



Cork Simon
Community

Paper Four

HOME TRUTHS



HOW LONG IS AN EMERGENCY?

Routes into and out of homelessness in the Southwest

November 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

Cork Simon's Home Truths series aims to offer insights into different aspects and experiences of homelessness in the Southwest, drawing on publicly available data and supported by the personal experiences of Cork Simon service users. The series began in June 2023. This fourth paper is an analysis of selected data from Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage quarterly 'Homeless Performance Reports.' The data is supported by the experiences of adults staying in our emergency shelter.



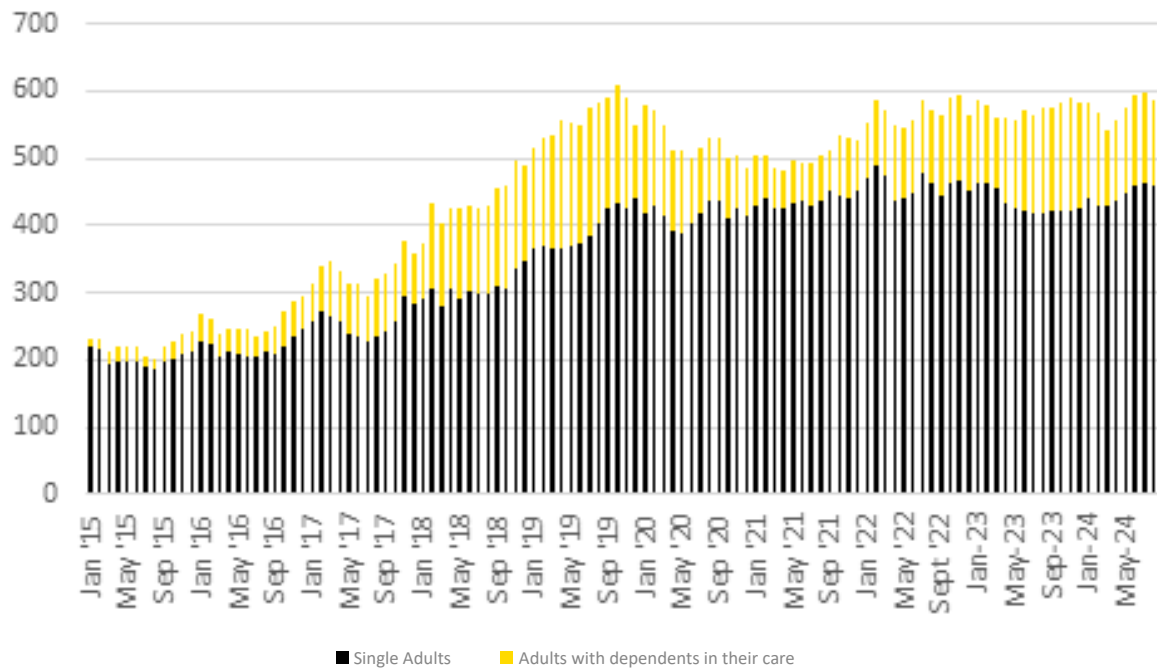
2. METHODOLOGY

This Home Truths paper analyses data contained in the quarterly 'Homeless Performance Reports' published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage between Q1 2018 and Q2 2024 inclusive, with a focus on entries to and exits from emergency accommodation in the Southwest.

Data in this paper is presented for varying time spans depending on its date of first publication and its format of presentation in the Department's Performance Reports. For example, data relating to reasons for presentations in emergency accommodation is presented from Q2 2023, when that data was first published. Data relating to long-term and short-term homelessness is presented from Q1 2022, reflecting a change in the format of Performance Reports at that time, with data prior to Q1 2022 based on individuals and post Q1 2022 based on households.

Data in this paper is based on household use of emergency accommodation, that is single households and family households combined. It should be noted that the majority of households in homeless emergency accommodation are single adult households, as Figure 1 shows. Over the last 9.5 years, single adults have accounted for, on average, almost four in every five adults in emergency accommodation in the Southwest.

Figure 1: Numbers of single adults and adults with dependents in their care in emergency accommodation in the Southwest per month



Data source: Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Homeless Reports January 2015 to August 2024.

3. SUMMARY

This Home Truths report examines journeys into and out of emergency accommodation in the Southwest through an analysis of data published in Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage quarterly Performance Reports. This Home Truths analysis is based on households in emergency accommodation in the Southwest. Single adults account for almost four in five households in emergency accommodation in the Southwest.

Emergency accommodation should only ever be for short-term use. But this analysis shows approximately half of households in emergency accommodation in the Southwest are long-term homeless - that is, they have been stuck in emergency accommodation for six months or more. Long-term homelessness followed an upward trajectory through 2022, 2023 and the first quarter of 2024, exceeding 50% between Q2 2023 and Q1 2024, before falling slightly in Q2 2024 to 48.5%. Long-term homelessness is known to have detrimental effects on health and wellbeing¹.

Once in emergency accommodation, the chance of exiting is very slim. Most recently, in Q2 2024, less than one in 10 households in emergency accommodation in the Southwest exited to a tenancy. This low ratio is common; the exit to tenancy rate has averaged 10% per quarter over the last two and a half years (Q1 2022 – Q2 2024).

While there has been a recent increase in the number of households exiting emergency accommodation in the Southwest to tenancies, there have however been 24% fewer exits to tenancies in the last three full years (2021 – 2023) compared to the three years prior (2018 - 2020). The significant fall in private rented accommodation as a tenancy exit route from emergency accommodation appears to have contributed to this.

The private rental (PR) market was the dominant tenancy exit route from emergency accommodation in the Southwest from 2018 to 2020, before falling significantly. From 2018 to 2020, exits to private rental accommodation averaged 59 per quarter, but from 2021 to mid-2024 they have only averaged 18 per quarter.

Exits to Local Authority (LA) lettings fluctuated between 2018 and mid-2024 but remained steady relative to exits to private rental tenancies. Exits to Approved Housing Body (AHB) lettings have increased since Q1 2023 (although not reaching the level that exits to PR lettings were at) but fell back in the most recent quarter, Q2 2024. Overall, AHB and LA lettings are now the more likely household tenancy exit routes from emergency accommodation in the Southwest, and PR lettings are the least likely.

The interplay between the private rented sector and homelessness is evident in this analysis. In addition to the door closing on the private rented sector as a tenancy exit route from emergency accommodation, it's evident that the private rented sector is a gateway to homelessness. Since Q2 2023, reasons for new presentations in emergency accommodation have been recorded in the quarterly Performance Reports. Between Q2 2023 and Q2 2024, one in four new household presentations to emergency accommodation in the Southwest has followed a 'no fault' Notice of Termination (NoT) from private rented accommodation. The most common reason for the issuing of such a NoT is the intended sale of the property.

The promising and important role of the Tenant-in-Situ scheme² is evident as a counterbalance to the sale of rental properties and resulting entries to emergency accommodation. Tenant-in-Situ preventions are notable in recent Performance Reports with 35 preventions in the Southwest in Q2 2024, and 65 in Q1 2024. The implementation of the 'Simon Bill'³ would help to further stem the flow of households from the private rental sector into homelessness.

¹ Finnerty, J. (2018). *Last Resort: Vulnerability, Resilience and Quality of Life in a Homeless Population*. Cork: Cork Simon Community. <https://www.corksmon.ie/last-resort>

² The Cost Rental Tenant-in-Situ scheme began on 1 April 2023 and is available to tenants who are not eligible for social housing and are at risk of homelessness through the sale of their rental home. Under the scheme, the Housing Agency can purchase the property and continue renting it to the tenant. <https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/housing/renting-a-home/help-with-renting/cost-rental-tenant-in-situ-scheme/>

³ The Simon Bill or Residential Tenancies (Amendment) (Extension of Notice Periods) Bill 2020 proposes to change tenancy law so that a person or family at risk of homelessness is provided with a three-month extension to their notice period. <https://www.simon.ie/about-the-simon-bill/>

4. STUCK IN EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

- The significant majority of households in emergency accommodation in the Southwest are 'repeat' presentations, indicating they are stuck there.
- Half of households are 'long-term homeless'; they have been stuck in emergency accommodation for six months or more.

4.1 New and Repeat Presentations

Figure 2: Number of household presentations to emergency accommodation in the Southwest per quarter

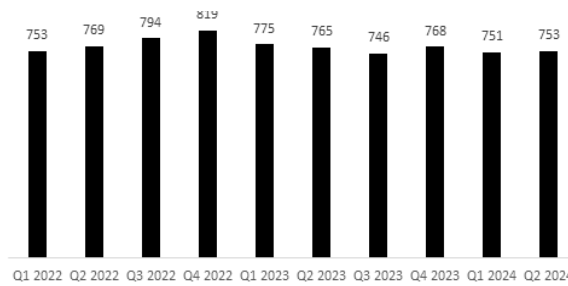
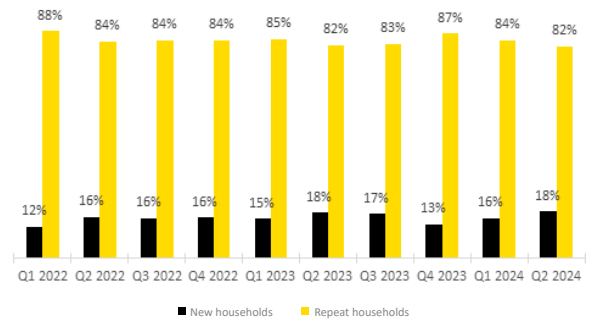


Figure 3: New versus repeat household presentations to emergency accommodation in the Southwest

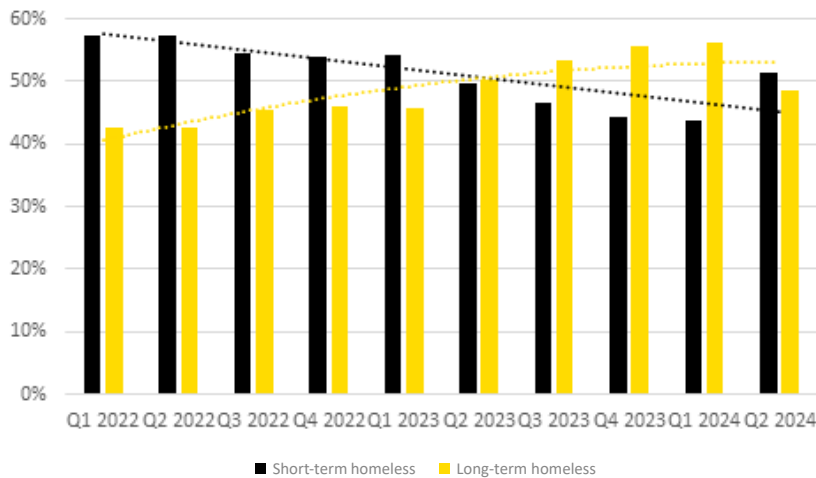


According to most recent data, for Q2 2024, 18% of household presentations to emergency accommodation in the Southwest are 'new' presentations – that is, they were accessing emergency accommodation for the first time. The remaining 82% of households in emergency accommodation are 'repeat' presentations.

Over the two and a half years to Q2 2024, as represented in Figure 3, on average 16% of households are 'new' presentations and the remaining 84% are 'repeat' presentations, indicating more than four in five households in emergency accommodation in the Southwest are stuck in homelessness.

4.2 Long-term homelessness

Figure 4: Short-term homeless households versus long-term homeless households in emergency accommodation in the Southwest per quarter



As Figure 4 indicates, the rate of long-term homelessness⁴ among households in emergency accommodation in the Southwest has followed an upward trajectory exceeding 50% between Q2 2023 and Q1 2024 and falling back most recently in Q4 2024 to 48.5%.

Over the two and half years shown in the above graph, the rate of long-term homelessness has averaged 52%.

“Actually I’m two years (in emergency accommodation) and they (say) “wait, wait, wait”. Okay, so what I can do? Not much. I don’t want to do nothing. But after two years, you just like, used to it, you know? So I have to wait. I just waiting. It’s too long.”

- Henrik

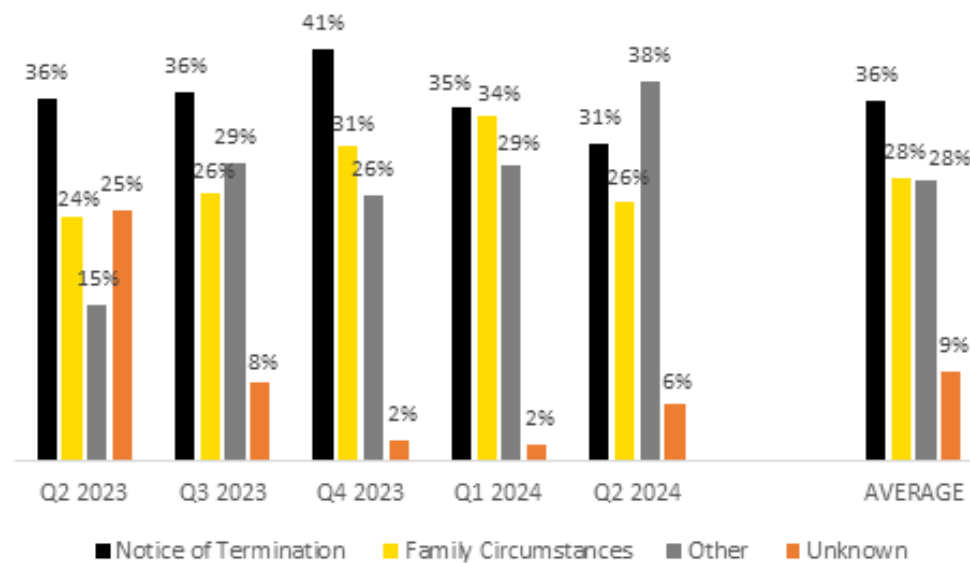
⁴ Short-term homelessness is defined as stays of less than six months in emergency accommodation, while long-term homelessness is defined as episodic or cumulative stays of six months or more in emergency accommodation over the previous twelve months.

5. PRIVATE RENTED HOUSING - A GATEWAY TO HOMELESSNESS

- One in four households new to emergency accommodation in the Southwest received a 'no fault' notice of termination from private rented accommodation in the 15 months between Q2 2023 and Q2 2024.

5.1 Reasons for new presentations to emergency accommodation

Figure 5: Reasons (grouped) for new household presentations to emergency accommodation in the Southwest



Over the 15 months from Q2 2023 to Q2 2024, a notice of termination (NoT) from private rented accommodation has been the most common reason for new household presentations to emergency accommodation in the Southwest, accounting on average for 36% of new household presentations. This equates to 179 households newly presenting to emergency accommodation in the Southwest following a NoT from private rented accommodation in the fifteen months to Q2 2024.

The next most common reason for new household presentations to emergency accommodation is 'family circumstances' – mostly the breakdown of a relationship - accounting for an average of 28% of new household presentations during the time span.

Most recent data, for Q2 2024, shows 31% (n. 45) of new household presentations to emergency accommodation in the Southwest followed a notice of termination (NoT) from private rented accommodation, 26% (n. 37) resulted from family circumstances, and 'other' reasons accounted for 38% (n. 54). In 6% (n.8) of cases the reason was unknown.

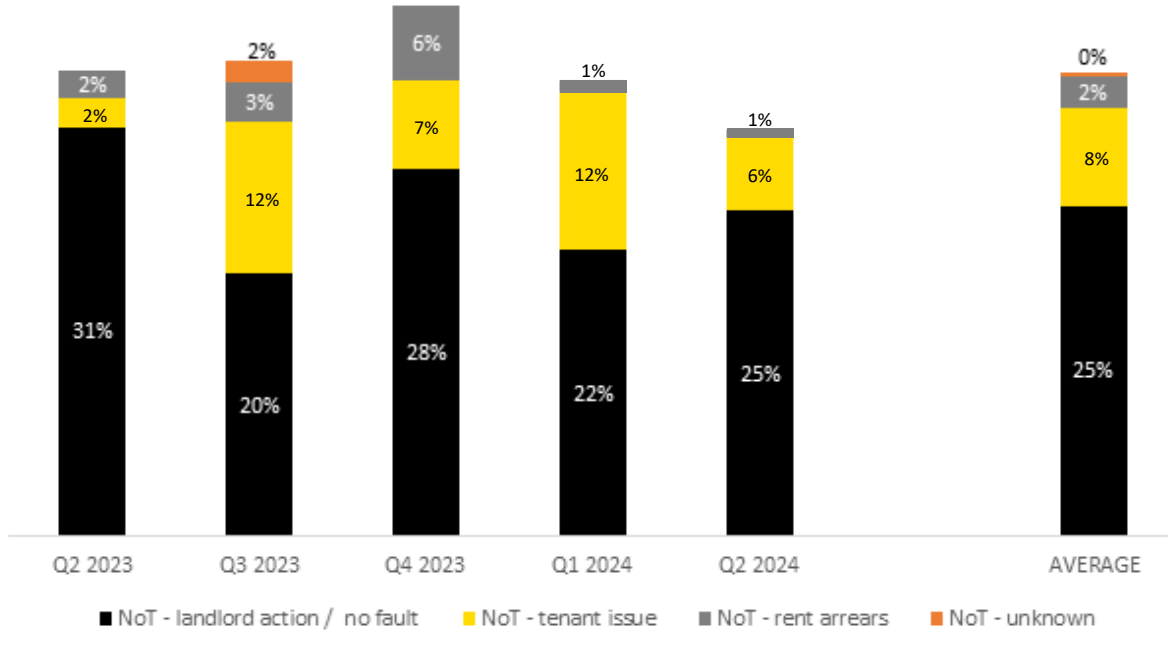
“Landlord came to me said ‘your contracts up, I’m not gonna give you another one’. It was hard to find somewhere. Nobody wants to take HAP (Housing Assistance Payment), that’s the problem. Trying to find a place - I looked – and it’s just not there like. I was out on the streets for one night. Ended up in here (Cork Simon emergency shelter). I’d never been in the homeless services before – I’ve worked for myself all my life. These kinda things, they soul destroy ya, they really do.”

Brendan



5.2 Reasons for ‘notice of termination’ leading to new presentations to emergency accommodation

Figure 6: Reasons for ‘Notice of Termination’ among new household presentations to emergency accommodation in the Southwest, per quarter.



As Figure 6 demonstrates, ‘no fault’ Notices of Termination (NoT) are the most common type of NoT received by households newly presenting to emergency accommodation in the Southwest between Q2 2023 and Q2 2024.

Among households who received a NoT and subsequently presented to emergency accommodation in the Southwest, seven in 10 received a ‘no fault’ NoT.

As Figure 6 shows, ‘no fault’ NoTs have accounted for an average of 25% of new household presentations to emergency accommodation in the Southwest over the 15 months to Q2 2024. This equates to 161 households.

According to most recent data, from Q2 2024, ‘no fault’ evictions accounted for 25% (n. 36) of new household presentations to emergency accommodation in the Southwest that quarter. This was followed by NoTs relating to ‘tenant issues’ and ‘rent arrears’, accounting for 6% (n. 8) and 1% (n. 1) respectively.

Further break down shows the intended sale of the property to be the main reason for a ‘no fault’ NoT resulting in a household presenting to emergency accommodation. Intended sale of a rental property accounted for almost 6 in 10 ‘no fault’ NoTs over the five quarters from Q2 2023 to Q2 2024.

- Less than 1 in 10 households in emergency accommodation in the Southwest exited to a tenancy in Q2 2024.
- Exits from emergency accommodation to tenancies over the last three years (2021-2023) are lower than the three years prior (2018-2020).
- Approved Housing Body (AHB) and to a lesser extent Local Authority (LA) lettings have replaced the private rental (PR) market as the most likely tenancy exit route for households in emergency accommodation in the Southwest, but exits to AHB and LA lettings are not at the same level as earlier exits to PR lettings.

6.1 Exits to tenancies from emergency accommodation

Figure 7: Numbers of households in emergency accommodation and households exiting emergency accommodation to tenancies in the Southwest per quarter

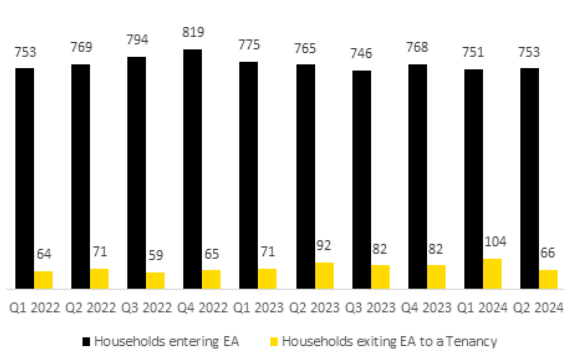
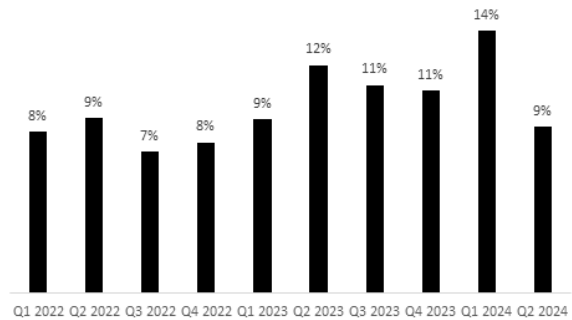


Figure 8: Household exits from emergency accommodation to tenancies, as a percentage of entries to emergency accommodation, in the Southwest per quarter.



The number of households exiting emergency accommodation to a tenancy has fluctuated over the last 10 quarters, or two and a half years, as demonstrated in Figures 7 and 8. The numbers have ranged from a low of 59 (in Q3 2022) to a high of 104 (in Q1 2024). Most recently, in Q2 2024, 66 households exited to a tenancy. The numbers have equated to an exit rate (exits from emergency accommodation as a percentage of presentations in emergency accommodation) per quarter of 7% to 14%, or an average of 10%. The exit rate for the most recent quarter, Q2 2024, was 9%.

“Started searching Daft, because I am safe now in the Simon, where I have a room, but it’s still not ideal, comparing to the previous life that I had - my private houses. No one get back to me. There is not enough accommodation. The prices are so high that sometimes when I look at the price, there is no point even to be inquiring because I am just taking someone’s time. The one thing what would change my thinking now, well, I am still trying to think positive, but it would be permanent accommodation. Apartment, something to share house, whatever. I would take anything but to be on my own. Being on my own would give me independence. That’s what I need because I am counting on people at the moment. Independence is what everyone needs.”

Sylwia



Figure 9⁵: Numbers of households exiting emergency accommodation to tenancies, in the Southwest per quarter.

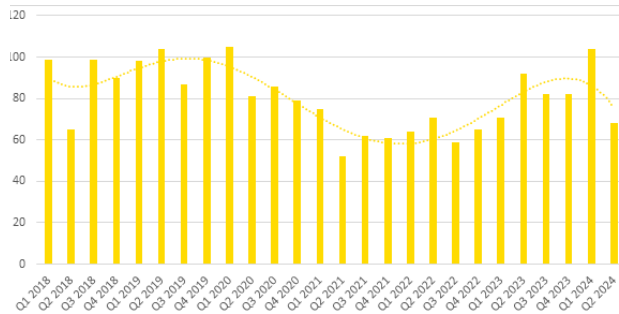
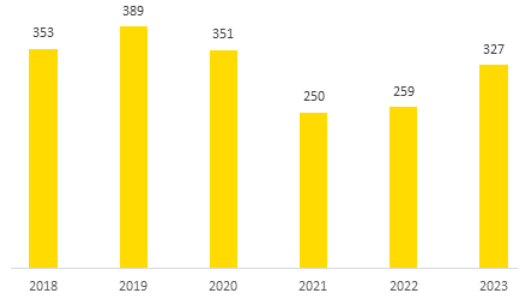


Figure 10⁵: Numbers of households exiting emergency accommodation in the Southwest to tenancies, per year

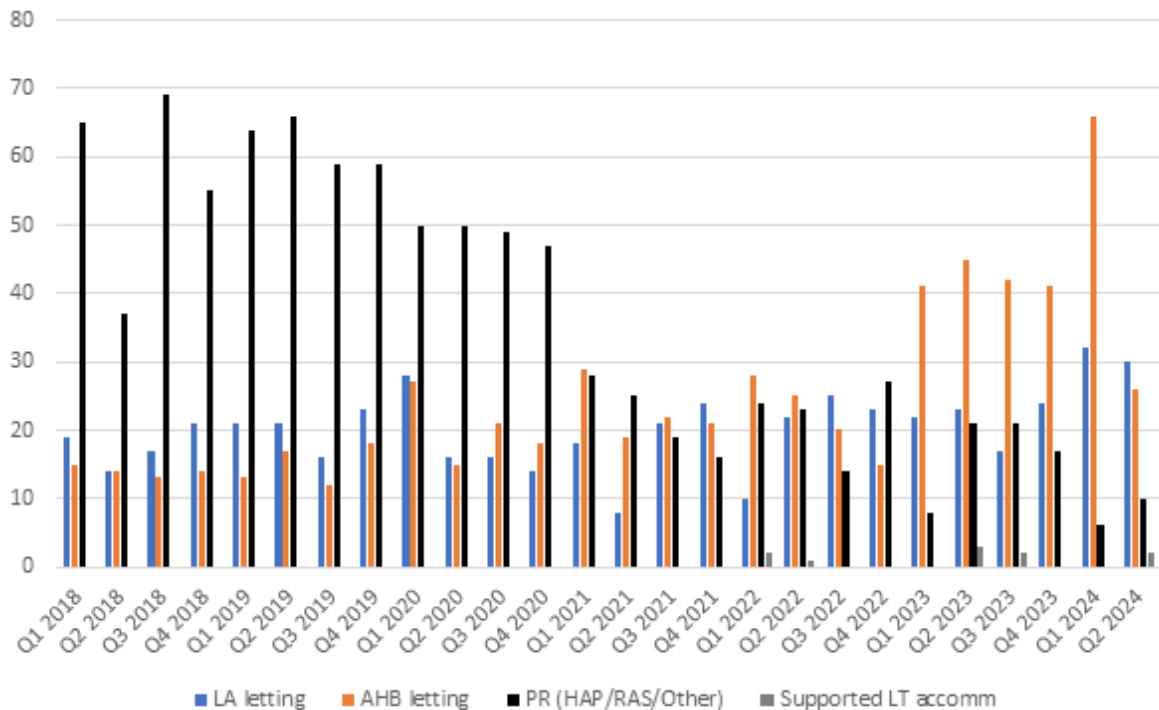


While there has been a recent increase in the number of households exiting emergency accommodation in the Southwest to tenancies, there have however been fewer exits to tenancies in the last three full years (2021 – 2023) compared to the three years prior (2018 – 2020).

There were 1,093 exits to tenancies in the three-year span 2018 – 2020 while exits to tenancies were 24% lower in the following three years, 2021 – 2023, when 836 households exited emergency accommodation in the Southwest to tenancies.

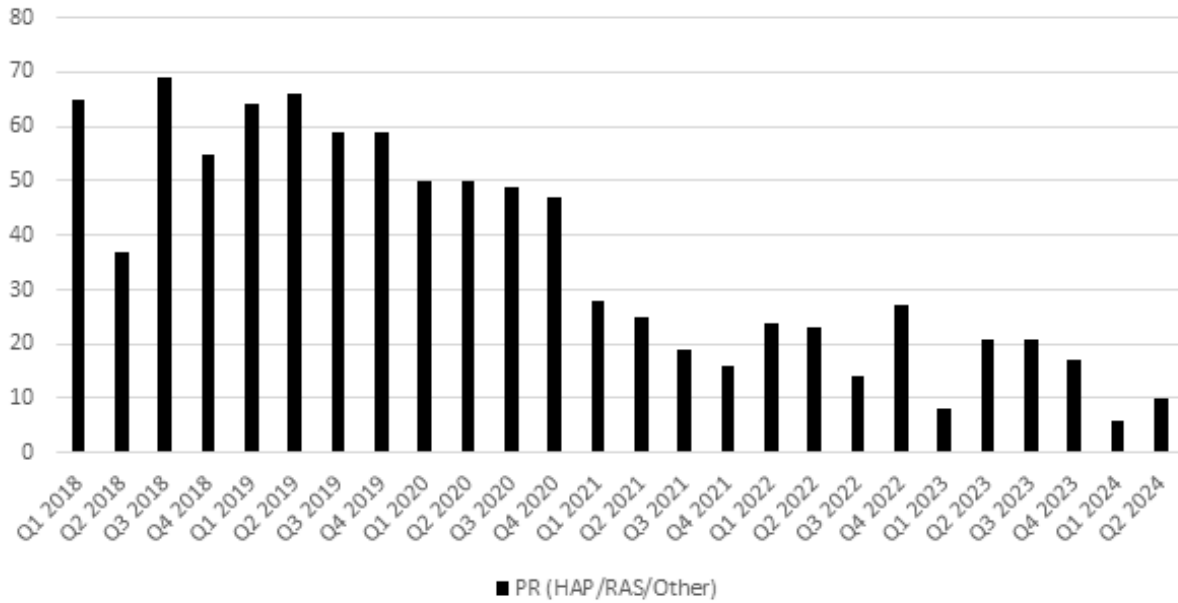
6.2 Exits to tenancies from emergency accommodation – types of tenancies

Figure 11⁵: Type of tenancy secured by households exiting emergency accommodation in the Southwest to tenancies, per quarter



⁵ The presentation of data in the quarterly Performance Reports relating to exits from emergency accommodation to tenancies changes from Q1 2022. Before then, data is presented as exits to tenancy 'units'. From then on, it is presented as 'household' exits to tenancies.

Figure 12⁵: Household tenancy exits from emergency accommodation in the Southwest to private rented accommodation, per quarter.



As Figures 11 and 12 indicate, the private rented (PR) sector was the main tenancy exit route for households in emergency accommodation in the Southwest from Q1 2018 to Q4 2020. During this time, an average of 59 households per quarter exited to private rented accommodation. From Q1 2021 to the most recent quarter, Q2 2024, exits to private rented accommodation fell to an average of 18 per quarter. From Q1 2021 the private rented sector was no longer the primary exit route but shared a place with Local Authority (LA) and Approved Housing Body (AHB) lettings.

In contrast to the fall in PR exits, the number of exits to AHB lettings increased notably in 2023 and the first quarter of 2024. However, with the exception of Q1 2024, quarterly exits to AHBs have been lower than earlier exits to PR; they have only partially replaced the PR exit route.

The number of households exiting to LA lettings has fluctuated between 8 and 32 per quarter, averaging 20 per quarter, from Q1 2018 to Q2 2024. The highest numbers of LA exits were recorded in the first two quarters of 2024, when 30 and 32 households respectively exited.

Overall, AHB and LA lettings are now the most likely tenancy exit route out of emergency accommodation in the Southwest, but not to the same extent as exits to PR housing at its peak.

“I’ve been referred to a housing body. They’re willing to house me. I’m just waiting for the viewing. As soon as I get the viewing I’ll be in in a week or so. I’m just waiting for it to come available. I can’t even explain how I feel really. Just delighted really. I’m just over the moon really. I’ll have my own space. Peace of mind. Try and get a bit of stability. My own quietness. The quiet!

I’d been searching for my own place, to try to rent, for months. I was applying on CBL (Choice Based Lettings) for a long time. I never thought I’d get my own place, ever. Never, ever. Like, you see people on the list (social housing waiting list) there for 15 years like and then I’m thinking, I’m a single man, you just have no... there’s no hope there. I’ve been in and out (of homeless services) since I’m about 18. Every time I come into homelessness, I see the same people, in the same place, in the same boat, through 10 years. And they never had hope of ever getting a place. That’s why I never had hope.

I was in an awful lot of places, other places. I’m not running anybody down like, it’s not the staff’s fault, it’s not anybody’s fault, it’s just the way things are, but you just get put into the hostel, you’re just stuck there, you just feel, I always felt, like I was just left there. Since I came to Cork Simon I’ve never been helped so much. There’s good support here like. I wouldn’t ever doubt them, like, they do help you, if you’re willing to be helped, they’ll help, like.”

Scott

7. PREVENTION IS BETTER...

- The recent increase in the number of households prevented from entering emergency accommodation in the Southwest through the Tenant-in-Situ scheme is promising.

7.1 Preventions from entering emergency accommodation

Figure 13: Number of households entering, and prevented from entering, emergency accommodation in the Southwest per quarter

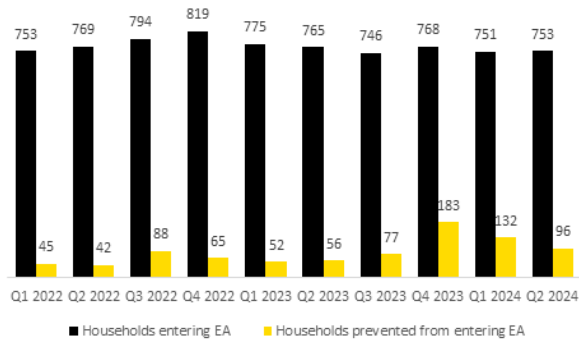
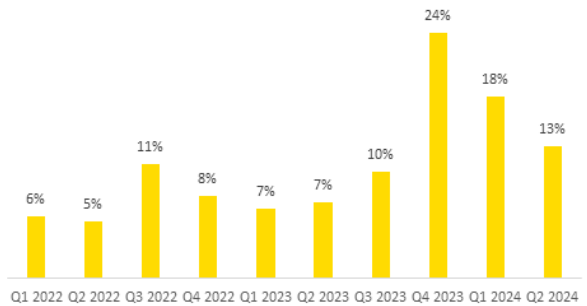


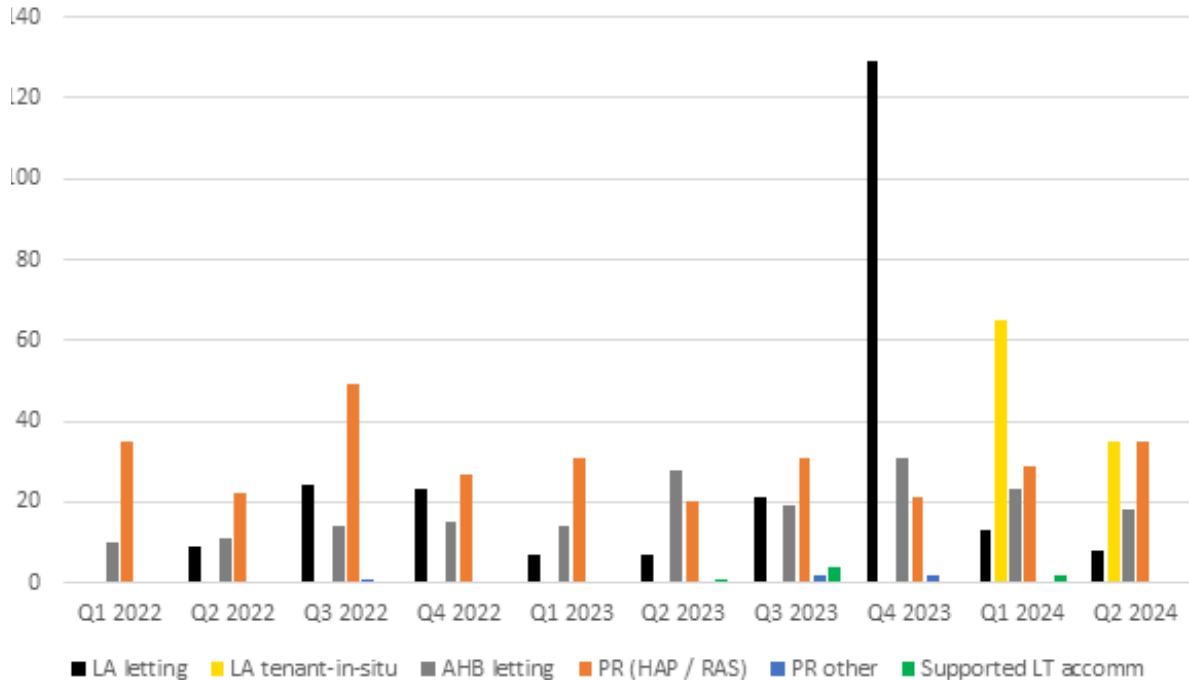
Figure 14: Households prevented from entering emergency accommodation as a percentage of entries to emergency accommodation in the Southwest per quarter



As Figures 13 and 14 show, there has been an increase in the number of households diverted from entering emergency accommodation in the Southwest in the last three quarters, compared to the seven quarters before. There was a significant increase in the number of households diverted in Q4 2023. While numbers diverted were lower in the next two quarters (Q1 and Q2 2024), they remained higher than numbers prior to Q4 2023.

7.2 Preventions from entering emergency accommodation – types of tenancies

Figure 15: Households prevented from entering emergency accommodation in the Southwest by housing type, per quarter.



Local Authority lettings are noted in the above chart as the housing type most associated with the large increase in Q4 2023 to the number of households diverted from entering emergency accommodation in the Southwest in that quarter. Since Q1 2024, the Performance Reports have included the Tenant-in-Situ scheme as a prevention type, labelling it 'LA - Tenant in Situ'. The Tenant in Situ Scheme allows Local Authorities to buy properties where tenants are facing eviction due to the sale of the property. The Scheme applies to tenants with a valid Notice of Termination, deemed at risk of homelessness and who qualify for social housing support. In the first six months of 2024, 100 households were prevented from entering emergency accommodation in the Southwest through the Tenant-in-Situ scheme (65 in Q1 2024 and 35 in Q2 2024).



Cork Simon
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