

To the Lord Mayor and

City Councillors

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## Re: Briefing/update on COVID 19-Homelessness

Dear Lord Mayor and Councillors,

Over recent weeks, the Dublin Region Homeless Executive under the auspices of Dublin City Council has experienced an unprecedented demand on services for Homeless families and individuals. We are working tirelessly with the other Dublin Local Authorities and our charity partners and some private operators to ensure that there has been and will be no disruption to these services. Whilst taking into consideration advice from the HSE regarding social distancing, etc., we are also mindful of our staff at this time who are working hard to ensure arrangements are in place for all our service users, so that everyone feels safe, secure and supported throughout this COVID 19 period.

It is important for us to reiterate that the DRHE/DCC remain open for business and continue to provide a broad range of critical services and we will continue to provide these services in partnership with the HSE and all our charity partners. We want to sincerely thank all our partners and other stakeholders for their continued support and collaborative efforts.

In the last two weeks, we have sourced the following new accommodation:

- 160 self-contained apartments
- 197 en-suite bedrooms in hotels, and
- 300 adult single occupancy beds

The opportunity to source such accommodation is an indication of the very significant change that has occurred in the private property market as a result of COVID 19. We will continue to source as much alternative accommodation as possible in the days and weeks ahead. We have received strong support from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government for this course of action.

This additional accommodation for single persons will allow us to reduce the concentration of individuals (Sharing) in our existing hostels that will allow them to provide improved safe distancing options. Indeed, the process of moving our residents has already begun, with numbers residing in shared emergency accommodation reducing on a daily basis.

The following is an overview of the key actions that have been and are being taken by the DRHE/DCC to ensure we provide appropriate and safe services for persons in emergency accommodation.

## **Accommodation**

We have been consulting with our charity partners and private operators regarding contingency plans across homeless services and have introduced a range of precautions aimed at minimising the risk of infection among service users and staff, including hygiene arrangements and limiting the need for travel and movement between services. This communication with service providers also includes the implementation of measures to firstly reduce the spread of COVID 19 and thereafter to deal with persons who need to quarantine, self-isolate or positive cases who need separate accommodation.

## **Actions:**

- The additional accommodation as it comes on stream will ensure that there is sufficient capacity to allow for isolation of suspected or confirmed cases of COVID 19.
- In consultation with the HSE, we are identifying high-risk individuals currently residing in emergency accommodation and we are in the process of moving these people to separate cocooning facilities.
- All service providers are putting in place self-isolation facilities within their own premises.
- We have converted all one night only accommodation (where clients would have been expected to vacate during the day) and this is now 24 hour with meals being provided on site. This minimises the need for any residents to exit during the day and it eliminates the need for them to be outdoors and risking contact with others.
- We are in the process of arranging the provision of food to all facilities where this particular service has been restricted or stopped because of Covid19. Hotel living is proving to be a challenge for service users and we are working with the hotel operators to extend meal times in the hotels and are actively looking at other options.

- Our Housing support officers and charity partners are linked in with all families staying in contracted commercial accommodation and hubs. Our Housing Support Officers can be contacted at : **01 222 7414** or by email [housingsupport@dublincity.ie](mailto:housingsupport@dublincity.ie)
- We are in constant communication with service managers in the various premises throughout the region, discussing and implementing contingency plans to ensure that all services remain fully operational.
- Dublin Simon Outreach and PMVT Intake team continue to work proactively on the streets on behalf of the DRHE, offering advice and accommodation to all rough sleepers
- We are continuing to support families and vulnerable persons to move into tenancies through HAP and social housing.

### **Testing on any suspected cases is arranged via GPs or Safetynet.**

Safetynet Primary Care is a registered charity funded by the HSE, it offers a comprehensive primary health care service targeted at people who are experiencing homelessness in Dublin. The programme makes services more accessible by locating medical and social support services in the agencies and services where homeless people attend for support. Safetynet are currently carrying out Covid19 testing in our hostels where they are prioritising the most vulnerable.

In addition, the HSE has put plans in place to ensure additional services required by our clients, outside of COVID 19 continue. Safetynet contact details are on the DRHE website and twitter accounts. <https://www.primarycaresafetynet.ie>.

### **Communication**

We have a dedicated communications team and as the HSE issue guidelines they are forwarded immediately to all our charity partners, private operators and voluntary groups. Signage and guidance for service uses and staff is also circulated to service providers. The HSE has taken the lead on all media queries relating to Covid19. However, to keep the public informed, the DRHE website is updated daily – see [www.homelessdublin.ie/covid19](http://www.homelessdublin.ie/covid19)

- Notices have been widely circulated and displayed (including on-line) encouraging homeless family/individuals to contact staff in the DRHE should they have any questions and concerns.

- We are anxious that people are encouraged to contact us so we can respond and alleviate any concerns they may have at this time. See useful numbers on the next page for all contact details.
- The Homeless Freephone number **1800 707 707** for access to emergency accommodation out of hours for the Dublin region has been extended - 10am to 2am 7 days a week.
- Staff in both Parkgate Street and the Civic Offices are on site and are continuing to operate our services, with support offered by telephone or appointment to avoid congregation in public spaces.
- Over 40 staff members have the capacity to work remotely so there will be no disruption of services.
- We remain a critical service and will continue to operate in the current crisis circumstances.

We very much appreciate and acknowledge the great support, co-operation and assistance that we are getting from all our partners and various voluntary groups in the region. We also want to give great credit to our hardworking and committed management team and staff who are very much in the frontline of this crisis.

Finally, we would encourage any individuals in our services, to make contact with the DRHE if they have any concerns. These are unprecedented times and we here in the DRHE/DCC are working hard to provide a full range of services and information to all.

email [www.homelessdublin.ie](http://www.homelessdublin.ie)

twitter @homelessdublin

**Eileen Gleeson**

**Director,  
Dublin Region Homeless Executive,**

**Brendan Kenny**

**Deputy Chief Executive,  
Dublin City Council**

## Useful contacts

**Central Placement Service for singles and couples;** Tel: 01 - 222 6944 Monday to Friday: 10.00am – 4.00pm. Email: [homelesscps@dublincity.ie](mailto:homelesscps@dublincity.ie)

**Central Placement Service for families;** Tel: 01 – 222 6977 Monday to Friday: 10.00am – 4.00pm. Email: [family.support@dublincity.ie](mailto:family.support@dublincity.ie)

**Homeless FREEPHONE 1800 707 707;** for access to emergency accommodation out of hours for the Dublin Region, extended hours - 10.00am to 2.00am 7 days a week;

**Housing Support Officers** providing housing advice and move on options to families in emergency accommodation. Tel: 01 222 7414 Monday to Friday: 10.00am – 4.00pm. Email: [housingsupport@dublincity.ie](mailto:housingsupport@dublincity.ie)

**Homeless HAP** Tel: 01 – 222 6955 Monday to Friday: 10.00am – 4.00pm. Email: [homelesshap@dublincity.ie](mailto:homelesshap@dublincity.ie)

**Fingal County Council** Homeless Section Tel 01 890 5090  
Monday to Friday 9am to 4.30pm email [homeless@fingal.ie](mailto:homeless@fingal.ie)

**South Dublin County Council** Homeless Section Tel: 01 414 9364  
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm [sdcchomeless@sdublincoco.ie](mailto:sdcchomeless@sdublincoco.ie)

**Dún Laoghaire – Rathdown County Council** Homeless Section Tel; 01 205 4804  
Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm email: [homeless@dlrcoco.ie](mailto:homeless@dlrcoco.ie)