

Re: Report/Update on COVID-19 and Homelessness.

Dear Lord Mayor and City Councillors,

The DRHE welcomes the national data released recently that clearly indicates a steady decrease in the homeless numbers this year throughout the country. This report focuses on the situation in the Dublin Region and shows that the measures put in place over the past number of years are beginning to show results.

The main points to note for Dublin are:

- At the end of June 2020 there were 871 families in emergency accommodation, this is the lowest number since April 2016. It is also a reduction of 22 families on the May figure.
- The number of children resident in emergency accommodation at the end of June has reduced by 699 to 1,979 since January 2020. In July 2018 the figure was 2,894 and in January 2020 it was 2,678.
- At the end of June there were 354 families (down 59 from May) residing in Hotel accommodation. This is the lowest number since April 2015. The highest figure was in March 2017 when it was 871. Up to the end of June and since March, 85 families have been moved from hotels into self-contained apartments that were sourced by the DRHE throughout the city 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. It should be noted that those families, now moved to such apartments, are still included in the emergency accommodation data.
- 314 families entered emergency accommodation for the first time between January and June 2020, (It was 554 for the same period in 2018, and 508 in 2019). 59 new families presented and were assessed as Homeless in June 2020 compared to 94 in January, 80 in February, 42 in March, 14 in April and 25 in May.
- In June, 142 families were either prevented from entering emergency accommodation (70) or exited (72) into new tenancies.

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 worked with Landlords to source lettings by:

1. Virtual Viewings
2. Staggered appointments for a smaller number of referrals

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 217 Homeless HAP tenancies were sourced in June 2020, which is the highest monthly number achieved since the scheme was introduced in 2016. This number will be even higher in July.

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

23 Families leaving hotels - Private emergency accommodation.

24 Families leaving Supported emergency accommodation.

88 Families did not use emergency accommodation (Preventions).

13 Singles/ Couples leaving Private emergency accommodation.

32 Singles/ Couples leaving supported emergency accommodation.

37 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 in relation to homelessness in the Dublin area. *We are seeing an increased number of new family presentations in July.*

The improved situation in relation to homeless families is indeed welcome but the current situation in relation to single persons is not so good and we need to source a significant further amount of emergency accommodation to cater for an increasing demand, and with an eye on the upcoming winter period.

The main reason for this is that during the Covid-19 pandemic we had to close a number of existing hostels and significantly reduce the capacity in most other facilities in order to comply with Public Health Guidelines on social distancing from the HSE.

This led to a total capacity reduction of close to 500 beds and while new accommodation was sourced to make up for this reduction, it has not been sufficient to cater for an increased new demand/need.

- 105 single adults became Homeless for the first time in June, 48 were prevented from entering emergency accommodation with Homeless HAP and 87 single adults exited emergency accommodation into tenancies during the same month.

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, that 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 more necessary homeless facilities in the city and region.

#### Deaths in Homeless Services:

In 2018, the Department of Public Health and Primary Care, Institute of Population Health, School of Medicine Trinity College, the University of Dublin published a report titled "*Mortality Amongst the Homeless Population in Dublin*" which provided valuable insights and data to inform policy. The report reviewed the standard mortality ratios for 2011-2015 for both males and females accessing homeless services in the Dublin Region and found the ratios for males were between 3 and almost 10 times higher compared to males in the general population and for homeless females between 6 and 10 times higher than that of females in the general population. The report also found drug and alcohol intoxication was the most common cause of death amongst the homeless population accounting for 33.9% of deaths where cause of death was known.

#### Capturing of Data:

Since 2005 a formal Death Policy notification protocol has been in place in the Dublin region, this was reviewed in 2011. The notification includes a standardised template completed by service providers and submitted to the DRHE. The notification giving the date of death is noted on the Homeless PASS system which facilitates a tracking of the number of deaths and linking of each death to their PASS record. All homeless persons who access emergency accommodation in the Dublin Region or are in contact with the Dublin Simon Outreach rough sleeping outreach/intake team are linked to PASS.

The Death Policy Notification also ensures that a respectful, immediate and appropriate response is available for service users, staff, volunteers and management for the death of a person who was either residing in their service for a long period of time or a person who had been accessing their service for a short period of time. It is important to note that not all such deaths occur in emergency accommodation, and like the general population, homeless people also die in hospital and/or in hospice care etc.

#### Data for 2020:

The number of homeless people that died in 2018, 2019 and to date in 2020 is outlined below:-

Year	Male	Female	Total No
2018	27	8	35
2019	27	7	34
to date in 2020	21	10	31

In 2020, the cause of death for 24 individuals is unknown, 4 deaths were by suicide and 3 were as a result of a known medical condition. It is the Coroner's Court that determines cause of death and often this can take a long period of time to verify.

Month	Male	Female	Total
Jan 2020	3	2	5
Feb 2020	4		4
Mar 2020	2		2
Apr2020	2	1	3
May 2020	2		2
June 2020	2	3	5
July 2020	6	4	10
Total	21	10	31

Intensive liaison between the DRHE, HSE and Tusla has taken place as a result of the unprecedented spike in deaths (7) that occurred in the week commencing 19th July.

We are outlining below some limited (for privacy reasons) information on these seven deaths;

*One of the deaths occurred in a hospice where a female in her fifties was receiving palliative care for cancer. She was previously a long-term resident in a Supported Accommodation Facility for Homeless that is managed by a NGO.*

*A second death was a young woman in her thirties who appears to have tragically taken her own life while residing in a Supported Accommodation Facility that is managed by a NGO.*

*A third was a young woman in her twenties who died in a Supported Accommodation Facility that is managed by a NGO.*

*A fourth was a young woman of 19 who died in an emergency accommodation facility that is managed by a Private Operator on behalf the DRHE.*

*A fifth was a middle-aged man who died in an emergency accommodation facility that is managed by a Private Operator on behalf of the DRHE.*

*A sixth death was of a young man in his twenties found dead while sleeping rough. He had no connection with Dublin and never sought emergency accommodation. He had been released from prison the day before his death.*

*The seventh was a man in his thirties who appears to have tragically taken his own life at the home of a family member. While he was registered with the DRHE as Homeless he had not taken up emergency accommodation and occasionally had slept rough.*

Two of the deaths were in a single Supported Accommodation Facility managed by a NGO and two were in separate Hostels managed by Private Operators, the other three deaths did not occur within Homeless facilities.

While the exact cause of death will ultimately be a matter for an inquest in each case, it does appear at this stage that drugs and alcohol intoxication were a big factor in most of these tragic deaths.

Deaths in such tragic circumstances are devastating for the families involved and we offer our heartfelt condolences to them. Our thoughts are also with the staff in the various facilities who had to deal directly with these tragedies and our own staff who are working with Homeless households every day and who would have known some of the people who died.

#### Health Supports:

Both the DRHE and the HSE are deeply saddened by what has occurred and will continue to work together to develop a deeper insight into these cases and identify any gaps in services. Two actions are currently underway:-

- The special clinics of the Ana Liffey Drugs Project (commissioned by the DRHE) will be expanded over the coming weeks, with a particular emphasis on harm reduction.
- As is normal procedure, death in service reviews are being conducted by the relevant services.

The DRHE, together with the HSE, has joint responsibility for providing a coordinated and integrated response to delivering support services to the homeless population. All NGO operated facilities provide full wrap-around supports to service users.

Since the pandemic, the collaborative approach between the DRHE and the HSE has intensified and there has been an increased emphasis on the provision of health supports to clients in Private Emergency facilities. In addition, the DRHE and HSE CHO9 Social Inclusion Addiction services have collaborated to provide addiction supports to residents of homeless accommodation via the Ana Liffey Drug Projects team.

The Ana Liffey teams are providing clinics in a number of Privately Operated Hostels aimed at:-

- Minimising the harms of drug use on the person and the environment in which they are living.
- Ensuring people accessing the service are aware of how to avoid and how to manage overdose.
- Providing structured addiction supports to enable people to stabilise their use.
- Providing progression pathways for individuals who wish to access treatment programmes.

We are shortly going to recruit a further five (5) Housing Support Officers to add to the team of 15 new Housing Support Officers taken on last year for Homeless services. These newly recruited Officers will focus on single homeless persons, and in particular those residing in facilities managed by private operators.

Homeless Mental Health supports are also provided by HSE Mental Health teams in the Dublin Region and, in addition, Mental Health Services provide resource officers for suicide prevention when a service user is at risk of suicide. The Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention will attend the service to provide the support required.

We in the DRHE, would like to acknowledge the continued hard work of our own colleagues, staff in the other three Dublin Local Authorities, all our partners in the charity and private sector, and all other stakeholders for their continued support and collaborative efforts on a variety of responses to prevent and alleviate homelessness.

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4<sup>th</sup> August 2020

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