

## DIRECT PROVISION

### **‘Homelessness of asylum seekers is “unacceptable”**

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A GROUP providing information for asylum seekers and refugees across the country has warned that homelessness for those awaiting a decision on their status is not acceptable.

“It is particularly unacceptable when a person who is internationally homeless ends up living on the streets because they have experienced difficulties in the accommodation centre in which they have been housed by the State,” said the Refugee Information Service (RIS).

Referring to a recent High Court case heard by Judge Hedigan, the organisation’s director Josephine Ahern told *Metro Éireann*: “The case shows exactly how easy it is for a person to become homeless. [Judge Hedigan] said that asylum seekers live in direct provision accommodation while their cases are being decided by Government and that if they experience difficulties with the management of these centres or with other residents, the State must ensure that the appropriate supports are in place so they do not end up on the streets.”

According to Ahern, the judge added that it is clearly “in no one’s interests to have asylum seekers living on the streets of Dublin or any other city in Ireland”.

In light of the growing numbers of homeless asylum seekers, Ahern said: “We have enough difficulties addressing the needs of the indigenous Irish population who suffer homelessness... There is no justification for the State to make decisions which leave people in even more vulnerable and precarious circumstances while they are in the asylum system.”

She continued: “We understand that the direct provision accommodation system is complex to manage and that there are many issues to deal with on a daily basis, but there is no reason for a person who has sought the protection of Ireland to end up homeless.”

Some people, Ahern said, are experiencing homelessness “because of poor mental health, addiction or because they have suffered a family breakdown and lack the supports necessary to work through their problems.”

She called for support for those who have found themselves homeless. “People with mental health difficulties are particularly vulnerable, and this is even more so the case when a person has fled their country because they fear persecution,” Ahern said.

“It is imperative that bodies such as the Homeless Agency, the Health Service Executive, local authorities and the RIA co-operate to ensure that when a person is identified as at risk of homelessness, and that the necessary supports are put in place to prevent them becoming homeless,” she added.

Photo: Bryan O'Brien

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