

7<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear Lord Mayor and Councillors

**Report/Update on Covid-19 and Homelessness**

This is the tenth report/update on homelessness in the Dublin region that we have issued to Councillors since the onset of Covid-19 earlier this year. From the beginning of the year, national data has been showing a significant and welcome reduction on the number of people (in particular families) that are residing in emergency accommodation throughout the country.

This report focuses on the situation in the Dublin Region at the end of **October** and reflects our ongoing commitment to keeping you all briefed throughout this difficult period of Covid-19.

At the end of October, there were **858** families in emergency accommodation. This is the lowest monthly figure since March 2016. The October family figure represents a small decrease (**7**) on September but represents a total decrease of 343 families since the start of the year (In January 2020 there were 1,201 families in emergency accommodation).

***Families in emergency accommodation:***

Jan 2020	Feb 2020	Mar 2020	Apr 2020	May 2020	Jun 2020	Jul 2020	Aug 2020	Sept 2020
1,201	1,178	1,103	974	893	871	862	856	865

The number of children residing in emergency accommodation at the end of October was **2,070**. This represents an increase (62) on the September figure. Before this, the figure had been reducing steadily every month since September 2019, when the figure was **2,872**. It also represents a decrease of 608 since the start of this year.

***Children in emergency accommodation:***

Jan 2020	Feb 2020	Mar 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	August 2020	September 2020
2,678	2,669	2,491	2,232	2,065	1,979	2,017	2,023	2,008

**Families in hotels:**

At the end of October, there were **246** families residing in hotels (down 167 from May 108 from June, 88 from July, 56 from August, and down a further 32 from September). This is the lowest number of families in hotels since April 2015. The highest ever figure was in March 2017 when it reached **871**. In relation to the **246** families, this is broken down between contracted Hotels (117) and accommodation sourced through self-accommodation (129).

Between March and June of this year, **85** families were transferred 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 hotel facilities. More of these apartments are currently being sought and it should be noted that these particular families are still included in emergency accommodation *data*.

### **New presentations (Families):**

**583** families entered emergency accommodation for the first time between January and October 2020. This compares to 966 for the same period in 2018, and 922 in 2019. A total of **64** new families (down 7 from September) presented and were assessed as Homeless in October 2020.

January 2020	February 2020	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	August 2020	September 2020
94	80	42	14	25	59	56	78	71

The table below shows some information on the 64 new families that presented in October:

Nationality	No. of Families	No. of Adults	No. of Children
Ireland	37	42	62
Other EU	20	35	38
Non EU	7	12	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>123</b>

In relation to the reasons for Homelessness, 37 of the cases were related to family circumstances, 13 were related to the private rented sector and the remaining 14 came from various other situations. In October **60 families** were prevented from entering emergency accommodation, mainly through HAP and **99 families** exited from emergency accommodation into new tenancies. While the reduction in numbers is of course 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 for homeless services in the Dublin area.

### **Housing Assistance Payment Scheme (HAP):**

The Homeless HAP Scheme has continued to operate successfully with our Housing Support Officers and Place-Finders assisting households to move out of emergency accommodation. These staff adapted quickly to the Covid-19 restrictions and have consistently worked with property owners 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 **279** Homeless HAP tenancies were sourced in October 2020 (an increase of 33 tenancies on the September figure).

This **October** figure is the highest number of Homeless HAP tenancies created since the scheme was introduced back in 2016. This figure will be bettered again in November reaching over 300 in a month for the first time.

***Breakdown of family type and previous accommodation of those***

***Accessing HHAP in October:***

- 43** Families leaving hotels - Private Emergency Accommodation
- 56** Families leaving Supported emergency accommodation
- 89** Families who did not use emergency accommodation (Prevention)
- 28** Singles/Couples leaving Private Emergency Accommodation
- 28** Singles/Couples leaving supported emergency accommodation
- 33** Singles/Couples who did not use emergency accommodation (Prevention)
- 2** Families leaving Direct Provision

**Summary:** *Breakdown of individuals in Emergency Accommodation in the **Dublin Region** – to October 2020, as published nationally:*

Month	Families	Adults in Families	Children	Singles	Total Adults	Total Individuals
<b>October</b>	<b>858</b>	<b>1,246</b>	<b>2,070</b>	<b>3,051</b>	<b>4,297</b>	<b>6,367</b>
Sept 20	865	1,257	2,008	2,994	4,251	6,259
Aug 20	856	1,242	2,023	2,962	4,204	6,227
Jul 20	862	1,269	2,017	2,919	4,188	6,205
Jun 20	871	1,276	1,979	2,895	4,171	6,150
May 20	893	1,309	2,065	2,855	4,164	6,229
April 20	974	1,412	2,232	2,854	4,266	6,498
<b>Oct 19</b>	<b>1,270</b>	<b>1,840</b>	<b>2,795</b>	<b>2,694</b>	<b>4,534</b>	<b>7,329</b>

**Single Homeless Adults:**

As we indicated in our previous reports, the situation in relation to **single persons** is more complex. The total number of single adults in emergency accommodation has continued to increase, and in **October** this number reached 3,051.

There was some success in terms of exits for single persons and preventions, with **84** single adults exiting to tenancies and **70** singles preventions through new tenancies in October (HAP). This figure was **89** and **70** respectively in **September**.

The number of single adults presenting as homeless and using emergency accommodation for the first time has remained high. In October **156**, single adults used emergency accommodation for the first time; it was 135 in September, 134 in August, 176 in July, 105 in June, 123 in May, 99 in April, 108 in March, 160 in February, and 215 in January.

In recent months, we have successfully sourced additional emergency accommodation to cater for an increasing demand coming into the cold weather period. Currently there are a significant number of emergency beds unused each night; this has been the situation consistently over recent months.

The table below shows the level of availability for emergency beds during the two-week period at the end of October:

<b>Night</b>	<b>Not Placed</b>	<b>Empty Beds</b>
<b>Sunday 31/10/2020</b>	0	48
<b>Saturday 30/10/2020</b>	0	54
<b>Friday 29/10/2020</b>	0	27
<b>Thursday 28/10/2020</b>	0	21
<b>Wednesday 27/10/2020</b>	0	44
<b>Tuesday 26/10/2020</b>	0	41
<b>Monday 25/10/2020</b>	0	18
<b>Sunday 24/10/2020</b>	0	13
<b>Saturday 23/10/2020</b>	0	33
<b>Friday 22/10/2020</b>	0	39
<b>Thursday 21/10/2020</b>	0	38
<b>Wednesday 20/10/2020</b>	0	25
<b>Tuesday 19/10/2020</b>	0	29
<b>Monday 18/10/2020</b>	0	52

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 also essential in terms of addressing the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness and for the expansion of the Housing First Programme. We have assigned additional Housing Support Officers to work full time with single homeless persons who are residing in emergency accommodation with the aim of assisting them in sourcing accommodation that is more suitable. We are very conscious of the big challenge in relation to single homeless persons in the Dublin area and we must find ways of significantly reducing the record number that are now residing in emergency accommodation.

### **Deaths in Homeless Services**

The figures in the table below shows some detail on the deaths of people registered as part of Homeless Services in the Dublin area. It is important to note that not all these deaths occurred in emergency accommodation, for example, many of them died in hospital, hospice etc. or in Long-Term permanent supported accommodation, a small number died while sleeping rough. Ultimately, the Coroner's Court determines cause of death and this process of verification can take a long time.

Sadly two deaths occurred on a single day two weeks ago, one occurred in long-term permanent supported accommodation, the second person was discovered deceased in a tent located on a laneway in the city centre. We understand this person had travelled from his home that day in Belfast with the intention of returning home the same evening. He was not known to Homeless services in Dublin.

It is important to emphasise the need to maintain confidentiality around these deaths and that these people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect in their passing, they also have families and friends many of whom may have struggled to help them.

Unfortunately, in recent times there tends to be a rush out from some people to apportion immediate blame etc. before even the most basic of information is available and without any consideration for the deceased or their families. We are not trying to divert attention away from deaths in Homeless Services, far from it, but the issue does need a more informed, open, and honest debate.

A report carried out “Mortality Amongst the Homeless Population in Dublin” which details mortality rates amongst the homeless population in the Dublin region for the period 2005-2015 is available on the DRHE web-site <https://www.homelessdublin.ie/content/files/Mortality-amongst-the-homeless-population-in-Dublin.pdf>. We have in association with the HSE and the Department of Housing commissioned the author of the above report to carry out a comprehensive review of deaths in Homeless Services during 2020. This report should be completed early in the New Year.

We are also very concerned at a big increase in the use of tents throughout the city because it does pose a serious health risk not alone to the users but also to the general public who may transverse the locations of these tents that are often pitched on amenity areas. As well as no access to toilet facilities, a significant number of tent users are obviously engaged in drug activity given the large amount of drug paraphernalia that is regularly left behind, when tents are eventually vacated.

This comes at a time when there is an unprecedented level of un-used emergency accommodation available every night in Dublin. We are asking that groups (who are no doubt well meaning) would desist from offering and giving tents to persons who may be homeless and instead encourage them to engage with outreach services with a view to accessing a safer mode of accommodation.

The role of the DRHE is to constantly liaise proactively (this is done directly) with persons occupying these tents and they can offer immediate accommodation in most cases but often this is refused, however our outreach staff will persist with their efforts. It is not the role of the DRHE to remove tents but we do notify Waste Management Division when tents are vacated, and they do the removal as well as cleaning up whatever is left behind.

Of course, we have to be very conscious of the needs of the individuals involved who use tents and who may be suffering with serious addiction and in some cases mental health issues. Every possible effort is made to link them into the relevant health service, but in many cases, there is a strong reluctance or outright refusal to engage with such services. This is a challenge that the DRHE will place a very significant focus on during 2021. This is one example of how complex the Homelessness situation is.

**Deaths in Homeless Services:**

Year	Number in Homeless acc.	Number in Long-Term Supported Permanent acc. *	Total
2020 (up to end October)	34	16	50
2019	37	12	49
2018	34	13	47
2017	35	27	62

\*Persons residing in Long Term Accommodation have secure tenancies, with supports provided on site for vulnerable individuals who have complex health needs.

The number who sadly died while sleeping rough is low, but even one is too many.

### **Covid-19**

Shielding (previously cocooning) is provided for most at-risk homeless persons and recognises the need to minimise the contact for those who are older and more vulnerable. At the end of October there were 239 homeless individuals residing in shielding facilities in the Dublin Region. The DRHE, in partnership with the HSE continues to identify any more individuals that may require shielding to ensure that the most vulnerable are protected.

Since the start of the pandemic, in excess of 1,000 people accessing emergency accommodation or rough sleeping have been tested for Covid-19.

At the end of October, there were a total of **82** confirmed cases across Homeless Services in the Dublin Region since the onset of Covid-19 last March (with two deaths in a Long-Term Supported Accommodation Facility). Due to the comprehensive Covid-19 response put in place by both the DRHE and the HSE, the number of people testing positive has remained low.

There has been no confirmed cases in recent weeks. 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. We work closely and very regularly with the HSE on Covid-19, issues and we very much value their ongoing strong support.

### **Emergency Accommodations facilities in Dublin City**

The table below indicates the number of emergency accommodation facilities in use across Dublin city at the end of October 2020.

The area of the city with most facilities is Dublin 1, followed by Dublin 7 and Dublin 8. We are conscious of the need not to over concentrate facilities in certain parts of city and we consider this when opportunities to acquire such properties do arise.

50% of our Homeless accommodation facilities are managed by Charity Organisations such as the Peter McVerry Trust, Crosscare, Dublin Simon, Respond, Novas, Salvation Army, Focus Ireland, Sons of Divine Providence, De Paul Trust and are funded to do so by Government through the DRHE. Private Operators manage other facilities usually through an arrangement involving a lease of property, refurbishment and operation. All accommodation complies with and operate within Covid-19 guidelines and all bed spaces adhere to social distancing requirements. Service providers are regularly issued with guidance from the HSE.

We have recently, in partnership with the HSE commissioned a comprehensive independent review on how all Homeless facilities are managed in the city/region.

This review/report should be completed early in the New Year.

Area	No. of premises	No. of Single Beds	% total single beds	No. of premises Families	Approx. No. of Families	% of total family units
<b>D 1</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>31%</b>
D 2	12	600	20.5%	0	0	0
D 3	2	30	1.0%	4	120	13%
D 4	0	0	0	1	13	1%
D 6	1	14	0.5%	4	155	16%
<b>D 7</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>D 8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>13%</b>
D 9	7	180	6.0%	2	60	6%
D10	0	0	0	2	11	1%
D11	2	30	1.0%	2	30	3%
D12	1	30	1.0%	2	85	9%
D17	0	0	0	1	28	3%
Totals	82	2,904	100%	36	967	100%

### **Cold Weather Strategy**

As we mentioned in the last report, in order to meet the increase in demand for homeless services and have appropriate contingency plans in place for cold weather conditions, the DRHE recently activated its Cold Weather Strategy for 2020/2021 for the Dublin Region. This Strategy will run in conjunction with the plans already operational as part of our COVID-19 response.

A copy of the strategy has been circulated to each of you and is also available on the DRHE website [www.homelessdublin.ie](http://www.homelessdublin.ie)

As always, we are grateful for the strong support we receive from all of you.

Coming up to the end of a very difficult year, we also want to thank:

- Our colleagues in the three Dublin County Councils for their ongoing support.
- Our colleagues in the HSE for their support and help during the year including through Covid.
- The Department of Housing for its ongoing support and funding.
- Officials in the several other State Agencies that we worked with during the year.
- Our partner Charity Organisations who we are so reliant upon. (Especially in 2020)
- All the Voluntary Groups and their Volunteers who consistently assist Homeless persons.

I want to give a very special *shout out* to all our staff in the DRHE who deserve huge credit for their commitment and hard work during the year. Working in very difficult circumstances, they are often forgotten about in the general commentary around homelessness in Dublin, when in reality they are the ones most involved directly with homeless persons on a daily basis.

*Finally, I want to pay a sincere and well deserved tribute to the Director of the DRHE, Eileen Gleeson who is retiring on Christmas Eve. Eileen has made a huge contribution to the cause of homelessness in Dublin since she was appointed four years ago and has given absolute energy and commitment to a job that is without doubt one of the toughest anywhere in the public service.*

*I wish her and her family the very best of luck and health in retirement, she can be very proud of her public service in Dublin over many years and she will be missed.*

**Brendan Kenny**

**Deputy Chief Executive**

**Dublin City Council**



Email: [www.homelessdublin.ie](http://www.homelessdublin.ie) Twitter: @homelessDublin and @housingdcc

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