

Focus Ireland

Insights into Family Homelessness Number 4

Survey of the families that became homeless during March 2016

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Summary of Key Findings

- This study presents key findings from a short quantitative survey conducted by telephone with 70 families who presented to Dublin family homeless services during March 2016. This represents 83% of the total number of families who presented as homeless in the Dublin region during this time (N=84).
- The principle aim of the telephone survey was to identify the accommodation trajectories of families before they presented to homeless services, in order to understand the key triggers which resulted in their homelessness.
- 46 (66%) of the respondents were born in Ireland and 24 (34%) were migrants: 12 (17%) were from countries within the EU and 12 (17%) were from outside the EU. This signifies a disproportionate presence of migrant-headed families becoming homeless in comparison to the national average (CSO, 2011).

- Of the surveyed participants, 23 (33%) were experiencing homelessness with their partner and children, while 47 (67%) were single parents. Of those who were single with children, all but two were female-headed households.
- 18 (26%) of the respondents were aged between 18 and 25 years, 35 (50%) were 26-35 years and 17 (24%) were over the age of 36 years. 48 (69%) of the families constituted of one or two children. The remaining 22 (31%) of the respondents had three or more children.
- The vast majority (n=59, 84%) of the research participants described themselves as 'full-time parents' (n=56) or 'unemployed' (n=3). 7 of the respondents were in employment - either part-time (n=5) or full-time (n=2). 3 respondents were studying full-time or part-time.
- 51 of the families (73% of the sample) reported that their last stable home was in the private rented sector. The majority were also in receipt of rent supplement during their last tenancy.
- In analysing the participants' previous four accommodations, three trajectory 'types' were identified:
 1. Stability in the private rented sector: This group consisted of families who reported a stable housing history, mostly in the private rented sector, before presenting as homeless in March. They identified this as their first experience of homelessness. Some of this group went directly from the private rented sector into homelessness, while others resided with friends or family for a period of time prior to approaching their local authority.
 2. Precariousness in the private rented sector: This group had experienced some form of housing instability in the past, but in a broad sense, their housing trajectories were stable and secure. They demonstrated reliance on family members or friends during periods of housing need and many reported issues in the private rented sector in terms of short tenancies or the property being of low standard.
 3. Prolonged instability and hidden homelessness: This group largely demonstrated unstable housing histories and reported fewer or shorter tenancies which could be considered independent and stable. Many of this group reported that they had experienced homelessness in the past, and some of these experiences were lengthy and at times chaotic. Like group 2, they were also highly dependent on informal networks such as friends or family to address their housing need. This group disproportionately featured young people.
- Key 'at-risk' groups identified among families:
 1. Victims of domestic violence: 11 of the March survey respondents reported domestic violence as being the main cause of their most recent experiences of homelessness, with a further 5 reporting that domestic violence had negatively impacted on their housing stability in the past. This was in the cases of both intimate partner violence and also violence in the family home.

2. Young parents: 18 (26%) of the survey respondents were young people under the age of 25 years; 10 of whom were under the age of 21. These young people reported family conflict and/or frequent transitions between insecure living situations. They had little or no experience of living independently in stable housing.
 3. Migrant families: 24 of the survey respondents were headed by a migrant. Of these families, 15 were homeless for the first time (the majority of whom were EU migrants). Of the 12 non-EU migrants surveyed, 5 had lived in Direct Provision¹ in the past, 4 of whom were entirely reliant on friends for accommodation since leaving Direct Provision.
- In terms of patterns around help-seeking, 57 (81%) of the research participants had sought help or support before becoming homeless. The most common first port-of-call for families was their local authority housing service. Many also approached service such as Threshold, Focus Ireland Information and Advice Service, PRTB, or their local social welfare office.
 - In an open-ended question at the end of the survey, participants suggested a range of supports that they felt would have assisted them during periods of crisis. These included: rental support to match increasing rents; more help prior to becoming homeless; more time in accommodation to address arrears or secure financial support; and more formal support and advice provisions. A number of participants also felt they could have benefited from emotional support also during this time of particular stress.

Introduction

During 2014 and 2015, the rate of family homelessness in Ireland increased at an alarming rate. During 2015, month-by-month ‘snapshots’ of the growing numbers of families in emergency accommodation published by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE)² were at such a high rate that it evoked significant media coverage, extensive political debates in the Oireachtas³ and public concern. In January 2016, 125 families became newly homeless in Dublin which represented the highest monthly number on record. During February 2016, an additional 83 of families became homeless and these high numbers continued during March 2016 as a further 84 families entered homelessness. The growth of family homelessness is particularly striking when compared with the 25 families who presented as homeless during March 2014 (DOE, 2014).

Focus Ireland was appointed by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) as the Homeless Action Team (HAT) for families across the four local authorities in the Dublin region⁴. Once a family presents as homeless to the relevant local authority, they are routinely provided emergency accommodation in the form of hotels or B&Bs. They are then referred to the Focus Ireland HAT who make contact with the family within 24 hours to set up an initial assessment. While information

¹ ‘Direct Provision’ refers to the congregate accommodation facilities which houses asylum seekers as they await their asylum application to be processed by the Department of Justice.

² Dublin Region Homeless Executive Homelessness Statistics on Families:
<http://www.homelessdublin.ie/homeless-families>

³ Oireachtas Bulletin (No.26, 2016) Reporting on Debates on Homelessness in the Oireachtas for the Dublin Region Homeless Executive.
http://www.homelessdublin.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Oireachtas%20Bulletin_March2016.pdf

⁴ While Focus Ireland is the principle service who assists families experiencing homelessness in Dublin region, other homelessness organisations also work closely with families.

is collected during and after this process, there may be slight inconsistencies in data collection across different staff members. In order to understand the reasons behind the extensive problem of families becoming homeless in a timely fashion, whilst also capturing potential changes in trends of this phenomenon, a more targeted and direct method of data collection was initiated. Focus Ireland conducted similar studies in 2015. These consisted of more detailed interviews of families who became homeless during April and July 2015⁵. These studies indicated that many families reported complex routes from their last secure home until their initial contact with homeless services. Feedback from the DRHE, other homeless organisations and our own research committee, led to a modification in the survey instrument and a refinement of the research objective.

This led to the development of a concise quantitative survey⁶ (see Appendix 1). This survey was administered via telephone with families who presented as homeless to their local authority during March 2016. The primary aim of this study was to analyse the previous four accommodations which preceded their becoming homeless in March 2016. This yielded a greater understanding of their trajectories into homelessness in a way which was targeted, consistent, and most importantly, timely in its reflection of the present-day experiences of families. This telephone survey (or a similar survey) will be conducted on a regular basis by the advocacy team in Focus Ireland in order to capture changes and trends to inform policy and service planning.

Methodology

To avoid placing any undue burden on families during a time in which they are in crisis (as well as enabling efficient data collection), the three-page telephone survey was concise, tightly structured and targeted in its design. As outlined in Appendix 1, questions pertaining to the last four accommodations were the main component of the survey – which sought to capture change in living situations and to (partially) capture the housing history of the participants. This section also captured duration of time spent in these four accommodations, self-reported reasons for leaving each accommodation, and details around rental supplements and supports. The survey also recorded basic demographic details including age, marital status, employment status, country of origin of the participant, and number of children. The survey concluded with questions pertaining to service use prior to becoming homeless among the families.

The surveys were conducted with 70 of the 84 families who became homeless in March 2016. These surveys were administered by telephone during the first two weeks of April. Surveys with the remaining 14 families were not conducted for a range of reasons: e.g., because Focus Ireland did not have a phone number for the family (or another organisation was assisting them), the telephone number did not appear to be in service or the participants did not answer their phone or

⁵ Focus Ireland (2015) 'Come back when you're homeless': Preventing family homelessness through assisting families to stay in their homes or to find alternative affordable accommodation'.

⁶ The survey was designed by the advocacy team with the guidance of Focus Ireland Research Advisory Group – which consists of leading experts in the area of homelessness and research (representatives from the University of Dublin Trinity College, University College Dublin, NUI Maynooth, Waterford IT, and the Housing Agency).

return voicemail messages⁷. Focus Ireland's Research Officer conducted all telephone interviews. At the time in which these families were contacted, the majority had been assessed but not all had been formally assigned a family case worker yet (though many had already received advice from the support worker). Therefore it was of particular importance to clearly state the purpose of the telephone call. In cases where information was requested by the family in relation to their homelessness or housing situation, the telephone number of the Family HAT team was provided to the individual. While the survey was structured in design and the questions were posed in a consistent way, in many cases, the families expanded on their answers⁸. Detailed notes were recorded in these instances. The interviews typically took around 5-10 minutes each, but were sometimes longer - depending on the level of detail offered by participants themselves. All data was inputted and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22.

Focus Ireland's Data Protection and Customer Confidentiality policies, as well as the organisation's Ethical Guidelines for Conducting Research, were adhered to at all times in the completion of this study. Focus Ireland received the telephone numbers of the families to be supported after they presented to their local authority. The Focus Ireland Research Officer then contacted the relevant family members in order to explain the rationale of the study – i.e. to get a better understanding of the processes and events which led to their homelessness and to extend current knowledge of family homelessness more broadly. At this point, the researcher made it clear that participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that they were under no obligation to continue with the phone call if they did not want to⁹. When it was evident that the participants were willing to participate, they were invited to state their verbal consent¹⁰. All details emerging from the research were anonymised and this was also explained to the families¹¹.

Demographic Profile

The following section outlines the demographic profile of the 70 research participants. All participants were adult parents (i.e. over the age of 18 years) and were accompanied by one or more of their children. While the vast majority were residing in private emergency accommodation (commercial hotels or B&BS), several participants were living with friends or family or in family emergency accommodation.

⁷ The researcher attempted to make contact a total of four times with each family over the course of two weeks in April 2016. In cases where families had a message service activated on their mobile phone, one voicemail was left. This was to minimise any perceived annoyance or disturbance to the participant.

⁸ No leading questions were used in these discussions to ensure methodological rigour.

⁹ Importantly, families also explained that their participation or non-participation would not in any way impact on the Family HAT service support offered by Focus Ireland. Moreover, the Family HAT would not have been aware of the decision of families to engage or not.

¹⁰ Upon making telephone contact, all families consented to being surveyed. Indeed, it is worth noting that the families who were surveyed appeared to be particularly open in sharing their experiences.

¹¹ The contact numbers and names were destroyed once the telephone surveys were completed.

Age

Of the participants who were surveyed, 18 (26%) were aged between 18 and 25 years; 35 (50%) were between 26 and 35 years of age; and 17 (24%) were 36 years or older. See Table 1 below.

Table 1. Age Breakdown of Sample

Age Group (in years)	Number of Research Participants	Percentage of Total (N=70)
18-25	18	26%
26-35	35	50%
36+	17	24%

Nationality

46 (66%) of the research participants were born in Ireland, while 24 (34%) were born outside of Ireland; 12 (17%) of the migrant-headed households were originally from an EU country while 12 (17%) were from outside the EU. Among those individuals born outside of Ireland, the vast majority had been living in Ireland for several years (in some cases, ten years or more).

Table 2. Nationality Breakdown of Sample

Nationality Category	Number of Research Participants	Percentage of Total (N=70)
Ireland	46	66%
EU	12	17%
Non-EU	12	17%

Therefore, 34% of the sample was represented by migrant-headed families. If drawing on the previous National Census 2011 (National Census 2016 analysis pending at time of writing this document), 34% is significantly higher than the proportion of migrants living in Ireland across the wider population, particularly among the proportion of non-EU migrants. The Census found that 12% of the general population in the Republic of Ireland were migrants – among which 8.5% EU migrants and 3.5% non-EU migrants. In this way, migrants could be seen as disproportionately represented in this cohort of families who became homeless, suggesting their vulnerability to housing instability.

Family Type

Two thirds of the sample (n=47, 67%) of the families interviewed were one-parent households, the majority of whom were headed by women. The remainder 23 families (33%) were two-parent families.

48 of the 70 families (69%) had either one or two children in their care. 10 families were accompanied by 3 children and 12 families had four children or more.

Table 3. Breakdown of Number of Children as per Each Family unit

Number of Children	Number of Families	Percentage of Total (N=70)
1	27	39%
2	21	30%
3	10	14%
4	9	13%
5+	3	4%

Employment Status of Respondents

The vast majority (n=59, 84%) of the research participants described themselves as ‘full-time parents’ (n=56) or ‘unemployed’ (n=3). 5 (7%) of the respondents were in part-time employment while 2 (3%) were engaged in full-time employment. 3 respondents were studying full-time or part-time, but all expressed difficulties in maintaining their studies since becoming homelessness.

Type and Location of Last stable Home

Of the last four accommodations before becoming homeless, an overwhelming majority (n=51, 73%) of the research respondents cited private sector accommodation as being their last stable home. Stability in housing was defined as those who lived in accommodation which was not ‘dependent’ on others (including doubling up with friends or family), for a duration of one year or more, and the accommodation itself was of adequate standard. 7 participants reported their last stable accommodation as their family home (i.e. among young people), while 3 participants cited Local Authority Housing. Other families found it difficult to recall their last stable home due to prolonged housing instability. The majority of the research respondents who had lived in private

rented accommodation prior to becoming homeless had been availing of social welfare rental supplement. In other words, most of these families were recognised by the State as being in need of rental supports as most of these families are considered a low income household.

The survey included the location of the participant's last stable home. These areas of Dublin would generally be considered as having high proportion of rental accommodation and high proportion of low income families also. The most common areas of Dublin included Dublin 15 (specifically, Blanchardstown, Mulhuddart, Clonee and Castleknock), Dublin City (e.g. Summerhill, Smithfield, Cabra) and Tallaght. Families also reported previous accommodations in Dublin 3 (e.g. East Wall, Clonliffe), Dublin 5 (e.g. Donnycarney), Dublin 9 (e.g. Santry, Beaumont), Dublin 11 (e.g. Finglas), Dublin 17 (e.g. Coolock), Dublin 6 (e.g. Rathmines), Dublin 8, Dublin 10 (e.g. Ballyfermot), Dublin 12 (e.g. Drimnagh, Walkinstown), Dublin 18 (e.g. Ballybrack, Sandyford), Dublin 22 (e.g. Clondalkin), Dublin 24 (e.g. Ballycullen) and outside of Dublin in Bray, Drogheda, Co. Longford and Co. Galway. In the case of those families who lived outside of Dublin, they had previously lived in Dublin in the past and returned to Dublin when they became homeless.

Housing History and Accommodation Trajectory Type

While the majority of families reported that their last stable home was in the private rented sector, when the participants were asked about their previous four accommodations or living situations, there was variety in the type of accommodation trajectories or housing histories experienced by families. The survey captured also the duration of these living situations and the key reasons for each accommodation transition. Gleaning this information enabled two principle areas of insight: it captured a concise analysis of the participants' recent housing history and it revealed triggers which resulted in their homelessness. Three trajectory 'types' were identified in the analysis of the survey data. These include:

1. Previous Stability in the Private Rented Sector
2. Precariousness in the Private Rented Sector
3. Prolonged Housing Instability and Hidden Homelessness

Individuals and households who experience homelessness demonstrate diverse experiences and housing histories. As such, these three categories serve as broad analytical groupings as opposed to definitive and distinct cohorts; there were commonalities and anomalies across all three groupings.

Type 1: Previous Stability in the Private Rented Sector (n=34)

The housing history of this subgroup of families were characterised as broadly stable: almost half of the families who became homeless in March had not experienced homelessness or housing instability in the past, and had lived predominantly in various private rented sector accommodations. Most of the respondents had resided in each private rented accommodation for prolonged periods of time (usually two years or more); 16 of the respondents from this group reported periods of four years or more in a single tenancy. These stable tenancies suggest that their rental and utility payments were sustained over this time. The housing histories of this cohort

were largely independent – in other words, apart from a small number of exceptions, participants from this group were not routinely reliant on family members or friends for their housing need. In terms of demographic profile of this cohort, 15 of the respondents of this group – almost half – were migrants, 11 of whom were EU migrants. Additionally, 15 were two-parent households which was a higher proportion than the other analytical groupings. 30 of the 34 respondents (88%) were over the age of 25 years.

The reported ‘triggers’ of their homelessness among these families were typically associated with issues of affordability in the private rented sector or landlord decisions. Tenancies were terminated in many instances due to the landlord or estate agent selling the property (n=8), or a landlord was moving back into the property or decided to give the accommodation to a family member (n=7). In six cases, families had reported affordability issues due to rental increases (n=6), which included rental or utility arrears over time, or issues around rent supplement (e.g. delays in payment, payment reduced upon gaining employment, etc.). Three families reported that they were evicted because their landlord went into receivership (n=3).

22 of the families, a majority of this group, transitioned directly from the private rented sector tenancy into homeless accommodation. An additional 7 of the families of this cohort, after leaving their last stable home (private rented accommodation), resided in the homes of family members or friends prior to presenting to their local authority as homeless. These situations served as a temporary measure to facilitate more time to look for alternative private rented accommodation. An additional 4 families stayed in a domestic violence refuge for 1 to 3 months before being transferred to a commercial hotel due to capacity constraints in the domestic violence services. One other family went straight from private rented accommodation into homeless services as a result of domestic violence from a partner. Finally, one family slept in their car for a number of nights before presenting to their local authority.

Type 2: Precariousness in the Private Rented Sector (n=14)

The housing histories of the 14 families who were categorised in this group were broadly stable, but they had experienced some level of housing instability or homelessness in the past. As such, they were grouped in this second group. For example, many of the participants stayed with their families in overcrowded conditions for prolonged periods of time (i.e. a number of months, sometimes for several years), or families moved frequently between different informal living arrangements (such as moving between family members’ houses). In a minority of cases, participants had lived in emergency accommodation for a short period of time in the past (such as a few weeks or a number of months). However, on balance, this group reported more time in stable housing situations than in insecure or homeless accommodations. 10 of these 14 families had three or more children; highlighting their relatively larger family size than the other groups.

This slight precariousness in their housing was broadly characterised by economic factors and issues around affordability and insecure living situations, as was the case with Type 1 housing history and trajectory type. Examples of reasons cited for leaving their last stable accommodation included rental increases or inability to afford rent (n=5) or their landlord selling up or giving the house to a family member (n=2). Affordability issues also had an impact on the level of quality in housing which appeared to further impact on their housing precariousness over time. Additionally, personal crises also had a negative impact on their housing stability. In two cases, a house fire

resulted in the family becoming homeless. A further two families became homeless as a result of domestic violence.

8 of the respondents from this group reported transitioning directly from private rented accommodation to homeless services. The other 6 families were residing with family members before presenting as homeless. However, unlike Type 1 group, families who resided with family members were typically there for a year or more signalling a greater reliance on family or relatives for housing. These living situations were described as overcrowded and often difficult and some of the families were forced to move between these inappropriate and overcrowded conditions for extended periods.

Type 3: Prolonged Instability and Hidden Homelessness (n=22)

The third group of families reported a more unstable housing history. This constituted a sizable number of families (n=22) who had spent proportionately more time in unstable living situations and had little experience of living in independent or stable accommodations. While some participants resided in private rented accommodation in the past, these respondents tended to be for shorter periods of time (typically a number of months) than the other participants who were surveyed. These families were particularly dependent on friends or family members for accommodation, and in some cases, they lived in overcrowded conditions for several years before presenting to homeless services. Several of the respondents reported living in emergency homeless accommodation in the past, either before or after they had children, and a small number reported experiencing homelessness with their family during childhood. Duration of time spent homeless ranged from short periods of time such as several weeks to more prolonged and chronic experiences of homelessness, such as the case of two participants who reported 8 years or more moving in and out of homeless services in the past. In general terms, this group had spent limited time in stable accommodation across their housing histories and were largely marginalised from the wider housing market.

This group of families reported more diversity in their housing trajectories in terms of reasons for leaving their accommodation, but these reasons were prominently associated with overcrowding and family conflict (n=8). Indeed, the two experiences closely overlapped; overcrowding could cause or worsen family conflict. In the context of strained family relationships, parental substance misuse and/or experiences of violence or abuse in the family home were also cited by several respondents in this group. Similar to the other groups, personal crises such as domestic violence, unplanned pregnancies or bereavement were also reported as causing housing instability.

While this group demonstrated more complex trajectories, their demographic profile revealed some noteworthy patterns. Young parents were disproportionately represented in this Type 3 category (n=13, 59% of those categorised in Type 3). Of these 13 respondents, 8 were aged 20 years or younger. Many of these young people reported family conflict or histories of moving between insecure living situations and three had experienced homelessness during childhood (either accompanied by their parent or alone). Many of these young people, particularly those under 21 years, had transitioned directly from the family home into unstable housing or hidden homeless situations, before presenting as homeless. Furthermore, seven of these families were headed by migrants, six of whom were from outside of the EU. Perhaps significantly, four migrants had resided in direct provision accommodation several years previously. These migrant families were

heavily reliant on friends or members of their community for housing – sometimes for a period of 2 to 5 years.

Risk Groups Identified

Emerging from the above analysis, three subgroups of families were identified as facing disproportionate risk to homelessness or housing instability:

1. Victims of domestic violence: 11 of the March survey respondents reported domestic violence as being the main cause of their most recent experiences of homelessness, with a further 5 reporting that domestic violence had negatively impacted on their housing stability in the past. This was in the cases of both intimate partner violence and also violence in the family home.
2. Young parents: 18 (26%) of the survey respondents were young people under the age of 25 years; 10 of whom were under the age of 21. These young people reported family conflict and/or frequent transitions between insecure living situations. They had little or no experience of living independently in stable housing.
3. Migrant families: 24 of the survey respondents were headed by a migrant. Of these families, 15 were homeless for the first time (the majority of whom were EU migrants). Of the 12 non-EU migrants surveyed, 5 had lived in Direct Provision in the past - 4 of whom were entirely reliant on friends for accommodation since leaving Direct Provision.

Help-Seeking before Becoming Homeless

57 of the 70 (n=81%) participants surveyed reported that they approached a service *before* becoming homeless. The majority of these families cited Local Authority or City Council Office as one of the first port of calls to discuss their impending homelessness. Threshold, Focus Ireland (advice and information service) or a local social welfare office were also commonly reported as sources of information for families. Several of the families had also approached Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), Residential Tenancies Board (previously PRTB), or their local councillor or TD. In a small number of cases, the families approached Citizens Information.

The research participants frequently expanded upon questions pertaining to services to describe their various interactions and experiences. A number of the participants reflected, particularly among those who had never experienced homelessness before, that they lacked knowledge of the services available to them and they were not sure where to go to for help. Some of the families, however, engaged extensively with a number of key services prior to their homelessness but despite this, they were unable to sustain their home (for example, in cases where affordability was not an issue but rather their private rented home was being sold).

In the final, open-ended question, some participants suggested a range of supports that they felt would have assisted them. These included: rental support to match the rental increases; more help from their local authority prior to becoming homeless; to have had more time in accommodation to address arrears or financial support; and more formal information and advice provisions. A number

of participants also felt they could have benefited from emotional support by services during times of high stress.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to produce a concise and targeted examination of the accommodation trajectories, demographic profile and help-seeking patterns of families experiencing homelessness. It provides a current analysis of the factors which impacted on the housing trajectories of families in the context of a more expanded housing history. As the survey was conducted with 70 of the total 84 number of families presenting as homeless during March, it captures a representative sample of families who became homeless during a certain period of time in the Dublin region and therefore, it goes some way in enlightening our broader knowledge of the current processes and triggers of family homelessness.

There are a number of implications for policy-makers and service providers emerging from the data presented here. In the context of this competitive housing market, it is evident from the analysis of the three accommodation trajectories that the private rented sector is becoming an increasingly precarious and unstable tenure for low income families. Furthermore, their overall dependency on rental supplements places these families at an additional risk of not being able to secure follow-on accommodation due to low number of landlords accepting rent allowance. Indeed, the high number of families who reported a consistently stable housing history prior to becoming homeless in March 2016, signifies the increased difficulties for families in the private rented sector related to issues of affordability or landlords selling or taking back their property. For families with more unstable housing histories, they appear largely excluded from the private rented sector and marginalised from the broader housing market. Cumulatively, this signals the inadequate provision of social housing or affordable housing, particularly in stressed urban housing markets such as Dublin.

The survey results also reveal particular 'at risk' groups to family homelessness which may help inform prevention strategies: families who are on rent supplement and on low income, young families experiencing income poverty and difficulties in the family home, migrant families, victims of domestic violence, and families who are residing in overcrowded accommodation and may be 'hidden' from services. The results presented here also points to the interaction between personal crises (such as domestic violence, relationship breakdown, family conflict and overcrowding) and lack of adequate income which place many families at a heightened risk of residential instability and homelessness. Thus, given the diversity of support needs and experiences of these families, a one-size-fits-all policy approach would not be appropriate.

While this small-scale study provides timely insights into the trajectories of families who reported as homeless, there are a number of themes which merit more extensive research and analysis:

- To yield a greater understanding of needs and experiences of different subgroups among those experiencing family homelessness - for example, more targeted studies of migrant families, of women who became homeless with their children as a result of domestic violence, or a greater understanding of the experiences of young parents in their late teens and early twenties.

- To ascertain a deeper understanding of when and where families first contacted services or local authority in order to enable a greater understanding of early intervention strategies in preventing homelessness.
- To provide a service needs analysis of families experiencing homelessness. The respondents in this survey reported varying levels of satisfaction across services and it would be beneficial to understand what support families find helpful or unhelpful in order to best serve their needs.

Appendix 1: Telephone Survey Instrument

Bi-Monthly Telephone Survey with Families

SECTION I: Demographic Profile

Q1	PASS ID – <i>to be completed prior to phone call</i>					
Q2	Age					
Q3	Nationality	Irish	EU	Non-EU		
Q4	Marital Status	Single	In a couple			
Q5	Number of Children	1	2	3	4	5+
Q6	Current Employment Status of Interview Respondent:	Full-time parent	Student	Part-time Employment	Full-time Employment	Other(state):

SECTION II: Accommodations Prior to Homelessness

Please describe your previous four accommodations (note to interviewer: No.4 is the accommodation IMMEDIATELY BEFORE entering Hotel/B&B accommodation):

Q7	Tenure Type	Duration of Stay	Reasons for Leaving (insert coding category)	If you were in PRS:	
				a) were you in receipt of rent supplement? (Y/N)	b) did you have to 'top up' this payment with your own money?
1					
2					
3					
4					

Q8	How long would you say it has been since you last had a stable accommodation?	Less than one month	1-6 months	7 months – 1 year	1-2 years	3+ years	

Q9	In what area/location was your last stable home? (please specify):			
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Q10	Would you describe this as the first time you have experienced homelessness?	First Time Homeless	Have experienced homeless before	Don't know

SECTION III: Help-seeking

Q11a	Did you contact anyone BEFORE you became homeless?	Yes	No	Don't know
Q11b	If yes, who did you contact? (✓all that apply)	Local councillor/TD		
		Local Authority		
		CWO		
		Citizens advice		
		MABS		
		PRTB		
		Local Social Welfare Office		
		Friend/Family member:		
		Non-Statutory organisations:	Focus Ireland	
			Threshold	
			Simon Community	
			Other (please state):	
		GP		
		Your landlord		
Other (please state):				
Q12	Is there anything you can think of that might have helped you or your family in preventing you from becoming homeless? (Please state):			

END OF SURVEY

The Focus Ireland Family Homeless Action Team is funded by:



Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Community and Local Government



Comhairle Contae
Fhine Gall
Fingal County
Council



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