

15th October 2020

Dear Lord Mayor and Councillors,

Report/Update on Covid-19 and Homelessness

This is the eighth report/update on homelessness in the Dublin region to Councillors that we have issued since the onset of Covid-19 earlier this year. From 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.

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

At the end of August, there were **856** families in emergency accommodation, this remains the lowest number since April 2016. It also represents a small reduction on the July figures.

Families in emergency accommodation:

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

The number of children residing in emergency accommodation at the end of August was **2,023**, this was slightly up (6) on the July figure, but it has reduced steadily every month since September 2019 when the figure was **2,872**.

Children in emergency accommodation:

Jan 20	Feb 20	Mar 20	Apr 20	May 20	Jun 20	Jul 20
2,678	2,669	2,491	2,232	2,065	1,979	2,017

Families in hotels:

At the end of August, there were **302** families in hotels (down 59 from May, 20 from June and a further 32 from July). This is the lowest number since April 2015. The highest figure was in March 2017 when it reached **871**. In relation to the **302** figure, it can be broken down between contracted Hotels (140) and those sourced through self-accommodation (162). 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*.

We would of course prefer to be able to get these apartments on longer term contracts, as HAP tenancies, as long-term leases or as acquisitions but those options are generally not available (not being offered by the owners) to us at present.

New presentations (Families):

448 families entered emergency accommodation for the first time between January and August 2020. (It was 789 for the same period in 2018, and 735 in 2019).

78 new families presented and were assessed as Homeless in August 2020:

Jan 2020	Feb 2020	Mar 2020	Apr 2020	May 2020	Jun 2020	Jul 2020
94	80	42	14	25	59	56

The table below shows some detail of the **78** new families in August:

Nationality	No. of families	No. of Adults	No. of Children
Ireland	57	68	99
Other EU	15	23	30
Non EU	6	10	9
Total	78	101	138

In relation to the reasons for Homelessness, 44 (56%) of the cases were related to family circumstances, 13 (17%) were related to the private rented sector and the balance 21 (27%) from various *other* situations.

In August **81** families were prevented from entering emergency accommodation, mainly through HAP and **77** moved from emergency accommodation into new tenancies.

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 Officers team have adapted quickly to movement 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 with a total of **240** new tenancies sourced in August 2020.

Breakdown of family type and previous accommodation of those accessing HHAP in August

- 36** Families leaving hotels - Private Emergency Accommodation
- 38** Families leaving Supported emergency accommodation
- 72** Families did not use emergency accommodation (Prevention)
- 16** Singles/Couples leaving Private Emergency Accommodation
- 30** Singles/Couples leaving supported emergency accommodation

47 Singles/Couples did not use emergency accommodation (Prevention)

1 Family leaving Direct Provision

While the reduction in numbers is always 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.

Summary: Breakdown of numbers in Emergency Accommodation in the Dublin Region – August 2020.

Month	Total Families	Total Children	Total Adults	Total Individuals
Aug 2020	856	2,023	4,204	6,227
Jul 2020	862	2,017	4,188	6,205
Jun 2020	871	1,979	4,171	6,150
May 2020	893	2,065	4,164	6,229
Apr 2020	974	2,232	4,266	6,498
Sept 2019	1,294	2,872	4,370	7,242

Single Homeless Adults

The improved situation in relation to homeless families is indeed welcome but 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 August this number stood at 2,962. There has been success in terms of single exits and preventions, with 68 single adults exiting to tenancy and 59 single preventions through new tenancies in August. However, the number of single adults presenting as homeless and using emergency accommodation for the first time has remained high. In August **134** single adults used emergency accommodation for the first time, it was 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 a significant amount of additional emergency accommodation to cater for the increasing demand, whilst also keeping an eye on the upcoming winter period. During the winter period 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 will be publishing its annual Cold Weather Strategy shortly to ensure preparedness for the approaching winter months.

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.

Rough Sleeping

The number of people 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 may move between rough sleeping, using emergency accommodation on a more regular basis, sleeping in insecure accommodation, and or staying with family or friends.

Due to Covid-19, and the need to adhere to public health guidelines, the Spring Rough Sleeper Count could not take place this April, and in light of current public health advice, the November Rough Sleeper Count also cannot take place, at least not, in the same format as recent years. The DRHE is now reviewing the method of carrying out Rough Sleeper Counts with a view to doing them more regularly.

In the meantime, the Dublin Simon Outreach team provide daily and weekly reports on the number of engagements and the number of unique individuals that they support on the streets of the city and suburbs. All engagements with a person sleeping rough, or at risk of sleeping rough, are recorded by the team.

The reported numbers for the last 2 full weeks of September are outlined below, and are for the full 1-week (7 nights) period, and not 1 night:

Week	Total Individuals	Numbers registered as homeless	Numbers not registered as homeless
Sept. 14th to 20th	123	102	21
Sept. 21st to 27th	119	88	31

These numbers represent unique individuals who had engagements with the Outreach Team over 7 days, and were considered to be rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping. Not all individuals included in these numbers will have experienced an incident of rough sleeping, as many engagements may ultimately lead individuals to access emergency accommodation or other services. Some individuals may have several engagements with the Outreach Team over the course of the week, and some will be encountered only once.

The PASS (Homeless) Registration System in the DRHE provides a useful insight into patterns of rough sleeping, engagement with the outreach team, and episodic emergency accommodation usage. It can also provide a useful picture of the number of unique individuals who engage in rough sleeping over a longer period than 1 night or 1 week.

Because of the additional accommodation sourced in recent months, there has been a sizeable number of beds available/empty on virtually every night over recent weeks and a similar situation has existed during most of the summer period.

The following Table shows the nightly bed availability over the same 10-day period as above:

Night	Not Placed	Empty Beds
Sunday 27/09/2020	0	24
Saturday 26/09/2020	0	15
Friday 25/09/2020	0	31
Thursday 24/09/2020	0	14
Wednesday 23/09/2020	0	31
Tuesday 22/09/2020	0	28

Monday 21/09/2020	0	51
Sunday 20/09/2020	0	27
Saturday 19/09/2020	0	19
Friday 18/09/2020	0	39
Thursday 17/09/2020	0	52
Wednesday 16/09/2020	0	66
Tuesday 15/09/2020	0	19
Monday 14/09/2020	0	15

The planning of homeless services is based on the DRHE's comprehensive knowledge of trends in rough sleeping.

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.

Covid-19

Cocooning or shielding as it is now termed by the HSE is provided for most at-risk homeless persons and recognises the need to minimise the contact for those who are older and more vulnerable, there are currently 270 homeless individuals residing in shielding facilities.

The DRHE, in partnership with the HSE, is currently carrying out an exercise to identify any further 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.

There have been **77** confirmed cases across Homeless Services in the Dublin Region since Covid-19 arrived last March (with two deaths in a Long -Term Supported Facility) and 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.

Structure and Governance of the DRHE

The Dublin Region Homeless Executive is a shared service, operating under the aegis of Dublin City Council, on behalf of the four Dublin Local Authorities, as the lead statutory authority in the Dublin Region in respect of the co-ordination of responses to Homelessness. It has specific responsibilities for the operational co-ordination of the 2019 to 2021 Homeless Action Plan, Regional Service Provision and the disbursement of Section 10 funding (most of this recouped from the Department of Housing) for homeless services and in commissioning new service provision.

The DRHE provides funding to 23 Non-Profit Organisations for more than 115 services across the Dublin Region.

In addition, the DRHE co-ordinates and funds the provision of private emergency accommodation for people experiencing homelessness. It also provides a range of shared services to the sector as well as Central Government departments via the implementation of the National Shared Client Database, namely Pathway Accommodation Support System (PASS), and the development of National Quality Standards Framework for Homeless Service Providers nationally.

The relevant statutory provisions regarding homelessness are provided for under Section 2 and Section 10 of the **Housing Act 1988** and in the Housing (Miscellaneous) Act 2009. A Consultative Forum chaired by the DRHE meets regularly and includes representatives from the three county Councils, Tusla, HSE, all the other relevant State Agencies and the NGO Network. We also have regular meetings with the Departments of Housing, Health and Justice.

National Quality Standards Framework.

The National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) has been developed by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive on behalf of the Department of Housing.

It is informed by the quality principles of the Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services and adopts the overarching themes used by the Health, Information and Quality Authority (HIQA).

The aim of the framework is to:

1. Promote safe and effective service provision to persons experiencing homelessness
2. Support the objectives of the National Homelessness Policy i.e. enabling people to move into and sustain housing with appropriate levels of support
3. Establish consistency in how persons experiencing homelessness are responded to, across different regions and models of service delivery.

All Organisations in receipt of Section 10 Homeless funding are required to implement the National Quality Standards Framework. It applies to homeless services for single adults, adult couples and for adults with dependent children.

A comprehensive process including a significant level of consultation with all the relevant stakeholders was initiated in 2015 leading to its roll out in May 2019

Roll out of National Quality Standards Framework.

In May 2019, the Department of Housing, Planning launched the National roll-out of the National Quality Standards Framework for Homeless Services. The **DRHE Quality Standards Team** have played, and continue to play a key role in the National rollout of the NQSF strategy. The documentation devised and used by the DRHE Quality Standards team acts as templates for other Local Authorities to adapt to suit their own needs.

The DHRE Quality Standards team liaises and guides Local Authorities nationally in successfully implementing the procedures and documentation used by the DHRE, as requested by the Department of Housing, to ensure the implementation of a consistent approach across the country.

In addition to this Framework and inspection regime, we have a number of experienced staff in the DRHE who can and do respond very quickly to any problem arising or any complaint made in any of our funded facilities and they usually resolve the matter very quickly.

During the Covid-19 period, there has been an increased level of visits to Homeless facilities by public health staff who will report any instances of problems to the DRHE for attention. Our inspectors also conduct regular unannounced visits to facilities.

The DRHE is about to commission an independent review of how such facilities are managed generally by both the NGOs and the Private Operators. We will present the outcome of this review to the Housing SPC.

We intend to continue circulating a monthly report/update to City Councillors on Homelessness and Covid-19 and we are currently working on the September report. If Councillors wish to have any specific or general matter dealt with, in future monthly reports please let us know.

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15th October 2020



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Homeless FREEPHONE 1800 707 707; for access to Emergency Accommodation out of hours for the Dublin Region.