Family Homelessness in Dublin: Results from Repeated Point-in-Time Telephone Surveys

Dr Sarah Sheridan, Research Officer, Focus Ireland
Presentation

- Family homelessness in Ireland
- Current data: what we know & rationale for current study
- Methodology of current study
- Limitations
- Findings:
  - Conclusion and the importance of basing policy and service planning on research evidence.
Family Homelessness in Ireland

- Numbers of families in emergency accommodation have increased by almost 297% since July 2014.
- 84% of all families in Dublin region (May 2017).
- 64% of Dublin families living in commercial hotels or B&Bs.
- Recent expansion of Family ‘Hubs’ (congregate emergency settings).
Number of families becoming newly homeless in Dublin Region each month

Source: Focus Ireland • Created with Datawrapper
Number of Families Homeless Monthly (National)

- Jul '14: 300
- Jan '15: 400
- Jul '15: 500
- Jan '16: 600
- Jul '16: 700
- Jan '17: 800

1,365
Number of People Homeless in Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Adults</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Housing Planning Community and Local Government • Created with Datawrapper
Existing Data on Family Homelessness in Dublin:

- Existing quantitative data:
  - Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government Stats
  - Dublin Region Homeless Executive (infographics and quarterly financial reports)
  - Limited evidence being published from large-scale public data sets.
- Small (but growing) body of published research on family homelessness in Ireland (Walsh and Harvey, 2015; Share and Hennessey, 2017).
- Focus Ireland principle service working with families in Dublin region
- Urgent gaps in knowledge:
  - Timely analysis of the causes of homelessness
  - Capturing trends over time
  - Demographic profile of families
Quarterly Telephone Survey Data

Number of families becoming newly homeless in Dublin Region each month

- March
- June
- Sep
- Dec
Methodology

- 3-page telephone survey
- Focus of survey instrument:
  - Last 4 accommodations and self-reported reasons for leaving
  - Demographic profile
  - Service use
- High ethical standards adhered to at all times
- Duration of survey: 5-10 minutes
- Descriptive data analysis
- Refining of instrument over time
### Telephone Survey with Families - December 2016

**SECTION I: Accommodations Prior to Homelessness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.1</th>
<th>What type of accommodation are you currently residing in? (✓)</th>
<th>Hotel / Emergency Accommodation (✓)</th>
<th>With Friends/Family (✓)</th>
<th>Moving between Accommodations (✓)</th>
<th>Have Exited Homelessness (Include details on tenure type and, where appropriate, tenancy scheme, HAP, RS, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>Please describe your previous 4 accommodations BEFORE you entered emergency accommodation (note: No.4 relates to accommodation IMMEDIATELY BEFORE entering Hotel/B&amp;B accommodation)</td>
<td>Tenure Type</td>
<td>Duration of Stay</td>
<td>Primary Reason for Leaving</td>
<td>If you were in PRS:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1-6 months</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1-6 months</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1-6 months</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1-6 months</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>How long would you say it has been since you last had a 'stable' accommodation?</td>
<td>&lt; 1 month</td>
<td>1-6 months</td>
<td>7 months – 1 year</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>In what area/location was your last stable home? (please specify):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Limitations

- Incomplete sample
- Every three months
- Crude interpretation of housing histories and triggers to homelessness

→ Not claiming to be a comprehensive / complete analysis.
→ However, it does indicate key trends and demographic profiles which are disproportionately represented and change over time.
→ Regular publishing and sharing of evidence in order to advance broader knowledge on family homelessness.
Survey Data
Sample (N=183)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>December</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Age Breakdown in Years

- **December**
  - 18-25
  - 26-35
  - 36+ years

- **September**
  - 18-25
  - 26-35
  - 36+ years

- **June**
  - 18-25
  - 26-35
  - 36+ years

- **March**
  - 18-25
  - 26-35
  - 36+ years

European Research Conference
CHANGING PROFILES OF HOMELESSNESS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SERVICES.
BARCELONA, September 22^nd^, 2017
No. of Respondents with Histories of Direct Provision: 19
# One-parent families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of sample</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>December</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Children</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>December</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>27 (39%)</td>
<td>16 (34%)</td>
<td>16 (37%)</td>
<td>11 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>21 (30%)</td>
<td>15 (32%)</td>
<td>14 (32%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20 (14%)</td>
<td>5 (11%)</td>
<td>7 (16%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9 (13%)</td>
<td>4 (8%)</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>3 (4%)</td>
<td>7 (15%)</td>
<td>2 (6%)</td>
<td>2 (9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Children**: 150 112 93 51

**Pregnant**: N/A 7 4 1
## Employment Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>March</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>December</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student (full or part-time)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training / CE Scheme</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Housing History
Q. “Would you describe this as the first time you have experienced homelessness?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>March</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>AVERAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Last Stable Accommodation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Total Number of Families</th>
<th>Percentage across 4 waves of data collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Rented Accommodation</td>
<td>126 (101 of these or 80% on RS)</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Home</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing instability</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA / AHB</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New to the country</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own home</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halting Site</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>183</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Commonly-Reported Reasons for Leaving Last Stable Accommodation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons Cited</th>
<th>No of Families</th>
<th>% across 4 surveys (N=183)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Property removed from market</strong> <em>(34%)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>landlord selling</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>landlord moving in or giving to family member</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bank repossession <em>(of landlord)</em></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRS-related issues</strong> <em>(23%)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rent increase</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rent arrears</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insecure tenancies</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>landlord renovating property</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues with payment of Rental Subsidies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issued notice of termination</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>substandard property</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>domestic violence</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family conflict</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overcrowding</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationship breakdown</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accommodation Trajectories
Accommodation Trajectories

1. Stable Housing History
2. Precarious Housing History
3. Unstable / Chaotic Housing History
4. Youth Pathways to Homelessness
Accommodation Trajectories

1. **Stable housing history (n=92, 50% of total)**
   - First experience of homelessness
   - Lengthy and stable tenancies in PRS
   - Some stayed temporarily with friends/family before presenting as homeless
   - Triggers to homelessness:
     - Landlord selling
     - Landlord decisions
     - Rental increases
2. Precarious housing history (n=38, 21%)

- Broadly stable housing histories in PRS with some degree of housing problems in the past
- Experiences of substandard / insecure tenancies in PRS.
- Reliance on informal arrangements for longer periods (several months or longer)
- Triggers to homelessness:
  ▪ Landlord leaving market
  ▪ Affordability/financial issues
  ▪ Personal crises
  ▪ Larger families
3. Unstable/chaotic housing history (n=20, 11%)
- No experience of living in independent tenancies
- Transience
- Extensive hidden homelessness
  (Sometimes for years)
- Histories of homelessness

Triggers to Homelessness
- Family conflict and overcrowding
- Personal crises
- Difficulties accessing PRS tenancies
4. Youth pathways to homelessness (n=30, 16%)

- Under the age of 25 (many under 21).
- No experience of living independently
- Triggers to Homelessness:
  - New family formation
  - Overcrowding & family conflict
  - Difficulties accessing private rented sector
  - Affordability problems
Help-seeking across the samples

Q. Did you contact any support service before you presented as homeless? (Percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>March</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>December</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agencies approached:
- Local Authority (most common)
- Voluntary organisations

Finding out information:
- Informal networks (i.e. word of mouth)
- Website searching / Google
- Local representatives (TDs / Local councillors)
December: Divergences in Data

- Some divergences emerging in comparison to other months…
- Fewer PRS-reported issues.
- Unstable housing histories; prolonged hidden homelessness.
- Triggers included:
  - Family conflict
  - Overcrowding
  - Few housing options (i.e. priced out of PRS).
- High proportion of Non-EU migrants; young parents & those over the age of 36…
Conclusion

- **Demographic profile evidences those most at-risk**
  - Joblessness and homelessness
  - One-parent households → single parents
  - Young parents
  - Migrant parents

- **Housing Histories:**
  - Problems of affordability, supply and tenancy sustainment in the private rented sector
  - Over half demonstrate very stable housing histories
  - Degree of marginalisation from housing market and lack of affordable housing options
    - Evidence highlights that these families do not need therapeutic interventions; but rather, subsidised housing with security of tenure.

- Looking to 2017 and beyond:
  - Importance of building an evidence base
  - Housing as key solution; not emergency facilities with therapeutic support.