



Feidhmeannacht um Dhaoiné ar Easpa  
Díidne Réigiún Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin Region Homeless Executive



# On-Street Food Services in Dublin: A Review

Prepared for the Dublin Region Homeless Executive  
Mary Higgins Independent Consultant. August 2021.



Comhairle Cathrach  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City Council

## **Contents**

Executive Summary	<b>i</b>
Section one: Introduction	<b>1</b>
Section two: Purpose, methods, and limitations	<b>2</b>
Section three: Background and context	<b>6</b>
Section four: Experience of on-street elsewhere	<b>12</b>
Section five: About on-street services in Dublin	<b>16</b>
Section six: Who uses on-street services and why?	<b>22</b>
Section seven: Contribution to addressing homelessness	<b>29</b>
Section eight: Impact, risks, and benefits	<b>32</b>
Section nine: Key findings and recommendations	<b>38</b>
Appendices	
Acknowledgements	<b>42</b>
References	<b>43</b>
PEA Residents survey	<b>45</b>

## Executive summary

### Introduction

This review was commissioned by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive to review the operation of on-street services in Dublin. These services have become established in the last five years or so and operate on the main streets of the city, providing food, toiletries, and clothes to people who are homeless.

The purpose of the review was to improve knowledge and understanding of the operation, motivation, and impact of the services in order to inform deliberations about their future operation. It was based on consultation with homeless services, officials, policy makers, regulators, businesses, and residents of private emergency accommodation. Just four on-street services participated.

### Findings

An estimated 16 to 20 groups are engaged in delivering the services. Most are activists with connections to grass roots movements and a couple are faith led. Most use social media sites to appeal for goods and volunteers, to report on the people they come into contact with and to criticise the government for its inaction on the growing crisis of homelessness.

The groups do not have the skills or experience to engage with people who are homeless, and there are examples of their interventions undermining the work of mainstream providers and possibly supporting people to remain on or return to the streets. Evidence suggests that people who are homeless are not the main users of the services and the question of who uses the services and why remains to be answered.

The model of on-street services where people queue for food and eat in full public view on the main streets of the city is inherently undignified and is potentially unsafe. No attention is paid to nutritional needs or food safety and the crowds that gather at the food stalls are thought to attract drug dealing and other unsavory activity, putting people who are vulnerable at risk. The services have disrupted businesses, intimidated individuals going about their daily work and contributed to increased antisocial behaviour on the city streets.

There is failure individually and collectively on the part of the responsible official bodies to protect the welfare and safety members of the public and people who are homeless and vulnerable by implementing and enforcing existing regulations in relation to charities, food safety, services for people who are homeless, and obstructive behaviour.

## Recommendations

1. Take immediate action to address risks of on-street services. Establish a working group of relevant statutory bodies to decide how to address the risks posed by on-street services including enforcement of existing regulations, the introduction of new ones and mechanism for managing these into the future.
2. Establish what needs are met by on-street food services. Engage with on-street services and their users, to better understand what needs are being met and more appropriate and sustainable ways to meet them. Needs appear to relate to poverty, exclusion, addiction, and mental ill health and public bodies with responsibility for these should be centrally involved in the exercise.
3. Explore a future role for on-street volunteers. The potential for the people who have been active in the on-street services to become involved in delivering homeless or other services as part of a formal operating framework should be explored with them, as a means of harnessing the commitment and energy demonstrated by on-street services.
4. Prepare a strategy for the management of outdoor spaces in the city. The strategy should be interagency and focused on the management of outdoor public spaces, with a clear vision for how the city should be for residents, workers and visitors and the standards they should expect in terms of space, safety, and conduct.
5. Enhance standards of services for people who are homeless. Develop new standards that are not just about the provision of food, but about dignity and nurture; not just about hostels but about safe and appropriate hostels; not just about interventions but about effective interventions that are demonstrably person centred and effective in supporting people out of homelessness.
6. Introduce licensing for services for people who are homeless. A licensing system, based on compliance with the strengthened standards should be introduced and applied rigorously to all services, to ensure the quality of services and that those not compliant with them are not permitted to operate.
7. Improve public information about homelessness. The activities of on-street services have demonstrated that homelessness is not well understood particularly in terms of its causes, solutions and state interventions. Official communication in the form of flat statistics is not sufficient to convey a true picture of needs and responses and it is recommended that public information about the issue should be improved to provide an understandable narrative on its complexities and dynamics and links with its underlying causes of poverty, exclusion, addiction and other disabilities, and how these can be addressed to prevent a continuation of homelessness.

## Section one: Introduction

This report sets out findings, conclusions and recommendations arising from a review of services, operating on the streets of Dublin city which nominally provide food to people who are homeless. In this report these services are referred to as 'on-street' services and this definition includes mobile soup runs, stalls and tables that distribute food, drink, and other items at key points on the city streets.

These on-street services are separate and independent from what are described in this report as 'mainstream' services for people who are homeless. Mainstream services operate within a strategic and funding statutory framework led by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE). The DRHE sets agreed strategic direction, determines the range of necessary services, administers funding to them, monitors and evaluates their effectiveness, collects, and publishes data on homelessness, and commissions research.

A recent review for the DRHE on the role of Day Services<sup>1</sup> concluded that on-street services were unintentionally undermining the effectiveness of mainstream services and it recommended that their growth be managed, through a more strategic approach. This current review, also commissioned by the DRHE, aimed to progress that recommendation by increasing knowledge and understanding of the on-street services in terms of their motivation, operation, and impact.

The review was based on consultation with on-street food services, mainstream homeless services, policy makers, regulators, city businesses, and people who were homeless and staying in emergency accommodation at the time of the review. It also draws on relevant published documentation about on-street food services and related issues. It was carried out between April and July 2021 by an independent consultant who has a background in the development of policy on homelessness and in leading its implementation in Dublin.

There are nine sections in the document. *Section one* provides an introduction and is followed by the review objectives and methods in *Section two*. *Section three* presents a background and context including information on homelessness, laws, and regulations and *Section four* examines the experience of on-street services elsewhere, particularly in the UK. *Section five* provides information about on-street services in Dublin and *Section six* on who uses them. *Section seven* reviews the contribution of on-street services to addressing homelessness, and *Section eight* their impacts, risks, and benefits. *Section nine* presents key findings and recommendations.

---

<sup>1</sup> Kelleher, J. & Norris, M. (2020). Day Services for People Who are Homeless in Dublin: A review commissioned by the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive (DRHE). Dublin. DRHE.

## Section two: Objectives, methods, and limitations

### 2.1 Introduction

This section explains the objectives of the review, the questions it sought to answer, the methods used to capture and analyse information, and the limitations of the project.

### 2.2 Objectives and questions

This review aimed to provide an evidence base for deliberations and decisions about the strategic direction for the organisation and operation of on-street food services in Dublin. Its specific objectives were to:

- Profile on-street services in terms of their location, times and operation, organisation status, services offered, and coordination across those services and with mainstream homeless services
- Assess the extent to which on-street services are used by people who are homeless
- Investigate the impact of on-street food services on businesses, the streets where they operate, their contribution to achieving current policy objectives on homelessness, and their impact on mainstream homeless services
- Identify the benefits, risks, and drawbacks of on-street services
- Complete a document review of Government policy in terms of homelessness, consumption of food in public places, charities regulation, and experience of on-street services in other jurisdictions
- Analyse the data collected to make practical recommendations on the future operation of onstreet food services.

Following on from these objectives the review questions were:

- Who is providing on-street services, when and where, and what services are offered?
- Why are the organisations providing these services, what needs are they intending to meet?
- Who is using the services and what are they using them for?
- What contribution do on-street services make to addressing homelessness, do they complement or undermine mainstream services?
- Have on-street services identified needs that are currently not met by mainstream homeless and other providers?
- What are the benefits, drawbacks, or negative impacts of on-street services?
- What can be learned from elsewhere about on-street food services?
- What should change as a result of this review?

## 2.3 Methods

There were three elements to carrying out the review, data collection, analysis, and the development of recommendations. Data collection was through consultation, which included interviews and conversations, survey, observation, and desk research. The list of consultation participants was agreed with DRHE and covered five key sources: mainstream homeless services, on-street services, residents of some Private Emergency Accommodation (PEA), public officials and regulators, and city centre businesses.

### 2.3.1 Interviews and conversations

Interviews followed qualitative research methods and were semi structured and informal. They were carried out via online platforms and telephone and focused on capturing responses to the research questions and any other issues of importance to the individuals interviewed.

The list of consultation participants was agreed with DRHE and covered five key sources: mainstream homeless services, on-street services, residents of some Private Emergency Accommodation (PEA), public officials and regulators, and city centre businesses. An additional interview was held with a representative from Shelter Northern Ireland.

Separate conversations were held where a full interview was not possible or necessary, for example where facts were being checked and included the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), the Charities Regulator and Pavee Point Roma Project; and email contact was made with a lead HSE EHO.

In terms of on-street services, the DRHE provided the names of 23 services and contact information for 16 of them. Through social media, contact information for a further four was secured. All of these were contacted, and six responses were received. One person refused to participate due to 'previous experience with the DRHE', another agreed to an interview, but this did not materialise, and ultimately four took part. This response rate is similar to that of the study carried a year earlier which contacted 21 separate organisations with six participating in an online survey (Farrell, 2020:31,35).

Interviews and conversations were held with 40 individual participants, as shown below.

	Mainstream Homeless	Business	Officials	On-street	Other	Total
Interviews	8	6	9	4	2	29
Individuals	17	7	9	5	2	40

### 2.3.2 Survey

The survey was prepared using Microsoft Forms and distributed to three PEA sites for administration by staff with residents. The aim of the survey was to assess the extent to which residents in PEA availed of on-street food services, what they used them for and any changes they would like to see

made to their operation. This was a convenience sample and was not representative of PEA residents who themselves are not representative of all people who are homeless; but it was felt that they are the group most likely to have experience of rough sleeping and need for on-street services.

A copy of the survey is available in the Appendix to the report.

### 2.3.3 Observation

There were three distinct parts to observation. The first was observation of on-street services in operation which was carried out by the consultant on four occasions in different parts of the city. This was complete or covert observation, meaning that the services were not aware that they were being observed and there was no contact with them before or at the time of the observation about it. It provided opportunities to observe the setting up and serving of food from tables, the food and other items on offer, and the people who availed of them.

The second was observation in the form of walking around a city centre area in the company of two members of An Garda Síochána while they talked about their experience and observations of on street services, homelessness, and the impact in that area. The third was a visit to four separate PEA premises to see the arrangements for serving food and the type of food that was available.

### 2.3.4 Desk research

A review of published official and other relevant documentation provided background information for the review. It included material on Government policy on homelessness, homelessness in Dublin and the role of food and day services; the regulation of charities and public fundraising; the provision of food in public spaces, food safety, and other matters of relevance to the provision of services in public spaces; and discourse on their benefits and drawbacks.

Information on the providers of on-street food services was examined through their own social media pages and other media reporting, as well as the websites of the Charities Regulator and Benefacts which provided financial and governance information on some of the on-street services.

The previously mentioned *Report on Day Services for People who are Homeless in Dublin* (Kelleher & Norris, 2020), provided valuable information on a range of relevant issues including context and background, the operation of mainstream food services, the services provided and gaps in those services, and discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of emergency responses to homelessness.

Another report was particularly helpful, as it was focused specifically on 'mobile soup-runs' (called in this report 'on-street food services'). The report is an unpublished Master's Thesis<sup>2</sup>, which was made

---

<sup>2</sup> Farrell, E., (2020). *An investigation into the role and challenges of mobile soup runs in the provision of food service to the homeless marginalised in 21st Century Ireland*. [Unpublished Masters Thesis], Technological University of Ireland, School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology. 2020.

available to the consultant by its author in the course of the review. The aim of the Thesis was to "investigate the role and challenges of mobile soup runs in the provision of service to the homeless and marginalised in the 21st century". It investigates similar issues to this review, uses similar methods, and was carried out about 12 months prior to this one. As such, it provided a useful point of reference and means of comparison during the analysis stage.

## 2.4 Analysis

Data collection was an iterative process, beginning with the first interviews. Findings from these helped to inform later interviews, documentation review, and the survey of PEA residents. Notes of interviews were typed as they were held, capturing a near verbatim record. Interview and other data were analysed through a deductive process, using the review questions as a framework. They were coded and these were revisited, revised, and organised into themes and sub themes. This process was repeated as other data became available until no new themes emerged and they were finalised as findings.

## 2.5 Limitations and challenges

There were some limitations and challenges to carrying out this review:

- The views of the people who use on-street services are not represented in this review
- The views of on-street service providers are under-represented with just four interviews having been carried out, despite efforts to engage with them all
- There are no objective data available about on-street services (in the form of service user or other statistics for example), so assessment of their operation was drawn from interviews, their own information published on social media sites, other information in the public domain and the experience and views of other organisations about them
- The survey of residents of PEA is not representative of all people who are homeless. Due to Covid restrictions the survey was administered by staff rather than by the consultant which limited control and insight into the process
- The timeframe for the project at 16 weeks determined and limited its depth and scope.

## Section three: Background and context

### 3.1 Introduction

This section provides a short context and background for the findings, conclusions and recommendations presented in subsequent sections. It briefly reviews the thrust of Government policy on homelessness, progress in the achievement of its goals, and specific policy and practice in Dublin. It then goes on to explore the changes that have occurred to homeless services in response to Covid 19, and finally reviews the legislative and regulatory frameworks which apply, or may apply, to the operation of on-street services.

### 3.2 Government policy

For the last two decades, Government policy on homelessness has been set out in periodic national and regional strategies which in general follow a whole of government inter-agency approach to reducing the number of households who become homeless and the length of time they spend homeless.

During this time, the number of households homeless has increased and diversified, with higher proportions of women and families among the population. In 1999, when the first official assessment of homelessness in Dublin was undertaken, 1,350 households were found to be homeless, most of whom single men<sup>3</sup>. The latest statistics published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in May 2021 show that there were 3,717 households accessing emergency accommodation in Dublin.

The Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) *Spring 2021 Count of Rough Sleepers in the Dublin Region* found 125 individuals to be sleeping rough in the week of 19th to 25th April, a slight reduction on 139 in the previous November. New presentations by single people to emergency accommodation in May 2021 was 154, a 12% increase on the previous month<sup>4</sup>.

### 3.3 Policy and practice in Dublin

Dublin City Council is the lead statutory body for homelessness in the four Dublin local authority areas and is responsible for leading the preparation of agreed plans on homelessness and, through the DRHE, for the funding, provision, and monitoring of appropriate services to ensure the successful implementation of those plans, through Service Level Agreements with voluntary and private providers.

Action plans are informed, shaped, and reviewed by a Joint Consultative Forum of the Dublin Local Authorities, HSE, Tusla, ETB, Prison Service, Probation Service, and voluntary organisations involved

---

<sup>3</sup> Williams, J and O'Connor M (1999). *The Report of the 1999 assessment of homelessness in Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow*.

<sup>4</sup> DRHE Monthly Report to City Councillors. *Covid 19 and Homelessness*. June 2021.

in homelessness, through a Homeless Network which comprises representatives from all relevant voluntary services. A Management Group of local authorities, Tusla, Probation Service, the HSE and DRHE advise on services necessary to implement agreed plans, and funding for them.

The current DRHE Action Plan 2019-21, has three key strands: *Prevention*, through measures to create and sustain tenancies; *Protection*, by ensuring an adequate supply of safe and appropriate temporary accommodation for homeless households; and *Progress* through the creation of move on accommodation opportunities and supports, so that people who experience homelessness are assisted into long term housing, largely through Housing Assistance Payments for private rental tenancies with supports as necessary, to ensure that housing is sustainable and that homelessness does not recur.

To achieve these policy aims, a range of services is funded by the DRHE from outreach and engagement, needs assessment, care planning and support, accommodation, food services, referral to mainstream health, addiction, and other services as necessary; support, vocational, educational and employment supports; and work with individuals and families who are homeless to move successfully out of homelessness, all carried out in a way that is person and needs centred. A key service is *Housing First* which targets people who are sleeping rough and supports them directly from the streets into long term accommodation.

### 3.4 Covid driven developments

The outbreak of Covid presented significant challenges in terms of ensuring the safety of individuals from contracting the disease and preventing its spread in communal facilities. Responses to these challenges, led by the DRHE and the HSE with the support of mainstream homeless services, successfully protected the homeless population<sup>5</sup> and made a number of improvements to the operation of services.

Improvements include an increase of 1,035 emergency accommodation places to help get people off the streets, to facilitate the movement of households to safer and more suitable accommodation and the provision of cocooning and quarantining facilities as necessary. The additional supply of accommodation was through the acquisition of vacant hotel, *Airbnb*, and *other* properties and the management of this accommodation is contracted mostly to private providers; hence it is called Private Emergency Accommodation (PEA). At the time of the review, there was a reported surplus of emergency accommodation of between 70 and 80 beds each day.

Other improvements are the abolition of the 'local connection' rule which rendered individuals from outside Dublin ineligible for emergency accommodation so that is no longer a barrier to the provision of temporary emergency accommodation for anyone in the city. The operation of PEA has also

---

<sup>5</sup> To the end of May 2021 there had been 296 confirmed cases of Covid and 3 Covid related deaths among people in homeless accommodation. *DRHE Monthly Report to City Councillors-Covid 19 and Homelessness*. June 2021.

changed, with the introduction of full board, 24-hour access, and the provision of health and other services on a peripatetic basis. A plan is also being prepared for an independent inspectorate for PEA that would bring it into line with other accommodation for people homeless.

Bookings into emergency accommodation have also been adapted and are now made on a 'rolling' rather than a night- by-night basis. This has improved security and stability for residents and reduced the volume of calls to the Freephone service which are now all dealt with during the daytime, rather than the evening and nighttime. Procedures for the assessment of people who are newly homeless have also been streamlined and are made on an outreach basis from the Central Placement Service to one emergency accommodation site.

### 3.5 Homelessness and food

As Farrell explains, there is a long tradition in Ireland of food services for people who are poor and otherwise needy, dating back to Famine times (2020:5-10), which has persisted in Dublin through food centres in the city and in suburban areas. These services are available to and used by people who are homeless, people who were previously homeless, and to people who are housed but who may have other needs, including social isolation and loneliness.

Although they are also used by people who are not homeless, food services are regarded as an important element of the homeless service system, not just for food, but for providing an easy point of access for engagement and onward entry to other services. As such, they have been an integral part of the system of services for people who are homeless.

In the city centre, five food services operate as part of the system of services for people who are homeless and another five are community-based food services, not specifically targeting people who are homeless, although they are likely to be among their users. Covid obviously impacted on the operation of mainstream food services some of which were discontinued during lock down, others of which maintained their services on a takeaway basis.

Food services have consistently featured in homeless service evaluations, reviews, and quality standards<sup>6</sup> all of which have acknowledged their value both for people who are homeless and those who are housed. The reviews have made similar recommendations, for example to clarify the role and purpose of services for people homeless and those who are not homeless; make improvements to their monitoring and evaluation; to ensure availability at night and weekends; and for improved coordination and for centres of excellence (Weafer,2005).

The most recent review examines the concept of Day Services, and their operation internationally, and identifies weaknesses in the organisation and operation of food and day services in Dublin, particularly

---

<sup>6</sup> Including: Haase, T. and McKeown. K. (1997). *An Audit of Services for Homeless People in the Eastern Health Board Region*. Homeless Initiative. *Putting People First: A Good Practice Handbook for Homeless Services*. (1999), Homeless Initiative; Weafer J. (2005) *Review of Food and Food Centres*. Homeless Agency.

the fact that they have developed in a way that is 'ad hoc'. It notes that the role of food services is not clearly defined and they do not form part of the current Action Plan on Homelessness and points to the lack of data on the use of the services. In this context, one provider is quoted as saying that such data collection 'would conflict with their ethos'. The key recommendation is for a more strategic approach be taken to the planning and management of Day Services, through the establishment of "hubs" that would provide for central coordination to reduce duplication of effort and to enhance impact.

### 3.5 Standards, regulations, and laws

There are laws, regulations and standards that apply, or may apply, to services for people who are homeless, including on-street services. These include standards, laws, and bye laws relating to charities, fundraising, trading, food safety, public order, and the operation of services for people who are homeless.

#### 3.5.1 Charities and fundraising

Two key statutes apply to the fundraising and charities in Ireland, the Charities Act 2009 and the Street and House to House Collections Act, 1962 (as updated by the Charities Act) and they apply to any individual or body collecting goods or cash from the public.

Under the Charities Act, a body carrying out charitable activities in or from Ireland is required to be registered with the Charities Regulator<sup>7</sup>, before they begin operations. Permits are required for cash and non- cash collections from the public in any public place or by house -to -house visits. A public place in this context is any place that the public can access, excluding churches. Applications for permits must be made to the relevant Garda division on a standard form at least fourteen days before the proposed collection is due to begin.

It is an offence for any group to describe itself as a charity if it is not registered, to carry out activities in advance of being registered, or to invite donations or accept gifts if not registered. To be accepted as a charity an organisation must be legally constituted and have clear objectives which must constitute a 'public benefit'. Public benefit in this context includes the relief of poverty or economic hardship, promotion of health and civic responsibility, the promotion of religion, and other purposes of benefit to the community.

Charities, through their Board and committee members, are expected to comply with all relevant laws and standards, and to operate in a way that is transparent and accountable, particularly in relation to fundraising, financial management and the keeping of proper books of account. The Regulator has the power to remove a charity from the register, to direct it to provide specified information and to appoint an inspector to investigate its activities. It also has a role in investigating activities by

---

<sup>7</sup> Established in October 2014, under the Charities Act, and responsible for maintaining a register of charities, monitoring their compliance with the provisions of the legislation, and promoting public trust and confidence in charities and their operations.

unregistered charities, acting on reports from the public, investigating, advising unregistered bodies of their responsibilities and encourages registration.

### 3.5.2 DRHE quality standards

The National Quality Standards Framework for Homeless Services in Ireland was produced by the DRHE in conjunction with HIQA and provides a standards framework for all homeless services. The framework is designed to ensure a common focus on the achievement of Government objectives, on the delivery of person centred services that protect and promote individual rights and preferences, and to ensure that they are effective in assisting them successfully out of homelessness. All homeless services are required to comply with these standards, and regular assessments of compliance are made. Inherent in the NQSF is a requirement to comply with all regulations and laws in Ireland.

The DRHE also produced a good practice guide for the on-street services. The *Good Practice Guide for Volunteers - Operating safely and effectively while engaging in street outreach with people who are homeless* (2015), sets out a list of what on-street services should provide, a code of conduct for volunteers, and action to take in certain situations. It also provides useful telephone numbers and a list of organisations who have adopted the *Good Practice Guide* - from which official approval for its activities has been inferred in the case of at least one on-street service.

### 3.5.3 Food, trading, and public order

According to its website, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), described as 'an independent, statutory and science-based body' is 'dedicated to protecting consumer interests in the area of food safety and hygiene' and ensuring that consumers can 'trust the person who is giving them food'. It does this by working with and through local Environmental Health Officers (EHO), employed by the Health Service Executive (HSE), and responding to complaints made to it by members of the public and other bodies.

According to the FSAI, it is a legislative requirement for anybody supplying or serving food to the public to be registered with the appropriate local EHO and to undergo periodic inspections of the preparation, storage, trading spaces and procedures, so as to ensure compliance with regulations and the management of risk of harm to the people who will be consuming the food. Compliance in practice requires that at least one person in the enterprise is trained in food hygiene procedures.

Another regulatory requirement is that anyone trading on a street in Dublin city is obliged to hold a *Casual Trading Licence* issued by Dublin City Council under its Casual Trading Bye Laws and the license is also a pre-requisite for serving food. These bye laws cover other activities such as performance, busking, and street furniture. Application forms for the licences are available on the Dublin City Council website.

Finally, the provisions of the Public Order Act (1994) provide for sanctions against behaviour on streets which is 'offensive, unreasonable, insulting or obstructs the passage of people or vehicles on public roads'.

### 3.6 Summary and discussion

The operating context for on-street food services in Dublin is one where there is an adequate supply of emergency accommodation every night, hostels that are accessible 24/7 with full board; and a ready supply of food centres aimed at people who are homeless and others in need.

There is a framework of regulations and legislation of relevance to the practice of on-street services and to protecting people who are vulnerable, as many who are homeless are, and those who avail of food in public places. These include DRHE quality standards for services for people who are homeless, legislation and regulations in relation to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and child protection, preparation and provision of food, groups that seek funds and goods from the public, for groups that operate in public places and for behaviour on the streets of the city.

## Section four: Experience of on-street services elsewhere

### 4.1 Introduction

On-street services are a phenomenon in other cities where they have stirred controversy about their value, or lack of it, in responding to the needs of people who are homeless. This section presents a brief review of the debate and a short exploration of responses in the UK to provide other perspectives and experiences to help inform discussion on the future management of on-street services in Dublin.

### 4.2 Debate

Arguments in favour of on-street services, or 'soup runs' as they are more commonly called elsewhere, are that they provide easy access to services and consequently can attract and reach people such as entrenched rough sleepers, and others who do not use more formal and mainstream services for reasons such as being barred, or because they have no entitlement (due to issues related to legal status and rights to public services). Further arguments in their support are that they meet needs for social contact as well as food and other essential items and reduce the incidence of 'survivalist crime' such as stealing.

Arguments against on-street services are that they encourage and support people to stay on the streets, leading to detrimental impacts for them, on the areas that they eat and sleep and hang around in, and the people who live and work there. An additional argument is that the energy and resources that go into providing those 'pop up' services would be better invested in working for real change in the underlying causes of homelessness and solutions to it.

The case of mobile launderettes in Australia, is used to support this position. This was seen as an innovative response to homelessness and one that received significant public and philanthropic endorsement. But Parsell and Watts (2017)<sup>8</sup> argue that mobile launderettes miss the point that people who are homeless need housing where they can wash laundry when and how they like, in private. They also signal the waste of effort and energy of volunteers in only addressing emergency needs and call for 'effective altruism' that would ensure that voluntary efforts are measured by their impact, not by their novelty or level of promotion.

### 4.3 Responses and interventions UK

On-street services are intrinsically linked with rough sleeping and there have been a number of initiatives to address both in the UK over the last couple of decades, with varying levels of success.

---

<sup>8</sup> Parsell, C. and Watts, B. (2017). *Charity and Justice: A Reflection on New Forms of Homelessness Provision in Australia*. University of Queensland, Australia. Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK. *European Journal of Homelessness*. Volume 11, No. 2. FEANTSA. Brussels.

Most attention has been in London, and Westminster in particular, which has overwhelmingly the highest incidence of both. The Rough Sleepers Initiative for example which ran from 1990 to 1996 was extended in central London as the Rough Sleepers Unit.

In relation to soup-runs, activity has been focused on reducing their number, improving their coordination, moving them off the streets, and controlling them through legislation and regulation. Soup-runs in Westminster were the subject of research published in 2009<sup>9</sup> commissioned jointly by the council and Crisis. Although twelve years old, its findings are relevant to this review and the future of on-street services in Dublin.

#### 4.3.1 Coordination and reduction

Criticisms of soup-runs have focused on the fact that there are too many of them and that they are uncoordinated so that effort is duplicated and wasted. In response to these criticisms the Soup Run Forum was established in 2005 by *Housing Justice*, a group representing faith-based providers in the UK, which are the majority providers there. The Forum supports information sharing, exchange of good practice and exemplars, and an independent campaigning voice. It holds periodic forums, sets agreed timetables for soup runs and meets with local residents to hear about and address the negative impacts of soup-runs on them.

At the same time, but separately, a magazine for and about rough sleepers was established and continues to be circulated in London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, with a current reported circulation of 8,000. Volunteer based, *Pavement* provides information on soup-runs, benefits, related information, and opinion pieces. Another initiative has been 'Street Pastors' a Christian movement through which trained, supported, and coordinated volunteers walk city streets on Friday and Saturday nights from 10 until 4 approaching people who are on the streets to 'listen, care and help'.

A Westminster council initiative, also in 2005, aimed to bring all on-street services inside by locating them into the premises of three mainstream service providers in the area, which was also considered to have been successful, largely because it had made street life more difficult to sustain. But there were still small numbers of people who did not use the indoor services, including migrants without recourse to public funds.

An earlier initiative on soup-runs under the government Rough Sleepers Unit in London was the establishment of a project in 2002 to reduce the number of on-street services. This London Soup and Clothing Run Project (LSCR) was managed jointly by the Salvation Army and Thames Reach

---

<sup>9</sup> Lane, L. and Power, A. (2009). *Soup-runs in Central London: The right help in the right place at the right time?* London School of Economics & Political Science. London.

Broadway. Using a process of 'influencing through relationship' it was successful in reducing the number of services by 70%, although by 2005 they had increased again, according to Shelter (2005)<sup>10</sup>.

In the context of this review of the situation in Dublin, the findings of the LSCRP in relation to users and providers of on-street services are of interest. It reported three main categories of users of soup-runs: entrenched rough sleepers, rough sleepers already using other services, and the 'unsettled settled', those who had moved from homelessness to housing but still required contact and support. Among providers the project identified some poor practice, namely lack of engagement with service users, underage volunteers, and a voyeuristic attitude.

Over the years, this pattern of working with soup-runs to reduce their number and negative impacts has been repeated in other parts of the UK, including Northern Ireland. There have been initiatives in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester, Doncaster and other towns and cities. While the exact interventions vary from place to place, the focus seems to be on better coordination and communication between authorities, mainstream services, and soup-runs and this has given rise to other initiatives such as coordinated interagency and intensive targeted supports for rough sleepers and the integration of soup-runs into mainstream homeless service activity.

This is the approach that is being pursued currently in Belfast where Shelter NI has been contracted by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to work with soup-runs, and other bodies such as the police, to 'find common ground' and build an agreed way forward. Although the number of people sleeping rough is small in the city (six per night officially, up to 20 unofficially) there is significant on street activity in the form of food and other interventions, including the anonymous locating of a 'pod' shelter for rough sleepers, with space for sleeping and a phone charging dock and radio.

#### 4.3.2 Legal and other interventions

On and off over the years, authorities have sought to address the dual problem of rough sleeping and on-street services through the use of legal remedies, including the introduction of new rules or bye laws.

Begging and rough sleeping are illegal in the UK under the Vagrancy Act, 1824 (repealed in Ireland by the Housing Act, 1988) and this, together with provisions of anti-social behaviour legislation (the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act, 2014), has provided a framework that councils and others have used or attempted to use to curb both rough sleeping and on-street services (although guidance on Public Spaces Protection Orders available under the 2014 Act, are clear that it should not be used to target people based solely on the fact that they are homeless or sleeping rough).

In 2007 Westminster Council sought more legal powers to 'control the provision and distribution of food and public lands' but did not get the necessary support. In 2011 it proposed new bye laws, outlawing

---

<sup>10</sup> Shelter, 2005. *SHP Practice Briefing Food for Thought: soup-runs and soup kitchens*. London.

the provision of free refreshment in a public space, in the area outside Westminster Cathedral known as the Piazza. A consultation process on these proposals reveals an interesting breakdown in support and opposition to the proposals, with businesses and residents being mostly in support together with a number of homeless services, but the proposals were ultimately withdrawn due to insufficient political support.

#### 4.4 Summary and discussion

Internationally, supporters of on-street services regard them as key to meeting the needs of people who, for whatever reasons, are in need and are not connected into other services; and in helping them stay alive. Detractors see them as helping to maintain people on the streets and sustain street lifestyles that are risky and potentially life threatening. There is also a belief that the effort of services is misguided and misdirected and would be more productively spent in attacking the underlying, structural causes of homelessness. Added to this is an argument for 'effective altruism' that would ensure that support for volunteer initiatives would be based on evidence of positive impact.

The general approach to improving the management and operation of soup-runs in London and other parts of the UK has been to work with the services to reduce their number and improve their coordination and contribution. In turn this has led to the services themselves being more formally organised and represented and, in some places, to better coordination between mainstream and street services, and more targeted and integrated services. Alongside these approaches have been attempts to use legislation and bye laws to control soup-runs and rough sleeping and while these are used to some extent, they are enduringly unpopular and subject to strenuous opposition.

## Section five: About on-street services in Dublin

### 5.1 Introduction

This section presents information on-street services. It had been intended that the review would provide a comprehensive profile of the services but given the very limited participation of the services in the review, and the dearth of formal information about them, this has not been possible. Information presented here is drawn from interviews with four on-street providers, from published information by and about on-street services on social and mainstream media, and from the experience and views of other participants.

### 5.2 Scale and extent

Such information as is available about on-street service providers is fragmented. While most services have their own social media page and appear to have their own regular time slots and patches on the streets, there is no overall picture of who does what, where, when, and it is unclear exactly how many services are currently operating in Dublin city.

It seems that the number of services may vary over time. They have been a subject of interest to journalists, and mainstream media reports have put the numbers at between 12 and 16. In June 2018, Cormac Fitzgerald through observation and engagement with on-street services reported in [thejournal.ie](http://thejournal.ie) that there must have been 'at least 16' and Kitty Holland in the Irish Times in January 2020 that there were 'at least a dozen to emerge in recent years'.

Information from review participants and social media sites suggest that most became established around 2018, although some preceded this date. Mustard Seed Soup Run has been in operation since 2006, Inner City Helping Homeless was established in 2013; and Lighthouse is part of a long-established Christian Mission.

The DRHE published its *Good Practice Guide for Volunteers - Operating safely and effectively while engaging in street outreach with people who are homeless* in 2015, which indicates there were onstreet services in operation at that time, and research for Dublin City Council in 2016 reported that 'Active informal citizenship is visible and vibrant on the streets at night with a growing number of "pop-up" services providing food, clothes and shelter type support to people on the streets'. (O'Flynn, A., 2016:3).

While most on-street services are Dublin based, there are also services that operate in Dublin but are from other parts of Ireland including Athlone, Cavan, Kilkenny, and Port Laoise. Informants suggested that there are also services that come from wider afield, including Northern Ireland, but it was not possible to verify this. Although most of the services operate from the city centre, there is social media evidence of services in operation in suburban areas such as Clondalkin and Ballymun.

### 5.3 Motivation and purpose

On-street services do not refer to specific objectives, purpose, or goals in their published information but tend to descriptions such as 'caring for Dublin's homeless', 'feeding the homeless', 'meeting the practical needs of the homeless'. Some also refer to providing those services to people who 'are struggling financially', or 'experiencing food poverty', who are not homeless.

While what the services do is clear, why they do it and what they are hoping to achieve by doing it is less so. The four services which participated in the review indicate two key motivators for their providing food services for people who are homeless. One is faith, and this was the case for two of the four which have a clear Christian mission and have been providing services for a number of years. The second is social activism and applied to the other two, meaning that they want social change, not just the delivery of service. For one this arose from personal experience and a drive to help others experiencing similar challenges and for the other it stemmed from frustration and anger at the lack of progress being made on homelessness by the Government and a desire to demonstrate how the problem could be addressed effectively.

Judging from the social media sites, this typology seems a fair reflection of the motivations across the on-street services, although not necessarily in those proportions, with social activism appearing to be by far the most common. Many services comment regularly on the failure of Government to address homelessness and the housing crisis. In addition to the common criticisms of Government inaction, State funded service provision - particularly that provided by private operators – are reproved, although without explanation. One describes hostels as 'vile', another declares that 'private emergency accommodation has to go' and another that 'deaths will continue' if unregulated providers 'with no training' are 'allowed to increase bed supply in the city'.

Some services are very open about their activism, with postings of their participation in street and other protests on their sites. One provider is quoted by Cormac Fitzgerald in thejournal.ie article referred to in 4.2 above as saying that 'we are trying to build a grassroots movement that will have more of an impact than just a soup run'. It was also reported that some services were involved in the occupation of Apollo House, organised by the Irish Housing Network<sup>11</sup> and have links to other campaigns such as 'Take Back the City' and 'Raise the Roof Campaign', broad based bodies advocating for action on the housing crisis.

Many review participants, across the sectors, found the activism of the services problematic, believing that it exposed that 'their true mission is to fight the establishment', others believed their activities were 'politically motivated', and in some cases 'party political'. Other views were that the motivation of on-street services had nothing to do with activism but with 'self -promotion' and 'media opportunities', that

---

<sup>11</sup> An empty office block which was occupied and used to accommodate some people who were homeless for four weeks during December 2016 and January 2017.

the service providers were 'attention seekers', 'not interested in genuine needs' but only with 'increasing their own profiles and level of importance', 'with a constant eye on creating media opportunities'.

#### 5.4 Form, regulation, and compliance

On-street services describe themselves and are generally referred to as 'charities' and all of them are actively engaged in seeking and receiving donations of food, services, other items, and money from the public. Of the four services which participated in this review, each is a registered charity and legally incorporated and all reported awareness of and compliance with legal requirements on the procurement, storage, preparation and serving of food.

A search of the Charities Regulator and Benefacts websites found two more of the identifiable onstreet services to also be registered charities. It is possible that more may be registered under different trading names or as part of larger organisations, but it is more likely that most on-street services are not registered as charities. These findings are again in keeping with those of Farrell (2020:35) and indicate a group of services that operate informally.

To date in 2021 the Charities Regulator received 25 complaints about 10 unregistered groups working with people who were homeless. Five of these were in Dublin and contact was made with all of them by the Regulator. Three responded and of these, one has since completed the registration process while the other two have yet to do so. The Regulator reports that making contact directly with unregistered groups is often problematic and a major obstacle to addressing the issue of unregulated charities.

At the time of the review, the Food Safety Authority had received no complaints from the public about the operation of on-street food services and had no knowledge of their operation. The HSE Environmental Health Service was unable to provide any information on the operation of the services and their compliance with food safety regulations. According to the FSAI this is because it is an 'offence to disclose confidential information when undertaking official food safety control duties, under SI 79 of 2020'.

Evidence suggests that the majority of on-street services are not formally constituted, are not registered as charities, do not hold trading licenses (a prerequisite of registration with the HSE EHO) and are not compliant with food safety and other relevant regulatory requirements. It is possible that they are not aware of these requirements or that they apply to them.

#### 5.5 Operations

On-street services operate from spots on Grafton Street, South King Street, College Green, the GPO, North Earl Street, Thomas Street. While there were reports of serious disputes over 'patches' in the past, at least some of which had required intervention by An Garda Síochána, these seem to

have been resolved and either just one organisation is in each patch at a time, or a number of them occupy the same space harmoniously.

The services all operate in the evenings and to fixed times, usually for a few hours between 6 and 10, once a week each. Two have their own centre/café from which they operate and a number operate soup runs either on foot or from vehicles which tend to work into the early hours of the morning, providing mainly soup and sandwiches. These generally follow regular routes, often meeting the same people on the way.

At the fixed points, tables are set up and food and other items are laid out on them by the volunteers who were clearly visible and distinct from service users by their 'high viz' vests, some of which contained the name of the service or services involved. This is quite a laborious process of unloading, arranging in an orderly way so that items can be easily accessed by both servers and those availing of the items on offer. Clothes were on offer at two of the sites observed. At one, items were arranged on a table separate from the food and at another a pile was left at the end of the food table next to groceries for people to rummage through.

In terms of order and behaviour, consultant observation was that people generally formed orderly queues, although comments from consultation participants suggest that this may not always be the case, with reports of queue jumping and sometimes rows. Queues were relatively short, and certainly not in the hundreds reported, but this observation was over a few evenings in the space of two weeks so is not representative of rates of demand. The people queuing were a mix of men and women and a range of age groups, and the predominant group at all sites was families from the Roma community.

At one site, a part of a main street had been taken over by five large cars and vans parked at different points along the road, from which tables, food and clothes were being unloaded and laid out. Adults and children were gathered in a disorderly and large crowd as members of the public picked their way through.

There were reports of the on-street services 'helping one another out', for example sharing food if one had run out, but this is informal and there is no obvious structure or process for coordination, although as previously stated the sharing of times and places seem well coordinated. One on-street provider pointed to duplication: 'there's too many soup kitchens, we're tripping over one another, so people move around from one to the other, they get fed at one and then go on to the next one'; and a similar comment was made by another person: 'you could get (named mainstream food service) to come down here and he'd be able to point out that they had already been fed earlier in the day'.

## 5.6 Offerings

Observation suggests that what is on offer is consistent across the services and includes hot food, cold food (sandwiches), drinks in bottles or cartons, tea and coffee from flasks, confectionary, sweets, yogurts, and groceries. The take-away food and groceries, which could be loaded into bags and taken

away, was particularly popular. As already mentioned, clothes are also provided some of which appear to be new, and others clearly used. Some services provide tents.

At least two organisations have diversified their offerings to include a take-away service from their premises and deliveries of food parcels to 'needy' households such as those in senior citizens housing. One actively uses the delivery of food parcels as a means of developing relationships to uncover other needs that can then also be met; while another provides outreach into an inner-city flats complex, aiming to make life changing interventions with families who live there.

On-street services have 'regulars', for whom appeals are made for specific items to meet their individual needs. Updates on their progress and their general welfare are provided on social media, often with photographs and statements of gratitude for the help they have received. Offerings of 'friendship', 'a listening ear', 'some company', 'a bit of care' are provided by many on-street services. One service describes their offering as 'essential items, including one cigarette each'.

Of the four participating on-street services, two make referrals to a particular addiction service and sometimes to mainstream homeless services, and two offer advice and information themselves, mainly on social welfare and medical cards. One reported high demand for support in relation to the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP).

Concerns were expressed about the provision of befriending, advice, and other supports by 'volunteers' who are not trained, supported or Garda vetted to people who are vulnerable and likely to have complex and challenging needs, with risks for both the giver and the receiver. In the words of one on-street provider: 'No disrespect to anyone but what I have seen is charities and groups of people giving back and trying to make a difference, but they don't have the expertise to give additional support'. A linked concern was the lack of coordination of these interventions so that there 'are multiple groups working with the same person'.

## 5.7 Summary and discussion

On-street services have become established in an ad hoc way over the last seven years or so, although a couple have operated for longer than this. There is no single source of information about the services but based on information gathered for this review there are between 16 and 20 services, six of which are registered as charities and four are registered with the Environmental Health services.

The majority seem to be activist organisations, part of grassroots movements motivated by a desire to see social change, particularly in the area of housing and homelessness, but this is not explicitly stated in their published information. These are volunteer groups, without formal constitution or form and are not compliant with regulations, standards or laws that apply to their activities.

All follow a similar pattern of providing hot and cold food, clothes, toiletries, and groceries at fixed points or through mobile 'soup runs' at fixed times in the evenings at weekends and two also deliver food to

the homes of people 'who are disadvantaged'. The majority of services describe their users as 'the homeless' but some also refer to people who are 'struggling' and experiencing 'food poverty'.

In addition to the food and other items, many of the services also offer support and related assistance and have 'regular' users for whom special appeals are made for particular items and updates are provided on social media sites. Support is described as 'a bit of care', 'a listening ear' and 'essential items'.

There is concern that there are too many services, that there is no coordination among them so that their effort is duplicated, and that the services are not 'qualified to provide the extra support'. Most of the groups have no contact with mainstream homeless services and seem not to be aware of the services already working with people who are homeless.

## Section six: Who uses On-street services and why?

### 6.1 Introduction

This section examines who uses on-street services and what they use them for. It draws on the views of on-street providers themselves, consultation observation, the experience and views of other review participants and the findings of a survey of residents of Private Emergency Accommodation (PEA).

### 6.2 Who uses on-Street services?

On their social media pages, the on-street services describe the people who use their services in different ways. In addition to the most common category of 'the homeless' many refer to those 'presenting with food poverty', 'hidden poverty and 'struggling'.

One participating service stated about those presenting to their services: '90% are on the streets or in PEA' and went on to say that they 'arrive in the evening starving because they haven't eaten a thing all day'. In his view, people who are homeless need on-street services because mainstream homeless services are unable to address all needs as 'they don't have enough people to do the work'.

Another provider pointed to a diverse range of service users and changes in their profile in the last four years - 'dynamics have changed, people who can't afford to put a roof over their heads', changes in age groups '18 to 25s have increased'; in patterns of drug use- 'gone from benzos to heroin to crack cocaine'; gaps in services for people who are homeless -'all the funded bodies do fantastic work', but 'some hostels don't have the expertise, security men running them'.

The depiction of the on-street services as helping people who are homeless was contested by most review participants, who believed that they were used by a wide range of people 'most of them probably not homeless' and thought to include people 'who happened to be passing by', those who are on a break from work' (taxi drivers were particularly mentioned), 'or some other activity', 'regular attenders', and others who just 'hang around' the food tables, possibly as a 'social outlet'.

Mainstream homeless providers, the DRHE and others are of the firm view that there is no need for anyone in Dublin to be hungry or to avail of on-street services because there is an adequate supply of food and other assistance through existing food and accommodation services. This is the finding from the recent *Review of Day Services* (Kelleher and Norris, 2020), although it was also acknowledged that not all services are open during the weekend or at nighttime, indicating a gap.

Consultant observation indicated a mixed demographic using the on-street food services, across all sites. Most were carrying shopping bags and rucksacks and a majority was consistently Roma families.

### 6.3 Why are people using on-street services?

So, if there is no need for people who are homeless to go to on-street services for food why are the services used and repeatedly used? A range of different reasons were suggested. Some felt that they were used simply because 'they were there'. As one person described it 'if you build it will they come', meaning that if you provided a service that was free then people would of course use it, but that was not an indication that they needed the service.

Continuing this theme of use not being equated with need, others reported that individuals often picked up food intending to either eat it themselves later or to hand it on to friends, but a 'lot of it ends up being thrown in the bin'; while another suggested that 'people get the munchies on their way home and they just go and help themselves to what's there'. A similar view was expressed by another who, before Covid restrictions, had observed people regularly 'popping out from Quirkeys, grabbing a few sandwiches, and heading back', and another that 'people come and get fed and then get a taxi to their hostel'.

An alternative view was that on-street services offered choice to people who were homeless and to others who may not have much control over when or what they eat. Another was that 'like everyone else, they just want to get out and move around, do different things, socialise, and this is one way of doing that'. This view was shared by another person who had observed people 'arrive off trains, hang around for a while and then go back to the station to get the train home'. Some suggest that the crowds associated with the services are used for drug use and drug dealing and that there may be other dangers among them for people who are vulnerable. A similar concern was expressed in relation to mainstream day services in the *Review of Day Services Report (2020:29)*.

Asked whether the on-street services had identified any unmet needs, most participants felt that they might be responding to households who were struggling to meet their financial commitments and access to meals and groceries was a way of helping to make ends meet, while some believed that getting food and groceries for free 'left more cash for drink and drugs'. The situation for members of the Roma community was thought to be acute in that many 'live outside of the system' without recourse to formal social protection and, since Covid, had experienced job losses and the supports associated with schools which have exacerbated their needs.

The issue of food poverty and the appropriate responses to it was raised repeatedly. The first question was 'is this a problem that has been exposed by on-street services and if it has, is offering free food on the street the most appropriate way of addressing it?' The second was that if food poverty is an issue, then systemic changes that would ensure adequate incomes, was the answer, not free food. Some participants raised the issue of the morality of continued over-production of food which is then distributed to people 'in need' as an act of largesse.

Although there was a strong view that homeless people were not using the services, it was felt that those who would be most likely to need or to avail of alternative or additional sources of food were

those in emergency accommodation such as PEA, Family Hubs, and hotels where access to cooking and food may not be adequate. A survey of some people in three PEA sites was undertaken to assess their use of the services.

#### 6.4 Use of services by PEA residents

At the time of the survey, PEA operated full board and 24 hours access, as part of ongoing improvements and developments to services for people who are homeless by the DRHE. Food is prepared offsite, delivered, and served and eaten in designated facilities in the accommodation premises. Observation of four centres indicated good facilities for eating, for food storage and serving, good quality food and adherence to food safety standards in relation to storage and temperature checking.

The online survey was circulated to three PEA sites where it was administered by staff. All information was self-reported and there was no opportunity for the consultant to probe views or experiences. In the context of these limitations, the findings provide a snapshot of service use and preferences among this population. Eighty-one completed surveys were returned.

A question was asked about gender and age and returns indicate some confusion (due to a flaw in the service design) and in the majority of responses either age or gender was ticked, not both. There were 71 returns indicating age group as follows: 7 (10%) were aged 18-24; 40 (56%) were aged 25-44; and 24 (34%) between were aged between 45-64. Just 14 people indicated gender, nine female and five males.

##### 6.4.1 Survey results

The survey provided a list of mainstream and on-street food services, agreed with the DRHE, and asked respondents to tick any that were used, and to indicate if they used any "other" not on the list. This process was repeated with a list of standard items provided by services and a request to tick any that were used. A question was then asked about the frequency of use, with a choice of 'daily, weekly, monthly, and less often'. This was followed by questions about improvements that could be made to food services. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix 3.

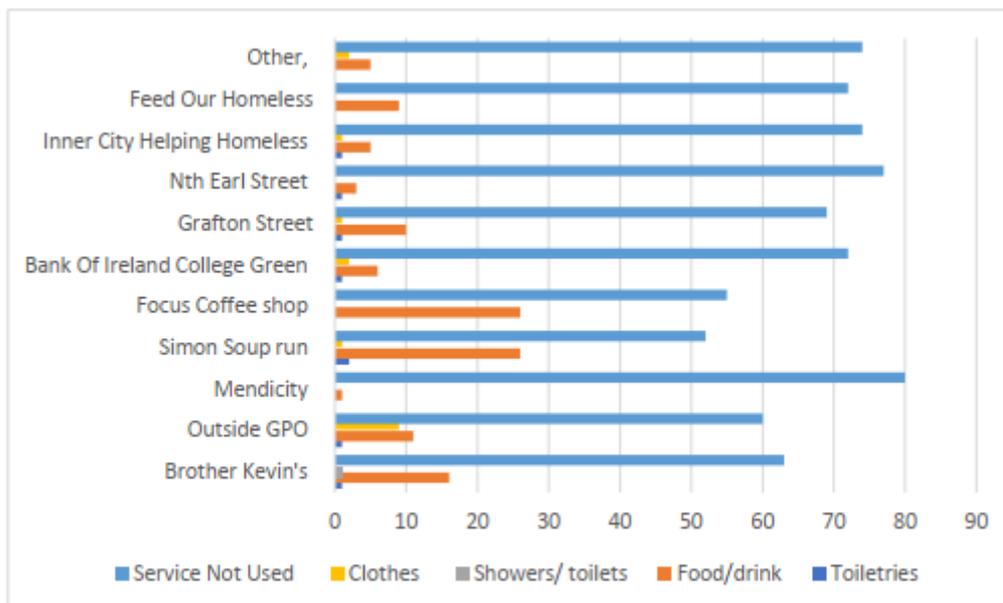
Table 1 shows the number of services used by each respondent by percentage (rounded). Sixty seven reported using other services and the breakdown of their service use by number and percentage is also presented. Almost three quarters (72%) use just one or two, with the remaining 28% using between three and ten. In total there are 171 incidences of service use, 30% of which was accounted for by six individuals. This pattern, of a small number consuming many services, is common in homeless and similar populations.

Table 1: Number of services used per individual

Number services	All Individuals	% (81)	Service users only	% (67)
None	14	17	N/A	N/A
One	31	38	31	46
Two	14	17	14	21
Three	9	11	9	13
Four	3	4	3	5
Five	3	4	3	4
Six	1	1	1	1
Seven	3	4	3	5
Eight	1	1	1	1
More than ten	2	2	2	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>99</b>

Chart 1 presents responses to the first question which provided a list of services and another of food, clothes, showers, toiletries, to be ticked as appropriate. The "other" services identified were Peter McVerry Trust, Merchants Quay, Mustard Seed, Path, Lighthouse and Liberty Soup Run.

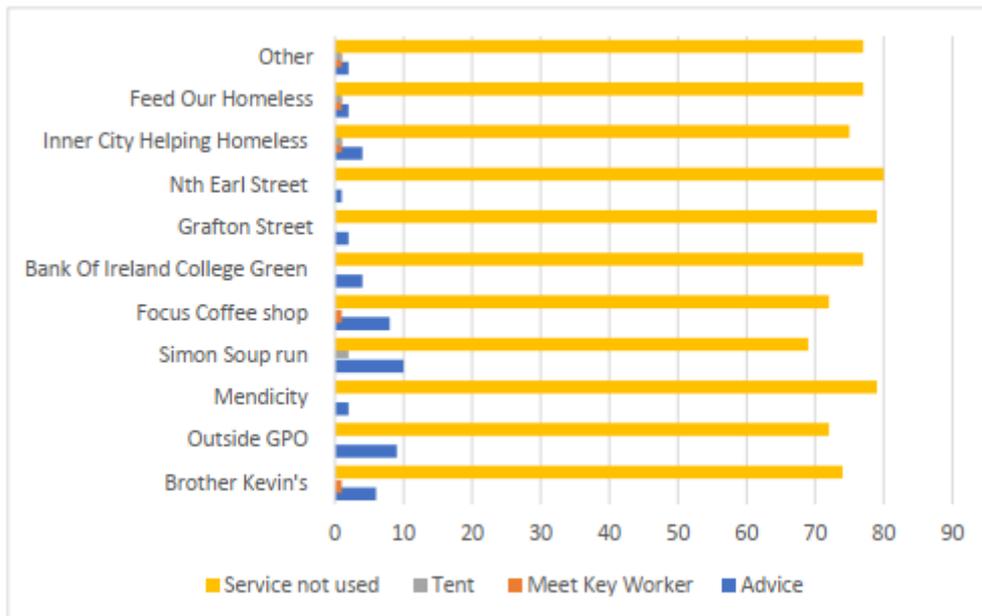
Chart1: Services used for clothes, showers/toilets, food and drink, and toiletries



As Chart 1 shows, food is the reason most often cited for other service use. The services used most are the mainstream homeless services of Dublin Simon and Focus Ireland (at 26 uses each) and Brother Kevin's (16). On-street services are used in much smaller numbers - 9, 10 and 11 respectively for Feed Our Homeless, Grafton Street and 'outside the GPO' (also a key source of clothes, with 9 users). Table 2 provides additional comments made by respondents and it is of note that one of them is: 'I get good food in the hostel, just go to Brother Kevin's to pass the time', pointing to the use of food services for reasons other than food.

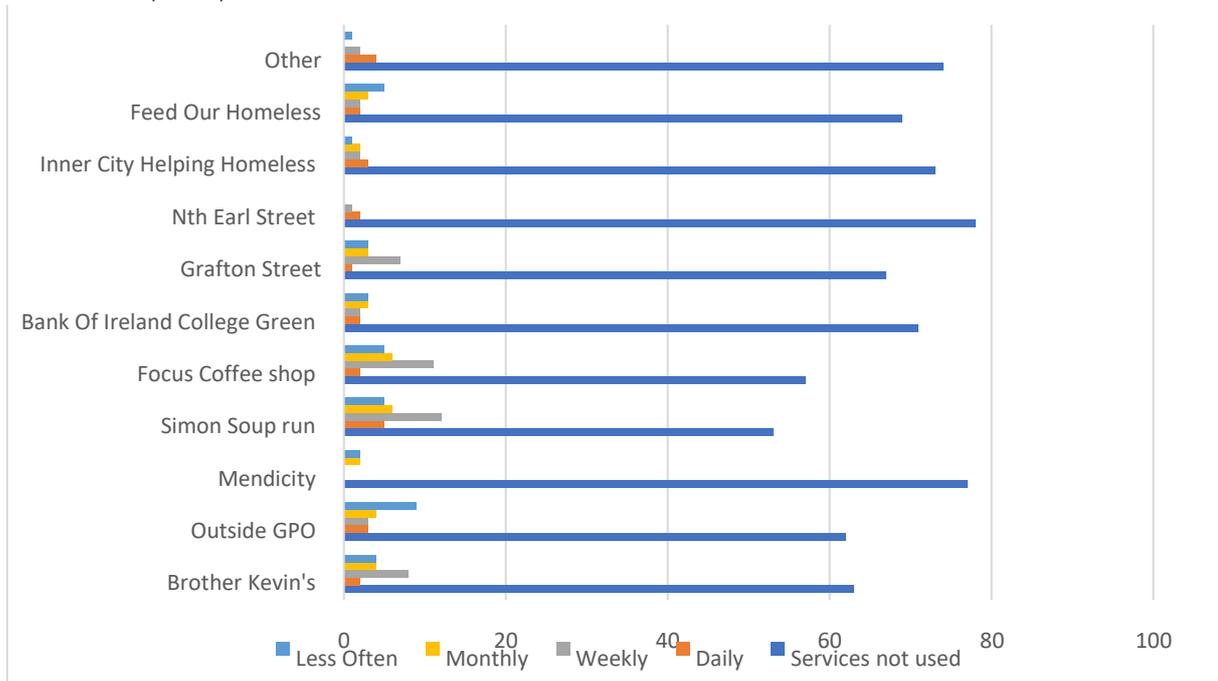
Chart 2 shows that 'advice' is the next most cited reason after food and again Dublin Simon (10) and Focus Ireland (8) are most used, followed by 'outside GPO' (9) and Brother Kevin's (6), while 'meeting key worker' and 'tent' were seldom selected. Quite why someone staying in emergency accommodation would require a tent is not clear and may indicate that this is a service that was used in the past rather than at the time of the survey.

Chart 2: Services used for advice, key worker, and tents



The results of the frequency question are presented in Chart 3, which shows 'weekly' to be the most common rate of usage, although many services are used less frequently than monthly, indicating that their use is an occasional rather than a regular occurrence.

Chart 3: Frequency of service use



The survey also sought feedback on services and improvements that could be made to them. This was done through one multiple-choice question 'What improvements would you like to see made to food services?' where the options were: "Better choice of food; More regular times; More private location; Place to sit and eat; More indoors; and More outdoors"; and two open ended questions: "Any other suggestions for improvements?" and "Do you have any other comments to make about food services?" There were no responses to the multiple-choice question, but comments were made about food services and improvements which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Suggested changes/improvements

Any other suggestions for improvements?	Do you have any other comments to make about food services?
Do not consider it a business and treat everyone the same	It's absolutely beautiful to see people giving up their own time to help in any way they can!
No 'out of date' food please	More mobile runs like the Liberty, with contact number made easily available
I think it would be better to have a more permanent place like a shop where you have a set opening time	There should be more advertisement of food services
Safer places	There are often too many people under the influence, and it is very intimidating
More facilities such as toilets	I get good food in the hostel, just go to Brother Kevin's to pass the time
More structured so people are not skipping the queue	I'm happy with the food in the hostel
More support	I'm happy with the food in my hostel
More stewards at soup run	Hostel food is good

## 6.5 Summary and discussion

This section reviewed who uses on-street services and what for. While one on-street provider estimated that '90% of users were homeless and in PEA' this is not borne out by the results of the survey which clearly indicate a high level of satisfaction with the food provided in PEA and a very low usage of on-street services. Where outside services are used, they are mainstream services such as Dublin Simon and Focus Ireland.

PEA residents were critical of aspects of on-street services including 'out-of-date food', 'trouble' in the queues, too many 'people under the influence' and 'not enough control'. Their suggested improvements were for a 'permanent location like a shop, with fixed opening times and better controls'.

While the survey group is not representative of people who are homeless in Dublin its findings cast doubt on the claims that on-street services are meeting the needs of people who are homeless and tend to confirm the view of review of participants that most people using the services 'are not homeless', that 'free food is helpful to people in a range of situations' and the services provide opportunities for 'social contact' and 'just hanging around'.

## Section seven: Contribution to addressing homelessness

### 7.1 Introduction

On-street services describe themselves as 'helping the homeless' or 'feeding the homeless' and this section looks further at the ways in which the services address homelessness and contribute to the achievement of Government policy on it.

### 7.2 Cooperation and coordination

While there is some contact between on-street services and mainstream homeless services, this tends to be with the more formally organised and established services and in relation to individuals only. There is no structure for coordination, and it is thought that there is overlap and duplication of their respective work with individuals. Overall, it was felt that on-street services have not engaged with homeless services to find out what initiatives and services are already in place, so that they could tap into these and work with them effectively. Rather, they have behaved, in the words of one person, as if they have 'discovered homelessness'.

Over the years, the DRHE has made specific efforts to engage with on-street providers through periodic meetings with them as a group, and together with a wider group of relevant stakeholders including businesses, mainstream homeless services and An Garda Síochána. The experience of the meetings is that they were useful, but only up to a point. It was found that the same few engaged repeatedly, with most not participating at all, so that their value as a tool for engagement and dialogue was limited. Some of the on-street service providers who attended found the meetings disappointing with one describing them thus: 'they picked our brains, and they gave you nothing back'.

### 7.3 Impact on homelessness and Government policy

Although most people believed that on-street services were well intentioned, the consensus is that 'they are not well informed' and that they have made little if any positive impact on addressing the needs of people who are homeless. Mainstream services reported 'risky behaviour' by the groups, such as 'waking people asleep on the streets to give them food', leading to individuals being woken several times, and other indications of poor practice such as referrals of individuals for accommodation when in fact they were long term council tenants, indicating poor assessment practices.

Direct undermining of the work of mainstream services with individuals was also reported, by 'interfering with case work that's going on', 'advising people to stay where they are, prolonging the time spent on the street' and 'persuading people to take action that is not in their best interests'. One person described on-street services as 'hostile' to mainstream services stating that 'they record calls with us' and 'set up situations for cameras and publicity', so that individual cases are used to make 'points' publicly.

One review participant commented that the on-street services are actively 'preventing people from going into hostels' and they 'are instead, getting drunk and laying on the street' while another reported that the 'number of people sleeping on the streets has increased five-fold due to the work of some on-street services'. There were also reports of individuals who had been in accommodation returning to the streets because of on-street services and the supports they offered. This risk that people are supported to remain on the street, has been researched by researchers and commentators internationally and is discussed briefly in Section four.

Advantages to on-street services were acknowledged, including their availability and accessibility, with 'no questions asked'. These are also features of mainstream food and day services and are the reason that those services are an integral part of the system of homeless services, a 'hook' for people who are homeless and an opportunity to build relationships with them so that they can be linked into the homeless system and to alternatives to the street; but without this link, they are just addressing the symptoms of homelessness, not homelessness itself. Without interventions to support the movement of people from homelessness and into housing, on-street services cannot contribute to the implementation of Government of policy.

#### 7.4 Impact on understanding of homelessness

In tandem with the provision of food on-street services have a strong social media presence which is used to highlight their offerings, their experiences, and their opinions on homelessness and related issues. The essence of their message, which uses emotive language and imagery, is that the homeless situation is out of control and worsening day by day, that the Government is doing nothing to address it and more people need on-street services for survival and solace.

This narrative, and the way it is used, was described by participants as being 'inaccurate', not reflective of the 'complexities of homelessness' and promoting the 'misleading idea that it can be solved by food and tents'. It was felt to be critical of the approach taken by the Government and, by extension mainstream services, to address the issue and the needs of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. As one person said 'on-street services are like magnifying glasses, they're not making it up, but they make the cracks look much bigger than they are'; and another 'it's not true, but it makes us look bad'.

This situation poses challenges for mainstream service providers most of whom began as activist organisations working to get government recognition of the fact that homelessness was a chronic problem that required attention and appropriate responses. Now that those responses are established and those activists are part of the State response to homelessness, they feel constrained in speaking out to challenge and clarify the current narrative and practices of on-street services.

## 7.5 Summary and discussion

On-street groups are providing their own version of 'help' to people who are homeless, in a way that is separate from mainstream services which operate as part of the agreed Government approach to addressing homelessness. In doing so they duplicate, contradict, and may even undermine the work of the mainstream services and, by extension, the achievement of Government policy objectives.

It is possible that the groups are also contributing to supporting people to remain on the streets, to return to the streets or to take to the streets, increasing their exposure to the significant health, safety and other risks attached to life on the streets.

In their interactions with people who are homeless and their general practices, on-street services expose a lack of understanding and insight into the causes and solutions to homelessness and the current approach and interventions in place to address it.

## Section eight: Impacts, risks, and benefits

### 8.1 Introduction

This section reviews other impacts and risks associated with the on-street services to the people who use them, other people, businesses, and the places they operate. It also identifies any benefits that the services may have.

### 8.2 Fear and intimidation

By far the most striking factor to emerge from this review was the atmosphere of fear and intimidation which has been wrought by some providers of on-street service providers, to the extent that individuals and organisations were reluctant to participate in the review if they were going to be identified with comments that could be construed as being negative about on-street services. Their concern was that if this occurred, they would be 'demonised' on social media, as others had before. As one person said, 'they would like nothing better than to see the council/business/ mainstream services on the front of the paper criticising organisations who are trying to help people who are homeless'.

### 8.3 Disruption and obstruction

On-street groups have been challenging and disruptive to the functioning of businesses, and the city centre as a space. Typical impacts are obstruction of shop, café, restaurants and bar entrances by cars and vans used by on-street services, the setting up of tables in front of business premises, and the congregation of people who use the services around business entrances and outdoor spaces. These deter customers from going into premises and prevent businesses from carrying out their normal everyday functions with stock, preparation, and customers.

Participants referred to cars and vans used by on-street providers parked 'where and how ever they want', there is a 'total disregard for parking regulations', 'the needs and rights of businesses' in terms of access to and from their premises, and of members of the public to 'pass down public roads'. It was the belief of many participants that the issuing of a parking ticket to one of these vehicles in the past caused a full -scale social media attack on the issuing authority, resulting in a 'blind eye' being turned to any future breaches, presumably to avoid further exposure.

As is the case with mainstream homeless services, there are no formal channels of communication between on-street services and bodies directly affected by their operations, so any interaction is done one to one. Individual businesses have made frequent attempts to negotiate some way of managing space so that both they and on-street services can operate in it, but this has not been possible. Businesses report dismissive and often aggressive responses to these attempts, described as a 'mob mentality' with threats to expose them on social media as 'being against us trying to help the homeless'.

### 8.4 Crowds, clothes, and tents

There are additional side effects of on-street services caused by the congregation of people, clothes, and tents. Crowds inevitably come with the food services, from people queuing or 'just hanging around them', which creates nuisance and deters customers from going into nearby premises. Some participants observed that there was both drug use and drug dealing going on within those crowds which 'brought other problems'.

Tents are provided by some of the on-street services and a number can be seen around the city, some clearly inhabited, some evidently abandoned, and others somewhere in between. Review participants had observed tents being used for congregating, drug use and dealing - described by one person as 'turning into drug dens' - violence against women and prostitution, and suspected covert surveillance of business and other premises. Tents were seen as a major contributor to increased anti-social behaviour, street drinking, drug use, crime, and other disruption in areas where they are located.

On-street services and more particularly the tents and sleeping bags provided by them, give rise to the use of shop and other doorways as toilets. In one situation where there were four tents together it was estimated that there were twelve or more people in the tents, using the one business doorway every day for urination and defecation. As a private space, the business was responsible for cleaning the area daily before it could open for the public or its own staff.

Some businesses also reported frequent instances of people sleeping in tents or in sleeping bags in their doorways or in outside areas to their premises, which had to be carefully stepped over and around by staff as they were entering or leaving work premises. Even if the tents and sleeping bags were empty, they would not attempt to remove or to interfere with them in any way. As one person said, 'your first job in the morning should not be to step over people or pick up shit'. The 'whole situation' has left staff feeling distressed and afraid to enter or leave their places of work, leading to employers creating complicated alternatives ways in and out of the buildings to protect them.

## 8.5 Historic buildings

In addition to negative impacts on businesses and their premises there were also concerns about the use of buildings by the on-street services and how they were affected. Examples are the GPO and Bank of Ireland on College Green, two key spots from which on-street groups operate.

The concerns here are that these are important 'historic monuments', for which, in normal circumstances, permits are required to hold any event outside or around them and they are being used by food services which 'lean up against them', 'with crowds of people around them' and are generally misused and even abused by people providing and using food services (children's drawings are evident on the GPO walls for example). That this has happened without official intervention to protect the buildings, is a cause of consternation, frustration, and questions about what was 'different about this situation?'

## 8.6 Dignity and safety

Apart from these direct impacts on the city streets and the operation of businesses and buildings, deep concern was expressed about the risks and potential negative impacts of on-street services on the people who use them, particularly those who were vulnerable in any way. Concerns centred on their safety, and the ability of on-street services to address their particular needs.

A key concern was that people had to queue and eat food 'in full public view', a situation considered to be a form of 'humiliation' and a demonstration of a lack of care by on-street providers for the dignity and privacy of people using the services. The fact that the services operate on the main streets of the city and at key points on them rather than somewhere more discreet and private was a matter of further question, particularly since on-street services had refused offers of alternative locations -including a city centre park and buildings - where they could operate indoors. This position gave rise to further questions for many participants about the real motivation of on-street services.

There were also concerns at the lack of attention paid by on-street food services to dietary needs, particularly given that they were targeting people who are homeless who generally have poor health, with some being immunocompromised and with special nutritional needs. These needs are not recognised or catered for by the on-street services which do not provide information on allergies, cater for ethnic and other preferences, or provide food of good nutritional value.

Risks associated with food that is not sourced, prepared, stored, and served safely were identified and misgivings expressed about the safety of the food served by on-street services. The risks of unsafe food were well understood by food businesses and mainstream homeless services who are themselves subject to regulation and inspection by EHO. They found it difficult to understand how it could be that food was served to the public on the streets without being subject to the same rules and protections, and led some to wonder was it because 'they're homeless and don't matter?'. Particular attention was drawn to the frequent serving of items such as chicken and rice which are 'notoriously dangerous' from a food safety point of view, and the lack of refrigeration at the stalls and during transport.

As previously discussed, on-street services are volunteer run. In this context the significant risks to their engaging with individuals who are vulnerable and potentially challenging, were highlighted. The risks are for both the providers and users of services and range from the expectations of service users not being met (in the sense that responses to them would not follow those of the mainstream homeless services that they are familiar with) to physical threats and danger of assault. Particular attention was drawn to the hazards of crowds and the opportunities they provide for drug dealing, grooming, proselytising, and political recruitment; and the fact that 'there are gangs in the city and the homeless are being dragged into them'.

Other concerns were expressed about the fact that there is no Garda vetting of volunteers, that people who are recovering addicts, with no other qualifications, are volunteers, that some services have

children serving and that there are likely to be no risk assessment, risk management, safeguarding, or volunteer support procedures in place in the on-street services.

#### 8.7 Waste

The issue of waste including that from clothes and food was raised, described by one person as being left behind for 'someone else to clean up' and by another as '90% of food is left behind'. An informal conversation with a council street cleaner at one site indicated that he would not be able to remove the left-over waste which would require a mechanical cleaner.

Dublin city council report that the clean up the areas where they have operated stalls and what is required 'after they've gone is a quick clean up'. There are no 'additional costs to the waste left by on-street services as the cleaning is part of the normal cleaning and the commitment of the council to have a Grade A city centre'. Abandoned tents will only be removed after consultation with the council, DRHE and An Garda Siochana. The problem with clothes provided by on-street services was that those items that were not taken were left on the street, or 'dumped' in business entrances and doorways.

#### 8.8 Public nuisance and enforcement

Many participants felt that the operations of the on-street services resulted in public nuisance through the obstruction of businesses in carrying out their operations, through attendant begging and drinking on the streets, and the prevention of people from passing down public streets and roads, all of which were thought to be in breach of bye laws and other statutes.

There was frustration that, despite all of these problems having been raised with some of the relevant authorities at different points in time, no interventions had been made to address the fall-out from onstreet services for businesses, citizens, and others by any of them. This raised questions about whether it was because 'it's about homeless people and they don't count' or because they are 'turning a blind eye, because they don't want the fall out on social media?'. Concerns were also expressed about the city post lockdown - 'how are we going to open up again', 'no one is going to want to come into the city centre when it's like this' and 'what kind of city are we going to have?'.

#### 8.9 Benefits

Clearly the people who use the on-street services benefit from them, or they would not use them and the fact that some people seem to use them regularly is an endorsement of their value to them. From the review we can see that people avail of the services for food, groceries, toiletries, and clothes, all essential items that cost money. When people are financially constrained, as many are as a result of high rents, and job losses due to Covid measures, being able to get these items for free is a help that can possibly make the difference between managing and not managing every week.

The review also revealed that there are benefits aside from food and these include meeting up with other people, 'putting in the time' and 'just getting out and having social contact'. Loneliness is considered a major public health challenge, one that has replaced smoking in many societies. It has been exacerbated by the forced withdrawal and isolation associated with the pandemic, so it is easy to see how an accessible food service can help to alleviate this, at least superficially<sup>12</sup>.

On-street services provide significant opportunities for giving, whether it is by the people who manage and deliver the services voluntarily, by those who make food, provide raw materials, make donations of groceries and clothes, or give money. Giving is good for people. It is thought to improve wellbeing by providing that 'warm glow' of doing something for someone else, and doing this voluntarily, which enhances empathy and understanding. Volunteering Ireland estimates that over 28% of adults in Ireland volunteer. It has researched the benefits for volunteers and published a report in 2017<sup>13</sup> which shows that they include being 'purposeful and valued', 'meeting and getting to know new people', a sense of 'making a difference' of 'feeling connected', 'belonging and good about myself'.

Other benefits include opportunities for new experiences and the development of new skills. Depending on the nature of the volunteering activities there may also be chances for exposure on the media and for influencing thinking, attitudes, and policy. In the course of the review, some participants referred to the fact that the increased formality and professionalisation of charities and voluntary bodies has reduced the opportunities for volunteering in services for people who are homeless.

## 8.9 Summary and discussion

The direct negative impacts of on-street services and activities related to them are significant. They have disrupted the operation of a number of businesses, contributed to increased anti-social behaviour on the city streets, apparently broken rules and regulations with impunity, and threatened and intimidated people going out about their business.

On-street services were seen as being carried out at the expense of people who used them, that it was undignified for people to queue and eat on the streets in full public view when they could be in places that would offer some privacy, and there were concerns about the potential for exploitation of vulnerable people using the services or hanging around them by those who would see opportunities in the crowds they attract.

The benefits of on-street services are for the people who can avail of free items such as food, groceries, and clothes, and the opportunities for social contact and socialising. There are also intrinsic benefits for those who donate or give in other ways who will experience the satisfaction of altruism, and particular benefits for those who organise, manage, and deliver the on-street services. Other benefits

---

<sup>12</sup> O'Sullivan, R., (2021). Blog: *Loneliness a key public health issue for society*. Institute of Public Health.

<sup>13</sup> Volunteering Ireland, (2017). *The impact of volunteering on the health and wellbeing of the volunteer*. Volunteering Ireland. Dublin.

include exposure on social and other media, public recognition, and the opportunity to comment on, shape, and change policy.

## Section nine: Key findings and recommendations

### 9.1 Introduction

This review set out to profile on-street services, assess the extent to which they are used by people who are homeless, identify their benefits, risks, and drawbacks and to make recommendations on their future operation. The key findings from the review are presented here, together with recommendations. Participants were asked for their proposals for the future and while there was significant skepticism about any changes occurring as a result of this review, many made proposals, and these have been incorporated into the recommendations.

### 9.2 Key findings

Groups providing on-street services are not inclined to communication or dialogue. Of 20 contacted just four agreed to participate in the review. This level of engagement is typical of previous experience with the groups by other researchers and the DRHE and is an obstacle to the development of understanding and insight into their operations, motivations, and experiences. Their non-participation in this review limits its scope and value.

The number of groups fluctuates but current information suggests there are between 16 and 20, most of which have become established in the last five years or so. Most are activists with connections to grass roots movements, a couple are faith led, and all have demonstrated significant capacity for organising and mobilising a range of supporters and volunteers to provide goods and deliver hot and cold food, groceries, toiletries, and other items from stalls at fixed locations in city streets and from mobile 'soup runs'.

On-street services report that they are 'feeding the homeless' who come to them starving, but this is not borne out by the evidence. People who are homeless are not the main users of services. Residents in emergency accommodation have expressed a clear preference for food in their accommodation or from mainstream service providers. A question remains to be answered about who uses on-street services and what unmet needs they have that the services are meeting.

The groups do not have the skills or experience to work with people who are homeless, and there are examples of their interventions undermining the work of mainstream providers. It is possible that onstreet groups have supported and encouraged people to remain on or return to the streets through the provision of food, tents and other supports which make rough sleeping viable - but which also exposes them to its risks and dangers.

The model of on-street services where people queue for food and eat in full public view on the main streets of the city is inherently humiliating, undignified and potentially unsafe. No attention is paid to either nutritional needs or food safety by the groups and it is thought that the queues and crowds that

gather at the food stalls create opportunities for drug dealing and other unsavoury activities, putting people who are vulnerable at risk of exploitation.

The operation of some services is particularly problematic. They have disrupted city centre businesses, contributed to increased anti-social behaviour on the city streets, flouted established rules, regulations, and accepted practices and have directly and indirectly threatened and intimidated individuals going about their daily work.

The groups have a strong social media presence which is used to highlight their offerings, their experiences, and their opinions on homelessness and related issues. Their narrative is that street homelessness is out of control and worsening day by day, that more and more people need on-street services for survival and solace, that the Government is doing nothing to address it and that it can be solved by food and tents. This is not an accurate picture of either homelessness or Government and other action to address it and highlights a lack of public awareness of the nature of the problem and its solutions.

Covid provided the impetus and opportunity for significant improvements to services for people who are homeless Dublin to the extent that there is a daily excess of emergency accommodation all of which is available 24/7, offers full board and streamlined access via the Freephone. Food is accessible through Day Services in the city centre which continued to function during lock down by offering their services on a take-away basis.

There has been a failure on the part of official bodies to protect the welfare and safety of people who are homeless and other members of the public. Most on-street services are not registered as charities but appeal for goods and services and raise money from the public; volunteers provide services to vulnerable people without the necessary skills or supports; they engage with people who are homeless without reference to the DRHE National Quality Standards; they serve food but are not registered with Environmental Health services; and they break parking and other regulations without sanction.

### 9.3 Recommendations

#### 1. Take immediate action to address on-street service risks

Establish a high-level working group of statutory bodies relevant to the operation of on-street services (Dublin City Council, DRHE, Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Environmental Health Officers, An Garda Síochána, Charities Regulator) to consider the risks identified in this review, and decide how to secure the safety of service users, volunteers, and city streets in the immediate and long term, through timely enforcement of existing regulations and the introduction of new regulations and other mechanisms as necessary.

## 2. Establish what needs are met by on-street services

As part of the same exercise additional efforts should be made to engage with the volunteers involved in on-street services and the people who use the services. This engagement should seek to understand more about the needs presenting to the services and identifying more appropriate and sustainable ways of addressing them. The profile of users of on-street services identified indicates needs relating to poverty, exclusion, lack of access to social protection, addiction, mental ill health, and other disabilities and vulnerabilities. In this context it is crucial that all the public bodies responsible for these issues and the people who experience them, are centrally involved in the process.

## 3. Explore a future role for on-street volunteers

The potential for the people who have been involved in the on-street services to become involved in delivering homeless or other services as part of a formal operating framework should be explored with them, as a means of harnessing the commitment and energy they have demonstrated to tackling homelessness.

## 4. Prepare a strategy on the management of outdoor spaces in the city

The review revealed fragmentation in the approach of official bodies to managing city spaces so that authority and responsibility were dispersed, unclear and ineffective. It is recommended that a strategy should be prepared for the management of outdoor spaces in the city, with clarity about what it should be like for residents, workers and visitors, and the standards they should expect in terms of space, safety and conduct in public spaces. The plan should be interagency, with a strong focus on implementation and holding statutory bodies to account for their individual and collective management of city spaces.

## 5. License services for people who are homeless

Introduce a system of licensing, inspection, and enforcement for all services working with people who are homeless and ensure that unlicensed service cannot operate. Licensing will give assurance to people who are homeless and to members of the public about the services and ensure consistency in their practice.

## 6. Enhance standards of services for people who are homeless

Working with service providers, enhance existing standards for services for people who are homeless so that they are not just about the provision of food, but about dignity and nurture; not just about hostels but about safe and appropriate hostels; not just about interventions but about effective interventions that are demonstrably person centred and effective in supporting people out of homelessness. To be effective, the standards must be at the heart of service delivery, planning, funding, and evaluation, include a strong service user perspective and input, and underpin the licensing system.

## 7. Improve public understanding about homelessness

The activities of on-street services have highlighted a lack of understanding of homelessness and existing responses to it. Official communication in the form of flat statistics is not sufficient to convey the picture of the needs, complexities, and dynamics of homelessness and the responses in place to address it. It is recommended that public information be improved to provide an understandable narrative on the issue - including links with its underlying causes of poverty, exclusion, addiction and other disabilities - and how these can be addressed to prevent the continuation of the problem.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank everyone who participated in some way or another in this review. Particular thanks to those who agreed to be interviewed, especially those who trusted my assurances that they would not be identifiable - I hope I have managed to honour that trust. Thank you to the people who administered the survey in PEA, without any fuss or bother, and of course those who made responses and provided such clear insights. A number of officials had the task of providing me with information and I thank you for your patience with my repeated contacts and for the trouble that you went to. Thanks also to those others who allowed me to pick their brains, pointed me to other information sources, who showed me around PEA, walked me around the city and explained legislation.

## References

- Benefacts, 2020. *Ireland's nonprofit sector analysis 2020*. Available at: <https://www.benefacts.ie/insights/reports/2020/>
- Charities Act, 2009. Available at: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2009/act/6/enacted/en/html> *Covid 19 and Homelessness - Monthly Report to City Councillors*. (2019). DRHE. Dublin.
- Cromarty et al (2018). *Rough Sleepers: Enforcement Powers (England)*. Briefing Paper 07836. House of Commons Library. London.
- DRHE (2015). *Good Practice Guide for Volunteers - Operating safely and effectively while engaging in street outreach with people who are homeless*. DRHE. Dublin.
- Farrell, E., (2020). *An investigation into the role and challenges of mobile soup runs in the provision of food service to the homeless marginalised in 21st century Ireland*. [Unpublished Master's Thesis], Technological University of Ireland, School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology. Dublin.
- Fitzgerald, C., (2018). 'One night out in Dublin with five different soup runs'. *Thejournal.ie*. June 2018. Available at: <https://www.thejournal.ie/soup-run-dublin-4082985-Jun2018/>
- Haase, T. and McKeown, K. (1997). *An Audit of Services for Homeless People in the Eastern Health Board Region*. Homeless Initiative. Dublin.
- Holland, K., (2020). 'Eating out in Dublin the Homeless Way'. *The Irish Times* 22nd January 2020. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/eating-out-in-dublin-the-homelessway1.4147229>.
- Kelleher, J. & Norris, M. (2020). *Day Services for People Who are Homeless in Dublin: A review commissioned by the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive (DRHE)*. Dublin. DRHE.
- Lane, L. and Power, A. (2009). *Soup- runs in Central London: The right help in the right place at the right time?* London School of Economics & Political Science. London.
- National Quality Standards Framework for Homeless Services in Ireland* (2019). DRHE. Dublin.
- O'Flynn, A. (2016). *Beggars Can't be Choosers? A Research Study on Begging in Dublin City Centre*. Dublin City Council.
- O'Sullivan, R., 2021. *Blog: Loneliness a key public health issue for society*. *Institute of Public Health*. Available at: <https://publichealth.ie/blog-loneliness-a-key-public-health-issue-for-society>
- Parsell, C. and Watts, B. (2017). *Charity and Justice: A Reflection on New Forms of Homelessness Provision in Australia*. University of Queensland, Australia. Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK. *European Journal of Homelessness*. Volume 11, No. 2. FEANTSA. Brussels.
- Putting People First: A Good Practice Handbook for Homeless Services*. (1999), Homeless Initiative. Dublin.
- Shelter, 2005. *SHP Practice Briefing Food for Thought: soup- runs and soup kitchens*. London.
- The Homeless Action Plan Framework for Dublin, 2019-2021*. (2019). Dublin City Council, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Fingal County Council and South Dublin County Council. Dublin.

Volunteering Ireland, (2017). *The impact of volunteering on the health and wellbeing of the volunteer*. Volunteering Ireland. Dublin.

Weafer J. (2005) *Review of Food and Food Centres*. Homeless Agency. Dublin.

Williams, J and O'Connor M (1999). *The Report of the 1999 assessment of homelessness in Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow*. Homeless Initiative. Dublin.

Wilson, W. and Barton, C. (2021). *House of Commons Briefing Paper 020007, 22nd March 2021. Rough Sleeping (England)*. House of Commons Library. London.

# Street Food Services Survey (Copy)

We're carrying out this survey to find out about what food services you use and why. It's confidential, don't need your name and will only take a few minutes.

...

1. Which services do you use? Tick any that are used.

	YES
1. Brother Kevin's	<input type="radio"/>
2. Outside GPO	<input type="radio"/>
3. Mendiocly	<input type="radio"/>
4. Simon soup run	<input type="radio"/>
5. Focus Coffee Shop	<input type="radio"/>
6. Bank of Ireland, College Green	<input type="radio"/>
7. Grafton Street	<input type="radio"/>
8. Nth Earl Street	<input type="radio"/>
9. Inner city helping homeless	<input type="radio"/>
10. Feed Our Homeless	<input type="radio"/>

2. Please name any others that use that are not on the list

Enter your answer

3. What do you use the services for?

	Food/drink	Clothes	Toiletries	Showers/toilets
1. Brother Kevin's	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Outside GPO	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Mendiocly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Simon Soup run	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Focus Coffee shop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Bank Of Ireland College Green	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Grafton Street	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Nth Earl Street	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Inner City Helping Homeles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Feed Our Homeless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Other, no need to name	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. Would you get other help?

	Advice	Meet Key Worker	Tent
1. Brother Kevin's	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Outside GPO	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Mendicity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Simon Soup run	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Focus Coffee shop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Bank Of Ireland College Green	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Grafton Street	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Nth Earl Street	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Inner City Helping Homeless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Feed our Homeless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Other, no need to name	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. How often would you go to them?

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Less often
1. Brother Kevin's	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Outside GPO	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Mendicity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Simon soup run	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Focus Coffee Shop	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Bank of Ireland, College Green	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Grafton Street	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Nth Earl Street	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Inner city helping homeless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Feed Our Homeless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. What improvements would you like to see made to food services?

1. Better choice of food	<input type="radio"/>
2. More regular times	<input type="radio"/>
3. More private location	<input type="radio"/>
4. Place to sit and eat	<input type="radio"/>
5. More indoors	<input type="radio"/>
6. More outdoors	<input type="radio"/>

7. Any other suggestions for improvements:

Enter your answer

8. Do you have any other comments to make about food services?

Enter your answer

9. About you

	Male	Female	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+
Tick applicable	<input type="radio"/>					

Submit

Never give out your password. [Report abuse](#)

This content is created by the owner of the form. The data you submit will be sent to the form owner. Microsoft is not responsible for the privacy or security practices of its customers, including those of this form owner. Never give out your password.

Powered by Microsoft Forms | [Privacy and cookies](#) | [Terms of use](#)