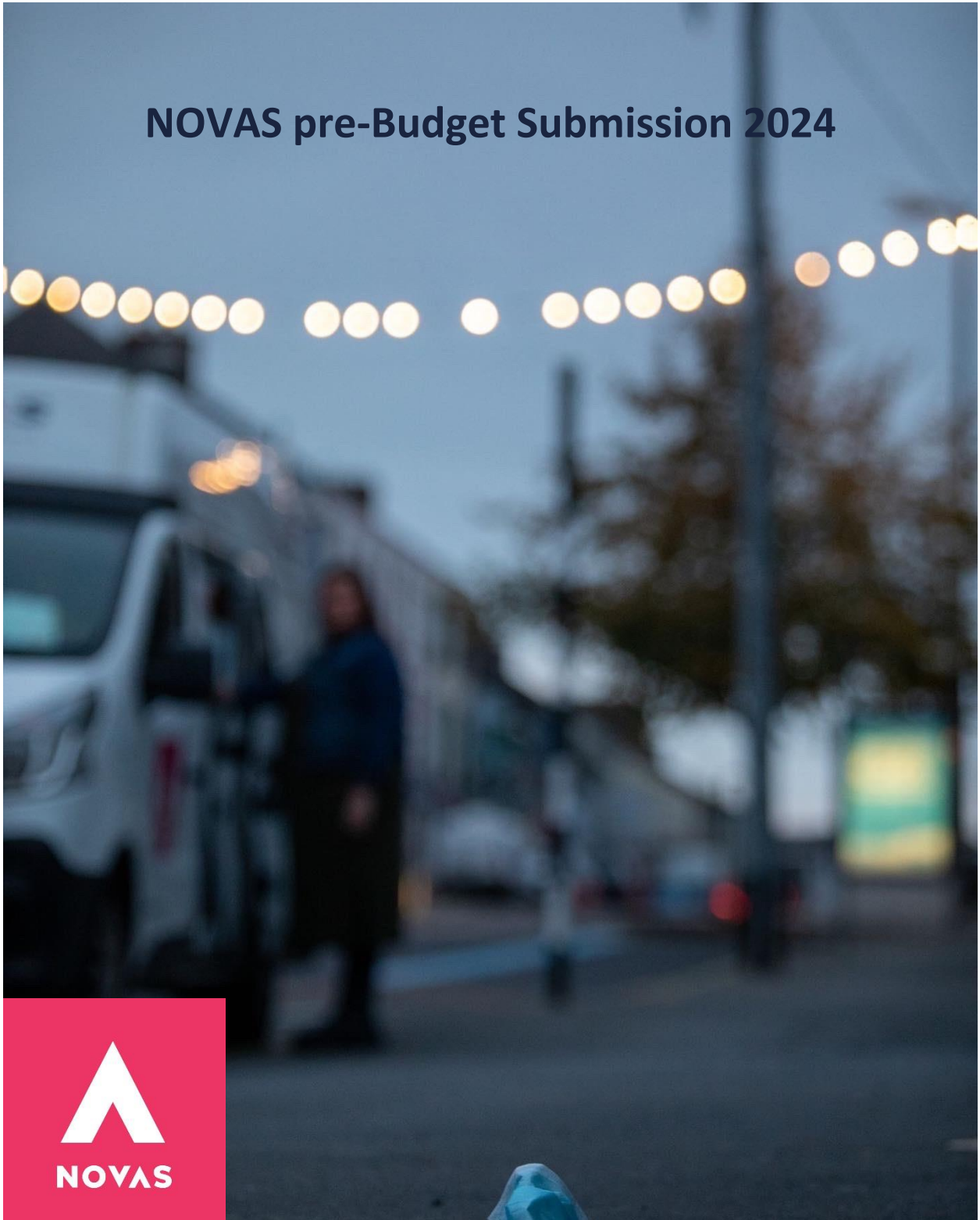


# NOVAS pre-Budget Submission 2024



## Introduction

It is essential that budget 2024 supports people who rely on homeless services and the wider housing sector generally. Nationally, there has been a huge rise in the number of people accessing emergency accommodation. The latest homeless figures for July 2023 reveal that 12,847 people are currently homeless, an increase of more than 2,000 individuals from the same month last year. In addition, there are many more people who are hidden homeless, people who are living in squats, in substandard and overcrowded accommodation, sofa-surfing and involuntary sharing, who are not recorded in any official data.

This budget must prioritise both preventing homelessness and reducing the length of time people spend in homeless services. People can spend years in services waiting for a home, propelling a myriad of issues relating to institutionalisation, addiction and mental and physical health issues.

An acceleration of the supply of social and affordable housing is paramount to turning the tide on homelessness. The government must, at a minimum, meet its own housing targets for low-income housing through a mixture of new developments and repurposing vacant and other-purpose dwellings. This is the single, most critical factor is reducing homelessness in this state. Without a home it is impossible for people to fully participate in society.

Issue	Recommendation
<p>People in homeless services;</p> <p>Young people</p> <p>Single adults</p> <p>Children</p>	<p><i>The number of young adults aged 18 to 24 years of age accessing emergency accommodation has increased more than any other group.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The new Youth Homeless Strategy must be sufficiently resourced to ensure a timely and extensive roll-out of the SHY model of housing.</li> </ul> <p><i>Single adults spend the longest period of time in emergency accommodation with fewer move-on options than other cohorts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Prioritise the development of one-bed units of accommodation in line with local authority waiting lists.</li> <li>➤ Accelerate the redevelopment &amp; repurpose of the existing built environment.</li> </ul> <p><i>Homelessness has profound traumatic impacts on children, effecting their physical, mental, social and nutritional health.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensure all services for children are designed and delivered through the lens of trauma informed practice.</li> <li>➤ Ensure all children in homeless services have access to a child support worker.</li> </ul>
<p>HAP Payments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Increased HAP and HHAP to reflect recent rent increases.</li> </ul>

<p>Housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The government must meet its own targets for social and affordable housing.</li> <li>➤ Revise existing targets under <i>Housing for All</i> considering the acceleration of the homeless crisis.</li> </ul>
<p>Prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Increase the prevention budget</li> <li>➤ Further incentivise and streamline the Tenant in Situ scheme so more households have an opportunity stay in their homes when the landlords is selling.</li> </ul>
<p>Health and Recovery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ring-fenced health budgets for people who experience homelessness</li> <li>➤ Additional access to dual diagnosis support as per new model of care</li> <li>➤ Additional recovery beds throughout the country</li> </ul>
<p>Full cost recovery for service delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Commitment to multi-annual budgets that reflect the full cost of operating homeless services and supports</li> </ul>



## People in homeless services

### ➤ Young People

The number of young people experiencing homelessness and living in emergency accommodation is rising. The single biggest rise in homelessness is among young adults aged between 18 and 24 years and they now comprise just under 20% of all adults living in emergency accommodation. Within a 12-month period up to April 2022, there was a 70% rise in the number of young homeless adults recorded in official data. They are also more predisposed to hidden homeless than older adults, relying on extended family and friends to put them up and moving frequently between houses.

While young people are particularly vulnerable in congregated homeless settings, they also find it more difficult to exit homelessness than their older counterparts due to their limited life skills and their limited access to social housing and to the private rented market due to their age.

As a member of the Irish Coalition to End Youth Homelessness, NOVAS warmly welcomes the recently published Youth Homeless Strategy. We urge that budget 2024 will:

- **Sufficiently fund the SHY model of housing within the strategy so a number of dedicated housing options for young people are available.**
- **Extend the age limit of young people who can receive aftercare support and ensure this is not dependent on education status and that such aftercare is sufficiently funded.**
- **Expand the CAS for Care Leavers Scheme to enable TUSLA, approved housing bodies and local authorities to meet the demand for such housing.**

### ➤ Single adults

Single people represent the majority of applicants on social housing waiting lists and in emergency homeless accommodation. Single people tend to spend increasingly long periods of time living in this type of accommodation. Pathways from homeless services is severely limited for single adults, due to the lack of one-bed units among social housing stock and in the private rented market. The impact of living in emergency accommodation for such protracted periods of time can be devastating for individuals, with an increasing sense of hopelessness, exacerbated addiction, mental health and physical health issues. In Budget 2024, NOVAS urges:

- **Procurement of additional one-bed units in social housing stock, to reflect social housing waiting list applications. Demand for one-bed units on current lists exceeds 50%, development should reflect this.**
- **Increased HAP payments for single individuals so they have an opportunity to access one-bed units in the private rented market.**

### ➤ Children

There has been a significant rise in child homelessness in the last year. There are profound traumatic impacts of homelessness on children effecting their physical, mental, social and nutritional health. Preventing homelessness and limiting the time children live in homeless accommodation to under six months, is essential in mitigating trauma. Budget 2024 should:

- **Ensure all homeless services accommodating and supporting children are developed through the lens of trauma informed practice.**

- **Ensure that all children living in homeless services have access to a child support worker.**
- 

## HAP Payments

Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) provides an essential exit-route for many people experiencing homelessness and despite the significant contraction of the private rented market in recent years it is still the largest exit route from homelessness.

Despite some additional discretionary increases in HAP payments last year, there has been no substantive increase in payments since 2017 and rates now fall far below average rental prices across the country. As a result, the vast majority of properties are inaccessible to people on HAP payments and paying an additional top-up to the landlord has become a system wide norm.

Area	HAP Rate (Couple/Single Adult with 2 Children)	Average Rent (Daft Q2 2023)	Difference with HAP Limit
Limerick City	€700	€1,738	-€1,038
Cork City	€925	€1,793	-€868
Waterford City	€575	€1,471	-€896
Galway City	€875	€1,867	-€992
Dublin (City Center)	€1,275	€2,307	-€1,032

Budget 2024 should:

- **Increase all HAP payments to reflect the cost of renting in the private rented market.**
- 

## Housing

Accelerated social and affordable housing supply will underpin any reduction in homeless figures. This can be achieved through new developments and the redevelopment and repurpose of vacant dwellings. The government must reach its own housing targets for the duration of the *Housing for All* plan, while simultaneously revising such figures. It has been suggested that recent figures from the Housing Commission recommend an upward revision of previous targets.

According to the CSO, there were 163,433 vacant properties recorded in the 2022 census, 27.3% of which were apartments or flats. This is a speedier and more environmentally friendly opportunity to provide housing for single adults currently living in homeless accommodation.

- **Meet own targets for social and affordable housing under *Housing for All* plan and revise such targets according to growing need.**
  - **Consider the resumption of the ban on no-fault evictions.**
  - **Funding should be allocated to hold a Referendum on the Right to Housing, in line with the Government's commitment in its *Programme for Government* and in *Housing for All*.**
- 

## Prevention

Currently less than 10% of homeless budgets in local authorities are ring-fenced for prevention services. If we are to meaningfully stem the tide of households entering homelessness as well as prevent repeat homelessness, this needs to be significantly increased. A pivot from reactionary responses to prevention of homelessness is essential.

In addition, the ending of the moratorium on evictions in March of this year compounded the precarious nature of living in a private rented property and propelled hundreds of additional households into homelessness in the following months. Robust measures need to replace the moratorium on evictions to prevent wide scale evictions and subsequent homelessness.

NOVAS request Budget 2024 to consider:

- **Increase the homeless prevention budget.**
  - **Streamline the Tenant in Situ scheme to ensure all local authorities are engaging in the process so that households with a notice-to-quit due to a property sale have an opportunity to stay in their home.**
  - **Review and increase current national Housing First targets as a means of preventing repeat homelessness and supporting people with complex needs to maintain their tenancies.**
  - **Increase private rented inspections and other protections for renters in the private rented market.**
  - **Incentivise private landlords to stay in the market through tax breaks in exchange for greater security of tenure for tenants and higher standards of accommodation.**
- 

## Health and Recovery

People who experience homelessness have poorer physical and mental health than the general population. Those who live in emergency accommodation can display high rate of self-harm, suicidal ideation and suicide attempts and regularly present with complex and co-occurring needs relating to

addiction and mental health. The average age of death is also much younger than the general population.

Despite the rate of co-morbid issues among the homeless population, our clients often find it difficult to access mainstream support and services. Budget 2024 should:

- **Provide for a ring-fenced homeless health budget, specifically to meet the health needs of the growing homeless population.**
  - **Ensure greater access to dedicated dual diagnosis support and budgetary commitment to the new Dual Diagnosis Model of Care.**
  - **Greater access to timely treatment beds throughout the country so people can access support in the areas they are from.**
- 

### Full-cost recovery of service delivery

Demand for homeless services has never been greater but the ability of the not-for-profit sector to provide such services is increasingly limited, due to our inability to attract and retain staff and the increasing funding restraints associated with service delivery. Budget 2024 must protect this vital sector by committing to:

- **Multi-annual funding to enable services to plan and project.**
  - **Provide full cost recovery for homeless services, which reflects all costs including; support staff (HR, administration, legal etc.), increasing levels of compliance and governance and salaries that reflect the professional and qualified staff required to fulfil very challenging roles.**
  - **Budgets must be agile to external factors such as inflation and cost-of-living crises.**
- 

Thank you for considering NOVAS' 2024 Pre-Budget Submission. Together with our partners in government, we are committed to providing quality services and housing to people who are experiencing homelessness, addiction and social marginalisation and will work towards our joint goal of ending homelessness by 2030.