

## PROTECTING ASYLUM SEEKERS IN RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS

Asylum seekers in Ireland are accommodated on a full-board basis in residential institutions throughout the country, under a system called "Direct Provision." Over 50% of residents have been there for three years or more, despite the fact that these institutions were designed for short stays (of up to 6 months). More than one third of residents are children, who endure enforced poverty as a result.

Asylum seekers are not permitted to work, and they do not have access to training or education beyond a basic level. Residents are obliged to live on the periphery of society and can be transferred arbitrarily and with limited notice, which adds to the instability of their existence and their social exclusion.

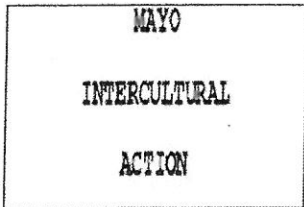
Studies have shown that residents in Direct Provision centres become institutionalised and demoralised, and many develop mental health problems as a result. Many believe that they will be transferred or punished if they complain, and they are afraid to do so even where their health or safety is jeopardised. Despite recurrent problems and complaints about the administration of these centres, residents do not have access to an independent complaints mechanism.

**We believe that the State should introduce independent monitoring and an independent complaints system to safeguard the health and welfare of Direct Provision residents – immediately.**

**We are concerned** that a third of the residents in Direct Provision centres are children, who are being forced to reside in an institutional environment in a situation of extreme poverty for periods of up to several years (with parents prevented from working to extricate their children from poverty).

**We are concerned** that the children of asylum seekers do not receive children's allowance payments.

**We are concerned** that asylum seekers do not have access to the labour market and training or education, even when their applications have been pending for 6 months and longer.



Tralee International Resource Centre



**We are concerned** that the living allowance of €19.10 per adult (€9.60 per child) paid to residents has been unchanged since 2001, despite the sharp rise in the cost of living in Ireland over those 10 years.

The Labour Party passed the following resolution at its Party Conference in 2010:

*Conference resolves that the current policy of dispersal and direct provision for asylum seekers be abolished on the grounds that it is inhumane, inflexible, costly and is incompatible with the State's obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights.*

Minister for Justice and Equality, then Deputy Alan Shatter TD, stated at a meeting of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 2010 that:

*The direct provision system was introduced as a cost saving for the State in the context of the amount spent on social welfare. The manner in which it operates should be subject to a fundamental review. I hope within the next two years, or preferably in the next six months, we will see Fine Gael in government. That review should take place and we need to see if there is a better way to deal with people.*

**We believe that the Government should take immediate steps to reform the system of direct provision.**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_, TD/ Senator,

We/ I share the concerns described here. We/ I also believe that the Government should introduce independent monitoring and an independent complaints system for the residents of direct provision *immediately*, and that it should take *immediate* steps to reform the system.

Name (individual or organisation):

Address:

Signature:

Date: