

REPORTED REASONS FOR FAMILY HOMELESSNESS IN THE DUBLIN REGION: JULY TO DECEMBER 2016

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Foreword

This report reviews administrative data to present the reasons for homelessness for families who newly presented to homeless services between July and December 2016. Upon presentation to their local authority, families complete an initial assessment form. One of the questions asked is the reason for their presentation to homeless services. Unlike the support planning process which can explore in detail the often complex set of circumstances that led to homelessness, the initial assessment typically captures a single primary reason. The report demonstrates that forced departure from a tenancy in private rented accommodation was the most commonly reported cause of homelessness, closely followed by family circumstance such as relationship breakdown and overcrowding. However, the DRHE expect that factors relating to the private rented sector are likely to be understated during the period being reported on. Previous qualitative research¹ commissioned by the DRHE on family homelessness found that many families will have moved in with family or friends following a loss of private rented accommodation and that this move was unsustainable. Notwithstanding this limitation, this report provides valuable insight into the most common causes of family homelessness in the Dublin Region.

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1. S. Stamp (pending publication),
The Experiences of Newly Homeless
Families Accommodated by Dublin's
Homeless Services in August 2015.
Dublin Region Homeless Executive.

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction.....	3
2.	Overview.....	4
2.1	Private Rented Sector.....	4
2.2	Family Circumstance.....	4
2.3	Other.....	4
3.	Reasons for Homelessness.....	5
3.1	Private Rented Sector.....	6
3.1.1	Notice to Quit (43%).....	6
3.1.2	Private Rented Sector - Other (5%).....	6
3.2	Family Circumstance.....	6
3.2.1	Overcrowding (11%).....	6
3.2.2	Relationship breakdown (33%).....	6
3.2.3	Family Circumstance - Other (2%).....	6
3.3	Other (6%).....	7
3.4	Insufficient information.....	7

1. Introduction

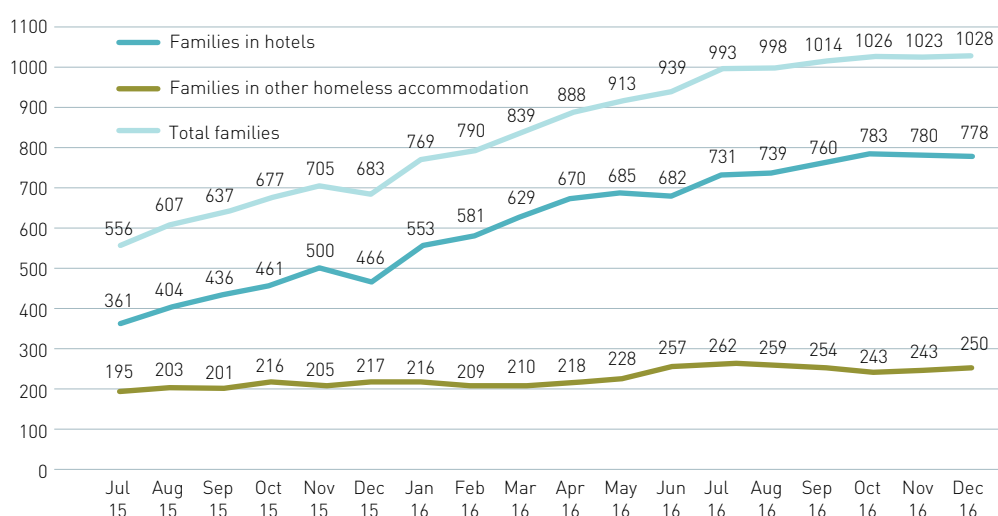
As detailed in this report, 400 new families accessed homeless accommodation services between July and December 2016. As can be seen in Table 1 below, the number of families presenting varies each month with July being the highest at 97 and December the lowest at 39. There is a consistent pattern that families defer presentation to homeless services over the Christmas period as low numbers in December are followed by a peak in January.

While 400 new families accessed emergency accommodation, a number of families also departed to take up tenancies during the same period. The net increase in families accessing emergency accommodation between July and December 2016 was 89 or 9%. The number of families increased from 939 in June 2016 to 1,028 in December 2016 as detailed in Figure 1 below.

Table 1: Number of new families accessing homeless accommodation, July to December 2016

New Families accessing homeless accommodation	
Jul-16	97
Aug-16	72
Sep-16	65
Oct-16	67
Nov-16	60
Dec-16	39
Total	400

Figure 1: Number of families in emergency accommodation in the Dublin Region each month



The monthly figures detailed here represent the number of families in emergency accommodation over a single week in the month.

2. Overview

In the last six months of 2016 a total of 400 new families were accommodated in emergency accommodation in the Dublin Region who had no active or previous PASS² record i.e. they were 'new' to homelessness. A review of the initial assessments conducted with families upon their presentation to homeless services reveals two primary reasons for homelessness; leaving private rented accommodation on foot of a Notice to Quit (NTQ) and leaving family or friend's accommodation due to relationship breakdown or overcrowding. A small number of families reported 'other' reasons for their presentation to homeless services.

2.1 Private Rented Sector

An analysis of these household's circumstances at presentation to Dublin's Pathway to Home services reveals that:

- 48% of families (n=181) stated that the primary reason for their homelessness related to a loss of or inability to secure private rented accommodation.

Further analysis of these household's circumstances at presentation to Dublin's Pathway to Home services confirms that:

- Notices to Quit were issued to 161 families;
- Eleven families left their accommodation as it was of poor quality or unsuitable to their needs;
- Two families were unable to source private rented accommodation after their previous lease expired;
- Six families, who were either new or returning to Dublin, could not afford private rented accommodation in the Dublin region;
- One family had to leave the parental home as it was sold and could not source private rented accommodation.

2.2 Family Circumstance

There were a total of 172 families (46%) in this category, of which 40 families stated the primary reason for their presentation as homeless is that they were departing an overcrowded living situation while 123 stated that there was some element of relationship breakdown that triggered their rooflessness. General family circumstance (n=6) and family reunification (n=3) make up the remainder.

It should be noted that further investigation is required to fully determine whether these factors arose as a direct result of losing private rented accommodation (e.g. departing private rented accommodation and moving in with other family members – so-called sofa surfing- and thereby residing in unsuitable and overcrowded living situations that can contribute to relationship breakdown).

2.3 Other

Causation among the remaining 22 families (or 6%) breaks down as follows:

- Three families were evicted from social housing;
- Three families, who were previously home owners, presented to homeless services after their property was repossessed;
- Five families cited no income source as their reason for homelessness;
- Eight families left properties due to being victims of anti-social behaviour;
- Three families left their properties voluntarily, i.e. without a valid NTQ.

There was insufficient information available on the remaining 25 families.

2. PASS provides real-time information for homeless presentation and bed occupancy across the Dublin Region.

3. Reasons for Homelessness

Table 2: Reasons for homelessness reported by families in the Dublin Region, July to December 2016

	Jul '16	Aug '16	Sep '16	Oct '16	Nov '16	Dec '16	TOTAL
Private Rented Sector							
Notice to Quit							
- General	28	21	15	21	14	4	103
- Invalid/illegal	-	1	2	-	1	-	4
- Landlord/family use	3	1	-	2	1	-	7
- Property to be sold	5	4	7	2	3	1	22
- Landlord bankrupt/ receivership	2	-	1	1	1	-	5
- Tenant rent arrears	2	-	4	7	2	-	15
- Anti social behaviour	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
- Building work/repairs	1	-	1	-	1	2	5
Unsuitable accommodation	3	1	1	1	1	4	11
Expiry of lease	1	1	-	-	-	-	2
Rented property fell through	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
New/return to Dublin unable to afford rent	1	1	-	-	1	3	6
Parental family home sold	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
TOTAL PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR	46 53%	30 43%	31 50%	35 56%	25 44%	14 38%	181 48%
Family Circumstance							
Overcrowding	5	8	5	7	8	7	40
Relationship breakdown - General	14	13	9	9	4	5	54
- Parent	13	9	10	5	6	3	46
- Partner	-	4	3	5	9	2	23
Family reunification	1	1	-	-	1	-	3
General family circumstance	-	-	-	-	3	3	6
TOTAL FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCE	33 38%	35 51%	27 44%	26 41%	31 54%	20 54%	172 46%
Other							
Evicted/surrendered social housing	1	-	1	1	-	-	3
Property repossessed	1	-	2	-	-	-	3
No income source	2	1			-	2	5
Victim of anti social behaviour	4	-	1	1	1	1	8
Voluntarily left property	-	3	-	-	-	-	3
TOTAL OTHER	8 9%	4 6%	4 6%	2 3%	1 2%	3 8%	22 6%
SUBTOTAL	87	69	62	63	57	37	375
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Insufficient information ³	10	3	3	4	3	2	25
TOTAL	97	72	65	67	60	39	400

3. Insufficient information was not included in the calculation of the percentages presented in this report.

3. Reasons for Homelessness (cont.)

3.1 Private Rented Sector

For 48% (n=181) of the families, homelessness originated in the private rented sector, with various contributory factors briefly discussed below.

3.1.1 Notice to Quit (43%)

As detailed in Table 3 below, landlords issued 161 families with a NTQ. There was no detailed reason provided for the NTQ for 103 of these families. Based on the detail provided by the remaining families at their initial assessment, seven properties were being taken back by landlords for family use and 22 were to be sold, while five landlords had gone into receivership. A total of 15 families stated they were issued with a NTQ because of rent arrears and four were subject to an illegal eviction. In five cases families had to depart a property for repairs or renovations to take place.

Table 3: Notice to Quit type reported by families new to homelessness in the Dublin Region, July to December 2016

Notice to Quit	TOTAL
General	103
Invalid/illegal	4
Landlord/family use	7
Property to be sold	22
Landlord bankrupt/ receivership	5
Tenant rent arrears	15
Anti social behaviour	-
Building work/repairs	5
TOTAL	161

3.1.2 Private Rented Sector - Other (5%)

There were a total of 20 families in this category. Two families stated that they had secured a property in the private rented sector but it fell through, difficulties finding another suitable property resulted in the family presenting to homeless services. Unfitness or unsuitability of the property for habitation (n=11) was also

cited as a reason for having to vacate a rented property. An additional six families were either new or returning to Dublin and could not afford rent in the region. One family had to leave the parental home as it was sold and could not source alternative private rented accommodation.

3.2 Family Circumstance

For most of the remainder (n=172 or 46%), homelessness had its origins in relationship breakdown, family conflict and/or lack of space within the family home.

3.2.1 Overcrowding (11%)

A total of 40 families stated their cause for presenting as homelessness as being the result of living in overcrowded accommodation.

3.2.2 Relationship breakdown (33%)

Of the 123 families that detailed relationship breakdowns, 46 were with parents, 23 with partners, while 54 families cited general relationship breakdown as the primary cause for presenting as homeless.

3.2.3 Family Circumstance - Other (2%)

There were a total of nine families in this category of which three families stated that family reunification was the cause of their homelessness. In these instances, changes in household types (i.e. new family members joining them in Ireland) resulted in a different housing need and subsequently a need to present to homeless services when suitable accommodation could not be sourced. For the remaining six families, homelessness came about as a result of general family circumstance. No further information was included on the initial assessment form.

3.3 Other (6%)

Causation among the remaining 22 (6%) families breaks down as follows. Three families stated that they were evicted from social housing; the reasons for such are unknown. Three families, who were previously home owners, presented to homeless services after their property was repossessed. For five families, no income source was cited as the main reason for homelessness. Eight families left properties due to being victims of anti-social behaviour. The remaining three families departed the private rented sector voluntarily i.e. without a valid NTQ upon presentation to homeless services.

3.4 Insufficient information

There was insufficient information available for 25 families.

Notes

