

2025

# Recommendations to Government for Budget 2025



**FOCUS** Ireland

Challenging homelessness. Changing lives.

# Contents

Policy Recommendations requiring no Budgetary Allocation	4
Expenditure Proposals	5
Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage	5
A. Increase Funding for New Build Social Housing Supply	5
B. Private Rented Sector	8
Department of Social Protection	13
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	15
Section 10 Funding	15
Introduction	15
The Impact of Rising Homelessness on Budget Planning	15
The Effect of Budget Planning for Homelessness Services	16
Estimating the Level of Need for Homeless Services in 2024	18
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	19
Department of Health	22

# Context

- Figures released from the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage (HLGH) from April 2024 show that 14,009 persons were in emergency accommodation, including 4,206 children.
- While 8,100 new build social homes were delivered in 2023, this outcome fell below the annual 9,100 target as set out in Housing for All. The record delivery of social housing is not having any discernible impact on the scale or duration of homelessness.
- Instability in the private rental market continues to be a key driver of homelessness. Over 19,000 Notices of Termination were received by the RTB in 2023 and 4,810 NOTs were received in Q1 2024.
- Families and individuals are spending longer in emergency homeless accommodation, unable to exit through social or affordable housing. In total, 1,996 families are currently in emergency accommodation, and over half are lone parent families.
- There is an increasing trend in Local Authorities ‘pushing back’ on households presenting as homeless, requiring them to stay with family or friends rather than offering emergency accommodation.
- Most households on the social housing waiting list require 1-2 bed homes. The construction of social housing must match the demographics on the social housing needs assessment and address the geographical disparities.

# Policy Recommendations requiring no Budgetary Allocation

As this is a Pre-Budgetary Submission, its core recommendations require the allocation of funding in the 2025 Government Budgetary process, however, it is important to remember there are policy changes and practical measures which could significantly address the scale and impact of homelessness which require minimal or no added cost, and would even reduce costs. Focus Ireland recommends the following targeted policy measures to prevent further increases in homelessness.

<b>Social housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish a process for allocation of social housing which gives fairer access to households trapped in homelessness for long periods.</li><li>• Ensure that new social housing targets and funding prioritises the delivery of 1 and 2 bed homes in cities and urban areas</li></ul>
<b>Emergency Accommodation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prioritise households in emergency accommodation for over a year to receive intensive case management to facilitate exits out of homelessness.</li></ul>
<b>Best interests of the Child</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce legislation which would require Local Authorities to regard the best interests of the child when responding to families presenting as homeless.</li></ul>
<b>Child Poverty and Well-Being Unit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child Poverty and Well-Being Unit to convene an inter-departmental working group on child homelessness for lone parents with Tusla and DHLGH to achieve solutions in the best interests of the child.</li></ul>
<b>Rent Arrears for HAP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Align rent arrears arrangements for HAP tenants with those for social housing tenants, with a view to avoiding evictions into homelessness due to minimal accruals of arrears.</li></ul>

# Expenditure Proposals

## Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage

### A. Increase Funding for New Build Social Housing Supply

*Housing for All's* commitment to providing an additional 90,000 social housing units by 2030 would make a significant contribution to solving the housing and homelessness crisis. However, since *Housing for All* was published in 2021, the Government has undoubtedly faced significant challenges in the delivery of social and affordable housing in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, construction supply chains shortages, the fallout from Brexit, rising inflation costs, bank interest rate rises and wider the cost-of-living challenges.

Additionally, it is widely expected that the ESRI will advise government that at least 50,000 new build homes, rather than the 33,000 projected in 2021, will need to be built to meet future demand, on top of recent estimates from the Housing Commission which advised that Ireland's current housing deficit is approx. 235,000 homes. The 8,100 new build social homes delivered in 2023 is very welcome but falls short of the target of 9,100 as set out in *Housing for All* and this target itself falls significantly below what will be needed to meet future housing demand and our housing deficit, as set out clearly in the Housing Commission Report.

Based on recommendations from the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), reflected in *Housing for All*, at least a third of new housing should be social housing: a third of the new 50,000 housing target must be social housing. To make this aspiration a reality, Budget 2025 needs to allocate appropriate funding so that construction of approx. 16,600 new social homes can commence in 2025.



Increase annual capital funding for social housing to approx. €3.4bn a year to meet new estimated target of an average 16,600 social homes a year.



Ensure that new funding prioritises the delivery of 1 and 2 bed homes in cities and urban areas

Given the length of time that new housing takes to build, even if we start now, it will be at least 2027/8 before new social housing delivery begins to reflect newly recognised targets. Increasing funding for 2025 will allow Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies to start to build the capacity and pipelines necessary. Failure to allocate funding at this point would send a regrettable message that Government has not grasped the urgency of the situation we face.

Based on Budget 2024's allocation of €1.9bn to deliver 9,300 new social homes, we estimate that Budget 2025 needs to increase multi-annual funding of approx. €3,386,400,000 a year to deliver approx. 16,600 new social homes annually. This estimate is based on Department of Housing cost estimations for 2024 and would likely need to be increased annually to reflect changing costs of housing delivery. A reset in social housing targets also gives Government the perfect opportunity to put in place mechanisms and funding to ensure that social housing that is delivered going forward better reflects the size of both homeless households and those on social housing waiting lists, who predominately require 1 and 2-bed homes in urban centres.

## Activate Un-commenced Planning Permissions

In December 2022, the CSO and Dublin Taskforce had an estimate of 42,000 un-commenced planning permissions for apartment dwellings in Dublin at the end of 2021. In our 2024 Pre-budget Submission, Focus Ireland called for a dedicated budget line to assist in re-activating construction on 10,000 apartments which had received planning permission but had not been commenced, due to a range of factors. We also looked for a working group and to expedite this unique opportunity to deliver new homes relatively quickly.

While not all such projects are viable, the potential of these units justifies a significant mobilisation of resources to deliver as many as possible. We argued that the expenditure

of public resources on these units should be further justified by ring-fencing one-third of units for households moving out of homelessness.

No specific budget line was allocated to this work and no working group was established. Departmental sources indicated that existing budget lines would be directed towards activating such opportunities, however we are not aware of any update on progress on this issue.

The most recent data show that there are 60,607 un-commenced planning permissions in the four Dublin local authorities at the end of 2023, of which 53,231 are apartments and nearly half, or 23,984 of those, are in the Dublin City Council area. While progress is being made, the urgency and potential benefits of commencing many of these granted permissions indicates that our proposal for a dedicated working group and budget would still be a valuable contribution.

## CAS for Care Leavers (Tusla CAS)

Since Focus Ireland published ‘Out on their own’ over 20 years ago, it has been recognized that young people who grew up in our care system have an unacceptably high risk of becoming homeless upon becoming adults. Despite many reforms, this risk regrettably persists, with young people leaving care accounting for 20% of homeless presentations amongst 18-19-year-olds in Dublin in 2023.

The CAS for Care Leavers (or Tusla CAS) funding scheme represents one of the most significant initiatives to tackle the historic vulnerability of care leavers, and it is a crucial underpinning to the Youth Homeless Strategy.



Focus Ireland is proud to be the largest provider of homes for vulnerable young care leavers under the CAS for Care Leavers scheme. However, significant barriers threaten the continued success of this funding scheme.

The DCEDIY commissioned Review of the scheme recommends for the continuation and expansion of the programme to meet projected levels of housing need amongst young people leaving care. Despite initial important progress, the scheme is failing to deliver enough homes due to several factors, predominantly the low number of 1-bedroom units which are being built across the construction sector.<sup>1</sup> Recommendation 75 (2) in the Housing Commission report reinforces the importance of this programme by calling on the Government to Review the CAS and ensure it is adequately funded.

## B. Private Rented Sector

While the current contraction of the private rental sector is not the root cause of rising homelessness, Notices of Termination (NoTs) continue to be one of the primary triggers into homelessness and must be tackled with evidence-based, data-driven policy responses.

Over the last number of years, Focus Ireland has made repeated submissions proposing such evidence-based policy responses, including our Submission to the Review of the Private Rented Sector,<sup>2</sup> our joint paper with the Chartered Accountants,<sup>3</sup> and previous Pre-Budget Submissions. Instead of considering such measures, a scattergun approach of universal short-term tax incentives and complicated legislative changes to the operation of the private rented sector has been adopted.

We cannot yet fully evaluate the medium-term effect of the tax incentives for landlords introduced in the 2024 Budget, but in spite of this measure, in Q1 2024 more families entered homelessness in the Dublin region due to an NoT linked to the sale of the property than in any other quarter over the previous year.<sup>4</sup> The position of Focus Ireland in relation to the private rental sector, as set out in our previous submissions on this area of policy, align with the recommendations in the recent Report of The Housing Commission, specifically Recommendation 31(3).<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on an average cost of purchase of €194,744 - Departmental Data – Tuesday, 12 Dec 2023 – Parliamentary Questions (33rd Dáil) – Houses of the Oireachtas

<sup>2</sup> Focus-Irelands-Submission-to-the-Review-of-the-Private-Rented-Sector.pdf (focusireland.ie)

<sup>3</sup> Focus Ireland and Chartered Accountants Ireland launch new Briefing Paper with targeted measures to keep small-scale landlords in the market -rteredaccountants.ie

<sup>4</sup> Dublin Region Homeless Executive Monthly Reports to Dublin City Councillors on Homelessness.

<sup>5</sup> Report of the Housing Commission Recommendation 31 (3): Reform the tax treatments of landlords to incentivise remaining in the sector and to encourage new entrants. Consideration needs to be given to further reforms and the introduction of a standard tax rate for rental income. This should be linked to properties remaining in the sector for longer periods of time and to energy efficiency upgrades.



Reform taxation of landlords - a standard rate of 25 percent on Case V income for landlords who opt to professionalise by foregoing grounds of termination under Section 34 of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, giving additional security to their tenants.

## Tenant in Situ Scheme

The expansion of the Tenant in Situ (TiS) scheme to prevent homelessness was one of the few positive outcomes of the Government's on/off approach to a moratorium on no-fault evictions. In Q1 2024, 393 adults who would have otherwise been evicted to allow private sale of the properties they were renting were prevented from becoming homeless due to a TiS acquisition by their Local Authority. While this only helped a minority of tenants facing evict-to-sell NoTs, it highlights the potential of this scheme as a tool to prevent homelessness where a tenant in receipt of HAP or RAS receives an NoT and the landlord intends to sell the property.

Despite the provision for 1,500 acquisitions by Local Authorities in 2023 and 2024, and the stated indication that these acquisitions are focused primarily on TiS cases,<sup>6</sup> a total of just 1,081 TiS acquisitions were made by all Local Authorities in 2023.<sup>7</sup>

As homelessness continues to rise beyond previous records, this level of TiS acquisition is under-ambitious given the potential role of the scheme in preventing homelessness as exits from begin to increase. While TiS was able to prevent 393 adults from becoming homeless nationally in Q1 2024, there are still tenants falling through the safety net - 53 families became homeless due to evict-to-sell NoTs in Dublin alone during the same period. Focus Ireland experience with the scheme indicates that households are often excluded from the scheme because the home they are renting would require significant refurbishment to meet social housing standards, or the landlord's asking price is above the conservative thresholds set by the Department. More households could be helped if (i) there was a specific fund made available to local authorities to bring properties up to appropriate standards (ii) greater flexibility on purchase price was allowed to local

<sup>6</sup> [Housing Schemes – Thursday, 9 May 2024 – Parliamentary Questions \(33rd Dáil\) – Houses of the Oireachtas](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Social Housing Overview 2016 to Q4 2023](#)

authorities to reflect the savings arising from preventing homelessness. In addition to these budgetary measures, simply speeding up the process would save more tenancies without additional cost.

In 2023, 11,538 NOTs were received by the Residential Tenancies Board where the landlord intended to sell the property. Based upon ESRI estimates,<sup>8</sup> this indicates approximately 3,800 households will be eligible for support under the TiS scheme.



- Set 3,800 target for Tenant in Situ scheme to meet demand.
- Provide funds for renovation costs and greater flexibility on purchase price.
- Resource the Housing Agency for an awareness campaign on the TiS scheme to ensure tenants with a Notice of Termination engage with their Local Authority at an early stage.

The Dublin Region Homeless Executive, in its monthly reports to Councilors on Homelessness, notes - *“It is very important we get the message out to tenants with a Notice of Termination to engage with their Local Authority at an early stage.”*

Increased awareness of this scheme to ensure tenants with an NOT engage with their Local Authority at an early stage, along with increased capacity for acquisitions could prevent homelessness, avoiding the trauma of this experience and the significant exchequer funding required to provide emergency homeless accommodation.

## HAP

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is the main financial support for people on the social housing waiting list to access financial support for their housing needs. The exclusion of HAP tenancies from the social housing waiting list has resulted in a serious underestimate of social housing need. There are now approx. 116,000 households in need of social housing, when you consider both the official waiting list figure and the numbers on HAP at the end of 2023.

Focus Ireland believes that the private rental sector is not a suitable, or cost-effective,

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS141\\_1.pdf](https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS141_1.pdf)

large-scale provider of social housing, however, we recognise that the private rental sector will remain essential in meeting the needs of tens of thousands of households over the coming decade until social housing stock is increased. Consequently, the schemes put in place to support social housing tenants in the private rental sector must be designed appropriately to provide secure homes for those forced to avail of them. Rents in the private rental market are increasingly unsustainable, especially for low-income and vulnerable groups.

Focus Ireland is recommending practical reforms to HAP to reduce the financial burden on vulnerable households and bring HAP more into line with real market rents. The ‘discretionary’ increase in the maximum rent limits on HAP announced in 2022 had very little impact on hard-pressed tenants.

In 2023, €507.74m was paid to landlords to provide HAP tenancies and by the end of the year there were 56,848 households in HAP tenancies in the State<sup>9</sup>. Each of these tenancies can legally have their rent increased by 2% annually if in an RPZ, and more if not in an RPZ. These allowable annual increases need to be reflected in the budget for HAP in 2025 and must automatically be added to the amount paid to the landlord if the tenant notifies the LA of a rent increase.



Increase HAP budget by €10.2 million to reflect allowable 2% increase in Rent Pressure Zones and automatically apply increase to all HAP recipients payment

---

<sup>9</sup> [HAP Funding Delivery Statistics \(gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publications-and-statistics/publication/2023-hap-funding-delivery-statistics/)

We estimate that if every household in a HAP tenancy had their rent increased by 2%, an additional €10.2m needs to be added to the HAP budget to ensure these additional costs don't fall to vulnerable households in the form of 'top-ups' to landlords to cover the shortfall between actual rent and the HAP limit.

In our submission on the private rented strategy submitted to the Department of Housing in August 2023, we proposed a series of short- and medium-term proposals to reform the HAP system, as well as the importance of introducing a strategy to phase out HAP. We have included the proposals with financial implications below and all proposals on the reform, and ultimately abolition, of HAP can be [read here](#).

The maximum rent limit on HAP properties should be urgently increased to reflect increases in market rents over the last 6 years.



Ensure that no household is paying more than 30% of their net income on housing costs. Where legally allowable rent increases cause these safeguards to be breached, HAP subsidies should be increased.

# Department of Social Protection

## Core Social Welfare Payments

The number of people at risk of poverty is rising and the cost-of-living crisis in recent years has exacerbated this issue. While there are many drivers of poverty, inadequate levels of social welfare is a key one. Budget 2023 and 2024 increases were below the rate of inflation which translates to a real term cut in income. Moreover, budget 2024 focused on providing once-off measures that failed to address longer-term structural issues and provide an adequate safety-net for vulnerable people.

Overall, the rate of inflation, according to the CPI, stands at 3.4 per cent in February 2024.<sup>10</sup> According to the most recent SILC data, one-parent households (43.5%) accounted for one of the highest deprivation rates. The rising cost-of-living coupled with a volatile rental market is having tangibly negative impacts on the standard of living for vulnerable groups.



- A 15% adjustment in core social welfare rates to catch up with inflation and avoid a cut in real terms
- Increase the Qualified Child Increase for those under 12 by €10 and for those over 12 by €12 to prevent an increase in child poverty

Providing adequate safety-nets, which take account of the rising cost of living and inflation, is essential to supporting vulnerable groups to avoid homelessness during periods of personal economic difficulty or to exit homelessness. Social income supports should therefore be regularly adjusted to adequately reflect rising costs and inflation. It is on this basis that Focus Ireland is calling for a minimum adjustment of 15% adjustment in the core social welfare rates, anything below this will represent a cut in real terms.

## Rent Supplement

As highlighted in our submission to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, we believe that the maximum rent limit on HAP properties should be urgently increased to reflect increases in market rents over the last 6 years and reduce financial burden on low-income households. Like with HAP, A revision of maximum rent limits for the Rent Supplement scheme has not taken place for many years, with the result that the rent caps are now significantly out of line with market rents. This is particularly important given that renters are more likely to be at risk of poverty, deprivation or experiencing consistent poverty. For example, the CSO's analysis of "*consistent poverty rates by tenure status shows that the rate for those living in owner-occupied dwellings was 1.8% compared with 13.5% for those living in renting accommodation*".<sup>11</sup>

Focus Ireland is calling for the alignment of maximum rent limits with market rents, and for this to be reviewed on an annual basis to better reflect fluctuations and account for volatility in the private rented sector. Furthermore, we recommend retaining rent supplement eligibility for tenants who have been renting for less than six months to insulate renters against the risk of poverty and social exclusion and increased risk of homelessness in an unpredictable market environment.



---

<sup>11</sup> [Poverty and Deprivation - CSO - Central Statistics Office](#)

# Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

## Section 10 Funding

### Introduction

In the past, Focus Ireland Pre-Budget submissions had little to say about the funding of the homeless sector. We have always aimed to draw attention to measures that can solve homelessness – supporting people into secure homes or preventing homelessness in the first place – rather than the homeless system itself.

However, in our Pre-Budget Submission in 2024 we took the view that, given the rising level of homelessness and the pressures on the sector itself, it was necessary to outline the budgetary implications of the current situation if we are to maintain a functioning emergency homeless service during this period of crisis. Unfortunately, what the Irish Fiscal Council referred to as ‘a mix of gimmickry and plans to repeatedly breach [the National Spending Rule]’<sup>12</sup> persisted in the 2024 budget and so we return to the issue for Budget 2025.

### The Impact of Rising Homelessness on Budget Planning

In contrast to many other major areas of social expenditure, funding the allocation for homeless services is not based on any published forecasts or prediction of the level of homelessness over the coming year. During a period of consistent and rapid increase in the number of homeless people needing services, the weaknesses of this approach have become very clear.

For instance, the 2022 budget included a provision of €194m under Section 10 of the Housing Act – provision for homeless services. This figure was then used as the baseline for the 2023 Budget, so that a €215m allocation for was presented as ‘increased spending’ of some €21m. However, in reality, homelessness had increased so much over the year

---

<sup>12</sup> Press Release: The Government needs a serious fiscal framework. 7th December 2023 [Press-Release-Fiscal-Assessment-Report-Dec-2023.pdf \(fiscalcouncil.ie\)](#)

that the spending outcome for 2023 was not the allocated €215 but nearly €317m<sup>13</sup>. The following year, in Budget 2024 the unreal figure of €215m was used as the new a base, so that a budgetary provision of €242m was presented as an ‘increase’ of €27m when in fact it would have amounted to a €75m cut.

This system of expressing the budgetary provision each year only in relation to the *provision* made in the previous year, with no reference to the reality of what has happened, creates an ever-widening gulf between what is said at Budget Day and the real costs of mass homelessness.

While the collated Local Authority Budgets for 2024 are not yet available, compiled data from local authority estimates show expenditure projections of approx. €435m on homeless services in 2024<sup>14</sup> (although this is subject to final approval by the Department of Housing). As Section 10 exchequer funding accounts for around 80% of total Local Authority spend on homelessness, we can expect total Section 10 expenditure of at least €348m in 2024, rather than the €242m allocated for the year.

It should not be surprising that the costs of homelessness have spiralled in parallel with the actual number of people becoming homeless. From March 2023 to March 2024, the number of households in emergency homeless accommodation has increased by 12.5% nationally. Nor is it surprising that the rising of inflation over the last two years would be reflected in the cost of homeless services.

What is surprising is that these largely predictable factors do not appear to be considered in the budgetary process. It would appear that the Government does not have forecasts on the expected pattern or cost of homelessness, and if it does have such forecasts, they are either totally inaccurate, or are not being used for budgetary planning. Homelessness has shifted from being a rather marginal issue which required a relatively small proportion of public expenditure to being a major social issue requiring significant public funds. Planning should evolve to reflect this regrettable reality.

## The Effect of Budget Planning for Homelessness Services

It is important to recognise the fact that each year the Government does end up providing additional funds to cover the growing needs, and this is, of course, welcome. But this is not just an accounting issue, this lagging budgetary process has real consequences in the services which people seek out when they lose their homes. These consequences include:

- This current process of budget setting has the effect of obscuring the costs of the failure of our housing system. There is broad awareness in Ireland of the social

---

<sup>13</sup> Departmental Expenditure: 9 May 2024: Written answers (KildareStreet.com)

<sup>14</sup> Focus on Homelessness- Public Expenditure on Services for Homeless Households (forthcoming)

and human costs of homelessness, but there is little recognition of the cost to the taxpayer. Awareness of these costs would make it easier for Government to implement the measures (planning, land use, investment) needed to solve the problem.

- The current budgetary process places the Local Authority and homeless system in a permanent position of crisis, undermining the capacity to plan effectively. A system where managers know that their 'official budget' is habitually inadequate and will always have to be supplemented sometime during the year will be an inefficient system where disproportionate energy is spent on firefighting and crisis planning.
- Short-term planning results in Local Authorities being over-reliant on for-profit providers of emergency accommodation and places them in a weakened position in price negotiation. Failure to recognise the real cost of the homeless system, results in it costing more.
- The under-provision of exchequer funding in the face of greater demand results in a higher proportion of homelessness services being carried from the resources of the Local Authorities themselves. This places pressures on other public services and politicises the provision of adequate services to people who are homeless.
- The escalating cost of providing emergency accommodation draws funds away from the services which actually solve homelessness. The success of the homeless system in preventing homelessness and supporting people into secure homes depends on the quality, experience and dedication of its staff. The pay and conditions of staff in Voluntary Sector homeless organisations has fallen well behind equivalent roles in statutory organisations while pressure on staff has increased.
- Statutory bodies and Local Authorities seek to meet their own staffing challenges by recruiting experienced staff from front-line roles in voluntary organisations, while simultaneously funding those bodies at levels which do not allow them to retain their staff. Setting funding levels, and therefore potential wage rates, is a matter for Local Authorities through their Service Level Agreements. However, Local Authorities are unable to enter into meaningful discussions on this when their official annual funding allocation is well below what is required to fund their services even with a wage freeze.
- The staffing crisis within front-line homeless services should not be underestimated. It cannot be resolved without first being recognised in the budgetary process. As highlighted last year, the pay disparity for community and voluntary staff has exacerbated the recruitment and retention crisis in the sector which impacts on service delivery. Without sufficient multi-annual and forecasted State funding for adequate staffing and high-quality employment, homeless services will be unable to respond to growing, more complex needs in homeless services.

## Estimating the Level of Need for Homeless Services in 2024

As noted above, from March 2023 to March 2024, the number of households in emergency homeless accommodation (EA) has increased by 12.5% nationally.

Arising from the range of factors discussed elsewhere in this submission and in other Focus Ireland analysis we propose that the funding allocation for 2025 should be based on a forecast that homelessness will continue to rise but at a slower rate of 8% during the year. In our 2024 submission we set out the remarkable difficulties in calculating the cost of a homeless bed and other non-residential homeless services.<sup>15</sup>

Based on a forecast of homelessness increasing by 8%, and costs increasing by 2.5%, the actual Section 10 funding requirement for 2025 will be €365m – a 10.5% increase on the expected 2024 outcome of €348m.



### RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE FUNDING OF HOMELESS SERVICES

- The budgetary provision for 2025, should be based on the real Section 10 expenditure outcome for 2024 (estimated at €348m) rather than the provision made at the start of the year (€242m).
- Based on estimates that homelessness will continue to grow but at a slower rate (8%, down from 12.5% in 2024), and inflation of 2.5%, the Section 10 budgetary allocation would need to be **€365m** in 2025.

---

<sup>15</sup> [Pre-Budget-Submission-2024.pdf \(focusireland.ie\)](#)

# Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

## Targeted Supports for Children and Young People in Homelessness

There are now 4,206 children in emergency accommodation and this figure is expected to rise. We know from evidence-based research on childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences, that becoming homeless as a child is a deeply traumatic experience. The latest census shows that children aged 0-14 years represent the largest age cohort living in emergency accommodation.

It is well-documented that the impact of homelessness carries many negative consequences for the physical, psychological, and emotional development of children which can have lifelong effects. This is why we have dedicated Child Support Workers to work directly with children and link them with supports throughout their time in homelessness.

Focus Ireland is calling on the Government to safeguard the rights of children by writing the needs of children into the laws which guide our Local Authorities. This can be done by passing the Bill on the 'Best interests of the Child' requiring Local Authorities to place the needs of the child at the centre of decision-making and to provide the family with access to safe accommodation.



In addition, we believe that the needs of every homeless child should be assessed, including factors such as access to their school, medical and therapeutic needs, and how to support family relationships. Every child in homelessness should have timely access to a Child Support Worker. A dedicated Child Support Worker is trained to work 1:1 with children addressing their needs and minimizing the trauma of homelessness. An estimated 10-20% of families engaged in Focus Ireland services have more complex support needs, as such these children will require a designated Child Support Worker to help them navigate their journey in homeless services and more importantly, their exit out of homelessness.

## Crisis Intervention Service Emergency Care Placements

The Tusla National Out-of-Hours Service provides emergency foster care or residential placements for children and young people until they can return home or are admitted into Alternative Care. Currently, there are 26 emergency placement beds available to this service, 6 of which are provided privately.

Throughout 2023, these placements operated at capacity, contributing to the overall crisis in residential care which has resulted in up to 180 children and young people being placed in so-called ‘Special Emergency Arrangements’ due to inadequate capacity. The number of emergency placements, and their concentration in Dublin, remained unchanged in 2024.



- Resource Tusla to operate 2 additional units in partnership with Voluntary Sector Providers, each with the capacity for 5 emergency placements, at a cost of **€2.8 million** per annum for a total of 10 new emergency placement beds.

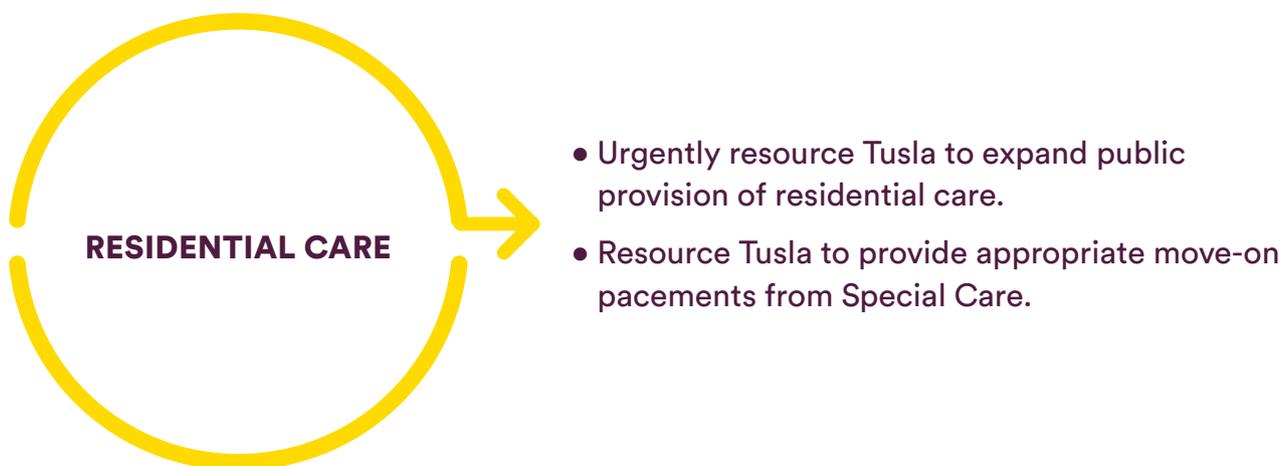
## Residential Care Crisis

The Tusla Strategic Plan for Residential Care committed to incrementally reverse the disproportionate dependency on private residential care, increasing public residential capacity by an additional 104 beds, to achieve 50:50 private-public provision by 2025.<sup>16</sup>

However, as this strategy nears its completion, residential care remains in an ever-worsening crisis. Up to 180 children and young people have been placed in, often unregulated, ‘Special Emergency Arrangements’ due to inadequate capacity.

These ‘Special Emergency Arrangements’ are both inappropriate for the vulnerable children allocated to these placements, as well as being extremely costly and placing the long-term viability of vital Tusla services for children at risk.

Additionally, the significant lack of appropriate move-on placements from Special Care has resulted in children remaining in Special Care beyond the maximum 9-months permitted under legislation.<sup>17</sup> This results in children remaining detained in an inappropriate environment for extended periods of time, as well as families of children who require Special Care, where risks of harm were identified, being unable to access appropriate care.



<sup>16</sup> Tusla, Strategic Plan for Residential Care Services for Children and Young People 2022-2025.

<sup>17</sup> Child Care (Amendment) Act 2011

# Department of Health

## Investment in Mental Health Services for Homelessness

Mental health supports play a critically important role in preventing homelessness, as well as ensuring a successful exit from homelessness; poor mental health often can be the trigger that causes homelessness, while failure to provide for mental health needs can undermine the impact of housing supports.<sup>18</sup> Focus Ireland reinforces FEANTSA's view that homelessness is a health issue and a truly comprehensive European approach to mental health must consider the needs and access of people experiencing homelessness.

Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies should prioritise training for trauma-informed care which aims to address trauma in policies and practices and foster higher levels of trust between service users and service providers. We support the commitment to consolidate improvements and continue to increase access to health supports, including mental health supports, within Housing for All. To ensure this is achieved, adequate budgetary provision is required.



- Allocate **€5 million** funding for mental health inreach services within homeless accommodation, including in Private Emergency Accommodation.

In 2023, Focus Ireland published research on the importance of multidisciplinary teams (MDT) in supporting families experiencing homelessness, especially families with more complex needs. The research identified a cohort of families in our range of services (estimated at about 10-20%) with additional complex needs that require extra targeted support. Families with complex support needs could be dealing with mental health difficulties, addiction issues, child welfare problems, past difficulties sustaining tenancies, and money and home management concerns, among others.

<sup>18</sup> [Homelessness is a health issue: A truly comprehensive European approach to mental health must consider the needs and access of people experiencing homelessness \(feantsa.org\)](https://www.feantsa.org/)

An MDT approach to helping these families would involve access to specific clinical and specialised supports that could help them exit homelessness and that would greatly improve their health and well-being. Focus Ireland plans to develop an MDT model to improve access to mental health supports for those experiencing homelessness.

However, the widespread labour shortages in mental health professionals across the country which result in lengthy waiting lists means that access to adequate supports increasingly difficult. Mental health in-reach services in homeless accommodation including private emergency accommodation requires increased investment to help families and individuals access supports and exit homelessness.

## **Dedicated budget line in HSE Service Plans for support services to homeless people.**

While the HSE provides significant funding for homeless services and is a recognised equal partner in the provision of Housing First, there is no dedicated funding line with HSE Social Inclusion for budgets and, as the Housing Commission has pointed out<sup>19</sup>, no commitment to multi-annual funding for Housing First services which are being provided on a ‘as long as needed’ basis.

The absence of a dedicated homelessness budget for homeless services in the HSE Service Plan means that funding intended for support to people who are homeless is regularly raided by other immediate or visible demands.



- Allocate a specific budget line within the HSE Social Inclusion Budget for support of services to people who are homeless and make a commitment to multi-annual funding for Housing First and related services.

focusireland.ie

**FOCUS** Ireland

Head Office  
9-12 High Street  
Christchurch, Dublin 8  
D08 E1W0

T 01 881 5900  
LoCall 1850 204 205  
F 01 881 5950  
E [info@focusireland.ie](mailto:info@focusireland.ie)