

Nasc's Recommendations relating to Themes 1 & 2: Physical conditions and social supports and services

1. Introduction

This proposal is based on the discussions that have occurred to date within the Working Group Theme 1 and Theme 2 Sub Groups on the physical conditions in direct provision and the social supports provided to residents, and will include recommendations on how to improve reception conditions for asylum seekers, taking into specific account the particular needs of vulnerable groups.

In Nasc's initial submission¹ made to Ministers Fitzgerald and Ó Riordáin on Ireland's direct provision and protection systems in the wake of the Roundtable Discussion last Autumn, we made several recommendations in relation to accommodation issues (Theme 1) and social supports (Theme 2) including:

- The introduction of an independent complaints mechanism; and expanding the remit of the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children to receive, investigate and respond to individual complaints made by residents of direct provision, or any future reception system (Theme 1);
- Placing the weekly allowance on a statutory footing and increasing payments in line with the objective of the Supplementary Allowance Scheme (Theme 2);
- Beginning the closure of centres that do not provide self-catering facilities (Theme 1);
- Cap or limit the time applicants can spend in a reception centre and begin providing step down processes and alternative accommodation for residents who have been in direct provision for an excessive amount of time (Theme 1);
- Provision of special accommodation units or alternative accommodation for particularly vulnerable families/individuals needs to be provided as a matter of urgency (Theme 1);
- Victims of trafficking should be accommodated outside of direct provision (Theme 1);
- Using the EU Receptions Conditions Directive as a framework for establishing a humane reception system (Themes 1 & 2).

Additional recommendations that will be discussed in this submission include:

- Comprehensive needs assessment upon submission of protection application (Themes 1& 2)
- Transfers (Theme 1)
- HIQA inspections (Theme 1)
- Transitional supports for moving out of direct provision (Theme 2)
- Access to education and educational supports (Theme 2)
- The right to work after 9 months (Theme 2)

¹Available at: <http://www.nascireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Nasc-DP-reforms-sub-final-1.pdf>

- Guaranteed access to relatives, legal advisors, NGOs, community groups and other bodies offering support services; and information regarding what supports are available to them (Theme 2)

In Nasc's original submission to the Ministers, and in our ongoing advocacy and campaigning, we call for an end to direct provision and the introduction of a reception system that protects the rights and dignity of all protection applicants and their families. We continue to firmly believe this is the best solution, however we are aware that the remit of the Working Group on the Protection Process only involves reform of the existing system. With this in mind, this list of recommendations, while not exhaustive of what is needed to improve the State's provision of accommodation and support services to asylum seekers while they await a decision on the protection application, are in Nasc's view the bare minimum that must be implemented to ensure asylum seekers' human rights are not at risk and to ensure the dignity and well-being of asylum seekers and their families.

This submission will explicate Nasc's recommendations in more detail. They are divided into those recommendations relating to Theme 1; those relating to Theme 2; and those relating to both Themes. All specific recommendations are underlined. Please note, this submission is still a draft and the recommendations included are not exhaustive.

2. Theme 1 Recommendations

a. Independent Complaints Mechanism and expansion of Ombudsman's remit:

Nasc has already made a proposal to the Theme 1 Sub Group on the need for an independent complaints mechanism with recommendations about how this could be implemented by RIA. This included seeking a clarification of the remit – or if necessary a legislative amendment to expand the remit – of the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children to include the reception and accommodation of asylum seekers as a final arbitrator of complaints. The recommendations from that submission will not be reiterated here.

b. Self-catering facilities:

The provision of self-catering is essential to protect the dignity and well-being of asylum seekers and their children while they await a decision on their protection application. In a report published by Nasc last year, *What's Food Got to Do With It?*², issues with food provision in centres included: the quality of the food and its lack of cultural and religious appropriateness; the strict structure of mealtimes; the negative impact it had on families and children; its association with a broken direct provision system; and its impact on people's health. The report recommended that the system be

²Keelin Barry, *What's Food Got to Do With It? Food Experiences of Asylum Seekers in Direct Provision* (Nasc, 2014). Available at: <http://www.nascireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/WhatsFoodFINAL.pdf>.

overhauled, especially in how food is delivered; that self-catering options should be expanded as a matter of urgency; and the at the very minimum communal cooking areas should be made available in every centre.

Our submission to the Ministers called for a phasing out of direct provision beginning with the closure of centres that do not provide self-catering facilities. Bearing in mind the limited remit of the Working Group, we continue to call for a phase out of contracts with centres that do not provide self-catering or at the very least some form of communal kitchen for residents. Centres without any of those facilities could be given the option of adding some form of cooking facilities for residents within the confines of their planning permission, or be given an opportunity to request planning permission for the construction of such facilities.

Access to communal kitchens should be available to all asylum seekers at any stage of the application process, as soon as these facilities can be constructed. Access to self-catering – as it is likely to be more expensive and lengthy for owners to introduce, could be limited to those who have been in the application process for an extended period of time, e.g. over 6 months after the introduction of the Single Procedure. For any existing cohort of applicants from the ‘old system’ that are still resident in direct provision after the introduction of the Single Procedure and the application of any proposed scheme for long-stayers, they should immediately be given access to what self-catering options are currently available in the direct provision system, or be provided with alternative accommodation if they are assessed as ‘vulnerable’ (see below).

c. Capping the time spent in direct provision:

A cap should be introduced to limit the time applicants can spend in a reception centre. This cap could be graded if an ‘enhanced’ form of reception is implemented. For instance, when the Single Procedure is implemented, the expectation is that the bulk of applications will be processed within 6 months. If an applicant is still awaiting a decision, through no fault of their own, after 6 months, they should be moved to a self-catering facility as soon as possible. If an applicant is still waiting after 9 months, they should be given access to the labour market (see below), in which case, they may be able to avail of private rented accommodation if they have the means. If an applicant is still awaiting a decision after a year, they should be allowed access to either a self-contained unit or private rented accommodation, and if they do not have the means (if they are unable to find employment) then rent allowance should be provided to them. No applicant should remain in a reception system for longer than two years.

d. Special accommodation for vulnerable people:

The stated remit of this Working Group is to propose recommendations to reform direct provision in such a way that promotes the respect and dignity of asylum seekers. This must include provisions

which guarantee an adequate standard of living and protection of applicants' physical and mental health. This is particularly the case for protection applicants who – amongst an already vulnerable population – can be deemed particularly vulnerable. Those applicants and their families must be given special consideration and access to whatever additional supports and services they may require. This can impact where they should be located, and possibly even if they should be provided with alternative accommodation if their vulnerability is not suitable to communal living (for instance, see 'Victims of Trafficking' below).

As noted in the discussions in the Theme 1 Sub Group, a definition of what constitutes a 'vulnerable person' in the asylum process is necessary. The EU Receptions Directive defines vulnerable persons as:

'minors, unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, victims of human trafficking, persons with serious illnesses, persons with mental disorders and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation' (Directive 2013/33/EU, Article 21)

Nasc recommends implementation of this definition.

A comprehensive assessment of the specific needs of each applicant, to determine any vulnerabilities and to ensure access to the appropriate accommodation and supports, is essential – this is discussed in more detail below. The construction of self-contained, en suite units with sleeping and living rooms in some centres could be designated for vulnerable persons (e.g. single parents with minor children). If deemed necessary by the assessors, alternative accommodation could be provided in exceptional cases in the form of private rented accommodation for the duration of the application process. This would arguably only occur in very rare instances, and under the new Single Procedure should reasonably only be for approximately 6-12 months; not a significant cost on the part of the State.

For aged out minors, they should not be moved into direct provision upon turning 18 and should be given the option of remaining in foster care or provided with appropriate alternative accommodation. We recommend a policy change that affords aged out minors the same system of aftercare as separated children granted status, and other young people in state care in Ireland.

e. Victims of trafficking:

As noted in the statement to the Department of Justice issued by the Immigrant Council of Ireland and supported by Nasc in September 2014, victims of trafficking should be accommodated outside of the direct provision system.³ Direct provision accommodation is not suitable for victims of

³Available at: <http://www.nascireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Proposal-for-housing-of-adult-victims-of-sex-trafficking.pdf>

trafficking and does not meet our international obligations in relation to the provision of safe and secure accommodation.

f. Transfers:

Transfers from one reception centre to another should only happen if absolutely necessary, and they should be done in consultation with the resident. If a transfer is necessary, every effort must be made to ensure that the best interests of any children involved are a priority, for example not issuing a transfer during the school year.

Transfers should not be issued as a 'punishment' or even perceived to be done so. If someone must be transferred for failure to comply with the House Rules, that resident should be notified and given warnings, as per the House Rules. In Nasc's experience, this aspect of the House Rules is not being followed by RIA and residents are not being informed of the reasons for their transfer. Residents must also be given a *real* opportunity to respond. A letter from RIA stating that a resident has the option to respond is not enough; RIA must actively ensure that a resident understands that a warning has been issued, that they have the right to respond, and providing multiple options for a response. The ability to comprehend written English, and the ability to compose a written response in English, cannot be assumed.

If a resident requests a transfer, that request should be acknowledged within a reasonable timeframe (e.g. 10 working days), and a response should be given to the request within a reasonable time as well (e.g. 30 days). If the transfer request requires a medical assessment – which may take longer than 30 days – the resident should be notified that their request will take longer due to the assessment and be given a timeframe for when they can expect a response. In Nasc's experience, residents do not always receive an acknowledgement that the request was received or processed when they send in the request themselves.

g. HIQA Inspections:

As an oversight of the reception provided to asylum seekers, accommodation centres contracted by RIA or owned by the State, should be subject to regular inspections by the Health, Information and Quality Authority (HIQA). This was recommended by Special Rapporteur Geoffrey Shannon in his Fifth Report on Child Protection.⁴

3. Theme 2 Recommendations

⁴ *Fifth Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection: A Report Submitted to the Oireachtas* (2011), p. 18. Available at: <http://www.nascireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/5-Rapporteur-Rep-Child-Protection.pdf>.

a. Weekly Allowance:

Nasc recommends placing the increasing the weekly allowance payments for asylum seekers in line with the State objective of the Supplementary Welfare Scheme, “[t]o provide a standard minimum income, in an immediate and flexible manner, to those whose means are insufficient to meet their basic needs”.

It is important to note that there is no clear legal basis for the payments of €19.10 per week or €9.60 per week. This is because Section 15 of the *Social Welfare and Pensions (No. 2) Act, 2009* states categorically that asylum seekers cannot be habitually resident, therefore they have no entitlement whatsoever to supplementary welfare allowance or any social welfare payment. Nasc recommends the weekly allowance payments be placed on a statutory footing. However, if retained in its current ‘administrative scheme’ form, it is imperative that the scheme be made transparent with clear policies and procedures. It should also be clear that the administration of the Scheme is subject to the normal DSP protocols including the Decision Making and Natural Justice Guidelines.

In setting the rate of payment, it need not be equivalent to that of the basic Job Seekers payment or any other SW payment; however, the payment must be reflective of the costs that arise for individuals and families on a day to day basis.

The interim proposal made in the Theme 2 Sub Group suggested an increase from €19.10 to €38.74 for adults and from €9.60 to €29.80 for children. The original payments were determined based on the ‘comfort payments’ made to people in long term institutional care. However it is important to note that when these payments were determined in 2000, the halved amount for children was supplemented by Child Benefit, which has not been available to asylum seekers since 2004. We support this proposal because the increase puts the payments into line with increases to the supplementary welfare allowance, and the qualifying child allowance currently payable under the SWA.

Since higher rates of DPA are available to residents who are currently residing in self-catering accommodation, based on the appropriate personal/family rate of SWA, this could be extended when increased access to self catering is made available to long stay and vulnerable applicants (see above). Different rates of DPA could also be made available to those who are deemed particularly vulnerable and housed in alternative accommodation, such as victims of trafficking and aged out minors.

A greater income will help in many facets of life while residing in direct provision, including facilitating greater participation in the community and opportunities to integrate, and for children, a greater ability to participate in educational and after school activities. It would also arguably lower the amount of exceptional needs payments required by residents (€1.1 million to protection

applicants in DP in 2013⁵), which would significantly counter the initial increased cost of introducing a higher allowance.

Nasc does not contend that the 'risks' identified in the *Draft Interim Proposal* on the increase to the weekly allowance are valid; indeed the risks identified in the proposal were not discussed by the sub group during the meeting on financial supports. If those outside of direct provision seek to re-enter the system as a result of an increase in the payment, this would hopefully be countered by a significant reduction in the number of 'long-stayers' if effective measures are introduced to address the 'legacy' issues – this is obviously contingent on recommendations emanating from Theme 3. Also the proposed efficiency of the incoming Single Procedure system will help to keep numbers living in direct provision low. In addition, an argument that an increase in the allowance would put Ireland out of line with its European neighbours does not allow for the cost of living in Ireland in comparison with other EU member states.

b. Transitional Supports:

When an asylum seekers is given a residency permission, they are in a particularly vulnerable situation, especially if they have been living in direct provision for several years. Their ability to successfully transition out – for instance, securing accommodation, accessing social welfare and employment – can be significantly compromised. More supports must be provided for those in this position. A good model here is the supports provided to Programme Refugees by the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration. This would ensure the effective integration of former direct provision residents into the social and economic fabric of Irish society.

Identification: Having a GNIB card or some form of identification is necessary to access many social services and supports, and registering with GNIB is very often the first step people take after receiving their residency. We welcome the recent practice from INIS of waiving the €300 registration fee for persons in direct provision registering for the first time. However, the fee waiver is usually conditional on the person registering within a 30 day period. In our experience many asylum seekers struggle to register if they do not have a national passport. With countries increasingly seeking biometric data before issuing passports, it may be impossible for an asylum seeker to apply for a passport from within Ireland if their country of origin does not have an embassy or a consulate here. We recommend that INIS take a more lenient view of the requirement to produce a passport for the first period of registration; this will enable asylum seekers to access support services, search for employment and take the necessary steps to obtain a national passport. At present, those without passports are unable to take advantage of the fee waiver offered by INIS.

⁵ *Draft Interim Proposal concerning financial supports – increase to the weekly direct provision allowance*, prepared by the Secretariat of the Working Group, following the discussion at the meeting of 8 December 2014.

Access to Housing: It is extremely difficult to access housing in the current housing crisis. Those who have received status do not know how to look for relevant housing or for landlords who will accept Rent Allowance. The application for rent allowance is lengthy and convoluted, requiring being placed on the Council Housing list, and often people must try to get a deposit for private rented accommodation from the Community Welfare Officer. We welcome the rolling out of the Housing Assistance Scheme (HAP), as it will be beneficial to people leaving direct provision. However residents must be made aware that they can request a housing deposit from the CWO, as many DP residents are unaware of this.

In Nasc's experience, a reference from a direct provision centre has become almost essential in acquiring private housing. Nasc recommends that centre management provide this letter automatically when a resident receives their residency permission. In addition, RIA sends a letter to the individual stating that they have 2 weeks to vacate direct provision – in the current housing climate, this is not enough time for the person to find housing and often creates stress as they worry that they will be required to leave before they have found other accommodation. Nasc recommends – at least during the current housing crisis – that RIA does not put a time limit on vacating direct provision, but make it conditional upon the person finding housing.

Access to Social Welfare: Most of people leaving direct provision do not know what allowances they are entitled to. People need to be provided with the relevant information on what type of supports they can receive, from someone (an individual caseworker would be ideal) who can go through the application process with the individual. Nasc also recommends that a full social welfare payment, plus any additional allowances that apply, should be available to a person immediately upon the granting of a residency permission, and not only when the person has vacated direct provision. The payment will allow the person to seek adequate housing and employment, and set themselves up to move out of direct provision.

Access to Education: There should be a strong focus on the re-education and training of residents leaving direct provision to prepare them to seek employment and integrate. Specialised language and skills classes should be provided to those leaving direct provision. Information should be provided to outline government schemes/supports that are available to assist in accessing education, e.g. Back to Education allowance and how to apply for a SUSI grant when eligible. Consideration should be given for those already engaged in education when exiting direct provision. For those who have been sponsored (for instance by philanthropic funding) and accessing third level education, having to leave direct provision and apply for social welfare means they are no longer able to stay in education. An exceptional needs payment should be provided to keep these students engaged in education. For those leaving direct provision with refugee status – as refugee status is declaratory – time spent in direct provision should be reckonable for the purposes of the residency requirement for educational grants and fee waivers.

Access to Employment: Long-term residents of direct provision may have become de-skilled while in the asylum system and struggle to find employment after being granted residency. Nasc recommends that training be provided specifically for those leaving direct provision for support with creating a CV, interview preparation and assistance in where to look for employment. This should include information on how to register with the local INTREO centres for jobseekers. Former DP residents should also be provided information on relevant social welfare back-to-work schemes such as community employment or Jobsbridge.

Access to Health: When leaving direct provision, people must be informed that they can keep their medical card until they no longer meet the eligibility criteria.

All of these issues and recommendations could be handled by a case worker assigned to an individual transitioning out of the asylum system, to provide the person with information on what they need to do, what offices they need to go to, what services are available to them, and point them towards trainings that can support them as they transition out of direct provision.

c. Access to education and educational supports:

Nasc recommends that the DES implement specific actions to improve educational opportunities for asylum seekers, including improved access to English language classes (this includes providing *real* opportunities to attend existing classes, for instance providing transport where necessary) and skills training to allow asylum seekers to be active and productive members of Irish society. This must also include the introduction of dedicated programmes to support and retrain migrants who have left direct provision upon attaining a residency permission to prepare them adequately for entry into the workplace (see Transitional Supports).

Language classes and other general up-skilling classes should be made available at or near every reception centre, and new contracts should include clear stipulations about who (e.g. the owner) is responsible for the provision of classes and/or transport to classes.

Primary and Secondary School

There are significant barriers faced by parents and children in direct provision in terms of being able to fully engage in education. These issues include:

- Packed lunches provided by some centres may not be adequate (not nutritious, large enough, varied or culturally appropriate)
- Depending on the centre, there may not be a school bus service available and public transport can be irregular and costly – provision must be made in these instances
- Some centres do not have adequate homework/study areas for students
- Children are less able to participate in extracurricular and afterschool activities due to the financial and other constraints of living in direct provision

In centres where these issues arise, additional provision must be made for school children to be able to adequately participate in school.

Third level

Although there are no clear policies preventing asylum seekers from accessing third level education, there is a significant lack of clarity amongst educational institutions about the right of asylum seekers to access third level education. This applies not only to third level institutions but also secondary institutions, where students are sometimes receiving incorrect career guidance about their options in accessing further education. Nasc recommends that the Department of Education issue a public statement noting clearly that being in the asylum process is not prohibitive of accessing third level education.

In addition to the lack of clarity, in Nasc's experience the non-EU fees required at higher level institutions are prohibitive and function to exclude asylum seekers from accessing training that would allow them to upskill and enter the labour force upon getting residency. The cost barrier to accessing further education beyond secondary school is particularly pertinent to the case of asylum seeking children, many of whom have spent a considerable number of years in the Irish educational system. These young people, having completed their leaving cert and in some cases achieving high points, are then completely excluded from any further development. This is an exceptional waste of potential both for the individual and for Irish society as a whole. This policy also serves as a disincentive to attend school or achieve academically for other young asylum seeking children.

Nasc welcomed the recent statement from the Department of Education to amend the *Student Support Act, 2011* in order to allow asylum seekers who are school leavers to have the same rights as their classmates when it comes to grants for third level education. However, this commitment must be extended to all asylum seekers rather than just those who are school leavers. Residency while awaiting a protection application decision should be reckonable for the purposes of determining grants and fee waivers. In addition, in relation to the concerns raised by the Department of Education in their *Information Note*⁶ to the Working Group regarding viewing the policy change considerations against the comparative position of asylum seekers residing in other EU member states – it must be borne in mind that many of the issues highlighted here are issues impacting people (and children) who have been in the system for an excessive period of time, which does not compare with application processing times in other EU member states.

Aged Out Minors

Separated children who enter the State as asylum seekers are not entitled to State support should they wish to avail of further education and training upon turning 18 years of age (when they become known as 'aged out minors'). The lack of state funding effectively prohibits this vulnerable group

⁶ *Information Note from the Department of Education and Skills to the Working Group on the Protection Process*, 17 November 2014

from continuing in education. Aged out minors in the asylum process on a weekly allowance of €19.10 a week often do not have the financial means to enter into further education and training.

Nasc has provided support for 28 aged out minors between 16-24 to access education and training through a dedicated 'Separated Children's Fund' (initially funded by The One Foundation, and now by the Community Foundation of Ireland) since July 2012.

More must be done to ensure access to education for this particularly vulnerable category of young people. We have recommended above that aged out minors do not be housed in direct provision; additional supports must be provided including the provision of a basic living and rent allowance, so that the young person can continue in education if they choose. These young people often do not have any relatives to rely on for support of any kind and this must be reflected in the support provided by the State.

d. Right to Work:

Nasc recommends giving asylum seekers the right to work in line with the EU Receptions Directive (Directive 2013/33/EU, Article 15). To paraphrase the Directive, it requires that Member States give access to the labour market to applicants no later than 9 months after the application was lodged, if a first instance decision has not been made and the delay is not the fault of the applicant. This access to the labour market cannot be withdrawn during any appeals process, until a final, negative decision has been made. The Directive also states that a Member State may restrict that access in accordance with their national law, to give priority to EEA citizens and legally resident third country nationals with work permits.

While we believe even this access to the labour market is too restrictive, we are conscious that a recommendation on the right to work must have some restrictions and the introduction of Article 15 of the Receptions Directive would serve as a bare minimum for access to the labour market that will not infringe on the access of EEA nationals and work permit holders.

e. Access to individuals and groups:

Applicants must not be prevented from accessing any relevant individuals or groups they may desire to contact, simply by being a resident in direct provision. RIA has committed to reformulating the sign out procedures, which we welcome – a resident leaving the centre to visit friends or relatives should not be prevented or have their occupancy in a centre threatened from doing so. If a resident must travel to attend meetings with legal advisors, or attend for an interview in Dublin, they must be provided the appropriate travel and subsistence funds to do so by the Community Welfare Officer. Nasc has reports from residents in rural areas being provided €40 for return travel to Dublin – this does not even cover the cost of the buses, let alone subsistence for a day's travel.

Access to individuals and groups includes not just an applicant's access to supports outside of the centre, but also access to the public areas of reception centres by relevant individuals and organisations offering supports for residents. Access should only be limited for reasons of security of the premises and the residents. This goes beyond the need to accommodate guests in accordance with the CA & TA judgement. In Nasc's experience, access to residents in direct provision can be difficult for NGOs and community and voluntary groups, who provide much needed supports, information and services to residents. These services are no risk to the security of the premises or the residents, and should not be denied. In many cases, this is the only information residents receive regarding the protection process and their rights as protection applicants. Indeed, the State relies on the provision of much of these services and supports by outside groups, as it means the State does not have to provide those things itself.

4. Themes 1 & 2 Recommendations

a. EU Receptions Directive:

As noted throughout this submission, the EU Receptions Directive provides an excellent framework for implementing a reception system that provides dignity and respect for protection applicants. The Directive applies across a range of the recommendations made in this submission, including the right to work, transfers, vulnerable people, access to relatives, legal advisors and NGOs and community groups, and the needs assessment. Although ideally we would make a recommendation for opting in to the recast Directive, for the purposes of this submission we ask only that the Directive be implemented as a model for reform of direct provision. This would be a first step in bringing Ireland's reception system back in line with its European counterparts.

b. Comprehensive Needs Assessment:

Significant discussions have occurred in the Theme 1 Sub Group regarding the need for a comprehensive needs assessment to occur when an application for protection is first lodged, which would include an special needs relating to vulnerability, physical and mental health, or any other issues such as gender or age-specific concerns that may be relevant. The assessment should be conducted in consultation and communication with the applicant, so that any preferences for accommodation, such as location near supports and services, are taken into consideration in the determination of the most suitable accommodation for that person. If relevant, the assessment should take into account the best interests of the child, as all children resident in the state are protected by national and international law. It should be conducted by a group of assessors which would include representatives from relevant bodies, such as the HSE and Tusla. If additional bodies or organisations are deemed by the initial assessment to be relevant (for instance, SPIRASI in a case where torture has been identified), these bodies should be called in. This assessment must be conducted without prejudice to the assessment of a protection application.

5. Concluding Observations

It is important to keep in mind that the bulk of these recommendations apply to those asylum seekers who will be entering the protection process after the introduction of the Single Procedure. Assuming Theme 3 makes a recommendation for a scheme to provide leave to remain to those who have been in the current system for an extended period of time, it is likely that there will be a certain number of applicants from the 'old system' who may still be in direct provision after the introduction of the Single Procedure – these recommendations would then apply to that cohort as well, and we would be further recommending that this cohort be urgently provided with as many additional or 'enhanced' supports as a priority (e.g. self-catering accommodation, or alternative accommodation if deemed 'vulnerable').

Arguments against these recommendations will invariably focus on the cost of implementation; however it is important to note that some of the money allocated to Ireland within the Asylum and Migrant Fund will be available to the State to implement improvements in the reception system. This must be taken into account when determining the costing of any recommendations for to the system. It is accepted that the implementation of the above stated supports may result in an initial cost increase. However, with the introduction of a more streamlined application process, and if the numbers in the current system were substantially reduced through the introduction of a discrete scheme (Theme 3), these costs would be offset in the long term.