

HOUSING, PLANNING, COMMUNITY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT



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WHAT IS THE TRUE LEVEL OF HOMELESSNESS IN THIS STATE?

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What is the true level of homelessness in this state?

The Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local government (DHPCLG) produces a monthly homeless report detailing the number of families, adults and children accessing local authority managed emergency accommodation.

For example, DHPCLG's homeless figures for May 2017 indicate that there are now 2,777 children, 4,922 adults and 1,312 families in emergency accommodation.

The data contained in the report is produced by local authorities through the Pathway Accommodation and Support System (PASS). The data is broken down on a regional basis and via different age groups.

However DHPCLG is not the only government department that funds emergency accommodation.

Through Tusla the Department of Children and Youth Affairs funds domestic violence refuges. Until very recently the Department of Social Protection funded emergency accommodation via the New Communities Unit for families who are, according to the Department, "primarily non-Irish, homeless and generally without recourse to any weekly income."

The Department of Justice funds Direct Provision for adults and children who have secured their leave to remain but are unable to access accommodation either within the private rented sector or via a local authority social housing waiting list.

So the monthly figures are not an accurate reflection of the true level of homelessness in this state and DHPCLG has no idea how many people are actually homeless.

The homeless statistics released by the Department do not include:

- adults and children in Tusla-funded domestic violence refuge accommodation or step-down accommodation
- foreign nationals in transitional or emergency accommodation funded by the Department of Social Protection's new communities unit
- the 399 adults and children that are currently trapped in direct provision or those in transitional accommodation funded by the Reception and Integration Agency, RIA, who have their stamp 4 visas

Tusla cannot give us up to date figures while in the Department of Social Protection in past could not provide accurate figures on the New Communities Unit. The Department of Justice and Equality has provided the figures for direct provision, however these are not counted in the Department of Housing's official monthly figures.

This means that the figures that are being released every month do not reflect the total number of people - adults and children - in emergency accommodation or transitional accommodation.

The inaccuracies of the figures have been raised via parliamentary questions, Housing Committee debates and via questions to the Minister. The responses from the various government departments clearly show that DHPCLG monthly homeless reports significantly underestimate the number of adults and children in emergency accommodation.

Adults and Children in Tusla-funded domestic violence accommodation

According to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), in 2016 Tusla provided €12m for emergency refuge and support services. Unfortunately at the moment Tusla does not collect information in respect of the numbers of women and children who use funded domestic violence refuges and step down accommodation on a month by month basis.

However Tusla data indicates that in 2015, 1,736 women and 2,621 children were forced to leave their homes as a result of domestic violence and were accommodated in domestic violence accommodation. The DCYA has indicated in response to parliamentary questions on the matter that the data on the numbers of women and children who used these services in 2016 will be available in quarter 4 of 2017.

On this basis in 2015 as many as 4,375 women and children being accommodated on a yearly basis in emergency refuge accommodation are not being counted and recognised as being homeless.

If there are no accurate figures being collected and shared between departments how are Tusla and DHPLG meant to know what sort of capacity they need, how much funding is needed and what social supports are necessary to help survivors of domestic violence.

Number not counted: No figures available for 2017, or 2016 and according to DCYA in 2015 1,736 women and 2,621 children = **4,375**

New Communities Unit

The New Communities Unit (NCU) falls under the remit of the Department of Social Protection. The NCU provides assistance to homeless, predominantly non-national families. In response to a series of parliamentary questions submitted from September 2016 the Department of Social Protection stated that:

"Information in relation to the average length of stay of families booked to emergency accommodation by the NCU is neither collated nor retained by the NCU. Similarly data on the number of families that have moved out of emergency accommodation, booked by the NCU, to private rented accommodation or alternative emergency accommodation is also not collated nor retained by the NCU."

It is clear from this response that there was no data available on how many families were being booked into emergency accommodation by the NCU. Therefore they have not been counted in the official DHPCLG figures.

In the latest PQ response from the Department of Social Protection dated the 20th of June 2017 states:

The booking function was transferred to the Central Placement Service on the 22nd May 2017. The NCU has had no housing placement function for homeless persons from that date.

Number not counted- We don't know. Going forward the DHPCLG has stated that; *"all placements into emergency accommodation overseen by housing authorities, irrespective of nationality, are now completed by the relevant housing authority and those persons/households will be included in all future PASS monthly homeless reports published on my Department's website."*

Stamp Four- Former Direct provision residents

According to the Department of Justice there are currently 399 people still resident in direct provision centres despite having been granted some form of leave to remain. These people can access Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and are on the social housing list. However they are still only in receipt of €19:50 per week of JSA, therefore they are not in position to save for a deposit in order to secure a tenancy in the private rented sector. Plus they also encounter significant language and cultural barriers.

These people are stuck in direct provision as they cannot gain access to the housing market and they are another substantial group of people who are not included in the DHPCLG monthly homeless figures.

In the past Sinn Féin has called for the department of Housing in conjunction with the Department of Social Protection to put in place additional support services to assist former asylum seekers who have been granted residency status in order for them to access housing. More must be done to ensure that those who have successfully gotten their status aren't placed at greater risk of homelessness due to a lack of adequate cultural support, advice and interpretation services.

Number not counted: As of June 2017 according to the Department of Justice there are **399 individuals**, 247 adults and 152 children, residing in State provided accommodation with some form of permission to remain in the State.

Sinn Féin recommendations

Both Tusla and the Department of Justice have stated in response to parliamentary questions that there are moves being made towards collating their figures on a monthly basis. The Department of Justice has in fact begun to do so. The latest PQ response from the Department of Social Protection on the New Communities Unit stated that the Central Placement Unit has taken over responsibility for placing homeless people who previously fell under the remit of the NCU.

Sinn Féin believe that DHPCLG in conjunction with that Tusla, the Department of Justice and the Department of Social Protection should produce a monthly report that includes all adults and children in state funded emergency accommodation.

As an interim measure a quarterly report should be compiled consisting of the collated homeless figures. These reports should contain the number of emergency allocations under each department for that quarter. This would include the number of people entering and exiting homelessness and the length of time they have been in emergency accommodation at the end of that quarter.

APPENDIX OF PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Homeless Figures

QUESTION NO. 39

Chun an Aire Tithíochta, Pleanála, Pobail agus Rialtais Áitiúil:

To the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government:

To ask the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if, in view of recent confusion as to when the monthly homeless figures will be released, he will consider publishing the monthly homeless figures within two weeks of the end of the month in question; and if, going forward, he will include adults and children in emergency domestic violence refuges funded by Tusla, non residents in emergency accommodation funded by the new communities unit of the Department of Social Protection or those persons sofa surfing in his department's monthly homeless figures..

- Eoin Ó Broin.

For **ORAL ANSWER** on **Thursday, 19th January, 2017.**

Ref No: 2144/17

REPLY

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney)

The official monthly homelessness data reports provided by housing authorities are produced using the Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS), the single integrated national data information system on State-funded emergency accommodation arrangements overseen by housing authorities. They therefore do not capture details of individuals utilising State-funded emergency accommodation arrangements which are not overseen by housing authorities, such as clients of domestic violence refuges or the New Communities Unit. Any relevant data compilation and management in relation to those clients is a matter for Tusla and the Department of Social Protection respectively. Likewise, persons who may be 'sofa surfing' are not in State-funded emergency accommodation overseen by housing authorities and would not be eligible for inclusion in the official monthly reports or officially regarded as homeless, unless such persons are deemed to be homeless by housing authorities having regard to the criteria set out in section 2 of the Housing Act 1988.

The official monthly reports are published on my Department's website as soon as the data from housing authority reports has been compiled, assessed and verified. While I am not in a position to commit to a target date for the publication of each month's data, I will continue to ensure that the data are published in as timely a manner as possible, taking account of the need to collect the housing authority reports, liaise with the housing authorities on any data quality issues and compile the data into a formal publication, without impacting negatively on the overall quality of the data.

DÁIL QUESTION addressed to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Dr. Katherine Zappone)

by Deputy Eoin Ó Broin

for **WRITTEN ANSWER** on **09/05/2017**

* To ask the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to parliamentary question number 283 of 25 January 2017, the number of adults and children in Tusla funded domestic violence refuges; and the number of adults and children in Tusla funded domestic violence step down accommodation on the first day of each month in 2016..

- Eoin Ó Broin T.D.

REPLY.

As I outlined to the Deputy in my previous response, Tusla does not collect information in respect of the numbers of women and children who use funded domestic violence refuges and step down accommodation on a month by month basis.

Tusla data indicates that in 2015, 1,736 women and 2,621 children were forced to leave their homes as a result of domestic violence and were accommodated in domestic violence accommodation. Data on the numbers of women and children who used these services in 2016 will be available in Quarter 4, 2017.

In 2016, Tusla provided €20.6 million in funding to support the provision of Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) Services. This included funding for some 60 services throughout the country comprising:

- €12.0m for emergency refuge and support services,
- €4.6m for community based domestic violence support services, and
- €4.0m for Rape Crisis Centres.

This year, Tusla is allocating €22.1m to DSGBV services, an increase of €1.5m over 2016.

The provision of domestic violence refuge spaces nationally in 2016 was 155 family units, comprising 147 emergency refuge family units and 8 emergency non-refuge family units.

In 2017, Tusla is giving priority to implementing actions contained in the second National Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence Strategy, in preparation for ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), which includes improving access to services geographically, including the provision of additional short-term and safe, emergency accommodation for women and children.

Direct Provision and Transitional Accommodation

QUESTION NO: 855

DÁIL QUESTION addressed to the Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald)

by Deputy Eoin Ó Broin

for **WRITTEN ANSWER** on **Tuesday, 20th June, 2017.**

* To ask the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of adults and children that have been granted their stamp 4 visa or leave to remain that remain in direct provision or other non permanent accommodation funded by his department on the first day of each month in 2016 and to date in 2017..

- Eoin Ó Broin.

REPLY.

Details of the numbers of persons with a form of status who continue to reside in State provided accommodation are not available on a monthly basis for 2016. What can be said is that the numbers of persons with some form of status residing in State provided accommodation ranged from approximately 450 persons to approximately 600 persons during 2016. The numbers rise and fall as some residents are granted a form of status and others with status move into the community. Over 1,900 persons left the State provided accommodation system during 2016. It is important to note that not all those leaving State provided accommodation would have done so because they received a form of status. The State provided accommodation system is entirely voluntary and some of those leaving the system were exercising their right to live elsewhere.

The collation of information regarding the number of persons with status who had come through the normal protection process is available on a monthly basis from January 2017 and the Reception and Integration Agency will continue to collate this information on an ongoing basis. The table below sets out the information requested by the Deputy:

Month	Number of those with a form of status
January 2017	532
February 2017	454
March 2017	421
April 2017	415
May 2017	396
to date in June 2017	399

QUESTION NO: 282

DÁIL QUESTION addressed to the Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charlie Flanagan)

by Deputy Eoin Ó Broin

for **WRITTEN ANSWER** on **Tuesday, 4th July, 2017.**

*To ask the Minister for Justice and Equality further to parliamentary question number 855 of 20 June 2017, the number of adults and children that are part of the group of 399 persons with a form of status that reside in State provided accommodation..

- Eoin Ó Broin.

REPLY.

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (David Stanton)

As I set out in Parliamentary Question 855 of 20 June 2017, there are 399 persons residing in State provided accommodation with some form of permission to remain in the State. Of those 399 persons, 247 are adults and 152 are children.

New Communities Unit

To the Minister for Social Protection

To ask the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question Number 514 of 31 May 2016, the average length of stay for families housed in the 148 emergency accommodation units in use by the New Communities Units.

- Eoin Ó Broin.

To ask the Minister for Social Protection if the new communities unit shares information on the persons they accommodate with the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government or other authority with responsibility for housing.

- Eoin Ó Broin.

for **WRITTEN ANSWER** on **Friday, 16th September, 2016.**

REPLY

Minister for Social Protection (Leo Varadkar T.D.):

It is proposed to take Question Nos. 688 and 690 together.

As the Deputy is aware from the response to an earlier parliamentary question, the New Communities Unit (NCU) of my Department offers assistance to families who are primarily non-Irish, homeless and generally without recourse to any weekly income. The main focus of this unit is to ensure that families with an entitlement receive an income maintenance payment, under the terms of the relevant legislation. In addition, non-Irish homeless families have been referred to this unit directly by the Central Placement Service, operated on behalf of the four local authorities by Dublin City Council, and the staff in the NCU have facilitated booking these people into emergency accommodation. This accommodation is sourced and funded by Dublin City Council under Section 10 of the Housing Act (1988). The practice, whereby staff in the NCU act as booking agents in such circumstances, is a residual one from when the NCU was based in the HSE. Officials from my Department are considering the appropriateness and nature of the NCU's involvement in the delivery of this service at present.

Information in relation to the average length of stay of families booked to emergency accommodation by the NCU is not collated or retained by my Department. In facilitating the booking of people to emergency accommodation, the NCU contacts the accommodation provider directly to make the booking. Notification in relation to those persons accommodated in emergency accommodation is part of the reporting relationship between the accommodation provider and its funder and the NCU does not have a role in this.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

To the Minister for Social Protection

To ask the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons that the staff in the new communities unit have booked into emergency accommodation, by month in 2016 and to date in 2017.

- Eoin Ó Broin.

for **WRITTEN ANSWER** on **Tuesday, 20th June, 2017.**

REPLY**Minister for Social Protection (Regina Doherty, T.D):**

As the Deputy is aware from previous PQ responses on this matter, the New Communities Unit (NCU) of the Department of Social Protection offers assistance to families who are primarily non-Irish, homeless and generally without recourse to any weekly income. The main focus of the unit is to ensure that families who are entitled an income maintenance payment receive same, under the terms of the relevant legislation. In addition, non-Irish homeless families have been referred to this unit directly by the Central Placement Service, operated on behalf of the four local authorities by Dublin City Council, and the staff in the NCU facilitated booking these people into emergency accommodation. This accommodation is sourced and funded by Dublin City Council under Section 10 of the Housing Act (1988). The practice, whereby staff in the NCU act as booking agents in such circumstances, was a residual one from when the NCU was based in the HSE.

Information in relation to the number of persons booked to emergency accommodation by the NCU was neither collated nor retained by the NCU. In facilitating the booking of people to emergency accommodation, the NCU contacted the accommodation provider directly to make the booking. Notification in relation to those persons accommodated in emergency accommodation is part of the reporting relationship between the accommodation provider and its funder; the NCU did not have a role in this.

The booking function was transferred to the Central Placement Service on the 22nd May 2017. The NCU has had no housing placement function for homeless persons from that date.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

QUESTION NO: 646

DÁIL QUESTION addressed to the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy)

by Deputy Eoin Ó Broin

for **WRITTEN ANSWER** on **04/07/2017**

To ask the Minister for Housing; Planning; Community and Local Government further to parliamentary question number 2100 of 20 June 2017, if these persons will now be included in his department's monthly homeless statistics in view of the fact it is now sourced and funded by Dublin city council under section 10 of the Housing Act 1988 (details supplied). (Details Supplied) as the central placement service is now responsible for booking persons into emergency accommodation and not the new communities unit

- Eoin Ó Broin.

REPLY.

Draft

Official homeless reports are published on my Department's website and can be accessed using the following link: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/homelessness/other/homelessness-data>.

These reports are based on data provided by housing authorities and produced through the Pathway Accommodation & Support System (PASS), the single integrated national data information system on State-funded emergency accommodation arrangements overseen by housing authorities. These reports are published on a monthly basis capturing details of individuals utilising State-funded emergency accommodation arrangements that are overseen by housing authorities.

With effect from 22 May 2017, the Department of Social Protection's New Communities Unit have no role in the placement or administration of emergency accommodation. All placements into emergency accommodation overseen by housing authorities, irrespective of nationality, are now completed by the relevant housing authority and those persons/households will be included in all future PASS monthly homeless reports published on my Department's website.





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