



March 2014 | Housing Supports

Every month we invite a response to our short, 3 question survey. Our survey for March 2014 was in relation to housing supports for people parenting alone or sharing parenting. The aim of the survey was to find out how housing supports could be improved and the impact of insecure housing on those parenting alone.

The Questions

1. Is secure and assured housing an important factor for those parenting alone in entering or staying in employment and /or education.
2. What does secure and assured housing mean to you and how does it impact on your quality of life?
3. What alternatives to current housing supports for people parenting alone (including supports for both home owners and private/local authority tenants) would help you to enhance the quality of your life?

The Results

All of those surveyed stated that secure and assured housing was essential for lone parents who were in work or education. One respondent outlined the impact her housing has had on her ability to avail of educational opportunities while others emphasised the importance of stability in order to maintain routines for children.

...it allows me to focus on my education and finding a decent job.

I can't do a Masters in Education as I was planning, as I live over 45 km from the college I would have had to attend and I would not be able to afford the journeys.

Having to move constantly due to rent increases takes up time, money and creates instability. A constant home is essential in maintaining positive routine.

The impact of losing vital family support as a result of housing issues was also highlighted.

I'm from Dublin and still have family there but I was forced to move to Wicklow in 2007 where I have no family or supports.

The majority of those surveyed discussed how important secure housing was to their quality of life and in particular, the importance of this for their children.

Security of place is very important for emotional stability of the children.

It means a permanent and secure sense of "home" for us as a family and allows us to embrace the "normal" activities of everyday life in a warm and safe place...it allows us to feel that we each have our "own space" in which to develop as a family and to welcome others into...it is freedom in itself.

The link between secure housing and other supports within the community, such as schooling, friendships and family support, was also discussed. This emphasises the importance of lone parents being able to stay within the communities where they have developed these important practical and emotional connections.

It gives me comfort that all the systems I have placed in my locality will remain, such as my son's school and after school care. It enables us to integrate within a community as opposed to moving constantly and establishing no roots or connections.

The impact of insecure housing on a person's ability to have guests stay over or to have other social outlets was outlined by one respondent.

...will there be a spare bedroom for her or another relative to stay, will I have space to make my hobbies?

One respondent also spoke of the negative impact of insecure tenancies on the family and on children in particular.

Secure affordable housing can be the makings or breakings of a family unit, kids feel secure and less stressed in the home knowing that you are not going to be thrown out of your home due to high rent.

With regard to possible alternatives to current housing supports, several respondents suggested that more affordable rents and longer term, secured tenancies were essential. Financial support for home owners who are struggling to pay mortgages on low wages was also suggested. Increased availability of social housing and RAS tenancies were given as possible solutions for those eligible for financial support with housing costs.

Security of tenure, affordable cost and ease of moving if necessary are all crucial to enable a security base on which to build a life for the children.

Help with mortgage as ex does not pay anything towards it, it should be €1,400 and I am on agreed payment of €650 but in the term that will cost me an extra €20,000. Hard when I have two kids to support and bills.

Longer leases, RAS to be more attractive for landlords and to be extended beyond a once off, more social housing is key with rent to buy schemes in place. For parents on rent allowance to be able to share accommodation thus reducing their outgoings, For this to be supported within rent allowance.

The importance of supporting lone parents in employment with their housing costs, in addition to those in receipt of government supports was also highlighted.

At the moment I am in private housing paid for by myself. Some kind of tax credit or interest rate discount would be beneficial.

In conclusion, the importance of secure and assured housing has clearly been highlighted. People parenting alone find it difficult to enter or stay in employment when their current housing is insecure. The impact of insecure housing on children in particular was emphasised by the majority of those surveyed.