



## ***Locked Out of the Market VI***

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**The Gap between Rent Supplement/HAP Limits and Market Rents**

**Snapshot Study**

**January 2017**

**Simon Communities in Ireland**

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# Introduction

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This report summarises the results of a snapshot study undertaken over three consecutive days in November 2016 (28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>) to track the number of properties available to rent within the Department of Social Protection Rent Supplement (RS) limits and Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) limits. Details were gathered from Daft.ie<sup>1</sup> for the following areas: Cork City Centre<sup>2</sup>, Dublin City Centre<sup>3</sup>, Galway City Centre<sup>4</sup>, Limerick City Centre<sup>5</sup>, Portlaoise, North Kildare, Athlone, Sligo Town<sup>6</sup>, Dundalk, Leitrim<sup>7</sup>, and Waterford City Centre.<sup>8</sup> This is the sixth snapshot study of this kind and compares the findings to the previous snapshot exercise undertaken in August 2016, following the increases in RS and HAP limits in July 2016. This study differs slightly from the August 2016 study as Waterford City Centre was included as an eleventh study area. For the purposes of accurate comparison in this regard, national findings excluding Waterford City Centre will be directly compared to the August 2016 findings. Thereafter, comparable national findings including Waterford City Centre will be added in parenthesis where appropriate using +WCC.

Rents continued to increase nationally during quarter 3, 2016 by an average of 3.9% between July and September, matching the largest quarterly increase on record. In this period average national rents rose from €1,037 to €1,077. There were fewer than 3,700 homes to rent nationwide on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2016, 12% fewer than on the same date a year previously.<sup>9</sup>

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

<sup>2</sup> Each city centre in daft is known as a "general area" and has a number of specific areas associated with it. Ads are placed in these specific areas. Cork City Centre contains properties to rent in Cork City Centre, Western Road and The Lough (daft.ie).

<sup>3</sup> Dublin City Centre contains properties to rent in Temple Bar, Dublin 1, Dublin 2, Christchurch, IFSC, North Wall, Smithfield, Hanover Quay (daft.ie).

<sup>4</sup> Galway City Centre contains properties to rent in Galway City Centre, Nun's Island, Bohemore and Woodquay (daft.ie).

<sup>5</sup> Limerick City Centre contains properties to rent in Limerick City (daft.ie).

<sup>6</sup> Areas of Athlone, Portlaoise, Dundalk and Sligo Town contains properties to rent within each of the townland boarder (daft.ie).

<sup>7</sup> Areas of Kildare and Leitrim contains properties to rent within each of the county boarders (Daft.ie)

<sup>8</sup> Waterford City Centre contains properties to rent in Newtown, Ballyaneen, Waterford City, Belview Port, Ballytruckle, Ballygunner, Carrigeen, Ballinamona. (daft.ie)

<sup>9</sup> Daft.ie Rental Report Q3 2016. <http://www.daft.ie/report/q3-2016-rental-daft-report.pdf>.

## Main Findings

- There were 643 properties (692 properties +WCC) available to rent with no minimum cost, an increase of 24% (34% +WCC) since the August 2016 study when 518 properties were available to rent.
- Just 17% of all properties available to rent, 112 properties, (116 +WCC) were available within the RS/HAP limits for the four categories included in this study, dropping from 20% in the August 2016 study.<sup>10</sup> So while the overall number of properties available to rent had increased slightly, meaning an additional 10 properties fell within the limits, the proportion available to those in receipt of state housing supports had decreased. This indicates a growing gap between RS and HAP limits and market rents.
- 83% (531 properties) of all properties available to rent were above RS/HAP limits (this figure remains the same +WCC data). This figure was 80% in Aug 2016.

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These findings demonstrate that the benefit of the increase in RS/HAP limits from July 2016 has started to reduce as rents continue to rise. This confirms the need to constantly monitor and adjust RS/HAP limits to keep them aligned with market rents in the absence of full Rent Certainty.

- There were no properties available to rent in Portlaoise within the RS/HAP limits in all four categories. This figure is in keeping with the previous studies carried out in August 2016, May 2016 and August 2015. RS/HAP limits for Portlaoise are low while rents in County Laois have increased by 13.6% in the year to Q3 2016.<sup>11</sup>
- One property was available to rent across all of the four categories over the course of the study in two locations. These were in Sligo Town and North Kildare.
- Five properties were available to rent within RS/HAP limits across all 10 areas for a single person over the course of the study representing a decrease of 3 properties since August 2016. These properties were in Dublin City Centre (1), Galway City Centre (1), North Kildare (2) and Sligo Town (1).
- There were only 2 properties available to rent for single people across the 4 city centre locations included in this study. This figure is unchanged from the August 2016 study. This includes 1 property in Dublin City Centre and 1 property in Galway City Centre.
- Of the 112 properties available to rent nationwide within all four categories of RS/HAP limits;
  - Single persons: Five properties were available within RS/HAP limits for a single person. This is a decrease of 3 properties from August 2016. The percentage share of total properties available within RS/HAP limits for single persons remains disproportionately low at 4% when compared to the final two categories.
  - Couples: Five properties were available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a couple (6 properties +WCC). This is a decrease of 6 properties (5 properties +WCC) since August 2016. Similarly, the percentage share of total properties available within RS/HAP limits for couples remains disproportionately low at 4% when compared to the final two categories. The percentage of properties available for couples has more than halved from 11% in August 2016 to 4% in November 2016, a drop of 7%.

<sup>10</sup> The four RS/HAP limit categories looked at were: Single Person; Couple; Couple/One Parent with One Child; One Parent/One Parent with Two Children.

<sup>11</sup> DAFT.ie Quarterly Rental report Q3 2016 <http://www.daft.ie/report/q3-2016-rental-daft-report.pdf>.

- Couple/one parent plus one child: Sixty properties were available for a couple/one parent and one child during the study period (63 properties +WCC). This is a significant increase of 11 properties (14 properties +WCC) when compared to August 2016 and represents 54% of all available properties.
- Couple/one parent plus two children: Forty two properties were available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children (no properties were available in Waterford City Centre for this category). This is an increase of 8 properties when compared to August 2016 and amounts to 38% of all available properties within RS/HAP limits.
- Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 62% higher than the average RS/HAP limits for a single person across the 9 locations for which data was available (55% higher +WCC).<sup>12</sup> This ranged from 188% higher in Dublin City Centre to 2% higher in Sligo Town. The average rent reported for a one bedroom apartment in our August 2016 study was 29% higher than the average RS/HAP limits for a single person across ten study locations.<sup>13</sup>
- Average rent for a two-bedroom property was 28% higher than the average RS/HAP limits for a couple/one-parent with two children across all 10 locations (+21% +WCC). This ranged from 112% higher than RS/HAP limits in Dublin City Centre to 22% less than RS/HAP limits in Dundalk. Average rent for a two bedroom property in August 2016 was 3% higher than the average RS/HAP limits, representing a 25% increase in the intervening period.
- Significant regional variation and fluctuations can be seen across the study findings in terms of numbers of properties available within RS/HAP limits.
  - Of the 5 properties available to rent for single people within RS/HAP limits, 2 of these properties were available in North Kildare, with only 1 property available in Dublin City Centre, Galway City Centre and Sligo Town respectively.
  - Significant fluctuations can be seen in the 'couple/one parent plus one child' category across a number of the study areas including Cork City Centre (+10 properties), Leitrim (+8 properties) and North Kildare (-11 properties).
  - Regional variation in the distribution of properties in the 'couple/one parent plus one child' category can also be observed whereby only 4 properties were available in this category across the three city centre locations of Cork City Centre (2), Dublin City Centre (0), Limerick City Centre (1) and Galway City Centre (1).

<sup>12</sup> It was not possible to calculate the average rent for a one-bedroom property in Dundalk over the course of the study period due to a lack of supply for this category at all price points.

<sup>13</sup> Simon Communities in Ireland, 'Locked Out of the Market V', October 2016, <http://www.simon.ie/Publications/Research/TabId/278/ArtMid/1573/ArticleID/142/Locked-Out-of-the-Market-V.aspx>.

# Recommendations

## *Rent Supplement & HAP*

1. Ongoing monitoring and adjustment of RS/HAP limits on a bi-annual basis to ensure they are aligned with private market rents. This is particularly pertinent in current and future Rent Pressure Zones.
2. Ensure that discretionary uplifts are made easily available to those in receipt of RS/HAP payments when required.
3. Single people and couples must be specifically targeted given the disproportionate impact inadequate RS/HAP limits are having on these households' ability to access affordable housing. This must be prioritised given that 44% of people on the social housing waiting list are single person households and 2,794 of those in emergency accommodation are recorded as single people without dependents. However, it must be acknowledged that some of these will be separated couples due to the dearth of emergency accommodation designated for couples.
4. Immediate implementation of the commitment to rollout the Housing Assistance Payment for Homeless Households nationwide.
5. A national awareness campaign targeting potential landlords and tenants should be undertaken to communicate the benefits of signing up to the HAP scheme. This is particularly pertinent given the rollout of the scheme to the remaining Local Authorities by Q1 2017. In addition, there needs to be increased awareness of the availability of discretionary uplifts amongst RS/HAP applicants and recipients.
6. People who are homeless must be prioritised as having the greatest level of social housing need.

## *Private Rental Sector*

7. Urgent implementation of the *Strategy for the Rental Sector* and the broader implementation of the *Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness (Action Plan)*.
8. Rent predictability measures introduced through the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016 are welcome, particularly the designation of Cork City and the four Dublin Local Authorities as Rent Pressure Zones. Rent Predictability must be extended as a matter of priority to other areas experiencing continued rent increases.
9. We continue to call for full rent certainty with rent linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and enhanced security of tenure. While rent increases are limited to 4% per annum for three years in Rent Pressure Zones this amounts to 12.5% compound increase in three years which is considerable for hard pressed families struggling to meet rents.
10. The high threshold criteria for areas to qualify as a Rent Pressure Zone must be reviewed. In its current format, the criteria may prove too onerous and prevent the application of rent predictability in areas that have experienced significant rent increases<sup>14</sup>. An area may satisfy the quarterly rent inflation criteria but the average rent for tenancies in the area, as registered with the RTB, may not have been above the average national rent in the quarter. Average national rent may be distorted by higher than normal rents in urban centres particularly within the four Dublin Local Authorities.
11. Tenants must be offered greater security of tenure.
  - a. The commitment to move towards indefinite leasing is welcome and should be fast tracked at the earliest opportunity. The extension of the duration of the Part 4 Tenancy from 4 to 6 years is a welcome start in enhancing security of tenure.

<sup>14</sup> There are two criteria an area must satisfy to become designated as a Rent Pressure Zone, the quarterly rent inflation in the area must be 7% or more in four of the last six quarters and the average rent for tenancies in the area, as registered with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) in the previous quarter, must be above the average national rent in the quarter.

- b. The introduction of landlord obligations to provide reasons for terminating a 'further' Part 4 tenancy is welcome as is the enhanced system of redress for tenants whose tenancies are terminated by a landlord in bad faith. Increased monitoring by the RTB of 'further' Part 4 tenancy terminations is required to ensure landlords continue to act in good faith as per the required statutory declaration when sale of property is cited as the primary reason for termination of such tenancies.
  - c. The termination of tenancies on the basis of Section 34 of the Residential Tenancies Act continues to be a concern. Terminations relying on Section 34 reasons should be closely monitored by the RTB to ensure landlords are acting in good faith and in compliance with the new standards contained in the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016.<sup>15</sup> The continued use of sale and renovation as reasons for terminating an individual tenancy are of utmost concern. Tenants should be permitted to remain in situ during and after sale, particularly if the property will continue to be used as a rental property.
- 12. Measures to prevent the simultaneous serving of termination notices on large numbers of residents in a single development are welcome. The Tyrrelstown amendment should be commenced immediately to prevent further evictions of this nature. Further amendments to these measures should be considered in case of simultaneous termination of less than 5 tenancies.
  - 13. Full protection must be given to tenants of Buy-to-Let (BTL) properties in receivership. All landlord obligations should transfer to the receiver and subsequently to the new property owner. This is particularly important given the 2016 Quarter 3 increase of 5.4% in the number of BTL accounts for which a rent receiver has been appointed.
  - 14. The new strategy commits to examine the tax/fiscal treatment of accommodation providers to protect current supply and promote future investment. We support NESC's recommendations 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.

#### *Tenant Services*

- 15. The national rollout of the Tenancy Protection Service (TPS) helpline from 1 January 2017 is welcome. The enhanced rent supplement payment service provided by the TPS should be rolled out nationally to ensure those who need to access additional rent supplement payments can do so without unnecessary delay. Specific targets for the rollout of this service need to be set and published as a matter of priority.
- 16. The Deposit Protection Scheme which is provided for in the 2015 amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act should be commenced and implemented immediately. The Strategy does not contain a target date for the commencement of the scheme and instead suggests further amendments to the model will have to be made prior to its introduction.
- 17. Proposed new standards relating to the safety of private rental accommodation are welcome. This is a prime opportunity to also include revised standards in relation to energy efficiency, minimum health standards and control of damp in private rental accommodation.
- 18. The commitment to increase inspection cover across private rental accommodation is long overdue. At a minimum, and to enhance the proposed inspection model, landlords should be required to carry out quarterly inspections and carry out any necessary repairs and maintenance work.

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<sup>15</sup> Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016, P. 46, <http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2016/a1716.pdf>.

19. The commitment to deliver a more efficient and effective shared service approach to inspections is welcome. New inspection mechanisms must be backed up by effective enforcement procedures to ensure rental accommodation is brought back to standard. Mechanisms must be put in place to protect tenants from any adverse consequences arising from inspection and enforcement procedures. It is essential that all HAP tenancies are inspected prior to the commencement of the tenancy to prevent households losing their tenancy due to substandard accommodation.

### *Housing Supply*

20. The commitment to develop a cost rental model for the rental sector is encouraging. Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) must be fully resourced and supported to engage with the model to provide as many affordable housing units as possible.
21. The use of publically owned land to deliver rental units targeting low and middle income households is welcome. The use of public lands to achieve this must be balanced by securing significant concessions from investors in terms of security of tenure, rent certainty, quality of housing and amenities in addition to developer contributions similar to existing Part V contributions for social housing (minimum 10%).
22. Fast track the development of the Vacant Housing Strategy. Better use must be made of existing empty homes, both in the private sector and in Local Authority stock. There are over 198,358 vacant homes across the State.<sup>16</sup> These homes must be brought back into use as quickly as possible to provide homes for those with long term and urgent housing needs. Commitments to accelerate the national roll-out of the 'Repair and Leasing' and 'Buy and Renew' schemes are positive. The targeted return of vacant properties and resourcing available for these schemes must be reviewed and revised upwards where possible. The 'Buy and Renew' scheme will be particularly useful for AHBs working with people moving from emergency accommodation and shelter accommodation to more sustainable long term tenancies.
23. The 'Build to Rent' model is a positive inclusion in the new rental strategy. The State should seek to acquire further social housing provision through developer contributions similar to Part V social housing contributions.
24. A review of the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) is required. It is intended that 2,000 social housing units will be delivered through this scheme in 2016. However, many landlords are not renewing contracts as they can get higher rent from private tenants.

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<sup>16</sup> Census 2016 Preliminary Results, <http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpr/censusofpopulation2016-preliminaryresults/housing/>.



## Findings

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The findings from the three day snapshot study are presented below. An overall picture of the 11 study areas is first provided in *Table 1* below showing the average number of properties available to rent in each area over the three days of this study. It displays the total number of properties available within RS/HAP limits across each of the four household categories: single person; couple; couple/one-parent with one child; and couple/one-parent with two children. The average cost of a one-bed and two-bed property with no maximum price limits is also included for each location.

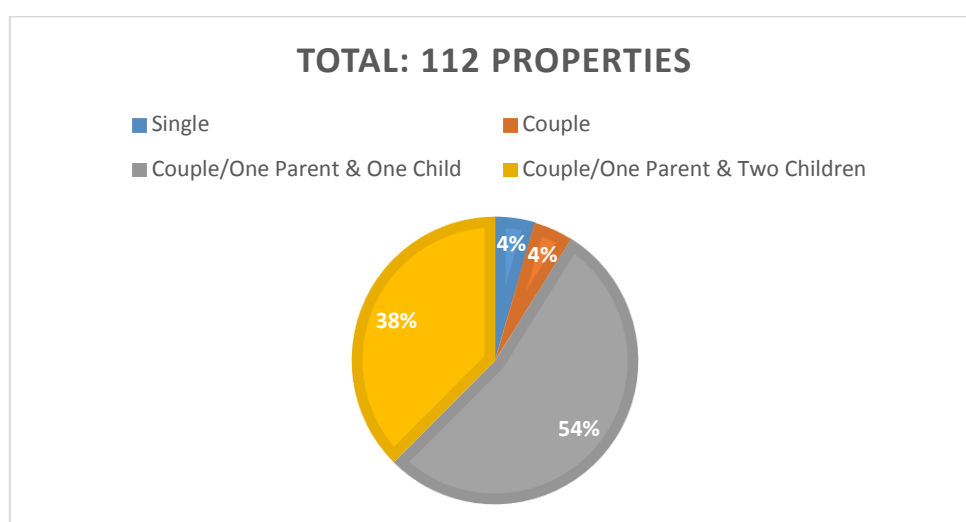
This is followed by *Figure 1* and *Figure 2* which illustrate the percentage breakdown of properties available per household category in November 2016 and again for comparative purposes August 2016. Finally, this is followed by a breakdown of tabular and summary findings from each area examined in this study period with like for like comparisons with the findings from the corresponding study in August 2016. The individual area tabular findings show the number of new available properties to rent for the four household types over the three days of the study period.

Table 1: Available properties to rent within RS/HAP limits across 11 study areas on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>

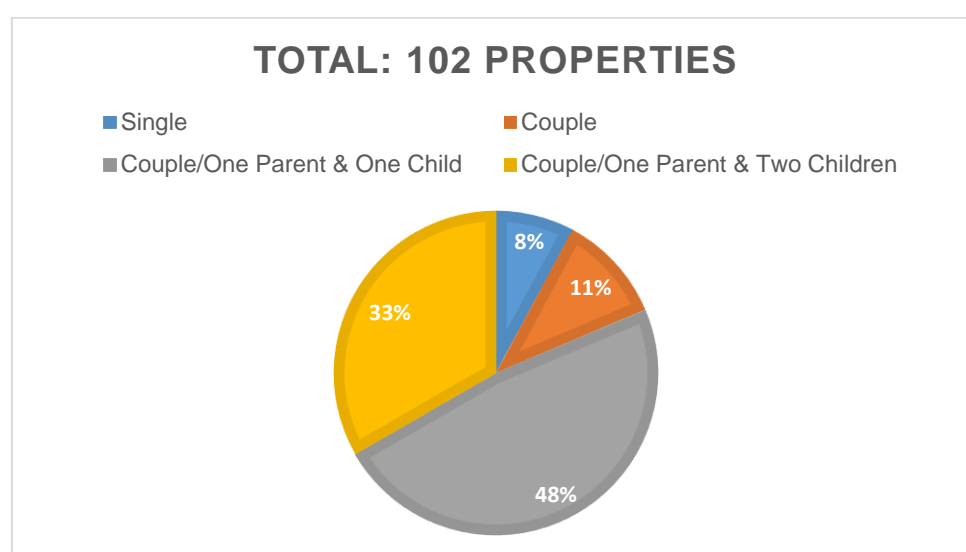
LOCATION	Average number of properties available to rent with no min cost	Average monthly rent one-bed property vs RS/HAP Limit for single person		Average monthly rent two-bed property vs RS/HAP Limit for Couple/One-parent + 2 Children		Single person Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP Limits	Couple Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP Limits	Couple/One Parent + 1 Child Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP Limits	Couple/One Parent + 2 Children Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP Limits
Athlone	28	€550	€450	€650	€625	0	0	1	0
Cork City Centre	67	€902	€550	€1244	€925	0	1	17	2
Dublin City Centre	260	€1900	€660	€2700	€1250	1	0	0	0
Dundalk	35	€n/a	€575	€821	€1050	0	0	15	15
Galway City Centre	25	€600	€575	€1151	€875	1	2	1	0
North Kildare	118	€1015	€575	€1300	€1050	2	1	5	9
Leitrim	55	€388	€340	€396	€475	0	0	17	14
Limerick City Centre	16	€744	€420	€836	€700	0	0	1	0
Sligo town	17	€470	€460	€582	€575	1	1	3	2
Portlaoise	22	€650	€420	€700	€610	0	0	0	0
Waterford City Centre	49	€561	€430	€752	€575	0	1	3	0
Total	643 (692 +WCC)	€802 (€778 +WCC)		€1038 (€1012 +WCC)		5	5 (6+WCC)	60 (63+WCC)	42

Figure 1 and Figure 2 below illustrate the percentage breakdown of properties available per household category in November 2016 and August 2016. The pie charts demonstrate that single people and couples continue to be disproportionately affected with regard to availability of properties within RS/HAP limits in these two specific categories. Only 4 % of properties were available to rent for single people in November 2016 representing a decrease of 4% from the findings in August 2016 when this was 8%. The percentage of properties available for couples has more than halved from 11% in August 2016 to 4% in November 2016, a drop of 7%. In contrast, the percentage share of properties available for a couple/one parent and one or two children has showed slight improvement since the August 2016 study. 54% of properties were available for a couple/one parent and one child, up 6% since August 2016. 38% of properties were available for a couple/one parent and two children, up 5% on the August 2016 study figures. These findings suggest that the increase in RS/HAP limits and the application of discretion (flexibility) are having a greater impact for these household types in terms of access and availability of properties. Further measures are therefore required to improve access to private rented homes for single people and couples.

**Figure 1: Number of Properties by RS/HAP Household Category November 2016**



**Figure 2: Number of Properties by RS/HAP Household Category August 2016<sup>17</sup>**



<sup>17</sup> Note the RS/HAP limits increased as of the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2016.

## Summary of findings for each location

### Athlone

Table 2: Athlone – properties available within RS/HAP limits

Date:	Total Number of properties available to rent	Average Monthly Rent for one-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Single Person		Average Monthly Rent for two-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Couple/one parent + 2 Children		Single Person Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €450	Couple Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €470	Couple/One Parent + 1 Child Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €600	Couple/One Parent + 2 Children: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €625
28/11/16	26	€550	€450	€650	€625	0	0	1	0
29/11/16	28					0	0	0	0
30/11/16	30					0	0	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

#### Athlone Summary

- There was an average of 28 properties available to rent in this study period. This figure mirrors the findings of the August 2016 Study.
- Two properties were available to rent in this study period. Both properties were within the RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child. One of these properties was a one bedroom property. This figure is unchanged from the August 2016 study.
- There were no properties available within RS/HAP limits within the remaining three categories, a figure that has remained constant across the previous three studies in August 2015, May 2016 and August 2016.
- The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Athlone over this study period was €550. Average rent for a two-bedroom property was €650, representing an increase of €50 since the August 2016 study.
- The average rent for a one-bedroom property was 22% more than the RS/HAP limit for a single person, while a two-bedroom property was 4% more than the RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with two children.
- Rents increased in Co. Westmeath by an average of 13.2% in the year to Q3 2016.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Daft.ie Quarterly Rental Report Q3 2016 <http://www.daft.ie/report/q3-2016-rental-daft-report.pdf>.

## Cork City Centre

Table 3: Cork City Centre properties available within RS/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties available to rent	Average Monthly Rent for one-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Single Person		Average Monthly Rent for two-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Couple/one parent + 2 Children		Single Person: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €485	Couple: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €575	Couple/One Parent + 1 Child: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €700	Couple/One Parent + 2 Children: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €725
28/11/16	64	€903	€550	€1244	€925	0	1	13	2
29/11/16	65					0	0	0	0
30/11/16	71					0	0	4	0
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>

### Cork City Centre Summary

- There was an average of 67 properties to rent in Cork City Centre over the course of the study period. This is an increase of 9 properties when compared to August 2016.
- There were no properties available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a single person over the three days of the study. This is a decrease of one property in this category when compared to August 2016.
- There were 2 properties available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children. This is an increase of 2 properties when compared to the August 2016 study.
- Seventeen properties in total were available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child. This is an increase from 7 properties recorded in August 2016.
- One property was available within RS/HAP limits for a couple, representing a reduction of 1 property since the previous study in August 2016.
- The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Cork City Centre over the study period was €903. The average rent per month for a two bedroom property over the study period was €1244.
- The average rent for a one bedroom was 64% higher than the RS/HAP limit for a single person, while the average rent for a two bedroom was 34% higher than the RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent and two children.
- Rents increased in Cork City by an average 14.4% in the year to Q3 2016<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Daft.ie ibid

## Dublin City Centre

Table 5: Dublin City Centre properties available within RS/HAP limits

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Total Number of properties available to rent (no minimum cost)</b>	<b>Average Monthly Rent for one-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Single Person</b>		<b>Average Monthly Rent for two-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Couple/one parent + 2 Children</b>		<b>Single Person:</b> Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €660	<b>Couple:</b> Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €900	<b>Couple/One Parent + 1 Child:</b> Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €1250	<b>Couple/One Parent + 2 Children:</b> Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €1275
28/11/16	252	€1900	€660	€2700	€1275	0	0	0	0
29/11/16	257					1	0	0	0
30/11/16	271					0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

### Dublin City Centre Summary

- There was an average of 260 properties available to rent in Dublin City Centre over the study period. This is up from 206 properties recorded in August 2016.
- There was just one property available to rent within RS/HAP limits in this region and that was for a single person. This represents no change from the August 2016 study period.
- There were no properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple. This is a decrease of 5 properties when compared to August 2016.
- There were no properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child in November 2016 representing no change on the findings from August 2016.
- There were no properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children across the three days of this study. This figure remains unchanged since the August 2015 study.
- The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Dublin City Centre over the three days of the study was €1,900. The average rent for a two-bedroom property was €2,700.
- Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 188% more than RS/HAP limit for a single person, while a two-bedroom property was 112% more than RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.
- Rents increased in Dublin City Centre by an average of 11.8% in the year to Q3 2016<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Daft.ie ibid

## Dundalk

Table 7: Dundalk properties available within RS/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties available to rent	Average Monthly Rent for one-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs HAP Limit for Single Person		Average Monthly Rent for two-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs HAP Limit for Couple/one parent + 2 Children		Single Person: Total number of properties available to rent within HAP limits of €575	Couple: Total number of properties available to rent within HAP limits of €650	Couple/One Parent + 1 Child: Total number of properties available to rent within HAP limits of €975	Couple/One Parent + 2 Children: Total number of properties available to rent within HAP limits of €1050
28/11/16	35	€ n/a	€575	€821	€1050	0	0	12	12
29/11/16	36					0	0	3	3
30/11/16	34					0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>

### Dundalk Summary:

- There was an average of 35 properties available to rent in Dundalk during this study period, representing an increase of 10 properties when compared to August 2016.
- There were no properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a single person across the three days of the study, representing a decrease of 1 property since the August 2016 study.
- Similarly, there were no properties available to rent for a couple across this study period, again representing a decrease of 1 property on the previous study in August 2016.
- There were 15 properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child. This is an increase of 3 properties since August 2016. All of these properties were two-bedroom units.
- There were 15 properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children. This represents an increase of 4 properties since the August 2016 study.
- It was not possible to calculate the average rent for a one-bedroom property in Dundalk over the course of the study period due to a lack of supply for this category at all price points. The August 2016 study recorded an average price of €607 for a one-bedroom unit. The average rent per month for a two-bedroom property in Dundalk over the November study period was €821.
- Average rent for a two-bedroom property was 22% less than the RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.
- Rents increased in Co. Louth by an average of 15.2% in the year to Q3 2016.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Daft.ie ibid

## Galway City Centre

Table 9: Galway City Centre – properties available within RS/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties to rent	Average Monthly Rent for one-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Single Person		Average Monthly Rent for two-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Couple/one parent + 2 Children		Single Person: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €575	Couple: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €650	Couple/One Parent + 1 Child: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €850	Couple/One Parent + 2 Children: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €875
28/11/16	25	€600	€575	€1151	€875	1	2	1	0
29/11/16	26					0	0	0	0
30/11/16	25					0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

### Galway City Centre Summary

- There was an average of 25 properties available to rent in Galway City Centre over the three days of this study. This is an increase of 13 properties when compared to August 2016.
- There was one property available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a single person over the course of the study period. This is a minor increase of one property when compared with August 2016.
- There were 2 properties available for a couple during this study period, representing an increase of two properties when compared to August 2016.
- There was only one property available to rent over the three days of the study within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child. This figure remains unchanged since the August 2016 study. This property was a one-bedroom property.
- There were no properties available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children during the study period. This is a decrease of 1 property when compared to August 2016.
- The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Galway City Centre over this study period was €600. Average rent for a two-bedroom property was €1151
- Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 4% more than RS/HAP limit for a single person while a two-bedroom property was 32% more than RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.
- Rents increased in Galway City by an average of 10.9% in the year to Q3 2016.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Daft.ie ibid



## North Kildare

Table 10: North Kildare – properties available within RS/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties available to rent	Average Monthly Rent for one-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Single Person		Average Monthly Rent for two-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Couple/one parent + 2 Children		Single Person: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €575	Couple: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €650	Couple/One Parent + 1 Child: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €975	Couple/One Parent + 2 Children: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €1050
28/11/16	117	€1015	€575	€1300	€1050	1	1	5	8
29/11/16	115					1	0	0	0
30/11/16	122					0	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>

### North Kildare Summary:

- There was an average of 118 properties available to rent across North Kildare during this study period. This is an increase of 21 properties on the findings from the August 2016 study.
- There were 2 properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a single person over the study period. This is a decrease of 1 property on the previous study in August 2016.
- Only one property was available to rent for a couple across the three days of this study representing no change on the August 2016 findings.
- There were 5 properties available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child over the study period. This marks a significant decrease of 11 properties when compared to August 2016.
- There were 9 properties available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children during this study period. This is a sharp decrease of 8 properties when compared to August 2016 when 17 properties were available in this category.
- The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in North Kildare over the November 2016 study period was €1,015. The average rent for a two bedroom property was €1,300.
- Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 77% more than RS/HAP limit for a single person while a two-bedroom property was 24 % more than RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with two children.
- Rents increased in Co. Kildare by an average of 13.4% in the year to Q3 2016<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Daft.ie ibid

## Co. Leitrim

Table 12: Co. Leitrim – properties available within RS/HAP limits

Number of Properties available within Rent Supplement/HAP limits									
Date	Total Number of properties available to rent	Average Monthly Rent for one- bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Single Person		Average Monthly Rent of two- bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Couple/one parent + 2 Children		Single Person: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €340	Couple: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €370	Couple/One Parent + 1 Child: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €450	Couple/One Parent + 2 Children: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €475
		€388	€340	€396	€475	0	0	17	14
						0	0	0	0
						0	0	0	0
						0	0	17	14

Co. Leitrim Summary

- There was an average of 55 properties available to rent in Co. Leitrim over this snapshot study period. This is a significant increase of 23 properties when compared to August 2016.
- There were 31 properties available to rent in Leitrim across the four categories of RS/HAP limits over the three days of the study.
- No properties were available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a single person during the study period. There were no properties available to rent within these limits during the August 2016 study period also.
- No properties were available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a couple during the study period. This is a decrease of 2 properties when compared to August 2016.
- There were 17 properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child. This is a significant increase of 8 properties since the August 2016 study.
- Fourteen properties were available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children. This is an increase of 10 properties since the August 2016 study when just 4 properties were recorded in this category.
- The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Co. Leitrim over the three days of the November 2016 study period was €388; while for a two-bedroom property it was €396.
- Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 14% higher than RS/HAP limit for a single person. Average rent for a two bedroom property was below the RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.
- Rents increased in Co. Leitrim by an average of 7.4% in the year to Q3 2016.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Daft.ie ibid

## Limerick City Centre

Table 13: Limerick City Centre – properties available within RS/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties available to rent	Average Monthly Rent for one-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Single Person		Average Monthly Rent for two-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Couple/one parent + 2 Children		Single Person: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €420	Couple: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €450	Couple/One Parent + 1 Child: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €650	Couple/ One Parent + 2 Children: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €700
28/11/16	16	€744	€420	€836	€700	0	0	1	0
29/11/16	17					0	0	0	0
30/11/16	15					0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

### Limerick City Centre Summary:

- There was an average of 16 properties available to rent in Limerick City Centre over the 3 days of this snapshot study. This is a significant decrease of 19 properties since the August 2016 study when 35 properties were recorded.
- There was only one property available to rent within RS/HAP limits across all four categories of the study. This is a decrease of 2 properties when compared with the August 2016 study findings.
- There were no properties available to rent over the three days within the RS/HAP limits for a single person or a couple in Limerick City Centre in the November 2016 study.
- There was only 1 property available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with one child over the three days of this study compared to 2 properties in August 2016.
- The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Limerick City Centre over the August 2016 study period was €744 while it was €836 for a two-bedroom property.
- Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 77% more than RS/HAP limit for a single person while a two-bedroom property was 19% more than RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.
- Rents increased in Limerick City by an average of 13.2% in the year to Q3 2016.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Daft.ie ibid

## Portlaoise

Table 14: Portlaoise- properties available within RS/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties available to rent	Average Monthly Rent for one-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Single Person		Average Monthly Rent for two-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Couple/one parent + 2 Children		Single Person: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €420	Couple: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €433	Couple/One Parent + 1 Child: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €580	Couple/One Parent + 2 Children: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €610
28/11/16	20	€650	€420	€700	€610	0	0	0	0
29/11/16	22					0	0	0	0
30/11/16	24					0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

### Portlaoise Summary

- There was an average of 22 properties available to rent in Portlaoise over the November 2016 study period, a minor increase of 1 property when compared to August 2016.
- There were no properties available to rent within the RS/HAP limits across any of the categories over the 3 three days of the November 2016 study – the exact same situation as August 2016.
- The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Portlaoise over the August 2016 study period was €650, while it was €700 for a two bedroom property.
- Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 55% more than RS/HAP limit for a single person while a two-bedroom property was 15% more than RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.
- Rents increased in Co. Laois by an average of 13.6% in the year to Q3 2016.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Daft.ie ibid

## Sligo Town

Table 15: Sligo Town – properties available within RS/HAP limits

Date	Total Number of properties available to rent	Average Monthly Rent of one-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Single Person		Average Monthly Rent of two-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Couple/one parent + 2 Children		Single Person: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €460	Couple: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €490	Couple/One Parent + 1 Child: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €550	Couple/One Parent + 2 Children: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €575
28/11/16	19	€470	€460	€582	€575	1	1	3	2
29/11/16	17					0	0	0	0
30/11/16	16					0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>

### Sligo Town Summary:

- There was an average of 17 properties available to rent in Sligo town over the November 2016 study period. This is a significant decrease of 15 properties when compared with the August 2016 study period.
- There was 1 property available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a single person. This is a minor decrease of 1 property when compared to August 2016.
- One property was available within the RS/HAP limits for a couple during the August 2016 study period representing an increase of 1 property when compared to August 2016.
- There were 3 properties available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child. This marks a 2 property increase on the findings from August 2016. Two of these properties were one bedroom properties.
- Two properties were available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children. This is an increase of 2 properties when compared with the previous study in August 2016.
- The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Sligo town over this study period was €470 while it was €582 for a two-bedroom property.
- Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 2% more than RS/HAP limits for a single person while a two-bedroom property was 1% more than RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.
- Rents increased in Co. Sligo by an average of 6.3% in the year to Q3 2016.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Daft.ie ibid

## Waterford City Centre

Table 16: Waterford City Centre – properties available within RS/HAP limits

Number of Properties available within Rent Supplement/HAP limits									
Date	Total Number of properties available to rent	Average Monthly Rent of one-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Single Person		Average Monthly Rent of two-bedroom property (over 3 days) vs RS/HAP Limit for Couple/one parent + 2 Children		Single Person: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €430	Couple: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €450	Couple/One Parent + 1 Child: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €550	Couple/One Parent + 2 Children: Total number of properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits of €575
28/11/16	44	€651	€430	€752	€575	0	1	3	0
29/11/16	52					0	0	0	0
30/11/16	52					0	0	0	0
TOTAL						0	1	3	0

### Waterford City Centre Summary:

- There was an average of 49 properties available in Waterford City Centre over the course of the 3 days of this snapshot study. This represents a year on year decrease of 48 properties when compared to the November 2015 study.
- There were no properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a single person during the August 2016 study period.
- There was one property available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple over the three days of the snapshot study.
- There were 3 properties available within RS/HAP limits for a Couple/One Parent and one child.
- There were no properties available within RS/HAP limits for a Couple/One Parent and two children.
- The average rent for a one bedroom property in Waterford City Centre over the three days of the study was €651 and €752 for a two bedroom property.
- Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 51% more than RS/HAP limits for a single person while a two-bedroom property was 31% more than the RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.
- Rents increased in Waterford City Centre by 11.2% in the year to Q3 2016.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Daft.ie, ibid.

## Discussion and conclusions

Ireland's approach to housing provision has been disconnected - home ownership, the Private Rented Sector, social housing and homelessness have all been approached in isolation when in fact they are all interconnected. The *Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness* aims to deal with all forms of housing provision in an integrated manner offering a huge opportunity to take into account the fact that a change in one area in relation to housing provision and supply can have a knock on effect on other areas. There must be a move away from continued over reliance on the private housing sector for the delivery of affordable housing for those on low incomes, and social housing for those with long term housing needs. The recently published *Strategy for the Rental Sector* is welcome and represents a seismic shift in policy terms of attempting to limit rent increases. The introduction of rent predictability in Cork and Dublin was urgently required but concern remains due to spiralling rents nationwide. Measures towards increased security of tenure; to raise the standard of rental accommodation and boost rental supply are also very welcome.

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The new strategy represents a starting point from which much more needs to be achieved to bring an end to volatility in a sector in which an increasing amount of people call home.

The Private Rental Sector is under increasing pressure to deliver social housing through Rent Supplement (RS) and the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme and there are 91,600 households on the social housing waiting list.<sup>29</sup> It is essential that Local Authorities get back into the business of building and acquiring social housing on the scale required to meet ever-growing housing need with the support of Approved Housing Bodies (AHB's).

This snapshot study has shown that the beneficial impact of increases in RS/HAP limits introduced in July 2016 are being slowly undone by continued volatility in the Private Rented Sector. These limits are becoming increasingly inadequate as private market rents grow quarter by quarter. The number of properties available to rent within these limits represents 17% of all properties available to rent across the 10 study areas nationwide over the three days of this study.<sup>30</sup> This is down 3% since the corresponding study in August 2016. It must then be acknowledged that 83% of properties available to rent remained beyond the reach and choice of those in receipt of RS/HAP payments. Ongoing review and adjustment of RS/HAP limits is necessary to counter the negative impact of private rental market volatility on the provision of social housing supports for those with the greatest need.

Pockets of improvement can be seen across some of the areas included in this study illustrating significant regional variation in the beneficial impact of increased RS/HAP limits. Some increases in available properties can be seen, for example in Cork City Centre the number of available properties within RS/HAP limits increased from 10 properties in August 2016 to 20 properties in November 2016. In other areas, increases were much smaller, for example in Galway City Centre the number of available properties within RS/HAP limits increased from 2 properties in August 2016 to 4 properties in November 2016.

These increases are in contrast to findings from urban centres and commuter belt towns including Dublin City Centre and North Kildare. In Dublin City Centre the number of properties available within RS/HAP limits decreased from 6 properties in August 2016 to 1 property in November 2016. In North Kildare the

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<sup>29</sup> Housing Agency, 'Summary of Social Housing Needs Assessment', 2016, <https://www.housingagency.ie/Housing/media/Media/Publications/Summary-of-Social-Housing-Assessment-Needs-2016.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> This figure remains the same when calculated on the basis of Waterford City Centre's inclusion as an eleventh study area.



number of properties available to rent has dropped from 37 in August 2016 to 17 in November 2016. These decreases have occurred across all four household categories with pronounced decreases for families in North Kildare and couples in Dublin City Centre. What is clear is that the Private Rented Sector remains very volatile and open to much fluctuation which unfortunately impacts those on low incomes or those in receipt of housing payments the most.

The study shows that people who are single and couples are disproportionately affected with regard to availability of properties within RS/HAP limits in these two specific categories. It is essential that these households are prioritised given that 44% of people on the social housing waiting list are single person households and 2,794 of those in emergency accommodation are recorded as single people without dependents. However, it must be acknowledged that some of these will be separated couples due to the dearth of emergency accommodation designated for couples and some may be parents. According to the most recent daft.ie quarter three rental figures, average rent has increased by 11.7% since Q3 2015. This combination of increasing rents and decreasing property availability is reducing the beneficial impact of RS/HAP payments for vulnerable groups including people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness and those on low incomes. Data recently released by the Department of Social Protection shows increased RS/HAP limits are having little distributive impact on household income for households in receipt of these payments.<sup>31</sup> Those earning less than €285 per week will see a marginal increase of 0.7% in their weekly income following social welfare increases announced in Budget 2017. The impact for those earning less than €404 per week will be negligible as their household income rises by approximately 0.1%.<sup>32</sup>

The total number of properties available to rent across the study areas has increased by 24% (34% + WCC) when compared to August 2016. This increase reflects the ongoing volatility in the Private Rented Sector and to a large degree attributed to increases in properties in Dublin City Centre, North Kildare, and Leitrim. That being said, both Dublin City Centre and North Kildare have experienced significant decreases in available properties within RS/HAP limits since the August 2016 study suggesting increased supply is entering the market at higher price points.

Discretionary uplifts of up to 20% are available in both the RS and HAP schemes as required, made on a case by case basis. The beneficial impact of these discretionary uplifts payments can be seen with the Housing Assistance Payment for Homeless Households, piloted in Dublin, which has supported 637 households to move out of emergency accommodation into stable tenancies as of November 2016.<sup>33,34</sup> Although these payments are welcome and should be continued, people are not always aware of this option, therefore further information should be made available to applicants and recipients of both schemes. The beneficial impact of discretionary uplifts are subject to regional variation depending on market rents. In some areas discretionary uplifts can allow people to meet rising rents. For example, in Leitrim, Sligo Town and Galway City Centre, a discretionary uplift of 20% would reverse the gap between RS/HAP limits and private market rents for a one bedroom property. In Limerick City Centre and Portlaoise, a similar discretionary uplift would close the gap between RS/HAP limits and private market rent for a two bedroom property. In other areas however, the gap between market rent and RS/HAP limits cannot be sufficiently closed even if a full 20% discretionary uplift was applied. This is the case for one and two bed properties in Cork City Centre, Dublin City Centre, North Kildare and Waterford City Centre. Discretionary uplifts

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<sup>31</sup> Department of Social Protection, *Social impact assessment of the welfare and income tax measures in Budget 2017*, November 2017, P. 7, <http://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/SocialImpact2017.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Dáil Éireann Debate, Vol. 927 No. 3,

<http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail2016110800064>.

<sup>34</sup> The Housing Assistance Payment for Homeless Households or Homeless HAP Pilot, which is operated by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) on behalf of the Dublin local authorities, provides discretion to exceed the HAP rent limits for homeless households, if this is necessary in order to source suitable accommodation. To qualify for HAP under the pilot scheme, a household must be accepted as homeless within the meaning of section 2 of the Housing Act 1988 by one of the 4 Dublin local authorities.



are not a long term sustainable policy solution to rising rents and ever decreasing availability of rental property. RS/HAP limits must be reviewed and adjusted on a bi-annual basis to ensure they are sufficient to meet rising market rents. This is particularly pertinent in current and future Rent Pressure Zones that could potentially see a year on year rent increase of 4% for new tenancies over a three year period.

Increased RS/HAP limits, although a positive development, are not enough alone to tackle the continuing housing and homelessness crisis. Limits must be reviewed and adjusted on an ongoing basis. Full rent certainty is required, bringing rent limits in line with real market rates including index linking with, for example, the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The recently launched *Strategy for the Rental Sector* is needed now more than ever. The introduction of rent predictability through the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act is commendable. The initial designation of Cork City and the four Dublin Local Authorities as Rent Pressure Zones is a vital first step in combatting spiralling rents in these locations. However, as this study has shown rents nationwide continue to grow making it all the more important that rent predictability is extended to areas experiencing comparable increases. This is particularly true of urban centres and commuter towns that are absorbing the growing rental population.

Rent certainty must be matched with increased security of tenure. In the absence of indefinite leasing, the extension of Part 4 tenancies from four to six years is welcome. At the earliest opportunity, the commitment to move to indefinite leasing must be realised. In the interim, tenants must be granted greater protection from tenancy termination for reasons of sale of their rental property. Increased protection for tenants of multi-unit developments are welcome but must be reviewed to ensure those renting in smaller developments are adequately protected.

Supply side initiatives outlined in the new *Strategy for the Rental Sector* are positive and if implemented correctly will have a significant impact on low to middle income families and those exiting homelessness or at risk of losing their home. Revised standards for the private rental sector are welcome but unfortunately fall short in terms of energy efficiency, minimum health standards and control of damp. The government should seize this opportunity to improve the private rental stock as more people make their home in the sector.

## About Simon Communities

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The Simon Communities in Ireland are a network of eight regionally based independent Simon Communities, based in Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, the Midlands, the Mid West, the North West and the South East, that share common values and ethos in tackling all forms of homelessness throughout Ireland, supported by a National Office. The Simon Communities have been providing services in Ireland for over 40 years. The Simon Communities deliver support and service to over 8,300 individuals and families throughout Ireland who experience – or are at risk of – homelessness every year.

Whatever the issue, for as long as we are needed, Simon's door is always open. For more information please visit [www.simon.ie](http://www.simon.ie)

**Services include:**

- Housing provision, tenancy sustainment & settlement services, housing advice & information services helping people to make the move out of homelessness & working with households at risk;
- Specialist health & treatment services addressing some of the issues which may have contributed to homeless occurring or may be a consequence;
- Emergency accommodation & support providing people with a place of welcome, warmth & safety;
- Soup runs & rough sleeper teams who are often the first point of contact for people sleeping rough.

**For further information contact**

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