

**‘Come back when you’re homeless’:
Preventing family homelessness
through assisting families to stay in
their homes or to find alternative
affordable accommodation**

**24th June 2015
Final Version**

Table of Contents:

Overview	Page 1
1. Introduction	Page 3
2. Aim of Research.....	Page 3
3. Methodology	Page 4
4. Profile of Families	Page 5
4.1 Nationality	
4.2 Accommodation type before becoming homeless	
4.3 Living in Private Rented Accommodation	
4.4 Living in other accommodation	
5. Tenancy sustainment	Page 10
6. Rapid Re-housing	Page 13
7. Length of time waiting for emergency accommodation	Page 15
8. Recommendations	Page 15
Appendix 1: Information provided to families on the study and objectives	Page 19
Appendix 2: Guide questions for telephone Interview	Page 20
Appendix 3: Case studies	Page 25

Overview

All of the 71 families which had been allocated to Focus Ireland's Homeless Action Team (HAT) by the four Dublin Local Authorities during April 2015 were contacted to explore the factors which led to them becoming homeless. Of these, 52 families participated in the study, representing the most comprehensive study to date of the reasons for a single cohort of families becoming homeless.

The results of the survey were then analysed to draw out the lessons in relation to the two broad stages of homelessness prevention:

- Tenancy sustainment: Interventions to maintain the family in their existing home
- Rapid Re-housing: Supporting the family to find alternative accommodation during the notice period and so avoiding contact with homeless services

The study records the experience of the families as perceived and reported by them and has not been compared against reports from the services with which they interacted.

Experience of Tenancy Sustainment

The study found that 32 of the families (62%) had been living in the private rented sector before becoming homeless; a large majority of these (78%, n=25) had been in receipt of Rent Supplement (RS). Of these families, 21 (40% of all families but 85% of all those in receipt of RS) reported that RS problems were a contributory factor in them losing their home. While RS continues to be the largest single factor contributing to loss of accommodation, it has fallen in significance when compared with earlier studies. Furthermore, in this study, RS was frequently only one of a complex set of issues. This points to the success of the Tenancy Protection Service (TPS) operated by Threshold: tenancies which were threatened simply by inadequate RS levels are turning up in homeless services less often, leaving a higher proportion of more complex cases.

For most of the families, TPS would not have been a relevant intervention as the Notice of Termination (NoT) was valid, or they were not in private rented accommodation or not receiving RS. However, in around 10% of cases access to the TPS could have played a role in averting loss of the original home.

In a third of all cases (17) the family had received a Notice of Termination (NoT) resulting from the property being sold, repossessed by the bank or required for the landlord's own use. However, 14 of these cases were preceded by some dispute about rent; a rent increase, discontinuation of 'top up' payments, or a Community Welfare Officer (CWO) request to negotiate a rent cut. In other cases, RS had been refused, reduced, suspended or not accepted by the landlord. Anecdotal evidence from the study suggests that some landlords may have used the reason of sale or family use falsely in order to terminate a tenancy, following a dispute about rent. Some of these cases, too, may have been averted by access to the TPS at a much earlier stage, before issues over rent escalated.

One significant cohort not previously identified in studies of homeless Dublin families was newly formed single-parent households which had previously been living in a (Local

Authority) parental home but had been forced to leave without being able to access alternative housing. This group comprised almost a quarter (n=12) of all families in the study.

Further study is required to see whether this is a persistent cause of homelessness or a once-off result. If it is a consistent factor, 'family reconnection' approaches might play a useful role. Family reconnection is a client-driven case-management approach to strengthen relationships and resolve conflicts between young people who leave home and their families.

The study also shows that entering homeless services was not the first option for most families and there was no evidence of families declaring themselves homeless because of (mistaken) beliefs that this would improve their situation on the housing list.

Experience of rapid re-housing

The study shows that in the period between a family receiving a NoT and presenting as homeless, the opportunities for rapid rehousing are very limited, and services are not set up to assist them during this period. In the majority of instances families sought help before losing their homes. Typically they contacted a Local Authority (52%) or Local Councillor (29%). A further 25% contacted Threshold and 23% approached a Citizens Information Centre. In a significant number of cases the families were not provided with appropriate or timely information, and were not referred to relevant services; 17% families stated that they were told nothing could be done '*until they actually became homeless*' and to come back at this point. This was the case even where the family had written proof that they would shortly lose their home.

Despite being in crisis following the loss of their home, interviewees reported waiting on average one month for Emergency Accommodation, having to 'prove' their homeless situation and being told by officials that there was no emergency accommodation available. These families described having to sleep in friend's or family's houses on the floor or sofa, in a B&B paid from their own resources or with their children in their car while waiting to be allocated Emergency Accommodation.

While the range of issues raised in attempting to sustain existing tenancies is increasingly complex, all the families reported the same reasons for failing to achieve rapid re-housing: lack of private rented accommodation and the fact that RS levels are insufficient to allow them to enter or re-enter the private rented sector.

The families described the frustration of searching for alternative accommodation and finding that rents were unaffordable, the RS level they were entitled to would not cover the cost of the market rent, most landlords were refusing to accept RS (or in some cases the new Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)), or they were not eligible for RS. In addition, any savings towards a deposit and the required one month's rent in advance had been exhausted, or families could not get references. Many respondents described queues of other people turning up at viewings, and being unable to hold accommodation due to competition with those not receiving RS and therefore able to offer cash to landlords. While the Homeless HAP pilot overcomes some of these barriers, families are not entitled to this scheme before they actually become homeless. The anecdotal evidence of landlord resistance to HAP is also of concern.

1. Introduction

In the last three years, family homelessness in Ireland has risen from a relatively limited problem, mostly associated with a range of complex social issues, to crisis level which now impacts families whose primary problem is simply an inability to pay escalating rents in the private rented sector. The number of families becoming homeless across the country in the last two and a half years has grown consistently, with the largest number in Dublin due to a critical shortage of affordable housing and steeper rises in rents.

The main policy response to this has been a prevention initiative led by the four Dublin local authorities and delivered by the Tenancy Protection Service (TPS), operated by Threshold. Latest figures (May 2015) from the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) report that under this initiative 553 families were prevented from becoming homeless in Dublin during the period June 2014 to March 2015. However during the same period, approximately the same number of families have lost their homes. By the last week in April there were a total of 442 families in homeless accommodation in the Dublin region, up from 411 the previous month. Even more shocking is the fact that these figures include more than 1,000 children who are homeless with their families.

Once a family presents to a Local Authority and is assessed as being homeless, they are placed in Emergency Accommodation and allocated to the Focus Ireland New Presenters Team. Focus Ireland is the voluntary organisation designated as the Homeless Action Team (HAT) for families by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE), and is funded by them to work with and supporting the vast majority of homeless families in the four Dublin local authority areas concerned (Dublin City, Fingal, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown and South Dublin).

When the New Presenters Team was established in 2012, an average of 8 new families were presenting as homeless in Dublin every month. These numbers have risen dramatically since then, with an average of 32 families becoming homeless each month in 2014. This figure has now doubled to an average of 63 families each month so far in 2015.

In April 2015, 71 families were referred to Focus Ireland by the four Dublin local authorities, 63 of whom have no previous experience of homelessness. This figure does not include families who have recently become homeless but have not yet been placed in emergency accommodation.

2. Aim of Research

In line with Focus Ireland's emphasis on developing strategies to prevent homelessness, the objective of this research was to establish whether the 71 families who were allocated to the New Presenters Team in April 2015 approached any services or organisations seeking support, information and advice before becoming homeless.

The aim of this research is to determine which, if any, support and information services the families contacted and what advice or preventative measures were offered to them. The study's research question is to establish how many of the 71 families who were allocated to the New Presenters Team in April 2015 could have been prevented from becoming homeless through access to tenancy protection, homelessness prevention advice or rapid re-housing prior to entering homeless services..

3. Methodology

The 71 families who were placed in Emergency Accommodation in Dublin during the month of April 2015 were contacted by a researcher in Focus Ireland to see if they would participate in a short telephone interview as part of this study. Details on the 71 families were provided by the New Presenters Team to the researcher.

An introduction (Appendix 1) was prepared by the researcher to explain the purpose and scope of this study to the families, and verbal consent was obtained from the families involved. A set of questions were developed as a guide for these interviews (Appendix 2).

Focus Ireland's research ethic guidelines were adhered to in the completion of this study. The following ethical considerations were adhered to for the interviews with families:

- The need to ensure that the families felt in no way under any obligation to participate in the interview, and that they fully consented to the process.
- The need to ensure that the families understood that if they chose not to participate in the study, this would in no way impact on services they would receive from Focus Ireland.
- The need to ensure that those who did wish to participate were comfortable with the process, that the interview only explored issues of relevance to the study, and that they could answer only those questions that they were comfortable with.
- The need to protect the anonymity of the participants.
- The need to ensure that participants could, at any stage during the interview or prior to report write up, withdraw from the research process.

All 71 families were contacted by telephone between 21st and 27th May. A total of 52 (73%) of the families agreed to participate in a telephone interview. Only one person refused to participate in the study, while the remaining families did not respond¹.

The study records the experience of the families as perceived and reported by them and has not been compared against reports from the services with which they interacted. In some cases, the advice which the families say there were given is hard to understand given the circumstances which the family say they faced. Some of these instances have been explored with Threshold to better understand the circumstances. It is important to note that the study records what the families heard and understood, rather than what the agencies intended to convey or believe they conveyed.

¹ Families were contacted a total of three times by telephone, and then sent a text message.

4. Profile of Families

4.1 Nationality

Of the 52 families who participated in this study, 27% (14) were non-Irish national families.

It is interesting to note that Census 2011 found that almost half of all households renting in urban areas were headed by a non-Irish national², however the census does not break down between families and other households. 23% (16) of the 71 families who became homeless in April 2015 were non-Irish nationals, so while non-Irish nationals represent a significant proportion of the newly homeless families, it does not appear that they are over-represented.

4.2 Family type

33 (63%) of the families were lone parent families, all headed by females.

4.3 Accommodation type before becoming homeless

For 62% (32) of the families, their last home had been as tenants in the private rented sector. 25 of these families had been in private rented accommodation immediately prior to homelessness, while the remaining 7 had availed of informal arrangements between losing their tenancy and becoming homeless.

'Were you renting your accommodation before becoming homeless?' (n=52)	Number	Percentage
Yes	28	53.8%
Of which: in Private rented sector	25	
In Social rented sector	3	
No	24	46.2%
Total	52	100.0%

Table 1: Number of families in rented accommodation immediately before becoming homeless

Table 2 below indicates that while 24 families stated that they were not renting prior to becoming homeless, 7 of these had lost or had to leave private rented accommodation earlier in their pathway into homelessness, forcing them into one of the temporary living situations.

'If not renting were you living in rented accommodation before that?' (n=24)	Number	Percentage
Yes	7	29.2%
No	17	70.8%

² Roof over our heads, CSO, August 2012 p20

Total	24	100.0%
-------	----	--------

Table 2: Number of families who had been in private rented accommodation before stated tenure type

The 24 families which had not been in rented accommodation immediately prior to homelessness lived in a variety of accommodation types as set out in Table 3.

Accommodation prior to becoming homeless (n=24)	Number	Percentage
With family	16	66.7%
With friends	4	16.7%
Halting Site	2	8.3%
B&B (from own resources) ³	1	4.2%
Owner occupier	1	4.2%
Total	24	100%

Table 3: Accommodation type of families not renting before becoming homeless

Of those staying with family or friends, many mentioned that this entailed sleeping either on a sofa or the floor, often with the entire family in one room. Other respondents stated that their family had to be ‘split up’, with some members having to stay in another location due to lack of space. More shocking is that five families stated that they slept with their children in their car at various intervals.

Several interviewees reported long periods of insecure accommodation between losing their home and entering homeless services.

One woman interviewed, who had been an owner occupier, was fleeing domestic violence but had left the Emergency Accommodation she was offered because of the prevalence of drug use there, and stayed on friends’ sofas and in her car with her three children for 3.5 years. Another respondent had to leave her private rented accommodation after her son was threatened, and had been staying in squats and sleeping in a van for 3 years.

One interviewee spent two nights with her partner in their car while friends looked after their baby, then her partner spent a further month in the car while she stayed with their baby at her friends. Similarly, one interviewee described spending a few nights in his car while the rest of his family stayed with friends.

4.4 Living in Private Rented Accommodation

Of the 32 families interviewed who had lived in private rented accommodation, some described living in one or two bedroom units or moving outside of Dublin, despite being far from schools and supports, in order to find affordable accommodation and manage their

³ While only one family is recorded as living in a B&B (from their own resources) directly before being allocated Emergency Accommodation, other families said that they had paid for B&B accommodation for their family between periods spent with other family members and friends.

budget. For example, one couple with three children had been living in a one-bedroom apartment, while another couple with three children had lived in a two-bedroom apartment. In another case, a single mother with four children had lived in a one-bedroom house in Dublin. Four families had relocated to Navan, Kells or Wicklow in order to source more affordable accommodation.

Of the 32 families who had lived in private rented accommodation, 14 (44%) said that their landlord was registered with the PRTB. One respondent had not heard of the PRTB, and the remaining respondents did not know.

4.5 Living in other accommodation

Of the 17 families who had never lived in private rented accommodation, 12 (or just under a quarter of total sample), were young Irish single mothers who had previously been living in their parental home, which in all cases was local authority accommodation. These newly formed households were not able to access private rented accommodation due to market rents that exceeded the Rent Supplement levels or not being able to find a landlord willing to accept Rent Supplement. Most of these respondents described an antagonistic relationship with her mother, and in some instances the mother or mother's partner was reported to be an alcoholic, abusive, or there had been a serious argument leading to the young women being asked or having to leave the family home. In other cases, there was overcrowding in the family home; for example, one young women and her sister, with one child each, shared one room in their mother's small local authority house.

There was one further case of a young non-Irish national woman who had been living with her child in her family home in Offaly until three years ago. This family was not eligible for Rent Supplement and had been staying with friends as they were unable to find affordable accommodation.

The remaining four families who had not lived in private rented accommodation included one non-Irish national who was not eligible for Rent Supplement and had been living with a friend for the last year, two families who had been living in a halting site, and one owner occupier who was leaving a situation of domestic violence.

Table 3 indicates a total of 16 families that had been staying with family members prior to becoming homeless. As discussed above, 12 of these are newly formed households who had been living in the parental home. A further four families had been living in private rented accommodation but had returned to their mothers' home following a relationship breakdown, receipt of a Notice of Termination (NoT) from a landlord, and having to leave unsuitable accommodation. These families could not continue to stay at their family home due to overcrowding. In one case, a mother and three children had to leave as her brother and his children had also been forced to move back to the family home.

Another respondent reported that Dublin City Council (DCC) would not allow her and her two children to continue staying in her mother's local authority house as this 'was overcrowding', despite her mother being happy to have her stay. In a further instance, a couple and their three children who had been living in two bedroomed accommodation which they had to leave after receiving a NoT, also stated that DCC would not allow them to go to the family home as this constituted overcrowding, even though they had been advised by officials in the Central Placement Service (CPS) located in Parkgate Street to stay with family.

4.6. Rent Supplement

Of the 32 families whose had been living in the private rented sector before becoming homeless, 25 had been in receipt of Rent Supplement⁴.

'Were you in receipt of Rent Supplement?' (n=32)	Number	Percentage
Yes	25	78.1%
No	7	21.9%
Total	32	100.0%

Table 4: Number of families in receipt of Rent Supplement

It is important to note that 6 of the 7 families not in receipt of Rent Supplement were non-Irish national families. Many of these families appeared unfamiliar with the Rent Supplement or social welfare system. In three cases, their landlord refused to accept Rent Supplement; while in another case the family had been refused a Rent Supplement payment due to the rent being above the Rent Supplement level. Two other families were not eligible for Rent Supplement as one of the adults was working, even though this was described as a minimum wage job. In these cases, the family had managed to pay the cost of the rent from their own resources for a period of time before becoming homeless. The remaining non-Irish national family was not eligible for Rent Supplement and had been staying with friends⁵.

4.7. Reasons for becoming homeless

The table below lists the reasons, as stated by the 52 interviewed families, for their family becoming homeless. Often respondents stated more than one reason for the family becoming homeless. For example, a landlord increased the rent, then the landlord sold the property; or there was a relationship breakdown, then overcrowding at a friend's or family member's home.

As can be seen below, whatever the preceding reason for losing their original accommodation (failed Tenancy Sustainment) , the inability to secure new housing at the low levels of RS was cited by virtually all families as the reason why they could not secure alternative affordable accommodation (failed Rapid Rehousing).

Tenancies in the private rented sector tend to be quite short (estimated by the PRTB as around 18 months), so households living in this sector are familiar with terminating tenancies and finding new accommodation. The scale of difficulty experienced in obtaining such new housing (Rapid Rehousing) is then as significant a factor in the families entering homeless services as the reasons for loss of the original tenancy.

⁴ As noted, 25 of these 32 families had been in private rented accommodation immediately prior to becoming homeless, of these 19 (76%) has been in receipt of RS.

⁵ It should be noted that two further non-Irish national families had not lived in private rented accommodation before becoming homeless - although they did not state that they were not entitled to Rent Supplement, this is possible that this is one reason they had not resided in private rented accommodation.

In giving an account of events leading up to becoming homeless, family members described a number of issues that frustrated and aggravated an already stressful situation for them. For example, two families mentioned being told by Dublin City Council (DCC) that they could not continue to stay in their parental (mother’s) local authority home as this would be considered overcrowding.

Main reason	Further breakdown of reasons	Number
Notice of Termination due to property no longer being available	• Landlord sold property	11
	• Landlord went bankrupt/property repossessed	3
	• Landlord required property back for his own need	3
Notice of Termination due to in affordability of rent	• Increased rent/could not afford rent	5
	• Tenant no longer in receipt of Rent Supplement/ Rent Supplement reduced/ refused	1
	• Landlord refused or no longer accepting Rent Supplement/ reduced rent allowance rate	1
Could not locate affordable private rented accommodation		48
Relationship Breakdown/Changes in Family Circumstances	• Relationship with parents broke down	13
	• Relationship with partner ended	1
	•	
Overcrowding	• At friend’s accommodation	3
	• Overcrowding in the family home	9
	• Other ⁶	1
Unsuitability of accommodation	• Accommodation of poor quality	2
Domestic Violence		4
Anti-social behaviour/intimidation	• Included threatening behaviour/threats against the family	3
	• Fell out with neighbours	1
	• Other	2

Table 5: Reasons for homelessness as stated by families

⁶ In this case the family had been living in private rented accommodation and the landlord gave a NoT due to ‘overcrowding’ when the respondent’s husband was returned from prison.

One woman, who was leaving a situation of domestic violence with her three children, had been offered a two-bedroom house by a housing association but said that DCC 'blocked' this due to overcrowding. Others referred to the length of time that they were on the housing list, on average 8 years, and they saw social housing as the sustainable housing solution for them. Some families mentioned the difficulty of not being able to deal directly with landlords regarding the acceptance of Rent Supplement as they could only communicate through estate agents by email, the problem of a centrally located Rent Supplement office which made decisions without regard for the particular situation of the family, and the length of time appeals to this office take.

5. Tenancy Sustainment measures

A Protocol Arrangement between the Dublin Region Homeless Executive and the Department of Social Protection, which is administered through Threshold who act as a single point of contact, became effective in the four Dublin local authorities in June 2014. This protocol is consistent with Article 38 of the Social Welfare Regulations (2007), which allows payments to be made in exceptional cases to Rent Supplement claimants across all household types.

'The primary objective of this protocol is to secure a speedy intervention to prevent households residing in private rental dwellings who are in receipt of SWA rent supplement payments from losing their tenancies and entering an episode of homelessness due to:

- i. A combination of income inadequacy, missed payments and early arrears due to actual or notified increased rental charges, and/or;
- ii. Decision-making by landlords and tenants in relation to their respective roles and responsibilities under Irish Landlord and Tenancy Law; and/or;
- iii. Where the provision of housing information, advice, tenancy sustainment and support interventions are required to deliver a de-escalation of disputes between landlords and tenants and to mediate and seek a resolution to same in order to secure the tenancy and prevent an episode of homelessness arising from the loss of the tenancy.

Persons identified under this protocol will be fast tracked, as appropriate, for inclusion in the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme once operational'⁷.

Based on interviews with the 52 families who were allocated to the New Presenters Team in April 2015, this study found that the TPS were not immediately applicable in the majority of cases (n=47; see Table 6 below). In 36% of these cases, a Notice of Termination (NoT) was found to be legal due to a landlord selling his house, a property that was repossessed, or required back for the landlord's own use. In these instances, the families were advised that

⁷ Dublin Region Homeless Executive, (2014) 'Programme for the Prevention of Homelessness: Protocol Arrangement between the Dublin Region Homeless Executive and the Department of Social Protection'

nothing could be done for their situation or that an increase in their Rent Supplement level was not applicable.

The Protocols were also not applicable for families who were not residing in the private rented sector or who were not in receipt of Rent Supplement immediately prior to becoming homeless. This includes, for example, newly formed households who had been living in the parental home or those who had returned home due to various circumstances. This was also the case for families who had to leave their home due to threats, intimidation or domestic violence.

Cases where the Threshold TPS Protocols were not applicable (n=47)	Number	Percentage
Landlord issued valid NoT due to property being sold, repossessed or required for landlord's own use	17	36.2%
Newly formed households who were still living at parental home	12	25.6%
Returned to parental home following relationship breakdown, anti-social behaviour or unsuitable accommodation	4	8.5%
Leaving a situation of serious threat/intimidation	4	8.5%
Leaving a situation of Domestic Violence	3	6.4%
Non-Irish national living in Private Rented Accommodation; not in receipt of or landlord refusing to accept Rent Supplement	3	6.4%
Non-Irish national staying with friends (one of whom stated not eligible for Rent Supplement)	2	4.2%
Other ⁸	2	4.2%
Total	47	100.0%

Table 6: Number of cases in which the TPS Protocols did not apply

As illustrated in the table above, 17 families were issued a NoT by their landlord on the basis of a claim that the property no longer being available. However, 14 of these 17 cases had been preceded by a rent increase, the discontinuation of 'top up' payments, or a request by the Community Welfare Officer (CWO) for the tenant to negotiate a rent reduction with their landlord. In other cases, Rent Supplement had been refused, suspended or not accepted by the landlord. Interestingly, these 14 instances all involved a NoT being issued for reasons of the property either being sold or required for the landlord's own use. In some of these cases,

⁸ In one cases this involved a rent increase, but the respondent did not contact services until the family was actually homeless; and in the other case a landlord gave (illegal) notice that the family was 'overcrowded' in the accommodation when the respondent's husband returned from prison.

the interviewee reported seeing the property re-advertised for rent a short time after they left. In the remaining 3 cases, which had not been preceded by some issue concerning rent levels, the property was repossessed by the bank. It is possible that the TPS might have helped sustain some of these tenancies if engagement had been much earlier in the process, by the time contact was made a NoT had been issued on an apparently valid basis and no intervention was possible.

Findings from this study suggest that five families may have been prevented from becoming homeless if they had access to the TPS (see Appendix 3). However, despite a public awareness campaign by DRHE in June 2014 and again in April-May 2015, these five families reported not being aware of the Protocols. When these families contacted Local Authorities and other agencies they were told that nothing could be done to resolve their housing situation *until they became homeless*.

Eight of the 71 families who were placed in Emergency Accommodation in April 2015 had experienced homelessness previously. Of the 52 families interviewed in this study, five had previous experience of homelessness and 48 (or 92%) expressed the opinion that they never expected their situation to lead to homelessness. Many said that they never thought they would become homeless because ‘we have children’, ‘I thought we would be able to find another place’, ‘we thought we were safe in this country’, ‘I am well educated, I have a degree’, ‘[I] never [thought I would be homeless], I have been working for 10 years before this, was well paid and never needed social welfare or Rent Supplement before’.

Who the respondent contacted when they realised they were in difficulty or may be at risk of homelessness	Number	Percentage
Local Authority	27	51.8%
Local Councillor/TD	15	28.8%
Threshold	13	25.0%
C.I.C.	12	23.1%
Other Non-Statutory Organisation*	9	17.3%
Other Statutory authority representative**	8	15.4%
Focus Ireland Services	7	13.5%
HPU	5	9.6%
PRTB	4	7.7%
Parkgate Street	2	3.8%
C.W.O. / Central Rent Supplement Unit	2	3.8%

Table 7: Various services contacted by families at risk of homelessness

(*includes: Church, Women’s Aid/refuge, women’s health centre/resource centre, counsellor, HUB on the internet, Samaritans. ** Includes: Social Worker, Public Health Nurse, An Garda)

Eight respondents mentioned that their first point of contact was with Parkgate Street, the HPU or the CPS Homeless Helpline; two of these families had experienced homelessness before. The remaining families stated that they contacted some other service or organisation prior to becoming homeless (see Table 8 below). In the majority of instances this included a Local Authority (52%) or a Local Councillor (29%).

Nine (17%) of families interviewed reported that the Local Authority, HPU or CIC advised them that they could not help the family *'until they actually became homeless'*. This occurred even where families were able to provide a NoT from their landlord or demonstrate that they were trying to find other accommodation. One respondent stated that she was advised by her Local Authority 'the day you have nowhere to go, that you have no sofa to sleep on, then you take your children and you go to Parkgate Street'. A further six respondents were told 'to find work', to 'keep looking on the internet' or 'try to find other accommodation'. In all these cases, the families were unable to secure alternative private rented accommodation as outlined above in Section 7. Two interviewees reported being informed by local councillors that 'we are only dealing with people who are actually homeless now' or 'the housing crisis is so bad there is nothing we can do'. In other cases local councillors said that they would advocate with a Local Authority for housing on the respondents behalf or advised the family to go directly to Parkgate Street.

Of the 13 families who approached Threshold, nine say that they were informed that either their NoT was legitimate or the lease was 'not legal'. In these cases, the families report that they were advised that they could not be given further assistance or that the case was not applicable for the TPS protocols. In some of these cases however, the NoT was extended and one family was advised to 'take the landlord to court' as they had been evicted illegally⁹.

6. Sourcing alternative accommodation: Rapid Re-housing

International literature on family homelessness, describes two distinct phases of homelessness prevention: sustaining the existing home and Rapid-Rehousing prior to accessing homeless service¹⁰. To explore the experience of attempted rapid rehousing, after respondents had given an account of the circumstances leading to their becoming homeless, they were asked if they had sought alternative accommodation.

In nearly all cases, families described looking at many advertised properties but finding that rents were too high, most landlords were refusing to accept Rent Supplement (and in some cases the new Housing Assistance Payment or HAP), the Rent Supplement level they were entitled to would not cover the cost of the market rent, or they were not eligible for Rent

⁹ Threshold note that these two phrases (lease is 'not legal' and 'take the landlord to court') are not phrases their advisors would use, and they reflect the terminology used by the families.

¹⁰ Rapid Rehousing, what the research says, Urban Institute 2015
<http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/2000265-Rapid-Re-housing-What-the-Research-Says.pdf>

Supplement. Furthermore, families referred to having exhausted their savings or not being able to amass, or have access in the first place, to a deposit and the required one month's rent in advance. In some cases, families could not get references because they had not rented before or because their relationship with a previous landlord had broken down. Many described the intense competition with other accommodation seekers, especially those not dependent on Rent Supplement and therefore able to offer cash to prospective landlords, with queues of people turning up at viewings. Some respondents mentioned looking at one or two-bedroom apartments and trying to arrange sharing with other couples, even though this would have been inadequate for their needs. Others said they tried looking for more affordable accommodation outside the Dublin area although this would distance them from their support network.

Even in the many cases where these families had been given notice of a month or more that they were going to lose their accommodation, they were unable to source alternative affordable private rented accommodation.

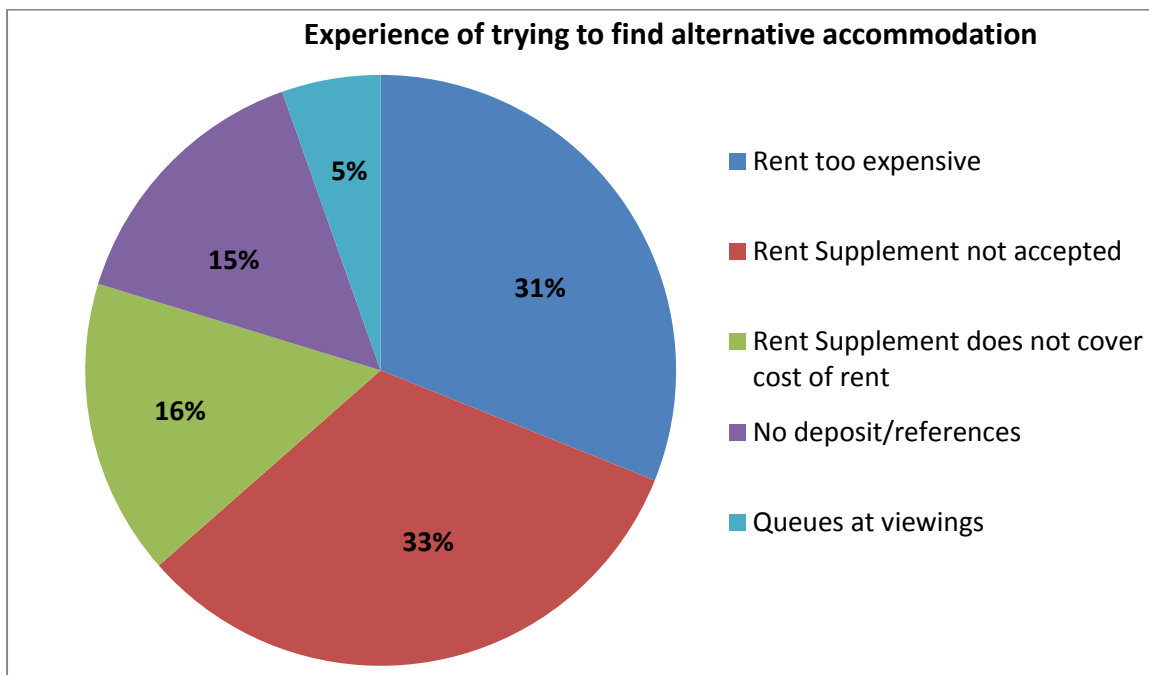


Figure 1: Experience of sourcing alternative accommodation

The chart above illustrates the following accounts of the interviewed families trying to source alternative accommodation (most families gave an account which included a range of the various experiences listed below):

- 23 families mentioned that rent was 'too expensive' or 'too high', that rent has 'gone up', or that they 'could not afford the rent'.
- 24 families said that 'landlords were not taking Rent Supplement' or that 'the houses that took Rent Supplement went too quickly'. A further 2 families mentioned that landlords were not willing to accept the HAP either.
- 12 families described how they 'could not find anything within the rent limit', 'houses are all over the capping level', Rent Supplement 'is not enough to cover the rent', or that they 'could not afford to pay the top up'. Five of these families stated that they

need a three-bed accommodation unit for the number of children they have, which would cost approx. €1,200 – €1,300 a month, but their Rent Supplement limit is around €700. A further four families said they tried to get a one or two-bedroomed house or to share with other couples, and 2 other families mentioned looking outside Dublin despite this being far from school and supports.

- 7 families stated they did not have or could not afford a deposit or the required one month's rent in advance.
- 4 families did not have any references.
- 4 families mentioned the large queues of people turning up for a viewing.

7. Length of time waiting for Emergency Accommodation

Many of the families interviewed mentioned having to wait for Emergency Accommodation with no other place to stay, and having to ring the CPS Homeless Helpline every day. One respondent reported being told by staff at the HPU that 'there is a crisis at the moment and we have nowhere to put you'. Of the families who mentioned waiting for emergency accommodation; this varied from a few nights to over three months, and was on average one month. Typically families slept in friend's or family's houses on the floor or sofa, in a B&B that they paid for from their own resources, or in their car. One woman described having to remain with her violent partner for 6 months, as she had nowhere else to go. Families also said they had to 'prove' their homeless situation, for example with a letter from the Gardaí regarding threats, or invoices from a hotel; in some cases families stated that they did not feel believed.

8. Recommendations

This study examines the experiences of families as they became homeless and what interventions might have prevented this from occurring. A number of areas for action emerge from the results, and these can usefully be divided into two phases of prevention:

- Tenancy sustainment: Interventions to maintain the family in their existing home
- Rapid Re-housing: Supporting the family to find alternative accommodation during the notice period and so avoiding contact with homeless services

Actions which would have assisted families to maintain their tenancy in their existing home

Although in several cases the impact was indirect, the Rent Supplement maximum rent level falling behind the rent demanded by a landlord was cited by 35% of the families as a factor in their becoming homeless.

- Recommendation 1: The Rent Supplement maximum rent levels should be reviewed by the Department of Social Protection to reflect actual market rents -

rents have increased by between 20% and 40% since they were last revised in June 2013.

If the Department of Social Protection continues to refuse to raise the Rent Supplement levels, the existing weaknesses in the Tenancy Protection Service (TPS) must be addressed. The evidence from the interviews with these recently homeless families is that a significant number interacted with local authorities prior to becoming homeless, but were not effectively informed about the TPS.

- Recommendation 2: It is acknowledged that most of the families interviewed lost their homes prior to the current awareness campaign concerning the TPS. However, the findings re-emphasise that awareness campaigns must be well resourced and on-going so as to achieve engagement much earlier in the pathway into homelessness
- Recommendation 3: In addition to the generalised awareness campaign being run concerning the TPS, there is the need for better training for public representatives and front-line staff in local authorities about the TPS and how to communicate its role to families in need.
- Recommendation 4: Given the high proportion of families which are non-Irish nationals, the TPS awareness campaign should be broadened to use appropriate languages and cultural networks.

Two families report that they were advised that the TPS Protocol was not applicable in their case because the lease was 'illegal' due to the recording of incorrect rent payable (i.e. the rent set out in the lease did not reflect the 'top up payments'). As noted on page 13, it is difficult to understand the exact nature of the interaction of these families as reported, as the response the families report does not match the practice of Threshold in such cases.

- Recommendation 5: There is a need for improved awareness of rights and advocacy with families where a top-up is paid but is not included on the signed lease – as such payments do not affect the validity of the lease and the payment of a 'top-up' is not in itself a barrier to accessing the TPS.

Landlords terminating the tenancy as they claimed to be selling their property, going into receivership or making the home available to family members were cited by 36% of the families as factors in their becoming homeless. These are legitimate reasons for issuing a NoT under current legislation, but there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that some landlords may have cited these reasons as pretext.

Under the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, landlords who are found by a PRTB Dispute Resolution Tribunal to have falsely availed of these reasons to terminate a tenancy may be ordered to pay damages up to an amount considered appropriate, depending on the inconvenience suffered by the tenant. However, there is virtually no policing of this regulation, very few cases are notified and PRTB cases take a very long time to be heard.

- Recommendation 6: Given the number of families becoming homeless as a result of the clauses related to selling or use of the accommodation for the landlord's own family, there is need for much greater scrutiny of such cases and the application of appropriate penalties for false use. Potential actions include: requiring landlords who

avail of this reason for NoT to register this with the PRTB, setting a minimum level of damages to be paid to wrongfully evicted tenants and including awareness of the consequences of mis-use of these clauses in awareness campaigns to tenants and landlords.

Twenty percent of homeless families interviewed were new household formations, with families leaving the parental home for a number of reasons - ranging from relationship breakdown to overcrowding. All the parental homes in this study were local authority dwellings. It is possible that, with the right interventions and support, some of these families might have been able to continue living in the parental home for an additional period.

- **Recommendation 7:** This finding highlights again the important role that the first contact with the local authority might play. Local authority staff should be able to deploy a range of supports, including tenancy sustainment services (TSS), for families who are not yet homeless and report to their local authority about their situation. In such cases, the TSS service would undertake an assessment of the situation and, if appropriate, engage external services to create better relationships to sustain the current living arrangements.
- **Recommendation 8:** Local Authorities should review the application of 'overcrowding' regulations during the current housing crisis, as there is an apparent contradiction between the proposals from homeless services that families should stay with wider family and from housing services that family members cannot stay.

Rapid Re-housing: Actions which would have assisted the family to find alternative accommodation during their notice period, and so have avoided entering homelessness

All 52 families interviewed reported that the Rent Supplement maximum rent level falling behind the rent demanded by a landlord was a contributory factor in them being unable to find alternative accommodation prior to entering homeless services.

- **Recommendation 9:** The Rent Supplement maximum rent levels should be reviewed by the Department of Social Protection to reflect the fact that rents have increased by between 20% and 40% since they were last revised in June 2013. While this would not in itself address the shortage of available housing, it would allow such families to work on an 'equal footing' with others seeking accommodation.

If the Department of Social Protection continues to refuse to raise the Rent Supplement levels, the various measures currently available to sustain families in their current accommodation and to families that have entered homeless services should be extended to create a 'rapid re-housing' programme for families who have received a NoT but have not yet become homeless.

- **Recommendation 10:** A 'Rapid Re-housing programme should be established, targeting families who have received a NoT but have not yet become homeless. This would include access to 'Homeless HAP' and the TPS uplift in relation to rent levels.

The evidence from this research and elsewhere clearly shows that early intervention is extremely important in either securing a household's existing home or achieving rapid rehousing. At present, the system is entirely dependent upon vulnerable and stressed families obtaining information and seeking help within the necessary time period. Experience shows that the most vulnerable families are unlikely to do this due to the stresses they are experiencing. A new system, in which advance notice of a forced termination of tenancy is given to local authorities, should be put in place so that pro-active intervention is possible.

- Recommendation 11: Introduce a requirement that landlords must notify the Local Authority when a NoT is given in relation to rent arrears, or repossession of the rented unit. The Local Authority should then refer the family to designated Rapid Re-housing programme.

There was evidence from the interviews with families that landlords who had experienced the inefficiencies of the Rent Supplement system were viewing HAP as being similar, and were therefore also reluctant to accept this payment.

- Recommendation 12: Build on the existing awareness campaign to clearly communicate the difference between HAP and Rent Supplement to landlords and landlord representatives (e.g. estate agents, PRTB etc.).
- Recommendation 13: Ensure that forthcoming legislation which will prevent discrimination against RS tenants will also extend to HAP tenancies.

Continued dependence on the private rented sector does not address the lack of social housing. While the Government's Social Housing Strategy and Minister Alan Kelly's announcement of a new social housing investment over the next three years are welcome, this will not increase capacity in the short term.

- Recommendation 14: All measures which would result in increased housing supply in the short-term (e.g. a more pro-active approach to use of NAMA stock for social housing, increased investment in housing units from NAMA stock by Local Authorities, faster construction methods etc.), should be actively explored, while maintaining the goal of creating quality housing in sustainable communities.

General

The study demonstrates that not only is family homelessness increasing, the pattern of causes is constantly evolving as economic conditions change and new preventative measures are introduced.

- Recommendation 15: A similar full survey of all families becoming homeless should be carried out at least quarterly to keep track of evolving patterns and to assess the effectiveness of prevention measures.

Appendix 1: Information provided to families on the study and objectives

Introduction:

I am working with Focus Ireland to look at what may have prevented families like yours from actually becoming homeless. We want to draw government attention to the huge number of families that are becoming homeless (70 other families along with yours become homeless last month).

With your agreement, I'd like to ask some questions about your experience so as to understand what may have prevented your family from becoming homeless while you were still in your home. I understand that you may not yet have spoken to anyone from Focus Ireland Services so I can give you a number to contact if you feel you need support in the meantime (contact for NP team for appointment for A & I clinic on Thursdays).

I also want to reassure you that if you agree to take part you won't be identified in the research and all your answers will remain confidential. Also, whether or not you agree to talk to me will not affect in any way the service you get from Focus Ireland.

It should take about 10 minutes to answer the questions so could I ask you for your consent to take part in this piece of research?

(IF YES) Just to let you know, the information I am asking for will only be used for the purpose of this piece of research, it will be deleted at the end of the project and when the Focus Ireland Team contact you for an Initial Assessment you will be asked to give written consent to gather more detailed data that will help them to help you.

Firstly, I'd like to thank you for your time, I know that you and your family are in very difficult circumstances. I know too, that you have probably already given much of this information and told your story to other agencies and services but your experience could be very helpful in providing prevention services for other families

Appendix 2: Guide questions for telephone Interview

Question 1 (Establish the last place of tenure in order to determine whether or not the family was living in the private rented sector)

1A. 'Were you renting your accommodation prior to becoming homeless?' ('...*this time*' if the family have experienced homelessness previously – to be established by cross checking with the New Presenters Excel data)

If they answer No, not renting;

1B. note the tenancy type (i.e. owner occupier, living with family/friends, living abroad, other)

If **Not renting** (except where they were owner occupier) ask;

1C. 'Were you living in a private rented accommodation before that?'

If 'Yes' in private rented prior to last living arrangement go on to 1D.

If they answer **Yes, renting** ask;

1D. 'Were you renting from....?'

A private landlord

As part of the RAS scheme

A local/voluntary housing authority

Other

1E. 'In what part of Dublin was the accommodation and how much rent per month were you paying?'

1F. 'What support, if any, was offered by your landlord/housing provider when you first got into difficulty/were given notice/had to move?'

1G. Do you know whether your landlord was registered with the PRTB?

- Yes registered with PRTB No not registered with PRTB Don't know

Question 2 (Establish whether the family was in receipt of rent supplement)

2A. 'Were you in receipt of any rent supplement in order to help pay your rent?'

If 'Yes', in receipt of rent supplement;

2 B. 'How much per month was this supplement?'

2 C. 'Was your rent reviewed during the time you were a tenant here and if so what was the outcome of that?' (i.e. landlord refused to lower rent, forms were lost etc.)

2 D. 'Some people who get rent supplement pay a top up, did you pay any top up payments to cover the difference between the amount of your rent and the amount of rent supplement you were receiving?'

If 'No', not in receipt of rent supplement ask;

2E. 'Did you ever apply for rent supplement for that property during the time you were a tenant there?' No (go to **2F**) Yes (go to **2G**)

If 'No', did not make application for rent supplement ask;

2F. Why not? (i.e. in employment, landlord would not accept it, thought they would not be entitled etc.)

If 'Yes', had applied for rent supplement ask'

2G. 'What was the outcome of that application?' (i.e. refused due to family member working/not on housing list, lost accommodation before application was fully processed etc.)

Question 3 (Establish reason for becoming homeless)

3A. What do you think were the main reasons that you became homeless?

Main reason	Further breakdown of reasons	Number
Notice of Termination due to property no longer being available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlord sold property • Landlord went bankrupt/property repossessed • Landlord required property back for his own need 	
Notice of Termination due to in affordability of rent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased rent/could not afford rent • Tenant no longer in receipt of rent supplement/ rent supplement reduced/ refused • Landlord refused or no longer accepting rent supplement/ reduced rent allowance rate 	
Could not locate affordable private rented accommodation		
Relationship Breakdown/Changes in Family Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship with parents broke down • Relationship with partner ended • Other 	
Overcrowding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At friends accommodation • Overcrowding in the family home • Other?? 	
Unsuitability of accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation of poor quality 	
Domestic Violence		

Anti-social behaviour/intimidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included threatening behaviour/threats against the family • Fell out with neighbours • Other 	
------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

3 B. 'Did you ever consider that your situation could result in you becoming homeless?'

- No
 Yes
 Don't know

Question 4 (Establish who the family contacted and the outcome of this)

4A. 'When you first realised that you were in serious difficulty or that you may have been at risk of becoming homeless who, if anyone, did you contact?'

4B. 'How many times did you contact this person/service/organisation?'

4C. 'What was the outcome of this?'

4D. 'Did they refer you to any other service/organisation?'

- No
 Yes
 Don't know/can't remember

» If relevant;

4E. 'Were you given the Freephone number for Thresholds Tenancy Protection Service?'

- Yes, given the Freephone number (go to 4F)
 No, not given the Freephone number

4F. Did you contact this number?

If 'YES', 'What was the outcome of this?'

If 'NO', 'Why not?'

4G. If the customer can't remember/doesn't know who they contacted suggest the following;

- Local Councillor/TD
 Local Authority

- C.W.O.
- C.I.C.
- MABS
- Your landlord
- Other Statutory authority representative
- Non Statutory Organisation (e.g. Threshold, Focus Ireland, Simon Community)

4H. Is there anything you can think of that might have helped your family and possibly prevented you from having to become homeless?

Thank customer for their time and help.

Ensure any expectations around service provision are managed and reassure customer that the New Presenters Team are endeavouring to contact them as quickly as possible; in the meantime those with questions and queries about their situation can be referred to the Advice and Information Services in Eustace Street while any child protection concerns or families that feel they are not coping and need support should be advised to contact the NPCM team.

Appendix 3: Case studies

1. Cases that may have been applicable for the TPS Protocol (n=5):		
No.	Details	Support sought by tenant
1	Family (one adult and one child) living in the Fingal area when rent increased from €950 to €1,300 per month. Notice of Termination (NoT) given due to inability to continue paying rent.	CIC advised that once notice was given there was nothing they could do. CWO advised Rent Supplement could be increased from €950 to €1,000, but the landlord would not accept this and the family could not find any other property for €1,000 per month. CWO said to 'keep looking' and also advised them to go back to the family home (respondent's parents) which they did for a few days but her father became stressed by this situation.
2	Family (couple with three children) had been in their home in the Fingal area for 5 years. Two years ago the rent was reviewed (by CWO) and the tenant managed to have the official rent reduced from €1,150 to €925 per month (unofficial rent was €1,300). Rent Supplement was reduced accordingly and a new lease was drawn up near the end of 2013. In Feb. 2014 the landlord said he had only stated reduced rent in the new lease to allow continued Rent Supplement payment, but still expected to get a total rent of €1,300 and that the tenant was now in arrears, which she agreed to pay off monthly. However, in Sep 2014 following a children's maintenance award by the courts the Rent Supplement payment was decreased to €453 per month and her LPA was also reduced. Arrears became unmanageable and a NoT was given in respect of rent arrears.	The family contacted Threshold in January 2015. They were given details of the TPS Protocol but, the family report, Threshold found that the landlord was not suitable for this programme due to an illegal lease based on an incorrect declaration of the actual rent (i.e. a top up was being paid) ¹¹ . The family were given two NoTs which were found not to be legitimate by the PRTB and they advised the respondent to remain in the property. However, the relationship with the landlord became very strained and eventually he broke into the house with his father and assaulted the respondent so she and her children had to leave. The respondent had also contacted her Local Authority and a local councillor.
3	Family (couple with one child), originally from Algeria, had been living in private rented accommodation in the Fingal area and were in receipt of Rent Supplement until the landlord issued a NoT as he required the property to carry out repairs. The family managed to find another property in Co. Wicklow but were refused Rent Supplement as the rent	Contacted Threshold on three occasions, their Local Authority and the Gardaí regarding the illegal NoT, eviction and landlords threatening behaviour. Threshold advised that they could not help as the lease was illegal (i.e. the rent was more than the cap and the landlord was unwilling to reduce it) ¹² . The Gardaí said they

¹¹ It should be noted that the advice as reported by the family does not accurately reflect the relevant law, or the advice that a Threshold advisor is trained to give.

¹² As noted above (pg 13) the reported advice is at variance with the advice that Threshold would have given in these circumstances, as the payment of a top-up does not invalidate the lease or prevent access to the TSP.

Appendix 3: Case studies

	<p>was €950 and their capping limit is €650. The landlady refused to reduce the rent. They were given an illegal NoT after going into arrears and illegally evicted two days later. They subsequently lost the deposit and two months' rent that they managed to pay from their own resources and the respondent's wife had a miscarriage.</p>	<p>would have to contact a solicitor in relation to the illegal eviction. The family were not given the details of the TPS Protocol.</p>
4	<p>Family (a couple and 3 children) had been living in a 3 bed apartment in the city centre since 2008. In late 2011, the landlord's property was repossessed by the bank and sold to a new landlord. The respondent had been paying an official rent of €950 plus a top up to overall rent of €1,100. However, there was damp in one bedroom and it could not be used so the respondent stopped paying the €150 top up. The landlord said she was in arrears, turned off the ESB for four months and began sending abusive texts and calls; eventually a NoT was issued in August 2014 on the grounds of rent arrears.</p>	<p>Threshold advised the respondent to pay the arrears and to 'try to find somewhere else'. However, the respondent didn't move and reported that she then engaged with a PRTB tribunal and then 'a higher court'. She states that the judge said she could not be evicted over €400 rent arrears and was to be given time to find other accommodation. The respondent had contacted the Local Authority four times before going to court. They told her she was prioritised on the housing list and could be housed in 3 months, so she told the court she only needed 3 months more but she did not get Local Authority housing. She was not given details of the TPS Protocol. She was in contact with the CPS from January when she lost the apartment until April, but could not get Emergency Accommodation. She stayed with relatives for 3 months, slept with her partner in their car for 2 nights while a friend kept her baby, and then stayed in the friend's house while her partner continued to sleep in car for another month. The respondent also contacted a TD.</p>
5	<p>Non-Irish national family (one adult and one child) living in the Fingal area since 2009. Their landlord increased the rent from €850 to €925 per month in April 2014 and Rent Supplement Central Unit advised that Rent Supplement would no longer be paid as a result of the rent increase. However, in July the CPS paid the increased amount for one month and then said they would not continue to pay. The tenant had tried to get more hours from her agency work to pay the arrears (she was in receipt of LPA so could work part time) and had given letters from the agency stating there were no hours available to the Central Rent Supplement Unit. Arrears accumulated and the landlord issued a NoT stating their intention to sell the property. However, the respondent saw the house re-advertised on Daft.ie a few days later.</p>	<p>The respondent had been looking for alternative accommodation for about a year and even looked for a one-bed apartment, but was not able to get this with a child. She wrote to the Central Rent Supplement unit nearly every month - a total of 6 letters. CIC advised her to keep writing as it was pointless appealing the Rent Supplement decision as this would take about 6 months to process. She had been in contact with Threshold for a year and felt they were not helpful. The respondent attended a PRTB tribunal with the landlord. She was told she could appeal the decision but was 'tired' at this stage. Eventually she contacted the HPU on the last day of the lease. She felt she had tried to do everything possible before that.</p>

Appendix 3: Case studies

2. Families living in Private Rented Accommodation until issued a valid NoT due to property being sold, reposessed or required for landlord's use (n=16):		
No.	Details	Support sought by tenant
6	Property reposessed by the bank and respondent was given a short term lease on a second property owned by the landlord, but this also went into receivership.	Family contacted their Local Authority and showed letters from the PRTB regarding the NoT and evidence that they were searching for alternative accommodation, but were told 'we cannot help you until you become homeless'
7	Non-Irish national couple in DCC area. The respondent's husband was working when they first moved to Ireland but he then lost this job. Their landlord would not accept Rent Supplement, so the respondent paid €640 for a few months until they were issued with 6 weeks' NoT stating the landlord's intention to sell the property.	Initially contacted the Local Authority when they received the NoT and were advised 'there's nothing we can do until you become homeless'. They were given the contact details for Parkgate Hall for if and when this happened. The family also contacted Threshold in January 2015 but were told that the notice was valid.
8	Non- Irish national family living in Co. Wicklow. Their rent was raised from €950 to €1,250 per month. They offered to pay €1,100 but the landlord would not accept this and rent arrears built up. Eventually the landlord gave a NoT stating that his son was returning from Australia and he needed the house to live in.	Contacted the Local Authority before they became homeless explaining that they could not locate alternative accommodation but were told to come back when they were homeless and that they would be given emergency accommodation. Also contacted Threshold after receiving the NoT and were informed that this was legal, but Threshold did help to get a 6 months extension on the lease. Returned to the Local Authority when they became homeless, but had to wait 4 weeks on the Emergency Accommodation list. They rented a room in a B&B paid from their own resources for 9 days before getting EA.
9	Family (couple and son with a disability) living in West Dublin and paying €1,100 rent per month. They were not eligible for Rent Supplement as the respondent's partner was working 30 hours a week on minimum wage. In October 2014, the rent increased to €1,300 per month and arrears accrued which they were not able to clear. Eventually, they were given 8 weeks NoT that the landlord was selling the property.	The family contacted Threshold regarding the rent increase and were told this was legitimate. They also contacted the Local Authority who informed them that they were eligible for HAP; however, the landlord refused to accept this payment. Also contacted Focus Ireland's advice and information service.
10	Rent Supplement reduced by €50 per month and rent increased from €1,000 to €1,100 per month, so arrears built up over a number of years. Eventually, the landlord issued a NoT that he was selling the property. The respondent stated that he had rented three different houses in the past and never had a problem before. He had been working for ten years before this	Initially, the respondent was advised by a Local Councillor to contact Parkgate Hall and say he was 'sofa surfing'. He then approached the Local Authority who told him 'you can't get any help until you are homeless'. He also contacted Threshold who phoned the landlord, however the landlord just said he wanted to sell the property at that stage. The family had to ring the CPU every day for 4 weeks and stayed with family and friends in the meantime. At one point they were offered

Appendix 3: Case studies

	and has been on the housing waiting list eleven years.	sleeping bags from staff in Parkgate Hall who also suggested they go to the Gardaí and stay a night there.
11	Non-Irish national family living in South Dublin since 2006. They received a NoT from their previous landlord but managed to secure alternative accommodation paying €1,200 rent per month and receiving €819 per month in Rent Supplement. Then the rent increased to €1,500 and arrears accrued. Eventually they were issued with 3 months NoT that the landlord wanted to sell the property	The family contacted a local TD who referred them to the Homeless Persons Unit in February, but they were told that there was no family accommodation.

3. Newly formed households unable to access Private Rented accommodation (n=12):		
No.	Details	Support sought by tenant
12	Young woman living with her mother and mother's boyfriend, she had not yet left home. She had previously been in the care of her grandmother for 1 year as the relationship with mother had always been difficult, but worsened after her father died and her mother had a breakdown. Things became more difficult when her mother's boyfriend moved into the house and after the respondent had her baby. She was asked to leave a number of times over the last couple of years and then finally 'put out' and the locks changed.	Respondent went straight to Parkgate Hall as advised by a friend. Her PHN referred her to Focus Ireland's advice and information service while she was waiting for emergency accommodation. She reported only staying in the EA for one night as it was too far away from her supports and GP (she was suffering from post-natal depression), and there was a lot of drug use there. She is currently staying with her 2 month old baby in friends' houses for a couple of nights at a time.

Appendix 3: Case studies

4. Families who returned to parents' home following relationship breakdown, anti-social behaviour or unsuitable accommodation (n=4):		
No.	Details	Support sought by tenant
13	Respondent had been living in private rented accommodation for five years, but moved back to her mother's house following the breakdown of her relationship with her partner. Her mother is very ill and there was overcrowding at the family home with other siblings living there. This led to a lot of stress so the respondent was asked to leave.	The respondent stated that she could not get a deposit as a single parent who was not working (she had worked until the birth of her second child). She has been on the housing waiting list over 8 years, and kept trying to follow this up with the LA. However, they advised her that she 'would be on list 4 more years as other people were a priority'. They told her they could not help until she was homeless and to go to Parkgate Hall when this happened. She did not contact Parkgate Hall until she no other options left. She did know what other services to contact and did not contact Focus Ireland or Threshold as she did not see herself as homeless.

5. Leaving a situation of serious threat/intimidation (n=4):		
No.	Details	Support sought by tenant
14	The family lived in a halting site until the respondent's husband was stabbed and threatened so they had to leave. The family could not find private rented accommodation as landlords were not accepting Rent Supplement. Also they could not afford the rent as their Rent Supplement is capped at €1,000 per month, but they need a house to accommodate three children which costs approx. €1,300 per month.	The respondent stated that they did not know who to contact as she is not able to read and only contacted the Gardaí. They also contacted Focus Ireland and rang the CPS Freephone in Parkgate Hall on two occasions. The family had to get letter from the Gardaí in order to prove the stabbing incident before they could go on the list for emergency accommodation.

Appendix 3: Case studies

6. Leaving a situation of Domestic Violence (n=3):		
No.	Details	Support sought by tenant
15	The respondent had been an owner occupier living with her violent partner. When she contacted Women's Aid she was informed that all the refuges were full, so she had to continue living with her violent partner for 6 months with a safety order. She subsequently had to leave the house because the Gardaí were not responding when she called them. She managed to find private rented accommodation initially, but the house had vermin and when she contacted the Environmental Protection Agency the landlord issued a NoT at the end of her one year lease and the PRTB found this to be legal. She then had no deposit and found that rents were too high.	The respondent first accessed Emergency Accommodation in 2012, but there was a lot of drug use there so she left and has been sleeping on friends' sofas and in her car for the past three and a half years. Last year a Housing Association offered her a two bed house, but DCC did not allow her to take it as she has three children and this would have been deemed overcrowding. The respondent also contacted the CIC, who referred her back to Women's Aid and the Samaritans.

7. Non-Irish national living in Private Rented Accommodation; not in receipt of or landlord refusing to accept Rent Supplement (n=3):		
No.	Details	Support sought by tenant
16	Non-Irish national living in private rented accommodation in West Dublin with Rent Supplement until they received a 30 days NoT from the landlord who wanted to sell the property. The family moved to Co. Meath to a property in which the landlord did not accept Rent Supplement and they were paying €750 per month. However, the property was in very poor condition and the landlord refused to carry out repairs so the respondent stopped paying rent. They left the house for a week and when they returned the landlord had changed the locks.	Threshold advised that this was an illegal eviction and to take the landlord to the PRTB; the respondent is waiting for the outcome of this at present. The Local Authority advised that they had no family emergency accommodation, so the family stayed in a friend's house and sometimes in a hotel until emergency accommodation became available approximately 1.5 months later.

Appendix 3: Case studies

8. Non-Irish national staying with friends (n=3):		
No.	Details	Support sought by tenant
17	Non-Irish national who was not eligible for Rent Supplement under the Habitual Residency Conditions and who could not find affordable accommodation. The respondent had tried unsuccessfully to find a job but this was difficult due to childcare. She eventually got employment in a shop but was let go in December 2014 as the owner was in financial difficulty. The family have been staying with friends for the last year.	After the respondent found work for a period of time, she was no longer eligible for Rent Supplement due to earnings but was still not able to afford the rent in any advertised accommodation. Also she had no references from a previous landlord. A friend from Church (who had been an asylum seeker) told her to contact Focus Ireland, Simon, CIC and SVP which she did. CIC gave her the contact number for the HPU, but when she contacted them she was told they could not help her until she had nowhere else to go, so she returned there when her friend changed the locks.

9. Other (n=3):		
No.	Details	Support sought by tenant
18	Family were living for one year in Co. Kildare. Their rent was increased from €750 to €950 per month in March 2014 following a lease review. They had been in receipt of Rent Supplement of €550. Arrears accrued and the family were eventually given one month's NoT.	The respondent stated that they have never had any problem getting rented accommodation before so they just tried to find alternative accommodation after they received the NoT. They contacted the Local Authority <i>only after</i> they lost the house but were not assessed as homeless until two weeks later. The family had to stay a further two weeks with friends before being allocated emergency accommodation, but the respondent's partner had to stay at another friend's house so they were split up as a family.