6]

Sweden: Pepper spray requires a police permit; permits are very restricted and importing it requires separate permission. [7]

Different national rules do not establish whether civilian access reduces violence.

What a serious review should answer

A review should hear from women, survivor organisations, Gardaí, medical professionals and legal experts.

Effectiveness. Does regulated civilian access help people escape attacks?

Risks. What are the risks of injury, misuse or a spray being used against its owner?

Controls. Which products, age limits, training and sales restrictions would be appropriate?

Accountability. How would lawful use be defined, misuse penalised and results monitored?

The proposal gives Government a specific question to address: could a carefully controlled system improve personal safety, and what does the evidence show?

A note of caution

Gardaí’s published spray policy says force must be a last resort, reasonable and proportionate. It requires training before officers may carry spray. [8]

Policy for Garda operational use, published in 2009; it does not endorse civilian access.

Responsibility remains with the perpetrator

Any debate about personal protection must sit alongside effective policing, prevention, prosecution and accessible care.

TWO REQUESTS. CLEAR ANSWERS NEEDED.

A dedicated treatment unit for the Mid-West.

A review of regulated pepper spray for personal protection.

WOMEN'S SAFETY

Protection before. Care when needed.

SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE

National Rape Crisis Helpline

1800 77 8888

Free, confidential support, 24 hours. For survivors and those supporting them. [4]

Women's Aid

1800 341 900

Free national domestic abuse helpline, available 24 hours a day. [5]

Immediate danger

112 or 999

Call the emergency services.

SOURCES & READING

[1] CSO: Sexual Violence Survey 2022, Main Results · [2] CSO: Crime and Victimisation 2019 · [3] Department of Justice: Firearms - your questions answered · [4] Dublin Rape Crisis Centre: National Helpline · [5] Women's Aid: helpline information · [6] France: Service Public, defence sprays · [7] Swedish Police: pepper spray · [8] Gardaí: spray policy, 2009

Campaign proposal: briefing supplied to The Irish Future by local campaigners. *The Irish Future's editor is involved with this campaign.* Survey years and the scope of each measure are shown above.