

# Supporting Transition from Direct Provision

Learning from the  
Refugee Support Grants Programme

November 2019

**sstgt** | **st.stephen's  
green trust**

Report Written By:

Pamela Montgomery

Independent Consultant

E: [pmontgomeryconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:pmontgomeryconsulting@gmail.com)

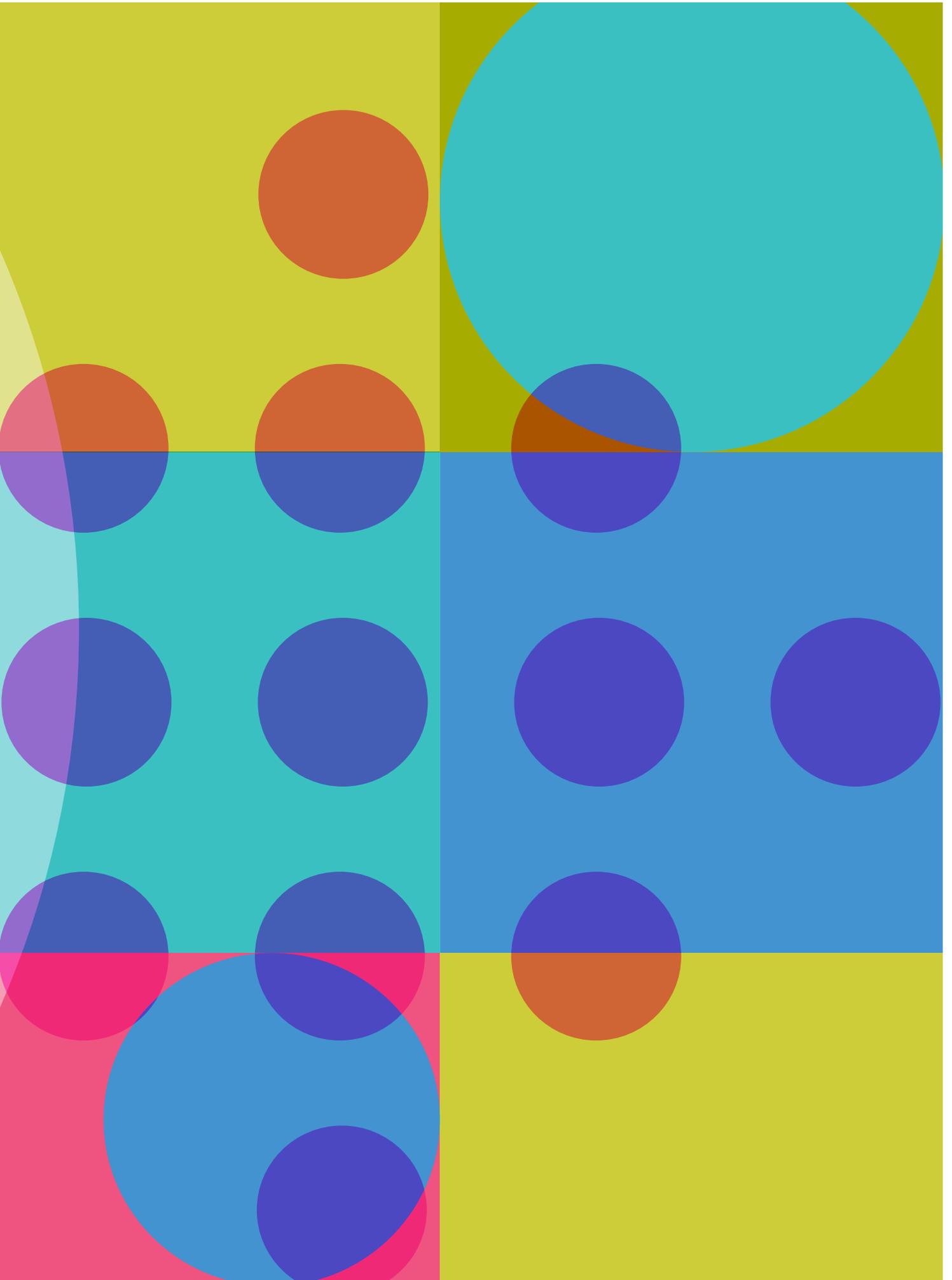
T: 0044 78 2434 4948

# contents

---

	<b>foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>executive summary</b>	<b>7</b>
Section 1	<b>introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1	St. Stephen's Green Trust	8
1.2	The RSGP	9
Section 2	<b>direct provision</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1	Overview	10
2.2	Growing concerns about the direct provision system	11
2.3	Changes in the direct provision system over the life of the RSGP	12
2.4	Challenges to transition from direct provision	13
Section 3	<b>the refugee support grants programme</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1	Rationale and focus	14
3.2	RSGP design	15
Section 4	<b>evaluation methodology</b>	<b>16</b>
4.1	Rationale	16
4.2	Approach	16
4.3	Methods	17
Section 5	<b>what was funded</b>	<b>18</b>
5.1	Organisations and projects	18
5.2	Approaches to transition support	20
5.3	Family reunification	28
5.4	Alternative approaches to resettlement	30
Section 6	<b>support needs during transition from direct provision</b>	<b>33</b>
6.1	Overview	33
6.2	Finding somewhere to live	36
6.3	Independent living	40
Section 7	<b>RSGP outcomes and impact</b>	<b>46</b>
7.1	Transition from direct provision	46
7.2	Family reunification	50
7.3	Alternative approaches to resettlement	52

Section 8	<b>reflections on the operation of the RSGP</b>	<b>54</b>
8.1	Overview	54
8.2	The first dedicated funding to support transition	54
8.3	Multi-year funding	54
8.4	SSGT's approach as a funder	55
8.5	RSGP structure	56
Section 9	<b>achievements and challenges</b>	<b>58</b>
9.1	Achievements	58
9.2	Challenges and barriers to transition and integration	59
Section 10	<b>recommendations</b>	<b>62</b>
	<b>appendix</b>	<b>67</b>
	Funding for RSGP projects	67
	<b>endnotes</b>	<b>68</b>



# foreword

---

St Stephen's Green Trust (SSGT) established the Refugee Support Grants Programme (RSGP) in 2016 to support the transition of people living in Direct Provision Centres to independent living within local communities in Ireland. Analysis carried out by SSGT in 2015 had demonstrated some of the barriers and obstacles being faced by people exiting Direct Provision and the RSGP provided financial assistance and other supports to a number of organisations across Ireland to work with individuals and families.

The core issue at the heart of the RSGP has been the transition of people from Direct Provision into independent living and it is evident that this will remain a key challenge for many years to come. Since the establishment of Direct Provision in 2000 there have been noticeable fluctuations in numbers applying for international protection. These numbers have been increasing significantly in recent years (a 65% increase in 2 years, including 1,478 people living in emergency accommodation) as Direct Provision Centres are full.

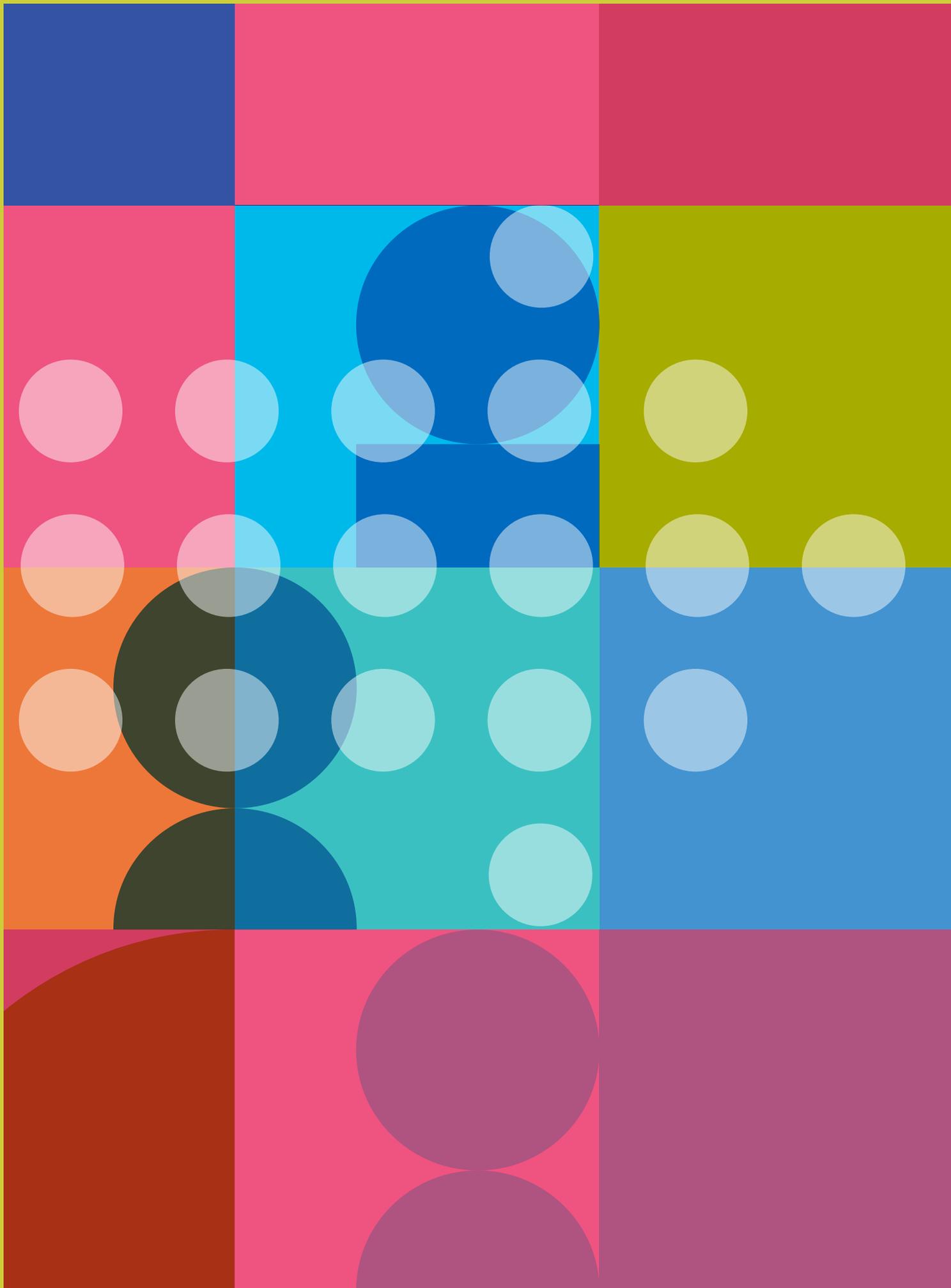
In this context, strategies and initiatives to enable people in Direct Provision to make a successful transition to independent living are both necessary and critical. The experiences of the RSGP between 2016 and 2019 would suggest that this process can be facilitated and supported to a significant extent by the availability of skilled and knowledgeable workers who can guide and advise people exiting Direct Provision about a range of important issues relating to accommodation, employment, education, training, social welfare entitlements and integration into local communities. The groups supported by the RSGP have developed a range of different strategies and approaches concerning transition into independent living and community integration and these have been captured very well in this evaluation of the RSGP.

It is hoped that the lessons, the learning and the outcomes from the RSGP will be fully analysed and considered by those government departments, statutory agencies and voluntary organisations most involved in assisting people seeking international protection and refugee status in Ireland. The majority of asylum seekers are not familiar with the ways in which services in Ireland are structured and organised and the experiences of the RSGP would suggest that this process can be helped enormously by the availability of a guide, a confidante, a trusted advisor, a mentor, a support worker – basically a human being who will take the person/family transitioning into independent living through every stage in this particular process.

This report captures the interactions between the support worker and those being assisted in a very clear and cogent manner and it should be of interest to all individuals and organisations involved in issues around international protection. On behalf of the Trustees of SSGT I would like to thank the evaluator, Pamela Montgomery, for the work and time she has invested in compiling the data, in liaising with the RSGP grant recipients and in producing an extremely readable and comprehensive evaluation report. The report succeeds in providing a strong contextual background for the RSGP whilst also describing the work carried out by the participating organisations and the outcomes which have emerged from their work, at an individual organisational level and at a collective level. I would also like to thank the SSGT staff members and Trustees who supported Pamela in her evaluation work and to the workers within the grant-aided organisations who have enabled so many asylum seekers and refugees to make an effective transition from Direct Provision to independent living.

There can be little doubt that Ireland has benefited from the arrival of a significant number of migrants and immigrants into the country over the last 20 years. For many of them and especially for people in the Direct Provision system, it has been a difficult and stressful transition to a new country, to a new culture, to new structures and procedures for the delivery of public services. The RSGP has demonstrated practical and person-centred ways in which those living in Direct Provision can be supported in their journey to independent living. The learning from the RSGP, as set out in this evaluation report, should be used to influence and inform ways in which more people can make successful transitions from Direct Provision to independent living and to ensure that people who have secured refugee and other status can leave Direct Provision within the shortest possible time.

Stephen Rourke,  
Trustee, St Stephen's Green Trust  
November 2019



# executive summary

## Background

In 2016, St Stephen's Green Trust (SSGT) launched a new grants programme – the Refugee Support Grants Programme (RSGP). The aim of the programme was to develop an evidence base of effective measures needed to support people to make a smooth transition from living in direct provision to independent living and integration in the community. Grants of between €18,000 and €36,000 were made over a three year period to nine organisations.

This report sets out the findings of an external evaluation carried out over the life of the RSGP. It sets out the context in which the programme and the projects operated, evidence of the support needs people have and how these were met by different projects, what was achieved and challenges that remain.

## Findings

The report highlights the wide range of challenges people face when trying to move out of direct provision accommodation and once they leave. These include: coping with and finding a way through a range of administrative delays and barriers which make their stay in direct provision longer than it should be; challenges around finding somewhere to move to and in securing a tenancy; navigating the complexities of the international protection, social welfare, education and training systems; and building a new life in the community. It sets out an evidence base of tested models and approaches which could be used to inform the development of services to address these challenges and identifies a number of core principles which should underpin how these should be delivered.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations focussed on what needs to be in place to ensure people can make a smooth, timely and sustainable transition from institutionalised living in direct provision to living independently in the community.

## SECTION 1

# introduction

---

## 1.1 St. Stephen's Green Trust

St Stephen's Green Trust (SSGT) is a charitable foundation which respects human dignity and is committed to helping create a society where the dignity of all can be realised through social justice and inclusive, nurturing communities. It has a long history of grantmaking focused on supporting community based activism and work to address inequalities and injustice.

Over the last five years a core issue of concern for the Trust has been the gaps in support available to refugees and people seeking asylum in Ireland. In particular it has had a longstanding interest in the position of people living in direct provision, the system used to house asylum seekers entering Ireland in search of international protection. Since 2014, it has supported a grant programme to provide children living in direct provision centres with opportunities to learn and play outside the centres in which they live. The programme helps meet the costs of activities such as swimming classes, sports club fees or summer camps for families with little or no funds to pay for activities that other children in the local community would usually take part in. To date the programme has provided nearly €320,000 to 20 local organisations across Ireland and reached at least 2,500 children.

Building on this work, in 2015 SSGT began a process of consultation and research to explore in detail the major issues faced by people living in direct provision and how it might make a contribution to address these. This identified a lack of statutory supports to help people make the transition from living in direct provision to independent living to be a key issue.

In early 2016 SSGT worked to design a new grants programme – the Refugee Support Grants Programme (RSGP). The primary focus of the programme was to support initiatives working to ensure that people have the supports they need to move from direct provision. In addition, it was decided to open the programme to the support of policy work or other initiatives focussed on addressing the situation of asylum seekers and refugees coming to Ireland which would make a contribution to strengthening long-term integration. SSGT was successful in an application for funding for this programme from its main donor, advised through Porticus UK.

## 1.2 The RSGP

The RSGP was launched in mid-2016 as a one year programme with the possibility of extension for two further years. This was confirmed by the end of the first year of funding. Applications were sought through a closed call from those working in the field and awards were made by September 2016. Grants were made to 9 organisations to take forward a range of projects. The majority of projects funded were concerned with providing support services to help people transition from direct provision.

As part of the process, a formative evaluation was commissioned in autumn 2016 to capture learning over the life of the programme and to document the outcomes achieved. The evaluation process was designed to add value to the work of the projects by providing project workers with the opportunity to meet on a regular basis and to share learning with each other. An end of year report was prepared at the end of year 1 and an interim report completed by the end of year two which was made available on SSGT's website.

This report sets out the findings of the evaluation over the life of the programme from its early design stage to its conclusion in September 2019. It provides further information about the rationale for the programme, the context in which it was launched and operated and how this changed over time together with the challenges which remain. Based on the learning from the programme, it concludes with a series of recommendations informed by the experience and expertise of the organisations supported under the RSGP about how transition from direct provision can be best supported.

SECTION 2

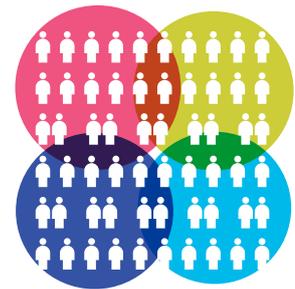
# direct provision

## 2.1 Overview

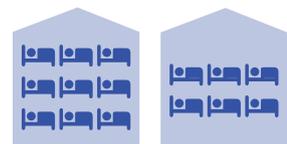
Direct provision is the system by which the State meets its obligations of providing for the needs of asylum seekers awaiting decisions on their applications for international protection. Established in 2000 in response to an increasing number of asylum seekers entering Ireland, it was intended to provide for their welfare and that of their families until their cases were granted some form of status, they leave voluntarily or are removed.

Since its introduction, the numbers of people living in direct provision have fluctuated. Over the last decade this ranged from a high of 7,779 in 2009 to 5,047 in 2013 with a gradual increase since then particularly over the last three years.<sup>1</sup> As at October 2019 there were 6,066 people living in 38 direct provision centres nationwide with a further 1,478 people living in emergency accommodation in hotels and guest houses.<sup>2</sup>

The direct provision system was set up as a means to meet the basic needs of those seeking asylum through a network of accommodation centres across Ireland. The location of these centres has been driven by property availability rather than proximity to essential services, local amenities or transport routes with many in remote rural locations.<sup>3</sup> Direct provision centres have provided those seeking asylum with accommodation and the provision of canteen style food with catering facilities for residents (in some centres) not provided until relatively recently. While living in direct provision residents are excluded from most social welfare entitlements. They are entitled to a medical card and children are entitled to access first and second level education. They receive a small allowance and up until 2018 were not permitted to work. The International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS), formerly the Reception and Integration Agency, within the Department of Justice and Equality (DOJE) has responsibility for the co-ordination of direct provision accommodation and other services for residents.



As at  
October 2019  
**6,066**  
people  
living in 38  
direct provision centres



**1,478**  
people  
living in emergency  
accommodation

## 2.2 Growing concerns about the direct provision system

It was envisaged at the outset that people would live in direct provision on a short-term basis while their applications were being processed. However, it rapidly became clear that people were remaining within centres for lengthy periods of time. The system of direct provision and the conditions under which people were living has been under criticism from its establishment.<sup>4</sup>

In response to widespread concerns about the operation of the system an independent Working Group chaired by Bryan McMahon was established by government in 2014 to report on the existing protection process, and to recommend improvements to direct provision and to other supports for asylum seekers. This report, (the McMahon Report)<sup>5</sup> published in June 2015, made clear how long delays in the status determination process<sup>6</sup> had led to people remaining in accommodation centres for very lengthy periods. The Working Group found that in February 2015 only 23% of those in Direct Provision accommodation centres were resident for less than a year. Of the remainder the majority 43.5% had been resident for 5 years or more. It was also noted that 679 of those living in the centres had been granted some form of status but had been prevented from moving out due to their inability to find accommodation outside the centres.

The report set out the profound consequences for individuals and families as a result of the conditions under which they were living:

- negative impacts on physical, emotional and mental health and in particular on children spending their formative years in an institutional setting;
- a loss of skills and the creation of dependency;
- an inability to support themselves or their families or to contribute to society in a meaningful way;
- boredom and isolation;
- fear that they may not be capable of independent living when they get a final decision.

Not surprisingly, it was noted that when granted status people face a wide range of challenges establishing themselves into the community. While the Working Group was not able to address this issue in depth, particular issues identified included accessing suitable accommodation, navigating the social welfare system, finding work and integrating into the community.

## 2.3 Changes in the direct provision system over the life of the RSGP

Over the life of the RSGP there have been improvements to the direct provision system and some positive developments which if fully implemented offer potential for further improvements.

In line with the recommendations of the McMahon report key reforms to date include: increases in the weekly allowance paid which in 2019 is now €38.80 for adults and €29.80 per child; improvements to living conditions including the provision of communal kitchens and self-catering accommodation in a number of centres and plans to roll this out further<sup>7</sup> and the extension of the remit of the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children to receive and address complaints from those living in direct provision.

Significantly, following on from a Supreme Court decision in May 2017 which found that the complete ban on asylum seekers right to work to be unjustified and unconstitutional, Government announced in November of that year that it would give effect to the judgement by opting into the European Reception Conditions Directive (recast) which took place in June 2018. In addition to providing for access to the labour market and further education and training, it places reception conditions for those claiming international protection on a statutory footing for the first time and sets out minimum standards to be applied. This includes a requirement for ongoing vulnerability assessments to ensure that the special reception needs of people applying for international protection are identified and acted upon. From June 2018, asylum seekers who have not received a first instance decision within 9 months of their protection application have been able to apply for a work permit. By November 2019 4,964 applications for permits had been submitted and 3,350 had been approved.<sup>8</sup>

A further recent development has been the publication of National Standards for accommodation in August 2019 in line with the requirements of the Directive and other international standards. The National Standards set out a framework for improvements in both living conditions and services provided to residents. They will result in a contractual responsibility on providers of direct provision to meet clear standards for the provision of accommodation and services. If fully implemented, these standards should improve living conditions, supports and services to those living in direct provision centres and ensure consistency of service delivery across all centres. The Standards will be legally binding and subject to monitoring by January 2021.<sup>9</sup> No detail is as yet available on how contractor performance against the indicators for each standard will be assessed, the inspection process and how this will operate or how failure to comply will be dealt with.

At the same time the system has been under pressure particularly since 2017. This is due to:

- increasing demand for bed spaces as a result of an increase in the number of new applications for international protection in recent

years which have risen from 2,224 in 2016 to 3,673 in 2018 with this upward trend continuing for 2019<sup>10</sup>;

- difficulties experienced by people with status living in direct provision in finding accommodation to move to due to the wider housing crisis;
- insufficient capacity within the system with % occupancy reported as 99.3% by the end of 2018; and
- well documented difficulties in the ability of IPAS in securing the support of local communities for the development of additional direct provision centres.<sup>11</sup>

This has resulted in a growing number of people being accommodated in emergency accommodation provided by hotels and guest houses contracted by IPAS since the latter half of 2018. Intended as an interim measure numbers have grown significantly from 24 in September 2018<sup>12</sup> to 1,478 in October 2019.<sup>13</sup> It has been reported that in May 2019 a significant proportion of these are living in emergency accommodation for more than 3 months.<sup>14</sup> The growing use of emergency accommodation for vulnerable adults and children seeking international protection has been the subject of concern particularly in relation to living space and inadequate supports.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.4 Challenges to transition from direct provision

Notwithstanding some improvements in the conditions for people living in direct provision, a range of factors have contributed to people continuing to remain in accommodation centres for lengthy periods. While the introduction of a single application process has brought about improvements in processing times of applications for international protection, by October 2019 processing times remain significant at 15 months for a first instance decision.<sup>16</sup> Factors around housing supply reflected in rising rents and a shortage of affordable properties within Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)<sup>17</sup> rates nationwide are contributing to growing levels of homeless overall. In this context, finding somewhere to move to from direct provision is a key challenge reflected in the number of people continuing to remain in accommodation centres after they receive international protection status. At 1 November 2019 this stood at just over 10% of the total population in direct provision, 770 people.<sup>18</sup>

In response to the challenges around people being able to find accommodation and move on from direct provision, in early 2019 Depaul and Peter McVerry Trust were contracted by IPAS to help people find and secure accommodation. Case-workers have been appointed to work across the direct provision network, Depaul in 8 centres in the north of the country and Peter McVerry Trust elsewhere.

In October 2019 it was reported that government has established an independent group to examine the Irish international protection system including the existing system of supports given to asylum seekers and direct provision.<sup>19</sup> The group will engage with a separate existing inter-departmental group of officials chaired by the Department of Justice and Equality examining the direct provision system.



As at  
November 2019

**770**  
**people**

10% of total  
population in direct  
provision had received  
international  
protection status but  
could not move out

## SECTION 3

# the refugee support grants programme

## 3.1 Rationale and focus

The initial driver for the RSGP was the refugee crisis which escalated over the course of 2015 with the UN Refugee Agency reporting over 1 million refugees as having arrived in the European Union by December that year. The majority of these were fleeing war and persecution including the conflict in Syria.

In autumn 2015, SSGT sought to respond to this by obtaining the commitment of its main funder (advised through Porticus) for a new three year grant programme to support refugees arriving in Ireland under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). The latter was established to implement government's commitment made in September 2015 to accept a total of 4,000 refugees. It was envisaged that people would be taken in through a combination of the EU relocation mechanism, established by two EU Council decisions in 2015 to assist Italy and Greece which were bearing the brunt of the crisis, and the UNHCR-led refugee resettlement programme focussed on resettling refugees from camps in Jordan and Lebanon.

As part of the planning process for the design of the new grant programme, SSGT carried out further scoping work early in 2016. Information was gathered from a range of statutory and voluntary organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers together with published research and other information. SSGT also consulted organisations funded under its grants programme for children in direct provision. This review indicated that the pace of resettlement was proving to be much slower than expected. In addition, it appeared refugees taken in under the IRPP would receive support in relation to housing, access to services and integrating into the community. It was concluded that a more pressing need was in relation to individuals and families leaving direct provision which, in contrast to those resettling under the IRPP, received little direct support to make the transition in any coherent way.

The challenges people face in successfully transitioning to independent living, in particular for those who have been living in direct provision for some time, were highlighted in the McMahon report. Information gathered by SSGT through its consultation process pointed to a need for services to assist people to find and move into accommodation in the community and to navigate unfamiliar and complex social welfare, housing, education and training systems as well as a need for on-going support once people make the move.

In light of this and of the evolving nature of the situation, it was decided to refocus the new programme in year one on the most urgent need for support – refugees leaving direct provision – with a view to reviewing the focus of the programme as the position became clearer. As the position remained unchanged over the course of the first year a decision was taken to continue the focus of the programme on supports for transition from direct provision.

### 3.2 RSGP design

The overall aim of the RSGP was to make a positive change in the lives of refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland by supporting organisations in the voluntary and community sector carrying out practical, relevant and effective work. It was intended primarily to support initiatives providing support to people living in direct provision transition to independent living. However, a decision was taken that funding would also be considered for supporting work focussed on strengthening approaches to long-term integration.

In June 2016 SSGT issued a closed call for outline applications to 35 organisations providing support to people in direct provision or engaged in policy work in relation to asylum seekers and refugees. Grants were awarded in September 2016. Overall, over €267,000 in grants were awarded to 9 organisations over 2016 to 2019 to:

- support people to obtain the services and supports they need to gain confidence and live independently;
- have increased involvement in their communities; and
- increase awareness among policy makers and service providers about how needs can best be met.

It was intended that a key outcome of the RSGP would be an evidence base of effective measures and policy developments required to meet the support needs of people transitioning from direct provision and effective approaches to long-term integration. It was hoped that this together with the work of the projects would contribute to an improvement of policies and services from statutory agencies and service providers over the longer term.

In addition to grants, the RSGP was designed to provide grantees with the opportunity to come together as a group over the course of the programme to reflect on their projects and to share experience and learning with each other and with SSGT.

## SECTION 4

# evaluation methodology

### 4.1 Rationale

As an organisation SSGT is committed to sharing learning around its grantmaking programmes with other interested agencies and funders. This report is part of its commitment to this, of reflecting on its programming and being accountable to those it funds and its funders.

In addition, it was decided that meeting the overall aim of developing an evidence base would best be achieved through commissioning a formative evaluation over the life of the programme.

### 4.2 Approach

The objectives of the evaluation were to capture the outcomes from the work of the funded projects in a proportionate way and to support reflective learning among funded projects.

As far as possible grantees were supported to use a common approach to collecting information on supports provided and outcomes achieved recording quantitative information (such as the number of people provided with supports across different areas such as housing, social welfare, job search) and qualitative information (such as project worker assessments of improvements in confidence of people supported). Grantees were also encouraged to collect feedback on the value of the services provided from service users together with case studies illustrating the challenges people face. They also provided a brief summary of their project for inclusion in this report.

## 4.3 Methods

The main elements of the methodology and sources of information used to inform the evaluation process were:

- A review of the relevant literature on the history and current operation of direct provision.
- Discussions had at six convenings of grantees through Learning Network Meetings to discuss their work and reflect on and share learning. The first occurred at an early stage to discuss how they might capture the impact of their work and thereafter every six months with a final meeting at the end of year 3 of the programme.
- Twice yearly written reports from grantees on their reflections on the work, activities carried out, number of people supported and types of issues dealt with, achievements and challenges.
- A series of telephone discussions with grantees on their reports and regular discussions with the SSGT Executive Director.

### 4.3.1. Limitations

While the RSGP was a three year programme, not all of the projects have been in operation for the full period for a range of reasons. In some cases projects were delayed by the time needed to meet the conditions of SSGT funding such as securing additional funding from other sources. There were also delays due to some long run in periods around the recruitment of staff. One project experienced difficulties in maintaining the work on two occasions over the 3 year period due to staff changes. The impact of these factors meant that the projects got underway at different points in time with only 3 in operation from 2016 to 2019. As such the statistics cited in the report on service delivery and outcomes relate to what was achieved over the life of the RSGP to the end of September 2019 rather than 3 full years of activity.

A further limitation relates to how information about activities and services was collected by projects providing supports. Most recorded the number of individuals provided with support. One project already at an advanced stage when awarded the SSGT grant had agreed an approach with its other funders using a unit of analysis based on families rather than individuals. As such, it has not be possible to produce aggregate statistics in some instances.

## SECTION 5

# what was funded

---

## 5.1 Organisations and projects

The majority, seven of the grants made, were to organisations which were either providing or planning to provide support to people who had received confirmation of their international protection status to make the transition from living in direct provision to living independently in the community.

Two further projects were funded. In view of the importance of family reunification to the integration of refugees, Nasc received support to address this specific issue. The Irish Refugee and Migrant Coalition (IRMC) received support to explore the potential for community models of resettlement of refugees.

Funding from SSGT either met the project costs in full, contributed to costs as one of a number of funders or in the case of Laois Partnership funded one element of a broader AMIF funded programme (see Appendix 1 for details on other funders). Projects working with residents to help them transition from direct provision provided services with relatively limited resources using part-time staff working from 1 to 3 days a week. The exception was the PATHS project co-ordinated by the Jesuit Refugee Service and the Peter McVerry Trust which employed two full-time workers, one from each organisation.

Overall, the reach of the RSGP was significant with 829 adults supported directly through advice, support or legal expertise which when other members of the household – partners, children and other family members – are added in accounts for at least 1,232 people benefiting from the services provided.



## 829 adults

supported directly  
through advice,  
support or legal  
expertise

---

Figure 1: Grants made by SSGT



## 5.2 Approaches to transition support

Six of the seven projects focused on helping people transition from direct provision employed project workers who worked in direct provision centres. The exception was a community based mentoring scheme led by Doras Luimni which provided one to one supports from volunteers.

While there were differences in how services were delivered by the six organisations working in direct provision centres, a common approach was the availability of a project worker who provided a point of contact for residents, was a source of information and guidance and acted as an advocate for service users when difficulties were encountered. An important aspect of the role was the creation of relationships of trust with people and giving them the time and space to seek help on a range of issues many do not feel comfortable discussing with other residents. These have included issues relating to the trauma they have experienced around their departure or travel from their homeland and those relating to mental health.

### Transition Support Service

**Diversity Sligo** supports asylum seekers and refugees in their inclusion into Irish society. Our activities are: information clinics twice a week in Globe House direct provision centre; funding and organising activities for adults and for children; supports to parents; support for preparing an asylum case; dissemination of information on education and educational grants; information on voluntary work; preparation for work; running volunteer programmes in Befriending, English tutoring, gardening, homework support, art and music for children; and transporting children to activities.

The *Transition Support Service* aimed to help people who are moving out from the accommodation centre into the community. We set out to support refugees every step of the way towards more independence as citizens, workers, students, neighbours and active members of the community.

We employed a Transition Support Worker two days a week. The project worker made calls, wrote emails and letters, had one to one meetings with the refugees, accompanied them when needed to meetings, advocated for them, gave them advice and support and listened to their requests for support. They provided assistance with:

- Applying for Sligo County Council Social Housing.
- Accessing Community Welfare Officer payments – agreement for a deposit.
- Setting up bank accounts and obtaining relevant identification documents.
- Applying for job seekers/lone parent's allowance/disability allowance.
- Family reunification by linking people with the Irish Refugee Council, Nasc and the Immigrant Council of Ireland.

- Navigating the social welfare system and advising on rights and entitlements.
- Writing reference letters for landlords and talking to landlords.
- Finding employment, apprenticeships, further education courses and student finance.
- Negotiating with MABS on paying bill arrears.
- Establishing connections with volunteering, local community and providing information about activities in the community.

Our main achievement was that 105 adults have used our service and received help and support and know now that they are not alone in their journey towards integration. Specific achievements include:

- successfully negotiating with Sligo County Council which changed its policy and agreed to allow people with refugee status to become eligible for Homeless HAP;
- setting up Friendship Benches and training volunteer listeners;
- developing a greater awareness of direct provision issues through meetings with mainstream service providers;
- meeting with and advocating on behalf of those with mental health issues with HSE Mental Health and Housing Department; and
- successfully negotiating with Sligo Institute of Technology to access Sanctuary College funding for asylum seekers and refugees.

Overall a significant number of people were supported to access education and training and to get a job and people have been supported to engage with local community life.

In most cases services were provided by project workers who established an on-going presence in the direct provision centres. Most also held regular weekly or twice weekly advice or information clinics either in the centres or offsite nearby on an appointment or drop in basis. They were also available by phone for advice and if necessary follow up meetings. Support was generally provided on a one to one basis and was tailored to individual need. Follow-on support continued to be available after people moved out of direct provision either by phone or by appointment and proved critical to the successful integration of some residents.

## From Direct Provision to Independent Living

**South West Mayo Development Company's** aim is to sustain and develop the people, communities, resources and the environment of Mayo area. Our objectives are to promote, support, assist and engage in: social, enterprise and community development. Since 1991, we have successfully delivered a range of social inclusion programmes including the Diversity Mayo project funded by AMIF to support third country nationals and Mayo Refugee Resettlement Project to support Syrian refugees.

*From Direct Provision to Independent Living* aimed to address the gap in supports to people moving out from the Old Convent direct provision centre in Ballyhaunis and to former residents recently settled in County Mayo. It aimed to deliver enabled, informed and supported transition to independent living and increase people's access to mainstream supports in the county around employment, training, education, childcare, health and family supports. The project also set out to enhance social inclusion by connecting people with existing community groups and initiatives and raising local awareness of the social needs of refugees to ensure a welcoming community response. We also sought to engage statutory agencies to raise awareness of the specific needs of people transitioning from direct provision to inform the practice and response of local front-line services.

Our project worker worked one day a week. They provided support to residents with status to access information and navigate the different dimensions of their future independent living and to people who moved out to county Mayo.

We have also engaged with a wide range of frontline services and local statutory agencies to raise awareness on the specific issues and needs of the target group. The project closely collaborated with Diversity Mayo through sharing knowledge, resources and travel costs.

55 adults have used our service. Our main achievements are that:

- 55 adults and their 97 family members were supported and gained better awareness, understanding and confidence around navigating different aspects of their life in Ireland.
- A significant number of people were supported to access education and training and to get a job and people have been supported to engage with local community life.
- People have gained increased confidence to engage with mainstream services and are aware that there is a support out there they can turn up to for advice, welcome or a chat.

Two of the partnership led projects, Laois Partnership and County Kildare Leader Partnership were overseen by multi-agency steering groups to which the project worker reported regularly on progress and challenges. In the case of Laois

Partnership's Transition from Direct Provision Project, the steering group had an oversight role of the transition project as one element of a broader AMIF funded integration initiative in County Laois including the development of an Integration strategy for the county.

## Transition from Direct Provision Project

**Laos Partnership Company** was formed in 2008 to offer one unified structure for the delivery of economic, social and cultural services in County Laois. This work is largely delivered through: the Rural Development Programme (previously LEADER), the Local Community Development Programme (previously LDSIP), as well as a number of other complementary programmes.

The *Transition from Direct Provision Project* set out to establish a support service for residents of the Montague Direct Provision Centre to assist those that were transitioning into private accommodation in the community. This was provided by an Integration Support Worker who worked for one day a week and held outreach clinics in the Montague where residents could easily access her. Support was provided to 24 people over a two year period.

The service provided included:

- Preparation of a Personal Action Plan focused on transitioning.
- Assistance with: registering with the immigration officer; accessing CWO payments – agreement for a deposit, costs of moving, setting up home costs and allowance for school uniforms books; applying for job seekers/lone parent's allowance/disability allowance; family reunification linking people with the Irish Refugee Council and other national bodies for support; applying for social housing; and accompanying people to appointments if requested.
- Writing reference letters for landlords and talking to landlords.
- Referrals to Jobs Club.
- Assisting with finding school places.
- Establishing connections with St. Vincent de Paul in the local community and providing information about activities in the community.
- Accessing Specialist legal services such as Mercy Law on their behalf.
- Keeping in touch by phone on a regular basis and visiting if required.

Photo: Denis Byrne Photography



Our main achievement has been to give people who are transitioning the best chance of settling into their new life outside of the accommodation centre. While this is an exciting time for people, it is often a time that they can easily be overcome with the enormity of the challenge. Having someone to meet and discuss next steps or hurdles is really helpful. The first few months after leaving direct provision can be lonely especially after living surrounded by so many people. Having someone to phone or drop by is really supportive as people often hit problems with managing finance or managing the household after 2 or 3 months.

The project worker for County Kildare Leader Partnership's Positive Transition Project reported to the Integration Strategy Implementation Group established to oversee the implementation of the County strategy of which the project was an element.

## Positive Transition Project

**County Kildare LEADER Partnership** is a not for profit Local Development Company that works with individuals, families and communities to enable their participation in the social, economic and cultural activities in the county. Its aim is to promote and support the development of a vibrant and inclusive society. The Partnership is responsible for the delivery of programmes within the county that support those at risk of marginalisation including asylum seekers and refugees.

Our aim was to provide support to individuals and families transitioning from the Eyre Powell direct provision centre in Newbridge to independent living. We wanted to support residents to access a range of services including accommodation, welfare, health, education, training and employment opportunities. We also planned to liaise with statutory and non-statutory services and to support positive integration.

A project worker was employed to work 3 days per week. They worked on a one to one basis with individuals and families to access a range of services including supporting individuals to secure an Irish Residence Permit (IRP) card and assisting people to apply for appropriate social welfare entitlements and in registering with Kildare County Council for Housing Assessment and Homeless HAP.

The project worker also liaised with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and Kildare County Council Housing Unit to address obstacles to transition. In addition, they developed easy to read local guides on how to access social welfare and social housing services locally. 60 people used the service.

Our main achievement was the introduction of Homeless HAP in County Kildare, and the recognition by Kildare County Council Housing Unit that individuals with status living in Direct Provision are homeless and entitled to register enabling them to access a deposit and rent in advance.

Photo: County Kildare LEADER Partnership



Cultúr's practice model was underpinned by community development principles so that in addition to providing one to one support, the focus was on working with residents to assist them to articulate their collective needs, engage directly with service providers and support each other.

## A Community Development Response to Integration, Resettlement and Relocation

**Cultúr Migrants Centre** is a regional community work organisation based in County Meath. It works with ethnic minorities including immigrants, migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees to promote the participation and self-determination of members of ethnic minorities who experience or are at risk of poverty, racism and exclusion.

Cultúr works in one of the biggest direct provision centres in Ireland, Mosney accommodation centre. A large proportion of residents in Mosney have lived in Ireland five years or more and in the last year we have seen large numbers of people receiving leave to remain in Ireland including residents in Mosney. While this is a welcome shift, it has presented challenges on several fronts. Because of a lack of affordable accommodation locally, people are opting, due to little choice, to move to the west of Ireland and the south resulting in people leaving any roots they have put down. For those who remain they are moving to Meath, Louth and Fingal (Balbriggan) and are falling between the stools in terms of supports available to them, which in some cases is due to moving from one county to another.

We set out to bring about an increase in number of families moving out of Mosney and support them to build links with their new communities. We wanted to increase people's confidence to access services and support them to develop employability skills or to return to education. We also wanted to work with service providers and other relevant organisations to encourage the development of coordinated supports to people transitioning from direct provision.

A community worker worked for one day a week using a community work approach to build the capacity of residents. At an early stage the community worker engaged with residents to support the development of a baseline study to identify their collective needs, challenges and gaps in the current direct provision system. This informed how the service was taken forward. It had been hoped to establish an interagency committee to address these issues which would work directly with residents on a one to one basis and through group meetings. However, this didn't work as planned and the community worker has engaged with services individually to raise issues or resolve problems and provided one

to one guidance and support to residents. Residents have also been supported to attend personal development courses and employability skills training offered by Cultúr. 230 people have received support over the life of the project.

The community worker has also established links with community and faith-based groups to support residents moving into the local community and established and coordinated a network of former

Photo: Cultúr Migrants Centre



residents to provide practical information for people moving into the areas in which they live.

Our main achievements are: the noticeable increase in the number of participants returning to training/ education and work or both, while in transition or when they have moved out to independent leaving; people having the confidence to engage with mainstream services themselves; and a better awareness of the issues by mainstream service providers who are supportive in providing local solutions to support a smooth transition.

The approach of the PATHS project run by Jesuit Refugee Service in conjunction with Peter McVerry Trust was informed by the successful Housing First model and had two elements: the provision of housing accompanied by intensive, multidisciplinary integration supports.

### PATHS Project

The **Jesuit Refugee Service** (JRS) is an international NGO, founded in 1980. Our mission is to 'accompany, to serve and to advocate' the cause of refugees and forcibly displaced persons worldwide. In Ireland, JRS provides outreach and support to individuals, children and families living in 11 direct provision centres and to immigration detainees in prison. JRS services prioritise children, vulnerable asylum seekers, people living long term in direct provision and persons transitioning into the community. *The PATHS (Providing Asylum-seekers in Transition with Housing and Support) Project* was delivered in partnership with the Peter McVerry Trust (PMVT).

The PATHS Project sought to assist asylum seekers living long term in direct provision to overcome the barriers to successful transition towards independent living; and to enhance their integration prospects and foster better long term outcomes for communities.

The PATHS Project assisted persons granted status/permission to remain to exit direct provision in a timely manner by facilitating access to appropriate accommodation options and through the provision of comprehensive integration (education, employment, psychosocial, links to the community) supports throughout the transition process and beyond. The project was based on the housing first model and utilised the expertise and capacities of organisations working in both the homelessness and asylum and immigration sectors to address the housing and support needs of people granted status who were experiencing difficulty in transitioning from direct provision. Integration supports were provided by an Integration Officer based in JRS and PMVT worked to identify and secure accommodation.

Despite the extremely challenging housing environment and the structural barriers that exist when transitioning from direct provision accommodation, the number of households successfully progressed was a major accomplishment and exceeded the ambitious target initially set. In total, within the timeframe supported by the St Stephen's Green Trust, more than 160 individuals in 75 households were supported to transition from direct provision accommodation to independent living. Furthermore, due to the provision of targeted wraparound integration supports, only one single household failed to sustain their initial tenancy following progression from Direct Provision.

In 2019, the PATHS Project was successful in achieving its objective to inform policy in this area, having developed a model for housing people granted status (refugee, subsidiary protection or permission to remain) that was recognised as being sustainable, scalable and implementable nationwide. However, to ensure better long term outcomes for persons transitioning from direct provision and local communities are achieved, it is essential that both the Accommodation-Finding and Integration-Support functions of the model are mainstreamed.

The Refugee Advocacy and Integration Support Mentoring Programme project was a pilot programme which used community based mentoring provided by volunteers to support people transitioning from direct provision or who had moved into independent accommodation.

## Refugee Advocacy and Integration Support Mentoring Programme

**Doras Lumini** was established in 2000 in response to the introduction of the direct provision system for asylum seekers and works to promote and protect the rights of migrants in Ireland, specifically the south west region. It has three core areas of work: direct support services; advocacy; and integration planning. It runs an Advice and Legal Information Centre and provides assistance on a range of immigration related issues. It also includes a legal service that provides specialist legal information and assistance.

Through this work, we became aware that a growing number of people were returning for assistance 6-12 months after moving into independent living due to difficulties sustaining tenancies, unfamiliarity with education, social welfare and employment options, as well as experiences of isolation in independent accommodation.

The RAIS project aimed to create a community based support service to assist people who have lived in direct provision and are currently moving to or are living in independent accommodation through the support of trained volunteer community mentors. A Support and Outreach Officer worked one day a week on

the project supported by other staff in Doras Luimni to design and deliver the project including the development of a manual for volunteer mentors. Mentoring has been provided to 15 people.

We had to deal with a number of challenges. Staff changes interrupted the operation of the project on a number of occasions. Also learning from the early stages of the project led us to rethink how mentee and mentors could be best matched, how mentors should be supported and how mentoring could be best structured to ensure mentees obtained maximum benefit.

The current model is working well. Interested people discuss their specific needs and what they want to achieve with the Support and Outreach Officer. Mentors are recruited from our contacts in St Vincent De Paul and through expressions of interest from members of the public and then go through an informal interview process. Those selected then take part in two training sessions. They are then paired with mentees based on their skills and the particular goals of individual mentees. Mentors and mentees met in a group sessions and the pairs work together to agree time lined goals.

Our main achievement has been inspiring confidence and supporting people to work towards impactful outcomes with dedicated volunteers.



Photo: Doras Luimni

### 5.3 Family reunification

When people flee their countries because of danger or persecution they are often separated from family members. At moments of crisis or great danger individuals may be forced to leave loved ones behind or individual family members take different routes to safety because of limited opportunities or resources. Becoming reunited with family members is the primary concern of asylum seekers and bringing those left behind often in war zones or refugee camps to a place of safety in Ireland is the top priority for people granted international status.<sup>20</sup>

In Ireland refugee family reunification is governed by the International Protection Act 2015. Prior to the commencement of the legislation reunification was governed by the Refugee Act 1996 which provided for a broad category of dependents as falling within the scope of reunification. The change in legislation brought a much narrower definition of family and limited eligible family members to spouses and children under 18 thus excluding other family members such as older children, brothers, sisters and grandparents.

Nasc's *Family Reunification, Securing Integration for Refugees* project was developed to provide people who had recently obtained international protection status living in direct provision and in the community with the support they need to apply for family reunification, a complex process requiring specialist support.

The initial rationale for the project was to support as many people as possible to apply for family reunification in advance of the commencement of the International Protection Act and through this work develop an evidence base to advocate for legislative change. Work in subsequent years built on this and included supporting the safe arrival and integration of families to Ireland through the support of an integration officer.

## Family Reunification: Securing Integration for Refugees

**Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre**, is an NGO based in Cork. Nasc is the Irish word for link and we empower migrants to realise and fulfill their rights. We do this through the delivery of an expert free legal information and advice service. The outcome from our legal service informs and provides an evidence base to support our national advocacy goals. The Nasc Legal Service supports 1,300 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers annually. We also run a number of programmes, including a migrant youth project and an access to employment project for refugee women.

Family reunification was the consistent theme running throughout the 3 years of this project. In year 1 our focus was on maximising the number of applications for extended family members of refugees as the law was about to change and restrict this right to apply to immediate family members, removing the discretionary right to apply for extended family members. Aligned to this we then sought to highlight the negative impact that the new law had upon refugee families and seek to bring about a change to this law.

In year 2 our focus then shifted to the provision of support to ensure that the families arrived safely in Ireland and to support newly declared refugees living in direct provision to access family reunification. We also deepened our work in bringing about legislative change.

In year 3 we then began working to provide a wide range of pre and post departure supports to newly arrived families coming to Ireland under family reunification. These supports included housing, access to schools and education, access to healthcare and social welfare supports among others.

Funding from SSGT was used to increase the capacity of our legal information service to work on family reunification the equivalent of two days staff time per week. The core of the work centred around increasing the capacity of our legal information service, enabling us to directly support 150 refugees (excluding family members) through this service. The level of support provided depended upon the needs and capacity of each person. The additional capacity also enabled us to respond effectively to opportunities brought about by the introduction of two rounds of the International Humanitarian Admission Programme (IHAP) where we supported 120 refugees and former refugees to apply. In year three we appointed a dedicated integration officer to support newly arrived families to

settle into life in Ireland through assistance with accessing housing, education, welfare, health and other essential services.

We did not achieve our end goal of changing the law on family reunification. However, we worked together with Oxfam Ireland, the Irish Refugee Council and Senator Colette Kelleher to produce a draft bill to amend the International Protection Act. A huge amount was achieved in raising awareness of the issues and gaining cross-party support for the draft bill from all political parties except Fine Gael. The Bill also attracted majority support in both Houses of the Oireachtas and the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice recommended a change in the law. With our NGO partners we also published a research piece highlighting the impact that the change in legislation had on refugee families. The Bill is now stalled but the government did introduce the IHAP to ameliorate the harshness of the new law.

Our achievements include that:

- We directly supported 50 refugees to access family reunification.
- We reunited 37 refugee families.
- We supported 45 refugees and former refugees to access IHAP.
- We assisted, with the help of the International Organisation for Migration to secure safe travel to Ireland and avail of the travel assist programme.
- We supported 13 newly arrived families to access housing and other supports.

Photo: NASC



## 5.4 Alternative approaches to resettlement

The Irish Refugee and Migrant Coalition (IRMC) was set up in 2015 to bring together organisations working in the fields of international development, community development and migrant and refugee issues to respond collectively to advance the rights and dignity of people on the move and those in need of international protection.

The project was developed in the context of what was seen as Ireland's slow response to the refugee crisis in 2015 and meeting the commitments given to accept up to 4,000 people under IRPP, originally by the end of 2017. Funding was provided by SSGT to enable the coalition to explore alternative community based approaches to the resettlement and long-term integration of refugees.

## Community Sponsorship Programme

The **Irish Refugee and Migrant Coalition** aimed to identify new avenues to provide more people with safe and secure access to international protection.

Following an initial period of scoping work it was decided to focus on the area of community sponsorship and how this might be transposed into the Irish context. Community sponsorship enables members of the community to get involved in resettlement efforts by providing some of the supports needed for resettlement. It has proven to be successful elsewhere in delivering positive integration outcomes for refugees.

In year one, work was carried out to develop a framework for a community sponsorship scheme and to advocate for the introduction of a pilot scheme to a wide range of stakeholders nationally including relevant government officials. By the end of the year work had progressed to the point where agreement had been reached on a broad framework with officials and Ireland announced its commitment to the introduction of a Community Sponsorship Scheme in September 2017.

Following on from this the IRMC was actively involved with relevant officials in developing the framework further and planning for the implementation of a pilot project for launch in 2018. As part of this, IRMC took part in a mission with the Department of Justice, UNHCR and other civil society bodies to Ottawa Canada to learn first-hand about its Community Sponsorship Programme.

Under the pilot programme community sponsorship involved interested groups in a community coming together and forming a Community Sponsorship Group. Once formed the Group submits a detailed plan of the supports it will provide to a refugee family following arrival for a period of up to two years. The group undergoes a matching and vetting process to link it with a support organisation and a refugee family. It then takes responsibility to source accommodation, introduce new arrivals to services and provide broad based support. The pilot scheme has been operational since September 2018 and five families have been sponsored. Additional Community Sponsorship Groups have also been set up and preparing to receive families.

IRMC has remained involved since the launch of the pilot scheme and has participated as a member of a Department of Justice advisory group on the scheme since then.

The Community Sponsorship Ireland scheme has now been mainstreamed and was launched by the Minister with responsibility of Equality, Immigration and Integration on 15 November 2019.



## SECTION 6

# support needs during transition from direct provision

## 6.1 Overview

Information on the nature and range of support needed by residents to help them transition from direct provision is available from six of the RSGP projects which provided general support. Comparable statistical information on support provided is available from five of these projects which worked with residents living in or who had recently moved on into the community from: Eyre Powell, Mosney, Old Convent, Montague and Globe House accommodation centres. Together these five projects provided direct one to one support to 420 adults through practical advice, information and advocacy.

The nature of the support varied considerably. In some cases project workers helped people to resolve one or two specific issues which could be dealt with and resolved quickly. In other cases issues required a significant input over a longer period or support was needed to help people deal with multiple issues over a range of areas.

## CASE STUDY

F is a 17 year old from Afghanistan. At the age of 10 rebels murdered his father because he worked for the government. His school was blown up so he missed out on education. Age 14 he was held captive by rebels and beaten and his life threatened. His mother sold everything she possessed and arranged for him to escape the country. At the mercy of human traffickers who badly mistreated him they travelled for months on foot sleeping in the open across Iran, Turkey, Serbia before being taken to Germany via Hungary and Austria. He finally spent a year in the Jungle in Calais before getting to Ireland in a lorry container. He does not know if his mother or sister are still alive which causes him great stress and anxiety. We arranged counselling to help him process the past and move on with his future.

His primary goals were to get his ministers letter, get an education, preferably an apprenticeship and find accommodation. He has made every effort to improve his English and further his education attending the Community Training Centre. Because he was still living in direct provision he did not receive a training allowance. In the end it was too difficult for him to continue as he needed special sports clothes and foot wear for the Sports and Recreation course. We liaised with the ETB Social Welfare and Community Training Centre on his behalf but to no avail.

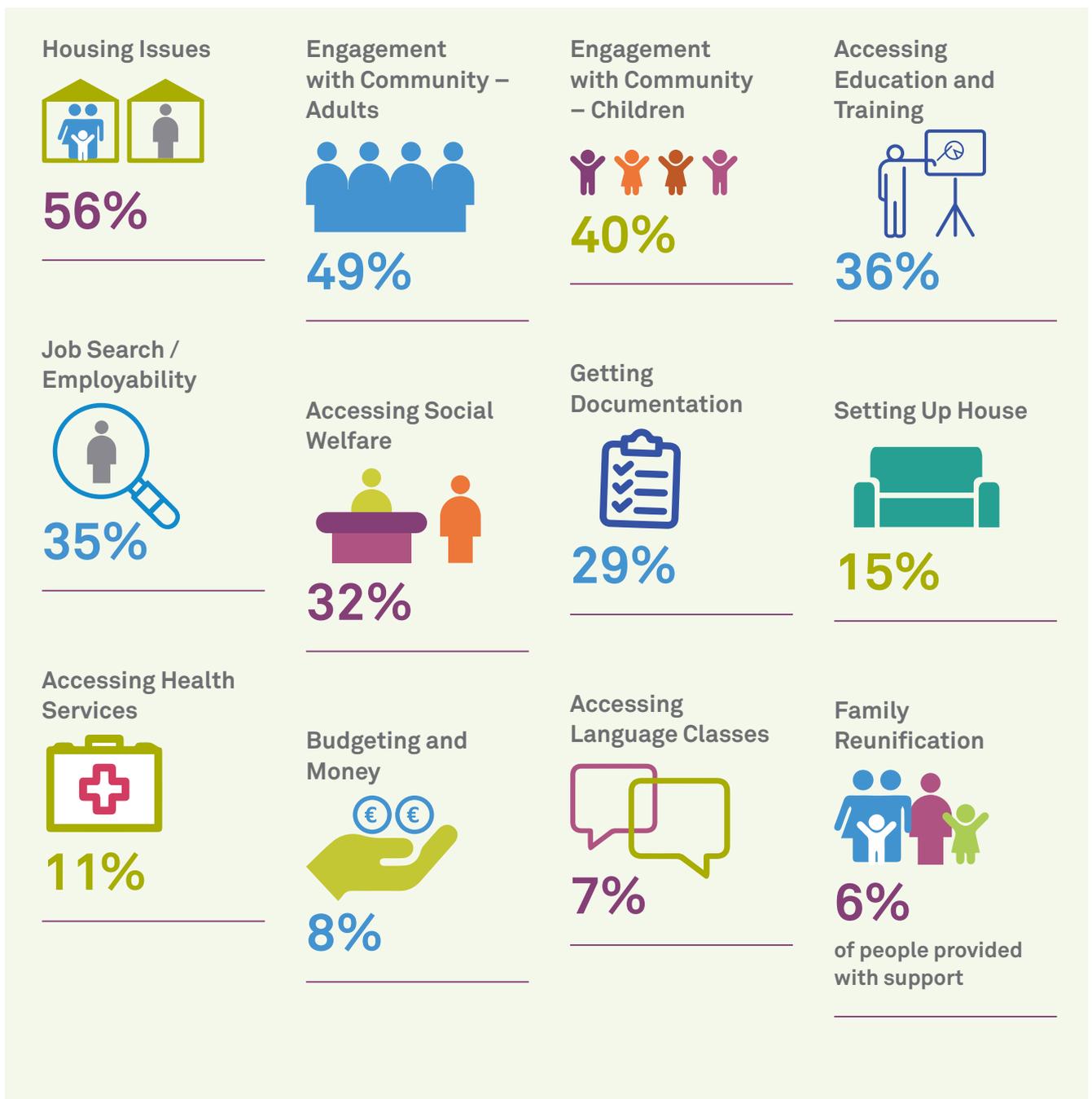
There was a delay receiving his Ministers Letter and IRP card which prevented him moving on with his education, employment and accommodation. We linked him with an Employer Liaison Officer who matched him with an employer and he has now started the YESS Employment Programme. We sourced a Maths and English tutor to bring him up to apprenticeship level.

We assisted with the following:

- Applying for Ministers Letter numerous times.
- Creating a professional CV for application for apprenticeship and part-time work.
- Filling in a County Council housing application and explaining HAP system.
- Searching for accommodation in local private rental market.
- Applying for transfer to other Direct Provision centres due to difficulties with other room residents.
- Applying for Medical Card Renewal and finding doctor.
- Applying for Job Seekers Allowance.
- Applying for renewal of temporary work permit.
- Applying for Travel Documents and liaising with Immigration Garda.
- Contacting UNICEF to try and locate his mother and sister.
- Researching courses and jobs in local area.
- Liaising with ETB to find a Maths and English tutor.

Information collected by these projects indicates that assistance is needed across a wide range of areas to enable people to make the transition to independent living and integration within the wider community. The most frequent support need over the life of the RSGP across all projects related to securing accommodation in the community.

Figure 2: Percentage of people provided with support by type



## 6.2 Finding somewhere to live

### 6.2.1. Support needs

Helping people navigate the complexities of the housing system and then find and secure accommodation in the community was a significant area of work across all five projects. While some projects have now largely stopped providing this support following on from the introduction of an accommodation service in all direct provision centres, others have continued to respond to requests for help from residents who have built relationships with them and see them as the best source of help. Evidence collected over the three years of the operation of the RSGP gives an indication of the extent of support needed.

Advice and help with completion of forms and documentation needed to getting on a Council Housing list, a prerequisite for accessing financial support for housing costs, was the most frequent support provided (N=195) followed by helping people navigate the HAP system and complete applications (N=136). Support was also sought by people around how to find accommodation in a market where so little is available or available at rates which will be met by HAP (N=133). Project workers were often asked to attend viewings with people and while this was not always possible within the limited resources of the projects, it was a frequent support provided (N=90). Project workers also met or were in contact with prospective landlords on behalf of residents to advocate on their behalf around tenancy agreements and rent payments (N=62). Other matters handled by support workers included assisting people to transfer to other council areas and helping people with special needs find accommodation.

Identifying and securing accommodation for residents to move to, was reported as the biggest challenge to transition by project workers in each year of the operation of the RSGP and from the analysis above, was one which residents frequently asked for help and support. At the outset of the RSGP three main underlying factors were identified as contributing to this: administrative delays across a range of areas; a lack of housing within HAP rates; and challenges around securing accommodation. These challenges remain three years on although recent developments have mitigated some of these to an extent.

## CASE STUDY

M spent 10 years living in the direct provision system with his wife and three children.

The family lived together in a single room in an accommodation centre where residents were not allowed to cook for themselves. Although their children could attend school, M and his wife faced many barriers accessing education and, as asylum seekers, were prohibited for the majority of their time in direct provision from seeking employment. The family survived on a weekly allowance of €19.10 per adult and €9.60 per child (the allowance up to August 2017).

---

“It wasn’t easy living in direct provision. As parents we want what is best for our children, we want to provide for them but we couldn’t work. We waited a long time to get our papers.”

---

Despite these challenges, the couple used their time in direct provision to complete every course and qualification they had access to – making sure that once they were granted status and had permission to seek employment, they could seize the opportunity to work and support their children.

M and his family rejoiced when they were finally granted status after 8 long years but then faced the disheartening struggle of having to spend nearly 2 more years trying to find a home outside of direct provision. As M remembers: *“I was able to work but we couldn’t afford to move out from the centre.”*

In 2017, with the support of the PATHS project the family successfully found a home after years of unsuccessful attempts.

Since leaving direct provision, M and his wife have both secured employment and have advanced their careers through additional professional training. Their three children are integrating well into local primary and secondary schools and their futures look bright here in Ireland.

---

“We waited two years to find a place but with help received now life is much better. We both work and our children are happy in school. We are enjoying living in this community. We don’t look back.”

---

### 6.2.2. Administrative delays

A lengthy administrative process means that those granted status are faced with long waits before they can even begin the process of finding accommodation. Over the last three years, projects reported individuals receiving letters from the International Protection Office (IPO) stating it would be recommending the award of status but then waiting up to 3 months before receiving notification of the full decision from the Ministerial Declarations Unit.

Delays associated with the issuing of Irish Residency Permits (IRP) required to go on housing lists, were also reported around 3 – 6 weeks at best with much longer delays of up to 6 months reported. Project workers reported a number of factors contributing to delays. The primary issue is the delays around people getting an appointment to apply. Projects also reported issues around slow communication between the Department of Justice and Equality and the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB).

The next step for residents is to make an application to get on a local authority housing list, a requirement to access HAP. Current processing times vary significantly across local authorities but can take 2 months or longer. Only after applications have been approved can residents apply for HAP which adds further delay.

There was some evidence that through advocacy and relationship building processing times have been mitigated to some extent with officials taking a more flexible approach to the standard of documentation required or prioritising applications from residents to reduce delays. However, experience to date suggests that a frequent scenario is of people having to wait around for a number of months after receiving confirmation of their status before they are in a position to start looking for accommodation.

### 6.2.3. A lack of available housing within HAP rates

A scarcity of housing overall and within the rates payable by HAP proved to be a significant barrier to people moving out of direct provision over the life of the RSGP. A possible solution emerged through the work of the PATHS project which negotiated access for project participants to Homeless HAP<sup>21</sup> rates on a pilot basis over the second year of RSGP. This provides access to an enhanced rate of HAP, the payment of deposits and up to two months' rent in advance. Importantly, the PATHS project found that eligibility for the scheme cut out administrative delays and provided for deposits and advance payment of rents to landlords within a streamlined process. Accessing the scheme increased the ability of residents to compete in the rental market and resulted in a significant increase in the number of people able to exit direct provision; from 8 people at the end of year one of the PATHS project to 82 at the end of year 2. A further additional support that was available to PATHS project participants was the Place Finder Scheme which provides for restricted viewing of properties.

Provision was made for all local authorities nationwide to roll out Homeless HAP to households in emergency accommodation in January 2018.<sup>22</sup> In view of the potential offered by Homeless HAP to address the challenges people seeking

to move out of direct provision face around accessing affordable housing and securing tenancies, SSGT made a grant to Mercy Law Resource Centre to prepare a short legal opinion on their eligibility for access to the scheme and provide advice and training at a local level for RSGP projects and others. Over 2018 and 2019 RSGP project workers were active in liaising with their local council housing departments to encourage them to implement the new provisions and recognise residents of direct provision with status as eligible for Homeless HAP.

#### 6.2.4. Challenges to securing accommodation

A significant challenge which emerged across projects is the disadvantage residents face in being able to secure accommodation. Direct provision residents have no rental history or references they can provide to landlords making them a less attractive prospect. In addition, a number of project workers reported what they saw as a reluctance of some landlords to consider Black Minority Ethnic residents in direct provision as potential tenants when they were contacted by them about viewings by phone. This led one project to use its local Irish administrative staff to make calls about bookings for viewings which made a significant difference to the number of viewings achieved.

In a highly competitive market being able to cover the costs of deposits and the first month's rent in a timely way is critical to secure properties. These costs are not payable under HAP (though are available under Homeless HAP). Access to funds to meet these costs was a particular problem in the early years of the RSGP as prior to the relaxation of the bar on employment there was little scope for people to save for the costs of moving into accommodation. While deposits can be met by applying for an exceptional needs payment from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) administered by local Community Welfare Officers (CWOs) clear evidence emerged from the RSGP of considerable variation and inconsistency around whether these costs are met.

For those who manage to find a job, the ability to work has enabled people to have the resources needed to save towards the costs of moving into independent living in the community. This has made a significant difference to their ability to move out. For example, examining the profile of families which have moved out of Mosney over the last year, Cultúr has found that over 60% had one or more people in work when awarded status. In addition, contacts made through work were instrumental in enabling them to find or secure accommodation. Most of these families in work were able to save enough money to pay a deposit to secure the property they found or to fund them starting afresh in a new area.

For those not in work and without resources, the pressure has been on people to get into debt to pay deposits and upfront rental costs often in the hope that these will be refunded by DEASP.

#### 6.2.5. Introduction of an accommodation service

In early 2019, Depaul and Peter McVerry Trust were contracted by IPAS to help people with status living in direct provision centres across the country to find and secure accommodation. Case workers have been appointed to work across

all direct provision centres to work with residents and to liaise with the housing office in each local authority to streamline the assessment process.<sup>23</sup> The focus of the work is in helping people with status who have not been able to find accommodation to secure housing rather than the provision of the additional supports provided by the RSGP projects.

Overall, RSGP project workers reported the introduction of an accommodation service as a positive development and one which has enabled them to concentrate more on the delivery of other supports sought by residents in transition. Some RSGP project workers reported that they had developed good working relationships with the accommodation service case workers to the extent that they refer people to each other. Others reported that they did not find a way of working together so that the two services operate quite separately.

A number of RSGP project workers reported that the availability of the accommodation service together with access to Homeless HAP has made a big difference particularly in overcoming the challenges around deposits which had been a major barrier to securing accommodation. Others were more equivocal about the impact of these recent changes. One project worker while welcoming residents access to Homeless HAP reported that in practice it has made little difference as there is no property available even at these higher rates. Even with the support of the accommodation service administrative delays still occur to the extent that tenancies agreed in principle with landlords can be put at risk by the failure to issue deposit and rent payments in a timely way. For another the key factor in being able to secure property continues to be the ability to pay a deposit and one months rent in advance when offered the tenancy as landlords *'are not patient enough for the HAP process'*. It was reported that it is common practice for landlords to demand a deposit and one months rent up front but offer to refund the one month upfront payment when the HAP payment is made. This puts tenants at some risk since this is done informally and nothing is written down.

Overall, while access to Homeless HAP has improved the position of those trying to move out of direct provision in some counties, in others the potential benefits have not be realised due to long processing times with respect to both applying for social housing and Homeless HAP.

## 6.3 Independent living

### 6.3.1. Support needs

In addition to housing issues, the work of the RSGP projects points to a demonstrable demand and need for support services to enable people to access their entitlements and make a smooth and successful transition to independent living. For some, information and guidance or help to resolve a particular problem is sufficient. For others guidance, support and advocacy across a range of areas is needed.

## CASE STUDY

Z received her leave to remain status in April 2018. She is a single parent with small children. While speaking reasonably good English, she cannot read or write in English. She had difficulties in registering with GNIB and could not understand the reason, so I accompanied her to see the Immigration officer for clarification. Her name has not been communicated to GNIB database for administrative reasons and she was advised to wait for a second letter from the Ministerial Decision Unit of the Department of Justice. I wrote to MDU, GNIB section and IPO office on her behalf requesting to clarify the position as well as to return her passport. She was very anxious around this delay and needed reassurance. She received a second letter in June 2018 and her passport was returned shortly after that. The IRP card was issued in August 2018.

I provided her with information and supported her to apply for Child Benefit and Disability Allowance which I advised her to apply for knowing her health status. Due to her literacy I helped her fill out the application forms taking particular care that answers were correct. Child Benefit was approved in September 2018, with the payment backdated from the date of legal status awarded. Disability Allowance section took more than six months to make a decision and four phone calls were made to ask for an update. Payment was finally approved in February 2019. I explained the conditions and additional benefits associated with the Disability payment, such as entitlement and conditions for employment as she is keen to work part time, fuel allowance, free travel pass, and the household benefits package. Due to literacy issues, it took time for her to integrate this information. We completed relevant forms for fuel allowance and household benefits package in advance, so she could submit these once she moves out. Around the time she was moving out we informed Disability Section about the change of her address.

In parallel we worked on access to housing and completed an application for housing assistance from the County Council which was approved. She was offered HAP in October 2018, which meant she could move anywhere in Ireland. She was actively looking for accommodation, navigating daft.ie with the assistance of her neighbour and from us through making calls to landlords to arrange viewings. She viewed several properties around Ireland, unsuccessfully. I issued her with reference letter for landlords and she got a similar reference letter from the accommodation centre manager.

She made a connection with former residents of the direct provision centre who live in another county. They found a house for rent nearby which she agreed to move to. HAP was approved for the property. A call was made to the relevant County Council to confirm the amount of HAP and to clarify why a discretionary twenty percent increase was not applied in her case. It was an ideal transition for her to move to a community of people / social network who offered to help with schools, GP and other aspects of independent living.

## CASE STUDY

T was granted subsidiary protection status in May 2018. Due to fears for his life he fled from Zimbabwe in 2013 and had to leave his family behind. He stayed in Baleskin for twelve months and was called for his first interview in March 2016. He then moved to a direct provision centre for one month before being moved on to another centre.

---

“At this stage, I felt I was in limbo, I missed my family and I was very concerned that I wouldn’t see them again and the process was taking much longer than I had expected. I completed more paperwork and attended more interviews.”

---

He was eventually granted status in May 2018 and immediately applied for family reunification. It was at that stage that he engaged with a project worker in the accommodation centre.

---

“The transition from a direct provision centre to a house in the community would have been much more difficult without her and she played a big part in finding accommodation. She had contacts and also provided me with references for potential landlords. She also helped to fill necessary applications and mediated on my behalf when necessary. I had a lot of documents to complete in relation to medical care, social welfare, resident permits and PPS numbers and she guided me throughout. She also had links with the Irish Refugee Council and Spirasi who were of great assistance to me.”

---

With the project worker’s help, he finally found suitable accommodation for himself and his family in November 2018 and, at that point, received notice that his family could travel to be reunited. Applications for their visas and reunification were arranged through the Irish Refugee Council. He was given a contact in the Saint Vincent de Paul who helped cover expenses for heating and clothing. After over three years, the family were finally reunited in January 2019.

T is now undertaking a full time one year course with the ETB and hopes to go to college to do a degree. The project worker still checks in with the family and helps when needed.

The evidence is that supports are needed during and after the transition process. The experience of the RSGP project workers is that after leaving direct provision some people will require no ongoing support or will obtain this themselves through the signposting provided by project workers to other services in the community. For others, ongoing support will be needed in the period immediately following on from moving out or when problems arise as much as a year after leaving the accommodation centre often when as one project worker put it *‘the social isolation begins to kick in’*.



Service user

“The project worker keeps in contact with me and I seek her advice when necessary. I’m a bit isolated. The transition was stressful and I found myself getting depressed again. But I know she will always answer the phone to me and this is a great consolation.”

### 6.3.2. Integration

As well as practical help around navigating the complexities of a wide range of systems and processes including those relating to international protection, social welfare, education and training, the RSGP projects have provided valuable integration support. This latter area of work has supported people isolated in direct provision centres, often for lengthy periods of time, to get involved in and make a contribution to the local community. Just under half of adults (N=205) received help to make contact with local groups, take part in community activities or attend community events. Support was also sought for children though at a slightly lower level (N=168). While this support was provided as needed, project workers reported that when people get status the focus for most is on getting support around more practical issues to enable them to leave direct provision as soon as possible so much of this work will take place after people leave the accommodation centres.

### 6.3.3. Accessing the labour market

In terms of more practical concerns, help to access education and training (N=151) and job search or accessing employability skills (N=145) was the next most frequent type of assistance provided to over a third of people who engaged with project workers. The most frequent supports sought in relation to education and training related to assistance around applying for courses or training (N=119); identifying appropriate courses (N=81); and identifying sources of financial support (N=43).

145 people received support around finding a job (N=103), help with preparing their CV (N=93), accessing employment services or identifying employability courses or supports (N=58). This support was provided on a one to one basis though some projects also provided assistance to groups of residents through workshops. For example, Cultúr delivered a series of ‘Back to Work Initiative’

workshops to people who had obtained work permits including such topics as negotiating contracts, workplace rights and managing money including how to open a bank account.

#### 6.3.4. Accessing social welfare

Over a third of people receiving support from the RSGP projects (N=135) were provided with assistance to access their social welfare entitlements. Getting help applying for benefits was the most frequently recorded issue (N=119). A relatively small number of people were provided with help in appealing decisions. Assistance varied from advising people of their entitlements to help with filling in forms to advocating on their behalf with service providers or front line staff.

#### 6.3.5. Help to resolve issues around documentation

Project workers provided assistance to just under a third of the total supported with help in applying for or resolving issues around documentation about their status. Most frequently this related to issues around passports and travel documents (N=51) and delays in issuing IRP cards following on from their confirmation of status (N=59). An additional issue relates to delays around the issuing of letters confirming the granting of status. This creates significant anxiety for residents who imagine the worst '*that the Minister has changed his mind*' and cannot make plans to move on.

#### 6.3.6. Other issues

A range of other support needs were met by project workers. Help in accessing health services was provided to 48 people and included help to find and register with a GP (N=24) and organising referrals to social workers or mental health services (N=8).

Helping people with the practicalities of setting up house, such as help with setting up utilities or furnishing accommodation (N=24) and help with budgeting and money (N=35) such as accessing food banks or opening bank or credit union accounts was also provided. 30 people were provided with support to access language classes.

Assistance was also provided to 24 people to make applications for family reunification. Project workers were able to draw on the expertise of Nasc also funded under the RSGP in this specialist area of work.

## CASE STUDY

P commenced with the service in January 2018. She received her immigration status letter giving her Leave to Remain in November 2017. The letter was very confusing, giving different instructions to the local Immigration Officer and they refused to process the IRP application stating that a further letter would be issued. I sought advice from contacts in the Immigrant Council of Ireland, the Irish Refugee Council, The Service User's solicitor and the Jesuit Refugee Service and advocated on The Service User's behalf with the Immigration Officer who then contacted the relevant departments to resolve the issue. The situation was eventually resolved on 30 May 2018.

**Project Worker**

## SECTION 7

# RSGP outcomes and impact

## 7.1 Transition from direct provision

### 7.1.1. People transitioning from direct provision

The projects providing general support collected a range of information about the impact of their work. This included evidence of quantifiable tangible outcomes achieved as a result of the support offered together with project worker assessments of the impact of their support in terms of the confidence and skills developed by residents or those who had transitioned to independent living. In many cases people moved on before a final assessment of outcomes achieved could be carried out by project workers so the information reported is likely to be an underestimate of tangible outcomes achieved.

In the face of a very challenging housing market and other barriers, a significant outcome has been the number of people supported to move out of direct provision into the community, a total of 400 people including children and family members.

Other tangible outcomes reported by the five comparable projects offering general support include: 70 people taking up education or training opportunities; 102 people either in or who have completed employability skills or preparation for work courses; 91 children and 93 adults now engaged in community activities both formally in clubs or organisations or more informally through attending local activities and events. In addition 85 people supported are now in paid employment, a significant increase on year 2 reflecting the impact of the relaxation of the absolute bar on employment. For most, however, employment consists of low paid service sector work.

---

“The available employment opportunities are often zero hours contracts with employment agencies, in factories etc which are low paid and precarious positions. Either through their qualifications not being recognised or losing their skills through time in the asylum process, refugees find it difficult to find better paid positions. However the desire to work, be independent and not be ‘a burden on the State’ is extremely high.”

---

A circular orange icon with a white border, containing the text "Project Worker" in white. The icon is positioned to the right of the quote, partially overlapping the bottom right corner of the quote's text area.

Project Worker

In addition to this, a significant impact of the support reported by all project workers has been to foster the development of people's confidence both to engage with mainstream services themselves and about living independently in the community often after long periods in direct provision. Key to this has been the availability of a reliable and consistent source of support they can come to for advice and practical support seen by project workers as *'very important for people who experience anxiety and stress over moving out from institutional living or for those new in the locality'* together with being available *'when they hit road bumps in the community'* when they move out.

Project  
Worker

“People expressed improved self-esteem stating they had the confidence to undertake tasks, as simple as opening a bank account, that they previously would have shied away from. They were provided the tools to be able to navigate their way through Irish society.”

Service  
user

“Nobody tells you about life here...you find out as you go along and people are very sceptic. This service was a great support and guidance and gave us an overview of life and how everything works here. It helps people open their way of thinking as everyone is coming from such different cultures and beliefs and are afraid to sometimes to start living in this new life...without this kind of support it is very difficult.”

Service  
user

“It was so hard to find accommodation. I kept trying and they would look at you in the estate agents and say nothing, like you didn't exist. When the project worker came with me that was a big help and they started to treat me better. The project worker was there for me every step of the way...I did not feel so abandoned and could cope better with the stress. I have finished my training and I have a job now. The service never gave up on me and always encouraged me to keep trying even when I felt down and not wanting to go on.”

### 7.1.2. Service providers

At the outset, it was hoped that RSGP would make a contribution to service providers and policy makers having increased awareness of the needs of people transitioning from direct provision and ultimately improved services from local statutory agencies and service providers.

As part of their work projects built effective working relationships with local officials in statutory agencies, with letting agents and others and through this increased knowledge and understanding of the specific challenges faced by people transitioning from direct provision. Through engagement with officials and particularly through advocacy around individual cases, most projects reported examples of mainstream service providers developing a better understanding of the challenges people face and of front line staff doing what they can to develop solutions at a local level. For example through relaxing the standard of documentation required. Examples were also given of front line staff gaining a better understanding of the impact of delays, for example on the issue of IRP cards, and the huge consequences this can have for people's lives.

Inconsistencies in the approach of front line staff has, however, been a common theme around service delivery over the course of the RSGP. Differing levels of knowledge of the entitlements of people transitioning from direct provision together with unconscious bias or discrimination was reported by project workers as leading to inconsistencies in assessment resulting in the denial of entitlements for some. Examples were given of individual officers in the same office taking a more or less flexible approach to the assessment of eligibility for services or entitlements. In the main, however, it was reported that the project workers' engagement with front line staff and agencies has increased knowledge, that service providers have responded well to requests for assistance to resolve particular problems and that there is an openness to making services more accessible to the needs of people in transition. For example, a number of project workers reported how they had successfully raised their experience of challenges in finding accommodation for direct provision residents with officials in County Council Housing departments and the need for people living in direct provision to be able to access Homeless HAP. What has emerged, however, is that knowledge built can quickly dissipate when individual members of staff move on.

A significant development, noted by all project workers, has been the introduction in early 2019 of the accommodation service by IPAS operated by Depaul and Peter McVerry Trust to assist people find accommodation and move on from direct provision. While the main focus of this service is on helping people to secure accommodation rather than the full range of supports provided by the RSGP projects, this represents the first major dedicated publically funded resource focussed on supporting people to transition from direct provision.

### 7.1.3. An evidence base of measures needed to support transition

The work of the transition projects funded under the RSGP has demonstrated the wide range of support needs experienced by people transitioning from direct provision.

For projects providing a general service to residents in direct provision centres and after they have moved on into the community, the role of project workers was to offer:

- Practical help in filling in applications for social benefit, housing and other matters;
- Providing advice on entitlements and rights;
- Accompanying people to appointments with service providers and others and viewing properties;
- Advocating on behalf of clients including with statutory agencies, service providers, landlords and letting agents and others to resolve issues when problems arose;
- Raising common challenges with service providers;
- Developing local information step by step guides for residents on transition and how to access entitlements and services; and
- Helping people develop links with local communities.

The approach was to offer support and then provide this in the most appropriate way ranging from signposting to sources of help to providing more hands on support and assistance. An important aspect of the role was to build relationships with local service providers to increase knowledge about the particular circumstances and needs of people transitioning from direct provision.

There were some differences in how projects were structured and the way services were delivered. However, while there were differences in approach, a number of core principles underpinned practice. These were:

- **A person centred wrap around service** which is: tailored to individual need; well linked to local services; builds individual capacity and empowerment; is sensitive to cultural difference; and incorporates advocacy to service providers on behalf of individuals or around common challenges;
- **The provision of services on the ground** through drop in or by appointment 'clinics' in accommodation centres or local venues in close proximity;
- **Post transition support** to provide people with access to follow-on support to facilitate integration as required.

Experience to date also suggests the need for local support work to have access to specialist legal or other technical advice on more complex issues such as family reunification which requires a level of expertise and significant inputs of time.

## 7.2 Family reunification

### 7.2.1. Families and individuals seeking family reunification

Accessing family reunification rights can be a long and difficult process and one for which there are few affordable sources of expertise. In addition, as there is no right to appeal decisions, there is no room for error. Through its information service Nasc was able to provide information and advice to 150 people to navigate this process enabling 50 families to be reunited. In addition Nasc provided support to 120 refugees to apply under the IHAP process enabling 45 families to receive positive decisions.

In conjunction with partner organisations Nasc was able to assist 37 families to arrive safely in Ireland, a very labour intensive process as travel documents, exit and entry visas must be attained and paid for across a number of non-EU countries.

### CASE STUDY

N is a Somali refugee. She was separated from her family during the conflict in Somalia. Her mother and N's eight children were missing for years. Her husband had been taken by the Somali militia some years previous and had not been seen since. She travelled to Europe via Libya where she suffered torture and servitude. Escaping Libya, she made her way to Ireland and applied for refugee status. She came to us on the advice of a friend and we helped her make a Red Cross Tracing application for her family. After several years the Red Cross were able to locate her husband, mother and five of her children in Kenya. Three of her children remain missing.

Her application for refugee status took seven years to be processed during which time she was very isolated living in direct provision and distressed as she worried about her family. After she was eventually granted status, N immediately wanted to apply for family reunification. We worked with her throughout the application which required extensive research on the conditions of refugees in Kenya, the legal validity of marriages in Somalia and the availability of medical treatment in Kenya. We also maintained contact with UNHCR who were able to verify the family's identity and status as refugees.

N was granted family reunification and we began the process of obtaining travel documents for the family. As Somali passports are not accepted in Ireland, she had to go through the Irish Embassy to have her travel documents and visas issued to her family. This process took several months and required regular communication between us and different agencies. N's family arrived in Ireland in 2017.

In the latter stages of the project Nasc supported 13 families who arrived under family reunification to secure accommodation, access services and to integrate into Irish society. An integration officer worked directly with families before and after arrival providing one to one support and accompanying people to key appointments and advocating on their behalf as needed.

## CASE STUDY

M, an Eritrean refugee, arrived in Ireland in 2014. He was granted refugee status in 2016 and immediately came to us for assistance applying for his family – his wife and two young children – to join him. M had been separated from his family for several years prior to coming to Ireland and was desperate to see them again. Unfortunately, as M is Eritrean and his wife and children were in Sudan, there were difficulties in getting documentation making the application quite complex. We worked with him to secure a successful family reunification decision.

Once a positive decision was made, our legal team were then able to refer to our Integration Officer. M lived in shared accommodation that would be unsuitable for children and had no idea how or where to register his children for school. Our Integration Officer began by informing M of his ability to apply for housing supports and making him aware of all the steps that needed to be taken once his family arrived. With our assistance, he was able to secure a small apartment for the family that would meet their immediate needs. We had, by this time, developed excellent relationships with local schools and the children were able to enrol immediately upon their arrival and get assistance with uniforms and books. We were able to organise visits to the PPS Office, Housing Office and GNIB in the weeks after the family's arrival so all the bureaucracy was dealt with smoothly and efficiently. The Integration Officer was able to meet with the family and give them assistance with completing the correct forms for medical cards and any other supports available.

M's wife didn't speak any English so a referral was made for her to our Gateways Project – a language and employment course specifically for refugee women and female family members of refugees. She was able to get to know other women and begin basic English language classes within weeks of her arrival. The Gateways programme was then also able to secure summer camps for the two children so that any English gained before the school term ended wouldn't be lost during the summer holidays.

### 7.2.2. Service providers

The approach taken of accompanying people to most appointments with agencies and services providers was reported as having been beneficial in both providing support, assurance and guidance to people but also in terms of raising awareness of staff in local authority housing departments and social welfare offices. Staff were reported as having become more aware of the rights and entitlements of people recently arrived under family reunification as a result.

### 7.2.3. Advocacy and an evidence base of the need for reform

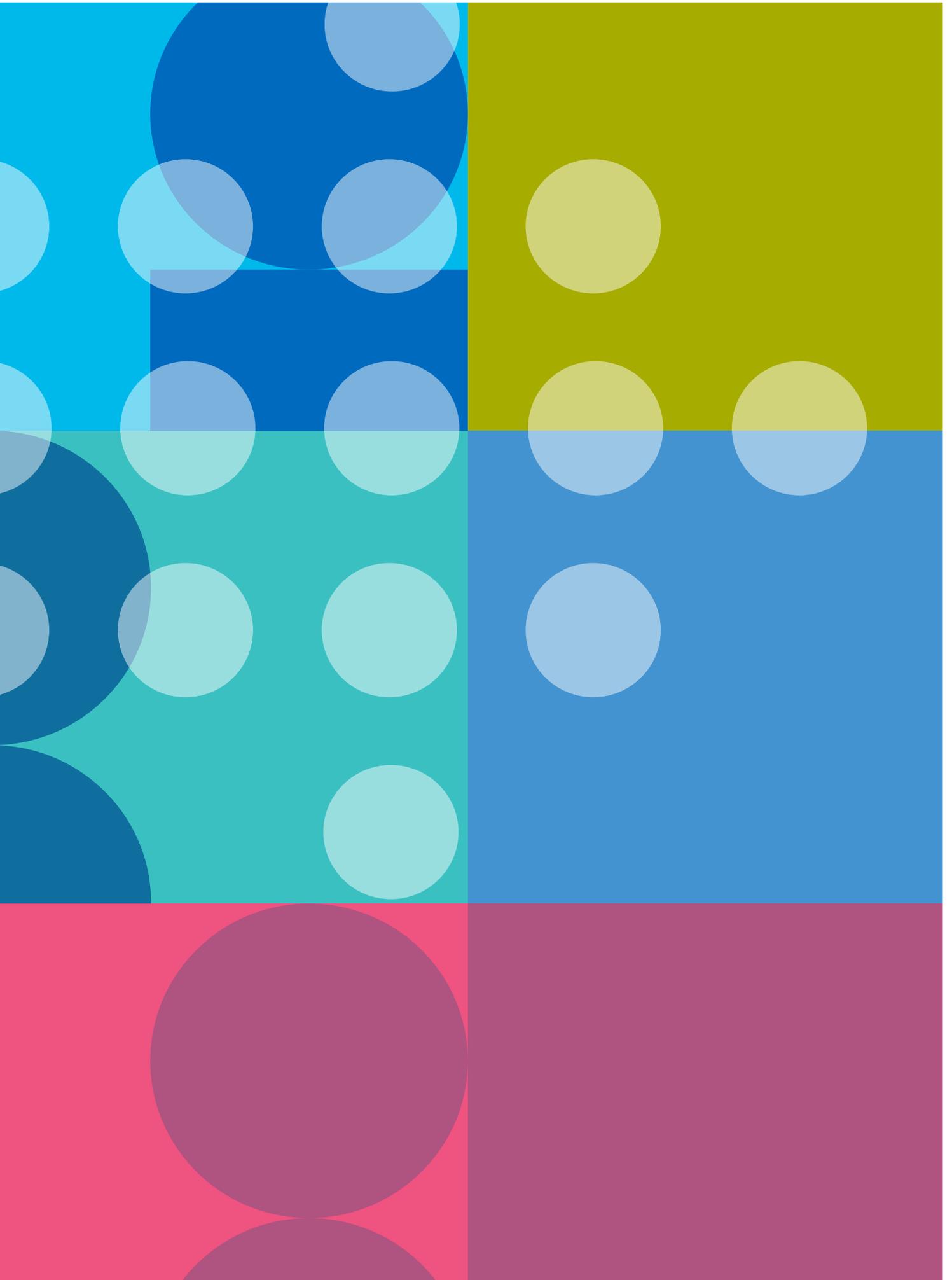
Through its casework, Nasc hoped to develop an evidence base which would demonstrate the negative impact of the more restrictive definition of family members eligible for family reunification specified in the International Protection Act and support advocacy around legislative change. The experience gained through the project was reported to have informed Nasc's subsequent advocacy around this issue. Advocacy by Nasc and others contributed to a private members Bill being introduced in the Seanad, which received cross party support, around widening the range of dependents who might apply for reunification. The Bill subsequently passed all stages of the Seanad and Dáil but failed to progress due to government not granting a money message and is effectively stalled for now.

This advocacy did, however, raise awareness of the issues and following on from this IHAP was launched in May 2018 as part of the government's commitments under IRPP as a temporary measure intended to bring up to 530 family members to Ireland.

## 7.3 Alternative approaches to resettlement

Support under the RSGP enabled the Irish Refugee and Migrant Coalition to develop a new community led approach to resettlement as an alternative to the traditional state-centred model. Following an initial pilot Community Sponsorship Ireland has now been launched as a mainstream programme resourced by the Department of Justice and Equality. While protests about the siting of new accommodation centres have been much in evidence over the last year, the community response to the sponsorship programme has demonstrated the huge amount of good will and resolve to help within communities throughout Ireland who want to proactively play their part in addressing the crisis facing so many fleeing their countries and seeking refuge.

While it is early days, community sponsorship potentially offers a more inclusive and integrated approach to the settlement of refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland albeit that the number of people that can be resettled via this route is likely to be low in the short to medium term.



## SECTION 8

# reflections on the operation of the RSGP

## 8.1 Overview

Towards the end of the RSGP, project workers were asked for their reflections on how the programme had been operated by SSGT. The RSGP process was reported as having worked well from the perspective of project workers and their organisations and as having contributed to the overall programme outcomes achieved. Project workers highlighted a number of positive aspects of the RSGP.

## 8.2 The first dedicated funding to support transition

The community and voluntary sector has and continues to play an important role in the national response to people in the Irish reception system. When the programme was launched in 2016, there were no dedicated state funded resources or programmes to support people exiting direct provision. It was reported that funding under the RSGP was the first source of funding received by the projects for this area of work.

The importance of this funding was emphasized by project workers. In some cases it was reported that without the support of the RSGP the work could not have taken place. Others reported that the funding enabled a step change in the services they were trying to provide on very limited funding or on a volunteer basis enabling these to be provided in a more structured and co-ordinated way by a dedicated project worker.

## 8.3 Multi-year funding

The way SSGT's funding was delivered was reported as being highly valued.

Part funding for the projects from the RSGP enabled organisations to use this to lever funds from other sources to meet the full costs of projects. Multi-year funding provided the stability organisations needed to plan and develop their work and respond appropriately to changing demands and contexts. The longer term time frame of the funding also enabled organisations to build capacity to support larger numbers of people and critically to build expertise. For example, Nasc attributed the funding provided under the RSGP as having contributed directly to establishing the organisation as one of the leading experts nationally on

Family Reunification. One organisation reported that being able to demonstrate stability and project funding over a medium time frame as having made them a more attractive prospect for other funders when they applied for funding to increase work in particular service areas. For another having dedicated funding for the first time enabled the project to establish a higher profile locally and through this attract funds.

#### 8.4 SSGT's approach as a funder

SSGT's approach to grant-making was viewed very positively reported as being supportive and flexible. This enabled organisations to develop the focus of their work over time in response to changing demand, opportunities and learning from practice.

Project workers were positive about the application process and SSGT's approach to reporting was seen as appropriate and proportionate. The emphasis placed on impact and social change and feedback from the evaluation process was reported by a number of project workers as having helped to guide their initiative and as having contributed to the outcomes achieved.

#### 8.5 RSGP structure

The RSGP was designed to include opportunities for grantees to come together regularly in Learning Network Meetings. These were held twice a year over the life of the programme and facilitated by the programme evaluator. The purpose of the meetings was to provide project workers with the opportunity to network and reflect on and share learning and experiences about their work. In addition, arrangements were made by SSGT for briefings or presentations from external speakers where specific information needs were identified by project workers. A training session on the applicability of Homeless HAP from Mercy Law was also held.

The meetings were reported as a particularly valuable aspect of the RSGP process. They provided valuable peer support for project workers supporting people in direct provision or in the community, most working as the only staff member in the project and carrying out challenging work. They also provided an opportunity to get practical support from others around how to deal with challenges and to share learning and good practice.

Project  
Worker

“The Learning Network Meetings really added value. They provided good support and helped me make connections and get support from other areas and projects. Without this I could have felt very isolated. They were a good source of information.”

---

“The sharing of information and experiences and knowing that you are not alone has been extremely helpful as well as finding out how others are resolving the issues.”

Project Worker

---

“The guest speakers and the training received at meetings were very helpful.”

Project Worker

Relationships built through the network fostered some collaborative working between projects. For example, referrals being made when people were moving out of direct provision into an area covered by another project.

Locally based groups focussing on transition also benefited from the participation of organisations which had a broader policy focus and capacity. Nasc, Jesuit Refugee Service and Irish Refugee and Migrant Coalition provided timely updates on national initiatives and changes in the law or policy. Engagement with the local transition projects provided the latter with evidence to inform advocacy and was reported by one organisation as having enabled it to develop strong links with groups on the ground across the country.

In light of the value of the network meetings and concerns expressed by project workers of the gap that would be left when the RSGP came to an end, in mid-2019 SSGT began to explore demand for a network for groups providing services to people living in direct provision. Following on from initial discussions, SSGT commissioned a survey of organisations funded under the RSGP and its programme to support activities for children in direct provision together with other voluntary and community groups involved in providing services.

In light of the positive response received, SSGT convened a facilitated workshop of interested groups in early September 2019 attended by representatives from 22 organisations to discuss this in detail and agree the purpose and scope of a new and broader network. Following on from this, SSGT made a grant to the Irish Refugee Council to co-ordinate a network of organisations providing services, support and advocacy to people living in or transitioning from direct provision. The aim of the network will be to share good practice and information, provide training around emerging issues and in the longer term provide an evidence base for advocacy.



## SECTION 9

# achievements and challenges

### 9.1 Achievements

Often with limited resources, work funded under the RSGP has made an important contribution to the ability of people to transition from direct provision and integrate into and make a contribution to Irish society.

For most project workers, the main achievement of their work over the last three years has been the volume of people they have supported to move out of direct provision, people who are now living confidently and independently in the community. The result of engagement with local service providers, higher levels of awareness and knowledge of the needs of people trying to move out of direct provision, was also mentioned as a significant achievement. This has contributed not only to a better understanding of need by local service providers and front time staff but also an increased openness to working with project workers and service users to find local solutions to problems which arise.

At a programme level, the RSGP has enabled the development, testing and documentation of a range of practice models to support the needs people experience during and after transition from direct provision. It has created an evidence base of the needs people experience, approaches to addressing these and what the core elements support should entail. It has demonstrated what can be achieved in terms of facilitating a smooth transition from direct provision and integration with the commitment of will and resources.

## 9.2 Challenges and barriers to transition and integration

The achievements of the work funded under the RSGP are all the more significant in light of the barriers to transition and integration evidenced in all projects. Some of these have been mitigated to some extent by policy developments over the period and by the advocacy efforts of project workers. Some remain.

### 9.2.1. The absence of a co-ordinated framework to support transition

The RSGP was launched in response to a gap in provision for people in direct provision. It was hoped that the RSGP would over time make a contribution to improved services and policies at a local and national level. A recognition by the Department of Justice and Equality that people need support to move out of direct provision evidenced by the introduction of an accommodation service in early 2019, was welcomed by project workers. However, as the focus of this work is on securing accommodation it was viewed by project workers as falling short of the range of supports needed to help people transition and integrate into the community in a smooth and timely way.

In addition to a lack of resourcing for the provision of practical supports across a wide range of issues, some project workers identified the need for an integrated and co-ordinated policy response to the position of international protection applicants which would identify and address barriers to transition and integration in the policies, practice and procedures of government departments and mainstream services.

For some, while the funding under the RSGP has helped bridge the gap in services in a limited number of direct provision centres, its overall value has been to highlight this shortfall in an area which should be funded by the State.

### 9.2.2. The lack of affordable accommodation

A lack of affordable accommodation for people to move to has proved to be the most significant barrier to transition from the earliest days of the RSGP and this has continued.

In this context, the recent clarification that Homeless HAP may be payable to those seeking accommodation from direct provision was welcomed by project workers. While it was reported that in some counties this has made little difference in the context of a lack of available property overall, others reported that this has made a difference to the ability of people to secure accommodation in counties Sligo, Mayo and Dublin.

Significant challenges have also emerged around the availability of accommodation for people with special needs across projects. This includes suitable accommodation for people with physical disabilities and elderly residents or people with mental health problems requiring assisted living or other supports.

### 9.2.3. Securing accommodation

In addition to the provision of a deposit and one months rent in advance, the advantage of Homeless HAP is a significant reduction in processing times. It was reported that delays can still occur, however, putting the securing of tenancies at risk. Moreover, access to Homeless HAP is applied at the discretion of the local authority rather than an entitlement to those residing in direct provision who would be otherwise homeless.

In the early days of the RSGP and the movement from the previous Rent Supplement scheme to HAP, evidence emerged of landlords being unwilling to accept HAP tenants. This appears to have become less of an issue as HAP has rolled out though landlords wanting an immediate deposit and one months rent up front to secure properties was reported to continue to be an issue for those who obtain property without the support of the accommodation service. A further barrier reported by project workers relates to the references sought by landlords from employers and previous landlords before a prospective tenant can be offered a viewing. Unconscious bias or discrimination by landlords was also reported as a factor in accessing viewings and accommodation.

### 9.2.4. Operation of the international protection system

Delays at key stages of the international protection application process have remained a feature throughout the life of the RSGP and have contributed to prolonged institutional living in direct provision. This includes: processing times for applications for international protection which while reduced from those reported in the McMahon report remain high, currently at 15 months for a first instance decision; delays between the issuing of letters advising of a recommendation of the award of international protection status and the issue of notification of the full decision; and the delays in the issue of IRP cards.

### 9.2.5. Inconsistent levels of awareness of rights and entitlements among service providers

A common theme from the RSGP has been a lack of knowledge of front line staff around the benefits and entitlements of people leaving direct provision and inconsistencies in the approach to service users and assessment of applications. This has proved to be the case particularly around the decisions of local CWOs around the consideration and assessment of applications for deposits. Through advocacy on behalf of service users, project workers have done much to raise awareness and increase understanding at a local level. However this can be undone when front line staff move on.

### 9.2.6. Difficulties in opening bank accounts

A recurring problem over the life of the RSGP is around the difficulties people encounter in opening bank accounts due to strict regulations around identity – a passport or driving licence is required. The position is less clear in relation to credit unions with some projects reporting that accounts have been able to be opened, some reporting difficulties.

### 9.2.7. Barriers to employment

The relaxation of the total bar on employment for those seeking international protection in July 2018 was a significant change and one reported by RSGP project workers as having given people hope and which had made a huge difference to the atmosphere in direct provision centres. This enables residents in the State for 9 months or more and awaiting a first decision on their status to apply for a work permit.

People do, however, face barriers to employment despite having the right to work. While 3,350 people have been granted permission to work, the returns employers are required to submit indicate that more than half of those with permission have not found work.<sup>24</sup> Given the location of many direct provision centres often in remote or rural locations transport is a key challenge since many are not easily accessible to public transport routes. This is a particular barrier as applicants for international protection status are not permitted to obtain a driver's licence even if they have work permits. Employers can be put off by the temporary nature of the permission to work which needs to be renewed every six months. Even if people manage to overcome these challenges, RSGP project workers report that most will find work in low paid, zero hours contract jobs in the service sector.

### 9.2.7. The hidden costs of transition

Finding a place to live in the current climate is challenging requiring multiple viewings with a low probability of success. It was reported that when people obtain status they are desperate to find accommodation and willing to travel long distances to view available properties. For those not in work, the costs associated with this are a major challenge.

In addition, moving out of direct provision often to a new area brings costs: school uniforms for children attending a new school; potentially childcare costs or higher childcare costs to cover what may have been provided by friends informally; or less help forthcoming to furnish accommodation which might otherwise have come from friends and acquaintances in the local community.

## SECTION 10

# recommendations

---

**SSGT****1 Ensure wide dissemination of this report**

The report has highlighted the range of support needs people experience during and after the transition process and outlined a range of models and core principles underpinning how these can best be met.

It is recommended that SSGT share the findings of this report widely and in particular with relevant government departments and agencies, local authorities and key voluntary and community organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers including those working to ensure the voice of asylum seekers and refugees is heard. It will also be important to share the findings of the report with the recently established independent group set up by the Department of Justice and Equality which is examining the Irish international protection system including the existing system of supports given to asylum seekers and direct provision.

**2 Continue to monitor the position of people in direct provision**

SSGT has had a long standing interest in the area of direct provision and more generally in ensuring that vulnerable migrants gain the supports they need to become full members of Irish society. Through the support of its donors, in addition to the RSGP it has supported an activities for children programme. Evaluations of both programmes have demonstrated gaps in provision and the need for a more co-ordinated and resourced response.

Funding for the RSGP is now at an end and SSGT's programme for supporting activities for children is due to end in 2020 although the SSGT funded network for organisations providing services, support and advocacy to people living in or transitioning from direct provision will run over a three year period.

SSGT aims to continue to be active in supporting vulnerable migrants in becoming full members of society although it has no resources to commit to further funding programmes at this time. It has, however, funded two evaluations of its current programmes which have produced a range of recommendations. In this context, and in view of the recent publication of National Standards for direct provision, it is recommended that SSGT considers how it might support the monitoring of the position of people in direct provision including the implementation of the National standards and the findings and recommendations from the its two commissioned evaluation reports.

## Government

### Transition from direct provision

#### **3 Implement a co-ordinated transition and integration service for people exiting direct provision**

The RSGP was launched in response to a clear gap in services to assist people move from direct provision to independent living in the community. The introduction of a State funded accommodation finding service in early 2019 indicates that the need for transition support has been accepted by the Department of Justice and Equality although only as this relates to finding and securing accommodation in the community. While this is a welcome development, the findings of this report highlight that a wide range of issues need to be addressed if people are to transition from direct provision and integrate into local communities in a smooth, timely and sustainable way. It has been shown that there is a demonstrable need for practical support across a wide range of areas: social welfare, documentation, education and training, employability and employment, and health and mental health. These practical supports need to accompany accommodation support and be properly resourced.

This evaluation has outlined a number of different approaches and models by which this might be achieved and the core principles which should inform delivery: a person centred wrap around service; the delivery of services on the ground, and post transition support. An important aspect of this is the availability of support which is well linked with local service provision.

#### **4 Ensure a co-ordinated interagency response to support transition and integration**

Each government department has a remit and responsibility for the provision of services to people in direct provision. This evaluation has shown, however, how the policies, procedures and practice of government departments and mainstream services can act as a barrier to transition and integration. At the same time, the RSGP programme has provided examples of how structured and co-ordinated interagency working at a local level can address barriers and deliver workable solutions to common issues.

Interagency structures could also provide a framework for identifying appropriate measures to address the underlying causes of inconsistencies in the application of policies and procedures which have been a feature in many of the RSGP projects.

## **5 Explore the scope to apply community sponsorship to refugees exiting direct provision**

The Community Sponsorship Ireland scheme was designed as a mechanism to support the arrival of refugees under the IRPP programme. It has been piloted successfully and is now being rolled out as a mainstream resourced programme. Based on experience to date, there would be merit in giving consideration to whether and how the programme might be applied to support the integration of people granted international protection status living in direct provision.

## **6 Take account of the costs of transition**

The report has highlighted additional often hidden costs people have to meet when moving out of direct provision means moving to a new area away from the support of friends and contacts built up with local services in the area in which they have lived. Consideration should be given to the provision of financial aid to those who need help to meet these costs through for example an exceptional needs payment from DEASP.

## **7 Review access to driving licences**

Those seeking asylum cannot apply for a theory test or a driving licence currently. They can only apply when their status has been confirmed. Given the location of many direct provision centres in remote or rural locations with poor transport links, not being able to drive is a significant barrier to employment and the opportunity to save for moving out into the community.

## **Protection process**

### **8 Protection process reform**

The report has highlighted how delays in the operation of the Irish protection process at key points in the system contribute to prolonged institutional living in direct provision. Addressing this will require the full implementation of the McMahon recommendations and the National Standards on direct provision together with the allocation of resources to ensure a transparent and effective protection process which provides decisions in a timely way.

## Transparency

### 9 Increase transparency around the operation of direct provision system and the protection process

Currently it is difficult to access up to date, factual information on a range of issues relevant to the transition of people from direct provision. The former Reception and Integration Agency did produce some relevant monthly statistics on the operation of the protection process and direct provision and made these publicly available on its website. However, the last monthly report made relates to November 2018. In the interests of transparency there is a need for the reinstatement of regular publication of statistics by IPAS. In addition to what has been previously provided, information on the number of people living in direct provision after their award of international protection status and the length of time they subsequently spend in direct provision accommodation should also be reported. IPAS should also provide comprehensive reporting on those residing in emergency accommodation in hotels and guest houses. There is also a need for regular publically available statistics on the processing times for applications for international protection from the International Protection Office.

## Family reunification

### 10 Implement amendments to the International Protection Act

Family reunification is a key factor underpinning integration. However, the provisions of the International Protection Act make this more difficult narrowing the definition of eligible family members and the time frames for people to apply for family reunification with no room to appeal decisions. These barriers to integration would be addressed through the amendments to the Act as outlined in the International Protection (Family Reunification) (Amendment) Bill and this should proceed through the final stages of the Dáil.

## Local authorities

### 11 Allocating resources to reduce processing times of applications for social housing and HAP

While access to Homeless HAP has improved the position of those trying to move out of direct provision in some counties, in others the potential benefits have not be realised due to long processing times with respect to both the length of time required to be approved for social housing and the processing of applications for Homeless HAP. In a highly competitive housing market these delays continue to put people living in direct provision at a significant disadvantage and act as a barrier to timely exit from institutionalised living.



# appendix

## Funding for RSGP projects

Organisation	Project	Total funding from SSGT	Total project funding	Other funders
Cultúr	A Community Development Response to Integration, Resettlement and Relocation	€36,000	€43,500	AMRI
Diversity Sligo	Transition from Direct Provision to the Community	€36,000	€58,894	Tusla
South West Mayo Development Co	From Direct Provision to Independent Living	€29,300	€31,050	Donations
County Kildare Leader Partnership	Positive Transition Project	€30,000	€100,168	Kildare County Council, CKLP, SICAP
Laois Partnership	Transition from Direct Provision Project	€20,000	€205,000 <sup>1</sup>	AMIF, AMRI, Laois County Council, LOETB
Jesuit Refugee Service Ireland	Providing Asylum Seekers in Transition with Housing and Support (PATHS Project)	€39,000	€207,157	AMIF, JRS
Doras Luimni	Refugee Advocacy and Integration Support Mentoring Programme (RAIS)	€18,000	€18,000	None
Nasc	Family Reunification, Securing Integration for Refugees	€33,000	€43,828	Nasc, Tomar Trust, The Ireland Funds, HSE
Irish Refugee and Migrant Coalition	A Community Development Response to Integration, Resettlement and Relocation <sup>2</sup>	€26,000	€26,000	None
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>€267,300</b>	<b>€733,597</b>	

1 The Transition from Direct Provision Project was one element of a larger integration project funded by AMIF.

2 Funding was provided by SSGT for two years only.

## endnotes

- 1 Department of Justice and Equality (2019). *Spending Review 2019. Direct Provision: Overview of current accommodation expenditure*. Available at: [http://justice.ie/en/JELR/Spending\\_Review.pdf/Files/Spending\\_Review.pdf](http://justice.ie/en/JELR/Spending_Review.pdf/Files/Spending_Review.pdf)
- 2 Niamh Smyth T.D. [42681/19] (2019) Thursday 17 October 2019, Dáil Éireann Debate.
- 3 St Stephen's Green Trust (2019). *Healing the wounds of isolation: Letting children be children – Extra-curricular activities for children living in direct provision centres and the need for sustained support*. Available at: <https://www.ssgt.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/SS-GT-DPGP-evaluation-webversion.pdf>
- 4 Ni Raghallaigh, M Foreman M and Feeley, M (2016). *Transition from Direct Provision to Life in the Community*. Available at: [https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Transition-from-Direct-Provision-to-life-in-the-community\\_M-NiRaghallaigh\\_M-Foreman-et-al-2016.pdf](https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Transition-from-Direct-Provision-to-life-in-the-community_M-NiRaghallaigh_M-Foreman-et-al-2016.pdf)
- 5 Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers (2015). Available at: <http://www.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>
- 6 At this stage Ireland was operating a two-stage assessment procedure for asylum seekers which explored eligibility for refugee status and only then assessed whether subsidiary protection or leave to remain would be offered significantly adding to the time taken for the applicant to receive a final determination. At the time of the launch of the RSGP in 2016 plans were well advanced to introduce a new single application process which came into effect following the commencement of the International Protection Act in December 2016.
- 7 Department of Justice and Equality. *Immigration in Ireland: Annual Review 2018*. Available at: <http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Immigration-in-Ireland-Annual-Review-2018.pdf/Files/Immigration-in-Ireland-Annual-Review-2018.pdf>
- 8 The Irish Times “Direct Provision: 20 years of an ‘inhumane’ system” 16 November 2019. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/direct-provision-20-years-of-an-inhumane-system-1.4081833>
- 9 Jim O’Callaghan T.D. [43672/19] (2019) Wednesday 23 October 2019, Dáil Éireann Debate.
- 10 Spending review 2019.
- 11 See for example The Irish Times “Department of Justice ‘disappointed’ with decision to withdraw Oughterard tender” 2 October 2019. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/departement-of-justice-disappointed-with-decision-to-withdraw-oughterard-tender-1.4036865>
- 12 JRSI (2019). *Living with Dignity: Enhancing Reception Conditions and Supports for Protection Applicants in Emergency Accommodation*. Available at: <https://www.jrs.ie/jesuit-refugee-news-2/500-submission-on-emergency-accommodation-2019>
- 13 Niamh Smyth T.D. [42681/19] (2019) Thursday 17 October 2019, Dáil Éireann Debate.
- 14 Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire T.D.[22551/19] (2019) Tuesday 28 May, Dáil Éireann Debate.
- 15 See for example, The Journal.ie “Emergency accommodation for asylum seekers costs three times more than Direct Provision centres”, 26 August 2019. Available at: <https://www.thejournal.ie/direct-provision-costs-emergency-accommodation-4782558-Aug2019/>  
The Journal.ie “Ombudsman criticises use of hotels as emergency accommodation for asylum seekers”, 25 September 2015. Available at: <https://www.thejournal.ie/direct-provision-ombudsman-4823876-Sep2019/>; Irish Refugee Council (2019). *The Reception Conditions Directive: One Year On*. Available at: <https://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/RCD-One-Year-On-11-July-2019-Final.pdf>
- 16 Niamh Smyth T.D. [42681/19] (2019) Thursday 17 October 2019, Dáil Éireann Debate.
- 17 HAP is a form of social housing support provided by all local authorities. Under HAP local authorities make a monthly payment to a landlord subject to rent limits on the HAP tenant’s behalf. The tenant pays a weekly contribution towards the rent to the local authority based on household income. HAP rates vary significantly across Council areas based on current market rates.
- 18 Fiona O’Loughlin T.D. [44565/19] (2019) Tuesday 5 November 2019, Dáil Éireann Debate.
- 19 The Irish Times “Asylum seeker support focus of group” 26 October 2019. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/asylum-seeker-support-focus-of-government-group-1.4063070>
- 20 Hinds, R (2018) *A family belongs together: Refugee experiences of family reunification in Ireland*. Available at: <https://nascireland.org/sites/default/files/A%20Family%20Belongs%20Together.pdf>
- 21 Homeless HAP has been in effect in Dublin and Cork City since February 2015.
- 22 Circular: Housing 4/2018
- 23 CCMA/RIA/DHPLG Working Group (2019) *Information paper on supporting people with status/leave to remain*. Made available by Irish Refugee Council.
- 24 The Irish Times “Direct Provision: 20 years of an ‘inhumane’ system” 16 November 2019. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/direct-provision-20-years-of-an-inhumane-system-1.4081833>





**ssgt** | st.stephen's  
green trust

PO Box 950,  
Newbridge,  
Co Kildare

tel: + 353 45 480666  
email: [info@ssgt.ie](mailto:info@ssgt.ie)  
website: [www.ssgt.ie](http://www.ssgt.ie)