



Crosscare information and Advocacy Service

Key recommendations on Integration for newly recognised refugees and leave-to-remain residents

Welfare anomaly

People living in Direct Provision (DP) who are recognised as refugees or granted alternative status are required to leave within two weeks of getting status. At the same time even though people have recognised refugee status they are not entitled to full social welfare payments while they are in Direct Provision. Thus a trap is created making it very difficult for people to move on from Direct Provision successfully - this is exacerbated by the fact that it is not possible to access a rental deposit payment in advance of securing a lease agreement (which generally requires a deposit).

Extra barriers include: limited money for making phone-calls to landlords and transport to viewings, no former landlord reference, language barrier, racist discrimination by landlords, refusal of Rent allowance by majority of landlords in Dublin particularly, longer dependency on private rental market due to lower access to labour market, moving further out of towns/cities impeding access to facilities/schools/work etc.

Residents who feel pressurised into moving out of DP accommodation by the deadline set by RIA often become homeless, and they have further difficulties with accessing emergency accommodation by the Councils due to unavailability of emergency hostels and with accessing social welfare assistance as they are required to have proof of address.

Asylum seekers who have opted out of Direct Provision face difficulties in accessing social welfare on receipt of their permission to reside. They are required to provide proof of address and means which is problematic where they are being supported by friends.

Residents remaining in DP are effectively discriminated against in the processing of social welfare assistance where DP is assessed as 'means' and the standard €19.10 payment is continued to be issued without any change.

The effects are evident on mental health on people moving out of DP, suffering stress and isolation on top of existing health issues.

Recommendation

- Full social welfare payments should be provided to people living in Direct Provision who have been granted status. An extension of the two week time limit in Direct Provision coupled with access to rental deposits in advance would make the difficult move from Direct Provision to private rented more supported and less risky for a very vulnerable group of

people. Under Statutory Instrument 412/2007, Article 38 Payment in exceptional circumstances provides the Community Welfare Service with the provision to issue Supplementary Welfare Allowance payments, including rent deposits in advance in exceptional circumstances. This is being applied for example in the Rent Initiative Scheme for emergency hostel residents who are moving on to private rented. Deposit in advance and rent above the rent supplement cap is being issued to qualifying emergency hostel residents. This can be developed in the guidelines for CWS to include applicants who have received their permission to remain including those in DP and outside DP in order to allow them to move on more quickly and securely. The package would also serve as an incentive for a landlord to accept a former DP resident as a tenant.

Transitional support

People who are leaving Direct Provision to start a new life for themselves in Ireland have often experienced severe trauma and hardship in their own country. They will often be without family support and can struggle to effectively negotiate the different State services and systems. The level of support available to people who leave Direct Provision in such circumstances is wholly inadequate and must be urgently addressed if they are expected to integrate.

Recommendations

- Full adult weekly social welfare assistance for young aged-out minor adults from 18-24 years who have been granted residency. They are currently restricted to lower payments based on age (€100 per week). These adults do not have support from parents and are expected to survive on lower incomes than older adults, they are therefore at a disadvantage to their respective age cohort.
- The resettlement support offered to Programme Refugees and co-ordinated by the OPMI needs to be offered to all people leaving Direct Provision and those granted permission to reside who have opted out of DP— including settlement support, in particular accessing accommodation. This can include the provision of an Accommodation Officer for each Direct Provision Centre, particularly to assist more vulnerable groups such as women with children, aged out minors and older people.
- Funding for organisations on the ground that assist people exiting Direct Provision needs to be increased significantly in providing settlement support.
- People accessing mental health supports while in Direct Provision should not have these supports discontinued when they exit Direct Provision. Their mental health issues are not resolved following the granting of status and with the challenges of moving on they are in **fact exacerbated. Mental health supports are required immediately on leaving Direct Provision** with a handover from their supports to local supports in their new local area.