

Cold Weather Strategy 2020/21

In the event of cold weather or any emergency event, the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) coordinates the response to homelessness on behalf of the four Dublin Local Authorities. In order to meet a likely increase in demand for homeless services and have the appropriate contingency plans in place for cold weather conditions, we are now activating the Cold Weather Strategy 2020/21 in the Dublin Region. This relates to the period of **November 2020 to the end of March 2021**.

Homelessness is not just a cold weather issue, the comprehensive services operated by the DRHE and its several partner organisations exists throughout the year. Planning for the winter period begins during the summer because, for example, if additional accommodation is required, the process of acquiring properties for such accommodation can take some time to finalise. The complexity and uncertainty around Covid-19 will place a further challenge on homeless services during the winter.

This strategy for the winter months comes at a time when there has been a significant improvement in family homelessness compared to previous years in the Dublin region. The situation in relation to single persons is more complex but over the last few months there has been a sizeable number of emergency accommodation beds empty at the end of each night, which certainly was not the position in previous years. This figure varies from night to night, but such a positive position may not continue throughout the winter period, therefore more emergency beds for single persons will be required including contingency for Covid-19.

We will also have special contingency in place to cater for the possibility of extreme weather events during the winter period.

The Cold Weather Strategy is a dual approach, focusing on expanding current capacity to meet increasing demand for emergency accommodation and providing a targeted response for people who are long-term rough sleeping and those people reluctant to engage with homeless services. This Strategy will run in conjunction with the plans we already have in place as part of our Covid-19 response.

Increase in emergency accommodation for single persons/couples

In partnership with a range of service providers, we will, since August and up to the end of December 2020, have increased the capacity for single persons and couples in the Dublin Region by approximately **300** permanent and **40** temporary beds. These beds will become operational on a phased basis and will be all in place, if necessary, by the end of December.

As these beds become operational, they will be activated, as required, depending on the demand for homeless services on any given night. Equally, they will provide vital capacity if any extreme weather event occurs.

All emergency beds are now on a 24-hour rolling basis with meals being provided. Along with the additional beds that are being put in place for the winter, there were already extra beds brought into the system for Covid-19:

- This additional accommodation ensured that there was and is sufficient capacity to allow for isolation of suspected or confirmed cases of Covid-19;
- In consultation with the HSE, we were able to identify high-risk individuals who were residing in emergency accommodation and move them to separate *Shielding* facilities;
- We converted all one night only accommodation (where clients would have been expected to vacate during the day) to 24 hours, with meals provided on site. This minimised the need for any residents to exit during the day and eliminated the need for them to be outdoors, risking contact with others.

Enhanced services operational during the winter period

While our services operate right throughout the year to support people experiencing homelessness during the winter period services are increased and enhanced to mitigate against the health risks that bad weather poses. Winter weather requires even more assertive engagement with long-term, entrenched rough sleepers and hard-to-reach groups, aimed at placing them in appropriate and long-term accommodation. Enhanced services operating for this winter period will include:

- Increased staffing for the *Dublin Street Outreach service provided by *Dublin Simon* and funded by the DRHE for the winter period, to enable broader engagement with people sleeping rough across the Dublin Region. The team work actively on the street to encourage people to avail of emergency accommodation.
- Increased contingency placements for any family that presents in need of emergency accommodation. These emergency placements are already in place and are managed through the DRHE Family Support Team.
- The Outreach Mobile Health Clinic, operated by *Safetynet Primary Care, delivers weekly services with the DRHE Outreach Teams (Dublin Simon) and the Housing First Intake team (*Peter McVerry Trust*), to support rough sleepers with complex medical needs.
- Improving outcomes for people who may be sleeping rough, arrangements are in place between the DRHE, the Gardaí, Street Outreach, Housing First, the Central Placement Service and the HSE to achieve a co-ordinated approach to individuals experiencing homelessness.
- The DRHE has a range of rapid emergency beds and support measures that can be activated during extreme weather conditions or other serious adverse events. The DRHE Extreme Weather Protocol can be viewed on our website www.homelessdublin.ie

****Dublin Simon Outreach** - This team is very familiar with the locations of people sleeping rough across the Dublin Region and persistently work with individuals to support them into emergency accommodation. This process can take time and multiple contacts, as some people do not want to engage (for whatever reasons), but the teams persevere with every person working to achieve a successful outcome. The service operates **365 days a year, from 7am until 1am**. The Outreach Team also ensure that people sleeping rough are linked with other appropriate health services, such as addiction and mental health services to prevent further rough sleeping. They also have with them sandwiches and snacks along with clean clothes, hand sanitizers, and face masks for anyone still sleeping rough.*

****Safetynet Primary Care** is a registered charity funded by the HSE, it offers a comprehensive primary health care service targeted at people who are experiencing homelessness in Dublin. The programme makes services more accessible by locating medical and social support services in the agencies and services where homeless people can attend for support.*

COVID-19 Response

In partnership with the HSE, Safetynet and the Ana Liffey Drug Project are operating a rapid response system with accommodation providers to test for Covid-19 amongst the homeless population. This includes assessment for Covid-19, transport to and placement in self-isolation beds including

integrated health and accommodation supports for persons tested positive that do not require hospitalisation.

- In addition, the HSE has put plans in place to ensure additional services required by Homeless persons, outside of Covid-19 continue. Safetynet and Ana Liffey Drug Project contact details are on the DRHE website and Twitter accounts.
- As Covid-19 continues through the winter period, the DRHE has also brought a number of extra beds for both singles and families into the system to ensure the continuation of Shielding and Isolation for those affected by Covid-19.

Range of services funded through DRHE

The NGO/Charity Homeless Sector is funded under Section 10 Grant by the Government through the DRHE to provide and manage a large range of homeless facilities and services in the Dublin Region. These key partners operate 114 services across the Dublin Region including several large emergency facilities to the provision of social and care services. We very much appreciate the continuing contribution of these organisations, and as our partners, we look forward to working with them during the upcoming challenging few months with winter and Covid-19.

There are a number of Private Operators also managing some emergency facilities in Dublin and the DRHE is satisfied with the level and quality of service delivered in these facilities. A range of additional support services have been put in place by the DRHE and HSE into these facilities in recent months.

There are also several Voluntary organisations/groups providing a range of services to homeless persons throughout the city and we very much appreciate their worthy and important contribution.

The DRHE wishes to acknowledge the strong support, co-operation and help from the other three Dublin Local Authorities, The Health Services Executive, Tusla, Prison Service, Probation and the Department of Justice and other Statutory Bodies. The DRHE could not do any of this without the necessary funding from the Department Of Housing, Heritage and Local Government and strong ongoing support and help from officials in that Department.

With all of us working together with a shared objective, we can overcome the challenge of the coming winter and Covid-19 for those experiencing Homelessness in the Dublin Region.

APPENDIX:

General Information – Access to Services

If an individual / family is presenting as homeless for the first time in Dublin, their respective Local Authority will carry out a comprehensive assessment.

DRHE/Dublin City Council Central Placement Service for singles and couples;

Tel: 01 - 222 6944 Monday to Friday: 10am to 4pm. Email: homelesscps@dublincity.ie

DRHE/Dublin City Council Central Placement Service for families;

Tel: 01 222 6977 Monday to Friday: 10am to 4pm Email: family.support@dublincity.ie

DRHE/Homeless FREEPHONE 1800 707 707; for access to emergency accommodation out of hours for the Dublin Region - 10am to 10pm 7 days a week;

DRHE/Housing Support Officers providing housing advice and move on options to families in emergency accommodation.

Tel: 01 222 7414 Monday to Friday: 10am to 4pm Email: housingsupport@dublincity.ie

DRHE/Homeless HAP

Tel: 01 222 6955 Monday to Friday: 10am to 4pm Email: homelesshap@dublincity.ie

DRHE/Dublin Simon Outreach* Tel: 01 872 0185 from 7am to 1am, operating 365 days of the year

DRHE/Tenancy Protection Service – 1800 454 454

Safetynet, 01 962 0116. info@primarycaresafetynet.ie

Ana Liffey Drug Project, 01 878 6899, Freephone Help- 1800 786 828 – info@aldp.ie

Fingal County Council Homeless Section

Tel 01 890 5090 Monday to Friday 9am to 4.30pm Email: homeless@fingal.ie

South Dublin County Council Homeless Section

Tel: 01 414 9364 Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm Email: sdchomeless@sdblincoco.ie

Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown County Council Homeless Section

Tel: 01 205 4804 Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm Email: homeless@dlrcoco.ie

We would also continue to ask the public for their assistance during this time to let us know if they come across someone sleeping rough at

<https://www.homelessdublin.ie/homeless/i-am-rough-sleeping/report-rough-sleeper>