



## **Introduction**

One Family welcomes the opportunity to make this submission in advance of the development of a new Child and Family Homelessness Action Plan. We hope this will form an integral pillar of the recently published national housing plan *Delivering Homes, Building Communities 2025-2030*.

Child and family homelessness did not exist in Ireland before 2013.<sup>1</sup> The causes that led to the establishment of such a situation are complex and deeply structural, and therefore require a comprehensive, whole-of state response to work on greatly reducing, and ultimately ending, child and family homelessness in this country.

## **About One Family**

One Family is Ireland's organisation for people parenting alone, sharing parenting, and separating. We have been working directly with one-parent families for over 50 years and provide a national helpline, AskOneFamily, as well as specialist parenting, therapeutic and family support services around Ireland. Our mission is to create a society that values and supports one-parent families. We do this through the provision of specialist family support services, research and policy work.

One Family is founder and chair of the National One Parent Family Alliance (NOPFA). NOPFA was developed as a response to the disproportionately high levels of poverty and homelessness experienced by one-parent families.

## **About One Parent Families**

There are approximately 220,000 one-parent families living in Ireland and 1 in 4 families with children in Ireland are one-parent families.<sup>1</sup> One-parent families have consistently been, and remain disproportionately represented across, indicators of poverty, deprivation, homelessness, fuel poverty and substandard living conditions; faring worse than nearly all other measured cohorts. Almost 50 per cent of all one-parent families experience enforced deprivation, and 1 in 4 one-parent families are living at risk of poverty. While the national consistent poverty rate has increased to 5 per cent, it is more than twice that for one-parent families, at just over 14 per cent. It is well understood that many lone parents will have difficulty meeting current housing costs. Lone parents also face greater levels of discrimination when trying to access housing.

The development of a Child and Family Homelessness Action Plan offers a unique moment in time to consider an evidence-based set of policy responses that can, and will, lead to a significant reduction or elimination of one-parent families finding themselves

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<sup>1</sup> Focus Ireland: <https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Research-Briefing-No-1-Interactive.pdf>

without a home to call their own. It is imperative that an action plan is developed in the first instance. It is impossible to begin to solve a problem when the problem is not adequately acknowledged and where no plan exists to begin to tackle it. We welcome the fact that this Government has listened to organisations such as One Family, and many others, who have been calling for an action plan for many years. However, a plan can only work when policy is evidence-based and where stakeholders working on the ground as well as those who have experienced this issue first hand, can input throughout the plan's lifetime.

For an action plan to achieve its stated goals and if it is to make a positive impact, it is vital that the plan be evidence-based, adequately funded and resourced, actioned in a timely manner, and monitored and amended where necessary. Establishing a stakeholder group that can support the Government in implementing and monitoring this action plan would be a clear first step in ensuring that everyone is working together to bring an end to child and family homelessness.

### **Provide an equitable response to child and family homelessness**

Many families and children living in Ireland have become vulnerable to experiencing housing precarity and homelessness due to the structural nature of the ongoing housing crisis. Record high rents, coupled with record low availability of affordable and social housing, has led to a perfect storm. It is important to acknowledge that those who are more vulnerable are far from being described as a homogenous group. While lower incomes may leave many more families now at risk, there are several sub-groups within this mix, who will be even more vulnerable to homelessness than others. One-parent families, including those fleeing domestic abuse, are clearly at a significant disadvantage when it comes to attaining and retaining secure and affordable housing and are the focus of this submission.

Further intersectional disadvantages may also be experienced by one-parent families based on their gender, ethnicity, educational attainment and whether they and/or their children have a disability or serious illness. The level of familial and community support one has also matters greatly for this cohort, as well as the size of the family, the ages of the children, and where in the country they live.

Lone parents are invisible when looking at public policy in this country. While reform of the family law court system is ongoing, there continues to be a failure to recognise the needs of one-parent families in other department's policies and services, and this is an acute issue when it comes to housing. When a separation occurs, there is an immediate need for one member of the family to source alternative housing and one that is adequate to support ongoing contact with their child/ren. From working with such families, we hear almost every day of the difficulties people can encounter in this regard. The action plan must acknowledge that these family's needs are not currently being adequately met under any existing policy framework. It is no longer good enough to pretend that these families do not exist or that they are able to address their own needs without State support. Lone parents face a multitude of challenges, whether staying in the family home or moving out. We ask that these challenges be acknowledged and solutions provided to ensure separated parents are able to provide a secure and adequate home for themselves and their children.

One-parent families are particularly vulnerable to experiencing child and family homelessness and this is well documented in the official monthly state figures which document the numbers of people staying in emergency accommodation. In our submission ahead of the publication of the national housing policy in 2025, we noted that in June 2014, just over 300 families were recorded as homeless and staying in

emergency accommodation. When One Family made a submission ahead of the publication of the national housing plan in May of last year, this had rocketed to a record level of 2,185 families living in homelessness accommodation, including 4,653 children. Notably, 58 per cent of these families are one-parent families. The October 2025 report told us that the total numbers of families had risen to 2,383 with one-parent families making up 1,430 or 58 per cent of those families.<sup>2</sup> This trend continues to rise month-on-month and must not be allowed to continue in this manner.

**Consideration must be given to the following points when developing the Child and Family Homelessness Action Plan:**

- Acknowledge and respond to the disproportionate level of housing inequality and homelessness experienced by one-parent families.
- Address the structural causes to this housing crisis and invest in evidence-based housing insecurity and homelessness prevention strategies to keep families in their homes and avoid the trauma and long-term damage that homelessness can inflict.
- Future housing delivery forecasts must recognise and incorporate the full spectrum of housing needs of one-parent families and look at the level of hidden homelessness that exists for these cohorts. We know from working with families every day that a large number of one-parent families are living in their parent's home, staying in their childhood bedroom with one or more children, all sharing a room. Too many families are living in overcrowded conditions, and this appears to be invisible to policy makers when considering housing need and planning for the future.
- There are also many one-parent families staying in domestic violence refuges, often choosing to return to the abuser as alternative housing options simply do not exist. Legislation and policy are required to ensure the Local Authorities respond to this need appropriately.
- Lone parents are severely limited also when sourcing alternative accommodation, that has the room to enable their child/ren to stay overnight. Those who remain in the family home may be secure while their children are growing up, but the house will be sold once their child/ren turns eighteen and are not even allowed to apply for social housing until that point.
- There also needs to be much better recognition of the number of families within the International Protection System, including one-parent families, with much less familial and community support and who will require leave to remain and therefore need to source housing at some point in the future.
- All of the different cohorts of one-parent families must be explicitly acknowledged and solutions included in this action plan, to look at prevention strategies and other policy responses that may be required. One Family and the National One Parent Family Alliance ask that we be involved within a stakeholder group to provide support, knowledge and expertise around all these complex issues and to ensure the action plan addresses the needs of all types of families.
- Increase funding streams towards prevention, tenancy sustainment, and resettlement support to reduce the number of one-parent families entering

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<sup>2</sup> Dept of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Monthly Housing Report Oct 2025: [https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/d585a64a/Homeless\\_Report\\_October\\_2025.pdf](https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/d585a64a/Homeless_Report_October_2025.pdf)

emergency accommodation. Develop appropriate data collection systems that reflect the real reasons for family breakdown to include fleeing domestic abuse.

- Ensure that every child and young person living in homeless accommodation has a child and family support worker to help them to navigate the challenges they face in this situation.
- Emergency accommodation should be just that and should never last longer than six months. Families often spend a year or more in homeless accommodation. This action plan should establish a deadline as to how long a family can stay in emergency accommodation and engage with Local Authorities to ensure there is an adequate response that can ensure this deadline is respected and not breached regularly.
- Homelessness places a significant financial burden on families. Families living in emergency accommodation often face higher costs for everyday essentials such as take-away food and laundry services, as they have minimal or no access to a kitchen or washing machine. A special payment should be provided weekly to cover such costs.
- There are significant limitations placed on the ability of lone parents to have a normal family life and to be able to parent their children appropriately given the restrictions of where they, and their children, are allowed to be in some emergency accommodation services. This is not acceptable and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency through additional staffing, insurance cover or risk assessment.
- Almost 60,000 households are on waiting lists for social housing. One-parent families make up the second largest cohort, with 12,701 lone parent headed households (21.2%) waiting to be provided with social housing. That doesn't include those on Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) or other transfer lists. Vulnerable households, and those living in emergency accommodation, require a faster allocation response from Local Authorities.
- Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) rent limits must keep up with rental market prices to enable those in receipt of housing support payments to be able to compete. There should be enforcement of guidance around a social welfare customer's income not falling below a critical level following payment of housing, this is not considered for families who must pay top-ups in rent to landlords.
- Reform the system of differential rents to ensure tenants pay an equivalent amount of rent regardless of their location. These reforms must ensure that family related payments such as child maintenance payments, the Working Family Payment, Carers Allowance and Domiciliary Care Allowance are excluded as means for one-parent families. It is currently at the discretion of each Local Authority to set differential rents, leading to a postcode lottery in terms of how much is paid.
- Ensure that Local Authorities are obliged to uniformly support survivors of domestic abuse who become lone parents when they are forced to leave their homes and not penalise them based on leaving a tenancy.

## **Conclusion**

We thank you for the opportunity to feed into this important consultation. One Family and NOPFA wish to support the government and the Department of Housing in turning

the tide on the scourge that is child and family homelessness. We are uniquely placed to provide information, expertise for lone parents and separated parents and their children. We are happy to provide further information and answer any questions you may have.

ENDS