



The Cost of Challenging a Crisis: Tackling Homelessness

Simon Communities of Ireland
Pre-Budget Submission 2023

Summary of SCI Pre-Budget Costings

Part 1 Summary: Budgetary Measures to Tackle Homelessness

Budget 2023 Ask	Cost (€)
Target vacant homes for social housing use	€ 556,011,109
Bring 5,000 vacant properties back into the market for social housing use through the Repair and Lease Scheme: €502,832,776 Capital Expenditure, €47,428,333 Current Expenditure	
An additional four staff to tackle vacancy in each of the 28 local authorities: €5.6million	
A nationwide awareness raising campaign of the scheme: €150,000	
Invest in Homeless Prevention	€ 13,123,633
Double funding for homeless prevention work €13.1million	
Commit to increase homeless prevention funding annually until homeless prevention accounts for 20% of total budget for homeless services.	
Allow for 14,000 additional HAP tenancies in 2023 with a 40% increase on standard rate and a discretionary rate of 50% in all Local Authority areas	€ 20,250,000
Provide an additional 70 one-bed homes for care leavers in 2023 under the designated Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) for Care Leavers at risk of homelessness	€ 9,164,050
Host a Referendum on the right to housing	€ 16,800,000
Increase HSE funding for Homelessness services	€ 39,790,000
Improve sector funding	
Total	€ 655,138,792

Part 2 Summary: Social Welfare Budgetary Measures

Budget 2023 Ask	Cost (€)
Increase Rent Supplement rates by 40%	€ 49,182,800
Increase core social welfare rates by €20 per week	€ 676,000,000
Increase QCI for children over 12 by €12 and children under 12 by €7	€ 146,000,000
Equalise Jobseekers' rates for under-25s	€ 77,200,000
Increase minimum wage to living wage in Budget 2023	
Total	€ 948,382,800

Introduction

Homelessness is at an almost unprecedented level and requires an emergency response. The homelessness crisis is being driven by the crisis in housing and a targeted, impactful response is necessary.

We need targeted measures to bring homes and financial support quickly to those at risk of and experiencing homelessness. If we do not invest now, we risk perpetuating inadequate housing supply, rising rents, and ongoing pressure in the housing market for years to come.

A recent analysis from the ESRI estimated that the Government could borrow an additional €4bn to €7bn a year when Ireland's projected growth rates are considered and the borrowing costs it faces in the markets.¹ This money can be strategically invested to relieve our housing crisis.

It is widely accepted that Budget 2023 will be the 'Cost of Living' Budget; housing costs are a significant expense for many households. The latest CSO Frontier Series Research Paper² found that certain household groups are more affected by inflation than others, with renting households one of the worse affected. During the 63-month period from December 2016 to March 2022, overall Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation was 9.6%. Inflation for renters fared much worse, with 1.9 percentage points higher in renters from Local Authorities at 11.5% and a notable 2.8 percentage points higher for renters in the private market with a 12.4% rate of inflation.

The burden of the housing and inflation crisis has been placed on the shoulders of those least able to bear it. According to results from the latest *Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)*, after deducting rent paid:

- 1 in 2 (50.5%) of people living in accommodation rented from the Local Authority were at risk of poverty.
- 59.1% of people living in accommodation rented with other forms of social housing support (HAP, RAS, RS) were at risk of poverty.

State supports are no longer meeting the needs of low-income households. They need to be re-evaluated with contemporary Ireland in mind.

Action is needed to protect households worst affected by rising rents and high inflation rates from homelessness. In the long-term, we need to increase the supply of affordable and social housing. In the short-term, we need to ensure those who are most vulnerable to housing exclusion and insecurity are protected through our welfare system.

Ireland's insecure housing and rental market is driving people into homelessness. We are seeing continual increases in homeless numbers throughout the country in recent months, as thousands of men, women, and children remain locked out of a housing system due to the absence of affordable homes.

Our recent history has shown us that Ireland is capable of taking bold and significant action when we decide to tackle a crisis. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we saw leadership and coordination from the Government as they took the necessary steps to protect people not only from the Covid-19 virus, but also from poverty, social exclusion, and homelessness.

¹ Available at: https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/QEC2021SUM_SA_MCQUINN_0.pdf

² Available at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/frp/frp-eihc/estimatedinflationbyhouseholdcharacteristicsmarch2022/summaryofmainresults/>

The Covid-19 pandemic and associated public health restrictions lead to the introduction of major protections in the private rental market such as the rent freeze and the moratorium on evictions. During this time we saw a fall in homelessness, mainly among families, who were protected from homelessness by eviction. However, this protection was only temporary. January 12th 2022 marked the end of Covid-enforced renter protections, including the rent freeze and an increased 90-day notice period when ending a tenancy. Homelessness has risen steadily since.

The pandemic showed us Ireland's ability to tackle a crisis head-on. While the scale of what is needed to address the housing and homelessness crisis is not comparable to the response to the pandemic, the vision and ambition are.

The Simon Communities of Ireland ask that the State apply this ambition to tackle the homelessness crisis continually unfolding here in Ireland.

Homelessness Context

2022 has seen a drastic rise in the number of people in homelessness, with some groups more deeply affected than others. We now have 10,325 people living in emergency homeless accommodation; the first time homelessness rose above 10,000 since before the pandemic. Given the current trajectory, it is likely that we will continue seeing an increase in homelessness in the coming months.

So far³, in 2022, we have seen record high numbers of homelessness for a number of groups:

- Adults in emergency homeless accommodation (7,297)
- Single Adults in emergency homeless accommodation (5,054)
- Adult men in emergency homeless accommodation (4,725)
- 25-44 year olds in emergency homeless accommodation (3,908)
- And 45-65 year olds in emergency homeless accommodation (1,996)

In the April 2022 homeless numbers, we had record numbers of Young People aged 18-24 year in emergency homeless accommodation (1,246); a 70% increase in the number of young people homeless in only 12 months.

Ireland has committed to ending homelessness by 2030, yet figures continue to rise. Without decisive intervention from the State, we cannot expect homeless figures to drop.

³ Correct as of May figures 2022, Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/80ea8-homelessness-data/>

Part 1: Budgetary Measures to Tackle Homelessness

Budget ask Summary:

Budget 2023 Ask	Cost (€)
Target vacant homes for social housing use	€ 556,011,109
Bring 5,000 vacant properties back into the market for social housing use through the Repair and Lease Scheme: €502,832,776 Capital Expenditure, €47,428,333 Current Expenditure	
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Total	€ 655,138,792

Bring 5,000 vacant properties back into the market in 2023 through RLS for people in homelessness and on the social housing waiting list

Budget ask: €556,011,109

- Ring-fence **€502,832,776** capital expenditure in 2023 to bring 5,000 vacant properties back into the market for social housing use through the repair and lease scheme, with an focus on one-bed properties developed through universal design lens in line with local Social Housing Needs Assessments.⁴
- Allocate **€47,428,333** current expenditure to fund leasing and running of the scheme.⁵
- An additional four staff (minimum) to tackle vacancy in each of the 28 local authorities at an approximate cost of **€5,600,000**.⁶
- A nationwide awareness raising campaign of the scheme at a cost of **€150,000**.

Context:

Vacancy is a major issue affecting every city, town, and village in Ireland. SCI call for the Government to take decisive action to bring vacant properties back into use through the Repair and Lease Scheme (RLS) to house people in homelessness and on the social housing waiting list.

Utilising our current vacant housing stock will allow us to quickly increase our social housing supply in areas close to established amenities, support systems, and communities. Targeting vacant properties will ensure sufficient 'pepper-potting' of social and private housing units to avoid the stigma effects associated with the clustering of social housing.

Costing laid out above is in line with Government spending for similar levels of housing delivery, such as, *Croí Conaithe*, where the Government are providing €450m to support 5,000 new builds. SCI propose that **€556,011,109** is secured to resource the Repair and Lease Scheme and secure 5,000 vacant homes. Included in this costing is an increase in dedicated staff throughout the country, a campaign to raise awareness of the scheme and the current expenditure to meet the leasing costs. This initiative would boost our social housing supply, and lift thousands of low-income families out of housing insecurity and homelessness.

Vacancy Context:

The latest GeoDirectory Residential Buildings Report⁷ found 90,158 dwellings recorded as vacant across the Ireland, with rates most prevalent in rural areas. Leitrim had the highest vacancy rate of 13.3%, followed by Mayo (11.9%) and Roscommon (11.6%). In addition, the GeoView Commercial Buildings report found 29,317 vacant commercial units throughout the country.⁸

⁴ See external Appendix for breakdown of capital expenditure calculations.

⁵ Costing 5000 times average annual cost for long-term leasing of €17,512 per unit. Available at: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2021-07-13/365/?highlight%5B0%5D=lease&highlight%5B1%5D=lease&highlight%5B2%5D=lease&highlight%5B3%5D=lease>

⁶ Four staff at a cost of €50,000 for each of the 28 Local Authorities.

⁷ Available at: https://www.geodirectory.ie/getattachment/Knowledge-Centre/Reports-Blogs/GeoDirectory-Residential-Buildings-Report-Q4-2021/GeoDirectory_Residential_Report_Issue_16_Q4_Q2021.pdf?lang=en-IE

⁸ Available at: <https://www.geodirectory.ie/knowledge-centre/reports-blogs/geoview-commercial-buildings-report-q4-2021>

The CSO estimate that there are 166,752 vacant dwelling across the country.⁹ These are modest estimates, as figures do not include ‘over the shop’ space, holiday homes, or vacant commercial space. 86,030 of these dwellings were vacant in 2022 and occupied in 2016; these have been vacant for a short time and are likely to be in a good state of repair. In an address to the Oireachtas Housing Committee¹⁰, Architect and housing policy analyst, Mel Reynolds, estimated that approximately 40,000 vacant homes could be reintroduced into the housing stock with correct intervention.

A 2016 analysis of North Main Street in Cork City¹¹ found that there was capacity to accommodate a total of 945 people on that street if vacant buildings were used to their full potential; a 61.5% (or 585) increase on the number of individuals that could comfortably live on that street alone. It is disheartening to have so many vacant properties with over 10,000 people in homelessness.

Local Authorities are responsible for dealing with vacancy in their area. Unfortunately, there is only one Vacant Property Officer in each Local Authority to manage 166,000 vacant homes across the entire country. A high rate of vacancy combined with a lack of staff perpetuates vacancy levels.

The Minister has committed to a Vacant Property Tax in Budget 2023, in line with *Housing for All*.¹² This is a positive step towards discouraging vacancy; we need stronger incentives to bring vacant homes back to the market and to ensure these homes are used to house people in homelessness.

Repair and Lease Scheme Context:

The Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS) targets owners of vacant properties who cannot afford or access the funding needed to bring their property into a state of repair. Properties are available for Local Authorities for social housing for a prolonged period. Targeting RLS is beneficial as it focuses on small landlords and individual property owners.

Housing for All calls for a ‘renewed focus on Repair and Leasing’ and refers to the scheme as one of the main mechanisms to renovate vacant properties along with the Local Authority’s ability to CPO (compulsory purchase order). SCI were pleased to see plans within *Housing for All* to use ‘CPOs to target up to 2,500 vacant properties for onward sale’, but in the context of the current crisis, we also require an increase in our social housing stock. Reform of RLS with increased targets and funding will help to provide significantly increased levels of social housing throughout the country quickly.

Housing for All commits to phasing out long-term leasing while it builds social housing. SCI support this commitment. Long-term leasing can increase pressure and competition in the market. Shifting the focus to RLS will allow vacant properties to be brought back quickly for social housing use (while our Local Authorities continue to *build* stock) without putting pressure on the existing market.

⁹ Available at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpr/censusofpopulation2022-preliminaryresults/housing/>

¹⁰ Available at:

https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_housing_local_government_and_heritage/submissions/2022/2022-01-25_opening-statement-mel-reynolds-architect_en.pdf

¹¹ Available at: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/mplan/news/formal-launch-of-north-main-street-study.html>

¹² *Housing for All* Objective 19.12. Collect data on vacancy levels in residential property with a view to introducing a vacant property tax

Simon Communities of Ireland proposal for a renewed Repair and Lease Scheme

Increase Targets: *Housing for All*, has set out extremely low targets for the delivery of properties under the Repair and Lease Scheme:

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Units	120	130	130	140	140

Table 1: Repair and Lease Current Targets¹³

SCI propose to increase these targets to **5,000** vacant units a year in 2023 and again in 2024, with the potential in year 3 and each year after to transfer the skills developed to addressing dereliction and over shop units for conversion to homes. Each Local Authority will have individual minimum targets based on local social housing waiting lists (see external appendix). We acknowledge that 5,000 homes is a significant uplift in the current targets particularly in the context of only 279 properties having been brought into use through the scheme since 2016.

However, there has been evidence of a much higher demand for the scheme. Delivery accounts for only 11.8% of **2,353 proposals**¹⁴ received during this time. With sufficient funding, staffing, and willpower, it is possible to deliver a high number of social homes through RLS.

Increase RLS loans available and introduce a grant element: *Housing for All* increased loan RLS amounts from €40,000 to €60,000. While this increase is welcome, we need an increased funding model that will make a meaningful dent in vacant housing. SCI propose that for the period of 2 years loan amounts under the scheme would increase to €150,000, with a grant element of €33% of the total cost up to a maximum of €40,000. This would allow a maximum of **€190,000** under the scheme against cost of repairs. As is the case currently, the value of the repairs is offset incrementally against the agreed rental payment over a defined period within the lease.

Reformed minimum lease: to avail of this scheme, vacant property owners must commit to a minimum of 15 years. This will ensure this scheme provides meaningful impact for people in need of social housing. Similar to the current running of the scheme, the local authority will agree the appropriate offset period with the property owner on a case-by-case basis. These arrangements may include scenarios whereby the offset is by way of a rent-free period; a consistent reduction over the duration of the lease or a term, which is scaled against the duration of the lease.

Focus on increasing the supply of one-bedroom properties: As a policy/scheme, RLS is the most successful at bringing one-bedroom properties – particularly apartments – into the social housing market (see table 2). This is likely because small property owners only are targeted with this scheme. This is important given the over-representation of single adults in homelessness (49%),¹⁵ on the waiting list for social housing (52%),¹⁶ and the chronic shortage of one-bed properties. We must ensure our housing market is integrated, sustainable and meets the needs of our population. It is important to assess housing allocations against a person's needs and personal circumstances, with flexibility to adapt to those needs as they move through life. Given the scale of housing required against a backdrop of the challenges outlined above, it is imperative that the property development process is as efficient as possible.

Unit Type as % of Scheme Total across SHCEP, 2016-2020					
Unit Type	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4+ Bed	

¹³ Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d32c4-repair-and-leasing-scheme-rls-further-information/>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/6060e-overall-social-housing-provision/#repair-and-leasing-scheme-rls>

¹⁵ Correct as of June 10th 2022: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/80ea8-homelessness-data/>

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/970ea-summary-of-social-housing-assessments-2020-key-findings/>

P&A-CALF	Apartment	11%	20%	4%	0%
	House	1%	12%	43%	8%
Long-Term Lease	Apartment	15%	37%	3%	0%
	House	3%	5%	22%	14%
Private Lease	Apartment	16%	43%	9%	1%
	House	2%	10%	17%	3%
MTR	Apartment	0%	3%	1%	1%
	House	0%	7%	41%	46%
Repair and Lease	Apartment	42%	19%	9%	4%
	House	4%	13%	8%	0%
Enhanced Leasing	Apartment	14%	79%	7%	0%
	House	0%	0%	0%	0%
AHB NAMA SPV	Apartment	8%	30%	17%	0%
	House	0%	7%	27%	11%
Total		13%	34%	44%	9%

Table 2: Unit Type as % of Scheme Total across SHCEP, 2016-2020.¹⁷

To incentivise the refurbishment of one-beds, funding must be made available per one-bedroom unit. This will mean that an owner of a large multi-room or multi-story property – for example a vacant townhouse or farmhouse – who converts the building into one-bedroom properties, will have funding available for each one-bedroom unit that can be created within Local Authority standards.

Increased Staffing and Personnel: *Housing for All* commits to ‘ensure Vacant Homes Officer position is full-time’¹⁸; more than one person in each Local Authority is needed to bring a wider number of vacant properties back into the market. Equip each Local Authority with sufficient levels of staff to tackle the issue. SCI propose that at least five full time staff are deployed in each Local Authority to manage vacant properties in the area that would include a Project Lead, two Vacancy Officers, and an administration role. Local Authorities with larger volumes of vacancy should have increased resources made available to them.

Awareness Campaign: Public awareness and engagement is key to the success of the scheme. To ensure the success of this reformed scheme, owners of vacant properties (identifiable through census data and previous sign-ups to the scheme) will be contacted with information and requests to join the scheme.

The Future of this Scheme: With the resources, momentum, and qualified personnel in place, this scheme can continue to tackle vacant properties and deliver social housing units throughout the country in 2024, giving the State time to meet social housing stock building targets. SCI envision that this scheme will be reviewed and expanded to tackle dereliction, vacant commercial spaces, and over-the-shop spaces in the years following.

Benefits:

¹⁷ Spending Review 2021 – Analysis of Social Housing Current Expenditure. Available at: <https://assets.gov.ie/205491/ab71c182-54e3-4cd0-ae94-8069761d952e.pdf>

¹⁸ *Housing for All* Objective 19.6

- Alleviate pressure on the existing private rental and housing market;
- Reduce the State's reliance and spending on HAP and reduce waiting lists for social housing;
- Increase the availability of one-bed properties desperately needed for single people in homelessness and on the social housing waiting list;
- Wide-scale reduction in the number of vacant properties in our villages, towns, and cities. This will breathe life back into our communities, improve social cohesion, and increase footfall to local businesses and amenities. It will also support objective laid out in many Government policies such as *Housing for All*, *Town Centre First policy*¹⁹, *Our Rural Future*²⁰.
- Support a sustainable, environmentally friendly method of social housing delivery.

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/41084-government-launches-first-ever-town-centre-first-policy/>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/4c236-our-rural-future-vision-and-policy-context/>

Increase Funding Towards Homelessness Prevention

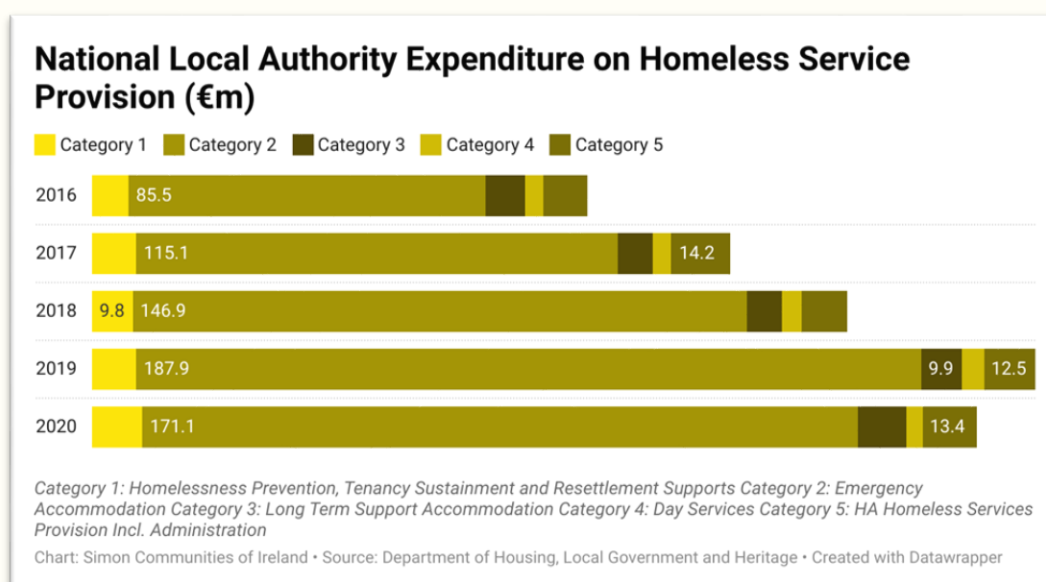
Budget Ask: €13,123,633

- Invest an additional **€13,123,633** in Budget 2023 to double the homeless prevention budget to €26,253,266.
- Commit to increase homeless prevention funding annually until homeless prevention accounts for 20% of total budget for homeless services.

Homeless Prevention Context:

SCI has long campaigned for a commitment to end homelessness before it starts. Currently, less than 7% of funding towards homelessness goes toward prevention. Increasing homelessness prevention funding is a long-term, cost beneficial investment for the State that will permanently reduce homelessness by dealing with the core drivers of housing insecurity before they reach crisis point. Preventing homelessness makes sense. It is beneficial both to the State and to any family or individual struggling in insecure housing.

In 2021, only 6.6% of funding was allocated toward homeless prevention;²¹ a slight increase on the €12.1 million (5.7%) allocated in 2020.²² Spending on emergency homeless accommodation increased by €85.6million (100%) between 2016 and 2020, while funding for homeless prevention only increased by €3.3million (37.5%) during this time. Emergency accommodation, accounted for 81% (€171.1m) of the 2020 spend. The crisis level of homelessness and demand for homeless emergency accommodation, will incur additional long-term costs. One such cost includes health.²³ Robust preventative policies safeguard against the damaging long-term health impacts of homelessness.

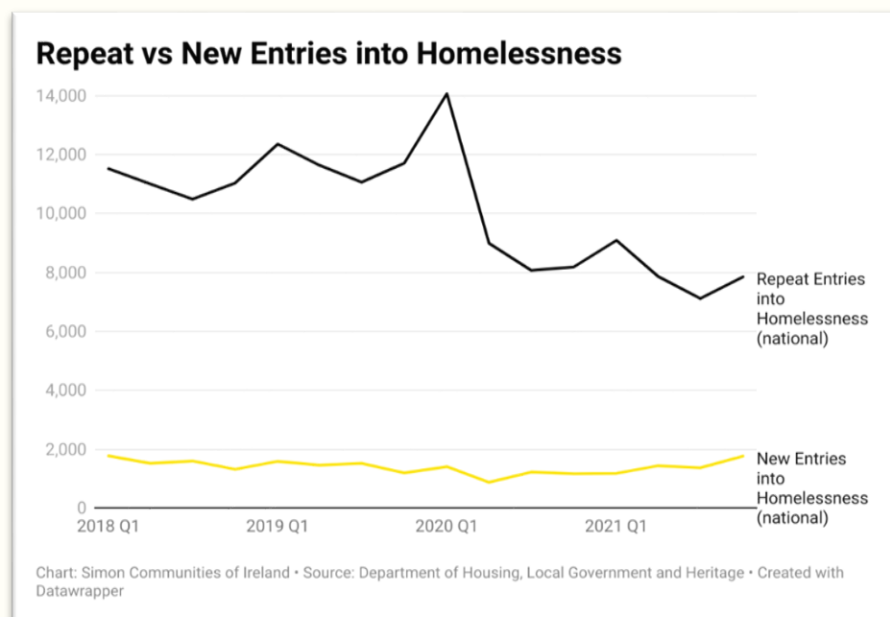


²¹ See external Appendix. Calculated from data available in 2021 Local Authority Regional Financial Reports: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/80ea8-homelessness-data/#local-authority-regional-financial-reports>

²² <https://assets.gov.ie/205497/82c74d9c-33f1-4349-98d6-95b2147e3d72.pdf>

²³ See further information on the effect of homelessness on the health on page **pg.X**.

Homeless prevention works. The latest quarterly homeless progress shows that in Q1 2022 alone,²⁴ 658 adults were prevented from entering homelessness by securing accommodation through social housing and supported tenancies. In that same time, only 570 people exited homelessness.



Studies show that a large proportion of people experiencing homelessness in Ireland could have avoided the need for emergency homeless accommodation if they had been supported with targeted homeless prevention policies.

A 2008 evaluation of homeless services in Dublin²⁵ reported that 69% (1,409) of the people surveyed in emergency accommodation could move into mainstream housing either with no support (259) or with short-term support (391). This suggests that many may not have required emergency accommodation in the first place if they were able to receive timely housing support or information.

A 2022 study²⁶ found similar results. The study categorised 72% of single adults in homeless emergency accommodation in Dublin as 'transitional users'. Research shows that 75% of people who fall into this category of homelessness have their immediate housing problem resolved after one homelessness episode, meaning it is likely that intervention would have prevented the need for homeless emergency accommodation in the first instance.

Benefits:

- Long-term reduction in homelessness throughout the country that will support the State's goal of ending homelessness by 2030.²⁷
- Support additional Government objectives and commitments including the Lisbon Declaration, *Housing for All*, and the upcoming Youth Homelessness Strategy.

²⁴ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e5f1f-homeless-quarterly-progress-report-for-q1-2022/>

²⁵ https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/11721/1/homeless_agency_evaluation_of_services.pdf

²⁶

<https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0264275122001743?token=667B7C11C56F548D2B0C0589C3CA54E691F7EB96D18943D344A104870A45A833ED1A220C5230DF21B4A8C86F06503DD6&originRegion=eu-west-1&originCreation=20220531155943>

²⁷ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ef5ec-housing-for-all-a-new-housing-plan-for-ireland/>

- Preventing homelessness will prevent the development and escalation of physical and mental health conditions. This will relieve the pressure on the healthcare system by improving the health of our population.
- The majority of those accessing emergency homeless accommodation have a history of homelessness. Homeless prevention will break the cycle of homelessness and housing insecurity for thousands of people each year and thus reduce homelessness in its entirety.
- Forward Programme for Government²⁸ commitments, which outline that “reducing and *preventing* homelessness is a major priority for the Government”

Additional Policy/non-budget Asks/Recommendations

- Fully enact the provision of the Simon Bill into legislation²⁹

²⁸ <https://assets.gov.ie/130911/fe93e24e-dfe0-40ff-9934-def2b44b7b52.pdf>

²⁹ <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2021/159/?highlight%5B0%5D=residential&highlight%5B1%5D=tenancies&highlight%5B2%5D=amendment&highlight%5B3%5D=extension&highlight%5B4%5D=notice&highlight%5B5%5D=periods&highlight%5B6%5D=bill&highlight%5B7%5D=2021>

Reform HAP rates

Budget Ask: €20,250,000

- Allocate an additional **€20,250,000³⁰** to HAP in budget 2023 to allow for 14,000 additional HAP properties, with
 - A 40% increase on Standard HAP rates, and;
 - Increase of discretionary rate to 50% outside of Dublin

This will sum to a total allocation of €47,250,000 in Budget 2023 for new HAP properties.

Context:

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a vital support that helped 61,907 households secure or maintain their home in 2021.³¹ Suitable financial assistance guarantees that the most vulnerable in society are not forced into homelessness. While capping rents is an option for the Government, it will not address the issue of affordability at current rates. Recent ESRI research shows that strict price caps risk lowering supply and upkeep in the medium term;³² an increased focus needs to be placed on increasing HAP rates to meet current rates.

In its introduction, HAP rates were benchmarked at the 35th percentile of rents, meaning anyone who needed housing support could only afford the cheapest properties in the country. This mentality and these rates are no longer a suitable guide. Since that time, rents have increased 41% from €1,111 in Q4 2016 to €1,567 in Q1 2022 according to Daft.ie.³³ Similar figures are found within RTB data, which shows the standardised average of new rents rose 38% from €1025.85 in Q4 2016 to €1415.12 in Q4 2021.³⁴

Trends in HAP payments show there has been an increase in the proportion of people who require a discretionary Top-Up on the standard HAP rate. The use of discretions granted by local authorities has increased from 33% of tenancies in 2018 to 50% in December 2020.³⁵ This is reflected in the HAP exchequer spend: between 2020 and 2021, the number of HAP tenancies increased only by 3% (59,821 – 61,907), while the average spend per tenancy increased by 12% (€435.9m – €504.2m).³⁶

Because HAP rates fail to meet rent prices, a large proportion of people on HAP are paying top-ups directly to their landlord. A 2022 Threshold report³⁷ found that 25% of renters were in receipt of HAP and an additional 5% were in receipt of Rent Supplement. 73% of the HAP recipients and 50% of rent supplement recipients pay a top-up to their landlord, ranging from €150 a month to as much as €700 a month. Half of people in of HAP found it difficult to pay bills and affording groceries.

³⁰ See external Appendix for costing breakdown and calculations

³¹ Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/6060e-overall-social-housing-provision/#housing-assistance-payment>

³² Available at: <https://www.esri.ie/news/rent-stabilisation-measures-can-mitigate-excess-inflation-but-come-with-risks>

³³ Available at: https://ww1.daft.ie/report/ronan-lyons-2022q1-daftrentalprice?d_rd=1

³⁴ RTB Rent Index, available at: <https://www.rtb.ie/data-hub>

³⁵ Available at: <https://www.audit.gov.ie/en/find-report/publications/2021/chapter-8-oversight-of-the-housing-assistance-payment-hap-.pdf>

³⁶ Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/6060e-overall-social-housing-provision/#housing-assistance-payment>

³⁷ Available at: <https://www.threshold.ie/publications/we-are-generation-rent-2022/>

An analysis of the HAP payment from the Department of Housing saw that 28% of HAP recipients paid a top-up, although no data was collected on the amount paid.³⁸ Paying unsustainable top-ups on rent places low-income households at increased risk of tenancy breakdown and homelessness.

SCI's quarterly *Locked Out of the Market* research report analyses the availability of HAP properties in 16 areas across the country for a variety of household types. Our studies show a chronic decline and shortage of properties affordable under HAP. Our latest report³⁹ found only 37 properties affordable under HAP limits; a drastic 95% less than the 906 available this time last year (June 2021). This also represents a drop in the proportion of HAP properties within the market; indicative of a system no longer suitable to support the most vulnerable households. Only 5.6% of properties were affordable under HAP; down from 11% in the previous two *Locked Out* studies.

Locked Out continually finds a particularly chronic shortage of HAP properties outside of Dublin. Up to 90% of properties within HAP rates found in our *Locked Out* reports are located within the Dublin areas examined. This is not surprising given the discretionary HAP limit extends to 50% in Dublin, while the rest of the country has been limited to 20%. Rural areas are experiencing drastic increases in rent in recent months; a 20% discretionary limit has not been enough to help people find a home.

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage recently increased the discretionary rate to 35% in areas outside of Dublin. While this increase is welcome, 35% is not enough to bring a substantial number of homes with the rates. Our *Locked Out* report found that increasing discretionary rates to 50% in areas outside Dublin increased the availability of HAP properties by 190% (19), compared to only a 50% (5) increase with a 35% discretion.

The Department must increase the standard rate of the Housing Assistance Payment as a priority, and ensure that all households have access to a 50% discretion rate. Standard HAP rates need reassessment to meet the needs of low-income households. As a priority, rates need to be increased by 40% in budget 2023 in line with increases in the rental market, and be benchmarked against median rental rates in each budget thereafter until we have a sufficient social housing stock.

SCI understands that HAP is not a long-term solution to homelessness, but it is necessary to ensure rates can suitably support those in need of a home. As the State works to improve its housing stock, the over-reliance on HAP will naturally fall along with the associated costs. Until we have a suitable levels of social housing, HAP rates need to provide meaningful housing support for low-income households.

Benefits:

- Support the Programme for Government commitment to ensuring “that Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) levels are adequate to support vulnerable households, while we increase the supply of social housing.”
- Protection of low income families and households from homelessness

Additional Policy/non-budget Asks/Recommendations:

- Record top-up levels being paid directly to landlords by tenants receiving HAP
- Resource Local Authorities to target homeless prevention measures towards households paying top-ups

³⁸ Available at: <https://assets.gov.ie/181027/86ca11e7-6721-4538-a062-b2e8ffa347f8.pdf>

³⁹ Available at: <https://www.simon.ie/press-release-junes-locked-out-of-the-market-report-finds-just-37-hap-properties-available-across-16-areas/>

End Homelessness for Care Leavers

Budget Ask: €9,164,050

Allocate **€9,164,050** to provide an additional 70 one-bed homes for care leavers in 2023 under the Designated CAS Scheme for Care Leavers to ensure at least 14% of care leavers (approx. 500 per year) can be accommodated through the scheme.⁴⁰

Context:

Youth Homelessness is on a worrying upward trend in 2022. In less than a year, the number of people aged 18-24 in homelessness has increased by 70% from 733 in April 2021 to 1,246 in April of this year.

1,246 is the highest number of young people living in emergency homeless accommodation ever recorded by the Department of Housing.

Countless studies and research shows that young people leaving the care system face a heightened risk of homelessness. The non-profit group Empowering People in Care (EPIC) in their most recent advocacy report shows that finding suitable accommodation to meet their needs was one of the greatest difficulties for young people with a care background, with 14% of cases living in homeless emergency accommodation.⁴¹ A UK reported that 14% of care leavers became homeless, while a total of 26% had experienced periods of hidden homelessness including couch surfing.⁴²

This is extremely concerning. Homelessness and housing insecurity is a known risk for care leavers, yet they continue to fall through the gaps and remain over-represented in homelessness.

Homes provided for Care Leavers can be funded through the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS); a welcome housing innovation but it needs to expand to ensure at least 14% of care leavers can be housed through the scheme. At present, only 48 (or 2%) of 18 to 22 year olds accessing aftercare services are accommodated through CAS.⁴³ At the same time, an average of 9% of young people are living in 'other' accommodation. While not officially defined within Tusla, this includes homeless accommodation and institutionalised settings such as prison. Not included here are the young people who have left State Care and who have no aftercare support. Their accommodation status is largely unknown.

Housing for All commits to 'provide capital funding for further development of housing for the specific vulnerable cohorts eligible for CAS funding'.⁴⁴

Considering 14% of young people require housing support upon leaving care, the number of properties available for young people coming from the Care System needs to be increased as a priority to ensure there is sufficient supply to house new care leavers at risk of homelessness each year.

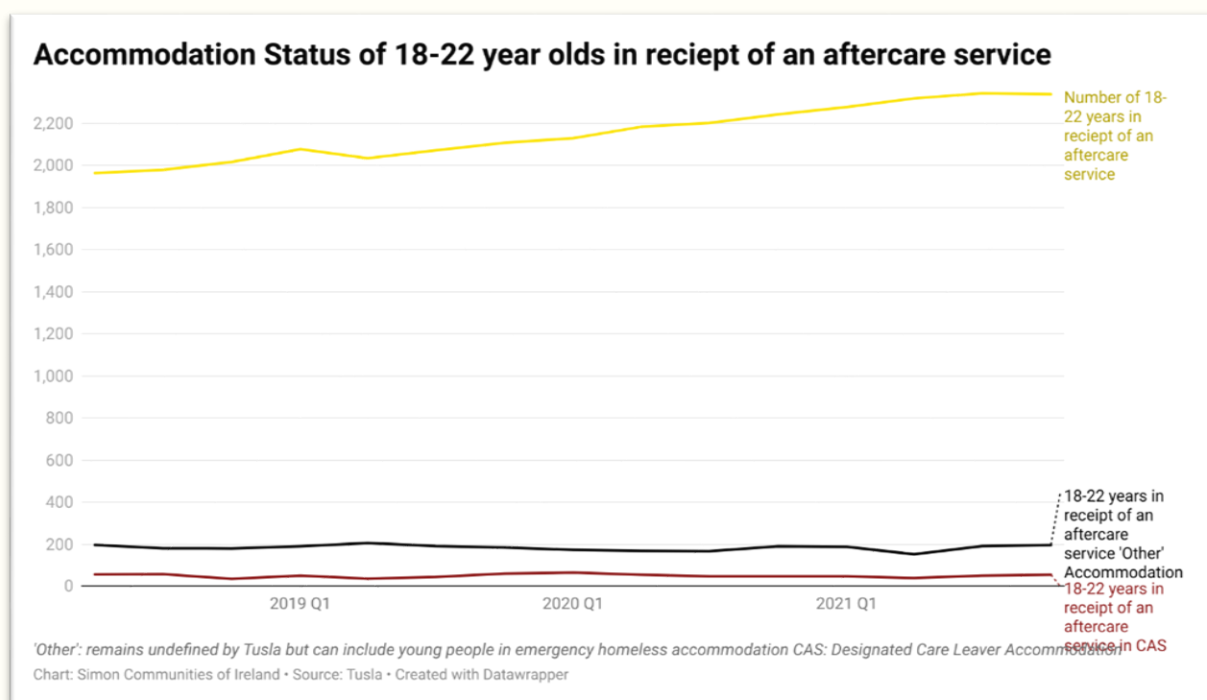
⁴⁰ Costing includes 70 homes at a cost of €130,915 each according to data provided by the Minister for Housing: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2022-04-05a.864&s=homeless#g866.r>

⁴¹ Available at: <https://www.epiconline.ie/epic-advocacy-report-2020/>

⁴² Available at: <https://www.basw.co.uk/resources/care-where-care-leavers%E2%80%99-access-accommodation>

⁴³ Available at: <https://data.tusla.ie/>

⁴⁴ *Housing for All* Policy Objective 10.1



Benefits:

- Breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty at a young age
- Reduction in youth homelessness
- Achieve *Housing for All* Housing Policy Objective 10.1.
- Support the development of the upcoming Youth Homelessness Strategy

Additional Policy/non-budget Asks/Recommendations

- The SCI submission the NHAC on the upcoming youth homelessness strategy contains a number of prudent policy recommendations regarding young people at risk of and experiencing homelessness in Ireland. It is available to read here: <https://www.simon.ie/e-publication/youth-homelessness/>

Host a Referendum to the Right to Housing in 2023

Budget Ask: €16,800,000

Allocate €16.8million in Budget 2023 to facilitate a Referendum on the right to housing.⁴⁵

Context:

The Constitution is a statement of fundamental values that the people of Ireland believe in. It shapes all Government policy and legislation. A home is fundamental for a persons' dignity and necessary to form a foundation for life.

People experiencing ongoing housing insecurity in a turbulent housing market are failed by an imbalance in our Constitution. Currently, the Constitution is fundamentally imbalanced towards private property rights, which are protected in both Article 43 and Article 40.3. There is no equivalent right to housing in the Constitution. This means that the starting point of Government policy and every legal analysis in respect of the regulation of land and property begins from the perspective of a property owner's right. While this right may be restricted in the interests of the common good, the starting point for analysis remains the private interest, with the common good only relevant as a secondary and subjective thought.

The imbalanced Constitutional structure has proven repeatedly to fail people in need of housing. It perpetuates high levels of vacancy and dereliction across the country, it allows for land hoarding, and it has contributed to our national housing crisis.

Including a Right to Housing in the Constitution would not alone solve our current housing crisis. However, it has an enormous potential to be a catalyst for change. It will place an onus on the State to develop and implement policy and practice that will meet the right to adequate housing of our citizens, and safeguard against future housing crisis' from occurring in the first place.

A right to housing in our Constitution provides every level of Government with a guiding principle and a commitment to ensuring there are sufficient homes for all of our people. In practical terms, this means refusing to accept endemic housing crisis in our society. It means a new level of respect for the levels of affordable housing and social housing needed. It means having sufficient levels of housing suitable for people's needs including housing with universal design for people with disabilities, catering to the housing needs of our ageing population, and housing for small and large families alike.

Benefits:

- Supports *Housing for All* and Programme for Government commitments to host a referendum on Housing.
- Supports the Government commitment to end homelessness by 2030

⁴⁵ Estimated from costs of previous referendums: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2022-02-15/321/?highlight%5B0%5D=expenditure&highlight%5B1%5D=referendum>

Increase HSE funding for Homelessness services

Budget Ask: €39,790,000

Double funding from the Department of Health towards supporting the health and wellbeing of people in homeless in 2023.⁴⁶

Context:

The health of people who are experiencing homelessness must be a priority in Budget 2023. The homelessness crisis has grown exponentially over the last decade, but health funding. Both the Programme for Government and *Housing for All* contain cross-departmental commitments to improve health outcomes for people in homelessness (actions 3.10 – 3.14 in *Housing for All*).

These commitments need to be implemented through ring-fenced multi-annual health budgets that are specific to the homeless population. Homelessness is a health issues as much as it is a housing issue. Homelessness – even for a short period of time – can have a hugely damaging effect on a person. It is well established that homelessness can have adverse effects on physical health, mental health, and overall wellbeing.

An Irish study examining the health of people in homelessness in Dublin and Limerick found that the majority of the 601 people in the study were experiencing mental or physical health problems:⁴⁷

- more than 1 in 3 had a self-harmed;
- 3 in 5 had suicidal thoughts, while 1 in 3 attempted suicide;
- half of people in the study were experiencing both mental illness and addiction issues;
- more than 1 in 2 had health issues that affected their daily activities.

A recent internal analysis of the Dublin Simon Community on the support needs of clients in our STAs showed that 53% had some requirement for mental health support, while 23% had both mental health and addiction and 19% had mental health, physical health and addiction.

SCI welcomed the €11million additional funding allocated to homeless health-related services by the Department of Health and associated agencies; it was a well-needed support in times of economic and social upheaval. However, there is still an overwhelming need for physical health care, mental health supports, and addiction services for people who are at risk of homelessness before they access emergency accommodation, as well as immediate access to this care once they become homeless. Budget 2023 needs to provide a strong homeless health budget, ensuring adequate funding and resources for physical health, mental health and addiction supports, including:

- Resources to implement trauma informed care across homeless services.
- Increased provision of low-threshold homeless-specific detox and recovery beds to deal with the demand for addiction treatment in the sector.⁴⁸
- Increased provision of accessible mental health care, including funding for counselling, suicide prevention supports and dual-diagnosis workers.

⁴⁶ 10% increase on spend in 2021 prior to the €11million Covid-19 funding addition

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2021-07-27/2056/>

⁴⁷ O'Reilly et. al (2015) Homelessness: An Unhealthy State. Health Status, Risk Behaviours and Service Utilisation among Homeless People in Two Irish Cities. P.10. Accessible at:

<https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/24541/1/Homelessness.pdf>

⁴⁸ The Dublin Simon detox service, for example, currently has an average waiting time of 56-70 days. Long waiting periods is detrimental to a person in addressing their addiction and can compound issues.

- Funding for in-reach primary care nursing for homeless services, ensuring high-quality healthcare is as accessible as possible.
- Allocate adequate HSE and Local Authority multi-annual funding for long term supported accommodation, to support and sustain people who are unable to live independently owing to complex health and social care related support needs.

Outlined below are examples of the known health effects caused by homelessness and housing insecurity for children, young people, and pregnant people.

Children and Young People: For children, homelessness can negatively affect development, cognitive functioning, participation in education, and opportunities later in life.⁴⁹

SCI are particularly concerned about young the mental health and addiction supports available to children and young people in homelessness. There are insufficient treatment supports available to people with alcohol and drug dependency as well as a lack of provision of mental health and psychological supports for young people in homelessness.

HSE data shows 11,702 new or re-referred cases were seen by the community Camhs teams up to the end of last November, compared to an expected activity level of 9,338.⁵⁰ Homelessness is emotionally straining and traumatising. Young people at risk or currently experiencing homelessness need direct access to mental health support to minimise the psychological damage.

A 2017 report published by Dublin Simon in conjunction with Mental Health Reform⁵¹ highlighted the complex web between homelessness, mental health difficulties, and addiction;

While in most cases, one of these difficulties appeared to have initially influenced the onset of another (e.g. mental health difficulties leading to homelessness or vice versa) service user's descriptions suggested that once in motion, a non-linear and interdependent relationship occurred between their mental health, and their experiences of addiction and homelessness, with each contributing to the subsequent onset and/or exacerbation of the other

Underpinning this connected experience of homelessness, addiction, and mental health difficulties was the experience of trauma in youth that was never properly addressed resulting in the need for self-soothing and self-medication.

Pregnancy: Numerous studies show that experiences of homelessness while pregnant can result in increased risk of adverse health implications including increased likelihood of preterm delivery, increased risk of neonatal intensive care unit admission, and low birth weight.⁵²

While there is limited research in the Irish context, increased instances of pregnancy for young people in care and post-care is internationally well established. A recent longitudinal study of leaving care in Victoria, Australia, found at the third wave of data collection, 31% of participants had sexual

⁴⁹ Available at: <https://www.oco.ie/app/uploads/2019/04/No-Place-Like-Home.pdf>

⁵⁰ As reported within <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40785912.html#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20HSE%3A%20%22This,waiting%20more%20than%2012%20months>

⁵¹ Available at: <https://www.mentalhealthreform.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Homelessness-and-mental-health-report.pdf>

⁵² Available at: <https://www.mungos.org/publication/homeless-pregnancy-toolkit/>

relations resulting in pregnancy and 19% had children.⁵³ A US longitudinal study⁵⁴ that compared care leaver birth rates with non-care peers showed that young women who left care were more than twice as likely as their non-care peers to have given birth to children. Male care leavers, at 21 years of age, were nearly three times more likely than their non-care peers to be fathers.

Pregnancy and parenthood is particularly difficult for those living in insecure housing conditions and homelessness. At present, there is no data collected on the number of pregnant women supported in homeless accommodation in Ireland, although DePaul in 2017 reported that 27 pregnant women stayed in their emergency accommodation.⁵⁵ Improved data on pregnancies can help identify people at an early stage in their pregnancies and ensure better health outcomes, particularly for young parents who need additional support in accessing information and services.

Benefits:

- Improve the health and wellbeing of thousands of people experiencing homelessness in Ireland.
- Reduce long-term health impacts, thus reducing pressure on the healthcare system and improving the wellbeing of people in homelessness

Additional Policy Asks:

- Ensure the fulfillment of health related support for people in homelessness as outlined in *Housing for All*:
 - 3.10. Maintain Covid-19 public health measures for people who are homeless and consolidate improvements in health care delivery
 - 3.11. Continue to increase access to health supports and protections for homeless individuals, with an individual healthcare plan to be provided for all homeless individuals that need one and improved access to mental health services
 - 3.12. Finalise a model of health care for people experiencing homelessness, including a health / vulnerability assessment tool to assist in determining suitability for Housing First and level of support needed
 - 3.13. Strengthen integrated care pathways for people who are homeless with chronic health needs based on an inclusion health model, to achieve better health outcomes and to reduce the incidence of premature death

⁵³ Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.104387>

⁵⁴ Available at: <https://www.chapinhall.org/research/midwest-evaluation-of-the-adult-functioning-of-former-foster-youth/>

⁵⁵ Available at: <https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2018/0308/945868-homeless/>

Improve Sector Funding

Budget Ask: Full Cost Recovery Approach

- Provide multi-annual funding that reflects the full cost of delivering homeless services and allows for increases based on need and inflation.
- Benchmark salaries and benefits for homeless sector staff to achieve parity with the public sector, in line with any adjustments agreed via formal public service pay talks between Government and unions (as facilitated by Workplace Relations Commission).
- Review criteria for Covid-19 recognition payment to include frontline workers in the homeless sector.

Context:

The current funding structure for the homeless sector is not fit for purpose. Organisations supporting people in homelessness are burdened by years of inadequate and unsustainable funding. We rely on public donations to ensure full service provision. Homeless organisations are also carrying the weight of our extensive governance and regulatory requirements, which – although very necessary – are costly and have not been accounted for in funding allocations. In order to provide reliable, high-quality and safe services, we need to be funded with full cost recovery, including the cost of overheads and back office support such as HR, finance, IT, quality assurance and compliance with health and safety standards.

Staff Retention and Recognition Context:

It is essential that the staff who work in frontline homeless services are skilled, qualified, experienced and motivated to support the most vulnerable people in society. The work is challenging and the burnout rate is high, something we are experiencing even more acutely since the pandemic as demand for services increased. However, this is increasingly difficult with high staff turnover and a lack of resources. A report by Fórsa⁵⁶ identifies a ‘talent flight’ among workers in the delivery of health services by the community and voluntary sector in Ireland with up to 33% leaving annually. This leads to a decline in the quality of service delivery. Low pay is a major contributor to the mass exodus of talented workers according to the report, where one member commented:

“I work 46.5 hours a week in homeless services on sleeping night shifts. They pay me minimum wage between 11pm-8am. I do live work during these hours but am still paid the lowest pay. Responding to self harm, fights, overdoses, fire alarms, intruders, mental health crisis. From sleep into immediate action is a skilled job. Why am I paid so poorly? I have higher health risks and deal with social isolation and I am treated like rubbish.”

A high turnover of staff is unsustainable, expensive and has negative implications for service provision. Staff in the homeless sector worked tirelessly during the height of the Covid-19 to keep people living in homelessness safe. They worked in frontline congregated settings through every lockdown and COVID-19 wave to ensure service continuity. Despite being classed as essential healthcare workers, homeless sector staff were excluded from the payment under the COVID Recognition Scheme.

The sector needs to be able to attract and retain high-quality staff who can build trusting relationships with clients and ensure a continuity of care for the duration of their time in homeless services. SCI call for sufficient funding to be made available in Budget 2023 to ensure this.

⁵⁶ Available at: <https://www.forsa.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ANewSystemicFundingModel1.pdf>

Part 2: Social Protection Budgetary Measures

Budget Ask Summary:

Budget 2023 Ask	Cost (€)
Increase Rent Supplement spend by 40%	€ 49,182,800
Increase core social welfare rates by €20 per week	€ 676,000,000
Increase QCI for children over 12 by €12 and children under 12 by €7	€ 146,000,000
Equalise Jobseekers' rates for under-25s	€ 77,200,000
Increase minimum wage to living wage in Budget 2023	
Total	€ 948,382,800

Bring Rent Supplement Rates in line with Market Rate

Budget Ask: €49,182,800

Increase Rent Supplement rates by 40% for an additional spend of **€49,182,800**⁵⁷ in budget 2023.⁵⁸

Context:

Rent supplement is a vital short-term financial support for renters who become unemployed. Rates for this social welfare support needs revision in line with inflation and rising rents. The latest CSO Frontier Series Research Paper⁵⁹ found that renting households one of the worst affected are more affected by inflation than those who own their homes. During the 63-month period from December 2016 to March 2022, overall Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation was 9.6%. Inflation for renters fared much worse, with 1.9 percentage points higher in renters from Local Authorities at 11.5% and a notable 2.8 percentage points higher for renters in the private market with a 12.4% rate of inflation.

There is a clear solution to ending high inflation rates, increasing rents, and protecting people from homelessness: increase the supply of affordable and social housing.

Ireland's insecure housing and rental market is driving people into homelessness. We are seeing continual increases in homeless numbers throughout the country in recent months, as thousands of men, women, and children remain locked out of our unattainable housing market. Homelessness is a symptom of poor policy making at a Government level; only drastic change and effort will result in meaningful change.

Rent Supplement is a temporary financial support that prevents households from falling into homelessness. Rates need to be in line with current market rates to be an effective homeless prevention measure.

Benefits:

- Forward the Programme for Government commitment to ensuring “that Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) levels are adequate to support vulnerable households, while we increase the supply of social housing.”
- Protection of low income families and households from homelessness

Additional Policy Recommendations:

- Expand eligibility for rent supplement and remove barriers to this short-term rental support.

⁵⁷ A 40% increase on the €122,957,000 was spent in 2021:

<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2022-01-19/913/>

⁵⁸ SCI understand that this is a demand led, short-term income support to meet current rental costs of households and not to support the find of new accommodation. However, there is a need to prevent unsustainable top-ups on rent, increasing risk of poverty. Rising cost of rents in the private sector needs to be a part of 2023 budgetary calculations. As a provisional sum, we have increased the 2021 spend by 40%, in line with market rate increases between 2016 and 2022, but this is likely to be at the upper end of the scale.

⁵⁹ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/frp/frp-eihc/estimatedinflationbyhouseholdcharacteristicsmarch2022/summaryofmainresults/>

Increase Social Welfare Rates

Budget Ask: €899,200,000

- Increase core social welfare rates by €20 per week at a cost of **€676million**⁶⁰
- Increase QCI for children over 12 by €12 and children under 12 by €7 at a cost of **€146million**⁶¹
- Equalise Jobseekers' rates for under-25s at a cost of **€77.2m**⁶²

Context:

The Government has committed to reducing the rate of consistent poverty in Ireland to below 2% by 2025 under the Roadmap for Social Inclusion⁶³. Enacting this commitment will reduce the number of households who are vulnerable to homelessness.

The latest CSO Frontier Series Research Paper⁶⁴ found that certain household groups are worse affected by rising inflation rates than others. Overall Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation for the 63 months from December 2016 to March 2022 was 9.6%. However, inflation estimated for households in the lowest – and second lowest – income decile was 1.8 percentage points higher, at 11.4%.

The most recent Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)⁶⁵ shows that in 2021, the 'at risk of poverty' rate was 11.6%. If all social transfers were excluded from income, the at risk of poverty rate would have been 38.6%. Social Welfare works to keep people out of poverty; we need to ensure rates are adequate as we face into rising living costs and an ongoing housing crisis. Increasing base social welfare rates by a minimum of €20 in Budget 2023 would go a long way to meeting the high rate of inflation experienced by low-income households throughout the country.

Young People and Jobseekers Allowance Context:

Reduced social welfare rates are a barrier for young people trying to lift themselves out of homelessness and achieve housing security. Despite only 5% of young people not being in education, employment or training – and 87% in higher-level education – 1 in 10 reported financial strain, making it difficult to make ends meet, according to the ESRI's recent *Growing up in Ireland* report.⁶⁶

SCI acknowledge the move to ensure young people under the age of 25 who are in vulnerable situations are not subject to the reduced social welfare rates⁶⁷, including those who:

- live independently and receive a state housing support such as RS, RAS, or HAP;
- have dependent children;
- are transferring from Disability Allowance to Jobseeker's Allowance;

⁶⁰ AS calculated by SVP through an analysis of figures available here:

<https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2022-05-19a.784&s=cost+increase+social+welfare+by+5#g790.r>

⁶¹ *ibid*

⁶² As calculated by Social Justice Ireland: <https://www.socialjustice.ie/system/files/file-uploads/2022-06/Budget%20Choices%202023%20-%20Full%20Document.pdf>

⁶³ <https://assets.gov.ie/46557/bf7011904ede4562b925f98b15c4f1b5.pdf>

⁶⁴ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/frp/frp-eihc/estimatedinflationbyhouseholdcharacteristicsmarch2022/summaryofmainresults/>

⁶⁵ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2021/povertyanddeprivation/>

⁶⁶ <https://www.esri.ie/news/new-growing-up-in-ireland-research-shows-20-year-olds-negotiating-the-path-to-adulthood-with>

⁶⁷ https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social_welfare/social_welfare_payments/unemployed_people/jobseekers_allowance.html

- were in the care of the Child and Family Agency during the 12 months before reaching 18

Despite these necessary exclusions, SCI still encounters young people trapped in homeless services and accessing a lower rate of social welfare. This is concerning given the increasing rate of homelessness among young people; in May 2022 there were 1242 young people aged 18-24 in homeless an increase of 59% in 12months. No vulnerable young person who is at risk of homelessness should be left with a reduced social welfare payment that can further compound their poverty and housing issues.

Family and Child Poverty Context:

Families – particularly single parent families – are at a high risk of poverty and housing exclusion in Ireland. During Covid we witnessed a welcome fall in the number of families experiencing homelessness. The moratoria on evictions along with additional social welfare support protected contributed to a 39% drop in the number of families in homelessness from 1,488 in March 2020 to 913 in March 2021; a pandemic low of family homelessness.

This progress has been lost, and homelessness has risen to pre pandemic levels. . At present, there are 1,366 families living in emergency homeless accommodation, including 3,028 children. This is a 41% on the number of children in homelessness (2,148 in May 2021) and a 50% increase in the number of families experiencing homelessness since the pandemic low of 913 in March 2021.

Welfare supports are key to preventing poverty for families in Ireland. According to the latest SILC results in 2021, 22.8% single-parent families were at risk of poverty, 44.9% experience deprivation, and 13.1% experience consistent poverty. This is the highest deprivation and consistent poverty rate across any other household type. Without the COVID-19 incomes supports that were in place at the time, persons in one adult households with one or more children were the most likely to be at risk of poverty with a rate of 37.2%.⁶⁸

Benefits:

- Forward Government commit to reduce the rate of consistent poverty in Ireland to below 2% by 2025 under the Roadmap for Social Inclusion.
- Reduction in poverty and social exclusion for thousands of vulnerable households throughout the country
- Improvements in health and wellbeing

⁶⁸ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2021/impactofcovid-19incomesupportsonpoverty/>

Pay a Living Wage in 2023

Budget Ask:

Increase Minimum Wage to Living Wage in Budget 2023

Context:

Rising costs of living means that employment is no longer sufficient to keep people out of homelessness. During the pandemic, the Simon Communities witnessed an increase in the number of young people gaining employment and work placements, likely relating to the effect of the pandemic on the employment market. Unfortunately, due to low wages and the ever-increasing cost of housing and rent, securing employment is no longer a way out of homelessness for today's young people.

Minimum wages need to be reviewed and benchmarked against a robust anti-poverty measure, such as the Vincentian Partnership's Minimum Essential Standard of Living.⁶⁹ The latest reported the living wage to be €12.90 per hour.

The link between poverty and housing insecurity or homelessness is heightened in the context of housing now accounting for an average of 55% of a single persons minimum living costs in Dublin, and over a third outside of Dublin.⁷⁰

Similar findings came from a report from the Low Pay Commission,⁷¹ which recommended the national Minimum Wage be progressed into a living wage that would be fixed at 60% of the median wage. In 2022, this would be €12.17 per hour.

The Tánaiste recently announced plans to introduce the national Living Wage in 2026.⁷² However, given the increasing rates of homelessness, the Simon Communities are calling for this to be brought forward in Budget 2023.

⁶⁹ <https://www.livingwage.ie/>

⁷⁰ https://www.livingwage.ie/download/pdf/living_wage_annual_paper_2021-22.pdf

⁷¹ <https://assets.gov.ie/226962/f72db6b6-00ef-46cb-8af9-c347cb0851ff.pdf>

⁷² <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/8556d-tanaiste-outlines-proposal-to-bring-in-living-wage-for-all/#:~:text=Research%20carried%20out%20by%20the,without%20substantial%20effects%20on%20employment.>