Focus on Homelessness

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Introduction

Each month since June 2014, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) has published data on the number and basic demographic of households living in emergency accommodation funded via Section 10 of the Housing Act, 1988. In addition, from the start of that year the DHPLG began publishing Quarterly Performance Reports and from the beginning of 2013, Quarterly Financial Reports. Both sets of reports are compiled by local authorities and provide a range of information on their activities and expenditure in response to homelessness. These detailed reports, now numbering over 450, include data on the number of adults entering emergency and temporary homeless services and those exiting to local authority housing, approved housing bodies and private rented sector (including HAP). In addition, they contain data on the length of stay in such accommodation and data on the expenditure on the various responses to homelessness.

This substantial quantity of data covers a period of 6 years during which there was a substantial increase in the extent of homelessness, the emergence of families experiencing homelessness on a large scale and consequent large increases in public expenditure. The period was also marked by a number of shifts in policy and practice.

While this data is quite narrow in its scope, covering only those in emergency accommodation and most rough sleepers, and there are a number of exclusions of certain categories over this period, these data nonetheless provide a reasonably comprehensive and detailed overview of trends in homelessness in Ireland over the period. Even taking into account its limitations, it is a more detailed and timely source of information than is available in most other European Member States.

Thus, it provides an invaluable resource to help us understand and improve on our policies and practices. However, to date this large body of data has not been collated in an easily accessible format so that its contribution to informing effective public policy and debate on homelessness has been relatively limited, although the Performance Reports for the second half of 2019 have been usefully summarised by the DHPLG.

Focus Ireland and the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin have collaborated for over a decade to bring high quality and up-to-date research on homelessness to a wider audience and into the core of public policy formation. ‘Focus on Homelessness’ aims to build on the success of our research and our popular ‘Lunchtime Talks’ series, by making this substantial body of data available in an accessible and reliable format.

‘Focus on Homelessness’ condenses the available data into 17 key indicators, set out in time series over the 6-year period, and provides a brief description of each indicator. ‘Focus on Homelessness’ will be published quarterly as the DHPLG reports become available, providing an up-to-date analysis of the extent, nature, duration and cost of homelessness in Ireland.

In addition to updating the 17 key indicators, future editions of this quarterly core report will be accompanied by Special Reports looking in more detail at specific aspects of the data available. Special Reports are planned to look at Gender, Age, Regional Variation and Public Expenditure, as well as situating the Irish data in the international context.

1 An initial report was published for April 201, but the continuous monthly publications commenced in June 2014.

2 https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data. Further details on these data sources and some of their limitations can be found in Appendix 1.

3 That categories 1-3 in the ETHOS typology used for comparative research on homelessness – see Appendix 2 for details on ETHOS.

Section A: Households
Figure 1 provides data on the trends in the number of households in emergency accommodation from mid-2014 to the end of 2019, with the number of households in emergency accommodation steadily increasing. The highest number recorded was in November 2019 at just under 6,000 (5,959) households.

The increase in households in emergency accommodation has been largest in Dublin, but can also be seen in the rest of the country. Outside of Dublin, the number of households in emergency accommodation has increased by 128% since 2014 and climbed above 2,000 for the first time in 2019.

Presenting the scale of homelessness in terms of the number of households affected is important because solutions to homelessness come in terms of homes, and so it gives the clearest indication of the number of dwelling which are required to meet the needs of those households in emergency accommodation. However, it should be noted that, as only data on individuals and ‘adults with child dependants’ is published in the DHPLG monthly reports and Quarterly Performance Reports, the figure for homeless households is derived from these figures by taking into account the number of couples. See Appendix 1 for a discussion of the discontinuities in this data.
Figure 2 breaks down the households in emergency accommodation by composition, with one parent and two parent families shown separately. Households of ‘Adult Individuals (No Children)’ includes both single person households and couples with no accompanying children.

In the second-half of 2019, just over 4,000 or two-thirds of households in emergency accommodation were single persons/couples without accompanying children, just over 20% were couples with accompanying child dependents and 15% were individuals with accompanying dependent children. Fifty-seven percent of families in emergency accommodation are one-parent families, compared to 24% of all families in Ireland.

More details of the composition of households with children are given in Section D: Families.
Section B: Adults in Homelessness
There were 6,309 adults in emergency accommodation as of December 2019, an increase of 165% on June 2014. Around two thirds (68%) of these adults are in the Dublin region.

This figure includes all adults, whether they are single or in a couple, and whether or not they are accompanied by children. A small number of ‘adult dependents’ in families in emergency accommodation are not included in this figure, see discussion of Figure 13 for more information on this.
Adults in emergency accommodation comprise of 60% men and 40% women. The number of women in emergency accommodation has been growing faster than men over the past six years, a trend which is partly explained by the growth in family homelessness and the large proportion of families in emergency accommodation with one female parent (see Section D).

The graph shows that the rate of increase in women’s homelessness begins to slow down at the start of 2018, in a similar pattern to family homelessness (see Section B). This change in the trend is less visible among men in homelessness, indicating that homeless women are more likely to be part of a household with children than are men. Fifty-seven percent of families in emergency accommodation are one-parent families, compared to 24% of all families in Ireland.
25-44 year olds make up the majority of the number of adults in emergency accommodation at around 60%. The next largest group is 45-64 year olds (28%), followed by young adults aged 18-24 (12%). People aged over 65 years are the smallest group, at just 3% of all adults in emergency accommodation.

All age groups have seen a rise in homelessness over the past six years. The largest rise has been among 45-64 year olds, with a 231% increase since June 2014.

On average, people in emergency accommodation tend to be younger than the general population. Half of Ireland’s overall population are under 45, while they comprise three quarters of those in emergency accommodation. Although 18-24 year olds make up only 12% of all people who are in emergency accommodation, young people have the highest rate of homelessness compared to the other age groups, based on Census 2016.
There are three types of emergency accommodation reported in the monthly reports. Private Emergency Accommodation (PEA) includes hotels, B&Bs and other residential facilities that are privately owned and are being used on an emergency basis. Supported Temporary Accommodation (STA) is emergency accommodation, primarily congregate shelters and Family Hubs, with onsite professional support, and operated by Non-Government Organisations funded or partially funded by Section 10 funding via the local authority. Temporary Emergency Accommodation (TEA) is the smallest category and includes emergency accommodation with no (or minimal) supports, TEAs are operated both by NGOs and private operators.

The number of people in PEA in Ireland is almost four times higher in 2019 than in 2014. The number of people in STA has increased by 125% over this period. TEA is the smallest group, and has further decreased since 2014 (-25%).
The number of adults in emergency accommodation for more than six months increased from just under 800 in Q1 2014 to nearly 3,800 by Q4 2019, an increase of 370%. Sixty percent of adults were in emergency accommodation for more than six months at the end of Q4 2019, and 65% in Dublin, compared to just under 50% in Q1 2014. Outside Dublin, 47% of those in emergency accommodation had been homeless for more than six months in Q4 2019 compared to 26% in Q1 2014.

The benchmark of 'longer than 6 months' reflects the fact that the aim of Government policy in 2014, when the format of the data collection was agreed, was to 'end long-term homelessness', which was to mean homelessness lasting for more than 6 months.

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5 In line with the definitions agreed under the then Government strategy, this data includes those adults consecutively or continuously for longer than 6 months, and non-consecutively for longer than 6 months in the previous 12 month period.
Figure 8 shows the number of adults entering and leaving emergency accommodation as expressed by a daily average (i.e. the quarterly total divided by the total number of days in the quarter).

This graph shows the gap between the number of adults becoming homeless each day and those who are exiting. In every quarter since 2014, more adults entered homelessness than exited, resulting in the increase in the total number of people in homeless accommodation.

The difference between the two indicators has narrowed within the last two years, driven primarily by an increase in the number of exits from homelessness. However, the number of new adults presenting and accepted as experiencing homelessness has not changed significantly over the past six years.

The figure for ‘new presentations’ includes those who have applied to their local authority for homeless support for the first time, are deemed by the local authority to fulfil the conditions under Section 10 of the Housing Act, 1988 and are offered (and take up) emergency accommodation. People who apply for homeless support but are deemed ineligible are not counted as ‘presenting’, nor are people who are deemed to be eligible for homeless support but do not enter homeless accommodation (for instance because they find alternative rented property, or go to stay with relatives. See discussion under Figure 10 below).
The average number of adult return presentations per day has increased each quarter since 2014. In Dublin, return presentations have tripled since the start of 2014. Outside of Dublin, there are now almost ten times more return presentations per day than in 2014.

A number of lead authorities outside Dublin report some unusual patterns in relation to repeat presentations. For example, in the mid-East Region, the number of repeat presentations increased from 78 in Q3 2017 to 1,034 in Q1 2018, and dropped to 365 in Q2 2018. In the Mid-West region, the number of repeat presentations were 335 in Q4 2016 but increased to 1,489 in Q1 2017 and to 2,629 in Q2 2018.
3,960 adults exited emergency accommodation to housing nationally in 2019, the most exits in a single year to date. It should be noted that this figure does not include adults in the Dublin region who were successfully prevented from entering emergency accommodation, through the offer of Homeless Housing Assistance Payment (Homeless HAP) or arrangements to remain with family. Some published figures for ‘exits’ from homelessness include this group.

The number of adults exiting emergency accommodation to social housing, either via a social housing tenancy or social housing support in the form of various rent supplements, has fluctuated by quarter, but the last quarter of 2019 saw the highest ever number of exits to housing, at 1,122. Between Q1 2014 and Q4 2019, over 15,600 adults exited emergency accommodation, albeit some may have returned to emergency accommodation over the same period.

Just over one-third of these housing exits were to a social housing tenancy managed by a Local Authority or a not-for-profit Approved Housing Body, with the remaining obtaining housing in the private rented sector; in nearly all cases it was with the assistance of the Homeless HAP.

Reliance on exits via the private rented sector has grown over this period. For example, in the case of Dublin, just over 60% of all exits to housing in the second half of 2019 were to the private rented sector (via Homeless HAP in virtually all cases), compared to 50% in the first half of 2014. Others exited from emergency accommodation to stay with friends, migrated, entered other services such as hospital, or in a few cases were imprisoned, but such exits are inherently unstable and many return to emergency accommodation.
Section C: Rough Sleeping
A rough sleeper count is conducted in Dublin in the Spring and Winter of each year, commencing in 2007, but only data from 2014 is shown in Figure 11. After reaching a high of 184 people sleeping rough in Q4 2017, rough sleeping on a point-in-time basis has fallen steadily and has now reached its lowest level since 2015.

This point-in-time data conceals the fact that a larger number of individuals sleep rough over a period-of-time. For example, during in the final quarter of 2019, nearly 670 unique individuals who were rough sleeping were identified each quarter by street outreach teams in Dublin, with over 80 percent fluctuating between rough sleeping and accessing emergency shelter accommodation each quarter.

Outside of Dublin, only the South-West region recorded any significant number of rough sleepers in Q4 2019, at 135, with just under 70 percent also using emergency accommodation during that quarter. The South-East region reported six rough sleepers in this quarter and the remaining authorities do not record the number of rough sleepers.

The full series of Dublin Rough Sleeping Counts can be accessed on the Dublin Region Homeless Executive web-site at https://bit.ly/2KCNogb
Section D: Family Homelessness
In June 2014, there were just over 300 families in emergency accommodation in Ireland. As of December 2019, there were 1,548 families, an increase of 349%. This is mainly concentrated in Dublin, which has 75% of all homeless families. As of December 2019, there were 755 families who had been homeless for longer than six months in Dublin and the number of families homeless for over two years has increased from 22 to 184 since 2016.

See Appendix 1 for a discussion in changes in the categorisation of homeless families over this period.
Five families presented as homeless in the Dublin region in January 2013. Since January 2013, an average of 63 families have become homeless every month and there have been ten individual months in which over 100 families became homeless. An average of 86 families presented as homeless each month in 2019, with July having the highest number of new presentations in 2019 at 124 families.

There is an established seasonal pattern of a drop in family homelessness each December, with homeless families leaving emergency accommodation to stay temporarily with friends or extended family for Christmas (see Figure 13). This is usually followed by a sharp rise in January and February as these families enter emergency accommodation again. The drop in families entering emergency accommodation each December can be seen clearly in Figure 13 above.
In December 2019, there were 3,422 child dependents in Ireland living in emergency accommodation. Virtually all the people in this category are children (under the age of 18) but around 7-10% are over-18s who are accommodated with their family. This is a 371% increase in the 5 years since 2014.

The majority of Ireland’s homeless children are in Dublin, with around three quarters of all children in emergency accommodation living in the capital.

While family homelessness is mostly concentrated in Dublin, the rest of the country has also seen an increase in the past six years. Child homelessness outside of Dublin is now more than five times higher than it was in June 2014. Just 5% of all homeless children were outside of Dublin in 2014. This figure now stands at a quarter, with 709 more children living in emergency accommodation outside of Dublin than five years ago.
As of December 2019, there were 755 families who had been homeless for longer than six months. This represents 65% of all homeless families in Ireland. The number of families homeless for over two years has increased from 22 families to 184 families since 2016.
Section E: Individuals
The total number of individuals in emergency accommodation (adults and children) rose above 10,000 for the first time in March 2019. In December 2019, it stood at 9,731, which is over three times the number of people in emergency accommodation in June 2014.
Section F: Expenditure
Current expenditure by central (DHPLG) and local government on accommodation services for households experiencing homelessness nationally increased by 280% from €57m in 2013 to €217m in 2019. This figure does not include the capital funding associated with the provision of additional shelters and Hubs, rather it is only the day-to-day expenditure on providing emergency accommodation for households experiencing homelessness. The expenditure is distributed between not-for-profit bodies (47.5%), for profit accommodation services (45.5%), and Local Authorities (7%).

Additional funding is provided by various statutory health and social inclusion services for households experiencing homelessness or preventing homelessness (via the rent supplement scheme funded by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for the amount of €39m), which was estimated to be €85m in 2017.\(^8\)

Spending has increased across the five categories of services, with the exception of Long-Term Supported Accommodation. Spending on emergency accommodation has seen the largest increase, up 492% since 2013. Emergency accommodation is also the highest-spending category, at 82% of expenditure in 2019.

Appendix
Appendix 1: Data

Monthly Reports
The PASS (Pathway Accommodation & Support System), established in Dublin as a bed management and client support system in 2011, was rolled out nationally in 2013, and this development allowed for data on number of adult individuals with accompanying child dependents experiencing homelessness and residing in designated emergency accommodation funded by Section 10 and Local Authority contributions during the third week of every month in each county to be generated on a monthly basis. The publication of these Monthly Reports commenced in April 2014 on a trial basis, and from June 2014, with some modifications, has been produced on a continuous monthly basis. Data is generated from PASS on the profile of households in the designated services by household composition, the gender, age and nature of accommodation provided for adults and the number of accompanying child dependents. In comparison with the quarterly performance reports, the monthly reports provide stock data on the number of adults, child dependents and households in a given week each month.

In comparative terms, using the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) as a framework, this monthly data provide provides data category 2, people staying in a night shelter; and category 3, people in accommodation for the homeless and in 2014 only (see below), category 4, people in a women’s shelter (see appendix 1 for an overview of ETHOS).

The Monthly Reports do not capture the those using emergency or temporary shelters not funded by the Local Authorities, does not include all those rough sleeping, those in Section 10 funded long-term supported accommodation, these in direct provision nor households in insecure or inadequate accommodation. Only a small number of services with less than 200 beds nationally do not, for various reasons, receive, nor indeed, seek Section 10 funding, and therefore are not included in the PASS data.

Data on the numbers sleeping rough or literally homeless is collected via a point-in-time or one-night street count twice a year in Dublin (in March and November), and the number of contacts outreach teams have with those sleeping rough is available in Dublin, the South West and South East regions only. Data from Dublin shows that the majority of those rough sleeping also use emergency shelters, so that a significant number are likely to be captured in the monthly reports.

On households in insecure or inadequate accommodation, data is collected via the Housing Needs Assessment, which was carried out by the local authorities on a bi-annual basis, and now annual basis. Amongst the categories of need for social housing support are ‘unsuitable accommodation due to particular housing circumstances’, reasonable requirement for separate accommodation, ‘unsuitable accommodation due to exceptional medical or compassionate grounds, ‘over-crowded accommodation and ‘unfit accommodation.’ In the Assessments conducted in 2013, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, between 35,000 and 40,000 households were assessed as being in these categories.

The Monthly Reports do not include persons in long-term supported accommodation but funded via Section 10. In 2019, 49 long-term supported residential services were allocated funding via section 10 in the amount of €9.8m. Census 2011 identified 992 individuals in such long-term supported accommodation, with Census 2016 identifying 1,772 individuals.
Nor do the Monthly Reports include persons who are in Direct Provision Centres (DPCs), which provide congregate accommodation with various support services, for international protection applicants provided by the Department of Justice / Reception and Integration Agency, who have been granted refugee status or leave to remain in Ireland, but are unable to exit Direct Provision due to their inability to secure rental accommodation. At the end of June 2019, there were 780 such persons in Direct Provision Centres, or 12 percent of the overall number in DPCs (IGEES, 2019, p.22). Furthermore, at the end of June 2019, there were over 900 persons seeking international protection, who due to an increase in persons seeking international protection and constrained capacity in DPCs, were placed in commercial hostels and B&Bs by the Reception and Integration Agency.

**Modifications to the Monthly Reports**

**Removal of Refuges in January 2015**

From 1 January 2015, accommodation or refuges for those escaping from gender-based violence (ETHOS category 4) which was funded via Section 10 – a total of 21 residential services with a bed capacity of approximately 250, with annual funding of just over €2.1m was transferred to the statutory Child and Family Agency (TUSLA), and these accessing these residential services have not been enumerated in the monthly data since that date. This followed from a recommendation of the Homelessness Oversight Group* (2013, p.23) that: "such refuges are not homeless emergency accommodation and would prefer to see both a discrete funding stream and separate reporting for the provision of State support to the accommodation needs of persons experiencing domestic violence. This would seem to appropriately reside within the scope of the recently established Child and Family Agency. We recommend therefore that existing funding arrangements for the provision of refuge accommodation and services would be transferred to the Child and Family Agency."

The Policy and Procedural Guidance for Housing Authorities in Relation to Assisting Victims of Domestic Violence with Emergency and Long-term Accommodation Needs states that "It is a matter for Tusla to monitor women's refuges in terms of capacity, usage, through flow, etc. The official monthly homeless data published by this Department and produced by housing authorities via the Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS) relates to the State-funded emergency accommodation arrangements that are overseen by housing authorities only. PASS is not operational in the refuge sector. (2017, p.3)." To-date, the Child and Family Agency have not published data on a monthly basis on the number and characteristics of those accessing such residential services.

**Re-categorisation of Households March, April and July 2018**

In March 2018, 253 Adults accommodated 'in houses and apartments' who had hitherto being included in the monthly data were excluded, and in April a further 121 adults were excluded on the same basis that they were not in emergency accommodation, giving a total of 374 adults. Following further investigations by the Department of Housing, ‘further cases of houses and apartments being recorded as emergency accommodation’ were identified, containing a further 251 adults, giving an overall total of 625 adults (with 981 accompanying child dependents) excluded for the Monthly Reports. On 27 September 2018, a note was prepared by the Homelessness and Housing Supports Unit in the Department of Housing summarizing the re-categorizations.

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9 To assist the Minister in monitoring and measuring progress towards ending homelessness in 2016, a three-person Homelessness Oversight Group, comprising a senior social policy academic, a retired former senior civil servant and a private sector accountant, was established in February 2013. Some 10 months later, in December 2013, the oversight group produced its first, and what was ultimately, its only report.
Quarterly Performance Reports
From January 2014 onwards, at the end of each quarter, Local Authorities, were required by the Department of Housing to produce Performance Reports providing flow data on a range of indicators, included the number of new and repeat adult presentations to homelessness services per quarter; the number of adults in emergency accommodation for more than six months, the number of adult individuals exiting temporary and emergency accommodation to tenancies in the local authority sector, approved housing bodies or private rented sector (including those in receipt of the Housing Assistance Payment) with, or without support, and the number of rough sleepers.

Quarterly Financial Reports
Local Authorities were also required to produce detailed quarterly Financial Reports outlining the distribution of central government and local authority funding on preventative actions, emergency and long-term supported accommodation, and other services for those experiencing homelessness. The reports also provide data on the distribution of this expenditure to NGO and private sector providers of the range of services listed above. These reporting requirements arose from the issuing of a Protocol Governing Delegation of Section 10 Funding for Homeless Services to Local Authorities.
## Appendix 2: ETHOS – European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual Category</th>
<th>Operational Category</th>
<th>Living Situation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roofless</td>
<td>People living rough</td>
<td>1.1 Public space or external space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People staying in a night shelter</td>
<td>2.1 Night shelter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Houseless           | People in accommodation for the homeless | 3.1 Homeless hostel  
|                     |                      | 3.2 Temporary accommodation  
|                     |                      | 3.3 Transitional supported accommodation  |
|                     | People in a women's shelter | 4.1 Women's shelter accommodation |
|                     | People in accommodation for immigrants | 5.1 Temporary accommodation, reception centres  
|                     |                      | 5.2 Migrant workers’ accommodation |
|                     | People due to be released from institutions | 6.1 Penal institutions  
|                     |                      | 6.2 Medical institutions  
|                     |                      | 6.3 Children’s institutions/homes |
|                     | People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness) | 7.1 Residential care for older homeless people  
|                     |                      | 7.2 Supported accommodation for formerly homeless persons |
| Insecure            | People living in insecure accommodation | 8.1 Temporarily with family/friends  
|                     |                      | 8.2 No legal (sub)tenancy  
|                     |                      | 8.3 Illegal occupation of land |
|                     | People living under threat of eviction | 9.1 Legal orders enforced (rented)  
|                     |                      | 9.2 Repossession orders (owned) |
|                     | People living under threat of violence | 10.1 Police recorded incidents |
| Inadequate          | People living in temporary/ non-conventional structures | 11.1 Mobile homes  
|                     |                      | 11.2 Non-conventional building  
|                     |                      | 11.3 Temporary structure |
|                     | People living in unfit housing | 12.1 Occupied dwelling unfit for habitation |
|                     | People living in extreme overcrowding | 13.1 Highest national norm of overcrowding |
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