

5th November 2020

Dear Lord Mayor and Councillors,

Report/Update on Covid-19 and Homelessness

This is the ninth 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 this year, national data has been showing a significant and welcome reduction on the number of people (in particular families) residing in emergency accommodation throughout the country.

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

At the end of September, there were **865** families in emergency accommodation (This is the lowest number since April 2016). It does represent a small increase (**9**) on the August 2020 family figure.

Families in emergency accommodation:

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

The number of children residing in emergency accommodation at the end of September was **2,008**, this was down (15) on the August figure and 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	August 2020
2,678	2,669	2,491	2,232	2,065	1,979	2,017	2,023

Families in hotels:

At the end of September, there were **278** families in hotels (down 135 from May, 76 from June, 56 from July and a further 24 from August). This is the lowest number in hotels since April 2015. The highest figure was in March 2017 when it reached **871**. In relation to the **278** families, this is broken down between contracted Hotels (131) and accommodation sourced through self-accommodation (147). 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 who now live in these apartments are still included in the emergency accommodation *data*.

New presentations (Families):

519 families entered emergency accommodation for the first time between January and September 2020, (This figure was 877 for the same period in 2018, and 837 in 2019).

A total of **71** (down 7 from August) new families presented and were assessed as Homeless in September 2020:

Jan 2020	Feb 2020	Mar 2020	Apr 2020	May 2020	Jun 2020	Jul 2020	Aug 20
94	80	42	14	25	59	56	78

The table below shows some information on the **71** new families that presented in September:

Nationality	No. of families	No. of Adults	No. of Children
Ireland	52	58	76
Other EU	11	20	26
Non EU	7	10	17
Unknown	1	2	1
Total	71	90	120

In relation to the reasons for Homelessness, 50 of the cases were related to family circumstances, 12 were related to the private rented sector and the remaining 9 came from various other situations.

In September **59 families** were prevented from entering emergency accommodation, mainly through HAP and **76 families** exited from emergency accommodation into new tenancies.

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. Place-finders and the Housing Support Officers team 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 a total of **246** Homeless HAP tenancies were sourced in September 2020 (an increase of 6 tenancies on the August figure). The **October** figure will be the highest number of Homeless HAP tenancies created since the scheme was introduced back in 2016.

Breakdown of family type and previous accommodation of those accessing HHAP in Sept.

<u>32</u>	Families leaving hotels - Private Emergency Accommodation
<u>48</u>	Families leaving Supported emergency accommodation
<u>83</u>	Families who did not use emergency accommodation (Prevention)
<u>16</u>	Singles/Couples leaving Private Emergency Accommodation
<u>31</u>	Singles/Couples leaving supported emergency accommodation
<u>33</u>	Singles/Couples who did not use emergency accommodation (Prevention)
<u>3</u>	Families 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 for homeless services in the Dublin area.

Summary: *Breakdown of individuals in Emergency Accommodation in the **Dublin Region** – for six months to September 2020, as published nationally.*

Month	Families	Adults in Families	Children	Singles	Total Adults	Total Individuals
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
Sept 19	1,294	1,862	2,872	2,508	4,370	7,242

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 September this number was 2,994. There has been some success in terms of exits for single persons and preventions, with 89 single adults exiting to tenancy and 57 single preventions through new tenancies in September. This figure was 68 and 59 respectively in August.

However, the number of single adults presenting as homeless and using emergency accommodation for the first time has remained high. In September **135** single adults used emergency accommodation for the first time; it was 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 a significant amount of additional emergency accommodation to cater for an increasing demand, whilst also keeping an eye on the upcoming winter period. During the winter period, the number of single adults accessing homeless accommodation is likely to increase. This is a trend that we are very aware of and we prepare for it right throughout the year.

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.

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

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

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 September there were 240 homeless individuals residing in shielding facilities in the Dublin Region.

The DRHE, in partnership with the HSE, is currently carrying out a further exercise 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 September there were a total of **72** 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.

Cold Weather Strategy

In order to meet the increase in demand for homeless services and have appropriate contingency plans in place for cold weather conditions, the DRHE has 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

Review of Services:

We have agreed with the HSE to jointly carry out a detailed review of all deaths in Homeless Services this year.

We have also initiated a joint review on all aspects of how emergency accommodation facilities are operated on behalf of the DRHE in the city and a comparison of day- to- day management operations between the NGOs and Private Operators.

We will bring these completed reviews/reports to the Housing SPC and to all relevant stakeholders.

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