



**Peter
McVerry
Trust**

Opening doors for
homeless people

Educational Gaps and Future Solutions

Summary Report

A study of the holistic educational needs
and experiences of a sample of
homeless men in Dublin
aged 18-38 Years

Authors:

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DCU Institute of Education

Full report can be found at pmvtrust.ie/education



An tIonad Míbhuntáiste
Oideachasúil
Educational
Disadvantage Centre

About the Authors



Sarah Murphy was the lead author of this report and is a Research Associate with the Educational Disadvantage Centre at Dublin City University (DCU) Institute of Education, and an Independent Research Consultant.



Grainne McKenna is an Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education at the DCU Institute of Education.



Dr Paul Downes is the Director of the Educational Disadvantage Centre and Associate Professor of Education (Psychology) at DCU's Institute of Education.

About DCU Educational Disadvantage Centre

Located within DCU's Institute of Education, the Centre's purpose is to highlight the implications of social and economic exclusion in education across education and related sectors in Ireland and internationally.

The Centre's mission is to promote equality in education and to contribute to the shaping of teacher education, so that the cycle of socio-economic and educational exclusion is broken. The Centre aims to contribute to best practice in national and international policy and practice regarding social inclusion and equality in education.

With this in mind, the Centre's stated aims are in the areas of:

- Pre-Service Preparation
- National and International Research
- National and International Policy and Practice
- Community Outreach & Projects
- Continuing Professional Development

www.dcu.ie/edc



About Peter McVerry Trust

Peter McVerry Trust is a national housing and homeless charity committed to reducing homelessness and the harm caused by substance misuse and social disadvantage.

The charity provides low-threshold entry services, primarily to younger people and vulnerable adults with complex needs, and offers pathways out of homelessness based on the principles of the Housing First model.

Our vision is an Ireland that supports all those on the margins and upholds their rights to full inclusion in society.

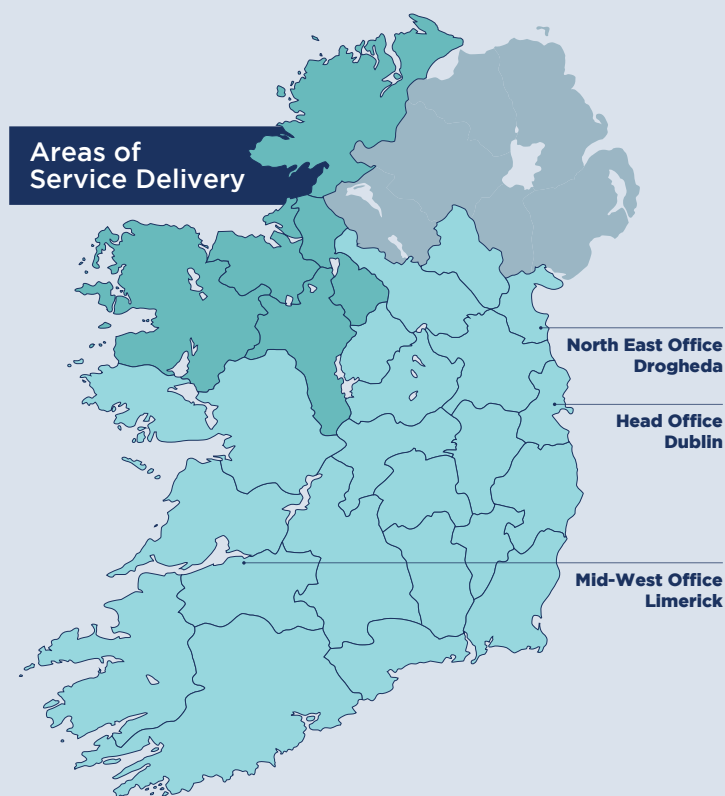
Peter McVerry Trust provides residential and supported temporary accommodation for under 18s, adults and families. The charity also provides Housing with Supports and Tenancy Sustainment services for various local authorities in the form of Housing First and SLI (Support to Live Independently), which serves people who are at risk, or have a history of homelessness.

Peter McVerry Trust also provides specialised drug treatment services through a stabilisation day-programme and a residential community detox.

Peter McVerry Trust delivers an accommodation and resettlement service, on behalf of the Department of Justice and Equality and in partnership with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), for people staying in Direct Provision centres who have a status of leave to remain.

In 2018, the charity worked with over 5,800 people and was active in 14 local authorities across Ireland. Peter McVerry Trust's national headquarters are located in Dublin. The charity also has a mid-west regional office in Limerick City and a north-east regional office in Drogheda, Co. Louth.

As of September 2019, Peter McVerry Trust was supporting 1,700 people per night across Ireland in our housing, homeless and residential services. The charity is currently working across 21 counties and doing more than ever to tackle homelessness.



Message from the CEO

As CEO of Peter McVerry Trust I am very pleased to see the publication of this vital piece of research. At Peter McVerry Trust we are committed to finding solutions to homelessness and working with individuals and communities impacted by it. The solutions that we propose and seek to put in place are based on the best evidence available to us.

In our work to prevent people becoming homeless much of our work is about early stage prevention and intervention instead of emergency late stage activities. As such, given the early age and length of time people will engage with the education system, it is the best opportunity to positively impact on the life outcomes for people. That is particularly true for those who may be more vulnerable or likely to experience homelessness due to their life circumstances.

The education system offers the State an enormous opportunity to identify, engage and support people to allow them to fully achieve their potential and to facilitate the development of strong, resilient and rounded individuals. This new research report allows Peter McVerry Trust to move beyond anecdotal reports from service users about their interaction with the education system and establish a robust evidence basis for our future work and the education strategies of the State.

This report was commissioned in 2018 by Peter McVerry Trust and its publication follows a 12 month programme of work. It deepens our understanding of young homeless men's experiences of the education system, past and present, and provides an evidence base to inform actions that will improve on the experiences of vulnerable young people in the future.

Given the clear and established links between early school leavers, educational attainment and the likelihood of experiencing homelessness, we were keen to fully appreciate the issues that impacted on people's education journeys. This report provides clear evidence and indicators that should allow for better supports and services to be put in place for people either through or around the education system.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the report authors and thank them for their research and to underline our appreciation of the partnership with DCU Educational Disadvantage Centre.

I would like to acknowledge the work of Peter McVerry Trust staff for their participation alongside the researchers from DCU. Specifically, I would like to thank Head of Services with Special Responsibility for Research, Liz Pena, Research Officer, Sabal Al-Khateeb, and Deputy Director of Housing and Communications, Francis Doherty for their work in bringing forward this report.

Finally, I look forward to progressing the recommendations of this report with the relevant Government Departments and agencies to better serve the needs of vulnerable young people.



Pat Doyle
CEO

Peter McVerry Trust Educational Supports



From left to right: Liam Connellan; Paula Phelan; Brendan O'Leary and Pat Doyle, CEO Peter McVerry Trust - pictured outside Belvedere Youth Club, Dublin



Peter McVerry Trust Educational Supports



A study room in Peter McVerry Trust's Youth Supported Temporary Accommodation service in Dublin city

Executive Summary



Introduction

The objectives of this study were to review the educational experiences of young men aged 18–38 who are currently accessing Peter McVerry Trust emergency homeless accommodation in Dublin.

This research considers the diverse voices and lived experiences of young men aged 18–38 who are availing of homeless supports from Peter McVerry Trust. It explores and provides insight into their historical experience of schooling, in terms of educational access and participation, and supports or lack thereof their learning and development needs, as well as considering their current training and educational needs, barriers and challenges in relation to these.

While there has been significant research on the experiences of homeless children and families, there is a relative dearth of information available about the educational experiences of this cohort of young men. That is in spite of this age group and gender making up the single largest cohort of homelessness in Ireland. This demographic also reflects the main group accessing Peter McVerry Trust’s homeless services in Dublin.

The research project began in September 2018 and was delivered over a 12 month period. This followed on from a 3 month consultation period between DCU Educational Disadvantage Centre and Peter McVerry Trust as to the purpose and terms of reference for the research.

Research Aims & Objectives

The research aims and objectives were agreed as the following:

1. To review evidence-informed research that supports positive educational experiences as a preventative factor for those at risk of homelessness.
2. To consider the lived experiences of young homeless men aged 18–38 years availing of emergency homeless accommodation with Peter McVerry Trust.
3. To document participants' experiences of the education system and how it responded to their educational and social-emotional needs.
4. To provide clear recommendations and achievable solutions that will inform existing supports and preventative strategies for young men at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness in Ireland.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed methods approach and comprised of a questionnaire available in online and hard copy format, and thirteen semi-structured one-to-one interviews to gain information on the educational experiences of men aged 18 – 38 years currently living in Peter McVerry Trust's emergency homeless accommodation who had attended primary and secondary school in Ireland.

The qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirteen men. Twelve of whom had also filled out a detailed questionnaire.

Sample

The study was conducted in the Dublin region and recruitment was supported by staff from Peter McVerry Trust.

Recruitment was supported by key-workers working directly with service users, whereby they shared study information and participation requirements through conversations, provision of information leaflets and posters displayed in day services and accommodation sites in Dublin.

Two members of the research team attended a 'breakfast morning' at Peter McVerry Trust's information and advice centre in Dublin 7, to meet and consult with service users and respond to any questions or concerns prior to commencement of the study.

At the time of the research interviews there were 171 participants aged 18 – 38 years of age staying in Peter McVerry Trust's services educated in Ireland. As a result, this study's sample of 51 participants constitutes 29.6% of all eligible participants.

However, this study is not necessarily representational of residents in Peter McVerry Trust homeless accommodation or of the male homeless population in Dublin.



Summary of Key Findings



<p>A significant deterioration in the interviewees' experiences of education following their transition from primary to secondary school.</p>	<p>The prevalence of suspension and expulsion from school and the practice of detention amongst the interviewees.</p>
<p>Inadequate emotional counselling and therapeutic supports in and around schools.</p>	<p>The negative impacts of bullying and other adverse experiences while at school.</p>
<p>The need for integrated supports to bring together education, child and family, health and employment agencies.</p>	<p>Holistic educational needs of children and young people in care.</p>
<p>Supportive relational and alienating authoritarian role of teachers.</p>	<p>Appeals from participants for more supportive schools.</p>
<p>Very high interest in future training and education opportunities.</p>	<p>The challenges and barriers to participating and completing education and finding and maintaining employment while accessing emergency homeless accommodation.</p>

Key Findings



Primary School vs Secondary School

The research found that there was a marked decline in the participants' experience of the education system once they transition from primary school to secondary school.

When asked about their overall experience of primary school, 72% said that it had been excellent, very good or good, while 28% said it was fair or poor. Participants cited sports, friends, play time, learning and one-to-one time with teachers as their favourite things about primary school.

When asked about their overall experience of secondary school, there was a marked decline in perceptions with 46.9% saying that it had been excellent, very good or good and 53.1% saying that it had been fair and poor. There was a similar decline evident in participants' perceptions of their learning and achievement, their ability to complete homework, their attendance, their parents' involvement and their relationships with teachers between primary and secondary school.



“

In primary, the teachers loved me. In secondary, the teachers hated me.

Aidan

”



72%

Primary School



53.1%

Secondary School

When asked about their overall experience of primary school, 72% said that it had been excellent, very good or good. When asked about their overall experience of secondary school 53.1% said that it had been fair or poor.

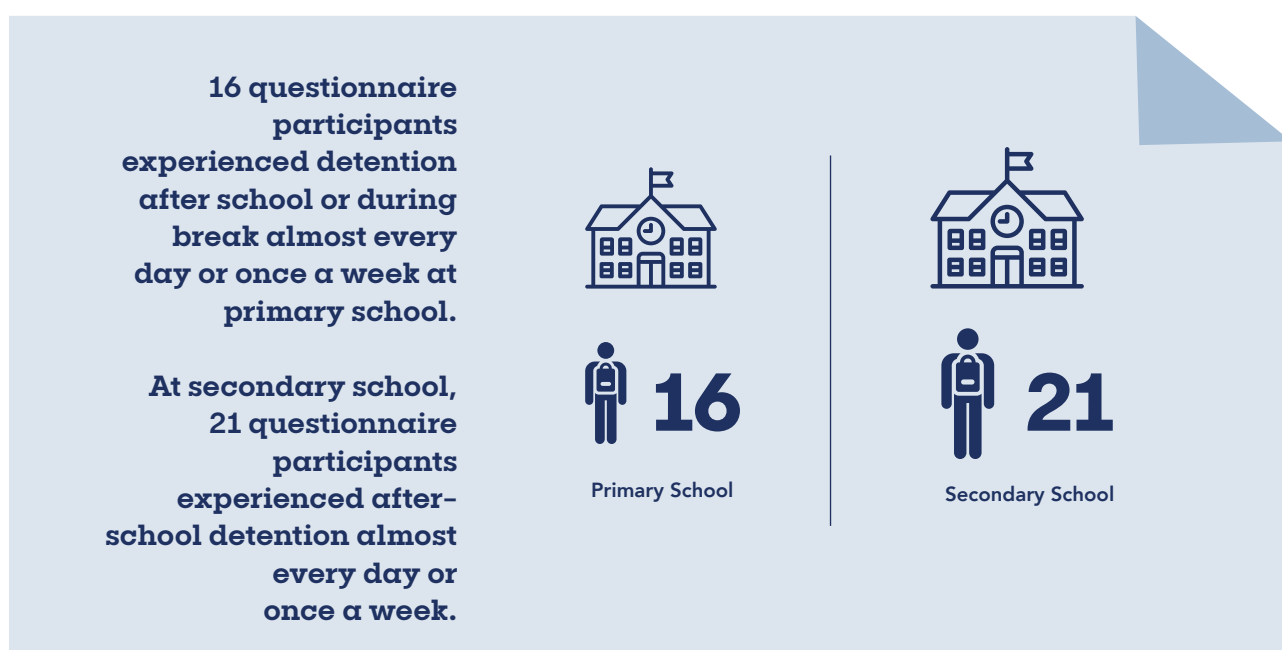
Detention, Expulsion, Suspension

The report finds significant experiences of detention, expulsion and suspension amongst research participants. The rates of detention, expulsion and suspension were significantly above that of the general school population.

The research found that 42.9% of participants reported never having been excluded from school. However, 24.5% said that they had been temporarily excluded in the form of suspensions; 12.2% had experienced multiple or 'rolling' suspensions; and 18.4% reported having been permanently excluded or expelled from school.

According to the latest national figures, there were 167 expulsions nationally for the 2016-2017 period, amounting to 0.048% of the population. There were 35 expulsions nationally in primary school in 2016-2017, up from 19 in 2014-2015 (Millar, 2018).

In terms of reasons for exclusions, 65.5% of permanent exclusions were due to non-violent behaviour; 37.9% were due to difficult relationships with teachers; 27.6% were due to poor attendance and 27.6% were due to violence towards others in school.



Emotional Counselling and Therapeutic Supports

The lack of appropriate emotional counselling supports for research participants is clear from the questionnaire responses and interview data.

Emotional counselling and therapeutic supports in and around schools need significant development and investment with a view to better supporting young people and ensuring adequate emotional supports are available to them so as to retain them in the education system.

Time and time again it is apparent that research participants felt that the emotional supports in schools and those available more generally to young people of a school-going age had not been sufficient to meet their needs.

Mental Health, Trauma and Bullying Needs

This section looks particularly at the mental health needs of the young people while in education, including experience of bullying and other factors that would have negatively impacted on their educational experiences.

The researchers found that there were significantly above average rates of bullying experienced by the participants.

At secondary school the researchers found that 22 questionnaire participants said that they had experienced depression.

They found that 23 had experienced anxiety; Almost 60% (30 people) had experienced difficulties in concentrating while 18 people had experienced feelings of isolation or loneliness.

Of those interviewed for this report 15 people had a learning difficulty.

When asked about traumatic childhood experiences 68% had experienced such an event, including parental separation, bereavement or trauma.



25%
Bullying



35%
Verbal abuse

Just under 25% of those involved in the report experienced bullying on a daily or weekly basis. While 35% of people interviewed experienced verbal abuse on a daily or weekly basis.

Integrated Learning Supports

There is clearly a key role for One-Stop-Shop Community Lifelong Learning Centres to address difficulties and challenges of engaging in education, maintaining employment and accessing services.

These One-Stop-Shops offer a flexible drop in space for privacy, security, to develop confidence, morale and social networks to challenge fatalism and the named problem of boredom, as well as career advice and educational opportunities.

Children and Young People in Care

Given the prevalence of young people in homelessness with a history of State care in the form of U18 residential care accommodation, the researchers looked specifically at this issue.

14% of participants had been in residential or foster care and spoke of significant adverse experiences which had negatively impacted on their education and capacity for learning and concentration.

Role of Teachers

Participants mentioned teachers as having the potential to create a positive experience for them at school and conversely also shared stories of difficult relationships with teachers.

As mentioned above, there was a marked decline in participants' perceptions of their relationship with teachers once they transitioned to secondary school.

In particular, there were issues raised about cultural awareness training for secondary teachers and the need for enhanced conflict resolution practices in secondary schools which equip teachers to look at the circumstances of the child or young person to develop tailored and appropriate responses.

More Supportive Schools

A common theme running through the responses given by research participants was for the education system and schools in particular to offer a more supportive environment for young people. This support should recognise the challenges and issues that young people may be impacted by beyond the school environment but which cannot be disconnected from their education experiences.

The research participants in particular called for more social and emotional education.

They proposed that supports should be relevant and meaningful and that the issue of drug prevention education about the consequences of using drugs should play a bigger role in the educational cycle.

A number of participants also stressed the need for better life skills education which would include more practical learning and life skills. This was related to the fact that for some young people their home environment may not lend itself to develop those skills.

Future Training and Education Opportunities

A very strong finding was the appetite for further education amongst research participants.

When asked about the barriers that they face in terms of participating in future education or training, participants cited their current lack of a home as the main barrier.

Participants also mentioned addiction and drug use as a barrier, as well as physical and mental health issues and communication difficulties, including depression and autism, and a lack of qualifications and sufficient financial resources to obtain these.

79.1% of participants in the questionnaire said that they would be interested in further education or training.



Participants

When asked what they wanted to be when they grew up while at school, the interviewees listed the following professions:

Doctor, vet, barrister, scientist, zoologist, archaeologist, fireman, astronaut, pilot, carpenter, mechanic, train driver, cartoonist, journalist, singer, artist, soldier, businessman, IT professional, accountant, teacher, professional footballer and boxer

“

I wanted to be an archaeologist... I have always loved history. I used to collect bits of rock and stuff like that.

David



”

“

I was a straight A student till like fourth year... For fourth year I was on an in-house suspension for half the year. It's an in-school suspension, you write lines, you write thousands of words.

Conor linked his sudden change in school to his relationship with his mother which deteriorated sharply in fourth year.

“

My brother died in an accident when I was 12 and I was hanging around on the back road at the time and I kind of went off the head... just once my brother died I gave up on life. I would have been in the top percentage of all the classes in primary school.

Peter



”

“

I was dealing with so much bigger things than coming into school every day, which is sort of sad but it's the truth of it.

James

”




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When asked about their aspirations for the next five years, participants in the questionnaire said that they would be interested in further education or training, with the following professions listed as what they would like to work as:

Pilots, nurses, IT professionals, scaffolders, plumbers, electricians, mechanics, hairdressers, football coaches, social workers, supervisors in a warehouse.



“



Not homeless. That's the main goal. As long as that's out of the way in five years' time I don't care about anything else...I'd probably like to go back into the bar...pubs, bars, hotels.

Simon

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“

I am going to be running my own restaurant



”

“

I would like to be a social worker

”

“



If they give you a leaflet and say read that, most of the time it's going to get thrown away, but if somebody showed me... a demonstration... it just sits in my head a bit better. I don't know why.

Rory

”

Recommendations

It is envisaged that the recommendations set out below will be considered by the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Finance and Public expenditure, as well as other relevant Departments and agencies. Recommendations for policy makers are informed by the findings from the lived experiences of these men and their reported experiences of education in Ireland. The seven key recommendations of this report are as follows.

1. Provide a distinct funding strand for adequate emotional counselling and/or therapeutic supports in and around schools to support children and young people experiencing trauma and adverse childhood experiences to support the mental health needs of these vulnerable students

For the Department of Education and Skills to provide a distinct and dedicated funding strand for adequate emotional counselling and/or therapeutic Supports in and around schools to support trauma, mental health needs of vulnerable students, including students at risk of early school leaving, homelessness, family bereavement, suspension and expulsion, bullying victims and perpetrators, as well as children in care.

Doing so will need to address the significant gaps on this key issue across a range of Department of Education and Skills' National Strategies and Action Plans, such as DEIS 2005 and 2017, Wellbeing and Anti-Bullying Strategies. Strategies for prevention and early intervention should include a coordinated response to children and young people at risk of exclusion from education, both temporary and permanent, as well as early school leavers. Specialist psycho-social and emotional supports for children must be provided by appropriately trained and accredited emotional counsellors and therapists. These specialist emotional counsellors and therapists are required for this level of complexity of emotional needs and sustained supports, as part of an early

intervention strategy to prevent problems amplifying.

2. Provide additional Multidisciplinary Team Supports in and around schools to provide alternatives to suspension and expulsion

For the Department of Education and Skills to:

i Set a target that no school suspend/expel students but instead provide Multidisciplinary Team Supports for these students.

This increased funding needs to occur at primary school level, as well as post-primary, given that many students are experiencing issues at primary school and the instance of suspension and expulsion at primary school level. This strategic acceleration of focus and investment on Multidisciplinary Team supports in and around schools as alternatives to suspension or expulsion is to recognise that the High Prevalence of Suspension and expulsion from school for this vulnerable group at risk of homelessness is displacing and accentuating one problem to other levels. It is vital to recognise that the current national rates of suspension and expulsion, though decreasing slightly, are unacceptable.

ii Provide increased funding for Multidisciplinary Team supports in and around schools as alternatives to temporary or permanent exclusion. This should include enhanced funding for the National Council for Special Education [NCSE] to support the inclusion of children and young people at risk of marginalisation owing to behavioural or emotional needs and needing emotional counselling and/or therapy supports in and around schools.

3. Provide and lead a strategic commitment to enhanced focus on conflict resolution skills for secondary teaching in Initial Teacher Education and continuing professional development to upskill schools in responding to children's social, emotional and behavioural needs

For the Department of Education and Skills to provide and lead a strategic commitment to enhanced focus on conflict resolution skills for secondary teaching in Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Professional Development. This should also include the development of whole-school approaches to mental health and wellbeing and strategic commitments to trauma-informed practice and conflict resolution skills in primary and secondary schools, particularly in areas of socio-economic marginalisation. This will require ongoing collaboration between the DES, the HEA and the Teaching Council in further developing this reform agenda across Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Providers, as part of the Teaching Council's review of ITE provision and its Cosán framework for teachers' learning.

4. Establish a distinct funding strand to develop Community Lifelong Learning Centres, integrated with Multidisciplinary Teams as one-stop-shops for meeting diverse holistic educational needs, including for young people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness.

For the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Education and Skills to develop a distinct funding strand to develop Community Lifelong Learning Centres, integrated with Multidisciplinary Teams as one-stop-shops for meeting diverse holistic educational needs in an integrated way, including complex needs of young people and adults who may be vulnerable and marginalised.

Benefits of these Community Spaces for Homeless Men and Women include:

- Offering space to study that is not available in PMVT accommodation, in environments to provide privacy and a sense of security with flexibility as a 'drop in' space. A homeless liaison officer for public libraries to encourage people to use these services for study could also be considered in this regard.
- Supporting pathways to education, training and work, including individually tailored career advice and planning

- A reduction in social isolation and expansion of social networks that bolster self-esteem and motivation, and reduce the difficulties of boredom, sadness and isolation identified by study participants.
- Keep people's confidence and morale higher if not successful in gaining work through mentoring supports and also to challenge fatalism that is associated with risk behaviours generally.
- Supports for siblings at risk of homelessness as part of an integrated support approach.
- Opportunities to improve self-confidence, efficacy and self-care while addressing negative self-perception and low self-esteem associated with homelessness and risk behaviours.
- Family support for those experiencing homelessness, including the provision of safe, stimulating spaces for visitation, parent-child play and interaction, as well as integrated supports for family members who may also be experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- Availability and accessibility of advocacy, advice, emotional counselling and therapeutic supports including screening and referral pathways for healthcare needs, including access to addiction and mental healthcare services.

One pathway for such a distinct funding strand for these Community-Based One-Stop-Shops is through developing this as part of expanding the Area Based Childhood (ABC) Initiative Funded by the DCYA, to include a stronger anti-poverty focus and sustained system supports approach for complex needs beyond simply pre-packaged programmes. A further rationale for these Community-Based One-Stop-Shops is to address fragmentation of service provision supports and minimise costs of increasing rents in Dublin by placing these services as co-located with a common framework of goals.

5. Establish an Interdepartmental National Expert Advisory Group to develop a National Strategic Action Plan for meeting the holistic educational needs of children and young people in care

For the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Education and Skills to immediately establish an Interdepartmental National Expert Advisory Group to Develop a National Strategic Action Plan for meeting the holistic educational needs of children and young people in care.

Adults who have been children in care are clearly overrepresented in the population of homeless men in Dublin and this requires consideration as part of this national strategic response across the DCYA and DES. With no DES/DCYA national strategy in place for this group, there is a glaring gap in strategy at national level for schools to meet the range of holistic educational needs of children in care. The State, as corporate parent to children in care, has a responsibility to ensure that supports are prioritised to facilitate these children and young people to reach their full potential (DCYA, 2004). At present there is a clear and pressing need for the immediate establishment of an Interdepartmental National Expert Advisory Group, jointly led by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Education and Skills to identify, document and provide a meaningful response and supports to the social, emotional, educational and housing needs of children and young people (aged 0-24 years) with experience of state care.

6. Increase focus on Social, Personal, Health Education (SPHE), in particular social and emotional development education, meaningful drug education and life skills

For the Department of Education and Skills to develop and devote more time on the primary and post-primary Curriculum to SPHE

(Social, Personal, Health Education), including an increased focus on social and emotional education, relevant, meaningful drug prevention and education and life skills. The Department of Education and Skills should request the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA] to examine the experience and reality of Social, Personal, Health Education [SPHE] curriculum delivery in Primary and Post Primary Schools across different age levels in school. Given the repeated appeals of this sample for these issues to be addressed in school, this must include an awareness and understanding of local and national issues related to social and emotional wellbeing, the development of meaningful life-skills and evidence-informed approaches to drug education and prevention. All actions and activities must be aligned with the EU Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2018) especially the new key competence Personal, Social and Learning to Learn which highlights the importance of this curricular dimension internationally and aim to develop quality, future-oriented education and training tailored to students' needs.

7. Explore ways of providing accommodation for young men which address the heterogeneity of this group and is conducive to studying and maintaining employment, as well as the provision of education and training opportunities where appropriate

For the Peter McVerry Trust to explore ways of providing accommodation for young men which address the heterogeneity of this group and includes provision of accommodation conducive to studying and maintaining employment, as well as education and training opportunities where appropriate. This could include accommodation with individual rooms or lower numbers of men sharing rooms in smaller units with access to internet facilities and quiet, communal spaces which could be used for studying. Particular consideration should be given to accommodation and communal

spaces for those who are co-parenting, seeking a return to education and employment, as well as those seeking support for drug and alcohol addiction.

In relation to the current study, a significant number of participants expressed an interest and commitment to further education, training and employment. It was reported that at times it was difficult to maintain employment or continue education when living in emergency and temporary accommodation owing to; availability of affordable and accessible public transport to and from work or college, dedicated spaces for study, and disruption to restful sleep owing to shared accommodation spaces and required safety checks throughout the night. Where possible, the Peter McVerry Trust should consider developing temporary accommodation and supports the diverse needs of their service-users. This approach could potentially be further developed to include families experiencing homeless to cater to the educational needs of children in homeless accommodation.



Peter McVerry Trust's Education and Activation Initiatives



In 2019 Peter McVerry Trust took on the operations of the Carline Learning Centre in Clondalkin, West Dublin.

This centre works with around 30 young people each academic year to support them to obtain their Junior Certificate. The vast majority of these young people have been excluded from mainstream school systems.



In Moyross, Limerick, Peter McVerry Trust funds the Moyross Youth Academy to offer carpentry courses for long term unemployed young people from the area.

The funding is provided for a woodwork tutor and Peter McVerry Trust buys the furniture made by the young people for use across our social housing units.



Peter McVerry Trust works with and provides funding to the Belvedere Youth Club in Dublin 1.

The funding is focused on the provision of an IT education project for young people who access the youth club's services and who come from the immediate environs of Dublin's north inner city.

As part of our work to support young people in the education system, Peter McVerry Trust is currently funding trauma counselling sessions for students at two schools in Dublin.

This counselling was developed as a homelessness prevention measure as these schools had seen high number of past pupils access our homeless services.





Peter McVerry Trust, in conjunction with the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), provides an online learning platform which offers a flexible, accessible and cost-effective means of learning and accreditation at QQI Levels 2 & 3. This platform is called writeon.ie.

Peter McVerry Trust currently offers NALA's online education platform across our Supported Temporary Accommodation Services, our Family Hubs and our Housing with Support Services, throughout the four Dublin Local Authority areas, Louth, Limerick and Kildare.

Through our ongoing engagement with schools in Dublin we are funding a breakfast club at a DEIS school in Dublin.

This ensures that children attending that school start the day with a nutritious and proper breakfast.



Peter McVerry Trust is currently bringing forward a number of employment activation programmes for people in our homeless and housing services.

These programmes are located in Dublin, Kildare and Limerick. The programmes will aid people's ability to secure and retain employment in areas such as construction, hospitality and tourism, IT and retail.

Conclusion

This study has explored the educational experiences and future education needs of young men who are currently experiencing homelessness in Dublin. One of the key findings of this process is that this is far from a homogenous group with identical experiences, needs and plans. Rather, these men have come from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds and family circumstances, have had a wide range of experiences in education and training and have experienced diverse challenges, both in and outside school, which have impacted on their educational experience.

There was a distinct difference in the reported experience of participant's time at primary school. When asked about their overall experience of primary school, 72% said that it had been excellent, very good or good and 28% fair or poor. Participants cited sports, friends, play time, learning and one to one time with teachers as their favourite things about primary school.

When asked about their overall experience of secondary school, however, there was a marked decline in perceptions, with 46.9% saying that it had been excellent, very good or good and 53.1% saying that it had been fair and poor. There was a similar decline evident in participants' perceptions of their learning and achievement, their ability to complete homework, their attendance, their parents' involvement and their relationships with teachers between primary and secondary school.

The prevalence of suspension and expulsion from school and the extent of the practice of detention was a cause for concern.

Participants spoke eloquently of the power of teachers to significantly affect their enjoyment of school life. There is a real need to improve Initial Teacher Education for secondary teachers to take into account perspectives expressed and gaps identified in this study in relation to conflict resolution and cultural awareness.

There were also insightful and realistic suggestions made by participants with regard to the need for schools to incorporate more social and emotional education, including mental health, better and more meaningful

drug education and more practical learning and life skills into the curriculum.

The incidence of bullying, depression and anxiety among other experiences illustrates the need for emotional counselling, therapeutic supports and increased multidisciplinary supports in and around schools. These will help young people going through the adverse experiences such as trauma, abuse and family addiction mentioned by participants during these consultations.

An overwhelming majority of participants, 79%, want to pursue further training and one stop shops are a key solution put forward in this report to enable these men and those like them to fulfil their potential.

This study provides a first step to listening to these perspectives and aspirations with a view to instigating the change required, at both individual and systemic levels, to bring these men back into education and ensure that future young people can be better and more holistically supported.





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