

# Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness

Call for  
government  
action on  
homelessness  
among young  
adults

**The number of young adults becoming homeless in Ireland has more than doubled in the last four years. Of all age groups, they are most vulnerable, least likely to know where they can get help or present to services, and most likely to bunk in with friends and extended family, live in other precarious situations, or sleep rough. As such many are not included in official figures. They are our hidden homeless – and not just hidden – they are also forgotten. Barely mentioned in Government policy or strategy, there is no provision for addressing their very particular needs and circumstances.**



Young adults are at a crucial point in their emotional, cognitive and social development, transitioning from adolescence to adulthood; experiences at this stage have life-long impacts. To move successfully to adulthood, they need understanding, support, space and structure. Left to their own devices, those out of home often flounder and face a future of exclusion, potentially leading to a lifetime cycle of homelessness. However, with the right interventions their needs can be addressed and they can move out of homelessness and into productive, independent adulthood.

Young adults out of home are in crisis, without experience of independent living and the resilience of adulthood. They can have a range of needs and issues, stemming from adverse childhood experiences, which include poor mental health, behavioural issues, problematic drug or alcohol use, and sometimes all of these in combination. Some are parents and many are separated from their children because of their situation. Those leaving state care or detention, from migrant or ethnic groups, or who identify as LGBTQ are disproportionately represented in youth homelessness.

When their precarious living situations breakdown and they approach homeless services, the response is placement in emergency accommodation for adults, where they are at risk of intimidation, exploitation and exposure to risky behaviours. Once homeless, their chances of getting out are lower than other age groups, particularly if they are single. Housing options are very limited – they have no hope of social housing and their youth makes them unattractive to private landlords. Even if they can source accommodation, their reduced entitlement to just half the rate of Jobseekers Allowance, together with their undeveloped independent living skills can make it untenable.

A situation that potentially consigns young people to a lifetime of recurrent homelessness is not acceptable. The Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness brings together key charities in housing, homeless, children and youth services to chart a course of action which will give those who are homeless now the chance they deserve to become independent adults, and will prevent homelessness in the future.

# Actions to address and prevent homelessness among young adults:

## 1. Housing First for Youth

Housing First is acknowledged internationally as the way to address homelessness effectively and we recommend the introduction of a programme of Housing First for Youth in Ireland, to include:

- Ring fencing of appropriate accommodation from public housing stock, approved housing bodies, and private owners and the provision of specialist supports for young people who are homeless or at immediate risk of becoming homeless.
- The inclusion of a range of options including self-contained and shared, supported lodgings and foyers to test these which settings are best for young people.
- The implementation of tailored, personalised, plans, based on an assessment of individual needs, talents and ambitions, and including support with independent living skills, education and preparation for work.
- A coordinated approach to the implementation of individual plans, led by Children and Young People's Services Committees, to ensure that all services are mobilised, particularly mental health services, and that needs and issues are addressed effectively on a local area basis.
- Encompass the current arrangements for young people leaving State care, through the planned provision of housing under the Capital Assistance Scheme into Housing First for Youth.
- Rigorous tracking and evaluation of Housing First for Youth.



## 2. Prevention and early intervention

Homelessness is not random. Its predictors are empirically established and understood. They are identifiable at an early stage by health services, schools and other community based services. Intervening when needs and issues arise, before they become critical or entrenched, is a more efficient use of public resources and secures better outcomes for young people and their families.

- Strengthen family supports and timely access to necessary specialist services where children and young people are most at risk of homelessness through Children's and Young people and retain them in school to build resilience to the risk of homelessness.
- Intervene where there is a clear and immediate risk of a young adult becoming homeless through mediation, counselling and mentoring services to help improve family relationships, or where this is not possible, to help young people make a planned transition to alternative, sustainable, accommodation.
- Continue intensive supports to families who are moving from homelessness in the areas they move to, to ameliorate the ongoing negative impact of homelessness on parents and children.
- Ensure that the issue of transitioning to independent living is addressed in school and youth service programmes so that adolescents can learn what is involved in leaving home and how they can plan towards it, as well as the nature, risks and consequences of homelessness, and assistance available.
- Homeless services work with community based services to sensitise them to the risks of homelessness, how homelessness can be avoided and dealt with if it does occur, and to facilitate joint working between local community and specialist homeless services.
- Guarantee that where a young person does become homeless and presents to city centre services that they will receive a comprehensive assessment and will be transferred from emergency accommodation within two weeks.
- Address policies that disadvantage young people.

### 3. Address policies that disadvantage young people



An adequate supply of housing is key to addressing and preventing homelessness and current government policies in this regard are welcome and must be accelerated. However, even with a better housing supply, young people will continue to be disadvantaged in accessing and maintaining tenancies if their right to live independently is not clearly recognised and supported in government policies. Implementing the following recommendations will begin to address some critical disadvantages:

- Restore the full rate of Jobseekers Allowance for under 26s. Their reduced entitlement denies them the ability to live independently. There are no youth discounts on food, gas, electricity and other necessities: it costs the same for them to live as other adults.
- Ensure an after rent income based on the Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) developed by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice. This will introduce equity across household types and age groups and help to improve the sustainability of renting.
- Introduce indefinite leasing for private rented tenants, as committed to in Rebuilding Ireland. This will provide surety of tenure for private tenants and equalise conditions as between public and private tenancies.
- Intensify the production of cost rental schemes, using State owned lands, as a means of ensuring a supply of affordable rental accommodation.
- Plan to produce a more diversified social and affordable housing stock to include adequate units for single person households reflecting the full range of housing needs.

#### Who we are

The Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness was established in September 2017 as a way of consolidating the work of different organisations who are trying to tackle youth homelessness. We hope that through the Coalition, we will be better able to draw attention to the issue and highlight our collective solutions. To learn more about the Coalition and our work visit our website. [www.endyouthhomelessness.ie](http://www.endyouthhomelessness.ie)



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