

#### Launch HOUSING IT'S TIME TO END HOMELESSNESS

# APPENDIX: CITY PROFILE DUBLIN, IRELAND



According to some reports, the housing crisis in Ireland is the 'longest and most severe the country has ever experienced'.¹ Driving this crisis are dwindling affordability, rising rents, increasing demand, and an inadequate supply of social housing.² In the Greater Dublin Area, and across Ireland generally, 8% of total stock is social housing³, slightly higher than the 7% OECD average.⁴ It has been recommended that a target of 20% of all housing stock should be social housing.⁵

Households are struggling in the private rental market, where prices are predicted to keep rising in the foreseeable future. Rental costs in the Greater Dublin Area are among the most expensive in the country, so it was no surprise that a high proportion (42%) of low-income households were experiencing financial stress. Indeed, the poorest households, those in the 20% income distribution are completely priced out of the rental market in the Greater Dublin Area.

Since 2021, the housing crisis has pushed more people into poverty. Across Ireland, after housing costs are accounted for, the rate of poverty increased to 19% compared with 12% before costs were deducted. The situation was worse for households renting with 59% living in poverty following housing costs.<sup>7</sup>

The impact on homelessness across Ireland has been huge. The growth in homelessness has been unprecedented, increasing by more than 60% between 2016 (4,488 people) and 2019 (7,121 people).8 In the Greater Dublin Area, the latest figures for March 2022 recorded 7,539 people in emergency accommodation (i.e. experiencing homelessness), an increase of 6% since 2019. In general, the majority of people who experienced homelessness have previously rented in the private market.9

Ireland's Government is committed to ending homelessness, including rough sleeping, but despite past policies and initiatives, homelessness continued to worsen. Last year, it introduced the Affordable Housing Act 2021, Ireland's first housing legislation. Its 2021 housing plan, Housing For All, provides for historic levels of government investment to grow the supply of social housing over the next ten years and a commitment to end homelessness by 2030. While this is sure to make a big difference, addressing current shortfalls remains a challenge; it will take time to bring new social housing supply onto the market. In the meantime, as has been noted, a 'crisis of housing availability and affordability is likely to be an enduring feature of Ireland's housing landscape for some time'. 10

#### Geographical area

Dublin is the capital and largest city of the Republic of Ireland. Located on the east coast of Ireland, Dublin is part of Dublin County, which also includes the local government areas of Fingal, South Dublin, and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown. These areas, combined with the counties of Meath, Kildare, and Wicklow, form the Greater Dublin Area (also referred to as Greater Dublin).

In 2022, the population of Dublin County was estimated to be 1,450,701 people, while for the Greater Dublin Area it was estimated at 2,073,459 people; around 41% of the total population of Ireland (estimated at 5,123,536 people).<sup>11</sup>

In general, the data presented in this report apply to the Greater Dublin Area, but where data were not available, the smaller geographical area of Dublin County (also referred to as Dublin Region) was used instead.



- 1 https://borgenproject.org/irelands-housing-crisis/
- 2 https://www.homelessdublin.ie/content/files/Homelessness-Action Plan-2019-2021.pdf
- 3 https://ws.cso.ie/public/api.restful/PxStat.Data.Cube API.ReadDataset/TAH05/XLSX/2007/en
- 4 https://www.oecd.org/els/family/PH4-2-Social-rental-housing-stock.pdf
- 5 Housing Costs and Poverty 2022, Social Justice Ireland, available at: https://www.socialjustice.ie/system/files/file-uploads/2022-05/2022-05-30-housing-costs-and-poverty-2022-final.pdf
- 6 https://borgenproject.org/homelessness-in-ireland/
- 7 https://www.socialjustice.ie/system/files/file-uploads/2022-05/2022-05-30-housing-costs-and-poverty-2022-final.pdf
- 8 https://www.homelessdublin.ie/content/files/Homelessness-Action Plan-2019-2021.pdf
- 9 https://borgenproject.org/homelessness-in-ireland/
- 10 https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Domestic-Violence-and-Family-Homelessness-Report FINAL.pdf
- 11 Central Statistics Office, https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/population/

## Definition of rough sleeping and homelessness

Homelessness is experienced when people have nowhere to live, when they lack accommodation that is safe, suitable, supports their needs, and is affordable.<sup>12</sup>

Similar to the United Kingdom, Ireland also has a legal definition of homelessness which is used by local housing authorities to determine when they have a duty to assist people experiencing homelessness.

The legal definition, provided in Section 2 of the Housing Act, 1988, states that a person shall be regarded as homeless if, in the opinion of the authority:

- (i) there is no accommodation available which, in the opinion of the authority, the person together with any other person who normally resides with them or who might reasonably be expected to reside with them, can reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of, or
- (ii) the person is living in a hospital, night shelter or other such institution, and is so living because they have no accommodation of the kind referred to in paragraph (i), and
- (iii) they cannot provide accommodation from their own resources.<sup>13</sup>

# Population and ratio of rough sleeping and homelessness

Regular counts of people sleeping rough are conducted by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE). Taking place during winter (October) and spring (April) each year, the count of people sleeping rough is only undertaken in the Dublin Region (covers four local authorities), a smaller geographical location than the Greater Dublin Area (covers seven local authorities). <sup>14</sup>

Rough sleeping is also enumerated in the census, although the number of people sleeping rough in the Greater Dublin Area is not available in the 2016 Census.

Compiled by the DRHE and presented in <u>Table 1</u>, are the number of people who were sleeping rough in the Dublin Region, between March 28th and April 3rd, 2022.

- Over a seven-day period, 91 unique individuals were counted sleeping rough in the Dublin Region, translating to a rate of 6 people sleeping rough per 100,000 residents.
- The majority (72 people, or 79%) sleeping rough in April 2022 were known to homelessness services, having either been assessed by a local authority and/or used emergency accommodation.
- The figure suggests a slow but steady decline in the number of people recorded sleeping rough, compared with 94 counted 6 months earlier (October 2021) and 125 people counted 12 months earlier (April 2021).<sup>15</sup>

Table 1. Rough sleeping count (7-day period)

	Dublin Region*
Estimated number sleeping rough (April 2022)	91**
Rate of rough sleeping per 100,000 residents	6.3***

#### Sources

- \* A smaller geographical location than the Greater Dublin Area.
- \*\* Dublin City Council Retrieved from Spring 2022 Count of People who are Sleeping Rough in the Dublin Region | Dublin City Council.
- \*\*\* Based on 2022 estimated resident population of Dublin Region: 1,451,000, Central Statistics Office Ireland, Estimated Population (Persons in April) 2021. Last updated 1 September 2022 <a href="https://data.cso.ie/table/PEA04">https://data.cso.ie/table/PEA04</a> Retrieved from <a href="https://data.cso.ie/table/PEA04">https://data.cso.ie/table/PEA04</a> Retrieved

#### Overall homelessness

The Census of Population provides information on levels of homelessness in Ireland. The 2016 Census, the latest available, shows that across the Greater Dublin Area, 5,240 people were enumerated as experiencing homelessness (in emergency shelter or sleeping rough).

The total for Ireland was 6,906.<sup>16</sup> This indicates that Greater Dublin accounted for 76% of people experiencing homelessness in Ireland.

- 12 https://homelessnessinireland.ie/what-is-homelessness/
- 13 https://www.homelessdublin.ie/info/policy
- 14 https://www.homelessdublin.ie/content/files/Final-Spring-2022-Report-on-people-sleeping-rough-in-the-Dublin-Region.pdf
- 15 Dublin City Council, Spring 2022 Count of People who are Sleeping Rough in the Dublin Region | Dublin City Council
- 16 Census of Population 2016 Profile 5 Homeless Persons in Ireland, available at: https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp5hpi/cp5hpi/hpi

Monthly statistics on homelessness are published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH), and are based on the number of people experiencing homelessness who were accommodated in emergency and transitional accommodation, funded and overseen by local housing authorities (responsible for the delivery of homelessness services) during a specific count week.<sup>17</sup>

However, these official figures do not include people experiencing homelessness who are not registered with a local authority, such as women and children in women's shelters/refuges, people sleeping rough, or anyone couch surfing with family or friends. Consequently, they are an underestimate of the true scale of homelessness in the Greater Dublin Area, and Ireland generally.

Data presented in <u>Table 2</u>, therefore, indicate only the minimum number of people experiencing homelessness; that is, people accommodated in emergency and transitional accommodation, provided by local authorities.

- A total of 7,539 people accessed local authority managed emergency accommodation in the Greater Dublin Area, during the week of 21-27 March 2022, giving a rate of 364 people per 100,000 residents.
- The total for Ireland in that week was 9,825, and represented a 3.5% increase in numbers recorded for February 2022. More than three-quarters (77%) of people accessing emergency accommodation in Ireland were located in the Greater Dublin Area <sup>18</sup>

 Although people sleeping rough are not specifically counted in these figures, it is likely that a number of people were sleeping rough when they sought support from the local authority.

Table 2. Type of homelessness (March 2022)

	Greater Dublin Area
People living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out (rough sleeping)	Not counted
People in emergency and transitional accommodation	7,539*
Total number homeless (registered)	7,539
Rate of homelessness per 100,000 population	363.6**

#### Notes:

- \* Includes 3 types of accommodation: Supported Temporary Accommodation (STA), which includes family hubs, hostels, with onsite professional support. Private Emergency Accommodation (PEA): includes hotels, B&Bs and other residential facilities used on an emergency basis, with supports provided to service-users on a visiting supports basis. Temporary Emergency Accommodation (TEA): which has no (or minimal) support.
- \*\* Rate based on population of Greater Dublin Area as at June 2022: 2,073,459.

## Structural factors affecting homelessness

#### Social and affordable housing

Homelessness cannot be eradicated without an adequate supply of social and affordable housing. But with an inadequate supply of social housing and a lack of affordable private rentals in the Greater Dublin Area, current levels of homelessness will remain entrenched.

In the latest Residential Tenancies Board Rent Index Report, Q1 2022, analysis shows that the cost of rental housing generally across the Greater Dublin Area increased fastest for households in the low-income guintiles.

This was especially so for rental households in the Dublin Region. Overall, the cost of private rent increased by 9% for the Dublin region and 6% for the rest of the Greater Dublin Area.<sup>19</sup>

<u>Table 3</u> presents the supply of social housing and the number of households in rental stress in the Greater Dublin Area.

 More than 57,000 dwellings are social housing stock representing 8.6% of total dwellings, higher than the 7% OECD average<sup>20</sup>; however, more is needed to address the high numbers of people experiencing homelessness, and the thousands of households on the social housing waiting lists.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Monthly Homelessness Report, <a href="https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/e4cbe-monthly-homeless-report-for-march-2022-and-homeless-quarterly-progress-report-for-quarter-1-2022/#monthly-homeless-report-for-march-2022-and-homeless-quarterly-progress-report-for-quarter-1-2022/#monthly-homeless-report-for-march-2022-and-homeless-quarterly-progress-report-for-quarter-1-2022/#monthly-homeless-report-for-march-2022-and-homeless-quarterly-progress-report-for-quarter-1-2022/#monthly-homeless-report-for-march-2022-and-homeless-quarterly-progress-report-for-quarter-1-2022/#monthly-homeless-report-for-march-2022-and-homeless-quarterly-progress-report-for-quarter-1-2022/#monthly-homeless-report-for-march-2022-and-homeless-quarterly-progress-report-for-quarter-1-2022/#monthly-homeless-report-for-march-2022-and-homeless-quarterly-progress-report-for-quarter-1-2022/#monthly-homeless-report-for-march-2022-and-homeless-quarter-1-2022/#monthly-homeless-report-for-march-2022-and-homeless-report-for-quarter-1-2022/#monthly-homeless-report-for-march-2022-and-homeless-report-for-quarter-1-2022/#monthly-homeless-report-for-march-2022-and-homeless-report-for-quarter-1-2022/#monthly-homeless-report-for-march-2022-and-homeless-report-for-quarter-1-2022/#monthly-homeless-report-for-march-2022-and-homeless-report-for-march-2022-an

<sup>18</sup> Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage gov.ie/housing, Monthly Homelessness Report March 2022, Retrieved from https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/11b88-homeless-report-march-2022/

<sup>19</sup> Rent Index, Q1 2022, https://www.rtb.ie/images/uploads/general/RTB Rent Index Q1 2022 Final.pdf

<sup>20</sup> https://www.oecd.org/els/familv/PH4-2-Social-rental-housing-stock.pdf

<sup>21</sup> Over 60,000 households are on the social housing waiting lists, and more than 16,400 in the Dublin Region. Government of Ireland (Taoiseach), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 'Housing For All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland' (21) Published on 2 September 2021, Last updated 15 December 2021 Retrieved from <a href="https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ef5ec-housing-for-all-a-new-housing-plan-for-ireland/">https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ef5ec-housing-for-all-a-new-housing-plan-for-ireland/</a> (Accessed 17/5/22

- More social housing stock was also needed for the more than two-in-five low-income households in rental stress, who were at increased risk of homelessness.
- It is noteworthy that across the Greater Dublin Area, there was a complete lack of private rentals that were affordable to low-income households, thereby exacerbating the risk of homelessness for vulnerable households.

Table 3. Social and affordable housing measures

	Greater Dublin Area
Number of social housing rented dwellings (% of total dwellings) (2016)	57,013 (8.6%)*
Number of new private rental listings affordable for low-income households (Q1, 2021)	0**
% of low-income households in rental stress (bottom 40% of income distribution paying more than 30% of gross income on private rent) (2019)	42.3%***

#### Sources:

- \* % based on stock of total private dwellings: 665,373 households, Table TAH05, last updated 16/12/2021, Number renting from local authority (social housing) https://ws.cso.ie/public/api.restful/PxStat.Data.Cube\_API.ReadDataset/TAH05/XLSX/2007/en.
- \*\* Based on figures 14 and 16, total of 8,872 new tenancies registered in Greater Dublin Area, https://www.rtb.ie/images/uploads/Comms%20and%20Research/ RTB Rent Index Q1 2021.pdf.
- \*\*\* The Rental Sector in Ireland, Table TRS21, last updated 26/01/2022, <a href="https://ws.cso.ie/public/api.restful/PxStat.Data.Cube\_API.ReadDataset/TRS21/XLSX/2007/en">https://ws.cso.ie/public/api.restful/PxStat.Data.Cube\_API.ReadDataset/TRS21/XLSX/2007/en</a>.

#### Level of income and poverty

Without sufficient levels of income, access to housing becomes extremely difficult, further entrenching poverty and hardship, as well as exposing many vulnerable households to the risk of homelessness. Housing is so expensive in Ireland, that it is pushing many households into poverty. The overall poverty rate for Ireland was 12%, but this increased to 19% once housing costs were deducted. The situation was even worse for households renting with 59% living in poverty after accounting for housing costs.<sup>22</sup>

<u>Table 4</u> presents the average rent and average income levels for the Greater Dublin Area, and the poverty rate for Dublin County. As indicated, private rental housing is expensive and consumes a large component of household income:

- In 2021, a typical rental in the Greater Dublin Area cost the average household more than two-thirds of their average weekly household income.
- For the poorest households, those in the bottom 20% income distribution, their income was way below the average weekly rent, falling short by €146.00, making the typical rental completely unaffordable.
- Of the 8,872 new tenancies registered in the Greater Dublin Area, none were priced below €175.00 per week, and would cost the poorest households 71% of their income, leaving very little for everyday necessities.<sup>23</sup>
- In general, the consistent<sup>24</sup> poverty rate for Dublin (a smaller geographical area) was 5.4% (without housing costs), while a further 11.1% were at risk of poverty.

Table 4. Income and poverty measures

	Greater Dublin Area
Mean weekly rent (2021)	€394.00*
Mean weekly equivalised disposable household income (2020)	€575.00**
Mean weekly equivalised disposable household income – bottom 20% income distribution (2020)	€248.00***
Consistent Poverty Rate – overall (2020)	5.4%**
Poverty rate – children	Not available+

#### Sources

- \* https://www.rtb.ie/images/uploads/Comms%20and%20Research/RTB\_Rent\_Index\_Q1\_2021.pdf.
- \*\* For Dublin county, not Greater Dublin Area, Income and Poverty Rates, Table SIA51, last updated 27/10/2020, <a href="https://ws.cso.ie/public/api.restful/PxStat.Data.cube\_API.ReadDataset/SIA51/XLSX/2007/en">https://ws.cso.ie/public/api.restful/PxStat.Data.cube\_API.ReadDataset/SIA51/XLSX/2007/en</a>.
- \*\*\* Composition of Average Weekly Net Equivalised Income, Table PII17, 2020, last updated 09/06/2022 https://ws.cso.ie/public/api.restful/PxStat.Data.Cube\_API.
  ReadDataset/PII17/XLSW/2007/en.
- + Child poverty rate for Ireland: 8.0%.

<sup>22</sup> https://www.socialjustice.ie/system/files/file-uploads/2022-05-30-housing-costs-and-poverty-2022-final.pdf

<sup>23</sup> Based on figures 14 and 16, total of 8,872 new tenancies registered in Greater Dublin Area, https://www.rtb.ie/images/uploads/Comms%20and%20Research/RTB\_Rent\_Index\_Q1\_2021.pdf

<sup>24</sup> Consistent poverty is based on a combined deprivation and poverty indicator,

#### Family Violence

Family violence data for the Greater Dublin Area has been difficult to source, but the figures for Ireland show that the Gardai (Irish police force) received<sup>25</sup>:

• 43,500 domestic violence reports in 2020, an increase of 17% from the previous year. Many of these households would have been exposed to an increased risk of homelessness.

Knowledge about the extent of domestic and family violence and its link to homelessness is limited, largely because homelessness figures do not currently include women who access domestic violence services.<sup>26</sup>

However, based on findings from a 2021 study investigating the link between domestic violence and homelessness, a significant number of families in emergency accommodation reported becoming homeless because of domestic violence.<sup>27</sup>

To improve the data accuracy, this 2021 study recommended several important changes, including:

- Develop national protocols to support interagency and cross-sector collaboration, including data and information sharing;
- Count families and individuals who access domestic violence services; and
- Count residents in domestic violence refuges as homeless.

 Some positive developments are underway. In May 2022, it was reported that the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DHRE), the lead statutory local authority responsible for homelessness data and services in the Dublin Region, will add domestic violence as a reason for seeking emergency accommodation to enable more accurate data collection.<sup>28</sup>

Table 5. Family violence measure

	Greater Dublin Area
Number of family violence-related crimes (2020-21)	Not available
Reported family violence crimes per 100,000 population	Not available

<sup>25</sup> https://www.garda.ie/en/about-us/publications/annual%20reports/an-garda-siochana-annual-reports/

<sup>26</sup> Mayock, P. & Neary, F. (2021) Domestic Violence and Family Homelessness. Dublin: Focus Ireland & The Housing Agency, available at: <a href="https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Domestic-Violence-and-Family-Homelessness-Report\_FINAL.pdf">https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Domestic-Violence-and-Family-Homelessness-Report\_FINAL.pdf</a>

<sup>27</sup> https://www.focusireland.ie/focus-blog/the-double-trauma-of-domestic-violence-and-family-homelessness-and-the-route-out/

<sup>28</sup> https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40878263.html

# POLICY CONTEXT



LAUNCH HOUSING CAPITAL CITIES HOMELESSNESS INDEX 2023 APPENDIX: CITY PROFILE

#### Rough sleeping and homelessness

Ireland's overarching goal is to end homelessness by 2030, with regional homelessness action plans aligned to this national commitment. In January 2019, the Dublin City Council and the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive (DHRE) released the Homelessness Action Plan 2019-21 for Dublin.<sup>29</sup>

A new plan for 2022-24<sup>30</sup> has since been drafted which continues the three key themes of *prevention* (early intervention for those at risk of homelessness), *protection* (through the provision of emergency accommodation and targeted support), and *progression* (identifying and enabling pathways to long-term housing). <sup>31</sup>

Through an updated 'Housing First National Implementation Plan', there is a commitment to provide 1,200 tenancies over the next five years for people with a history of rough sleeping, or long-term use of emergency accommodation and who have complex needs. The plan includes establishing a National Homeless Action Committee, expanding street outreach teams for people sleeping rough, and implementing individual healthcare plans.

The success or otherwise of any initiative to end homelessness does, of course, depend on an adequate supply of housing for households on low and moderate incomes. Alongside this is the importance of providing measures to effectively prevent homelessness. And, where necessary, providing accommodation with wraparound support through a Housing First model.<sup>34</sup>

# Investment in social and affordable housing

Ireland has been experiencing a housing crisis for many years. The Global Financial Crisis in 2008 resulted in austerity measures that impacted the number of new social housing dwellings constructed. By 2015, a historical low of only 75 units was built across the country, compared with nearly 5,000 in 2008.<sup>35</sup>

Attempts to deal with Ireland's housing and homelessness crisis were reflected in the *Social Housing Strategy (2014)* and the *Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan (2016)*, which aimed to provide 35,600 and 47,000 social housing units, respectively.<sup>36</sup> However, the number of people in emergency accommodation increased by 58% between 2016 and 2019, indicating that such initiatives, were less than effective at ending homelessness.<sup>37</sup>

In 2021, the Affordable Housing Act 2021, the first housing legislation in Ireland, aims to increase the stock of affordable housing and lower rents in the short to medium term, in response to the current housing crisis.<sup>38</sup>

The Government's *Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland* was released in September 2021. Housing for All is a comprehensive commitment to respond to the housing crisis across the housing tenures, including social housing, cost rental<sup>39</sup>, affordable purchase, and private housing.

- 29 https://www.homelessdublin.ie/content/files/Homelessness-Action Plan-2019-2021.pdf
- 30 https://councilmeetings.dublincity.ie/documents/s37309/4.Housing%20SPC\_Draft%20Homelessness%20Action%20Plan%20Framework%20for%20Dublin%202022-24.pdf
- 31 Dublin City Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Fingal County Council and South Dublin County Council, the Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 'The Homelessness Action Plan Framework for Dublin, 2019-2021' (2), January 2019 Retrieved from https://www.homelessdublin.ie/content/files/Homelessness-Action Plan-2019-2021.pdf
- 32 Government of Ireland (Taoiseach), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 'Housing For All A New Housing Plan for Ireland' (21) Published on 2 September 2021, Last updated on 15 December 2021 Retrieved from <a href="https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ef5ec-housing-for-all-a-new-housing-plan-for-ireland/">https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ef5ec-housing-for-all-a-new-housing-plan-for-ireland/</a> Accessed 17/5/22
- 33 Government of Ireland (Taoiseach), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 'Housing For All A New Housing Plan for Ireland' (14) Published on 2 September 2021, Last updated on 15 December 2021 Retrieved from <a href="https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ef5ec-housing-for-all-a-new-housing-plan-for-ireland/">https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ef5ec-housing-for-all-a-new-housing-plan-for-ireland/</a> (Accessed 17/5/22
- 34 https://councilmeetings.dublincity.ie/documents/s37309/4.Housing%20SPC Draft%20Homelessness%20Action%20Plan%20Framework%20for%20Dublin%202022-24.pdf
- 35 www.feantsaresearch.org/download/10-2 article 14333336430605362120.pdf
- 36 www.feantsaresearch.org/download/10-2 article 14333336430605362120.pdf
- 37 https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-30921080.html
- 38 https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=ad3ff722-9baf-437e-8f0e-cf0c2717e391
- 39 Cost rental is a new form of long-term home rental, targeted at middle-income households with incomes above social housing limits, but who are unable to afford private market rent, https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3d575-affordable-housing/

Also included is a commitment to end homelessness by 2030.40

Specifically, the *Housing for All Plan* provides €20 billion to build 33,000 homes a year for the next ten years, the largest housing investment in the history of the state. An annual average investment of €4 billion will provide 9,500 new social housing builds and 6,000 affordable homes for purchase or rent, each year until 2026.<sup>41</sup>

While these commitments have been welcomed, critics of the *Housing for All Plan* have pointed out that the targets are not enough to address the current housing need and demand. According to one Social Justice Ireland, the real housing needs of around 90,500 current households have not been considered in the projected figures.<sup>42</sup>

# Responding to homelessness and the COVID-19 pandemic

Ireland's Government introduced a range of measures at the end of March 2020 aimed at preventing people from becoming homeless, including a ban on evictions and freezing rents. Across Dublin, more than 650 places had been secured to temporarily accommodate people experiencing homelessness in apartments and hotels.<sup>43</sup>

Led by the Health Service Executive (HSE), the COVID-19 homeless response was supported by the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive (DRHE), voluntary homeless and drug service providers, and Safetynet Primary Care. 44

By April 2020, the DRHE, the HSE and voluntary agencies had already implemented measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 among people experiencing homelessness. These included:

- Identification of people within the homeless population who were "physically vulnerable", (such as older people or anyone with underlying medical conditions),
- "Cocooning" vulnerable residents by providing singleperson rooms,
- Isolation and rapid testing, and
- Reducing overcrowding across the homelessness system (before the pandemic people in private hostels shared bedrooms with up to eight individuals, and was subsequently reduced to a maximum of four).<sup>45</sup>

In October 2020, the Government of Ireland provided an additional €5.1 million for health supports for people who were homeless. Dublin received €2.4 million to:

 Operate a 110-bed isolation unit for homeless families and single people, including nursing, GP, and social care support;

- Provide a health support team of nurses and mental health social care workers to care for 250 people who were 'cocooning' and the people who were in private emergency accommodation;
- Operate an 18-bed unit for single people experiencing homelessness with complex needs;
- Provide mobile testing, tracing, and self-isolation facilities for people who were homeless with suspected cases of COVID-19; and
- Maintain a 7-day dedicated homeless response team.

Some measures, implemented during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic to minimise the impact on people experiencing homelessness, have been incorporated as part of the *Housing for All Plan*. The specific measures include individual health care plans, tailored drug and alcohol support services, and mental health services, especially for people sleeping rough.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>40</sup> https://councilmeetings.dublincity.ie/documents/s37309/4.Housing%20SPC\_Draft%20Homelessness%20Action%20Plan%20Framework%20for%20Dublin%202022-24.pdf

<sup>41</sup> Government of Ireland (Taoiseach), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 'Housing For All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland' Foreword by Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Minister Ryan (8) Published 2 September 2021. Last updated 15 December 2021 Retrieved from <a href="https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ef5ec-housing-for-all-a-new-housing-plan-for-ireland/">https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ef5ec-housing-for-all-a-new-housing-plan-for-ireland/</a> Accessed 17/5/22

<sup>42</sup> https://www.socialjustice.ie/article/budget-2022-will-not-answer-real-housing-need

<sup>43</sup> https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/coronavirus-dublin-accommodation-sourced-for-homeless-people-1.4212875

<sup>44</sup> The Department of Health. Published 6 May 2021, Last updated 7 May 2021 Retrieved from gov.ie - Minister for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy welcomes commencement of the COVID-19 vaccination programme for medically vulnerable people in homeless services (www.gov.ie)

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