



# Youth Homelessness and Prevention Measures



An Ghníomhaireacht  
Tithíochta  
The Housing Agency

# Workshop Overview

Topic	Speaker
Introduction	Patrick McCarthy (The Housing Agency)
Overview of Current Homeless Prevention Landscape	Gráinne Carew (DHLGH)
Homeless Prevention Typologies & Upstreaming (Upstream Cymru)	Andrew Guy (The Housing Agency)
Youth Mediation Service – Focus Ireland	Neil Forsyth (Focus Ireland)
Supported Housing for Youth (SHY)	Bevin Herbert (Dublin City Council)
Workshop Discussion	



# Workshop

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## Workshop Questions

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1. What are the potential benefits of a service like youth mediation for you or the organisation you work for in preventing homelessness?
2. Would “Upstreaming” be effective in preventing homelessness in Ireland for young people and if so, how could it be implemented?
3. In addition to the projects outlined today, are there any other projects or initiatives nationally or internationally that you are aware of that could be effective in preventing youth homelessness?





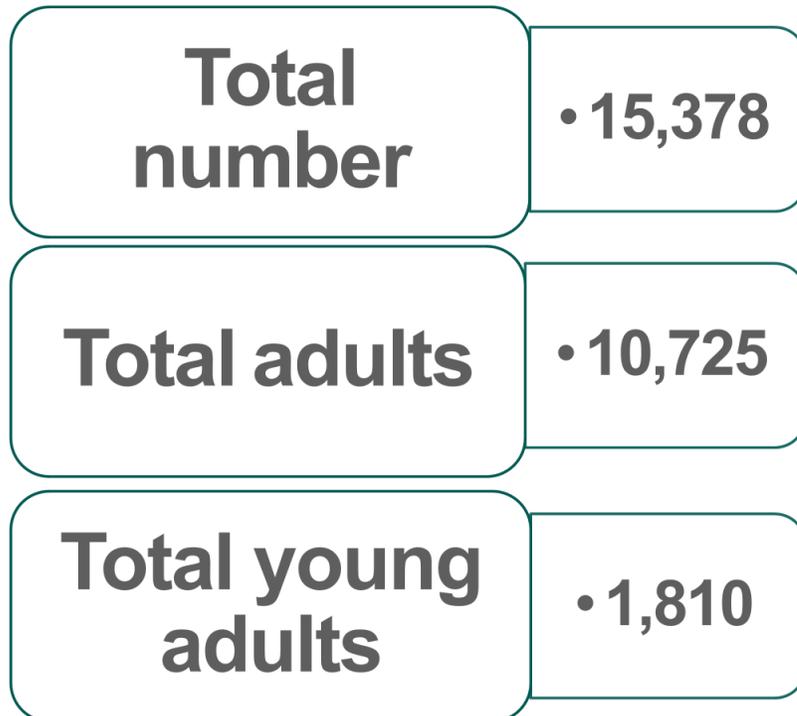
An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage

# Youth Homelessness Prevention

Homelessness Policy, Funding and Delivery

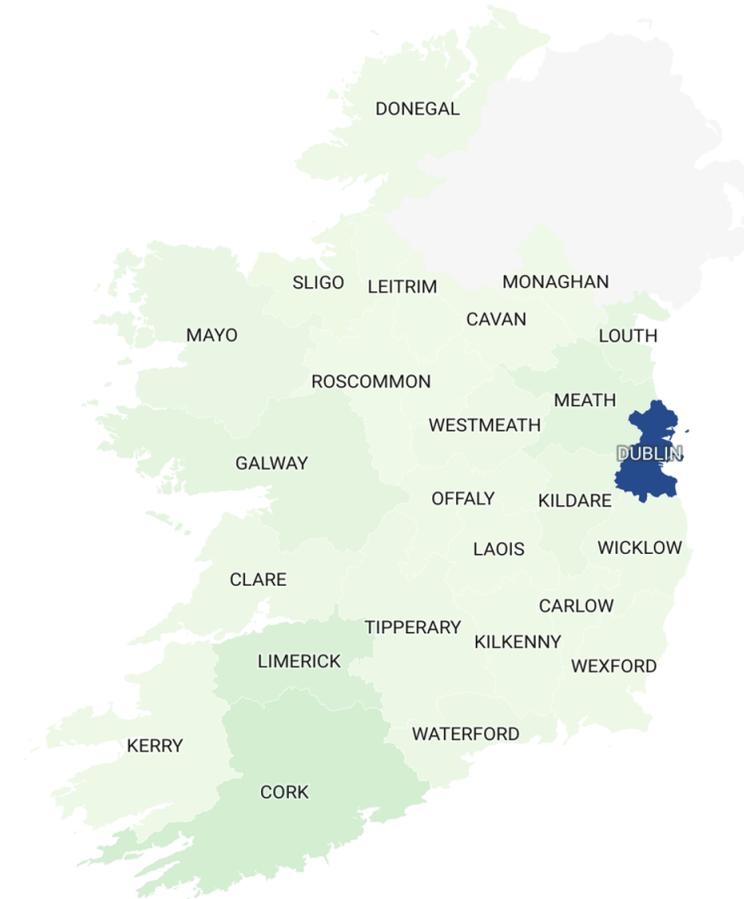
10 April 2025

# Numbers currently accessing emergency accommodation



## Adults in Emergency Accommodation

17-23 February Adults in Emergency Accommodation

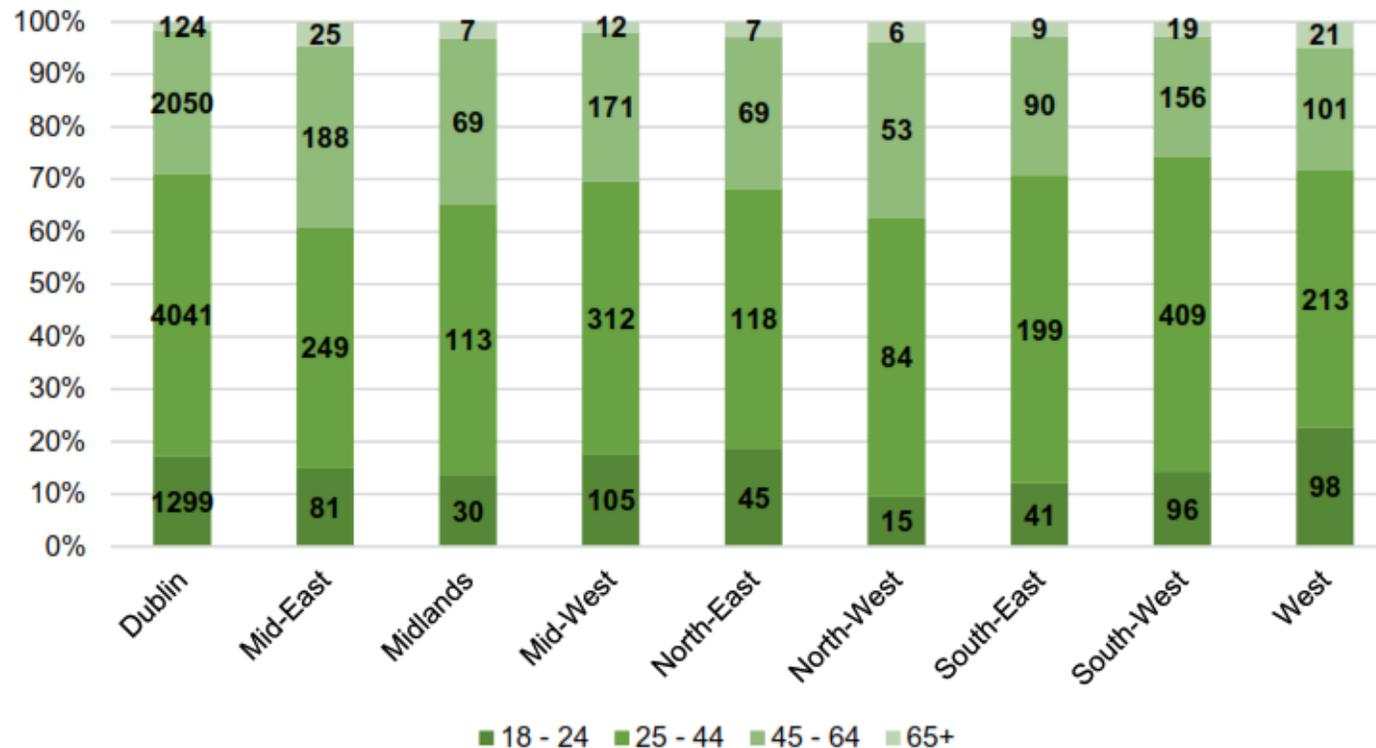


Map: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage • Source: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage • Created with Datawrapper

# Numbers currently accessing EA by age band and region



Adults in emergency accommodation by age band and region



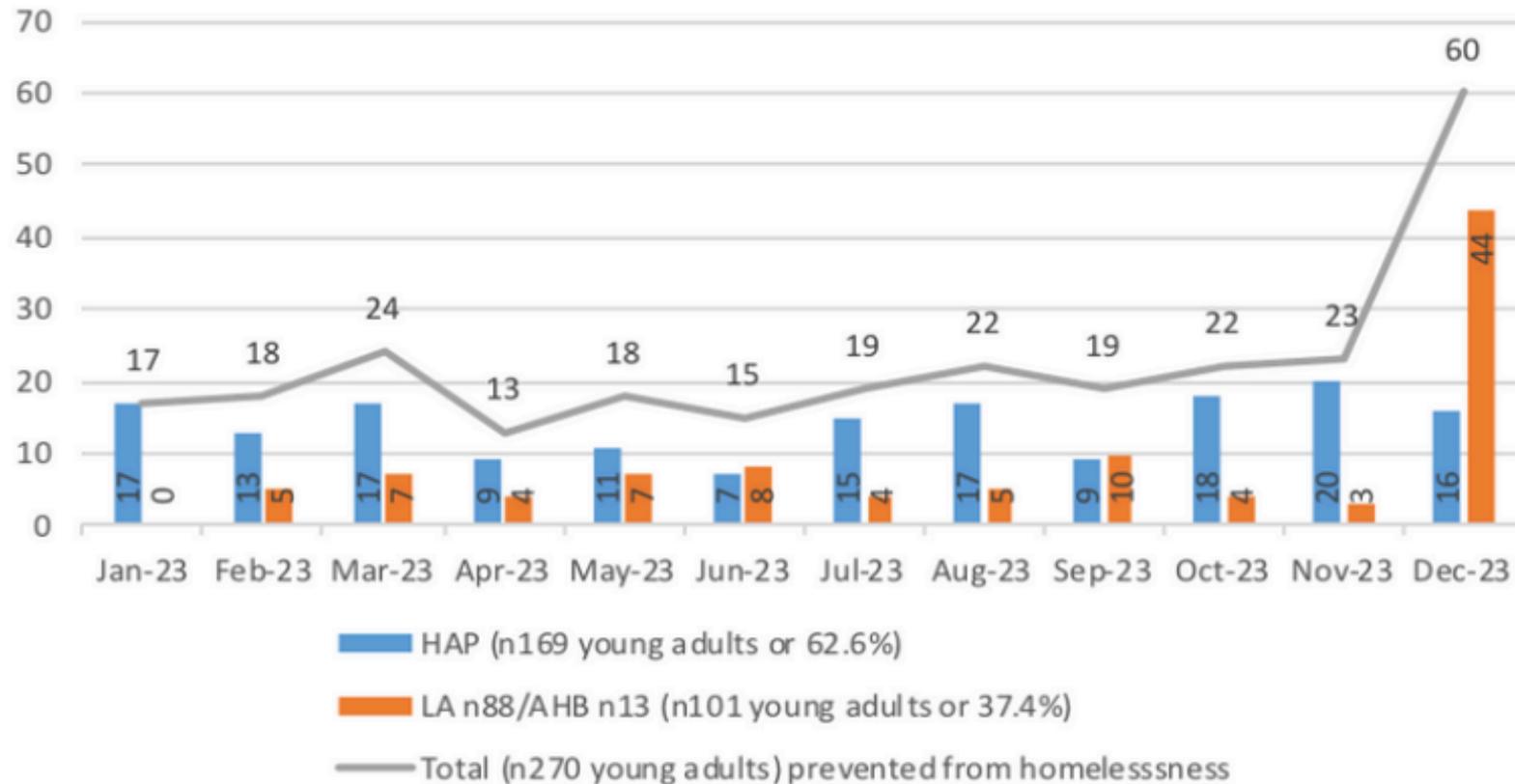
# Exits and Preventions



Adults exiting emergency accommodation		
	2023	2024
Local authority lettings	976 (34.7%)	1,251 (36.9%)
AHB lettings / Long-Term Supported Accommodation (LTSA)	974 (34.6%)	1,319 (39%)
Private rented HAP	865 (30.7%)	814 (24.1%)
	2,815	3,384

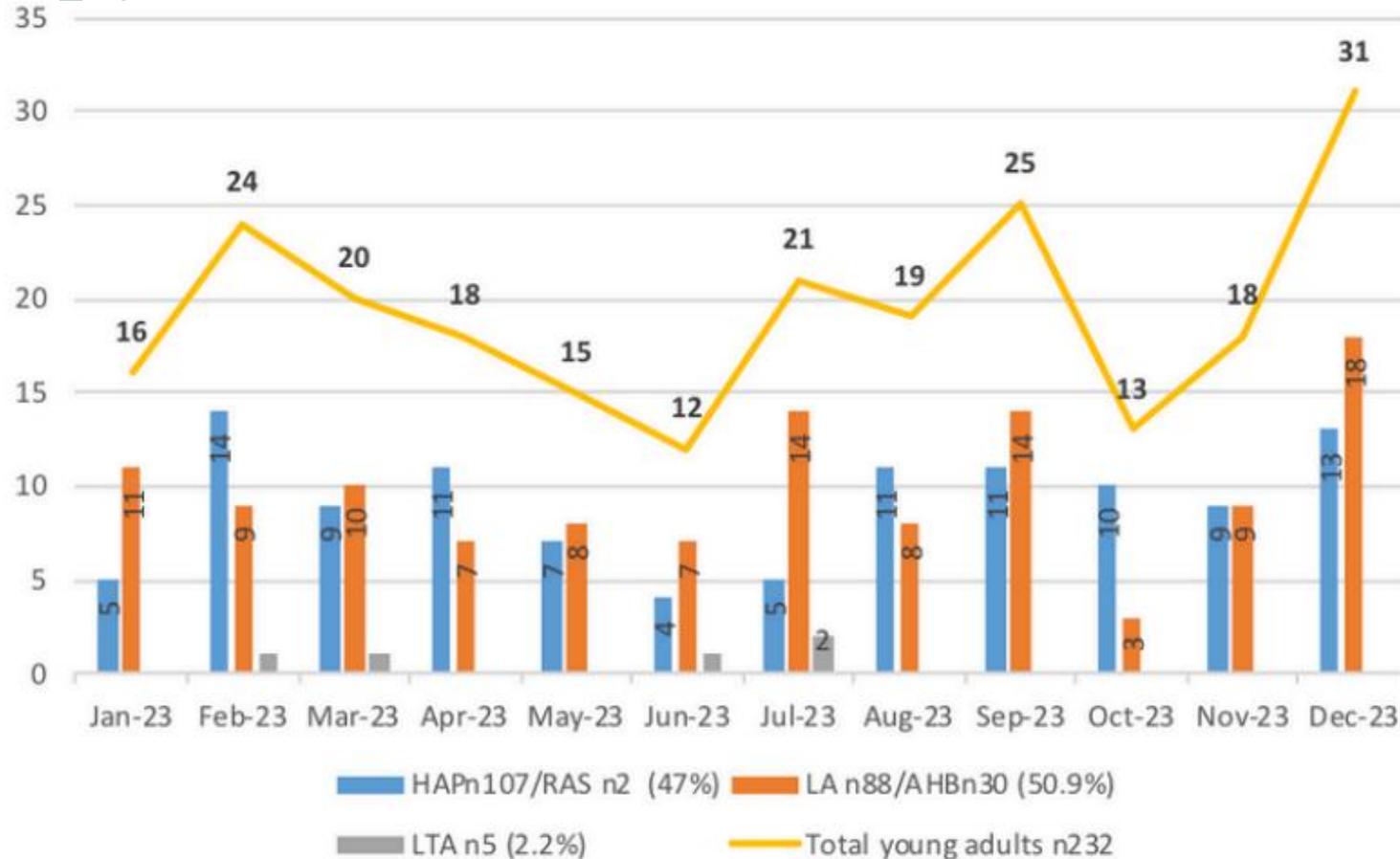
Adults prevented from entering emergency accommodation		
	2023	2024
Local authority lettings	1,449 (35.9%)	679 (12.4%)
LA Tenant in Situ (TiS) Acquisitions	N/A	1,676 (30.4%)
AHB lettings / Long-Term Supported Accommodation (LTSA)	569 (14.1%)	734 (13.3%)
Private rented HAP	2,015 (50%)	2,420 (43.9%)
	4,033	5,509

# 18-24 year-olds prevented from entering homelessness, 2023



*Youth Homelessness in the Dublin Region, 2023 Pathie Maphosa, Paula Mayock*

# 18-24 year-olds exiting EA to a tenancy, 2023

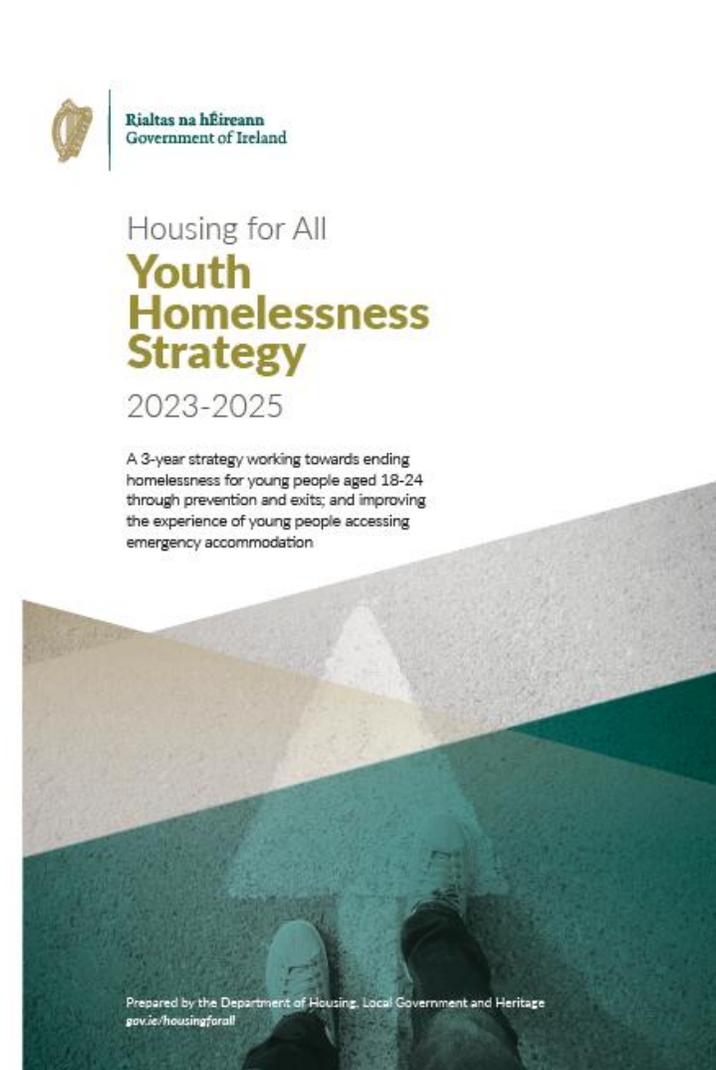


*Youth Homelessness in the Dublin Region, 2023 Pathie Maphosa, Paula Mayock*

# Background to the YHS

- **Published November 2022**
  - **3-year Strategy**
  - **3 strategic aims**
  - **27 actions**
  
- **Overarching aim: to help young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.**

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/69597-youth-homelessness-strategy/>



# Vulnerable cohorts



- Care leavers;
- People with disabilities;
- Young parents, especially those parenting alone;
- Members of the Traveller community;
- Members of the LGBTI+ community;
- Individuals leaving prison services

# Three Strategic Aims



1. To prevent young people from entering homelessness
2. To improve the experiences of young people in accessing emergency accommodation
3. To assist young people in exiting homelessness

# Strategic Aim 1: To prevent young people from entering homelessness



- ✓ **Information Campaigns (Action 1)**
- ✓ **Establishment of an Early Intervention and Prevention subgroup ( Action 2 & 4)**
- ✓ **Updated Housing Circular 46/2014 on the Protocol on Young People Leaving State Care due to be published Q2-24 (Action 7)**

# What's next?



## New Programme for Government commits to;

- *the full implementation of the Youth Homelessness Strategy*
- *A holistic and cross departmental approach to homeless prevention*



# Thank you.

## Any questions?

**[grainne.carew@housing.gov.ie](mailto:grainne.carew@housing.gov.ie)**

**<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/69597-youth-homelessness-strategy/>**



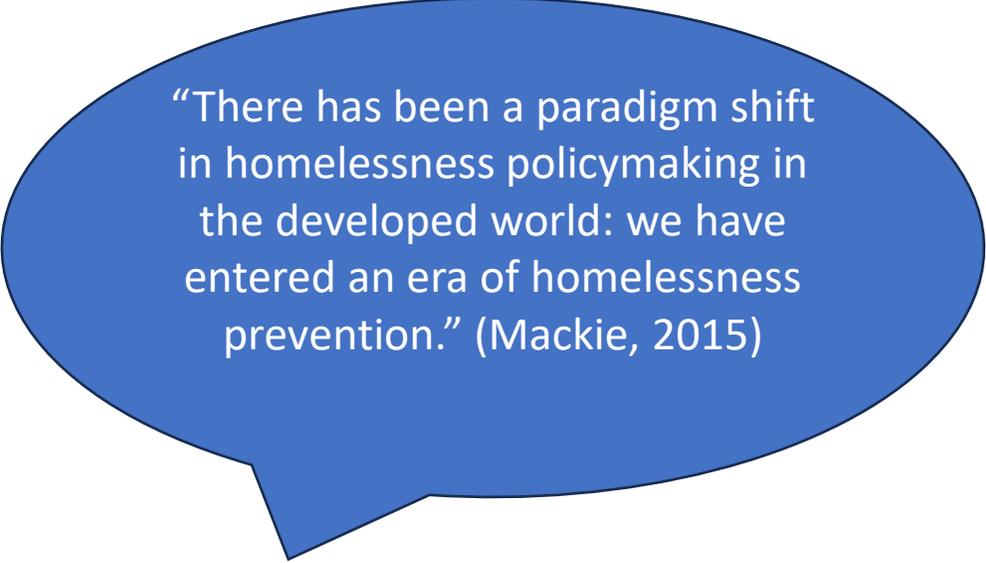
# Homelessness Prevention



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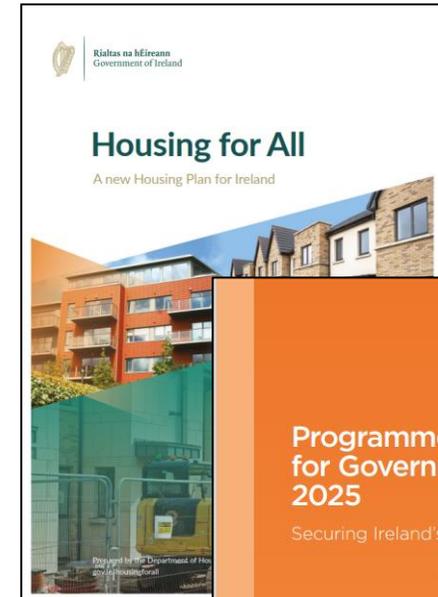
# Homelessness Prevention

- “Homelessness prevention refers to policies, practices, and interventions that reduce the likelihood that someone will experience homelessness.”
- “It also means providing those who have been homeless with the necessary resources and supports to stabilize their housing, enhance integration and social inclusion, and ultimately reduce the risk of the recurrence of homelessness.” (COH)



“There has been a paradigm shift in homelessness policymaking in the developed world: we have entered an era of homelessness prevention.” (Mackie, 2015)

# Homelessness Prevention Timeline



# Prevention Typologies – Public Health Model

## 1. Primary prevention

Refers to structural-level initiatives that apply to everyone, in order to reduce the risk of homelessness and build protective factors.

An example of this in Ireland would be the State's efforts to increase the supply of social and affordable housing.

## 2. Secondary prevention

Intervention strategies aimed at those who are at imminent risk of homelessness as well as those who have recently become homeless. The aim of secondary prevention is to avoid homelessness or move out of homelessness as quickly as possible.

Examples of this in Ireland would be supports available through Homeless HAP and Homeless HAP Place Finder Service.

## 3. Tertiary prevention

Initiatives that support individuals and families who have previously experienced homelessness to ensure that they do not experience it again.

An example of this in Ireland would be Housing First.

# Prevention Typologies

	Gaetz & DeJ (2017)	Mackie, Fitzpatrick & Wood (2017)
Types of Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Structural Prevention</li><li>- Systems Prevention</li><li>- Early Intervention</li><li>- Eviction Prevention</li><li>- Housing Stability</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Universal Prevention</li><li>- Targeted Prevention</li><li>- Crisis Prevention</li><li>- Emergency Prevention</li><li>- Recovery Prevention</li></ul>
Used by:	Canada	UK and other European Countries



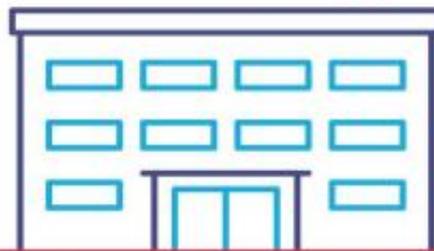
## 1. UNIVERSAL PREVENTION

Preventing or minimising youth homelessness risks across the population at large, *e.g. provision of sufficient affordable housing for young people.*



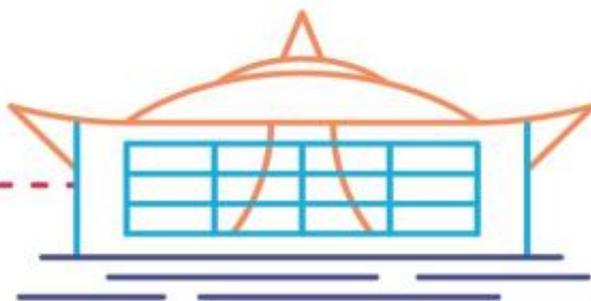
## 2. TARGETED PREVENTION

Upstream prevention focussed on high risk groups, such as vulnerable young people, and risky transitions, such as leaving prison *e.g. transition pathways from care to sustainable housing*



## 3. CRISIS PREVENTION

Preventing homelessness likely to occur within 56 days, in line with Welsh legislation which asks local authorities to intervene to help households threatened with homelessness *e.g. family mediation*



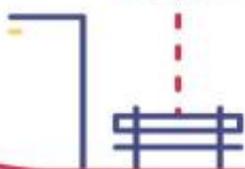
## 5. RECOVERY PREVENTION

Prevention of repeat homelessness – sofa surfing and rough sleeping *e.g. Housing First for Youth*



## 4. EMERGENCY PREVENTION

Support for those at immediate risk of homelessness, especially those young people sleeping rough *e.g. community hosting*





# Upstream Cymru



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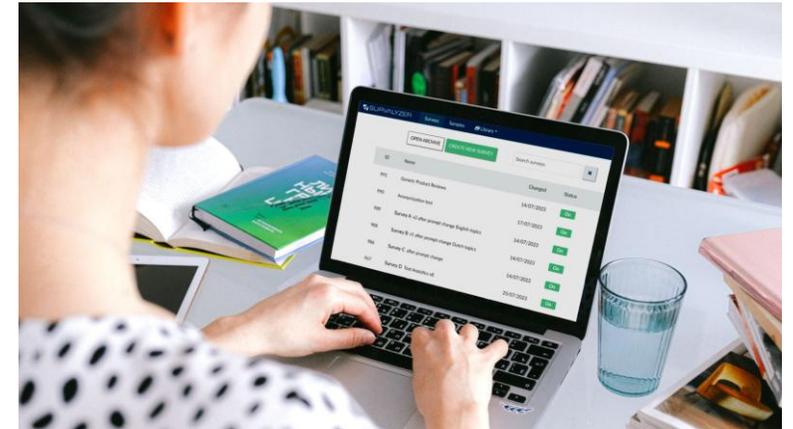
# Upstream Cymru

- End Youth homelessness Cymru launched in 2017
- 10 year plan to end youth homelessness by 2027
- Cross sector and cross organisational. Coalition is made up from a wide range of stakeholders, youth work, education, social work, housing, police etc.
- 4 key pillars
  - Partnership Building
  - Amplify Youth Voice
  - Research
  - Champion Innovation and Best Practice



# Upstream Cymru

Led by the charity Llamau in partnership with Cardiff University, Upstream Cymru is a school-based intervention programme, where young people complete a survey that identifies risk of homelessness, particularly as a result of family relationship breakdown, and support is then offered to the young people and their families.



# Background

- Upstream Cymru is based on established prevention programmes in Australia, Canada and USA. These programmes work to establish an effective method of identifying young people at risk of family breakdown at an earlier point, before they reach crisis.
- The Australian Geelong pilot saw a reduction by 40% in presentations of youth homelessness and also established that 65% of young people identified through the programmes were not previously known to be in need of support.
- *“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in”*

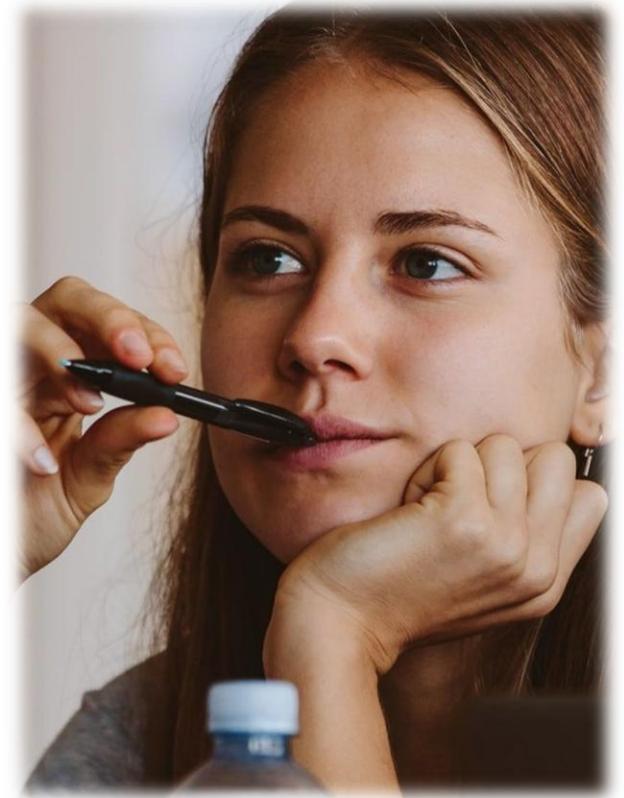


# Upstream Process

**Online survey:** All students complete a wellbeing survey to flag early risks (e.g., family breakdown, school disengagement, mental health challenges).

**Data analysis:** The information is used to identify young people at risk.

**Tailored supports:** Early, targeted help is provided through education, family support, and community services, preventing the situation from escalating into homelessness.



# Upstream Supports

- **Family Mediation Workers:** The aim of this service is to promote resilience within the family, building on their existing communication skills and equipping families with ability to overcome conflict without the need for further intervention.
- **Emphasis Workers:** Working intensively with young people at risk of disengaging from education, work or positive community activities. Emphasis staff work with young people to identify the unique barriers they face to reaching their potential.



# Upstream Cymru Reach

- 11 schools in Wales – 11,716 pupils
- Since its launch 3,822 surveys have been facilitated
- In 2022-23 Upstream data was used to identify 149 pupils at risk of homelessness and supported 107 families
- 65% of these pupils were not previously known to support agencies



# Teacher Feedback

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**"It enables the school to look at Wellbeing issues affecting the whole school, year groups or individuals"**

*Deputy Head Cardiff*

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**"It's free, simple and can be carried out in whole year group"**

*Deputy Head Cardiff*

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**'I have to say, they are so professional, I just see them as part of the pastoral team'**

*Head of Year, Caerphilly*

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**'The family are different after the mediation, you change lives'**

*Assistant Head Cardiff*



**Focus Ireland**  
**Youth Mediation Service**

**Youth Homeless Workshop - Housing Agency Conference 2025**

**Neil Forsyth**

# What is Mediation?

- The word "mediation" originates from the Latin word "mediāre," meaning "to be in the middle" or "to intercede."
- Mediation is a method of resolving disputes through the involvement of an independent third party – the mediator.
- A confidential, facilitative and voluntary process in which parties to a dispute, with the assistance of a qualified mediator, attempt to reach a mutually acceptable agreement to resolve the dispute.
- The mediator helps parties to work out what issues are at the root of their conflict and what their options are to resolve the conflict, this forming the basis of agreement.
- The mediator does not take sides or make judgements during the process. They simply guide the process towards understanding and mutual agreement.

# Outline of Youth Mediation Service

- Focus Ireland has been operating a mediation service in Dublin on behalf of Tusla since 2017.
- Three full-time mediators: one funded by Tusla in Dublin Mid-Leinster and two funded by Focus Ireland, the latter taking referrals from across all Dublin CHO Areas.
- The service is a prevention/early intervention project aimed at young people aged between 12 and 18 years of age.
- Targeted at young people and families or young people and their care-givers whose relationships have broken down and the young people are deemed to be on the “edge of care” and/or at risk of homelessness.
- The service also works with young people who are already in care placements/youth homeless services but their placements are at-risk of breaking down.

# Rationale for Youth Mediation Service

- Research: Mayock, Parker & Young (2014) identified family conflict and arguments with primary carers as key factors leading young people to moving “in and out” of home and ultimately accessing homeless services.<sup>1</sup>
- Family conflict remains one of the main causes of youth homelessness – DRHE research found the main driver of homelessness for all young people was relationship breakdown with a parent at 27.8%, which increases to 36.5% when conflict with other family members, partners and family circumstances is included.
- Internationally: Geelong Project (Upstream Australia), Upstream Wales, Upstream Canada.
- Cost effective early intervention/prevention measure – increasingly recognized as effective tool to keep at-risk young people in family home, thus reducing risk of entering care or homelessness (FEANTSA, 2021).<sup>2</sup>

# Model of Youth Mediation Service

- The model or style of mediation used by Focus Ireland's mediation service is called facilitative mediation.
- In facilitative mediation, a mediator's goal is to create an environment where both sides of a dispute can speak openly about what they agree on and where they disagree, and then bridge the gap through direct communication, with the mediator acting as a facilitator.
- Facilitative mediation is based on the idea that by understanding each others perspective, the participants will make compromises to resolve the dispute through a mutually beneficial resolution.
- In short, facilitative mediation depends on direct compromise.

# Benefits of Mediation as an Intervention

- Brings stability to families who are struggling
- Young people who remain at home and in community have better chance of making a successful transition to adulthood
- Service is offered within the family home
- Emphasis not on 'fixing' young person or family but supporting them to find solutions
- Mediators are seen as less of a 'threat' compared to other services
- Helps young people and families to develop skills – communication, listening, compromise
- Empowers young people and families – resilience/ability to face future conflict

# Is Mediation Effective?

- In 2024, the service worked with 94 cases.
- In 56 cases, young people remained at home, 3 returned home, 1 young person moved to live with another family member, 1 was taken into care.
- 10 cases from 2024 are still ongoing.
- In 33 cases, mediation process did not conclude – not suitable, non-engagement or disengagement.
- We need more evidence of the effectiveness of mediation and other early intervention and prevention strategies.
- Despite the emphasis on prevention and early intervention, the implementation, scaling-up and funding are lacking.<sup>3</sup>

# Challenges for Mediation Service

- Lack of understanding of mediation among stakeholders.
- Complexity of cases.
- Length of time – many cases take much longer than expected.
- Non-engagement or sporadic engagement.
- Long waiting list for the service.
- Prevention, early intervention or crisis intervention?
- Difficulty recruiting suitable staff.
- Lack of other supports for families.

# What Participants Say

- “I was so glad that the [name of mediator] you felt like you say anything to her. So, in that way, it was so good that she had such an openness or an awareness or an easy approach that, erm, you didn’t know what you were expecting but you felt listened to and you felt heard and you felt that you were going to get somewhere. Yeah” [Mother]
- “Do you want me actually to pretend like I’m talking to a friend? [Interviewer: Yeah!] Dude you gotta f\*cking try this, this actually works, f\*ck [name of state service], f\*ck all that shit, this works [mediation service], this actually makes life better, this is not a f\*cking waste of time. [Did you think this was a waste of time at first?] Yes. But I quickly realised it wasn’t a waste of time.” [Young Person]
- “That there were a 100 [name of mediator] to be able to go around to houses in crisis and help. Like, I am not joking, that women had a profound effect on my life, she really did... out of all the professionals I ever met - she [mediator] was the most professional in the sense that she didn’t come into our house like a professional, and I think that’s the best way someone like her should.” [Mother]



**Thank You.**

# Supported Housing for Youth (SHY)

Bevin Herbert

*Senior Executive Officer*  
Dublin Region Homeless Executive

10<sup>th</sup> April 2025

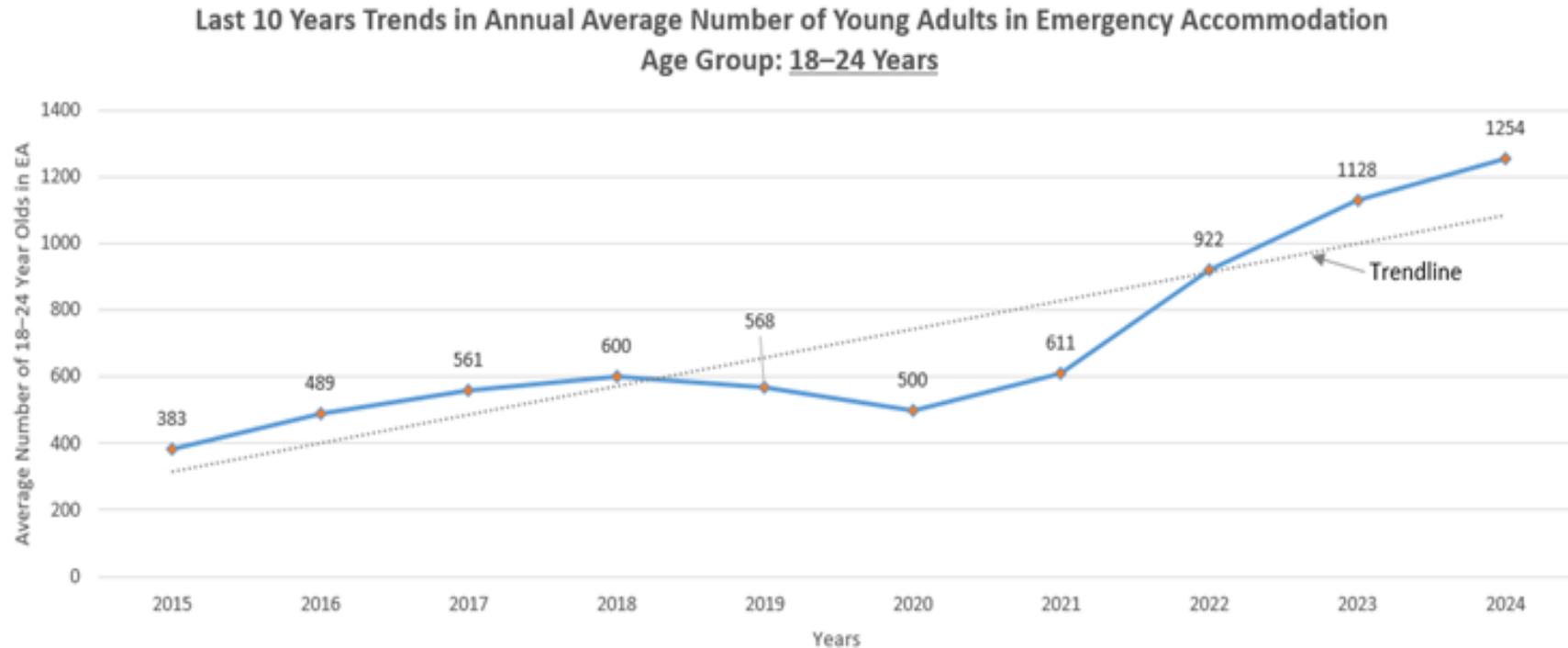


# Background

- Housing for All – Youth Homelessness Strategy 2023 - 2025
- Sets out 27 key actions to prevent youth homelessness; improve the experiences of young people accessing emergency accommodation; and assist young people in exiting homelessness.
- A Steering Group, comprising representatives from organisations with a role in addressing youth homelessness, was established in January 2023 to drive the delivery of all actions.
- One of the main actions in the Strategy (Action 22) is to develop a pilot of a housing-led intervention for young people, Supported Housing for Youth (SHY). This intervention is aimed at those aged 18-24 at risk of homelessness / experiencing homelessness and who require additional supports to maintain a tenancy
- The DRHE was chosen to undertake the pilot

# Context

## Youth Homelessness in the Dublin Region





# Context

## Youth Homelessness in the Dublin Region

- Between 2015 – 2023, 195% increase in the average number of youths accessing EA in Dublin Region\*
  - In 2023, 18% of total adult population, in 2025 (February), 17.3% of total adult population
  - Gender analysis – 64.4% male / 35.6% female
  - Citizenship – Irish (57.1%), EU (16.7%), Non EU (25.8%), UK (.2%)
  - Two distinct groups – 1) those accessing EA with other family members (50.8%) and those accessing EA as single individuals (49.2%)

\*<https://www.homelessdublin.ie/content/files/Youth-Homelessness-in-the-Dublin-Region-2023.pdf?v=1740669531>



# Insights

## Reasons for Youth Homelessness, 2023 (singles)

- Reasons – all new singles (18-24)

Reason for Homelessness	Total	Reason as %
Relationship Breakdown - Parent	204	27.8%
Overcrowding	96	13.1%
Leaving Direct Provision	65	8.8%
Newly Arrived from Abroad <sup>7</sup> - Less than 6 months	46	6.3%
NOT <sup>8</sup> - Property to be Sold	42	5.7%
Family Reunification	36	4.9%
Leaving State Care Services	25	3.4%
Relationship Breakdown - Other Family Member	22	3.0%

- Reasons – new singles (18-19)

Reason for Homelessness: 18-19-year-olds	Total	%
Relationship Breakdown - Parent	30	33.7%
Leaving State Care Setting	18	20.2%
Newly Arrived in Ireland – Less than Six Months	9	10.1%
Overcrowding	8	9.0%
Leaving Direct Provision	7	7.9%

# Youth Homeless Preventions & Exits out of EA 2023



- Homeless Preventions 270
  - Through HAP 169
  - Social Housing 101
- Homeless Exits 232
  - Through HAP 107
  - Social Housing 120
  - LTA 5



# Pilot beginnings

- In October 2023, DRHE published an Expression of Interest seeking submissions from NGO's / AHB's interested in providing accommodation & support services for SHY
- Range of accommodation options, including shared accommodation & 1 bed units
- Appropriate supports
- Time limited participation in the programme, end goal – young person in a position to live independently
- Setting goals



# Who is it aimed at

- Vulnerable Cohort identified in the Strategy
  - Care leavers;
  - People with disabilities;
  - Young parents, especially those parenting alone;
  - Members of the Traveller community;
  - Members of the LGBTI+ community
  - Individuals leaving prison



# The Pilot – Key points

- Cluid & Focus – joint submission
- Supported housing for 20 young people with low to medium support needs across the 4 Dublin Local Authorities
- Cluid providing housing by agreement with LA's & tenancy management
- Focus Ireland providing case management & supports
- External Evaluation organised through the Housing Agency
- Steering Group for SHY set up
- Funded through Section 10 funding
- Oversight through agreed SLA process with DRHE
- Applicants accommodated under license agreement with Cluid
- Collaboration between Cluid and Focus with clear roles & responsibilities



# The Pilot – Key points

## Support principals

- Flexible – tailored to the client & client led
- Housing led approach
- Youth choice, self determination
- Positive Youth Development & wellness
- Social inclusion & community integration
- Assertive engagement without coercion
- Goal setting

## Placement Management

- Placements for 12 months & then reviewed
- License fee
- Bill payments
- Food & laundry
- Good neighbourhood policy – house rules
- House share arrangements
- Collaboration with client on purchase of soft furnishings

\*Respite Accommodation



# Management of Process

- Information day held for homeless service providers & relevant stakeholders
  - It was decided that for the pilot only those accessing EA would be eligible
- Comprehensive Referral form completed with applicant and referrer
  - All referrals were assessed using an agreed scoring criteria
  - Barthel Index used – an assessment of a person's daily living skills
- SHY panel evaluated all applications – DRHE rep, LA rep, Focus Ireland & Cluid reps, LA Social Worker / HSE rep



# Outcomes

- 87 referrals received
- 20 selected through panel meetings with relevant LA

LA Breakdown	
DCC	11
DLRCC	2
FCC	1
SDCC	6

- 8 – 1 beds & 6 – 2 beds
- Referrals & selections by gender

Female	29	8
Male	58	12



# Outcomes

- **Homeless Duration of young people**

- 0 – 3 years      15
- 3 – 5 years      5

- **Vulnerable Groups**

- Disabilities –one referral received - referred to TEA.
- Care Leaver – 4 young people have a care background in various settings.
- LGBTQI+ - 1 is a member of this group
- Travelling Community – 1 is a member of this group
- Prison Leaver – 1 has a history of prison but Young parent –
- 1 lone parent with access child



## Also worth noting

- Rough Sleeper – 1 of the confirmed has a history of rough sleeping. Well known to rough sleepers.
- Family – 2 of the females are sisters.
- There is a mix of clients who are working, studying or still seeking employment.
- There is also a mix of clients who present with various supports needs e.g.: drug use, mental health.
- Unintended consequences of the assessment and panel process – referrals to LTA, TEA, youth specific placements
  - Provided opportunity to link young people to a more appropriate placement / housing option



# Feedback

- Monthly review meetings DRHE, Cluid & Focus
  - In general feedback from both Focus and Cluid is very positive about the level of engagement with supports and move on options
  - Issue arose in one of the sharing arrangements but was managed very well through case conference and appropriate referral
  - Onward referrals when support needs identified
  - Non engagement – Focus & Cluid worked collaboratively to resolve
  - Housing led approach – work ongoing
  - Early engagement with young person reluctant to take up SHY offer



**ANY QUESTIONS?**

# Workshop

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## Workshop Questions

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1. What are the potential benefits of a service like youth mediation for you or the organisation you work for in preventing homelessness?
2. Would “Upstreaming” be effective in preventing homelessness in Ireland for young people and if so, how could it be implemented?
3. In addition to the projects outlined today, are there any other projects or initiatives nationally or internationally that you are aware of that could be effective in preventing youth homelessness?



# What's Next?

1pm → Return to the hotel lobby where hotel staff will direct you to lunch.

2pm → The afternoon sessions resume back in the Marina Suite.

**Enjoy your break!**

