

Dear Lord Mayor and City Councillors

Report/Update on COVID-19 and Homelessness.

This is the seventh report/update that we have issued since March on homelessness in the Dublin Region. Since the beginning of this year, national data has been showing a significant and welcome reduction in the number of families residing in emergency accommodation throughout the country. In July, there was a small increase in the overall number of individuals, this was mainly related to single adults and the provision of additional emergency accommodation by the DRHE in the Dublin area.

This report focuses on the situation in the Dublin Region.

The main points to note are:

- At the end of July 2020, there were **862** families in emergency accommodation; this remains the lowest number since April **2016**. It is also a reduction of nine families on the June figure.

Families in emergency accommodation:

January 2020	February	March	April	May	June
1201	1178	1103	974	893	871

- The number of children residing in emergency accommodation at the end of July was **2,017**, this was up slightly on the June figure, but has reduced considerably over the past number of months.

Children in emergency accommodation:

January 2020	February	March	April	May	June
2678	2669	2491	2232	2065	1979

At the end of July, there were **334** families in hotels (down 59 from May and a further 20 from June). This is the lowest number since April 2015. The highest figure was in March 2017 when it reached **871**. In relation to the **334** figure, it can be broken down between contracted Hotels (161) and those sourced through self- accommodation (173).

Families in hotels:

January 2020	February	March	April	May	June
648	623	575	514	413	354

Between March and June of this year, 85 families were moved from hotels into self- contained apartments that were sourced by the DRHE on short-term (12- month) agreements. This type of accommodation, while temporary represents, much more suitable accommodation for the families concerned and is considerably less expensive than the previous hotel facilities.

More of these apartments are currently being sourced and it should be noted that those families, now moved to such apartments, are still included in the emergency accommodation *data*.

- **370** families entered emergency accommodation for the first time between January and July 2020. (It was 676 for the same period in 2018, and 632 in 2019). **56** new families presented and were assessed as Homeless in July 2020 compared to 94 in January, 80 in February, 42 in March, 14 in April, 25 in May, and 59 in June. In July **77 families** were prevented from entering emergency accommodation, mainly through HAP and 70 moved from such accommodation into new tenancies. The table below shows some detail of the **56** new families in July:

Nationality	No. of families	No. of Adults	No. of Children
Ireland	36	49	51
Romania	10	18	26
Other EU	2	2	3
Non EU	8	8	18
Total	56	77	98

6 of these families became Homeless from private rented properties but most became homeless through family breakdown situations and migration.

In July 2020, there was a small increase on the previous month in the overall number of individuals in emergency accommodation, this relates to single persons and the additional emergency accommodation recently sourced.

Housing Assistance Payment Scheme (HAP):

Homeless HAP has continued to operate successfully with our Housing Support Officers and Place-finders assisting households to move out of emergency accommodation.

Place-finders and the Housing Support Officer team have adapted quickly to movement restrictions and have consistently worked with Landlords to source new tenancies. The level of Homeless HAP tenancies being sourced monthly has remained stable throughout the Covid-19 emergency despite revised working arrangements and a total of **260** Homeless HAP tenancies were sourced in July 2020. This the highest monthly number achieved since the scheme was introduced in 2016 (previous high was June 2020 with 217). A figure of 240 will be achieved in August.

Breakdown of family type and previous accommodation of those accessing HHAP in July.

28 Families leaving hotels - Private emergency accommodation.

42 Families leaving Supported emergency accommodation.

77 Families did not use emergency accommodation (Preventions).

23 Singles/ Couples leaving Private emergency accommodation.

39 Singles/ Couples leaving supported emergency accommodation.

51 Singles/Couples did not use emergency accommodation (Preventions).

While the reduction on numbers in emergency accommodation is very welcome, we fully accept that there are still far too many families in emergency accommodation including hotels and we are very conscious of the challenge that still exists on homelessness in the Dublin area.

The improved situation in relation to homeless families is indeed very welcome but as we indicated in our previous report, the data in relation to **single persons** was not as re-assuring and that we needed to source a significant further amount of emergency accommodation to cater for an increasing demand whilst also keeping an eye on the upcoming winter period. In recent weeks, we have sourced further emergency accommodation for single persons in the city centre area and this has resulted in a sizeable number of beds being spare on most nights including during the two more recent bad weather spells.

We very much appreciate the support of Councillors so far on our task in sourcing urgent new emergency accommodation throughout Dublin City and Region and we do realise this support can be difficult in light of the strong opposition that almost inevitably arises from local residents and businesses to the implementation of such facilities. We are asking that Councillors would continue to support our continuing tough task in sourcing and bringing into operation further necessary homeless facilities in the city and region.

Single Homeless Adults:

We will soon be entering the winter period and numbers amongst single adults are likely to increase. This is a trend that we are always aware of, and we prepare for it throughout the year. The DRHE continues to source additional emergency accommodation for singles and will be implementing the Cold Weather Strategy later this year to ensure preparedness for the approaching winter. An increase in the overall supply of social housing is critical to addressing homelessness in the longer-term and is crucial in both preventing people from entering homelessness and exiting emergency accommodation. The delivery of single person social housing over the coming years is essential in terms of addressing the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and for the expansion of the Housing First Programme.

176 single adults became homeless for the first time in July, 51 of these were prevented from entering emergency accommodation with Homeless HAP and 62 single adults exited homelessness to tenancies. The 176 figure compares to 105 in June, 123 in May, 99 in April, 108 in March, 160 in February, and 215 in January.

The DRHE closely and constantly monitors the profile and number of people rough sleeping in Dublin city centre and across the Dublin region. Official Rough Sleeper counts take place twice yearly in both April and November. The number of rough sleepers in the winter of 2019 was 90 (the lowest number recorded since winter 2012). Due to Covid-19, and the need to adhere to public health guidelines, the Spring Rough Sleeper Count did not take place this April. The bi-annual counts provide a useful snapshot of the minimum number of rough sleepers on a given night, but they do not capture data on the movement of homeless individuals in and out of rough sleeping, and between emergency homeless accommodation and rough sleeping.

The Dublin Simon Street Outreach Service provides weekly updates to the DRHE on the numbers and support needs of the people they engage with on the streets. The Street Outreach Service reported to us that **over the week** 17th – 23rd August the team engaged with a total of **110** individuals, of which **87** were registered as homeless.

Of the 87 registered on the Homeless IT System (PASS), a total of 35 (40%) had also used emergency homeless accommodation over the previous calendar month.

The planning of homeless services is based on the DRHE's comprehensive knowledge of trends in rough sleeping. During the recent storms, there were more than sufficient emergency beds for anyone sleeping on the streets who was willing to take up the offer of accommodation. Additional beds sourced in July means that there is currently a sizeable number of beds to spare each night. It should also be noted that all emergency beds in the Dublin Region are now provided on a 24-hour basis and there is no requirement for homeless persons to leave the accommodation during the day.

Street Outreach Services (funded by DRHE):

A very effective Street Outreach Service, operated by Dublin Simon Community on behalf of the DRHE is assertively engaging with people sleeping rough across the Dublin region. This service operates 365 days a year from 7am - 1am Monday to Friday and 9am – 1am Saturday and Sunday. Outreach teams meet with people sleeping rough, including people in tents, to encourage them to accept the available emergency accommodation.

The Outreach Service works closely with the Housing First Programme Team that also operates on the streets in order to support long-term homeless individuals into permanent housing with wraparound supports. They also work with Safetynet who provide on-street health/medical supports to people who are rough sleeping. The Dublin Outreach and Housing First teams have public health-compliant vehicles to safely transport vulnerable individuals to emergency accommodation. Outreach teams engage with people at known rough sleeping locations as well as responding to alerts from members of the public.

Dublin Simon Community commented last week that 71% of all rough sleeping interventions are thanks to alerts from members of the public reporting a rough sleeper online or by telephone.

In advance of the weather warning, both the DRHE and Dublin Simon Community renewed their ongoing appeal to members of the public to report anyone they see sleeping rough so that Outreach teams can link them in with the appropriate accommodation and health services that they require.

A rough sleeper reporting facility is available on the DRHE website.

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

In order to ensure a co-ordinated response to people rough sleeping, the DRHE and Outreach teams work in close collaboration with services responsible for particular locations or amenities, including DCC Parks Service, DCC Waste Management Service, Office of Public Works (OPW), Waterways Ireland (responsible for canals), Irish Rail, and An Garda Síochána. The teams also liaise with private property owners and business owners where there are issues related to people who may be rough sleeping in the vicinity of their property, in order to ensure that an offer of accommodation is made to anyone who is homeless and to give whatever possible supports.

Shower facilities:

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, while day services are unable to operate their full range of services, the Street Outreach Service run by Dublin Simon Community has been offering showering facilities to people who are rough sleeping and not accessing available accommodation.

The Outreach Team brings the person to a showering facility run by Dublin Simon Community and provides them with toiletries, towels and fresh clothing as required. A small number of individuals have availed of these showers since the service commenced. However, the priority remains to support people into emergency accommodation where showers, meals and other supports are available onsite.

Housing First Programme (Funded by DRHE):

The Housing First Programme is delivered on behalf of the DRHE by the Peter McVerry Trust, who support homeless individuals into permanent housing and provides them with wraparound tenancy and health supports in order to sustain their home. A total of 68 homeless individuals have been housed by the Housing First programme from 1 January to 31st July 2020.

The current number of active Housing First tenancies in the Dublin region is 316 and the total number of individuals housed since the commencement of the programme is 418.

Covid-19:

Shielding (previously cocooning) is provided for most at-risk homeless persons and recognises the need to minimise the contact for those over 60 years of age, there are currently **200** homeless individuals residing in shielding facilities. The DRHE, in partnership with the HSE, are currently carrying out an exercise to identify any further individuals that may require shielding to ensure that the more vulnerable are protected. Since the start of the pandemic in excess of 850+ people accessing emergency accommodation or rough sleeping have been tested for Covid-19.

There were **59** confirmed cases across Homeless Services in the Dublin Region up to the end of July and due to the comprehensive Covid-19 response put in place by both the DRHE and the HSE, this figure has remained low.

Sadly there were two deaths (both known to each other) in a Long Term Supported Facility. The most recent confirmed case occurred in the first week of August.

The number of confirmed cases has continued to decrease since the onset of the Pandemic. In the early stages of the crisis, the maximum number of people that required isolation for suspected or positive cases was 120 in a given week, this figure has been steadily decreasing and currently there are 25 people in self-isolation.

The DRHE and the HSE have a robust system in place to deal with all suspected or confirmed cases that occur within homeless services in the Dublin Region, including a dedicated homeless testing service, referral and transportation to isolation facilities where required.

When a suspected case is identified, this system is immediately triggered along with contact tracing and a general audit of any other risks to public health in the facility that need to be managed.

In conclusion, we would like again to acknowledge and thank all our colleagues and partners who together with ourselves strive daily to prevent and alleviate homelessness. Whether out on the streets, in the offices, or working remotely all staff are professional, dedicated and supportive of all clients they meet.

We are all united, in our aim to help those of our fellow citizens who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

We are very grateful for all the support we receive from City Councillors, and as we approach the winter season and the challenge of the continuing Pandemic, we will rely again on your support over the coming months.

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31st August 2020



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Homeless FREEPHONE 1800 707 707; for access to emergency accommodation out of hours for the Dublin Region, extended hours - 10.00am to 2.00am 7 days a week;