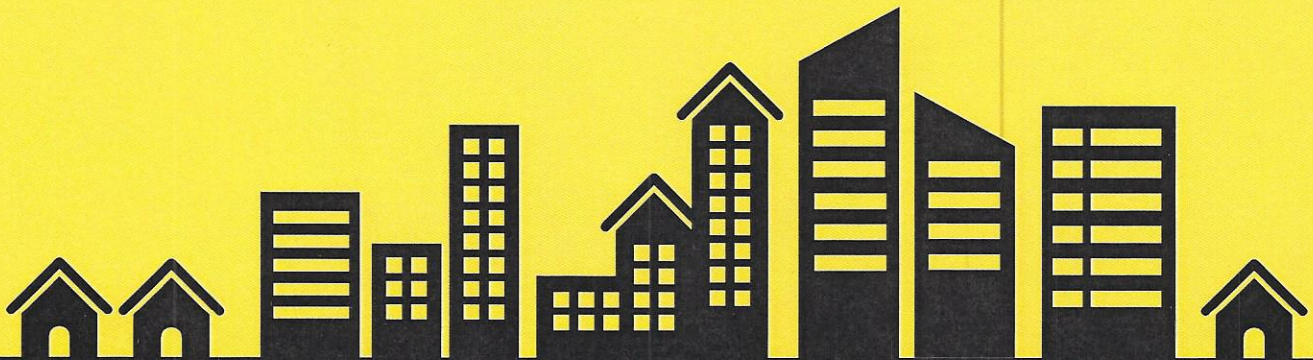

Locked Out of the Market VII

THE GAP BETWEEN RENT SUPPLEMENT/
HAP LIMITS AND MARKET RENTS
SNAPSHOT STUDY

MAY 2017



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Introduction

This report summarises the results of a snapshot study undertaken over three consecutive days in March 2017 (1st, 2nd and 3rd) to track the number of properties available to rent within the Department of Social Protection Rent Supplement (RS) limits and Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG) Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) limits.

Details were gathered from Daft.ie¹ for the following areas: Cork City Centre,² Dublin City Centre,³ Galway City Centre,⁴ Limerick City Centre,⁵ Portlaoise, North Kildare,⁶ Athlone, Sligo Town,⁷ Dundalk, Leitrim,⁸ and Waterford City Centre.⁹ This is the seventh snapshot study of this kind and compares the findings to the previous snapshot exercise undertaken in November 2016.

According to Daft.ie Quarter 1 2017 Rental Report, rents rose by an average of 13.4% between January and March 2017. During this period, average national rents rose from €1,111 to €1,131. There were fewer than 3,100 homes to rent nationwide on May 1st 2017, down from 4,000 on February 1st and in line with May 2016, the lowest on record.¹⁰

1 Daft.ie is a property website that advertises properties for sale and for rent. <http://www.daft.ie/about/>

2 Each city centre in daft is known as a "general area" and has a number of specific areas associated with it. Ads are placed in these specific areas. Cork City Centre contains properties to rent in Cork City Centre, Western Road and The Lough (daft.ie).

3 Dublin City Centre contains properties to rent in Temple Bar, Dublin 1, Dublin 2, Christchurch, IFSC, North Wall, Smithfield, Hanover Quay (daft.ie).

4 Galway City Centre contains properties to rent in Galway City Centre, Nun's Island, Bohermore and Woodquay (daft.ie).

5 Limerick City Centre contains properties to rent in Limerick City (daft.ie).

6 Areas of North Kildare include Ballitore, Ballymore Eustace, Celbridge, Clane, Johnstownbridge, Kilcock, Kildare, kill, Leixlip, Maynooth, Naas, Newbridge, Prosperous, Rathangan, Robertstown, Sallins, Straffan, The Curragh.

7 Areas of Athlone, Portlaoise, Dundalk and Sligo Town contains properties to rent within each of the townland boarder (daft.ie).

8 Areas of Leitrim contains properties to rent within the county boarder (Daft.ie).

9 Waterford City Centre contains properties to rent in Newtown, Ballyaneen, Waterford City, Belview Port, Ballytruckle, Ballygunner, Carrigeen, Ballinamona. (daft.ie)

10 Daft.ie Rental Report Q1 2017. <http://www.daft.ie/report/2017-Q1-rental-daft-report.pdf>

Recommendations

RENT SUPPLEMENT & HAP

1. People who are homeless must be prioritised as having the greatest level of social housing need.
2. Ongoing monitoring and adjustment of RS/HAP limits on a bi-annual basis is required to ensure alignment with private market rents. This is particularly pertinent in current and future Rent Pressure Zones.
3. Ensure that discretionary uplifts are easily available to those in receipt of RS/HAP payments when required.
4. Specifically target single people and couples; inadequate RS/HAP limits are having a disproportionate impact on these households' ability to access affordable housing. This must be a priority as 44% of people on the social housing waiting list are single person households and 3,219 of those in emergency accommodation are recorded as single people without dependents in their care. It must however be acknowledged that some of these will be separated couples due to the dearth of emergency accommodation designated for couples.
5. We welcome the rollout of the HAP scheme nationwide. The scheme must support households to move out of emergency accommodation where a dedicated Homeless HAP scheme is not operational.
6. A national awareness campaign targeting potential landlords and tenants should be undertaken to communicate the benefits of signing up to the HAP scheme. This is particularly pertinent, given the rollout of the scheme to the remaining Local Authorities in Q1 2017. A key focus of the campaign must be to increase awareness of the availability of discretionary uplifts amongst RS/HAP applicants and recipients.

PRIVATE RENTAL SECTOR

7. Urgent implementation of the Strategy for the Rental Sector and the broader implementation of the Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness (Action Plan).
8. The designation of 19 electoral areas as Rent Pressure Zones (RPZ's) shows the continuing escalation of the price of rent. Rent Predictability must be extended as a matter of priority to other areas experiencing continued rent increases.
9. We continue to see an urgent need for full rent certainty with rent linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and enhanced security of tenure. While rent increases are limited to 4% per annum for three years in Rent Pressure Zones this amounts to 12.5% compound increase in three years which is considerable for hard-pressed households struggling to meet rents.
10. Review the high threshold criteria for areas to qualify as a Rent Pressure Zone. In its current format, the criteria may prove too onerous and prevent the application of rent predictability in areas that have experienced significant rent increases.¹⁵ An area may satisfy the quarterly rent inflation criteria but the average rent for tenancies in the area, as registered with the RTB, may not have been above the average national rent in the quarter. Average national rent may be distorted by higher than normal rents in urban centres particularly within the four Dublin Local Authorities.

¹⁵ There are two criteria an area must satisfy to become designated as a Rent Pressure Zone, the quarterly rent inflation in the area must be 7% or more in four of the last six quarters and the average rent for tenancies in the area, as registered with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) in the previous quarter, must be above the average national rent in the quarter.

11. Provide greater security of tenure for tenants.

- a. Fast track the existing commitment to move towards indefinite leasing as a matter of urgency. The extension of the duration of the Part 4 Tenancy from 4 to 6 years is a welcome start in enhancing security of tenure.
- b. Section 34 of the Residential Tenancies Act as the basis of termination of tenancies continues to be a concern. The RTB should closely monitor terminations relying on Section 34 reasons to ensure landlords are acting in good faith and in compliance with the new standards contained in the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016.¹⁶ The continued use of sale and renovation as reasons for terminating an individual tenancy are of utmost concern. Tenants should be permitted to remain in situ during and after sale, particularly if the property will continue to be a rental property.
- c. Increased monitoring by the RTB of 'further' Part 4 tenancy terminations is required. This ensures landlords continue to act in good faith, as per the required statutory declaration when sale of property under Section 34 of the RTA is cited as the primary reason for termination of such tenancies.

12. Measures to prevent the simultaneous serving of termination notices on large numbers of residents in a single development are welcome. Further amendments to these measures should be considered in cases of simultaneous termination of less than 5 tenancies. The RTB must apply high levels of scrutiny to any applications brought by property owners seeking to invoke the market value exemption contained in the Tyrrelstown amendment.

13. Tenants of Buy-to-Let (BTL) properties in receivership must have full protection. All landlord obligations should transfer to the receiver and subsequently to the new property owner. This is particularly important in light of Central Bank Quarter 4 2016 figures that show 6,023 BTL accounts for which a rent receiver has been appointed.

14. We support NESC's recommendations for a simple regime for taxation of rental income, providing clear incentives for long-term investment in the provision of good quality rental homes with secure tenancies.

TENANT SERVICES

15. The national rollout of the Tenancy Protection Service (TPS) helpline from 1 January 2017 is welcome. The enhanced rent supplement payment service provided by the TPS should be rolled out nationally to ensure those who need to access additional rent supplement payments can do so without unnecessary delay. There is a need to set and publish specific targets for the rollout of this service as a matter of priority.

16. Commence and implement the Deposit Protection Scheme, which is provided for in the 2015 amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act, immediately. The Strategy does not contain a target date for the commencement of the scheme and instead suggests that further amendments to the model will have to be made prior to its introduction. Since 2015, disputes in relation to tenancy deposit retention have increased by 30%.¹⁷

¹⁶ Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016, P. 46. <http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2016/a1716.pdf>.

¹⁷ Residential Tenancies Board, Breakdown of Dispute Cases, <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/figures-show-increase-in-tenants-failing-to-vacate-homes-at-end-of-lease-1.3028790>.

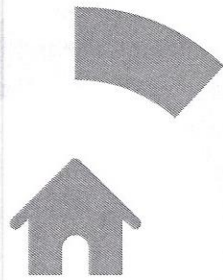
17. Proposed new standards relating to the safety of private rental accommodation are welcome. This is a prime opportunity to include revised standards in relation to energy efficiency, minimum health standards and control of damp in private rental accommodation.
18. The commitment to deliver a more efficient and effective shared service approach to inspections is welcome. New guidelines, due to be delivered by Q2 2017, must be influenced by stakeholders in the rental sector including those renting through the HAP scheme. There must be effective enforcement procedures to back up new inspection mechanisms; this will ensure rental accommodation returns to standard. Mechanisms must be put in place to protect tenants from any adverse consequences arising from inspection and enforcement procedures. Inspection of HAP tenancies should take place prior to the commencement of the tenancy, to prevent households losing their tenancy due to substandard accommodation.

HOUSING SUPPLY

19. The commitment to develop a cost rental model for the rental sector is encouraging. To provide as many affordable housing units as possible Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) must be fully resourced and supported to engage with the model. Tax incentives for cost rental providers must be considered to ensure their viability. At a minimum, this should include mortgage interest relief, local property tax deductibility and access to current and future home renovation schemes.
20. The use of Local Authority owned land to deliver rental units targeting middle-income households is welcome. This use of Local Authority lands must be balanced by securing significant conditions from investors in terms of security of tenure, rent certainty, quality of housing and amenities in addition to developer contributions similar to existing Part V contributions for social housing (minimum 10%).
21. Fast track the implementation of the Vacant Housing Strategy once published. Better use must be made of existing empty homes, both in the private sector and in Local Authority stock. There are 183,312 vacant homes across the State.¹⁸ These homes must be brought back into use as quickly as possible to provide homes for those with long term and urgent housing needs. Commitments to accelerate the national rollout of the 'Repair and Leasing' and 'Buy and Renew' schemes are positive. The targets for these schemes must be reviewed and revised upwards and the necessary resources made available. The 'Buy and Renew' scheme will be particularly useful for AHBs working with people moving from emergency accommodation and shelter accommodation to more sustainable long-term tenancies.
22. The 'Build to Rent' model is a positive inclusion in the Rental Strategy. The State should seek to acquire further social housing provision through developer contributions similar to Part V social housing contributions.
23. A review of the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) is required. It is intended that 2,000 social housing units will be delivered through this scheme in 2016. However, many landlords are not renewing contracts as they can get higher rent from private tenants.

¹⁸ Census of Population 2016 - Profile 1 Housing in Ireland, <http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp1hii/cp1hii/>.

National Findings



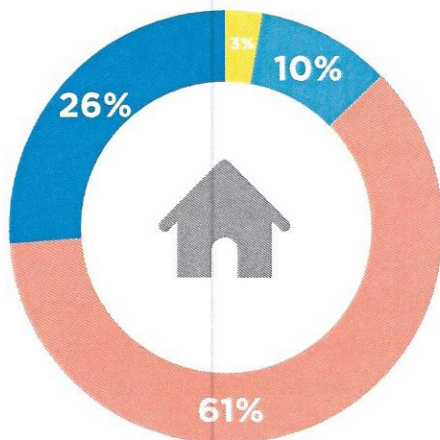
Just

12%

of all properties available to rent were available within Rent Supplement/HAP limits

FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF PROPERTIES BY RS/HAP HOUSEHOLD CATEGORY MARCH 2017

72 Properties



SINGLE PERSON



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 1 CHILD



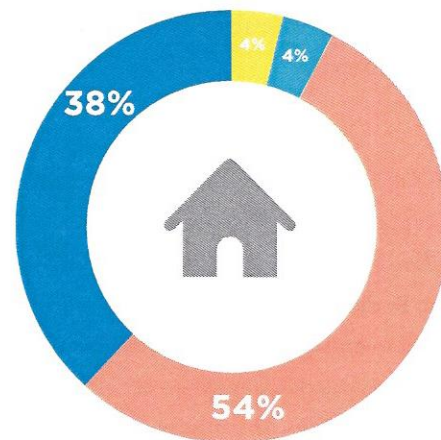
COUPLE



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN

FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF PROPERTIES BY RS/HAP HOUSEHOLD CATEGORY NOVEMBER 2016

112 Properties



SINGLE PERSON



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 1 CHILD



COUPLE



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN



SINGLE PERSON

ONE-BEDROOM PROPERTY 



AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT FOR ONE-BEDROOM PROPERTY WAS +35% HIGHER THAN THE AVERAGE RS/HPS LIMITS FOR A SINGLE PERSON



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN

TWO-BEDROOM PROPERTY 



AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT FOR A TWO-BEDROOM PROPERTY WAS +17% HIGHER THAN THE AVERAGE RS/HPS LIMITS FOR A COUPLE/ONE-PARENT WITH TWO CHILDREN

% HIGHER/LOWER BY LOCATION



AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT FOR ONE-BEDROOM PROPERTY IN NOV 2016 STUDY WAS +55% HIGHER THAN THE AVERAGE RS/HPS LIMITS FOR A SINGLE PERSON

% HIGHER/LOWER BY LOCATION



AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT FOR ONE-BEDROOM PROPERTY IN NOV 2016 STUDY WAS +21% HIGHER THAN THE AVERAGE RS/HPS LIMITS FOR A COUPLE/ONE-PARENT WITH TWO CHILDREN

↓ REPRESENTING 4% DECREASE IN THE INTERVENING PERIOD

Findings

There were 600 properties available to rent with no minimum cost, a decrease of 13% since the November 2016 study when 692 properties were available to rent across all 11 study areas, and a decrease of 48% when compared to May 2015, when the first Locked Out of the Market study was carried out.

- Just 12% of all properties available to rent (72 properties) were available within the RS/HAP limits for the four categories included in this study, dropping from 17% in the November 2016 study.¹¹ This represents a significant drop of 40 properties when compared to November 2016. The four categories examined are as follows:



SINGLE PERSON



COUPLE



**COUPLE/ONE PARENT
AND ONE CHILD**



**COUPLE/ONE PARENT
AND TWO CHILDREN**

- 88% (528 properties) of all properties available to rent were above RS/HAP limits, or, in a small number of cases were unsuitable due to landlords request for single/couple occupancy. This figure was 83% in November 2016.
- These findings demonstrate that the benefit of the increase in RS/HAP limits from July 2016 continues to reduce, as private rental sector rents continue to rise while rental supply remains low. This confirms the need to constantly monitor and adjust RS/HAP limits to keep them aligned with market rents in the absence of full Rent Certainty.

¹¹ The four RS/HAP limit categories looked at were: Single Person; Couple; Couple/One Parent with One Child; One Parent/One Parent with Two Children.

- There were no properties available to rent in Portlaoise within the RS/HAP limits in all four categories. This figure is in keeping with the previous studies carried out in November 2016, August 2016, May 2016 and August 2015. RS/HAP limits for Portlaoise are low while rents in County Laois have increased by 16.6% in the year to Q1 2017.¹²
- One of the 11 areas studied – Dundalk, had only one property available to rent across all four categories within RS/HAP limits.
- Two properties were available to rent within RS/HAP limits across all 11 areas for a single person over the course of the study representing a decrease of 3 properties since November 2016. These properties were in Dundalk (1), and Waterford City Centre (1). This represents a continuation of a worrying trend, which has seen the proportion of available properties for single people drop across multiple Locked Out study periods.
- There was only 1 property available to rent for single people across the 4 city centre locations included in this study, representing a decrease of 1 property from the November 2016 study. This property was located in Waterford City Centre.

Of the 72 properties available to rent nationwide within all four categories of RS/HAP limits;

SINGLE PERSONS



Two properties were available within RS/HAP limits for a single person. This is a decrease of 3 properties from November 2016. The percentage share of total properties available within RS/HAP limits for single persons remains disproportionately low at 3%.

COUPLES



Seven properties were available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a couple. This is a minor increase of 1 property since November 2016. The percentage share of total properties available within RS/HAP limits for couples stands at 10%.

COUPLE/ONE PARENT PLUS ONE CHILD



Forty-four properties were available for a couple/one parent and one child during the study period. This is a significant decrease of 19 properties when compared to November 2016 but represents 61% of all available properties. It should be noted that 26 of these properties were one-bedroom units, the suitability of which for this family type is open to question.

COUPLE/ONE PARENT PLUS TWO CHILDREN



Nineteen properties were available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children. This is a significant decrease of 23 properties when compared with November 2016 and amounts to 26% of all available properties within RS/HAP limits.

- Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 35% higher than the average RS/HAP limits for a single person across the 10 locations for which data was available.¹³ This ranged from 72% higher in Dublin City Centre to 3% higher in Sligo Town and Dundalk. The average rent reported for a one-bedroom apartment in our November 2016 study was 55% higher than the average RS/HAP limits for a single person across ten study locations.¹⁴
- Average rent for a two-bedroom property was 17% higher than the average RS/HAP limits for a couple/one-parent with two children across all 11 locations. This ranged from 110% higher than RS/HAP limits in Dublin City Centre to 15% less than RS/HAP limits in Leitrim. Average rent for a two-bedroom property in November 2016 was 21% higher than the average RS/HAP limits, representing a 4% decrease in the intervening period.
- Significant regional variation and fluctuation is evident across the study findings in terms of numbers of properties available within RS/HAP limits.
- Of the 2 properties available to rent for single people within RS/HAP limits, 1 of these properties was available in Dundalk and the final property was available in Waterford City Centre.
- Significant fluctuations can be seen in the 'couple/one parent plus one child' category across a number of the study areas including Leitrim (-11 properties), Cork City Centre (-8 properties), North Kildare (-5 properties) and Dublin City Centre (+8 properties).
- Regional variation in the distribution of properties in the 'couple/one parent plus two children' category can also be observed whereby only 1 property was available in this category across the five city centre locations. This property was located in Limerick City Centre.

TABLE 1: AVAILABLE PROPERTIES TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS ACROSS 11 STUDY AREAS ON MARCH 1ST, 2ND & 3RD

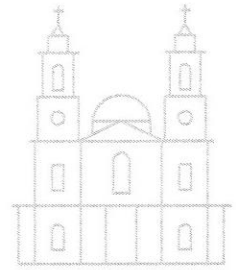
LOCATION	AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITH NO MIN COST	AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT ONE-BED PROPERTY VS. RS/HAP LIMIT FOR SINGLE PERSON		AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT TWO-BED PROPERTY VS. RS/HAP LIMIT FOR COUPLE/ ONE-PARENT & 2 CHILDREN		TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS			
						SINGLE PERSON	COUPLE	COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 1 CHILD	COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN
Athlone	38	€498	€450	€619	€625	0	0	2	1
Cork City Centre	54	€760	€550	€877	€925	0	3	9	0
Dublin City Centre	167	€1130	€660	€2629	€1250	0	0	8	0
Dundalk	33	€590	€575	€832	€1050	1	1	12	12
Galway City Centre	28	€730	€575	€900	€875	0	0	2	0
North Kildare	103	€858	€575	€1000	€1050	0	0	0	1
Leitrim	33	€375	€340	€403	€475	0	2	6	3
Limerick City Centre	29	€800	€420	€960	€700	0	0	0	1
Sligo town	30	€520	€460	€540	€575	0	0	2	1
Portlaoise	18	€N/A	€420	€810	€610	0	0	0	0
Waterford City Centre	67	€515	€430	€600	€575	1	1	3	0
Total	600	€678		€924.50		2	7	44	19

¹³ It was not possible to calculate the average rent for a one-bedroom property in Portlaoise over the course of the study period due to a lack of supply for this category at all price points.

¹⁴ Simon Communities in Ireland, 'Locked Out of the Market VI', January 2016, <http://www.simon.ie/Portals/1/Locked%20Out%20of%20The%20Market%20VI%20-The%20Gap%20between%20Rent%20Supplement%20HAP%20Limits%20and%20Market%20Rents%20-%20FINAL%2025012017v3.pdf>.

Findings for Each Location

Athlone



ATHLONE SUMMARY

There was an average of 38 properties available to rent in Athlone in this study period, an increase of 10 properties since the November 2016 study.

Three properties were available to rent across all 4 categories in this study period.

Two properties were available to rent in the couple/one parent and one child category. One of these properties was a one-bedroom property.

One property was available within the couple/one parent and two children category. In the previous four studies, no properties have been available within this category.

The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Athlone over this study period was €498. Average rent for a two-bedroom property was €619.

The average rent for a one-bedroom property was 11% more than the RS/HAP limit for a single person, while a two-bedroom property was 1% less than the RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with two children.

Rents increased in Co. Westmeath by an average of 14.7% in the year to Q1 2017.²²

AVERAGE MONTHLY
RENT FOR ONE-
BEDROOM PROPERTY

RS/HAP LIMIT
FOR A SINGLE
PERSON



AVERAGE MONTHLY
RENT FOR TWO-
BEDROOM PROPERTY

RS/HAP LIMIT FOR
COUPLE/ONE PARENT
& 2 CHILDREN



TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES
AVAILABLE TO RENT

38



SINGLE PERSON
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €420

0



COUPLE
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €450

0



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 1 CHILD
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €650

2



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €700

1

Cork City Centre



CORK CITY CENTRE SUMMARY

There was an average of 54 properties to rent in Cork City Centre over the course of the study period. This is a decrease of 13 properties when compared to November 2016.

There were no properties available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a single person over the three days of the study mirroring the findings from November 2016.

There were no properties available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children. This is a decrease of 2 properties when compared to the November 2016 study.

Nine properties in total were available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child. This is a significant decrease of 8 properties when compared to November 2016. Eight of these properties were one-bedroom units, the suitability of which for a family of this size is open to question.

Three properties were available within RS/HAP limits for a couple, representing a minor increase of 2 properties since the previous study in November 2016.

The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Cork City Centre over the study period was €760. The average rent per month for a two-bedroom property over the study period was €877. Only one two-bedroom property was available over the study period.

The average rent for a one bedroom was 38% higher than the RS/HAP limit for a single person, while the average rent for a two bedroom was 5% less than the RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent and two children.

Rents increased in Cork City by an average 13.1% in the year to Q1 2017.³⁵

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT FOR ONE-BEDROOM PROPERTY

€760

RS/HAP LIMIT FOR A SINGLE PERSON

€550

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT FOR TWO-BEDROOM PROPERTY

€877

RS/HAP LIMIT FOR COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN

€925



TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT

54



SINGLE PERSON

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €420

0



COUPLE

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €450

3



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 1 CHILD

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €650

9

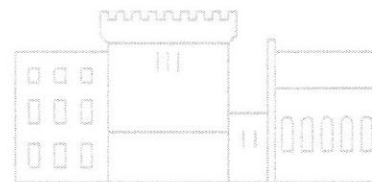


COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €700

0

Dublin City Centre



DUBLIN CITY CENTRE SUMMARY

There was an average of 167 properties available to rent in Dublin City Centre over the study period. This is down from 260 properties recorded in November 2016.

There were no properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a single person, representing a reduction of one property when compared to the November 2016 study period.

There were no properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple. This figure remains unchanged since the November 2016 study.

There were 8 properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child in March 2016. All of these properties were one-bedroom units, the suitability of which for a family is questionable.

There were no properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children across the three days of this study. This figure remains unchanged since the August 2015 study.

The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Dublin City Centre over the three days of the study was €1,130. The average rent for a two-bedroom property was €2,629.

Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 72% more than RS/HAP limit for a single person, while a two-bedroom property was 110% more than RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.

Rents increased in Dublin City Centre by an average of 16.2% in the year to Q1 2017.²⁴

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT FOR ONE-BEDROOM PROPERTY

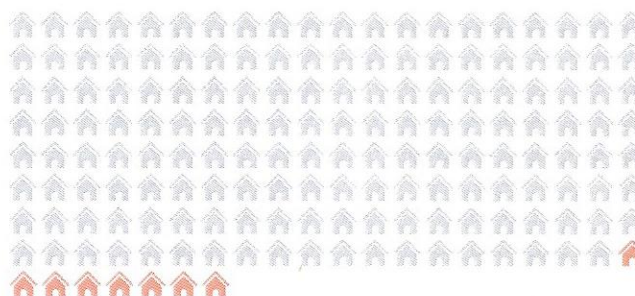
RS/HAP LIMIT FOR A SINGLE PERSON

€1130 €660

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT FOR TWO-BEDROOM PROPERTY

RS/HAP LIMIT FOR COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN

€2629 €1275



TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT

167



SINGLE PERSON
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €420

0



COUPLE
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €450

0



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 1 CHILD
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €650

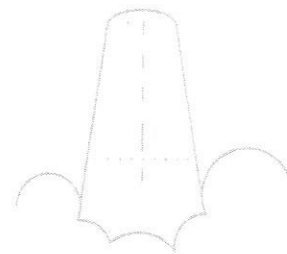
8



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €700

0

Dundalk



DUNDALK SUMMARY:

There was an average of 33 properties available to rent in Dundalk during this study period, representing a decrease of 2 properties when compared to November 2016.

There was one property available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a single person across the three days of the study, representing an increase of 1 property since the November 2016 study.

Similarly, there was 1 property available to rent for a couple across this study period, again representing an increase of 1 property on the previous study in November 2016.

There were 12 properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child. This is a decrease of 3 properties since November 2016. All of these properties were two-bedroom units.

There were 12 properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children. This represents a decrease of 3 properties since the November 2016 study.

The average rent for a one-bedroom property in Dundalk over the course of the study period was €590. The average rent per month for a two-bedroom property in Dundalk over the March study period was €832.

Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 3% more than RS/HAP limit for a single person. Average rent for a two-bedroom property was 3% more than the RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.

Rents increased in Co. Louth by an average of 18.3% in the year to Q1 2017.²⁵

AVERAGE MONTHLY
RENT FOR ONE-
BEDROOM PROPERTY

€590



RS/HAP LIMIT
FOR A SINGLE
PERSON

€575

AVERAGE MONTHLY
RENT FOR TWO-
BEDROOM PROPERTY

€832



RS/HAP LIMIT FOR
COUPLE/ONE PARENT
& 2 CHILDREN

€1050



TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES
AVAILABLE TO RENT

33



SINGLE PERSON
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €420

1



COUPLE
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €450

1



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 1 CHILD
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €650

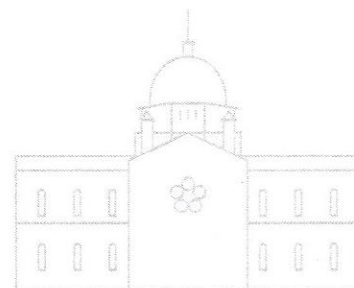
12



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €700

12

Galway City Centre



GALWAY CITY CENTRE SUMMARY

There was an average of 28 properties available to rent in Galway City Centre over the three days of this study. This is an increase of 3 properties when compared to November 2016.

There were no properties available within RS/HAP limits for a single person over the course of the study period. One property was available in this category in November 2016.

There were no properties available for a couple during this study period, representing a decrease of two properties when compared to November 2016.

There were 2 properties available to rent over the three days of the study within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child. This is an increase of 1 property when compared to November 2016. Both of these properties were one-bedroom units.

There were no properties available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children during the study period. This figure remains unchanged since November 2016.

The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Galway City Centre over this study period was €730. Average rent for a two-bedroom property was €900.

Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 27% more than RS/HAP limit for a single person while a two-bedroom property was 3% more than RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.

Rents increased in Galway City by an average of 10.6% in the year to Q1 2017.²⁶

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT FOR ONE-BEDROOM PROPERTY

€730

RS/HAP LIMIT FOR A SINGLE PERSON

€575

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT FOR TWO-BEDROOM PROPERTY

€900

RS/HAP LIMIT FOR COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN

€875



TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT

28



SINGLE PERSON

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €420

0



COUPLE

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €450

0



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 1 CHILD

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €650

2

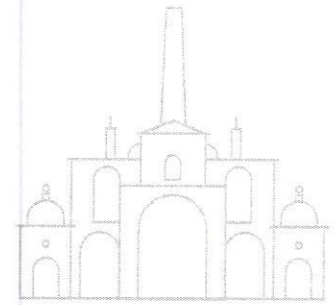


COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €700

0

North Kildare



NORTH KILDARE SUMMARY:

There was an average of 103 properties available to rent across North Kildare during this study period. This is a decrease of 15 properties on the findings from the November 2016 study.

There were no properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a single person over the study period. This is a decrease of 2 properties on the previous study in November 2016.

Similarly, no properties were available for a couple across the three days of this study representing a decrease of 1 property since the November 2016 findings.

No properties were available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child over the study period. This marks a significant decrease of 5 properties when compared to November 2016.

There was only 1 property available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children during this study period. This is a sharp decrease of 8 properties when compared to November 2016 when 9 properties were available in this category.

The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in North Kildare over the March 2017 study period was €858. The average rent for a two-bedroom property was €1,000.

Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 49% more than RS/HAP limit for a single person while a two-bedroom property was 5% less than RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent with two children.

Rents increased in Co. Kildare by an average of 13.8% in the year to Q1 2017.²⁷

AVERAGE MONTHLY
RENT FOR ONE-
BEDROOM PROPERTY

€858

RS/HAP LIM
FOR A SINGLE
PERSON

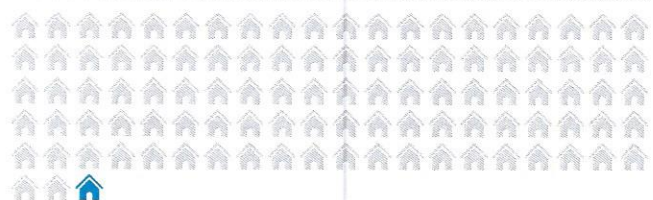
€575

AVERAGE MONTHLY
RENT FOR TWO-
BEDROOM PROPERTY

€1000

RS/HAP LIMIT FOR
COUPLE/ONE PARENT
& 2 CHILDREN

€1050



TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES
AVAILABLE TO RENT

103



SINGLE PERSON
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €420

0



COUPLE
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €450

0



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 1 CHILD
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €650

0



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €700

1

Co. Leitrim



PROPERTIES AVAILABLE WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS

There was an average of 33 properties available to rent in Co. Leitrim over this snapshot study period. This is a significant decrease of 22 properties when compared to November 2016.

There were 11 properties available to rent in Leitrim across the four categories of RS/HAP limits over the three days of the study. This is a sharp decrease of 20 properties when compared to November 2016.

No properties were available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a single person during the study period. There were no properties available to rent within these limits during the November 2016 study period also.

Two properties were available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a couple during the study period. This is an increase of 2 properties when compared to November 2016.

There were 6 properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child. This is a significant decrease of 11 properties since the November 2016 study.

Three properties were available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children. This is a decrease of 11 properties since the August 2016 study when 14 properties were recorded in this category.

The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Co. Leitrim over the three days of the March 2017 study period was €375; while for a two-bedroom property it was €403.

Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 10% higher than RS/HAP limit for a single person. Average rent for a two-bedroom property was 15% less than the RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.

Rents increased in Co. Leitrim by an average of 9.2% in the year to Q1 2017.²⁸

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT FOR ONE-BEDROOM PROPERTY

RS/HAP LIMIT FOR A SINGLE PERSON

€375 €340

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT FOR TWO-BEDROOM PROPERTY

RS/HAP LIMIT FOR COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN

€403 €475



TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT

33



SINGLE PERSON

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €420

0



COUPLE

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €450

2



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 1 CHILD

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €650

6

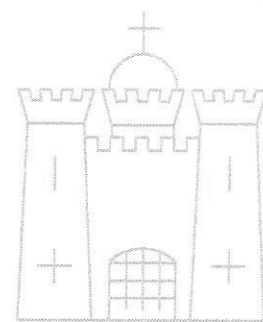


COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €700

3

Limerick City Centre



LIMERICK CITY CENTRE SUMMARY

There was an average of 29 properties available to rent in Limerick City Centre over the 3 days of this snapshot study. This is an increase of 13 properties since the November 2016 study when 16 properties were recorded.

There was only one property available to rent within RS/HAP limits across all four categories of the study. This figure remains unchanged when compared with the November 2016 study findings.

There were no properties available to rent over the three days within the RS/HAP limits for a single person or a couple in Limerick City Centre in the March 2016 study.

There was only 1 property available to rent within the RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children over the three days of this study. This is an increase of 1 property when compared to the November 2016 findings.

The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Limerick City Centre over the March 2017 study period was €800 while it was €960 for a two-bedroom property.

Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 90% more than RS/HAP limit for a single person while a two-bedroom property was 37% more than RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.

Rents increased in Limerick City by an average of 12.6% in the year to Q1 2017.²⁹

AVERAGE MONTHLY
RENT FOR ONE-
BEDROOM PROPERTY

€800



RS/HAP LIMIT
FOR A SINGLE
PERSON

€420

AVERAGE MONTHLY
RENT FOR TWO-
BEDROOM PROPERTY

€960



RS/HAP LIMIT FOR
COUPLE/ONE PARENT
& 2 CHILDREN

€700



TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES
AVAILABLE TO RENT

29



SINGLE PERSON

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €420

0



COUPLE

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €450

0



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 1 CHILD

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €650

0

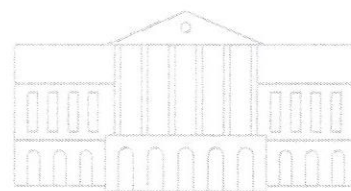


COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €700

1

Portlaoise



PORTLAOISE SUMMARY

There was an average of 18 properties available to rent in Portlaoise over the March 2017 study period, a decrease of 4 properties when compared to November 2016.

There were no properties available to rent within the RS/HAP limits across any of the categories over the 3 three days of the March 2017 study - the exact same situation as November 2016.

It was not possible to calculate the average rent for a one-bedroom property in Portlaoise during the study period due to a lack of availability at all price points. The average rent for a two-bedroom property was €850.

Average rent for a two-bedroom property was 33% more than RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.

Rents increased in Co. Laois by an average of 16.6% in the year to Q1 2017.³⁰

**AVERAGE MONTHLY
RENT FOR ONE-
BEDROOM PROPERTY**

€N/A

**RS/HAP LIMIT
FOR A SINGLE
PERSON**

€420

**AVERAGE MONTHLY
RENT FOR TWO-
BEDROOM PROPERTY**

€810

**RS/HAP LIMIT FOR
COUPLE/ONE PARENT
& 2 CHILDREN**

€610



**TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES
AVAILABLE TO RENT**

18



SINGLE PERSON

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €420

0



COUPLE

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €450

0



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 1 CHILD

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €650

0

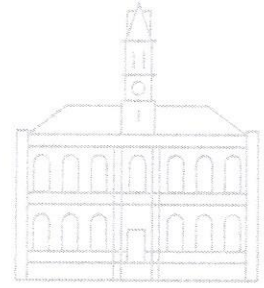


COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €700

0

Sligo Town



SILGO TOWN SUMMARY:

There was an average of 30 properties available to rent in Sligo town over the March 2017 study period. This represents an increase of 13 properties when compared with the November 2016 study period.

There were no properties available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a single person representing a reduction of 1 property when compared to November 2016.

Similarly, no properties were available within the RS/HAP limits for a couple during the March 2017 study period representing a decrease of 1 property when compared to November 2016.

There were 2 properties available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and one child. This marks a 1 property decrease on the findings from November 2016. One of these properties was a one-bedroom unit.

One property was available within RS/HAP limits for a couple/one parent and two children. This represents a decrease of 1 property when compared with the previous study in November 2016.

The average rent per month for a one-bedroom property in Sligo town over this study period was €520 while it was €540 for a two-bedroom property.

Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 13% more than RS/HAP limits for a single person while a two-bedroom property was 6% less than RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.

Rents increased in Co. Sligo by an average of 12% in the year to Q1 2017.³¹

AVERAGE MONTHLY
RENT FOR ONE-
BEDROOM PROPERTY

€520

RS/HAP LIM
FOR A SINGLE
PERSON

€460

AVERAGE MONTHLY
RENT FOR TWO-
BEDROOM PROPERTY

€540

RS/HAP LIMIT FOR
COUPLE/ONE PARENT
& 2 CHILDREN

€575



TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES
AVAILABLE TO RENT

30



SINGLE PERSON

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €420

0



COUPLE

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €450

0



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 1 CHILD

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €650

2

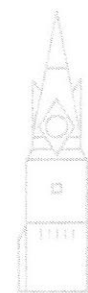


COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €700

1

Waterford City Centre



WATERFORD CITY CENTRE SUMMARY:

There was an average of 67 properties available in Waterford City Centre over the course of the 3 days of this snapshot study, an increase of 18 properties when compared to the November 2016 study.

There was one property available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a single person during the March 2017 study period, an increase of 1 property when compared to November 2016.

There was one property available to rent within RS/HAP limits for a couple over the three days of the snapshot study. This figure remains unchanged when compared to the November 2016 findings.

There were 3 properties available within RS/HAP limits for a Couple/One Parent and one child, remaining unchanged when compared to the November 2016 findings. All of these properties were one-bed units.

There were no properties available within RS/HAP limits for a Couple/One Parent and two children mirroring the findings from the November 2016 study.

The average rent for a one-bedroom property in Waterford City Centre over the three days of the study was €515 and €600 for a two-bedroom property.

Average rent for a one-bedroom property was 20% more than RS/HAP limits for a single person while a two-bedroom property was 4% more than the RS/HAP limit for a couple/one parent with two children.

Rents increased in Waterford City Centre by 10.2% in the year to Q1 2017.³²

AVERAGE MONTHLY
RENT FOR ONE-
BEDROOM PROPERTY

€515



RS/HAP LIMIT
FOR A SINGLE
PERSON

€430

AVERAGE MONTHLY
RENT FOR TWO-
BEDROOM PROPERTY

€600



RS/HAP LIMIT FOR
COUPLE/ONE PARENT
& 2 CHILDREN

€575



TOTAL NUMBER OF PROPERTIES
AVAILABLE TO RENT

67



SINGLE PERSON
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €420

1



COUPLE
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €450

1



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 1 CHILD
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €650

3



COUPLE/ONE PARENT & 2 CHILDREN
PROPERTIES AVAILABLE TO RENT
WITHIN RS/HAP LIMITS OF €700

0

Discussions & Conclusions

Discussions & Conclusions

Ireland's approach to housing provision has been disconnected - home ownership, the Private Rented Sector, social housing and homelessness have all been approached in isolation when in fact they are all interconnected.

The Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness aims to deal with all forms of housing provision in an integrated manner offering a huge opportunity to take into account the fact that a change in one area in relation to housing provision and supply can have a knock on effect on other areas. There must be a move away from continued over reliance on the Private Rental Sector for the delivery of affordable housing for those on low incomes, and social housing for those with long term housing needs. In December 2016, we welcomed the Strategy for the Rental Sector (Rental Strategy). The Rental Strategy represents a seismic shift in policy terms in attempting to limit rent increases. The introduction of rent predictability in electoral areas throughout the country is welcome. However, national rents must be continually monitored and where appropriate Rent Pressure Zones (RPZs) must be extended to those areas experiencing continuing increases. This is particularly pertinent given recent projections that national rents outside RPZs could rise by as much as 8-11% in Leinster, 9-10% in Munster and 7-9% in the Connaught/Ulster region during 2017.³³ Rental Strategy commitments to raise the standard of rental accommodation and to boost rental supply are welcome. Measures to increase security of tenure are particularly welcome in light of recent research published by the UK Institute of Public Policy Research, which found that longer, more secure tenancies in the German rental market were more affordable, acting as a brake slowing the process of rent increases.³⁴

The new strategy represents a starting point from which much more needs to be achieved to end volatility in a sector that an increasing number of people call home.

33 Society of Chartered Surveyors of Ireland, 'Residential & Commercial Property Review & Outlook 2017', https://www.scsi.ie/policy_research/residential_commercial_property_market_review_2017_full.

34 Institute of Public Policy Research, 'Lessons from Germany: Tenant power in the rental market', January 2017. Pp. 4, 17, <http://www.ippr.org/files/>

OVER RELIANCE ON THE PRIVATE RENTAL SECTOR

The Private Rental Sector is under increasing pressure to deliver social housing through Rent Supplement (RS) and the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme and there are 91,600 households on the social housing waiting list.³⁵ It is essential that Local Authorities get back into the business of building and acquiring social housing on the scale required to meet ever-growing housing need with the support of Approved Housing Bodies (AHB's). In 2016, 2,204 new social housing units were delivered. This includes 652 newly built social houses funded through the Social Housing Investment Programme (SHIP), the Capital Acquisition Scheme (CAS) and the Capital Advanced Leasing Facility (CALF), and a further 1,552 social houses acquired by Local Authorities. Social housing construction and delivery is not happening quickly enough; the pace must be accelerated to have a meaningful impact on the housing and homelessness crisis.

This snapshot study has shown that the beneficial impact of increases in RS/HAP limits introduced in July 2016 are being undone at an increasing rate by continued volatility in the Private Rental Sector. These limits are becoming increasingly inadequate as private market rents grow quarter by quarter. The number of properties available to rent within these limits represents 12% of all properties available to rent across the 11 study areas nationwide over the three days of this study. Over three consecutive Locked Out of the Market snapshot studies since July 2016 when the limits were increased, availability of properties within RS/HAP limits has dropped by three and five percent respectively, dropping from 20% in August 2016 to 17% in November 2016 to 12% in March 2017. Eighty-eight percent

of properties available to rent remained beyond the reach and choice of those in receipt of RS/HAP payments, marking the continuation of a worrying and unacceptable trend. Ongoing review and adjustment of RS/HAP limits is necessary to counter the negative impact of private rental market volatility on the provision of social housing supports for those with the greatest need.

It is essential that Local Authorities get back into the business of building and acquiring social housing on the scale required to meet ever-growing housing need with the support of Approved Housing Bodies (AHB's)

³⁵ Housing Agency, 'Summary of Social Housing Needs Assessment', 2016. <https://www.housingagency.ie/Housing/media/Media/Publications/Summary-of-Social-Housing-Assessment-Needs-2016.pdf>.

SECTOR VOLATILITY & REGIONAL VARIATION

There was very limited improvement across some of the areas included in this study including Dublin City Centre, Athlone and Waterford City Centre. In Dublin City Centre there was an increase of 8 properties within the limits for a couple/one parent and one child. It must be reiterated that these were one-bedroom properties, the suitability of which for a family is open to question. The remaining 8 study areas all experienced a drop in the number of properties available within RS/HAP limits. In some areas, the drop in availability was particularly sharp reflecting the overall drop in available properties at all price points from 692 properties in November 2016 to 600 properties in March 2017. County Leitrim and North Kildare experienced the most significant drops of 20 and 16 properties respectively.

On a comparative level, there is regional variation between the findings of the previous study in November 2016 and the March 2017 study. Availability has significantly declined in commuter belt towns (North Kildare, Portlaoise, Dundalk) dropping from 47 properties in November 2016 to 27 properties in March 2017. This is largely reflective of reduced overall availability (no limits) of 21 properties suggesting overall falling supply is squeezing RS/HAP recipients out of the market. In regional towns (Athlone, County Leitrim, Sligo Town) availability within RS/HAP limits has dropped from 39 properties in November 2016 to 17 properties in March 2017. Overall availability (no limits) has remained largely unchanged (+1 property) suggesting increasing rents are responsible for reduced availability for RS/HAP recipients. None of these regional towns have thus far, been designated Rent Pressure Zones. What is clear is that the Private Rented Sector remains very volatile and open to much fluctuation, which unfortunately impacts those on low incomes or those in receipt of housing benefit payments the most.

The Private Rented Sector remains very volatile and open to much fluctuation, which unfortunately impacts those on low incomes or those in receipt of housing benefit payments the most.

MARGINALISED DEMOGRAPHICS

The study shows that people who are single and couples are disproportionately affected by the inadequacy of RS/HAP limits and poor supply in the private rented sector. These households must be prioritised; 44% of people on the social housing waiting list are single person households and 3,219 of those in emergency accommodation are recorded as single people without dependents in their care. It must however be acknowledged that some of these will be separated couples due to the dearth of emergency accommodation designated for couples and some may be parents. According to the most recent Daft.ie Quarter 1 2017 rental figures, average rent increased year-on-year by 13.4% to Q1 2017. This combination of increasing rents and decreasing property availability is reducing the beneficial impact of RS/HAP payments for vulnerable groups including people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness and those on low incomes. Data recently released by the Department of Social Protection shows increased RS/HAP limits are having little distributive impact on household income for households in receipt of these payments.³⁶ Those earning less than €285 per week will see a marginal increase of 0.7% in their weekly income following social welfare increases announced in Budget 2017. The impact for those earning less than €404 per week will be negligible as their household income rises by approximately 0.1%.³⁷

DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS AND RS/HAP LIMITS

Discretionary uplifts of up to 20% are available in both the RS and HAP schemes as required, made on a case-by-case basis. The beneficial impact of these discretionary uplifts payments can be seen with the rollout of the Housing Assistance Payment for Homeless Households, piloted in Dublin. This pilot has supported 637 households to move out of emergency accommodation into stable tenancies as of November 2016.^{38,39} Since 2014, according to the Department of Social Protection 11,500 persons at risk of homelessness have been supported through increased discretionary RS payments using this case-by-case approach.⁴⁰ As of March 1st 2017, Local Authorities can exceed the prescribed HAP rent limits on a case-by-case basis subject to guidelines.⁴¹ Publication of data on all applications received and awarded uplifts with regard to these payments is crucial. Although these payments are welcome and should continue, people are not always aware of this option, therefore further information should be available to applicants and recipients of both schemes. In addition, managing this on a case-by-case basis is burdensome and resource intensive not to mention stressful for the households involved. The beneficial impact of discretionary uplifts is subject to regional variation depending on market rents. In some areas, discretionary uplifts can allow people to meet rising rents. For example, in Athlone, Dundalk, Leitrim, Sligo Town and Waterford City Centre, a discretionary uplift of 20% would reverse the gap between RS/HAP limits and private

market rents for a one-bedroom property. In Waterford City Centre, Galway City Centre, Dundalk, Cork City Centre and Athlone, a similar discretionary uplift would close the gap between RS/HAP limits and private market rent for a two-bedroom property. In other areas however, even if a full 20% discretionary uplift were to apply, the gap between market rent and RS/HAP limits would not close. This is the case for one and two bed properties in Dublin City Centre and Limerick City Centre. Discretionary uplifts are not a long-term sustainable policy solution to rising rents and ever decreasing availability of rental property. Review and adjustment of RS/HAP limits must take place on a bi-annual basis to ensure they are sufficient to meet rising market rents. This is particularly pertinent in current and future Rent Pressure Zones that could potentially see a year on year rent increase of 4% for new tenancies over a three-year period.

SECURITY OF TENURE & RENT CERTAINTY

Increased RS/HAP limits, although a positive development, would not be enough alone to tackle the continuing housing and homelessness crisis. Full rent certainty is required, bringing rent limits in line with real market rates including index linking with, for example, the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The introduction of rent predictability through the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act is commendable. The designation of 19 electoral areas as Rent Pressure Zones is a vital first step in combatting spiralling rents in these locations. However, as this study has shown

36 Department of Social Protection, Social impact assessment of the welfare and income tax measures in Budget 2017, November 2017, P. 7, <http://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/SocialImpact2017.pdf>.

37 Ibid.

38 Dail Éireann Debate, Vol. 927 No. 3, <http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail2016110800064>.

39 The Housing Assistance Payment for Homeless Households or Homeless HAP Pilot, which is operated by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) on behalf of the Dublin local authorities, provides discretion to exceed the HAP rent limits for homeless households, if this is necessary in order to source suitable accommodation. To qualify for HAP under the pilot scheme, a household must be accepted as homeless within the meaning of section 2 of the Housing Act 1988 by one of the 4 Dublin local authorities.

40 Department of Social Protection.

41 DHPCLG, Coveney announces Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) now available in Dublin, <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/rebuilding-ireland/housing-assistance-payment/coveney-announces-housing-assistance-payment>.

rents nationwide continue to grow making it even more important that the Minister extends rent predictability to areas experiencing comparable increases. This is particularly true of urban centres and commuter towns that are absorbing the growing rental population.

Rent certainty must be matched with increased security of tenure. In the absence of indefinite leasing, the extension of Part 4 tenancies from four to six years is welcome. The commitment to move to indefinite leasing must be realised as a matter of urgency. In the interim, tenants require greater protection from tenancy termination for reasons of sale of their rental property. Increased protections for tenants of multi-unit developments are welcome but need urgent review to ensure those renting in smaller developments are adequately protected.

PRIVATE RENTAL SECTOR SUPPLY

Supply side initiatives outlined in the new *Strategy for the Rental Sector* are positive and if implemented correctly could have a significant impact on low to middle-income families and those exiting homelessness or at risk of losing their home. Caution is urged in the leveraging of Local Authority lands in RPZs for the delivery of rental units for middle-income families. The leveraging of such land must be balanced by securing significant conditions from investors in terms of security of tenure, rent certainty, quality of housing and amenities in addition to developer contributions similar to existing Part V contributions for social housing (minimum 10%). The commitment to develop a cost rental model for the rental sector is encouraging. To ensure as many affordable housing units as possible, Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) must be fully resourced and supported to engage with the model. Revised standards for the private rental sector are welcome but unfortunately fall short in terms of energy efficiency, minimum health standards and control of damp. The government should seize this opportunity to improve the private rental stock as more people make their home in the sector.

About Simon Communities

The Simon Communities in Ireland are a network of eight regionally based independent Simon Communities, based in Cork, Dublin, Dundalk, Galway, the Midlands, the Mid West, the North West and the South East, that share common values and ethos in tackling all forms of homelessness throughout Ireland, supported by a National Office.

The Simon Communities have been providing services in Ireland for over 45 years. The Simon Communities deliver support and service to over 8,300 individuals and families throughout Ireland who experience – or are at risk of – homelessness every year.

Whatever the issue, for as long as we are needed, Simon's door is always open.

For more information, please visit www.simon.ie

SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Housing provision, tenancy sustainment & settlement services, housing advice & information services helping people to make the move out of homelessness & working with households at risk;
- Specialist health & treatment services addressing some of the issues which may have contributed to homelessness occurring or may be a consequence;
- Emergency accommodation & support providing people with a place of welcome, warmth & safety;
- Soup runs & rough sleeper teams who are often the first point of contact for people sleeping rough.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT

PH: (01) 671 1606

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