

FOCUS
Ireland

**Survey of families
that became
homeless in
September 2017**

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The principle aim of this report is to capture the accommodation trajectories of families who presented as homeless in Dublin during September 2017. The primary focus of the exercise is to capture where the families lived *before* they presented to homeless services and the key factors which impacted on their loss of housing. The analysis also presents key demographic information of families as well as patterns around help-seeking.

It is hoped that the generation of timely data will help to inform policy and service responses to family homelessness in Ireland today.

This exercise is carried out every three months by Focus Ireland to capture change or consistencies over time. This is the seventh report following the same methodology. All preceding reports can found in Focus Ireland *Insights into Family Homelessness Series*.

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SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – SEPTEMBER 2017

The Study

- This study presents key findings from a short quantitative survey conducted by telephone with 26 of the total 89 families who presented to Dublin family homeless services during **September 2017**. This represents 29% of the total number of families who presented as newly homeless in the Dublin region during the month of September (n=89).
- This survey does not claim to offer a representative insight of all families experiencing homelessness in the Dublin region; rather, it offers a point-in-time analysis of a proportion of those entering homelessness during a particular month. By conducting this survey every three months, however, trends and patterns have emerged which will build our understanding of *what is driving family homelessness over time*. **Since March 2016, a total of 277 telephone surveys have been completed with families presenting as homeless.**
- Sample size for this study (**n=26**) continues to be smaller than previous samples in the series. Focus Ireland did not have telephone contact details for many families because they left homelessness or, more commonly, another organisation/NGO was assisting them. In response to the deepening family homelessness crisis, 'Family Hub' accommodation is expanding (i.e. congregate emergency accommodation facilities) and are run by a range of homelessness organisations. Focus Ireland will continue with this methodology for 2017 to offer comparisons and contrasting data with the preceding year.
- In detailing the data from September 2017, the following report will frequently compare data with the aggregated data that emerged across all 2016 telephone surveys¹ as well as the previous wave of data collection (June 2017).

Demographic Profile – September 2017

- **5 (19%)** of the respondents were aged between 18 and 25 years, **12 (46%)** were 26 to 35 years and **9 (35%)** were over the age of 36 years. In comparison to previous telephone survey data sweeps where roughly a quarter of all families were under 25, the proportion of young parents within this sample was slightly less.
- Among the **26** respondents who were surveyed, **16 (62%)** were born in Ireland and **10 (38%)** were categorised as being of migrant origin (i.e. born outside Ireland): **4 (15%)** were from countries within the EU and **6 (23%)** were from outside the EU. The proportion of migrant families in September 2017 is roughly the same as June 2017 – but less than the overall 2016 average (46%).
- Of the sample, **10 (39%)** were experiencing homelessness with their partner and child(ren), while **16 (62%)** were lone parents. The proportion of lone parents is in line with the overall Department of Housing Statistics during September 2017² where 61% of all families were lone parents.

¹ The aggregate analysis of all telephone survey 2016 data can be found in Focus Ireland's *Insights into Family Homelessness Series No. 9*.

² Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2017) *September 2017 Homelessness Statistics*. Available: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/node/8422> [Accessed 17 April 2018].

- Half of the families (**13; 50%**) constituted one or two children, the other half (**13; 50%**) of the respondents had three or more children.
- Of these 26 families, there were **66** children – 48% of these children were aged 4 years or younger.
- The vast majority of the respondents (**n=19, 73%**) described themselves as unemployed. Four respondents were in employment – two in part-time and two in full-time. One respondent was studying.

Housing History

- **17 (65%)** of the respondents reported that their last stable home was in the private rented sector. This reflects previous rounds of data collection (approximately 70%). **Thus each round of data collection consistently demonstrates the predominance of families becoming homeless through private rented sector.**
 - **10 of these 17 families (59%)** had been in receipt of rent supplement in this private rented sector (PRS) property which is considerably less than the 80% average of PRS respondents in 2016 surveys.
 - The most prominent reason for their leaving last accommodation was properties being withdrawn from the market (**n=9, 35%**), mirroring 2016 trends (34%). 6 of these respondents (23%) reported that their landlord was selling the property.
- In analysing the respondents' previous four accommodations, key trajectory 'types' were identified. These are expanded upon in the report:
 1. Stability in the private rented sector
 2. Prolonged instability and hidden homelessness
 3. Unstable/chaotic housing history
 4. Youth pathways to homelessness
- In terms of patterns around help-seeking or early engagement with services, **16 (62%)** of the **26** respondents sought help or support before becoming homeless. This is slightly less than the 70% of respondents who sought help in the June 2017 survey.
- The most common first port-of-call for families was Focus Ireland (**n=5**) or their local authority (**n=4**). **Two families** sought help or advice directly from the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB).

Trends Identified between September 2017 Survey and 2016 Surveys:

- ∞ Once again, a majority of families that became homeless continued to report that their last stable accommodation had been in the **private rented sector**.
- ∞ Families continue to demonstrate **stable housing histories**.
- ∞ After a decrease in **reports of properties being withdrawn from the market** in the June 2017 survey, the September 2017 survey saw a return to the 2016 average.

- ∞ Similar to the June 2017 survey, there were **fewer parents under the age of 25** entering homelessness – who have little or no experience living in independent housing – compared to the 2016 average.
- ∞ There was a **continued presence of families of migrant origin** – both EU and non-EU – presenting as homeless.
- ∞ The majority of respondents were **unemployed** at time of becoming homeless and dependent on rent allowance supplements, **indicating the persistent association between joblessness, low income and homelessness.**
- ∞ Four families became homeless due to **relationship breakdown** and two families reported **domestic violence** from a partner as a leaving reason; which is higher than in 2016.
- ∞ There was more **diversity in the location of last stable home** which include areas of Dublin previously unreported during 2016.

INTRODUCTION

During **September 2017**, **89** families presented as newly homeless to their local authority across the four Dublin regions³. There were **1,138** families residing in emergency accommodation in the Dublin region alone during that month – comprising of **1,562 adults and 2,416 children**⁴.

Across the country as a whole during **September 2017**, there were a total of **1,455** families with **3,124** children living in emergency accommodation⁵. This represents a **24%** increase when compared to the **1,173** families who were homeless across the country during the same month in **2016**.

Focus Ireland was appointed by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) as the Family Homeless Action Team (HAT) for families across the Dublin region⁶. When a family presents as homeless to their relevant local authority, they are routinely provided emergency accommodation in the form of commercial hotels or B&Bs. They are then referred to Family HAT who make contact with the family as soon as possible in order to set up an initial assessment. More recently, 'Family Hub' accommodations have been expanded significantly, drawing in a range of different non-governmental organisations such as Peter McVerry Trust, Crosscare and Respond.

³ This figure represents the number of families who became homeless during the relevant month and had not been counted as homeless in the past. Focus Ireland press release on the month of September can be found here: <https://www.focusireland.ie/press/focus-repeats-call-govt-develop-specific-sub-strategy-end-family-homelessness-number-children-passes-3000-first-time/>

⁴ Monthly infographics on family homelessness in Dublin (Dublin Region Homeless Executive): <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/homeless-families>

⁵ The count which is conducted on a monthly basis through regular reporting of statistics to the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government pertains to all persons residing in Section-10-funded emergency accommodation (during the final week of each month). This does not include women and children residing in domestic violence refuges nor does it include non-Section-10 funded facilities. Homeless figures for September 2017 can be found at:

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/homelessness-report-september-2017>

⁶ While Focus Ireland is the principle service who assists families experiencing homelessness in Dublin region, other homelessness organisations also work with families. See the back page of this document for a brief background of the role and function of Focus Ireland Family HAT.

In an effort to ensure that Focus Ireland (and relevant stakeholders and policy-makers) have an accurate and timely understanding of the accommodation trajectories and 'triggers' to family homelessness, Focus Ireland conduct telephone surveys with a sample of families every quarter⁷. This regular reporting highlights key causes of family homelessness and how this can change over time. These regular reports also capture key demographic profile information on families who are presenting as homeless.

This report marks the seventh report which used the same survey with families entering homelessness. Therefore the data emerging in each report can be comparable with one another and can depict trends over time. All previous reports can be found across separate publications as part of Focus Ireland's *Insights into Family Homelessness Series*⁸. Paper No. 9 presents data from all of 2016.

METHODOLOGY

The 3-page telephone survey developed for the purpose of this exercise was concise, tightly structured and targeted in its design⁹. This was for the purpose of efficiency, to maximise the response rate, and most importantly, to minimise the burden on families in crisis situations (see Appendix 1 for survey instrument).

The survey seeks to capture a recent trajectory of accommodation transitions, the demographic profile of respondents, and interaction with services prior to their presenting as homeless. Questions pertaining to the last four accommodations – which formed the main component of the survey – captured change and transition in the respondents' living situations and to (partially) capture the dynamics of their housing history. This section also included duration of time spent in these four accommodations, self-reported reasons for leaving each accommodation, and details around rental supplements.

In total, **26** of the **89** families who became homeless in the Dublin region during **September 2017** participated in the survey, representing **29%** of the entire cohort of families newly presenting as homeless that month. In keeping with Focus Ireland Research Ethics Guidelines, attention was paid by both the services and advocacy staff members to ensuring that families were never invited to participate in more than one study and that high ethical standards were maintained at all times. Data collection took place during March 2018¹⁰.

Prior to the Focus Ireland Research Officer making contact with the respondents, a member of the Family HAT team attained verbal consent from respondents during a routine phone call with the family as part of their initial assessment to the service. Forty-one families were not contactable; eighteen of these families had invalid phone numbers or did not answer the phone, while twenty-three families were not contactable as Focus Ireland did not have telephone contact details for these families because they left homelessness very quickly (some to newly opened 'Family Hubs') or another organisation/NGO was assisting them.

⁷ As agreed in the Research Programme set out by the Focus Ireland Research Advisory Group (RAG) – a subcommittee of the organisation's Board – which comprises of expert researchers and academics in the area of homelessness and housing.

⁸ Focus Ireland Insights into Family Homelessness Series publications can be found here: <http://www.focusireland.ie/resource-hub/publications-and-partnerships/research/>

⁹ The survey was designed by the advocacy team and was shared with Focus Ireland Research Advisory Group for feedback.

¹⁰ Some time was required to collect the telephone numbers and consents to contact families.

At the research stage, several families were then not contactable (i.e. phones were always engaged or connecting to 'call catcher') or, alternatively, the families did not answer their phone or return voicemail messages¹¹. Other families were not surveyed due to a language barrier problems and informed consent was not possible. This left **26** surveys which were successfully completed with relevant families via telephone.

Upon making contact with the participants, the Research Officer stated the purpose of the telephone call and what was involved in taking part in the survey. While the survey was structured in design and questions were posed in a consistent way, in many cases, the families expanded on their answers and there was some flexibility in terms of follow-up questions (research notes were recorded in these instances). The surveys typically took around 5-10 minutes each, but sometimes calls were longer - depending on the level of detail offered by participants themselves.

In cases where information was requested by the family in relation to their homelessness or housing situation, the relevant contact number of the Family HAT team was provided to the participant.

All data was inputted and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22.

Focus Ireland's Data Protection and Customer Confidentiality policies, as well as the organisation's Ethical Guidelines for Conducting Research, were adhered to at all times in the completion of this study. The respondents were made aware at both initial phone call and follow-up phone call that involvement in the study was entirely voluntary and that they were under no obligation to participate. All details emerging from the research were anonymised and this was also explained to the respondents¹².

There were no changes made to the previous telephone survey instrument for June 2017 data collection.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

All **26** of the respondents were adult parents (i.e. over the age of 18 years) and were accompanied by one or more of their children.

Living Situation at Time of Survey

At time of survey, **19 (73%)** of the families were residing in private emergency accommodation (commercial hotels or B&BS). **7 (27%)** families had exited homelessness – **4** of whom had accepted a HAP tenancy.

Age

Of the participants who were surveyed, **5 (19%)** were aged between 18 and 25 years; **12 (46%)** were between 26 and 35 years of age; and **9 (35%)** were 36 years or older. See Table 1 below.

¹¹ The researcher attempted to make contact a total of four times with each family. In cases where families had a message service activated on their mobile phone, one voicemail was left.

¹² Contact details and names were destroyed once the telephone surveys were completed and all identifiable details were removed.

Table 1. Age Breakdown of Sample

Age Group (in years)	Number of Survey Respondents	Percentage of Total
18-25	5	19%
26-35	12	46%
36+	9	35%
TOTAL	26	100%

19% of respondents were in the youngest age category. This is higher than the June 2017 surveys (15%) and lower than 26% of the 186 surveys conducted during 2016.

Nationality and Ethnic/Cultural Background

In the **September 2017** surveys, **16 (62%)** of the survey respondents were born in Ireland, while **10 (38%)** respondents were born outside of Ireland. **4 (15%)** of whom were originally from an EU country while **6 (23%)** were from outside the EU (see Table 2).

Table 2. Nationality Breakdown of Sample

Nationality Category	Number of Survey Respondents	Percentage of Total
Ireland	16	62%
EU	4	15%
Non-EU	6	23%
TOTAL	26	100%

The proportion of migrant households in this survey (38%) has not changed from the June 2017 survey (37%), but is below the 2016 average of 46%. The proportion of migrant households could be considered significant given that 17.3% of the general population were born outside of Ireland¹³.

Table 3 displays the ethnic and cultural background of the families surveyed. The majority were White Irish; there were 4 Black African respondents, 2 Irish Traveller families, and 3 from Asian or 'other' cultural backgrounds.

Table 3. Ethnic and Cultural Background

Ethnic and Cultural Background	Number of Respondents	
White	White Irish	14
	Irish Traveller	2
	Another White Background	3
Black / Black Irish	African	4
Other	Asian other	2
	Other	1
TOTAL	26	

¹³ Central Statistics Office 2016 Census [www.cso.ie]

Two respondents reported that they had a history of living in direct provision accommodation for those seeking asylum. This is lower than 2016 samples when 4 to 5 families had histories of direct provision during each round of data collection. Nonetheless it is worthy of note that each wave of data collection has captured at least one respondent with histories of direct provision.

Family Type

In this September 2017 survey, **16 (62%)** of the respondents were one-parent households. This is lower than the June survey (70%). However it matches the average proportion of one-parent households in 2016 surveys (62%) and Department of Housing homelessness statistics which highlights how around 65% of families in emergency accommodation constitute of one-parent households. Of the **16** one-parent households in September 2017 survey, **all were headed by lone mothers**. The remaining 10 respondents (38%) in the September 2017 survey were two-parent families.

In terms of the number of children in the family unit, half of the respondents had either one or two children in their household (**n=13, 50%**). This is lower than the average of the 2016 surveys (67%). The remaining **50%** of the respondents had three or more children. One family had five or more children.

Table 4. Breakdown of Number of Children as per Each Family unit

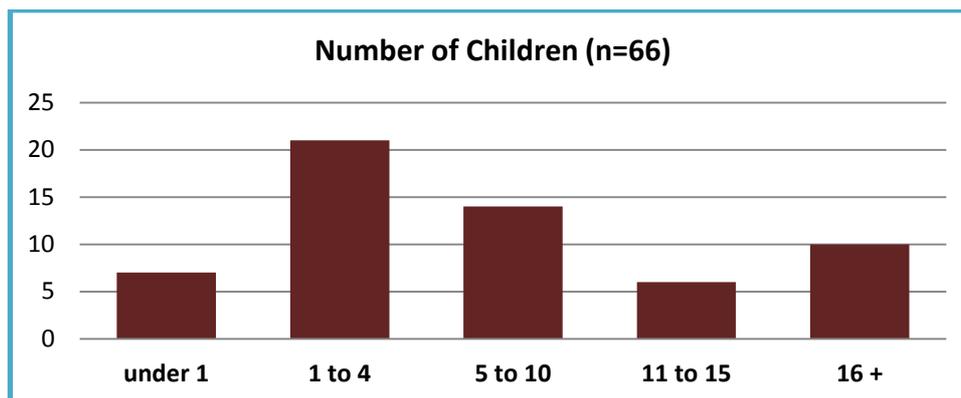
	Number of Families	Percentage of Total
Number of Children	1	27%
	2	23%
	3	23%
	4	23%
	5+	4%
	TOTAL	26

Of these 26 families, there were **66** children: **7** of whom (**12%**) were under the age of 1 year; **21** children (**36%**) were between 1 and 4 years; **14** (**24%**) were between 5 and 10 years; **6** (**10%**) were between 11 and 15 years; and **10** children (**17%**) were over the age of 16. Several families chose not to disclose the ages of their children¹⁴.

Therefore, **48%** of the children were under the age of 4, while **72%** of children were under the age of 10 years. See figure 5 below.

¹⁴ As a result, the "Valid Percent" is reported i.e. the percent when non-responses/missing data are excluded from the percentage calculations.

Figure 5. Ages of Children



Employment Status of Respondents

The vast majority of the research participants (**n=19, 73%**) described themselves as unemployed (or full-time parents in receipt of social welfare payment). This is lower than June 2017 surveys (86%) and the average in 2016 (83%). **Two (8%)** of the respondents were in part-time employment and **one (4%)** was a student. There were no respondents in full-time employment.

Once again, high levels of joblessness, limited income, and dependency on rental supplements have been found to be disproportionately represented among families entering homelessness.

Location of Last stable Home

The survey included the location of the participant's last stable home. Similarly to the June 2017 survey, the areas cited in this section differed from 2016 in some respects. However, as found in previous surveys, there were a considerable number of families who were living in Dublin 15 before they became homeless (n=4). Five families were living in the area of the north inner city in their last stable home; three in Tallaght and two in Finglas. The remaining families were living in places which included Dublin 5 (Coolock); Dublin 13 (Donaghmede), among other locations on the north side of the city. South Dublin locations included Dublin 2; Dublin 10 (Ballyfermot); Dublin 16 (Knocklyon); Dublin 18 (Sandyford); Dublin 22 (Clondalkin) and Co. Dublin (Lucan). Two families reported that their last stable accommodation was outside of Dublin, with one of these families living in the UK in *their last stable home*.

REASONS FOR HOMELESSNESS

The survey captured the details – including duration, tenure and reasons for leaving – of the last four accommodations prior to their becoming homeless. Gleaning this information enabled two principle areas of insight: participants' recent housing history; and the various triggers or events which resulted in their loss of accommodation. It also indicated the nature of their housing histories and specifically, whether the families had experienced homelessness or housing stability in the past.

Last Stable Accommodation and Triggers to Homelessness

Mirroring both June 2017 and all 2016 survey data, the majority (**n=17, 65%**) of respondents who presented as homeless during **September 2017** reported that their last stable home was in the private rented sector (67% in June 2017; 72% average across all surveys conducted in 2016).

A majority (10 of 17 families) were in receipt of rent supplement in their last stable home, while seven were meeting rental payments through their own income, income from a partner or from a family member.

Additionally, **eight families** reported that their last stable home was **staying with family** – six of whom categorised this as their parental family home and two others were staying with relatives.

A frequency analysis was conducted on reported ‘triggers’ to homelessness (in relation to the loss of their last stable home). Table 6 below highlights the self-reported reasons why families had to leave their last stable home. It is worth noting that these triggers did not always directly precede their stay in emergency accommodation; many families relied on informal arrangements for accommodation *before* they presented as homeless with their local authority, as will be discussed at greater length in the following section.

Table 6: Cited Reasons for Leaving Last Stable Accommodation

Reasons cited for leaving last stable property		No. of Respondents
Property being withdrawn from the private rented sector (35%)	Landlord selling	6 (23%)
	Landlord moving in / giving property to family member	3
Additional issues related to private rented sector (12%)	Rent unaffordable	3
Other	Relationship breakdown	4
	Domestic Violence	2
	Overcrowding	5
	Anti-social behaviour	1
	Unclear	2
TOTAL		26

A recurrent theme of each of these telephone survey reports is the relevant properties being withdrawn from the rental market. As highlighted in the table above, the number of **families** that cited their **landlord selling** as the main trigger to their homelessness (23%) was higher than the June 2017 survey (11%) while mirroring 2016 data (23%). **3 families** reported that their landlord was either moving in to the property or giving it to a family member. Therefore, the number of families **made homeless due to the landlord removing the property from the private rented sector (35%)** was higher than the June 2017 surveys (19%) while mirroring the 2016 surveys (34%).

Affordability was a problem for 3 families (12%) who had become homeless as a result of **rent being too high**. Of note, 2 of these families were in receipt of Rent Supplement at the time of losing their rental accommodation.

4 families (15%) became homeless due to relationship breakdown. An additional **2 families (8%)** became homeless due to domestic violence.

5 families (19%) became homeless due to overcrowding. 3 of these families were young women with infants who left their family home.

Housing Trajectories and Routes into Homelessness

An additional objective of this regular research exercise with families presenting as homeless is to understand their accommodation trajectories – that is, to capture their previous four living situations and the reported reasons why they left each of those accommodations. Emerging from this were four broad analytical groupings:

1. Previous stability in the Private Rented Sector (n=18, 70%)
2. Prolonged Housing Instability and Hidden Homelessness (n=1, 4%)
3. Unstable/chaotic housing history (n=2, 7%)
4. Youth pathways to homelessness (n=5, 19%).

The four groups differ from both the most recent comparable survey in June 2017 and also the 2016 surveys in some respects (which are described further in this section). However, the percentage of families in Group 1 – *previous stability in the private rented sector* - has not changed from the June 2017 survey (70%) – suggesting the majority of respondents had maintained tenancies successfully in the past and that the experience of homelessness was recent and a factor of the continued housing crisis.

These groupings will now be expanded upon¹⁵.

- 1. Previous Stability in the Private Rented Sector** – There were **18 families (70% of the sample)** who reported no prior experience of homelessness and very little time living with friends or family (apart from after they became homeless when they often relied on informal arrangements before presenting to their local authority as homeless). This equals the June 2017 surveys (70%) and is higher than the 2016 averages which represented 50% in this grouping.

These families reported stable tenancies in the private sector, typically remaining for several years in each tenancy. Reasons for leaving previous tenancies in the past were typically associated with the landlord removing the property from the private rented sector, unaffordable rent increases, domestic violence, and one case of relationship breakdown. Their relative housing stability would strongly indicate that these families had previously complied with tenancy agreements and were able to pay their rent. Similarly to previous surveys, the majority of this group, but not all, were also supported with rent supplement.

Key Characteristics of Group One:

- **9** of these **18** families became homeless due to the landlord leaving the sector (**6** of which were due to landlords selling). An additional **3** families reported that they had to leave as the landlord wanted to either move back in or move a family member in.

¹⁵ All case studies are fully anonymised and identifiable details are removed.

- **10** of the **18** families were migrants; **6** were of a black or ethnic minority background.
- **10** of the **18** families were lone parent families.
- Three quarters of this group (**N=13, 72%**) sought advice and information from a support service or organisation *prior* to presenting as homeless; 4 of whom approached Focus Ireland as their first port of call.
- **7** of the families in this group had already exited homelessness by the time they were surveyed - 3 with the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). . **11** families were in emergency hotel accommodation.

- 2. Prolonged Housing Instability and Hidden Homelessness** – There was **1 (4%)** family in the **September 2017** cohort who reported more extensive marginalisation from the housing market. This marks a considerable decrease compared to both the June 2017 survey (22%) and the average of all surveys across 2016 in which 11% reported more profound housing issues.

For several years, this family had little or no experience of living in independent or stable tenancies. They had rented for 8 years in the private rented sector before becoming homeless. This family subsequently spent nearly 2 years in emergency accommodation, a number of months in a friend's house, and 18 months in a family relation's house. They are now residing in emergency accommodation.

- 3. Unstable/chaotic housing history** - There were **2 (7%)** families who had no experience of living in independent tenancies and had been hidden homelessness for a number of years. This is lower than the average recorded in 2016 (11%). The most recent comparable survey, June 2017, featured no families in this category.

Both of these families had been living between the homes of family relations for several years. Both moved to emergency accommodation due to overcrowding and ultimately the breakdown of relationships.

Key Characteristics of Group Three:

- The 2 families were from an Irish background.
- **1 of the 2** families were a lone parent family.
- **1 of the 2** families sought advice and information from a support service or organisation *prior* to presenting as homeless; that being Citizens Advice.
- **The 2** families were living in emergency hotel accommodation at time of survey.

- 4. Youth pathways to homelessness** – There were **5 (19%)** respondents who were under the age of 26, all entering homelessness due to relationship breakdown with a family member. In 4 cases, this relationship breakdown is attributed to pregnancy. The percentage for this family category in the September 2017 survey is slightly higher than the average recorded in 2016 (16%). The most recent comparable survey, June 2017, featured no families in this category.

Key Characteristics of Group Four:

- **All 5** families were from a white Irish background.
- **All 5** families were lone parent and headed by a female.
- **All 5** families are currently residing in emergency hotel accommodation.
- **Only 1 family sought advice and information** from a support service or organisation prior to presenting as homeless.
- **4 of the 5** respondents had no experience of an independent tenancy, living in the family home since birth.

Help-Seeking before Becoming Homeless

16 of the 26 families (62% of total) sought information or advice *prior* to presenting as homeless. This is lower than the June surveys (70%), and the average of 67% across the surveys during 2016. 13 of the 16 families who did seek help were from the stable housing group (Group No. 1 described above). 1 respondent each from the housing instability and hidden homelessness group (Group No. 2), the unstable housing history group (Group No.3), and the youth pathways group (Group No. 4) sought help or information.

1 of the families approached their local TD or councillor as their first action in seeking help. An additional 4 families approached their local authority office as a first port-of-call, and 6 families approached either Focus Ireland or Threshold. 3 families contacted Citizens Advice or the RTB.

Like previous months, in cases where families did not contact any service, it was typically related a lack of knowledge about which services were available and how they could help.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this regular telephone survey exercise with families presenting as homeless is to produce a concise and targeted examination of the accommodation trajectories, demographic profile and help-seeking patterns of families experiencing homelessness. As has been emphasised a number of times within this document, the findings do not necessarily pertain to all families experiencing homelessness; rather, they relate to a *cohort* of families at a particular *point-in-time*. Nonetheless, repeating this exercise on a regular basis is yielding targeted and timely analysis of family homelessness, building a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon.

As such, below are the key themes emerging from September 2017 survey, together with some discussion on the similarities and divergences with the previous surveys of similar data collected in June 2017 and across 2016. Data from families presenting as homeless in September 2017 provides, yet again, a pattern of consistency.

1. **Families with histories of stability in the private rented sector:** 70% of the families reported stable tenancies in the private sector before becoming homeless, typically remaining for several years in each tenancy. This mirrors the June 2017 surveys (70%) and is higher than the 2016 averages which represented 50% in this grouping.
2. **Properties being withdrawn from the market returns as the primary reason for losing private rented accommodation:** Within this sample, the prevalence of landlords withdrawing their properties from the market (35%) was higher than the June survey (19%), while mirroring the average recorded across all of 2016 (34%). Of note, prominent reasons for leaving last stable property in the September survey were overcrowding and relationship breakdown.
3. **Continued prevalence of lone parents (and particularly lone mothers):** In this September 2017 survey, **16 (62%)** of the respondents were one-parent households. This is slightly lower than June 2017 survey data (70%) while mirroring the average across 2016 data (62%). Again, women are consistently overrepresented: all lone parents surveyed in the September 2017 survey were female.

4. **Persistent link between joblessness and homelessness:** Families entering homeless are more likely than not to be unemployed and dependent on social welfare jobseekers' allowance. 73% of respondents to the September 2017 reported they were unemployed. While this figure is lower than both the June 2017 survey (86%) and the average across 2016 (83%), it is still considerable. 10 of the 17 families who were living in the private rented sector were dependent on rent supplement to meet their rental payments.
5. **Continued prevalence of migrant families:** Families of migrant origin, that is, respondents who were not born in Ireland (but may have Irish citizenship), continue to feature in high numbers in September 2017 (38%). This is slightly higher than the 27% reported in June 2017, but lower when compared to the 46% average across 2016.

While Dublin Region Homeless Executive now publish reports on the causes of homelessness among families from data derived from assessment forms¹⁶, these reports seeks to uncover the loss of last *stable housing* (as opposed to most recent living situation). It also reveals the stable housing histories reported by a majority of the families. By conducting these surveys over time, one can observe the impact housing market dynamics have on low income families – the majority of whom are headed by a single mother and dependent on social welfare and rent subsidies. This, combined with landlords leaving the market, high rents, low take up of tenants on rental subsidies on the part of landlords, together with extraordinary competition on private sector units in the Dublin region, continues to push low income families *out* of the private rented sector and *into* homelessness.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to the staff of Focus Ireland Family HAT, and in particular to Pauline Burke and Meaghan Kennedy who provided ongoing assistance across the data collection phase. Focus Ireland would like to thank the commitment and expert guidance from all members of our Research Advisory Group.

¹⁶ Dublin Region Homeless Executive (2017) *Reported Reasons for Family Homelessness in the Dublin Region*. Dublin: DRHE. Available at: <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/publications>

Appendix 1: Telephone Survey Instrument

Telephone Survey with Families – September 2017

SECTION I: Accommodations Prior to Homelessness

Q.1	What type of accommodation are you <u>currently</u> residing in? (✓)	Hotel / Emergency Accommodation (✓)	With Friends/Family (✓)	Moving between Accommodations (✓)	Have Exited Homelessness (include details on tenure type and, where appropriate, tenancy scheme, HAP, RS, etc.)														
Q2	Please describe your previous 4 accommodations BEFORE you entered emergency accommodation (note: No.4 relates to accommodation IMMEDIATELY BEFORE entering Hotel/B&B accommodation)																		
	Tenure Type	Duration of Stay	Primary Reason for Leaving	If you were in PRS:															
				a) were you in receipt of rent supplement? (Y/N)	b) did you receive a RS supplement increase from social welfare?														
1																			
2																			
3																			
4																			
Q3	How long would you say it has been since you last had a 'stable' accommodation?	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>< 1 month</td> <td>1-6 months</td> <td>7 months – 1 year</td> <td>1-2 years</td> <td>3+ years</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>						< 1 month	1-6 months	7 months – 1 year	1-2 years	3+ years	N/A						
< 1 month	1-6 months	7 months – 1 year	1-2 years	3+ years	N/A														
Q4	In what area/location was your last stable home? (please specify):																		

Q	Would you describe this as the first time you have experienced homelessness? (✓)	First Time Homeless	Have experienced homeless before	Don't know	

SECTION II: Demographic Profile

Q5	What age are you?					
Q6	What country are you originally from? (✓)	Irish	EU	Non-EU (go to Q3b)		
Q6b	<i>If you are originally born outside Ireland, have you ever resided in Direct Provision Accommodation in Ireland?</i> <i>If yes, for how long? _____</i>			Yes	No	
Q7	What is your ethnic or cultural background? (✓)	White	Irish			
			Irish Traveller			
			Another White background			
		Black /Black Irish	African			
			Any other Black background			
		Asian/Asian Irish	Chinese			
			Any other Asian background			
	Other / Mixed					
Q8	What is your current employment status? (If unemployed, ask Q4b) (✓)	Unemployed	Student	P/T Employment	F/T Employment	
Q8b	<i>If unemployed, are you in receipt of a weekly social welfare payment? (✓)</i>	Yes	No			
Q9	Are you single or in a couple? (✓)	Single	In a couple			
Q10	How many children do you have? (✓)	1	2	3	4	5+
Q11	What age are your children? (insert number of children in relation to age categories)	Age in Years	Number of Children			
		Under 1 year				
		1-4				
		5-10				
		11-15				
		16+				

SECTION III: Help-seeking PRIOR to becoming homeless

Q13a	Did you contact anyone BEFORE you became homeless? (✓)	Yes	No	Don't know			
Q13b	If yes, who did you contact? (✓ all that apply)	Local councillor/TD					
		Local Authority					
		CWO					
		Citizens advice					
		MABS					
		RTB					
		Local Social Welfare Office					
		Friend/Family member:					
		Non-Statutory organisations:	Focus Ireland				
			Threshold				
			Simon Community				
				Other (please state):			
		GP					
Your landlord							
Other (please state):							
Q14	Was there a service/support that you felt you particularly need(ed) living in emergency accommodation? (please give details)						

Thank you very much for taking part in this survey. We really appreciate it.

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Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.
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