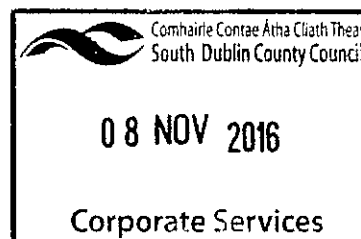


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OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Colm Murphy
Meeting Administrator
Corporate Performance and Change Management
South Dublin County Council
County Hall
Tallaght, Dublin 24



Minister Reference: 1026123210

4th November 2016

Dear Mr. Murphy,

I am directed by the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality to refer to your correspondence of 11 October, 2016 regarding Direct Provision.

Since its publication in June, 2015 the Report of the Working Group on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers, has been under proactive consideration; in the first instance by the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform and thereafter on an ongoing basis by the Department of Justice and Equality and other relevant Government Departments and Agencies. The Report contains a total of 173 recommendations, many of which have implications for a number of Government Departments and services. In the most recent review of progress in June, 91 recommendations were found to have been implemented; a further 49 recommendations were found to have been partially implemented or were in progress; and the balance remained under consideration. This represents significant progress in taking forward the Working Group recommendations, with 80% now implemented, partially implemented or in progress. The Tánaiste has committed to advancing the remaining 20%, taking into account the necessary resources that some of these will require. It should also be noted that a small number of the recommendations have been superseded by Government initiatives in the interim since the publication of the Report. The most recent status update is available on the Department of Justice and Equality website, and on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service.

A key recommendation of the Working Group was the introduction of a single application procedure in the protection process. The International Protection Act 2015 provides for such a procedure. The Department of Justice and Equality is currently preparing all of the steps necessary to commence the Act. The Act

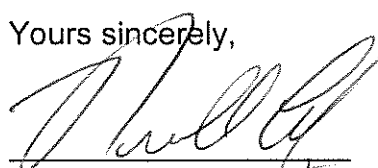
responds to some 26 of the Working Group's recommendations and can be expected to positively address the crucial issue of the length of time that applicants spend in the protection process and in the Direct Provision system; another key concern of the Working Group.

In addition, significant efforts have been made to deal with those who are longest in the system and at this stage the vast majority of those who are over 5 years in the system and who do not have any impediments to progress, such as pending judicial challenges, have now had their cases processed to completion. This has been a key achievement that has had a real impact on many people and families in the protection process.

A transition Task Force was also established last year which put in place important supports to facilitate people with status to integrate into the community. The Task Force reported that 87% of people granted status had moved into the wider community within six months.

Tangible progress in improving the daily lives of asylum seekers living in Ireland while their application is being processed is also being made. In January last, the Tánaiste and the former Minister for Social Protection announced an increase to the Direct Provision Allowance for children, the first such increase since the introduction of the payment some sixteen years ago. Prescription fees for Direct Provision residents, including children, have also been waived. The Tánaiste has also committed to extending the remit of the Offices of the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children to include access for residents in Direct Provision centres. This requires amending legislation which will be processed as soon as possible. The Minister for Education and Skills has also announced a second year of their pilot support scheme for students in the protection system for the academic year 2016/2017.

Yours sincerely,



Níall Colgan
Private Secretary to the Tánaiste
and Minister for Justice and Equality