



SPRING 2023

# #SimonReads

Update from the Simon Communities of Ireland



**Simon**  
Communities of Ireland



# REFLECTING ON SPRING 2023

## Introduction from our Executive Director, Wayne Stanley

**Welcome** to the first edition of the Simon Communities of Ireland's quarterly newsletter.

The Simon Communities of Ireland are a leading national campaigner working to end homelessness. We engage in advocacy, policy and communications work that is grounded in the experiences of the Simon Community services across Ireland. This newsletter will serve to provide an update on the work of the Simon Communities for our supporters and colleagues in the sector, as well as provide an overview of homelessness, policy development, and insights from recent research, reports and publications relating to housing and homelessness.

**Homelessness and the Eviction Ban:** The latest figures show that in the last week of February, 11,742 men, women and children in homeless emergency accommodation in February 2023 represents a decrease of 0.10% (12 people) in one month but a 24% increase (2,250 people) since this time last year. This is the first time in 14 months that there has been a fall in homelessness.

While the number of single people in homelessness continues to reach record levels, family homelessness began to plateau and even reduce in the first few months of 2023. Reductions in family homelessness could be attributed to the recent moratorium on evictions. While the effect of the current moratorium is still to be fully understood, it is clear that it has prevented homelessness.

The Simon Communities of Ireland, along with many others, campaigned for an extension of the ban. Our argument was that more time was needed to embed preventative measures such as the tenant in situ scheme prior to lifting the ban. While our recommendation was not taken on, it should be acknowledged that some actions to address the oncoming crisis were taken. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage have made amendments to the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme, including effective from May 1st a guarantee of payment to landlords, where the tenant defaults on payment of contribution to HAP, these changes are welcome and are a minimum recognition of the pressure on those households.

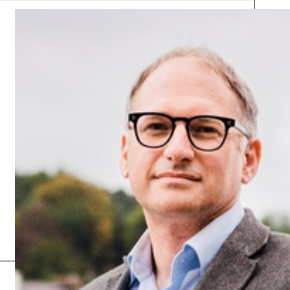
The Department has also written to each Local Authority to instruct them to target acquisitions on HAP or RAS tenants under Notices to Quit and has increased their social housing acquisition targets to 1,500 in 2023. Again, these are positive changes, but we know that this process is taking time.

**Insights into the Sector:** Figures from the RTB showed that 4,741 Notices of Termination (NoT) were received in Q3 2022 before the eviction ban was introduced. Recently released figures show that a further 4,329 NoT's were received by the RTB in Q4 2022.

Potential upheaval and large scale movement within the rental sector in the coming weeks and months is concerning given a lack of properties and a lack of affordability. The Simon Communities' quarterly Locked out of the Market report found 672 properties available to rent in 16 areas across Ireland; no properties were found within standard Housing Assistance Payment limits (HAP) and just 29 (4.3%) were available with discretionary limits.

In the context of the lifting of the moratorium these are very stark numbers. In the real world, when we look at these numbers through the lens of the people we support out of homelessness, the private rental market is no longer an option.

The consequences of this have been playing out for some time with growing levels of long-term homelessness and individuals and families unsustainably topping up the payments, in order to exit or avoid homelessness. Given the decision of government not to extend the moratorium on no fault evictions it is difficult to see any improvement in the situation in the coming months, in fact there is uniformity across government, opposition, local authorities and NGO's including Simon that things will get worse before there is any hope for better.



*Wayne Stanley*  
Executive Director



# UPDATES FROM THE SIMON COMMUNITIES OF IRELAND

## #SimonTalks

The Simon Communities of Ireland host a regular webinar as part of our #SimonTalks series to give a platform to discuss policies, research and insights into the housing market, issues relating to homelessness, and social insights. We have hosted three #SimonTalks webinars so far in 2023 covering a wide range of topics. Each are available to watch back on our [YouTube Channel](#).



### January

Our first the #SimonTalks of 2023 examined the Economic Outlook for Housing in 2023 with Professor Conor O'Toole from the ESRI



### February

Clotilde Clark-Foulquier – project manager at FEANTSA – joined our #SimonTalks to explore how cities address vacant housing in Europe



### March

Sandra Cogan Williamson joined our #SimonTalks to uncover Cork's Journey to becoming Ireland's first trauma sensitive city.

## Home for Good

Home for Good is a broad coalition of organisations and individuals who believe that Constitutional change is essential to tackle our housing and homelessness crisis. The Simon Communities of Ireland are proud to chair this group and work closely with colleagues from the sector on this important issue. The Housing Commission is currently developing a potential wording that could be used in a referendum and they are due to present a report to the Minister for Housing.



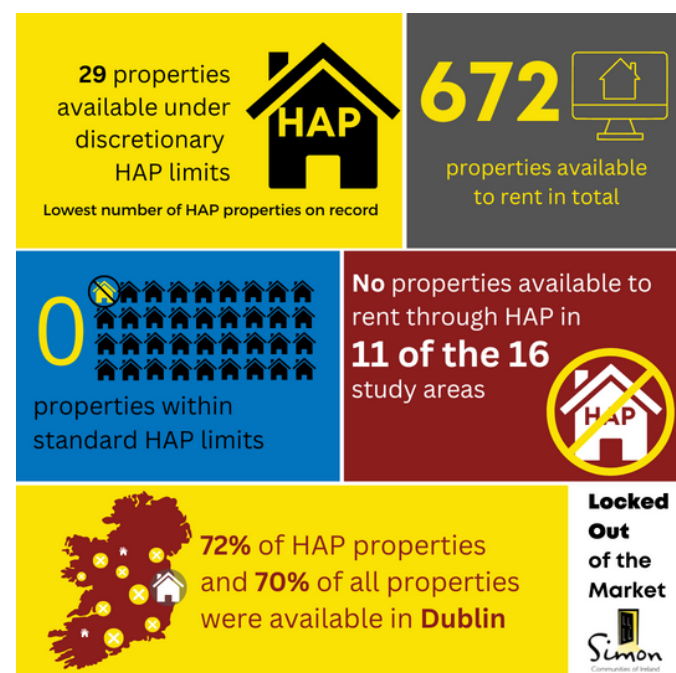
## Locked Out of the Market

Locked Out of the Market is a quarterly snapshot study undertaken over three consecutive days that tracks the number of properties advertised to rent within the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage standard and discretionary Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) limits. Information for the report is gathered from Daft.ie for 16 areas across the country and reflects the lived experience of people trying to find a home to rent in this period. In the first quarter of 2023, the Simon Communities of Ireland published two Locked Out of the Market reports looking at properties available in both [December 2022](#) and [March 2023](#).

Our March report – for the second time in the *Locked Out* series – found no properties available within a standard HAP rate. September 2022's Locked Out publication was the first report to find no properties within standard HAP rates.

In total, 29 properties were affordable through discretionary HAP limits. This is a 29.3% decrease from the previous report and a 63.7% decrease from 80 available March 2022. For comparison, 1,055 properties were available within HAP rates two years ago in March 2021.

### Summary of Key Findings for March 2023:







## Youth Homelessness

The Simon Communities of Ireland are proud members of the Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness (ICEYH) and so far, 2023 has been a busy year for the group. In late 2022, the Department of Housing published Ireland's first Youth Homeless Strategy in over 20 years. ICEYH secured a seat on the National Homeless Action Committee (NHAC) steering group that will oversee the implantation of key actions committed to within the Youth Homelessness Strategy. The steering group met on January 31st and March 22nd to provide updates on actions within the strategy and to make progress on the Supported Housing for Youth pilot provided for under the strategy.



On March 2nd and 3rd, the Simon Communities of Ireland together with Focus Ireland represented the ICEYH at a FEANTSA hosted event in Brussels. The 'Youth Homeless Coalition Building' event allowed representatives from coalitions in Scotland, Belgium, Wales, Denmark and Ireland to meet, share best practices, and learn from one another.

The Simon Community will be representing the Coalition again at the upcoming June FEANTSA Policy Conference.

## Political Submissions and Briefings

**Submission on the Statement of Strategy for the Department of Social Protection:** The submission outlines key priorities which the Department of Social Protection should consider including in its Statement of Strategy in order to meet the stated aim of the Programme for Government to tackle homelessness.

[The Submission is available to view online here.](#)

### Public Consultation on diversion paths for young adults aged 18-24:

The Simon Communities of Ireland made a submission to the public consultation providing an overview of youth homelessness and the effects of homelessness on young people. Following this are policy recommendations aimed to support two cohorts of young people: (i) young people coming out of prison and (ii) young people in homelessness who may be at risk of offending and who can be diverted from the criminal justice system. As well as housing options, the Simon Community call for a trauma informed approach and coordination between governmental departments and agencies.

[The Submission is available to view here.](#)

**Census 2027 Public Consultation:** The Simon Communities of Ireland made a submission to the CSO's public consultation proposing the inclusion of a question in Census 2027 seeking to capture the extent of hidden homelessness in Ireland. The purpose of this question is to examine the prevalence and to better understand the types of 'hidden' homelessness in Ireland. This data is currently not captured.

[The Submission is available to view here.](#)

**Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Tourism:** SCI were requested to make a submission on the General Scheme of the Registration of Short-Term Tourist Letting Bill 2022. The submission provides an overview of the impact that a lack of supply of affordable homes is having on homelessness and addresses scope and potential of the Bill to contribute to the efforts to reduce homelessness and where consideration could be given by the committee to strengthen the Bill.



# HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

## Homelessness in Numbers

**11,742** people were in emergency homeless accommodation at the end of February – a decrease of 12 since January (11,754). This is the first time in 14 months that there has been a fall in homelessness.

The 11,742 men, women and children in homeless emergency accommodation in February 2023 represents a decrease of 0.10% (12 people) in one month but a 24% increase (2,250 people) since this time last year.



- 1,599 were families – this is 10 (0.6%) less than the previous month (1,609 families)
- 5,736 were single adults – this is an increase of 66 (1%) on the previous month (5,670 single adults). This is a record high number of single adults in homelessness
- 3,373 were Children/Dependents – this is a decrease of 58 (1.7%) on the previous month (3,431 dependents)
- 1,457 were Young People aged 18-24 – this is an increase of 2.4% on the previous month (1,423), and up 298 (25.7%) year on year from 1,159 in February 2022.

Speaking to the numbers, Wayne Stanley, Executive Director of the Simon Communities of Ireland, said:



While a reduction of 12 people in emergency accommodation in the context of almost 12,000 is small, it is incredibly welcome.

What these figures suggest is that the moratorium, was doing its work, particularly for families, and keeping people out of homelessness. Unfortunately, it's ending today but had it continued and the State taken action to step up initiatives to prevent and address homelessness, there was the potential to make some real and sustained progress.



### Adults and Children Living in Emergency Homeless Accommodation in Ireland, May 2014 - present

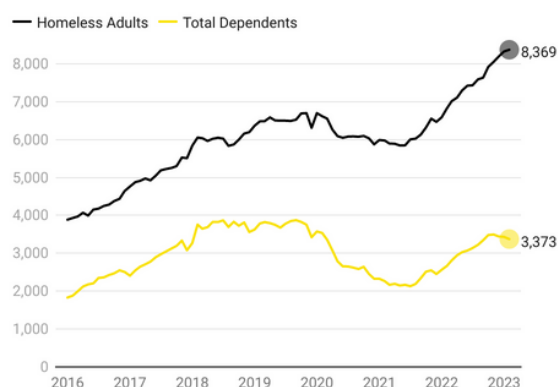


Chart: Simon Communities of Ireland • Source: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage • Created with Datawrapper

### Total Number of People living in Emergency Homeless Accommodation in Ireland, May 2016 - present

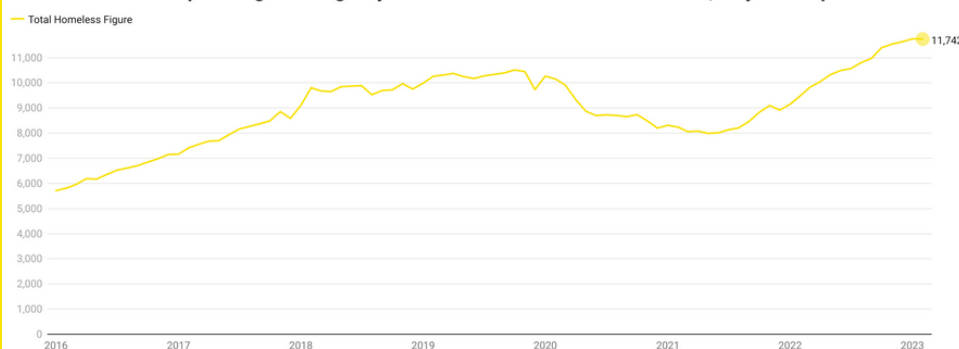


Chart: Simon Communities of Ireland • Source: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage • Created with Datawrapper



# POLICY & DEVELOPMENT

## Moratorium on Evictions

An eviction ban was introduced by the Government on November 1st 2022 in response to increased homelessness, increased pressure on homelessness services, and instability in the housing market. The Simon Community campaigned for the Government to use this time to take emergency action in increasing our social and affordable housing stock and introducing sustainable homeless prevention measures.

Homelessness continued to increase despite the ban. SCI have been working with the Irish Homeless Policy group to call for an extension on the ban. Legality, Constitutionality, and effectiveness of the ban in question

The Simon Community of Ireland – together with seven other NGOs supporting people experiencing or at risk of homelessness – wrote to Minister O'Brien asking for the ban to be extended and offered seven recommendations to be actioned alongside an extension of the eviction moratorium. [You can read the letter here.](#)



On March 21st, while a motion was put forward to extend the ban was underway within the Dáil, the Simon Communities of Ireland attended a Raise the Roof Rally outside. Despite concerns from the sector and opposition parties, the ban was lifted on March 31st.



## Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2022

Published on March 24th, the Summary of Social Housing Assessments brings together information provided by local authorities on households in their functional area that are qualified for social housing support but whose social housing need is not currently being met.



An Ghníomhaireacht  
Tithíochta  
The Housing Agency

### Key Findings for 2022:

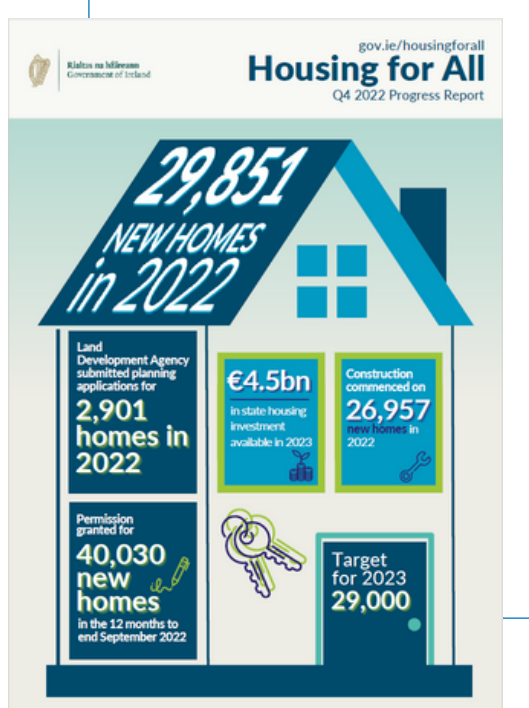
- In total, **57,842** households were assessed as qualified for housing support as of 1 November 2022.
- The number of households qualified for social housing support decreased by 1,405 (2.4%) since the previous assessment on 17 November 2021 and by 33,758 households (36.8%) compared to the first annual assessment conducted in September 2016.
- One-adult households remain the majority household grouping on the waiting list and grew proportionately from 54.9% of the total in 2021 to 56.0% in 2022.
- One parent family households continue to be the second highest household grouping, increasing marginally from a proportion of 23.0% to 23.5% of all households qualified for social housing between 2021 and 2022.
- For the first time, the SSHA can now report on the number of households living in Direct Provision. In 2022 there were 572 households recorded in this current accommodation type.
- A Traveller Identifier was also introduced in 2022, with 124 households identified as Irish Travellers. It is expected to take at least two years for all new and revised applications to respond to this new question.
- There were less households on the waiting list for a period of more than 7 years, with proportions declining from 27.3% in 2021 to 22.3% in 2022. Conversely, more households were on the list for less than 2 years with these proportions increasing from 33.9% in 2021 to 38.6% in 2022.





## Housing for All

In February, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage published the [Q4 2022 Housing for All Progress report](#) along with [statistics for the quarter](#). The section below outlines some highlights from the reports.



**Homelessness:** Action 3.3 in Housing for All committed to carry out a review of the relevant sections of the Housing Act 1988 to address issues arising in the implementation of the Act in order to enable local authorities to better address homelessness. As of Q4 2022, this review has been completed ensure the Act reflects the current situation of homelessness, as expressed by local authorities and homeless services. In reviewing the Act, the Department has been working with the Regional Homeless Leads from the Dublin Region, the South-West and the Mid-West since July 2022.

The review of sections 2 and 10 of the Housing Act 1988 has been completed. Section 2 of the Act outlines how local authorities can form an opinion on whether or not an individual/household shall be regarded as homeless, while section 10 outlines the actions that a local authority may take regarding the accommodation of those regarded as homeless.

The Department will now seek legal advice on the recommendations emerging from the review with a view to implementing the appropriate responses once complete

### Increasing Social Housing Delivery: Action 4.4

committed to a review of the structure and operation of Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) to assess whether any refinements to the facility are required to support delivery of social housing by the Approved Housing Body (AHB) sector across a wider range of Local Authority areas.

The review of the structure and operation of CALF was approved in early January 2023. The Department of Housing is now engaging with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the revised sanction required. Intensive stakeholder engagement and a circular to explain the changes to the operation of the facility will be completed in Q1 2023.

**Address Vacancy in Housing:** According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO), there were 166,752 vacant homes across Ireland in 2022. The Simon Communities advocated for these vacant homes to be used as social and affordable housing supply. Since then, some progress has been made in addressing vacancy:

- Government published the Vacant Homes Action Plan on 30th January 2023. The Plan outlines how the Government will address vacancy and tackle dereliction.
- Budget 2023 introduced a new Vacant Homes Tax to increase the supply of homes for rent or purchase. The tax will be applied to residential properties which are occupied as a dwelling for less than 30 days in a 12-month period.
- From November 2022, the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant was expanded to include eligible properties in both cities and more remote rural areas (in addition to those in towns and villages, which have been eligible since July). 716 applications have been reported to the end of December 2022.
- Existing schemes, including the Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS) and the Buy and Renew element of the Social Housing Programme have also been extended.

Ireland has **166,000** vacant homes.

Aoife and Sarah just need **one.**

**#EndingHomelessness**

Simon Communities of Ireland

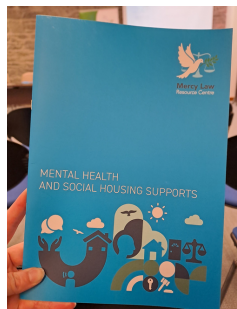
Graphic from our 2022 Simon Week Campaign



# RESEARCH & REPORTS

## Health, Mental Health & Addiction

**Mercy Law:** The Simon Communities of Ireland attended the launch of the Report at Mercy Law's Conference on Mental Health, Social Housing Supports, and Homelessness on February 16th. This report is centred on the lived experiences of people with mental health difficulties seeking to have their housing needs met and focusses on the legal and administrative barriers to accessing social housing supports



**Simon Community NI and DePaul:** The Mental Health and Homelessness study was conducted to gain a greater understanding of the mental health issues of people experiencing homelessness within a Northern Ireland context. The study aimed to gain a better understanding of the specific needs of this population, the gaps in service provision, and potential solutions.



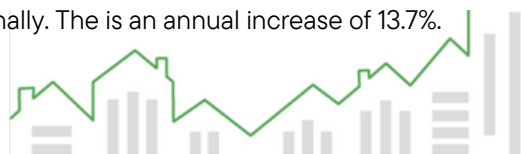
## Housing & Homelessness

**National Economic and Social Council:** The 'Private Rental in Ireland' report documents a major shift towards rental and away from home ownership in Ireland. The Repair & Lease Scheme and the recommendations of the Simon Community are referenced as "a potential way of offsetting the loss of social housing property in the private rental sector."



Taighde, Idirphlé, Comhairle  
Research, Dialogue, Advice

**Daft.ie:** The latest quarterly Rental Report from Daft.ie found that the national average rent now sits at €1,733 nationally. There is an annual increase of 13.7%.



THE NUMBER OF AVAILABLE RENTAL  
HOMES IN IRELAND IS 1,096



**Residential Tenancies Board:** In Q 3 2022, the RTB received 4,741 Notices of Termination (NoTs). These figures are not directly comparable to previous reports from the RTB due to changes in legislation.

Table 2. Notices of Termination Received by the RTB by Reason for Termination\*, Q3 2022\*\*

Types of NoTs	Total NoTs Received	% of Total***
Landlord intends on selling the rental property	2,845	60.01%
Landlord/Landlord's family member intends on moving into the property	794	16.75%
Breach of tenant obligations	738	15.57%
Terminating before a Part 4/further Part 4 tenancy commences	136	2.87%
Landlord intends to substantially refurbish/renovate the rental property which requires the dwelling to be vacated	85	1.79%
Dwelling is no longer suitable to the accommodation needs of the tenants	44	0.93%
Landlord intends to change the use of the rental property	25	0.53%
Reason given not specified in Act or no reason given	74	1.56%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,741</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Note: The data presented relates to the NoTs received via the standard and rent arrears processes.

\* Revisions of the data may occur following data checks and further processing.

\*\* In July 2022, the legislation surrounding NoTs issued having to be sent to the RTB changed.

\*\*\* Due to rounding percentages may not add up to 100%.

**ESRI:** The *Housing Adequacy and Child Outcomes in Early and Middle Childhood* report found that, at age nine, 75% of children lived in owner-occupied housing, 12% in social housing, 11% in the private rented sector and just over 1% were living with their parent(s) in their grandparents' home. While the majority of children lived in accommodation that is perceived to be suitable, one in ten lived in unsuitable housing, mainly due to the size. A similar proportion of children lived in homes that parents could not afford to keep warm; for 7% of children, this was a persistent problem over their childhood.



## Cost of Living & Poverty

**Central Statistics Office (CSO):** The CSO's monthly Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures the overall change in the prices of goods and services that people typically buy over time. Prices on average, as measured by the CPI, were 8.5% higher in February 2023 compared with February 2022. The most notable changes in the year were increases in Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas & Other Fuels (+26.0%), Food & Non-Alcoholic Beverages (+13.1%), Restaurants & Hotels (+8.9%) and Alcoholic Beverages & Tobacco (+5.0%). There were decreases in Education (-6.3%) and Miscellaneous Goods & Services (-0.1%).



An  
Phríomh-Oifig  
Staidrimh

Central  
Statistics  
Office

**Barnardos:** A new Cost of Living Survey conducted by the children's charity found that one in ten parents (10%) said they had used food banks over the previous 12 months, more than double the number from the previous survey (4%). One quarter of parents had to cut down on household bills such as gas and electricity in order to afford food costs over the past 12 months.





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