

Press Release

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RENT SUPPLEMENT CHANGES
ARE CAUSING EXTREME HARDSHIP

A new survey, aimed at assessing the impact of the Department of Social & Family Affairs' Rent Supplement Restrictions, has revealed that many people are now suffering extreme hardship as a result of the operation of the revised scheme.

In particular, the survey shows that the changes in eligibility for Rent Supplement are causing people to live in undesirable housing situations and that the housing 'safety net' for those experiencing severe housing deprivation has been removed.

The study, called 'Creating Crisis' was compiled by Brendon Buck of the Department of Planning & Development at the Dublin Institute of

Technology. It was launched today (Sept 27th) at the Mansion House, Dublin, by RTE's Prime Time presenter, Miriam O'Callaghan.

CentreCare (a project of CROSSCARE one of the major social care agencies in Dublin) and City Centre (Dublin) Citizens Information Service commissioned the survey which asks, in the absence of Rent Supplement, what alternatives do vulnerable people have?

Bryan Gavin, Information Officer with CentreCare, said that it was widely recognised that the rent supplement scheme was an essential social housing mechanism, through which low-income households could meet their accommodation needs within the private rented sector. "Our study was prompted by the significant changes in entitlement to Rent Supplement introduced by Mary Coughlan, the Minister for Social & Family Affairs, in the December 2003 Budget. The survey outlines cases studies which reveal that the changes have caused additional hardship and the creation of new crises for people".

Deirdre Casey, Development Manager of City Centre (Dublin) Citizens Information Service, said that the report shows that many

people in vulnerable situations and those at risk of homelessness have been refused support. The survey recommendations call for the restoration of short-term housing support for people in crisis and the restoration of discretion to Community Welfare Officers in cases where there are exceptional circumstances.

“In the absence of an adequate alternative source of support, the rent supplement scheme must remain in place as a short-term crisis measure for people in vulnerable situations”, Yvonne Fleming, Co-ordinator of CentreCare concluded.

A copy of the ‘Creating Crisis’ report is available from CentreCare or City Centre (Dublin) Citizens Information Service (see contact numbers below)

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