



**Churches
in Ireland**
Connecting
in Christ

**Irish Inter-Church
Meeting**

Working Group

Questions for Canvassing Politicians on Housing and Homelessness (RoI)

THREE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW¹

1. Over 10,000 people are homeless in Ireland — accommodated in hotels and emergency accommodation. We don't count adults still living with their parents, or “couch-surfing” with friends. About 80,000 households are awaiting social housing — that's nearly a quarter of a million people. 40,000 households are in mortgage arrears of more than 2 years. It's a national epidemic of housing insecurity.
2. In 1975 the government built 8,500 social houses. In 2018 it built 2022. It will take a long time to house all those on the social housing list. The Minister for Housing has said that the state has enough land to build 50,000 houses, but that he doesn't believe this is the answer to the housing crisis.
3. Every day we pay about €2,000,000 to landlords via the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and other rent support schemes. This is €3,650,000,000 over five years that doesn't result in a single house being built.

THREE THINGS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. What is the policy of my local council towards people who are awaiting social housing or who are homeless in my constituency?
2. Can I talk to someone in a charity working with homeless people or in housing support to find out about the lived realities of those with whom they work?
3. Would I be prepared to face a degree of suffering so that these peoples' suffering will reduce (for example through an increase in taxes to pay for social housing, or through a reduction in house prices)?

THREE THINGS TO ASK CANVASSERS

1. Will you call for the state to build houses for social housing (not “have peoples' housing needs met” through HAP rentals)?
2. What will you do to address “vulture funds” buying up new properties in bulk, making it harder for people to buy their own home?
3. Will you work for stronger regulations to improve security of tenure, prevent excessive rent increases and protect people from eviction?

¹ These figures are accurate as of January 2020



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THREE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW¹

1. In the first three months of 2019 4,617 households presented as homeless to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). During this period 32.5% of presentations were single males and 32.2% were families. Therefore a minimum of 1,341 children experienced homelessness in the first three months of 2019.
2. A total of 1,760 new builds were begun from January – March 2019 (1582 of these are within the private sector and 172 of these were social housing). This represents a decrease of 10.2% on the same period in the previous year. When considered in parallel to the number of households presenting as homeless in the same period (4,617) it falls far short of what is required.
3. The number of people in housing stress is greater still. It is estimated that between 75,000 and 136,000 adults in Northern Ireland were potentially living in concealed homelessness in 2016.

THREE THINGS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. What is the policy in Northern Ireland towards people who are awaiting social housing or who are homeless?
2. Can I talk to someone in a charity working with homeless people or in housing support to find out about the lived realities of those with whom they work?
3. Would I be prepared to face a degree of suffering so that these peoples' suffering will reduce (for example through an increase in taxes to pay for social housing, or through a reduction in house prices)?

THREE THINGS TO ASK CANVASSERS

1. Will you call for the state to build more houses for social housing?
2. How will you ensure that families and especially children experiencing homelessness are supported through the trauma of this experience?
3. Will you work for stronger regulations to improve security of tenure, prevent excessive rent increases and protect people from eviction?

Find more resources at irishchurches.org/homeless

¹ These figures are accurate as of September 2019

**Irish Council of Churches
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