



Youth Homelessness: Submission to the National Homeless Action Committee

Contents

Introduction	2
Overview of the Issue	3
Supporting Young Adults at increased Risk of Homelessness	3
Identifying those at Risk and Addressing Hidden Homelessness	4
Young Adults coming from the care system	5
Young People Who Experienced Household Disruption as a Child	7
Young People Who Experienced Homelessness in Childhood.....	7
LGBTQI+ Youth Homelessness	8
Improved supports for Young People in Homelessness	8
Supporting Young People Experiencing Homelessness While Pregnant	9
Mental Health and Addiction Supports for those Experiencing Homelessness	9
Economic Supports	10
Regulation of the Rental Market rental measures	11
Summary	12

Introduction

Youth Homelessness is a key concern for the Simon Communities in Ireland. For decades Simon services have worked directly with young people experiencing – or at risk of – homelessness. This work happens through street outreach, emergency accommodation, homelessness prevention, tenancy sustainment, resettlement, as well as youth specific service provisions. The Simon Communities of Ireland are a member of the Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness.

Galway Simon services have seen a particularly marked increase in the overall number of young adults supported across Homelessness Prevention and Housing Services in the last 3 years.



18-25 Year Olds (Unique Households)				
	2018	2019	2020	2021
Community Support Service	18	5	8	1
BRC + County	10	24	27	26
Youth Service	29	37	44	39
Emergency Service	3	5	4	4
Supported Housing	0	0	0	0
Women & Family Service	10	15	15	5
Community Housing & Resettlement	1	1	1	1
Independent Living	0	1	0	1
My Home			1	1
Housing First			1	2
Rapid Prevention				50
Total	71	88	101	130

Data from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage shows youth homelessness rose by 29.79% between May 2021 and January 2022, where we saw 1,111 people between the ages of 18 and 24 in homeless emergency accommodation.

This stands out as the highest percentage increase of homelessness seen across all age groups during this period.

Homeless Adults by age category

Age Group	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+
May-21	780	3340	1604	119
Jan-22	1111	3552	1795	130
% increase	29.79%	5.97%	10.64%	8.46%
Number Increase	331	212	191	11

Overview of the Issue

Youth is a time of self-discovery, growth, and development; limited access to safe, secure housing can have a deeply damaging effect during this critical time in life. Developing a National Youth Homelessness Strategy is an opportunity to prevent homelessness from affecting a large cohort of young people, not just in the short-term, but in a way that ensures vulnerable young adults have a stable foundation to build a future. Tackling homelessness for young people is not just about providing a roof over their head; it is about ensuring a compassionate transition from teenage years to adulthood which requires support to ensure healthy cognitive, social, and economic development.

The housing market is difficult to navigate for young people who are more likely to have a lower income. Young people who do enter the housing market are most likely to do so through the private rental market¹. Rising rents, a low housing stock and few long-term renting options makes affordable, secure housing difficult to find.

Young people who may be particularly vulnerable to homelessness and insecure living conditions including those who have lived in residential State Care, young people who experienced household disruption in childhood, those with a history of homelessness, and those who identify as LGBTQI.

Without secure, safe housing, it can be difficult to address the support needs of our more vulnerable young people which in turn can compound disadvantage. Eradicating homelessness as an issue for Ireland's youth can be done and will ultimately stop homelessness from affecting these young people later in life.

Supporting Young Adults at increased Risk of Homelessness

Working with young people in homelessness, it is clear that there are a number of reoccurring factors that can place a person at increased risk of homelessness. Working to identify these factors at an early stage and implementing evidence based measures to address them is needed to ensure homelessness does not become a reality for vulnerable young people.

¹ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp1hii/cp1hii/tr/>

In this regard the definition of youth is pivotal to the success of a Youth Homelessness Strategy. Young people aged 18-24 appear to be of focus of the documents relating to the upcoming strategy. However, the journey to homelessness for this age group can start well before the age of 18 and can last beyond the age of 24. The Simon Communities see value in including young people from the ages of 13 to 26 in this strategy to ensure meaningful prevention and supports can be put in place.

Early interventions not only prevent homelessness in the short term, but also support a young person to find a path that is less likely to see cyclical and entrenched homelessness over the course of their lives.

Identifying those at Risk and Addressing Hidden Homelessness

More work is needed to better understand the demographic of young people in homelessness and their journey through housing insecurity. Addressing and understanding 'hidden' homelessness is central to preventing homelessness for our Youth. At present, those counted as homeless in official figures include those living in emergency accommodation funded through Section 10 of the Housing Act.

In truth, homelessness regularly begins long before a person requires emergency accommodation. The FEANTSA European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) is a means of understanding and measuring homelessness which is seen as best practice throughout Europe.² Under this wider definition, people are defined as homeless if they are:

- Houseless (with a place to sleep but temporary in institutions or shelters not including emergency accommodation)
- living in insecure housing (threatened with severe exclusion due to insecure tenancies, eviction, domestic violence)
- living in inadequate housing (in caravans on illegal campsites, in unfit housing, in extreme overcrowding).

People living in such conditions can be described as the 'hidden homeless'; a type of homelessness that is deeply under-researched in Ireland.

SCI are concerned that young people are disproportionately affected by periods of hidden homelessness which masks the extent of youth homelessness. A six-year Irish study showed that young people trying to exit homelessness 'demonstrated enormous determination in their attempts to sustain housing and took specific steps to avert a return to homelessness. It is significant that their strategies and actions included efforts to avoid homeless hostels, settings which most perceived as undesirable and stigmatising'.³

In order to understand the true extent of hidden homelessness in Ireland, national Homeless data records need to align with the ETHOS definition of homelessness. This methodology is already seen in other EU countries such as Denmark, Finland, and the UK where people staying with friends or family because they have nowhere else to go, or young people 'sofa surfing' are regarded as homeless.⁴

Koen Hermans presented at the Feantsa 2021 European Research Conference on Homelessness about the methods of counting homelessness in Belgium introduced in 2020 and 2021 using ETHOS

² <https://www.feantsa.org/en/toolkit/2005/04/01/ethos-typology-on-homelessness-and-housing-exclusion>

³ <https://www.homelessdublin.ie/content/files/Young-Peoples-Homeless-and-Housing-Pathways.pdf>

⁴ https://www.feantsaresearch.org/public/user/Observatory/2020/EJH/EJH_14-3_A2_v02.pdf

Light⁵ as a guiding framework to identify the true nature of homelessness. Using a standardised questionnaire with a multi-stakeholder approach (services working directly with homelessness, social services, youth care, prison, psychiatric institutions, institutions for asylum seekers, low-threshold services, healthcare institutions, Local Authorities and so on), the study was able to categorise the number and types of people experiencing different forms of homelessness. Results provided insight into unique circumstances for different groups such as addiction rates, history of institutionalisation (former stay in care or prison system), insight into health, nationality, age and duration of homeless struggles.

Operationalising the adopted⁶ ETHOS definition of homelessness in Ireland in such a way would help identify different risk factors that are common which in turn can help us develop policies to prevent homelessness from occurring and eradicate it as an issue by 2030 in Ireland.

Young Adults coming from the care system

Young people leaving the care system face a heightened risk of homelessness. From September 2017 onwards, young people who have been in the care of the State for a minimum of 12 months between their 13th and 18th birthdays must be referred to Aftercare services (for care leavers) and must have an Aftercare plan developed based on an assessment of their needs and support requirements at the point of leaving care. However, evidence suggests that rates of exit from youth homelessness can be low⁷ and that there are risks of repeated homelessness for vulnerable young people, highlighting the need for effective preventative approaches.⁸

The non-profit group *Empowering People in Care* (EPIC) in their most recent advocacy report showed that finding suitable accommodation to meet their needs was one of the greatest difficulties for young people with a care background. In 2019, one in ten advocacy cases managed by EPIC involved a homeless child or young person.⁹ This is mirrored by figures provided to the Oireachtas in 2018, which estimated that '9% of young people leaving care are at a more pronounced risk of entering unstable accommodation'.¹⁰

According to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, approximately 500 young people leave care every year upon reaching 18 years of age¹¹; a difficult age for anyone to face into the housing market alone. According to the most recent Tusla Annual Report, 2,943 young people were being supported through aftercare services at the end of 2020¹².

Robust data on the connection between homelessness, housing insecurity, and care leavers would mean it would be possible to determine the number of housing units required and the type of support needed to sustain these tenancies each year. The announcement from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on the research and data project to examine the lives of children in care and adults who were in care as children is welcome, but housing and

⁵ <https://www.feantsa.org/download/fea-002-18-update-ethos-light-0032417441788687419154.pdf>

⁶ Ethos has been referenced in Irish Homeless strategies since the early 2000's.

⁷ <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/27356/>

⁸ <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/30457/1/Preventing%20Homelessness%20-%20A%20Review%20of%20International%20Evidence.pdf>

⁹ https://www.epiconline.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/EPIC-advocacy-report-2019-2020_ME_FINAL-WEB.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2018-11-07/2/>

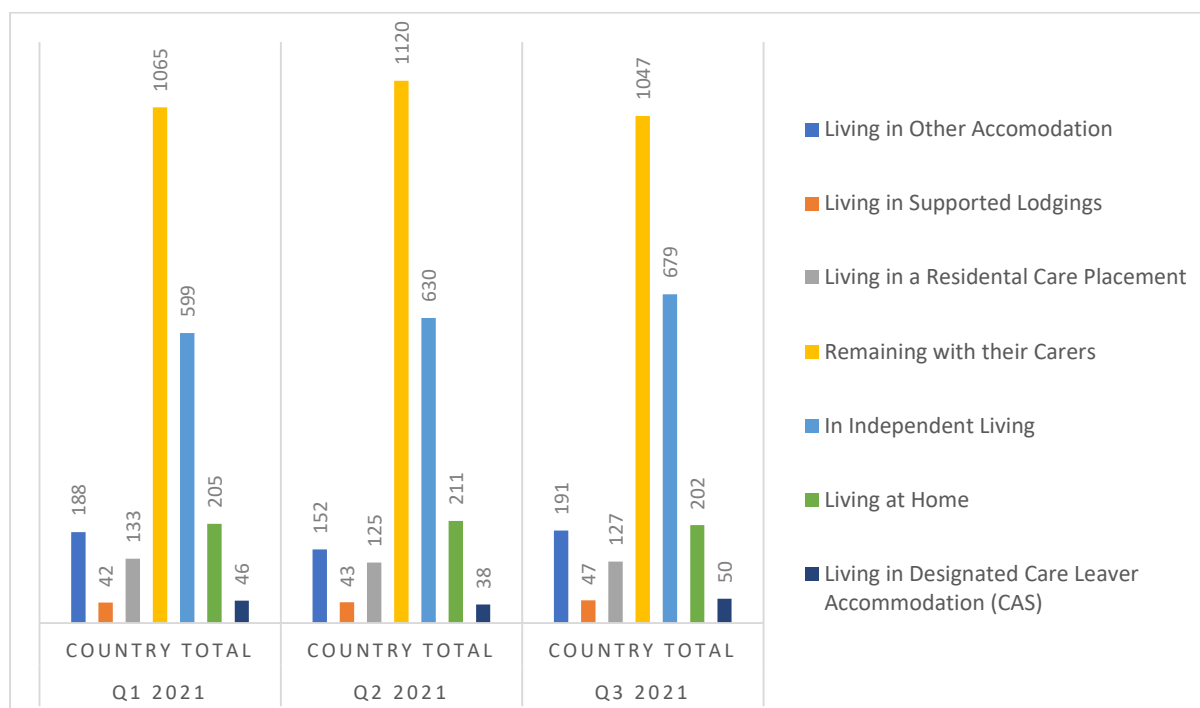
¹¹ <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/d7c8d-minister-ogorman-launches-largest-ever-examination-of-the-lives-of-children-in-care-and-adults-who-were-in-care-as-children/>

¹² https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/TUSLA_English_Annual_Report_Spreads.pdf

homelessness data for this group needs to be prioritised.¹³ While the number of young people accessing aftercare in homeless accommodation is accounted for in the ‘other accommodation’ category, it is not possible to distinguish from the data provided the number of young people coming from the Care System entering homeless accommodation. That data can ensure the *Housing for All* commitment to ‘provide capital funding for further development of housing for the specific vulnerable cohorts eligible for CAS funding’¹⁴ is targeted and successfully prevents homelessness for young people leaving care. SCI sees the benefit of CAS for care leavers and, and we believe that a systemic commitment to the initiative. Leading to a building up a stock of appropriate housing for young people leaving care, with supports provided where required can have a transformative impact for the most vulnerable young people leaving care.

On average, only 45 (less than 2%) of 18 to 22 year olds accessing aftercare services are accommodated through CAS.¹⁵ With approximately 1 in 10 young people requiring 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. CAS for care leavers is a welcome innovation and should be expanded.

Accommodation Status of 18-22 Year Olds Accessing Aftercare Services (Q1-Q3 2021)¹⁶



SCI support the commitment in the Programme for Government, *Our Shared Future* to “ensure that aftercare and transition plans and protocols are developed for vulnerable homeless people or those at risk of homelessness leaving hospital, state care, foster care, prison, or other state settings.”

We would highlight the underutilisation of the 2014 Protocol on Young People Leaving State Care. Under this Protocol, each Local Authority was to engage with Tusla to develop their own Protocol for

¹³ <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/d7c8d-minister-ogorman-launches-largest-ever-examination-of-the-lives-of-children-in-care-and-adults-who-were-in-care-as-children/>

¹⁴ *Housing for All* Housing Policy Objective 10.1

¹⁵ <https://data.tusla.ie/>

¹⁶ *ibid*

young people leaving State Care. *Rebuilding Ireland* reiterated the need for the Protocol as a means to provide 'direction to local authorities on their requirement to engage with young people leaving care in relation to their housing need.'¹⁷

While it is positive to see Care Leavers identified as a specific group in need of social housing, there is no consistency between Local Authorities, limited ring-fenced housing to address needs, care leavers are not given priority allocation once assessed, and there does not seem to be any published review or evaluation of the impact of the protocol¹⁸. Each Local Authority in their Housing Allocation Scheme appears to have a different priority and Policy for Care Leavers.

It is critical for Local Authorities to identify Care Leavers listed as a priority group, but more work is needed before this results in a meaningful reduction in homelessness. Local Authorities have no definitive number/proportion of allocations officially designated to young people at risk of homelessness, no clear assessment of local Care Leaver need, and no ring-fenced housing or funding available to provide for this group.

We agree with the assessment of the Department of Housing in the Youth Homelessness Discussion Paper provided to the National Homeless Committee that resolving the looming threat of homelessness for young people leaving care will require a whole-of-government approach to ensure adequate resources assigned to support people transitioning to housing and preventing homelessness. Coordination between the Department and Local Authorities on this issue can lead to deliverable targets that will make meaningful changes for young people leaving State Care.

Young People Who Experienced Household Disruption as a Child

Young people who were directly within the care system are an identifiable population to whom, housing supports and homeless prevention assessments can be targeted. However, there is an additional cohort of young people who experienced great difficulty in childhood or as a teenager but who did not officially go into Care. The Simon Community are concerned for this cohort who may fall through the gaps; this can include those who experienced abuse, who were surrounded by addiction, or who experienced family breakdown in their late teens.

Many of these young people require the housing, homeless prevention and other supports that are available to a young person leaving State care. However, they do not have access to those supports that are available and are also on reduced social welfare payments (social welfare addressed below in more detail).

Young People Who Experienced Homelessness in Childhood

In support of the point made previously that consideration of the scope of the strategy to be moved beyond the 18-24 year old group, research shows that young people who experience homelessness first as a child are at an increased risk of homelessness and insecure housing as an adult, even when Housing First supports are available.¹⁹ A failure to address homelessness at its source perpetuates cycles of poverty and social exclusion that can have an effect on generations. To reduce the occurrence of homelessness following children as they become young adults, SCI believe that every child should be guaranteed an assigned case worker when identified as homeless or at risk of homelessness. Given the effect of homelessness and precarious housing on a child's health,

¹⁷ https://www.ipav.ie/sites/default/files/rebuilding_ireland_action_plan_for_housing_homelessness.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.endyouthhomelessness.ie/youth-homelessness/rebuilding-ireland/>

¹⁹ <https://bmcp psychiatry.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12888-021-03142-0>

wellbeing, and transition into adulthood, such timely measures need to be guaranteed. This is in line with Government policy, including commitments made in *Housing for All*:

- Action 3.16: Enhance family support and prevention and early intervention services for children and their families through a multiagency and coordinated response, and disseminate innovative practice

Local Authorities, if provided with a discretionary budget, would be able to support special or additional requirements of children and young people experiencing homelessness without delay, particularly those with disabilities or additional needs. Such timely interventions can stop issues compounding and becoming more severe over time.

LGBTQI+ Youth Homelessness

LGBTQI+ people experience higher rates of homelessness than their cis-gendered and straight peers. In Europe, it is estimated that 1 in 5 members of the LGBTQI+ community experiences homelessness, rising to 1 in 3 for Trans people and nearly 40% for intersex people²⁰. While this is not an issue solely associated with youth, studies estimate that a significant percentage of homeless youth are members of the LGBTQI+ community²¹.

LGBTQI+ youth homelessness is a ‘hidden’ form of homelessness due to the absence of systematic data collection about sexual and gender identity. This means the full extent of the issue is not fully known. A recent study into LGBT homeless youth in Ireland²² shed light on the unique difficulties experienced by this group, particularly the invisibility of their homeless experience. A fear of homophobic and transphobic abuse and discrimination means that homeless LGBTQI+ people appear to avoid emergency accommodation where possible making their experience practically invisible and difficult to fully record. This invisibility in turn worsens the situation as policy makers cannot make informed decisions on how to best support this vulnerable group, or even understand the full extent of the issue.

SCI believes that this group needs an increased focus and support, but first we need to take a measured approach to understand the extent of the issue.

Improved supports for Young People in Homelessness

As previously highlighted, a whole-of-government and multi-agency approach is critical when tackling Youth Homelessness and providing wrap around supports. A partnership approach is critically important. A multi-agency partnership that exists between Galway Simon, Galway City Council and Túsla – to ensure youth services are well informed and young people are well supported – is proving effective in the outcomes that it is having for young people. In particular we are seeing increased rates of employment in the group. There is further potential in this model if appropriate housing can be sourced. We acknowledge that this might look different in other areas where working relationships differ, but the core principle of a dedicated partnership service has proven very effective. This wrap around, whole-of-government approach is necessary to lift young people out of homelessness.

²⁰https://www.feantsa.org/public/user/Resources/reports/Youth_Homelessness_in_European_Context_v5.pdf

²¹<https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935X.2016.1151781>

²²<https://researchrepository.ucd.ie/handle/10197/12508>

Supporting Young People Experiencing Homelessness While Pregnant or with Children

Young women experiencing homelessness who are pregnant are particularly in need of support; women who traditionally present later in their pregnancy for antenatal care include younger women (under 24), and women with chaotic lifestyles.²³ 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.²⁴

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 relations resulting in pregnancy and 19% had children.²⁵ A US longitudinal study²⁶ 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.²⁷ 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.

Mental Health and Addiction Supports for those Experiencing Homelessness

There is a tremendous need for mental health supports and addiction services for young people who are at risk of homelessness before they access emergency accommodation, as well as immediate access to this care once they become homeless. There are insufficient treatment supports available to young people with alcohol and drug dependency as well as a lack of provision of mental health and psychological supports for young people in homelessness. The latest 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 9,338.²⁸ 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 Reform²⁹ 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

²³ [Homeless pregnancy toolkit - St Mungo's \(mungos.org\)](https://www.mungos.org/)

²⁴ [Homelessness in pregnancy: perinatal outcomes \(nature.com\)](https://www.nature.com/)

²⁵ <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2019.104387>

²⁶ <https://www.chapinhall.org/research/midwest-evaluation-of-the-adult-functioning-of-former-foster-youth/>

²⁷ [Increase in pregnant women accessing homeless hostels \(rte.ie\)](https://www.rte.ie/)

²⁸ [https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-](https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40785912.html#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20HSE%3A%20%22This,waiting%20more%20than%2012%20months.)

[40785912.html#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20HSE%3A%20%22This,waiting%20more%20than%2012%20months.](https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40785912.html#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20HSE%3A%20%22This,waiting%20more%20than%2012%20months.)

²⁹ <https://www.mentalhealthreform.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Homelessness-and-mental-health-report.pdf>

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.

Economic Supports

Inadequate wages and lower social welfare rates adds an additional barrier to young people looking to lift themselves out of homelessness and achieve housing security. The ESRI's recent *Growing up in Ireland* report gives a stark insight into the real life difficulties of young people living in Ireland today. Despite only 5% of young people not being in education, employment or training – and 87% engaging in higher level education – 1 in 10 reported financial strain, making it difficult to make ends meet.³⁰

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 rates³¹, including those who:

- live independently and receive a state housing support such as Rent Supplement (RS), Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) or Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).
- have dependent children
- are transferring from Disability Allowance to Jobseeker's Allowance
- were in the care of the Child and Family Agency during the 12 months before reaching 18.

Yet despite these necessary exclusions, SCI still encounters young people trapped in homeless services and accessing a lower rate of social welfare. SCI want to ensure that no vulnerable young person who is at risk of homelessness is left with a reduced social welfare payment that can further compound their poverty and housing issues. By working with stakeholders engaging with young people, these gaps can be sufficiently addressed and target initiatives can be implemented. Young people leaving care, for example, can access a higher State allowance of €300 if in full-time education from the age of 18. However, young people with experience of living in alternative care settings have a lower attainment and progress to higher education at lower rates than their majority population peers attainment.³² Munster Technological University acknowledged this gap in educational attainment and in 2021 introduced an initiative to support Care Leavers in third level education, and thus help them retain the higher rate of payment and achieve educational success.³³

Young people in employment are still struggling to lift themselves out of poverty and secure housing. 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.

³⁰ <https://www.esri.ie/news/new-growing-up-in-ireland-research-shows-20-year-olds-negotiating-the-path-to-adulthood-with>

³¹ https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social_welfare/social_welfare_payments/unemployed_people/jobseekers_allowance.html

³² https://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/inline-files/brady-et-al.-2019-care-experienced-young-people-accessing-higher-education-in-ireland-1-1_0.pdf

³³ <https://www.mtu.ie/news/mtu-initiative-for-care-leavers>

Young people are overrepresented in insecure, temporary, and low-paid employment. Given the continued increase in rental costs and the cost of inflation, welfare rates for young people and minimum wages should be reviewed and a roadmap set out to meet the Minimum Essential Standard of Living, as a key homelessness prevention measure.³⁴ Organising our welfare system to ensure people have access to a minimum essential standard of living is a key anti-poverty measure, and can provide young people with the means to prevent homelessness or support to get themselves out of homelessness. The link between poverty and housing insecurity or homelessness is heightened in the context of the current housing crisis with rents now accounting for an average of 55% of a single person's minimum living costs in Dublin, and over a third outside of Dublin.³⁵

Regulation of the Rental Market rental measures

Young people are more likely to rent than older age groups. As highlighted by the ESRI, declining rates of home ownership across generations means more young adults are exposed to the private rental market, where existing affordability issues have been exacerbated by rapidly rising rents in recent years.³⁶

Ireland's rental market is unaffordable and lacks long-term stability. According to the latest Daft.ie rental report, rents in the Q4 2021 were, on average, 10.3% higher than the year previous, across the country, the strongest year-on-year increase in rents since the middle of 2018. The national average asking price of €1,524 for rent is unattainable.³⁷ Such a market is completely unaffordable for a young person on a low wage or social welfare rate, even when supports such as HAP are in place, as outlined by SCI's quarterly *Locked Out* research series.³⁸

We need greater supports for renters, including prevention measures against eviction that will result in homelessness. Reforms and emergency measures for the private rental market during the pandemic, including the rent freeze and moratorium on evictions, had a significant impact on stemming the flow of people into homelessness.

SCI Ireland were pleased to see the Simon Bill (Residential tenancies (Amendment) (Extension of Notice Periods) Bill 2021) pass second stage in Dáil Éireann³⁹ and we urge the Government to safeguard its legal enactment in 2022. The Simon Bill, if enacted, will provide increased protection for those facing eviction and deemed to be at risk of homelessness. Homeless services and local authorities are regularly contacted by people who are coming to the end of a tenancy notice period, and are imminently at risk of homelessness, having been unable to source alternative accommodation. In such a case, if a local authority determine a person or family are 'at risk of homelessness', the amendment will trigger an extension in the notice period for that household to allow time to prevent homelessness. This determination and extension should be accompanied by a commitment to ensure that the individual or family affected will be given all available supports to take advantage of the extension and secure alternative accommodation as soon as possible.

³⁴ <https://www.livingwage.ie/>

³⁵ https://www.livingwage.ie/download/pdf/living_wage_annual_paper_2021-22.pdf

³⁶ <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/CB202104.pdf>

³⁷ https://ww1.daft.ie/report/2021-Q4-rental-daftreport.pdf?d_rd=1

³⁸ <https://www.simon.ie/publication-type/research/>

³⁹

<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>

Summary

Summary of Key Points that the Simon community believe should be considered and included as part of the Youth Homelessness Strategy:

Strengthening the battle against homelessness:

- Operationalise the ETHOS definition of homelessness and work with a range of Stakeholders to uncover the number of young people experiencing hidden homelessness
- A whole-of-government and multi-agency approach to tackling Youth Homelessness replicated at the local level with the involvement of the young person as a stakeholder.
- The scope of the Strategy should be expanded from 18-24 year olds to 13 to 26 in this strategy to ensure meaningful prevention and supports can be put in place.

Health and Mental Health:

- Improved access to mental health and addiction supports needs to be prioritised and guaranteed for young people at risk of homelessness and those living in emergency accommodation.

Preventing Homelessness for Vulnerable Cohorts:

- Young people coming from the care system require additional support to prevent homelessness. Improved data collection is needed to determine the number of young people leaving care that require homeless support. Reforms and reviews of the CAS for Care Leavers and the Protocol on Young People Leaving State Care are needed to ensure all young people leaving care in need of housing support is catered to in a timely way.
- Young People who first experienced homelessness within childhood with their families should be guaranteed a case worker and be entitled to specific support to prevent homelessness in young adulthood and again later in life
- Young people who experienced household disruption as a child or teenager – but did not officially enter State Care – should be entitled to additional social supports, full social welfare payments, and be targeted for homelessness prevention services
- To better support Young People experiencing or at risk of homelessness who identify as LGBTQI+:
 - further research is needed to uncover the hidden nature of this homeless population
 - Training needs to be made readily available to both service users and staff in emergency services on best anti-homophobic and anti-transphobic practice.
 - LGBTQI+ specific homeless prevention and exit measures are required to support this group and reduce the instance of homelessness.
- Young people who are pregnant and become young parents need additional support to ensure good health outcomes, sufficient housing support, and proper health support.

Providing Structural Supports:

- Social welfare payments and minimum wages should be benchmarked to meet the minimum essential standards of living as an anti-poverty measure, and the social welfare rate for all young people under the age of 25 be increased.
- Introduce measures to stabilise the rental market, including the enactment of the Simon Bill (Residential tenancies (Amendment) (Extension of Notice Periods) Bill 2021) in 2022.