

Pre Budget Submission 2019 Summary



Simon Communities in Ireland

August 2018



Introduction

Almost 10,000 people are stuck in emergency accommodation, according to the most recent published figures, while many more have no other choice but to share with family and friends doubling and tripling up, resulting in overcrowding.

This is Ireland in 2018. These are our families, friends, neighbours and colleagues. Still more people join them each month, due to our dysfunctional housing system.

THESE 10,000 PEOPLE ARE THE VISIBLE AND STATISTICAL EMBODIMENT OF THIS BROKEN SYSTEM YET THEY REPRESENT JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG IN TERMS OF HOUSING INSTABILITY AND INSECURITY.

The increasing number of people entering emergency accommodation across the State in 2017 resulted in a budgetary allocation for homelessness services in 2018 of €116 million, including an additional €18 million for wrap around services and running costs associated with the most recent emergency response mechanism – the Family Hub programme. Budget 2019 must revise these allocations upwards to meet the needs of people who remain stuck in emergency accommodation and those who will become homeless.

The budgetary process is a timely opportunity for policy makers to assess the impact of current policy approaches and to what extent they can adjust these approaches to deliver better outcomes for people. It is also important that policy choices are person-centered and offer sustainable solutions to recurring societal issues representing best practice. To date, an emergency led response forms the basis of Ireland's response to the homeless crisis including the use of private hotels, B&Bs and emergency dormitory shelter beds. This response is not adequate to deliver

secure homes for the people that need them most. The Simon Communities in Ireland are committed to working with Government and our NGO partners to deliver effective responses focusing on preventing homelessness, moving people out of homelessness as quickly as possible by increasing the national rollout of Housing First (housing plus support in housing) and building social and affordable housing supply.

WE NEED NEW APPROACHES TO FACILITATE THE EXIT OF THE NEARLY 10,000 PEOPLE IN EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION INTO SECURE, AFFORDABLE HOMES.



Large-scale social and affordable housing is required to meet the housing needs of the (at least) 86,000 people on the social housing waiting list. A suite of new homelessness prevention measures are required to keep people in the homes they have, preventing their entry into homelessness. Those in the private rented sector remain most at risk due to high rents, dwindling supply and limited security of tenure.

ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE AND SECURE HOUSING IS A BASIC NEED AND IS FUNDAMENTAL TO THE ENJOYMENT AND PROGRESSIVE REALISATION OF A HOST OF OTHER RIGHTS INCLUDING HEALTH, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT.

This submission will firstly examine the homelessness and housing system trends that have contributed to the ongoing housing and homelessness crisis. This exercise will provide the basis for a wider discussion on the budgetary and policy decisions that the State must make in the short, medium and long term to end the current crisis and prevent its recurrence for future generations. This will include budgetary and policy recommendations focusing on:

- Homelessness Prevention
- Housing first
- Emergency accommodation
- Social and affordable housing supply
- The private rental sector
- Health and complex needs
- Social welfare and income adequacy

Priority recommendations & departmental responsibility

PRIORITY AREA	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT
PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS 	
<p>Introduce legislation to place homelessness prevention on a statutory footing, matched with appropriate levels of statutory funding.</p>	<p>DHPLG</p>
<p>Monitor and adjust Rent Supplement (RS) and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) limits on a bi-annual basis to ensure alignment with private market rents. In Rent Pressure Zones, increase limits by at least 4% per annum.</p>	<p>DHPLG</p>
<p>Additional funding to extend the HAP Placefinder service to all Local Authorities nationwide.</p>	<p>DHPLG</p>
<p>Ensure the extension of the Homeless HAP scheme nationwide to prevent people becoming homeless and to facilitate as many exits from Emergency Accommodation as possible. The scheme must allow prioritisation of people experiencing long-term homelessness.</p>	<p>DHPLG</p>
HOUSING FIRST 	
<p>Resources for the rapid implementation of the National Implementation Strategy for Housing First must be ring fenced so they are not absorbed into meeting the costs of emergency accommodation. This is key to ensuring people leave homelessness behind.</p>	<p>DHPLG, DOF, DOH, HSE</p>
<p>Social and affordable housing targets must include standalone targets to deliver a supply of one-bedroom units required to meet existing and future national Housing First targets.</p>	<p>DHPLG, DOJ</p>

EMERGENCY ACCOMODATION

Emergency Accommodation should only ever be short term – ideally averaging no more than 7-10 days. On entering emergency accommodation or a Family Hub, households must be supported to source and maintain a tenancy in the wider community through the Homeless HAP Scheme.	DHPLG
The Department should put in place a five-year plan aimed at reducing the time spent in emergency accommodation to an average of 7-10 days per person.	DHPLG
There must be sufficient funding for the provision of emergency accommodation, as needed, to ensure funding is not diverted from other essential services such as Housing First, homelessness prevention etc.	DHPLG, DOF
Ring fenced funding for specialist non-statutory services such as Homeless Action Teams to ensure those in private emergency accommodation, Family Hubs and longer term sustainable tenancies on exiting homelessness are provided with appropriate visiting and on-site support.	DHPLG, DOF, DOH, HSE

SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLY

Significantly increased capital expenditure to allow Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies to deliver 10,000 new social housing units per year.	DHPLG
The CSO recommended reclassification of Approved Housing Bodies must not impede their access to finance and funding under current structures.	DHPLG, DOF, DPER, DOT
Put in place the necessary financial mechanisms and Capital Advanced Leasing Facility (CALF) funding to ensure the delivery of a national cost rental scheme.	DHPLG
Prioritise additional Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) finance for State and Local Authority owned land to facilitate the construction of affordable homes under the Affordable Homes Initiative.	DHPLG
Commence section 79(2) of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 to allow Local Authorities and AHB's to access the necessary finance to deliver affordable housing supply.	DHPLG

PRIORITY AREA

RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT

PRIVATE RENTAL SECTOR



Amend the Residential Tenancies Act to remove the maximum 3 year period (Sunset Clause) for which an area can be designated as a Rent Pressure Zone (RPZ).	DHPLG, DOF
Expedite legislation to introduce RPZ enforcement measures as a matter of priority.	DHPLG
Urgently amend, commence and implement the Deposit Protection Scheme, provided for in the 2015 amendments to the RTA.	DHPLG
Legislate to remove and replace paragraph (b) of section 34 of the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) with an appropriate provision that implements the Government's commitment to introduce indefinite leasing.	DHPLG
Adequately resource the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) in terms of staffing and expertise to undertake its ever-growing mandate.	DHPLG

HEALTH AND COMPLEX NEEDS



Introduce universal access to primary care and GP services in line with Sláintecare recommendations.	DEASP, DES, HSE, DOH
Increase non-capital mental health expenditure to 10% of the total health budget in line with Sláintecare recommendations.	DOH, HSE
Funding to urgently implement the Sláintecare recommendations to develop child and adolescent mental health teams, adult community mental health teams, old age psychiatry services, child and adolescent liaison services and intellectual disability mental health services.	DOH, HSE
Remove prescription charges for people experiencing homelessness.	DOH, HSE
Ring fenced funding must be put in place for the immediate and full implementation of the National Drugs Strategy 'Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery - a health led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025'.	DOH, DPER

HEALTH AND COMPLEX NEEDS (CONTINUED)



Fund the addiction treatment services and facilities committed to by Government in Rebuilding Ireland, September 2016. Ensure that the capital and revenue costs for the operation and development of the Dublin Simon Community Medical Residential Treatment and Recovery Facility are in place in Budget 2019, as committed to by Government.

DOH, DPER

Increase funding for Detox beds and Step-up/Step-down facilities in line with the commitments in Rebuilding Ireland.

DOH, DPER

SOCIAL WELFARE AND INCOME ADEQUACY



Extend Homeless Community Employment Scheme nationwide with adequate resources and funding.

DEASP, DPER

Increase minimum social welfare payments by €6.50 per week to €204.50, representing 30% of the Gross Average Industrial Earnings (GAIE).

DHPLG

Return Jobseeker payment rates for people under 26 years of age to this suggested rate in line with other age groups.

DEASP

Increase Supplementary Welfare Allowance rates to €204.50, with equity of payment rates restored for people under 26 years of age.

DEASP

Reassess Rebuilding Ireland's educational and school supports and targets aimed at children and families in Emergency Accommodation.

DEASP

Extend the Back to Education Allowance Scheme to all adults experiencing homelessness.

DHPLG, DES

Make ring-fenced funding and placements on back to work, training, and education programmes available to ensure greater participation by people who have experienced homelessness.

DES, DCYA,
DEASP

Conclusion

Budget 2019 is a critical budget for this Government; it is also a critical budget for people who are homeless and experiencing housing instability. We must do more to assist people to stay in the homes they have, preventing their presentation to emergency accommodation services and avoiding prolonged experiences of hidden homelessness.

It is time to ensure that there will be an end to long-term homelessness and rough sleeping by resourcing the nationwide roll out of Housing First. This must be matched with appropriate funding to deliver the necessary health, education and employment supports that underpin this approach. We must now redouble our efforts to build the social and affordable housing required to meet the basic needs of our population, particularly the needs of those most vulnerable in our society. In this submission, the Simon Communities in Ireland have outlined what we believe are the necessary policy and budgetary measures that must be taken to achieve these important goals. We remain committed to achieving these goals with our NGO and Government partners.

See our full submission [here](#).

About Simon Communities

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 almost 50 years. The Simon Communities deliver support and service to over 11,000 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

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.
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