Direct Provision Explainer
The journey of people seeking asylum in Ireland

A system for emergency accommodation that has developed into long term institutional living

Application Process
Info & Challenges

Initial interview on arrival, sometimes up to a 3 month wait. A 62 page application form needs to be filled out. A key issue is that access to any legal support tends to be much later in the process e.g. on appeal. An applicant may not have access to all the details or have trouble remembering, sometimes after a traumatic journey spanning years. Any gaps or discrepancies can result in delays or rejection.

Supposed to be short holding accommodation but many living here long term with the longest existing residents there 9+ years.

Centres are not suitable for long term living. Of 40 centres in the country, only 3 were built with the purpose of accommodating asylum seekers. Buildings include: hotels, hostels, convinity/nursing homes, a mobile home site [1], in the case of repurposed hotels often families are living in a single room with no cooking facilities of their own.

Living rules are applied by centre management, e.g. curfews, no visitors in room, you can’t be away from your place without permission for more than 3 days or you may face eviction.

Average wait times reported between 20 months and 2 years for first interview [2]. The IPOS now target wait times of 8-10 months for first interview (non-prioritised), however this doesn’t factor in subsequent appeal delays.

Majority of Asylum Seekers get negative decision on first application. Ireland has one of the lowest numbers of asylum applications in Europe as well as one of the lowest acceptance rates, well below the EU average. E.g. during the 3 year period of the migrant crisis (2015-2017) there were 8,400 asylum applications but only 1,375 positive first instance decisions [3].

Key Issue: From the start there is uncertainty and lack of information around timelines for your case.

This is where most Asylum Seekers are “stuck” in the system waiting for a follow up interview on appeal. Many have been stuck in this loop for years. An Asylum Seeker can appeal the initial rejection if there are sufficient grounds, e.g. further documentation to be obtained, proof of conditions in home country. They are more likely to get legal advice as part of an appeal.

Outcome / Interview

Arrive in Ireland

Sent to Balskin Reception Centre

Dispersed to Direct Provision Centre

Wait to hear from International Protection Office

Wait

Rejected

Accepted

Yes

Deported

Yes

Appeal?

No

Leave to Remain?

Travel/Location Barrier
Most centres are situated a long distance from large urban centres making it difficult to access most work & education options. E.g. weekly living allowance is €38.80 [4]. A single bus return ticket from Money to Dublin for example is €13. Also Asylum Seekers are not permitted to hold a Driver’s Licence so independent transport is not an option.

Right to Work
There have been some improvements with the relaxing of some previous salary & sector restrictions however various practical challenges remain. You can only apply for a permit for 6 months at a time which restricts the types of jobs you can go for and discourages employers. Job applications are refused due to documentation issues - you can’t retain a Passport or Driver’s Licence when you are in the system so it’s very difficult to set up a bank account.

And there are often prejudicial barriers due to racism and/or coming from Direct Provision.

Impact on Children
There are two multiple independent national and international reports calling out the Direct Provision System as being detrimental to children’s wellbeing and development [5] [6]. Also, children share bedrooms with their parents and have very little space of their own. Due to the confined living circumstances they are more likely to witness domestic violence [7].

Living Conditions & Mental Health
There is one female-only accommodation centre, and seven male-only ones; the majority of centres are mixed [8], with shared bedrooms and overcrowding [9]. Single people typically have no say who they share with often resulting in inappropriate, frightening and/or unsafe dormitory accommodation conditions. Many residents are dealing with trauma and in some cases PTSD from experiences including torture and sexual violence.

Cooking & Autonomy
In most centres food is supplied by service providers in communal settings. There are recognised issues with the nature, quality and quantity of food provided - often associated with cost-cutting by private providers. Lack of autonomy and cramped communal living spaces are not appropriate for long-term living [7].

Following appeal, successful applicants are granted subsidiary protection or in some cases “leave to remain”, if it is determined that they would be unsafe to return to their country of origin.