

FOCUS
Ireland

**Families who
presented as
homeless during
December 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 December 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 – DECEMBER 2017

The Study

- This study presents key findings from a short quantitative survey conducted by telephone with 23 of the total 63 families who presented to Dublin family homeless services during **December 2017**. This represents 37% of the total number of families who presented as newly homeless in the Dublin region during the month of December (n=63).
- 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 300 telephone surveys have been completed with families presenting as homeless.**
- Sample size for this study (**n=23**) continues to be smaller than previous samples in the series. Focus Ireland did not have telephone contact details for many families as either they had exited homelessness before surveys were initiated or the families were working with another service. Additionally, there is always a seasonal drop in family homelessness figures in the December/Christmas period.
- In detailing the data from December 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 (September 2017).
- Subsequent to this publication, Focus Ireland will publish an analysis of the 300 families who have been surveyed to date.

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

Demographic Profile – December 2017

- **3 (13%)** of the respondents were aged between 18 and 25 years, **13 (57%)** were 26 to 35 years and **7 (30%)** 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 less. This is possibly linked to fewer younger parents presenting as homeless before Christmas.
- Among the **23** respondents who were surveyed, **12 (52%)** were born in Ireland and **11 (48%)** were categorised as being of migrant origin (i.e. born outside Ireland): **5 (22%)** were from countries within the EU and **6 (26%)** were from outside the EU. The proportion of migrant families in December 2017 is higher than September 2017 – and similar to the overall 2016 average (46%). It is possible that migrant families have fewer social supports and networks to help with temporary living arrangements leading up to Christmas.
- Of the sample, **15 (65%)** were experiencing homelessness with their partner and child(ren), while **6 (26%)** were lone parents. **2 (9%)** respondents who had experienced a recent relationship breakdown with their respective partners were living away from their children at time of survey. The proportion of lone parents in this December survey is considerably lower than the proportion recorded in September 2017 (62%) and the overall Department of Housing Statistics during December 2017² where 61% of all families were lone parents.
- Almost half of the families (**11; 48%**) constituted one or two children, the remainder (**12; 52%**) of the respondents had either three or four children.
- Of these 23 families, there were **56** children – 42% of these children were aged 4 years or younger.
- The vast majority of the respondents (**n=17, 74%**) self-reported as unemployed. Five respondents were in employment – two in part-time and three in full-time. Employment status for one respondent is unclear due to language difficulties at time of survey.

Housing History

- **19 (83%)** of the respondents reported that their last stable home was in the private rented sector. This is higher than previous rounds of data collection (approximately 70%). **Thus each round of data collection consistently demonstrates the predominance of families becoming homeless through the private rented sector.**
 - **14 of these 19 families (74%)** had been in receipt of rent supplement in their private rented sector (PRS) property. This reflects previous rounds of data collection with an 80% average of PRS respondents across the 2016 surveys.
 - The most prominent reason for families leaving last accommodation was properties being withdrawn from the rental market (**n=10, 43%**), showing an increase on both the September

² Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2017) *December 2017 Homelessness Statistics*. Available: <https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/homelessness-report-december-2017> [Accessed 11 July 2018].

2017 surveys (35%) and 2016 trends (34%). 5 of the survey respondents (22%) 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. Unstable/chaotic housing history
 3. Relationship breakdown pathway
 4. Migrant pathways to homelessness

- In terms of patterns around help-seeking or early engagement with services, **18 (78%)** of the **23** respondents sought help or support before becoming homeless. This is higher than the 62% of respondents who sought help in the September 2017 survey.

- The most common first port-of-call for families was their local authority (**n=9**) or Focus Ireland (**n=5**). **2 families** sought help or advice directly from the local councillor or TD.

Trends Identified between December 2017 Survey and 2016 Surveys:

- ∞ Once again, a large 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**.
- ∞ **Reports of properties being withdrawn from the market** in the December 2017 survey has increased compared to the 2016 average.
- ∞ Similar to the September 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 reason for leaving their last stable property.
- ∞ There was more **diversity in the location of last stable home** which include areas of Dublin previously unreported during 2016.

INTRODUCTION

During **December 2017**, **63** families presented as newly homeless to their local authority across the four Dublin regions³. This is fewer families when compared to previous months (an average of 90 families presented as newly homeless each month across the six previous months), but it was the highest inflow of homeless families ever recorded during the month of December⁴.

Across the country as a whole during **December 2017**, there were a total of **1,408** families with **3,079** children living in emergency accommodation⁵. This represents a **17%** increase when compared to the **1,205** families who were homeless across the country during the same month in **2016**. In the Dublin region, there were **1,121** families in emergency accommodation comprising of **1,562 adults and 2,385 children**⁶.

Focus Ireland was appointed by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) as the Family Homeless Action Team (HAT) for families across the Dublin region⁷. 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 makes 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.

Focus Ireland conduct telephone surveys with a sample of families every quarter⁸. This regular reporting identifies the *root 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.

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 December can be found here: <https://www.focusireland.ie/press/december-drop-family-homelessness-welcome/>

⁴ Fewer families tend to present as homeless during December, compared to other months during the year: families may stay in temporary living arrangements before presenting as homeless in January or their landlord permits them to stay in the property until after Christmas. This results in a corresponding 'spike' of families presenting as homeless in January of each year.

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 December 2017 can be found at:

https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/homeless_report_-_december_2017.pdf

⁶ Monthly infographics on family homelessness in Dublin (Dublin Region Homeless Executive):

<http://www.homelessdublin.ie/homeless-families>

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

This report marks the eighth 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*⁹. 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 design¹⁰. 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, **23** of the **63** families who became homeless in the Dublin region during **December 2017** participated in the survey, representing **37%** 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 June 2018¹¹.

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. Thirty-three families were not contactable; fourteen of these families had invalid phone numbers or did not answer the phone, while nineteen 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.

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 messages¹². Other families were not surveyed due to a language barrier problem and informed consent was not possible. This left **23** surveys which were successfully completed with relevant families via telephone.

⁹ Focus Ireland Insights into Family Homelessness Series publications can be found here: <http://www.focusireland.ie/resource-hub/publications-and-partnerships/research/>

¹⁰ The survey was designed by the advocacy team and was shared with Focus Ireland Research Advisory Group for feedback.

¹¹ Some time was required to collect the telephone numbers and consents to contact families.

¹² 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.

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 respondents¹³.

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

¹³ Contact details and names were destroyed once the telephone surveys were completed and all identifiable details were removed.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

All **23** 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, **18 (78%)** of the families were residing in private emergency accommodation (commercial hotels or B&BS). **3 (13%)** families had exited homelessness – **2** of whom had accepted a HAP tenancy. **2 respondents** (both male) were living with friends after a relationship breakdown with the partner and were separated from their children at time of survey.

Age

Of the participants who were surveyed, **3 (13%)** were aged between 18 and 25 years; **13 (57%)** were between 26 and 35 years of age; and **7 (30%)** were 36 years or older. See Table 1 below.

Table 1. Age Breakdown of Sample

| Age Group (in years) | Number of Survey Respondents | Percentage of Total |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| 18-25 | 3 | 13% |
| 26-35 | 13 | 57% |
| 36+ | 7 | 30% |
| TOTAL | 23 | 100% |

13% of respondents were in the youngest age category. This is lower than the September 2017 surveys (19%) and 26% of the 186 surveys conducted during 2016.

Nationality and Ethnic/Cultural Background

In the **December 2017** surveys, **12 (52%)** of the survey respondents were born in Ireland, while **11 (48%)** respondents were born outside of Ireland. **5 (22%)** of whom were originally from an EU country while **6 (26%)** were from outside the EU (see Table 2).

Table 2. Nationality Breakdown of Sample

| Nationality Category | Number of Survey Respondents | Percentage of Total |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| Ireland | 12 | 52% |
| EU | 5 | 22% |
| Non-EU | 6 | 26% |
| TOTAL | 23 | 100% |

The proportion of migrant households in this survey (48%) has increased from the September 2017 survey (38%), while reflecting the 2016 average of 46%. Migrant households are significantly over-represented given that 17.3% of the general population were born outside of Ireland according to our national census¹⁴.

Table 3 displays the ethnic and cultural background of the families surveyed. The majority were White Irish; there were 5 from an 'other' White background (European), 3 Black African respondents, 1 Irish Traveller, and 3 from 'other' cultural backgrounds.

Table 3. Ethnic and Cultural Background

| Ethnic and Cultural Background | | Number of Respondents |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| White | White Irish | 11 |
| | Irish Traveller | 1 |
| | Another White Background | 5 |
| Black / Black Irish | African | 3 |
| Other | Asian other | 0 |
| | Other | 3 |
| TOTAL | | 23 |

Three 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 December 2017 survey, **8 (35%)** respondents reported as being lone parent households. 6 of this cohort were **parenting alone and female**¹⁵. The remaining 15 respondents (65%) in the December 2017 survey were two-parent families. Additionally, 2 male respondents had experienced a relationship breakdown in the context of homelessness and now lived separately from their former partner and children (both were staying with friends). Relationship breakdown in the context of homelessness – as has been found in previous research reports published by Focus Ireland¹⁶ - is extremely concerning, indicating the detrimental impact homelessness can have on family life.

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=11, 48%**). This is lower than the average of the 2016 surveys (67%). The remaining **52%** of the respondents had three or four children.

¹⁴ Central Statistics Office 2016 Census [www.cso.ie]

¹⁵ Department of Housing homelessness statistics shows that around 60-65% of families in emergency accommodation are made up of one-parent households.

¹⁶ Walsh, K. and Harvey, B. (2017) *Finding a Home: Families' Journeys Out of Homelessness*. Dublin: Focus Ireland.

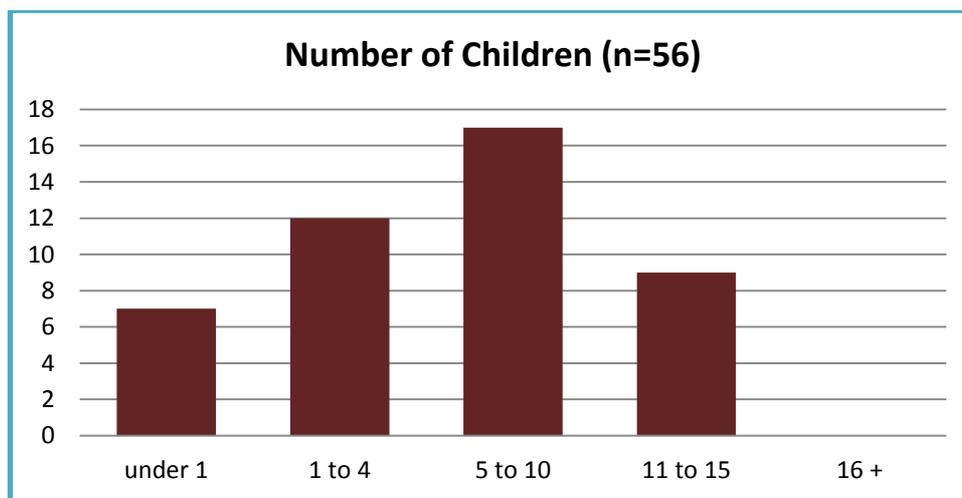
Table 4. Breakdown of Number of Children as per Each Family unit

| | Number of Families | | Percentage of Total |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Number of Children | 1 | 5 | 22% |
| | 2 | 6 | 26% |
| | 3 | 9 | 39% |
| | 4 | 3 | 13% |
| | 5+ | 0 | 0% |
| | TOTAL | 23 | 100% |

Of these 23 families, there were **56** children: **7** of whom (**15%**) were under the age of 1 year; **12** children (**27%**) were between 1 and 4 years; and **17** (**38%**) were between 5 and 10 years; **9** (**20%**) were between 11 and 15 years. There were no children over the age of 16. Several families chose not to disclose the ages of their children¹⁷.

Therefore, **42%** of the children were under the age of 4, while **62%** of children were under the age of 10 years. See figure 5 below.

Figure 5. Ages of Children



¹⁷ As a result, the “Valid Percent” is reported i.e. the percent when non-responses/missing data are excluded from the percentage calculations.

Employment Status of Respondents

The vast majority of the research participants (**n=17, 74%**) described themselves as unemployed (or full-time parents in receipt of social welfare payment). This mirrors the September 2017 surveys (73%), but is slightly lower than the average in 2016 (83%). **2 (9%)** of the respondents were in part-time employment and **3 (13%)** were in full-time employment. Employment status for one respondent is unclear due to language difficulties at time of survey.

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

Location of Last stable Home

The survey included the location of the participant's last stable home. Similarly to the September 2017 survey, the areas cited in this section differed from 2016 in some respects. Contrary to previous surveys where there were a considerable number of families who were living in Dublin 15 before they became homeless, only one family reported Dublin 15 as the location of their last stable home. Four families were living in Dublin 10 (Ballyfermot) in their last stable home; while five were living in various parts of Co. Dublin, including Balbriggan (n=2), Swords, Lucan, and Blackrock. The remaining families were living in places which included Dublin 1, Dublin 3 (Ballybough), Dublin 5 (Raheny); Dublin 7 (Phibsboro), Dublin 13 (Donaghmede), among other locations on the north side of the city. South Dublin locations included Dublin 4 (Ringsend); Dublin 8; Dublin 12 (Walkinstown); and Dublin 24 (Tallaght). One family reported that their last stable accommodation was outside of Dublin, in Clonee in Co. Meath.

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

The vast majority of respondents in the **December 2017** surveys reported that their last stable home was in the private rented sector (**n=19, 83%**). This is considerably higher than the September 2017 surveys and the average across all surveys conducted in 2016 (65% and 72% respectively).

A majority (14 of 19 families) were in receipt of rent supplement in their last stable home, while five were meeting rental payments through their own income, income from a partner or from a family member.

Additionally, **three families** reported that their last stable home was **staying with family** – all of whom categorised this as their parental family home.

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 (43%) | Landlord selling | 5 (22%) |
| | Landlord moving in / giving property to family member | 3 |
| | Landlord renovating | 1 |
| | Bank repossession (of landlord) | 1 |
| Additional issues related to private rented sector (13%) | Notice to quit | 3 |
| Other | Relationship breakdown | 4 |
| | Domestic Violence | 2 |
| | Overcrowding | 2 |
| | Loss of employment | 1 |
| | Unclear | 1 |
| TOTAL | | 23 |

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 (22%) mirrored both the September 2017 survey (23%) and the 2016 data (23%). **3 families** reported that their landlord was either moving in to the property or giving it to a family member, 1 family lost their tenancy due to landlord renovating, while the property in which another family were renting was repossessed by a bank. Therefore, the number of families **made homeless due to the property being removed from the private rented sector (43%)** was higher than both the September 2017 surveys (35%) and the average across the 2016 surveys (34%).

3 families (13%) became homeless as a result of being issued with a notice to quit from their landlord. Of note, 2 of these families were in receipt of Rent Supplement at the time of losing their rental accommodation.

4 families (17%) became homeless due to relationship breakdown. An additional **2 families (9%)** became homeless due to domestic violence by a partner.

2 families (9%) became homeless due to overcrowding. 1 of these families had a child under 1 year of age.

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, 78%)
2. Unstable/chaotic housing history (n=1, 4%)
3. Relationship breakdown Pathway (n=3, 14%)
4. Migrant pathways to homelessness (n=1, 4%)

The four groups differ from both the most recent comparable survey in September 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 significantly from the September 2017 survey (70%) or indeed the round of data collection previous to that in June 2017 (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.

A new category was created for the December 2017 surveys: Relationship Breakdown Pathway. This refers to families who never had independent tenancies and had lived in the family home until they presented as homeless. They are distinct to the youth pathway previously identified as they were older than 26 years of age.

These groupings will now be expanded upon:

- 1. Previous Stability in the Private Rented Sector** – There were **18 families (78% 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 mirrors the September 2017 surveys (70%) while being considerably 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. Other factors included overcrowding, the loss of employment, receipt of a notice to quit, 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 (**5** 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.
- **10** of the **18** families were migrants; **5** were of a black or ethnic minority background.
- **6** of the **18** families were lone parent families.

- More than three quarters of this group (**n=15, 83%**) 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.
- **2** of the families in this group had already exited homelessness by the time they were surveyed - both with the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). **15** families were in emergency hotel accommodation. 1 respondent – who had experienced a relationship breakdown with his partner - was staying with friends.

2. Unstable/chaotic housing history - There was **1 (4%)** family who had a year's experience of living in independent tenancy. However, they received a notice to quit due to ASB complaints. Previous to this tenancy they had experienced a short period in emergency accommodation and six months of hidden homelessness in the home of a family relation. This figure for December 2017 is lower than the average recorded in 2016 (11%). The most recent comparable survey, September 2017, featured two families in this category (7%).

This family was a young family of a white Irish cultural background with two children and were living in emergency accommodation at time of survey.

3. Relationship Breakdown Pathway – There were **3 (13%)** respondents who had entered homelessness due to overcrowding which usually was accompanied by family conflict. In the case of one family, pregnancy was a trigger to family conflict which resulted in homelessness. All respondents had no experience of an independent tenancy, living in the family home since birth.

Key Characteristics of Group Three:

- **All 3** families were from a white Irish background.
- **All 5** families were lone parent and headed by a female.
- **1 respondent** was aged between 18 and 25, while the remaining **two respondents** were in the 26-35 age category.

4. Migrant pathways to homelessness – There was **1 (4%)** migrant respondent who had entered homelessness due to overcrowding following family reunification (this respondent was renting a one-bed room while awaiting his family to join him in Ireland). When the family did arrive they were unable to source alternative appropriate accommodation for their family of three children.

Help-Seeking before Becoming Homeless

18 of the 23 families (78% of total) sought information or advice *prior* to presenting as homeless. This is higher than the September 2017 surveys (62%), and the average of 67% across the surveys during 2016. 15 of the 18 families who did seek help were from the stable housing group (Group No. 1 described above). 1 respondent from the housing instability and hidden homelessness group (Group No. 2) and two from the relationship breakdown group (Group No. 3) sought help or information.

9 families approached their local authority office as a first port-of-call, and 5 families approached Focus Ireland. 2 families contacted their local councillor/TD.

Like previous months, in cases where families did not contact any service (n=4), it was typically related to 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 December 2017 survey, together with some discussion on the similarities and divergences with the previous surveys of similar data collected in September 2017 and across 2016. Data from families presenting as homeless in December 2017 provides, yet again, a pattern of consistency.

1. **Families with histories of stability in the private rented sector:** 78% of the families reported stable tenancies in the private sector before becoming homeless, typically remaining for several years in each tenancy. This shows a slight increase on the September 2017 surveys (70%) and is considerably 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 rental properties being withdrawn from the market (43%) was higher than both the September survey (35%) and the average recorded across all of 2016 (34%). Of note, prominent reasons for leaving last stable property in the September survey were domestic violence and relationship breakdown.
3. **Reduced prevalence of lone parents:** In this December 2017 survey, **6 (26%)** of the respondents were one-parent households. This is lower than both the September 2017 survey data (62%) and the average across 2016 data (62%).
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. 74% of respondents to the December 2017 reported they were unemployed. This figure is equal to the September 2017 survey (73%) but lower than the average across 2016 (83%). 14 of the 19 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 the December 2017 surveys (48%). This is higher than the 38% reported in September 2017, while mirroring 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 forms¹⁸, these reports seeks to uncover the loss of last *stable housing* (as opposed to most recent living situation) and an insight into housing histories.

¹⁸ Dublin Region Homeless Executive (2017) *Reported Reasons for Family Homelessness in the Dublin Region*. Dublin: DRHE. Available at: <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/publications>

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.

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Appendix 1: Telephone Survey Instrument

Telephone Survey with Families – June 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> | | | Yes | No | |
| | <i>If yes, for how long? _____</i> | | | | | |
| 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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