

31st December 2020

Dear Lord Mayor and Councillors

Report/Update on Covid-19 and Homelessness

This is the eleventh 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 2020, national data has been showing a significant and welcome reduction in 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 **November 2020** and reflects our ongoing commitment to keeping you all briefed throughout this difficult period of Covid-19.

At the end of November, there were **783** families in emergency accommodation. This is the lowest monthly figure since January 2016. The November family figure represents a significant decrease (**75**) on October and represents a total decrease of 418 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	Oct 2020
1,201	1,178	1,103	974	893	871	862	856	865	858

The number of children residing in emergency accommodation at the end of November was **1,914**. This represents a decrease (**156**) on the October figure. This figure has been reducing steadily since September 2019, when the figure was **2,872**. It also represents a decrease of **764** 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	Oct 2020
2,678	2,669	2,491	2,232	2,065	1,979	2,017	2,023	2,008	2,070

Families in hotels:

At the end of November, there were **204** families residing in hotels (down 209 from May, 150 from June, 130 from July, 98 from August, 74 from September and down a further 42 from October). 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 **204** families, this is broken down between contracted Hotels (83) and accommodation sourced through self-accommodation (121).

New presentations (Families):

639 families entered emergency accommodation for the first time between January and November 2020. **This compares to 1,062 for the same period in 2018, and 987 in 2019.** 56 new families (down 8 from October) presented and were assessed as Homeless in November 2020.

January 2020	February 2020	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	August 2020	September 2020	October 2020
94	80	42	14	25	59	56	78	71	64

The table below shows some information on the 56 new families that presented in November:

Nationality	No. of Families	No. of Adults	No. of Children
Irish	32	36	47
Other EU	20	38	50
Non EU	4	6	6
Total	56	80	103

In relation to the reasons for Homelessness, 38 of the cases were related to family circumstances, 5 were related to the private rented sector and the remaining 13 came from various other situations. In November **90 families** were prevented from entering emergency accommodation, mainly through HAP and **118 families** exited from emergency accommodation into new tenancies. This is an increase on the 99 families who exited in October.

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 on family homelessness 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 sourced monthly has remained stable throughout the Covid-19 emergency despite revised working arrangements.

305 Homeless HAP tenancies were sourced in November 2020 (an increase of 26 tenancies on the October figure).

This **November** figure is the highest monthly number of Homeless HAP tenancies created since the scheme was first introduced back in 2016.

Breakdown of family type and previous accommodation of those accessing

HHAP in November:

<u>28</u>	Families leaving hotels - Private Emergency Accommodation
<u>72</u>	Families leaving Supported emergency accommodation
<u>105</u>	Families who did not use emergency accommodation (Prevention)
<u>27</u>	Singles/Couples leaving Private Emergency Accommodation
<u>33</u>	Singles/Couples leaving supported emergency accommodation
<u>38</u>	Singles/Couples who did not use emergency accommodation (Prevention)
<u>2</u>	Families leaving Direct Provision

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

Month	Families	Adults in Families	Children	Singles	Total Adults	Total Individuals
Nov 2020	783	1,150	1,914	3,093	4,243	6,157
Oct 2020	858	1,246	2,070	3,051	4,297	6,367
Sept 2020	865	1,257	2,008	2,994	4,251	6,259
Aug 2020	856	1,242	2,023	2,962	4,204	6,227
Jul 2020	862	1,269	2,017	2,919	4,188	6,205
Jun 2020	871	1,276	1,979	2,895	4,171	6,150
May 2020	893	1,309	2,065	2,855	4,164	6,229
April 2020	974	1,412	2,232	2,854	4,266	6,498
November 2019	1,256	1,822	2,782	2,687	4,509	7,291

While it is important to acknowledge the significant progress made during 2020, (an unprecedented year), there is still a long way to go and the obvious challenges will continue into 2021 and beyond.

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 **November** this number reached 3,093.

There was some success in terms of exits for single persons, with **108** single adults exiting to tenancies and **67** singles preventions through new tenancies in November (HAP). This figure was **84** and **70** respectively in **October**. The number of single adults presenting as homeless and using emergency accommodation for the first time has remained high but there was a decrease in November.

In November **116** single adults used emergency accommodation for the first time; it was **156** in October, **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 and this has been the situation consistently over recent months.

During the last 15 nights of November, there was an average of 46 emergency beds unused each night and this average will be higher during December. Despite this availability, a sizeable number of single persons continued to sleep rough during this period that further demonstrates the complexity of the homelessness issue in Dublin. The issue of entrenched rough sleepers, many with serious addiction and other health problems requires an even greater level of intensive work in 2021 and the DRHE will be working very closely with the HSE on this. We also hope to see strong progress on implementation of the recent DRHE report on the provision of day care services for homeless persons in Dublin.

Week Long Assessment of Rough Sleepers in the Dublin Region.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the twice-yearly head count of persons (April and November) rough sleeping in the Dublin Region could not take place. In order to assess the number of people currently rough sleeping in Dublin this winter, an alternative and more comprehensive approach has been taken in full compliance with current public health guidelines. We are considering a move permanently to this method of assessment and carrying it out four times a year rather than twice yearly as before.

Over the week November 23 to 29th, the DRHE Outreach Team (Dublin Simon) engaged in a full Dublin region assessment of people sleeping rough, or at risk of sleeping rough. Over **7 nights** the Outreach Team visited all known locations in the region at least once. Additional staff were deployed to ensure more intense coverage of city centre areas.

They communicated with the Gardaí and staff in the other three Dublin Local Authorities to ensure that they were fully informed about any individuals who were known to be rough sleeping, particularly in isolated areas. It is important to note that the statistics below represent the total unique individuals over a 7-day period, and cannot be compared with the figures published previously that related to one-night counts. In total there were **139** unique individuals encountered over the course of the week. **127** had PASS (DRHE Registration/IT system) identification. This means that they were registered, accepted as Homeless and would be offered emergency accommodation if they were willing to accept this. In the 127 figure, one individual had access to Long Term Supported Accommodation, one had a live HAP tenancy and an additional five will be housed shortly under the Housing First Programme. The other 12 were not registered at the time of the assessment but that process is now underway and all have been offered emergency accommodation.

Further details in relation to the 127 registered individuals are contained in the tables below:

Gender	Number	
Male	93	73 %
Female	34	27 %
Total	127	100 %

Age Group	Number	Citizenship	Number	Local Authority	Number
18-19	0	Irish	93	DCC	51
20-24	9	EU	10	DLR/FCC/SDCC	26
25-44	89	Non EU	4	Outside Dublin	5
45-62	29	Unknown	20	Unknown	45
Total	127	Total	127	Total	127

It can take several intensive engagements with an individual who is rough sleeping to achieve a positive outcome; however, in the majority of cases the outreach team are successful in supporting people to access emergency accommodation and other services within a short time frame.

Over this one week of assessment, seven individuals were engaged on four or more occasions, but the majority of individuals had just one engagement with the outreach team over the course of the week. 20% had an allocated bed in emergency accommodation on at least one of the nights when they were counted as sleeping rough, 89% had used emergency accommodation at some point in the past and 65% had used emergency accommodation at some point in the 3 months preceding the assessment week. Since the week of the count, 57 of the 127 individuals have used emergency accommodation, 3 of them for the first time.

In addition to the 7-day assessment described above, a head count of people rough sleeping in the city centre environs was carried out in the early hours of Wednesday 25th November. A team of experienced outreach staff did it from Dublin Simon Community, the Peter McVerry Trust and the DRHE from 1am to 4am, on a selected route covering the area from O'Connell Street to St. Stephen's Green, and from Custom House Quay to Wood Quay. **45** people were found bedded down on the night. These were included in the overall figure of 139.

The number of people engaging in rough sleeping in the Dublin Region varies from night to night. While there is a core group of people who may regularly sleep rough, and may or may not engage with services, there is a larger group of people that move between rough sleeping, using emergency accommodation on a more regular basis, sleeping in insecure accommodation, and or staying with family or friends. Others may only engage in rough sleeping for a very short transitional period. Conducting this assessment over a 1-week period illustrates some of the complexity involved in the experiences of people who engage in rough sleeping.

There was a high number of unused emergency beds available (on average 40 empty beds) throughout the city on each night that this assessment/count was being carried out.

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 November, there were 262 homeless individuals residing in shielding facilities in the Dublin Region.

The DRHE, in partnership with the HSE continues to identify more individuals that may require shielding to ensure that the most vulnerable are protected.

Since the start of the pandemic, approximately 1,400 people accessing emergency accommodation or rough sleeping have been tested for Covid-19.

At the end of November, 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. 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.

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 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 of single persons that are now residing in emergency accommodation.

We have now assigned additional Housing Support Officers to work full time with single persons and couples who are residing in emergency accommodation with the aim of assisting them to source accommodation that is more suitable. Over recent months, the team have reviewed the position of 777 single persons currently living in emergency accommodation. 42 individuals (2 couples) supported by the team have moved onto HHAP (20) and Social Housing tenancies (20).

A further 34 have moves pending. This intensive work will continue into 2021. This progress demonstrates the significant benefit that has arisen over the last 18 months from the recruitment directly by the DRHE of 25 Housing Support Officers. The first tranche of these officers made a big difference in supporting families to move out of emergency accommodation and now five of them are working full times with single persons who are currently residing in emergency accommodation.

Happy New Year.

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