

Reunified Refugee Families and Homelessness



Submission to the Minister for Justice and Equality

Crosscare Refugee Service
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(1) The Homeless Crisis and the Impact on Family Reunification

Family Reunification should be a time of joy where families of refugees are reunited after a long period of separation and turmoil, often for years, and where time for reconnection and readjustment is needed for the family.

“While family separation can be a barrier to integration, the presence of family members can accelerate the integration of both new arrivals and family members already in Ireland.”¹

However, it is often a time of intense stress and trauma for everybody involved. Reunified refugee families are some of the most marginalised in our society and we believe there is a moral obligation to streamline the process of arrival and integration of people arriving under this scheme. These families are experiencing isolation and exclusion from appropriate and prompt access to services and entitlements where the need is immediate. Concessions and supports that have been afforded to refugees need to be extended to support families entering under Family Reunification in the most practical sense. Affording rights and entitlements must be accompanied with protocol and procedures that ensure access to them. As a group recognised as coming from exceptional circumstances, exceptional responses are required.

The absence of affordable housing, particularly in Dublin, has had a very negative impact on reunified families since the housing crisis began, making them one of the most at-risk groups in terms of falling through the safety-net and sourcing private rented accommodation. Whilst the housing crisis will take longer to resolve, the right to Family Reunification must not be deterred or prevented by the unavailability of housing. Families have been separated for too long and are often co-dependent therefore reunification is hugely important to their well-being and family rights. Decision-making on family reunification applications and the process of transition for reunified families must consider all of the issues and work to protect the right to Family Reunification at the most minimal cost and strain to families.

This submission outlines the context in which families are supported through the process of Family Reunification and settlement in Ireland, and discusses the barriers and impact that some are experiencing more recently in Ireland. The analysis indicates where practices are presenting as barriers and where some practices have been more supportive. It concludes with the key priority areas of concern with recommendations to the Government to support a safe and risk-free resettlement of reunified families in Ireland.

¹ Hinds, R, 2018, *A family belongs together: Refugees’ experiences of family reunification in Ireland*. Irish Refugee Council, Nasc, Oxfam Ireland

(2) Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020

The introduction of the new Migrant Integration Strategy is a welcome step towards positive integration practices and provisions for migrants living in Ireland and is fully supported by Crosscare, the social support agency of the Dublin Archdiocese working in the areas of homelessness, community supports and with young people. Crosscare's Information and Advocacy services currently resides on the implementation Monitoring Committee as one of the NGO sector representatives to support the development and implementation of the Migrant Integration Strategy. It is within this framework that we present this policy brief under the commitments made by the Government to engage with migrant stakeholder groups and consult on best practice.²

(3) The Right to Family Reunification

The International Protection Act introduced in Ireland in 2015 outlines the permission for Family Reunification under sections 56 and 57, which permits those who are declared a Convention Refugee, Programme Refugee or Beneficiary of Subsidiary Protection to apply for permission for dependent family members to enter and reside in the State with them. Significant changes to Family Reunification were introduced in this Act in December 2016 including a 12 month time limit to apply from the date the sponsor was given a declaration of international protection. Family members of sponsors are defined as parents (in the case of minor refugees), spouses and civil partners, and children who are unmarried and aged under 18.

Refugees are individuals who have faced exceptional threat and are supported by legislation and policies under the Department of Justice and Equality to facilitate their settlement in Ireland, which includes Family Reunification. The Government provides legislative rights and entitlements for sponsors and their family to be reunified in Ireland and to live and work in the State. The provisions are primarily concerned with the application for Family Reunification, entry to the State and associated rights and entitlements for family members. The State recognises the unique exceptional circumstances of refugees and provides significantly exceptional support such as the provision of travel documents under the Geneva Convention for those unable to obtain passports from their country of origin.

These provisions however, **fail to ensure the immediate practical support required on arrival** of family members in the State. These families are coming from extremely traumatic circumstances and they are faced with further stress and trauma in dealing with administrative systems and delays which are impacting on their immediate basic needs and welfare in their first weeks and months in Ireland. These families can often be some of the most at-risk groups in Irish society and the State needs to commit to making appropriate preparations to support those who are granted Family Reunification. Provisions need to go beyond the legislation in terms of access to rights and

² Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-20, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade & Defence, Action 2: 'Government Departments and agencies will ensure appropriate, regular engagement with NGOs representing migrant groups'.

entitlements, with appropriate and efficient application and implementation. There is a significant difference in the absence of support for families entering under Family Reunification compared to the resettlement provisions that are afforded to families who have arrived under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP). The difference being that resettlement workers provide support with sourcing accommodation, accessing entitlements, medical assessments, school placements, GP registration, etc. to those families transferred to Ireland under the IRPP. The families who have entered under Family Reunification cannot access this resettlement management support, yet they are as much at-risk where the refugee sponsor has limited English and knowledge of supports. These families are forced to seek support from mainstream services, limited advocacy support organisations, or rely on informal and limited support networks.

(4) Crosscare Refugee Service – Settlement and Integration work with Families

Crosscare Refugee Service works with individuals and families who have been given a declaration of International Protection and as part of this work assist with their applications for Family Reunification. This involves providing information and advocacy to complete applications, communicate with the Department of Justice and Equality, apply for travel documents, registration for family members with INIS, and assistance with access to statutory services and entitlements.

Many of these families will be at risk of homelessness, as the sponsor who has applied for family members to join them may not have sufficient accommodation or be permitted to accommodate more family members in their current tenancy. In the past two years, more families are presenting to our Dublin based service as homeless on arrival, as the sponsor is unable to source accommodation for the family in advance due to the housing and homeless crisis.

Crosscare Refugee Service has worked with 32 cases involving 153 individuals who have arrived in Ireland under Family Reunification and were immediately homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and accessing the homeless services in the Greater Dublin area.

(5) The Settlement Process

The settlement process for reunified families is a complicated one. On receipt of the positive decision letter from the Minister for Justice and Equality granting Family Reunification, the individual with refugee status (sponsor) is informed of their immediate obligation to register their family members with the Immigration Registration Office on their arrival. The letter concentrates on the legal obligations of the family on entry to Ireland, but does not direct families to offices for support with housing, social welfare, health etc. or to organisations that can assist them, such as Crosscare Refugee Service.³ On leaving Direct Provision accommodation, refugees and subsidiary protection residents are provided with some of this information in a letter from the Reception and Integration Agency, but it is based on their individual case where the information can differ significantly for a

³ See Appendix 1

reunified family in terms of supports and services available. Reunified families are expected to know where to start and where to go for support or access to services.

The immediate steps to settlement are often more urgent and extensive than those for the sponsor who has already established requirements such as a PPS number, social welfare entitlements and registration with the Local Authority for housing before leaving Direct Provision accommodation. The sponsor will need to take on a more significant and stressful process for their family starting from before their arrival in the State.

(6) Adverse Impact during Settlement Transition

The current housing market crisis is contributing heavily to the number of issues that are having an adverse impact on families arriving under Family Reunification. Reunified families face a broad spectrum of issues that contribute to their risk of becoming homeless and moving on from homelessness. The main issues we have identified through our service include:

1. Sponsors granted protection have a **12 month period to apply for Family Reunification** and processing periods vary, which limits them to a very short time to learn English, acquire employment and become financially independent.
2. Sponsors are **unable to source adequate Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) tenancies for family members in advance** of their arrival without the required administrative steps in registering for Irish Residence Permit (former GNIB) cards, PPS numbers, social welfare payments and registration with the Local Authority. Families may be separated within homeless services to accommodate them in place of family-appropriate emergency accommodation. They may be offered 'one night only' emergency accommodation through the Homeless Freephone or may be asked to 'self accommodate' by independently contacting private hotels and B&Bs for placements that the local authority will fund. Self-accommodation can prove challenging with language barriers and the limited supply of private rented accommodation. Increases in HAP allowance rates have been insufficient, particularly for people living in the Dublin region.
3. Sponsors have **extremely limited access to private rented accommodation** under the Housing Assistance Payment scheme rent limits. They regularly describe the disinterest by landlords in Dublin to take up HAP tenancies. They are competing with all other renters in a housing market with a huge deficit of housing which is in turn driving up rental prices. Some sponsors will remain longer in Direct Provision accommodation while they struggle to source a HAP tenancy. Minister Stanton has referred to this problem as causing a shortage of accommodation provision for incoming applicants for International Protection.⁴ Indeed, this pressure on housing has hampered the timeframe of the IRPP resettlement target and the rate of move-on of people from EROCs and direct provision.⁵ A recent response to this by

⁴ Meeting held by Minister of State with homeless service organisations 3rd August 2017.

⁵ Jesuit Refugee Service Ireland (2018) *Sharing Responsibility, Saving Lives*, JRS Ireland

the Reception and Integration Agency has been to put extra pressure on those granted protection to move on from Direct Provision.⁶

4. Sponsors who have been living alone in a private tenancy, such as a studio, will not be permitted to allow other family members to reside in the tenancy and will be putting their **tenancy at risk** if family members arrive and reside there for a prolonged period of time.
5. Sponsors' family members will **need to access emergency temporary accommodation** through the homeless services in the interim whilst searching for a HAP tenancy, putting further pressure on extremely strained homeless services.
6. In our experience, larger families in particular are experiencing **low uptake by private landlords of HAP tenancies**, as they continue to report to our service about their many unsuccessful attempts to find tenancies, as well as facing the existing well publicised difficulties with sourcing housing.
7. Due to pressure and waiting lists with Local Authorities, families may be **waiting several weeks, months, or longer for a 'rolling booking'** (a long term placement in one accommodation unit). Families may be moved at short notice to different emergency accommodation residences until they are placed in a long term secure accommodation.
8. Language barriers can have an impact on families without English proficiency at every stage of their settlement and with every statutory agency where **interpretation services are not offered**.
9. A sponsor's **knowledge of and access to services may be limited** and they often require some advocacy to assist them to adequately access essential support. Where services are available this might not be readily apparent or easily arranged for example, both the online appointment booking systems for PPS numbers with Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and immigration registration with the Burgh Quay Registration Office do not offer interpreter services.
10. Conditions in emergency accommodation can often be experienced by clients as traumatic and fearful. They can further extend or trigger clients' previous traumatic experiences, **affecting their health and wellbeing**. Some families arriving in Ireland have high medical needs that require urgent medical assessment and treatment. Delays in accessing a medical card for free medical access can have an impact on the health of family members, where they may be at medical risk due to delays in receiving urgent treatment. Restriction on facilities for food preparation, storage, cooking adequate meals, and the added expense of convenience food and subsequent weight gain/ loss are also identified issues for families in homeless accommodation.⁷

⁶ See appendix 2

⁷ Share and Hennessy, 2017, *Food Access and Nutritional Health among Families in Emergency Homeless Accommodation*, Focus Ireland

(7) Case study

The variety and regularity of issues that can have an impact on a family are presented in the following case study of a reunified family that Crosscare Refugee Service has worked with. Their name has been changed for the purpose of this report.

Ahmed* is a refugee from a Middle Eastern country. He is from an ethnic minority community that is denied all citizenship rights and face racism and institutional discrimination. He was granted Family Reunification for his wife and four children. His family arrived in Ireland in October 2017. Prior to their arrival Ahmed made every effort to prepare. He secured private rented accommodation and paid the rent out of his own money, as he was unaware of the possibility of applying for the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). The accommodation was substandard, with no functioning heating and malfunctioning plumbing.

Ahmed received an illegal eviction notice in late November and came to our service for assistance with this and other support needs. We helped Ahmed contact the Local Authority and advocated on his behalf for him and his family to be registered as homeless. After several visits including two refusals by Local Authority staff to process his application, and one refusal by telephone, Ahmed and his family were registered as homeless and given the option to 'self-accommodate' which by making a booking for themselves. This presented another hurdle, as neither Ahmed nor his family members spoke enough English to make hotel bookings by telephone. This challenge was further complicated by the fact that it was close to Christmas, and demand for accommodation was very high. Our service spent several weeks with Ahmed trying to call hotels and B&B's, but with little to no success.

While the notice of eviction was illegal, the landlord attempted to enforce it and began harassing the family over the telephone from the date it was sent. The landlord refused to communicate with our service, but continued to threaten a forced eviction if Ahmed and his family did not leave. The notice instructed Ahmed to leave on the 8th of December, however due to difficulties finding self-accommodating homeless accommodation; the family was forced to stay in the house until they finally secured emergency accommodation on 22nd December. Although the notice was invalid, this did not diminish the stress and intimidation that the family endured due to the landlord's actions. After spending the holiday season in short term emergency accommodation, our service finally managed to help Ahmed secure self-accommodating homeless accommodation for himself and his family. He and his family continue to reside in this accommodation and are looking for HAP supported private rented accommodation.

During this period of crisis, support from our service for Ahmed and his family was not limited to housing and homelessness information and advocacy. We assisted the family in securing Child Benefit payments, adding Ahmed's wife to his pension payment, securing schools for the children and arranging immediate access to health assessment for the recently arrived family members via Safetynet. We assisted Ahmed in applying for naturalization and in applying for his driver theory test. This work has amounted to 27 interventions between late October 2017 and March 2018, averaging at over 30 hours.

This case outlines the complexities and significant risks that reunified families are facing. It is the experience of our service, and the clients of our service that they are not in a financial position or possess adequate knowledge, language or capacity to manage all the needs they and their families will have during this process. By far, the main issue that is having the most impact on the security and well-being of these families is the unavailability of housing and access to emergency accommodation.

(8) Administrative Barriers & Impact

Many reunified families who have been accessing the support of our service have come under the former Family Reunification application process that did not have a time limit on applications and may have been waiting longer for Family Reunification decisions. The new single procedure for applications for protection can potentially have an impact on both the time period by which a successful applicant is granted Refugee status or Subsidiary Protection and will subsequently be permitted to apply for Family Reunification within a more limited 12 month timeframe. It therefore can potentially have an accelerated impact on the rate at which a family can be reunified and reside in Ireland.

Administrative barriers and the current housing crisis are preventing sufficient preparation for sponsors to source private rented accommodation for their family members arriving in the State. These barriers are prolonging the delay after arrival, forcing families to enter already heavily burdened homeless services. The Dublin Region Homeless Executive reported 49% of homeless families in the Dublin region had been made homeless due to overcrowding.⁸ In Dublin, the New Communities Unit (NCU), Gardiner St, Dublin 1, under the DEASP, had previously operated emergency accommodation placements for these families in B&Bs and hostels for several years until the responsibility for all emergency accommodation was centralised into the Central Placement Service in Dublin City Council. Households are not necessarily allocated to particular family emergency accommodation services based on assessed needs and vulnerabilities. As a result placements, while addressing the immediate emergency, may not be appropriate or suitable, even in the short-term.

Conversely, moving out of homeless services is significantly stunted as a result of housing deficit and the reported low uptake of HAP tenancies by private landlords from our clients, particularly in Dublin. With a reliance on the private rental market that is in crisis, these families will continue, like other families experiencing homelessness in Dublin and Ireland, to face prolonged homelessness and debilitated independence. They can be further hampered by limited access to support services where they are availing of the 'self-accommodation' system. Families accommodated in this way do not have case workers assigned to them.

⁸ DRHE, 2017, *Reported reasons for family homelessness: January to June 2017*
<http://www.homelessdublin.ie/publications?tags=23,24,22,29,30,21,25,31,32,26,33,34,28,35,27,37,36,38>

(9) Exceptional practices & advocacy

There have been some positive exceptional practices that have improved the immediate experience of some reunified families. Crosscare Refugee Service has experienced evidence of some positive and helpful practices that some statutory offices have made based on the urgency and need of some reunified families. These practices have been made following advocacy from our service on behalf of reunified families on their arrival in the State. The following are the main areas of assistance that we have identified.

Appointments

Issue: The online appointment booking system for immigration registration can be difficult to secure and there are often extensive delays. This is having an impact on access for reunified family members in order to access immediate supports for housing and social welfare. This was also a problem for booking appointments to process PPS number cards but this system has improved.

Response: Where a sponsor is receiving assistance from our service with their Family Reunification application process, on occasions, we have been able to successfully request expedited appointments for Immigration registration and PPS numbers in advance of the family arriving, to reduce delays on their arrival.

Restriction: The difficulty with this practice is that it requires advocacy from an organisation such as Crosscare Refugee Service to make these requests on behalf of sponsors and their families. Expedited appointments do not currently exist as a protocol but as a case-by-case response to advocacy efforts. Crosscare Refugee Service advocates for each family where possible for expedited appointments, as entitlements to social welfare supports may be delayed by immigration registration.

Housing & Emergency Accommodation

Issues: Access to housing under the HAP scheme can be difficult and uncertain. Access to rented accommodation is dependent on sourcing a tenancy for which a landlord is willing to accept the scheme. In the past year, our service is aware of only three reunified families who have secured a HAP tenancy. This can be harder for a family who is not familiar with the system or renting. Families who are presenting as homeless on arrival in the State will be referred to the Local Authority to request emergency accommodation in the interim while looking for a tenancy. This process can also be delayed where family members are waiting for IRP cards and PPS numbers.

Families are more than likely to be referred to 'self-accommodate' where there is a shortage of family-appropriate emergency accommodation. They will be asked to contact a list of hotels and B&Bs to source rooms on a night-by-night or week-by-week basis. It is very unpredictable for Local Authorities as to how and when they can provide emergency accommodation in the current environment, particularly in Dublin. This makes it very unpredictable and stressful for families. As indicated above families who are 'self-accommodating' have less access to case managers and support workers. At times, families have been unable to access any accommodation under the self-accommodation method for several nights at a time. It is a practice that transfers the burden of

accommodation placement on an already vulnerable group of families and is not a responsible alternative. This has been highlighted in recommendations to the Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government Debate;

“There must be an end to the practice of self-accommodation. It is not in accordance with the law, does not work and causes extreme stress. There must be an end to substandard and overcrowded emergency accommodation where there is a lack of cooking facilities and play areas for children, some of which we have encountered.”⁹

Local Authorities and homeless services do not offer interpreter services. Reunified families often request assistance from our service with ‘self-accommodation’ as language barriers can hinder their communications with hoteliers and the relevant Local Authority.

Response: Through our advocacy with the Central Placement Service in Dublin City Council, some emergency placements have been arranged on behalf of families at immediate risk with very limited English language as they would be unable to access a placement without an advocate during out-of-hours. During out-of-hours they are even more at risk when they cannot get such assistance or interpreters. The CPS has fortunately been more responsive to the needs of reunified families and open to cooperation with groups advocating on their behalf.

Restriction: Emergency accommodation is intended to be temporary by nature but families are forced to stay longer periods while the housing shortage continues. It is having a significantly negative impact on the integration of reunified families and hindering their fresh start in Ireland. Providing support to move on to private tenancies is therefore extremely important. Services such as Crosscare are very limited in capacity to provide this support as housing provision depends primarily on the private rental market.

The housing shortage and the burden of sourcing private tenancies are felt across the country by households experiencing homelessness. Local authorities are working to improve access to the HAP scheme, and the Government is investing in building houses. Responses to the housing shortage for refugees who are entering under the Resettlement Programme include caseworkers assisting households to move on from Emergency Response Orientation Centres. The Irish Red Cross is also assisting with volunteers providing practical support such as sourcing housing, and emotional support in the integration of families into the community, which they have extended to some Family Reunification cases.¹⁰

Health

Issue: The additional impact of immediate health needs for family members is experienced with delays in processing medical cards for several months. In some cases, families have been incorrectly told that they must be in receipt of Child Benefit in order to qualify for a medical card, which, if not challenged, can delay the process for several more months.

⁹ *Finding a Home - Families' Journeys out of Homelessness, and Keeping a Home - Preventing Families from Becoming Homeless*, 2018, Focus Ireland as discussed by Mr. Brian Harvey, 14th February 2018

¹⁰ Irish Red Cross <https://www.redcross.ie/news-and-events/irish-red-cross-placing-syrian-refugees-into-accommodation/>

Response: Family members with immediate health needs can be referred to Safetynet, a free limited GP service for people experiencing homelessness, or who do not have a current medical card. Safetynet runs several clinics in Dublin City Centre, with one operating from Crosscare's Cathedral Street office. Reunified family members are referred to this service during the period they are waiting for a medical card. Safetynet runs a new essential medical assessment clinic, operating out of Crosscare Refugee Service offices, to which reunified family members can be referred on arrival in the State. This is a practice that has been found to be helpful to identify and diagnose important health needs quickly and link patients into appropriate medical support services. Fourteen families from six countries, (Afghanistan, Guinea Conakry, Iraq, Kuwait, Pakistan, DR Congo and Somalia) have attended the health assessment clinic which was a total of 87 individuals over a five month pilot of the scheme.

Restriction: Safetynet is only available in a restricted number of areas in Dublin, Cork and Limerick. The medical consultations are limited and cannot provide a full GP primary and secondary service.

(10) Representation & Policy Submissions

Crosscare has compiled various submissions and represented on various platforms on these issues. We identify and flag emerging and ongoing issues affecting client groups with various Departments and service providers. These platforms include:

Submissions

- Submission to the National Housing Strategy 'Rebuilding Ireland' and subsequent Review
- Submission to OPMI Migrant Integration Strategy

Committees

- Homeless Network Prevention Subgroup with the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive
- Submissions by the Homeless Network (NGOs & DRHE)
- Presentation to the Oireachtas Committee on Housing and Homelessness
- Implementation Committee for the national Migrant Integration Strategy
- NGO coordinator on the Migrant Consultative Forum with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

Casework

- Ongoing casework advocacy in requesting expedited immigration registration appointments with positive outcomes
- Close liaison with Statutory and other agencies including Local Authority homeless persons units to expedite access to services and entitlements and mitigate risks. For example, facilitating health screening for reunited family members.

(11) Four Major Obstacles for Reunified Families

In working with reunified families arriving in Ireland, we have identified four major obstacles that they experience in the first few weeks when they will require access to essential primary need of accommodation and a basic income:

- 1. HOUSING**
- 2. IMMIGRATION**
- 3. INCOME**
- 4. HEALTH**

The following recommendations are presented for the Minister's consideration based on the information presented and the experience of our service and clients.

1. HOUSING

Emergency Accommodation

Securing a tenancy for family members is one of the main difficulties sponsors face in advance of their arrival. The sponsor will often be in receipt of social welfare assistance and is unable to register their dependent family members for dependent entitlements or housing supports until their arrival in the State. They will be required to have received their Personal Public Service Number (PPSN) and Irish Residence Permit (IRP) card in order to access supports. Often families will stay temporarily with the sponsor, creating overcrowding and putting the sponsor's tenancy at risk. Where this is not possible, the family will present to homeless services at the Local Authority to request emergency accommodation. In Dublin, the Central Placement Service is responsible for all State supplied emergency accommodation allocation and the family will present to a Housing Officer and complete the following process:

- PPS numbers will be requested from family members in order to process a housing need assessment and register them on the housing list. This can be delayed due to processing waiting times in the Client Identity Services.
- Adult family members will be assessed and placed, where possible on request or through advocacy on their behalf, in emergency accommodation together to ensure they are able to stay together at such a critical time when they will be very dependent on each other and the sponsor family member.
- The families' housing needs will be assessed and where there is no immediate availability of emergency accommodation for the family they will be referred to the Freephone for night-by-night emergency accommodation, or asked to 'self-accommodate' by sourcing hotel or B&B accommodation that will be covered by the Local Authority. This poses a barrier for families who are not proficient in English to communicate with services by telephone and there is very limited emergency accommodation available. It creates more stress for the family at the start of their new life in Ireland.

- Where PPS numbers are not yet available, families are referred to the Focus Ireland Family Intake Team who will arrange interim emergency accommodation with the exception of exceptional cases authorised and paid for by the relevant Local Authority.

Long-term housing

Families will then need to register with the Local Authority to be assessed for housing needs and access to the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) which will allow the sponsor to acquire a tenancy for all the family members. The family will need to independently source private rented accommodation under the HAP scheme. Although it is illegal to discriminate against prospective tenants who will access State rent supports, the scheme is not proving to have had great uptake by landlords in Dublin at present for reunified families, as evidenced in our clients' experiences and in recent research.¹¹ It is also a daunting and stressful task for families again with language and cultural barriers. Assessment for medical priority on the housing list can be difficult to achieve for some families where medical records and treatment are difficult to establish. Families will remain in emergency accommodation until they source a tenancy.

The influence of Airbnb on the rental market has been recognised as having an adverse affect on the supply of temporary and short term lets that are contributing to driving up rental rates in Ireland.¹²

Hidden racism and discrimination is evident also from the experiences of our clients in access to the private sector, which projects a double negative barrier on reunified families.¹³ Without the requirement to obtain a landlord licence in the private sector, it is impossible to monitor and prevent against racism in the sector. People experiencing racism in access to private rented accommodation must take a case to the IHREC in order to address any incidents. However, our clients are forced to accept this practice by landlords and continue on their search for accommodation, due to the urgency of their situations, rather than pursue a case with the IHREC.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We call on the government to

- Provide dedicated assistance for reunified families, including quality interpretation services, to access emergency accommodation with guaranteed minimum one month placements.

¹¹ Mr Seán Ó Siochrú, 14th February, presentation to Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government Debate, "In particular, the housing assistance payment, HAP, was just coming into being and was a major factor for families, but many landlords did not want to engage with it at that point." <http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/Debates%20Authoring/DebatesWebPack.nsf/committeetakes/HPJ2018021400002?opendocument#C00100>

¹² Journal.ie, March 2018, *What used to be low-rent areas will stay high now': How Airbnb is 'worsening crisis' in some Dublin areas* <http://www.thejournal.ie/airbnb-rent-dublin-3872491-Mar2018/>

¹³ ENAR Ireland, 2012 ENAR, *Shadow report, Racism and related discriminatory practices in Ireland* <http://enarireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/ENAR-Ireland-Shadow-Report-2011-12.pdf>

- End the practice of ‘self-accommodation’ for reunified families in need of emergency accommodation.
- Automatically expedite appointments for registration with Local Authority housing and homeless services on presentation of family reunification decision letter.
- Automatically expedite processing of Housing Needs Assessment and registration on housing waiting list, with homeless priority where required.
- Provide appropriate and efficient interpreter services where required within Local Authorities (Actions 16 & 18, Migrant Integration Strategy Implementation plan). This will not only provide a more efficient process for staff and families, it will also help to protect families’ rights and entitlements and remove the entire responsibility from the sponsor to independently navigate through systems on behalf of their families.
- Ensure that reunified families who require emergency accommodation are assessed and placed as soon as possible in accommodation appropriate to, and suitable for, their needs in place of the former emergency accommodation operated by the New Communities Unit Community Welfare Service.
- Curb monopolisation of the private rental sector by companies such as Airbnb
- Introduce a licence requirement for landlords as part of registration with the Residential Tenancies Board that requires adherence to a strict anti-racism/discrimination charter.

2. IMMIGRATION

The refugee sponsor receives a decision letter from the Minister of Justice and Equality confirming the approval of their request for Family Reunification. It includes details of the family members who are granted permission to join the sponsor and some limited details of the steps to take for their arrival in the State. The details do not specify administrative details on how immigration registration operates nor on how registration for housing and social welfare supports operate. Information is available on separate Department websites or on some phone lines only, which often leaves the sponsor, who may not be confident to navigate these administrative systems independently, to be dependent on other support services such as Crosscare Refugee Service.

Crosscare Refugee Service produced an information leaflet in 2017 on Family Reunification, giving information and advice for those who have families arriving in the State under Family Reunification, which is available in English, Arabic and Somali.¹⁴ The need for the leaflet was apparent based on the proportion of clients presenting to the service for assistance and from queries from other supports services throughout Ireland.

¹⁴ See appendix 3

The family members will be required on arrival to register with Burgh Quay Registration Office and issued with Irish Residence Permit (IRP – former GNIB) cards. The appointment service has now been changed to an online booking system and waiting times for appointments are currently at minimum six weeks or longer. At various times each day appointments are completely unavailable to book until the system is updated again. This is a barrier for families who are not proficient in English or computer literate. Registration is vital as the IRP cards are requested by local authorities and the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection when applications are made for housing and social welfare.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We call on the Government to

- Commit to a national communication strategy between the Department of Justice and Equality, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and relevant Local Authorities to ensure the families' basic needs are met through expedited administration of rights and entitlements as soon as an entry visa for family members is issued and before their arrival in the State. Cross-departmental responses are required to ensure effective transition for reunified families.
- Ensure that Family Reunification decision letters from the Minister of Justice and Equality provide adequate and appropriate information on steps to take to ensure smooth transition for family members, including appropriate referral to statutory agencies and support organisations. This will assist families to prepare in advance of the arrival of reunified family members and during their transition in Ireland. It will provide them with immediate knowledge as to which offices to approach for support.
- Ensure that all relevant statutory agencies have procedural protocol and trained staff to assist the sponsor prior to their family members' entry into the country and during their settlement (as per Actions 16 & 18 of the implementation plan for the Migrant Integration Strategy). This should include:
 - Automatically expedited appointments for all relevant statutory services (INIS, DEASP, Local Authority housing and homeless services). Appointments to be issued on presentation of family reunification decision letter.
 - Automatically expedited processing of Irish Residence Permit (IRP) cards, PPS number and Public Services cards, social welfare payments, Housing Needs Assessment and registration on housing waiting list, with homeless priority where required.
 - Reunified families should be allocated a case manager as soon as possible on arrival who can provide:
 - Support with medical card applications on arrival in the State with accurate communication information on criteria, with expedited processing times
 - Support with registering for school placements for children of reunified families
 - Support with access to accessible and full time English language classes

These protocols will assist staff in relevant agencies to identify reunified families and effectively implement best practice procedures.

- Commit to commissioning external training and consultation for relevant departments with the community and voluntary sector on specific needs of reunified families accessing the services of the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, and the Health Service Executive.
- Commit to cross-departmental evaluation of national procedures and protocols for newly arrived reunified families to determine the issues nationally, and develop preventative and effective measures to ensure families are assisted efficiently and appropriately (Actions 23 & 25, Migrant Integration Strategy Implementation plan).
- Support and fund a nationwide sponsorship programme that is staffed with trained professionals to assist Family Reunification cases (Action 6, Migrant integration Strategy).

3. INCOME

PPS registration

Family members apply for a Personal Public Service number in order to access social welfare entitlements. They make an appointment via an online booking system which previously had waiting times of up to several weeks. This posed a barrier for families not proficient in English or computer literate. The processing period for PPS numbers is usually one week. Applications for PPS numbers require proof of a person's need for a PPSN and proof of address, which can be difficult for reunified family members to produce whilst accessing night-by-night emergency accommodation, or if they are staying with an associate. Clients have been asked at their appointment to come back with this proof and arrange another appointment. Proof of need for a PPSN for these families is simply a social welfare application form that they need to submit to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) for entitlements. The appointment booking form does not include reference to the availability of interpretation services under 'additional services'. It is also the observation with our service that interpretation services do not appear to be offered to clients by staff during the registration appointment.

Social welfare application

On receipt of a PPSN, family members can apply for social welfare entitlements and present to the local welfare office to apply. They will be asked to present both their PPSN card and IRP card. Family members with permission under Family Reunification can apply for social welfare on presentation of their permission letter from the Minister for Justice and Equality in the absence of an IRP card.¹⁵ In our experience, knowledge and use of this provision is not always apparent in all social welfare offices. Crosscare Refugee Service advocates on behalf of clients on this basis where there are appointment delays in processing IRP cards. Processing periods for entitlements vary depending on

¹⁵ Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, *Guidelines for Deciding Officers*, <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Habitual-Residence-Condition--Guidelines-for-Deciding-Offic.aspx#sect6>

the demand on local offices however; families should be referred to the Community Welfare Service to apply for immediate interim Supplementary Welfare Allowance when there are delays for primary payments. The financial burden on the sponsor can be very significant and unsustainable when there are long processing periods. Families may not always be advised of this option or referred to the Community Welfare Service.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We call on the Government to

- Expand provision of full time free English classes for all persons granted International Protection and their reunified family members (Action 32 and 39, Migrant Integration Strategy Implementation plan)
- Provide appropriate and efficient interpreter services where required within DEASP services and staff who are adequately trained to inform migrants accurately of their entitlements as per commitments under the implementation of the Migrant Integration Strategy (Actions 16 & 18). This will not only provide a more efficient process for staff and families, it will also help to protect families' rights and entitlements and remove the entire responsibility from the sponsor to independently navigate through systems on behalf of their families.
- Ensure that the letter from the Department of Justice and Equality granting Family Reunification to a person with International Protection is accepted as sufficient to process entitlements and access to services for reunified members whilst IRP, PPS and public services cards are pending.

4. HEALTH

Challenges for children

Family reunification and the resettlement process can pose significant challenges for children. Children of reunified families are some of the most vulnerable groups living in Ireland. Many are affected from circumstances such as war, conflict, severe poverty and devastation in countries such as Somalia, Syria, Iran and Afghanistan. Many may have witnessed the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), torture and conflict during their young lives. They arrive under stressful circumstances and are in need of care and social re-integration, and consistent routine. The settlement process can impose further strain and delay on children's welfare and access to school placements as applying to schools will be determined based on the family's address. Where families are moving between different emergency accommodations it can be difficult to establish a link to a local school and find a school placement for children, especially if their arrival is during the school term. Children's welfare whilst living in transient emergency accommodation has been found to be at risk and child homelessness has been widely criticised (ISPCC, Barnardos, Children's Rights

Alliance).¹⁶ The potential for long-term impact of educational disadvantage of second generation migrants has been consistently demonstrated in International research literature from the UK and Western Europe to lead to long-term social exclusion of ethnic minorities.¹⁷

Medical card

While families are applying for social welfare assistance, they may be precluded from securing a medical card. Some clients have been previously and incorrectly advised that they will need proof of Child Benefit payment in order to process a medical card. Safetynet Primary Care is a charity that delivers free care to people experiencing homelessness and migrant groups without access to healthcare. They have services in Dublin, Cork and Limerick. They provide a free limited health service but this is not comparable to having one's own GP. It is not unusual for a family member to have a disability or illness on arrival and will have urgent medical needs. For people who are dependent on medication or require urgent assistance, this can put their health in jeopardy. Health assessments are offered to asylum seekers and families entering under the Irish Protection Programme, but this is not extended to families entering under Family Reunification.

A national government response is required to respond to high medical needs for reunified families that can reach vulnerable family members.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We call on the Government to

- Ensure the appropriate care of vulnerable children of reunified families by securing immediate and appropriate emergency accommodation on arrival if required, and that the family is prioritised for long-term housing to ensure stability for children and registration with local schools.
- Commit to the national roll-out of a medical assessment programme based on the Safetynet model for families arriving under Family Reunification, with immediate access to interim medical and medication provision services.

¹⁶ Irish Times, 8th November 2017. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/child-homelessness-in-ireland-worst-in-europe-forum-hears-1.3284654>, Report Cards, Children's Rights Alliance <https://www.childrensrights.ie/content/report-card-2018>

¹⁷ E.g. Janta & Harte, 2016, *Education of migrant children: Education policy responses for the inclusion of migrant children in Europe*, RAND Europe, European Commission

(12) Conclusion


All four major obstacles outlined; Immigration, Housing, Income and Health, are essential requirements for reunified families. All four involve some administrative barriers, mainly in appointment booking and processing delays, difficulties in accessing homeless services or seeking alternative emergency accommodation. Housing supply and issues with the HAP scheme are proving to present as the most significant issues for clients of our service.

Family reunification for refugees is a positive commitment by the Government and contributes to their overall well-being and settlement in our society. As a country we are providing a humane response to the adversity that refugees and their families have met in their lives and this commitment must be supported through adequate and accessible provision of entitlements and services. As a State, we have made a commitment and have therefore a responsibility to ensure the implementation of the assurances we have committed to are enforced and adequately resourced. We need to respond and operate in a cross-departmental capacity to reduce furthering the burden on these families who have already suffered and ensure their safe and humane settlement in Ireland. This strategic approach to family reunification is vital to align with Ireland's contribution as an EU and international player to the ongoing refugee and migrant crisis.

We ask the Minister and Government to consider the details of this brief and the recommendations to address the issues outlined.

(13) Appendices

1. Sample decision letter granting family reunification from Department of Justice & Equality Page 1


SEIRBHÍS EADÓIRSEACHTA AGUS INIMIRCE Na hÉIREANN
IRISH NATURALISATION AND IMMIGRATION SERVICE (INIS)
AN ROINN DLÍ AGUS CIRT AGUS COMHIONANNAIS, 13-14 CÉ BURGH, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND EQUALITY, 13-14 BURGH QUAY, DUBLIN 2
TEILEAFÓN / TELEPHONE: (01) 616 7700 FACSUIMHIR / FAX: (01) 879 8602 IÓSGHLAO / LO-CALL: 1890 551 500 RIOMHPHOST / E-MAIL: info@justice.ie

[Redacted]

Person ID:
Application No:

[Redacted]

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>	<u>Nationality</u>
[Redacted]		

Dear [Redacted]

I am directed by the Minister for Justice and Equality to refer to your application for Family Reunification in respect of the above named persons which was examined pursuant to Section 18 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) and also Section 70(14) of the International Protection Act 2015.

I am pleased to inform you that permission has now been granted to allow the above named: [Redacted] and to reside with you.

Application for Visa

You should now make an on-line visa application for your above named family members. This can be done on the visa application website at www.visas.inis.gov.ie. A comprehensive guide to completing your online application is available in various languages on the INIS web site at www.visas.inis.gov.ie. Before you complete your online visa application you should read all of the information on visas contained on this website.

Ten working days after making the on-line application you may then submit the following documents in order for the visa to be processed:

- Online Visa Application Summary Sheet
- Original Grant letter from Department of Justice
- Passport of eligible applicant (if available)
- 2 Standard Passport Photographs (must be the same as those given to the Family Reunification Unit)
- €60.00 Postal Order or Bank Draft payable to the Department of Justice and Equality

The documentation should be sent by **REGISTERED POST** and addressed to :

VISA PUBLIC OFFICE - FAMILY REUNIFICATION
I.N.I.S. - Dept of Justice & Equality
13-14 Burgh Quay
Dublin 2

Any queries to the Visa Office should be sent by email to visamail@justice.ie.

Registration with the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB)

Please note that all non-nationals who have a permission to be in the State are required by law under Section 9(2)(a) of the Immigration Act, 2004 to register their permission with their local Registration Officer as soon as possible. As the above named: [redacted] and [redacted] are over the age of 16 years they are not exempt from this requirement under Section 9(6) of the Immigration Act, 2004 and you will be required, following their arrival in the State, to accompany them to your local Registration Office to register. **If you live in the Dublin Region, this is located at the Immigration Registration Office, Garda National Immigration Bureau, 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2. If you live elsewhere this office is your local Garda station.**

Similarly, when [redacted]; [redacted] and [redacted] reach the age of 16 you will be required to accompany them to your local Registration Office to register and obtain the appropriate permission to remain.

Please note that **this letter is not evidence of identity and should not be used for any purpose other than for presentation by you, together with your family members, the above named persons at your local registration office.** In order for the above named persons to register with the Garda National Immigration Bureau, they are required, under Section 9(2)(a) of the Immigration Act, 2004 to produce a valid passport or other equivalent document issued by an authority recognised by the Irish government which establishes identity and nationality, unless you can give a satisfactory explanation as to why they cannot do so.

You and your family members should both take sufficient identification with you to satisfy the Garda Registration Officer as to your identities as well as documentary evidence of you and your family members' place of residence/address in the State. You should also bring this letter with you when you attend to register with your family members at your local Garda Registration Office.

Please note that a person who contravenes subsections (2), (3) or (4) of the Immigration Act, 2004 (i.e. a person who does not register with the Garda National Immigration Bureau) is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding €3,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or both.

On completion of the necessary formalities a Certificate of Registration will be issued. This Certificate is an important document and it should be kept safely. As the above named are persons granted permission to enter and reside in the State under Section 18 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) and Section 70 (14) of the International Protection Act 2015, they are exempt from the payment of the normal registration fee.

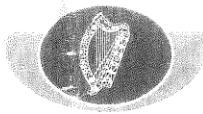
Any change in circumstances which would affect the accuracy of the registration of the above named persons should be notified to your Garda Registration Officer within 7 days of such a change in circumstances (e.g. changing address).

Yours sincerely,



Family Reunification Unit
26/04/2017

2. Sample letter from Reception & Integration Agency to Direct Provision resident


SEIRBHÍS EADÓIRSEACHTA AGUS INIMIRCE Na hÉIREANN
IRISH NATURALISATION AND IMMIGRATION SERVICE (INIS)

Person ID:

Application No(s):

Dear

I refer to previous correspondence regarding the accommodation which has been provided to you at Hatch Hall.

As you are aware, the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) provides accommodation to persons in the protection process. RIA has no role in the provision of accommodation to persons once a decision has been made on their application. We do offer those who have received a decision a grace period regarding their accommodation to allow them put their affairs in order and make arrangements to move into the community.

There is currently a very limited supply of accommodation available to RIA to cater for new applicants who are entering the process and we urgently require the bedspace that you are currently occupying. RIA is aware that you were granted permission to remain some nine months ago and you are now required to vacate Hatch Hall and move into the community as a matter of urgency.

Please provide RIA with the details of the efforts you have made to source alternative accommodation, including details of any application to your local authority housing list.

RIA understands the difficulty in sourcing alternative accommodation, as a result of the general housing shortage. The local NGO and local authority may be in a position to provide assistance to you and their contact details are : -

Crosscare
1 Cathedral St. North City, Dublin 1
Ph: 01 873 2844

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)
The Mews 20 Upper Gardiner Street Dublin 1
Ph: 8148644

Irish Refugee Council
37 Killarney Street, Dublin 1
Ph: 7645854

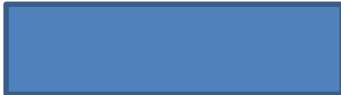
Dublin City Council
Civic Offices

ASINEACHT FHÁILTE AGUS COMHTHÁITE, BÓSCA OIFIG PHOIST 11487, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2
RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION AGENCY, PO BOX 11487, DUBLIN 2
TEILEAFÓN / TELEPHONE: (01) 418 3200 RIOMHPHOST / E-MAIL: RIA_DNBOX@justice.ie FACSÚIMHIR / FAX: (01) 418 3220

Wood Quay
Dublin 8
www.dublincity.ie

If you have any specific difficulties or queries in relation to moving out of the centre, please contact RIA,
PO Box 11487, or telephone (01) 4183200 and ask for Operations Unit.

Yours sincerely,



Reception & Dispersal
06/09/2017

3. Crosscare Refugee Service Family Reunification leaflet

CROSSCARE REFUGEE SERVICE

Crosscare Refugee Service is a support service for refugees, asylum seekers and non – EU immigrants.

We offer information and advocacy on areas such as:

- health
- housing
- homelessness
- social protection
- immigration

Phone: 01 873 2844
Email: refugeeservice@crosscare.ie

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crosscare
Serving those most in need

www.crosscare.ie

This publication is intended to give you information only. It is not a legal document. While we have done everything we can to make sure that the information in this publication is up-to-date and accurate, Crosscare Refugee Service will not be held responsible for any errors.



ARE YOUR FAMILY ARRIVING IN IRELAND UNDER FAMILY REUNIFICATION?

ARE YOU CONFUSED ABOUT WHAT TO DO AFTER YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS ARRIVE IN IRELAND?

Refugee Service

CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION (ALSO KNOWN AS 'STAMP 4')

After your family members arrive in Ireland, they must register with INIS (Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service). A Certificate of Registration ('Stamp 4') is proof of this registration. If your family members are aged 16 years old or over, they must always carry a valid Certificate of Registration ('Stamp 4'). If your family members will be living in Dublin City or County Dublin, you must make an appointment for them to register with INIS at:

www.inis.gov.ie

The appointment will take place at:
INIS
13/14 Burgh Quay
Dublin 2

If your family members will be living outside Dublin City or County Dublin, contact your local Garda Station and they will tell you where your family members can register for their Certificate of Registration ('Stamp 4') in your area. You may need to make an appointment for registration.

Your family members must bring the following documents to their appointment:

1. their passport or travel document; and
2. the letter granting you family reunification, with your family members' names on it.

Please note that you must go with your family members when they are registering. Otherwise they will not be able to register.

Your family members will then be given a Certificate of Registration ('Stamp 4'). When this Certificate of Registration expires, you will have to accompany them again to the relevant office with the required documents.

ENGLISH CLASSES

Many English classes are held in local Community Colleges, please contact them directly.

Fáilte Isteach is a community project which offers free conversational English classes. Classes take place in many counties.

You can find further information, including details of your nearest Fáilte Isteach group at:

www.thirdageireland.ie

SCHOOLS

Visit your local school to see if there are any places available for your family members who are of school-going age.

If there are no places available in your local school, your family members may be put on a waiting list. Ask the school for a letter to state this. Contact other schools in your area, to see if they have any places available.

You can find further information, including a parent and carers guide to school applications at:

www.tusla.ie

LITERACY

If your adult family members are unable to read or write, or have difficulties with reading or writing, literacy classes are available all across the country. NALA (National Adult and Learning Agency) can refer you to a class near where you live.

You can find further information, including details of your nearest literacy service at:

www.nala.ie



ASNCU

(ASYLUM SEEKERS & NEW COMMUNITIES UNIT)

If your family members become homeless, and will be based in Dublin City or County Dublin, they will need to present to the ASNCU to apply for a social welfare payment.

**ASNCU,
77 Upper Gardiner Street, Dublin 1
Opening Hours:
Mon – Fri 10–11:30am and 2–3pm**

MEDICAL CARDS

A medical card covers the cost of visiting a doctor, a hospital or getting prescription medication.

Medical cards and children under 16

Parents or guardians must apply for medical cards on behalf of children under 16. Family members under 16 years old will be assessed based on their parent's income. If their parent or guardian is getting a social welfare payment, they must also be receiving a payment for these children before they will be granted a medical card.

Medical cards and people aged 16 years or over

People aged 16 years or older must fill out their own application form. For family members over 16 years old to be granted a medical card, they must have a:

- a wage
- social welfare payment or
- a parent or guardian who is receiving a payment for them

You can find further information, including information on how to make an application for a medical card at:

www.medicalcard.ie

PPSN

Your family members will need a PPSN (Personal Public Services Number) to start work, access public services or apply for a social welfare payment.

You can find further information, including how your family members can make an appointment to apply for a PPSN in your area at:

www.mywelfare.ie

Your family members must have a Certificate of Registration ('Stamp 4') before they can be granted a PPSN.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

If your family members are your spouse, children or both and will be living with you, they will have to be added to your social welfare payment. You will then receive an extra payment for them. In some situations, you may have to change to a different type of payment.

A parent or guardian can also apply for child benefit if they have family members who are under 18 years old.

Family members who are 18 years or older, and not in full-time education, can apply for a social welfare payment at their local Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office.

Some social welfare payments take a long time to process. While your family members are awaiting a decision, they can apply for a temporary payment called Supplementary Welfare Allowance from their local Community Welfare Service.

You can find more information, on all Social Protection payments and information on how and where to apply at:

www.welfare.ie

SAFETYNET IRELAND

While you are waiting for your medical card, your family members can visit a free healthcare clinic held on Wednesdays at:

**Crosscare,
1 Cathedral Street,
Dublin 1
Phone: 01 8726775**

Access is by appointment only.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Job vacancies are advertised:

- on the internet
- through recruitment agencies
- at your local Intreo Centre

To apply for a job, your family member will need to submit a CV (Curriculum Vitae) or complete a job application form. Most large towns and cities have employment support services or a Jobs Club that will help people to write CVs and support them in their job search.

You can find further information at your local Citizens Information Centre (www.citizensinformation.ie) or Intreo Centre (www.welfare.ie).

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

If your adult family members wish to know what education and training opportunities are open to them, they can contact their local AEGAI (Adult Education Guidance Association of Ireland) office.

You can find more information, including the location of your nearest AEGAI office at:

www.aegai.ie

HOUSING

If your family members are living with you, you will need to let your landlord, council or voluntary housing provider know. Under the terms of your tenancy, you may not be allowed to have any more people staying in your home.

If you are getting Rent Supplement or HAP (Housing Assistance Payment), tell the office that makes these payments that your family members are now staying with you, as your payment may need to be re-assessed.

If you have already applied for social housing support to a council, you will have to add your family members to your application.

FINDING ACCOMMODATION

You can look for rented accommodation for your family members at:

www.daft.ie

If your family members need assistance with rent payments they can talk to their:

- Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Local Office about rent supplement; or
- local council about HAP (Housing Assistance Payment).

HOMELESSNESS

If your family members become homeless, they will need to present to your local council for an assessment. If your family members are assessed as homeless, emergency accommodation may be arranged. Unfortunately, there is very limited emergency accommodation and there is no guarantee of placement.

You can download a guide on what to do if your family members are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless at:

www.crosscare.ie