

## RESIDENCY AND CITIZENSHIP

“Dole Blow for Citizen Apps”

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By Catherine Reilly

**IMMIGRANTS WHO** access jobseekers’ benefit could see their citizenship applications dismissed on that basis, it has emerged.

The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) has encountered a number of such cases and expressed dismay at the situation, pointing out that jobseekers’ benefit is “an entitlement” amassed through PRSI contributions from workers and their employers.

“It means that some migrants who are entitled to social welfare are not taking it even when they urgently need to, as citizenship could be refused,” according to the migrant rights organisation.

Accessing child benefit and widow’s benefit “does not appear” to adversely affect applications, however.

The MRCI has also pointed to a lack of clarity on eligibility requirements for both citizenship and long-term residency, specifically surrounding the requirement to be “of good character”.

A spokesperson commented that from refusal letters, ‘good character’ appears to be not ‘coming to the adverse attention of the gardai’, yet relatively minor offences such as not showing car insurance to a garda or not having up-to-date car tax and insurance are being cited as reasons for refusal.

A Department of Justice spokesperson confirmed that citizenship applicants are “expected to be financially self-sufficient and non-reliant on public funds”.

The spokesperson said that enquiries with the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Social and Family Affairs “may be necessary” and that “each case is assessed on its own merits”. Criminal “or other offences” are taken into account, he added.

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