

**FOCUS**  
Ireland

**Survey of  
the families  
that became  
homeless during  
March 2017**

Authors: Sarah Sheridan

---

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

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

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

---

## Contents

Contents .....	2
SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – MARCH 2017 .....	3
INTRODUCTION .....	5
METHODOLOGY.....	6
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE.....	7
Living Situation at Time of Survey .....	7
Age.....	7
Nationality and Ethnic/Cultural Background.....	8
Family Type.....	8
Employment Status of Respondents.....	9
Location of Last stable Home .....	10
REASONS FOR HOMELESSNESS.....	10
Last Stable Accommodation and Triggers to Homelessness .....	10
Housing Trajectories and Routes into Homelessness.....	11
Help-Seeking before Becoming Homeless .....	14
CONCLUSION.....	14
Appendix 1: Telephone Survey Instrument.....	16

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS – MARCH 2017

### *The Study*

- This study presents key findings from a short quantitative survey conducted by telephone with **38** of the total 77 families who presented to Dublin family homeless services during **March 2017**. This represents **49%** of the total number of families who presented as newly homeless in the Dublin region during the month of March (**N=77**).
- This survey does not claim to offer a representative insight of all families experiencing homelessness in the Dublin region; rather, it offers a point-in-time analysis of a proportion of those entering homelessness during a particular month. It is hoped that by conducting this survey every three months, however, trends and patterns may emerge which will build our understanding of what is driving family homelessness over time.
- This report will frequently compare data with the aggregated data that emerged across all 2016 telephone surveys. This document can be found in Focus Ireland's *Insights into Family Homelessness Series No. 9* and analyses aggregate data of the 183 surveys administered with families over four data sweeps during 2016.

### *Demographic Profile*

- **12 (32%)** of the respondents were aged between 18 and 25 years, **8 (21%)** were 26 to 35 years and **18 (47%)** were over the age of 36 years. Therefore, the relatively high numbers of young parents among families entering homelessness continue to be a key trend in **March 2017**.
- Among the **38** respondents who were surveyed, **28 (74%)** were born in Ireland and **10 (26%)** were categorised as being of migrant origin (i.e. born outside Ireland): **2 (5%)** were from countries within the EU and **8 (21%)** were from outside the EU. The proportion of migrant families in March (26%) is smaller than the 2016 average (46%).
- Of the sample, **15 (40%)** were experiencing homelessness with their partner and child(ren), while **23 (60%)** were lone parents. Of the 23 who were lone parents, **20** of whom were **single mothers**.
- **24 (63%)** of the families constituted one or two children. The remaining **14 (37%)** of the respondents had three or more children.
- Of these **38** families, there were **81** children – **36%** of these children were aged 4 years or younger.
- The vast majority (**n=28, 74%**) of the respondents described themselves as unemployed. **9** respondents were in employment - either part-time (**n=7**) or full-time (**n=2**). **One** respondent was studying.

## *Housing History*

- **25 (66%)** of the respondents reported that their last stable home was in the private rented sector. **18 of these 25** families had been in receipt of rent supplement in this private rented property. This is similar to the 72% average of respondents who came from the private rented sector across all 2016 surveys.
- The most prominent reason for their leaving their last accommodation was properties being withdrawn from the market (**n=14, 37%**), which is another theme of continuity from previous surveys. The most common reason within this category was landlords selling up, which was reported by **11 respondents (29%)**.
- In analysing the respondents' previous four accommodations, key trajectory 'types' were identified again (also reflected in previous reports). These are expanded upon in the report, and are illustrated with anonymised case profiles:
  1. Stability in the private rented sector.
  2. Precariousness in the private rented sector.
  3. Prolonged instability and hidden homelessness.
  4. Young people who never lived independently
- In terms of patterns around help-seeking or early engagement with services, **21 (55%)** of the **38** respondents sought help or support before becoming homeless. This is somewhat fewer than the 72% of respondents who approached a service in June survey.
- The most common first port-of-call for families was their local councillor or TD (**n=11**) or Focus Ireland advice and information services (**n=9**). **Seven** families sought help or advice from their local authority.

### *Trends Identified between March 2017 Survey and 2016 Surveys:*

- ∞ A majority of families that became homeless continued to report that their last stable accommodation had been in the private rented sector.
- ∞ There was a continued high reported incidents of properties being withdrawn from the market.
- ∞ There continued to be a significant number of young parents entering homelessness, many of whom have little or no experience living in independent housing.
- ∞ There was a continued presence of families of migrant origin – both EU and non-EU – presenting as homeless
- ∞ The majority of respondents were unemployed at time of becoming homeless and dependent on rent allowance supplements, indicating the persistent association between joblessness, low income and homelessness.
- ∞ 6 families (16%) became homeless due to relationship breakdown; this is higher than in 2016 months.
- ∞ There was more diversity in the location of last stable home which include areas of Dublin previously unreported during 2016.

## INTRODUCTION

During **March 2017**, **77** families presented as newly homeless to their local authority across the four Dublin regions<sup>1</sup>. There were **1,069** families residing in emergency accommodation in the Dublin region alone during that month – comprising of **1,426 adults and 2,214 children**<sup>2</sup>.

Across the country as a whole during **March 2017**, there were a total of **1,256** families with **2,643** children living in emergency accommodation<sup>3</sup>. This represents a **32%** increase when compared to the **955** families who were homeless across the country during the same month in **2016**. However, the continued inflow of families presenting to their local authority as homeless is greatest in the Dublin region, where the high demand on housing is most pronounced.

Focus Ireland was appointed by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) as the Family Homeless Action Team (HAT) for families across the Dublin region<sup>4</sup>. When a family presents as homeless to their relevant local authority, they are routinely provided emergency accommodation in the form of commercial hotels or B&Bs. They are then referred to Family HAT who make contact with the family as soon as possible in order to set up an initial assessment.

In an effort to ensure that Focus Ireland (and relevant stakeholders and policy-makers) have an accurate and timely understanding of the accommodation trajectories and ‘triggers’ to family homelessness, Focus Ireland conduct telephone surveys with as many of the families presenting as homeless as possible<sup>5</sup>. This regular reporting highlights key causes of family homelessness and how can monitor how this can change over time. These regular reports also capture key demographic profile information on families who are presenting as homeless.

This report marks the fifth report which used the same survey with families entering homelessness so the data emerging in each report can be comparable with one another and can depict trends over time. All previous reports can be found across separate publications as part of Focus Ireland’s *Insights into Family Homelessness Series*<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> This figure represents the number of families who became homeless during the relevant month and had not been counted as homeless in the past. Focus Ireland press release on the month of March can be found here: <https://www.focusireland.ie/press/new-government-figures-show-record-number-7472-people-now-homeless/>

<sup>2</sup> Monthly infographics on family homelessness in the Dublin (Dublin Region Homeless Executive): <http://www.homelessdublin.ie/homeless-families>

<sup>3</sup> The count which is conducted on a monthly basis through regular reporting of statistics to the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government and pertains to all persons residing in Section-10-funded emergency accommodation (during the final week of each month). This does not include women and children residing in domestic violence refuges nor does it include non-Section-10 funded facilities. Homeless figures for September 2016 can be found at:

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

<sup>4</sup> While Focus Ireland is the principle service who assists families experiencing homelessness in Dublin region, other homelessness organisations also work with families. See the back page of this document for a brief background of the role and function of Focus Ireland Family HAT.

<sup>5</sup> As agreed in the Research Programme set out by the Focus Ireland Research Advisory Group (RAG) – a subcommittee of the organisation’s Board – which comprises of expert researchers and academics in the area of homelessness and housing.

<sup>6</sup> Focus Ireland Insights into Family Homelessness Series publications can be found here: <http://www.focusireland.ie/resource-hub/publications-and-partnerships/research/>

## METHODOLOGY

The 3-page telephone survey developed for the purpose of this exercise was concise, tightly structured and targeted in its design<sup>7</sup>. This was for the purpose of efficiency, to maximise the response rate, and most importantly, to minimise the burden on families in crisis situations (see Appendix 1 for survey instrument).

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

In total, **38** of the **77** families who became homeless in the Dublin region during **March 2017** participated in the survey, representing **49%** of the entire cohort of families newly presenting as homeless that month. In keeping with Focus Ireland Research Ethics Guidelines, attention was paid by both the services and advocacy staff members to ensuring that families were never invited to participate in more than one study and that high ethical standards were maintained at all times. The first tranche surveys took place in June 2017 and the second tranche took place in August 2017<sup>8</sup>.

Prior to the Focus Ireland Research Officer making contact with the respondents, a member of the Family HAT team attained verbal consent from respondents during a routine phone call with the family as part of their initial assessment to the service. Two families declined to participate in the survey at this initial stage, and eleven families were not contactable (Focus Ireland did not have telephone contact details because they left homelessness very quickly or another organisation was assisting them). At the research stage, several families were then not contactable due to difficulties in connecting with them via telephone (phones were always engaged or connecting to 'call catcher') or, alternatively, the families did not answer their phone or return voicemail messages<sup>9</sup>. This left **38** surveys which were successfully completed with relevant families via telephone.

Upon making contact with the participants, the research officer stated the purpose of the telephone call and what was involved in taking part in the survey. While the survey was structured in design and questions were posed in a consistent way, in many cases, the families expanded on their answers and there was some flexibility in terms of follow up questions (research notes were recorded in these instances). The surveys typically took around 5-10 minutes each, but sometimes calls were longer - depending on the level of detail offered by participants themselves. As the case in previous months, some phone calls exceeded 15-20 minutes as families voluntarily described their trajectories into homelessness in more detail.

---

<sup>7</sup> The survey was designed by the advocacy team and was shared with Focus Ireland Research Advisory Group for feedback.

<sup>8</sup> The staggered nature of data collection for March 2017 data collection was related to work demands in the research team in Focus Ireland. However, with the exception of the question relating to 'current accommodation', the findings are not affected by the different points of data collection (given the focus on the experiences which preceded homelessness and demographic profile which remains static).

<sup>9</sup> The researcher attempted to make contact a total of four times with each family. In cases where families had a message service activated on their mobile phone, one voicemail was left.

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

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

Focus Ireland's Data Protection and Customer Confidentiality policies, as well as the organisation's Ethical Guidelines for Conducting Research, were adhered to at all times in the completion of this study. The respondents were made aware at both initial phone call and follow-up phone call that involvement in the study was entirely voluntary and that they were under no obligation to participate. All details emerging from the research were anonymised and this was also explained to the respondents<sup>10</sup>.

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

## DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

All **38** of the respondents were adult parents (i.e. over the age of 18 years) and were accompanied by one or more of their children.

### Living Situation at Time of Survey

At time of survey, **26 (68%)** of the families were residing in private emergency accommodation (commercial hotels or B&BS), **1 (3%)** family were living with friends of family members. Finally, **11 (39%)** families had exited homelessness – **7** of whom had accepted a HAP tenancy; 3 were allocated local authority accommodation; and 1 family had sourced private rented accommodation themselves.

### Age

Of the participants who were surveyed, **12 (32%)** were aged between 18 and 25 years; **8 (21%)** were between 26 and 35 years of age; and **18 (47%)** were 36 years or older. See Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Age Breakdown of Sample**

Age Group (in years)	Number of Survey Respondents	Percentage of Total
<b>18-25</b>	12	32%
<b>26-35</b>	8	21%
<b>36+</b>	18	47%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>10</sup> Contact details and names were destroyed once the telephone surveys were completed and all identifiable details were removed.

Once again, high levels of young parents presented as homeless. Indeed, the proportion of young parents below the age of 25 years was even higher (32%) than in previous waves of data collection (approximately a quarter).

## Nationality and Ethnic/Cultural Background

In the **March 2017** survey, **28 (74%)** of the survey respondents were born in Ireland, while **10 (26%)** respondents were born outside of Ireland. **2 (5%)** of whom were originally from an EU country while **8 (21%)** were from outside the EU (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Nationality Breakdown of Sample**

Nationality Category	Number of Survey Respondents	Percentage of Total
<b>Ireland</b>	28	74%
<b>EU</b>	2	5%
<b>Non-EU</b>	8	21%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

The proportion of migrant households in this survey (26%) is relatively lower than the particularly high proportions in previous surveys during 2016 which averaged at 46%. It is nonetheless significant considering that 17.3% of the general population were born outside of Ireland<sup>11</sup>. Table 3 displays the ethnic and cultural background of the families surveyed. The majority were White Irish; there were 8 Black African respondents; and 2 Irish Traveller families.

**Table 3. Ethnic and Cultural Background**

Ethnic and Cultural Background		Number of Respondents
<b>White</b>	White Irish	27
	Irish Traveller	2
	Another White Background	1
<b>Black / Black Irish</b>	African	8
	Any other black background	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>38</b>

Of the non-EU migrants, 1 respondent reported that they had a history of living in direct provision accommodation for those seeking asylum. This is lower than 2016 samples when 4 to 5 families had histories of direct provision each round of data collection.

## Family Type

In this March 2017 survey, **23 (61%)** of the respondents were one-parent households. Again, this mirrors the average proportion of one-parent households in 2016 surveys which was 62% and Department of Housing Statistics which confirms that 65% of families in emergency accommodation constitute of one-parent households. Of the **23** one-parent households, **20** families were headed by **lone mothers**.

<sup>11</sup> Central Statistics Office 2016 Census [[www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)]



The remaining 15 respondents (39%) in March 2017 were two-parent families.

In terms of the number of children in the family unit, the majority of the respondents had either one or two children in their household (**n=24, 63%**) as per previous rounds of data collection. The remaining **37%** of the respondents had three or more children. Three families had five or more children.

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

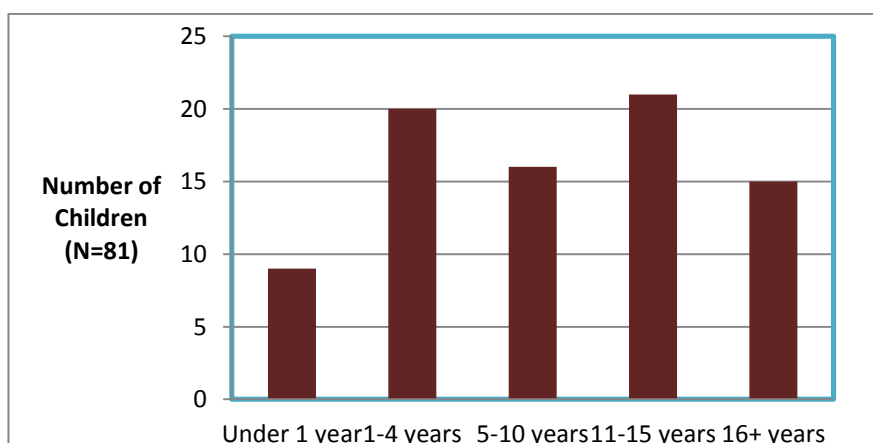
	Number of Families		Percentage of Total
<b>Number of Children</b>	1	14	37%
	2	10	26%
	3	9	24%
	4	2	5%
	5+	3	8%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>38</b>	<b>100%</b>

Mirroring broader 2016 data average, 63% of March survey families had either one or two children (compared to average of 67%).

Of these 38 families, there were **81** children: **9** of whom (**11%**) were under the age of 1 year; **20** children (**25%**) were between 1 and 4 years; **16** (**20%**) were between 5 and 10 years; **21** (**26%**) were between 11 and 15 years; and **15** children (**18%**) were over the age of 16.

Therefore, **36%** of the children were under the age of 4, while **56%** of children were under the age of 10 years. See figure 5 below.

**Figure 5. Ages of Children**



## Employment Status of Respondents

The majority of the research participants (**n=28, 74%**) described themselves as unemployed (or full-time parents in receipt of social welfare payment), slightly fewer than the average in 2016 (83%). **7** (**18%**) of the respondents were in part-time employment and **2** (**5%**) were in full-time employment. One respondent was a student.

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

## Location of Last stable Home

The survey included the location of the participant's last stable home. The areas cited in this section differed from 2016 in some respects. Broadly speaking, there was more *diversity* in the location of their last stable home and, perhaps related to this, there were only 2 families who were living in Dublin 15 before they became homeless (whereas in previous surveys there were usually a larger number who were coming from Dublin 15). Six families were living in Tallaght in their last stable home; six in the city centre; and four in Finglas. The remaining families were living in places which included Dublin 5 (Killester; Fairview); Dublin 10 (specifically Ballyfermot); Dublin 13 (Whitehall), among other locations on the north side of the city. South Dublin locations included Dublin 6 (Ranelagh; Milltown) and Dublin 14 (Churchtown) and Dublin 16 (Knocklyon). One family reported that their last stable accommodation was outside of Dublin.

## REASONS FOR HOMELESSNESS

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

### Last Stable Accommodation and Triggers to Homelessness

Mirroring 2016 survey data, the majority (**n=25, 66%**) of respondents who presented as homeless during **March 2017** reported that their last stable home was in the private rented sector (72% average across all surveys conducted in 2016).

**A majority (18 of 25 families)** were in receipt of rent supplement in their last stable home, while 7 were meeting rental payments through their own income, income from a partner or from a family member.

Additionally, **12 families** reported that their last stable home was **staying with family** – 7 of whom categorised this as their parental family home and 5 others were staying with relatives.

Due to anti-social behaviour and complaints from the neighbours, 1 family had to leave their own local authority home prior to entering homelessness.

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

**Table 6: Cited Reasons for Leaving Last Stable Accommodation**

Reasons cited for leaving last stable property		No. of Respondents
<b>Property being withdrawn from the private rented sector (37%)</b>	Landlord selling	11 (29%)
	Landlord moving in / giving property to family member	3
<b>Additional issues related to private rented sector (18%)</b>	Rent too high	5
	Non-renewal of lease	2
<b>Other</b>	Relationship breakdown	6
	Family conflict	4
	Overcrowding	4
	Loss of employment	1
	Bereavement	1
	Anti-social behaviour	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>38</b>

A recurrent theme of each of these telephone survey reports is the relevant properties being withdrawn from the rental market. As highlighted in the table above, **11 families** cited that their **landlord selling** was the main trigger to their homelessness. Furthermore, **3 families** reported that their landlord was either moving in to the property or giving it to a family member. Therefore, as emerged through previous survey data in 2016, **37% of families were made homeless due to the landlord removing the property from the private rented sector** (compared to 34% of all 183 surveys completed in 2016).

**5 families (13%)** had become homeless as a result of **rent being too high**– all of whom lost their accommodation the last 12 months. Of note, 4 of these families were in receipt of Rent Supplement at the time of losing their rental accommodation. Additionally, 2 families reported that they were unable to remain in their home due to lease not being renewed.

**6 families (16%)** became homeless due to relationship breakdown; this is higher than in any previous month of data collection.

## **Housing Trajectories and Routes into Homelessness**

An additional objective of this regular research exercise with families presenting as homeless is to understand their accommodation trajectories – that is, to capture their previous four living situations and the reported reasons why they left each of those accommodations. This data yields a somewhat rudimentary, yet concise, analysis of their housing trajectories.

Emerging from this were four broad analytical groupings:

1. Previous stability in the Private Rented Sector (n=17, 45%)
2. Precariousness in the Private Rented Sector (n=11, 28%)
3. Prolonged Housing Instability and Hidden Homelessness (n=4, 11%)
4. Young People who have Never Lived Independently (n=5, 13%)

These groupings broadly mirror previous surveys in terms of the proportion of the respondents' recent housing histories. These groupings will now be expanded upon, together with a brief case study of a housing trajectory of one family<sup>12</sup>.

- 1. Previous Stability in the Private Rented Sector** – There were **17 families (45% of the sample)** who reported no prior experience of homelessness and very little time living with friends or family (apart from after they became homeless when they often relied on informal arrangements before presenting to their local authority as homeless). This is a similar proportion to 2016 averages which represented 50% in this grouping.

These families reported stable tenancies in the private sector, typically remaining for several years in each tenancy. Reasons for leaving previous tenancies in the past were usually associated with changes in family structure such as getting married, having a child, or frequently, landlords selling.

Their relative housing stability would strongly indicate that these families had previously complied with tenancy agreements and were able to pay their rent. The majority of this group, but not all, were also supported with rent supplement.

#### Key Characteristics of Group One:

- **8** of these **17** families became homeless due to the landlord leaving the sector (**5** of which were due to landlords selling). An additional **2** families reported that they had to leave as the landlord would not renew the lease.
- **6** of the **17** families were migrants; **6** of whom were of a black or ethnic minority background.
- **8** of the **17** families were lone parent families.
- **Only 1** of the **17** families resided with friends or family before presenting as homeless, the remainder transitioned directly from 'stable' accommodation and into emergency hotel or B&B accommodation.
- Three quarters of this group (**n=13, 76%**) sought advice and information from a support service or organisation *prior* to presenting as homeless; 6 of whom approached their local TD or councillor also.
- **7** of the families in this group had already exited homelessness by the time they were surveyed. The remaining **10** families were in hotel accommodation.

- 2. Precariousness in the Private Rented Sector** – There were **11 (28%)** families who reported broadly stable housing histories but had experienced *some* degree of housing instability or precariousness in the past (i.e. where they were living in overcrowded, inadequate or insecure housing).

This instability in housing was characterised by often unsatisfactory or inadequate private rented accommodation tenancies. This group also demonstrated a certain level of reliance on family or friends for accommodation, sometimes for months or even years.

Family conflict was sometimes cited over this time, which was often related to overcrowded situations.

#### Key Characteristics of Group Two:

- **5** of the **11** families reported that their last stable accommodation was in the private rented sector and **3** had to leave due to landlord selling.

---

<sup>12</sup> All case studies are fully anonymised and identifiable details are removed.

- **6** of the **11** families lived with friends or family for a duration ranging from a month to a number of years prior to presenting as homeless. These situations ultimately became unsustainable for the families in question and they considered they had no other choice than to approach their local authority.
- **8** of the **11** families were White Irish and **8** were single parent households.
- **One** of the families who were categorised in Group Two had exited homelessness **(to a HAP tenancy)** by the time they were surveyed.

**3. Prolonged Housing Instability and Hidden Homelessness** – There were **4 (11%)** families in the **March 2017** cohort who reported more extensive marginalisation from the housing market. This directly replicates the average of all 2016 surveys across which 11% reported more profound housing issues.

These families had little or no experience of living in independent or stable tenancies; they were heavily reliant on friends or families, typically for lengthy periods of time and reported extensive difficulties in accessing private rental accommodation. However, **1** of the families in this group had exited homelessness (to a HAP tenancy) by the time they were surveyed.

Key Characteristics of Group Three:

- All **4** had spent time moving between the homes of family, friends and relatives and lived in significant housing precariousness for many years.
- **1** of these **4** respondents lived in emergency accommodation in the recent past. .
- **3** respondents were Irish and **1** was from an EU migrant background.

**4. Young People who have Never Lived Independently** - Identical to previous 2016 samples, young parents formed one of the most significant subgroups of families entering homelessness. In March 2017 almost **a third** of all the families were 25 years or under. Of the 12 respondents in this young cohort, **5** were categorised as being **significantly marginalised** from the housing market.

These **5** young people had no experience of living independently in stable housing, citing that they were unable to access the private rented housing market. Their living situations were often strained as they spent considerable periods of time in overcrowded conditions with their young children. Family conflict was commonly reported and typically worsened in situations of overcrowding.

Key Characteristics of Group Four:

- **5** of the **5** respondents were Irish-born.
- **2** of the **5** respondents were lone parents.
- 3 respondents had one child while the 2 had two children.
- **3** respondents were unemployed while **2** were employed on a part-time basis.
- **4** respondents from this group did not seek help from any organisation or local representative before becoming homeless.

## Help-Seeking before Becoming Homeless

21 of the 38 families (55% of total) sought information or advice *prior* to presenting as homeless. This is slightly less than the average of 67% across the surveys during 2016. Indeed, this mirrors December 2016 in which only 50% had sought help prior to homelessness. It will be important to note whether this continues to remain at a low level throughout 2017 as it may suggest that homelessness prevention services / supports are not well known and may require a more targeted information campaign. 13 of the 21 families who did seek help were from the stable housing group (Group No 1 described above). Only 1 of the 5 respondents from the youth homeless trajectory group (Group No 4) sought help or information. .

As in previous rounds of data collection, 11 of the families approached their local TD or councillor as their first action in seeking help. Through this contact, TDs advised families to present to their local authorities or city council offices, or offered other relevant information and advice. An additional 7 families approached their local authority office as a first port-of-call, and 9 families approached either Focus Ireland or Threshold.

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

## CONCLUSION

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

As such, below are the key themes emerging from March 2017 survey, together with some discussion on the similarities and divergences with the previous surveys of similar data collected in 2016. Notwithstanding some slight variations – for example, location of last stable home appeared to be more diverse – broadly speaking there is once again a great deal of consistency emerging from the March 2017 data.

1. **Private rented properties being withdrawn from the market:** Once again, the high prevalence of landlord withdrawing their properties from the market was identified. In total, 37% of the sample reported that either their landlords were selling or taking the property out of the market. This reflects an ongoing trend across each wave of data collection and raises key insights into the primary drivers into why families continue to present as homeless. 5 families become homeless due to rent being too high.
2. **Continued prevalence of lone parents (and particularly lone mothers):** In this March 2017 survey, **23 (61%)** of the respondents were one-parent households. Again, this mirrors 2016 data (62%). Women are consistently overrepresented in this subgroup and explain the increase in the numbers of women becoming homeless across emergency accommodation as identified through Department of Housing statistics.

3. **Continuing prevalence of young parents entering homelessness:** Mirroring previous surveys in 2016, a high proportion of young parents continue to present as homeless (32% in March 2017 were aged 25 or younger). Some of these young people have little or no experience living in independent tenancies and appear to be extremely marginalised from the private rented sector due to lack of affordable rents. Many of these young parents lived in highly stressed and overcrowded home environments prior to presenting as homeless.
4. **Persistent link between joblessness and homelessness:** Families entering homeless are more likely than not to be unemployed and dependent on social welfare jobseekers' allowance. 74% of the respondents reported they were unemployed and 18 of the 25 families who were living in the private rented sector were dependent on rent supplement to meet their rental payments.
5. **Continued Prevalence of migrant families:** Families of migrant origin, that is, respondents who were not born in Ireland (but may have Irish citizenship), continue to feature in high numbers in March 2017 cohort (although relatively smaller proportion than previous rounds of data collection; 26% in March 2017 compared to 46% across 2016).
6. **Lower numbers of families seeking advice prior to homelessness:** 55% of the families sought support prior to presenting as homeless. This is lower than average across 2016 (67%).

In conclusion, this telephone survey indicates the key trends and processes which are impacting on the continual inflow of families into emergency accommodation month-on-month. These trends appear to reflect broader structural and systemic issues which disproportionately impact on families who are on low incomes and who are dependent on social welfare and rent supplement. High rents, low take up of tenants on rental subsidies on the part of landlords, together with extraordinary competition on private sector units in urban areas – are culminating in this family homelessness crisis. Single parents, young people and those of migrant origin appear to be consistently disproportionately represented in family homeless populations. .

### **Acknowledgements**

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

**Appendix 1: Telephone Survey Instrument**

**Telephone Survey with Families – March 2017**

**SECTION I: Accommodations Prior to Homelessness**

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



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

## SECTION II: Demographic Profile

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

### SECTION III: Help-seeking PRIOR to becoming homeless

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

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

**Focus Ireland**  
**Head Office**  
9-12 High Street  
Christchurch  
Dublin 8

Tel 01 881 5900  
LoCall 1850 204 205  
Fax 01 881 5950  
Email [info@focusireland.ie](mailto:info@focusireland.ie)  
[focusireland.ie](http://focusireland.ie)

Registered charity  
CHY 7220

**Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.**  
[focusireland.ie](http://focusireland.ie)

**FOCUS**  
**Ireland**