

Summary

**Results of a  
Pilot Project to  
prevent family  
homelessness  
in Dublin 15**

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# Results of a Pilot Project to prevent family homelessness in Dublin 15

## Summary

In June 2016, in order to identify the most effective measures to tackle the family homelessness crisis, Focus Ireland launched a pilot project aimed at preventing homelessness among families living in Dublin 15.

An effective homeless prevention campaign must achieve a number of goals:<sup>1</sup>

- › to engage with households which are at risk of homelessness sufficiently early in their crisis.
- › to avoid becoming overwhelmed with households that, while experiencing hardship, are not in fact at risk of becoming homeless.
- › to provide an intervention, or range of interventions, capable of tackling the factors which are likely to cause homelessness.

To overcome these challenges, the Dublin 15 pilot project utilized a range of innovative approaches both during the engagement campaign and during the subsequent support phase. The project also involved a 3-month follow up interview to ascertain the impact of the intervention.


- › There was effective engagement with the target group of families living in private rented accommodation and at risk of homelessness. Among the range of communication channels deployed in the 4 week engagement campaign, one innovative approach was cited by 85% of the 165 families that contacted the services as the trigger for making contact. This was a direct mail from the Department of Social Protection to all 2,500 families in receipt of Rent Supplement in the target area, containing a letter from Focus Ireland.
- › There was little duplication with other prevention campaigns. 75% of the families that contacted the service had not contacted any State-supported prevention service prior to responding to this project.

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<sup>1</sup> Culhane, D.P., Metraux, S. and Byrne, T., 2011. A prevention-centered approach to homelessness assistance: A paradigm shift? *Housing Policy Debate*, 21(2), pp.295–315.



- Few of the households contacting the service were deemed by Focus Ireland staff to not need the service because they were at low risk of losing their homes (6%).
- In the 3 month follow-up survey, of 87 families who were residing in the private rented sector and at risk of homelessness at time of first contact, 89% (n=77) were still in tenancies, while 11% (n=10) were living in emergency homeless accommodation.
- Of those who were effectively prevented from becoming homeless, 82% were in the same tenancy, while 18% had found new tenancies: 11 found alternative rented accommodation, 6 of these with assistance from the Homeless HAP scheme; 3 had moved into Local Authority housing.
- The families which had avoided homelessness reported a high degree of continued feeling of housing insecurity. This may be a reflection of the general precarity of the rented sector, and the increasing number of people leaving the sector and entering homeless services.
- A strong majority of respondents were either very satisfied or satisfied with the quality of service and advice received from Focus Ireland staff (72%). However, a small number of respondents (n=5) said they received no assistance from Focus Ireland after contact was made.
- Even with a high percentage supported to avoid homelessness, a majority of respondents reported that their concerns upon contacting Focus Ireland were unresolved at the time of the survey (n=51, 64%). Respondents residing in private rented accommodation reported unresolved concerns mainly in respect of notice of terminations, rent increases, and finding alternative accommodation.
- A significant proportion of the families in the follow up survey were of non-Irish origin, though a significant proportion were recent Irish citizens. This reflects the high proportion of migrant households living in private rented accommodation and the proportion of migrants in Dublin 15 generally. Communications problems with some of this group had implications for the data collection processes and have implications for prevention services generally (ie. consideration should be given to translation services).



I hope the rent  
doesn't go up again.

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This project was supported under a three year strategic partnership between Focus Ireland and Bord Gáis Energy aimed at helping to prevent family homelessness.

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