



Locked Out of the Market

The Gap between Rent Supplement/HAP Limits and Market Rents

**June 2015 Snapshot Study
Simon Communities in Ireland**

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1. Introduction

This snapshot study summarises the results of an exercise undertaken over the three consecutive days in May 2015 (5th, 6th and 7th) to track the number of properties available to rent within Rent Supplement (RS) and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) limits. Details were gathered from Daft.ie¹ for the following areas: Cork City Centre, Dublin City Centre, Galway City Centre, Limerick City, Portlaoise, Kildare North, Athlone, Sligo town, Dundalk and Leitrim.

2. Main Findings

- There was an average of 1,150 properties available to rent over the three consecutive days the exercise was undertaken (May 5th, 6th, 7th) in the ten areas reviewed.
- 12% (138 properties) were available within RS/HAP limits.
- Two of the areas – Athlone and Portlaoise – had no properties to rent within the RS/HAP limits in all four categories.
- Just 7% (9 properties) of the available properties within RS/HAP limits were available within the single person Rent Supplement limit.
- 12% (17 properties) were available within RS/HAP limits for a couple.
- 50% (69 properties) were available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with 1 child.
- 31% (43 properties) were available for a couple/one parent with 2 children within RS/HAP limits.

3. Ireland's Current Rental Market

In 2015², rents continued to increase across the country with the Daft.ie Q1 Rental Report indicating that rents were an average of 8.2% higher than the same period in 2014. These increases reflect cumulative year on year growth and compared to the lowest point for rents in Dublin, which was 2010, rents had increased by one third in the capital to May 2015. The national figures mask regional variations – for example, rents have increased in Dublin's commuter counties from 7.6% in April 2014 to 14% in April 2015. Rents increased by 7.5% in Cork; 7.4% in Galway; 6.8% in Limerick and 5.6% in Waterford.

The number of properties available to rent nationwide continued to fall in Q1 2015 and are the lowest since Daft.ie started the reports. As of 1st May 2015, there were just 4,300 properties to rent nationwide, a decrease of 17% (900 properties) from February 2015 and 26% (1,500 properties) in twelve months. Over the three days that rents were tracked, there was an average of 1,150 properties to rent but only 12%, or 138 properties, were available to rent within Rent Supplement and HAP limits.

¹ Daft.ie is a property website that advertises properties for sale and for rent. <http://www.daft.ie/about/>

² Daft.ie Quarterly Rental Report Q1 2015 <http://c0.dmstatic.com/655/report/q1-2015-daft-rental-report.pdf>

4. About Rent Supplement (RS), RAS and HAP⁶

The Social Protection system is an essential safety net preventing people who have lost their jobs, those on low incomes and other vulnerable groups from falling in to homelessness and poverty. It is often the only protection preventing people from becoming homeless. However, cuts to basic social welfare since the beginning of the economic crisis, especially for young people under 25, have made it extremely difficult for people to live from day-to-day, increasing the risk of homelessness. The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice found that, of the 214 sample urban households they included in their research, social welfare cannot meet the Minimum Essential Standard of Living³ (MESL) for 191 of these households⁴. Rent Supplement, despite its imperfections and many flaws, has played an important role in supporting people on low incomes into, and to remain in, the private rented sector in the past.

4.1 Rent Supplement

Rent Supplement (RS) was first introduced in 1977 as a short-term income support administered by the Department of Social Protection. Since then, in the absence of social housing availability, it has become a long-term housing support payment. It has long been acknowledged that RS is fulfilling a function which it was never intended or designed to do - meeting long term housing needs in the absence of social housing provision, and with the restrictions on employment it was in fact causing poverty and employment traps. The 1995 Review⁵ of the role of Supplementary Welfare Allowance identified many of the problems with the scheme and clearly recommended that all forms of social housing should be administered by the Local Authorities (Fitzpatrick, 2015). There are currently approximately 70,000 households in receipt of this payment.⁶

4.2 Rental Accommodation Scheme

The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) was introduced in 2004 as a way of addressing some of the issues with the RS scheme and meeting longer-term housing needs. Those who were in receipt of RS longer than 18 months qualified to receive this payment. Under RAS the Local Authority finds the tenant the housing in the private rental market and pays the landlord a lower-than-market rent in return for guaranteed tenancy. A total number of 51,757 cases were transferred from Rent Supplement to RAS from the first transfer in Q4 2005 to the end of December 2014 (DECLG 2015)⁷. Landlords are now beginning to pull out of the scheme and are not renewing contracts as they can get a higher rent return from private tenants.

4.3 Housing Assistance Payment

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is another attempt to address some of the fundamental issues with RS. It is administered by Local Authorities and does not have restrictions on employment, removing the poverty trap element of RS.⁸ As it continues to be rolled out across the country in 2015, a pilot scheme is currently in operation in Dublin for people who are homeless. The scheme allows for people to receive up to 20% above the current RS/HAP limits with the aim of creating better opportunities for

³ The MESL looks at changes in prices of goods and services within the CPI basket of goods that are deemed essential for minimum standard of living such as food, clothing, electricity, home heating, health and education. During the period 2008 -2014 the cost of a MESL increased by 3.25% while cost of CPI decreased by 0.15%¹¹. From March 2014 – March 2015 on average the CPI rate has reduced by -0.6% however the average core cost of the MESL is higher in 2015 than in 2008 by 0.35%

⁴ Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice (2015) Minimum Essential Standard of Living

⁵ Review Group on the role of Supplementary Welfare Allowance in relation to housing: report to the Minister for Social Welfare

⁶Parliamentary Question week commencing 11/05/15

<http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail2015051200055?opendocument#WRD00700>

⁷ Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) Social and Affordable Housing Statistics

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/StatisticsandRegularPublications/HousingStatistics/>

⁸ Parliamentary Question week commencing 11th May

<http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail2015051200055?opendocument#WRD00700>

people to access housing and move out of homelessness. HAP is due to be introduced all across the country in 2015. It was reported in May 2015 that there were over 1,600 households in receipt of HAP. This had increased to 2,000 households in June with 100 people on the Homeless HAP Pilot scheme in Dublin⁹.

All of the above schemes are dependent on landlords engaging with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG), the Department of Social Protection and tenants. Landlords however are reporting bureaucratic issues with all schemes and with no incentives to engage with the schemes as rents continue to rise, it is more attractive and profitable to remain in the open market.

4.4 Rent Supplement and HAP Limits

The number of people in receipt of RS remains very high. Of the almost 90,000 households in 2013 assessed as having a housing need in 2013, 47% were in receipt of RS in private rented accommodation. For a number of years RS limits have been well below market rents. In March 2015, the Department of Social Protection announced that the current limits, set in June 2013, will not change. Limits for HAP are set at the same rate as the RS limits, resulting in similar difficulties.

⁹ Figures obtained from meeting with Minister for Social Protection 3rd June 2015

5. Report Findings

5.1 National Findings

The table below shows the average number of properties to rent in each area over the three days of the exercise. It also displays the total number of properties available to rent within the rent limits in each area for each of the four categories: single person; couple; couple/one-parent with 1 child and couple/one-parent with 2 children.

Overall Results of Number of Properties available within Rent Supplement/HAP limits

Location	Average number of properties to rent (with no min cost)	Single Person: Total number of properties to rent within RS Limit	Couple: Total number of properties to rent within RS Limit for	Couple/One Parent + 1 Child: Total number of properties to rent within RS Limit.	Couple/One Parent + 2 Children: Total number of properties to rent within RS Limit.
Athlone	42	0	0	0	0
Cork City Centre	68	1	3	4	3
Dublin City Centre	228	2	6	6	4
Dundalk	30	1	1	2	0
Galway City Centre	104	2	3	14	2
Kildare North	475 (all of Co. Kildare)	2	3	20	11
Leitrim	86	0	0	10	10
Limerick City	49	0	0	3	4
Sligo town	44	1	1	10	9
Portlaoise	24	0	0	0	0
Total	1150	9	17	69	43

National Summary:

- There was an average of 1,150 properties available to rent between over the three consecutive days the exercise was undertaken (May 5th, 6th, 7th) in the ten areas reviewed.
- 12% (138 properties) were available within RS/HAP limits.
- Two of the areas – Athlone and Portlaoise – had no properties to rent within RS/HAP limits in all four categories.
- Just 7% (9 properties) of the available properties were available within the single person RS/HAP limit.
- 12% (17 properties) were available within RS/HAP limits for a couple.
- 50% (69 properties) were available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with 1 child.
- 31% (43 properties) were available for a couple/one parent with 2 children within the limits.

5.2 Regional findings

Below you will find the following details for each of the ten regions included in this exercise. It also displays the total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits in each area for each of the four categories; single person, couple, couple/one-parent with 1 child and couple/one-parent with 2 children. The table include the RS/HAP limits for each category for ease of reference.

5.2.1 ATHLONE: Number of Properties available within Rent Supplement/HAP limits

Date	Total number of properties to rent	Number of properties to rent for a single person	Number of properties to rent for a couple	Number of properties to rent for a couple/one parent + 1 child	Number of properties to rent for a couple/one parent + 2 children
		<i>RS/HAP limit: €390</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit €400</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €500</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €520</i>
05/05/15	41	0	0	0	0
06/05/15	42	0	0	0	0
07/05/15	44	0	0	0	0

Athlone Summary:

- In Athlone there was an average of 42 properties to rent on the 5th, 6th and 7th May. There were **no properties to rent within Rent Supplement** for any of the four categories.

5.2.2 CORK CITY CENTRE: Number of Properties available within Rent Supplement/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties to rent	Number of properties to rent for a single person	Number of properties to rent for a couple	Number of properties to rent for a couple/one parent + 1 child	Number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 2 children
		<i>RS/HAP limit: €485</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit €575</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit €700</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit €725</i>
05/05/15	66	1	3	3	0
06/05/15	68	0 (new properties)	0 (new properties)	1 (new property)	1
07/05/15	71	0 (new properties)	0 (new properties)	0 (new properties)	2 (new properties)

Cork City Centre Summary:

- There was an average of 68 properties to rent in Cork City Centre on the 5th, 6th and 7th May.
- One property was available in Cork City Centre for single person over the three day period within RS/HAP limits. No new properties were available on the 6th and 7th of May.
- Three properties were available within RS/HAP limits for a couple on the 5th May with no new properties available to rent on the 6th and 7th May.
- Three properties were available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with 1 child on the first day. One new property was available on the 6th of May amounting to four properties over the three day period.
- No properties available for a couple/one parent with 2 children on the 5th May. One property became available on the 6th and two new properties were available within the rent limits on the 7th May amounting to three properties over the period of this snapshot study.

5.2.3 DUBLIN CITY CENTRE: Number of Properties available within Rent Supplement/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties to rent	Number of properties to rent for a single person	Number of properties to rent for a Couple	Number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 1 child	Number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 2 children
		<i>RS/HAP limit: €520</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €750</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €950</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €975</i>
05/05/15	222	2	3	1	4
06/05/15	234	0 new properties	3 new properties	3 new properties	0 new properties
07/05/15	228	0 new properties	0 new properties	2 new properties	0 new properties

Dublin Summary:

- An average of 228 properties available to rent in Dublin City Centre over the three days of the exercise (5th, 6th and 7th May).
- Two properties were available to rent on the 5th May within RS/HAP limits for a single person over the three day period. No new properties became available over the following two days (6th and 7th May)
- Three properties were available to rent for a couple within RS/HAP limits over the three day period. No new properties were available on the 6th and 7th of May.
- One property was available to rent on the 5th May within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with 1 child. Three new properties were available on the 6th May and two new properties available on the 7th May. (Six in total over the course of this snapshot study).
- Four properties were available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent plus 2 children on the 5th May, with no new properties available on the 6th or 7th May.

5.2.4 DUNDALK: Number of Properties available within Rent Supplement/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties to rent	Number of properties to rent for a single person	Number of properties to rent for a couple	Number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 1 Child	Number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 2 children
		<i>RS/HAP limit: €390</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €400</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €550</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €575</i>
05/05/15	29	1	1	2	0
06/05/15	31	0 new properties	0 new properties	0 new properties	0
07/05/15	32	0 new properties	0 new properties	0 new properties	0

Dundalk Summary:

- There was an average of 30 properties available to rent in Dundalk over the three consecutive days the exercise was undertaken (May 5th, 6th, 7th).
- One property was available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a single person on the 5th May. No new properties became available to rent within RS/HAP limits over the next two days (6th and 7th May).
- One property was available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a couple on the 5th May with no new properties becoming available over the following two days.
- Two properties were available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with 1 child on the first day of the exercise. No new properties became available on the 6th or 7th May.
- No properties were available over the three days within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with 2 children.

5.2.5 GALWAY CITY CENTRE: Number of Properties available within Rent Supplement/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties to rent	Number of properties to rent for a single person	Number of properties to rent for a couple :	Number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 1 child	number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 2 children
		<i>RS/HAP limit: €475</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €540</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €700</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €725</i>
05/05/15	62	0	0	4	1
06/05/15	180	2	3	10 new properties	2 new properties
07/05/15	70	0 new properties	0 new properties	0 new properties	0 new properties

Galway City Centre Summary:

- There were an average of 104 properties to rent in Galway City Centre over the three day period the exercise was carried out (5th, 6th and 7th May).
- On the 5th May there were no properties available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a single person. 2 properties became available on the 6th May within the limits for a single person but there were no new properties to rent on the 7th May.
- There were no properties to rent on the 5th May within the RS/HAP limits for a couple. Three properties became available on the 6th May with no new properties to rent the following day (7th May).
- Four properties were available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a couple/one-parent with 1 child in on 5th May. Ten new properties became available on the 6th May with no new properties available to rent within these limits on the 7th May. The total over the three days period was 11.
- One property was available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a couple/one-parent with 2 children on the 5th May. Two new properties became available on the 6th May with no new properties available on the 7th May. The total over the three days was three properties.

5.2.6 Kildare North: Number of Properties available within Rent Supplement/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties to rent	Number of properties to rent for a single person	Number of properties to rent for a couple	Number of properties to rent couple/One parent + 1 child	Number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 2 children
		<i>RS/HAP limit: €500</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €575</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €750</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €800</i>
05/05/15	155 (All Co. Kildare)	2	2	15	7
06/05/15	157 (All Co. Kildare)	0 new properties	1 new property	3 new properties	1 new property
07/05/15	163 (all Co. Kildare)	0 new properties	0 new properties	2 new properties	3 new properties

Kildare North Summary:

- There was an average of 158 properties available to rent over the 5th, 6th and 7th May in all of Co. Kildare. The exercise looked at properties to rent within RS/HAP limits in North Co. Kildare.
- There were two properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a single person on the 5th of May. There were no new properties available to rent on the following two days.
- There were two properties available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a couple on the 5th May. One new property was available to rent on the 6th May with no new property available to rent on the 7th May, a total of three properties over the period of this snapshot study.

- Fifteen properties were available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and 1 child on the 5th May. Three new properties within the limits were available to rent on the 6th May and two new properties on the 7th May. A total of 20 properties were available over the three days.
- Seven properties were available to rent for a couple/one-parent with 2 children on the 5th May. One new property became available on the 6th May and three new properties on the 7th May. A total of 10 properties were available over the three days.

5.2.7 LEITRIM: Number of Properties available within Rent Supplement/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties to rent	Number of properties to rent for a single person	Number of properties to rent for a couple	Number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 1 child	Number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 2 children
		<i>RS/HAP limit: €300</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €325</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €350</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €375</i>
05/05/15	85	0	0	10	10
06/05/15	87	0	0	0 new properties	0 new properties
07/05/15	87	0	0	0 new properties	0 new properties

Leitrim Summary:

- There was an average of 86 properties available to rent in Co. Leitrim over the three days the rental exercise was carried out the 5th, 6th and 7th May.
- No property was available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a single person or for a couple on any of the day' of this snapshot study.
- 10 properties were available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with 1 child on the first day of the exercise (5th May) with no new properties becoming available on the 6th or 7th May.
- 10 properties were available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with 2 children on the 5th May with no new properties available on the 6th or 7th May.

5.2.8 LIMERICK CITY CENTRE: Number of Properties available within Rent Supplement/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties to rent	Number of properties to rent for a single person	Number of properties to rent for a couple	Number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 1 child	Number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 2 children
		<i>RS/HAP limit: €375</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €400</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €500</i>	<i>RS/HAP limit: €550</i>
05/05/15	51	0	0	2	1
06/05/15	48	0	0	0 new properties	0
07/05/15	49	0	0	1 new property	3 new properties

Limerick City Centre Summary:

- There was an average of 49 properties available to rent in Limerick City Centre over the three days of the snapshot study - the 5th, 6th and 7th May.
- No properties were available to rent over the three days within RS/HAP limits for a single person or a couple in Limerick City Centre.
- Two properties were available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with 1 child on the 5th May. No new property became available on the 6th May and one new property was available to rent on the 7th May within these limits. A total of three properties were available over the three days.

- One property was available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with 2 children on the 5th May. Three new properties became available to rent on the 7th May.

5.2.10 PORTLAOISE: Number of Properties available within Rent Supplement/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties to rent	Number of properties to rent for a single person <i>RS/HAP limit: €340</i>	number of properties to rent a couple : <i>RS/HAP limit: €350</i>	number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 1 child <i>RS/HAP limit: €450</i>	number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 2 children <i>RS/HAP limit: €480</i>
05/05/15	23	0	0	0	0
06/05/15	25	0	0	0	0
07/05/15	24	0	0	0	0

Portlaoise Summary:

- There was an average of 24 properties to rent over the 5th, 6th and 7th May in Portlaoise. **No properties were available to rent within any of the categories of RS/HAP limits on any of the three days.**

5.2.9 SLIGO TOWN: Number of Properties available within Rent Supplement/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties to rent	Number of properties to rent for a single person <i>RS/HAP limit: €400</i>	number of properties to rent for a couple <i>RS/HAP limit: €425</i>	Number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 1 child <i>RS/HAP limit: €520</i>	number of properties to rent couple/one parent + 2 children <i>RS/HAP limit: €540</i>
05/05/15	42	1	1	10	9
06/05/15	45	0 new properties	0 new properties	1 new property	1 new property
07/05/15	46	0 new properties	0 new properties	0 new properties	0 new property

Sligo Town Summary:

- There were 44 properties available to rent in Sligo town over the three days of this snapshot study - 5th, 6th and 7th May.
- One property was available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a single person and a couple on the first day of the exercise, the 5th May. No new properties became available on the 6th or 7th May for either category.
- Ten properties were available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with 1 child on the 5th May. One new property became available for this category the following day, 6th May with no new property on the 7th May.
- Nine properties were available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with 2 children on the 5th May. One new property became available on the 6th May.

6. Conclusion

The results of this snapshot study, which took place over three consecutive days in May 2015 (5th, 6th and 7th), confirms the extent of the current crisis in the Private Rented Sector, particularly for those at the lower end of the income spectrum and those in receipt of RS and HAP payments. It is clear that the number of properties available to rent within the RS/HAP limits across the country is extremely limited – of the 1,150 properties available to rent in these ten regions over these three days only 138 were within RS/HAP limits, which represents 12% of all available properties.

This limited number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits is pushing people into homelessness and preventing people from leaving homelessness, which is in direct conflict with the Government's goal of ending long term homelessness and rough sleeping by 2016. This is of great concern as more people have no choice but to turn to emergency accommodation and remain in emergency accommodation for far too long. This is without a doubt contributing to the current homelessness and housing crisis.

We would question the Department of Social Protection's recent decision (March 2015), following a review, to retain Rent Supplement levels at their June 2013 levels. Increasing numbers of people are living on the edge, at risk of homelessness, and becoming trapped in emergency accommodation. The Tenancy Protection Service is at best a temporary measure offering short term security of tenure to vulnerable tenants.

Although Daft.ie no longer has the option to advertise 'Rent Supplement not accepted', this does not mean that there is not discrimination against people in receipt of RS/HAP payment. In fact anecdotal evidence suggest this is a big problem, especially with the number of available properties reducing. Some landlords advertising their properties instead ask for work references, say the property would suit professional person/couple etc. This is putting those people in receipt of Rent Supplement at a disadvantage in the open market when they are unable to offer more money, a deposit, negotiate on rent, provide such references etc.

In addition, in the current climate landlords can generally get a higher rent from private tenants without the considerable amount of administrative work associated with RS and HAP which are disincentives for landlords to engage in the RS and HAP schemes. The higher rents that can be achieved from private tenants is also impacting on the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) It is intended that 2,000 social housing units will be delivered through this scheme in 2015, but many landlords are not renewing these contracts with local authorities.

Protection for tenants in the Private Rented Sector is poor; changes are necessary to offer greater rent certainty and increased security of tenure. The National Economic and Social Council's recent report¹⁰ *Ireland's Private Rental Sector: Pathways to Secure Occupancy and Affordable Supply* (May 2015) outlines a number recommendations which we support, including the recommendations on developing a secure tenancy model for Ireland which would include the following four elements:

- Rent regulation to provide greater rent certainty for tenants and landlords through a mechanism for disciplined market rent adjustment;
- Changing the system of a four year lease to a regime in which leases are effectively indefinite;

¹⁰ Ireland's Private Rental Sector: Pathways to Secure Occupancy and Affordable Supply (NESC) May 2015. http://files.nesc.ie/nesc_reports/en/141_Irelands_Rental_Sector_ExSum.pdf

- Removing sale of property as a reason for vacant possession;
- Improving existing dispute resolution procedures.

It identifies measures to increase the supply of permanent affordable rental housing, in particular better incentives for the provision of good quality long term rental homes. It also calls for more favourable treatment for landlords with tenants in receipt of Rent Supplement and HAP.

We make the following call for urgent action to address this crisis:

- An immediate increase in Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) limits, to bring them in line with current market rents and index linked, for example, to the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- Urgent measures to ensure rent certainty.
- A deposit protection scheme to ensure that tenants' deposits are protected and guaranteed by a third party, for example PRTB, to be returned to tenants when they leave the property. This was a commitment in the current *Programme for Government*.
- We support the call from NESC for a simple regime for taxation of rental income providing clear incentives for long term investment in the provision of good quality rental homes with secure tenancies.
- We support the recommendation from NESC for more favourable tax treatment for landlords with tenants in receipt of Rent Supplement and HAP.
- Quality standards in the Private Rented Sector need to be improved, including an effective inspection mechanism.
- There is a clear need to increase awareness of rights and responsibilities of both tenants and landlords.
- Access to affordable housing for low income households is needed urgently.
- People who are homeless must be prioritised as having the greatest level of social housing need.

Appendix 1: The Housing and Homelessness Crisis

- There were 3,143 adults in emergency homeless accommodation nationally, and 1,118 children in April 2015 (DECLG, 2015).
- During one night in March 2015, there were 151 people without a safe place to sleep in Dublin City. This included 105 people sleeping rough and 46 people sheltering at the Nite Café. Unfortunately, Dublin is the only area where an official rough sleeper count takes place, making it difficult to get a countrywide rough sleeping picture. (DRHE 2015).
- Figures from Cork Simon Community indicate that rough sleeping in Cork City increased seven-fold in three years (2011-2014).
- In December 291 extra emergency beds were made available (Dublin and Cork), they are all or almost all are in use, (beds in Cork now wound down as at the end of March 31st), approx. 50 people are using the Nite Café (Dublin) each night and still there is still evidence that people are sleeping on our streets each night. (DECLG, 2015).
- Homelessness and housing insecurity are more acute and visible in our cities but the Simon Communities are working at capacity countrywide – in urban and rural areas.
- In December 2014, the Simon Communities reported a 41% increase in the numbers of individuals and families around the country turning to our services over a two year period. (Simon Communities of Ireland, 2014).
- There are 90,000 people on the social housing waiting list. (Housing Agency, 2014).
- Social housing commitments will take two years to begin to deliver housing. This is far too long for the people we work with and those at risk of homelessness.
- Social housing output in 2015 will be 15,000 units which will meet the needs of less than 17% of those on the social housing waiting list.
- Rents continue to rise, approx. 8.2% nationally between April 2014 and April 2015, and the number of properties available to rent are reducing, by more than 25% last year (Daft.ie, May 2015).
- Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment limits are too, low pushing people into homelessness and preventing people from leaving homelessness.
- New Central Bank mortgage rules will put even greater pressure on the private rented sector.
- According to Standard and Poors, Irish house prices are set to rise this year by approx. 9% - the fastest rate in Europe. (Irish Times, Feb 2015).
- 36% of all accounts in mortgage arrears are over two years. (Central Bank of Ireland, 2015)
- At the end of March 2015, 27,492 or almost 20% of buy-to-let mortgages, were in arrears of more than 90 days. (Central Bank of Ireland, 2015).

Appendix 2: Case Studies

Case Study: Rent Arrears

Carol* was given our Visiting Tenancy Support Service (VTSS) office number by the St. Vincent de Paul, whom she had contacted for financial help for rent arrears. Carol had received a notice to quit and was at immediate risk of becoming homeless with her two young children.

The VTSS worker did a brief assessment with Carol over the phone. She had about €800 rent arrears that seemed to have accumulated due to the fact that she had to top up her rent by €50 above her €32 per week contribution - her landlord had put €850 rent on the official lease to be within the rent allowance limit, however was really charging her €900 per month. Carol had since had a second child, which would entitle her to up to €975, however the landlord was not willing to give her a new lease because of her rent arrears.

The VTSS worker contacted the liaison officer from Threshold's Tenancy Protection Service, who in turn tried to negotiate with the landlord. Unfortunately this failed and Carol was given an eviction notice. Carol was advised to overstay her notice and to use the time to reduce the rent arrears if possible.

VTSS took on the case under visiting support in order to help Carol in reducing the rent arrears by finding the financial assistance by doing a budgeting session.

After three months of using visiting support Carol has reduced her rent arrears from €800 to €250 and she has received a new one year lease, which means her rent payment has gone from €190 monthly to the legally permitted €32 per week. The VTSS worker was able to advocate with funding agencies for financial help with the rent arrears and negotiated with the landlord in giving a new lease.

She is now no longer at risk of being evicted from her private rented home.

Source: Dublin Simon Community

*not real name

Case Study: Supporting Recovery

Alan* was sleeping rough in a town in the Midlands. He is also addicted to alcohol and had a diagnosis of depression.

The Local Authority referred him to the Midlands Simon Community Emergency Accommodation Service and he was supported to access the Community Addiction Service and also to access the local mental health services. Alan's health has stabilised and he is four months sober.

Alan would now like to move from the Emergency Accommodation Service to his own home. He feels that having his own flat/apartment would be vital to support his recovery.

He could claim €360 on rent allowance but he is finding it almost impossible to get accommodation for under €450. He has saved for a deposit but for the moment unless he finds an apartment that he can afford he will have to stay in the Emergency Accommodation Service.

Source: Midlands Simon Community

*not real name

Case Study: Moving to HAP

Mary* and her three children came to Mid West Simon Community two months ago. Mary had been living in rented accommodation for three years. Her lease was due to be renewed and she had just received notice from the landlord saying he needed the house for his son who was returning from Australia and that he wouldn't be renewing her lease.

Mary was receiving Rent Supplement of €600 a month. However when we started helping Mary to look for accommodation for her and her three children we soon discovered that any similar rental property was now on the market for between €700 and €800.

In addition, once Mary contacted the Department of Social Protection to inform them that she had to leave her accommodation they informed her that she would not be receiving Rent Supplement but would have to apply for Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). Mary did this and was approved for HAP but when she started approaching landlords about the payment most landlords were reluctant to consider taking HAP due to the newness of the scheme. Because of this and the requirement of a two year lease agreement she found it increasingly difficult to get a house for herself and her children.

Mary is now staying with her parents in one bedroom. She is spending much of her time with us looking up rental properties of which there hasn't been one in her price range in the past two months. She is spending a significant amount of money on buses for her children to attend school as her parents live much further away from her children's school.

Mary's mental health is suffering as a result of all the stress and her children have been very upset with the upheaval.

The current caps on Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment are having a detrimental effect on people trying to access the private rental market. We are seeing people being pushed into homelessness and/or having to rely on family members for accommodation which is often times entirely unsuitable to their needs.

Source: Mid West Simon Community

*not real name

Case Study: Notice to Quit

Jane* is a 28-year-old single mother with two young children. She had spent five years in the same private rented accommodation and was in receipt of rent allowance.

Jane came to the attention of Dublin Simon Community when she received an invalid notice to quit from landlord, after which the property went into receivership, Threshold contacted the estate agency dealing with the property who gave a valid notice of 112 days, but also increased the rent for that time from €850 per month to €1150 per month.

In the midst of this Jane has been suffering from depression and suicidal ideations. She has a limited support base in friends and family, and her children are in therapeutic treatment with the family support service.

Both Jane and the Family Support Service feel it is very important for the children to live in the local area as they are very vulnerable at this point and have their school and support services there.

Jane has looked for alternative private rented accommodation in the area for the past four months within the rent allowance limit, but has been unsuccessful so far. Her family is number 1,800 on the waiting list for Dublin City Council property.

Source: Dublin Simon Community

*not real name