



An overview of homelessness and human trafficking in Dublin

April 2024

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About The Passage

Founded in 1980 by Cardinal Basil Hume and The Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul, The Passage is based in the heart of Westminster. We provide practical support and a wide range of services to help transform the lives of people who are experiencing or at risk of street homelessness.

We are guided by our Vincentian values and offer our clients the resources and solutions to prevent or end their homelessness for good, including routes to employment, benefits, and stable accommodation.

We run a modern Resource Centre in Victoria, four accommodation projects, outreach and health services, homelessness prevention schemes and a pioneering modern slavery referral programme.

Our vision

Our vision is of a society where street homelessness no longer exists and everyone has a place to call home.

Our mission

- 1) Prevent street homelessness by intervening quickly before people reach crisis point.
- 2) End street homelessness by providing innovative and tailor-made services that act with compassion and urgency.
- 3) Advocate for those who feel they are not heard by amplifying their voice to bring about real systemic change.

Our values

- We assist people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, to realise their own potential and to transform their lives.
- We act with compassion and kindness.
- We are a voice for change and justice.
- We build relationships based on trust.
- We respect each other.
- We are straightforward in all our dealings.
- We believe in practical hands-on hard work.
- We collaborate across all sections of society.

Acknowledgements

The Passage would like to thank Depaul Ireland for their partnership in planning and delivering this project.

We would like to express our gratitude to Mr Kevin Hyland OBE, member of The Passage Board of Trustees.

We are also grateful to the organisations who participated in this project:

- Anew
- Crosscare
- Dublin Region Homeless Executive
- Dublin Simon Community
- Focus Ireland
- Health Services Executive Anti Human Trafficking Team
- International Protection Accommodation Services
- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
- Jesuit Refugee Service
- Merchants Quay Ireland
- Novas
- Peter McVerry Trust
- The Immigrant Council of Ireland

Abbreviations

AGS	An Garda Síochána
CPS	Central Placement Service
CoE	Council of Europe
DRHE	Dublin Region Homeless Executive
ECAT	Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings
EU	European Union
GRETA	Group of Experts on Action Against Trafficking in Human Brings (CoE)
IHREC	Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission
IPAS	International Protection Accommodation System
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals (UN)
SERP	Sexual Exploitation Research Programme
TIP Report	Trafficking in Persons Report (US)
TVPA	Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (US)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNGA	UN General Assembly
US	United States

Foreword

In 2017, The Passage was commissioned by the UK's first Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to produce a report into the links between homelessness and human trafficking. It is recognised that traffickers identify and exploit people experiencing homelessness, and those rough sleeping are at greater risk of becoming victims of human trafficking. Evidence also proves many who escape human trafficking end up as street homeless and then enter a cycle of susceptibility to being trafficked.

Following the 2017 report, The Passage established a Human Trafficking Programme and conducted monitoring and evaluation using internal technology and databases. Five years of data revealed that over 75% of victims identified by The Passage had become homeless as a direct result of their exploitation by human traffickers. Multilateral agencies including the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Union (EU) have international instruments and binding legislation that explains how human trafficking targets the most vulnerable in society. This includes people experiencing homelessness.

Evidence and data obtained by The Passage demonstrates and concurs with many precedents showing human trafficking is not a respecter of international borders. Victims identified by The Passage are of many nationalities and include cases where human trafficking offences have been committed within and outside of the UK. The Passage has adopted the ethos of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (Palermo Protocol), the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings (ECAT) and the EU Directive on Human Trafficking, recognising and supporting victims of this crime and making referrals into the NGO's and authorities within the UK National Referral Mechanism. The Passage has also, where appropriate, collaborated with statutory agencies such as the police and the Home Office.

Partnering with Depaul Ireland, The Passage undertook a similar exercise to the one carried out in the UK to explore potential links between homelessness and human trafficking in Ireland. Mapping and evaluation focussed on Dublin and has identified clear links between homelessness and human trafficking, akin to the situation in London. This report explains the research that was carried out, the results gleaned and findings from surveys and focus groups. This research and its findings have led to recommendations that will assist improved identification and support of trafficked victims in Ireland's homelessness sector. The Irish Government has recently launched a new National Action Plan on human trafficking, and it is believed our recommendations can contribute to achieving the objectives of the strategy.

The Passage has also established a partnership with the Mayor of New York's Office to End Domestic and Gender Based Violence. The Passage is commissioned to carry out similar mapping work across the New York City district.

This will allow for an international comparison across three major global cities and will be reported to the US Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons as a model of good practice.

The UN Palermo Protocol sets the ambition to suppress human trafficking. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) were led by the UN Missions of Ireland and Kenya in 2015. At the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 2023, the UN Secretary General spoke of his concern of the lack of progress of the SDG's.

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar in his 2023 UNGA speech stated, "On Ireland's behalf, I am also proud to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the 2030 Agenda and to achievement of the goals."

SDG 8.7 is for the eradication of modern slavery and human trafficking. In addition to assisting Ireland's domestic strategy on human trafficking, the recommendations in this report can promote Ireland's determination as a global leader of the SDG's and in respecting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights agreed by the UN.

Our thanks to all those who helped with this report, in particular Miranda Keast and Dr Júlia Tomás (co-authors) as well as David Carroll and Dermot Murphy (Depaul Ireland).



Mick Clarke

Chief Executive, The Passage



Executive summary

Homelessness and human trafficking have been shown to be interconnected in the UK. Research carried out by The Passage in 2017 found that people experiencing homelessness are at risk of being exploited, and victims of human trafficking are at risk of becoming homeless once they have broken free from the human traffickers. Since 2017, The Passage has been leading the way in the homelessness sector in the UK in addressing these interlinked issues, operating the first dedicated Human Trafficking Service within a homelessness organisation.

Human trafficking is not a respecter of international borders, and therefore The Passage decided to conduct research studies to map the link between human trafficking and homelessness in other international cities: Dublin and New York City. Findings from research and mapping in Dublin, has allowed for evidence-based recommendations to be proposed to support Ireland's human trafficking strategy by introducing systemic change. The Passage undertook a similar methodical evaluation to the earlier study in London to explore the links between homelessness and human trafficking in Dublin.

13 respondents from homelessness organisations completed an online survey on their knowledge and experience of human trafficking within the sector. One focus group meeting was convened, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with various relevant organisations. The study shows that most homelessness organisations believe that they are encountering victims of trafficking through their work but recognise that they have insufficient knowledge and awareness to identify victims. This is exacerbated by the absence of internal policies and procedures to provide the foundations to identify and support victims of human trafficking.

The research conducted has identified that there are many missed opportunities to identify victims and provide them with the support they are entitled to as a human right and as included in the EU Directive for Human Trafficking. As Ireland moves towards introducing legislation for the provision of support for victims of human trafficking, six recommendations are proposed to improve the multi-agency response to human trafficking, improve the intelligence picture, but importantly to reduce suffering and increase the opportunities for justice for victims.

Recommendations

- 1 Training and awareness raising for homelessness sector staff.**
Increase knowledge and skills by developing training on human trafficking, including signs to spot and what action to take, targeting specifically the homelessness sector.
- 2 Improve information recording.**
Homelessness organisations should improve information recording and systematically collect relevant data.
- 3 Produce an online toolkit.**
Develop an online Human Trafficking Toolkit for the homelessness sector.
- 4 Carry out further research.**
Further research on the links between homelessness and human trafficking to understand the scope and scale of victims experiencing homelessness.
- 5 Develop specialist accommodation options.**
Increase the offer of specialised accommodation to trafficking victims that are safe, suitable, and trauma informed.
- 6 Develop a revised multi-agency approach.**
Prioritise efficient multi-agency work between statutory and non-statutory agencies and organisations to support victims of human trafficking.

Introduction

In 2017, The Passage carried out a study to explore the links between homelessness and human trafficking in England [1]. This research found that people experiencing homelessness were vulnerable to being trafficked, and that people who had been trafficked and escaped were vulnerable to becoming homeless. Since then, The Passage has been leading the way in the homelessness sector in the UK in addressing these interlinked issues, operating the first dedicated Human Trafficking Service within a homelessness organisation, developing tools and guidance for the sector to improve awareness, practice and support and liaising strategically with commissioners and policymakers to advocate for more joined-up and effective approaches to supporting victims.

However, we have always known that human trafficking does not respect international borders and requires an upstream approach to be tackled effectively. In order to establish if there is indeed a link in other international cities, in 2023, The Passage embarked on a new project with two lead partners, Depaul Ireland and the Mayor of New York's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence, to examine the links between homelessness and human trafficking in Dublin and New York City.

In addition to producing a local report for each city that captures the findings of our mapping work and recommendations coming from that work, a wider report with recommendations of how to shine a light on the issue at a global level will also be produced, linking in with the UN SDG 8.7 which aims to take immediate and effective measures to end human trafficking.

The objectives for our work in Dublin were to:

- Explore whether homelessness organisations are identifying victims of trafficking within their work,
- Understand existing knowledge and skills to tackle human trafficking within the homelessness sector; and
- Make recommendations for regional and national improvements on how homelessness organisations can respond to the issue of human trafficking more effectively.

This report outlines the research and evaluation that was carried out, its key findings and makes six recommendations. These recommendations support the Irish Government's Third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking (NAP), [2] and improve the way vulnerable people receive crucial support.

[1] [Understanding and Responding to Modern Slavery in the Homelessness Sector](#), The Passage, 2017.

[2] [Third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking](#), Government of Ireland, 2023.

Background

Homelessness

There is a well-established network of support systems in place to work with people experiencing homelessness in Dublin.

The Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) is the central body responsible for statutory responses to homelessness in Dublin. It operates the Central Placement Service (CPS), which provides a central pathway into homelessness services, including supported temporary accommodation, long-term supported accommodation, family hubs, and approved housing bodies. In addition, there are a range of community-based services, including homelessness prevention services, day centres, floating support and outreach.

In spring 2023, the DRHE counted 83 people sleeping rough in Dublin. The large majority (90%) were known to the DRHE and had previously been assessed. Most of the people encountered were Irish, male, aged 26-45. 92% were linked to one of the four Dublin local authorities. Four had an active tenancy, and 18 had been rough sleeping during the previous street count in November 2022. Only 3% of those met during the count week were non-EU citizens, with 19% EU citizens and 79% Irish citizens. [1]

In addition, according to the latest official statistics from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage released in June 2023 [2]:

- 12,600 people were recorded as accessing emergency accommodation in June: 5880 single adults, 2955 adults in families and 3765 children.
- Of all the adults in emergency accommodation, 59% were Irish, 22% were from the EU or UK and 19% were non-EU nationals.
- Of all the adults in emergency accommodation, 62% were male and the majority (53%) were aged 25-44, followed by 28% aged 45-64.
- The two most common reasons given for why people were experiencing homelessness were relationship breakdown / family circumstance (28.2%) and Notice of Termination (28.8%).
- 923 people who had formerly slept rough or who were long-term users of emergency accommodation were supported through the Housing First Scheme.

However, according to the Department of Applied Studies from Maynooth University, these figures are “a considerable underestimate of the real scale of the issue, due to the failure to consider and measure many people in hidden homelessness.” [3]

This includes people in domestic violence refuges; people in prisons and care leavers with no housing to go to; long-term homeless accommodation without tenancies; people in severe housing insecurity (staying temporarily with friends or family, sofa surfing); those in Direct Provision with status, and Travellers in substandard accommodation.

Human trafficking

In 2022, 42 survivors of human trafficking were officially identified by An Garda Síochána (AGS): 5 minors and 37 adults. The majority were women and girls, victims of sexual exploitation (24 cases). 15 cases involved labour exploitation, 2 cases involved criminal exploitation and 1 case involved organ harvesting. The predominant country of origin of the survivors was Nigeria (11 cases).

The Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008 [4] introduced an offence of trafficking for labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, or the removal of their organs. The definition of human trafficking was expanded by the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Act 2013 to include forced criminality and forced begging [5]. The Blue Blindfold campaign run by the Department of Justice is a public awareness campaign to improve public knowledge about trafficking and the signs that someone has been trafficked; this was revamped in 2018 to give a user-friendly website that advertises a central reporting point for any concerns or suspicions.

It is important to note that the offences are not limited to trafficking into the State. Also, it is an offence in Ireland to buy sexual services from anyone, not just from a trafficked person, following the Nordic model legislation. It is also an offence to advertise sexual services in Ireland.

The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) 2022 evaluation [6] reported that Ireland is a country of destination of victims of trafficking in human beings, with sexual exploitation being the most common form of trafficking, experienced primarily by women and girls. Labour exploitation has been identified in sectors such as farming, fishing, construction, car washing and waste recycling, for example.

The US State Department Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report) raises concern that the numbers of identified victims show a downward trend with the State identifying 42 victims in 2022, compared with 95 in 2016 [7]. According to the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), multiannual data shows that sexual exploitation is the most common form of trafficking (55% of cases), and is mostly experienced by women, while labour exploitation accounts for 38% of cases and is more commonly experienced by men [8]. However, research carried out by Mary Immaculate College in 2021 found that the number of adults and children trafficked into Ireland between 2014 and 2019 is at least 38% higher than official records show [9]. Further research in 2023 by the Sexual Exploitation Research Programme (SERP) at University College Dublin highlighted particular risks to children in care being victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. [10]

The US TIP Report has a grading process awarded to nations using the UN Palermo Protocol based on The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), a federal statute passed into law in 2000 by the US [11].

The tiers are as follows:

- Tier 1: Countries that have made efforts to fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking.

- Tier 2: Countries that have not fully met the TVPA's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.
- Tier 2 Watch List: Countries that have made efforts to meet the TVPA's minimum standards, but: (1) the estimated number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is significant or significantly increasing and the country is not taking proportional concrete actions; or (2) there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year.
- Tier 3: Countries that do not meet the TVPA's minimum standards and are not working to meet the standards. These countries may not be eligible for non-humanitarian and non-trade related funding.

Ireland was in Tier 1 until 2017, then in 2018 and 2019 it downgraded to tier 2. In 2020 it moved to the Tier 2 Watch List, remaining there in 2021 until it returned to Tier 2 in 2022. However, concerns continue as Ireland has only achieved convictions in one human trafficking case for sexual exploitation and in 2022 did not convict any traffickers. There has never been a conviction of a trafficker for labour trafficking [12].

In addition, systemic issues have been identified with regards to identification of victims of human trafficking and the support services provided through the Government National Referral Mechanism (NRM) – the Government's system to identify and support victims of human trafficking [12]. Currently only AGS can formally identify victims of human trafficking. New legislation proposed by the Government is in its final stages at the Oireachtas and will increase the number of statutory agencies with a duty to identify victims of trafficking. It will also include a group of 'Trusted Partners' populated from NGOs.

In addition, appropriate accommodation appears to be a "chronic problem" according to the IHREC [14]. Victims referred into the NRM are accommodated within the International Protection Accommodation System (IPAS). The lack of specialist accommodation provision for survivors of trafficking has been recognised as a concern by GRETA and IHREC, acknowledging conflation between International Protection and human trafficking support and have called for systemic changes [15] such as the establishment of specialised shelter with tailored, gender-specific and trauma-informed services. As a result, IPAS has engaged with NGOs to establish pilot projects to analyse the effectiveness of NGO-led IPAS accommodation units. Within this context, Depaul Ireland is currently piloting a specialised unit capable of responding to the needs of 8-12 women survivors of sexual exploitation. Depaul's pilot brings the benefits of a care and case management model of service delivery, enhancing a trauma-informed and person-centred approach while mitigating risk. In this context, the pilot aims to identify the benefits and challenges, including cost benefit, of an NGO directly operating an IPAS accommodation centre. Using the model of harm reduction accommodation-based intervention, Depaul provides a multi-agency robust support service and their partners for this project include the Department of Justice and Equality, HSE, An Garda Síochána, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Social Protection and Ruhama.

International and national oversight mechanisms have strongly urged Ireland to tackle human trafficking more effectively. This research and evaluation exercise project was conducted at a crucial time of change within the policy landscape of human trafficking in

Ireland. In November 2023, Ireland's Third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking 2023-2027 (NAP) was published by the Department of Justice.

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Bill 2023 [16] (currently at An Dáil Éireann Third Stage) places the NRM on statutory footing. Once the new NRM reforms have been implemented through the NAP [17], other statutory agencies will become competent authorities in addition to AGS for the identification of victims of human trafficking: the Department of Justice Immigration Services, the Department of Social Protection, the Health Service Executive (HSE), Tusla (The Child and Family Agency), the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) and the Workplace Relations Commission. Referrals will be sent to an Operational Committee, chaired by the Department of Justice. Once a decision is made, the victim will be referred back to the competent authority or Trusted Partner for support.

Besides the establishment of a new NRM, which will make it easier for victims to come forward, be identified and access support, the NAP also proposes actions such as widespread training for all who may come into contact with survivors of human trafficking (statutory and non-statutory agencies), the establishment of dedicated accommodation for victims of trafficking, expansion of funding for use and awareness of cultural mediators and accompaniment services, enhanced data collection and analysis, compensation and support during trials. The NAP also provides trafficking survivors with protection from deportation until identification.

[1] [Weeklong assessment of rough sleepers in the Dublin Region](#), DRHE, March 6th to 12th 2023.

[2] [Monthly Homeless Report and Homeless Quarterly Progress Report Quarter 2 2023](#), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 28 July 2023.

[3] Hearne. and McSweeney, [Ireland's Hidden Homelessness Crisis](#), Maynooth University, November 2023.

[4] [Criminal Law \(Human Trafficking\) Act 2008](#)

[5] [Criminal Law \(Human Trafficking\) \(Amendment\) Act 2013](#).

[6] [Evaluation Report Ireland, Third Evaluation Round](#), GRETA, 2022.

[7] [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Ireland](#), US Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2023.

[8] [Trafficking in Human Beings in Ireland](#), Second Evaluation of the Implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, IHREC, 2023.

[9] [Report on Human Trafficking and Exploitation on the Island of Ireland](#), Mary Immaculate College, 2021.

[10] [Protecting against Predators: A Scoping Study on the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Young People in Ireland](#), SERP, 2023.

[11] Note: the TVPA allowed for the establishment of the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, which coordinates with foreign governments to protect trafficking victims, prevent trafficking, and prosecute traffickers.

[12] [2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Ireland](#), US Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, 2023.

[13] [Call for urgent reform of NRM to protect victims of human trafficking - MRCI](#), March 2022.

[14] [Accommodation for Trafficking Victims Remains a Chronic Problem - IHREC](#), March 2022.

[15] [Trafficking in Human Beings in Ireland](#), Second Evaluation of the Implementation of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive, IHREC, 2023.

[16] [Criminal Law \(Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking\) Bill 2023](#).

[17] [Third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking](#), Government of Ireland, 2023.

Methodology

An online survey was sent to homelessness organisations in Dublin through the Dublin Homelessness Network. The survey asked for a combination of quantitative and qualitative responses in order to create a snapshot of the experiences and skills of homelessness organisations in identifying and working with victims of human trafficking.

Following this, a focus group was held with the Homelessness Network, which was attended by 14 people from 7 different organisations. These organisations provided over 230 services to over 36,000 service users in 2022. [1] Topics discussed included general understanding of trafficking, experiences of identifying and working with trafficked people, and how to provide appropriate support. Themes from the discussions were drawn together and notes were produced by representatives from The Passage; these notes were distributed to all attendees in order to ensure accuracy.

Further, several individual interviews with representatives from key agencies were held in order to gain a wider perspective on this issue. These included discussions with IPAS and a refugee support organisation to gain further insight into how the international protection systems operate, given that this is a key component of the wider picture into how trafficking takes place and how potential victims are identified and supported. However, for the purposes of this scoping study, the focus in the discussion and analysis is about homelessness organisations rather than delving into the international protection system, which was beyond the scope of the project.

Finally, data and a case study were gathered from The Passage's experience of working with Irish nationals who have been trafficked, illustrating how trafficking can be experienced regardless of gender or nationality, and the impact that homelessness organisations can have on supporting victims effectively.

[1] Information gathered by Depaul Ireland for the purpose of this study in February 2024.

Limitations

A number of limitations to this scoping exercise should be noted.

It is important to highlight that in Ireland, the AGS are the body who investigate suspected cases of human trafficking and determine whether or not someone has been a victim of this crime. While the wording of the questions in the survey, distributed as part of this study, refers to “victims”, we know that the organisations that took part in the survey, and indeed the focus groups and semi-structured interviews, were giving information based on people they had encountered who reported being victims; however, one must note that many who reported being victims may not have gone through a full investigative process with the AGS. As a result, all information from the survey, and subsequent focus group and interviews, should be taken as referring to potential victims of human trafficking.

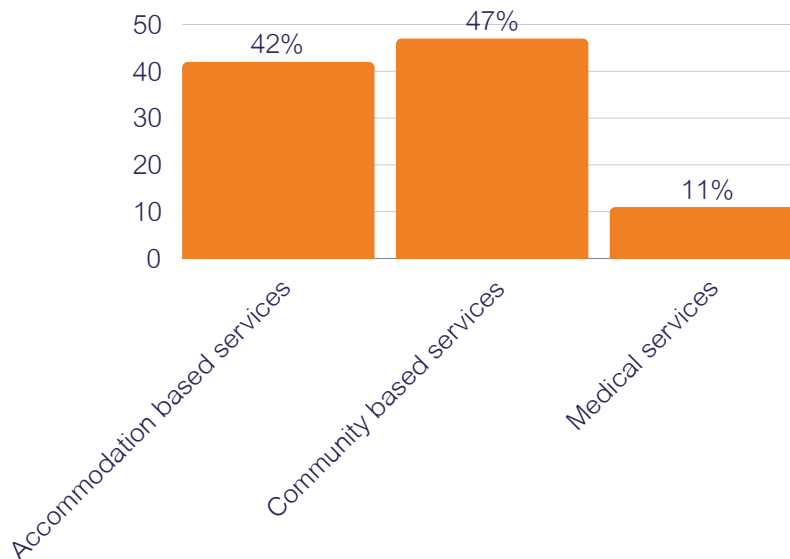
This was an initial scoping exercise carried out over a short period of time, solely focused on Dublin. It does not purport to be representative of the whole of the Republic of Ireland. Further, the main organisations that engaged with the project were those who play an official role being commissioned to provide services. It is recognised that there exist a range of more informal, community and faith-based organisations that provide different types of support to people experiencing homelessness, but for the purposes of this project, the main statutory networks were focused on. This report does not claim to represent the views and experiences of all homelessness organisations, but rather provides an initial exploration into some of the key issues.

Findings

Survey results

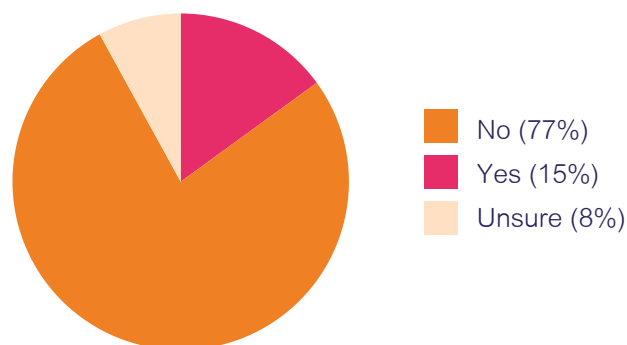
There were 13 responses to the survey from 11 different organisations. Of these, four worked specifically in Dublin and the rest work also across Ireland, including one that also works in the UK. Most organisations who responded were partially state funded (69%), with 23% being entirely state funded. Most organisations provide community and accommodation-based services.

Fig. 1: What services does your organisation provide?



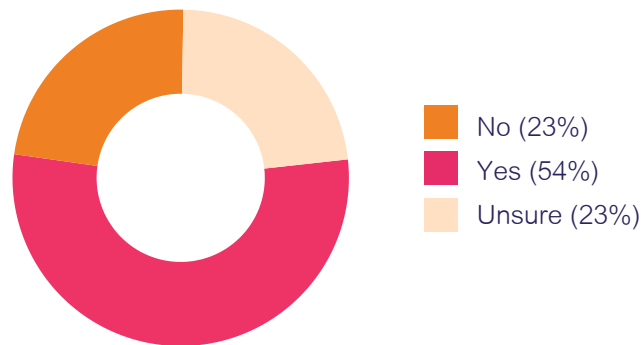
Whilst all respondents said that they have an information management system, when asked if it included entries on human trafficking, the majority (77%) said they did not.

Fig. 2: Does your information management system capture whether a client has been trafficked?



Regarding their knowledge of having supported victims of human trafficking in the past two years, significantly, 54% said that they suspected that they had worked with trafficked people, and a further 23% were not sure.

Fig. 3: Are you aware of or do you suspect you have worked with victims of human trafficking over the last two years?



Of the 54% who responded positively, only one person said they record victims of trafficking on their information management system, highlighting an important gap in record-keeping.

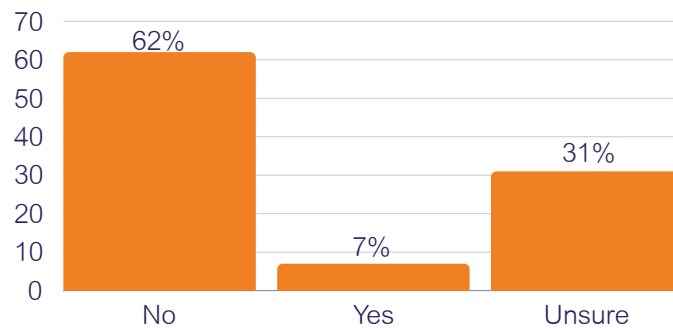
Those who responded that they felt they had worked with victims of trafficking worked in all different types of services: accommodation, community-based and medical services.

Of the 54% (seven respondents) who said that they thought they had worked with people who had been trafficked, three said that they had worked with one or two potential victims, and two said they had worked with four or five potential victims. One respondent said that they felt they had worked with probably around eight to ten potential victims but noted that this could be a lot higher.

Most of the potential victims were women, including one transgender woman, with one respondent saying they only worked with male victims, and another saying that they had worked with victims who were both men and women. Four respondents were able to identify the nationalities of those they had worked with as being from the African continent, including Nigeria specifically, while one respondent said they had worked with a victim of trafficking from Romania, and another said they had worked with people from Eastern Europe as well as Brazil. One respondent had encountered a potential victim of trafficking who was under 18, while the majority of respondents said that the potential victims, they had supported were aged 18-30. Two respondents said they had worked with someone aged 31-45. Only one person said they had worked with a potential victim over the age of 45. Overall, this shows a young age profile of potential victims that were being encountered by homelessness organisations.

The majority (93%) of all organisations reported that they did not, or were unsure if they had any internal guidance, policies or procedures on working with victims of trafficking.

Fig. 4: Does your organisation have internal guidance, policies or procedures on working with victims of trafficking?



Similarly, only one respondent stated their staff had received training on human trafficking.

Two questions analysed how people experiencing homelessness may encounter traffickers. When asked if the organisation had been approached by anyone offering seemingly illegitimate work that raised suspicions about potential exploitation, the overwhelming majority (92%) said that this has not happened in their experience. Similarly, most respondents (54%) said that they had not been told by their service users that they have been approached by anyone offering seemingly illegitimate work in the last two years. Two respondents said that they had had reports of this from service users, indicating the potential vulnerability of people experiencing homelessness to exploitation and human trafficking.

When asked about the steps respondents' services would take upon being made aware that they were working with a victim of trafficking, the most common response was to refer to the AGS. Other organisations that were mentioned include the Health Service Executive Anti Human Trafficking Team and Ruhama for specialist support for women involved in prostitution. Two respondents emphasised that they would only refer with the person's consent.

However, the majority of respondents (62%) said that they had not reported any experiences of trafficking, with only 23% saying that they had - all of whom had reported to the AGS. In terms of referring to other specialist organisations, 31% had also referred to other sources of support, including Tusla (to report risk to a minor), and Ruhama (specialist support for women involved in prostitution).

Finally, survey respondents were asked about what support they would like for their organisations around working with trafficked people. Everyone who responded said that training, education and awareness were very important to them, including understanding the signs that someone might have been trafficked and further support in how to identify potential victims. Practical resources were also mentioned - such as a comprehensive list of local organisations that could support victims of human trafficking, and best practice on signposting to other services. Support with drafting policies and procedures was additionally mentioned by two respondents.

Overall, the findings from the survey indicate:

1

A visible lack of organisational preparation around working with victims of human trafficking, including data recording.

2

Initial signs that homelessness organisations are coming into contact with victims of human trafficking.

3

A desire for guidance for organisations to be better equipped to work with victims of trafficking.

Discussion points from interviews and focus group

Knowledge about trafficking

When discussing knowledge about trafficking with homelessness organisations, one of the main reference points was the media. Participants in the focus group talked about their understandings of human trafficking based around sex trafficking, migrants and refugees being brought into the country to work, and people working or being kept in someone's home against their will. A couple of participants had awareness of how young people were being groomed and trafficked, including in the drugs trade, but overall participants felt that they often assumed that trafficking was primarily about women involved in prostitution, or about transnational movement of people.

"We lack an education on it."

These ideas were also reinforced through the interview held with representatives from the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE), who said that similar ideas were held within their organisation too and that anecdotally, human trafficking might be more linked for them with female-only services or domestic abuse services.

Given that existing research shows that human trafficking occurs in sectors beyond the sex industry - such as fishing, farming, car washing and construction - there was little understanding of this wider spectrum of forms of trafficking shown in the focus groups and interviews.

Vulnerability to exploitation

Identifying who is vulnerable to exploitation and how this can come about were also topics of discussion at the focus group and interviews.

Overall, there was a feeling that there can be a risk of exploitation in direct provision for people claiming international protection. This can be due to the range of different types of accommodation that are provided through IPAS (including hotels and tents), some of which may mean that vulnerable people are housed insecurely and far from support networks.

There have been efforts to counter this risk; for example, Ruhama ran a training programme for accommodation providers when the war in Ukraine broke out, recognising that the women and children who were fleeing war and relocating in Ireland were very vulnerable to exploitation.

Focus group participants agreed that people experiencing homelessness could be vulnerable to exploitation by virtue of the fact that traffickers could offer housing or accommodation to make a job offer seem tempting to those who lack somewhere to stay. One focus group participant had worked with two people who had been trafficked, one of whom had a learning disability and the other had an acquired brain injury. Others felt that substance misuse could also make people vulnerable to exploitation.

Focus group participants did not have specific examples from their knowledge of how people who have experienced homelessness had been targeted or exploited, explicitly because of this. But the HSE commented that persons in these situations are particularly vulnerable to trafficking or re-trafficking and they alert clients to possible risks – if an offer seems too good to be true, it generally is. They reported an incident of a client living in homeless accommodation being offered employment which could indicate a high risk for trafficking and exploitation. After discussion, and a review of the offer the client did not take up this option. This demonstrates that spotting the signs of human trafficking can lead to successful preventative work.

Identification and recording of potential victims

Homelessness organisations felt that they had some ideas of possible indicators that someone may have been trafficked, but it was not something that they were trained to look out for. Some of the signs the focus group participants considered were that clients might be vague about their circumstances and how they got to Ireland, they may not have documents, may have gaps in their story or tell different stories each time they are asked to recount their past.

A couple of participants spoke about how sometimes a person presents for support with someone else present who seems to control the conversation and it can be hard to discern what exactly the relationship is (for example, they might say they are an interpreter or a relative, but it is hard to be sure of this). In these situations, it is possible that some form of exploitation or coercive control may be taking place.

A participant who had worked in short-term accommodation provision spoke about how difficult it was to identify victims of trafficking, giving an example of one man who came to the country a few years ago, had no Personal Public Service (PPS) number, and the accommodation provider knew very little about him.

They described how the focus at that time was on what support was needed then and there and what they knew they could offer - but participating in the focus group made them think with hindsight that he could potentially have been a victim of trafficking.

It was also highlighted through the discussions that victims themselves might not recognise what they have experienced as human trafficking or might not be able to put a name to the experience.

Later in the focus group, participants were asked, based on the discussions that had been held, if they now felt that they had come across potential victims of trafficking within their work in the past. In response, 91% answered positively - a higher number than had reported this in the survey. While not all of the participants in the focus group were the same people who completed the survey, participants expressed a feeling that the discussions had given them a better understanding of trafficking, and there was a clear appetite for specialised human trafficking training.

"It's been an eye opener for me this morning."

The homelessness Central Placement Service (CPS) has an assessment as a first point of contact, which initially might be done on the phone. During this process, there can be language and cultural barriers that can present challenges, as well as mental health barriers such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or paranoia that might mean it is difficult to disclose important information over the phone to an unknown person. There is a standard assessment and service approach across the local authorities in Dublin (Dublin City Council, South Dublin County Council, Fingal County Council and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council) but questions on exploitation are not included. The online shared database, the Pathway Accommodation and Support System (PASS) does not record being a victim of trafficking as a reason for homelessness. It was noted that the assessment does ask about income details, where some form of exploitation could potentially be disclosed, but human trafficking is not addressed specifically within these initial assessment processes.

The HSE Anti Human Trafficking Team provides care and support to people identified as victims of trafficking by the AGS. They reported that, at the time of meeting, approximately 8% of their active cases were living in some form of homelessness accommodation. These were predominantly EU nationals.

It therefore seems that homelessness services - both services providers and the DRHE - coming into contact with people experiencing homelessness may not know what to look out for and not ask questions that could identify victims of trafficking. This could lead to potential victims being missed and not receiving specialist support.

It is also recognised that there may be people who are seeking international protection but who are not staying in IPAS accommodation - for example, who may be squatting, or sleeping rough, either due to not choosing to stay in IPAS provision, or through having been excluded from IPAS accommodation. If they are not connected with homelessness services because of their engagement with international protection routes, then potential victims of trafficking in this category may also be missed.

Those who are living in IPAS accommodation and who have nowhere else to go, may well be considered homeless, although are unlikely to come into contact with homelessness organisations and would not be registered as homeless through the DRHE. Similarly, those who have no legal residence in Ireland but are not seeking international protection and who are referred to the NRM as it currently operates, may be given 60 days of accommodation within IPAS and will also therefore not be registered as homeless with the DRHE.

Providing support

When discussing how participants in the focus group would go about providing support to victims of trafficking, they acknowledged that it is difficult to refer someone to a specialist service unless they are able to get to the stage where the potential victim is able to talk about what they experienced and the professional is confident in their suspicion that they experienced a form of trafficking. This takes time and trust.

All participants in the focus group and in individual interviews were aware of the AGS referral route for reporting victims of trafficking. The AGS are currently the only body who can formally identify victims of trafficking, but it was recognised that some people who have experienced trafficking may not want to cooperate with formal criminal investigations for a variety of reasons, including fear of threats from traffickers or distrust of authorities.

Two survey respondents mentioned having awareness of the Health Service Executive (HSE) Anti-Trafficking Team, who provide support to anyone identified as a victim of trafficking by the AGS. The HSE reported that they do have occasional contact with homelessness organisations who might get in touch with them for advice about someone experiencing homelessness who might have been trafficked, in particular, migrant women.

Focus group participants felt that it would be important to understand the processes and options, not only to know what to do when working with a potential victim, but also to be able to provide appropriate information to the service user so they can give informed consent for the next steps. This was recognised to be important in helping the person to feel safer and make their own decisions.

“Knowledge is power.”

It was noted that there can sometimes be a feeling that people experiencing homelessness might get passed around from agency to agency, denied a service and referred on to other services. This can be difficult for them (as well as for referral agencies). This conversation revealed the need for organisations to have strong partnerships and confidence in referral pathways to support victims of trafficking.

Overall, there was mixed knowledge about referral processes, which organisations do what, and how a comprehensive support structure for victims of trafficking should work, particularly for those who did not wish to undergo a criminal investigation.

The role of the migration sector

Organisations working in the migration sector were spoken to as part of this project, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the service landscape that provides support to victims of trafficking. There is an informal network of migration and refugee organisations that support migrants who have experienced trafficking while they are living within IPAS accommodation or elsewhere, including with legal advice, support with immigration status, and holistic integration, such as accessing educational opportunities. Organisations spoken to as part of this project reported that they predominantly get referrals from healthcare and social workers, but not from homelessness organisations. Within the migration sector, there is a range of training and guidance around identifying and supporting victims of human trafficking.

Irish Nationals

Kevin Hyland, who was the UK’s first Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, is the Global Strategic Director for The Santa Marta Group and also Ireland’s representative on the Council of Europe was also interviewed.

One of the areas Mr Hyland raised was that Irish nationals are also victims of human trafficking. The Department of Justice’s 2022 report showed that Irish nationals were the 6th highest recorded nationality when looking at recorded data for 2021. There may be a tendency to view human trafficking as a crime that only impacts on those from another country, which could lead to Irish nationals who maybe victims of human trafficking being missed.

It is noteworthy the UK’s 2022 NRM [1] recorded 11 Irish nationals identified as potential victims of human trafficking, with a further ten potential victims of dual Irish nationality:

<u>Nationality</u>	<u>Type of exploitation</u>
1 Bangladeshi Irish	Criminal exploitation (child)
1 Ghanaian Irish	Unspecified type of exploitation (child)
11 Irish	Criminal exploitation (8, including 6 children), domestic servitude and criminal exploitation combined (1 child), labour exploitation (1), child sexual exploitation (1)
8 Irish UK	4 criminal exploitations (children), 1 labour, 3 labour and criminal (including 2 children)

This shows that the majority of people with Irish or dual Irish nationality exploited in the UK last year were minors (16 minors or 76%), from which 11 (69%) were forced into criminal exploitation.

Therefore, further research should also consider the scale of Irish nationals experiencing human trafficking in Ireland and more awareness raising that Irish nationals may well be victims of human trafficking should be promoted.

Collaborative working

Mr Hyland also discussed the need to work collaboratively, across sectors and Government Departments to address the issue of human trafficking. At the time of writing, there are several changes being considered in which victims of trafficking are supported, not least the amendments to the NRM.

[1] [Modern Slavery: NRM and Duty to Notify Statistics UK, end of year summary 2022](#), Home Office, 2023.

Case studies

Case Study 1 – Dublin

One homelessness organisation in Dublin had worked with a woman who was originally from an African country. She had been placed in single-sex homelessness accommodation through the CPS. After having stayed with the organisation for a while, she reported having been kidnapped from her village and forced into prostitution. The experiences that she disclosed having had in the past to her support staff were hugely traumatic, and she alluded to having had more experiences that she could not speak about, all of which had a significantly negative impact on her mental health. This was one of the first times the organisation realised they might be coming into contact with people who had been victims of trafficking but did not have knowledge about the indicators of trafficking, the support pathways available or ways to approach these topics with people in their services.

Case Study 2 - London

Since 2018, The Passage identified and supported five Irish nationals who have been victims of trafficking. These were four males and one female, who were between 25 and 49 years old. Three of them experienced mental health issues as a result of the exploitation.

Three of these were cases of labour exploitation (agriculture), and 1 was a case of labour exploitation (agriculture and construction in private houses) and forced marriage. The final case was of historic child slavery for forced criminality (forced begging) and domestic servitude which later also resulted in forced marriage. Four of the five were rough sleeping at the time of recruitment and one was living with their family when exploitation started, but they all became homeless as a result of their exploitation.

The Passage was able to support these people in various ways; three people were placed in temporary accommodation, including a safehouse, hostel and a refuge for victims of domestic violence, and one person entered the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) to receive government support.

One example of The Passage's work with Irish nationals who have been victims of trafficking is Peter. Peter grew up in an abusive household. When he was old enough, he moved to London to find work and after a period of rough sleeping was offered a job by a family.

This family kept him captive for over 20 years. He was forced to do hard manual labour without pay and suffered physical assaults, threats, and emotional abuse. They used numerous violent methods to prevent him from leaving. After becoming injured, Peter was unable to work and became useless to the family. One day they abandoned Peter and left him homeless and alone.

When Peter arrived at The Passage, he was terrified, anxious and suffering from complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. He was identified as a potential victim of human trafficking. The Passage Human Trafficking Service supported him to enter the NRM and he went to a safe house.

However, Peter disengaged from the NRM and went in search of some family members. He found them and spent many happy months living with them. He got a dog and was about to start college. He finally felt like his life was coming together. Unfortunately, he couldn't stay with the family indefinitely, and he returned to The Passage for help.

Peter was in a bad way; he had recently lost someone close to him and found himself homeless again. He was having numerous hospital admissions, was anxious, depressed, and suicidal. The Passage supported him into temporary accommodation whilst they worked on a housing application with a local authority. After a lot of setbacks and hurdles, Peter was finally offered temporary accommodation in the town near his family. He was supported to the new accommodation by staff and the change in him when he arrived there was instant.

Peter now has his own tenancy where he can keep his dog. He enjoys daily walks on the beach and has joined the local gym. Peter has bought a smartphone and is now in regular contact with his family overseas, he is making plans to go and visit them for the first time in many years. Peter also plans to go to college to learn to read and write.

Peter told The Passage staff:

"You are my guardian angels. Thank you for believing in me and never giving up. You have changed my life, and I will never forget you. I couldn't have done it without you and The Passage has turned my life around. I finally feel like myself again."

Conclusions

Through the survey and the discussions with the homelessness sector, it has been identified that homelessness organisations come into contact with potential victims of trafficking. This seems to initially be in small numbers. But a key finding is that there is an awareness and data gap, meaning that it is not possible to identify the scale of the issue.

Much of the discussions focused on trafficking in the context of foreign nationals, and it is therefore not clear whether homelessness organisations are encountering Irish nationals or people with residence in Ireland who have been trafficked. With the knowledge from previous research that trafficking in Ireland takes place in a range of ways and labour settings, and that the official records of victims are likely to be underestimated, it is highly likely that homelessness organisations are meeting with more victims than they know.

Indeed, it appears that knowledge and understanding about the forms of trafficking and exploitation and how and where it can take place are limited, which has an impact on how effectively homelessness organisations are able to identify potential victims.

It is also not clear whether the potential victims of trafficking encountered by homelessness organisations were homeless before or post being trafficked and were targeted because of their vulnerability. More detailed research in consequence to this initial evaluation would be extremely beneficial in further understanding the ways in which people who experience homelessness in Dublin, also experience trafficking.

Overall, there seems to be an absence of training, policies and procedures within organisations which means that staff are not equipped to look out for the signs that someone may have been trafficked, or to confidently communicate with victims, with partners or internally when there is a suspicion that someone may have been trafficked.

Everyone was aware of trafficking as a crime, and there was more awareness of trafficking as something that can be experienced by migrants and women, particularly in sexual exploitation. However, there was a lack of awareness about the possibility for men to be trafficked, and Irish nationals were not seen as potential victims either. Participants were aware of the role of the AGS in reporting processes, but there appeared to be a lack of comprehensive knowledge about the referral pathways to provide clear support for potential victims.

Recommendations

1

Training and awareness raising for homelessness staff

Homelessness organisations - both in the statutory and voluntary sectors - should ensure that adequate training on human trafficking, including on how to spot the signs, how to report it and what support to offer, is a key part of induction and staff development programmes. As part of organisations' continued development, homelessness organisations should keep up-to-date with changes to legislation and best practice in working with victims of human trafficking and ensure that their assessment tools enable staff members or volunteers to identify potential victims of human trafficking and how to refer them for appropriate support. This reflects Action 1.1 from the Third National Action Plan.

2

Improve information recording

Information recording on PASS or any other independent information management system used by homelessness organisations should include fields that record details on whether a person is suspected of having been trafficked, including when this took place and how the victim was supported. Systems should be consistent between regions in the sets of data collected in order to facilitate comparison and analysis. The latest National Action Plan, Action 4.8.2 also considers how best to collect and utilise data from across vulnerable groups identified to be at risk of human trafficking.

3

Produce an online Human Trafficking Toolkit for the homelessness sector

This should include a directory of services, an anti-trafficking handbook, assessment tools, guidance, templates of joint working protocols and referral pathways, all of which can be publicised for homelessness organisations. This would contribute to Action 1.2 of the National Action Plan: "Disseminate information to raise awareness of the indicators of human trafficking to facilitate the identification of victims", "including the development of information for 'hard-to-reach' victims and communities".

4

Further research to understand the scope and scale of victims of human trafficking experiencing homelessness

Recognising the limitations of this initial piece of work, further areas for research have been identified. It would be useful to understand the picture regarding homelessness and human trafficking across the Republic of Ireland beyond the Dublin city region. Further research could also consider more accurately examining the numbers of people who experience both homelessness and human trafficking, and how these are experienced (for example, the extent to which people who experience homelessness are targeted by traffickers because of their lack of stable accommodation).

5

Develop specialist accommodation options

It is noted from different stakeholders that there is currently a lack of specialist accommodation to support victims of trafficking, and The Passage echoes the calls to develop appropriate and trauma-informed accommodation options for victims. It is welcome that Depaul Ireland is starting to play a key role in this area with the opening of Rosa's Place, a dedicated provision for women who have experienced trafficking, but further options that sit outside of the current IPAS provision should also be explored.

6

Develop a more multi-agency approach

At the time of writing, there are a number of changes being discussed to the ways in which victims of trafficking are supported, not least the amendments to the NRM. The Passage is a strong advocate of multi-agency partnerships that empower statutory authorities, the police, trafficking organisations, homelessness charities, local communities, people with lived experience and other interested parties to work together to ensure cohesive, joined-up approaches to tackling human trafficking.

We support work being put into creating wider systemic change to ensure that victims of trafficking are identified effectively, and traffickers are prosecuted for the crimes they commit, and it would be helpful to explore how improved cross sector working could be achieved and ideas shared to achieve greater collaborative working.

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The Passage Modern Slavery Service

The Passage is the first and only organisation in the homelessness sector to recruit a dedicated Anti-Slavery Team, providing support to survivors of modern slavery who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Westminster.

We offer holistic support including primary services, signposting to First Responders, respite accommodation (if suitable), health and mental health support and care until the survivor receives government support within the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract. To support other charities and local authorities to create their own Modern Slavery Support Service, we have created a Modern Slavery Toolkit.

Since launching our Modern Slavery Service in 2018, over 200 survivors have been identified and supported, with 33% entering UK's victim support programme, 53% accessing temporary or permanent accommodation and 11% being assisted to return to their country of origin.

For more information, please read our latest Modern Slavery Service Report at: <https://passage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Modern-Slavery-Service-Report-2022.23.pdf>



To speak with The Passage's Modern Slavery Support Service, please contact:
modernslavery@passage.org.uk.

To view and download The Passage's online Modern Slavery Toolkit please visit:
www.passage.org.uk/get-informed/modern-slavery-and-homelessness/toolkit/

For further information about The Passage and our work, please visit our website:
www.passage.org.uk or follow us on social media: [@PassageCharity](https://www.instagram.com/PassageCharity)



The Passage is grateful to Depaul Ireland for facilitating and supporting this report.

Depaul is a leading charity operating across the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland supporting some of the most marginalised individuals, couples and families experiencing homelessness. We provide support across five key areas of homelessness: Prevention, Families and Young People, High Support Accommodation, Health and Rehabilitation.

To know more about Depaul Ireland, please visit:

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