
Clíodhna Bairéad | Michelle Norris

Youth Homelessness in the Dublin Region:

A profile of young, single
emergency accommodation
users in 2016, 2017 and 2018

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Glossary of Terms

Adult: A person aged 18 or over as defined by the Child Care Act, 1991.

AHB: Approved Housing Body: non-profit sector provider of social housing.

DRHE: Dublin Region Homeless Executive: funds and manages homeless services in the Dublin Region. The DRHE also funds and operates the National PASS system.

Emergency accommodation: Accommodation allocated by the Dublin City Council Central Placement Service. Long-term beds allocated to adults provided by a homeless service in a temporary accommodation unit and confirmed on PASS.

HAP/HHAP: Housing Assistance Payment, a social housing support provided by local authorities to people who have a long-term housing need. Homeless HAP (HHAP) is currently the most common form of HAP provided by the DRHE to people who have accessed emergency accommodation in the Dublin region. HHAP provides a higher rate of payment than standard HAP in order to improve accessibility to the private market for individuals who have experienced homelessness.

Homeless: A person is considered to be homeless if:

- There is no accommodation available that they and any other person who normally lives with them or who might reasonably be expected to live with them, can reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of, or
- Is living in a hospital, county home, night shelter or other such institution, and is living there because they have no suitable accommodation, or
- They are unable to provide accommodation from their own resources (Section 2 of the Housing Act, 1988).

HSE: Health Service Executive

LA housing: Local authority-provided social housing.

NGO: Non-governmental organisation.

Pathway Accommodation and Support System (PASS): The national management and allocation system for accommodation and services for homeless people.

Rough sleeper: An adult individual who sleeps in the open air (e.g. on the street, in a tent, in a park, on a bench, in a bus shelter) or in a structure not suitable for human habitation (such as derelict buildings, stairwells, public toilets or public service buildings like bus/train stations). This definition does not include squatters, protesters or individuals who have accommodation and intentionally sleep out for a specific purpose or for pleasure (such as people camping illegally on public lands).

About the Authors



Clíodhna Bairéad holds a BA (Hons) degree in Public and Social Policy from NUI Galway and a Master of Public Policy (MPP) from University College Dublin. Her Master's research examined information-sharing between homeless services in the Dublin region. She has worked as a research assistant in NUI Galway and University College Dublin.

Clíodhna is a social policy PhD candidate at University College Dublin in the School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice under the supervision of Professor Michelle Norris. This report falls within the scope of her PhD thesis, which is titled: *Homelessness as a Form of Statelessness among Single Homeless People in Dublin: an analysis of three years of administrative data on patterns of homeless accommodation service usage and entry, exit and re-entry from homelessness.*

Michelle Norris is Professor of Social Policy at the School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, University College Dublin. Her teaching and research interests focus on housing policy and urban regeneration, particularly on:

- the management and financing of social housing
- the regeneration of social housing estates and inner urban areas
- homelessness

She has led over 20 research projects on these issues since 2000 and produced some 170 publications on the results. Her latest book, titled *Property, Family and the Irish Welfare State*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2016.

She has strong links with policymakers in Ireland. In 2011 and again in 2016, she was appointed by An Taoiseach as an independent member of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), which advises the Irish government on economic, environmental and social policy. In 2012 and in 2017, she was appointed by the Minister for Housing as chair of the Housing Finance Agency (hfa.ie). The agency raises finance on international markets which it lends on to local authorities and housing associations for the provision of housing to low-income households. In 2018 she was appointed by the Minister for Housing to the interim board of the Land Development Agency (LDA), which was set up to coordinate land within state control for more optimal uses where appropriate, with a focus on providing new homes.



Foreword

On behalf of Focus Ireland I am pleased to welcome the publication of ‘Youth Homelessness in the Dublin Region’. This is the first instalment in our new ‘Insights into Youth Homelessness’ series, which will build on our successful ‘Insights into Family Homelessness’ series.

We hope that this new research series will inform more effective responses to youth homelessness by policy makers and homeless service providers. In this respect this publication is particularly timely because the recently published Programme for Government 2020 commits the new government to ‘develop a National Youth Homelessness Strategy’. This report will provide valuable information to inform this strategy because it presents the first analysis of quantitative data on young people who use emergency accommodation for homeless people in Dublin. The report fills important gaps in our knowledge of why this group enters homelessness and when and how they leave homelessness and enables further exploration of some of the insights generated by the qualitative research into youth homelessness, most recently Paula Mayock and Sarah Parker’s book entitled ‘Living in Limbo: Homeless Young People’s Paths to Housing’ (2017)¹.

It is also important to acknowledge that this report would not have been possible without the support of Focus Ireland’s donors and valuable collaborations. In 2018, Focus Ireland’s Research Sub-Committee decided, in response to an invitation from Professor Michelle Norris of UCD, that it would part fund a PhD as part of the Irish Research Council (IRC) Enterprise Partnership Scholarship Scheme. This important scheme is an opportunity for voluntary sector organisations, with a commitment to research, to work with leading academics and support doctoral research. It has enabled Focus Ireland to support Cliodhna Bairead’s very useful PhD research on homelessness among single people in Dublin. The report is also the result of a collaboration with the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) which provided access to the high-quality data examined in this report.

¹ ‘Living in Limbo’ was commissioned by Focus Ireland and funded by Focus Ireland, in collaboration with Simon Communities of Ireland, Threshold, Peter McVerry Trust and Society of St. Vincent De Paul.

Of course, like all research, the report also reminds us of the gaps in our knowledge. We do not know whether the experience of youth homelessness outside of Dublin follows the same patterns as are revealed here for instance. We need to know more about how homelessness affects particular vulnerable groups such as young parents² or LGBTQI+ young people³ and we don't have a reliable estimate of the number of young people who have no home but don't use homeless services because they are 'sofa surfing' or living in precarious accommodation.

While there is much more we need to know about youth homelessness and much more we need to do to resolve it, the findings of this research also provides welcome assurances that some of the measures introduced to reduce youth homelessness are working. It gives us confidence that it is realistic to work towards an Ireland where no young person enters adulthood as homeless, and where any experience of homelessness is rare and brief – a situation referred to in the international research as 'functional zero.'

Mike Allen

Director of Advocacy and Research, Focus Ireland

2 Focus Ireland published "Young Families in the Homeless Crisis: Challenges and Solutions", Lambert et al. in 2018.

3 In September 2020, Focus Ireland will publish research into the experience of homelessness by young LGBTQI+ adults.

1. Introduction



Youth homelessness has been acknowledged for decades as an experience distinct from adult homelessness (FEANTSA, 2020). Research in this field has been predominantly qualitative research, which has produced important insights into these distinctive experiences (Mayock and Parker, 2017) and, in Ireland, into the ‘homeless pathways’ of young adults who experience homelessness (Mayock, Corr and O’Sullivan, 2008). However, quantitative research on the number of young adults who experience homelessness has not yet been produced, leaving gaps in our knowledge of how best to understand the experiences of youth homelessness and support young adults back into housing.

This report aims to start to fill some of these gaps by using demographic analysis for young people aged between 18 and 25 who first used emergency accommodation for homeless people in the Dublin region between 2016 and 2018. The data for this research was gathered from the Pathways, Accommodation and Support System (PASS) – an administrative database operated by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) that is used to place people who experience homelessness in accommodation services in Dublin. This type of analysis is being used to research areas of homelessness, and particularly to profile families in homelessness and to research the effectiveness of policies and services to prevent and reduce homelessness and to support people who experience homelessness to leave homelessness. It is hoped that this analysis will demonstrate the potential for the same approach to be taken to support young people who experience homelessness in Ireland.

This report is organised into eight further sections. The next two sections examine the key themes in the Irish and international research on youth homelessness and outline legislation and policies relevant to this research. The following section outlines the research methods used to conduct this study. This is followed by a profile of the demographic characteristics of the young homeless, single people who used emergency accommodation in the Dublin region between 2016 and 2018. The organisation of the remainder of the report broadly follows the pathways approach, which has produced strong qualitative research in the Irish context (Mayock, Corr and O’Sullivan, 2008). These sections of the report examine: entries into homelessness, progression through homelessness, and exits from homelessness from a quantitative perspective. To conclude, this report will present reflections on the research presented here, the greater body of research on the topic and the policy implications of this research.

2. Irish and International Research on Youth Homelessness



A large volume of research has been conducted on youth homelessness in Ireland, other Western European countries, North America and Australia. Most of the Irish research conducted to date is qualitative and focused on examining in depth the experiences of relatively small numbers of homeless young people. In contrast, particularly in the United States and Canada, there is a strong tradition of conducting large-scale quantitative research on youth homelessness, usually by surveying providers of homeless services, while examining the experiences of people in homelessness in less depth.

There are problems in robustly comparing the results of research from different countries. This is not just because of the variety of research methods used and the challenges inherent in researching hidden and hard-to-reach groups such as homeless people, but also because the various studies employ different definitions of both homeless and 'youth', in terms of the age groups included.

For instance, FEANTSA (2010: 1), the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless, specifies: 'Youth homelessness occurs where an individual between the ages of 13 and 26 is experiencing rooflessness or houselessness or is living in insecure or inadequate housing without a parent, family member or other legal guardian'. However, it points out that the governments of most EU member states do not have a formal definition of youth homelessness, and those that do have use varying definitions. The Dutch government's definition of youth homelessness includes people aged between 12 and 23 years, while French government policy on youth homeless targets young people aged between 16 and 25. In common with many other countries, relevant legislation and policy in Ireland distinguishes between children and young people, and establishes separate arrangements for addressing homelessness among these two groups. The Child Care Act 1991 defines a child as someone aged under 18 years and specifies that the State has additional obligations to provide support for children, including when they become homeless. Irish government policy includes specific provisions to address 'youth homelessness' that focus on young adults aged between 18 and 25 (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2013).

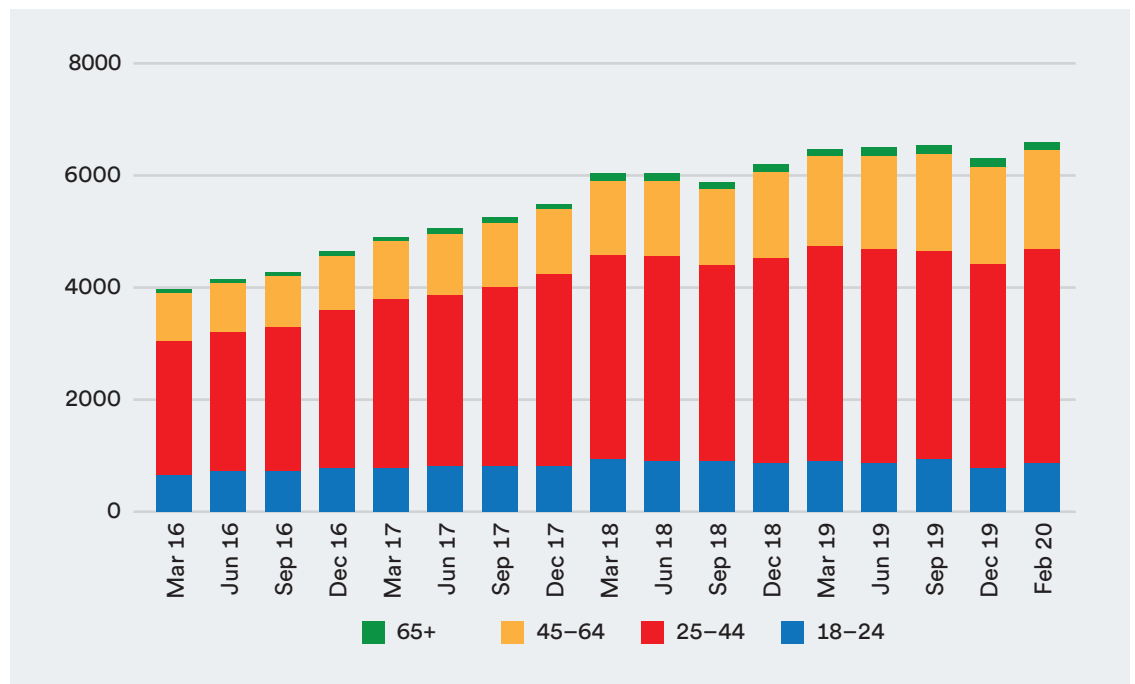
Partially as a result of these varying definitions of youth homelessness, estimates of the size of this population vary between European countries. What has been established, by FEANTSA for the European context, is that youth homelessness is distinct from adult homelessness in a number of ways. Primarily, entries into homelessness of young people often signify a loss of family support or structure, disengagement from education, increases in the rate of drug and alcohol dependency and in adverse mental health

experiences. A primary reason for young people entering homelessness, identified by FEANTSA, is increasing housing costs. These costs disproportionately affect young people, who experience age discrimination in the private housing market (FEANTSA, 2020). There are gaps in knowledge in regard to youth homelessness across Europe as well as failures by member states to adequately address and reduce youth homelessness. EU member states have, generally, tended to approach youth homelessness and other issues such as poverty, education exclusion, juvenile criminality and mental health as singular, stand-alone issues, when the evidence supports taking a more holistic approach to young people who experience socio-economic challenges early in life (Quilgars, 2010). In Ireland, health boards (replaced in 2005 by the Health Service Executive; HSE) have been required by the Department of Health and Children to develop strategic plans to address youth homelessness under the Youth Homelessness Strategy, published in 2001.

The data for Ireland as a whole, which is set out in Figure 1, indicates that youth homelessness increased substantially in absolute terms during the three years under examination in this report. In January 2016, 640 young people aged between 18 and 24 years were homeless; by December 2018 this had risen to 869 people. However, because the total number of homeless people rose by more than this, in relative terms the proportion of homeless aged between 18 and 24 years declined marginally between these years. In January 2016, young people accounted for 16.5% of the total homeless population; by December 2018 this had declined to 14%.

There is rather more consensus in the international research about the characteristics of the youth homeless population. Most research indicates that this group is male-dominated. For instance, the 2015 Canadian Youth Homeless Survey found that 57.6% of the homeless young people identified as male (Gaetz *et al.*, 2016). In the United Kingdom, the Young and Homeless Report (Homeless Link, 2018) found that, of the young people who received service support, 50% identified as male and 44% identified as female. In the United States of America, Safe Horizon reported that 56% of young people in homelessness identified as male (Safe Horizon, 2020). However, these findings may be skewed by the fact that most of the research on youth homelessness focuses on those sleeping rough or in emergency homeless accommodation, and women are more likely to be in 'hidden homelessness' (i.e. living in insecure accommodation or 'couch-surfing' temporarily in friends' homes) (Mayock and Bretherton, 2016). There is also evidence that youth homelessness is an intersectional phenomenon; the research from several countries indicates that levels of homelessness are significantly higher among LGBT youth as well as ethnic-minority young people and migrants (Ecker, 2016; Gaetz *et al.*, 2016).

Figure 1: Homeless Adults by Age Group in Ireland (N), March 2016–February 2020



Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (various years).

Avramov (1998: 106) has influentially conceptualised youth homelessness as ‘the outcome of a process of failed transitions’ from living with parents or caregivers to living independently. A common theme in the research on youth homelessness is the factors that disrupt these transitions and trigger homelessness. In the Irish context, Mayock and colleagues’ longitudinal panel research, which followed a group of homeless young people over six years, identifies the factors that are most significant in this regard, and provides a detailed picture of their operation and interaction. For instance, Mayock, Parker and Murphy (2014) identify four proximate triggers of homelessness that were evident among the young people they interviewed:

- histories of being in residential or foster care for extended periods, including experiences of placement breakdown or disruption during this time and poor preparation for leaving care, coupled with weak aftercare support;
- household disruption and family instability, which for some young people precipitated disruptions to schooling and negative coping strategies such as drug abuse, which further undermined already fragile family relationships;
- family conflict and family violence, including experiences of childhood neglect, abuse, parental substance misuse, and/or domestic violence, and
- problem behaviour and neighbourhood stressors including substance use and the influence of negative peer associations.

This analysis is broadly supported by the international research on youth homelessness (Quilgars, Johnsen and Pleace, 2008). For instance, Ford, Rugg and Burrows' (2002) longitudinal analysis of youth homeless in the UK identified a similar typology of pathways, and they linked the risk of entering homelessness to the ability of young people to plan for and control their entry to independent living, constraints on their access to housing, and the degree of family support available to them.

The research also indicates that, for each homeless person, the significance of different youth homelessness triggers is shaped by policy, socio-economic and personal factors. For instance, most homeless young people share experiences such as poverty, disadvantage and housing instability (Mayock, Parker and Murphy, 2014). In countries where supports for young people leaving care are stronger, leaving care is not such a common trigger of homelessness (Quilgars, Johnsen and Pleace, 2008). Among LGBT youth, parental or caregiver rejection of their sexuality and/or gender identity is a widespread factor that leads to these young people leaving home and thereby triggers homelessness (Castellanos, 2016).

Longitudinal research on youth homelessness helps to clarify the trajectories that young people follow through homelessness and exits from homelessness. For instance, on the basis of their longitudinal research on youth homeless in Ireland, Mayock and Parker (2017) propose a threefold categorisation of these trajectories:

- linear trajectories;
- non-linear trajectories, and
- chaotic trajectories/continuous homelessness.

They conclude that more linear (and less chaotic) trajectories culminating in exit from homelessness are associated with higher levels of engagement with services and established links with service professionals, stronger relationships with family members and lower levels of substance use and mental health needs. Conversely, difficulties in accessing affordable housing, perceived lack of support and 'service fatigue' inhibited young people's exit from homelessness. This analysis is supported by earlier research published by Mayock, Corr and O'Sullivan (2008). In addition, they identified prolonged homelessness, gaps in support services, use of adult hostels, negative peer associations, involvement in criminal activity and incarceration as factors associated with failure to exit homelessness.

3. Legislation and Policy Overview



Legislation

Three categories of legislation are relevant to youth homelessness:

- *Housing legislation:* the legal definition of homelessness currently used in Ireland is set out in Section 2 of the Housing Act 1988 which states:

“A person shall be regarded by a housing authority as being homeless for the purposes of this Act if—

(a) there is no accommodation available which, in the opinion of the authority, he, together with any other person who normally resides with him or who might reasonably be expected to reside with him, can reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of, or

(b) he is living in a hospital, county home, night shelter or other such institution, and is so living because he has no accommodation of the kind referred to in paragraph (a), and he is, in the opinion of the authority, unable to provide accommodation from his own resources.”

In Section 10 of this Act, local authorities are given the authority to provide accommodation and support to individuals who fall within this definition of homelessness, and in accordance with current policies and strategies provided by the relevant minister. The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 required all housing authorities to adopt a homeless strategy within eight months of the Act being introduced. It also required housing authorities to establish a homelessness consultative forum and appoint a management group.

- *Health legislation:* the Health Act 1953 stipulates that the State has statutory responsibility to provide care to those who cannot provide for themselves. The Health Care Executive was also included in the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 (P.2, S.37.2).
- *Child welfare legislation:* The Child Care Act 1991 established the special responsibility of the State to protect the welfare of children (defined as people aged 18 and under). The Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015 requires Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) to provide aftercare support to young people leaving state care.

National Policy

Youth homeless policymaking was driven by the implementation of the provisions of the Child Care Act 1991, during the years following its enactment. This legislation expanded government obligations to protect the welfare of children, including homeless children. As a result, policy on youth homeless remains strongly rooted in child welfare concerns (O’Sullivan, 2020). The period since 2000 has seen substantial developments in policy on youth homelessness and in policy on adult homelessness more broadly.

In 2000 the Government published *Homelessness – An Integrated Strategy* (Government of Ireland, 2000) which outlined the first cohesive national approach to tackling adult homelessness in Ireland. The key objectives of this strategy were “to ensure adequate emergency responses for those who become homelessness [sic] and “to ensure reintegration to the family and/or community of those who have been homeless” (Government of Ireland, 2000, p4). This strategy also acknowledged the importance of youth homelessness and referred to the government strategy on youth homelessness that was being developed at the time of publication.

The first Irish government *Strategy on Youth Homelessness*, published in 2001, aimed to “to reduce and if possible eliminate youth homelessness through preventative strategies and where a child becomes homeless to ensure that he/she benefits from a comprehensive range of services aimed at re-integrating him/her into his/her community as quickly as possible” (Department of Health and Children, 2001, p3). This strategy also required all health authorities to have a youth homelessness strategy in each region. A 2013 review of the implementation of the Strategy on Youth Homelessness gave a positive assessment of its achievements; this reflected falling youth homelessness since its publication and the expansion of services for homeless children in particular (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2013). However, the review also identified a need for service improvement, including better supports for young adults (aged 18+), particularly those leaving foster or residential care because, as mentioned above, the research indicates that care-leavers are at particularly high risk of homelessness. Their needs were addressed by the publication of the *Leaving and Aftercare Services National Policy and Procedure* (Health Service Executive, 2011), which states that it will provide a holistic, individual approach to providing support for people leaving care. The *National Aftercare Policy for Alternative Care 2017*, which sets out plans for additional supports for young people exiting state care, including aftercare support workers, care-leaving plans and supported social housing provision. These aftercare supports remain in place until the young person turns 21, though they may be extended to 23 to facilitate education completion (Tusla, 2017).

In 2008, a follow-up strategy to *Homelessness – An Integrated Strategy*, titled *The Way Home* was published, outlining the three core objectives of “eliminating long-term occupation of emergency homeless facilities; eliminating the need to sleep rough; and preventing the occurrence of homelessness as far as possible” (Government of Ireland, 2008, p5). *The Way Home* includes 21 recommendations. Recommendation number 15 relates directly to youth homelessness: “Closer links should be developed between the Youth Homeless Forum and the Adult Homeless Forum in each area to improve and monitor the effectiveness of systems at local level and ensure continuum of care for the individual upon reaching 18 years of age” (Government of Ireland, 2008. p24).

Rebuilding Ireland was published in 2016 and is the current national action plan for Housing and Homelessness. This action plan contains five pillars, the first is to address homelessness. This pillar states its primary aim is “*providing an urgent response to the homeless crisis, Pillar One focuses on taking immediate action to help those on the streets and those in emergency accommodation, including families in hotels.*” This aim includes taking an inter-agency approach to addressing homelessness by providing supports including, health services and housing provision. The Pillar Actions include, expanding the Homeless HAP (HHAP) tenancy scheme; rolling out Housing First nationally; introducing extra emergency beds seasonally in the Dublin Region under the Cold Weather Initiative; the HSE’s budget for homeless health services; and prioritising intervention and support that allows people to remain in their homes. This action plan specifically mentions young people and action number 1.7 states that “*We will work to ensure that young people leaving State care and at risk of homelessness are identified and catered for through appropriate housing and other supports for their needs*”(Government of Ireland, 2016).

The Housing First Implementation Plan 2018–2021, published in 2018, provides a specific strategy for providing housing as the first intervention in cases of homelessness. Housing First has developed internationally as a strategy to assist individuals who engage in rough sleeping and experience addiction issues. The guiding principle is that providing secure housing from which individuals can access other support services will provide them with the best opportunity to exit homelessness. The implementation plan reflects the expansion of the group for which housing is provided first, including those who have experienced long-term homelessness and individuals with mental health difficulties. It aims to provide 663 Housing First tenancies nationally by the end of 2021 (Government of Ireland, 2018). Housing First for youth is discussed in this implementation plan. It acknowledges the diverse set of needs that young people experience and states its intention to continue developing knowledge and understanding in delivering Housing First to young people (Government of Ireland, 2018).

Regional Policy in Dublin

In 1996 the four local authorities responsible for the Dublin region established the Homeless Initiative, which was tasked with building relationships between voluntary organisations and public agencies to create a workable framework to address homelessness in the Dublin region. This initiative was followed by the establishment of the Homeless Agency in 2001, which became the DRHE in 2011. The DRHE is the lead statutory authority for homeless service funding and management in the Dublin region. It created PASS which is now used nationally for bed allocations in emergency accommodation. The DRHE currently uses this operating system for emergency accommodation bed allocation. DRHE funding for emergency accommodation is provided under section 10 of the Housing Act 1988.

Since 2001, this agency has produced policies and strategies specifically to address homelessness in the Dublin region. The first strategy produced by the Homeless Agency was *Shaping the Future: An action plan on homelessness in Dublin 2001–2003* (Homeless Agency, 2001). This strategy presented three key objectives:

- to address the current gaps and deficiencies in services and accommodation, including long-term housing, for people who are homeless in Dublin;
- to ensure that people who are homeless have access to the range of services necessary to reduce the length of time they spend homeless to an agreed minimum and that they are assisted to sustainable long-term housing and independence;
- *to ensure that mainstream policies and services are focused on preventing people from becoming homeless* (Homeless Agency, 2001, p11).

Objective 3.5 of this action plan states the intent of the Homeless Agency “*to work with schools and youth services to develop programmes and activities for young people so that they are better prepared for leaving home. The programmes will aim to reduce unplanned movement from home, raise awareness of options to leaving home as a means of addressing problems, and ensure that young people have the skills to manage an independent household*” (Homeless Agency, 2001, p34).

Shaping the Future outlined the historical context of service provision and policies in the region. It addressed key issues that needed to be addressed and overcome. Finally, it established the methods by which successes or achievements regarding homelessness would be measured in the region.

The following strategic plans have been published for the Dublin region since the publication of *Shaping the Future*:

- *Making it Home: an action plan on Homelessness in Dublin 2004–2006* (Homeless Agency, 2004). This action plan acknowledges the previous commitments made to address youth homelessness.
- *A key to the door: The Homeless Agency Partnership Action Plan on Homelessness in Dublin 2007–2010* (Homeless Agency, 2007). This action plan refers to the youth homelessness strategy and some relevant research on youth homelessness.
- *Sustaining Dublin’s Pathway to Home: The Homeless Action Plan Framework for Dublin, 2014 to 2016* (Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2014). This action plan provides a summary of the partnerships in place working to end youth homelessness (Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2014, p6).
- *The Homelessness Action Plan Framework for Dublin, 2019–2021* (Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2019). In section two of this framework, the risk of homelessness to young people leaving care is addressed (Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2019: 24).

The Dublin Joint Homeless Consultative Forum (DJHCF) and Management Group, both of which were established in accordance with the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, are responsible for taking an active part in the decision-making for strategic plans in the Dublin region. These groups include members of both voluntary organisations and public agencies that have responsibilities for service provision and provision of care to people who experience homelessness in the Dublin region.

Youth Homeless Services in Dublin

There are a number of youth specific homeless services in the Dublin region, they are:

- George's Hill is a long-term supported housing project for people of all ages run by Focus Ireland. Twelve self-contained units are reserved for those aged between 18–25 years.
- The Caretakers Hostel is a partnership project with Focus Ireland and the Society of St Vincent de Paul. It has nine emergency accommodation beds for young people aged between 16 and 21. Four of these beds are ring-fenced for under-18s and the remaining five for those aged 18–21. The accommodation is primarily for young people who have been sleeping rough and have complex support needs, including drug use.
- The Peter McVerry Trust runs St Catherine's Foyer, a 48-bed emergency hostel reserved for young people. It provides supported temporary accommodation for those aged between 18 and 24.
- St Peter's Place, run by DePaul Ireland, provides 35 beds for young homeless people. It provides short-term supported accommodation for stays of up to six months.
- Focus Ireland and the Peter McVerry Trust also provide aftercare accommodation for young care-leavers in various locations around Dublin.

Day services specifically aimed at young people experiencing homelessness are:

- The Extension Youth Service, run by Focus Ireland, is a drop-in centre providing food, advice & information services and support in finding stable housing for young people. Key workers are available to provide ongoing support to those who need it.
- For young people who have left state care, Crosscare provides an aftercare service for 18–23-year-olds, which also offers supports in finding and sustaining stable accommodation. Run as a day centre, it offers advice, information, free counselling and advocacy services to young people.
- The Peter McVerry Trust runs a Youth Café which offers food, internet access, laundry and shower facilities for homeless young people.

Prevention services specifically aimed at young people at risk of experiencing homelessness services include:

- Focus Ireland Family mediation services, funded by Tusla, which work with young people and families, where social workers have identified a risk of homelessness. The service works with young people and their broader families to deal with conflicts which have the potential of resulting in family breakdown and homelessness.
- Aftercare service (funded by Tusla or delivered directly by Tusla) provide support for young people in special care from the age of 16, under the national aftercare framework. One objective of this support is to ensure a transition to secure housing when the young person reaches 18.

4. Research Methodology

Research Data

The data examined in this report was gathered as part Clíodhna Bairéad's PhD research, which is co-funded by Focus Ireland and the Irish Research Council (IRC) under the auspices of the IRC's Research Partnership Scheme. This research is being undertaken at the School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice at University College Dublin, and supervised by Prof Michelle Norris.

This data was collected using PASS which allows service providers to input service-user data, including their access to and exits from emergency accommodation. Each service user registered on PASS is given a unique identifier number, which enables them to access multiple services (emergency accommodation, support services, addiction support) without needing to provide these services with duplicate information. PASS allows service providers to keep notes about client engagement, accommodation bookings and services received. The PASS database is supported by the DRHE, which facilitated access for this research.

This report examines the demographics of young adults, aged between 18 and 25, who first accessed emergency accommodation in the Dublin region in 2016, 2017 and 2018. This region includes the operational areas of Dublin City Council, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Fingal and South Dublin County Councils. Only single young people are included in this study. They are defined as people aged between 18 and 25 who accessed emergency accommodation either as an individual or in a couple who are not accompanied by minors and are not part of a larger family unit. Young adults who were part of a family unit and adults who booked accommodation but have never used the allocated bed have been excluded from the data examined here.

A total of 847 young people who fall within the above criteria accessed emergency accommodation for the first time in the Dublin region in 2016, 2017 and 2018. For the purposes of this report, their start date in homelessness is the first night they stayed in emergency accommodation and their exit date is the last night they stayed in emergency accommodation. In this report, an individual ceasing to use emergency accommodation is defined as either:

- **Exit:** a person has exited to a tenancy and the accommodation moved to has been officially recorded on PASS, or
- **Departure:** the individual ceased using emergency accommodation for a reason other than moving to secure accommodation.

Those considered to be still experiencing homelessness have been recorded as either:

- **Placed:** has accessed a long-term bed or a rolling bed (a bed in emergency accommodation provided to the same individual nightly without time restrictions) on or before 31 March 2019, or
- **Active:** used emergency accommodation during the week starting 25 March 2019.

Defining Youth Homelessness

As discussed in the literature review above, defining youth homelessness is a challenge as there is no consistent definition across countries or research. To define youth homelessness for the purposes of this report, the age range used in the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government monthly reports on homelessness has been implemented. Type of homelessness based on age have been defined in national policy as well as Irish and international research.

Under this definition, those who experience homelessness before turning 18 are considered to have experienced *childhood* homelessness. Those who experience homelessness between 18 and 25 are considered to have experienced *youth* homelessness. Those who first experience homelessness from the age of 26 are considered to have experienced *adult* homelessness.

Data Protection and Consent

Before its examination for this study, the PASS data underwent a double anonymisation process. The researcher allocated new unique identifying numbers to all individuals aged between 18 and 25 who were recorded in PASS. In addition, consent for sharing of their data was gathered from each client when they first presented as homeless and were registered on PASS. Those who did not consent to data-sharing are excluded from the analysis presented here.

As seen in Table 1, of the total of 847 single people aged between 18 and 25 who used homeless services in the Dublin region in 2016, 2017 and 2018, 103 did not consent to their data being shared. Therefore, information on these 103 individuals is not included in the analyses.

Table 1: Consent for Data-sharing among Homeless Young People in the Dublin Region, 2016–2018		
Consent given N	Consent withheld N	Total N
744	103	847

Data Limitations

Secondary analysis of administrative data is an increasingly common method in homelessness research. This method enables researchers to access comprehensive and up-to-date data on this hard-to-reach population. PASS is one of the most comprehensive administrative datasets on homeless people available in any country (O’Sullivan, 2020). Like all administrative databases, PASS was not designed for research purposes, but for service delivery. Functions to allow research have been built into the system. However, as the primary function of the system is still service delivery some data collated on PASS was not relevant to this research.

The scope of the Irish definition of homelessness has been criticised because it excludes some households who would be widely regarded as homeless, such as households in insecure/inadequate accommodation or sofa-surfing, and also residents of non-local authority-funded emergency accommodation such as refuges for domestic violence victims and entirely charitably funded accommodation (Daly, 2019). This research specifically focuses on individuals who first accessed emergency accommodation in the Dublin region during the period examined (2016–2018) and thus is subject to the same limitation. However, the use of this data allows this research to be examined in comparison to other research conducted using the same database and to research conducted for similar populations internationally.

A secondary but important concern is the potential for identifying individuals in the PASS database and thereby breaching data protection legislation and right to privacy. With this consideration in mind, any groups small enough to be potentially identifiable are combined under the category ‘other’ in this report. The smallest groups reported separately in this study represent 2%, or 15 people, and cross-tabulations of data on these small groups are limited to a maximum of two variables.

5. Demographic Characteristics of Homeless Young People

Age and Gender

Table 2 reveals that the mean age of the young homeless people examined in this report was 21 when they first presented to emergency accommodation. The age at which the largest proportion of young people first became homeless was 18 (15%) for both male (14%) and female (17%) individuals. The age when the fewest first became homeless was 23 (10%) for both men (11%) and women (10%).

The single adult homelessness population is strongly male-dominated in the Dublin region, as reflected in the figures outlined in Table 2. These show that 71% of this group is male and 29% female.

Table 2: Age and Gender of Homeless Young People in the Dublin Region, 2016–2018			
Age of first presentation to homeless services	Male %	Female %	Total N
18	67	33	109
19	70	30	98
20	76	24	94
21	69	31	96
22	68	32	84
23	72	28	78
24	74	26	92
25	72	28	93
Total	71	29	744

Citizenship

The young people examined in this report reflect the changing diversity in Ireland. The PASS database reports a total of 52 countries of origin for this group. The majority (71%) of the homeless young people were Irish, 13% were citizens of countries outside the EU and 13% were EU citizens. The citizenship of 3% is unknown.

Among the single homeless young people under examination, 18-year-olds were most likely to be Irish citizens (82%) and 25-year-olds least likely to be Irish citizens (54%).

Table 3: Citizenship of 18–25 Young Homeless People in the Dublin Region 2016–2018

	Total N	Young People %
Irish	529	71
EU	96	13
Non-EU	97	13
Unknown	22	3
Total	744	100

6. Becoming Homeless

Age of First Presentation to Homeless Services

As discussed above, the most common age at which individuals in this group first accessed emergency accommodation was 18. When examined by year, we see that 18-year-olds accounted for the largest proportion of new emergency accommodation users in both 2017 and 2018. However, in 2016 20-year-olds made up the largest group of new service users (Table 4).

The total number of people who first accessed emergency accommodation fluctuated in each of the years examined: 2018 had the highest number of new entrants into homeless services (n=264) and 2017 the lowest number (n=237). The average number of new entries to emergency accommodation over the three years examined was 248.

Table 4: Age at First Presentation to Homeless Services of Young People in the Dublin Region, 2016, 2017 & 2018 (%)

Age of first presentation to homeless services	Year first presented			Total
	2016 %	2017 %	2018 %	N
18	31	32	37	109
19	28	35	37	98
20	42	24	34	94
21	31	34	34	96
22	32	36	32	84
23	31	31	38	78
24	33	29	38	92
25	33	33	33	93

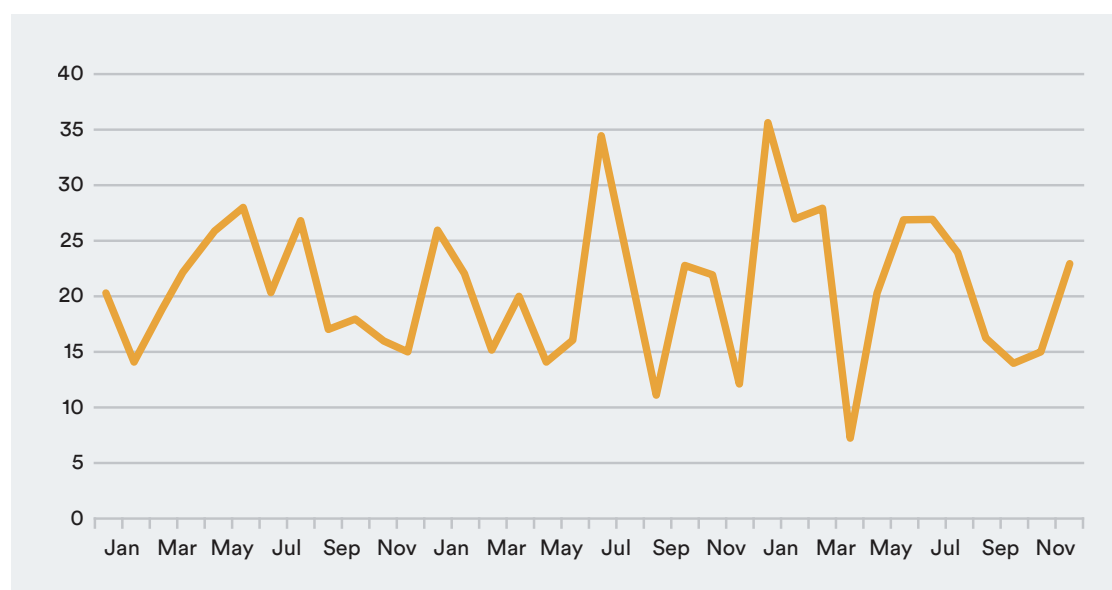
Table 5 shows the gender of individuals according to the year they first presented to emergency accommodation. New presentations by men were consistent over the three years examined, while presentations by women increased in 2018.

Table 5 Gender and Year of First Presentation to Homeless Services of Young People in the Dublin Region, 2016, 2017 & 2018 (N)			
Year First Presented	Male N	Female N	Total N
2016	175	68	243
2017	173	64	237
2018	179	85	264
Total	527	217	744

Figure 2 details the distribution of homeless young people’s first emergency accommodation access in each month between January 2016 and December 2018. There is no discernible pattern to their entries to emergency accommodation. This differs from trends among both homeless families and the general single adult population over the same period.

Among families, new presentations to homeless services are generally lowest in December and highest in July (Morrin, 2019). Among all of the single adults who first accessed emergency accommodation between 2016 and 2018, the lowest number of new presentations to homeless services occurred in September and the highest in January (Bairéad, 2020). The Cold Weather Initiative, which operates in the Dublin region in the winter months, increases the available number of emergency accommodation beds in the region. This increase in beds means that the number of people who access emergency accommodation also increases as there are physically more beds in which people can be placed.

Figure 2: Number of New Presentations to Homeless Services, 2016–2018



Previous Accommodation

The PASS database also records the previous accommodation of young people, on their first presentation to emergency accommodation services. This information is summarised in Table 6. For example, young people who had previously lived with their homeowner parents may record their previous accommodation as ‘parental home’ or ‘home owner’. However, the data generated from PASS clearly indicates that young people enter emergency accommodation from a variety of accommodation types.

Table 6 shows that 32% of the young people included in this study reported that they had moved from their family or parental home into homelessness. A further 8% reported that they had previously resided with other family members; 5% reported that they had previously lived in emergency accommodation; 2% that they had been sleeping rough; 12% that they had a social or private rented tenancy, and 8% lived with friends. Almost one-third of the young people did not specify their previous form of accommodation or reported that they had lived in another type of accommodation (32%).

Table 6: Previous Accommodation of Young Homeless People in the Dublin Region, 2016–2018 (%)

Broad category of previous accommodation	Further details (if available)	%
Parental/family home	Other	22
Other		19
Previous accommodation unknown		13
Private rented accommodation	Including HAP or RS subsidised	9
Living with friends		8
Living with other family members	E.g. grandparents; siblings; aunt/uncle; etc.	8
Emergency accommodation		5
Parental/family home	Social rented (LA/AHB)	5
Parental/family home	Owner-occupied	3
Social housing	AHB/LA provided	3
Parental/family home	Private rented	2
Rough sleeping		2
Total		100

Table 7 disaggregates the data on young people who had resided in the parental/family home or with another family member before entering emergency accommodation by gender and age. It reveals that young people who first became homeless at a younger age were more likely to have moved from this type of accommodation into homelessness; 50% of 18-year-olds had lived in the parental home or the home of another family member immediately before becoming homeless. This compares to 42% of 19-year-olds and 43% of 20-year-olds. Women, overall, were slightly more likely to have entered homelessness from a family home (42% female and 40% male went into homelessness from this type of accommodation). Women in this group represent both the highest and lowest likelihood of entering emergency accommodation directly from the family home. Women who were aged 18 when they first entered emergency accommodation were the most likely to have entered directly from the family home (58%) and women aged 25 when they first presented to emergency accommodation were the least likely to have come from the family home (27%).

Table 7: Male and Female Young Homeless People in the Dublin Region who Entered Emergency Accommodation from the Parental/Family Home or the Home of Another Family Member 2016–2018 (%)

Age when first presented	Male %	Female %
18	47	58
19	45	34
20	41	48
21	36	47
22	39	33
23	38	41
24	38	42
25	34	27
Total	40	42

Reasons for Homelessness

The PASS database also records young people’s self-reported ‘reasons for homelessness’. Although this information is self-reported and many of the young people examined here did not report a reason for their homelessness, this data provides useful insight into why young people think they have become homeless.

As shown in Table 8, 40% of reported reasons for homelessness relate to ‘family circumstances’ which is not surprising considering that many young people had moved from the family home into homelessness.

The primary reason for homelessness for 30 individuals in this group was leaving care. The proportion coming from foster or residential care is lower than would be expected in view of the research evidence, which indicates that this is a key proximate pathway into homelessness (Mayock, Parker and Murphy, 2014). This may indicate that the additional supports for young people leaving care that have been put in place in recent years are helping to reduce their risk of homelessness. Alternatively, it may indicate that young people are returning to the family home or other accommodation after leaving care but before entering homelessness. There may also be care-leavers who decided not to disclose their care experience or report it as a reason for their becoming homeless.

Table 8: Primary Reason Given for Becoming Homeless by Homeless Young People in the Dublin Region, 2016–2018 (%)	
Primary reason given	%
Family circumstances	40
No reason provided	23
Asked to leave accommodation	9
Other	9
Addiction issues/ mental health	4
No income source	4
Notice to quit or notice of termination of private rented tenancy	4
Leaving care	4
Leaving prison	3
Total	100

7. Being Homeless

Sleeping Rough

In recent years, a significant collaborative effort has been made by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive and many service providers to reduce rough sleeping in the region. These efforts include the introduction of the Cold Weather Initiative and an increase in street teams. However, rough sleeping remains prevalent among single adults in the region: 25% of the young people included in this study reported having slept rough.

There were only minimal gender differences: 25% of men and 24% of women aged between 18 and 25 had engaged in rough sleeping at some stage during their experience of being homeless. The age group with the highest level of rough sleeping is 20-year-olds (38%) and that with the lowest level is 19-year-olds (19%).

In comparison to other age groups included in the larger research project, which this report is a part of, 18–25 year olds had the second highest rate of engaging in rough sleeping (25%); 26–35 year olds had the highest rate of engaging in rough sleeping (26%) and those over the age of 66 had the lowest (16%).

Table 9: Engagement in Rough Sleeping by Young People in the Dublin Region by Age, 2016–2018 (%)

Age when first presented	%
18	27
19	19
20	38
21	21
22	29
23	23
24	22
25	20

Length of Time in Homelessness

Overall, young people who first accessed emergency accommodation in the Dublin region between 2016 and 2018 spent an average of nine months in homelessness (Table 10). No clear relationship between age and length of time in homelessness is evident. Rather, there is considerable variation among the ages, with 19-year-olds spending the shortest average length of time (m=7.52) and 20-year-olds spending the longest (m=12.24).

Table 10: Mean Number of Months Spent in Homelessness by Young People in the Dublin Region by Age, 2016–2018

Age of first presentation to homeless services	Mean	N
18	10.32	109
19	7.52	98
20	12.24	94
21	8.57	96
22	9.35	84
23	10.05	78
24	7.83	92
25	8.1	93
Total	9.24	744

Short-term, Long-term and Episodic Homelessness

The Kuhn and Culhane (1998) typology of different categories of homelessness has been enormously influential on homelessness response and policy. Like the research reported here, Kuhn and Culhane’s (1998) use administrative data on homeless people in emergency accommodation in their analysis, but their dataset examines the United States. On the basis of cluster analysis of this administrative dataset, they identify three dominant types of homeless experiences: transitional (short-term), chronic (long-term) and episodic. These categories have been applied within the context of this research on youth homelessness as:

- *Short-term homelessness* – individuals who access emergency accommodation for one month or less or who have experienced homelessness for more than one month and up to six months but used emergency accommodation for 95% of this period.
- *Long-term homelessness* – individuals who have experienced homelessness for more than six months and occupied an emergency bed for 95% of their time in homelessness.
- *Episodic homelessness* – individuals who have been homeless for more than one month and have experienced one or more episodes of emergency accommodation use over a 12-month period. An episode is defined as using an emergency bed for one or more nights. Those who have used emergency accommodation for less than 95% of their time in homelessness are considered episodic users of emergency accommodation.

The breakdown of these homeless types for the group examined in this research is presented in Table 11. This breakdown is based on young people aged between 18–25 who first presented to homelessness between 2016–2018. The analysis was conducted using the time period of the 1st of January 2016 – 31st of March 2019. Given the time period examined it is possible that the type of homelessness experienced by some individuals within this group has since changed.

Table 11: Short-Term, Long-Term and Episodic Patterns of Homelessness among Young People in the Dublin Region, 2016–2018

Age of First Presentation to Homeless Services	Short-term %	Long-term %	Episodic %	Total N
18	22	8	70	109
19	30	8	62	98
20	21	11	68	94
21	31	10	58	96
22	29	9	62	84
23	28	4	68	78
24	32	9	59	92
25	32	10	58	93
Total	28	9	63	744

Further analysis reveals that young men have a higher rate of episodic homelessness (67%) than young women (55%). These figures also show that almost a third of young people (28%) cease using emergency accommodation (EA) within six months or less. Long-term use of EA is unusual, only 9% of young people fall within this category. Episodic homelessness is the most common type of homelessness experienced by young people (63%).

8. Leaving Homelessness

Exit and Departure Rates

When a person ceases to use emergency accommodation (EA), the DRHE uses one of two definitions on PASS. *Exits* refer to confirmed exits from homelessness to secure accommodation. *Departures* refer to young people who have ceased using EA for a reason other than moving into secure accommodation. Some individuals cease to use EA without providing a reason; it is not possible to know if they have exited homelessness or if the challenges they face in exiting homelessness have ceased. As detailed in Table 12, 14% of the group included in this report had exited emergency accommodation to a registered tenancy by 31 March 2019.

Table 12: Exits from Emergency Accommodation (EA) among Young Homeless People in the Dublin Region by Age of First Presentation to Homeless Services, 2016–2018

Age when first presented	Total N	Exited EA %
18	109	14
19	98	13
20	94	18
21	96	14
22	84	11
23	78	15
24	92	11
25	93	19
Total	744	14

Departures from emergency accommodation are significantly higher than confirmed exits, as shown in Table 13. Overall 62% of the group included in this report had departed emergency accommodation by the 31st of March 2019.

Table 13: Departures from Emergency Accommodation (EA) among Young Homeless People in the Dublin Region by Age of First Presentation to Homeless Services, 2016–2018

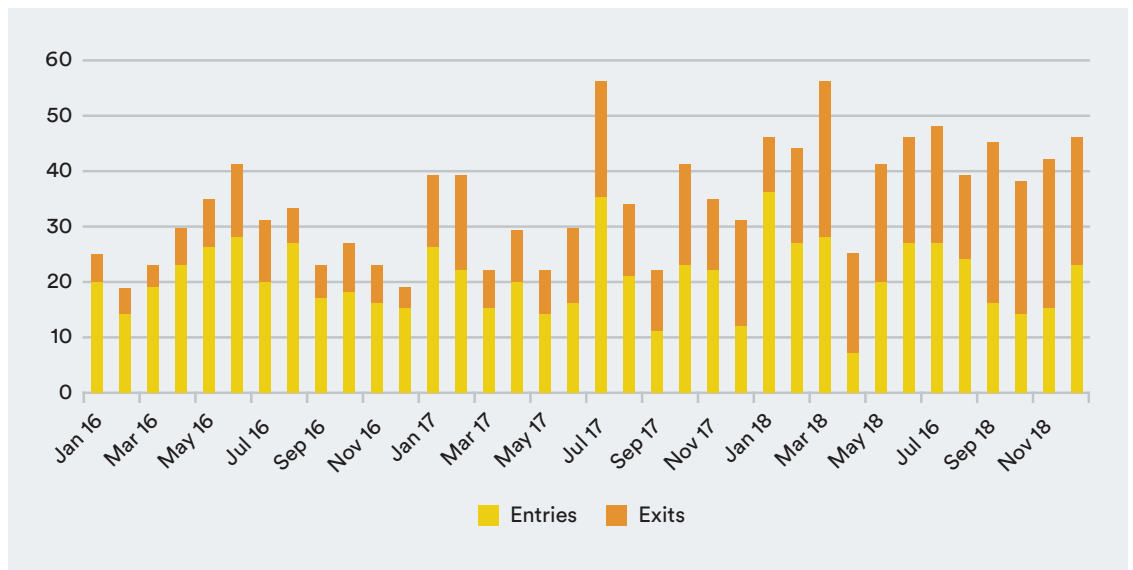
Age when first presented	Total N	Departed EA %
18	109	57
19	98	69
20	94	49
21	96	65
22	84	67
23	78	59
24	92	72
25	93	58
Total	744	62

The year that individuals are most likely to cease accessing emergency accommodation is the same year as when they first accessed it; 35% of people who first used EA in 2016 also ceased using it in 2016. A total of 42% of those who first used EA in 2017 also ceased using EA in 2017, while 53% of those who first accessed EA in 2018 also ceased using EA in 2018.

Of these three years, people who first presented to EA in 2016 (n=243) had the highest rate of ceasing to use EA by 31 March 2019 (84%). Of those who first started using EA in 2017 (n=237), 78% had ceased this usage by 31 March 2019. Finally, of those who first accessed EA in 2018 (n=264), 67% had ceased using EA by 31 March 2019.

Figure 3 illustrates both entries into and exits/departures from EA by young people in the Dublin region between 2016 and 2018. It shows wide variance, from the lowest number of entries in April 2018 (n=7) to the highest in January 2018 (n=36). For exits and departures, the lowest number occurred in March 2016 (n=4) and the highest in September 2018 (n=29). Exits and departures increased over time for this group but not at the same rate as entries into EA were occurring.

Figure 3: Monthly Entries and Exits/Departures from Emergency Accommodation by Young People in the Dublin Region, January 2016 – December 2018



Note: Bar chart with each month separately represented.

Reason for Exit or Departure

The PASS database records why young people exited or departed EA. Among the young people who exited EA to a tenancy, securing private rented accommodation subsidised by the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) was the most common (12%). The vast majority of those who received HAP were provided the higher rate of HHAP.

Table 14: Reason for Exit from Homelessness among Young Homeless People in the Dublin Region, 2016–2018

Reason for Exit or Departure	Percent of Total Population (n=744)
Secured private rented accommodation (subsidised by HHAP).	12
Secured social housing (provided by a LA or AHB)	2
Total	14

No departure reason was recorded for 46% of the young people who entered EA between 2016 and 2018. Of the 339 people who left EA without departure reason, 67% were in EA for one week or less. People who spent one night only in EA account for 16% of the 339 people who left EA without a departure reason, and represents 7% of young people examined in this report. The second most common reason for departure is having left single homelessness in the Dublin region (7%). This is likely to mean in practice that these people:

- had children or were reunited with children and thereby entered family homelessness, or
- left the Dublin region and moved to either another region in Ireland or another country.

Table 15: Reason for Departure from EA among Young Homeless People in the Dublin Region, 2016–2018

Reason for Exit or Departure	Percent of Total Population (n=744)
No departure reason	46
Left homeless services in the Dublin region	7
Other	6
Returned to family/friends	3
Total	62

Remaining Homeless

A total of 177 of the young people who used emergency homeless accommodation in the Dublin region during 2016, 2017 and 2018 were still homeless in March 2019. This category includes those young people who had a long-term/rolling bed in an emergency accommodation facility (n=133) and those using emergency accommodation more sporadically by booking a bed on a ‘one night only’ basis (n=44). The young people who were still actively engaged in using emergency accommodation at the end of March 2019 had a longer average length of time spent in homelessness (m=17.27) than the group as a whole (m=9.24). Of those in long-term beds (n=133), 8% stayed only in that bed for the duration of their time in homelessness. A total of 30% first used emergency accommodation between October and December 2018. This percentage (30%) includes those who had experienced episodic homelessness and therefore did not use emergency accommodation for the entirety of this period (October 2018 – March 2019). This group had a high rate of episodic homelessness, at 72%.

Table 16: Young People who Accessed Emergency Accommodation in Week Starting 25 March 2019

Still Active	Mean length of time in homelessness (months)	Number
In emergency accommodation on 31/03/2019 (long term/rolling bed)	17.81	133
Used emergency accommodation in week starting 25/03/2019 ('one night only')	15.64	44
Total	17.27	177

9. Research Findings and Implications

Research Findings

This report has set out a clear picture of young people aged between 18 and 25 years who accessed emergency accommodation for homeless people in the Dublin region for the first time between 2016 and 2018.

Young adults in this group are most likely to:

- be male and Irish;
- have entered emergency accommodation from the family home due to family circumstances;
- have used emergency accommodation episodically,
- have exited homelessness less than a year after they first accessed emergency accommodation, and
- have ceased using emergency accommodation without a reason recorded on PASS.

The reasons for entry into and exit from youth homelessness, the gender and age of homeless young people and length of time they spend in homelessness, on average, have all been explored in more depth, but among a much smaller group of young people in qualitative research on youth homelessness in Ireland (Mayock, Corr and O’Sullivan, 2011; Mayock and Corr, 2013; Mayock and Parker, 2017). This report presents quantitative data that broadly supports the findings of this earlier qualitative research on youth homelessness.

An exception to this is the experience of young people leaving residential and foster care. The data examined in this report indicates that this is currently not as significant a route into homelessness as the previous research on this issue suggests. This raises questions about where care-leavers are moving after leaving care. If a young person has lived in care but has not entered homelessness directly from care, are they reporting their experience of care to homeless services? Or has the strengthening of aftercare policies and supports for young people leaving care in recent years had a significant impact on reducing the number of people who enter homelessness? This report is unable to provide answers to these questions, but it has highlighted the importance of continued research in this field.

This report has also offered new insights into the experiences of homeless single young adults. These include the rate of rough sleeping recorded on PASS and different patterns of homelessness (short-term, long-term, episodic) which are evident among the young homeless population compared to their older counterparts. These patterns require further analysis, perhaps by further qualitative research.

Further research in this field would provide more insight into the experiences of young homeless adults. In the Irish context, the changes in youth homelessness over time could be examined further. Particularly in relation to examining what has worked from national and regional policy and what may need to be changed in order to improve outcomes in the future. In an international context, agreeing on a definition of youth homelessness within the European Union would allow researchers to more deeply examine what works for equivalent populations in different countries with the objective of continuing to learn from each other.

Reflections on Policy Responses

National policies and legislation such as the *Youth Homelessness Strategy* (2001) and the *Child Care (Amendment) Act* (2015) have prioritised homelessness prevention in their objectives. In recent years, these policy objectives have been put into practice through the expansion of support services. These services have been targeted towards young people leaving care (who are at high risk of homelessness) and young people aged under 18 who have experienced homelessness. The data presented in this report suggests that this approach has generated benefits and should be extended particularly to provide additional supports to prevent homelessness among young people aged 18-24.

Actions to prevent homelessness do take place within the Dublin region. As its impact and effectiveness falls beyond the scope of this research it should be examined in the future through other research projects. This report can however point to specific areas where increased prevention measures may be beneficial. 9% of the young people included in this study entered emergency accommodation from private rented accommodation. There may be a benefit therefore in increasing supports to prevent homelessness, such as those provided by the Residential Tenancies Board. These supports could include ensuring that young people are not discriminated against by landlords due to their age and that they are able to find support if their tenant rights are breached. As 40% of the young homeless people examined in this research entered emergency accommodation from the family home, increasing supports which enable

young people to remain in their family home may decrease their rate of homelessness. For young people who are at risk of homelessness from the family home, expanding support services such as family mediation services to young people who have no experience of care and have not had social worker engagement could prove beneficial. There may be some situations where remaining in the family home is not feasible for a young person. In these situations, a young person may need support to find appropriate accommodation to which they can move. The involvement of family support services in these cases may be beneficial as a support worker can ensure the young person continues to receive the supports they need after family mediation has ended.

The data on the patterns of homelessness among young people which are set out in this report reveals that chronic, long-term homelessness is the least common type of homelessness they experience. They are most likely to experience multiple episodes of using the emergency accommodation system (episodic homelessness) or cease using emergency accommodation within a six-month period (short-term homelessness). The target of policy makers and support services should be to reduce chronic homelessness to a minimum, with the eventual aim of reducing it to functional zero. Current policy targets include eliminating long-term homelessness in Ireland. The target for all young people who enter emergency accommodation should therefore be that they are supported to exit homelessness into appropriate accommodation within six months.

The data on known reasons for exits from homelessness set out in this report highlights a lot of diversity in terms of the routes young people take when leaving emergency accommodation. Accommodation provided for young people leaving homelessness should reflect this diversity as well as the different needs and life stages of the individuals in this group. Some young people, particularly those in the higher age range, may be ready to settle in a permanent home, as reflected by the 2% who exited to LA or AHB provided housing. Therefore, LA and AHB housing should continue to be an available option for them. However, permanent social housing may not be the most appropriate accommodation type for all young people in this group, particularly those who are younger. Private rented accommodation may be a more appropriate option for this group, as demonstrated by 12% of this group exiting to this accommodation type supported by Homeless HAP. Private rented accommodation provides more flexibility to change housing type or location as young people progress from early adulthood to mature adulthood. This change often brings with it a change of lifestyle that includes changes in housing needs, such as moving to live with a long-term partner versus living alone, with housemates or with friends; changing location for employment or education, and having children. HHAP allows young people to access different types of rented accommodation, such as shared accommodation between two for couples or between multiple friends. The objective outlined in Rebuilding Ireland to expand HHAP should continue to be pursued therefore. Some young people may be able to return to family or friends, as 3% of the young people in this report have reported doing. The expansion of the family mediation services discussed above may increase the number of young people who use this pathway to leave homelessness.

This report has presented new information on a very specific group of young adults. The research presented cannot claim to provide all the answers needed to end the issue of youth homelessness. What can be seen is that much has changed concerning the issue of youth homelessness since research and intervention on this topic began. Much has been done to understand and tackle youth homelessness. State bodies, voluntary organisations and researchers have all contributed to these changes. This report provides a snapshot of one aspect of this issue in the hope of contributing to continuing progress towards ending youth homelessness.

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