Home Works:

A Study on the Educational
Needs of Children Experiencing
Homelessness and Living
in Emergency Accommodation

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ALLIANCE
Uniting Voices For Children

Dr. Geraldine Scanlon
Grainne McKenna

The Community Foundation for Ireland

Contents

Home is the foundation for almost everything in a child's life. It is the place where they spend most of their time, where they play, relax, do their homework, eat their meals and sleep. Home should be warm, secure and safe. Home is where family is. A good home forms the essential basis that prepares a child to go to school, to learn and to thrive. Emergency accommodation over time does not provide this necessary foundation, despite the colossal efforts of schools and parents. There are nearly 4,000 children who are homeless in Ireland right now in the midst of a national housing emergency.

This report is the first time of its kind, looking at the educational impacts of homelessness on children. Important lessons were learnt after the devastating Hurricane Katrina in the US some years ago which left so many families homeless. There it was found that the school played a vital role in enabling children to access support, reducing distress and improving academic achievement. Many of these lessons could be applied here in Ireland.

Children who are homeless lose out on every level of their education because they have no home to provide them with the backdrop that they need to learn and grow. Let me paint the picture of what child homelessness looks like on a day-to-day level and the dreadful effect this has on their schooling. For a child, life in homeless accommodation can be tough. They wake up in the one room they share with their parents and siblings. Some must wake their children as early as 5:30am to make the long journey across the city to school. Many are exhausted and some fall asleep in class. School attendance is affected. The child is hungry because often there is nowhere to store food or prepare breakfast or their lunchbox. The child doesn't always have adequate washing facilities and sometimes goes to school with a dirty uniform.

Homeless accommodation makes it almost impossible for parents to establish regular routines. Parents say this can result in changes to their child's behaviour with many children 'acting out'. Others are sad or withdrawn from their peers as they struggle with the shame and secrecy they feel.

When the child returns to their accommodation after school, there is no place to do homework. There is nowhere to rest or play. They can't invite their friends back and it's tricky to go to birthday parties or sports clubs because they live so far from their communities. A child's sense of belonging and their friendships are negatively impacted. Children are denied the opportunity for academic achievement but also the important social experiences children need to develop their personality and abilities. A child living in homelessness is not able to enjoy their childhood.

All aspects of their educational experience are grossly impacted upon.

The backdrop for many families is poverty, social disadvantage and domestic violence. The stories are heart-breaking. One mother and her three children had to sleep in the family car for two weeks before moving to a hotel. Another family with five children became homeless when their home burnt down in a fire. Some children have disabilities or additional needs, adding to an already excruciating and difficult scenario for families.

In spite of the many intolerable demands, parents do an amazing job in raising their children and continuing to send them to school. Parents have high aspirations, desperately wanting their children to do well. Yet, they also know that their children's education is impeded by low energy, fatigue and illness due to a lack of rest, food and access to health services – all caused by homelessness.

Schools are a beacon of hope for families. They provide a stability and consistency that is otherwise absent in the child's life, and play a vital role in supporting families. Yet sometimes educational professionals say they feel helpless and badly need more resources to help them to cope.

Children need action now or we will lose a generation. We urgently need to address child homelessness and provide families with sustainable, affordable and social housing options. Specifically, we need a coordinated approach and dedicated actions to support children who are homeless in their everyday schooling or for younger children, early years supports. More information and service planning is needed to make sure that no child falls through the homeless gap.

Most of all, we need political will and concerted action from all in society to end the scourge of child homelessness so every child can learn, grow and flourish.

Tanya Ward
Chief Executive

Children need action now or we will lose a generation. We urgently need to address child homelessness and provide families with sustainable, affordable and social housing options.

Acknowledgements

This research could not have been completed without the participation of the parents who shared their lived experiences of family homelessness. Despite an acute sense of loss and high levels of housing insecurity and disruption, parents participated with absolute generosity. They articulated deeply personal experiences of parenting amid the stress, sadness and isolation resulting from homelessness.

The Children's Rights Alliance and the authors are most grateful to the individuals working in organisations that support homeless families who facilitated access to parents and provided the research team with space and time to meet with families.

We would like to acknowledge the important contributions made by educational professionals including principals, teachers, early childhood educators and home-school liaison teams. We would also like to recognise the professional support of Noel Kelly, the Director of Educational Welfare Services with Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. The support of the Irish Primary Principals Network, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the Joint Managerial Board was much appreciated in piloting and disseminating the survey to educational professionals.

We would like to thank the DCU Institute of Education and Dr Alison Doyle who provided insight and expertise which greatly assisted the research.

Sincere thanks also to the Educational Disadvantage Centre in Dublin City University (DCU) for their vital support.

The Children's Rights Alliance and the authors wish to thank the members of the Steering Group:

• Moira Leydon, Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI)

• Lisa Collins, ISPCC

• Tricia Keilthy and Jennifer Thompson, Society of St. Vincent de Paul

• Niamh Randall and Helen McCormack, Simon Communities of Ireland

• Maria Doyle, Irish Primary Principals Network

• Margaret Burns, Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice

• Milica Atanackovic, Early Childhood Ireland

• Maeve McCafferty, Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)

• Niamh Kelly and June Tinsley, Barnardos

• Finula Haran, National Parents' Council Post Primary

• Bernie Boyle and Alison Connolly, Focus Ireland

• Tanya Blyth, Peter McVerry Trust

Children's Rights Alliance members (as at July 2018)

22q11
Ag Eisteacht
Alcohol Action Ireland
Amnesty International Ireland
An Cosán
ASH Ireland
Assoc. for Criminal Justice Research and Development (ACJRD)
Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI)
ATD Fourth World – Ireland Ltd
Atheist Ireland
Autism Network Ireland
Barnardos
Barretstown Camp
Bedford Row Family Project
BeLonG To Youth Services
Care Leavers' Network
Catholic Guides of Ireland
Child Care Law Reporting Project
Childhood Development Initiative
Children in Hospital Ireland
COPE Galway
Cork Life Centre
Crosscare
Cybersafe
Dental Health Foundation of Ireland
Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, UCC
Disability Federation of Ireland
Down Syndrome Ireland
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre
Early Childhood Ireland
Educate Together
EPIC
EQUATE
Extern Ireland
Focus Ireland
Foróige
Future Voices Ireland
Gaelscoileanna Teo
GLEN- the LGBTI equality network
Immigrant Council of Ireland
Inclusion Ireland
Independent Hospitals Association of Ireland
Institute of Guidance Counsellors
Irish Aftercare Network
Irish Association for Infant Mental Health
Irish Association of Social Workers
Irish Centre for Human Rights, NUI Galway
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL)
Irish Foster Care Association
Irish Girl Guides
Irish Heart Foundation
Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO)
Irish Penal Reform Trust
Irish Primary Principals Network
Irish Refugee Council
Irish Second Level Students' Union (ISSU)

Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
Irish Traveller Movement
Irish Youth Foundation (IYF)
Jack & Jill Children's Foundation
Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice
Jigsaw
Kids' Own Publishing Partnership
Law Centre for Children and Young People
Lifestart National Office
Mental Health Reform
Mercy Law Resource Centre
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
Mothers' Union
Mounttown Neighbourhood Youth and Family Project
Museum of Childhood Project
MyMind
National Childhood Network
National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers (NOTA)
National Parents Council Post Primary
National Parents Council Primary
National Youth Council of Ireland
One Family
One in Four
Parentstop
Pavee Point
Peter McVerry Trust
Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI)
Realt Beag
SAFE Ireland
Saoirse Housing Association
SAOL Beag Children's Centre
Scouting Ireland
School of Education UCD
Sexual Violence Centre Cork
Simon Communities of Ireland
Social Care Ireland
Society of St. Vincent de Paul
Sonas Domestic Violence Charity
Special Needs Parents Association
SPHE Network
SpunOut.ie
St. Nicholas Montessori College
St. Nicholas Montessori Teachers' Association
St. Patrick's Mental Health Services
Step by Step Child & Family Project
Suas Educational Development
Teachers' Union of Ireland
Terenure Rugby Football Club
The Ark, A Cultural Centre for Children
The Prevention and Early Intervention Network
The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway
Traveller Visibility Group Ltd
Treoir
UNICEF Ireland
youngballymun
Youth Advocate Programme Ireland (YAP)
Youth Work Ireland

1

Introduction

1. Review international and national research on the impact of homelessness on children's education.

2. Gain insights into the lives and educational experiences of children that are living in homeless accommodation in the greater Dublin region.

3. Explore the types of educational provision that children are attending including early childhood settings, primary schools, and secondary schools.

4. Gain insights into the experience of principals, teachers and educational professionals working with children who are experiencing homelessness.

5. Provide clear, achievable and tangible recommendations that will support and enhance access to education for children experiencing homelessness.

In Ireland, families are the largest and fastest growing group experiencing homelessness, and figures from the *Homelessness Report* from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, February 2018, indicate that children and their families accounted for 63 per cent of Ireland's officially recorded homeless population. The number of families living in emergency accommodation has been steadily increasing since 2014 when rates of family homelessness were described as an 'emergency crisis' (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2014, p.13). In December 2014, official figures indicated a total of 407 families, with 880 dependent children accessing homeless accommodation. By February 2018, the number of families in such accommodation had more than tripled, with 1,739 families, including 2,431 parents and 3,755 dependent children officially recorded as homeless (Department of Housing,

Planning and Local Government, 2018). While the majority of homeless families (76 per cent) are located within the greater Dublin region, the crisis has extended beyond the capital and rates of family homelessness outside the Dublin region have more than doubled in one year; increasing from 165 in January 2017 to 410 families in February 2018 (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2018).

Access to a free primary education is enshrined in the Irish Constitution (Article 42), and further recognised by the State's signature and ratification of the UNCRC in 1992. Despite this, the current phenomenon of family homelessness is having a detrimental impact on children's participation and development of rights. Across Ireland, parents, child-care settings and schools are attempting to respond to the unprecedented phenomena of child

homelessness and its impact on children's educational access and engagement. In October 2017, the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) reported that children who are experiencing homelessness struggle in school and despite the increasing numbers, there is 'no support for hard-pressed teachers, no advice, no guidance and no additional resources' (INTO, 2017).

While current figures and demographic data indicate the alarming extent of the crisis, it is essential to try to understand the effects and potential impact of homelessness on the everyday lives of children. The experience must be considered in a child-centred context that includes their educational experiences and school-related issues including school attendance, academic achievement, participation and social engagement in their school communities. The objectives of this study were to:

Outline

While the experience of homelessness is disruptive to many areas of children's lives and development, this study focussed on children's experiences and participation in education from the perspective of their parents. The study considered children who were enrolled in and attending early childhood settings (child-care settings), primary and secondary schools.

Chapter Two outlines the research approach adopted, describing how families were recruited to the study and the ethical principles which informed the research strategy, the data collection and data analysis are detailed.

Chapter Three provides a brief overview of the available national and international literature and research

evidence related to the educational experiences of children experiencing homelessness. This includes the impact of homelessness on children's engagement in education from the perspective of children and parents, as well as consideration of the potential tempering effect of schools and educational settings.

Chapter Four presents the key findings from interviews with parents. Section One provides demographic information, including family composition, current accommodation, and pathways into homelessness. Section Two details the parents' perspectives on how homelessness has impacted on their children's daily lives and educational experiences; this information is presented within a framework of need including basic physiological needs, safety and security, friendship and belonging and children's attitudes to school and academic aspirations within an educational context.

Chapter Five presents the key findings of the questionnaire and interviews with educational professionals. Section One of the chapter provides an overview of the findings from quantitative surveys of professionals and presents a set of indicators for children experiencing homelessness within the framework of need as identified in Chapter Four. Section Two offers insights from educational professionals on the impact of homelessness on the educational experiences of children living in emergency accommodation.

Chapter Six draws conclusions from the findings and analysis and presents recommendations that may alleviate the adverse effects and potential long-term impact of homelessness on children's educational experiences.

2

Methodology and Methods

Research Approach

The study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of children's access to education and school participation while experiencing homelessness. The approach recognises the importance and authenticity of the lived experiences of families who are living in temporary and emergency accommodation. It also aims to share the attitudes and experiences of educational professionals working in schools and child-care settings who provide care and education for children who are homeless.

A mixed-method research design was adopted, involving three separate stages. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents of children experiencing homelessness. A survey questionnaire was completed by educational professionals working in primary and post-primary schools in the greater Dublin region, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with school principals, teachers, home-school liaison officers and early childhood professionals working directly with children experiencing homelessness. The study commenced in June 2017, with data collection taking place from July 2017 to November 2017.

Ethical Considerations

Research ethics approval was obtained from the DCU Research Ethics Committee which aims to promote the highest ethical standards in all research at Dublin City University and to ensure that all research participants are respected and their rights promoted.

In devising the questions and in conducting the interviews, consideration was given to the protection of participants' physical, social and psychological well-being and researchers were cognisant that participants might have experienced poverty, exclusion, and trauma. All methodologies were developed and delivered in such a way as to not further traumatise or stigmatise participants engaging in the research. Within the ethical principles of research with vulnerable populations, an 'ethics as process' approach (Ramcharan and Cutcliffe, 2001) was adopted and remained central to the methodological approach throughout the research. This approach afforded participants the ongoing opportunity to negotiate consent to participate, take breaks when and where required and to withdraw from the interview at any stage. Parents were provided with a €50 voucher as a token of appreciation for their contribution to the study.

Recruitment

▶ Parents and Families

A purposeful approach to sampling was employed, with the research team seeking participation from families with children aged three months to 18 years, who were attending child-care or educational settings who were living in emergency accommodation as well as temporary provision including family hubs and transitional accommodation. Recruitment of families was supported by agencies, services, and educational settings currently working with and making provision for children and families experiencing homelessness. Professionals working in family resource centres, child-care settings, family accommodation hubs for homeless families and homeless charities approached parents and invited them to participate, providing them with an outline of the study that described the research aims and objectives and contact information for the research team. Where parents expressed an interest in participation, they provided their contact information to the research team through professionals working with the children and families or by making direct contact with the research team. Parents were then contacted by telephone and invited to meet with the researcher at a convenient location, typically their accommodation or the child's educational setting. The researcher explained the purpose of the study as well as outlining issues of informed consent and confidentiality and parents were invited to ask questions and seek clarification. Parents who opted to participate then agreed the time and location for the interview. Before the interview parents were reminded of the aims and objectives of the research and were asked to complete written consent forms, including permission to record and transcribe interviews.

Parents were asked if the research team could speak with staff from their child's educational setting, and where parents agreed, written permission to contact the school was completed. All parents were provided with contact information for the research team if they had any questions or concerns following completion of the interview.

▶ Educational Professionals

Educational professionals making provision for children experiencing homelessness were invited to complete the online surveys that were disseminated by email through professional educational networks and bodies. This included the Irish Primary Principals' Network, the Joint Managerial Body for School Management in Voluntary Secondary Schools (JMB), the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI), Educate Together Principals' Network, the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD), and City and County Childcare Committees in the greater Dublin region. The link was also posted on Twitter to encourage responses from educational professionals working in primary and post-primary schools in the greater Dublin region.

Where parents provided permission for the research team to contact their child's school or child-care setting (13), principals and school staff from the child's school were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview.

Participants

▶ Parents and Families

A total of 20 parents from 19 families participated in the study. The families had a total of 38 dependent children, 19 girls and 19 boys, with ages ranging from five months to 17 years. The interviews explored the educational-related experiences of 36 children aged two years to 15 years who were enrolled in educational settings. At the time of the interview, four families were living in emergency accommodation, and fourteen families were in temporary or transitional accommodation in the greater Dublin region. One family had been living in emergency accommodation but had been provided with longer-term housing during the period of data collection.

▶ Educational Professionals

Forty-six educational professionals from 25 primary schools and 21 secondary schools across the greater Dublin region completed the online survey. These educational professionals indicated that they were working with children experiencing homelessness. This included, primary principals (6): post primary principals (9): vice-principals (2), primary teachers (9), post primary teachers (7), year head (2), guidance counsellor (2), home school liaison officers (4) and others (5). The survey included representation from; Post-Primary DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) (8) Post-Primary Non-DEIS (13): Primary DEIS Band 1 (4): Primary DEIS Band 2 (4): Primary Non-DEIS (7).

Eight educational professionals offering educational provision for children experiencing homelessness participated in the semi-structured interviews. The sample included primary school principals (4) Home-School Liaison Coordinator (HSLC) (1), resource teacher (1) class teacher (1) and a child-care provider (1).

Data Collection

▶ Interviews with Parents

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews (Appendix A) were completed at venues selected by the parents, with interviews typically lasting for 60 to 90 minutes. Parents provided demographic information as well as details of family composition and their pathway to living in emergency accommodation. Timelines were used to gain an understanding of the transition experienced by parents and children; from having a home of their own to living in emergency and temporary accommodation. Parents were asked to describe a 'typical' school-day while living in homeless accommodation, providing details on daily routines, including; morning and bed-time routines, travel times, mealtimes and food preparation, space and time for homework and opportunities for rest and relaxation.

Parents were asked to describe their children's experience of education during the period of homelessness with emphasis placed on their children's educational participation and engagement. This included children's attendance and punctuality, attitudes to school, relationships with school staff and peers, participation and involvement in school networks and extra-curricular activities as well as educational aspirations. Parents were also asked to describe the supports and systems that schools and child-care settings could offer to support the educational experience of children experiencing homelessness.

▶ Survey of Educational Professionals

Three separate surveys were developed, informed by indicators of educational need emerging from the parent interviews and literature review. The surveys were administered using Google Forms, and educational professionals

accessed the survey by way of a link sent by email. The surveys were also made available on the websites of professional educational networks and bodies, and Twitter. On activating the link, the first page introduced the topic, explained the level of engagement required and confirmed participants' anonymity. Contact details for the researcher were also provided. Participation and completion of the survey confirmed informed consent.

The online surveys were piloted in early September 2017 by representatives from the Joint Managerial Body for School Management in Voluntary Secondary Schools (JMB), the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN), and a County Childcare Committee. The representatives provided feedback on usability, the clarity of questions and the perceived relevance of the key indicators of need across the relevant educational settings.

The finalised surveys were designed to be completed within 40 minutes and were administered to three separate groups of educational professionals. These included (1) Principals and vice-principals (Appendix B), (2) Educational professionals in primary and post-primary schools (Appendix C), and (3) Early childhood professionals (Appendix D).

The online survey focused on the experiences of the educational professional in five key areas:

• The provision in schools for pupils who are experiencing homelessness;
• Discussion and professional dialogue concerning pupils experiencing homelessness;
• Perceptions of education-related needs for pupils experiencing homelessness;
• The impact of homelessness on pupils' continuity of learning; and
• Indicators of children's education-related needs.

The early childhood professionals survey yielded a relatively low response rate (5) and, as a result, it was difficult to draw comparisons from the data obtained so this has been subsequently omitted from the study. However, service profiles were completed for early childhood settings and a semi-structured interview completed with one early childhood service provider that was making provision for 19 children experiencing homelessness, including four children whose parents participated in the study.

▶ Interviews with Educational Professionals

Semi-structured interviews were completed in schools and lasted no longer than 60 minutes. The interview schedule was developed as a result of the themes that emerged from the educational professionals' survey and the findings emerging from individual parent interviews.

Principals and school staff were asked to describe the in-school provision that was available for children experiencing homelessness, as well as their experiences of communicating and sharing information with parents and other professionals. Participants were asked to share their perceptions of children's education-related needs and describe the strategies and supports that were available or required within the school setting. As with the parent interviews, educational professionals were asked to explain how living in temporary, or emergency accommodation can affect children's attendance and punctuality, attitudes to school, relationships with school staff and peers, participation in extra-curricular activities and children's academic self-concept and educational aspirations. Finally, educational professionals were asked to consider the types of supports that would assist them in meeting the education-related

needs of children experiencing homelessness; this included recommendations at a policy level as well as adjustments within their school and community context.

Data Analysis

▶ Interviews with Parents and Educational Professionals

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed and QDA Miner software was used to enable coding and thematic analysis. Analysis was completed using six phases of thematic data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006):

1. Recording and transcriptions were read and re-listened to, within the context of children's educational experiences and the key themes which had emerged from the literature review.

2. Initial coding of comments and features related to children's educational experiences and school participation was undertaken.

3. Comments were collated into proposed themes, and an initial framework of education-related needs and corresponding code-book developed.

4. Codes were applied to four interviews with review of the code frequency and text retrieval to ensure distinction between framework themes. The reviewed codes across the four thematic areas were then applied to the full data-set.

5. The data-set was further analysed including through secondary coding within the four thematic areas and across the different types of educational provision: early childhood settings, primary schools and secondary schools.

6. Finally, coded and categorised text was exported to Microsoft Excel to allow for final analysis alongside demographic information and a selection of illustrative examples.

▶ Survey of Educational Professionals

The quantitative analysis of all closed questions was conducted using Google Docs and summarised all responses. Each question was then filtered to focus on specific data sets and identify trends across schools and educational professionals. Survey questions, which were open questions, were analysed manually.

Study Strengths and Limitations

A key strength of this study was the employment of a mixed methodology approach, involving a literature review, semi-structured interviews with parents of children living in emergency accommodation, online surveys for educational professionals, and semi-structured interviews with educational professionals. The semi-structured interviews provided the research team with an opportunity to expand on the themes that had emerged from both the literature review and the quantitative findings from the online surveys. Consequently, the data that emerged from educational professionals who had been identified by parents was triangulated, capturing the authentic lived experiences of participants.

Some limitations can also be observed in this study. Firstly, given the sample size, the authors cannot generalise these findings to the experiences of all stakeholders concerned with the educational experiences of children living in homelessness accommodation. Secondly, the sample size from the

educational professionals was small (46) and was not evenly distributed across school type. Thirdly, due to the low response rate from early childhood professionals, the quantitative data from this group was omitted, and the wider insights and experiences of child-care providers who are working with children living in emergency accommodation is limited. However, service profiles were completed for the six early childhood settings that children were attending, and an in-depth qualitative interview was completed with an early childhood service provider that currently offers educational provision to 19 children experiencing homelessness. Finally, although the research sought to explore the impact of homelessness on children's participation, due to ethical considerations and a limited timeframe for completion of the study, the voice of the child is absent in this report. Notwithstanding the limitations of this small-scale research, it is hoped the findings will inform and facilitate broader discussion on the impact of being homeless on children's educational experiences and school participation and contribute to the development of policy and practice in this regard.

3

Literature Review

The Context

The current phenomenon of child and family homelessness has been caused by a number of economic factors including, the lack of the availability of social and affordable housing, mortgage arrears and a reduced amount of properties available for rent in the private market (Hearne and Murphy, 2017). Consequently, families, who for a variety of reasons, have found themselves homeless are being accommodated through state funding in various types of accommodation including, bed and breakfasts, hotels and family hubs throughout Dublin city and county (Children's Rights Alliance, 2017).

Monthly figures released by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government do not provide demographic specifics of dependent children's age-range,

although figures from Focus Ireland's Survey of Families that became homeless from March 2017 and June 2017 suggest that children aged zero to four years account for between 35-45 per cent of the total number of children experiencing family homelessness by five-year age grouping (Sheridan, 2017; Hoey and Sheridan, 2017).

This phenomenon has resulted in early childhood settings, primary and post-primary schools, facilitating children who have been displaced from their communities as a result of being accommodated outside their locality and as a result are experiencing longer journeys to school while others have had to transition to new schools. Teachers can visibly see the effects of how being placed in temporary accommodation is affecting these pupils' ability to engage in, and participate fully in school life (INTO, 2017).

Legal Obligations

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) recognises that childhood is a distinct phase, and that children from birth to 18 years, while dependent on adults, have special rights and require special protection. In 1992, Ireland made a commitment to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights when the State ratified the UNCRC. In doing so, Ireland made legally binding commitments to the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities. The UNCRC obliges the State and responsible stakeholders to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights. It demands that in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the

best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration (Article 3).

The UNCRC makes clear the State's obligation to safeguard the rights of all children. This includes the right to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (Article 27), the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24) and provisions to ensure that children with additional and special needs can enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community (Article 23).

Access to a free primary education is enshrined in the Irish Constitution (Article 42), and further recognised by the State's ratification of the UNCRC. Educational rights are embedded throughout the UNCRC, placing responsibility on the State to ensure educational provision, protection and participation for all children irrespective of their religious, cultural or social background. This obligation extends far beyond the provision of compulsory primary education that is available and free to all (Article 28(a)) and details the State's responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil opportunities for the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (Article 29). While the State has put in place legislative and administrative systems to realise the right to education, children living in poverty, children from the Traveller Community and those with disabilities and additional special needs continue to experience difficulties in relation to accessing and participating in education.

The Children's Rights Alliance uses the Convention as a framework to change Ireland's laws, policies and services so that all children are protected, nurtured and empowered. Government, legislators and key decision-makers must take account

of their obligations to children when making decisions that will have an impact on them. In 2016, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs announced funding of €8.25 million to support early childhood provision for children experiencing homelessness through the Community Childcare Subvention (Transitional) Scheme in addition to current childcare funding available under the Affordable Childcare Scheme.

Access and Participation in Education

Participation and access to education in Ireland has been underpinned by legislation including the Education Act 1998; the Education (Welfare) Act 2000; the Equal Status Acts 2000-2015; and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (EPSEN) 2004. The ground-breaking Education Act (1998) is particularly noteworthy. The Act's main objectives were to assert the authority of the State and the Department of Education and Skills, but also to achieve inclusion by making schools responsible:

> ...to promote equality of access to and participation in education and to promote the means whereby students may benefit from education. (s.6(c))."

The EPSEN Act 2004 enhanced the principles of the Education Act (1998) by defining in detail the process of identification and assessment of a Special Educational Need (SEN) and the roles and responsibilities of schools and related professionals, with regard to the effective inclusion and education of children with SEN. Pupils were assigned resources and support based on their specific type of disability following an assessment of needs.

In reflecting upon criticisms of this system particularly around access to assessment, the costs of private assessments and targeting support for specific pupil needs, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE, 2013) concluded that the system was inequitable, and recommended that an assessment of student needs, rather than a diagnosis of disability, should be *the* prerequisite to accessing support. As a result, it proposed a new allocation model which was introduced in September 2017 (NCSE, 2017). In particular the consultation group noted that the new model should be:

> [...] sufficiently balanced to provide stability in schools in terms of staffing but allow flexibility in response to changing school profiles: Newly devaluing schools; and/or unplanned and exceptional circumstances that can arise in school (NCSE, 2017 pg.4)

The new model provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on that school's *educational* profile. The educational profile is based on three areas including: students with complex needs, the percentage of students performing below a specific threshold on standardised tests and the social context which includes gender, geographical location and educational disadvantage. This allocation will allow schools to provide additional teaching support for all pupils who require it, based on individual learning needs. The new model should ensure that schools have greater certainty in relation to the resources that will be available to them while also providing support to those pupils who are in most need. While children experiencing homelessness have not been directly targeted in this new model it should be noted that they may have additional needs which should be considered in the allocation model.

In addition, the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) scheme launched in 2005 specifically sought to tackle disadvantage from pre-school through to second level education for children from disadvantaged communities and provides specific funding to schools in this regard. Its frame of reference is based on the definition of 'educational disadvantage' in the Education Act 1998 as:

❝ ...the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools. (s.32(9))

The scheme is described as a continuum of interventions to address disadvantage alongside the ongoing development of the provisions for pupils with SEN under the EPSEN Act 2004.

▶ **Educational Welfare**

The Child and Family Act 2013 amalgamated child protection, family support and other important services for children including educational welfare into one agency, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, for the first time in Ireland. The function of the Agency is to support and promote the development, welfare and protection of children while also supporting and encouraging the effective functioning of families. The Act also makes provision for Tusla to consult with the Ministers for Health and Education and Skills when developing a performance framework which includes matters which relate to their specific functions. In short, the Act now permits for a greater focus on family support and educational welfare.

While it is recognised that none of the legislation outlined above places any specific requirements or obligations on Tusla or the Department of Education and

Skills to provide specifically for the educational needs of children experiencing homelessness some new initiatives have evolved that could be harnessed to develop policies to support these pupils. For example, the new allocation model has the potential to be used as a mechanism for schools to access specific and targeted support for these pupils. In addition, the explicit remit of Tusla in relation to educational welfare [school attendance] could provide another pathway for schools and other agencies to highlight the impact of being homeless on access to and participation in education.

It is worth noting the legislative landscape in other jurisdictions where child homelessness has been an issue for a longer period of time. The McKinney Act 1987 (as amended in 1994, 2001) in the United States stipulates that children are entitled to a wide range of services including special education support, compensatory education, early intervention for English language learners, after-school services, and are entitled to avail of an extended school year and have access to child nutrition programmes (Biggar, 2001). In 2002, the legislation was amended further to require each state to appoint a coordinator to facilitate and provide for the educational needs of homeless children through the development of Individual Education Plans. The underlying assumption of the 1994 amendment to the McKinney Act is providing effective programmes to meet a child's basic needs, their educational needs as well as their overall development.

Experiencing Homelessness

While there is a dearth of studies on the effects of the family and child homelessness phenomenon in the Irish context, it has been noted that the challenges for families living in these conditions can be seen to be dependent on the type, quality and standard of their living conditions (Keogh, Halpenny and Gilligan 2006; Children's Rights Alliance 2017). For example, residing long-term in bed and breakfast accommodation has been noted to particularly impact on the academic performance of pupils (Power, Whitty and Youdell, 1995), while residing in emergency accommodation for long periods of time is most likely to have a profound impact on the general well-being of families especially those who have children attending school and who have additional or special educational needs (Keogh, Halpenny and Gilligan, 2006).

Experiencing homelessness can be correlated with other mitigating life factors including food poverty (Share and Hennessey, 2017), access to adequate health services and participation in education (Masten et al. 1997; Biggar, 2001; Buckner, 2008). Both national and international findings have identified more specific challenges for children experiencing homelessness pertaining to educational participation and outcomes. These challenges include but are not limited to, their lack of access to schools, poor attendance rates, inability to complete homework, experiencing difficulties in their continuity in learning, sustaining relationships with teachers and peers; experiencing high levels of anxiety and poor mental health while being placed long distances from their school on becoming homeless (Children's Rights Alliance, 2017; Buckner, 2008; Moore and McArthur, 2011 Keogh, Halpenny and Gilligan, 2006; Masten et al. 1997).

School Engagement

At a more fundamental level, children's ability to engage with and participate in education is hampered when their fundamental needs are not met (Biggar, 2001). This argument reflects the 'hierarchy of needs' theory of Maslow (1943) which states that human motivation is driven by the need to satisfy fundamental needs including physiological needs, safety, belongingness and self-esteem; meeting these basic needs takes precedence over higher-level pursuits, including academic work (Maslow, 1943, 1970; Neto, 2015; Ginn, Mughal, Syed, Rae Storteboom and Benzies, 2017). Children experiencing food insecurity and hunger experience fatigue, frequent headaches and difficulty concentrating in school (Lewit and Kerrebrock, 1997; Tapper-Gardzina and Cotugna, 2003). Furthermore, fatigue arising from stress has been found to impact on learning performance, inhibiting concentration, working memory and thinking skills (LePine, LePine and Jackson, 2004; Linden and Eling, 2006). Children who are tired, hungry, cold, experiencing stress, or in poor physical health are unlikely to be fully engaged in learning, as the satisfaction of such basic needs will take precedence over their motivation to learn and participate within the educational setting. International research has consistently indicated that children who are homeless experience poor health and well-being, a lack of security, loss of friendships and isolation (Lorelle and Grothaus, 2015). The compromising of these fundamental needs through homelessness impacts on their educational motivation, engagement and educational experience.

Such adverse experiences may lead to dis-engagement from school and thus to early school dropout, resulting in reduced opportunity to become fully autonomous citizens. The

importance of attending school is widely documented and is seen to be related to other life outcomes such as employment and independence (OECD, 2011). The long-term implications of early school dropout include limited employment opportunities, social exclusion, and increased likelihood of an individual experiencing high levels of poverty (National Economic and Social Forum (2002). Keogh, Halpenny and Gilligan (2006) argue that sustaining children in education is therefore critical to breaking the cycle of poverty and disadvantage. Significantly, these authors found that children who had stayed in the same school while experiencing homelessness were able to maintain their friendships and were subsequently supported by caring adults thus highlighting the important role of educational professionals in the daily lives of children.

The Impact of Homelessness on Educational Engagement

In trying to identify the actual impact of the experience of homelessness on children, researchers have sought to compare groups of children who are homeless with children from low-income households. A meta-analysis of studies on homeless children and children in low-income households conducted by Buckner (2008) found that both groups of children shared an overall poverty effect but homeless children performed worse on measures of academic achievement and school attendance in comparison to low-income housed children. Other research found few differences in developmental status between these two groups (Schteingart et al., 1995). Masten et al. (1997) suggest that children experiencing homelessness

may share multiple risk factors with children from the general population, including those living in households where there are low incomes, parents who have poor levels of education, family members experiencing poor health, and where health care and other needs remain unmet. However, they differ on related issues such as access to and participation in education, maintaining friendships and the social stigma related to being homeless. Taken together, the studies denote that risk is presented along a continuum where children who are experiencing homelessness are seen to be at greater risk than low-income housed children (Keogh, Halpenny and Gilligan, 2006). In addition, children experiencing homelessness can often have serious educational problems that extend beyond the barriers to education that can derive from residential instability (Masten et al., 1997), with significant deleterious impact on children's well-being, health and academic achievement.

The Function of Schools

Schools are multi-layered institutions that can be seen to impact on child development in ways that extend beyond educational attainment (Scanlon, 2011) including socialisation and supporting pupils who are experiencing adversity in their lives (Gilligan, 1998; 2000). According to Masten et al. (1997):

❝ Schools have the potential to provide developmental havens of safety, stability and care for children living in poverty and adverse circumstances.

Notwithstanding that schools have the potential to be a stable and familiar place for children (Moore and McArthur, 2011), school attendance and academic outcomes are affected

by the high levels of mobility and transition that occur when families are experiencing homelessness (Horn, 1991; Efron, Sewell, Horn and Jewel, 1996; Halpenny, Keogh and Gilligan, 2002; Moore and McArthur, 2011).

However, Gilligan (1998) argues that positive experiences of schooling can provide protective factors and contribute to the development of resilience by giving children opportunities to develop normally despite adversity, through the establishment of routines and rituals thus providing a safe base for them during periods of upheaval. A study in Australia by Moore and McArthur (2011) showed that pupils experiencing homelessness valued going to school because it provided a place of normality where they could learn and socialise with their peers as well as providing a place of safety. The study by Halpenny, Keogh and Gilligan in Ireland (2002) showed that school represented a stable and constant environment for children in an otherwise unstable routine.

Other variables in the school climate, including responsive teachers, supporting parents, organised leisure activities and strong school leadership, have been found to create a warm and supportive learning environment for all pupils (Gilligan, 1998; Moore and McArthur, 2011). Barrett, Ausbrooks, and Martinez-Cosio (2012) state that children who had experienced a significant life event, such as a natural disaster, were better able to cope with loss and displayed fewer signs of post-traumatic stress when supported by teachers. In particular, school leadership was seen to impact significantly on student well-being for pupils who had been evacuated after Hurricane Katrina where the ethos of the school was conducive to enabling help-seeking support from pupils by reducing distress and improving academic achievement.

Conclusion

The purpose of this review was to inform the context for the study on the impact of homelessness on children's access to and participation in education. The review has been primarily informed by the literature from the United States and a significant study conducted in Ireland in 2002. The review shows that the evidence of various studies is that homelessness can have a deleterious effect on children's educational experiences. However, where schools provide a safe and stable environment they can play an important role in helping children overcome adversity in their lives (Gilligan, 1998).

4

Parental Perspectives on Children's Educational Experiences

The interview with parents comprised two sections. The first section collected demographic information, including family composition, current accommodation and pathways to homelessness. The second section of the interview focused on parents' perspectives on how homelessness has impacted on their children's daily lives and educational experiences.

Section 1: Characteristics of Study Participants

Experiences of homelessness are diverse, and the families who participated in the study varied significantly regarding their demographic profile, family composition, periods of homelessness and the type and stability of their homeless accommodation (Appendix E). Given the relatively small size of the sample (i.e., 20 parents from 19 families), and the heterogeneous nature of the responses, data is presented descriptively to provide a deeper understanding of the unique context of families experiencing homelessness.

▶ **Demographic Profile**

A total of 20 parents (19 mothers, one father) from 19 families participated in the study. Parents were aged between 18 to 51 years.

Ten mothers and one father were aged 18 to 30 years, four mothers were between 31 and 40 years, and the remaining five mothers were aged 41 to 51 years. At the time of the interview, 18 families were living in emergency or temporary homeless accommodation in the greater Dublin region; one family moved from private emergency accommodation to long-term housing during the period of data collection.

The families had a total of 38 dependent children living with them in homeless accommodation – 19 girls and 19 boys, with ages ranging from five months to 17 years. Nine children (24 per cent) were aged less than four years, 23 children (61 per cent) were aged between five and 12 years, and the remaining six children were aged 13 to 17 years.

Eleven families had one child, seven families had two children, one family had three children, and two families had five children. Thirty-six children were enrolled in educational settings, with all children aged four to 17 years enrolled in and attending primary or secondary schools; seven children aged between two and a half years, and three years and eleven months were attending early childhood settings. Nine of the children were reported to have additional needs. Two children had significant physical disabilities which require the use of a wheelchair and ongoing medical care. Three children had a diagnosis of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and one had a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Three children were reported as having language and learning difficulties for which they receive therapeutic intervention and additional adult support within their school setting.

Five families had two parents who were married or in a long-term partnership, with both parents living with their children in homeless accommodation. Fifteen of the mothers were parenting alone; however, 75 per cent (12) indicated that their children had regular contact with and some degree of financial support from their father.

All children were born in Ireland. Sixteen of the mothers were Irish born, with four identifying as members of the Traveller community. Three mothers and one father were born outside the EU and had migrated to Ireland as teenagers; all four indicated that they are Irish citizens by naturalisation.

▶ **Education and Employment Status**

The educational attainment and employment history of parents varied significantly. Two mothers had completed an Honours Bachelor Degree (Level 8), with a third mother due to commence
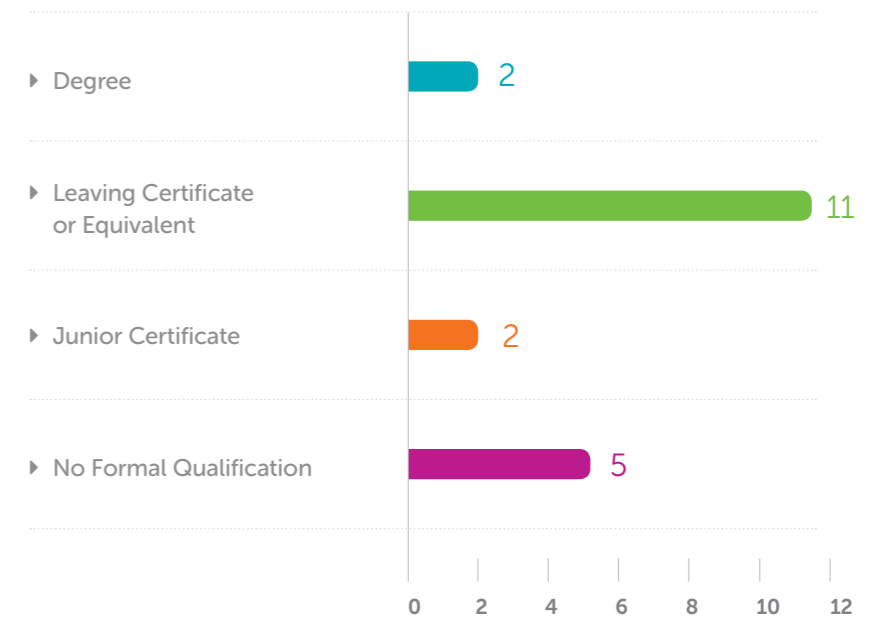
third-level education in September 2017. Eleven of the participants said that they had completed their education when they received the Leaving Certificate or an equivalent education award. **(Figure 4.1: Educational Attainment of Parents)**

The educational attainment of mothers aged 41 to 51 years was low, with all five mothers stating that they left school before the age of 14 with no formal qualifications. The women described negative experiences of education and attributed early school leading to family poverty, poor relationships with teachers and low educational aspirations within their families.

66 *At the time I think I just wanted to leave and my mother let me leave, I suppose she just didn't know herself how important it was. It's something you wouldn't even dream about doing today for your own kids.* **(Elizabeth, aged 41).**

Two mothers left school before completing their Leaving Certificate

because they became pregnant and had little or no support in caring for their infant children, both stated that they would like to return to education and training once they had stable housing.

66 *I would love to go back, but there is bit much going on now. Maybe when I do have my own little space, you know, a little apartment or whatever, it'd be perfect then. I'd put him into crèche and then I could go and do a course to be a chef. I find no matter what I cook or when I cook I'm just relaxed. It makes me feel a little bit better, that would be a good job for me.* **(Aisling, aged 18)**.

At the time of interview, four parents were employed – three full-time and one part-time. Three other parents indicated that they had previously been employed in full-time positions in the retail and hospitality sectors but they could not sustain employment when the family became homeless. This was attributed to the distance from their

Figure 4.1: Educational Attainment of Parents

- Degree — 2
- Leaving Certificate or Equivalent — 11
- Junior Certificate — 2
- No Formal Qualification — 5

(scale: 0 2 4 6 8 10 12)

homeless accommodation to their place of work, the cost of public transport and lack of availability of appropriate childcare provision.

66 *I was in work for a year and a half before I went homeless, so that was like a big thing for me because that was my job and my routine. The first couple of weeks, when I was in the hotel, I stuck at it but it was just constant. I had to give up my job, I had no one to take the kids, and it was too far from the hotel. I was living on a bus, constantly on a bus and getting the kids home at all hours. It was just very, very hard.* **(Michelle, aged 25).**

Parents who had sustained their employment referred to the financial and psychological benefits of work and the importance of maintaining routine and financial security despite the uncertainty of their accommodation.

66 *I thank God. I'm lucky and fortunate that I have a job. I don't know how people do it that literally are only on their book. Thank God I have my job because I wouldn't be able to stay here all day just waiting. I'd be on anti-depressants.* **(Caitriona, aged 32).**

66 *For me, I am managing, as I have a job, it's not as difficult. But I think people here, if they can't work or they don't work, how will they buy the things, the clothes and the food that their children need?* **(Josephine, aged 26).**

▸ **History of Housing Insecurity**

Many families had experienced significant periods of transition and made multiple attempts to source private rental accommodation before presenting as homeless to their local authority or the Central Placement Service for the Dublin City Council area. The parents described significant levels of housing insecurity and transition in accommodation prior to presenting as homeless. One mother

and her three children slept in their car for two weeks. Seven of the mothers stated that they lived 'doubled-up', moving between extended family and friends, for periods ranging from two months to four years.

66 *What happened was my landlord, my previous landlord who I'd been with for about nine years, had decided to sell up, because he was moving abroad. So he done that and I never realised I could become homeless from this. After a couple of weeks, I couldn't find anywhere else to rent. I went to my mother's, I went to friend's places, my sister's and I bounced around the place for probably six months and eventually I said enough is enough, we can't keep doing this, I needed somewhere to turn to.* **(Aileen, aged 31).**

Sixteen families had previously been placed on local authority social housing lists and were awaiting availability of social housing within their local communities. Parents described their attempts to secure affordable accommodation through availing of Rent Supplement or Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). Their experience was that it was not possible to source alternative affordable accommodation due to prohibitive costs, a scarcity of accommodation and reluctance of private landlords to accept families in receipt of Rent Supplement or HAP.

66 *There was literally 40 people standing outside the same house any time we'd view it like. It was mad. I don't know whether the people that got it might have been professionals or not on HAP, but there was always loads of people standing outside every appointment I went to, you know? I just kept getting told I wasn't successful. That's what I'd get told, 'sorry, you didn't get it, you weren't successful this time'.* **(Maria, aged 31)**

One mother reported that before presenting as homeless she had been on a social housing list for 13 years,

with multiple transitions within the private rental sector, as well as periods living back in her family home.

66 *I think we've moved about eight times or something, because I was on rent allowance. Then I had to give that house up because the rent went up and then the next one was being sold and then the rent went up again on the next one. Since he was born it has been like that, back and forth to me ma's like a yoyo, he's never had a home.* **(Caitriona, aged 32)**

▸ **Duration of Homelessness**

The period of homelessness ranged from one month to five years; however, this does not take into account the time many families spent living with friends and family members, or the unstable and sometimes precarious living conditions many experienced, including sleeping in a car and living in a house with no heating or electricity. Thirteen of the families had been homeless for 12 months or more, with one family with five children living in supported temporary accommodation for five years. **(Figure 4.2: Duration of Homelessness)**

Causes of Homelessness

▸ **Affordability of Adequate Housing**

Two families had previously lived in long-term housing provided by a local authority and three mothers had been living with their parent or a family member prior to presenting as homeless. The remaining 14 families (14 mothers and 1 father) had previously lived in private rental accommodation, with eight indicating that they had been in receipt of HAP. In the case of three of the families who had been living in private rental accommodation, homelessness

Figure 4.2: Duration of Homelessness
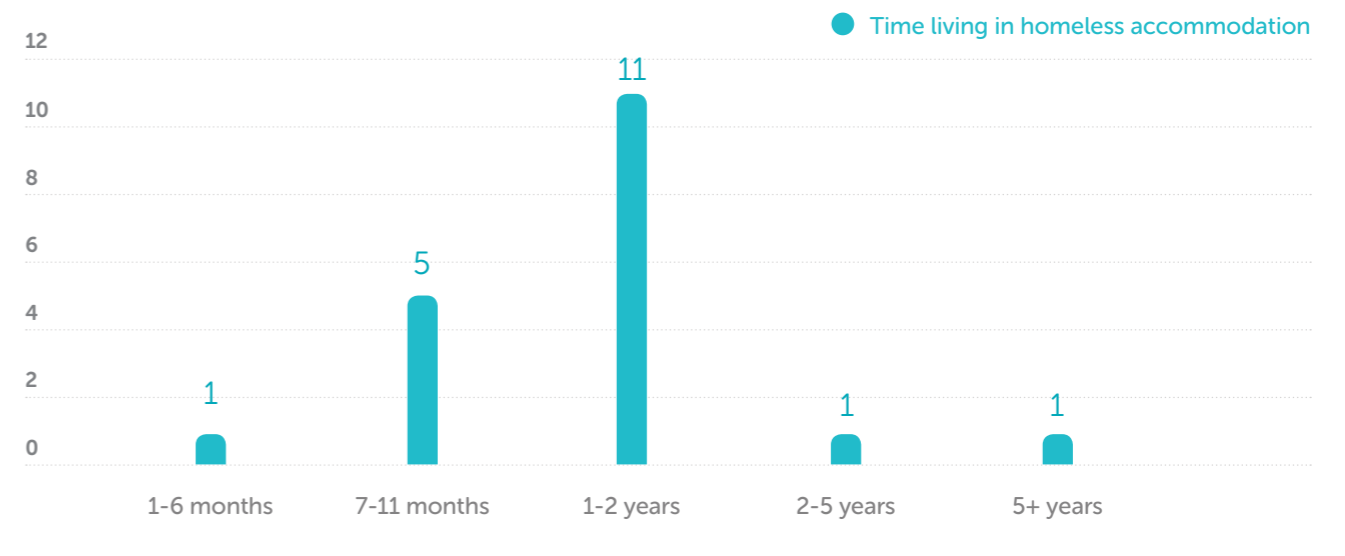
had resulted from unsustainable rent increases and in the case of 11 families it had been the result of the landlord ending their tenancy in order to gain vacant possession of the house for sale or family use. In three cases, the parents had subsequently become aware that the landlord had not sold the property but re-advertised it at a higher rent.

The following case study presents an example of the challenges faced by families within the private rental market, with limited security of tenure. It provides a glimpse into the detrimental impact on families when a tenancy is concluded with little or no warning without any alternative affordable provision.

⊙ **Case Study**

Deirdre is a 47-year-old mother who at the time of interview was living in an apartment provided as Temporary Emergency Accommodation (TEA). Deirdre had previously living with her three children and in a three-bedroom family home for six years. In 2016,

Deirdre was issued with a Notice of Termination stating that her landlord required the house for family use.

Despite attempts to source housing within the community, there was a lack of affordable housing to suit the needs of the family. Deirdre's son, Ronan, has a physical disability and requires use of a wheelchair. He also has ongoing health problems and has had two significant surgeries within the last four years. The previous home provided adequate space, accessibility, heating and ventilation for her son's medical needs but Deirdre could not access equivalent affordable housing in the greater Dublin area.

In 2016, Deirdre and her children presented to the local authority and were directed to 'self-accommodate' in private emergency accommodation. Following two days of phone calls to various hotels, they found availability for two nights in a hotel 20 km from their previous home. Deirdre then presented to the local authority, detailing her son's medical needs and one month later, the family were placed in an

apartment on a temporary basis. They have now been living there for over 12 months. While the apartment has ground-floor disability access for Ronan, there have been ongoing maintenance problems with plumbing and ventilation. Deirdre stated that there are significant amounts of black mould in the bathroom and bedrooms and this has exacerbated Ronan's underlying medical condition resulting in hospitalisation and ongoing medical absence from school.

Two months after leaving her previous home, Deirdre returned to the house to collect mail, and was surprised to find that the house was being rented by multiple tenants for significantly more rent than her family had been paying. With support from a housing charity, she took a case to the Private Residential Tenancies Board who found that the Notice of Termination had been invalid. The Board made a modest award for damages to the family. One year after the invalid eviction from their previous home, the family remains homeless. Deirdre stated: 'money is nothing when you lose your home.'

▶ **Family Crises**

Four of the mothers who participated in the study stated that they had become homeless as a result of personal and family crises that resulted in loss of their home. One family with two parents and five children lost their home in a fire. The mother reported that the only belongings the family retained were the children's school uniforms and bags that they had brought to school that day:

❝ *We lost everything. The kids walked out with uniforms and their bags because they were only coming home from school. Just the clothes that we had on us and nothing else. (Elizabeth, aged 41)*

All parents talked about the initial distress, fear and shame of presenting as homeless. One parent, a mother to three girls, two of whom have significant medical needs, became homeless when her home and an adjacent property were vandalised in December 2011. The home had been provided by the local authority and the family had been living there for 22 years. As there was no alternative local authority housing available, the mother and her three children moved to her daughter's two-bedroom home, where her daughter, her daughter's husband and three young children were living. The family remained on the local authority housing list for four years. In March 2015, the mother and her daughters presented as homeless due to significant overcrowding that was impacting on the health and well-being of all family members.

❝ *I had to go to my daughter's. We were sleeping with coats over us and all, we had no duvets or nothing, I lost completely everything. It took five hours for the fire brigade to get all the water out. It was that bad that the ceiling caved in on the man underneath, he had to be moved out and all. They (the local authority) said it'll only be two years for a house, and I was four years*

waiting on that list and I think it's a very, very long time especially with the situation that I have. So, I said, look I'm not getting anywhere waiting for social housing. I can see the tears coming into my eyes now, I was sobbing that much but I had to do it. It was hard, it was very hard, but I knew I was going to have to go homeless and that was nearly two years ago. **(Margaret, aged 51)**

One mother reported that she was awaiting social housing in her local community and in the interim had been living with her older sister who had a social housing tenancy. Unfortunately, her sister died by suicide and she was notified that with the death of her sister the tenancy had ended.

❝ *I was in a mess, so I ended up saying, enough is enough, I need to get out of this house, I need to move on because if I don't I'm going to end up going mental inside it, so I had to leave.* **(Sally, aged 31).**

Four of the mothers described how they had become homeless arising from domestic abuse related to both intimate partner violence and violence in the family home. The mothers stated that their families had experienced stress resulting from loss of employment and financial difficulties that they believe exacerbated family conflict and violence which ultimately resulted in homelessness. One mother was temporarily accommodated in a women's refuge, while the remainder were placed in private emergency accommodation, including hotels and bed and breakfasts. Prior to placement in emergency accommodation, one mother was advised to seek overnight accommodation with her infant son in a local Garda station.

❝ *Me and my da had a bit of an argument because he's a heavy gambler. He hit me in front of the baby so I just left. I had to leave. I*

went to Parkgate Street and they said 'we've no accommodation now but use the Freephone, they'll definitely give you something'. I kept ringing but they didn't have anything, and they told me to sleep in a Garda Station with the baby. **(Aisling, aged 18).**

Accommodation at the Time of Interview

Almost all families had experienced living in a number of different forms of emergency accommodation since presenting as homeless, including a women's refuge, a city centre hostel, temporary hotel accommodation and bed and breakfast accommodation (Appendix F). At the time of interview, four families were living in private emergency accommodation, including hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation; two families were living in apartments provided as temporary emergency accommodation; and 10 families were housed in supported temporary accommodation, including transitional housing and newly-established family hubs. One family was placed in long-term accommodation during the period of data collection; prior to this, the mother and her five children had been living in private emergency accommodation for five months.

Section 2: Impact of Homelessness on Children's Educational Experiences

The purpose of the study was to consider the key educational-related issues faced by children experiencing homelessness. Section Two of the interview elicited parents' perspectives on how homelessness has impacted on children's daily lives and asked parents to consider their children's academic achievement and experiences as well as their child's social and emotional development within the wider school context.

Parents' Perceptions of Children's Education -Related Needs

Parental responses were dynamic and complex, with variation according to their children's age, developmental stage and educational setting. However, all parents discussed the importance of their children's

educational access and participation. Parents spoke at length and in detail about how participation in school and educational settings can offer their children academic and employment opportunities and secure friendships that may ameliorate the insecurity and disruption arising from their experience of homelessness. Alongside the articulation of their commitment to educational participation, parents identified and discussed the challenges their children experienced in fully accessing education while living in emergency accommodation. These challenges extended beyond attainments, punctuality, homework completion and regular school attendance, but rather encompassed a range of educational 'needs' that impacted on their child's ability to fully engage in learning and build relationships with peers and school staff. These educational-related needs included basic physiological needs such as sufficient

rest and access to an adequate diet and also included children's sense of security, belonging, achievement and self-esteem within the educational context.

Parents' responses were analysed within a framework of educational-related needs that included four broad areas: basic and physiological needs; security, routine and predictability; friendship, trust and belonging; children's attitudes to school and educational aspirations. Across the four areas of education-related need, the parents' responses were recorded indicating how many times they referred to a particular need. All parents identified their children's basic physiological needs as the most significant factor impacting on their children's education **(Figure 4.3: Educational Needs of Children Experiencing Homelessness)**

There was variation across age-ranges regarding the extent of

---

Figure 4.3: Educational Needs of Children Experiencing Homelessness

● Area of Need

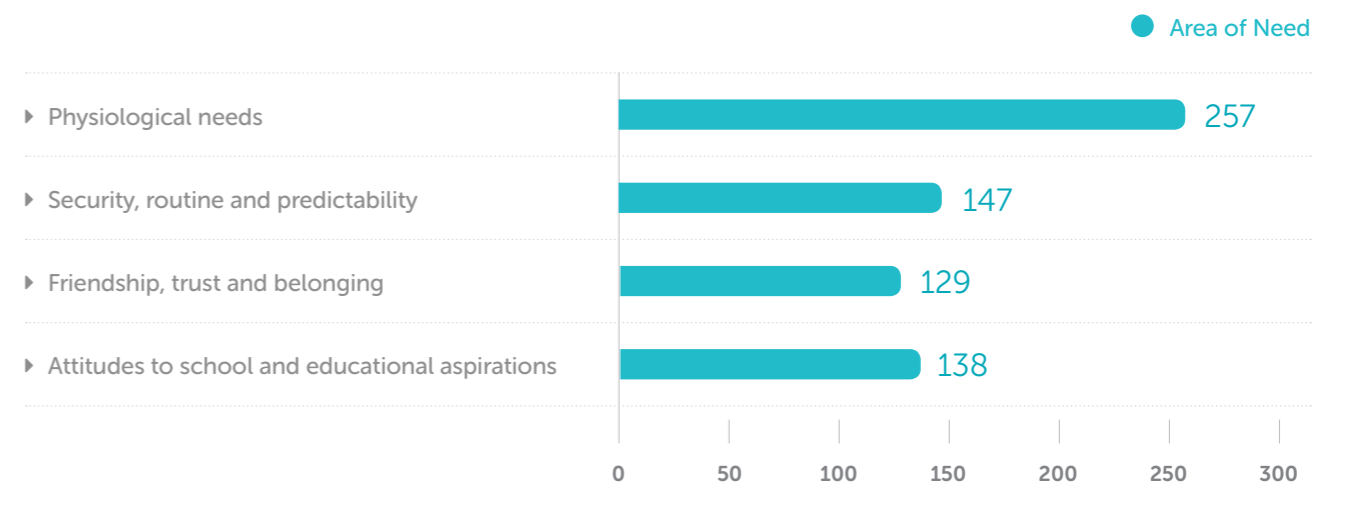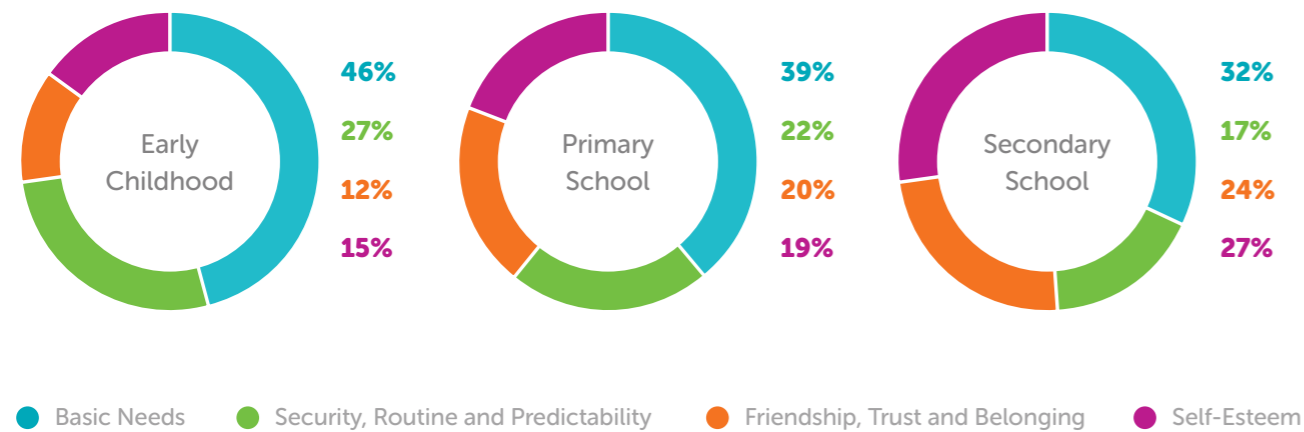| Area of Need	Value
▶ Physiological needs	257
▶ Security, routine and predictability	147
▶ Friendship, trust and belonging	129
▶ Attitudes to school and educational aspirations	138

0   50   100   150   200   250   300

Figure 4.4: Children's Needs Across Type of Educational Provision

Early Childhood — 46% / 27% / 12% / 15%

Primary School — 39% / 22% / 20% / 19%

Secondary School — 32% / 17% / 24% / 27%

● Basic Needs   ● Security, Routine and Predictability   ● Friendship, Trust and Belonging   ● Self-Esteem

'need' in each area, with parents of pre-school children placing greatest emphasis on children's physiological needs, while parents of secondary school children emphasised the impact of homelessness on children's friendship groups and self-esteem within the school environment. **(Figure 4.4: Children's Needs Across Type of Educational Provision)**

Basic Physiological Needs

Children's basic physiological needs in an educational context referred to children's requirement for sufficient sleep, an adequate diet and physical well-being to enable attendance, engagement and participation in learning and educational experiences.

▸ Inadequate Nutrition and Hunger

Access to a sufficient and nutritionally balanced diet was repeatedly identified as a factor impacting children's educational

participation and learning. Parents described how their children's eating habits were affected by homelessness, with parents detailing the challenges in providing children with adequate nutrition. This was attributed to limited financial resources, a lack of cooking and storage facilities as well as significant time spent travelling to and from the children's educational provision. Parents described their children's experience of hunger as well as ill-health and low mood resulting from poor diet. Four of the parents indicated that their homeless accommodation provided breakfast. A further three parents stated that their child's school offered breakfast clubs; however, parents explained that they were unable to avail of this owing to the time spent travelling to and from school.

66 *They have a breakfast morning, but because we have to get the bus she was missing the breakfast and everything. So I'm worried sick about her, she's in school all morning with nothing in her stomach, do you know what I mean? It is just horrible for her, it really is.* **(Margaret, aged 51)**

Parents described challenges in providing their children with school lunches, with three parents reporting that on multiple occasions they had to choose between paying for transport to school and buying food for their children. While families had been informed of potential financial support for school transport during the period of interviews (concluding on 20 October 2017), none of the families participating in the study had received travel cards or financial assistance with school transport costs.

66 *They probably didn't go in about twice a week, and the school are asking why they are not there? So I told them, 'I'm put in a position to either feed them or send them to school and I don't have the money to do both', so I chose to feed them and not send them to school.* **(Elizabeth, aged 41)**

66 *I could survive and not eat in the morning, I could not eat in the afternoon and wait for evening, I could manoeuvre that. But children, they have to eat, and even if they eat they're still saying I'm hungry. I can't pay for a bus when he has*

to eat, and we can only walk so far. Sometimes when there's no money in my hand I'm like, 'we really have to walk right now', you know. He's an understanding boy because he could see the situation, we had to walk.* **(Rachel, aged 30)**

66 *Sometimes I wouldn't have the money for lunch. She wouldn't go to school without her lunch so she was missing a day out of school because she had no lunch.* **(Margaret, aged 51)**

Parents reported that a lack of cooking and storage facilities in their emergency accommodation had resulted in difficulty providing children with adequate meals to support their day-to-day health and well-being, school attendance and engagement in learning.

66 *Before I went into the hotel, if you wanted to see the medical records, they have never ever got sick. When they went into the hotel I felt like they were constantly sick, they were just really grey. They weren't eating the proper foods that they are supposed to be eating and all that and so they got sick, all the time, and that's it, they're sick, no school.* **(Susan, aged 25)**

66 *I think they're cranky now in the day, you know when you get into school, they're just cranky with hunger and exhaustion. How can they listen and play with their friends when they are like that?* **(Elizabeth, aged 41)**.

Three parents indicated that the school provided children with a lunch during the day, but that often the mothers would bring additional food for the children on their journey to and from school.

66 *Because from travelling and we're not home, like normal kids would walk home and they're starving. We have to travel before we get home, so they are starving all the time like, literally, so I used to give them extra packed lunch.* **(Deirdre, aged 47)**

▸ Lack of Sleep and Exhaustion

Sixteen of the families spoke about how poor sleep and disrupted bedtime routines impacted on their children's learning and educational participation. Three parents of primary school children had been informed by school staff that their child had fallen asleep in school. In some cases, provision was made for children to rest in a sensory room or cosy area within the classroom.

66 *It has a major effect on him because he keeps getting a bit fatigued in class, you know, so he had to be taken out of class a few times and brought up to the sensory room for a sleep. (Roisin, aged 24)*

66 *Some days when I send him into school he could be in different humours and when I'm collecting him from school, a few times the teacher says to me that he's falling asleep in school because he's so tired.* **(Sally, aged 31)**

66 *They had said to me about him constantly trying to go to sleep at the table, and then getting frustrated and then not listening to what the teachers are saying.* **(Maria, aged 31)**

A number of families reported that due to the location of their accommodation, the family had to get up early and spend significant time walking and on public transport to get to school. Thirteen of the families indicated that their children had to get up each morning before 7am, with three parents waking their children at 5:30am to allow for access to a communal bathroom and travel time to their school. Children were said to be fatigued before arriving in school, often sleeping on the bus or requiring rest during the school day.

66 *Oh my God, I have to get him up as early as five sometimes. Just to get to the bathroom to get washed. Yeah, getting up at that time just to get washed for school.* **(Rachel, aged 30)**

66 *On a typical school day, the alarm goes off at six and we get up and get the kids washed and dressed and breakfasts, and then we do the lunches, by the time we have all that done, it's seven o'clock and we have to leave. Most mornings on the way to school on the bus, the two of them fall asleep. Now Ronan fell asleep this morning and he toppled sideways in his wheelchair and whacked his head off the pole on the bus. And Sarah, there was no seats on the bus for her so she sat down and fell asleep on the floor.* **(Deirdre, aged 47)**

66 *You're arguing with them the whole time on the way there and again on the way home. Then like that, they'd fall asleep on the bus and you're trying to wake them up, get a pram off the bus, get another child that's after falling asleep off the bus. It was a nightmare, like. You'd get the odd person that would help, but a lot of people, like, it like they'd just look at you, you know that kind of way?* **(Maria, aged 31)**

The families reported difficulty in establishing and maintaining children's bedtime routines while living in homeless accommodation. This resulted in children being late for school, non-attendance or children being tired throughout the day. Parents living in private emergency accommodation such as hotels and bed and breakfasts described how all family members went to bed at the same time and how noise from other families, nightclubs below the accommodation and the physical surroundings impacted on their children's sleep.

66 *Getting her up for school was very hard. She didn't sleep there because she didn't like that hotel; she thought there was a ghost in the corner of the room because there was a draught in the window.* **(Veronica, aged 26)**

66 *The kids find it hard to go asleep, the music would start about 9 or 10pm. And we'd only probably be*

getting back in that late and the kids should have been in bed by then. Sometimes I'd have to try get Leah asleep before the music kicked in but sometimes it didn't happen. So she'd probably doze off about 12 and then you'd have the pubs absolutely kicking all night until about 3 o'clock in the morning and Ella would still be awake with me. There's no sleeping. And then when people are coming out of the pubs they're stalling around the road and then you'd have the street cleaning machines coming up and down the road at all hours. So we were barely getting three hours' sleep and then trying to get them up for school at 6 o'clock. It is an absolute nightmare. **(Karen, aged 30)**

▸ Health and Physical Well-being

Almost all parents described how their children experienced frequent school absences and poor attendance arising from poor health, illness and infectious diseases which they attributed to cramped living conditions within homeless accommodation. One mother could not access GP care due to the family's change in address; she believed that this resulted in prolonged illness for her child, resulting in additional school absence.

They are sick all the time, constantly, they're only after being at the doctor. My daughter was at the doctor last week with a chest infection and we're constantly, constantly catching stomach bugs. Whether they go around the hotel, I don't know what it is but we constantly have stomach bugs. **(Elizabeth, aged 41)**

She had a week when she wasn't in school when we were in the refuge. We used to get bugs in there an awful lot, the baby used to suffer terrible with bugs. We used to get them all the time, you know like 24 hour bugs and high temperatures and vomiting. **(Veronica, aged 26)**

They've missed so many days because they are sick all the time.

They were getting chest infections and I had no doctor. So it was a nightmare, I had no doctor because I'd no permanent address. Then I couldn't get a doctor because they wouldn't take me on and the kids with medical cards. Obviously they'd sent the renewal form to my old address, so I never renewed them in time and I couldn't reapply for medical cards without a doctor. **(Maria, aged 31)**

A lot of sickness, so that's why there was 40 to 50 days missed in school last year. If it wasn't him, it was me. And then I couldn't bring him, I wasn't well enough for to get him there, you know what I mean? **(Cathleen, aged 45)**

He always had coughs and colds; they picked up everything in the hotel. So, like, every week there was a new sickness in the hotel, like somebody's child had chicken pox and the whole hotel would get it. There was hand, foot and mouth, and there was loads of head lice going around; it was really bad. **(Susan, aged 25)**

Two children in the families were recorded as having significant physical disabilities which require use of a wheelchair and ongoing medical care. Four other children have additional needs for which they receive therapeutic intervention outside school. Parents explained that this resulted in additional days' absence from school, often for the full day owing to the distance between the homeless accommodation, the school and the therapeutic/medical settings.

All parents within the study recognised that children's regular school attendance and meaningful educational experience was impeded by low energy, fatigue and illness resulting from a lack of adequate provision of food, rest and access to health services.

The following case study provides insight into how children's

fundamental need for a nutritionally balanced diet and adequate rest and relaxation can be impacted by uncertainty in emergency accommodation. It highlights how placement in homeless accommodation a significant distance from the child's school resulted in disrupted daily routines and meant that substantial time had to be spent travelling. It also reflects how financial strain and inadequate facilities for food preparation and storage in private emergency accommodation affect children's health, well-being and ability to engage in learning.

▸ Case Study

Veronica is a 26-year-old mother, with two girls: Alice, aged six and Annie, 18 months. At the time of interview Veronica had been living in supported temporary accommodation for nine months. Prior to this, the family had spent three months in different types of emergency accommodation; this included two months living in a women's refuge and one month of 'self-accommodating' for periods of one to three nights in various hotels in the greater Dublin region.

In September 2016, Veronica's daughter Alice started primary school in the community where Veronica had grown up and is awaiting availability of social housing. At that time, the family was placed in emergency accommodation 36 km from Alice's primary school. The family's daily routine was to wake the two girls at 6am each day and leave the refuge by 6.45am in order to ensure that Alice arrived at school on time. The journey took approximately two hours by car, with the baby Anna sleeping in the car and Alice eating her breakfast on the way to school.

Alice was said to enjoy school; she was fond of her class teacher and the school principal. Her mother believed that she had established good relationships with other

children in her class. While the school found her to be a happy and hardworking little girl, Veronica reported that Alice would often be very tired and upset at collection time, sometimes tearful on the way back to the family's accommodation.

She loved school right from the start, but it was hard on her, she was not herself. I'd say it was probably down to tiredness and always being hungry. She was just being dragged around the place. In fairness, she was up early, she was gone to school, she was back, she was trying to do her homework, she was trying to get dinner.

Alice would often be reluctant to go to bed and experienced difficulty sleeping through the night in the shared room with her mother and baby sister Annie. Veronica also found it difficult to provide meals and packed lunches for Alice owing to a lack of facilities for food preparation and storage.

It was costing me €6 every morning on a lunch for Alice going to school and I'd have to buy that in the garage. So I was driving to the garage, getting the breakfast because I had no fridge I couldn't store anything. Then coming up to the Christmas I was trying to save a few quid for Santa so I went and bought some yoghurts and butter and cheese and I left it in my car because it was freezing, so that was my fridge. There was a communal kitchen but there were no locks on anything, so if you went and done your shopping and there was another family there that didn't, they would help themselves to your food. When you came back later in the afternoon everything was gone. Eventually I bought a kettle, I boiled eggs in it and steamed the baby's bottles with it, and we used it for soup, we had soup and rolls.

At the time of interview, the family had moved to a self-contained housing unit within supported

temporary accommodation approximately 15 km from Alice's school. The family has a kitchen with cooking and storage facilities, which means that Veronica can plan and budget for meals and packed lunches on a weekly basis. While the journey to school takes approximately 45 minutes, Veronica reported that at present Alice has an established routine, with time and space for play, homework and bedtime stories. Alice now goes to bed at 8pm in her own room, and sleeps throughout the night, waking for school at 7am.

like and she has friends there and she's actually really, really settled, she loves her teacher. **(Veronica, aged 26)**

I think if I took him out of that school and put him somewhere else, he'd be completely lost. I think the school is so important. Work keeps me grounded, the school keeps him grounded. **(Caitriona, aged 32)**

When they had a holiday she was crying, I told her stop crying, she said, 'No I am going to miss my teacher', I said, 'Don't worry you are going back to the same teacher'. She needed to be there every day, she even got an award because she never missed school. Even though we are homeless, I take it as my job to get her there every day because when she is going to school she feels happy. **(Antoinette, aged 28)**

He is excited because when I take him to the school, he has his subjects that he loves. The school is full of art and he likes to draw. So it is, he loves that, he loves it. He is really looking forward to going back to school. **(Rachel, aged 30)**

Security, Routine and Predictability

Routine, consistency and predictability are considered important in providing children with feelings of security, promoting trust and supporting independence, especially for children experiencing stressful family conditions (Wildenger, McIntyre, Fiese and Eckert, 2008). Parents spoke of how homelessness disrupted their family's lives and how uncertainty in accommodation, removal from their local communities and children's loss of space, privacy and personal belongings had resulted in distress and discomfort for their children. Parents described how their children experienced difficulty with changes in their daily and school routines, increased sensitivity to perceived admonishment and challenges in establishing and maintaining relationships with teachers and peers. Despite these challenges, parents generally described their children's educational setting as a source of predictability and comfort, where consistent routines and responsive teachers could offer children a sense of stability and continuity amid the uncertainty of family homelessness.

It's a good school and it's basically been the only stability in the last year

Across all families there was a commitment to maintaining the continuity of school provision and seventeen families had retained their children's school place, even when the accommodation was a significant distance from their child's school. Two mothers described the importance of their child's attending the same school despite the significant cost and time taken to travel each day.

I didn't want to swap over schools because I wanted to try keep things as normal as possible because he was after moving out of the house where he was after being brought up since he was a baby. So I didn't want to change schools as well as change home. And I know people say, 'Well, why can't you just change him to a school somewhere closer?' I don't want him to grow up that way I grew

up, moving houses every month, moving schools every month. That's the lifestyle I had when I was a child, I was moved around constantly and I don't want that for him, do you know what I mean? I just want to keep it normal. **(Roisin, aged 24)**

We have to keep it the same, because their whole lives, everything's there, all we've ever known is out there. Like their doctors, their after-school groups, everything that they do. That's just the only thing they have left to hold on to so I wouldn't take that away from them right now. When they get to school, I think that few hours are the only bit of happiness that they do have, even if it's a fight to get them there. **(Elizabeth, aged 41)**

It's no good punishing the child, taking him away from his friends, his school, his teachers, when he's only after settling in and getting on and then all of a sudden, bang, 'Look you have to leave now', and then he's asking, 'Where's such a friend and such a friend and such a friend and such a friend', you know like so, it's hard, like, on a child and then I think that wrecks a child's head like you know so. **(Sally, aged 31)**

For the two families who had changed their child's school, parents described how this transition impacted on their child:

She cried for the first week, because meeting new friends, and moving to a different school, she had been six years in one school, and then just being taken out of it, that was tough on her. It affects them a lot. **(Cathleen, aged 45)**

She has a few certain friends in the new school and things like that but the ones that she was with beforehand, it's gone. Everything has changed, everything. **(Margaret, aged 51)**

All of the parents stated that they had informed the child's school that they

were experiencing homelessness. Three parents had not intended to inform their child's school but felt they had to because of a change of address, poor attendance or children arriving late. In all cases, the first communication was with the school principal but only ten parents spoke directly to their child's teacher. While parents generally found school staff to be supportive and understanding, four parents were uncertain as to whether the school principal had informed the teacher of their child's circumstances.

I told them, I told them about it immediately because she used to come to school sometimes 10 o'clock, 9.30, so I have to let them know that it's really far and this is what I'm going through. **(Antoinette, aged 28)**

The principal, you couldn't have met a nicer woman, I was explaining a bit of my story to her and she was just one of them women, I didn't have to say anything, she just knew and she was ever so nice to me, you know? But I don't know what if she told all the teachers, because I only said it to her, whether she said it to his teachers, I don't know. **(Aileen, aged 31)**

I was very, very embarrassed about having to go homeless and even when I did the four years on my daughter's floor, the school actually thought that was my place because I never let them know. I had to tell them which way it was, I had to tell them 'look I'm homeless'. So, they kind of understood that, they kind of gave her a bit of a leeway but it didn't last for very long because she wasn't getting in until very late in the mornings. **(Margaret, aged 51)**

Almost all parents indicated that their children's regular school attendance had been impacted while living in homeless accommodation. At times, this presented challenges for children when teachers or school staff would query the absence.

Well, I did have some problems with attendance. With my son, he's five, his teacher said about his attendance, and she said to him, 'There will be someone coming to visit you in the hotel over your attendance'. I had to go in and say to her, 'You know, he's only five'. And with the girls, I got letters to say that they missed so many days. One of them actually missed 100 and something days. Because their brother was doing his Junior Cert, I was trying to concentrate more on keeping the money to get him over because he needed to study. If I sent the girls, they were taking up two of the bus fares if you know what I mean and so we had two or three days a week they'd miss, especially coming to the end of the week because we were broke. **(Elizabeth, aged 41)**

They didn't like missing school at all. Even their reports this year weren't as good; it was like more attendance, they need more attendance, more homework to be done, just things that we've tried our best to do we just can't. **(Karen, aged 30)**

Parents of pre-school children placed emphasis on the importance of routine and predictability for their children, and three parents described how the family's experience of homelessness had resulted in changes in their child's behaviour. They explained how their children's behaviour changed, including refusal to eat and increased crying and comfort-seeking; two parents reported that their children who were previously toilet trained experienced bed-wetting when placed in emergency accommodation. Parents described how pre-school provision was important in providing children with predictable routine, warm relationships and time, space and equipment to play.

It (the crèche) is so important; it stays the same no matter what. She's coming and going from one place to another, never knowing where

she's going, who she's going to be with, what place she's going to be sleeping in. She doesn't know who's going to be there, if I'm going to be in the bed with her or if she's going to have her own bed that night. Every day, not knowing anything, this place was the only thing that stayed the same. **(Karen, aged 30)**

Well they (early childhood educators) took me in a room in the crèche there and they said to me, she was really... she was a bit upset today. They said, she was getting a bit antsy and she was saying, 'Mammy, Mammy, where's Mammy?' She's just out of sorts, you know what I mean? Because it's all about routine, it's all about routine at her age. If she doesn't have a routine she's all over the place. With the crèche, she gets up in the morning, she gets washed and dressed, she goes in there and has her breakfast, see her friends and her teachers, has her dinner. But outside of that, well anything can happen after that. **(Noreen, aged 24)**

I needed the crèche for him, he needed to get out of that room, it was so good for him but more torture for me because I had to walk around for three hours you know, but for Brian it was a big help. The teachers there knew what he liked, they had toys and they played with him, they would say, 'Oh, Brian, he's good at this, he loves the cars and the Lego' and he did love that, just playing, he loved it and they loved him'. **(Sally, aged 31)**

Across all types of educational provision parents reported that school was important to their children, not only because of their friendships and learning experiences, but also the stability and predictability it offered amid the uncertainty and stresses that accompanied their experience of homelessness. The following case study demonstrates how educators responded to children's individual needs and the family's context. They offered support, predictability, peer friendships and time and space

dedicated to play and learning that was otherwise difficult to have while experiencing high levels of mobility and uncertainty in accommodation.

❯ Case Study

Jessica is a 24-year-old mother of two children, Clare (aged three) and Peter (aged two). Jessica presented as homeless to her local authority in 2017 following six months living with friends and family members while attempting to source affordable rental accommodation. At the time of interview, Jessica had been living in supported temporary accommodation in North County Dublin for four months. Prior to this, the family had spent three months moving between various hotels and bed and breakfasts in the greater Dublin region.

Jessica's son Peter was born with a complex medical condition that resulted in physical disability and severely reduced mobility. He has required ongoing medical intervention and therapeutic support since birth and requires use of a wheelchair. Jessica described how the multiple changes in accommodation impacted on her children, particularly her daughter Clare (aged three):

When we were in the hotel and moving around, Clare's behaviour got very, very bad you know. She was very, I don't like to say bold but she was very bold, you know she was just acting up all the time like, attention-seeking and screaming, all this stuff. She lashed out all the time, you know we'd come back to the hotel, and then, if we were after booking out and booking back in, we'd change room, like they'd give us a different room. Clare wouldn't understand. She'd be on the floor in the hallway shouting, 'This is our house!' You know so I had to kind of explain to her somehow like, 'No we're in this one today', it wasn't nice to try to explain that to her.

Jessica reported that consistency in child-care provision had supported Clare and Peter in re-establishing routines and predictability. Despite travelling for an hour each morning, Jessica explained that maintaining the provision is a priority for the family as the children have formed relationships with staff and other children in the setting. The pre-school educators have an awareness of Peter's physical needs and have made adaptations to the physical environment, as well as working with his physiotherapist to support his movement and emerging autonomy within the setting. Clare has formed relationships with her teachers and classmates and Jessica has been provided with advice and information on parenting programmes and financial supports for parents caring for a child with a disability.

They love it, they love coming here like. I remember at the start Peter wouldn't come; now he won't come home with me. I go in every day and he says, 'No' and like they love it here like they're always here, they know what to expect, they get to have loads of fun. I think it was great at the start because I was kind of, I was very depressed at the start, and I wasn't kind of present with them or doing what I should have been really doing with them, so at least I knew they were getting that here, you know they were getting the one-to-one attention that they kind of needed.

Jessica believes that accessibility to affordable, high quality childcare has provided her children with secure routines to support development and learning as well as providing her with time to seek long-term accommodation and a return to employment. Jessica is a university graduate and at the time of interview was preparing to commence employment.

If I have access to having them in a full time crèche, then I'm going to be working. I'm actually making a

life for myself, where I don't have to be dependent on the social welfare or dependent on social housing. I'm going to have to try, it's going to be a bit rocky I'd say at the start but it'll be worth it. It's not really for the money for me, it's kind of to get my sanity back and my career back on track.

Friendship, Trust and Belonging

Children's relationships with their peers and teachers play an important role in many aspects of their academic and socio-emotional development (Birch and Ladd, 1997). Within the educational setting, children's relationships and sense of belonging are significant components of children's social and emotional development. Parents recognised the importance of their children's friendships within school as well as the challenges in supporting and maintaining these relationships while living in emergency accommodation. The importance of positive teacher-child relationships was highlighted by parents as a source of support and comfort for children within the wider school community.

▶ Peer-to-Peer Friendships

A majority of the parents (14) reported that their children had a best friend or a small group of close friends. In general, the children were said to enjoy warm, reciprocal relationships with their peers in school. In three cases, children attended the same school as their cousins, and parents valued these extended family networks in securing friendships and supporting the child. Many parents described how the primary reason for maintaining the child's current school place was to maintain their existing friendships:

66 *School is where they see their friends, in the school hours. They get to play with them in the yard and that would be it, they need to hold onto that.* **(Elizabeth, aged 41)**

66 *I kind of thought about bringing them there (a crèche close to the temporary accommodation) but they had settled here and they'd moved so much already. They started having friends, Clare loves it there, she has little friends and she goes out playing and Peter, he doesn't call it crèche, he just calls it 'friends'.* **(Jessica, aged 24)**

66 *He's loads of friends up there, because he's grown up in the area since he was a baby, if I took him out of there what would he have left?* **(Aileen, aged 31)**

66 *They know their friends, they start out with them and then they are all brought up together kind of in the school, you know?* **(Susan, aged 25)**

However, almost half of the parents (9), particularly those of children attending secondary school, explained the challenges for their children in maintaining friendships while the family was living in emergency accommodation. Four of the mothers described how friendships have been impacted as their children can no longer take part in extracurricular activities or play with their school friends after school owing to the journey time and costs associated with participation.

66 *He has friends in his class, and his cousin is there and he loves him. Every day after the school, it's him that's asking can we go to this club or that thing, or his cousin's house, can he go to the playground with his friends? But I can't do that because if I do that, well then I'm battling with the traffic trying to go home on time to give him his dinner, do you know what I mean?* **(Roisin, aged 24)**

66 *Well, she had very good friends up in the last house and them*

friendships have kind of fizzled out now because she hasn't been there. She was involved in dancing in the school and she can't go because we have to get the bus as soon as they are out the door. Now, she sees them in school every morning but it's not the same closeness as they had got before we left, you know. So, yeah, it has had an impact, you know what I mean, on their little friendships and their after-school clubs and the dancing and what have you, that's on the back-burner for now. **(Deirdre, aged 47)**

66 *I had to take them out of the after-school group because it mixes with the time of the buses, you know, and I get the other kids. I have to collect them and get the bus because otherwise the kids wouldn't be home here until all hours.* **(Elizabeth, aged 41)**

Five parents stated that their children's friendship groups had reduced to a small number of close or trusted friends in the period of homelessness. Parents believed that their children sometimes found it difficult to maintain friendships when they did not live in the local community. Parents also explained that their children were unlikely to discuss their current accommodation with their school friends because of embarrassment about living in homeless accommodation.

66 *He has one friend in school, like he is very hard socially. You know the other kids are great with him, they try and involve him and all but he is just, no. He is very bad with social skills and like he suffers hard with anxiety since we became homeless. At the moment, at this age I want him to be, I want him to start being more, like I don't want him to be withdrawn. I want him to be more open with his friends and making friends. That is all I want for him right now, is to try to … be happy. To start like being like his own age-group and mixing more with the kids in school.* **(Susan, aged 25)**

66 *I'd say, like realistically like, they couldn't have friends, real friends, you know that kind of way like? And if they did make friends it was like they lied about where they lived, do you know that kind of way? They lied about, 'Oh look, I can't do this, because I'm doing this or I can't go meet you here today because I …' you know? It was like they were very boxed; do you know that kind of way? They didn't have a childhood for that year, in my opinion, do you know? Like they didn't have friends, they couldn't play games, they couldn't go out, they weren't allowed out on the corridor like, they weren't allowed to do anything. They were restricted to everything, you know that kind of way, so like in that way, in school like, I think school was their playtime.* **(Maria, aged 31)**

66 *Her group of friends is much smaller now because she's very, very embarrassed. She's very shy and she wouldn't let anybody know. She wouldn't really tell any of her friends that we were homeless.* **(Margaret, aged 51)**

66 *They (child's teachers) have no problem with him, with his school work or anything like that, it is just in school he doesn't have a best friend; he keeps to himself. When his friends ask him 'Where do you live?' he doesn't know what to say, like it's so, like he's embarrassed. Even if they say can I come to see you in your house, he can't bring them over, you know, even myself I can't bring my friends over.* **(Rachel, aged 30)**

66 *He hasn't told his friends, he says he lives with his dad, because when I can't collect him if I'm in work, he'll walk to his dad's house, and his friends walk that way. I'd say he'd be embarrassed; he'd be real embarrassed for his friends to know. But he's real understanding about it.* **(Caitriona, aged 32)**

66 *Because it was hard with them (school friends) I'd give her money*

and let her go to the cinema or things like that. Try to let her still have a normal life, that being homeless is not going to stop us from having a bit of a life as well. We're homeless, we're not hopeless. **(Karen, aged 30)**

▶ Relationships with Teachers and School Staff

The majority of parents (17) spoke positively about their children's relationship with teachers and school staff. They described how praise, authentic encouragement and access to in-school supports had assisted children during periods of transition. In particular, parents of children attending pre-school and primary school spoke of the warmth and affection that their children experienced in their relationships with teachers and school staff and how this promoted positive attitudes to school and school work.

66 *She has such a special bond with every last teacher in here. Every last teacher knew our situation as well. She always had a bond with them no matter what but they really, really did look out for her when we became homeless and every last one of them are brilliant.* **(Karen, aged 30)**

66 *He loves his teacher, like every Friday, they collect their stars all week. If they have five stars they get to get something in the treasure box and all. So he just tells me his teacher let him get stuff out of the treasure box every week, he loves it. Like he's always talking about school, and singing little nursery rhymes that they learn in school.* **(Roisin, aged 24)**

66 *They loved their teachers last year and they love their teachers this year. Thank God, they were only back in school, the week that they started back and Sarah got student of the week.* **(Deirdre, aged 47)**

Parents of secondary school children were also positive about their child's relationship with school staff and

gave examples of how some schools had offered children individual support or opportunities to speak with a guidance counsellor.

66 *There's one certain teacher that she absolutely loves but, saying that, she loves most of the teachers. Now there was one or two of the teachers that was not understanding about her situation when she was going in late. I think it's very, very important to have teachers that understand situations and have that bond with children and not just turn their nose up to them and things like that. I don't like it when teachers do that. It's definitely important to have a good teacher there that you know you can just go and talk to. Definitely.* **(Margaret, aged 51)**

Parents of secondary school children stated that while their children had established good relationships with school staff and teachers, their child had asked their parents not to disclose their experience of homelessness to their school because of embarrassment or fear of being identified as 'different' to their peers.

66 *The school were good, now they'd call her out for little meetings and things like that to make sure she was o.k., but she didn't like that. She didn't like being took out of her class and she found it, like 'My friends are going to be looking at me now …' and this and that and the other. But they supported us; they have given us letters for the Council, very good letters for the Council as well.* **(Karen, aged 30)**

66 *He doesn't want them to know. Like, if he told them what's going on maybe they would tell others teachers and then they're looking at him differently in class. They're not going to look at him like as the same way as people that have houses.* **(Rachel, aged 30)**

66 *I told Jack that I'll ring the school and to tell them where we were at and he said, 'Don't ring them, don't*

let them know'. But I did ring them and I told them not to let him know that they know. He doesn't want to be different to anyone else there, he's 13 you know? **(Caitriona, aged 32)**

Attitudes to School and Educational Aspirations

Parents were asked to describe their child's attitude to school, including their child's individual capabilities, self-confidence, motivation and future academic aspirations. All parents stated that their children enjoyed attending school and participating in school life. Parents with school-age children (16) indicated that they had attended parent-teacher meetings with no significant learning or behavioural concerns identified by class teachers.

66 *We went for our parent-teacher meeting, our very first parent-teacher meeting. They said that she was getting on great, that her reading was excelling above everybody else, she was very good with her words but she always was because she's a chatterbox, she had no issues whatsoever.* **(Veronica, aged 26)**

66 *I think when me and his Dad went for the parent-teacher meetings the teacher was saying that he is very good but it doesn't show, he does be thinking of everything else. I think he meant like he was more distracted about what was going on at home than what was going on in school.* **(Susan, aged 25)**

In discussing their children's academic learning and attainments in school, the majority of parents of school-age children (14) indicated that they did not have concerns regarding their child's learning abilities and they felt their children were making progress with their school work.

66 *She's into absolutely everything. And that's what I like about her. She's into the business, she's into the science, she's into all the good things that she needs to be into – her maths, her everything. And she is getting good grades on it, well, she was last year and she will be back getting her good grades.* **(Karen, aged 30)**

66 *She does well at school because I tell her. I said, 'Look, I want you girls to be the best, I don't want you to stop halfway like me, that is the reason why I am stressing this, please you have to concentrate'. She's very good because they give them tests every week, so when she come out she got 10 on every one.* **(Antoinette, aged 28)**

66 *He needs to learn, I can't read and write, you see. School will be good for him, he can read, he can do all the homework and he can do well in there.* **(Sally, aged 31)**

66 *I explained they were five months out of school, and they were going to put them back a year, but they didn't have to because Gemma was so bright. She was very clever, she had her school books in her bag and she was doing her schoolwork at home, and she was keeping in. When she went back into the new school after five months, they were testing her, and they said to me, like the teacher said to me, 'Oh my God, she's up there, this is great', I said, 'How could she be losing it when she was doing it at home? We made sure she did it at home'.* **(Cathleen, aged 45)**

While parents reported that their children showed an interest in and enjoyed school, seven parents of school-age children spoke of how their child's attainments in class and school tests had deteriorated during the period of homelessness. Parents described how this resulted in disappointment for the children and sometimes added to stress within the family.

66 *It's taken a bigger toll on everyone and so it's just wearing us out more, I can tell by their reading that they're not at the pace where they probably should be, they know it too and that's not easy on them.* **(Elizabeth, aged 41)**

66 *Her grades were top of the range before we became homeless. Everything was As and Bs and everything. She got her ... they wouldn't actually send me her grades this year because it was out of the district ... to my mam's address so I had to wait until she went back to school and she brought home her results there the other day. Now they're very good grades but just not as good as what they were beforehand. It's dropping down to Ds and Cs and things like that. Where she was getting As and Bs, not one A has she got this year. Now it's still good to me and she's still worked through it but she knows, she knows it in herself and she is disappointed and she's actually angry. She was like 'I just couldn't focus and I couldn't concentrate' and things like that.* **(Karen, aged 30)**

66 *Since we've been here, with the tests and the homework, he struggles a little bit with it, I'm not going to lie, it is tough to get him to do it but you know, he's also very brainy depending on what subject and what it's about that day and so forth, you know? He watches documentaries and stuff on the telly, you know? And all that, so he learns from them as well. Ah yeah, he's a character.* **(Aileen, aged 31)**

66 *The thing that struck me is, in that time he was finding that hard in school, I was so mad at him because as a mother you want your child to do excellent in school and you want them to bring good results? I sat down with him and I said take that book now and solve them maths in there and I don't want one wrong in it and amazingly he gets everything right.* **(Rachel, aged 30)**

Almost all parents (16) indicated that they expected their children to successfully complete secondary level education, with 15 parents anticipating that their children will continue to third level education. Parents considered achievement in education as a way to fulfil ambitions and aspirations of future careers, financial stability and enriched life experiences.

66 *Ah, 100% they're going to college. There's no if or buts about it, there's no, there's no leaving school at all. School doesn't finish at secondary, it doesn't. 100%, school finishes in college.* **(Maria, aged 31)**

66 *I'm trying to drum it into their heads now because they're young and hopefully it'll sink in while they're young, the way that we're homeless now, I keep highlighting that fact, you know what I mean? I keep asking them, 'Please, do your best in school. Go as far as you can with your education; do not drop out, go onto college. College will be the best days of your lives. When you come out of college, you'll be able to get jobs, you'll be able to build on getting your own deposits for mortgages so you are never in the position that we're in right now'. You know, so I'm trying to get that all into their little heads. I know it's an awful lot for a seven and eight-year-old to take in.* **(Deirdre, aged 47)**

66 *He'll do really well in school. I know he will, because he is really clever. I would encourage him to go on and do what he wants to do, he talks about college, he talks about stuff like that now and he's only nine.* **(Susan, aged 25)**

66 *So, when he finishes, I want him to go to college, I want him to study whatever. Because I am free, I always tell him, 'Be whoever you want to be. When you grow up and then when you get to university choose the course you want to read, it is all about you, it is all about what you love doing'.* **(Rachel, aged 30)**

66 *She wants to be a teacher like her own teacher or she wants to be a doctor, a doctor of babies. So I think she means a midwife or a paediatrician but she says a doctor of babies because she loves you know the 'Pampers' ad on the telly, she loves that.* **(Veronica, aged 26)**

Despite the negative impact of homelessness on children's educational experience, high parental aspirations for children's success in school was consistently evident throughout the interviews. The following case study is reflective of high parental aspirations across the participant group, with families committed to children attending and succeeding within school despite multiple transitions and the deleterious impact of family homelessness on children's educational experience.

❯ Case Study

Maria is a 31-year-old mother of five children who at the time of interview had moved to long-term accommodation following 20 months living in private emergency accommodation. Maria, her partner and children had lived for eight years in private rented accommodation which they were required to vacate in 2016. On presenting to their local authority as homeless, the family was placed in a hotel approximately 30 km from their previous home and the children's school. During the period of homelessness, Maria became pregnant, and this placed additional strain on the family; her relationship with her partner broke down.

When I found out I'm pregnant that was probably one of the main reasons why we did completely split. He just couldn't see to have another kid in the room that we were living in. We lived in a room where we had three single beds and one double bed and that was between two adults and four children.

During the period of homelessness, Maria's children attended four different schools owing to the distance between the children's school and the family's emergency accommodation.

The same school, that was very important to me, but it was just, it wasn't possible, because like that, we had to get up at half five in the morning. By the time I got all the kids dressed, washed, down to the bus stop, then to wait for the bus was an absolute nightmare.

During the period of data collection, the family were notified that long-term accommodation had been identified and the family would be housed within four weeks. Maria described how the children's new school supported the family during the period of transition, providing advice and information on the school and the local area. The school principal made time for Maria and her children to meet with class teachers prior to commencing classes and the school provided a 'financial waiver' from the costs associated with the school book scheme and voluntary donation for September 2017.

Maria reported that her children settled well into their new school, making new friends and forming relationships with teachers and school staff. She described how her eldest son, Padraig (aged nine) had been encouraged by his class teacher to join the school's football team.

He was delighted that he was, you know, picked to be on the team, because there's only so many out of each class that is on the team, you know? So he was delighted that he was picked above other people, in his opinion, you know?

Despite the challenges faced by the family in the period of homelessness and significant transitions in

schooling, Maria remained optimistic about her children's experience of education and the experiences and opportunities education can provide for her children in the future.

100%, school finishes in College. I want them to have a better life than I have. I don't want them to be young with kids and settling down. I want them to travel. That's my big dream; I'd love them to travel. I know I'd miss them, but get out there and see every corner of the world before you settle down. That's my opinion, 100%, like, you know, you need your education, do you know what I mean? What can you be or who can you be without it? That's my opinion.

Summary of Parent Interviews

There was significant variance in family characteristics among participants in the study, highlighting that the experiences of homelessness occur within the unique context of each family. Despite differences in family composition and demographic information, all families had experienced significant levels of housing insecurity and transition since they had presented to their local authority as homeless. For a substantial number of families, homelessness occurred alongside other forms of loss and disadvantage including; poverty, domestic violence, bereavement, and disability that presented additional challenges in finding and sustaining accommodation. For all but one of the parents, this was their first experience of homelessness, and feelings of loss, sadness, shame, and isolation were prevalent themes of the parent interview.

The semi-structured interviews explored parents' perspectives on the key education-related issues faced by their children. The interviews generated in-depth discussion and provided meaningful insights into children's school attendance, relationships with teacher and peers, engagement in learning and future educational aspirations. While parents experienced significant challenges in ensuring that their children had access to schools and early childhood settings, such educational provision was highly valued by parents. Although there were variations across age-groups, the most significant education-related need for children was the satisfaction of their fundamental requirements for food, rest and warmth. Meeting these needs while living in homeless accommodation was made more difficult by scarce financial resources, time-consuming journeys and transport costs, as well as a lack of appropriate facilities for food preparation, sleep and personal hygiene in such accommodation. These challenges were further compounded by a requirement to move within different types of homelessness accommodation. In this study, these difficulties were salient for all families but most acute for those living in private emergency accommodation such as hotels, hostels, and bed and breakfasts. Parents recognised that school systems and teachers were making best efforts to support their children, but that the primary responsibility of schools is to educate children. Parents understood that schools and teachers do not have access to support, guidance and resources to fully respond to needs arising as a result of homelessness but stated that difficulty in meeting their children's basic needs impedes children's school attendance, participation, and engagement in learning.

5

Educational Professionals' Perspectives

Section 1: Educational Professionals' Survey

Table 5.1 indicates that a total of 46 schools participated in the survey with 25 primary and 21 post primary schools respectively.

Provision in Schools for Pupils who are Experiencing Homelessness

The purpose of this section was to gather information on any policies or initiatives adopted, in the schools in which respondents worked, to facilitate the educational needs of children who were experiencing homelessness.

▶ **Systems**

Respondents were asked if their school had a system in place for identifying pupils who have become homeless. The results presented in Table 5.2 indicate that 16 schools have a system in place while 24 do not. Respondents who said that their school did not have a system in place were asked if they would they find one useful to which 28 responded that they would.

The respondents who indicated that their school had a system in place were asked to describe that system. Two respondents reported that notification of a change in family circumstances generally came through their home school

Table 5.1: School Type of Respondents

SCHOOL TYPE	n
▶ Post Primary DEIS	8
▶ Post Primary Non-DEIS	13
▶ Primary DEIS - Band 1	14
▶ Primary DEIS - Band 2	4
▶ Primary Non-DEIS	7
▶ Total	46

Table 5.2: Provision of School-based Supports

	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
▶ Financial assistance with uniforms	22	21	3
▶ Financial assistance with school materials	29	14	3
▶ Waiver voluntary contribution	35	7	4
▶ Transportation	16	29	1
▶ Before school-care	23	22	1
▶ Lunch	34	12	-
▶ After-school care	23	23	-
▶ Facilitating late pick up	8	37	1
▶ Access to a trusted adult	38	6	2
▶ Advocacy for pupils needs	36	6	2
▶ Counselling	*8	*4	-
▶ Referral for counselling	*10	*2	-
▶ Basic hygiene (if required)	15	30	1

* Figures in relation to these items relate only to those respondents who were principals of schools (15)

liaison officer (HSCL) with the permission of parents and this information was then brought to the attention of the principal and the other relevant staff members. Three respondents indicated that the care or pastoral team (comprising of key educational staff including the HSCL, principal/vice-principal, guidance counsellor, year heads etc.) in their school identified pupils who were experiencing homelessness and this worked well in conjunction with a well-established 'open door policy' in the school. Another respondent indicated that class teachers 'build an open and trusting relationship with their pupils and their parents and the school supports them as best they can by linking them in with the relevant authorities'. This was described as an informal

system based on the ethos of the school. Building strong interpersonal relationships was seen as important by all respondents and this, they felt, helped them to identify in an informal way those children who were experiencing homelessness.

▶ **Seeking Support**

Respondents were asked if they had a system for pupils to seek support regardless of their age and if there was an appointed person in their school to respond to the pupil's educational needs when it was known that they had become homeless. The majority of the respondents (38 of the 46) said that their school had such a system in place, and 23 respondents indicated that there was an appointed person in their school to support the pupil.

▶ **Provision of School-based Supports**

Respondents were provided with a list of possible school-based supports and asked to indicate if their school provided any of these.

Table 5.2 indicates that 38 of the 46 respondents said their school provided pupils with access to a trusted adult, and 36 said that it provided advocacy for pupils' needs. In addition, more than half the principals in the survey (15) indicated that their school provided further support for pupils through provision of counselling and referral for counselling.

In the great majority of cases, respondents said that their school

provided a waiver of the voluntary contribution, and also provided school lunches. In the case of 'Before-school care' and 'After-school care', half of respondents said that this service was provided in their school. The high number of respondents reporting that their school provided lunches is in part, at least, a reflection of the fact that just over half of the sample were working in schools participating in the DEIS scheme. Around half of the schools supported pupils with financial assistance for uniforms and for school materials. Supports in the areas of transportation, basic hygiene and facilitating late pick-up were less frequently reported.

Provisions to Support Transition from One School to Another

Given that children who are experiencing homelessness may have to change schools unexpectedly, and perhaps more than once, the survey asked respondents to identify any specific provision in place in their school or within its classrooms that would to assist pupils in this regard.

▸ **General Initiatives within the School**

Of the 46 respondents, 19 indicated that there were services and facilities in place in their school that would help pupils adapt. Examples of the kind of provision mentioned by respondents include:

Homework Provision

Providing time and space in school to complete homework and assignments was facilitated through access to the library and providing printouts, to assist pupils with their homework as opposed to assuming that they have access to the books that they would require. No homework was

given which had to be conducted on the internet and discretion was used in all of the above.

Provision of School-based Facilities

• A number of participants indicated that their school had in place initiatives such as breakfast and homework clubs. One school adopted an inclusive and innovative approach to providing free lunches for pupils who had been identified as experiencing homelessness. Pupils were given vouchers by the school which were then redeemed for lunch; as all students were required to have vouchers the system ensured anonymity for pupils who were experiencing homelessness.

• Having a parents' space was cited as being important a number of respondents. Such a facility enabled schools to provide information sessions for parents on how to register for social welfare, how to register with homelessness organisations as well as enabling the provision of one-to-one support if and when required. This was generally facilitated by the Home School Community Liaison Scheme which was also instrumental in referring families to local agencies for financial and other support.

Whole School Approach

• Given the profile of the schools in which respondents worked, it is unsurprising that several respondents indicated that the specific needs of *all* pupils in their school were addressed by the care team and this enabled them to provide the necessary additional supports for pupils who were homeless.

▸ **Class-based Special Initiatives**

Participants were asked if they had any specific initiatives in their classroom for pupils who were experiencing homelessness. Twelve respondents out of 34

had some initiatives in place which are summarised below.

• Respondents indicated that class-based special initiatives were really dependent upon the specific needs of individual pupils but were unanimous in that support was provided where and when required by the care team and the Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL).

• In general, respondents said they made allowances for pupils being late, gave less homework and provided them with basic school materials. Respondents also referred to advocating on behalf of families and providing financial assistance where required.

Accommodating the Educational Needs of Children Experiencing Homelessness

Survey participants were asked if they had been directly involved in discussions with parents living in homelessness accommodation about their personal circumstances; 23 respondents indicated that they had been involved in such discussions. Respondents were asked to describe how this had helped them to respond to the educational needs of the pupil in their classroom; a summary of replies given is provided below.

▸ **Advocacy**

A common theme emerging from these responses was the assistance that schools gave to parents in relation to their needs and those of their children. In particular, several respondents indicated that they had advocated on behalf of the family and in doing so had gained a clearer understanding of the

specific challenges with which the families were coping and how these were impacting on the child in the school environment.

Sensitivity to Pupils' Needs

• Respondents indicated that having access to this type of information enabled the school community to become more sensitive to the needs of pupils and the challenges they face – for example, the difficulty in completing homework, the importance of supports such breakfasts or lunches, the importance of financial assistance for transport and of one-to-one support for both parents and children. One respondent emphasised that homelessness and its associated difficulties may impact differently on families and that speaking and visiting parents enabled teachers to identify the specific needs of children in the school environment.

• Some principals reported that discussions with parents lead to a greater understanding of the practical issues which were affecting the pupil in the school – for example, difficulties in getting to school on time and lack of materials. Such information was then shared with the key teachers in the school which then facilitated an open discussion with the pupil in how best the school could support him or her.

▸ **Emotional Well-being**

It was noted by one respondent that the key challenge for schools was not providing for the educational needs of the child but providing for the emotional well-being of the child and family. Other respondents noted that it was difficult to prioritise the educational needs of children who were experiencing homelessness when basic needs were not being met. In particular, it was noted that the educational

needs of children more often than not become secondary to their emotional and mental health needs. One respondent said:

❝ *We aim to lessen the impact of homelessness by providing a safe and enjoyable environment in our school.*

Sharing Information about Homelessness Circumstances

The principals who participated in the survey were asked if, in their experience, parents are reluctant to inform the school that they have become homeless. Six responded 'yes', and six said 'no'.

Respondents who responded 'yes' were asked why they thought parents might be reluctant to share this information. Responses included: parents feeling embarrassment about their situation and not wanting their child to be treated differently; perceived stigma; or not knowing how the school would respond.

Principals were then given a number of options and asked to indicate

when in their experience parents choose to share this information with the school. The key indicators (albeit small) are presented in Table 5.3.

Participants were asked if they found that pupils were reluctant to inform the school that they were homeless. Twenty-eight said 'yes', and eight said 'no'. Respondents who responded 'yes' were asked to indicate why they thought pupils might be reluctant to share this information.

Most respondents cited shame, stigma, embarrassment, fear of rejection, fear of the reaction of others and not wanting to be treated differently as key contributory factors in pupil's reluctance to inform the school that they were living in homelessness accommodation. One respondent noted:

❝ *Younger children are often not aware and some are having an adventure and staying in a hotel which can be exciting in the short term but as they become older they are aware and it can be difficult as they can't have play dates/birthday parties like other children. In school news [daily exchange between peers and class-based teachers] it can become obvious how their lives are different and as a result you can*

Table 5.3: Parents Sharing Information of Homelessness

INDICATOR	
▸ As soon as they become homeless	1
▸ When they are unable to make a voluntary contribution	2
▸ When the class teacher raises concerns	2
▸ When the pupil's behaviour changes	3
▸ When the pupil's attendance record changes	4
▸ When their living conditions have become untenable	5

Table 5.4: When/How Children Reveal Homelessness

INDICATOR	
▸ Class teacher raises concerns	1
▸ Changes in attendance record	1
▸ Work pattern changes	1
▸ Inability to complete homework	2
▸ Behaviour changes	3
▸ Living conditions become untenable	4
▸ Immediately they become homeless	5
▸ Unable to participate in afterschool activities	6

Figure 5.1: Awareness of Needs Arising from Homelessness

see them become withdrawn and worried. Parents often don't discuss it with children and try to protect them. Parents can also be embarrassed or ashamed and also frustrated and usually it takes a while for them to let us know. In fact, sometimes it's only when the children have told classmates they are staying in a hotel that we guess it might be the case and then as HSCL [staff] we invite parents to chat about what is going on and then you get a disclosure which can be very upsetting for them.

Participants were asked to indicate when, in their experience, pupils shared this information; an overview of their responses is provided in Table 5.4.

The results indicate that pupils primarily shared information when accumulative changes occurred in their attendance record, work patterns and inability to complete homework. It is worth noting that the class teacher is central to observing and reporting on these accumulative changes.
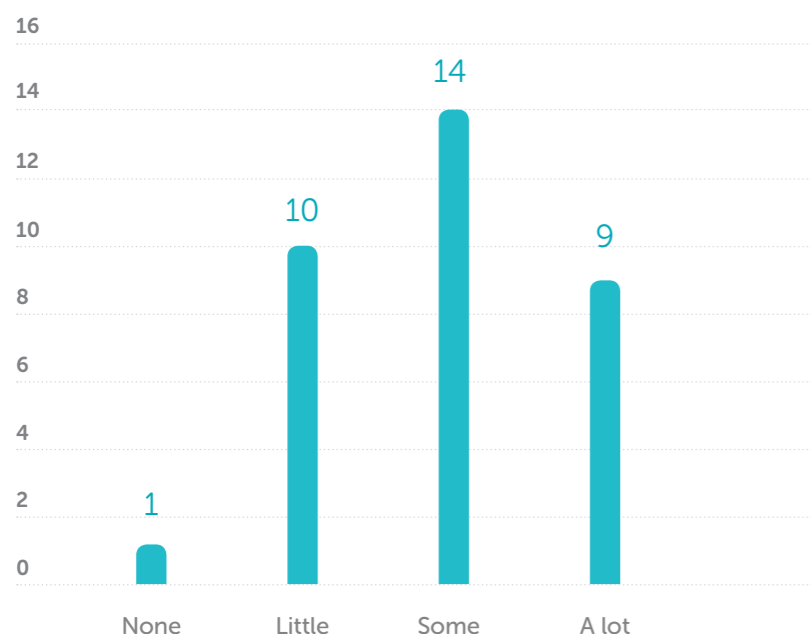
Awareness of Needs of Children who are Homeless, Professional Dialogue and Offering Support

In this section, the survey sought to explore the type of discussions that had taken place in schools between staff about pupils experiencing homelessness and how it helped them to develop their awareness of the issue and identify the type of support that pupils required.

▸ **Awareness**

Respondents were first asked to self-report on their level of personal awareness on the specific needs of children who are experiencing homelessness. Nine respondents

indicated they had a lot of awareness; 14 had some and 10 respondents had a little awareness. Only one respondent indicated that they had none (**Figure 5.1: Awareness of Needs Arising from Homelessness**).

▸ **Professional Dialogue**

Respondents were asked if they had participated in professional dialogue with other staff members at their school about pupils who were homeless. A clear majority – 34 respondents – indicated that they had participated in such discussions; 12 respondents had not.

Respondents were then asked how this dialogue had helped them to identify the support that the pupil might need under the following headings:

• Type of provision/ support offered (32);
• What worked (29);
• What did not work (25);
• What might be more useful (27).

▸ **Type of Provision/Support Offered**

• Co-ordinating services and support for pupils and their families was identified as the primary provision by respondents; this was usually facilitated by the HSCL and school care teams. Respondents said that information was treated in a respectful and confidential manner and shared with key staff members, especially teachers who could observe and monitor pupil's well-being.

• Where required, external supports were sought from a number of agencies including the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Focus Ireland, Crosscare and Tusla-led Meitheal approach, where a lead practitioner assesses and identifies the needs of a family or child where there is a child welfare or safety concern and convenes the necessary team to support them.

In the absence of external supports a 'go-to' person for pupils and families was appointed in several schools. In some cases, schools paid for transport and removed any school-based financial commitments – for example, school subscriptions were waived.

• Other school-based initiatives included providing one-to-one support for pupils where required, additional learning support, provision of out-of-school and after-school activities, access to breakfast and homework clubs and after-school care.

• In one school, a 'Buddy System' was created with peers in the classroom helping the pupil experiencing homelessness with homework.

❝ *We could figure out if we could pool together groups of students to meet their needs as a group rather than individually so that they wouldn't feel embarrassed because there were others in a similar situation. It also meant we were able to set up a mentor system where an older student who was homeless or in direct provision could meet up and talk to a younger student in a similar situation.*

▸ **What Worked?**

• Several respondents indicated that having a point of contact in their school provided parents with a safe mechanism which enabled them to engage in discussions with the school about their living conditions and how these were impacting on their child. It was noted that parents may experience embarrassment with face-to-face discussions with class teachers and having a contact person helped them explore and articulate the immediate needs of their child.

• Having access to additional learning support as well as receiving support from external agencies was cited as being important in supporting schools to enable them to identify

the pupils' needs. Once needs were identified this enabled schools to respond and facilitate the specific needs of the pupil which lead to an improvement in children's well-being. For example, being flexible with time-keeping for one pupil resulted in their returning to school, while daily communication and mentoring systems were found to contribute to a more tranquil time at school for others.

▸ **What did not Work?**

• Respondents reported a sense of helplessness in the face of the problems affecting pupils who were homeless, especially when advocating on behalf of their families (through writing letters of support to housing departments and agencies). It did not speed up the family's access to more suitable accommodation.

• One respondent noted that limited funding impacted on their capacity to take action; other respondents experienced difficulties in finding out what resources are available for families who were homeless. It was noted that even when the school identified agencies which might help, the onus is still on the family to travel to the city centre to register for these services. However, in some cases, this places additional burdens on parents and sometimes such journeys are simply not feasible.

• Respondents perceived that regardless of supports that had been put in place, there was a decline in mental health and well-being of pupils who had been living in hotel accommodation for long periods of time.

❝ *Mental health and well-being has continued to deteriorate. When sharing one room with a sibling and two adults for a prolonged period of time it becomes very hard regardless of what is put in place.*

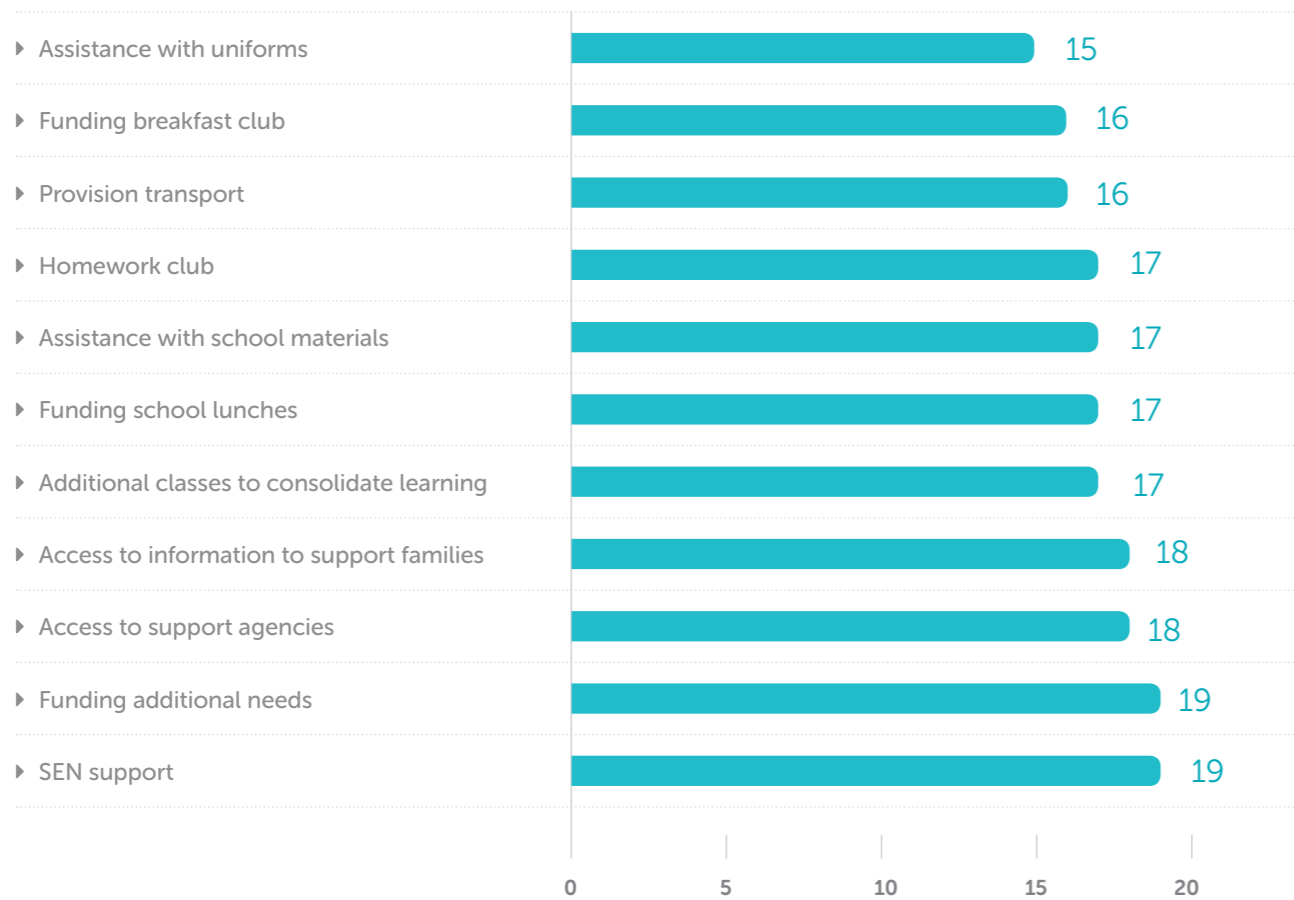Figure 5.2: What Schools Need in Order to Respond to Pupils' Educational Needs

Category	Value
Assistance with uniforms	15
Funding breakfast club	16
Provision transport	16
Homework club	17
Assistance with school materials	17
Funding school lunches	17
Additional classes to consolidate learning	17
Access to information to support families	18
Access to support agencies	18
Funding additional needs	19
SEN support	19

Table 5.5: Providing for Continuity of Learning

FACTOR	Number
Obtaining previous school records	1
Helping pupils manage transitions to your school	2
Providing additional support for learning	3
Making allowances for homework completion	4
Providing welcoming activities to facilitate integration	5
Monitoring school attendance	6
Assessing current needs	7

• Another respondent noted that despite providing a structure of support, families may be moved far away from the area where they had been living and their children may be unable to continue in the school.

• It was also noted that summer holidays can mean a break in the consistency of the support provided by the school.

▶ What Might be more Useful?

• All respondents to this question saw the necessity of appointing a key contact person in the school for parents and pupils or a dedicated person attached to a cluster of schools, especially where schools do not have access to a HSCL service. Additional funding would be necessary to enable schools, especially those which did not have DEIS status, to provide a framework of support. One respondent from a DEIS school stated:

❝ I think DEIS schools are well funded but I'm not sure how non-DEIS schools cope and provide support.

• Supporting pupils' mental-health and well-being was also cited as being critical, with particular reference being made to establishing a referral system independent of parents for those pupils over 18 years; having access to a counsellor in school; and providing support to pupils over the summer break where possible.

• Finally, it was noted that improved communication between the key workers in specific agencies and the school would help the school identify and respond to the pupil's immediate needs.

Engaging in discussions with families about their personal circumstances led to a number of initiatives which enabled schools to provide specific targeted support to pupils, including co-ordinating services, educational resources and peer mentoring.

Identifying a specific contact person for parents was seen to be critical in enabling and facilitating discussion as was having access to extra educational resources and support.

Advocating on behalf of families was seen as a key action that schools might engage in but a high level of frustration was evident given respondents' experience that advocacy to support parents' applications for housing had not had any effect. Respondents also reported a noticeable decline in well-being and mental health for those pupils who had remained in emergency accommodation for some time and suggested that a referral system be put in place specifically for those pupils 18 years and over. Additional funding for non-DEIS schools to enable them to provide a framework of support and improved communication between key workers in homelessness services and schools were seen as necessary to enabling schools provide for the educational needs of pupils who were experiencing homelessness.

Requirements to Enable Schools Support Pupils

Respondents were asked to indicate what schools need in order to effectively provide for the educational needs of children who are homeless. The responses are illustrated in figure 5.2.

Respondents indicated that Special Education Support was the most important resource that schools required to effectively provide for the educational needs of children who are experiencing homelessness. Specific funding to support meeting the additional needs of such pupils was of almost equal importance.

Access to support agencies was rated as the third most important resource, followed by the provision of additional classes to consolidate learning. Access to information to support families was rated as the fifth most important resource. Funding for school lunches and assistance with uniforms were ranked lowest – but were still seen by as important by a significant number of respondents.

Continuity of Learning

Respondents were asked to indicate in order of importance what factors, in their opinion, were necessary to facilitate and provide for a continuity of learning for pupils experiencing homelessness. Forty-six responses were recorded and ranked in order of importance in Table 5.5.

Obtaining previous school records was seen to be the most important action to provide for continuity of learning, followed by helping pupils to manage the transition to the new school. Providing additional support for learning and making allowances for homework completion were considered to be of less importance. Providing activities to facilitate integration, monitoring school attendance and assessment of current needs were seen as the least important measures for ensuring continuity of learning.

Policy Issues

The question of how current school policies in respondents' schools i.e. enrolment, transition and advocacy considered the needs of children who become homeless was explored with the respondents in the survey for principals (12).

▶ **Enrolment Policies**

Principals were asked if their school enrolment policy facilitated mid-year transfer for pupils who become homeless and 10 respondents said yes and two respondents said no. Respondents were then asked if on reflection, their policy presented challenges for these pupils and five said yes and seven said no. When asked if school management would be willing to change their policy to facilitate these pupils, eight said yes, one said no and three did not know.

▶ **Transition – Transfer of Information**

Respondents were asked to indicate if they found the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Educational Passport useful when transferring or receiving information about pupils making the transfer from one school to another. The document supports the transfer of pupil information from primary to post-primary school. Six found it useful while six indicated no. Respondents who indicated yes were asked to explain how it helped. The responses included:

- It ensures that additional supports are in place including books, uniforms and other requirements;
- The information provides the academic ability of the child and where supports are needed. However, it is the pre-visit to the primary school that informs our school about the real needs of the child;
- Knowledge helps us to assign the most appropriate support.

▶ **Advocacy**

Nine respondents knew about the agencies who support families who are homeless, while three were not aware. Eight respondents reported that they directly liaised with agencies on behalf of families who became homeless and four said they did not. The nature of involvement included:

- Linking families with support agencies;
- Trying to identify the needs on a case-by-case basis. For example, one family requires advocacy with the city council and school transport;
- Letters of support to housing agencies;
- Assisting in accessing local clubs and HSCL organises classes and emotional support for parent;
- Operating an open door policy.

Respondents indicated that, in general, school enrolment policies facilitated mid-year transfer and did not present challenges for pupils who may have to transfer to a new school as a result of becoming homeless and having to move out of their community.

Awareness of the Impact of Homelessness on Educational Participation and Achievement

Participants were asked to rate their awareness (from 1: 'No awareness' to 4: 'A lot of awareness') of how becoming homeless may limit a pupil's participation and achievement in education. Respondents reported medium to high levels of awareness in this regard as indicated in **Figure 5.3**.

Impact on Educational Experience

Participants were then asked what aspects of a pupil's educational experience they considered were impacted upon when they become homeless. The findings outlined below are a summary of the key points made in the replies of 36 respondents from the educational survey only. The analysis is set out under three main headings: Basic Needs; Social and Emotional Development; School Life.

▶ **Basic Needs**

Respondents overwhelmingly reported that difficulties in meeting basic needs was evident in a lack of adequate sleep, inadequate access to good food and nutrition, lack of routine, difficulties in maintaining personal hygiene, the absence of a consistent place of safety and the inordinate amount of time spent travelling, all of which were having a harmful effect on pupils' well-being and their ability to be able to participate in school life. One respondent noted that, when these needs not being met, the function of attending school changed.

66 *Lack of routine, space to do homework, the insecurity of the situation, lack of proper facilities, place in the family (e.g. eldest child) all contribute to a change of focus. The school becomes a haven (warm, welcoming, stable, routines embedded, availability of nourishing food etc.) rather than a place of learning. The caring agenda comes to the fore and the academics take a back seat and all of these facts have an impact on the educational experience.*

▶ **Social and Emotional Development**

Respondents specifically noted that pupils experiencing homelessness presented with a number of visible mental health issues, including high levels of anxiety, self-stigma,

Fig. 5.3: Awareness of Impact of Homelessness on Educational Participation and Achievement
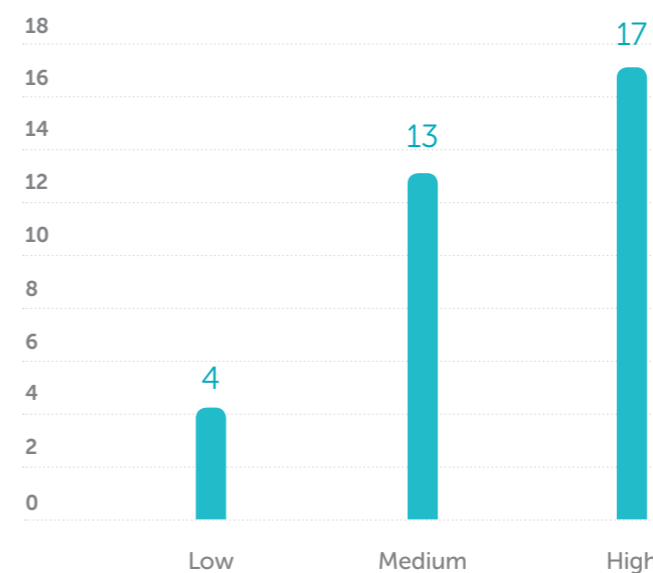
embarrassment, low levels of self-esteem, which ultimately impacted on their ability to socialise in school and maintain friendships.

66 *Their social experience of school: they become less sociable, more quiet and reserved, they can't spend time hanging around after school, they don't sit with their friends at lunch time because they may not have any lunch with them.*

Another respondent commented on the impact of consistently missing school as a result of their chaotic living conditions.

66 *Missing out on school activities that are special, such as school tours, library trips, storyteller visits etc.*

It was suggested that some pupils develop behavioural problems, reflecting an 'acting out' of their distress. In turn, this may result in a breakdown in their relationships within the school.

66 *They miss out on days at schools as result of tiredness, then fall behind in their work. Often behavioural problems follow which result in poor confidence and an apathetic approach to school life … in short, a breakdown in relationships.*

A majority of respondents noted that many pupils' experiences were leading to a deterioration in their mental health which ultimately impacted on their ability to engage positively in school.

66 *Their mental health is greatly impacted; they are moved around constantly and have no place to call home. As strong as some of these children are, this is a major factor in their well-being.*

▶ **School Life**

Respondents noted that ultimately many areas of pupils' educational experiences were diminished as a result of being homeless.

In particular, pupils' ability to consolidate learning was affected, including by being unable to complete homework due to the lack of an appropriate place to study. While some schools provide homework clubs, pupils may not be in a position to attend due to the long hours spent travelling to and from school. Experiencing high levels of anxiety was seen to impact on their ability to concentrate in class leading to poor motivation and a general deterioration in their interest in school. Respondents made the following comments:

66 *They struggle to concentrate as they are worried about their situation, they might not have space to complete homework, make lunch, keep their uniforms/P.E. gear organised.*

66 *They are so worried that it is very difficult to get into that headspace where they can learn.*

66 *It's like they gradually lose all interest in school. Mental health deteriorates.*

The distance that some pupils had to travel was seen to impact on punctuality and attendance.

66 *All aspects, attendance probably being the most immediate, especially when emergency accommodation is provided miles away from the school the child is attending.*

66 *Lateness can have a big impact as they often miss the same morning subject and lack of attendance also results in gaps in learning.*

Finally, one respondent noted:

66 *All aspects of the child's educational experience are impacted upon.*

In summary, the impact of being homeless was seen to impact on all aspects of school life and

was noted to relate to the lack of adequate provision for children's basic needs while experiencing homelessness and living in emergency accommodation. It was suggested that the function of school changes from being a place of learning to a place of safety, routine and predictability. However, poor attendance and living far away from school impacted on academic achievement and social relationships, leading in some cases to the development of behavioural problems. The difficulties faced by children who are homeless may sometimes lead ultimately to the breakdown of critical relationships for children, both those with fellow students and those with teachers.

Primary Indicators of Pupils who are Homeless

For the purposes of this research, a set of indicators was developed, drawing on the review of literature on educational outcomes for children experiencing homelessness, food poverty and those who had additional or special educational needs. These indicators were contextualised within the framework of the theory of the 'hierarchy of needs', outlined by Maslow (1943). This was to provide an insight into the fundamental educational needs of pupils experiencing homelessness in the Irish context. Respondents to the online survey were presented with a list of items that described children's educational needs in four domains: (1) Basic Needs; (2) Security, Routine and Predictability; (3) Friendship, Trust and Belonging; and (4) Attitudes to Schools and Educational Aspirations.

Participants were provided with a descriptor for each domain and asked to respond to each item that describes 'the child experiencing homelessness' by selecting 2 if that item is *Very True* or *Often True;* 1 if that item is *Somewhat or Sometimes True*; 0 if that item is *Not True*, and DK (Don't Know) if they did not have an answer.

▶ 1. Basic Needs

The 'Basic Needs' domain refers to meeting basic physical needs including food, water, sleep, shelter and their impact on the child and his or her management of the learning environment and school-based activities.

Table 5.6: Children's Basic Needs

THE CHILD EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS	Very True/ Often True	Somewhat/ Sometimes True	Not True	Don't Know
▶ Is well-rested, alert and ready for learning	4	11	28	3
▶ Does not appear hungry	3	23	17	3
▶ Is dressed in full uniform	2	26	16	2
▶ Maintains energy levels throughout the day	1	14	29	2
▶ Is physically healthy	4	21	19	2
▶ Has basic hygiene needs met	5	28	12	1

▶ 2. Security, Routine and Predictability

This domain is concerned with school as a place of safety, stability and refuge from uncertainty. It refers to physical, emotional and psychological safety.

Table 5.7: Meeting the Child's Safety Needs

THE CHILD EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS	Very True/ Often True	Somewhat/ Sometimes True	Not True	Don't Know
▶ Can become distressed by a sudden change in the school environment	26	15	3	2
▶ Attends school regularly (<20 days absence)	5	23	16	2
▶ Is easily upset by correction or admonishment from class teachers or peers	16	22	4	4
▶ Frequently arrives late to school	33	9	3	1
▶ Completes homework	4	27	10	5
▶ Experiences peer to peer bullying	5	18	16	7
▶ Will ask for additional support from teacher/staff	7	18	19	2
▶ Is easily frustrated in the school environment	17	20	6	3
▶ Makes friends easily and responds to unfamiliar adults	1	19	20	6
▶ Parents attend meetings	4	20	20	2

▶ 3. Friendship, Trust and Belonging

This domain encompasses the child's relationship with teachers, peers and the wider school community. It refers to the child's friendships and interactions, as well as their sense of belonging.

Table 5.8: Relationships within School

THE CHILD EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS	Very True/ Often True	Somewhat/ Sometimes True	Not True	Don't Know
▶ Has a 'best friend' or small group of close friends	5	27	12	2
▶ Responds positively to praise and encouragement from class teacher	22	19	3	2
▶ Participates in extracurricular activities	3	20	22	1
▶ Has limited awareness of or is intolerant of other children's needs	6	18	18	4
▶ Has their own identity and sense of belonging within class group	4	28	12	2
▶ Asks questions, answers questions, shares thoughts in class setting	4	23	17	2
▶ Appears socially isolated from peer group	14	23	6	3
▶ Will talk to and with the class teacher	10	26	8	2
▶ Can become distressed within the school environment	22	18	4	2

▶ 4. Attitudes to School and Educational Aspirations

This domain refers to the child's academic self-worth and encompasses their educational experiences attitudes and aspirations.

Table 5.9: Attitudes to School and Educational Aspirations

THE CHILD EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS	Very True/ Often True	Somewhat/ Sometimes True	Not True	Don't Know
▶ Is aware of their individual strengths and capabilities	6	28	8	4
▶ Shows interest, enthusiasm and motivation for school work	4	28	12	2
▶ Takes pleasure in academic progress	11	26	7	2
▶ Finds aspects of academic work challenging	25	19	-	2
▶ Shows poor persistence when faced with challenging tasks	17	23	3	3
▶ Displays a fear of failure	16	19	5	6

Summary

The purpose of developing a set of indicators for pupils who are homeless in the Irish context was to gain an insight into, and an understanding of, how educational professionals perceive the effects of homelessness on children's ability to engage in school life.

The results indicate that, in the view of these professionals, the impact of homelessness is evident in each one of the following four domains – *Basic Needs*; *Security, Routine and Predictability*; *Friendship, Trust and Belonging*; *Attitudes to School and Educational Aspirations*, but not in all areas of these domains.

The most significant impact of homelessness is evident to the respondents in the domain of *Basic Needs.* The replies of a majority of respondents show they perceive that children who are homeless do not get sufficient rest, may be hungry while they are in school, are unable to maintain energy levels throughout the day, and do not present in school dressed in full uniform.

With regard to the domain of *Security, Routine and Predictability*, the majority of respondents perceived that pupils experiencing homelessness frequently arrive late to school, can become distressed by a sudden change in the school environment, may not

make friends easily or respond to unfamiliar adults and may not ask for additional support from teachers. Moreover, the replies show that most respondents perceive that children who are homeless have difficulty in attending school regularly and in completing homework, and that they may be easily frustrated in the school environment.

The impact of homelessness was also observed in the domain of *Friendship, Trust and Belonging*. A clear majority of respondents said that it is only *Sometimes True* or *Not True* that children who were homeless have close friends, have their own identity and sense of belonging within their class group, take part in extracurricular activities, or ask questions and participate in class. Similarly, the majority perceived that these children were *Sometimes* or *Often* socially isolated. However, respondents indicated that pupils respond positively to praise and encouragement from their class teacher.

In the domain of *Attitudes to School and Educational Aspirations*, children were in general perceived as being aware of their strengths and difficulties, showing interest and motivation in school work and taking pleasure in academic progress. However, they were also perceived as finding aspects of academic work challenging, having difficulty in persevering with challenging tasks, and as being fearful of failure.

Section 2: Educational Professionals' Interviews

The themes that emerged from the surveys were explored in more detail and interviews were conducted with educational professionals.

The Phenomenon of Homelessness among Children Attending School

Participants in the interviews were unanimous that schools were experiencing a higher number of pupils who were homeless than was previously the case. One principal, who had moved schools over the past 10 years, and was now working in a DEIS – Band 1 school, noted:

66 *Well, my overall experience is that it wasn't an issue say fifteen years ago, and if it was an issue, you didn't hear about, it wasn't spoken about. But then three years ago, since I have come here, I have been made very aware very, very quickly that there is a lot of homeless families.*

Another principal noted the increase in the number of children experiencing homelessness who were pupils in her school:

66 *There is an increasing number of families who are presenting as homeless and a lot of ours [pupils] are based in the X Hotel so there's definitely been an increase and we get a lot of kids from the X.*

The fact that DEIS schools support children from vulnerable families and communities was noted by all of the interviewees. However, one teacher stated that supporting pupils who are experiencing homelessness is different:

66 *I think it's new. It's only in the last two years I've been here I've actually had children in the class that have been affected by it so it's still relatively new. There'd always be, like, broken families or poverty, that's always sort of been here. And I think even when I was in school, although it wasn't very common, it was beginning to come, this would be kind of late eighties, early nineties, whereas now that's nearly the norm here but the homelessness is much... it's a new thing. And I'd say*

a lot of people are only beginning to learn about it and the impact it has. Even the children themselves a lot of them in the class wouldn't know about this situation. But I think in a few years it will be the norm for a lot of people.

However, another principal was adamant that their school was not accepting this phenomenon as normal:

66 *So, what we're trying to make sure we're not doing [emphasis added] is we're trying to make sure that we're not normalising [emphasis added] it and that it just becomes a tick in the box, yeah, this family is homeless, yes, okay, tick, you know that in our discussions that we don't accept it as being a normal or a natural kind of phenomenon if you like.*

Getting to School

Respondents in the survey indicated that one of the biggest challenges for pupils accessing and actually getting to school was the distance they had to travel and how this in turn impacted on their educational experiences. This theme was explored in more detail with the interviewees. One principal noted:

66 *Travel, to me, seems to be the biggest issue with a lot of the homeless families. They're very appreciative to have a home or have somewhere to stay, it's better than having nothing. But getting to school and getting home from school, and then the daily chores, simple things like making dinner...*

Another principal articulated how the distance travelled by families impacted on their day:

66 *So, for example, with one of our families the children have to be in school for half eight to avail of the breakfast club, the children are getting up at six o'clock in the morning. They get out, they do whatever they have to do, they get a bus at quarter to seven, that takes them such and such a distance. They wait a few minutes, get another bus, then they're here at half eight. Maybe the parents have commitments, so they pick them up at half two, they may go to a friend's house, they may go wherever, and that might take them up to four o'clock, and then they start making the journey home. And they mightn't be home until six or half six.*

Travel distance was also considered to impact on punctuality and attendance:

66 *Yes, punctuality would be as much an issue as absenteeism; they can come in at all sorts of times in the morning, I suppose if they get up late at a particular time they may just say there's a point of no return at which they won't bother coming to school ...*

66 *Attendance is absolutely shocking if they're homeless, it's absolutely shocking, they just aren't able for whatever reason to get in here; if they've a distance to travel it obviously makes it worse.*

In turn, the impact of arriving consistently late to school was seen to have social implications for pupils. Consider the exchange of opinions of one principal and HSCL below:

66 *When you arrive late... It's unsettling, you're coming in, you're feeling different, you walk in the door, everyone's eyes turn to see who's coming in the door.*

66 *You don't know what's going on...*

66 *You've missed out on what's going on, yes, so you're unsettled straight away, so you're walking into an experience in school, which is not as you know relaxing and calm as it should be for the children. The comfort of being able to walk in off the line on the yard with your pals in the morning, there's a social aspect to it as well.*

Other interviewees acknowledged that while parents were trying to give children some stability by enabling them to remain in the school they had been attending before becoming homeless, this was, in fact, having a profound effect on them and their children.

66 *Yes, I understand parents want the one stability, the one stable thing that might be left in the child's life is the school. So, everything else has been changed so they want to try and keep that bit of continuity but it's putting pressure on themselves, they're obviously passing other schools to get here but they want that continuity for the children, so it's another difficulty for them again.*

However, this principal understood why they [families] travelled such long distances:

66 *[...] the reason they come to us is because they want something to be stable, we had a family here six or seven years ago who were homeless and they were in a hostel in town and it was two buses and it was a*

significant distance to travel, they were missing school, they were late and it was a father in this question because the mother had sadly passed away and I asked him why he didn't move the kids to a school in town and he looked at me like I had two heads and he said, 'because it's not where we're from'.

However, it was suggested that attending the school but not living locally was contributing to social isolation:

66 *They're really on the fringes of the group aren't you if you don't live locally anyway you can be on the fringes of the group but if you're not even in a situation where parents can arrange to bring someone over to play or whatever after school how do you manage? How do you mix? How do you fit in?*

Sharing Information and Providing Support

The question of how and when parents inform the school of the fact that they are homeless and the processes by which this information may be shared within the school in order to provide support to families and pupils was explored with respondents. One school principal described the process in her school as follows:

> **Case Study**

We work, and everybody knows this, we work on a 'need to know' basis. So, it's all about making sure that the children are protected, their families are protected you know and everybody in the school knows that there is no gossip in the staff room or anything like that, you know, so we'd be very careful about that. So, we work on a 'need to know', but if a child

then presents with difficulties then I give the teacher the information that might explain that behaviour.

Sharing information happens through the vehicle of our care team meeting and the Home School Liaison Officer. Either a parent has come to me or the teachers have come to me or the teachers have gone to the home school, wondering if, perhaps, you know, would this be right [that the family is homeless] or could this be if the parent hasn't identified themselves. And so, what we try and do then is just to check that it is true, see if the mum or child wants to talk about it, wants to look for some support and then it's just to see what practical supports we can put in place. And one of the practical things we do is lots of kind of advocacy, you know, I'm tired of writing letters to various people you know the council etc., etc. and making cases for particular families.

The other thing we do is, we look out in the mornings particularly just to see if the children are hungry and we make sure that they get a breakfast. Sometimes they're late and they've missed the breakfast club, so the SNA in the class or the SNA in the corridor – we don't have an SNA in every class – but the SNA on the corridor would be aware of the homeless children on that corridor or in that class and would make sure that they get food... Otherwise, then, like in the school completion programme we make sure that those children are prioritised for after-school activities for, you know, things like homework clubs; basketball, soccer, etc.

We try and look out for that significant adult in their lives just to make sure that if they're willing to talk to somebody that there's somebody there for them, that they know who to go to and who to link in with. Other than that, we feel kind of powerless really.

Despite the fact that the function of the staff of the HSCL service is to provide support to families, one interviewee noted that parents may not confide in these staff members at an early stage:

66 People are quite proud, they don't necessarily tell you upfront that you know they became homeless or whatever so it could be a while before you'd establish that they are, you might see a pattern emerging with the child coming late or something like that, so it could be a little while before that feeds into what we know.

However, once information about a child's homelessness is revealed to the school, a number of initiatives and supports are put in place for pupils. One principal spoke about how they tried to reduce the amount of time a child had to travel to school two days a week:

66 We had one little girl last year coming from Dún Laoghaire and so what she used to have to do is, she was even a good bit outside Dún Laoghaire, she'd have to get a bus to Dún Laoghaire, a train from Dún Laoghaire into town and a bus from town out here. So, she was, getting up at about kind of half six, you know trying to make it here for nine. Now what we did was two days a week we paid for a taxi out of home school funds... Just you know so that she could have some bit of a lie-in you know, two of the mornings a week.

Other respondents said that they gave families whatever it was they needed but some things were beyond their remit.

66 So, we give them everything they need. Uniforms, books, discretionary things like –depending on the family, obviously, and what their situation is, because some families are living in hotels, others in bed and breakfast.

66 You'd make phone calls, if they come in and ask you to ring, whether

it could be social welfare, you make a phone call. You'll do whatever they ask you to do, or whatever you might feel help. But a lot of time it comes back to the simple fact that, I think we alluded to earlier, they're from the area or they've lived in the area, but they're living outside the area, is there any way you [i.e. the principal] can help us to get us back into the area.

Schools were also discreet in how they provided extra food when they saw the need.

66 So, if there's extra lunch you give it to the families, they tell you, you'd say, look it... but you do it, you wouldn't say, now, X you're homeless, you're getting... you wouldn't do it like that. It's discreet. And they're aware of that and the families appreciate that.

What Schools Do

All respondents gave specific accounts of the types of activity they engaged in to support families and pupils who were experiencing homelessness. This resulted for some spending large amounts of time contacting agencies and writing letters. One principal spoke about his frustration in his attempts at trying to access support for one family in his area.

❯ Case Study

There was a case last year, actually I was very disappointed with the services, I have to say, there's no point in being... I'm being upfront and honest. There was a girl living in a car up here, and some of the families, local families came and said, you need to do something here, you're the principal, you might have a bit more authority than... or your work might have a bit more... I would say over the course of two days, I spent somewhere in the

region of four hours making phone calls, and it was just a dead end. I rang [AGENCY]: 'Tell her to come in and register and tell her to do this and tell her to do that'. The woman wasn't capable of doing any of those things. So, I rang a local agency, 'No, she needs to ...' and it was all what she needed to do. But my point was, this lady isn't capable of doing any of these things, is there no... So eventually I think I got through to [AGENCY] in X, and I spoke to a very good person there. And whoever I spoke to anyway, said, 'Yeah, I can see what you're saying, we'll sort it out'. And she was sorted out. And the families that reported said 'Yeah, she's gone' or whatever. But I kind of felt, if you saw someone, if somebody came to you... like, a family came into me, said, 'We've nowhere to go tonight', I'd be going, well... I really don't know where to start. Because the one time I did try and really take direct action, I was left very frustrated. Really frustrated. 'And tell her to go down to Citizen's Advice and do all of these things'. She wouldn't be homeless if she was able to do all of these things! That'd be my take on it.

Other principals spoke about what they perceived to be the fruitless exercise of writing letters. One said:

66 And in the 10 years, 11 years, I was principal people have always come and asked you to write letters supporting their application for housing in a certain area but the difficulty is if you write 50 of those letters in the first week in September sure they're worthless, if you're only writing one or two a year they might nearly carry more weight, so then the difficulty comes which ones do you write so you feel you know... Another principal she felt she was asked to write so many of them that they're just ... it might as well be your GP saying yes they attend this GP.

What Schools Need

Interviewees were asked what they needed in order to better support pupils who were experiencing homelessness. One principal said that access to funding which they could use at their discretion would be most helpful.

66 The taxis, you know what I mean, the taxis, the LEAP cards, just the turkey at Christmas, whatever it is like, it's just you know all of the... that there is that humanity and flexibility allowed within the funding streams to allow schools to judiciously use those funds. That it's not all tick the box around educational attainments. Because unless our children have their basic Maslow needs you know their hunger and everything else looked after, you know then we're on a highway into nothing trying to teach them you know what sound does the 'F' make, you know what I mean?

Integrating services and having consistent access to professionals who support families experiencing homelessness would also be welcome:

66 In an ideal world you'd love to see all integrated services working well together you know... you know you're dealing with and you talked about social workers earlier there's such a churn and turnover and people handling cases that it's next to impossible to have any continuity just on that level alone and then you know agencies like Dublin Corporation or whatever City Council don't want to talk to schools.

Again, having access to information was considered to be important:

66 If a family come into me and say they're homeless, a number I could ring, a person I could contact that may not solve the issue but would direct me, tell me where to go with

it, as opposed to my experience last year where over the course of two days, ringing around in circles.

Having access to extra resources, and in particular, additional teachers, was cited as being critical for schools to support pupils experiencing homelessness.

66 Teachers... an extra teacher to maybe just work with families, if there are families coming in late, that I can say, they're missing out on it every day, if we've an extra teacher here who has blocks throughout the day to work with these children that are vulnerable. Maybe even to do family things with them like cooking.

66 An extra teacher, if someone offered me ten thousand and offered me a teacher, I'd take the teacher. Just the resource, a teacher to work with the families. And maybe if there is issues that I'm missing that I'd actually... they can identify them, because there is a possibility that there are families here that have slipped through the net that are homeless, and we think everything is fine but things aren't fine.

Teachers' Perspectives on the Impact of Homelessness

A key aim of this research was to attempt to capture the experience and perception of teachers on how being homeless impacts on pupils' educational experiences. An interview was conducted with one teacher who had been identified through a parent interview on their views in this regard.

A number of issues emerged throughout the interview that encapsulated the teacher's perceptions on how being homeless was affecting one

pupil in her classroom. With regard to the child's relationships in school, the teacher said:

66 *She can become quite withdrawn. She'd never be the one to, you know, she gets along with everybody but she's not a leader, you know, the way you might see children that stand out as being the one who decides what game to play. Like on a Friday we have golden time and she'll just sort of go along with what everybody else is doing. She hasn't got a lot of confidence. And although she gets on with people she just tends to fall in with the people as opposed to being the one who takes charge or takes the lead.*

Her participation in class discussions about family events was also affected:

66 *She doesn't talk about where, like her journey to school is so different to everybody else's. Like she is very tired in school, exhausted, and I would be too if I had to travel what she travels. And I think then there's a lot of waiting around for siblings to go back. But that's something I have noticed, she stressed that it's a home and doesn't talk about that she isn't in a home.*

The teacher noted an issue that had also been highlighted in the interviews with parents and in the quantitative survey with professionals – the impact on academic performance of difficult living conditions, the absence of a proper space in which to do homework and having to travel a long distance to school. All of these factors meant that the child was losing ground in her schooling and had poor literacy skills.

66 *She's a very bright girl, very capable but she is exhausted and you can see that she, there's a real lack of motivation there. And if you look back on where she was a couple of years ago to where she is now, you know, I would say she isn't performing to the best of her ability maybe due to tiredness,*

lack of motivation. Her handwriting isn't, it's nearly in keeping with the disorganisation of maybe home life. I don't know if she has a proper place to do homework so the homework is, although it may be done, it's of a very poor standard. Appalling handwriting at times if I'm being honest and I don't know if it's that she hasn't a proper space to do it. That, and being exhausted, I think is really affecting her, like she's not achieving the scores that she could be achieving.*

The teacher noted that her pupil had not explicitly told her that she was homeless; however, as the child got to know the teacher she was beginning to share some personal information.

66 *I can't even remember how the conversation started, and she opened up a little bit and then it was nearly like I've said too much and I didn't want to push. And she said that she's really lonely for this area where she is, misses her friends. She really misses not being able to play outside. I asked about the weekend and she said: 'The only thing we really do is go to Aldi but I can't play out the way I used to play'. She was allowed play outside the front street and she's knock into different children in the class and she said all that's gone and she's really lonely for her friendships, for the independence that she had.*

Having this type of information made the teacher more acutely aware of how exploring specific topics that might permeate different curricular areas, for example, what you eat and what you cook, would be somewhat irrelevant when you lived in emergency accommodation and again impacted on her discussion in class.

66 *[...] and I think it's a vicious circle because we had talked about what do you get for your dinner, even in Irish, we're doing B and it's all about what you eat and it's so*

zoned in about healthy eating... it's everywhere. Like we have the Food Dudes programme here and we have, I think it's called, it's a new one, Super Troopers, and the idea is you try and eat as much fresh fruit and vegetables and home-cooked food. And I don't think, obviously she's not getting any chance to get a home-cooked dinner and a lot of packet food. And I can see, even over the summer, the difference that's made.*

The teacher continued on how specifically this was affecting the child:

66 *It appears that she has weight issues now; she would have been next door to me last year and when she came back over the summer I noticed and I think she is very aware of that.*

However, the fact that the teacher was aware of her pupil's situation led her to question how she managed her approach in delivering the primary school curriculum while also being sensitive to the needs of her pupil. She specifically referred to the importance of in-service training in this regard:

66 *We got a bit of training yesterday on SPHE and it really opened my eyes to the different language you should use and how you should approach certain topics. And this is something I'm not quite... I had no idea what it must be like. It's very hard for me to understand when I don't know so maybe a bit of staff training in how to, even using the correct vocabulary. I'm not quite sure how I should approach it, it's a learning curve for me; I'm trying my best. And I think it will be a bit of maybe I shouldn't have said that and I'll learn as I go but possibly staff training"*

She also valued the dialogue that she had engaged in with other colleagues and having access to information on a 'need to know' basis was seen as important in contributing to her

understanding of the needs of pupils in her school who are experiencing homelessness.

66 *And just to give an insight of how, even the few little conversations I've had with the home school [liaison staff member] it's given me more of an insight. But I arrived in on the 1st of September and I wasn't specifically told well look, we are aware of this. I think though across the board I think we, as teachers, need even to pass over from one teacher to the other, that's huge. Like you could spend a week, and not on a, on a real 'need to know' basis, not even on from a gossip, like dare I ever say that, but on a need to know basis.*

Early Journey* Community Childcare Service

Given that children from zero to four years account for the largest percentage of children experiencing homelessness (Census 2016), the final case study reflects the experience of one community not-for-profit childcare service that provided for 18 families experiencing homelessness in 2017. While the services offered and experiences of the setting cannot be generalised to all community not-for-profit settings, it provides insight into the experiences of early childhood professionals in supporting children and their families.

▶ **Service Profile**

Early Journey* is a community based not-for-profit childcare setting that has been in operation in a designated area of deprivation and disadvantage in Dublin for over 40 years. The service was established to meet demand for childcare referrals from the Health Service Executive including Public Health Nurses and/or Social Work Teams. The setting is a purpose built childcare facility that offers full day care for children aged six months to five years as well as parenting advice and support. The building comprises five pre-school rooms, a baby and toddler room, kitchen and dining area for children, outdoor play areas, a sensory room and a speech and language therapy room. Provision includes facilities to meet children's personal care needs with changing areas, washing machines and showers. There is a cot room for children aged less than two years and each pre-school room offers a quiet space for children to rest as required. Children are provided with a minimum of one hot meal per day as well as breakfast and a snack. The service offers a range of provision including full-time care, part-time care and sessional services. The service adheres to the High/Scope Curriculum and staff are trained to support children's social and emotional development and conflict resolution for young children. Childcare places are part funded by Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) Schemes including the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE or the Free Pre-school Scheme), the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme and the Community Childcare Subvention Resettlement (Transitional) CCSR(T) Scheme and this contributes to just over 50 per cent of overall all running

costs. The latter programme was introduced by Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone in December 2016. The remainder of costs are funded by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, parent and charitable donations as well as Tusla, the Child and Family Agency with funds made available by the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme.

▶ **Phenomena of Homelessness in the Child-care service**

Until two years ago, the setting did not have experience of children and families who were living in emergency or temporary homeless accommodation. In 2017-2018 the setting made provision for 18 families who had presented as homeless. Approximately eight of the families were already availing of services within the setting, with the remainder presenting through self-referral or referrals from the HSE, Tusla and community organisations. The service provider described the challenges of high demand for childcare places and prioritising provision for children living in temporary or emergency accommodation despite a waiting list for all rooms across the setting;

66 *About eight or nine of those (families) would have been already with us and through whatever happened they became homeless.... I suppose the demands for the nursery would have been for the newer parents coming in, that I felt if they were homeless and living in the hotel I felt a little bit, not under pressure I suppose but I was giving them top priority of places that if a place came available.*

In January 2017, the setting benefited from the introduction of the CCSR(T) Programme which affords children access to up to five hours' care and education each day at no additional cost to

parents. This reduction in parent fees was said to support the transport bringing children to and from the setting, allowing children to retain their place within the service despite being accommodated outside the local area.

In January last year when the new grant (CCSR(T)) came out I was able to change them from the subvention (CCS) to the new grant and it was great because it meant they didn't have to pay anymore, even though they were here a long time and they used to pay a fee... And it was great, the grant that came in took an awful lot of pressure off them because they had the extra bus fare to pay and like just the worry of being in the hotel room and then having to get buses and then some of them had to get two buses over.

▶ **Systems of Identification**

The setting indicated that they generally became aware of the families' experience of homelessness from parental disclosure to staff within the setting, difficulty in paying contribution fees or by changes to the child's address on registration forms. The service provider stated that the majority of parents made the disclosure to the child's key-worker. This communication was said to rely on established, trusting relationships between the parent and early childhood educators.

Some of them I would have found out from, some of them would put down on their application form that they're living in the hotel.... Now the girls, through conversation with the mams, because they've all got very good relationships with the staff, you know. The children would all have key-workers and the key-workers would have a very close relationship with the parents and it's usually through that. Or it could be if a parent is falling behind (with fees) and I have to talk to them and it might come up.

▶ **Identifying and Accommodating the Needs of Children**

The service provider described how the service responds to the needs of children and families experiencing homelessness, highlighting children's need for sufficient, nutritionally balanced food as well as social and emotional difficulties arising from predictability and routine arising from insecure housing.

• **Basic Physiological Needs**

The setting has a chef onsite and offers children a nutritionally balanced, warm meal each day as well as breakfast and a snack depending on hours of attendance. The service provider spoke of how children would be tired or hungry owing to long journeys or disrupted sleep while living in emergency accommodation. The setting responds to these needs through the provision of meals, spaces for rest and relaxation as well as daily opportunities for outdoor play and exercise. In addition, the service is part of a community-based food programme that provides food parcels to parents and families.

I think the difficult thing would be the children's bedtime, they'd be more tired coming in and things like that. They'd come in and they mightn't have had breakfast and we'd have breakfast ready for them when they come in... the cook in the kitchen, she cooks for every single one of them and they all get a huge portion and there's even still some left for the staff. So yeah they get good nutrition.

• **Security, Routine and Predictability**

The service provider spoke of children's needs for safety, routine, predictability, a warm meal and spaces to play, learn and relax and the negative impact of insecurity in their accommodation. Eight families had attended the setting prior to their experience of homelessness and despite being accommodated

some distance from the service, the parents retained the place, with some travelling for over an hour in order to attend. The service provider described how children experiencing homelessness experienced difficulty with transition and change and how this impacted on their behaviour within the setting. She described how children can become easily upset or frustrated sometimes lashing out at staff and other children. She described how educational professionals working within the setting respond to children's needs with responsive care, high levels of comfort and established routines and predictability within the setting. The service adheres to the High/Scope Curriculum (a quality approach to early childhood care and education that is child-led and identifies and builds on children's strengths, interests and abilities where children construct their own learning).

Staff are trained to support children's social and emotional development and conflict resolution for young children.

Yeah some of the children are not coping too well, and that's one of the things that's constantly coming up when I have room meetings, even the transitions within the nursery of, you know, putting on their coats to go outside, coming in, take off. We're working with some of the children and like they wouldn't have additional needs or anything. When they think they're getting their coats to go outside, they don't want to get their coats on because they think they're going home, you know, things like this.

• **Friendship, Trust and Belonging**

The service provider spoke of the importance of children's friendships and relationships within the setting and how children's friendships had been impacted

by their move into temporary or emergency accommodation.

I remember saying to the older little girl, we were talking about Christmas, and what are you getting and what would you like and what would really like. She said I just want a new home; I just want friends that live next door to me. My heart was breaking.... She would have been four. Now she wasn't in school so she was in her pre-school... she wanted to have friends that lived next door to her and she said she wanted a bike that was the other thing, I want a bike and go and call for my friends. So she was very aware that she couldn't have a bike because they were in hotel room and she didn't have any friends because they didn't know where they were going to be moving to.

The importance of established daily routines, opportunities for play and responsivity to children's basic and social-emotional needs were highlighted and the setting believes that these needs are supported through key-worker systems and the High/Scope curriculum. It was also stated that the key-worker systems promote effective relationships and communication between professionals and parents:

[...] the relationship with the parents is the most important thing and then your child kind of goes in with that. If the child knows that we've a really good relationship with mammy they're much happier with us and secure, you know. But no there is no support for, and there is no support for services that don't know the funding strands to help them understand.

▶ **Additional Supports offered by the Child-care service:**

In addition to early education and care experiences, Early Journey provides additional support, advice and information to parents of young children that are living in emergency or temporary accommodation. These

services are offered in addition to provision of early childhood care and education, within the wider remit of the charitable organisation.

• **Advocacy**

The childcare provider spoke of how the childcare setting is a source of information, advice and support for parents of young children. It was reported that some mothers and families were unaware of childcare supports for families experiencing homelessness including the CCS Transitional Scheme, supplementary welfare payments and supports available from charitable organisations. The service provider stated that often this information would be shared by word-of-mouth among mothers living in emergency accommodation, or when presenting to the childcare setting for a place for their child. In addition, the service provider is often asked to write letters of support on behalf of families seeking additional financial support through Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) or charitable organisations.

Today one of the parents, a young girl, came in and she asked me could I write a letter for her. She was after finding out that one of the other parents had got help with her payment through XX (Charitable Organisation). So they (the mothers) pass on messages like that, to say go in and ask XX (The Manager) and she might give you that.

The childcare provider also spoke of supporting other community-based settings, sharing information and working with other early childhood professionals to ensure children could access funding for childcare places and families as quickly as possible.

• **Parenting Support and Programmes**

The service provider spoke of the challenges of parenting young children when living in homeless accommodation. The service provides a safe space for parents

to talk with staff as well as access to more specific supports such as parenting programmes. Parents are invited to come into the setting, to play with and alongside their children participate in a weekly parenting programme delivered at no additional cost. The service provider reported that discrete supports, advice and safe spaces to share their experiences can significantly support them through their experience of homelessness.

I suppose I see it in the parents more than I see it in the children. I see the parents getting very upset. They might come in and have a bad night with the kids where they didn't sleep and they'd come in and have a good cry here. And we do a parenting course, it's a cert of security training with them, about the relationships with their children and we do that here in the nursery every Wednesday. And I've got some of them to go and join that because they don't seem to have much of a relationship with the children because they're constantly worried.... So, I do see the parents tend to have a lot of stress and worry on their shoulders. The children that come into us I actually, I couldn't, if I didn't know any of their addresses I wouldn't be able to pinpoint the children.

• **Food Hampers**

The childcare setting provides families experiencing homelessness with food hampers including snacks, tinned goods and dried food products that are made available through the Fund for European Aid to the most Deprived (FEAD). The setting coordinates deliveries for their own service and a number of other community childcare settings in the local area to provide basic food stuffs to families living in temporary and emergency accommodation.

We divide it between some of the other childcare services and then we make hampers up for our

homeless. Now it's all dried food so it's things that they can bring home and just use it. We have soups, you know, cuppa soups and Pot Noodles, now I know they're not great but the parents are delighted with them.

Early Journey has over 40 years' experience of providing early childhood care and education and family support in an area of deprivation and disadvantage. The setting has extensive experience of working with families and alongside other professionals such as Public Health Nurses, social work teams and early intervention teams. These relationships and supports have been developed over time and support staff in identifying and responding to the needs of children experiencing homelessness. In addition to DCYA funding for childcare programmes, the setting seeks out and secures additional funding and resources within their local and wider community to support families. However, as stated, this level of provision in early childhood cannot be generalised across all early childhood settings, but rather provides an example of how one organisation has responded to the phenomena of homelessness for infants and young children.

Summary

The findings from these qualitative interviews illustrates from an educational perspective the impact that homelessness is having on individual children as well as teachers in the classroom. Schools, advocating on behalf of families, are experiencing high levels of frustration in trying to access information with teachers requiring specific information on how to develop inclusive practices while delivering the curriculum. The type of initiatives and what impacts on decision-making, particularly in admissions and prioritising needs in one early childhood setting, emphasises the need for services to respond innovatively to an increasing number of children in the birth to four years age group. A number of critical areas have been identified which schools require to facilitate the educational needs of children who are experiencing homelessness. In particular schools require access to information from agencies, specific funding to support pupils as needs arise, in-service training and a coordination of services.

6

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

This study aimed to explore the educational needs of children that are experiencing homelessness. Parents and educational professionals shared their experiences of children's access and participation in education to inform understanding and guide the provision of supports and services. The study provided insight into how schools facilitate children and their families with examples of innovative practice, and differentiated supports that respond to the educational needs of children experiencing homelessness.

The families that participated in the study varied significantly regarding family composition, periods of homelessness, type and stability of accommodation as well as the educational setting that their children attended. Despite this heterogeneity, there was significant convergence

and agreement between educational professionals and parents on the education-related needs of children experiencing homelessness. These findings reflect themes emerging from other studies of family homelessness in an Irish context, including that of Keogh et al. (2006) and Share and Hennessy (2017).

This study considered how homelessness affects children's access to and participation in education with a conceptual framework aligned with Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943, 1970). This provides generalised insight and thematic organisation of the education-related needs of children experiencing homelessness across the domains of: (1) Basic Physiological Needs; (2) Security, Routine and Predictability; (3) Friendship Trust and Belonging; and (4) Children's Academic Self-Worth and Educational Aspirations. The findings of this study indicate that children

experiencing homelessness cannot meaningfully engage and participate in education and learning if their fundamental needs are not satisfied.

▶ Basic Physiological Needs

Children's requirements for secure shelter, sufficient rest, personal care and an adequately nutritious diet emerged as the most significant areas of need impacting on children's education. Children that are homeless in Ireland are experiencing exhaustion, hunger and increased susceptibility to illness because of poor living conditions and long journeys to and from school. Children require adequate rest, a nutritionally balanced diet and warm, clean clothing before they can fully participate in school life and learning. Children living in private emergency accommodation were noted to experience the most significant levels of need in this domain.

▶ Safety, Routine, and Predictability

Continuity in educational provision can provide children with a sense of routine and predictability. Parents in this study made their best efforts to maintain their children's educational provision as they considered it to be a place of safety and security in a time of significant disruption and uncertainty in children's lives. The children's educational settings were reported to provide children with friendships, warm teacher-child relationships and a sense of belonging within their wider school-community. Educational professionals indicated that they need to be made aware that children experiencing homelessness have specific needs so that they can respond to the child's need for security, safety and support within the school setting. While all parents in this study indicated that they had informed their child's school of the family circumstances, parents were uncertain as to how this information was shared and acted upon with substantial variations in the supports and accommodations offered to children. Principals, teachers and school staff discussed the lack of centralised information and support for educators and expressed the requirement for schools to have access to information and advice that would guide practice and support staff in responding to the needs of children and parents that are experiencing homelessness.

▶ Friendship, Trust and Belonging

Children were found to have positive relationships with teachers and their peers; however, parents and educational professionals described how disruption to children's lives and instability arising from homelessness negatively impacted on children's capacity for learning and ability to develop and retain

relationships with peers and staff in the school setting. Social isolation was attributed to children's withdrawal from their peer group and reduced participation in social networks and extra-curricular activities.

Parents and teachers also reported children's withdrawal from their peers as a result of secrecy and feelings of shame and embarrassment; this was especially salient for children aged ten years and older, particularly those attending secondary school. Educational professionals reported that teacher-child relationships were found to be negatively impacted by children's punctuality, poor attendance and failure to complete homework while living in homeless accommodation. Some teachers also stated that they were uncertain of how to respond to children's increased sensitivity, difficulty in completing homework and potential discomfort with curriculum topics that refer to home life and family composition.

▶ Attitudes to School and Educational Aspirations

The parents that participated in the study indicated that their children have positive attitudes towards schooling; they take pleasure in academic progress and value praise and encouragement from their teachers. Educational professionals and teachers affirmed children's motivation and interest but noted that irregular attendance and difficulty negatively impacted children's enthusiasm and engagement and aspects of academic attainment. Teachers reported that children who are experiencing homelessness could find aspects of learning challenging, these difficulties further compounded by children's increased sensitivity to perceived failure or admonishment. Parents and educational professionals recognised the opportunity to promote children's sense of achievement through authentic praise, encouragement, and

recognition despite the challenges children might be experiencing as a result of homelessness.

Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from the findings of the study. They provide a policy context for the improvement of systems, structures and services to ensure educational access and participation for children who are experiencing homelessness.

Families with children experiencing homelessness should be provided with the material assistance and support programmes to uphold a child's right to education. In particular, appropriate and dedicated measures should ensure that children can access and participate in education irrespective of their family circumstances. The response to children experiencing homelessness must be separate and distinct with input from all relevant government ministries, agencies, organisations and services working with and for children and families.

In 2016, the newly formed Government published *Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness* to address the housing crisis with a focus on increasing housing supply. It is welcome that *Rebuilding Ireland* recognises that issues may arise in relation to school attendance for children experiencing homelessness. This research could inform and update Pillar One of *Rebuilding Ireland* which commits to putting in place supports for families with children. The Inter-Agency Group established by Minister Eoghan Murphy TD following a review of *Rebuilding Ireland* in September 2017,[1] and chaired by a former Secretary General coordinates with the Department of Health, the Department

---

1. *Rebuilding Ireland*, 'Minister Murphy announces outcomes from review of *Rebuilding Ireland*' accessed 19 September 2017.

of Children and Youth Affairs, the Health Service Executive and Tusla, the Child and Family Agency is a welcome development as it presents an opportunity for coordinated actions to address issues facing families experiencing homelessness.

The annual Education Action Plan for 2019 and the developments envisaged in the School Completion, Educational Welfare Service could potentially be critically important for addressing the educational needs of children experiencing homelessness.

▶ 1. Update and Enhance Strategic Supports for Children Experiencing Homelessness

i. The Government should build on its existing commitments in *Rebuilding Ireland* and update Pillar One to reflect the additional identified needs of children experiencing homelessness with particular regard to education.

ii. The Government should consider expanding the Inter-Agency Group to include representatives from the Department of Education and Skills. Greater connectivity between the Inter-Agency Group and the Steering Group of the Children and Young People's Services Committees and national youth services could be important to responding to the needs of children experiencing homelessness.

iii. The objectives, actions and activity status of any updated or additional commitments in Pillar One should be submitted and reviewed as part of the *Rebuilding Ireland* Status Reports.

iv. The next annual Action Plan for Education 2019 presents an important opportunity to address the issues identified in this report. The Department of Education and Skills should liaise with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and

Tusla Educational Welfare Service and consult directly with the Irish Primary Principals' Network, the Joint Managerial Body for School Management in Voluntary Secondary Schools (JMB), the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI), Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI), Educate Together Principals' Network, the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD), youth organisations, voluntary childcare organisations and City and County Childcare Committees.

v. Targeted initiatives (such as DEIS, the School Completion Programme, Education Welfare Services, ABC programme) which focus on hard to reach children, run by the relevant Departments and constituent Agencies, could consider developing additional supports and local community response plans to address the educational needs of children experiencing homelessness. The School Completion Programme plays an important role in supporting this group of children. Tusla, the Child and Family Agency should consider increasing its supports to children experiencing homelessness and the Department of Education and Skills could give consideration to increasing HSCL provision where there is increased demand and extending the service to non-DEIS schools who are supporting children experiencing homelessness.

vi. Due to the housing crisis, thousands of children have had their education interrupted and negatively impacted by the challenges presented through their experience of homelessness. The Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Tusla, the Child and Family Agency must plan ahead for the longer-term impact of homelessness on the educational experience of this cohort of children and the disruption that it may have caused. This cohort of children will

need to be tracked by the Department of Education and Skills and the School Completion Programme and their needs planned for to ensure that they do not fall behind.

▶ 2. Support Schools to Cater for the Educational Needs of Children Experiencing Homelessness

i. The Government should establish a ring-fenced fund for schools to provide for the needs of children experiencing homelessness attending the school throughout the academic year. Funds may be used to provide supports for children living in emergency and temporary accommodation, including but not limited to psychological assessment and support, extracurricular activities, home-work clubs, additional tuition or wrap-around services delivered within the school premises.

ii. All schools and educational settings making provision for children experiencing homelessness should have access to resources and/or facilities to provide children with regular, nutritious food. Consideration should be given to mechanisms to support children's access to nutritionally adequate food out of school hours through the development of community-based meal provision for children and families within school settings.

iii. The Department of Education and Skills should issue a circular to provide advice and guidance regarding educational provision for children experiencing homelessness including recommendations to Boards of Management to address additional school costs, including the practice of 'voluntary donations' in primary and secondary schools.

iv. The Teacher Education Section (TES) of the Department

of Education and Skills should develop appropriate professional development training for teachers and schools making provision for children experiencing homelessness. This would include support for educators in identifying and addressing educational needs arising in children from deficiency in basic physiological and security needs.

v. The July Education Programme of the Department of Education and Skills provides funding to extend the school year by a month for children with severe or profound general learning disabilities or children with autism. This Programme should be extended for children experiencing homelessness to ensure that children living in emergency or temporary accommodation have opportunities for enrichment, learning and leisure during the summer months.

▶ 3. Ensure that Families with Children Experiencing Homelessness are Supported to Access Appropriate Accommodation

i. End the practice of 'self-accommodation' for families with children with immediate effect. Ensure that families with children who become homeless are provided with the necessary supports to access appropriate accommodation.

ii. The Government should provide a specific time-line in which it will end the use of emergency hotel and B&B type accommodation for families with children. Families with children should not be required to live in emergency or temporary accommodation for more than six months and figures relating to the type of provision and period of homelessness for families with dependent children should be maintained and published on a monthly basis.

iii. All emergency and temporary accommodation sites for families should be centrally mapped alongside the current mapping of all Family Resource Centres.

iv. In placing families in emergency and temporary accommodation, every possible attempt should be made to maintain children's educational stability and continuity of school placement. Families with children should be placed in accommodation that is within reasonable proximity to their child's existing school or child-care service. Access to public transport networks and the associated costs of travel should also be considered when determining a placement. Families should be provided with immediate access to the LEAP travel card scheme.

v. Quality standards must be adhered to in temporary and emergency accommodation to consider and respond to the needs of children. These standards should include specifications that uphold a child's right to a standard of living adequate for physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development in such a way that also considers and accounts for how these needs change according to the specific needs of different age groups. Centres should have appropriately trained staff, safe and secure spaces for rest and sleep, age-appropriate homework and study spaces, adequate facilities for food preparation and storage and appropriate standards of sanitary accommodation including private bathrooms and access to washing machines. Children should have access to safe play environments.

▶ 4. Ensure Families with Children Experiencing Homelessness are Granted Access to Adequate Financial Support and Welfare Assistance

i. Given the financial hardship faced by families with children experiencing homelessness, the significant costs associated with school can place additional pressure on these families. In addition to the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection should review the circumstances of these families to determine whether an Exceptional Needs Payment would assist with additional costs, particularly at the start of the school year. These costs include once-off costs associated with the purchase of appropriate outerwear, equipment, books and materials requested by schools. The Department should take into account the variation in costs between children attending primary and secondary school. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection should update its operational guidelines to highlight the specific issues related to families experiencing homelessness and to provide guidance on rates and eligibility criteria to all community welfare services, officers and representatives administering Exceptional Needs Payments.

ii. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection should also review the possibility of making available an additional payment to families experiencing homelessness to account for increased daily living expenses resulting from the period of homelessness with particular reference to adequate nutrition and transport to and from school, including a car fuel grant for parents who have access to private transport.

iii. Figures on accessing these supports should be collated to assess and determine the need for additional payments for this cohort.

▶ 5. Information and Service Planning

i. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government should ensure that there are adequate systems in place that provide clear information regarding children's experience of emergency and temporary accommodation. This should include anonymised demographic details showing the age range of children as well as the type of accommodation, transition between types of homeless accommodation and the total duration of homelessness.

ii. The Inter-agency Group should work with and fully utilise the infrastructure of Children and Young People's Services Committees and all relevant government, statutory and voluntary agencies to provide clear, accessible information regarding the supports and services available to families who are at risk of, or are experiencing homelessness. Information should be made available to schools and provide information on educational and family supports available nationally and locally.

iii. Children experiencing homelessness should be identified as a potentially vulnerable population and their needs should be considered when reviewing local and national policy documents relating to social inclusion, housing, education, social protection and healthcare.

References

Barrett, E. J., Ausbrooks, C. Y. B., and Martinez-Cosio, M. (2012). The tempering effect of schools on students experiencing a life-changing event: Teenagers and the hurricane Katrina evacuation. *Urban Education,* 47(1), 7-31. doi:10.1177/0042085911416011.

Biggar, H. (2001). Homeless children and education: An evaluation of the Stewart B. McKinney homeless assistance act. *Children and Youth Services Review,* 23(12), 941-969. doi:10.1016/S0190-7409(01)00176-1.

Birch, S. H., and Ladd, G. W. (1997). The teacher-child relationship and children's early school adjustment. *Journal of School Psychology,* 35(1), 61-79. doi:10.1016/S0022-4405(96)00029-5.

Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 3(2), 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

Buckner, J. C. (2008). Understanding the impact of homelessness on children: Challenges and future research directions. *American Behavioral Scientist,* 51(6), 721-736. doi:10.1177/0002764207311984.

Children's Rights Alliance. (2015). *Annual Report Card.* Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2y2lxBb.

Children's Rights Alliance. (2017). *Annual Report Card.* Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2Fn0AAB.

Department of Education and Skills. (2014). *Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools.* Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2t80uJd.

Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. (2014). *Implementation Plan on the State's Response to Homelessness.* Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2LJx4bS.

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. (2014). *Breakdown of homeless persons in emergency accommodation during the week 22 to 28 December 2014.* Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2bctDew.

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. (2017). *Homelessness Report-November 2017.* Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2sR5Hpr.

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. (2018). *Homelessness Report-February 2018.* Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2l3GCD7.

Dublin Regional Homeless Executive. (2017). *Reported reasons for family homelessness in the Dublin Region: January to June 2017.* Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2MhLGjH.

Dublin Regional Homeless Executive. (2017). *Families who are Homeless September 2017.* Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2MhLGjH.

Efron, D., Sewell, J., Horn, M., and Jewell, F. (1996). *Can we stay here? A study of the impact of family homelessness on children's health and well-being.* Melbourne: Hanover Welfare Services.

Gilligan, R. (1998). The importance of schools and teachers in child welfare. *Child and Family Social Work.* 3 (1), 13-25. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2206.1998.00068.x/pdf.

Gilligan, R. (2000). Adversity, resilience and young people: The protective value of positive school and spare time experiences, *Children and Society.* 14(1), 37-47. doi:10.1111/j.1099-0860.2000.tb00149.x

Ginn, C. S., Mughal, M. K., Syed, H., Storteboom, A. R., and Benzies, K. M. (2017). Sustaining engagement in longitudinal research with vulnerable families: A mixed-methods study of attrition. *Journal of Family Nursing,* 23(4), 488-515. doi:10.1177/1074840717738224.

Government of Ireland. (1998). *Education Act.* Stationery Office: Dublin. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2JBJBNH.

Government of Ireland. (2000). *Education (Welfare) Act.* Stationery Office: Dublin. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2MhWezo.

Government of Ireland. (2000). Equal Status Act. Stationery Office: Dublin. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2y5MqFv.

Government of Ireland. (2003). Education of Persons with a Disability Bill. Stationery Office: Dublin. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2y0ou6u.

Government of Ireland. (2004). *Equality Act.* Stationery Office: Dublin. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2JunHA0.

Government of Ireland. (2004). *Education of Persons with Special Education Needs.* Stationery Office: Dublin. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2Mkeloy.

Government of Ireland. (2013). *Child and Family Agency Act.* Stationery Office: Dublin. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2nnFM3A.

Government of Ireland. (2016). *Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.* Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2JID4nZ.

Halpenny, A.M., Keogh, A.F., Gilligan, R. (2002). *A Place for Children: Children in Families Living in Emergency Accommodation.* Children's Research Centre and the Homeless Agency: Dublin Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2sW3Y18.

Hearne, R., Murphy, P. (2017). *Investing in the right to a home: Housing, HAPs and Hubs.* Maynooth University. Retrieved 10th January 2018. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2uiJJ0T.

Hoey, D., and Sheridan, S. (2017). *Insights into Family Homelessness No. 11 - Survey of the families that became Homeless during March 2017.* Focus Ireland. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2JOTjQe.

Irish National Teachers Organisation. (2017). *Homeless Crisis felt in schools.* Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2JLlT5g.

Julianelle, P., and Foscarinis, M. (2003). Responding to the school mobility of children and youth experiencing homelessness: The McKinney-Vento Act and beyond. *The Journal of Negro Education,* 72(1), 39-54. doi:10.2307/3211289.

Keogh, A. F., Halpenny, A. M., and Gilligan, R. (2006). Educational issues for children and young people in families living in emergency accommodation. An Irish perspective. *Children Society,* 20(5), 360-375. doi:10.1111/j.1099-0860.2006.00015.

Lewit, E. M., and Kerrebrock, N. (1997). Childhood hunger. *The Future of Children,* 7(1), 128-137. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2sR3tpQ.

LePine, J. A., LePine, M. A., and Jackson, C. L. (2004). Challenge and hindrance stress: Relationships with exhaustion, motivation to learn, and learning performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 89, 883– 891. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.89.5.883.

Linden, D. v. d., and Eling, P A T M. (2006). Mental fatigue disturbs local processing more than global processing. *Psychological Research,* 70(5), 395-402. doi:10.1007/s00426-005-0228-7.

Lorelle, S., and Grothaus, T. (2015). Homeless children and their families' perspectives of agency services. *Community Mental Health Journal,* 51(7), 800-808. doi:10.1007/s10597-015-9827-y.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). *A theory of human motivation. Psychological Review.* 50(4), 370-396. doi:10.1037/h0054346.

Maslow, A.H. (1970). *Motivation and Personality.* New York: Harper and Row.

Masten, A. S., Sesma, A., Si-Asar, R., Lawrence, C., Miliotis, D., and Dionne, J. A. (1997). Educational risks for children experiencing homelessness. *Journal of School Psychology,* 35(1), 27-46. doi:10.1016/S0022-4405(96)00032-5.

Masten, A. S., Herbers, J. E., Desjardins, C. D., Cutuli, J. J., McCormick, C. M., Sapienza, J. K., Zelazo, P. D. (2012). Executive function skills and school success in young children experiencing homelessness. *Educational Researcher,* 41(9), 375-384. doi:10.3102/0013189X12459883.

McVerry, P., Carroll, E. and Burns, M. (2017). *Homelessness and Social Housing Policy.* (Issue 80). Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2MnvX2u.

Miller, P. M. (2011). An examination of the McKinney-Vento Act and its influence on the homeless education situation. *Educational Policy,* 25(3), 424-450. doi:10.1177/0895904809351692.

Miller, P. M. (2015). Families' experiences in different homeless and highly mobile settings: Implications for school and community practice. *Education and Urban Society,* 47(1), 3-32. doi:10.1177/0013124512469814/.

Moore, T., and McArthur, M. (2011). 'Good for kids': Children who have been homeless talk about school. *Australian Journal of Education,* 55(2), 147-160. doi:10.1177/000494411105500205.

Moore, T., McArthur, M., and Noble-Carr, D. (2011). Lessons learned from children who have experienced homelessness: What services need to know. Children and Society, 25(2), 115-126. doi:10.1111/j.1099-0860.2009.00270.x

National Council for Special Education. (2013). Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Schools. NCSE: Co. Meath. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/1Se5UHk.

National Council for Special Education. (2017). New Special Education Teacher (SET) Allocation Model. NCSE: Co. Meath.

National Economic and Social Forum. (2002). *A Strategic Policy Framework for Equality Issues Forum* Report No. 23. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2JHsn1P.

Neto, M. (2015). Educational motivation meets Maslow: Self actualisation as a contextual driver. *Journal of Student Engagement: Education Matters,* 5(1), 2015, 18-27. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2MjWi1B.

OECD. (2011). Inclusion of students with disabilities in tertiary education and employment. Paris: OECD. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2Mkl8i2.

Power, S., Whitty, G., and Youdell, D. (1999). Doubly disadvantaged: Education and the homeless child. In P. Vostanis and S. Cumella (Eds.), *Homeless children: Problems and needs* (pp. 130-141). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2sR5fHw.

Ramcharan, P., and Cutcliffe, J. R. (2001). Judging the ethics of qualitative research: Considering the 'ethics as process' model. *Health and Social Care in the Community,* 9(6), 358-366. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2524.2001.00323.x

Rafferty, Y. (1998). Meeting the educational needs of homeless children. *Educational Leadership,* 55(4), pp. 48-52.

Scanlon, G. (2011). Psychology in Education in Walsh, B. (2011), *Education studies in Ireland: key disciplines* (pp 132 – 161) Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

Schteingart, J. S., Molnar, J., Klein, T. P., Lowe, C. B., and Hartmann, A. E. (1995). Homeless and child functioning in the context of risk and protective factors moderating child outcomes. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology,* 24(3), 320-331. doi:10.1207/s15374424jccp2403_9.

Share, M., and Hennessy, M. (2017). *Food access and nutritional health among families experiencing homelessness in the Dublin region. Focus Ireland.* Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2vUlpCM.

Sheridan, S. (2017). *Insights into Family Homelessness No.7: Survey of the families that became homeless during September 2016.* Focus Ireland. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2t22ouK.

Sheridan, S., (2017). *Insights into Family Homelessness No. 10 - Survey of the Families that became Homeless during March 2017.* Focus Ireland. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2t3bWWc.

Tapper-Gardzina, Y., and Cotugna, N. (2003). The kids' café: A program to reduce child hunger. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care,* 17(1), 18-21. doi:10.1067/mph.2003.30.

U.S. Department of Education. (1994). Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments Act 1994. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2Jw1RMv.

U.S. Department of Education. (2001). 'McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act 2001. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/2JM6m5a.

United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child.* General Assembly Resolution. Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/1RUtyZo.

United Nations General Assembly (1992) *Convention on the Rights of the Child.* Retrieved from: https://bit.ly/1fVlqsS.

Wildenger, L. K., McIntyre, L. L., Fiese, B. H., and Eckert, T. L. (2008). Children's daily routines during kindergarten transition. *Early childhood Education Journal,* 36(1), 69. doi:10.1007/s10643-008-0255-2.

Wright, J.D., Rubin, B.A., and Devine, J.A. (1998). *Beside the golden door: Policy, politics, and the homeless.* New York. Aldine De Gruyter.

Appendices

Appendix A: Parent Interview Schedule

QUESTIONNAIRES/INTERVIEW SCHEDULE:

Study on the Educational Needs amongst Children Experiencing Homelessness Living in Emergency Accommodation.

Researchers:	**Dr. Ger Scanlon**
	Lecturer in Psychology Special Needs and Inclusion in Education
	Institute of Education, Dublin City University
	Ms. Grainne McKenna
	Lecturer in Early Childhood Education
	Institute of Education, Dublin City University
Contact Details:	Ms. Grainne McKenna
	Lecturer, Early Childhood Education
	DCU Institute of Education
	St. Patrick's Campus
	Drumcondra
	Dublin 9
	Email: grainne.mckenna@dcu.ie
	Tel: 01 884 2283

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE (PARENT/GUARDIAN)

Sex		Ethnicity/Race	
Age		Country of Birth	
Marital Status		Single/Never Married	
		Separated/Divorced	
		Married	
		Widowed	
		In long term partnership	
Employment Status		Not currently employed (seeking)	
		Not currently employed (disability)	
		Part-Time	
		Full-Time	
		Student/Training Programme	
		Not Reported	

Children within the Family			
# of children (residing EA)		#of children not residing	
Child	M/F	School/Pre-School attending	Date of Birth
Current accommodation/Provision			
Agencies currently offering support/advice/information to the family.			
Pathway into Homelessness (if disclosed)			
Comments/Additional Information			

Timeline/Transition in housing (Interviewers to explore the family's experience of housing and homelessness including the level of transition in housing prior to homelessness as is agreeable to parent/guardian).

⟵————————————————————⟶

Daily Routine

Could you describe a typical 'school-day'?

Prompts: Wake-up time, preparing children for school, breakfast, lunch-box, school equipment (books, homework etc.), transport, drop-off/collection, homework, leisure time, dinner, bed-time routine, opportunity to speak to/see school staff, interactions with parents of children that attend the school.

Time	Activity/Routine

Other Prompts:	
Uniforms	
School materials/equipment	
Meal preparation including packed lunch/snack	
Opportunities for play	
'Rules and Regulation' impacting children within accommodation	
Socialising with classmates/playdates	
Other	

2. Narrative Interview

Parent/guardian description of the child:
*Can you tell me a little bit about *child*/children?*
Prompts: Physical appearance/health, what makes him/her happy/sad, friendships, like/dislikes, favourite games/toys, strengths, ambitions, important adults?

This research hopes to explore children's educational experiences, and the possible impact that living in emergency accommodation can have upon access to and engagement in school life.

Thinking about *child's* experience of school

*How would you describe *child's* experience in school so far?* *Do you think that living in emergency accommodation has had an impact on their experience of schooling?*	
Social relationships and participation • *Friends?* • *Does he/she see school friends outside of school?* • *School events- PTM, Shows etc.* • *Extra-curricular activities*	
Teachers and School Staff *What does * tell you about his/her teacher?* • *How would you describe his/her relationship with his/her teacher?* • *School/teacher's awareness of child's abilities/learning needs* • *Awareness of current accommodation - how has the school responded/supported *child** • *Any areas of concern (relationships)*	
Academic/Ability • *Areas of strength in learning/school work* • *Areas of need* • *Homework- too much/too little* • *Any concerns (learning)*	
Behavioural and Emotional • *Attitudes toward school* • *Behaviour in school* • *Trusted adults - who would *talk to if they needed adult help/support* • *Any areas of concern*	

School Attendance: *If you were to think about *child's* school attendance since living in EA, would you say that he/she attends:*	**All**	**>50%**	**<50%**	**Not currently attending**
School Attendance: *Does this differ from school attendance prior to living in EA?*				
Comment:				

Parental Expectations:	
How far do you think your child will go in school?	Junior Cert
	Leaving Cert
	Trade/Vocational Study/PLC
	College/University
Comments:	

Thinking about *parent's* experience of child's school	
In terms of your experience as a parent: • *School awareness of current accommodation?* • *Have any supports, advice or information been provided by the school/pre-school setting?*	
Social relationships and participation • *Does the school promote parental involvement and participation i.e. PTA/events?* • *School events- PTM, Shows etc.*	
Communication with Teachers and School Staff • *How would you describe your relationship with his/her teacher?* • *What opportunities are there for you to speak with/communicate with the class teacher?* • *Is the class teacher awareness of current accommodation? How have they responded to this?*	
School Based Supports • *Are you aware of any supports that are in place for your child within school?* • *Can you think of any additional supports, provision that you believe would help *child* within the school setting?* • *What do you think would improve *child's* educational experience?*	
Comments:	

Parents' Educational Experience:		
Comment: *What was your experience of school/education?* *Did you have any memorable teachers? Why?* *What did you enjoy/dislike in school?* *What would you like your child/children's educational experience to be?*	Years of Education	
	Primary School	
	Junior Cert/Equivalent	
	Leaving Cert/Equivalent	
	Trade/Vocational Training	
	Some 3rd Level	
	Graduate/Post Graduate	
Comment:		

3. A School for Us (A3 visual to be populated by participants)

If we think about a school that supports children experiencing homelessness, what would that school have? What advice would you give them? How would parents be involved?

Prompts (used sparingly- encourage parent to identify):
- Transport to and from school
- School meals
- Wellbeing, self-care and independence
- Teacher/educational support
- After-school provision/summer camps
- Extra-curricular activities
- Homework clubs
- Support staff/services
- Community spaces- parents and families
- Play and learning opportunities

Appendix B-C: Educational Professionals' Survey

A STUDY ON THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AMONGST CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN DUBLIN

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project which is funded by the Children's Rights Alliance.

The Children's Rights Alliance has requested research into the key education-related issued faced by children experiencing homelessness. The purpose of the research is to identify clear, achievable and tangible recommendations that will support and enhance access to education for children experiencing homelessness.

This particular questionnaire is concerned with the experiences of educational professionals who have worked or are currently working with children who are homeless and living in emergency accommodation in Dublin. The primary aim of the questionnaire is to help us to identify the educational needs of children who are experiencing homelessness

Your views are very important to us and we would be grateful if you could complete this questionnaire as fully as possible

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE WILL BE TREATED CONFIDENTIALLY. NO NAMES OR OTHER IDENTIFYING INFORMATION WILL BE NOTED IN ANY REPORTS ARISING FROM THIS SURVEY. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION IS SOUGHT IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE SOLELY FOR THE RESEARCHERS' USE. THANK YOU VERY MUCH INDEED

SECTION A: YOUR EDUCATIONAL ROLE

(1) Teaching

Please specify your educational role

Primary Teacher ☐

Post Primary Teacher ☐

Year Head ☐

Guidance Counsellor ☐

Home School Liaison ☐

Pastoral Care Team ☐

Resource Teacher ☐

SEN Coordinator ☐

Other (Please Specify) _____

(2) School Type

Please specify your school type
Primary
DEIS Band 1 [ ]   DEIS Band 2 [ ]   Non- DEIS [ ]

Post Primary
DEIS [ ]   Non-DEIS [ ]

SECTION B: PROVISION IN SCHOOLS FOR PUPILS WHO ARE HOMELESS

In this section we are interested in any policies or initiatives that your school has adopted to facilitate the educational needs

of children who are homeless.

(1) Does your school have a system for identifying pupils who become homeless in place

Yes		No		Don't know	

(2) Does your school provide a system for pupils to seek support regardless of age?

Yes		No		Don't know	

(3) When it becomes known that a pupil is experiencing homelessness is there an appointed person in your school to facilitate the pupil's educational needs?

Yes		No		Don't know	

If you answered **YES** to Question 1, please describe this system.
_____If you

answered **NO** to Question 1 would you find such a system useful?

Yes		No	

(4) From the list below please indicate if your school provides any of these supports for pupils who are homeless and living in emergency accommodation.

Supports for Children Experiencing Homelessness	Yes	No	Don't Know
Financial assistance with uniforms			
Financial assistance with school materials			
School waiver voluntary contribution			
Transportation			
Before school care			
Lunch			
Afterschool care			
Facilitating late pick up (if there are two pick up times)			
Basic hygiene care (if required)			
Access to a trusted adult			
Advocacy for the pupils' needs			

Other - please specify

_____

(5) In your role are you aware about the specific educational needs of children who are homeless

Yes		No	

(6) Do you have any specific activities in place **in your own classroom or school** to assist pupils who are homeless and who are making the transition from one school to another?

Yes		No	

If you answered **YES** to Question 6, briefly describe these activities.
_____

(7) Do you have any special initiatives in your class or school for pupils who are homeless?

Yes		No	

If you answered **YES** to Question 7, please describe this initiative.
_____

(8) In your role, have you been directly involved in discussions (e.g. telephone contact or meetings) with **parents** about their personal circumstances relating to homelessness?

Yes		No	

If you answered YES to Question 8 above, please describe how this helped you to accommodate the educational needs of the pupil in your classroom?
_____

If you answered **NO** to Question 8 above, would you prefer to have more involvement with parents?

Yes		No	

SECTION C – SCHOOL STAFF

In this section, we are interested in the type of discussion that takes place between staff in schools about pupils who are homeless.

(1) In your role, have you participated in professional dialogue with other staff at your school about pupils who are homeless?

Yes		No	

(2) If you answered **YES** to Question 1 above, please describe how it helped you to identify the support that the pupil might need under the following headings:
  (a) Type of provision /support offered.
  _____

  (b) What Worked?
  _____

  (c) What did not Work?
  _____

  (d)   What might be more useful
  _____

(3) Please indicate your level of awareness about the specific educational needs of children who are homeless.

No Experience	A little Experience	Some Experience	A lot of Experience
1	2	3	4

(4) Please indicate your level of experience in facilitating children who are homeless in your classroom

No Experience	A little Experience	Some Experience	A lot of Experience
1	2	3	4

(5) Do you have any specific activities in place in your classroom to assist pupils who are homeless with the transition from one school to another?

Yes		No	

If you answered **YES** to Question 5, briefly describe these activities.
_____

(6) Do you have any special initiatives in your school for pupils who are homeless?

Yes		No	

If you answered **YES** to Question 6, please describe this initiative
_____

(7) From the list below please indicate in order of importance from **1 (being Most Important**) what in your opinion schools need in order to effectively provide for the Educational Needs of children who are homeless.

Provision for Children experiencing homelessness	Order of Importance
Access to information to support families	
Access to support agencies	
Specific funding to support pupils' additional needs	
Provision of transport	
Funding for breakfast club	
Funding school lunches	
Assistance with uniforms	
Assistance with school materials	
Homework club	
Additional SEN support	
Additional classes to consolidate learning	

Other: (please specify)

_____

SECTION D - PUPILS

(1) In your experience are pupils reluctant to inform the school that they have become homeless**.**

Yes		No	

If you answered **YES** to Question 1 above can you explain why you think in your experience that they may be reluctant to do so?

_____

(2) In your experience do pupils share this information when;

Sharing of Information	
Immediately, when they become homeless	
When they are unable to participate in after school activities	
When their living conditions have become untenable	
When their attendance record changes	
When their behaviour changes	
When class teacher(s) raises concerns	
When their work pattern changes	
Inability to complete homework	

(3) In your role are you aware of how homelessness may limit a pupil's educational participation and achievement in education?

No Awareness	A little awareness	Some awareness	A lot of awareness
1	2	3	4

(4) In your opinion what aspect of a pupil's educational experience is impacted upon when they become homeless?
_____

SECTION E: PROVISION FOR CONTINUITY OF LEARNING IN SCHOOLS FOR PUPILS WHO ARE HOMELESS

Continuity of learning

From the list below please indicate in order of importance **1- Being Most Important and 7, less important.** What in your opinion is necessary to facilitate and provide a continuity of learning for pupils who are homeless?

Facilitating Children experiencing homelessness	Order of Importance
Obtaining previous school records	
Assessment of current needs	

Helping pupils to manage the transition to your school	
Providing additional support for learning	
Providing welcoming activities to facilitate integration	
Make allowances for homework completion	
Monitor school attendance	

SECTION G: PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PUPILS WHO ARE HOMELESS.
Below is a list of items that describe children's educational needs in 4 domains; Basic Needs: Security, Routine and Predictability; Friendship Trust and Belonging and Attitudes to School and Educational Aspirations. In each section we have given you a descriptor to assist you in your response.

Instructions for Responses
For each item that describes "child experiencing homelessness"
Please circle **2** if that item **is very true or often true**
Please circle **1** if that item **is somewhat or sometimes true**
Please circle **0** if that **item is not true**
Please circle DK if you do not know

(1) Definition: Basic Needs: This includes access to and the provision of basic physical needs including food, water, sleep, shelter and their impact on the child and their management of the learning environment and school-based activities.

Basic Needs: The child experiencing homelessness is	Very True	Sometimes True	Not True	Don't Know
Well rested, alert and ready for learning	2	1	0	DK
Does not appear hungry	2	1	0	DK
Dressed in full school uniform (as applicable) and has weather appropriate clothing	2	1	0	DK
Maintains energy levels throughout the school day	2	1	0	DK
Physically healthy (no significant absence resulting from illness)	2	1	0	DK
Basic Hygiene	2	1	0	DK

(2) Definition of Security, Routine and Predictability: this considers school as a place of safety, stability and refuge from uncertainty. It refers to physical, emotional and psychological safety.

Security Routine and Predictability: The child experiencing homelessness can….	Very True	Sometimes True	Not True	Don't Know
Can become distressed by a sudden change in routine within the school environment.	2	1	0	DK
Attends school regularly (less than 20 days absence per year)	2	1	0	DK
Is easily upset by correction or admonishment from class teacher or peers	2	1	0	DK
Frequently arrives late to school	2	1	0	DK
Completes homework (as applicable)	2	1	0	DK
Experiences peer to peer bullying	2	1	0	DK
Will ask for additional support from teachers/staff within the school	2	1	0	DK
Is easily frustrated within the school environment	2	1	0	DK
Can make new friends easily and respond to unfamiliar adults (i.e. other teachers/staff within the school).	2	1	0	DK
Parent(s) attends scheduled meetings (i.e. Parent-Teacher Meetings)	2	1	0	DK

(3) Definition of Friendship, Trust, and Belonging: this refers to the child's relationship with teachers, peers and the wider school community. It considers the child's friendships and interactions as well as their sense of belonging.

Friendship Trust and Belonging: The child experiencing homelessness has…..	Very True	Sometimes True	Not True	Don't Know
Has a 'best' friend or small group of close friends within school	2	1	0	DK
Responds positively to praise and encouragement from class teacher	2	1	0	DK
Participates in extracurricular activities	2	1	0	DK
Has limited awareness of or intolerant of other children's needs	2	1	0	DK
Has their own identity and sense of belonging within class/year group	2	1	0	DK
Will ask questions, answer questions and share their thoughts in whole class setting.	2	1	0	DK
Appears socially isolated from peer group	2	1	0	DK
Will talk to and with the class teacher (not including direct teaching/instruction)	2	1	0	DK
Can become distressed within the school environment (shows signs of anger, upset, frustration)	2	1	0	DK

(4) Attitudes to School and Educational Aspirations- Refers to the child's academic self-worth.

Attitudes to School: The child experiencing homelessness is….	Very True	Sometimes True	Not True	Don't Know
Is aware of their individual strengths and capabilities	2	1	0	DK
Shows interest, enthusiasm and motivation for school work	2	1	0	DK
Takes pleasure in academic progress	2	1	0	DK
Finds aspects of academic work challenging	2	1	0	DK
Demonstrates poor persistence on challenging tasks	2	1	0	DK
Is fearful of failure	2	1	0	DK
Shows interest, enthusiasm and motivation for school work	2	1	0	DK
Finds aspects of academic work challenging	2	1	0	DK

Appendix D: Early Childhood Professionals' Survey

A STUDY ON THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (EARLY CHILDHOOD) AMONGST CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN DUBLIN

Dublin City University are completing research on behalf of the Children's Rights Alliance into the key education-related issued faced by children experiencing homelessness. The purpose of the research is to identify clear, achievable and tangible recommendations that will support and enhance access to education for children experiencing homelessness

This questionnaire is concerned with the experiences of **educational professionals in early childhood settings** who have worked or are currently working with children who are homeless and living in emergency accommodation in Dublin. The primary aim of the questionnaire is to help us to identify the educational needs of children who are experiencing homelessness

Your views are very important to us and we would be grateful if you could complete this questionnaire as fully as possible

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE WILL BE TREATED CONFIDENTIALLY. NO NAMES OR OTHER IDENTIFYING INFORMATION WILL BE NOTED IN ANY REPORTS ARISING FROM THIS SURVEY. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION IS SOUGHT IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE SOLELY FOR THE RESEARCHERS' USE. THANK YOU VERY MUCH INDEED

SECTION A: DETAILS ABOUT YOUR SETTING

(1) Early Childhood Setting

Please specify your role (please tick all that apply)

Role within the Setting:	
Centre Manager/Owner	
Early Childhood Educator	
Special Needs Assistant	

Other (Please Specify) _____

(2) Type of Provision

Provision offered by the setting:	
Community Based Childcare Setting (FT, PT and Sessional)	
Private Setting - Full Day Care and/or Part-Time	
Sessional Service (ECCE only up to 3 hours and 30 minutes)	
Childminder	

(3) Funding available to support provision for children experiencing homelessness

Please indicate funding available to support homeless children in accessing your service.

The Community Childcare Subvention Transitional (CCST) Programme
The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme
Other (Please state source of funding)

SECTION B: PROVISION IN PRE-SCHOOLS FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE HOMELESS

In this section we are interested in any policies or initiatives that your pre-school has adopted to facilitate the educational needs of children who are homeless.

(1) Does your pre-school have a system for identifying children who become homeless?

Yes		No		Don't know	

If you answered **YES** to Question 1, please describe this system.
_____

If you answered **NO** to Question 1 would you find such a system useful?

Yes		No	

(2) When it becomes known that a child is experiencing homelessness is there an appointed person in your pre-school to support the child's educational needs?

Yes		No		Don't know	

If you answered **YES** to Question 2, please describe the support offered by the appointed person.
_____

(3) From the list below please indicate if **your pre-school** provides any of these supports for children who are homeless and living in emergency accommodation.

Supports for Children Experiencing Homelessness	Yes	No	Don't Know
Financial assistance (clothing, food)			
Fees waiver			
Transportation			
Breakfast club			
Lunch (provided by the setting)			
Personal care (shower, bathing or laundry facilities)			
Parent/family room			
Advocacy on behalf of the child/family i.e. letters of support			

Other -please specify
_____

(4) In your role as an early childhood educator are you aware about the learning and educational needs of children who are homeless?

Yes		No	

(5) Do you have any specific activities in place **in your setting** to assist children who are homeless and or transitioning from another pre-school setting?

Yes		No	

If you answered **YES** to Question 5, briefly describe these activities.
_____

(6) Do you have any special initiatives in your pre-school for children who are homeless?

Yes		No	

If you answered **YES** to Question 6, please describe this initiative.
_____

(7)   In your role, have you been directly involved in discussions (e.g. telephone contact or meetings) with **parents** about their personal circumstances relating to homelessness?

Yes		No	

SECTION C – PRE- SCHOOL STAFF

In this section, we are interested in the type of discussion that takes place between early childhood educators and staff within the pre-school about pupils who are homeless.

(1)   In your role, have you participated in professional dialogue with other staff in your pre-school about the needs of children who are homeless?

Yes		No	

If you answered **YES** to Question 1 above, please describe how it helped you to identify the support that the pupil might need under the following headings:

Type of provision /support offered.

- What Worked?
- What did not Work?
- What might be more useful?

(3) Please indicate your level of awareness about the specific educational needs of children who are homeless.

No Awareness	A little awareness	Some awareness	A lot of awareness
1	2	3	4

(4) Please indicate your level of experience in facilitating children who are homeless in your pre-school.

No Experience	A little Experience	Some Experience	A lot of Experience
1	2	3	4

(5) Do you have any specific activities in place in your pre-school to assist children who are homeless with the transition from one pre-school to another?

Yes		No	

If you answered **YES** to Question 5, briefly describe these activities.
_____

(6) From the list below please indicate in order of importance from **1 (being Most Important**) what in your opinion do Early Education Settings need in order to effectively provide for the Educational Needs of children who are homeless.

Provision/Supports for Children Experiencing Homelessness	
Access to information/programmes to support families	
Access to support agencies for homeless families	
Funding to support children's additional needs	
Provision of transport	
Funding for breakfast club	
Funding school lunches	
Assistance with clothing	
Assistance with learning materials	

Other: (please specify)

SECTION D – Pre-School Children

(1) In your experience do children ever talk to staff about experiencing homelessness i.e. refer to living in emergency or temporary accommodation/waiting for a home?

Yes		No	

If you answered **YES** to Question 1 above can you provide some further information in relation to how children describe and explain their experience?

_____

(2) In your role are you aware of how homelessness may limit a child's educational participation, learning and development?

No Awareness	A little awareness	Some awareness	A lot of awareness
1	2	3	4

(3) In your opinion what aspect of a children's early educational experience is impacted by homelessness?

_____

SECTION E: CONTINUITY OF PRE-SCHOOL PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE HOMELESS

Continuity of learning

From the list below please indicate in order of importance **1- Being Most Important** what in your opinion is necessary to facilitate and provide a continuity of learning for pre-school children who are homeless.

Please circle in order of importance from 1 being Very Important to 6 being less important

Facilitating Children experiencing homelessness	Order of Importance
Obtaining previous pre-school records	
Assessment of current needs	
Helping children manage the transition to your setting	
Providing additional support for learning	
Welcoming activities to support transition	
Regular pre-school attendance	

SECTION F: PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PUPILS WHO ARE HOMELESS.

Below is a list of items that describe children's educational needs in 4 domains; Basic Needs: Security, Routine and Predictability; Friendship Trust and Belonging and Attitudes to School and Educational Aspirations.
In each section we have given you a descriptor to assist you in your response.
Instructions for Responses
For each item that describes "child experiencing homelessness"
Please circle **2** if that item **is very true or often true**
Please circle **1** if that item **is somewhat or sometimes true**
Please circle **0** if that **item is not true**
Please circle DK if you do not know the answer

INDICATORS

Definition: Basic Needs: This includes access to and the provision of basic physical needs including food, water, sleep, shelter and their impact on the child and their management of the learning environment and school-based activities.

Basic Needs The child experiencing homelessness	Very True	Sometimes True	Not True	Don't Know
Well rested, alert and ready for learning	2	1	0	DK
Does not appear hungry	2	1	0	DK
Has adequate clothing and weather appropriate clothing	2	1	0	DK
Maintains energy levels throughout the school day	2	1	0	DK
Physically healthy (no significant absence resulting from illness)	2	1	0	DK
Requires additional support with personal care routines	2	1	0	DK

Definition of Security, Routine and Predictability- this considers school as a place of safety, stability and refuge from uncertainty. It refers to physical, emotional and psychological safety.

Security Routine and Predictability The child experiencing homelessness;	Very True	Sometimes True	Not True	Don't Know
Can become distressed by a sudden change in routine within the school environment.	2	1	0	DK
Attends pre-school regularly (less than 20 days absence per year)	2	1	0	DK
Is easily upset by correction or admonishment from educators or peers	2	1	0	DK
Frequently arrives late to pre- school	2	1	0	DK
Has difficulty in establishing friendships with other children	2	1	0	DK
Will ask for additional support from educators and staff within the school	2	1	0	DK
Is easily frustrated within the pre-school environment	2	1	0	DK
Can make new friends easily and respond to unfamiliar adults	2	1	0	DK
Parent(s) attends scheduled meetings (i.e. Parent-Teacher Meetings)	2	1	0	DK

Definition of Friendship, Trust, and Belonging: this refers to the child's relationship with teachers, peers and the wider school community. It considers the child's friendships and interactions as well as their sense of belonging

Friendship Trust and Belonging: The child experiencing homelessness has…	Very True	Sometimes True	Not True	Don't Know
Has a 'best' friend or small group of close friends within pre-school	2	1	0	DK
Responds positively to praise and encouragement from educators and staff	2	1	0	DK
Has limited awareness of or intolerant of other children's needs	2	1	0	DK
Has their own identity and sense of belonging within the group	2	1	0	DK
Will ask questions, answer questions and share their thoughts	2	1	0	DK
Appears socially isolated from peer group	2	1	0	DK
Will talk to and with the key worker/educator (not including direct teaching/instruction)	2	1	0	DK
Can become distressed within the pre-school environment (shows signs of anger, upset, frustration)	2	1	0	DK

Attitudes to School and Educational Aspirations: refers to the child's academic self-worth

Attitudes to School; The child experiencing homelessness is….	Very True	Sometimes True	Not True	Don't Know
Is aware of their individual strengths and capabilities	2	1	0	DK
Shows interest, enthusiasm and motivation for play and learning	2	1	0	DK
Takes pleasure in their early learning experiences and accomplishments	2	1	0	DK
Demonstrates poor persistence on challenging tasks	2	1	0	DK
Is fearful of failure	2	1	0	DK
Shows interest, enthusiasm and motivation for activities and learning	2	1	0	DK
Finds aspects of pre-school learning challenging	2	1	0	DK

Appendix E: Overview of Participants

GENDER

▸ Female   19

▸ Male   1

AGE OF PARENT

▸ Range   18-51

▸ 18-25   6

▸ 26-30   5

▸ 31-40   4

▸ 41-51   5

AGE CHILDREN (ATTENDING EDUCATIONAL PROVISION)

▸ 0-3   7

▸ 4-8   16

▸ 9-12   7

▸ 13-17   6

NUMBER OF CHILDREN RESIDING WITH PARENT IN EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

▸ 1 child   11

▸ 2 children   7

▸ 3 children   1

▸ 5 children   2

NATIONALITY OF PARENT

▸ Irish   16

▸ Other nationality   4

EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

▸ Child-care service   7

▸ Primary school (including SEN provision)   20

▸ Secondary school   9

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION COMPLETED (PARENT)

▸ Third Level (L7 Degree or higher)	2
▸ Secondary/Leaving Certificate or equivalent	11
▸ Secondary/Junior Certificate	2
▸ Primary	5

HOUSEHOLD TYPE

▸ Couple with children	5
▸ Lone parent with children	14

CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

▸ Physical disability	2
▸ Developmental disorder (ASD/ADHD)	4
▸ Speech and language/specific learning difficulty	3

CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS

▸ Domestic violence	4
▸ Rental home sold/ rental increase- affordability within the market	14
▸ Family circumstances - overcrowding, relationship breakdown, bereavement	3
▸ Damage to previous home (fire, water damage, uninhabitable)	3
▸ Move due to work/education	1

Appendix F: Types of Homeless Accommodation

TYPE	Provision	Descriptor
▸ PEA	Hostel	Provision of a room within a hostel with access to shared toilets and bathrooms. Access to shared cooking facilities but no meal provision. No washing machines or communal spaces for rest and relaxation. Family required to vacate the property by 10 a.m. with permission to return at 4 p.m.
▸ PEA	Hotel/ Bed and Breakfast	Private room (s) with en-suite bathroom in commercial hotels. Provision for families varies significantly across the hotels and the services provided in some hotels included: • Communal washing machine and tumble dryers (coin operated) • Provision of breakfast • Communal cooking facilities • Food vouchers • Provision of bedding and bed linen Families living in hotels and bed and breakfasts reported high levels of transition, with families who were 'self-accommodating' experiencing daily changes between rooms and hotels.
▸ STA	**Women's Refuge**	Supported emergency accommodation with 24-hour staff available to discuss individual needs and provide appropriate information and support. Provision ranges from a single bedroom with a cot to additional bedrooms equipped with bunk-beds and additional cots as required. Communal bathrooms, kitchens and living space are available to mothers and children.
▸ STA	Family Hub	Temporary supported accommodation with onsite support to families. Provision for families participating in the study typically includes self-contained bedrooms, with access to communal kitchen and dining areas. Provision varied across each of the family hubs but services in can include: • Case-management support, information and advice • Provision of breakfast and/or an evening meal • Indoor and outdoor play facilities for children • Access to washing machine and tumble dryers
▸ STA	Transitional Housing	The Transitional Housing Programme provides twenty houses for families in the greater Dublin region, with each house including a kitchen/dining area, living room and laundry facilities. Families have access to case-management support and children can avail of free early childhood care and education in an onsite crèche. Appropriate space and adult support is provided to assist school-aged children with homework.
▸ TEA	Temporary Apartment	Two-bedroom apartments provided and maintained by voluntary organisations. Families can make contact with key-workers by telephone where advice, support or information is required.

Glossary of Terms

▶ Community Childcare Subvention Resettlement (Transitional) (CCSR(T)):
As part of *Rebuilding Ireland – an Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness* the Department of Children and Youth Affairs introduced the CCS Transitional (CCSR (T)) Programme as a targeted support for families experiencing homelessness. It provides subvention for children from birth to five years as well as childcare support for school-aged children from six to 12 years during the school holidays. The CCST provides €110 capitation per child, per week, for part-time care and education provision (up to five hours per day) with no additional costs to parents.

▶ Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Programme:
The DEIS Programme is the Department of Education and Skills' policy instrument to address educational disadvantage. The action plan focuses on addressing and prioritising the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (three to 18 years).

▶ Early Childhood Settings:
This refers to childcare settings that offer early childhood education and care for children from birth to six years who are not currently enrolled in school. This can include pre-schools, play groups, day nursery, crèches, day-care and similar services which cater for children aged zero to six years.

▶ Education Passport:
The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment developed the Education Passport to support the transfer of pupil information from primary to post-primary school. From 2014/2015, schools should use these materials to support the dual purpose of reporting to parents and of transferring pupil information to post-primary schools once enrolment has been confirmed.

▶ Educational Professionals:
This refers to staff that work directly with children who are working within early childhood settings, primary and post-primary schools. It includes school principals, teachers, early childhood educators, special needs assistants and home school liaison coordinators.

▶ Family Homelessness:
This refers to families with dependent children aged birth to 18 years for whom there is no accommodation available that, in the opinion of the local authority, the family might reasonably be expected to reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of, and in the opinion of the local authority, the family are unable to provide accommodation from their own resources.

▶ Homelessness:
The legal definition of homeless in Ireland is set out in the Housing Act 1988. This states that you are considered homeless if:
• There is no accommodation available that, in the opinion of the local authority, you and any other person who normally lives with you or who might reasonably be expected to live with you, can reasonably occupy or remain in occupation of, or
• You are living in a hospital, county home, night shelter or other such institution, and you are living there because you have no suitable accommodation or
• You are, in the opinion of the local authority, unable to provide accommodation from your own resources.

▶ Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme:
The Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme is a central component of the Department of Education and Skills' DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Action Plan. HSCL coordinators are qualified teachers who work in partnership with parents, teachers and communities, in order to enhance pupils' outcomes and learning opportunities, through improved attendance, participation and retention in the education system.

▶ July Education Programme:
The Department of Education and Skills provides funding for an extended school year for children with a severe or profound general learning disability or children with autism through provision of an extra month. It is more commonly known as July Provision or the July Education Programme. Where school-based provision is not possible, a child may be granted home-based provision.

▶ LEAP Travel Card Scheme:
The Leap Card scheme supports the cost of public transport for families living in emergency accommodation to cover their school journeys and family travel. The Dublin Region Homeless Executive oversees implementation of the initiative and, works in partnership the National Transport Authority, to provide families with access to Leap Cards with an inbuilt value-limit. The cards are made available to homeless families on an ongoing basis throughout the academic year, via Focus Ireland's State-funded Family Homelessness Action Teams.

▶ Private Emergency Accommodation (PEA):
This typically refers to accommodation sourced by the local authority provided by a hotel, Bed & Breakfast, hostel or hotels, bed and breakfasts and other residential facilities that are used on an emergency basis. Provision and facilities varies significantly but typically includes access to a bedroom with a bathroom. Families living in emergency accommodation may also, but not always have access to; shared facilities for the preparation and storage of food, washing machines and meal provision or food vouchers.

▶ Rebuilding Ireland:
The Government action plan for housing and homelessness outlines the actions and activities that will be taken to address the needs of homeless people and families in emergency accommodation, accelerate the provision of social housing, deliver more housing, utilise vacant homes and improve the rental sector.

▶ Self-Accommodate:
Families that are officially recorded as homeless by local authorities are required to identify and secure their own accommodation, typically in private hotels and Bed & Breakfasts, which is then paid for by the Local Authority.

▶ Student Support Team/ Pastoral Care Team:
A student support team or pastoral care team is a student-focused mechanism put in place by a school in order to:
• co-ordinate the support available for students in the school;
• facilitate links to the community and other non-school support services;
• enable students with support needs to continue to access a full education;
• assist staff to manage those students effectively;
• ensure new staff members are briefed about policies and procedures relating to student wellbeing and support; and
• advise school management on the development and review of effective student support policies and structures.

▶ Supported Temporary Accommodation (STA):
Supported Temporary Accommodation includes short-term provision for up to six months in Family Hubs, Women's Refuges and Transitional Housing Services with onsite support for families. Provision typically includes self-contained bedrooms, with access to communal kitchen and dining areas. Provision varies across Supported Temporary Accommodation sites but services can include: Case-management support, information and advice, provision of breakfast and/or an evening meal, indoor and outdoor play facilities for children and access to washing machine and tumble dryers. Some STA sites include early childhood settings for pre-school children.

▶ Temporary Emergency Accommodation (TEA):
This is accommodation for families with low support needs and can include access to a self-contained apartment.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ALLIANCE

Uniting Voices For Children

Founded in 1995, the Children's Rights Alliance unites over 100 members working together to make Ireland one of the best places in the world to be a child. We change the lives of all children in Ireland by making sure that their rights are respected and protected in our laws, policies and services.

7 Red Cow Lane
Smithfield, Dublin 7
Ireland

Ph: +353 1 662 9400
Email: info@childrensrights.ie

www.childrensrights.ie