

To the Lord Mayor and
City Councillors

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

We welcome the national data released last week by the Government that indicates a steady decrease in the number of homeless households this year throughout the country. In this report we are focussing on the situation in the Dublin area.

In Dublin the main points to note are:

- There are currently (March 2020) 1,103 families in emergency accommodation –this is the lowest number since **May 2017**. There will be a further decrease in April 2020.
- A total of **216** families entered emergency accommodation for the first time between January and March 2020 (It was 293 for the same period in 2018 and 276 for the same period in 2019). 42 families presented and were assessed as Homeless in March 2020 compared to 94 in January and 80 in February 2020.
- In the period (January to March 2020), **599** households were prevented from using emergency accommodation or exited emergency accommodation into new tenancies. **350** families exited from emergency accommodation to tenancies during this period. (It was 177 for the same period in 2018 and 237 for the same period in 2019). **249** families were prevented from entering emergency accommodation between January and March 2020. (It was 215 for the same period in 2018 and 237 for the same period in 2019)

A very important statistic in relation to families is that the number currently residing in hotels (March 2020) is the lowest since early 2016. For example, there were 540 families in Hotel accommodation at the end of March 2020 whereas there were 871 in March 2017 (the peak figure). The number of families in Hotels will be reduced further in April 2020. With the big change in the property market we expect now to be able to source a significant number of self-contained apartments as an alternative to hotels that will provide much more suitable accommodation and represent much better value for money

This welcome reduction in Family Homelessness results mainly from a gradual decrease in new presentations over recent months and a continuing increase in exits into tenancies. The increased level of Housing Supply in the latter months of 2019 and early months of 2020 has made a difference. The recruitment of 15 new Family Support Officers by the DRHE/DCC and their assignment (September 2019) to work intensively with families residing in emergency accommodation on their exit into tenancies has also had a very positive impact.

We are hopeful the new property environment caused by Covid-19 will lead us to source a greater number of long-term leased/acquired homes that will serve as permanent social housing but it has had no real impact yet on exits of families from emergency accommodation

Of course, while the decrease is welcome the number of families in emergency accommodation is still far too high and there will be no let-up in our collective efforts on this issue.

The situation in relation to Homeless single persons is still difficult. There are currently 2,906 single adults in emergency accommodation. (March 2020), this is the highest number of single adults recorded to date and is due in large part to the increased provision of new accommodation facilities and a corresponding increase in bed numbers.

The arrival of Covid-19 had major and particular implications for single persons amongst the Homeless population both for those residing in emergency facilities and for those sleeping on the streets. The provision of social distancing and other Public Health guidelines meant that most hostels in the system required to be "*thinned out*" urgently and a total of 288 beds had to be vacated with alternative emergency accommodation sourced. In addition, three existing hostels were closed for the same reason at Merchants Quay, Ellis Quay and Aungier Street representing 149 beds and alternative emergency accommodation had to be also sourced for them. (Overall 437 new beds had to be sourced)

All this clearly indicates the size of the challenge and operation that was required to be implemented urgently over a short number of weeks. This challenge was overcome by strong collaboration between the DRHE and the HSE together with our Charity partners, the three Dublin Local authorities and other state and voluntary bodies. Our efforts were helped by the sudden collapse of the property and tourism market in Dublin and the fact that we were able to quickly source Hotels, self-contained apartments and hostels (As outlined in our two previous reports) that certainly were not available pre Covid-19. Special attention was given by the DRHE through its Outreach Service to encourage rough sleepers to take up available emergency accommodation.

All this work is likely to have saved many lives amongst the vulnerable Homeless population. So far the number of confirmed cases with the virus is low with no deaths. This overall joint operation secured over a short period of time could not have been achieved without strong, flexible support and funding from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

Over the last two months, generally there has been sufficient emergency beds for all those single persons who were prepared to accept them. But because of the reduced capacity in most hostels and indeed the closure of three hostels to facilitate social distancing rules the situation has become quite 'tight' in the last couple of weeks but the opening of a new emergency premises in Drumcondra last week has thankfully alleviated this situation.

It is important for us to reiterate that both the DRHE and DCC remain open for business and continue to provide a broad range of critical services for Homeless households and we will continue to provide these services in partnership with the HSE, the three other Dublin Local Authorities, our Charity Partners and other stakeholders.

As always, we would encourage any individuals in our services, to make contact directly with the DRHE if they have any concerns. These are unprecedented times and we here in the DRHE/DCC continue to work very hard to maintain a full range of services and the provision of information to all. We would also encourage Councillors to contact us directly when and where they become aware of specific problems within the Homeless system. We appreciate your continuing strong support during this crisis period.

We again want to give great credit to our own hardworking and committed management team and staff in the DRHE who are very much in the frontline of this crisis.

Useful contacts:

Email: www.homelessdublin.ie twitter: @homelessdublin and @housingdcc

Central Placement Service for singles and couples; Tel: 01 - 222 6944 Monday to Friday: 10.00am – 4.00pm. Email: homelesscps@dublincity.ie

Central Placement Service for families; Tel: 01 – 222 6977 Monday to Friday: 10.00am – 4.00pm. Email: family.support@dublincity.ie

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;

Housing Support Officers providing housing advice and move on options to families in emergency accommodation. Tel: 01 222 7414 Monday to Friday: 10.00am – 4.00pm.

Email: housingsupport@dublincity.ie

Homeless HAP Tel: 01 – 222 6955 Monday to Friday: 10.00am – 4.00pm.

Email: homelesshap@dublincity.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 sdcchomeless@sdblincoco.ie

Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown County Council Homeless Section Tel; 01 205 4804

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm email: homeless@dlrcoco.ie

Eileen Gleeson

Director,

Dublin Region Homeless Executive,

10th May 2020

Brendan Kenny

Deputy Chief Executive,

Dublin City Council