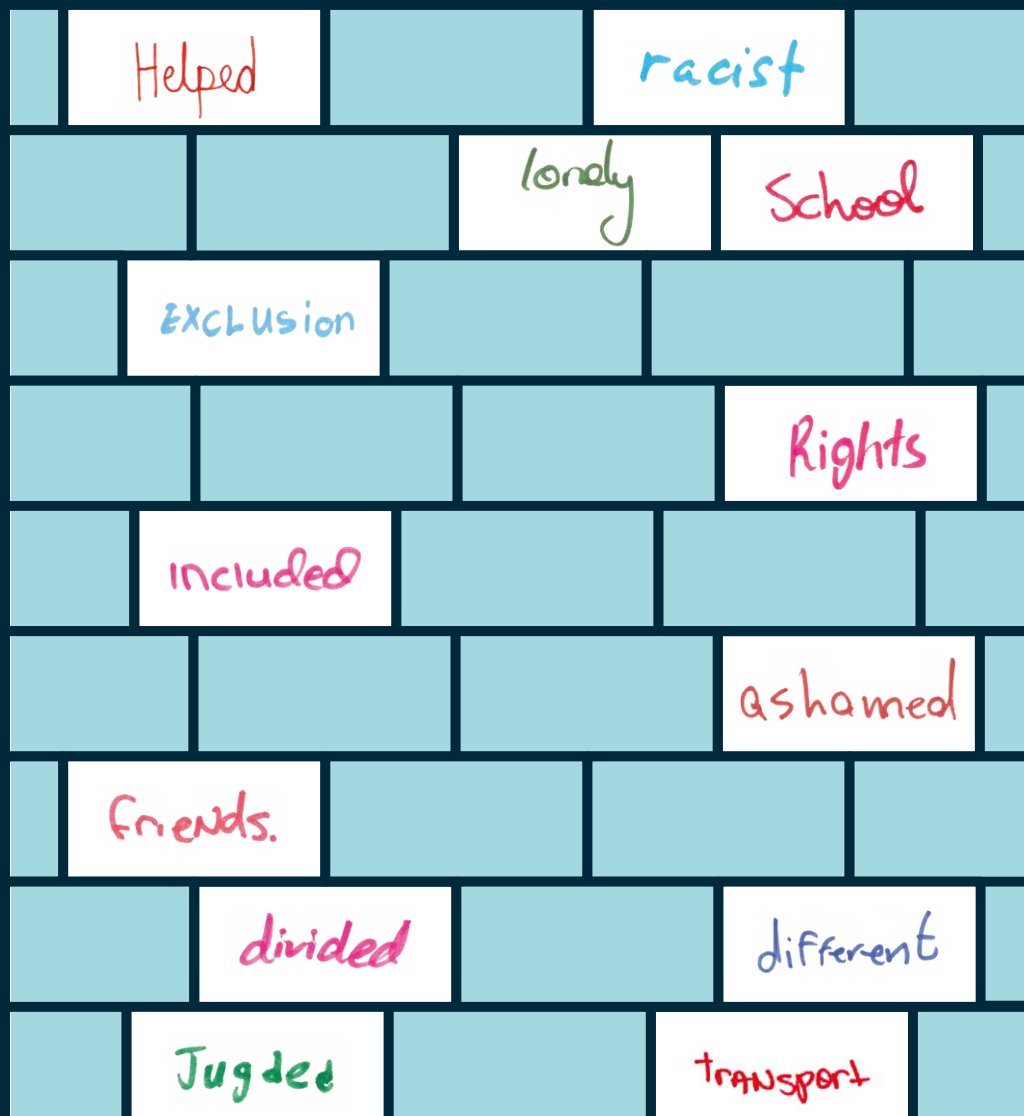


Direct Division

Children's views and experiences of living in Direct Provision

A report by the Ombudsman for Children's Office 2020



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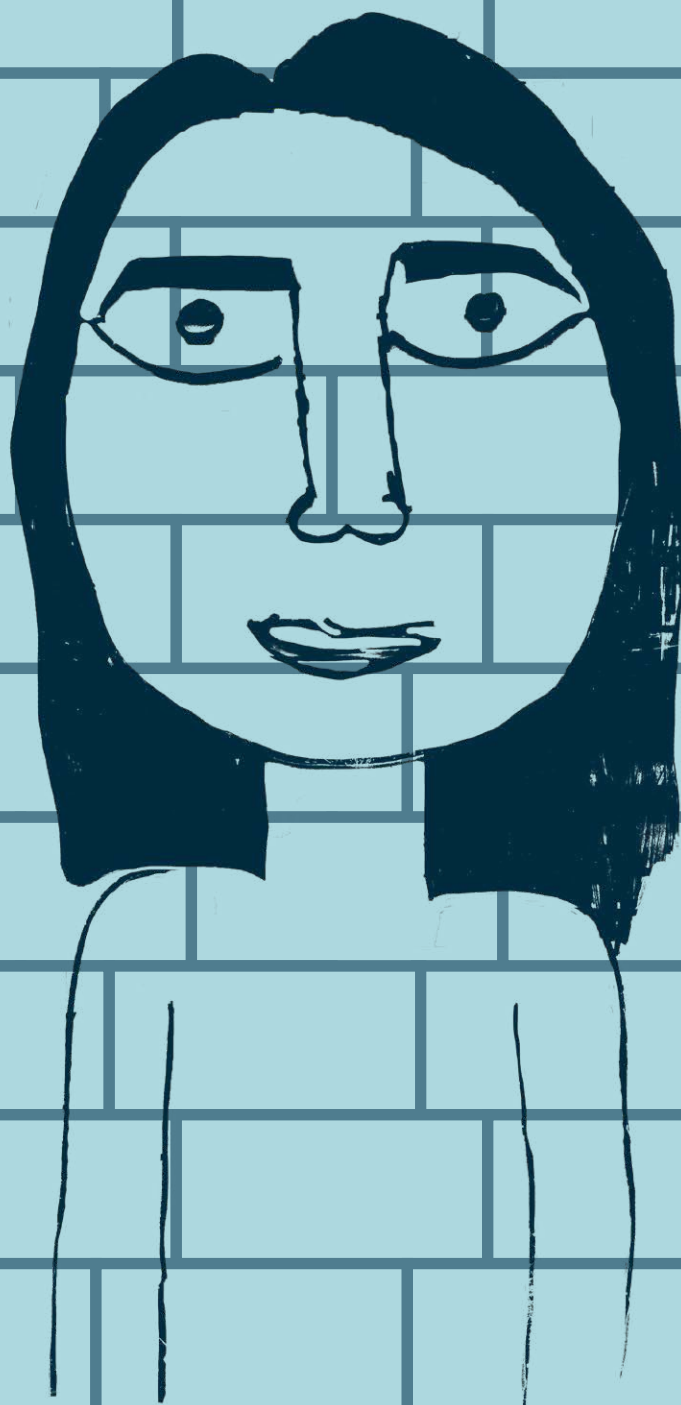


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Acknowledgements

The Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) would like to thank the International Protection Accommodation Service (formerly the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) and the Direct Provision accommodation centres that facilitated the OCO in undertaking this consultation. We would like to express our particular thanks to Dr Ann O'Kelly who worked closely with us throughout this consultation and the production of this report. We are also grateful to the staff of support agencies who gave up their time to accompany and support the children to take part in two one-day consultation events outside their centres. Our thanks go to Gansee Films, Splattervan and Roisin White and Alison Waters who worked with us on the creative outputs of this work. We would also like to thank Ballymun Regional Youth Resource (Reco) Centre, The Factory Southside Youthspace Limerick, and Henrietta Street School for their support with this project.

Our special thanks go to the children who participated in the consultation. We appreciate that to speak up when you are in a vulnerable position takes courage and a willingness to trust. Both were evident among the children throughout this consultation and have contributed enormously to the amount and richness of the data gathered.

To protect the anonymity of all involved we have made the decision not to name the centres where the children live.

Message from Dr Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children

Objective 3 of the Ombudsman for Children's Office Strategic Plan 2019-2021 states that *"We will influence positive change for and with children and young people in Ireland"*. Under this Objective we specifically noted that children living in Direct Provision accommodation needed positive change in the realisation of their rights. As part of that commitment we have undertaken this consultation to hear from children living in Direct Provision accommodation.

This consultation focused on children's views of their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, on their experience of inclusion and exclusion, and changes that would help them to feel accepted. The consultation moved beyond the private sphere of life within the accommodation centres and explored their experiences and views of inclusion and exclusion in school, their local community and wider Irish society. While not focusing on the internal conditions in their accommodation centres, many of the children's experiences and views of life in Ireland were shaped by living in Direct Provision accommodation. Therefore, accommodation was a central issue throughout the consultation.

Access to services such as education, housing and transport, as well as establishing friendships, taking part in community activities and being accepted in our wider society are things that many of us take for granted. However, children living in Direct Provision accommodation must learn how the systems in Ireland work and navigate these, often while learning a new language, and sometimes while dealing with trauma. In this consultation we wanted to find out what their experience of trying to find their way in Irish society was like, the challenges they face and the possible solutions that may help them. While the children who participated in this consultation do not comprise a representative sample of all children living in Direct Provision accommodation, a significant number of children – 73 from nine different centres - took part.

The findings presented here are quite stark. Within their accommodation centres, lack of space and privacy were often cited as problems, with children reporting that there were cameras everywhere, and that their rooms were often entered and examined by staff with no notice. All of this prevented the children from feeling that they lived like their Irish peers. While many children struggled to do so, some of them identified a range of things that helped them to feel included and a part of their schools, communities and wider society. Examples of these include playing sports for their school teams or representing their school in events like fashion shows, musicals and debating team. Where schools took steps to respect the children's religion and culture, this was very much appreciated. This includes schools which permit the wearing of the hijab, provide prayer rooms, provide Halal food and hold international and multi-cultural

days. In the wider community, a small number of the children reported playing for local sports teams and being part of local youth groups with the support of the community organisations.

Like most children, school is an important aspect of the children's lives. However, many felt discriminated against in the school. They frequently experienced the use of racist slurs such as the "N Word" and taunts of being terrorists if identified as being of the Muslim faith. There were reports of bullying related to race, religion and nationality in school. Social media was frequently used to engage in such bullying. Teachers were often seen by the children as not standing up for them when their peers were expressly or covertly racist or sectarian. Children also reported that some teachers expressed racist or discriminatory sentiments themselves, or were covertly racist. Teachers were reported as knowing little about what it meant to be an asylum seeker or what living in Direct Provision accommodation is like and the restrictions it placed on the children.

Many children also experienced discrimination in their local communities, feeling that the colour of their skin was how many Irish people judged them. They talked too about hearing racist comments such as "go back to your country" and they expressed fear when they heard about communities protesting about new Direct Provision centres. These children wanted to inform Irish people and communities about the hurt and pain and terror they experienced in their home countries because they feel that many in this country do not understand the rationale for them coming here and seeking asylum.

Many of the children felt isolated and different due to the geographical location of the centres they were staying in. This was exacerbated by the poor transport service available to them. They were often confined to just going to school and returning straight after it finished, with very few or no opportunities to take part in afterschool or community activities. Difficulty in asking for lifts was often linked by the children to their sense of stigma and fear of being judged about where they live, why they live there and the restrictions this places on them. When some of the children revealed where they lived they frequently felt targeted by their peers.

The children made many suggestions for changes, some very simple and small, others large and systemic, that would help to improve their lives in school, the community and wider society. Most prevalent among these were a faster process for determining their immigration status and action to counteract and stamp out racism. While living in Direct Provision accommodation, almost all of the children wanted more living space, more privacy and greater access to transport that would allow them greater freedom. Many wanted an end to centre-based, communal accommodation and a move to own-door housing in the wider community.

However, many of the changes sought were smaller and simpler. These included footpaths from the centre to the local town to make walking there safe and more information about community events that they could get involved in.

The final part of our consultation asked the children to write messages to Ireland, to tell the country the most significant thing they wanted Irish people to know. Many of the children wrote about loving Ireland, of feeling safe here, of being grateful for the protection they have received. Others wrote challenging messages, asking to be treated as a person not a colour, and seeking greater understanding.

This consultation took place before the world knew anything of Covid-19 and the challenges this would present. While lockdown and self-isolation has been extremely difficult for many, it is without doubt that it has highlighted and exacerbated many of the challenges faced by children living in Direct Provision accommodation.

As an extension to the consultation we asked the children to talk, write or draw about their experiences of life during lockdown. Unsurprisingly boredom was a common theme, but one child poignantly told us *'I want the people in Ireland to know that the same way they feel about not having any freedom, not to go and visit their friends and family or travel since the pandemic, is the same way I have felt living in Direct Provision for five plus years.'*

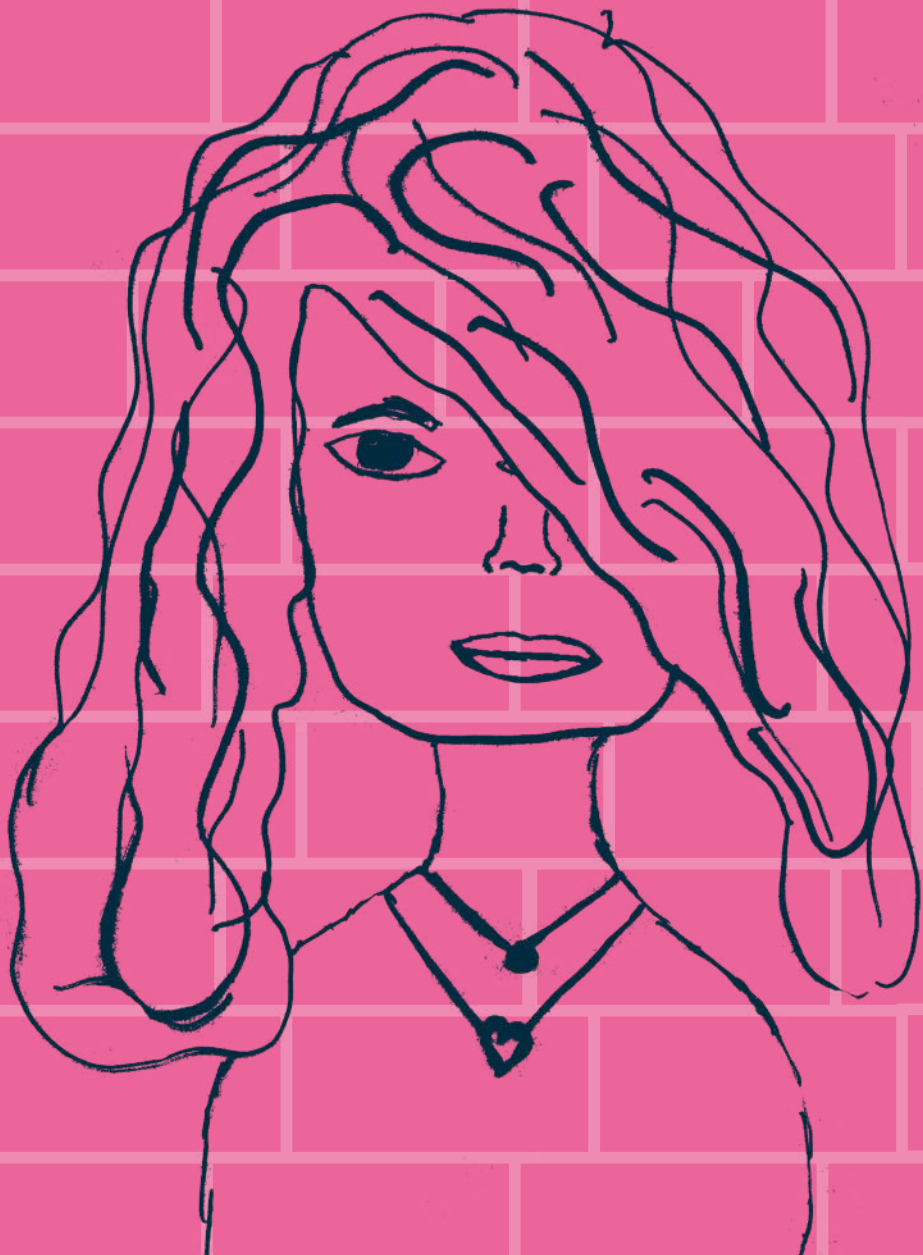
The policy context in which this report was written is one that is, hopefully, open to the possibility and potential of change. New political commitments to address and indeed end Direct Provision are to be welcomed and I hope that these will be honoured in the quickest possible timeframe. Nonetheless, in the interim and inevitable transition period, the issues highlighted by the children here must be considered to ensure that for as long as the current system remains, the Direct Division they experience is addressed and remedied. This is the focus many of the priority actions that we identify in this report. However, policy makers and service providers also need to consider the wider systemic issues, such as racism and sectarian discrimination, that ending Direct Provision on its own will not address. Finally, it is essential that whatever replacement system of provision is introduced, the lessons these children provide us with are heeded and previous mistakes are not repeated.

Niall Mulhony



Section 1 –

Background & Context



1.1 About the Ombudsman for Children's Office

The Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) is an independent statutory body, which was established in 2004 under the *Ombudsman for Children Act 2002*. Under the 2002 Act (as amended), the Ombudsman for Children has two core statutory functions:

- to promote the rights and welfare of children up to the age of 18 years
- to examine and investigate complaints made by or on behalf of children about the administrative actions, or inactions, of public bodies that have had, or may have had, an adverse effect on a child.

The Ombudsman for Children reports directly to the Oireachtas in relation to the exercise of these statutory functions.

1.2 About the OCO's consultation

In our Strategic Plan 2019-2021, the OCO made a commitment to continue to pursue the progressive realisation of the rights of vulnerable groups of children. Recognising that children living in Direct Provision accommodation are among the most vulnerable in our society, our Strategic Plan committed to paying particular attention to them.

Carried out during the latter half of 2019, our consultation with children living in Direct Provision accommodation was undertaken in light of this strategic priority and the Ombudsman for Children's duties under section 7 of the 2002 Act to:

- consult with children under 18 years of age
- highlight issues relating to children's rights and welfare that are of concern to children themselves
- encourage public bodies to develop policies, practices and procedures that are designed to promote the rights and welfare of children
- advise on matters relating to the rights and welfare of children

Background, aim and objectives of the consultation

Direct Provision was introduced in Ireland in 2000 to provide welfare for families and children awaiting decisions on asylum applications. It was intended to provide short-term support for asylum seekers, providing them with accommodation, food and a minimum income. Twenty years on, the average length of stay in Direct Provision is just

under two years (23 months), with some families remaining in this system for many years while their asylum application is processed.¹

In addition to being provided with accommodation and food, children and young people living in Direct Provision can attend pre-school, primary and second level education, are entitled to ancillary education services such as school transport, and to a medical card to help with their health care needs. Residents are not entitled to receive social welfare payments, but receive a subsistence payment of €38.80 a week for each adult and €29.80 per week for each dependent child. Direct Provision is predicated on the fact that those seeking international protection could not take up employment or become self-employed. Following a Supreme Court ruling in February 2018, it is now possible for adults in Direct Provision to legally work under certain conditions.

The Final Report of the Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers², commonly known as the McMahon Report, was published in July 2015. This report highlighted a number of problems with the Direct Provision system. The report made 170 recommendations aimed at improving Direct Provision and many of these were in respect of families and children. One recommendation of the McMahon Report was that the Ombudsman for Children should be able to take complaints made by or on behalf of children in the centres. Following express confirmation by the Department of Justice and Equality in April 2017 as to our remit, our complaint handling service was opened to children living in Direct Provision.

In 2017, we began a programme of visits to Direct Provision centres to raise awareness of children's rights and the OCO among adults and children. From these visits it became apparent that the children had much to say but few opportunities to express their views on living in Ireland.

The purpose of this consultation was to give children an opportunity to share their views about, and experiences of, living in Ireland.³ The consultation involved meeting children who, at the time of the consultation, were living in Direct Provision accommodation. This report provides an account of children's experiences of living in Ireland, provides insights into their past journeys and hopes for their future, and amplifies the voices of children who are seldom heard.

1 Available at <http://dorasluimni.org/direct-provision/>

2 Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers, Final Report, July 2015. Available at: <http://justice.ie/en/JELR/Report%20to%20Government%20on%20Improvements%20to%20the%20Protection%20Process,%20including%20Direct%20Provision%20and%20Supports%20to%20Asylum%20Seekers.pdf/Files/Report%20to%20Government%20on%20Improvements%20to%20the%20Protection%20Process,%20including%20Direct%20Provision%20and%20Supports%20to%20Asylum%20Seekers.pdf>

3 The consultation provided insights into children's views and experiences but it is not intended to be representative of either all Direct Provision accommodation or all of the children living in them.

The overall aim of the consultation was to hear and highlight the experiences and perspectives of children living in Direct Provision accommodation on living in Ireland. In delivering this aim, we worked to achieve the following objectives:

- to engage directly with children aged between 12 and 17 years of age who live in Direct Provision accommodation
- to support young people to reflect on and share their experiences of living in Ireland
- to enable children to identify changes they believe would improve their current and future life in Ireland
- to highlight young people's views and ideas to policy-makers and practitioners working with children seeking international protection.

Planning and implementing the consultation

According to RIA statistics⁴, there were 39 Direct Provision accommodation centres in Ireland at the end of 2018. This remained the case in 2019 when this consultation was undertaken. These are located in 17 counties. Only 3 of the centres are purpose built to provide Direct Provision accommodation. The remaining 36 originally had a different purpose such as hotels, guest houses, B&Bs, convents, nursing homes and holiday accommodation.⁵ Seven of the centres are state owned with services such as catering and maintenance provided by private companies. The remainder are both owned and operated by private companies. While all of the centres operate under the auspices of RIA, there is considerable variation between them, making it impossible to identify a 'typical' accommodation centre. A small number are located in urban centres, with many more in rural settings. Some provide apartment or house-type living accommodation with cooking facilities; others consist of rooms with meals provided by the service provider. During our consultation we visited a variety of Direct Provision accommodation centres in both rural and urban locations.

The OCO sought and secured the support of the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) for this consultation at an early stage. IPAS provided us with a list of the Direct Provision accommodation centres with children and the age breakdown of those children. This allowed us to identify those with the highest numbers of children aged 1 to 18 years. When the centres were selected IPAS wrote to each one asking them to support and engage in the consultation.

The consultation was undertaken between June and November 2019. In selecting centres for the consultation the number of children in the 12-17 years age group was a critical consideration. In addition, a cross section of accommodation centres on the basis of type of accommodation provided, state and private ownership and geographical locations was sought.

4 Available at <http://www.ria.gov.ie/en/RIA/November%202018%20-%20Final.pdf/Files/November%202018%20-%20Final.pdf>

5 Available at <http://www.ria.gov.ie/en/RIA/Centre%20Dispersal%20&%20Breakdown%2006-2017.pdf/Files/Centre%20Dispersal%20&%20Breakdown%2006-2017.pdf>

Seventy-three children from nine accommodation centres across the country took part. These centres included state and privately owned centres that offered different accommodation arrangements in both urban and rural settings.

We identified ten possible accommodation centres for inclusion in the consultation. Contact was made with each of these in May and June 2019. Children in nine of these ten centres were interested in and went on to participate in the consultation. A designated liaison person from each centre assisted with the coordination of visits by OCO staff. Information sheets for centre managers, parents and children, as well as consent and assent forms were distributed to the selected centres.

The specific locations of the Direct Provision accommodation centres that participated in this consultation are not identified in this report to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. All of the views expressed during the consultation have been anonymised and identifying information has been removed from the report.

Who was involved?

Through the consultation the OCO engaged directly with 73 children from 12 to 17 years of age. These children came to Ireland from a wide variety of countries across Europe, Africa and Asia and had been in Ireland for durations from a few months to over eight years.

What was involved?

The consultation process involved three visits to each accommodation centre as follows.

- On the first visit to the Direct Provision accommodation centre we met with the staff member who agreed to liaise with us and other staff, parents and children. The overall purpose of these visits was to introduce our staff and our office, to explain the overall aims and objects of the consultation, to outline the how, when and where of the consultation sessions, to obtain parental consent and children's assent for their participation and to assure them that we would protect their identity and privacy. These initial meetings were vital in securing support for the consultation and beginning to build trust in the process among both parents and children.
- During our second visit we undertook the main consultation sessions. These took the form of focus groups with the participants. Where there were small numbers of children, these worked together through each of the activities and discussions. Where there were larger numbers of children, a combination of large and smaller group work was used. At the start of each consultation session we provided additional information about the purpose of the project. Any questions the participants had were addressed and assurances given regarding confidentiality. An open dialogue and participative

approach to gathering information was taken by the consultation team. Each session was opened with a number of ice breakers that aimed to introduce participants to each other and to the consultation team and to put participants more at ease. Despite living in the same accommodation centre for significant amounts of time, this was the first time that many of the participants had met each other. Translation support attended a number of sessions to help children to participate in their first language.

The consultation sessions took the following format.

- An introduction to children's rights through a brief talk, a short video presentation and questions and answers.
- The substantive rights of the UNCRC were put up on the walls and participants were asked to select the right(s) that was most significant to them. This was followed by a facilitated group discussion about why they chose the right(s) they did.
- Using stickers relating to different rights, participants worked in facilitated groups to talk about which rights they feel they have in Ireland and which they don't.
- The children were then encouraged to discuss their experiences and views on their inclusion in Ireland across four domains: the Direct Provision accommodation centre, school, community and wider society.
- Following this, the children shared their views and experiences of exclusion in the above four domains.
- Children then identified what they felt would improve their inclusion and combat any exclusion they experienced.
- Finally, the participants were asked to think about what their key message to the government or wider Irish society would be with regard to their experiences in Ireland to date.

The opportunity to meet with the consultation team for a one-to-one interview was offered to all participants to further explore their experiences and views or to talk about these outside the group setting. However, only two participants undertook such interviews.

- Our third visit to the Direct Provision centres took place following an initial review of the data gathered. This allowed us to gain clarity and check the accuracy of what we had recorded during the consultation. All of the children who took part in the initial consultation session were invited to these sessions. However, some children and their families had moved to other Direct Provision accommodation centres, moved out of Direct Provision altogether and some children were busy or had decided not to take part in the return visits. These visits gave both the OCO team and the children involved time and space to reflect on the information gathered and views expressed.

In addition to the above, all of the participants were offered the opportunity to take part in an away day to work on creative outputs that would further allow them to express their views and share their experience of life in Ireland. Two away days were held on Saturdays in October and November. One was held in Dublin and one in Limerick to give participants from all of the centres the opportunity to attend. With support from volunteers from various local services, 47 of the children came to these away days. They worked through various art activities and conducted recorded interviews with film makers to further explore and express their experiences and views on life in Ireland.

1.3 Context for the consultation

Direct Provision in Ireland

The Irish State has obligations under International and European Law to accept and determine applications for international protection. Ireland acceded to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1956 and to its 1967 Protocol in 1968.⁶ In doing so, Ireland committed to accept applications for asylum, to determine these applications, and to give certain rights to individuals granted refugee status. The EU Qualification Directive⁷ lays out the minimum standards to qualify for subsidiary protection and places an obligation on Ireland to determine if an asylum seeker qualifies for subsidiary protection.⁸

For those refused asylum and subsidiary protection, Ireland can also offer Leave or Permission to Remain to asylum seekers under Irish law.⁹ This includes Permission to Remain under Section 49 of the International Protection Act 2015, Leave to Remain following a decision not to make a deportation order pursuant to Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999, and Permission to Remain pursuant to Section 4 of the Immigration Act 2004.¹⁰ Each of these types of permission is granted on behalf of the

6 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Geneva (28 July 1951). Available at <https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/5d9ed32b4> and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, New York, (31 January 1967). Available at <https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/5d9ed66a4>

7 Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 on *Minimum Standards for the Qualification and Status of Third Country Nationals or Stateless Persons as Refugees or as Persons who otherwise need International Protection and the content of the Protection Granted*. Available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32004L0083&from=en>

8 Under the International Protection Act 2015, subsidiary protection can be granted to a person (a) who is not a national of a Member State of the European Union, (b) who does not qualify as a refugee, (c) in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that he or she, if returned to his or her country of origin, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm and who is unable or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, and (d) who is not excluded under section 12 of the Act from being eligible for such protection.

9 Groarke, S and Brazil, P, *National Statuses Granted for Protection Reasons in Ireland*, ESRI Research Series Number 96, (January 2020), p.iii. Available at <https://www.esri.ie/pubs/RS96.pdf>

10 Ibid, pp.36-49.

Minister for Justice and Equality and specifies the conditions under which the leave is granted and the duration for which the holder can remain in Ireland.¹¹

While awaiting decisions on their applications, all asylum seekers (other than separated children, who are taken into the care of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency) are offered accommodation in Direct Provision Centres where they are provided with full board accommodation and certain support services.¹² Living in Direct Provision accommodation is not mandatory, and many people seeking international protection reside in the community with family or friends. In April 2020, there were 3,169 pending applications for international protection for people who were not living in accommodation provided by the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS). Of these, 472 (15%) were children.¹³ However, Direct Provision is the only State provided accommodation for asylum seekers.¹⁴

Figures provided to the OCO by IPAS at the beginning of March 2020 show that there were 7,668 people, including 2,093 children, seeking international protection in Ireland and residing in Direct Provision facilities or emergency accommodation. Of these, 6,035 are living in Direct Provision accommodation. Almost one-third of these (1,789 or 30%) are children. However, because Direct Provision accommodation is now at full capacity, 1,633 people seeking protection here were residing in emergency accommodation, including hotels and B&Bs.¹⁵ Just under one-fifth (304 or 19%) of those living in emergency accommodation are children.¹⁶ Based on the above figures provided by IPAS, this means that over 80% of children seeking protection here are living in either Direct Provision or emergency accommodation.

Direct Provision does not have a legislative basis and is based on a number of administrative decisions and ministerial circulars.¹⁷ When established in 2000, it was anticipated that asylum seekers would spend no more than six months in Direct Provision centres while awaiting decisions regarding their applications.¹⁸ However, many asylum seekers have spent much longer periods of time in these centres, in some cases years.¹⁹

As of March 2020, the average length of stay in Direct Provision is 23 months.²⁰ It should also be noted that, in March 2020, approximately 1,018 former asylum seekers who have been granted refugee status, subsidiary protection or permission to remain in Ireland

11 Ibid, p.56.

12 Reception and Integration Agency, Background. Available at <http://www.ria.gov.ie/en/RIA/Pages/Background>

13 Figures obtained directly from International Protection Accommodation Services in April 2020.

14 Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, Report on *Direct Provision and the International Protection Application Process*, (December 2019), p.W. Available at https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_justice_and_equality/reports/2019/2019-12-12_report-on-direct-provision-and-the-international-protection-application-process_en.pdf

15 Ibid.

16 International Protection Accommodation Services, *supra* note 12.

17 Thornton, L. 'Time to legislate for Direct Provision system for asylum seekers', (5 August 2013), Irish Times. Available at <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/oireachtas/time-to-legislate-for-direct-provision-system-for-asylum-seekers-1.1484416>

18 Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, *supra* note 14, p.10.

19 Ibid.

20 Figures obtained directly from *International Protection Accommodation Services* in March 2020.

remain living in Direct Provision as they are among the many families who are unable to find suitable and affordable accommodation due to the current housing crisis.²¹

International Standards

When Ireland ratified the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**²² in 1992, it made a commitment under international law to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children set out in the Convention for all children under the age of 18 living in Ireland. These rights apply to all children in Ireland, regardless of their nationality or immigration status. These rights include the Convention's four general principles, which are integral to the realisation of children's rights:

- Article 2 provides that all children must be able to enjoy their rights without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of their circumstances or those of their parents/guardians.
- Article 3 requires children's best interests to be treated as a primary consideration in all actions concerning them.
- Article 6 recognises children's right to life, survival and development. In this regard, States are expected to interpret 'development' as a holistic concept encompassing all aspects of children's development and are obliged to provide optimal conditions for childhood.²³
- Article 12 provides for children's right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them and for due weight to be given to children's views, in accordance with their age and maturity.

The rights of children set out under the UNCRC are wide-ranging and are to be understood as universal, inalienable, indivisible and interdependent. Among the ways in which children's rights under the UNCRC can be grouped is under the following headings:

- **Survival and development rights** recognise the conditions necessary for children's survival and full development. They include the right to adequate food, shelter, education, healthcare, rest, play and recreation, cultural activities, access to information, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

21 Dáil Éireann Debate, Written Answers, Direct Provision Data, 3293/20 (5 March 2020). Available at <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2020-03-05/407/?highlight%5B0%5D=direct&highlight%5B1%5D=provision&highlight%5B2%5D=direct&highlight%5B3%5D=provision&highlight%5B4%5D=direct&highlight%5B5%5D=provision&highlight%5B6%5D=direct&highlight%5B7%5D=provision>

22 United Nations, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

23 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment No.5: General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child* (2003). CRC/CGC/2003/5, p.4. Available at https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fGC%2f2003%2f5&Lang=en

- **Protection rights** provide for children's protection from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and cruelty. These rights include special protections identified for asylum seeking and refugee children as well as rehabilitation for children who have suffered abuse, exploitation or trafficking; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflict.
- **Participation rights** include children's right to freedom of expression, information and association and provide for children's right to express their views freely in relation to all matters affecting them and to have due weight given to their views, in accordance with their age and maturity.

A child's status as an asylum seeker, or the fact they are resident in a Direct Provision centre, does not diminish their entitlement to their rights under the UNCRC. Nonetheless, recognising that asylum seeking children are a particularly vulnerable group, Article 22 of the UNCRC requires State Parties to take appropriate measures to ensure that a child seeking refugee status, or who has been granted refugee status, receives appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of the applicable rights set out in the Convention as well as other international human rights instruments the State has signed up to.

Also of particular relevance is Article 27, which provides that State Parties to the Convention "*recognise the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development*". While parents or others responsible for a child have primary responsibility to secure, within their abilities and financial capabilities, the conditions of living necessary for the child's development, States are required to take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and, in cases of need, to provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing.

In 2016, the **United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child** (the Committee) examined Ireland's progress in fulfilling its obligations to children under the UNCRC. In its Concluding Observations the Committee recommended that "*the State party strengthen its measures to ensure that children in an asylum-seeking or refugee situation are ensured the same standards of and access to support services as Irish children. The Committee urges the State party to ensure independent inspections of all refugee accommodation centres.*"²⁴ The Committee also recommended that:

- asylum and refugee accommodation centres should have facilities and recreation areas suitable for young children and families
- provision should be made for adequate child protection services; education for children; appropriate clothing and quality food for

24 United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Ireland*, (2016), CRC/C/IRL/CO/3-4, para.66. Available at <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPrICAqhKb7yhsvOufvUWRUJILHLHKqpXZxUGOt-zQF0l%2B37QzAKosbh7yc40d4J3lYnFaWf0Egu6J99RK6Y%2FTHjpped5r1H3f3KQliFieFkoeAPALAwKpbZz>

children, including culturally appropriate food for children of minority faiths, and, where possible, residents should be allowed to store and cook their own food.²⁵

Ireland ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in 2000. Ireland's combined fifth to ninth reports under this Convention were examined by the CERD Committee in December 2019 and the Committee's Concluding Observation were published in January 2020.²⁶

With regard to the processing of applications for international protection applications, the Committee repressed concern about the backlog of applications and the resultant *"excessive waiting time in the application process, despite a decreasing trend since the introduction of a single application procedure"*²⁷ and recommended that Ireland should *"expedite the processing of applications with a view to delivering the decision within six months"*.²⁸

The CERD Committee also expressed a number of concerns *"at the continuous failure of the State party to provide adequate accommodation for asylum seekers despite its ongoing efforts"*.²⁹ In particular, the Committee highlighted the length of time that people spent in Direct Provision accommodation, the inadequate nature of this accommodation and the impact of this on resident's mental health and family life.³⁰ Additionally, the Committee highlighted what it referred to as *"the extensive use of emergency accommodation"* because Direct Provision accommodation had reached capacity and the housing crisis, the substandard living conditions of emergency accommodation and the lack of services and supports provided to those in this type of accommodation.³¹ In addressing these issues the Committee urged Ireland to develop an alternative reception model and to phase out the current system of Direct Provision.³² The Committee made the following recommendations while alternatives to the current reception provisions and Direct Provision system are being developed:

- Improve living conditions in existing Direct Provision centres and reduce the length of stay in these
- Set up clear standards of reception conditions for Direct Provision centres
- Regulate and inspect the operation of Direct Provision centres and hold those responsible accountable in case of a breach of standards

25 United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Ireland*, (2016), CRC/C/IRL/CO/3-4, para.66. Available at <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPRiCAqhKb7yhsvOufvUWRUJLHlHKqpXZxUGOt-zQF0l%2B37QzAKosbh7yc40d4J3lynFaWf0Egu6J99RK6Y%2FTHjped5r1H3f3KQliFieFkoeAPALAwKpbZz>

26 Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination Concluding observations on the combined fifth to ninth reports CERD/C/IRL/CO/5-9. Available at https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2fC%2fIRL%2fCO%2f5-9&Lang=en

27 Ibid, Para 35(a).

28 Ibid, Para 36(a).

29 Ibid, Para 37.

30 Ibid, Para 37(a).

31 Ibid, Para 37(c).

32 Ibid, Para 38.

- Stop the use of emergency accommodation as soon as possible and develop a contingency planning framework to effectively respond to capacity pressures.³³

The Concluding Observations also addressed the issue of sectarianism in the education system. In this regard the CERD Committee requested that Ireland promote diversity and tolerance of different faiths in the education system and monitor instances of discrimination on the basis of religion.³⁴

At a European Level the **EU Recast Reception Conditions Directive** identifies ‘minors’, that is, children aged under 18, as a vulnerable group and, under Article 23, additional rights and protections are afforded to them.³⁵ These additional rights, which reflect many of the rights contained in the UNCRC, include:

- The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in implementing the provisions of the Directive, including in the allocation of accommodation.
- A standard of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development must be ensured.
- The following factors should be considered when assessing the best interests of the child:
 - family reunification possibilities;
 - the child’s well-being and social development, taking into particular consideration the child’s background;
 - safety and security considerations, in particular where there is a risk of the child being a victim of human trafficking;
 - the views of the child in accordance with his or her age and maturity.
- Children should have access to leisure activities, including play and recreational activities appropriate to their age within accommodation centres and to open-air activities.
- Access to rehabilitation services for children who have been victims of any form of abuse, neglect, exploitation, torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, or who have suffered from armed conflicts, should be provided, appropriate mental health care should be developed and qualified counselling provided when needed.

33 Ibid, Para 38 (a-c).

34 Ibid, Para 30.

35 Article 23 of Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection. Available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013L0033&from=EN>

Developments in Irish Legislation

On 6 July 2018 Ireland adopted the **European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018**³⁶ (the 2018 Regulations) which gave effect to the EU Recast Reception Conditions Directive outlined above. As with the EU Directive, the Irish 2018 Regulations recognise children as a vulnerable group. They provide that when determining where a child should live, the Minister for Justice and Equality must ensure the allocated centre is suitable to meet all of the child's needs and allow them to avail of the benefits to which they are entitled under the Regulations.³⁷

The Irish 2018 Regulations also reflect the consideration of the specific needs of children contained in the EU Directive. Therefore, they provide that the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in the implementation of the Regulations and that the factors listed in the EU Directive, as well as the views of the child, need to be considered in assessing the child's best interests. The Regulations also provide for access for a child to primary and post-primary education in the same manner to Irish citizen children and that support services and language supports should be provided as necessary.³⁸

However, it is notable that the 2018 Regulations do not make any specific reference to rehabilitation services for children or to the recreational needs of asylum seeking children, either within their accommodation centres or in their community. The need for recreational spaces for children, including outdoor facilities, has been raised by the Joint Committee³⁹ and forms part of the EU Recast Directive.⁴⁰ It is further notable that while the provision of such recreational facilities does not form part of the 2018 Regulations, it is included in the National Standards.

The **International Protection Act 2015**⁴¹ (the 2015 Act) was enacted on 30 December 2015. Prior to the commencement of this Act, the asylum process in place could result in long delays in receiving a final decision.⁴² An applicant would first apply for refugee status, appeal if rejected and follow up by seeking a judicial review of the decision. If the refusal was not reversed, the applicant could then apply for subsidiary protection with the same appeal process. A final process for qualification was to make representations to the Minister for Justice.⁴³ This process *"resulted in many application decisions taking between three and five years to finalise, if not longer."*⁴⁴

36 European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 230/2018). Available at <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/si/230/made/en/print>

37 Ibid, Section 7(3).

38 Ibid, Section 17.

39 Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, supra note 2 p.52.

40 Article 23 of Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection, supra note 35.

41 The International Protection Act 2015. Available at <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/66/enacted/en/html>

42 Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, supra note 2, p.16.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

The 2015 Act introduced a new single application procedure for applications for international protection (refugee status and subsidiary protection) and permission to remain. The purpose of this is to streamline and speed up the application process. The Minister for Justice and Equality at the time stated that *“The intention under this Bill, when successfully implemented, will be to deliver that decision [on status] within six months”*.⁴⁵

Applicants make one application. Grounds for international protection are considered by the International Protection Office (IPO). If an applicant receives a negative recommendation in relation to their asylum or subsidiary protection application, they may appeal to the International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT). If they receive a negative decision from the IPAT, the Minister for Justice and Equality will consider grounds for permission to remain.⁴⁶

Developments in Public Policy

The final report of the **Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers** (the McMahon Report) was published in June 2015.⁴⁷ The Working Group was *“established to report to Government on the existing protection process and to recommend improvements to Direct Provision and to other supports for asylum seekers.”*⁴⁸ The terms of reference of the Group were to identify improvements to the current asylum and direct provision system, rather to identify alternatives to the system.⁴⁹

The Working Group structured its work around three themes:

1. *living conditions in Direct Provision accommodation centres*
2. *supports for those in the system (e.g. financial, educational, health)*
3. *existing arrangements for the processing of protection applications with particular regard to the length of the process.*⁵⁰

The McMahon Report looked at the impact that the Direct Provision system has on family life and on normal child development.⁵¹ Parents expressed their concerns for the well-being of their children in Direct Provision, including as regards their mental health

45 Dáil Éireann Debate, Minister for Justice and Equality, International Protection Bill 2015 Second Stage (10 December 2015). Available at <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/International%20Protection%20Bill%202015%20Second%20Stage%20%E2%80%93%20D%C3%A1il%20%C3%89ireann>

46 Arnold, S, et al. *Ireland's Response to Recent Trends in International Protection Applications*, ESRI Research Series Number 72 (June 2018), p.21. Available at <https://www.esri.ie/system/files?file=media/file-uploads/2018-06/RS72.pdf> and Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service International Protection Office Information Booklet for Applicants for International Protection. Available at <http://www.ipa.gov.ie/en/IPO/InfoBookletNew.pdf/Files/InfoBookletNew.pdf>

47 Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, *supra* note 2.

48 *Ibid.*, p.10.

49 *Ibid.*, para.3.

50 *Ibid.*, p.10.

51 *Ibid.*, pp.165-170.

and self-esteem, sense of shame, bullying at school, difficulties in forming friendships and lack of integration in the local community.⁵²

Children also had the opportunity to express their views, in writing or through artwork. Some of the many comments from children were:⁵³

- *“I would prefer homes to be normal, rather than living in hostels and being exposed that you’re an asylum seeker.”*
- *“Children in asylum are secluded from other children and there is not much to do. The children outside make fun of us. I don’t want to be made fun of anymore”*
- *“Please help us reduce the length of our stay in the asylum system so that we can have a better life like other children in our community.”*
- *“Activities should be made available at weekends to help us with the boredom.”*

The report noted that *“children felt different to their peers, especially in terms of activities and facilities. They were anxious just to be normal.”*⁵⁴

A significant factor in the impact that living in Direct Provision accommodation has on children is the length of time that they reside there awaiting the processing of asylum applications. The length of the asylum application process was identified as a key issue of concern in the McMahon Report⁵⁵ and recommendations were made to clear the backlog of asylum applications prior to the commencement of the 2015 Act.⁵⁶ This backlog was not cleared and, despite the intention to have cases finalised within 12 months,⁵⁷ significant delays were experienced by asylum seekers following the introduction of the single application procedure.⁵⁸ According to a recent statement from the Department of Justice and Equality, *“processing times for applicants for International Protection have reduced significantly in recent years.”*⁵⁹ At the end of 2019, processing times for a first instance decision/recommendation was approximately 15 months, if there were no complications with the application. Priority cases, such as unaccompanied children, were mostly receiving such a decision within 9 months.⁶⁰ The OCO could not find any data to indicate the current average length of time for a final decision to be issued.

52 Ibid, pp.279-282.

53 Ibid, pp.296-302.

54 Ibid, p.298.

55 Ibid, p.10 and para.3.1.

56 Ibid, para.6.40.

57 Ibid, p.10 and para.58.

58 Arnold et al., supra note 46, p.22.

59 Department of Justice and Equality Press Release, *Department of Justice and Equality announces ending of emergency accommodation in Rosslare Harbour and opening of independent living facilities* (March 2020). Available at <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR20000032>

60 Dáil Éireann Debate, Written Answers, *Asylum Applications Data*, 50267/19 (3 December 2019). Available at <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2019-12-03/289/?highlight%5B0%5D=21.75>

The McMahon Report made 173 recommendations and, as of July 2017, 169 of the recommendations had been implemented.⁶¹ The vast majority (133) of these recommendations were fully implemented and 36 were in progress or partially implemented.⁶²

The **Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality** (the Joint Committee) published a **Report on Direct Provision and the International Protection Application Process** in December 2019.⁶³ While noting improvements to the Direct Provision system since the publication of the McMahon Report,⁶⁴ the Joint Committee identified a number of key areas where improvements could be made. These areas include matters relating to accommodation, supports and services within the Direct Provision system, children in Direct Provision, integration, and the application process.⁶⁵

Some of the recommendations specific to children include:⁶⁶

- Child friendly information materials should be provided to all children in a language they understand.
- Vulnerability assessments for children should be undertaken by qualified professionals and conducted in a child-friendly manner.
- Child and teenager friendly communal spaces, including play areas, study areas and general recreational areas, should be provided in all Direct Provision centres.
- An additional allowance should be provided to parents to help cover the costs associated with their children's education.

Despite a gap of over four years between the two publications, a number of common themes arise in both the McMahon Report and the Joint Committee Report. It is also noteworthy that some of these issues that remain of concern, including the provision of information and vulnerability assessments, are provided for in the 2018 Regulations. This indicates that, notwithstanding the reported 133 fully implemented and 36 partially implemented recommendations from the McMahon Report,⁶⁷ and the introduction of the 2018 Regulations, there is still considerable work required to improve the situation of asylum seekers living in Direct Provision.

61 Report of the Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports for Asylum Seekers, *3rd and Final Progress Report on the Implementation of the Report's Recommendations* (June 2017). Available at http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/3rd_WG_Progress_Report_-_July_2017.pdf/Files/3rd_WG_Progress_Report_-_July_2017.pdf

62 Ibid, p.1.

63 Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, *supra* note 14.

64 Ibid, p.23.

65 Ibid, pp.23 – 46.

66 Ibid, p.52.

67 Report of the Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports for Asylum Seekers, *supra* note 61.

Standards and Inspection

The McMahon Report included a number of recommendations regarding standards for and the inspection of Direct Provision accommodation.⁶⁸ **National Standards** for accommodation offered to people in the international protection process were published by the Department of Justice and Equality in August 2019.⁶⁹ The National Standards provide:

“a framework for the continual development of person-centred, high-quality, safe and effective services and supports for residents living in accommodation centres. The purpose of the National Standards is to improve quality of care and ensure consistency across accommodation centres. The National Standards also provide residents with a guide as to what they should expect during their period of residence in an accommodation centre and will provide a framework for any future assessments, including inspections carried out by an independent inspectorate, to assess whether service providers are providing high-quality, safe and effective services and supports for residents.”⁷⁰

A number of the standards focus on the needs of children and would, if implemented fully, potentially bring about positive changes for them while living in Direct Provision accommodation. These standards reflect many of the issues raised by the children in our consultation and include:

- protecting the privacy, dignity and safety of each resident⁷¹
- providing child-friendly accommodation which respects and promotes family life and which is informed by the best interests of the child⁷²
- requiring dedicated child-friendly, play and recreation facilities⁷³
- dedicated facilities and materials to support children’s educational development⁷⁴
- requiring the service provider to ensure access to public services, healthcare, education, community supports and leisure activities, along with transport to same, for residents, including children and young people⁷⁵
- requiring the service provider to ensure supports are in place for children and young people to integrate and engage with the wider community⁷⁶

68 Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers, *supra* note 2, para.4.226.

69 Press Release, Department of Justice and Equality, Ministers Flanagan and Stanton welcome publication of the Spending Review on Direct Provision (15 August 2019). Available at <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR19000215>

70 National Standards, at para.2. Available at <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR19000215>

71 Ibid, Standard 4.3.

72 Ibid, Standard 4.4.

73 Ibid, Standard 4.5.

74 Ibid, Standard 4.6.

75 Ibid, Standard 7.2.

76 Ibid, Standard 7.3.

- o requiring the service provider to take all reasonable steps to protect each child from abuse and neglect and to ensure children's safety and welfare is promoted.⁷⁷

In addition to the standards, a number of the indicators of their implementation also refer to children. These include embedding a culture of involving and consulting children and adults living in the accommodation centre, seeking their views in a variety of ways and encouraging and empowering children to actively participate in consultations with a view to improving services provision; providing child friendly information in appropriate formats and languages; children's participation in the monitoring and review of services; and separately recognising the needs and provisions for children in the proposed Residents' Charters.⁷⁸

The National Standards will become legally enforceable on 1 January 2021.⁷⁹ The Department of Justice and Equality has acknowledged that some Direct Provision Centres may have to close as they will not be in a position to comply with the standards.⁸⁰ The Joint Committee on Justice and Equality has expressed concern that the closure of Direct Provision Centres, as a result of their failure to conform to the new standards, could result in an increase in the numbers of asylum seekers being accommodated in unsuitable emergency accommodation.⁸¹

In addition, it is unclear who will undertake inspections against the National Standards. The Joint Committee has recommended that an independent inspectorate that is independent of the Department of Justice should be established to "*ensure that these national standards are consistently applied and adhered to in practice and maintained for whatever duration each centre is in use*" and it was suggested that the remit of HIQA could possibly be extended to take on this role.⁸²

Review of the Direct Provision System

An Interdepartmental Group chaired by a Deputy Secretary General of the Department of Justice and Equality has been established to ensure that all Departments are proactively delivering on their responsibilities in relation to Direct Provision.⁸³ The Group is "*reviewing the management of applicants for international protection, considering the short-to-medium term options which could be implemented in addition to, or in replacement of, the existing system and is reviewing the implementation by all parties of the State's obligations under the [EU Reception Conditions] Directive*".⁸⁴ As of December 2019, it was expected the interdepartmental group would report in the first

77 Ibid, Standard 8.2.

78 Ibid, pp.20 – 69.

79 Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, *supra* note 8, p.16.

80 Joint Committee on Justice and Equality debate, Department of Justice and Equality (19 June 2019). Available at https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/joint_committee_on_justice_and_equality/2019-06-19/3/

81 Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, *supra* note 14, pp.28 – 29.

82 Ibid p.47.

83 Seanad Éireann Statement by Minister for Justice and Equality on Provision of Accommodation and Ancillary Services to applicants for International Protection (27 November 2019). Available at <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/SP19000289>

84 Ibid.

half of 2020.⁸⁵ However, the 2020 general election will delay this publication until the report can be considered by the new government.

A consultative group chaired by Dr Catherine Day, former Secretary General of the European Commission, has also been set up by the Department of Justice and Equality.⁸⁶ This group will advise on the implementation of the new National Standards. It will also identify good practice in other European countries, examine international protection and migration trends and advise on developing positive relationships between local communities and the systems for supporting asylum seekers.⁸⁷ This group is due to report by the end of 2020 if not earlier.⁸⁸

Policy and Provision: Key Areas Arising in the Consultation

In addition to the above overarching policy areas, it became clear throughout the consultation that particular areas of policy and provision are of specific relevance to children living in Direct Provision accommodation. Education and integration are two such areas.

Education

Children living in Direct Provision have full access to preschool, primary and secondary school education.⁸⁹ Transport can be provided for eligible children under the School Transport Scheme and parents can apply for financial assistance under the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance Scheme.⁹⁰ However, they cannot access any State supports in order to access third level education,⁹¹ other than through the Department of Education and Skills' pilot Free Fees Initiative. This pilot initiative was introduced in 2015 and grants access to the Free Fees Initiative (third level) for school leavers who are in the asylum process and who met a number of additional conditions.⁹² Six students received support under the pilot initiative up to 2018/19. Following a review of the 2018/19 scheme, this was extended to the academic year 2019/2020.⁹³

85 Select Committee on Justice and Equality debate statement by Minister for Justice and Equality (4 December 2019). Available at https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/select_committee_on_justice_and_equality/2019-12-04/5/?highlight%5B0%5D=direct&highlight%5B1%5D=provision&highlight%5B2%5D=direct&highlight%5B3%5D=provision

86 Kelly, F, Asylum seeker support focus of Government group, (26 October 2019) Irish Times. Available at <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/asylum-seeker-support-focus-of-government-group-1.4063070> and Press Release, Ministers Flanagan and Stanton announce establishment of Expert Group on Direct Provision (28 December 2019). Available at https://merrionstreet.ie/en/News-Room/Releases/Ministers_Flanagan_and_Stanton_announce_establishment_of_Expert_Group_on_Direct_Provision.html

87 Seanad Éireann Statement, supra note 83.

88 Select Committee on Justice and Equality, supra note 85.

89 Reception and Integration Agency, Education. Available at http://www.ria.gov.ie/en/RIA/Pages/Education_While_In_RIA_Accommodation

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.

92 Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration, The National Migrant Strategy 2017-2020 Progress Report for Government (2019), p.38. Available at <http://justice.ie/en/JELR/The%20Migrant%20Integration%20Strategy%202017-2020.pdf/Files/The%20Migrant%20Integration%20Strategy%202017-2020.pdf>

93 Ibid.

The McMahon report noted that concerns were raised in relation to *“obstacles to the children’s full participation in school life and extracurricular activities due to the limited financial means of their parents and, in the case of some centres, transport difficulties.”*⁹⁴ The Joint Committee was also concerned that the high cost of education creates a barrier to full participation by children in Direct Provision and referred to the difficulties that parents have in meeting *“the costs associated with school-going children - such as uniforms, ‘voluntary’ contributions and extracurricular costs such as class trips and sports clubs”*.⁹⁵ It was recommended in the McMahon Report that all Direct Provision accommodation centres should be required to provide an after-school homework or study club, or transport to and from a school-based homework or study club.⁹⁶ The McMahon report concluded that the implementation of these measures, along with increased weekly allowances, would help address these issues.⁹⁷ As previously mentioned, the Joint Committee also recommended that *“An additional allowance should be provided to parents to help cover the costs associated with their children’s education.”*⁹⁸

The McMahon Report further recommended that an *“awareness initiative should be rolled out to ensure that Boards of Management and school principals are familiar with the financial and other challenges facing children in Direct Provision and their families”*.⁹⁹ The 3rd and Final Progress Report on the Implementation of the McMahon Report reports that for 10 years RIA have hosted twice-yearly inter-agency meetings for State service providers, to which schools had been invited.¹⁰⁰ Further, this report goes on to state that *“A range of items come up for discussion and these meetings give all attendees an insight into the challenges facing children and families who are living in centres under contract to RIA. These meetings lead to, inter alia, networking with attendees outside of these meetings and school representatives make regular contact with RIA on issues of concern. The Department of Education and Skills has seconded an officer to RIA and that Officer links in with local schools and accommodation centres as appropriate and necessary.”*¹⁰¹

94 Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers, supra note 2, para.5.60.

95 Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, supra note 14, p.38.

96 Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers, supra note 2, para.5.63.

97 Ibid, para.5.60 – 5.62.

98 Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, supra note 14, p.52.

99 Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers, supra note 2, para.5.63.

100 Final Progress Report on the Implementation of the Report’s Recommendations of the Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, supra note 61, p.16.

101 Ibid.

A recent **Report on Education Inequality and Disadvantage and Barriers to Education** identified asylum seekers as a group who “*are destined to struggle*.”¹⁰² Training and guidance for teachers on equality for vulnerable groups was recommended along with consideration as to how the education system could be made inclusive and culturally respectful to all, especially Irish Travellers and other ethnic minorities.¹⁰³

A report on the **Needs of Refugee Children Arriving in Ireland through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP)** highlighted the importance of information and training for education professionals around intercultural awareness as different cultures and norms, along with different levels of understanding of English, can give rise to the potential for misunderstandings.¹⁰⁴ Islamic dress was also raised as an item that had the potential to cause issues in schools.¹⁰⁵ Racist bullying and name calling were identified as problems in some schools and training and supports to deal with these issues were recommended.¹⁰⁶ While these findings relate to refugee children arriving under the IRPP and living in Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres, these issues also arose for many children involved in our consultation.

The 2008 financial crisis led to a significant reduction in English language supports and, while measures were put in place in 2012/13 to increase the allocation of English as an Additional Language (EAL) teaching posts, many schools in Ireland do not have a dedicated EAL teacher.¹⁰⁷ As previously mentioned, the 2018 Regulations provide for educational support services and language supports where necessary.¹⁰⁸ However, according to the Irish Refugee Service, “*it is unclear if and how the Department of Education has delivered such support services to date, either in the context of emergency centres or the wider DP system*.”¹⁰⁹

Integration

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020 (the Framework) is Ireland’s over-arching national policy for children and young people aged from birth to 24. Led by the DCYA, the framework aims to co-ordinate policy across a wide range of Government departments and agencies in order to secure better outcomes for children. Outcome 5 of the Framework is for children and young people to be connected, respected and contributing to

102 Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Skills Report on *Education inequality & disadvantage and Barriers to Education* (May 2019), p.21. Available at https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_education_and_skills/reports/2019/2019-06-05_report-on-education-inequality-disadvantage-and-barriers-to-education_en.pdf

103 Ibid, pp.27-28.

104 Ní Raghallaigh, M et al, Children’s Rights Alliance, *Safe Haven, Needs of Refugee Children Arriving in Ireland through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme: An Exploratory Study* (September 2019), p.49. Available at <https://www.childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/Safe%20Haven%20Main%20Report.pdf>

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid, p.66.

107 Ibid, p.47.

108 European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018, supra note 36, Section 17.

109 Irish Refugee Council, *The Reception Conditions Directive, One Year On* (July 2019), p.22. Available at <https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/RCD-One-Year-On-11-July-2019-Final.pdf>

their world.¹¹⁰ The aims for children and young people under this outcome call for them to “have a sense of their own identity, free from discrimination” and to “have positive networks of friends, family and community”.¹¹¹ The importance of integration policies for members of minority ethnic groups, as well as difficulties faced in maintaining friendships due to social exclusion and rural isolation, are recognised by the Government in the Framework.¹¹² With specific regard to children living in Direct Provision, the **Joint Committee Report** refers to “the negative impact on the lives of people in direct provision of the siting of many centres in remote, isolated locations with little or no public transport links and no facilities.”¹¹³ The report went on to suggest that accommodation for asylum seekers should be “built or provided in locations that maximise opportunities for integration with local communities and provide good access to transport links, services, amenities and employment opportunities.”¹¹⁴

The **Migrant Integration Strategy** (the Strategy),¹¹⁵ which was published in 2017, sets out the Government’s approach to the issue of migrant integration for the period from 2017 to 2020.¹¹⁶ This Strategy “is targeted at all migrants, including refugees, who are legally residing in the State.”¹¹⁷ The primary objective of the Strategy “is to ensure that barriers to full participation in Irish society by migrants or their Irish-born children are identified and addressed.”¹¹⁸

Only one of the 76 Actions contained in this Strategy specifically refers to asylum seekers. Action 55 focuses on young people and provides for “an added focus on ensuring that young people from ethnic or religious minorities, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have access to youth services in which they will feel safe and protected and which will assist and enhance their integration.”¹¹⁹ However, there is no other reference to asylum seekers, or any reference to residents of Direct Provision, in the Strategy.

A 2019 Progress Report on the Strategy provides information on a number of different supports provided to asylum seekers in different parts of the country.¹²⁰ While these particular initiatives are welcome, there is no evidence available to indicate that

110 Department of Children and Youth Affairs. *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the national policy framework for children & young people 2014 – 2020* (2014), p.99. Available at <https://assets.gov.ie/23796/961bbf5d975f4c88adc01a6fc5b4a7c4.pdf>

111 Ibid, p.99.

112 Ibid, p.101.

113 Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, *supra* note 14, p.48.

114 Ibid.

115 The Department of Justice and Equality, *The Migrant Integration Strategy, A Blueprint for the Future*. Available at http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Migrant_Integration_Strategy_English.pdf/Files/Migrant_Integration_Strategy_English.pdf

116 Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration, *The Migrant Integration Strategy*. Available at http://www.integration.ie/en/isec/pages/migrant_integration_strategy

117 Ibid.

118 The Department of Justice and Equality, *supra* note 14, p.8.

119 Ibid, Action 55.

120 Progress Report to the Government Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration 2019, pp. 104-111. Available at <http://justice.ie/en/JELR/The%20Migrant%20Integration%20Strategy%202017-2020.pdf/Files/The%20Migrant%20Integration%20Strategy%202017-2020.pdf>

integration of asylum seekers into their local communities is being facilitated on an equal or systematic basis across the country.

Although coming four years later, this reflects the findings in the McMahon Report that engagement between Direct Provision accommodation centres and the local community seemed to vary, with the management of some centres working with local groups to create linkages whereas the management of other centres did not.¹²¹

1.4 Issues Arising and Priorities for Action

In light of the foregoing, and of the views, experiences and recommendations for change shared by the children who took part in our consultation, the OCO has identified the following priorities for action in improving the lives of children living in Direct Provision accommodation.

Delays in the Asylum Application Process

When Direct Provision was established, it was expected that asylum seekers would remain in the centres for six months.¹²² Current information indicates that the average period spent in Direct Provision is 23 months.¹²³ This is undoubtedly due to longer than anticipated processing times and to the unavailability of alternative accommodation for those who have obtained positive decisions regarding their applications. ***The OCO is concerned that, 20 years since the introduction of Direct Provision, the issue of delays in the asylum application system has not been fully addressed and result in children spending longer than is necessary living with uncertainty and in Direct Provision accommodation. The OCO welcomes the Minister for Justice and Equality's recent comments in relation to additional measures to speed up the processing time, while acknowledging that each application requires and deserves individual attention. These measures include video interviewing of applicants in Cork and an increased budget for the IPO that will allow for additional, appropriately trained staff.¹²⁴ The OCO encourages the Minister to ensure that plans to roll out video interviews nationally proceeds without delay and that staffing increases are progressed as soon as possible.***

Children will experience lengthy periods in Direct Provision differently to adults. Extended delays in processing asylum applications and consequent long stays in Direct Provision accommodation may have serious negative implications for children and their development. In considering the applications for international protection involving children, it should be noted that the threshold for international protection for children

121 Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers, *supra* note 2, paras 5.139 – 5.141.

122 Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, *supra* note 14, p.10.

123 International Protection Accommodation Services, *supra* note 12.

124 Dáil Éireann Debate, *supra* note 60.

is lower than the standard applied to adults and includes a long list of child specific forms of persecution that do not apply to adults.¹²⁵ However, research indicates that the application process, which focuses on the head of the household as the applicant, does not always pay sufficient attention to the separate needs of children.¹²⁶ **The OCO recommends that the Department of Justice and Equality ensure that due consideration is given to the specific experiences of children whose parents are applying for international protection and that all cases involving children are assessed in the most expedient manner possible while assuring due process. Where the child has been a victim of persecution, detailed consideration of their specific experiences and needs may contribute to shorter processing times and reduce the time that children live in Direct Provision and the uncertainty and anxiety associated with waiting for decisions.**

Implementation of the National Standards and Introduction of Independent Inspection

If fully implemented, the new National Standards for accommodation offered to people in the protection process have the potential to significantly improve the lives of children living in Direct Provision accommodation. If they are fully implemented on 1st January 2021 they will also help to give greater effect to many of children's other rights under the UNCRC.

While the National Standards replicate to a large extent the provisions of the EU Recast Directive, it is not immediately obvious that all of the provisions relating to children contained in the latter will be fully met. It is particularly significant that the National Standards make no reference to the provision of rehabilitation supports for children who have been previously abused and traumatised.¹²⁷ **The OCO encourages the Department of Justice and Equality to ensure that all of the provisions for children contained in the EU Recast Directive are fully reflected in the National Standards, including in relation to the provision of rehabilitation supports.**

The publication of the National Standards is a welcome development. However, concern has been raised about the lack of an independent body to carry out inspections and ensure that these standards are being complied with by the Direct Provision centres.¹²⁸ **The OCO is of the view that such inspections should be undertaken by an independent body with no direct reporting relationship with the Department of Justice and Equality or any branch of that Department. In the**

¹²⁵ Arnold, S. *Pathways to Citizenship* Ombudsman for Children's Office, 2020. Available at <https://www.oco.ie/library/pathways-to-irish-citizenship/>

¹²⁶ Arnold, S. 'Child refugee and subsidiary protection appeals in Ireland (2018), *Child and Family Law Quarterly*, 29:4; Cosgrove, C. and Thornton, L. 'Immigration and Asylum Law' in *Making Rights Real for Children: A Children's Rights Audit of Irish Law*, Dublin: Children's Rights Alliance (2015).

¹²⁷ Article 23 of Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection, *supra* note 35.

¹²⁸ Children's Rights Alliance, *Submission to the Joint Committee on Justice and Equality on direct provision and the international protection process* (31 May 2019), p.6 and Irish Refugee Council *Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality* (31 May 2019), p.23. Both available at: https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/32/joint_committee_on_justice_and_equality/submissions/2019/2019-12-12_submissions-report-on-direct-provision-and-the-international-protection-application-process_en.pdf

interest of providing clarity, this body should be identified as soon as possible. This will ensure transparency and proper oversight. Further, provision in respect of ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the standards should be clarified.

The Department of Justice and Equality has acknowledged that some existing accommodation centres will close as they will not be able to meet the National Standards.¹²⁹ Notwithstanding the recent difficulties experienced by the Department of Justice and Equality in establishing new Direct Provision accommodation,¹³⁰ the OCO is concerned that the closure of existing centres has the potential to result in many more asylum seeking children being housed in inappropriate emergency accommodation.¹³¹ **While we are aware that some centres are not suitable for renovation and refurbishment to meet the standards, the OCO encourages the Department of Justice and Equality to work towards the early identification of those centres that are unlikely to meet the National Standards but can be suitably renovated. All possible remedial work should be carried out on these centres in order to minimise closures. We further urge the Department to develop clear and realistic plans to minimise the use of emergency accommodation to house the residents of those centres that will close.**

Education

The most immediate education need of many children living in Direct Provision accommodation is acquiring English language skills. In this regard, the provision of language supports, in line with the 2018 Regulations, is imperative. While the OCO welcomes the increase in the allocation of EAL posts,¹³² **all schools with sufficient numbers of non-English speaking asylum seeking pupils should have a designated EAL teacher as required. Where any one school does not have a sufficient number of pupils to warrant a full-time EAL teacher, the Department of Education and Skills should put in place provision whereby this resource can be shared among schools as appropriate.**

The McMahon Report recommended that an after-school homework or study club be provided in each Direct Provision accommodation centre or that transport be provided to such a facility.¹³³ It is the OCO's experience from visiting Direct Provision accommodation centres that this is not yet available to all children or is available only on a very limited basis. **The OCO believes that the Department of Justice and Equality needs to clarify that such provision is being made available in all accommodation centres, is available at sufficient and appropriate times and is properly resourced to meet the needs of children at all ages and stages of their education. Further to this, the OCO encourages the Department to ensure that**

¹²⁹ Joint Committee on Justice and Equality debate, *supra* note 14.

¹³⁰ Pollack, S, *Protest against Tullamore direct provision centre scheduled for weekend*, (20 February 2020) Irish Times. Available at <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/protest-against-tullamore-direct-provision-centre-scheduled-for-weekend-1.4188244>

¹³¹ Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, *supra* note 14, pp.28 – 29.

¹³² Ní Raghallaigh, *supra* note 104, p47

¹³³ Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers, *supra* note 2, para.5.63.

sufficient IT and wifi resources are available to older children living in Direct Provision accommodation to allow them to fully meet the expectations and requirements of their schools in respect of their education.

While most children living in Direct Provision accommodation are not yet in a position to apply for third level education, concerns about this are a source of considerable anxiety for many of them. While some of the children we met during our consultation were aware of the Department of Education and Skills Pilot Free Fees Initiative,¹³⁴ many were not. Having been introduced in 2015, a review of the Scheme in 2018 led to less restrictive conditions being applied. This Scheme is due to be reviewed again in 2020. **The OCO urges the Department of Education and Skills, following its next review of the Scheme in 2020, to place this on a long-term footing to provide greater year-to-year certainty for children wishing to continue their education. The OCO also urges the Department of Education and Skills to work with the Department of Justice and Equality and schools to ensure that the initiative is widely publicised.**

Integration of Children Living in Direct Provision

Children who live in Direct Provision accommodation, like their non-asylum seeking peers, spend much of their time in school. Exclusion from normal school life can therefore have a significant negative impact on them. Many of the children in our consultation spoke of being excluded, discriminated against and bullied in school. This corresponds with concerns raised in recent research on the education needs of children arriving under the IRPP.¹³⁵ Many of the difficulties arising for children can be seen to stem from misunderstandings of different cultural and religious norms and schools' lack of resources to deal with these differences.

The OCO acknowledges the opportunity provided by the twice yearly inter-agency meetings for service providers, including schools, hosted by IPAS¹³⁶ to improve awareness in schools of the particular challenges faced by children living in Direct Provision accommodation. However, the children who took part in our consultation consistently reported a lack of understanding of their situation among teachers. **Therefore, the OCO is of the view that additional support through training and information needs to be made available to teachers, principals and Boards of Management. While encompassing inter-cultural awareness, training, information and resources should also increase knowledge and understanding of the asylum process and the system of Direct Provision, the impact of trauma, and the promotion of multi-racial, religious and ethnic integration amongst pupils. We encourage the Department of Education and Skills to work closely with the Department of Justice and Equality to ensure that such training is provided, and consideration is given to making this mandatory, through continued professional development for teachers and principals at both primary and secondary level. In addition, the OCO would**

¹³⁴ Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration, supra note 92, p.38.

¹³⁵ Ni Raghallaigh, supra note 104.

¹³⁶ Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports for Asylum Seekers, supra note 2.

welcome the development of specific resources for all education professionals and Boards of Management to guide and support them in addressing racial and sectarian discrimination and bullying in particular. Given the increasing diversity in Irish schools, such training and resources have the potential to benefit many pupils and teachers.

Considerable numbers of the children who took part in our consultation referred to their lack of engagement and integration in their communities. This corresponds with concerns raised in the McMahon Report¹³⁷ and the report of the Joint Committee.¹³⁸ As noted by the Joint Committee, many of the social inclusion difficulties faced by children living in Direct Provision arise from the isolated location of many accommodation centres and the lack of accessible transport.¹³⁹ **Notwithstanding the difficulties experienced by the Department of Justice and Equality in securing additional Direct Provision accommodation, the OCO suggests that consideration be given to more accessible locations in the future that are less isolated geographically and socially from local communities. With regard to current accommodation centres, the OCO is cognisant of the requirements in the National Standards and we urge the Department of Justice and Equality to ensure that the standard with regard to facilitating children's involvement in community activities, including through the provision of appropriate transport, is fully complied with.**

The provision of recreational facilities within the accommodation centres is vital for children's social integration with their peers in the centres and to their physical and mental well-being. In addition, the availability of such facilities can promote greater interaction with the local community within the centre. **The OCO encourages the Department of Justice and Equality to ensure that recreational facilities and spaces are provided in all Direct Provision centres in line with the National Standards and to ensure that these are available to the children as much as possible. Further, in the interests of clarity and consistency, the OCO is of the view that the 2018 Regulations should be amended to include this provision so as to bring these Regulations into line with the EU Directive and the National Standards.**

The OCO welcomes the initiative outlined in the Migrant Integration Strategy¹⁴⁰ that aims to improve the integration of asylum seeking children. However, while such children may share certain characteristics and experiences with the wider migrant population, it is the OCO's view that their living arrangements and uncertainty about their status result in additional challenges to their integration. As the current Strategy will come to an end in 2020, **the OCO believes that any successor to this strategy should take account of the specific needs and vulnerabilities of these children and include specific actions to address these.**

¹³⁷ Ibid, pp.279-282 and pp.286-302.

¹³⁸ Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, supra note 14, pp.47 - 48.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p.48.

¹⁴⁰ The Department of Justice and Equality, supra note 92, Action 55.

Review of the Direct Provision System

The OCO welcomes the establishment of the Interdepartmental Group to ensure that all Departments are proactively delivering on their responsibilities in relation to Direct Provision¹⁴¹ and the consultative group¹⁴² to advise on the implementation of the new National Standards, migration trends and good practice in Europe. It is of particular importance that the work of the Interdepartmental Group to examine alternatives to the existing system or substantial improvements to it is progressed and published as soon as possible. However, it is noteworthy that, although increased participation of and consultation with children were recommended through the 2018 Regulations and the National Standards, there is no reference to the involvement of children in either of these fora. ***In light of the State's obligations to treat the best interests of the child as a primary consideration, as well as the child's right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them and to have due weight to be given to their views consultations with children and young people living in Direct Provision Centres should be carried out by these review groups. Where such consultations are not feasible, in particular given the timeframe in which the Interdepartmental Group expects to report, it is essential that the views of children living in Direct Provision expressed through previous consultations and research, are considered by the Group.***

141 Seanad Éireann Statement by Minister for Justice and Equality on Provision of Accommodation and Ancillary Services to applicants for International Protection (27 November 2019). Available at <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/SP19000289>

142 Kelly, F, *Asylum seeker support focus of Government group*, (26 October 2019) Irish Times. Available at <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/asylum-seeker-support-focus-of-government-group-1.4063070> and Press Release, *Ministers Flanagan and Stanton announce establishment of Expert Group on Direct Provision*

(28 December 2019). Available at https://merrionstreet.ie/en/News-Room/Releases/Ministers_Flanagan_and_Stanton_announce_establishment_of_Expert_Group_on_Direct_Provision.html

Section 2 – **Children's Views**



2.1 Children's Views and Experiences of their Rights

Introduction

In order to locate the consultation in the context of children's rights, at the start of each consultation, we spent some time introducing the children to their rights under the UNCRC and discussions about these. Seeking their views on the significance of individual rights and the rights they believe they experience, or don't experience, was, as outlined above in the methodology, done in the following two ways.

- Following an information session on the UNCRC, the individual rights were posted on the walls. Having read these, children selected and discussed the right(s) that are most significant to them; and
- Using images of some of the rights, children identified and discussed the rights they feel they have and do not have.

Taking these discussions together reveals much about the children's understanding of their rights and of their experiences both before and since arriving in Ireland. It became clear that the participants consider their rights under the UNCRC as important to them and could identify both where they have been violated and upheld. For many, the abuse of their rights in their country of origin is intrinsic to their and their family's search for asylum in Ireland.

Protection Rights

It is notable that protection rights were those most frequently chosen as significant by the children. This is a broad category of rights and includes non-discrimination (Art. 2 of the UNCRC), the right to privacy (Art. 16), and protection from abuse and neglect (Art. 7).

It is notable that the children identified a number of protection rights as significant that would not, in our experience, commonly arise among Irish children. They include the right to protection from sale, trafficking and abduction (Art. 35), protection from all forms of exploitation (Art. 36) and protection from involvement in armed conflict (Art. 38). For some children it was clear that the significance of these rights was related to their experience before arriving in Ireland.

'I come from a place where there is war. In my school officers used to come for the boys and put them in a truck and give them a gun and uniform... they were mostly 15-18, I was 13. If I was still there I would be taken.'

'When I was in my country... the [authorities] was threatening us, they told my father they would kidnap me from my school... and someone was going to shoot my father... like I wasn't going to school... so we could not stay there.'

'Adults don't have rights to kidnap or sell children. They have no right to take children away from their family.'

The right to privacy (Art. 16) was the most commonly chosen individual right of significance to the children and was also one of the rights they felt they did not enjoy. This is because they felt that they had no privacy in their Direct Provision accommodation. This relates to a number of issues including their limited family living space, the actions of staff and the presence of security cameras.

'Everyone has right to privacy... but there is no privacy in this place, at first we were five in one room, now it's better. I don't like if someone browse my phone.'

'... we share rooms and we can't lock them, the management just walk into the rooms... we worry they will tell RIA if our rooms aren't clean.'

'There's cameras everywhere, and it's just, I don't know, you feel watched... It's like everyone is watching you'.

'We don't have privacy... like everything, our whole life is exposed. It just makes you wonder why they are doing this to us. Like... we are not animals.'



*We all share
a bedroom
(one room)*

*they
just walk
into our place
when ever
they feel
like.*

The right to be treated equally and to be protected from discrimination was a recurring theme. Children felt discriminated against on a number of grounds including race, ethnicity, religion and asylum status.

'They say "Are you Muslim?", and I go, "No, I'm not Muslim", just to like avoid them saying those things. "Oh, you have a gun at your home" or "You're a terrorist", or this, this, this'.

'People in school use the 'N' word...I saw kids laugh at refugees'.



I was
stopped
by the
Garda
because they
didn't trust me
as a black person
and thought
I was up to no
good.



Different from
Irish children
→ Excluded

Living in Direct Provision was often cited as exacerbating their exposure to such discrimination as they were more easily identified as different to their Irish peers. The children's experience and fear of discrimination on these grounds shaped many of their views of their acceptance, inclusion and exclusion in Ireland.

'There was school trip and it was going past the [accommodation] centre and one person on the bus said "Oh the zoo is coming". They think we are like animals...There was a friend of mine who was on the bus who actually lived here, but she pretended she didn't.'

This theme of discrimination arose through almost all of the discussions with the children and will be returned to in section 2.3 below.

The children's views of their safety and protection in Ireland varied, with some feeling safe here while others felt exposed to new threats because of their race, religion or asylum status, as well as safety issues relating to their accommodation. Feeling unsafe was closely related to discrimination and many of the children felt that they were easily identified and targeted as 'different' in negative ways. Some talked about feeling threatened by people using the 'N' word, while some girls were afraid to wear traditional dress such as the hijab (head scarf) as this exposed them as Muslim and therefore a target for hostility. With regard to their accommodation while some complained about the security cameras, presence of security staff etc., these measures made others feel safer.

'Sometimes, well if you have it in a religious event or anything you would wear it [hijab], and there's always this fear that they would, you know, just bully us or something...'

'I miss my country. But here just makes me feel warmer and better to cope with and protected.'

'I came from the worst conditions and I am so more than grateful that I am here. I thank God every single day that I am here. I just love being here. Even though these people are making it miserable sometimes, but I am grateful we are in a safe place, it is the most important thing. Like imagine being scared to go to school, imagine being scared of being bombed or shot or kidnapped. So I am more than grateful that I am here.'

Participation Rights

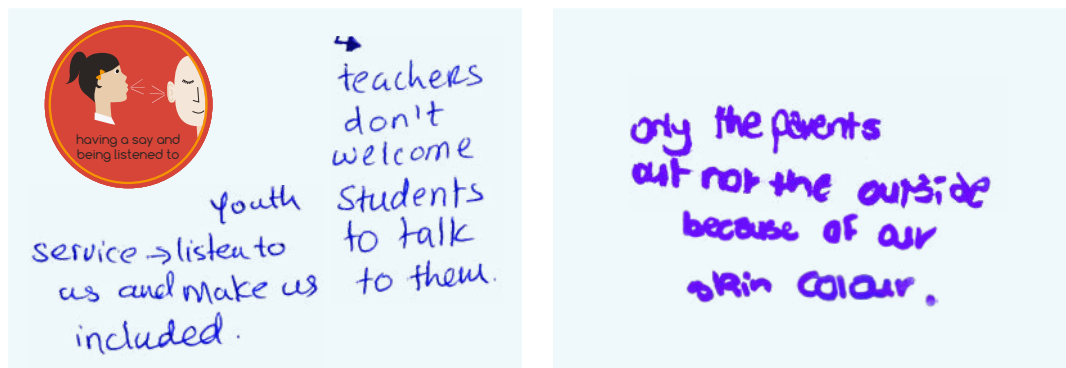
Participation rights encompass the rights of children to have their views heard and considered (Art. 12 of the UNCRC), the right to freedom of expression (Art 13), freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Art. 14), freedom of association and peaceful assembly (Art. 15) and the right to information (Art. 17).

Although smaller numbers of children prioritised these rights, the right to be heard and have their views considered was significant for a number of the children. Some children believed that achieving this right was affected by a general lack of interest in their views and also by their perceived difference.

'Everyone has a right to give opinion and be listened to... I listen with respect. Most people are not concerned if I give my opinion'.

'We have a say, but we are not taken seriously [in school] because of our skin colour, no other reason'

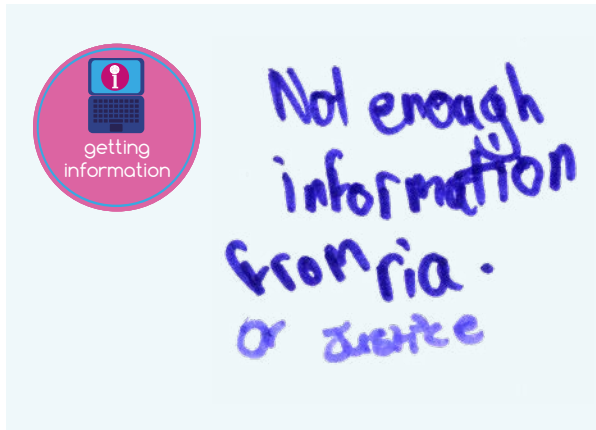
'We don't have this right because we live in [centre name]... We don't have a say in the community and we can't express ourselves'.



The right to have access to appropriate information was considered important in order to be able to settle and fully participate in life in Ireland. However, many of the participants considered that their access to information was limited, particularly through inadequate access to the internet. This lack of information made their participation in many areas difficult including in their accommodation centres, in school and in activities and groups.

'No, I don't think we are given enough information because, again, we just, we're looked at as if we don't understand...'

'When you arrive, there's not much information, no one to show you around.'



For many of the young people, their right to freedom of assembly and to join groups was seen to be restricted by the facilities available for older children and teenagers in their Direct Provision accommodation, the isolated geographic location of many of these and very limited transport options.

'The bus can only take us to school and bring us back, so we can't stay late at school or do anything in town after school. We always get home at twenty past four, every day'.

'This is the first time we have all got together [in the accommodation centre]... it would be nice if we could meet here, and maybe have a TV and some games'.

This right is closely related to the children right to engage in leisure and recreational activities and is returned to in sections 2.2 and 2.3 below.

Survival and Development Rights

Survival rights discussed by the children included the right to be alive (Art. 6 of the UNCRC), the right to access health care services (Art 24.), the right to social welfare benefits (Art. 26) and the right to an adequate standard of living (Art. 27).

Discussions about the right to be alive illustrated that the children considered this to go beyond simply being allowed to live, but to be allowed to live safely and with dignity.

'If you don't have that right, you could be killed, same as slavery, abuse or be mis-treated'.

'The right to live, be educated, to travel and to make choices'.

In talking about this group of rights, children acknowledged that while they lived in Direct Provision centres they are in receipt of shelter and food and appreciate that this provides a basic standard of living. Nonetheless, many of the children expressed

concern about the standard of living provided in Direct Provision accommodation. This included a number of concerns that went across children's survival rights including the quality, amount and choice of food received, the low level of financial allowances received by their parents, and the size and quality of the accommodation provided.

'Some people complain about the food here but my Mum says to be happy and enjoy it because in my country we may not have food'

'A home is not two rooms, we don't have a house right now, we have two rooms'

Development rights in the UNCRC include the child's right to maintain their identity through their name, nationality and family (Art. 8), the right to education (Art. 28), the right to develop their talents and abilities through education (Art. 29), and the right to practice their culture, religion and language (Art. 30) and the right to leisure, recreation and rest (Art. 31).

Many of participants in the consultation identified rights in this grouping as being of importance to them. Preservation of identity was considered to be important so that the children knew their past, who they are, their wider family and where they belong.

The right to education was selected as the most significant right by only a small number of participants but was one that created substantial discussion. The young people spoke of the importance of education and expressed appreciation of the education they are receiving in Ireland. Some of the children like and are happy in school.

'I like school here, everyone is nice'.

'I go to a mixed school with lots of nationalities no one cares where you are from'.

However, further discussions in relation to school life beyond the right to education revealed a number of difficulties for the children. These positive and negative aspects of school life are returned to in section 2.2 and 2.4 below.

Concerns about their future education were linked with their status as asylum seekers and about the length of time they had been awaiting a decision on their right to remain in Ireland.

'We really don't know what to do after school. We don't know if we can go to college. We all want to go [to college]. Let's be positive. My sister is going to university now.'

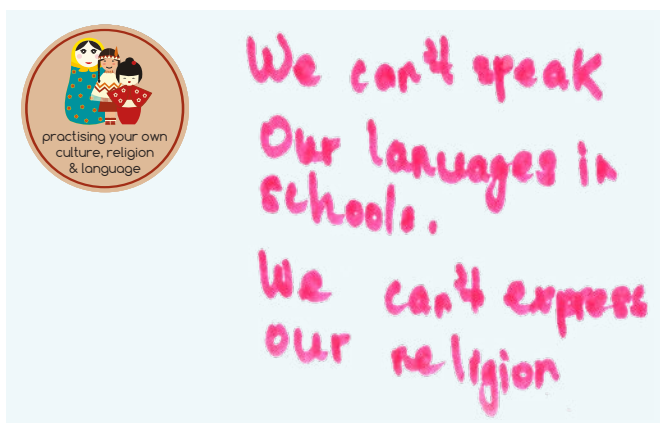
Despite the fears of discrimination expressed by some of the participants, many of the participants were of the view that they could freely express their culture and religion. However, further discussion of this topic revealed limitations to this freedom. In a number of instances it was related to once-off or annual events such as a school multi-cultural day/week. Others revealed that this freedom was often only achieved when they were among people of the same or similar backgrounds.

'It was the first time in 10 years that I saw such a lovely gathering. Muslim people came here to celebrate EID, it was a good day. I enjoyed a lot of sweets and food'

'I am Christian, I like practising my religion, I like the fact there are African churches'

Difficulties arose for other participants, however, and a number reported difficulties in using their own language.

'They make fun of you, they think because you speak a different language that you are talking about them or something and they start to make fun of your language...'



Muslim girls in particular experience difficulties in expressing their cultural and religious beliefs through wearing the hijab.

'It's kind of worse for the Muslim girls, because it's obvious... you know the ladies that put the hijab and everything on, it's like they're kind of being judged from other people. And that also makes it in the house thing.....you're going for a house viewing and then you see a lady with the hijab on her, and they're like [inhales sharply]. "She's a killer".'

With regard to their right to leisure, recreation and rest, many participants identified this as a right that they only partially enjoy or do not enjoy at all. They again related this to their accommodation and in particular the lack of space for just hanging out or sports, restricted access to transport, as well as exclusion based on their race, religion or status as asylum seekers.

'No, there's no space for teenagers, we have [youth group], we can go chill there, but it was closed for the summer... it would be nice if they built like, a place for us, for teens, just to go chill there'.



Through their discussions of their rights the young participants in this consultation acknowledge very real and significant improvements in the achievement and exercise of their rights such as protection from conflict, kidnapping and abuse. However, there remain many areas of concern including freedom from discrimination, adequate standard of living, leisure and recreation and enjoyment of their culture, religion and language. Not being able to fully exercise these rights has the potential to leave them feeling isolated, worried and outside the mainstream of Irish society.

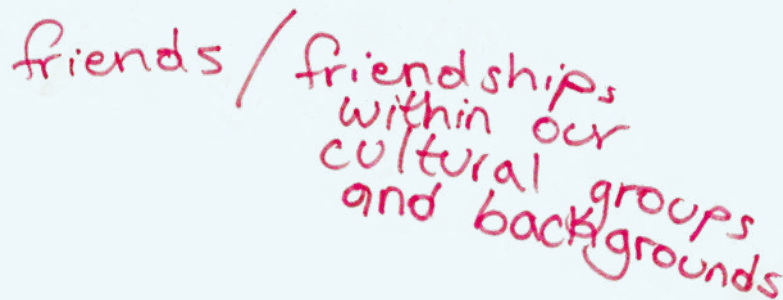
Having discussed their rights, we asked the children to tell us if they had any experiences of inclusion and exclusion in Irish life. Detailed in the following sections of this report, many of their discussions, experiences and accounts of life as an asylum seeker reflect and further explore the issues raised here.

2.2 Children's Experience and Views of their Inclusion

We began the discussion on inclusion by working with the children to define what the term meant to them. The children offered several definitions including *'feeling equal'*; *'respected'*; *'not being judged'*; *'not being bullied'*; *'not being discriminated against'* and *'feeling like we belong'*. This discussion allowed the children to start to identify aspects of their daily lives where they felt included.

Inclusion in the Accommodation Centre

The majority of the children that we spoke to felt most included with their peer groups in their centres. There was a sense of camaraderie within many of the centres, the children support each other and form close bonds. Shared cultural backgrounds also bonded some of the children together.



friends / friendships
within our
cultural groups
and backgrounds

Some Direct Provision centres organise activities for the children. A number of children described their recent participation in a local Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) summer camp organised specifically for residents of the Direct Provision centres. Some larger centres had created their own sports teams, but this was not common place in the centres.

'Yeah, they taught us how to play Gaelic. I got the shirt from there...yeah, they gave us boots as well... it was good because we met different people from other places'

'We have training in the big pitch at the front [of the accommodation centre]... it's for the centre team, just training for, like, matches and stuff and try out.'

In some centres the management or support staff applied for and accessed funding to ensure that the children had something to do in summer or during school holidays. We were also told of adult residents' involvement in the organisation of activities and trips for young residents.

'The trips are organised by a resident here... to fun parks, paintballing, they are all really good. He also like organises football, basketball, racing tournaments, long jump, shot put and all of those... athletics as well... if it wasn't for him there would be nothing here, actually, everyone would be going around with nothing to do, no one would be outside.'

'One of the Mums here, she found out about things we could do and organises for us to go to things'.

Most children did not have a place to socialise with each other in their centres. The children who had access a teenager room appreciated having their own space.

Despite the social activities that were planned for them, the school holidays were particularly challenging for the children with many describing the time as *'very boring, there is nothing to do and most people just stay in their rooms'*. With regard to taking part in this consultation, one child told us that they *'... woke up today excited because I knew there was something happening'*.

Inclusion In School

Some of the children gave examples of where their school made **particular efforts** to help them feel included. Frequently they cited their arrival in their new school as a time when they felt welcome.

People Came up to
You and Asked if you
wanted to become
Friends

Helped by Friends
To show school Around

'Like when I was in first year, the school made a Cairde team, like a friend's team...they helped us to get around, like, tell us which classes to go to...the year head told them in advance I was coming, so now they're like my best friends'

Having a positive relationship with a teacher was particularly meaningful to the children. One group described their interaction with a particular teacher in their school.

Participant 1: 'Yeah, he's very nice, he is open

Participant 3: He checks on everyone

Participant 2: He wouldn't judge, he talks to everyone. You could talk to him

Participant 1: He doesn't have favourites and he talks to everyone'

Group activities were identified as a source of inclusion for the majority of children who spoke with us. The examples given ranged from being involved in a class project, to getting involved in Transition Year (TY) programmes and representing their schools at events and competitions.

class project

Representing a project in
a junior Enterprise.

These group activities provided the children with an opportunity to mix with their peers, form friendships and develop their skills. One child explained:

'When we had a TY show, it was so fun. I think we got to, like, know each other more, yeah...'

Other children also identified music and drama as a way to increase their inclusion within school.

*participated in
the mini company
as an intermediate
category, sold
personalised family
frames.*

For many of the children playing team sports and taking part in competitions in or on behalf of their school provided welcomed opportunities for them to be judged on their talents and abilities and not on their race, ethnicity or status. The children were particularly happy to be a part of their schools teams.

'I would say that when I'm at school I feel included, when you're with your friends, yeah...and well, when we play basketball.'

'Playing soccer with my team makes me feel confident'.

*Get to play
table tennis
in school*

*Get to play
soccer*

*BASKETBALL
(school)*

*The school
Talent
show
was
fun !!*

A number of the children said that their ***schools recognised their culture and religion*** and provided specifically for them. This was always welcomed by the children who said that it made them feel normal and included in school. One child explained that her school canteen and breakfast club provides Halal food, thereby allowing her to eat with other pupils.

'Yeah, so now they have, like, Halal chicken and everything in the canteen... and there's a free breakfast scheme, like from eight to quarter to nine, they serve us beans and bread, and milk and tea, and scrambled egg...'

Acknowledgement of, and placing value on the children's needs improved their sense of normality and inclusion within their schools. One group explained their appreciation when their religious needs were accounted for.

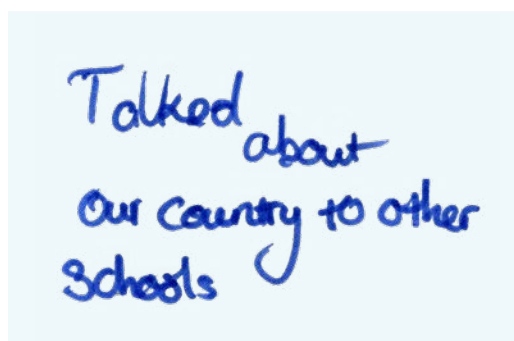
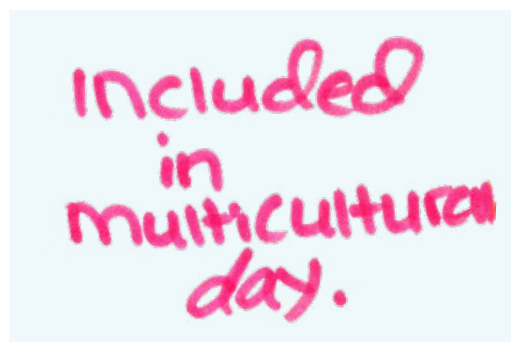
'In our school there is a chapel hall and a room for prayer. Our principal, because we have more Muslims, she decided to set up a room where we could go and pray in the lunchtime.'

Several of the children were very aware that some schools were not as understanding and many discussed the fact that wearing the hijab is prohibited in some schools. When girls were allowed to wear the hijab this increased their sense of inclusion and acceptance within the school.

'We're allowed to cover our heads in school; the school uniform is green so they said you're allowed to wear green scarves'

Some children believed that participating in culturally-specific activities in school was a good way to foster understanding and feel included.

'There was a culture day from your country...we made food, brought the Urbi dress and it was really good...we got the famous spices, we had our table decorated with the traditional mat. I drew the country flag and I made a banner to put on our table. We made a PowerPoint on our country on the iPad, our place was most popular.'



Inclusion in the Local Community

Most of the children who took part in this consultation had limited opportunities to interact with their local communities. Playing sports was the biggest source of inclusion for the children. Some children explained that community sports groups had reached out to them in the centres. This was something that the children greatly appreciated.

Handwritten text in blue ink on a light blue background. The text reads: "Golf club offered us to come in & play & trained us."

Some of the children attended local youth clubs which helped them engage with the community.

Handwritten text in blue ink on a light blue background. The text reads: "YOUTH - CLUB Activities for everyone"

Many of the children struggled to find examples of real social inclusion in their local communities as a result of living in Direct Provision accommodation centres. Few of them, for example, cited experiences of friendships with their Irish counterparts, visiting their homes or meeting them outside of school.

'Being mixed [with other people] makes us feel part of like the community.... you can feel like you live here, you can feel the difference...you don't really feel very included in many things when you are living in centres...because you don't really get to mix with, like, a lot of people from here [Ireland]...people usually just mix with people from their own countries'.

There were exceptions to this, although these were quite rare.

'I've met Irish people. I have an Irish friend; she is fine with [the centre]. I've been to her house and she has come here'.

Inclusion in Irish Society

We asked the children for their views on what made them feel included in Irish society. Many of them struggled to answer this question, with some saying ‘I have no example.’ Others pointed to the changes in some Direct Provision centres that allow their families to buy and cook their food as being an indication of their social inclusion.

2.3 Children’s Experiences and Views on Exclusion

There were many factors identified by the children that have led to their social exclusion. The young people cited examples of exclusion within their accommodation centres; in schools; in their local communities; and in society generally. Most children articulated an acute awareness of their perceived difference from their peers, which for many led to a sense of stigma and shame about being an asylum seeker or refugee and also about living in Direct Provision.

Exclusion based on living in Direct Provision Accommodation

Living in a Direct Provision centre was frequently cited as a reason for the children’s social exclusion. Issues ranging from the inability to cook their own meals, the remote location of the centre, the lack of transport and the general public’s lack of understanding of the system of Direct Provision were identified as reasons for the children’s social exclusion.

Geographical location and the lack of available transport combined to create a sense of exclusion and isolation for many of the children. Many of the accommodation centres are located outside of towns in rural areas that do not have regular public transport. The participants talked about the fact that their parents do not have cars and many parents are unable to obtain driving licences due to their status.¹⁴³ A number of accommodation centres that participated in the consultation have buses that provide transport to and from school for the children. However, these buses tend to operate only at times closely related to the school day. They do not facilitate the children’s engagement in social activities, including spending times with friends, joining sports teams and clubs and extra-curricular activities at school.

¹⁴³ Following the landmark decision of the Supreme Court judgment in *NHV v. Minister for Justice* [2018] 1 IR 246 regarding the right to work, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation brought in a temporary employment permit scheme for applicants for international protection. In order to realise their right to work asylum seekers applied for drivers’ permits. In order to be eligible for a learner permit, an applicant must be normally resident in the State. This stipulation resulted in asylum seekers being denied driving licences. This was challenged by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) in the Workplace Relations Committee (WRC) (Adjudication Number: ADJ-00017832). The adjudication of the WRC was that the Complainant had suffered indirect discrimination by being asked “to produce documentation that it was impossible for him to obtain”. Available at <https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/cases/2019/november/adj-00017832%20.html> As of January 2020, the State is appealing this decision.

'Yeah, it's like you know, you can't go out with your friends to town, the way they all go to town, and then you just can't, because bus times or whatever, or, like, because it's too far, like, you know. You want to have a sleepover, you want to have a party or anything... but then no, because it's like you know, too far.'

EXCLUSION from
The After school
soccer. because of
The Transports

Related to the issue of transport were the children's awareness and concerns about the **financial costs of pursuing hobbies and social activities** that could counteract their sense of exclusion. Where public transport was available, the cost of this was an issue for many children, as were joining or subscription fees.

→ transport (Not available)
→ CAN'T AFFORD it.
→ Somethings are (too) too late.

The children who met with OCO were very aware of the **financial pressure** that their family is under, with many stating that they 'would like to get a job, to help my family'. The financial constraints were felt particularly in school when school trips, outings and extra-curricular activities were being organised.

'I wanted to do soccer after school, but I can't as I don't have any transport. If I have to go back home I would have to call a taxi and we have to pay like €5, something like that'

Children were acutely aware of the difference between themselves and their peers in relation to participating in social and recreational activities. The inability of their parents to provide either private transport or to pay for public transport impacts their children's ability to integrate into their local communities and places them in a difficult position regarding their participation in wider community life.

Its difficult
to ask for lifts
for matches

This difficulty of asking for lifts was often linked by the children to their sense of stigma and fear of being judged about where they live, why they live there and the restrictions this places on them.

'We are discriminated against in school, especially when people don't know where we live... Maybe there is an event and they offer a lift and I say no and they say why and you can't tell the person you live in direct provision.'

Most centres that do not have self-catering facilities do not provide meals outside scheduled meal times and do not provide microwaves or other means to reheat or prepare food. Therefore, children need to be in their accommodation centre for fixed meal times. This was seen to impact on their ability to socialise and engage in activities outside the centre and further heightened their sense of being different to their peers.

*'Because you live in the accommodation, so you can't really join anything, because you can't do things they [other young people] because you live here, and they don't live here, and they can do whatever they want to do, any time, and you can't, because there's all timetables and s**t'.*

A large number of children who took part in the consultation spoke of **their embarrassment about living in Direct Provision accommodation** centres, with many referring to 'the label' that they consider is associated with their accommodation in the minds of people in Ireland, while others referred to 'being judged' because of their accommodation. Many children did not want their friends to know where they lived. This perception of being judged led many children to keep where they live a secret.

'I only tell people you're comfortable with [where I live], only the people you know like won't make fun of you...because you know when a piece of information gets spread, and goes to the wrong people, they would use this piece of information against you, and you know you wouldn't like that. So better to keep quiet'.

'It would be bad if they came. Most of my friends don't know I live in [centre name]. They don't really know how it is or how it works. They only see the news.'

Feeling that
we are
Jugded
Couse of
where we
live.

The children often cited their living arrangements for their inability to form close friendships. This led to children lying about where they live and naming the townland, or a place near to the Direct Provision centre as opposed to naming the centre itself.

don't tell people where we live.
CAN'T invite my friends.

'For Irish people to come, I wouldn't like them to come... Some of them when they hear, they move away. It prevents you making close friends because if they are really close friends, you would want them to come and play, but they can't.

'I would say we live... near the school, so it felt, really, a bit weird. It felt awkward, like, [if] people knew we were living there... I think, would judge us for living there. Yeah'

When some of the children revealed their living arrangements they frequently felt targeted by their peers. Other participants explained that their peers refused to mix with children who live in Direct Provision accommodation.

'And some people will ask us just to make us feel bad "Do you live there? Where do you live?" but they know that's where you live, just to make you feel bad'.

'Some children just don't talk to me because they say I'm living here. They say they don't talk to people who live in a dirty place, so I just keep quiet'.

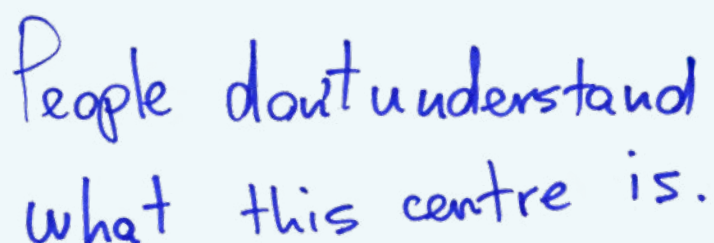
A lack of understanding of Direct Provision extended beyond the children's peers. Participants reported that they were negatively labelled in the wider community. In a number of areas, the participants spoke of being referred to in the local community and

in school as 'the [centre name] girls and boys' or as 'the [centre name] people'. These labels led to several children feeling ashamed of where they live.



I feel ashamed
to tell my friends
that I'm an asylum seeker.

This lack of knowledge and understanding of the Direct Provision system among their peers and wider society was cited by a number of children as problematic. Some explained that their peers knew the location of the centre but did not necessarily know what it was. This led to rumours about the centres being psychiatric hospitals, which made the participants more reluctant to share information about where they live.



People don't understand
what this centre is.

During one conversation two participants explained that the lack of understanding, as well as stereotypes of asylum seekers and refugees, leads to derogatory comments.

Participant 1: 'And it's like when they know you're from [the centre], they'll be asking you, "Do you have food? Do you live in tents?"

Participant 2: Yeah, "Do you have - do you even have water to take a shower?"

While some children did not necessarily feel shame or stigma about their living arrangements or the fact that they are seeking asylum, they did express **a sense of fear** about what would happen if their peer group found out about their status.

'If they see [name of centre] they will wonder, why do they live like this? I am not ashamed to be an asylum seeker because I know what I have been through. I am not really ashamed but I am scared they will not treat us so well... People in school use the n-word.'

One boy spoke of being supported by his friends in this situation.

'Like for me, it was much easier, most of my friends would back me up and all that, you know... and they'd just say "It's none of your business. You don't have to ask him that".'

However, most children we spoke to did not experience similar support or understanding from their peers and friendship groups.

'At school we mostly hang around with people who live here [in the accommodation] it's much easier'.

Exclusion in School

Many of the participants talked about feeling excluded in school. For some children getting to and from school contributed to their sense of exclusion, as they travelled to school together on buses that only served the accommodation centre. This marked them out as being from the Direct Provision centre when they arrived at and left school and as being different to their peers.



The school bus might be embarrassing.

Many of children that we spoke to described incidents of **bullying, racism and discrimination** while in school, all of which made them feel excluded from normal school life. They explained that both their peers and their teachers contributed to this exclusion. This exclusion ranged from not being selected by their peers and teachers for activities such as sports teams, presentations or projects, to serious allegation of racial abuse. These incidents are affecting the children's ability to fully participate in school life; with some children explaining that they do not participate in class because their peers will not work with them and others explaining that their exclusion means they will not speak or answer questions in class. The following depicts these issues.

'The first attitude they give you when you go to school it's weird, they don't see you like a normal person but when the Spanish exchange student comes it's normal, they're white... They do the 'us and them' system. Like most of the time you see black people talking on their own and the white people on their own, it's like separate, like people don't like to mix in school. Or you are in a group and you just see one black person stand in the corner. They are not open to come and start a conversation with you. They feel like you are going to bite them or something. I would tell them that words hurt, words can kill and they should watch what they say about people.'

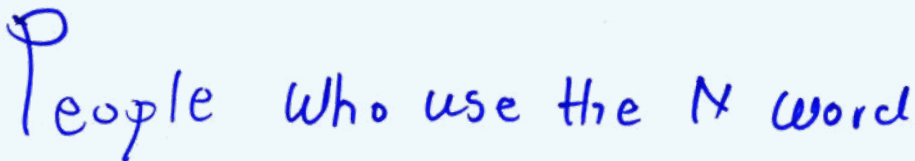
Participant 1: "... when the teacher says "get into pairs" you're always the one left behind if your friend isn't there...you're always the last one ... They don't ever like say, come with us. So the teacher is like, "it's okay, you can come with me"... all the time, every time'.

Participant 2: 'I like going to school, but then you know, sometimes when you have like a challenge, you're kind of like, 'oh no'... there are classes that you'd have with your friends that you really like but there are certain classes that if you're not friendly with a lot of the kids in there, you just like kind of dread walking in... you just want the class to finish'.

Participant 3: 'Half of my friends have moved, so I'm always like in a class on my own. So, like I dread going into some classes, but I just sit there and just do nothing all the time'.

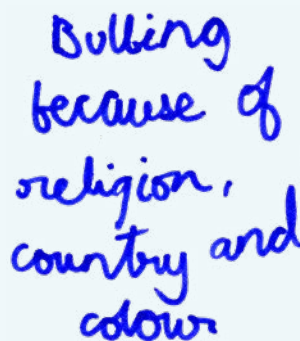
Use of **racist remarks** was reported by every group of children we engaged with and was commonly cited as a source of exclusion in school. Children had experienced being called racist names such as 'Black monkey' and 'a chocolate'. A number of participants talked about the use of the 'N' word by their peers in school and to those who asked if they could use the 'N' word.

'There is this group of guys in school who come up and ask for the 'N' word pass, because the 'N' word seems cool. It is in rap videos. It doesn't seem right for a white person to be using that word, so I just said no... Sometimes even your friends ask, maybe they don't know it is offensive so they might ask in a jokey way... It makes me disappointed. It is not necessary; I'm in school to learn my stuff. If someone asks me that, it makes me feel uncomfortable.'



People who use the N word

Bullying was related to race, religion and nationality. Social media also frequently used to engage in such bullying.



Bullying
because of
religion,
country and
colour

'On Snapchat – 'black + tree = monkey; all African people drink dirty water; and I wouldn't go out with a black girl'.

Religion and religious expression was also cited as a reason children believed that they were being bullied. One girl explained that her religious and cultural expression through wearing the hijab made her feel unsafe. She told us that when her family first moved to Ireland her father believed that it was unsafe for her and her sister to wear their head scarves to school.

'People are racist here and there are many attacks and stuff so it's better to go with the flow and not wear the headscarf...it was sad and my mom was against it [removing the hijab]. She was like "you just have to believe in yourself and God" but my Dad was like "it's for safety".'



not safe
Headscarfs

Other girls told us that their schools had banned the wearing of the head scarf citing health and safety or a uniform code as the reasoning behind this decision. This led to some girls having to remove their head scarves at the school gates or opting for other schools that allowed it.

Religion, and particularly being of the Muslim faith, was often cited as a source of bullying and exclusion, with one girl explaining:

'...Racism is regarding refugees and immigrants that's it and if you're Muslim as well, that big racism here. 'Oh you're a Muslim, so are you a terrorist as well? Do you have a bomb?' Just because we are Muslim doesn't mean we are terrorists or anything. There is loads of racism in this society.'

Many of the children talked about their **status as asylum seekers** as a further cause of exclusion and discomfort in school. This was related to negative stereotypes of asylum seekers and refugees and a lack of understanding of Direct Provision. One group explain how the 'tag' of asylum seeker affected them.

Participant 2: *'You have a fear of being judged...that you're an asylum seeker. They judge you, you know...they say two or three good things about you. But first they are going to judge you.'*

Participant 1: *'And it's like you know, we've been given this name, like we're asylum-seekers, we're refugees....this is a name putting on us.'*

Participant 3: *'It's like a tag.'*

OCO: *'And do you think it's a harmful tag?'*

Participant 1: *'Yeah, because it's like giving, us giving, we've been given this tag. It's like it's kind of giving the other people the right to like, you know, judge us or say whatever they want.'*

Participant 2: *'Make fun of us... and maybe feel sorry for us, because we're asylum seekers.'*

The children also explained that their status as asylum seekers or refugees singled them out in class. One group explained this as follows.

Participant 3: *'And you know once, yeah, we were in Geography class... We just had to say what the word 'refugee' meant, and if you see, oh my God, I was sitting at the back-*

Participant 2: *Everyone just looks at you.*

Participant 3: *-and everyone just looks at me.*

Participant 2: *At the same time.*

Participant 3: *The teacher goes, "What is meant by the word refugee?", and they all looked back, expecting me to answer.'*

This sense of being singled out due to their status also extended to the children feeling that there was a lack of understanding about their countries of origin. This happened in school when there was fundraising or incomplete education about their countries of origin.

'So, as black kids, they, you know those videos they sometimes put in the ads, where, like, let's say Africa, sponsor kids in Africa, they don't have water. But no, like, some parts in Africa there are different circumstances... Like, a lot of white people might think that Africa is like a jungle with lions and stuff, but it's not. Like, it's like an actual place where people live in, and there could be rich people there. But when they look upon us, they think, like, "You're poor", like, do you get me like? And that we're in asylum doesn't mean that in our past lives we were not, like, rich, or something like that, you know? But the way they look upon us, like, they think, like, we're nothing... So, yeah, but in cases of, like, white people, they judge too much, they judge too quick before they know what, like, is going on... Sometimes, it makes me feel, like, separated, like, a lot of black people from the [Direct Provision] centre feel the same way. And, like, that's why in school we end up having a group of our own black people... So, there was no, like, unity.'

Many children were of the view that these types of conversations and showing such videos in class is unfair on them as their peers look to them for confirmation or assume that they came from similar circumstances.

Participant 1: *'Teachers should ask us before showing a video about Africa. Everyone turns and looks at me when the video is on. The teacher didn't do anything...*

Participant 2: *Everyone thinks we have Ebola.*

Participant 1: *When they speak about Africa it makes them think that we have no water...they think we are poor and we are only here for the food and water.'*

The children we spoke to frequently said that their teachers did nothing to stop racist stereotyping in their classrooms with one child stating:

'Teachers should look out for us more, just have common sense and look out for us.'

One group of young people spoke of their anger about the discrimination they experience. They were particularly frustrated by the fact that it was not dealt with by their teachers or their school, therefore leaving them to find their own ways of coping. Other children believed that their exclusion by teachers was more covert and subtler.

'If you're in a classroom, the teachers tend to get along more with the Irish kids...they don't try...like they will be laughing, they will be having banter and all that and you're just sitting there like "I don't know what's going on". It's kind of strictly professional when it comes to foreigners, but it is very friendly when it comes to Irish kids.'

Covert racism was often described by boys whose peers and teachers relied on common stereotypes to engage them in conversation.

'If someone looks at me, the first thing they think of is 'he's black', so they start talking about basketball or hip hop.'

One girl summed up this feeling of subtle forms of racism and exclusion by stating:

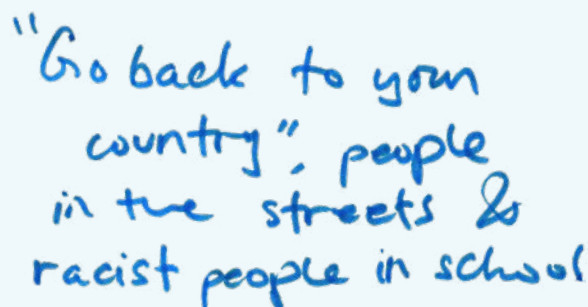
'They don't exclude you, you know exclude, I mean they just don't include you'.

Exclusion from the Local Community and Society

In discussing their experiences and views of exclusion, the issues and concerns they raised in respect of their local community and wider Irish society overlapped considerably. The discrimination described by the children was not confined to school. Many children experienced discrimination in their local communities, stating that *'...it is annoying when people judge us on our skin colour'*. The children were keenly aware of such judgement and discrimination in wider Irish society as well. One child explained that the system of Direct Provision adds to their sense of exclusion.

'It [Direct Provision] doesn't make you feel included in the Irish community, the people that have Irish backgrounds... they feel like we're a bit less than them or something like that, not enough to be friends with them, you know?'

Other children experienced overt racism in Irish society, with many recounting having insults directed at them.



"Go back to your country", people in the streets & racist people in school

We used to get
told to go back and
why are you here.

SAD



Children talked about the lack of understating in Irish society of the international right to seek asylum and why the children's families may have come to Ireland. This posed problems for the children and for some was a source of fear and anxiety.

'A friend said "Irish people are paying for everything for you" and that made me feel uncomfortable. I am not used to people giving me everything. I felt confused and I did not want anyone to see me living here. I felt sad because it is not my choice to be here. If I could get papers and if I didn't have troubles in my own country, I would not be here. I felt scared because she knows where I live.'

Living in Direct Provision centres contributed to the children's sense of exclusion from the local community and wider society. One child who had experience of living in an accommodation centre and also in a community setting spoke about the difference between them.

'Being mixed [with other people] makes us feel like part of the community.... you can feel like you live here, you can feel the difference... you never, you don't really feel like change when you just live in like the centres... you don't really feel very included in many things when you are living in centres... because you don't really get to mix with a lot of people from here [Ireland]... people usually just mix with people from their own countries'.

Many of the children were very aware of the protests occurring in some areas where Direct Provision centres were planned. The children believed that these protests were about fear and felt the need to explain why they were seeking asylum.

'We're not coming here to take, here's the thing. We're not coming here to get money or anything. We already have our own money from back home, let's say. But we're coming here for protection.'

Feelings of fear and anxiety were frequently expressed by the children. These feelings related to worries about being 'outed' as an asylum seeker or being sent back to an unsafe situation if their family's asylum claim was unsuccessful and they were deported.

'I feel weird about it. When people ask where I live I feel nervous. When people ask why I am here I feel more nervous and scared. I would feel ashamed to say that I live here. I would like to be normal... I am different to other Irish children, I don't want to go back to my country but I miss my country. If you are you here it's [because] you can't be in your own country. I feel safe here; I don't want to go back. If I don't get my papers, I don't know what would happen... I am scared if they say no and I have to go back.'

2.4 Children's Recommendations for Change

The children provided a wide range of suggestions for changes that would improve their lives as asylum seekers or as refugees who had been granted leave to remain in Ireland but continued to live in Direct Provision and EROC accommodation. The overall message from all children was clear.



We need changes !!!

Changes to the System of Direct Provision

The majority of the children articulated frustration with the system of Direct Provision. We spoke to children whose families had not had their first interviews with the Department of Justice and Equality, others who were awaiting decisions, some who were in the appeals process, or had been issued with a deportation order. A surprising number of the children had been granted leave to remain with their families but were unable to leave the Direct Provision system due to an inability to secure alternative accommodation. What the children all had in common was that they have had to wait, many describing their lives being on hold while decisions were made about their status.

Most of the children talked about **the length of time that they have been living in the Direct Provision**. This ranged from newly arrived children who had been there for a number of weeks to children who had been living in the system for up to eight years.



Ireland
isylum
process is a bit slow!

I think that
they must not
keep people ~~to~~
for too long in
the direct provision

'I love Ireland and everything but the system is so slow. The system is changing people, if it was a bit quicker it would have helped so many people get back together with their families... I don't think that people realise that we are human.'

The children we spoke to told us that while they lived in Direct Provision accommodation improvements in their centres would make their lives easier. Frequently, standard of living issues and the right to privacy were raised as areas for improvement.

Better food.

No Cameras

more computer/Equipments
in Accomodation centre

The accommodation centres offered a wide variety of different facilities that affected the children's standard of living. Having the ability to cook and eat food from their own country was important to all the children we spoke to. However, not all of the centres provide facilities for cooking. All children wanted bigger living spaces, especially for larger families. Many children had lived in a number of different centres and they were acutely aware of the variety of provision. However, all of them agreed that **self-catering accommodation is and would be better and that the same standards should apply everywhere.**

Self-catering
is still the
best centre
from all
the centres

There should be
more houses
with more
rooms in
self-cateri
centres

Have ability
to cook your
own food.

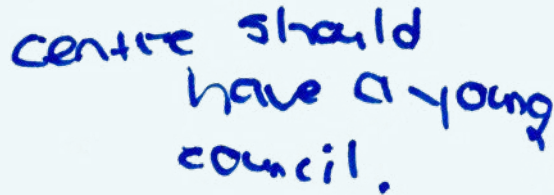
All centres
should be
similar

Some of the children felt like **they did not have a say in how their centre was run**, with their issues and requests being ignored. This caused frustration and a sense that complaints were not acknowledged at all or only if they created a fuss.

'I feel like if you try and – if you are nice to [centre staff] and everything, they tend to like not listen to you. But, if you go there with like a fuss, they'll be like, "Okay, yes, we will do it now" and they do it right away.'

Respond to
our complaints

One group suggested that the centres should have **youth councils** similar to their Student Councils in their schools, so that they could have their views heard.

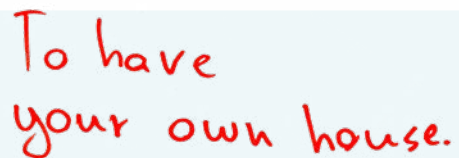


centre should
have a young
council.

Despite the suggestions for changes within the centres, the most significant change that many children wanted was **to end the system of Direct Provision accommodation centres**. They were of the view that it would be easier for them if they did not have to live within the Direct Provision system, and that they would experience less stigma and greater inclusion if they did not live in accommodation centres.



Easier if you
lived in community



To have
your own house.

One child explained how living in Direct Provision accommodation was holding her back.

'We want to go out, get involved, you know? It's like whenever we want to do something, we have to wait till we move out. You know, that's what's holding us back.'

The children we spoke to often discussed what would happen when they moved out. As previously, stated some of the children had been granted leave to remain and had some suggestions for the Government regarding **supports to secure housing and moving out of Direct Provision accommodation**.

More social
housing

get landlords to
take HAP

Helping from government
in Housing for when
people get their
status.

Moving out
LOANS
without
interest

New houses in everywhere
in Ireland

One group of children who had leave to remain described the pressures of going for house viewings.

Participant 1: 'And it's like, you know, you go for a house viewing, yeah? And then you go there, you're the only asylum-seeker. There's a lot of Irish people. That just tells you, 'What the hell are you doing there?' you know? They're obviously not going to pick you out of all these Irish people.

OCO: How does this make you feel?

Participant 1: Terrible, obviously. Just makes you lose hope and everything, you know.

Participant 2: You feel hurt because you want to be like others, you want to have a house; you want to have the right to do what others do but you can't because...

Participant 1: You want to settle.

Participant 2: It's not possible.

Participant 1: That's the biggest thing we want. We just want to settle.'

Changes in School

The vast majority of changes that were recommended related to children's experiences in school. This is unsurprising as it is where children not only spend most of their time but it is where they come into contact with peers, their local communities and provides them with a reference point for attitudes in Irish society.

Several recommendations for change relate directly to their **teachers**. These range from simple asks such as 'teachers to be more friendly' and that 'teachers know their students' to broader asks relating to teacher training. These referred to anti-racism training, training in human rights and training in different religions. This training and greater awareness of these issues extended beyond teachers to children and society for some participants.

Anti racism training for teachers.
Same for children & for school
from young age so they can use it

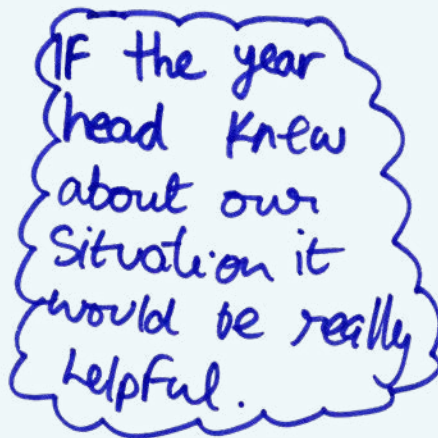
more
awareness
about other
religions

'[I want them] to understand other people's rights. So they know they can't really say, "Oh, you don't have a right to be here" and stuff.'

→ Rights training for everyone

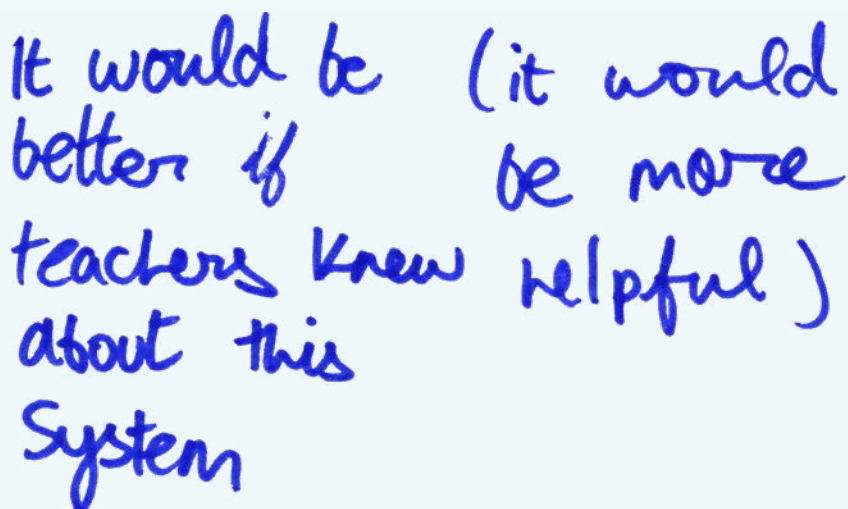
Many of the participants believed that if teachers and Irish children were made aware of human and children's rights and the impact of racism that they would treat asylum seekers better. Some children felt that having teachers from more diverse backgrounds, including different religions, nationalities and races, would benefit everyone and help them feel more included and a part of the school community.

Some children believed that it was important to inform the school that they were asylum seekers. One girl made the following recommendation based on her own experience.



IF the year
head knew
about our
situation it
would be really
helpful.

The children considered that it was not only important for senior teachers to know their situation but that it was vital that they understood the implications of being an asylum seeker in Ireland and of living in a Direct Provision accommodation. The children felt that if the teachers understood them and their situation that racism and bullying may be dealt with more effectively. Some children believed that racism was not addressed effectively in their schools. Openly discussing the issue of racism, taking proactive measures to combat it and disciplining pupils who were racist towards them was seen by many of the children as vital.



It would be better if teachers knew about this system (it would be more helpful)

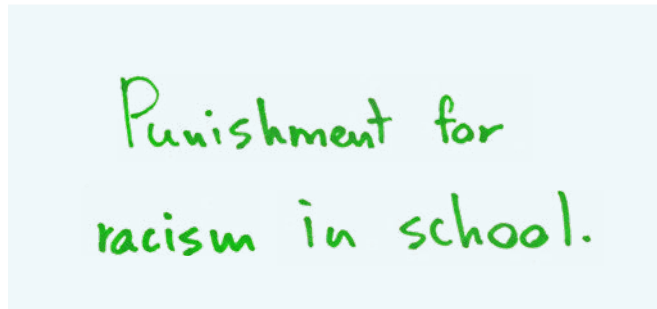
Participant 3: *'Like, they could teach in the school, like, they could talk a lot.*

Participant 1: *Yes, they could. Like, they don't really talk about it that much. They just talk in a brief, like, "Oh, yes, guys, don't be racist". Yes, that's it.*

Participant 2: *I think there's posters as well. Is there posters?*

Participant 1: *No, I have never seen any poster in that school that says, "Don't be racist".'*

'I feel like they need to start, like, [talking about racism] rather than waiting until something happened to do it, they should do it.'



Access to third level education was also discussed, as many of the young people were in the late stages of second level education. They were acutely aware that the opportunity to go to college may not be open to them. Many of the children that we spoke to had ambitions to continue their studies and the lack of certainty about this was a source of stress for many of them.

'We really don't know what to do after school. We don't know if we can go to college. We all want to go [to college]. Let's be positive. My sister is going to university now.'

'We are not sure about our future... we don't know if Ireland can keep us. I want to be a lawyer, but I am terrified'.

Changes in the Local Community

Isolation from their local communities is felt by many of the children. This isolation is due to a number of reasons, including the physical distance between their centre and the nearest village or town, restrictions on transport and their ability to socialise with Irish nationals. In order to enable children to mix with the Irish community the children made some suggestions based on people *'having discussions'* and improving communication between people living in Direct Provision and those living in the local community.

Be Missed with
Other Irish people
Makes us feel
like we are
Part of the
Community.

People
being more
open

Make
an effort
to talk to people

GET TO KNOW
US as people

Other children firmly believed that if their communities knew how they felt about their exclusion and understood the Direct Provision system that it would make their inclusion in the community easier.

'What should be done is to let them know how it feels, try and explain to them why do you do that, try and let them know, what do you have against us and I think if we tell them how it feels like it might make a little bit of change. We can't change people but just don't show your hate on me.'

Let your
people know
how it feels to
be excluded

If they knew what
it was to Be like
us

Some children believed that the divisions between people living in Direct Provision and the local community could be tackled **if people came to the centres** and knew what it was like to live there. Many children felt that removing the taboo of the centre could help the local community to understand how they live and what it feels like to be them.

• We could invite
them and let them
know how it feels.

One group explained that people's labelling and perceptions of them can be hurtful.

Participant 1: *'Basically, if they see you walk by... the main thing they think of you, or see you is that you are that guy from [the centre], you're from [the centre]. You are [the centre], refugee, asylum-seeker, all that.'*

Participant 2: *No, if they lived here, they would not talk.*

Participant 3: *If they lived here they would know.*

Participant 2: *Yeah, they would not say nothing.*

Participant 3: *What if they lived here?'*

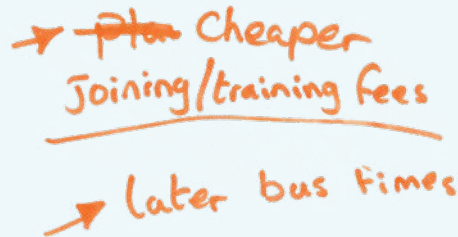
This conversation led to a suggestion of a 'community exchange', where local residents and those living in Direct Provision accommodation would swap accommodation so that local people really understood what living in Direct Provision is like.



Essentially the children believed that greater understanding of both asylum seekers and the local community would be helpful to both themselves and to local people.

People need
To understand
us and we
need to understand
them!

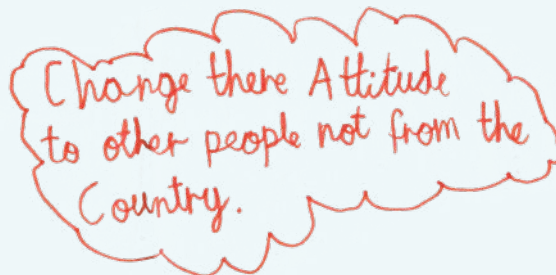
The children often identified simple suggestions that would improve their ability to interact with their local communities, such as providing footpaths in rural communities, increasing the transport available to them and advertising community events in the centres. Many of the children found sport in their local communities as a way to feel included. However, as discussed in section 2.3 above, they identified several barriers to their participation and made suggestions about how these could be addressed.



→ ~~plan~~ Cheaper
Joining/training fees
→ Later bus times

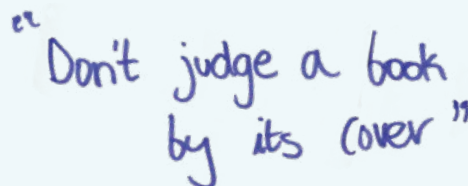
Changes in Irish Society

The children had some strong recommendations for changes in Irish society. They believed the negative stereotypes about asylum seekers were perpetuated at a societal level. Some children believed that there was a need for **attitudinal change**.



Change there Attitude
to other people not from the
Country.

Many children wanted 'people see that we are human', and to 'stop negative stereotypes' and for to 'people stop judging about where you live'. The following phrase was commonly used.



“Don't judge a book
by its cover”

The children frequently described wanting to be treated better, with more empathy and kindness.

"when given
the choice
between being
right or being
kind choose
kind"

Other children believed that Ireland was ill-prepared for refugees and asylum seekers, with some children expressing anger at the way they were treated by society.

Don't bring
asylum seekers
in if you don't
know how to treat
right !!.

Section 3 – Dear Ireland



3.1 Messages from Children in Direct Provision

The children that we spoke to desperately want to be a part of Irish society, they want to 'settle', they want to feel safe, be treated equally and make Ireland their home. Their isolation from Irish communities and wider society is not helping them achieve the inclusion that they crave. This can make them feel angry, hurt and ashamed. They are still happy and grateful to Ireland. They are proud of and want to share their own cultures and heritage, and also to participate fully all in parts of Irish life. They want to embrace and be embraced by Irish society.

At the end of each consultation we asked the children to write a letter entitled Dear Ireland. These messages refer to racism; equality; the asylum process; schools; messages to asylum seekers; as well as messages of thanks to Ireland. The following section presents their messages.

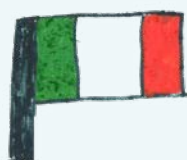
- To get to know us more and where we from.
- We didn't just come for the water and food there's reasons behind.
- Not to be judged by the colour of your skin.
- To know our views of the water and Ireland.
- Let us practice our religion and culture and language in here and maybe they can learn something about us.

I Really live Ireland ♥

♥ It's one of the best
country I've ever been
to.



It's very different from
where I lived in Nigeria.



In Some places in Ireland, i feel more
safer than when I was back home in africa

Hello,

Dear Ireland,

speed up asylum process. it's so slow and there's families
waiting for their papers more than a year and it's kinda
hard for kids. please speed it up ♥ with lots of love..

Thank you ♥ 3

I am an asylum seacker!!!
And my life is not easy as it could be!
It could be easier if the local people and
government would understand me!
If my friends in school ~~were~~ making fun
from the people who's in quiet same situation
as me i wout be ashamed to tell them
that I am an asylum seacker!!!
I really want to ~~live~~ ^{live} same as my friends wh
has a big house and place to cook good food
But, without help of government I cant change
my situation!

Not all of us drink dirty
water.

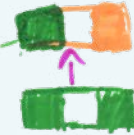
Stop Being Racist!

Be more nice

We Have a Say too.

Listen to Us Treat us Equally

You aren't allowed to say the n-word?
If you are going to show Irish people videos of Africans
Point Blank Period!!!!
Just say not all Africans



Dear Ireland,
we appreciate what you are doing very much. but we think
that people should understand what it feels to be non-Irish.
and that as foreigners we have feelings too. you need to
step up your game in this ^{particular area} situation. But if you keep working
you will get there. you doing great sweetie. ☺

Hi, Ireland you changed my life I was living in a country where it was hard for me to go school everyday because of war. living in Ireland changed my life my future. I am very grateful. Thank you I am proud to be Ireland citizen and live here. I have one request after you get your refugee status it's hard to find a house mostly house owners don't give to refugees because they don't have reference. if you build more houses it will be way easier for us to find a house Thank you
I would love to be a lawyer in future and work in Ireland.

Thank you

Give us our papers !!
Ye don't have the n' word pass
we need to be included
mixed races in class don't be dry
we love Ireland tho 😊
Be open and I will do the same mate
not all of us Africans drink dirty water

Stop being racist! ☺

Stop sayin' the n word!

~~Stop being racist!~~

Be more nice to other religious!

Treated everyone equally!

WE LOVE IRELAND! 🇮🇪

Not all black people drink dirty water!

Not all black people are slaves! WE'RE NOT SLAVES!

Black are unique ❤️❤️❤️

✗✗✗

Say NO to Racism..... ☺

STOP BEING RACIST! ~~stop~~
Don't say the N word pass!!!

~~RAACISM~~

WE LOVE IRELAND ✕

We are EQUAL... were UNIQUE OK!

Treat us like you want to be treated

POW'T BLANK PERIODT!

WE NEED to be included in everything too!

listen to us.....

Not all BLACK PEOPLE DRINK DIRTY WATER.

Black People Are Special xxx

were not SLAVE PEOPLE.....

we're talented xoxo

Dear Ireland, you
 We would love ~~you~~ to speed up the Asylum process. I would love you guys to have foreigner teachers in school as I feel excluded in school because some teachers don't make enough effort to get to know foreigners ~~to~~ student. I would love you guys to ~~have~~ have a day that you teach or raise awareness about racism and the awareness of foreigners. I have been here for 5 years and haven't got my status and people that have been here for ~~3~~ ^{3 months} get there status, I just don't understand that. And ~~you need to work on college~~ I think it stupid that you have to wait for 3 years to go to college in Ireland as some people just come and they will like to go to college. I would love to go to college next year and I want it to be easy to go to, finance wise. ~~Deportation~~ ^{Deportation} is stupid because someone is trying to get out of their Country for protection and you guys are sending them back to their Country.
 or
 War

Dear Ireland,

We would love you to speed up the Asylum process. I would love you guys to have foreigner teachers in school as I feel excluded in school because some teachers don't make enough effort to get to know foreign students, I would love you guys to have a day what you teach or raise awareness about racism and the awareness of foreigners. I have been here for 5 years and I haven't got my status and people have been here for 3 months get there [sic] status, I just don't understand that. I think it's stupid that you have to wait for 3 years to go to college in Ireland as just came and they will like to go to college. I would love to go to college next year and I want it to be easy to go to, finance wise. Deportation is stupid because someone is trying to get out their country for protection or war and you guys are sending them back to their country.

People are nice but some judge
Thier point of view.

IRELAND



Ireland is good But
we ~~are~~ Are All Humanbeing ☆
stop Bulling

The

Bulling

WE

WE ARE All Humanbeing

ARE

Same

Stop
bulling

إلى أيرلندا...

نود ان نجعلو لم الشغل مسووح ليدعقظ للأقارب وأيضاً لأصدقاء نود الميوت
كبيرة وليست صغيرة نود المعاملة تكون في القضاة أفضل وان يكون بقرينة اسمهم
لقد ننتارم هذا لنعرفه والاشخاص الذي في أيرلندا جيديون ولكن أيرلندا
عالية نرصد ان نكنهن في اعيان السيدات وأم شيء لم الشغل
للأصدقاء والأقارب ان امكنهم تربيون أسطادنا ونريد التبرع في الجنية
كل الجنية تنافز كثيراً نريد لم الشغل نريد لم الشغل نريد لم الشغل
نريد لم الشغل للأقارب والأصدقاء نريد لم الشغل من فضلكم
وشكراً...
Thanks 😊

To Ireland;

We would love that you permit family reunifications not only for family but also for friends. We want the houses to be larger and not small. We want the treatment in the hotel to be better and that we choose the people to be beside us in the hotel. Irish people are kind but the prices in Ireland are expensive. We would like some reductions in the car insurance. And the most important thing is the family and friends reunification. If you want to make us happy, then we would like to have the citizenship of the state because citizenship takes a long time. We want the reunification, we want the reunification, we want the reunification with family and friends. We want the reunification please and thank you.

Thank you

Don't judge people because of their race, skin colour, background, religion, language, tribe, nationality, gender/sex, and/or other ethnic

Get to know more about/of us (even ~~too~~^{learn} more)

Involve us in the community (Integrate/Interact with us)

Find out about our opportunities and abilities (what we are good at + can always do that we love)

- أنا مبسوط في أيرلندا . وانيسطنا مندمار جيت بنا في المطار .

وأريد أن أجيب أهلي من لبنان .

وشكراً لشعب أيرلندا الذي كل مارأنا يرجب بنا .

وأريد أن أزورك في المكتب .

I am happy in Ireland. We were happy when they welcomed us at the airport.

I want to bring my sister from Lebanon

I want to thank the Irish people, who welcome us each time they meet us.

I want to visit you in the office.

And thank you very much

Not to Judge us as black people
They should get to know
what us as black go through

LOVE

أنا سعيد جداً في أيرلندا. وسأكون راسياً سعيداً
لأنهم يقدمون خدمات جيدة
لأنني سوف أذهب إلى المدرسة
لأنني سوف أذهب إلى البيت المنتظر

و شكراً إلى
الوزير
♡

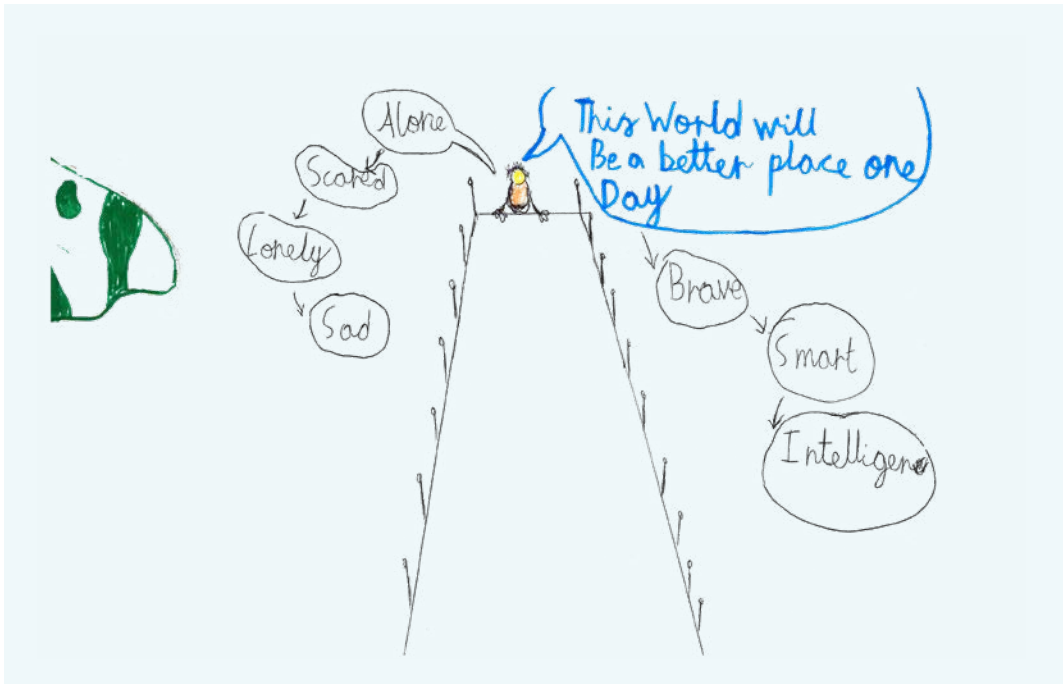
I am very happy in Ireland. I am also very thankful for the good reception you have given us

I am happy because they are providing good services

I am happy because I will go to school

I am also happy because I will go to the sought house

Thanks to the Minister





BROWN RACE

BE EQUAL, TREAT EQUAL.



WHITE RACE

NO racism

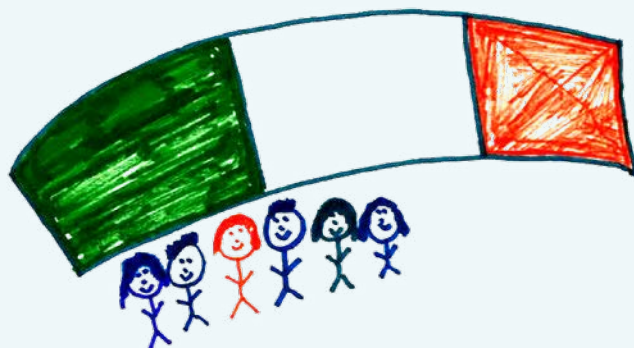
Everyone is the same
colour makes no difference
NO racism
by: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

NO racism

no rasi
sm

NO racism

NO racism



Ireland
hugging
me and my
I really
trust Ireland. family.

Dear Ireland -

Now I would love to thank you for accepting ^{us} in your Country and helping us feel equal with other people and all the rights that you have given us that we were not entitled to back in my Country in (Congo). I thank you for giving me the opportunity to be Education and thank other Irish friends in school for making me feel us part and as a Community. All I hope for is that ~~in the end~~ and my family get full citizenship in the Country because feel that this is home. because we feel safe and our rights are been given to us.

Thank you !!
Ireland

Don't treat us as crazy people
we are also humans like you'll we will
Never change our selves. You'll could at
least respect us as who we are and our
~~feeling~~ religion If we are not Irish don't treat
us as slaves.

Africa is NOT Poor
For them to get ~~the~~ know the real you
Not Judge you for your skin
For them ~~not~~ consider you in their activities

Please lets be strong ^{We will feel the pain together lets be strong.}
Can you please help each other.
We can do this if we stand together.
Without you guys we won't be able to be strong.
If we keep on fighting we won't be strong. Lets look out for each other like a family.
We stand together, we fight together, we laugh together and we cry together.
I'm so happy to be here: you guys you are a family

We are a family lets be strong and love one another

أنا مبسوطه في أيرلندا لأن سمحت لي بمفرصه للدراسه
والمواصلات والعلاج والرحلات والمعامله لطيفه
وأنا أحب روح لبيت وأحب أن تكون عمتي معنا
أنا أحب أن يكون لدي اصدقاء. ونكرأ لأيرلنده لاستقبنا
والمعامله لطيفه

I am happy in Ireland because this country is giving us an opportunity to go to school. The state is providing us transportation, therapy, trips and the nice treatment. I would love to go home and for my aunt to be with us. I would love to have friends. Thank you Ireland for welcoming us and for treating us very well. Thank you all

And the biggest thing that I want to become a lawyer when I grow up. It's my passion. And really really want Ireland to help me to reach my destination. I would really love that. Since im very concerned about my future and studies and what's gonna happen next. So I just hope that future plans everything good to me. Thank You

Hello Ireland,



I am writing to inform you about my request for assylum seeker. In my opinion I think you're doing a poorly job at deciding whether someone should stay or leave Ireland. The process it self is slow and it sucks you should be more nicer and give more opportunities to people. I can not sign of this letter because I don't want ye all to come after me.

Bye

~~I HATE~~ if your giving deportation orders.

لبيعوت نعا بصيله

ونابغ طبيون

ورماقله بدن كويسا

يرهو لم لشغل

الاند كويس

واليس الاند نعو لم بدن

نعا الاند بصيله فوي طبيه

يرهو لخله تعينه لسميادان

نعا الاند بصيره بدن

لعدرو نعا بصيله مقن

Ireland is good.

The houses here are pretty

The nature of Ireland is beautiful

The people are nice and treat us well

We want the family reunification

The teachers here are very nice

حلي ايرلندا.

ايرلندا كثير حلوه وشكرا لاستقبالنا فيها وشعب ايرلندي ودودجا
وانا احب شعب ايرلندي كثير وبتحق تغيروا لقانون لم الشمل.
وشكرا

To Ireland

Ireland is a very beautiful country. Thank you for receiving us. The Irish people are very friendly, that's why I love them so much. I wish that they will change the family reunification law.

And thank you

Dear Ireland

What an amazing people you are, you have welcomed, received and most of all ^{many} accepted people p. with different back grounds. As you have well received us we want to make a positive change to your country. We ask for an opportunity to make that change with our own special abilities, it was a great man who once said "If you ~~don't~~ ^{are} a Judge a fish by it's ability to climb ~~at~~ ⁱⁿ a tree it will live it's whole life believing it is stupid. We want to make a change in the way we can for we all have a role to play to make an amazing country and live for as a world. As an african proverb says if you want to go fast go alone if you want to go far go together.

- Solo porque vivamos en un asilo, no se ignifica ^{que} valgamos menos.
 - Todos tenemos los mismos derechos de sentirnos seguros en el país que estemos y de ser ayudados. Si hubiera igualdad y respeto, todos viviríamos cómodos y en armonía. Todas las personas tienen un pasado detrás, así que no podemos juzgar.
- Siempre es bueno ayudar a la gente, respetar y ser paciente.
- Ser amable con la gente, ayudar y compartir, te hace sentir muy bien.
 - Trata de siempre ver el lado positivo a todas las cosas.
 - Busca excusas para ser feliz, y no para estar triste o enojado.
 - Pregunta, escucha y aprende de los demás, porque todo lo que aprendas te ayudará en la vida.



Just because we live in asylum accommodation, it does not mean we are worthless.

We all have the same right to feel safe in the country that we are to be helped

If there were equality and respect, we would all live in harmony

All people have a past behind, so we can't judge.

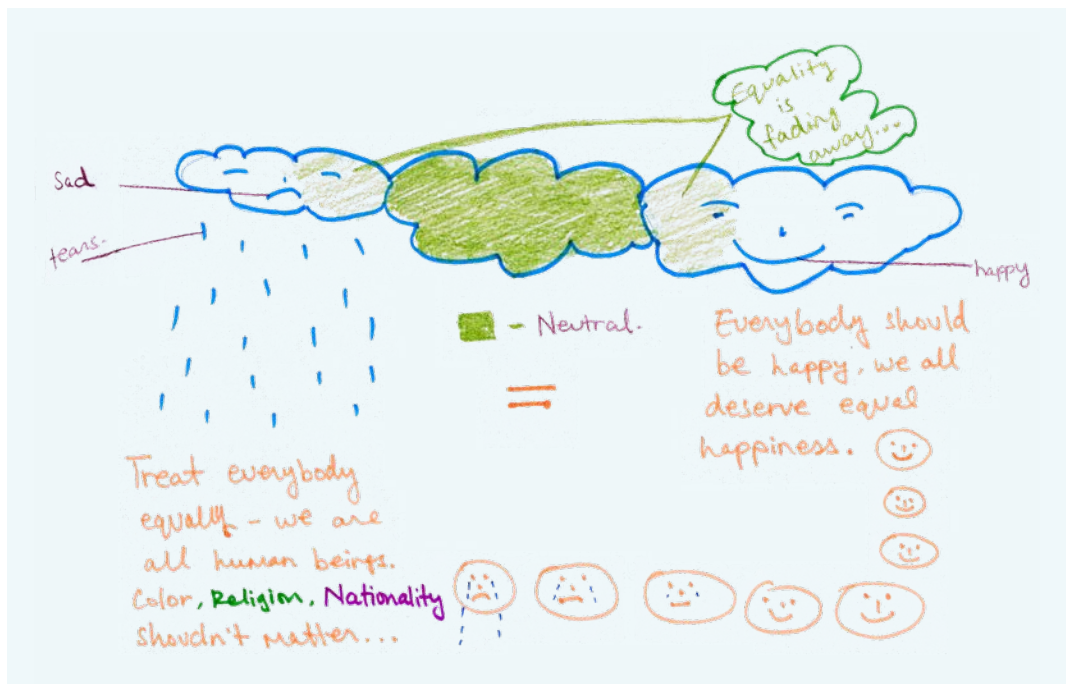
It is always good to help people, respect and be patient.

Being kind to people, helping and sharing makes you feel very good.

Try to always see the positive side of all things.

Look for excuses to be happy, and not to be sad or angry.

Ask, listen and learn from others, because everything you learn will help you in life



Not to Judge us from our skin color and
where we stay.

To threat us the same as everyone else.

To have the same rights as everyone.

Ireland is such a lovely Country but Here some people
who are really racist to other and ~~being~~ this music
change. Also being a Sitem stakeholder we were not forced
to be but it because we have some problem which we can't
manage by our self but by the help of the Irish government
We also need us and our feature friends to happy in
our lives. racist must stop in school, home and other
places cause we don't like this if its in school
teacher or managers must do something about.
and also the government must not keep people for
too long in the direct provision because here destroying
young people's future they don't have to keep people for
more than 5 years.

إلى إيرلندا...
 أتمنى بسماع لقرار لم التمثل في إيرلندا، وأيضاً التسريع في إجراءات
 السفر إلى البلد، وإتمنى من الشعب ~~إيرلندا~~ الأيرلندي التعاون معنا
 لبنين مستقبل جيد للبلد سوياً 😊.
 واتشكر دولة إيرلندا لاستقبالنا فيها
 Thank Ireland 😊

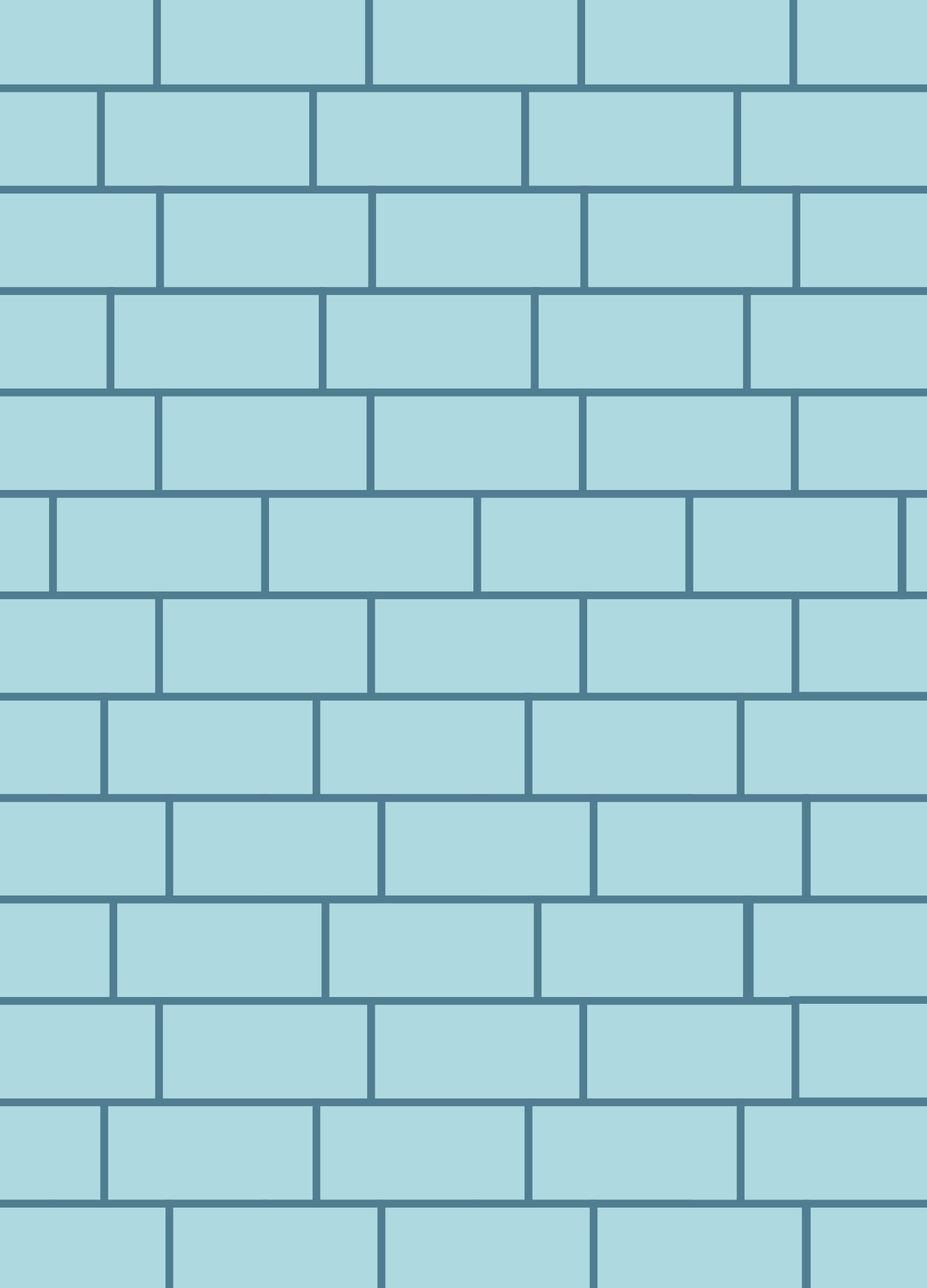
To Ireland

I hope to allow a decision about a reunification in Ireland and also speed up the procedures of travelling into the country. And I hope that the Irish people will cooperate with us to build a better future for the country together.

I thank Ireland for receiving us.

Thank you Ireland!





Helped

racist

lonely

School

EXCLUSION

Rights

included

ashamed

Friends.

divided

different

Judge

transport