Accommodation of Aged Out Minors in RIA Accommodation Centres

The following policy has been agreed between the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) and the HSE in relation to the accommodation of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers who reach the age of 18 - "aged out minors".

RIA, a functional unit of the Immigration Division of the Department of Justice and Law Reform, is responsible for the accommodation of asylum seekers in accordance with the Government policy of direct provision and dispersal. Responsibility for accommodating unaccompanied asylum seekers under the age of 18 ("unaccompanied minors") falls to the HSE.

Statement of Policy

When an unaccompanied minor in the care of the HSE reaches 18 years of age ("aged out minor"), he or she may be referred by the HSE to the RIA for transfer to adult accommodation and service provision. In circumstances where the HSE deems such a person to be particularly vulnerable, the period in HSE care can be extended beyond 18 years of age at the HSE's discretion.

From 1 January, 2009 on, by agreement with the HSE, unaccompanied minors on reaching the aged of 18 years will, after being discharged from the care of the HSE Children and Families Services, be dispersed to RIA accommodation centres outside of Dublin, generally to family centres which have established links to HSE services and NGO supports.

The rationale behind the policy change agreed between RIA and the HSE is straightforward, viz:

a) it relieves the pressure in the Dublin area on bed space and, more importantly, on community services. Dublin's health, education, therapeutic and welfare services have long waiting times for first appointments and interventions. It has been RIA's experience over the years that asylum seekers have easier access to services outside the Dublin area where waiting times are considerably shorter. Given that aged out minors have particular needs, having been separated from family at a very young age, it is important that they can receive appropriate services in a timely fashion,

b) it reduces the negative influences - crime, drug abuse and so on - that the big city environment in Dublin can have on aged out minors, who have limited financial means and who have no family support.

c) it provides a standardised and equitable approach to all asylum seekers over the age of 18 availing of RIA accommodation, thus ensuring fairness.

The centres chosen by RIA will be suitable for this particular cohort of asylum seeker. In partnership with the HSE, NGOs and other service providers RIA will provide accommodation based on an individually assessed need. The guidelines RIA will follow in this regard are as follows:

1) Aged out minors will be accommodated in centres which are profiled by RIA as 'family centres'. However, the aged our minor may be accommodated in an all-male centre is he so requests it.

2) Where possible, aged out minors will be accommodated in towns and cities where there is easy access to education facilities and other support services e.g Cork, Limerick, Sligo, Galway, Waterford and Portlaoise. RIA will take into account representations made on grounds of education (but not 3rd Level), medical and /or welfare needs. It must be recorded here that, on occasion, pressure on RIA spaces may in some instances require aged out minors to be temporarily accommodated other than in the towns and cities cited.

Principal Officer
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