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Direct Provision, Diminished Development:
An Exploration of the Impact that Residing in the
Lissywollen Direct Provision Centre has had on the
Social, Personal and Academic Development of
Child Asylum Seekers

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Declaration

I, Paul Hogan, declare that this dissertation and the research involved in it are entirely the work of the author. This work has not been submitted for a qualification to any other institute or university.

Signature: _____

Date: _____



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Table of Contents

	Content	Page
	Declaration	ii
	Acknowledgements	iii
	Table of Contents	iv
	Abstract	1
1	Introduction	3
1.1	Introduction	3
2	Literature Review	5
2.1	The Legal Framework	5
2.2	Literature Review	14
3	Methodology	27
3.1	Introduction	27
3.2	Research Design	27
3.3	Materials used	32

3.4	Participants profile	32
3.5	Procedure	33
3.6	Ethical Consideration	36
3.7	Delimitations	37
4	Results	38
4.1	Introduction	38
4.2	General Background	38
4.3	<i>Social Development</i>	39
4.3.1	Family Relationships	39
4.3.2	The Daily Routine in the Centre	40
4.3.3	Interaction	42
4.3.4	Communal Facilities	44
4.3.5	Financial Support	46
4.4	<i>Personal Development</i>	47
4.4.1	Personal Space and Privacy	47
4.4.2	Effects of the Determination Process	48

4.5	<i>Academic Development</i>	48
4.5.1	Preparedness for school	49
4.5.2	Extra-Curricular Activities and Play	50
4.6	<i>Reform</i>	51
4.7	Summary of Results	51
5	Discussion	53
5.1	Introduction	53
5.2	General Background	53
5.3	<i>Social Development</i>	54
5.3.1	Family Relationships	54
5.3.2	The Daily Routine in the Centre	56
5.3.3	Interaction	58
5.3.4	Communal Facilities	59
5.3.5	Financial Support	60
5.4	<i>Personal Development</i>	61
5.4.1	Personal Space and Privacy	61

5.4.2	Effects of the Determination Process	62
5.5	<i>Academic Development</i>	63
5.5.1	Preparedness for School	63
5.5.2	Extra-Curricular Activities and Play	64
5.6	Reform	65
5.7	Summary	66
5.8	Limitations of Research	66
5.9	Suggestions for Future Research	67
6	Recommendations	68
7	Conclusion	70
8	Reference List	71
9	Appendices	82
9.1	Appendix A Consent Form	82
9.2	Appendix B Information Sheet	83
9.3	Appendix C Dictaphone Consent	85
9.4	Appendix D Interview Schedule	86

9.5	Appendix E	Art 29 of the UNCRC	88
9.6	Appendix F	Group Interview	90
9.7	Appendix G	Results Sheet	91

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore how residents of the Lissywollen Direct Provision Centre, Athlone perceive living in the direct provision system has impacted on their social, personal and academic development as children. The research provided a retrospective perspective into the lives of young asylum seekers and how the direct provision policy impacted them as children. No research had been conducted previously on this topic.

The Legal Framework provided the reader with a clear and succinct legal perspective and contextualisation of the national and international instruments pertaining to asylum seekers and the direct provision system. The Literature Review detailed the existing body of knowledge pertaining mainly to concerns and issues which other research has highlighted.

The study was conducted using a qualitative empirical method in the form of semi-structured interviews. The researcher interviewed six young asylum seekers aged between eighteen and twenty three, who are proficient in English and who resided at the Lissywollen Direct Provision centre in Athlone. The semi-structured interviews explored the interviewee's perception of how living in direct provision has impacted on their social, personal and academic development. No previous research had been undertaken on the perceived impact of this policy on the social, personal and academic development of young people, who reside in Direct Provision centres.

The findings indicated that there is a perception amongst the young asylum seekers interviewed that living in direct provision has

impacted on their social, personal and academic development as children. Under these three seminal headings, a number of topics were further explored. Social development was considered further under the topics including family relationships; the daily routine in the centre; interaction; communal facilities; and financial support. The findings suggest that the restrictive living conditions and language barriers are impacting on family relationships and the social order. The daily routine in the centre is monotonous and boring and is a major factor in serious mental health concerns. There was no evidence to suggest that the management of the centre were organising social activities to improve interaction at the site. Most residents preferred a self-catering system rather than the current bed and board system. The stipend of €19.10 per adult per week and €9.60 per child per week is inadequate to provide the basic necessities for families. The personal development heading was explored further by exploring topics such as personal space and privacy and the effects of the determination process on individuals. Most participants recognise their own room as their personal space but that this space is too small to meet the requirements of a young person. Some participants described how waiting on a determination of their application has impacted them. The academic development heading was further considered by exploring preparedness for school and extra-curricular activities and play. Most participants find it difficult to study in confined spaces and therefore have to concentrate harder to ensure they are adequately prepared for school. Asylum seekers are precluded from attending third level institutions unless they receive philanthropical support. Asylum seekers find it difficult to take part in extra-curricular activities such as school excursions, sports teams, and dance, drama or music classes because of an inability to pay fees or to purchase gear or costumes. Most participants favour an overhaul of the current direct provision system and a fairer and faster determination process.

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of conducting this research was to explore how residents of the Lissywoolen Direct Provision Centre in Athlone perceived how living in the direct provision system has impacted their social, personal and academic development as children.

Social development is the term used to describe how children and young people learn the values, customs, mores, beliefs, knowledge and skills which enable them to relate to others by developing relationships and social connectedness within the family, community, and society in more effective manner. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory demonstrates that children and young people are influenced by family, peers, community, school and society and are shaped by broader social environments such as culture, religion, access to housing, education, health and their parent's employment or income. Aylward et al (2003, p. 3) states that "the new generation has to establish and negotiate a whole new web of friendship and kin relationships on the estate as they move through school, form peer groups, new relationships and new households".

Personal development is how the individual interprets that socialisation process and develops a conscious understanding and development of patterns of thought, emotion, temperament, self-awareness, and style.

Academic development is the acquisition of knowledge and skills to effectively progress from preschool to higher education in the pursuit of combating poverty and socio-economic disadvantage. Huitt (2011,

pg. 5) argues that a socially adjusted child is more likely to be academically successful. Scales et al. (2006, pg. 5) measured students' level of 'developmental assets' such as positive relationships, opportunities, skills, values and self-perceptions and its relationship to academic achievement and found that broad focus on social and emotional development promotes academic achievement. This research also explored how the participants would change and reform the current system.

This research will further explore these three seminal headings under various topics. The research will explore how residents perceive living in direct provision has impacted them under the various topics and headings. The topics explored relating to the perceived impact on the social development of the residents of the centre include: 1) family relationships; 2) the daily routine in the centre; 3) interaction; 4) communal facilities and 5) financial support. Secondly, the topics explored relating to the perceived impact on the personal development of the residents in the centre includes 6) personal space and privacy and the 7) effects of the determination process on the individual. Thirdly, the perceived impact on the academic development of residents is included in the 8) preparedness for school and 9) the extra curricular activities and play topics. Finally, the topic on proposals for reform (10) is related to what the residents would like to change about the policy of direct provision.

2.1 The Legal Framework

In 1999, Ireland adopted a controversial system of 'Direct Provision' to accommodate persons exercising their right under international law to seek asylum in Ireland (Arnold, 2012, pg. 7). The original concept of Direct Provision was to accommodate persons seeking asylum for a maximum of six months, while their application was being determined. However, figures obtained from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform demonstrate that some asylum seekers are languishing in accommodation centres for up to eleven years and over in some instances (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg.11). Some children have outgrown their childhood in these centres. (Arnold, 2012, pg. 7)

People exercise their international right to seek asylum in Ireland for a myriad of reasons. Some flee their country of origin due to persecution or to a well founded fear of persecution. Some flee from war torn or conflict torn countries, where their life may be in danger or where there is a real and substantial risk that their children may be recruited as soldiers. Some are victims or potential victims of female genital mutilation. Others may be victims of slave labour, labour exploitation or sex trafficking (Stoyanova, 2015, pg. 5).

The UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951 defines a refugee as someone owing to "a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail

himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. In the case of a person who has more than one nationality, the term 'the country of his nationality' shall mean each of the countries of which he is a national, and a person shall not be deemed to be lacking the protection of the country of his nationality if, without any valid reason based on well-founded fear, he has not availed himself of the protection of one of the countries of which he is a national". The Irish Refugee Council (2013, pg. 1) defines an asylum seeker as a person who claims to be in need of refugee protection and whose claim for refugee status has not yet been determined. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (2014, pg. 1) reinforces this definition by stating that an asylum seeker is therefore an individual who says he/she is a refugee but whose claim has not yet been evaluated. It is important to state that not every asylum seeker will be a refugee but every refugee was initially an asylum seeker.

Ireland became a member of the United Nations on December 14th 1955. The state has signed up to a number of international agreements such as the UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948), UN Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967), UN International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), UN International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (2003) and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006). These instruments indirectly address the obligation to protect persons fleeing persecution but the

primary international instrument on which the concept of asylum is based is the UN Convention Relating to the Status of the Refugee 1951.

The UN Convention Relating to the Status of the Refugee 1951, referred to hereafter as the 1951 Convention, was the first international agreement to define a refugee. The 1951 Convention was amended by the 1967 Protocol by lifting the geographic restriction that was contained in the original convention. Ireland signed the 1951 Convention in 1956 and the Protocol of 1967 in 1969. Asylum seekers exercising their right for international protection in Ireland under the Convention are accommodated in residential facilities known as Direct Provision centres pending adjudication and determination on their application for Refugee status.

The 1951 Convention was adopted in Geneva in the aftermath of World War II. Article 33 of the Convention commits that “no contracting state shall expel or return a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion”. However, this wording does not commit state parties to provide permanent residence for asylum seekers and many asylum seekers are returned home despite the threat of persecution.

The system of Direct Provision has no legislative basis in Ireland. The policy was established by way of a combination of Ministerial circulars and administrative decisions (Thornton, 2014, pg.4). According to Thornton (2014, p.1) “the initial legal basis for the system of direct provision and dispersal was based on provision, in kind, of supplementary welfare allowance and Department of Social Protection Ministerial Circular 04/00 of April 10, 2000 and Circular

05/00 of May 15, 2000 (now repealed)". This is in contrast to Art 15.2.1 of the Irish Constitution which states that "sole and exclusive power of making laws for the State is hereby vested in the Oireachtas: no other legislative authority has power to make laws for the State". However, in *CA and TA v the Minister for Justice, the Minister for Social Protection and the Attorney General*, Mr. Justice Colm MacEochaidh rejected claims that direct provision was in breach of the Constitution but found that some of the house rules in accommodation centres were unlawful (MacCormaic, 2014, pg.1)

Prior to the adoption of the direct provision system in Ireland in 1999 and its implementation in 2000, asylum seekers in Ireland were privately accommodated and could seek employment. The Direct Provision policy was in reaction to increasing numbers of persons exercising their international right of seeking asylum in Ireland (Arnold, 2012, p. 11). Asylum seekers could also apply for welfare payments such as rent supplement and child benefit. However, this changed considerably with the provision of the Habitual Residence Clause in 2004 for all individuals seeking welfare. The Habitual Residence Clause ensured that asylum seekers were wholly excluded from accessing social welfare. Despite this, in four separate cases between 2008 and 2009, the Chief Appeals Officer of the Social Welfare Appeals Office found that asylum seekers who were seeking Child Benefit were habitually resident and therefore qualified for the payment (FLAC, 2009, pg. 59).

The main pieces of legislation pertaining to asylum seekers in Ireland is the Refugee Act 1996, the Illegal Immigrants (Trafficking) Act 2000, the Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004, the Immigration Act 1999 and 2003 and the Child Care Act 1991. Under Section 9(4)(b) of the Refugee Act 1996, asylum seekers are prohibited to seek employment. Asylum seekers adults receive €19.10 per week while

each child receives just €9.60 per week. This payment has not increased since 2000 (Thornton, 2014, pg.1). Section 8(5)(b) of the Act obliges the State to appoint an officer of the Health Service Executive for an unaccompanied minor asylum seeker to make an application. The often criticised determination process is also provided for in this Act (Thornton, 2013, pg. 2). The Heads of the International Protection Bill 2015 is currently going through the various stages in the Houses of the Oireachtas. It is anticipated that this Bill, if enacted into law, will provide for a single applications procedure which should reduce the length of time asylum seekers spend in direct provision (Fitzgerald, 2015, pg.1).

Ireland has also transposed a number of EU Directives pertaining to the asylum process into Irish law, such as the Race Directive, the Reception Directive and the Dublin II Regulations. However, Ireland does not participate in the Council Directive 2003/9/EC laying down minimum standards for accommodation or Directive 2013/33/EU which proposes minimum standards for reception (Joyce and Quinn, 2014, pg. V) or the 2003 Directive for family reunification. Other instruments introduced by the Council of Europe include Resolution 14 (1967) on Asylum to Persons in Danger of Persecution, Recommendation on the Harmonization of National Procedures Relating to Asylum (1981), and Recommendation on the Protection of Persons satisfying the criteria in the Geneva Convention who are not Formally Refugees (1984).

Article 41.1.2 of Bunreacht na hÉireann “guarantees to protect the family in its constitution and authority as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the nation of the State”. Article 42 A of the Constitution provides for imprescriptable rights of the child and the right of the voice of the child to be heard. In

addition, Article 40 of the Constitution provides for personal rights which are inalienable and imprescriptable antecedent and superior to positive law. In 2004, the Irish people by way of a Referendum on the Citizenship Amendment voted to abolish the automatic right of children born in Ireland to automatic citizenship.

Fundamental human rights extend to all citizens and noncitizens. In the case of *Oguekwe v The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform*, the parents of an Irish-born child challenged decisions of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform to refuse leave to remain under the Irish Born Child scheme and to issue deportation orders against them. The parents asserted the personal rights of their Irish citizen child including his right to family life were not being adhered to. Denham J. discussed this point and reiterated that although the Irish citizen child had personal rights within Article 41.3.1 of the Constitution, “the rights are not absolute, they have to be weighed and balanced in all the circumstances of the case”. However, the High Court of Northern Ireland recently found (2013) that it would not be in the best interests of a child to return to the Republic of Ireland under the Dublin II Regulation due to the conditions it would face in Direct Provision. In *Bode v Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform* (2007) Denham J. stated “While steps taken by a State are often restrictive of the movement of foreign nationals, the State may also exercise its powers so as to take actions in a particular situation where it has been determined that the common good is served by giving benefits of residency to a category of foreign nationals - as a gift, in effect. The inherent power of the State includes the power to establish an *ex gratia* scheme of this nature. Such an arrangement is distinct from circumstances where legal rights of individuals may fall to be considered and determined.”

The basis for the establishment of the Working Group on the Protection and Direct Provision System is contained within the Statement of Government Priorities 2014 – 2016. The Statement includes:

- a) establish an independent Working Group to report to Government on improvements with the protection process, including Direct Provision and supports for asylum seekers and
- b) to reduce the length of time the applicant spends in the system through the establishment of a single applications procedure, to be introduced by way of a Protection Bill as a matter of priority.”

In October 2014 the Working Group on the Protection and Direct Provision system was established. Their terms of reference include:

1. “improving existing arrangements in the processing of protection applications;
2. showing greater respect for the dignity of persons in the system and improving their quality of life by enhancing the support and services currently available; ensuring at the same time that, in light of recognised budgetary realities, the overall cost of the protection system to the taxpayer is reduced or remains within or close to current levels and that the existing border controls and immigration procedures are not compromised”.

The group is chaired by Mr. Justice Bryan Mc Mahon and its membership includes 9 members from the asylum seekers advocacy sector and 10 members from the statutory sector. Sue Conlan, representing the Irish Refugee Council resigned from the working

group in March 2015 citing “The decision not to allow the Working Group, which contains experts on international protection law as well as lay people, to have sight of and indeed comment upon the Heads of the (International Protection) Bill is regrettable. Unfortunately, from a first reading of the Heads of the Bill, my sense of it is that it is too much of an enforcement measure. Given the importance of the Bill, which contains much more than a single protection procedure, it is difficult to understand why the decision was taken to withhold it from the Working Group. It is an opportunity lost and may well make passage of the Bill through the Oireachtas more difficult as matters that could have been ironed out in the Working Group will now need to be brought in to the party political arena” (Irish Refugee Council, March 27th, 2015). To date, the working group has met seven times and their final report will be submitted to the Minister by the end of May 2015. However, Thornton (2014) provides a word of caution prior to the publication of the report by stating “Tinkering with systems and processes that may ensure safe or more pleasant living conditions misses the point. The system of direct provision is a significant violation of children's rights. Only the dismantling of direct provision will ensure that the rights of all children in Ireland are cherished equally”.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Public Service Oversight and Petitions published a report in May 2015 which was “an examination of the extension of the remit of the Ombudsman for Public Service; the Ombudsman for Children and the Freedom of Information Acts to include the Direct Provision System” (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg VI). This report to the Houses of the Oireachtas made 19 recommendations including but not exclusively:

1. Reception system that respects the dignity of all persons in line with best international human rights practice to replace Direct Provision as it is not fit for purpose (Pg. 29)
2. The Joint Committee recommends that Ireland opt-in to the recast of Directive 2003/9 - Directive 2013/33. (Pg. 29)
3. The Joint Committee recommends in relation to signing-on requirements; that to eliminate the unintended consequence of stigmatising children, be changed so that children are only required to attend during times where schools are on holidays. (Pg. 29)
4. The right to work (Pg. 30)

This legal framework gives a detailed analysis of the legal parameters with regards asylum seekers from the Geneva Convention to the establishment of the direct provision system. The impact of direct provision from a social, personal and academic development perspective will be illustrated in the following sections.

2.2 Literature Review

Direct Provision has been described as intolerable, inhumane, not fit for purpose and that the current system should be abolished (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg V, pg VI, pg7, pgs 24-26, pg 29; O'Riordán, 2014, pg 1; Thornton, 2014, pg 7; Kitching et al, 2014, pg1; Brady, 2012, pg 16;). There has been much research to date highlighting the inherent injustices and violations in the Irish asylum system (Thornton, 2014, pg 7; O' Dwyer, 2014, pg 4; Thornton, 2014, pg. 44; Kelly, 2014, pg 62; Egan, 2014, pg 58- 59; O' Ceallaigh, 2014, pg 61; Arnold, 2012; FLAC, 2009, pg104; Breen, 2008, pg 611).

In an effort to tackle the increasing number of people seeking asylum in Ireland, the then Government of 1999 adopted a controversial system of 'direct provision' to accommodate persons exercising their right under international law (Arnold, 2013, pg. 13). At the start of 2015, there were 4,460 residents living in 34 accommodation centres, of whom 44% and 73% were under 25 years of age and under 35 years of age respectively (Reception and Integration Agency, 2015, pg 7). At this present time, one third of all asylum seekers are children (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg 53; Reception and Integration Agency, 2015, pg. 7; Thornton, 2014, pg. 5; Irish Human Rights Commission, 2014, pg. 16). The original concept of Direct Provision was to accommodate persons seeking asylum for a maximum of six months (Van Turnhout, 2014, pg 23; Brady, 2014, pg 24; Thornton, 2013, pg 5; Arnold, 2013, pg 11; AkiDwa, 2010, pg 12; O Donoghue, 2000). However, figures obtained from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform demonstrate that asylum seekers are languishing in accommodation

centres for an average of four years (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg 53) but up to eleven years (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg 11). MacLochlainn (2015, pg 11) highlights that 21% of asylum seekers have been residing in Direct Provision for seven years or more. The Reception and Integration Agency (2015, pg. 9) identified that of the 199 new asylum seekers who presented at Mount Street in January 2015, 79% were single applicants. This represents a new trend. Some children have outgrown their childhood in these centres (Arnold, 2013, pg. 7). Unaccompanied minors are accommodated primarily in foster homes.

The Lissywoolen Direct Provision Centre in Athlone is one of 34 accommodation centres located throughout the State. The centres are managed by the Reception and Integration Agency under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Aramark Ltd. is the company responsible for the day to day operation of the Lissywoolen centre. The site comprises of 100 caravans with communal washing and eating facilities and ancillary services. The site is located on the outskirts of town and borders an industrial park, a large-scale governmental department and the Traveller accommodation centre. In figures obtained by O' Brien (2014, pg 5) Aramark Ltd. "runs three State owned direct provision centres which accommodate up to 800 asylum seekers". Lissywoolen is the largest of these three centres providing 300 beds. Since the inception of direct provision, approximately €900m has been paid to private operators in the State, of which approximately €20m was paid to Aramark Ltd (O' Brien, 2014, pg. 6). This is in stark contrast to approximately €70,000 which was paid by way of the Supplementary Allowance to the total combined asylum seeker population in Athlone over the last 15 years, assuming the centre was operating at full capacity for that period. Each adult receives €19.10 per adult per week and each child receives €9.60 per week.

Social development involves learning the values, knowledge and skills that enable children to relate to others effectively and to contribute positively to family, school and the community. Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (See Appendix E) obliges "State Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to ... (c) the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values and for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for all civilisations different from his or her own" (UNCRC, 1989). The right to education is recognised as a fundamental right. Its broad definition includes personal development, access to information to achieve other human rights and is regarded as a socio-economic right. The Children's First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011, pg. 8) states "neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and/or medical care. A child whose height or weight is significantly below average may be being deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be being deprived of intellectual stimulation". This research explores what perceived impact living in direct provision has on the social, personal and academic development of young asylum seekers who live in the Lissywoolen Direct Provision centre.

The daily routine in direct provision is monotonous, boring and leads many to a de-skilling and idleness as residents await the determination of their application for refugee status (Fanning et al, 2001, pg 25, pg 44). A recent research report on children's needs in Co. Meath stated: "Given that 90% of asylum seekers suffer from depression after six months in direct provision, the needs of the

children residing in (direct provision) should be considered particularly with regard to recreational and mental health issues”(Quigley et al, 2013, pg. 22). This monotonous lifestyle coupled with pre and post migration trauma such as that experienced while awaiting their determination has caused serious mental health issues such as depression (Thornton, 2014, pg 5; Arnold, 2013, pgs 17-18; AkiDwa, 2010, pg. 12; Brazil, 2009, pg 1; Fanning et al, 2001, pg 58),sleep difficulties and suicidal ideation (Arnold, 2013, pg 1) for some residents. According to the National Intercultural Health Strategy 2007-2012 “it is accepted that many asylum seekers and refugees may suffer from a significant burden of mental health problems, including depression, psychological disturbances and / or posttraumatic stress syndrome” (Drumm, 2008, pg. 42). The mental health of the residents might be further affected and exacerbated by the separation from other family members, culture shock, language barriers, fear of deportation, insecurity, poverty, isolation, stigma, prejudice, shame and by the living environment (Mental Health Reform, 2014, pgs 13-17; AkiDwa, 2010, pg 13, Fanning et al, 2001, pg. 30).

Previous literature highlights food provision and preparation as major concerns for asylum seekers (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg. 32; Foreman and Ní Raghallaigh, 2014, pg. 6; Arnold, 2013, pg. 28; AkiDwa, 2010, pg. 17; Fanning et al, 2001, pg 35). “Food poverty is the inability to access a nutritionally adequate diet and the related impacts on health, culture and social participation.” (Friel and Conlon, 2004, pg. 22). Food is provided three times per day in the direct provision centres. Food stuffs may be collected from the communal eating facilities and re-cooked using gas heated stoves located in the caravans. Not all direct provision centres have cooking facilities. Many children never see their parents cook a meal for them (Foreman and Ní Raghallaigh, 2014, pg. 6). Most residents eat in the communal

eating facilities as there is very limited space in the mobile homes. Menus are determined by direct provision centre staff. No consultation is afforded to the residents of the centres and there is often a limited choice (AkiDwa, 2010, pg 17). Parents are unable to provide ethnic food such as Halal food or food which is representative of their culture (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg. 32; Arnold, 2013, pg. 28). The food provided does not cater for specific dietary conditions (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg 32; Fanning et al, 2001, pg 36) or medical concerns such as diabetes. The daily allocation does not cater for 'sensitive eaters' (AkiDwa, 2010, pg. 17). If a child or adult does not like a particular type of food, no substitute is provided and the person goes without. "Babies who slept through meal times were left without food for long periods" and management often stipulate that any child who reaches 6 months or over can no longer avail of baby food supplements (Arnold, 2013, pg 15; Fanning et al, 2001, pg 36). Missing meal times is particularly pertinent for members of specific cultures who fast during the Ramadan period. As a result, food stuffs is often stocked up, rationed and additional food purchased out of the weekly allowance of €19.10 to supplement personal food stocks and to provide their children with a well balanced diet (Arnold, 2013, pg. 15; Fanning et al, 2001, pg 35).

Direct Provision has undoubtedly had an impact on the concept of family for those who live in the accommodation centres. Fanning et al (2001, pg 39) argues that the family is the primary agent in the socialisation process. This process transmits values, traditions, customs, beliefs, culture, role expectations, behaviours, religious values, habits, manners, mores, identity and language to the offspring. Ogbu (2012, Pg 15) states that the parenting should provide basic care and nurturing, moral guidance and protection and a safe sanctuary to develop psychological wellbeing. However, the ability of the parents is inhibited by the confined and restricted environment of

direct provision. This makes many parents feel hopeless and worthless (Fanning et al, 2001, pg 41) or “not feeling like a woman or like a mother” (AkiDwa, 2010, pg. 14). Likewise, many fathers like to instill a sense of providing for the family economically, but the direct provision policy in Ireland does not permit the right to work and some fathers suffer stress and depression as a result (Arnold, 2013, pg 25; AkiDwa, 2010, pg 13).

The cramped accommodation of Direct Provision is a restricting factor in parents enjoying intimate occasions with their partners. In this environment, children may witness sexually explicit behaviour (Arnold, 2013, pg 25) and display them in the wider environment (Ogbu, 2012, pg 18). This is a concern to child welfare and wellbeing. Ogbu (2012, pg. 18) cites how a young girl misinterpreted the audible noise of her parents engaging in sexual intercourse as domestic violence and reported this occasion to her teacher. This indicates that Direct Provision may not be a suitable environment to raise a family.

Parents often experience difficulties in toilet training young children (AkiDwa, 2010, pg 15; Fanning et al, 2001, pg 42). Identifying and securing a consistent space in a cramped living environment for potty training is particularly onerous (AkiDwa, 2010, pg 42). Families also ration toiletries such as nappies, shampoo, toothpaste and body wash (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg 53; Arnold, 2013, pg 31). Toilet training in communal toilet facilities poses child protection concerns. In many instances, children share communal toilet facilities with grown adults and this poses significant child protection concerns (Arnold, 2013, pg. 25).

Geoffrey Shannon, Special Rapporteur on Children, highlighted in his report (2012, pg 26) the ‘real risk’ of child abuse in Direct Provision where single parent families are required to share with strangers and

where families with teenage children of opposite gender are required to share one room (Arnold, 2013, pg 7, pg 19; AkiDwa, 2010, pg 15). A report issued by the Health Information and Quality Authority (Ward, 2015, pg. 3) identified that 14% of the population of children living in direct provision were referred to the Child and Family Agency in the 12 months between August 2013 and August 2014 for child protection and welfare concerns. This figure represents a significantly higher number of children referred to the Child and Family Agency compared to the general population of children referred of 1.6%. The main issues highlighted in the report (Ward, 2015, pg. 4) include children's living conditions, inappropriate contact by adults towards some children in accommodation centres, children sustaining accidental injuries due to living in cramped conditions and the exposure of children to violence between residents. Concern was also raised about children been left unsupervised for periods while their lone parent went to queue for laundry or food.

The institutionalisation of children is nothing new in this State and various examples uncover our State's dark history on child abuse and institutionalisation such as the Mother and Baby homes, the Magdalene Laundries, the Cloyne, Ryan and Murphy reports, borstals, industrial schools and the Madonna House amongst others (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg V; Thornton, 2014, pg 7). Shannon (2012) also cites a 14 year old girl in a centre in Mayo who became pregnant by a male resident in the same centre in September 2011 (Arnold, 2013, pg. 19). MacNeely (2005, pg.1) highlighted that "some ten per cent of the Mayo Rape Crisis Centre's clients are asylum seekers. O'Connell (2014) reported on RTE how he had interviewed a number of women who were engaged in prostitution out of abject poverty to supplement the allowance they receive from the State each week. Female residents are regularly targeted by sex predators and regularly face abuse and sexual harassment (Arnold, 2013, pg 20). "Domestic

violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault in Direct Provision centres, recruitment for prostitution, and trafficking, particularly of young asylum seekers for the purposes of sexual exploitation were noted by Rape Crisis Centres as experienced by refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland” (Saidléar, 2014, pg 1). “Retired Supreme Court judge, Catherine McGuinness, recently predicted that at some future point the government will find it necessary to apologise publicly for the damage done, in particular, to the children of asylum seekers – just as it has had to apologise to former residents of industrial schools and the Magdalene laundries who were the victims of abuse as well as of state indifference” (O’ Reilly, 2013, pg. 1).

According to figures raised in the form of a Parliamentary Question by Deputy Sandra McLellan (2015) to the Minister for Children, 61 people have died in Direct Provision since 2002, 16 of whom were under the age of five. This high rate of infant mortality raises fundamental questions about the suitability of Direct Provision as a reception facility. The pre and post migratory trauma may also be a significant factor.

It is important that children receive and avail of physical and mental stimulation for child development. “Children require physical stimulation and safe spaces to develop cognitive, behavioural and emotional functions” (Arnold, 2013, pg 1). Finding space for children to play safely in can be a challenge for parents in Direct Provision (AkiDwa, 2010, pg. 14). The development of social relationships and learning skills are influenced by a child’s capacity to play and interact with others. The poverty experienced by children in direct provision limits the child’s ability to play and therefore has an impact on the ability to develop social relationships and while also affecting their integration into society.

Festive occasions provide an opportunity for social interaction. However, the weekly allowance of €19.10 per adult per week and €9.60 per child per week does not financially allow parents to purchase the Christmas presents, birthday presents or Easter eggs that the children have sought. In addition, it is challenging for parents to purchase costumes for other events such as fancy dress parties, St. Patrick's Day or Halloween. The required signing in and out procedure is off-putting for parents considering organising a birthday party and therefore cannot reciprocate an invite to their children's friends (Fanning et al, 2001, pg 6). These restrictions germinate an environment of social exclusion, marginalisation and isolation.

Academic development involves expanding educational knowledge as well as the development of the individual through exercise, extra curricular activities, healthy lifestyles and developing social skills. Beiter (2005, pg. 19) argues that education implies "the entire process of social life by means of which individuals and social groups learn to develop consciously within, and for the benefit of, the national and international communities, the whole of their personal capabilities, attitudes, aptitudes and knowledge". Education is a very important mechanism in overcoming social marginalisation and exclusion (Fanning et al, 2001, pg 7).

The policy of relocation by the Reception and Integration Agency can have devastating effects on a family, particularly young people attending school. At very short notice, the Reception and integration Agency may decide to relocate a family to another centre so young people have to adapt to a change in environment and try and make new friends. Sometimes, the relocation occurs in the middle of examinations, which increases the stress being experienced by the young person.

Childcare has two major purposes: care and education of the child. The provision of childcare provides a safe environment to educate, care and nurture the upbringing of a child. The lack of pre-school education and childcare in direct provision not only affects the asylum seeker children who could avail of this pre-school education but it also affects parents who cannot avail of free English or computing classes, as there is no one to take care of the children (FLAC, 2009, pg. 127; Faughnan et al, 2002, pg 47; Fanning et al, 2001, pg 55). Some accommodation centres have childcare facilities but these are often limited and over-stretched due to the demand (FLAC, 2009, pg 127). Many asylum seekers identified preschool as vital for a young child to learn how to speak English, particularly where parents were not proficient in the language (Fanning et al, 2001, pg. 73).

Some direct provision centres do not have play facilities, customised child centred spaces, private spaces or study or homework areas (Arnold, 2013, pg 15; Doras Luimní, 2011, pg 9). This provides major challenges for school pupils to adequately prepare or maintain motivation for school. A lack of adequate and furnished study and play areas impacts on the child's social and educational development (Ogbu, 2012, pg. 23). Some find it difficult to concentrate with the noise of other family members talking, electrical appliances such as a television or radio switched on or other people talking in the vicinity of the unit. It is reported that some school-children attempt to do their homework by confining themselves to sitting on a floor or lying on a bed (Ogbu, 2012, pg 23). This is not conducive to preparing adequately for the school day and limits their ability to reach their full potential.

Homework clubs or evening study classes provide an opportunity for primary and post-primary students to do their homework in a safe and conducive environment. However, as many direct provision

centres are located on the outskirts of towns, transport becomes a major issue particularly in light of the long distance to walk home and the inclement weather during the Winter season. Due to the meager allowance of just €19.10, paying for public transport is not an option (Arnold, 2013, pg 25). Many students go without extra tuition or examination preparation courses as they cannot afford the fees.

The cost of purchasing school uniforms, books, lunches, bags, equipment and utensils is also a major barrier for parents of school children to overcome. Some prominent book publishing companies change one chapter of a book each year to ensure annual receipts are maintained. This has a detrimental impact on the many families, including asylum seekers, who cannot afford to purchase school books. Some centres provide school lunches. As more and more educational institutions become digitalised, this also poses major challenges and obstacles for young asylum seekers as the demand to purchase laptops and other electronic devices increases. The purchase of laptops from the supplementary allowance is not possible in the short term.

Poverty acts as a barrier for social inclusion and participation. Young asylum seekers are often excluded from extra-curricular activities such as sports teams, music tuition, drama or dance classes, extra study classes or class trips due to an inability to pay the appropriate fee, gear or costumes, and equipment (Arnold, 2013, pg 25; FLAC, 2009, pg 124; Fanning et al, 2001, pg 8-9). Membership fees of sporting or cultural groups are barriers to participation also. Transport to and from football pitches, dance halls or community centres is also a barrier to participation. These barriers have a detrimental impact on the ability of the young asylum seeker to integrate, socialise and participate (Arnold, 2013, pg 25; Comhlámh, 2001, pg. 25).

The charging of international fees to asylum seekers precludes those who wish to access third level education. Many young asylum seekers overcome the barriers associated with accessing primary and post primary education. Those who wish to progress to third level institutions are restricted and this limits the ability of young asylum seekers to reach their full potential. A very small number of asylum seekers are lucky enough to be beneficiaries of philanthropy and thus receive scholarships to avail of online or in-house courses. However, this is not the case for the vast majority of young asylum seekers in Ireland who complete their Leaving Certificate. The Student Support Act (2011) should be amended to allow asylum seekers access third level education.

Asylum seekers in Ireland who have completed their Leaving Certificate or are of working age are not legally allowed to be employed in Ireland. Denmark and Ireland are the only two countries in the EU not to opt into, ratify or transpose the EU Directive 2003/09. Denmark's domestic legislation went much further than what was proposed in the EU Directive so opting in for the Danes would have been a retrograde step for asylum seekers in Denmark. The right to work is central to the maintenance of skills and education, which if not maintained can be lost (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg. 29). Asylum seekers cannot apply for Summer work or part time jobs. Ireland is the only country in the EU to adopt this position.

The review of the literature has raised many questions throughout this section. Questions have arisen regarding why there are such delays in the determination of applications resulting in residents spending many years in direct provision centres and whether these delays impact on individuals. Questions have also arisen regarding the significant profits being made by private companies who manage the day to day operation of the centres. Is food provision and preparation

impacting on individuals? One would have to question why there wasn't adequate investment in the provision of purpose built self catering units and is there a demand for such provision? Are children in direct provision being put at risk or neglected? What is being done to prevent or tackle mental health issues? Why is Ireland the only country in the EU to prohibit the right to work? Why are young asylum seekers precluded from attending third level education? One would also have to question why the Supplementary Allowance has not increased since 2000. As depicted, there are many questions that the existing body of research presents.

This research proposes to add to the existing body of knowledge by producing a thesis based on interviews with a number of asylum seekers who have been accommodated at the Lissywoolen Direct Provision Centre in Athlone. This study will explore how residents of the Lissywoolen Direct Provision Centre, Athlone perceive living in the direct provision system has impacted their social, personal and academic development as children. To date, no research has been undertaken on how this policy impacts on the social, personal and academic attainment of young people, who reside in direct provision centres. This is the justification for this research. It is proposed to conduct this study through an empirical qualitative analysis in the form of semi-structured interviews. The study will also enquire as to what changes could be applied to better support the social, personal and academic development of children living in direct provision.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of conducting this research was to explore how residents of the Lissywoolen Direct Provision Centre in Athlone perceived how living in the direct provision system has impacted their social, personal and academic development as children. The research also sought recommendations on what changes and reforms could be applied to improve and better support the social, personal and academic development of young people living in direct provision.

3.2 Research Design

This research explores the social, personal and academic development of young people who reside in Direct Provision. To date, no research has been undertaken on the effects of this policy on the social, personal and academic development of young people, who reside in Direct Provision centres.

It was proposed to conduct this study through an empirical qualitative analysis in the form of semi- structured interviews. According to Bryman (2004, p.266) qualitative research is a research strategy which is “inductivist, constructionist and interpretivist”. The researcher adopted this qualitative method in an attempt to extract richness in information from the participants. The interview is considered the best qualitative method of research with ethnic minorities as it

collectively encourages social transformation, empowerment, representation (Gill et al, 2013; pg. 237) and individually respects the confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of all participants.

The researcher had vigorously considered a number of different methodologies by which to conduct this research. Firstly, the researcher considered doing a quantitative study by distributing questionnaires but this was discounted because it was felt that the richness in detail that was been sought may be lost by this method. Also, there is no indication of how much thought a participant puts into answering the question and how the participant interpreted the question which means vital information may be lost (Popper, 1959).

The researcher also considered conducting the study by convening a focus group. Again, this method was discounted by the researcher because it was felt that participants would not present the detailed information in an open group forum. Also, Smithson (2000, pg. 105) highlights that some participants may be more performance driven than others in a socially organised situation, therefore not obtaining the information which is reflective of the group. Some participants may be shy or embarrassed to talk about their family conditions and their experiences, thoughts and feelings in the presence of their peers, while others may contribute significantly.

As stated, consideration was given to conducting focus groups or quantitatively by distributing questionnaires but interviews are considered as a more appropriate way of conducting research with ethnic minorities (Mizock et al, 2011, pg 3) because some participants like to perform more in focus groups than others (Smithson, 2000, pg. 105). Harden et al (2004, pg.30) echoes this sentiment by highlighting

that in focus groups some participants may dominate the focus group discussion which results in the underrepresentation of others views. Harrell and Bradley (2009, pg. 11) states that “the sensitivity of an issue could also discourage the use of focus groups as the group context may not be appropriate to discuss sensitive issues”. Barriball (1994, pg. 329) points out that semi-structured interviews are more preferable than questionnaires because they overcome the poor response rate, they enable the evaluation of the validity of respondent’s answers by observing non-verbal indicators, which is useful when discussing sensitive issues and respondents are unable to receive assistance when formulating a response which makes the response more authentic.

The researcher then considered conducting the interview in a structured way. This method was discounted because the researcher felt that a structured interview might inhibit the researcher from pursuing a particular line of interest which may have developed during the course of the conversation (Mizock et al, 2011, pg. 3). With these considerations in mind, the researcher adopted the semi-structured interview as the preferred method to conduct this research. The interviewer planned meticulously in the knowledge that the sequence, wording and format of issues raised during the course of the semi-structured interviews could affect the type of responses received and careful design was needed to minimise bias in results (Kelley et al, 2003, pg. 263).

With these reasons in mind, individual semi- structured interviews were selected as the most appropriate method to undertake this study because they operate in a less intrusive way in the format of a two-way communication. This method ensured that the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were protected at all

times while providing the maximum amount of detailed information was received in relation to the topic in a sensitive and empathetic manner. This methodology also allows the interviewer to pursue a specific trajectory or tangent if a particular topic of interest arises during the conversation. The researcher adopted this method to create an environment which ensured that the information was presented in a detailed way and free from inhibited responses which may have been present in a focus group, given the sensitivities of the study. Important issues such as culturally competent communication with the interviewee (Mizock et al, 2011, pg. 3) and best practice in ethical procedure were very much considered and adhered to during the course of the interviews and this developed a stronger research relationship with the interviewee. "Researchers should maintain respect for participants in all manners, and pay particular attention to minority ethnic groups, traditions and practices, and ensure knowledge of these practices before conducting research" (Kennedy, 2011, pg. 5).

The researcher adopted semi-structured interviews as the preferable method in an attempt to explore how young asylum seekers perceived living in the direct provision system has affected their social, personal and academic development. It also explored what changes could be brought about to improve the system from a resident's perspective. The researcher recognised the sensitive nature of the topic which was being investigated and the cultural differences which presented.

An interview guide (See Appendix D) was prepared in advance to allow the researcher to maintain focus and direction, but flexible enough to allow the interviewer to react to specific information shared. This interview guide allowed the researcher to ask different questions of the interviewee during the course of the discussion

depending on what issues were raised and without restricting the discussion to a particular format. The semi-structured interviews included three main sections on which to discuss without constraining the discussion to a particular format. These sections included social, personal and academic development. The social development section included headings such as daily routines, meal times, communal meal times, procedures for inviting guests, shower and toilet facilities, interactions, culture and religious practices, and recommendations for reform. The personal development section included personal space and privacy and the effects of friends receiving their permission to remain in Ireland or deportation orders. The academic development section included preparedness for school, school lunches, extra curricular activities, study space, study motivation, interactions, study groups, further academic aspirations, and proposals for reform (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010, pg. 102; Wengraf, 2001, pg. 159- 160).

It was decided to select semi-structured interviews as opposed to structured interviews as the semi-structured interviews encouraged respondents to speak for themselves (Nwagwuagwu, 2009, pg. 8) in a free flowing, fluid, flexible and open discussion on the topic (Hammett et al, 2015, pg. 141, Mizock et al, 2011, pg. 3). The semi-structured interview also allowed for new ideas and topics to be developed, clarified and elaborated on during the course of the interview as a result of what each interviewee discussed. This method encouraged a richness and uniqueness in detail. According to Hammett et al, (2015, pg. 141) “the interviewer and interviewee determine the flow of the conversation, exploring responses and emergent topic and tangents of relevance”. The researcher emphasised the importance of viewing the issue and the social environment through the eyes of the people who reside in direct provision. Attention to non-verbal communication including intonation, pitch of the voice, limb

movement, uneasiness, agitation, eye movement, attitude and other characteristics were also noted throughout.

This research was designed in such a way as to enable other researchers to replicate the authentic and seminal study in exactly the same manner as the original researcher. This design adhered to the principle of replicability to enable other researchers to assimilate and repeat the study and to test the validity and reliability of the information presented. "It is important that others are able to inspect the methods and interpretations so that they can comprehend the journey from an initial question to a conclusion, assess its validity and generalizability, and build on the research in an informed way" (Blandford, 2013, pg. 1).

3.3 Materials

Each participant of this research was furnished with a consent form (See Appendix A) and an information sheet (See Appendix B) prior to the undertaking of the interview. The researcher used a schedule of topics (See Appendix D) from which the interviewer asked a number of questions of the interviewee in an informal manner. A dictaphone was utilised in recording the interview from which the detail was transcribed onto a laptop and saved on a memory stick. A consent form for the use of the dictaphone (See Appendix C) was issued to each and participant and signed prior to commencing the interview. These records were kept in accordance with the time allowed in the consent form (See Appendix A) and then deleted or destroyed.

3.4 Participants

The researcher interviewed six asylum seekers between the ages of 18 and 23, who are proficient in English. The gender representation

was 50% male and 50% female and the average age of participants was 19. The researcher liaised with the Residence Association of the direct provision centre in Athlone who were tasked with selecting the participants. This is an unorthodox approach. However, given the policy of relocation by the Reception and Integration Agency and the recent adverse publicity that this centre has experienced, and others have received in national media outlets, some residents might have been fearful of taking part in such a research study. The Residence Association is recognised as working in the best interests of the residents and this is an organisation which the participants trust. This approach relieved this fear as trust and rapport was developed during the interviews, and the identity of the participants was only known to the researcher. This reinforced the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. It was decided to conduct the interviews at a neutral off-site venue such as Athlone Institute of Technology. The researcher conducted a pilot interview to ensure there was no discrepancy or inconsistency in the format of the research or the framing of the topics.

Table 1: Participant Profile

Participant	Gender	Age	Length of time in direct provision
Participant 1	Male	18	4
Participant 2	Male	19	5
Participant 3	Female	21	4
Participant 4	Male	19	3
Participant 5	Female	18	4
Participant 6	Female	21	4

3.5 Procedure

A list of eight people was established from the Lissywoolen direct provision centre in Athlone and six participants were randomly selected from the list of eight to take part in the interview. An additional two people were on a substitute list to replace any participant who wished to withdraw from the research. The researcher did not have to avail of the substitute list. The participants were contacted by phone and arrangements were made to conduct the interviews at a neutral setting at a time and date which suited both parties. This is an established approach for working with vulnerable groups (Pieper et al, 2011, pg.4; McCrea, N. 2003, pg 10; Delaney and McGee, 2001, pg. 32).

Each participant was furnished with a consent form (See Appendix A) prior to taking part in the study. The interviewees were also furnished with a second consent form (See Appendix C) to the effect that they gave their permission for the interview to be recorded using a dictaphone. An information sheet (See Appendix B) was also issued to each participant. This information sheet provided a brief description of the study and other details such as the researcher's name, phone number, course of study, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and an option to withdraw from the interview at any stage. The Social Research Association defines informed consent as "a procedure for ensuring that research participants understand what is being done to them, the limits to their participation and awareness of any potential risks they incur" (Wiles et al, 2007, pg. 1). Ryan (1994, pg. 2) points out that "recognition of the voluntary nature of participation is at the heart of informed consent.

In addition to supplying the interviewee with an information sheet (See Appendix B), the researcher gave a brief introduction and

outlined issues regarding informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity at the outset of the interview to ensure clarity. Details were given as to how the information would be transferred from the dictaphone and transcribed verbatim. Detail was also given as to how the information and the transcriptions would be used, stored and destroyed following the conclusion of the study. The researcher explained that although some quotes may be included in the study, no name would be accredited. In the interest of confidentiality and anonymity, the interviews were stored for the permitted timeframe only and classified with an alphabetical indication so that only the interviewer would know the identity of each of the participants. A hard copy, which was initialed, was filed in a locked filing cabinet. An electronic file was only retained for the specified period of time. The researcher was the only person permitted to access the files to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participant. These files were deleted after the study and the tapes and hard copies were destroyed.

The researcher conducted all of the interviews at the neutral setting of Athlone Institute of Technology. The interviews lasted between 14 and 18 minutes. All participants were content to have the interview recorded and therefore only notes on non-verbal communication were taken. A triangulation of observations was conducted after the interviews were conducted and transcriptions were made to ensure that there was no ambiguity about the detail disclosed. Bryman (2004, pg. 454) states that triangulation is where the results of an investigation associated with one research strategy are cross-checked with information from another research strategy. In this regard, the information obtained from the semi-structured interviews was cross checked with a Group Interview (See Appendix F).

Participants were informed that they would receive an outline of the results arising from the study. The results information sheet (See Appendix G) gave a broad overview as to the outcome of the study.

The recordings were transcribed verbatim and the results were correlated and subsequently compared and contrasted to the aims and objectives of the study and to the existing body of literature and these can be read in the results and discussions sections of this study.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Concerns were raised regarding the selection of the participants for this study. As previously mentioned, the researcher recognised that the selection of participants was an established method for research undertaken with vulnerable groups. The Ethics Committee was reassured that interviews would be conducted off-site at a neutral setting to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the interviewees. The interviews were conducted at a pre-booked room in the researcher's name in the Athlone Institute of Technology.

The Committee also expressed concern that some of the interviewees might become upset during the course of the conversation. However, these fears were allayed by the competence, empathy, sensitivity and experience of the researcher in working in a culturally competent manner with ethnic minorities. Provision was also made that any participant who felt uncomfortable at any stage of the interview could withdraw from the process. Participants could also refuse to answer any question which they were unsure or uncomfortable about answering. Every effort was made to make the participant feel comfortable and at ease during the course of the interview. Where an interview exceeded the intended time allocation, the interviewee could avail of a ten minute interval to prevent information overload or

to allow the interviewee to gather their thoughts. The interviewees were advised of the supports offered by the Student's Union at Athlone Institute of Technology in the event that people became upset or unsettled.

Consideration was given to conducting this study using focus groups. However, the researcher made a determination to proceed using semi-structured interviews. It was felt that this approach was the better approach given the sensitivities of research with people from ethnic minorities. Some participants may have been nervous and apprehensive in sharing their opinions, experiences and feelings with other people in the room in a focus group scenario. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to extract as much information as possible on the perceived impact on the social, personal and academic development of young people who live in direct provision, while also protecting their anonymity and confidentiality.

3.7 Delimitations

The study was limited by the fact that there is a culture of fear, uncertainty, isolation and marginalisation, which is systematic in direct provision policy. This systemic undercurrent acts as a deterrent for some individuals to engage in such a study for fear of ramifications or repercussions if the identity of the participant was revealed.

The researcher was mindful that language barriers may have been an issue in conducting this research. Therefore, the researcher had to restrict and limit interviewees to those who had a proficiency in English. This makes extrapolations from the sample group and the generalizability of the findings more difficult.

4. Results

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results which emerged from the semi-structured interview conducted with six participants who live in the Lissywoolen direct provision centre in Athlone. The semi-structured interviews explored the interviewee's perception of how living in direct provision affected their social, personal and academic development. Further, in order to achieve this, the following issues were explored under each of the seminal headings social, personal and academic. Results were presented through the process of thematic analysis (Byrman, 2004, p.412). The topics explored related to the perceived impact on the social development of the residents of the centre include 1) family relationships; 2) the daily routine in the centre; 3) interaction; 4) communal facilities and 5) financial support. The topics explored relating to the perceived impact on the personal development of the residents in the centre includes 6) personal space and privacy and the 7) effects of the determination process on the individual. The perceived impact on the academic development of residents is included in the 8) preparedness for school and 9) the extra curricular activities and play topics. The topic on proposals for reform (10) is related to what the residents would like to change about the policy of direct provision.

4.2 General Background

Out of the six people who were interviewed, 66% of those have been living in direct provision for 4 years. One participant is living in direct provision for five years and one participant is living in direct provision for three years. Two participants are aged 21 and have been living in direct provision since their teenage years. Another two participants are turning twenty years of age during the summer and they also have been living in direct provision since their teenage years.. One participant said *“I don’t like living in direct provision but it is all that we have at the minute because I can’t go home and I just have to live with what we have, we can’t change it”*. This sense of hopelessness and despondency is reciprocated across many categories.

4.3 Social Development

4.3.1 Family relationships

Five out of six participants interviewed felt direct provision was impacting negatively on them and their family. All of the participants spoke about how difficult it was for families to live in the caravan for such a long period of time. Some 66% of participants discussed how they get frustrated, aggravated and irritated living in direct provision and how those feelings can create familial tensions and distress. Many of the participants cited that they have seen their parents get upset because they wanted *“a better life for their family”*.

One participant noted how he felt ashamed that he could not work and provide for his family. *“Where I come from, a man works and looks after his family. I feel I am letting my family down. I want to work like to provide for my family”*.

Another participant described how living in direct provision was impacting on her family and on her personal development. *“I am not a very good cook because my mother doesn’t really cook in the mobile. We get most of our food prepared”*. Direct provision is also impacting on the socialisation process as it is difficult for parents to instill knowledge, values, skills, culture and beliefs in their children in such a confined and restrictive environment. *“My mother...eh.. she doesn’t have good English... she finds it difficult to speak with management. So if management have to talk to her, they sometimes tell me and I tell her”*. This language barrier is affecting the social order in families.

The family should be a safe sanctuary and a secure base in which to raise a child. However, one participant described how the lengthy procedure has impacted on her family *“I do not feel safe living in direct provision. At any time, my family could get word that we have to leave and return home”*.

4.3.2 Daily Routine in the centre

All of the participants described in detail the daily routine of living in direct provision. Many of the participants depicted how monotonous and repetitive life is in direct provision. One participant depicted what the layout of the site was and how cramped the accommodation is. *“Well there are 100 mobiles on the site. Ten rows of ten mobiles. And they basically probably are seven yards apart from each other.*

The daily routines of participants are very similar. The young residents begin their day by collecting food in their containers in the morning, watching TV in the afternoon if they are not in education, eat at the pre-determined times and interact with their friends in the evening. There is minimal orchestrated or organised mental or physical

stimulation for young people in direct provision. A participant depicted the daily routine in direct provision by saying *“Well...basically...you wake up. You go get food. You come back home, come back to the mobile and basically watch some TV. Maybe later on in the day, we can go play football with the boys in the site and then at night we go for food around five o clock, then back into the mobile. That’s the same thing every day or unless you might decide to go to town one of the days, see what’s in town, go buy some food stuff”*. Another participant stated *“We collect food in the morning, I don’t really know the time but mostly me and my brother go and we collect the food. We bring it back to mobile but some people...they decide that they like to eat in the centre”*. Another interviewee put forward a very similar account by stating *“I get up. I go get food in the centre. I come back to mobile. We have breakfast. In the evening, I read in my room or watch TV. My brother plays football in the evening with the boys. I stay in the mobile with my Mum. We have dinner in the centre”*.

Another participant described how direct provision has impacted on him personally. *“It has impacted me on my mental health. I would prefer to be out working. I want to go out there and do something instead of sitting around the home like. Because once you do it for a week, you might enjoy waking up at 12 o’clock for one week and doing nothing the whole day but it gets to a certain stage where you are like no I better get out and do something. You get so depressed when you are not doing anything”*. This sense of idleness and boredom has affected this individual’s mental health. Three other participants mentioned how direct provision was affecting their mental health and impacting on them personally and on their familial relationships.

It was clear that in the instance where participants had finished their schooling and were not lucky enough to receive philanthropical

support to advance to third level education, their daily routines were more monotonous and idle. One participant stated *“I finished my Leaving Cert two years now. I really liked going to school but it was hard. It was a break away from the centre. Everyday now I am bored. Nothing to do. Everyday, same thing. I would really like to go to college but we cannot afford fees. I get really sad when I think about it”*. It was clear that the idleness and monotony experienced by living in direct provision was impacting on this person’s wellbeing and their social and personal development.

4.3.3 Interaction

There was no evidence from the interviews to suggest that interaction through social activities were provided by the managers of the centre. However, one participant highlighted that English classes are provided to residents for whom English is not their first language by stating *“Yeah well, they have a few groups like English classes and they bring in people to teach people and on the social side you have to go out to make friends or meet other people”*.

All of the residents cited difficulties with inviting friends to the centre because it is mandatory for all visitors to sign in on arrival and sign out when departing. One interviewee stated *“oh yeah, if you have a visitor they have to sign in, go up to the main desk at reception and they have to sign in ‘cause you are only allowed to be in on the site until 11 o’clock so if you are a visitor you will have to leave”*. When explored further about how residents feel about this rule, one participant said *“Well it’s a hassle for friends and all because they don’t want to sign in and leave but they are the rules so like they have to go ahead”*. Another interviewee mentioned how former residents at the direct provision centre have maintained the friendship built up in direct provision by stating *“When they come, they sign in. And when*

they leave they sign out. But sometimes they like used to live there...our friends like...and they come now and have to sign in and sign out when they go". One participant displayed a level of annoyance with the system by saying "I don't think it's what you would normally have to do. Some people don't mind but it's like each time... sign in then sign out. They must know that this person is here. I don't know the limit like or whether it is relevant". Another participant showed outright discontent with the system by stating "Friends must sign in, sign out. It is like a prison. We are not criminals. We are not breaking laws".

This practice of mandatory signing in and out was particularly difficult for young people who wanted to organise a birthday party. One resident highlighted that the system was off-putting to celebrate birthdays although some birthdays were celebrated by others in the centre. *"My friends have had birthday parties but everyone like.. sign in and sign out. This is not normal for other birthday parties. I don't like it so I don't have parties anymore.* It was also noted during the course of this conversation that it was difficult for parents to reciprocate buying presents for residents to attend the birthday parties of school friends. *"I don't go to birthday parties because my parents cannot buy presents for other people. My mum only gets €20 per week. What would you buy with what's left over?"*

The communal eating area was portrayed by two participants as the social hub of the centre. *"It's just happening now like when more people came to the centre and they decide to eat in the canteen. People normally used to get food and eat in the houses but now they have started to eat in the canteen because of the new people. I think more people that we like are eating there so we start eating there but we never used to eat in there".*

One participant highlighted that social activities are not organised amongst the residents. *“If we get to get all of these people to get social together because we don’t really do stuff together. There are no activities that we do together. We just have football. If there were social things, people would get more involved in many things. If there were something to do, people would do little things together”*.

One participant described how the absence of social activities has meant longer periods confined to the mobile home. This is a precarious predicament for a young person and is not in their best interest or wellbeing. *“Well normally, I don’t really leave my mobile much. I stay with family. I used to have friends in school but they now study away from here. I feel really sad. I feel that why am I so different that I cannot go to college. I miss my friends really much. It’s so depressing. But it is the way it is, I cannot change it”*. The sense of hopelessness has also impacted on the personal and social development of this young person.

A shuttle bus transports residents from the centre to town and back at specific times. One participant commented that the bus was also a place where residents interact with each other. *“We talk to each other on the bus. The site is located outside town so it is a long walk. We go by bus to town all the time because we cannot afford taxis”*.

4.3.4 Communal Facilities

Most participants favoured a self catering system rather than the current system. *“I would like to see better cooking facilities for us to cook”*. A number of participants indicated that there is very little food cooked in the mobile. *“Most of the food is already prepared. They already cook everything for you. What you do is you take your containers, you go get whatever they have on the menu, you go pick*

whatever you want. The only thing they allow you to take back to your own mobile is probably eggs. They now give raw eggs. They used to cook them for you but now they give raw eggs". Some participants stated that they are not skilled enough to cook a meal because they don't see how the food is prepared. *"I cannot cook much because we don't cook much in the mobile.* The communal eating facilities in direct provision is impacting on the social and personal development of the residents in this regard.

Other participants described what type of food residents get at meal times. *"The food like... you know... the type of food is good but the way it gets cooked like ...it wouldn't be really nice. The chicken like...sometimes the chicken is very very dry like. It is so hard to eat like. Sometimes the rice doesn't feel like rice when you are eating it. Yeah...like the menu changes every day. I don't mind the type of food but the way it is cooked is where I have the problem. Other people like food cooked differently. That is the problem I would think like".*

A number of participants commented on the pre-determined menus and the lack of consultation with the residents. *"Well, eh... the menus... they decide what is for dinner. Sometimes fish, sometimes chicken. Eh...we eat in centre. Sometimes the chicken can be so hard and not nice".* Another participant said *"Well sometimes, the portions won't be big enough to last and to be honest, sometimes you go there and the food there is not very appealing like. You might go there and there is nothing you really want so you go back home and try make yourself a sandwich".* Another interviewee commented *"They have already made the menus. And the menus are already set. So you either have to eat what is there or you go back to your mobile".*

When pursued further about what happens if a resident does not like the food that is presented or if it doesn't meet their dietary

requirements, one participant said *“You have to buy food or go hungry. Many people buy food. Many people would have to go to town. Some people like their own food, you know, we eat different food where we come from and we do not eat their food every day”*. Another participant commented by saying *“If you do not like the food....eh..like... you just do not eat it and you make a sandwich if food is in mobile or you go without”*.

Residents in direct provision centres also share communal shower and toilet facilities. In Lissywoolen direct provision centre, residents have a dual system, where residents can decide to use the facilities in their mobile or use the facilities in the centre. One participant noted the facilities available at the communal centre by saying *“the centre has canteen, showers, few toilets, and laundry”*. Another participant commented *“Well each mobile has their own shower and toilet and in the main building block you can use the toilets aswell there”*.

4.3.5 Financial Support

Adults in direct provision receive an allowance of €19.10 per week and children receive €9.60 per week. Accommodation and meals are provided and the allowance is supposed to cover other costs. However, all of the participants indicated that the allowance received exposes them to abject poverty which greatly impacts on their social, personal and academic development. One participant noted *“It doesn’t even cover the basics in our family like. It is very low because you can’t even really do anything with it. You can just buy one thing and it’s mostly gone like. You can’t buy shoes like you know. We have no money to play football. The boys like one day..we had to go buy cheap shoes.. You know the shoes, you can only use them for like three weeks. It is very limited and little to buy stuff for football. When you*

try to go for other sports like rugby, football; you don't have the money to buy all the things that you really need to use for sport.

Another resident highlights how the allowance impacts on their social and academic development. *"my mother...she has to buy some things so that we can keep up with the house so that we can eat or whatever and so that we can take to school and things like that. Many people buy food. You have to buy food or go hungry. What are we going to buy for just €20?"*A similar response was given by another interviewee but his response also indicated that food is rationed. *"It is so hard but my mum...she keeps food for when food is low"*.

4.4 Personal Development

4.4.1 Personal Space and Privacy

Four participants displayed concern over the lack of personal space and privacy at the direct provision centre. *"They (Mobile homes) are small you know, once you grow up like. When you are young you wouldn't mind but like when you grow up you need more space and space to yourself. You want loads of room to put up loads of stuff. Mobiles don't give you that option"*. Another resident commented on the lack of personal space *"Well basically it is basically your room like. That is your only personal space to be honest"*.

More information was extracted from another participant *"Like.. we stay in mobiles so we ehh. .obviously some of us are different like ehh.. two rooms for sleeping and then a toilet and the people room. It is very small like. Others... they have like three rooms but one of them would be very small like. But probably they are old mobiles like. They have like two rooms. Toilet and living room. Some mobiles look kind of*

old but some look like new. Depends. Some are in not so good condition”.

Another participant describes how the accommodation has impacted on their personal space and privacy. *“Eh...well it is very small. Our mobile is very old and the bottom of it is not good looking. The wood is falling off it. We have sleeping rooms. My brother’s room is tiny, very very small. Sometimes, I cannot sleep. Then, we have toilet and living area. There is not much room. The mobiles get so warm and it is uncomfortable. We have cooker but we like normally... eat in the centre because the smell of food in the mobile is not nice. We eat like sandwiches in mobile. My personal space is like my room, that’s it”.*

4.4.2 Effects of the determination process

The effects of residents awaiting determination on their application for status or the effect of other residents who receive their status or deportation orders has a huge impact on the residents. One participant described the anguish of the unknown. *“It is very hard...to think about it, it is very depressing. You don’t know anything. You don’t know when. I think that is the most devastating thing. When you don’t know when. So anytime, anytime they might tell you that your process is successful or unsuccessful and at anytime you might have to be sent back and that is very ...unsettling”.* Another interviewee also commented by saying *“It is very hard. Lets say someone comes in and say they have been living there for one or two years and they get their papers and other people have been there for ten years. It is very hard and its stupid like that. Some people have been here for ten years and there is no movement. Everything is just the same and there is nothing going on. Everybody is just hoping that when the papers come you know. It is very frustrating. Really I try to think not much about it. I just try to focus on my work, studying and what’s next after that*

because there wouldn't be much that you could even do if you don't get them, try to just live or whatever". The effect of waiting such a long time and the uncertainty has deeply impacted on the social and personal development of the residents.

4.5 Academic Development

4.5.1 Preparedness for school

All six participants indicated how direct provision had impacted on their academic development and their preparedness for school. One participant stated *"Yeah it is very tough there like you know. Because you know, the space is small and if you try to fit a desk in there, you can't. You wouldn't get much space so it is very hard to study in there to be honest. You can hear other people from outside because the way the mobiles are so close"*.

Another participant remarked *"Study in a small place is very difficult. Because eh...for me like when I used to study in my mobile, I find it very difficult. Like it is so small and people be talking like but in your room you can hear and it is very loud and stuff like that. Probably like the only thing that we can do is like is to go the games room. Sometimes you just be like standing around in like the games room but it is annoying. Its better to study in your mobile. You have to concentrate harder when you are studying in your mobile. It is a little bit frustrating and annoying because you like have to study. I have to live with the conditions that I have. There is nothing I can change.* This sense of hopelessness to affect change has impacted detrimentally on the social and personal development of the individual while trying to study in the conditions described is impacting on their academic development.

This sentiment is echoed by another participant who stated *“I found the study hard. Our mobile is small and it can be noisy with my brother and mother. I can hear TV also. I study on my bed because I have no desk and cannot study in living area because it is too noisy. The mobile gets so warm. It’s hard and ehh.... I can always hear people outside the mobile playing”*.

The inability to pay for extra tuition and evening classes also affects the resident’s academic development. This was highlighted by one participant who remarked *“My school had evening study classes to do your homework and study for exams. I could not take part in these because the bus would be gone and I would have to walk home. Eh, also I could not afford extra tuition”*.

4.5.2 Extra- Curricular School activities and play

The literature review makes various references to the inability of residents in direct provision to get involved and engaged in extra-curricular activities such as sport, school trips, music classes and dance classes due to financial constraints. One participant noted *“Well I’m playing cricket myself so and to buy the gear you are talking about , to buy the complete set you are talking about like €600 and maybe transport...you have to pay membership fees and all. If you are lucky... some of the clubs have allowed me to go on without paying subscription fee. Also the club let me use their gear because I couldn’t purchase my own gear but it would be nice to have your own stuff”*.

Another interviewee described how they could not take part in a dance school because she could not afford it.

One participant described the play facilities that are located at the direct provision centre. *“The play facilities are mostly for young*

children. They play on the swings and stuff like. We only play football like at ...not much at all to do like. There is a basketball court but we use that most for football. No one really plays basketball, mostly play football. They have just moved the computer room into the reception so if you go there you can use the internet with their computers. Well they have got a games room and eh... a small little gym where you can go and use the treadmill. We have football pitch at the back and a small basketball area”.

4.6 Reform

Four participants would like to see the overhaul of the direct provision system and the determination process and replaced with a fairer system. One participant commented *“What I would change is maybe... is telling people how long the cases are going to take because I think if you tell someone your case is going to take four years, you might have a plan, you know...that will let me do this instead of sit around for four years and do nothing like”*. Another interviewee commented that they would like to expedite the system. *“I would like to speed up the system. Your lawyer cant even tell them how long it is going to take because they don’t even know themselves”*.

4.7 Summary of Results

The findings indicate that direct provision is perceived to have impacted on the social, personal and academic development of the residents. The topic on family relationships illustrates how the restrictive policy of direct provision and language barriers are impacting on the social order in families. The daily routines are described as being monotonous and boring. There was no evidence to suggest that regular social activities were organised by management to improve interaction. Interaction with the larger community of Athlone is limited due to the location of the site being on the outskirts

of the town. Most participants favoured a self catering system rather than the current bed and board system in communal facilities. Most participants recognise their own room as their personal space but that their room is very small. Some participants described how hard and unsettling it is to be waiting for a determination on their application. The Supplementary Allowance of €19.10 per adult per week and €9.60 per child per week does not adequately meet the needs of their families. Some participants find it difficult to study in confined spaces and therefore need to concentrate harder to ensure they are prepared for school, as they cannot afford extra tuition. Most interviewees highlighted that they find it difficult to take part in extra-curricular activities such as sports clubs or dance/music classes because of an inability to afford the required gear or equipment. Most participants would like to see an overhaul of the direct provision system and its replacement with a fairer and faster system for determination.

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings from the results chapter and relate it to the existing body of knowledge on direct provision. The results chapter presented the interviewee's perception of how living in direct provision has impacted on their social, personal and academic development. In order to achieve this, the results chapter further explored the three seminal headings under ten topics. The topics explored the perceived impact on the social development of participants under the following headings: 1) family relationships; 2) the daily routine in the centre; 3) interaction; 4) communal facilities and 5) financial support. The topics relating to the perceived impact on the personal development of the residents in the centre includes 6) personal space and privacy and 7) the effects of the determination process on the individual. The perceived impact on the academic development of residents is included in the 8) preparedness for school and 9) the extra curricular activities and play topics. The tenth topic includes proposals for reform and how the participant would change the system. These topics will now be discussed in the context of relating the findings to the existing body of knowledge contained in the literature review section.

5.2 General Background

The direct provision system was initially established to provide accommodation for a maximum of six months to people seeking asylum in Ireland (Van Turnhout, 2014, pg 23; Brady, 2014, pg 24; Thornton, 2013, pg 5; Arnold, 2013, pg 11; AkiDwa, 2010, pg 12; O Donoghue, 2000, pg.1). However, the results of this research indicate that the average stay of the participants in this study, who live in the Lissywoolen direct provision centre in Athlone, is four years. This is compatible with figures released by the Department of Justice and Equality which demonstrates that the national average of time spent awaiting determination on their application in direct provision is four years (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg. 53) but some have been in the system up to eleven years (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg 11). Quigley et al (2013, pg. 22) highlights that “90% of asylum seekers suffer from depression after six months in direct provision. MacLochlainn (2015, pg 11) highlights that 21% of asylum seekers have been residing in Direct Provision for seven years or more. The most amount of time spent living in direct provision amongst the participants was five years. However, the findings did allude that some residents have been living in Lissywoolen for ten years. This is an exorbitant amount of time to spend living in the Lissywoolen direct provision centre. One participant described how dissatisfied they were with the direct provision system by saying *“I don’t like living in direct provision but it is all that we have at the minute because I can’t go home and I just have to live with what we have, we can’t change it”*. The results indicate that the uncertainty of direct provision has impacted on the social, personal and academic development of the participants in this study.

5.3 Social Development

5.3.1 Family Relationships

Two thirds of participants discussed how they get frustrated, aggravated or irritated living in direct provision and how those feelings can create familial tensions and distress. *“It is a little bit frustrating and annoying because you like have to study”*. Many of the participants cited that they have seen their parents get upset because they wanted *“a better life for their family”*.

The Children’s First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011, pg. 8) states “neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, and/or medical care”. The findings of this study indicate that family relationships are being impinged upon due to deprivations of these characteristics. These accounts are verified by the Health Information and Quality Authority’s report on direct provision which highlights children’s living conditions, inappropriate contact by adults towards some children in accommodation centres, children sustaining accidental injuries due to living in cramped conditions and the exposure of children to violence between residents, as serious concerns. Concern was also raised about children been left unsupervised for periods while their lone parents went to queue for laundry or food (Ward, 2015, pg. 4). The results indicated that the responsibility of collecting the food is shared between adults and the oldest sibling.

One of the main facets of developing family relationships is the acquisition and assimilation of life learning skills from parents. Previous literature argues that children rarely see their parents cook a meal for them in direct provision (Foreman and Ní Raghallaigh, 2014, pg. 6). The results verify how living in direct provision was impacting on a participant’s family and on her personal development. *“I am not*

a very good cook because my mother doesn't really cook in the mobile. We get most of our food prepared".

Fanning et al (2001, pg 39) argues that the family is the primary agent in the socialisation process. The socialisation process transmits values, customs, beliefs, culture, identity and language from parents to children. Ogbu (2012, Pg 15) states that parenting should provide basic care and nurturing, moral guidance and protection and a safe sanctuary to develop psychological wellbeing. However, the ability of the parents is inhibited by the confined and restricted environment of direct provision. This makes many parents feel hopeless and worthless (Fanning et al, 2001, pg 41). The results substantiate this feeling of hopelessness. *"I have to live with the conditions that I have. There is nothing I can change"*. Likewise, many fathers like to instill a sense of providing for their family economically, but the direct provision policy in Ireland does not permit the right to work and some fathers suffer stress and depression as a result (Arnold, 2013, pg 25; AkiDwa, 2010, pg 13). One participant noted how he felt ashamed that he could not work and provide for his family. *"Where I come from, a man works and looks after his family. I feel I am letting my family down. I want to work like to provide for my family"*. It is clear to see how participants perceive living in direct provision has impacted on their social and personal development.

5.3.2 Daily Routine in the centre

The existing body of literature demonstrates that the daily routine in direct provision centres is monotonous, boring and leads many to a de-skilling and idleness (Fanning et al, 2001, pg 25, pg 44). This monotonous lifestyle has caused serious mental health issues such as depression (Thornton, 2014, pg 5; Arnold, 2013, pgs 17-18; AkiDwa, 2010, pg. 12; Brazil, 2009, pg 1; Fanning et al, 2001, pg 58), sleep

difficulties and suicidal ideation (Arnold, 2013, pg 1) for some residents. Figures released from the Department of Justice indicate that at least one resident of direct provision died by suicide since the system was established (McLellan, 2015, pg.1). The sense of idleness leading to depression is reciprocated in the study where a participant stated *“I want to go out there and do something instead of sitting around the home like... You get so depressed when you are not doing anything”*. In addition, sleep deprivation and sleeping difficulties were experienced amongst at least 33% of the respondents who indicated *“Sometimes, I cannot sleep”* and *“I find it hard to sleep”*. Previous literature indicates that the mental health of the residents might be further affected and exacerbated by the separation from other family members, culture shock, language barriers, fear of deportation, insecurity, poverty, isolation, stigma, prejudice, shame and by the living environment (Mental Health Reform, 2014, pgs 13-17; AkiDwa, 2010, pg 13, Fanning et al, 2001, pg. 30). All of the participants verified that a number of these factors are being experienced in the Lissywoolen direct provision centre such as separation from family members, fear of deportation, insecurity, poverty, shame and the restricted and dilapidated living environment.

The daily routine comprises of collecting food in the morning and returning to the mobile. The children then go to school and the adults predominantly stay on site. On occasion, the residents go by shuttle bus to the town centre to purchase additional food or other basic necessities. Half of the participants indicated that they like to play or watch sports in the evening. One participant said *“Well... basically... you wake up. You go get food. You come back home, come back to the mobile and basically watch some TV. Maybe later on in the day, we can go play football with the boys in the site and then at night we go for food around five o clock, then back into the mobile. That’s the same thing every day or unless you might decide to go to town one of*

the days, see what's in town, go buy some food stuff". Another interviewee verified this account by saying "I get up. I go get food in the centre. I come back to mobile. We have breakfast. In the evening, I read in my room or watch TV. My brother plays football in the evening with the boys. I stay in the mobile with my Mum. We have dinner in the centre". In this regard, the monotony, boredom and idleness of the daily routine may be impacting on the social and personal development of the residents in direct provision.

5.3.3 Interaction

The existing body of literature demonstrates that "children need both positive interaction and early relationship building with adults and other children to ensure an effective learning environment" (Arnold, 2013, pg.24). The poverty experienced in direct provision limits the child's ability to develop social relationships, while also affecting their integration into society. *"Well normally, I don't really leave my mobile much. I stay with family. I used to have friends in school but they now study away from here".*

From the research, there was no evidence to suggest that interaction through regular social activities were organised by the management of the centre. However, English classes were provided to those who wished to improve their ability to speak the language. *"Yeah well, they have a few groups like English classes and they bring in people to teach people and on the social side you have to go out to make friends or meet other people".* One participant highlighted that social activities are not organised amongst the residents. *"If we get to get all of these people to get social together because we don't really do stuff together. There are no activities that we do together. We just have football. If there were social things, people would get more involved in*

many things. If there were something to do, people would do little things together”.

The research indicated that although participants were compliant with the rules regarding visitors, they were also very frustrated with the rules. *“Oh yeah, if you have a visitor they have to sign in, go up to the main desk at reception. It’s a hassle for friends and all because they don’t want to sign in and leave but they are the rules so like they have to go ahead”.* Another participant vented their frustration with the system by stating *“Friends must sign in, sign out. It is like a prison. We are not criminals. We are not breaking laws”.* The lack of interactional activities is perceived to be impacting on the social, personal and academic development of the participants.

5.3.4 Communal Facilities

Previous literature highlights food provision and preparation as major concerns for asylum seekers (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg.32; Foreman and Ní Raghallaigh, 2014, pg.6; Arnold, 2013, pg.28; AkiDwa, 2010, pg.17; Fanning et al, 2001, pg.35). One participant in the research said *“Most of the food is already prepared. They already cook everything for you”.* Food poverty is defined as *“the inability to access a nutritionally adequate diet and the related impacts on health, culture and social participation.”* (Friel and Conlon, 2004, pg.1). The existing body of literature criticises food preparation and provision for a lack of consultation at meal times (AkiDwa, 2010, pg 17); pre-determined menus; provision of food which does not cater for specific dietary conditions (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg 32; Fanning et al, 2001, pg 36); food which is not representative of their culture (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg. 32; Arnold, 2013, pg. 28); or food which does not cater for ‘sensitive eaters’ (AkiDwa, 2010, pg. 17). *“You might go there and there is nothing you really want so you go back home and try make*

yourself a sandwich". Another interviewee commented *"The menus are already set. So you either have to eat what is there or you go back to your mobile"*. The results from this research demonstrate that two thirds of respondents favoured a self catering system as opposed to the current bed and board system.

There was evidence in the research to show that sufficient amounts of food were not been provided and many families have to purchase additional food. *"You have to buy food or go hungry. Many people buy food. Many people would have to go to town. Some people like their own food, you know, we eat different food where we come from and we do not eat their food every day"*. This assertion is supported by existing literature (Arnold, 2013, pg. 15; Fanning et al, 2001, pg 35). There was also evidence to suggest that food is being rationed *"It is so hard but my mum...she keeps food for when food is low"*.

Shannon (2012, pg 26) indicated that there was a 'real risk' of child abuse in Direct Provision where single parent families are required to share with strangers and where families with teenage children of opposite gender are required to share one room (Arnold, 2013, pg 7, pg 19; AkiDwa, 2010, pg 15). The research shows that although there are shower and toilet facilities in each caravan in Athlone, there are also communal wash and toilet facilities in the centre. *"The centre has canteen, showers, few toilets, and laundry"*. Another participant commented *"each mobile has their own shower and toilet and in the main building block you can use the toilets aswell there"*.

5.3.5 Financial Support

The right to work is central to the maintenance of skills and education, which if not maintained can be lost (MacLochlainn, 2015, pg. 29). In Ireland, asylum seekers do not have the right to work.

Every adult receives €19.10 per week and every child receives €9.60 per week. This weekly allowance is used to supplement personal food stocks and to provide other basic necessities (Arnold, 2013, pg. 15; Fanning et al, 2001, pg 35). The research indicates that the meagre supplementary allowance is impacting on their social, personal and academic development. *“It doesn’t even cover the basics in our family like. It is very low because you can’t even really do anything with it. You can just buy one thing and it’s mostly gone like. You can’t buy shoes like you know. We have no money to play football. It is very limited and little to buy stuff for football. When you try to go for other sports like rugby, football; you don’t have the money to buy all the things that you really need to use for sport”.*

Another resident highlighted how the allowance impacts on their social, personal and academic development. *“My mother...she has to buy some things so that we can keep up with the house so that we can eat or whatever and so that we can take to school and things like that. Many people buy food. You have to buy food or go hungry. What are we going to buy for just €20?”*A similar response was given by another interviewee but his response also indicated that food is rationed. *“It is so hard but my mum...she keeps food for when food is low”.*

5.4 Personal Development

5.4.1 Personal Space and Privacy

Two thirds of respondents highlighted that they had an issue with the lack of personal space. *“They (Mobile homes) are small you know, once you grow up like. When you are young you wouldn’t mind but like when you grow up you need more space and space to yourself. You want loads of room to put up loads of stuff. Mobiles don’t give you that option”.* Another resident commented on the lack of personal space *“it is basically your room like. That is your only*

personal space". More information was presented by another participant *"Like.. we stay in mobiles"*. Another participant verifies this account. *"Eh...well it is very small... My personal space is like my room, that's it"*.

5.4.2 Effects of the Determination Process

Arnold (2013, pg.5) states that the direct provision was set up while asylum seekers were awaiting determination on their application. This uncertainty and the fear of deportation have impacted on the social, personal and academic development of the participants. One participant stated *"It is very hard...to think about it, it is very depressing. You don't know anything. You don't know when. I think that is the most devastating thing. When you don't know when. So anytime, anytime they might tell you that your process is successful or unsuccessful and at anytime you might have to be sent back and that is very ...unsettling"*. Another interviewee also commented by saying *"It is very hard. Let's say someone comes in and say they have been living there for one or two years and they get their papers and other people have been there for ten years. It is very hard and it's stupid like that. Some people have been here for ten years and there is no movement. Everything is just the same and there is nothing going on. Everybody is just hoping that when the papers come you know. It is very frustrating. Really I try to think not much about it. I just try to focus on my work, studying and what's next after that because there wouldn't be much that you could even do if you don't get them, try to just live or whatever"*.

MacLochlainn (2015, pg. 27) highlights that 6-7% of the residents within the direct provision system who have received leave to remain cannot access affordable housing due to the increase of rent in the

private housing market and the ceilings on Rent Supplement. However, 33% of the respondents who took part in this research have subsequently received their leave to remain and cannot make the transition out of direct provision to affordable housing. This is a significant statistic compared to the figure cited by the existing body of knowledge. This issue may exacerbate as private market housing rents continue to rise.

5.5 Academic Development

5.5.1 Preparedness for school

Education is a very important mechanism in overcoming social marginalisation and exclusion (Fanning et al, 2001, pg 7). However, the research indicates that living in direct provision is impinging on the social, personal and academic development of the participants. Some direct provision centres do not have customised private spaces or study or homework areas (Arnold, 2013, pg 15; Doras Luimní, 2011, pg 9). A lack of adequate and furnished study and play areas impacts on the child's social and academic development (Ogbu, 2012, pg. 23). The research is in direct correlation to this account. *"Because you know, the space is small and if you try to fit a desk in there, you cant. You wouldn't get much space so it is very hard to study in there to be honest. You can hear other people from outside because the way the mobiles are so close"*. Some find it difficult to concentrate with the noise of other family members talking, electrical appliances switched on or other people talking in the vicinity of the unit. Another participant remarked *"Study in a small place is very difficult. Because eh...for me like when I used to study in my mobile, I find it very difficult. Like it is so small and people be talking like but in your room you can hear and it is very loud and stuff like that"*. This sentiment is echoed by another participant who stated *"I found the study hard.*

Our mobile is small and it can be noisy with my brother and mother. I can hear TV also. I study on my bed because I have no desk and cannot study in living area because it is too noisy. The mobile gets so warm. It's hard and ehh.... I can always hear people outside the mobile playing". It is reported that some students attempt to do their homework by confining themselves to sitting on a floor or lying on a bed (Ogbu, 2012, pg 23). This is not conducive to adequately prepare for school.

The existing body of literature comments that a lack of pre-school education and childcare in direct provision not only affects the asylum seeker children who could avail of this pre-school education but it also affects parents who cannot avail of free English or computing classes, as there is no one to take care of the children (FLAC, 2009, pg. 127; Faughnan et al, 2002, pg 47; Fanning et al, 2001, pg 55). Some accommodation centres have childcare facilities such as Lissywoolen, Athlone but these are often limited and over-stretched due to the demand (FLAC, 2009, pg 127). Many asylum seekers identified preschool as vital for a young child to learn how to speak English, particularly where parents were not proficient in the language (Fanning et al, 2001, pg. 73).

5.5.2 Extra- Curricular Activities and Play

Young asylum seekers are often excluded from extra-curricular activities such as sports teams, music tuition, drama or dance classes, extra study classes or class trips due to an inability to pay the appropriate fee, gear or costumes, and equipment (Arnold, 2013, pg 25; FLAC, 2009, pg 124; Fanning et al, 2001, pg 8-9). "Children require physical stimulation and safe spaces to develop cognitive, behavioural and emotional functions" (Arnold, 2013, pg 1). Finding space for children to play safely in can be a challenge for parents in Direct

Provision (AkiDwa, 2010, pg. 14). Membership fees of sports or cultural groups are often a barrier to inclusion. This is substantiated in the research. *“Well I’m playing cricket myself so and to buy the gear you are talking about , to buy the complete set you are talking about like €600 and maybe transport...you have to pay membership fees and all. If you are lucky... some of the clubs have allowed me to go on without paying subscription fee. Also the club let me use their gear because I couldn’t purchase my own gear but it would be nice to have your own stuff”*. Some clubs provide gear to asylum seekers to retain their participation but this is not the case for all clubs. Transport to and from football pitches, dance halls or community centres is also a barrier to participation. *“Mostly I walk. Also sometimes my brother has a bike so sometimes I borrow his bike and have to cycle down to training but its hard when it’s raining you know”*.

Some accommodation centres have playgrounds. The research indicates that this holds true for Athlone. One participant remarked *“The play facilities are mostly for young children. They play on the swings and stuff like. We only play football like at ...not much at all to do like. There is a basketball court but we use that mostly for football. No one really plays basketball, mostly play football. They have just moved the computer room into the reception so if you go there you can use the internet with their computers. Well they have got a games room and eh... a small little gym where you can go and use the treadmill. We have football pitch at the back and a small basketball area”*. Another participant commented *“Well they built some playground but some swings broke and there is no one to fix them”*. It is abundantly clear to see how living in direct provision has impacted on the social, personal and academic development of the participants.

5.6 Reform

The results indicate that there is a strong correlation between the findings and the existing body of knowledge on the single determination process and the need to speed up the applications (Thornton, 2014, pg. 2). *“What I would change is maybe... is telling people how long the cases are going to take because I think if you tell someone your case is going to take four years, you might have a plan, you know...that will let me do this instead of sit around for four years and do nothing like”*. Another interviewee commented that they would like to expedite the system. *“I would like to speed up the system. Your lawyer can’t even tell them how long it is going to take because they don’t even know themselves”*.

5.7 Summary

Much of the results attained in this research correlates with the existing body of research and theories. The research explored how residents perceived living in direct provision has impacted on their social, personal and academic development as children. The results attained in the social development section correlates with the exiting body of literature on family relationships, the daily routine in the centre, interaction, communal facilities and financial support. The results included in the personal development section correlates in the most with personal space and privacy and the effects of the determination process. However, there is a significant variant in this study with regards the 6-7% as cited by MacLochlainn (2015, pg. 27) to the 33% in this study of those who have received their leave to remain status but cannot make the transition from direct provision to affordable housing due to the increasing rent in the private housing market and the Rent Supplement ceilings. The results attained in the academic development section including preparedness for school and extra-curricular activities and play are similar to the existing body of knowledge. The reform section recognises the need for a faster and fairer system. This is consistent with existing literature.

5.8 Limitations

This study was restricted to participants aged between 18 and 23 years of age. Some of the information was presented in a retrospective manner which may have resulted in some information been inaccurately presented as it is very much dependant on the ability of the participants to recall specific detail about past events.

The policy of relocation of residents by the Reception and Integration Agency was certainly a restrictive factor in this study. The Reception and Integration Agency have the power and authority to relocate residents who may be on protest or in conflict with the management of the centre to other accommodation centres at very short notice. This resulted in all interviews been conducted off-site at a neutral environment.

The researcher was aware that language barriers may have been an issue in conducting this study. In this regard, the researcher limited interviewees to those with a proficiency in English. This makes extrapolations for the sample group and generalisations about the group more difficult.

5.9 Suggestions for future research

The researcher's suggestions for future research include an overview of the importance of social, personal and academic development for young asylum seekers. A second suggestion for future research include an investigation into how many young asylum seekers received philanthropical support to advance to third level education and its impact on the social, personal and academic development of young asylum seekers. Lastly, the researcher believes that a

longitudinal study on the social, personal and academic development of young asylum seekers would be very beneficial to this issue as it would be able to scrutinise the social, personal and academic development of child and young asylum seekers and document their impact on adulthood.

6. Recommendations

Arising from this research, there is an unambiguous demand to overhaul the current system of direct provision. It is clear that there is a need for a single determination procedure. This would reduce the length of time that asylum seekers spend in direct provision centres. This would also reduce the unnecessary anguish and frustration experienced by asylum seekers awaiting a determination on their application.

The research also highlights the need for purpose-built or acquired self catering units to be provided for anyone in the direct provision system for any longer than six months. These units should be dispersed to allow maximum integration into and interaction with the respective communities. Direct provision centres should be State owned and managed to provide accommodation to asylum seekers for a maximum of six months while appropriate self catering units are identified. The operation of communal showers and toilets needs to cease with immediate effect in the interest of child protection. Adequate play facilities and private space should be provided. Staff in these reformed Direct Provision centres should receive regular training to encourage culturally competent practice. Professional services should also be provided to residents such as mental health care teams, counselling, family supports, language classes and childcare services.

Ireland is the only country in the European Union to prohibit asylum seekers from working. Ireland should opt into EU Directive 2003/09/EC laying down minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers. The right to work should be provided to all. Additionally, the Student Support Act (2011) should be amended to allow asylum seekers to attend third level education. The Habitual Residence Clause should also be amended to allow asylum seekers apply for welfare assistance. This would replace the current arrangement of the Supplementary Allowance provision.

The Rent Supplement ceilings need to reflect the current private housing market. It is incomprehensible that 33% of participants in this study and 6-7% of asylum seekers in the State have received their leave to remain but cannot make the transition from direct provision to the private market. The Habitual Residence Clause also restricts asylum seekers from applying to Local Authorities for social housing, and this needs to be addressed.

Lastly, an amnesty should be provided to any current asylum seeker who has been in the direct provision system longer than the intended six month period. This would cater for the backlog of applications and allow a fresh start to the State's policy on asylum seekers.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, the purpose of conducting this research was to explore how residents of the Lissywoolen Direct Provision Centre in Athlone perceived living in the direct provision system has impacted on their social, personal and academic development as children. This research provides a succinct and clear portrayal of the perceived impact on the social, personal and academic development of young people in direct provision.

The research has highlighted that the perceived impact of living in direct provision has affected the social development of young people in areas such as family relationships; by the daily routine in the centre; the lack of social activities organised by the management of the centre to promote interaction; communal facilities; and financial support. The personal development of individuals is impacted by the lack of personal space and privacy and the affect of awaiting the determination on their application. The direct provision system has perceived to have impacted on the academic development of young people living in direct provision in how each individual is prepared for school and their ability to engage in extra-curricular activities and play. Lastly, the participants highlighted a need for a fairer and faster system of determining applications and an overhaul of the direct provision system.

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9.1 Appendix A



Direct Provision, Diminished Development: An Exploration of the Impact that living in the Lissywollen Direct Provision Centre has had on the Social, Personal and Academic Development of Child Asylum Seekers

Paul Hogan
087-9054960

Consent Form

I agree to voluntarily take part in this research on the educational experiences of young people within the Direct Provision system. I understand that my name will not appear in the report and the information that I give will only be used for the purposes of the study. I am also aware that my confidentiality and anonymity will be protected.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

9.2 Appendix B



Direct Provision, Diminished Development: An Exploration of the Impact that living in the Lissywollen Direct Provision Centre has had on the Social, Personal and Academic Development of Child Asylum Seekers

Information Sheet

I would like to know if you can assist me with research I am doing for my college course in Athlone Institute of Technology. I am carrying out research to find out about the social, personal and academic development of young people living in the Direct Provision system.

If you agree to take part, I will interview you to find out about your experiences living in Direct Provision. I will ask you about what it is like living in Direct Provision, what facilities you have to study in, how you get to and from school, your personal development learning, and what challenges you face with education including learning personal and social skills as an asylum seeker in Ireland.

I wish to record the interview. I also may take some notes throughout the interview. This will just be used to assist the interview and will be destroyed afterwards. You can choose not to take part in the interview or withdraw from the interview at any stage. You do not have to answer all of the questions, if you do not want.

I will do everything to make you feel as comfortable and relaxed as possible. Everything we talk about is just between you and me. I may use some quotes but these quotes will not be accompanied with your name. Nobody, apart from me, has permission to access any information you give me and I will protect your identity at all times. But if you were to say something to me that would cause me worry about your safety, I will talk to you about that. We may need to talk to another person so that we are satisfied you are safe.

Your name and the names of the other participants will not appear in the research. The name of the centre will not be in the report so as to protect your identity.

If you would like to take part in the research, please read the consent forms, sign your name and date them. If you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me with the details below.

Thanking you in advance for your consideration on this matter,

Paul Hogan

087-9054960

phogan@westmeathcoco.ie

9.3 Appendix C



Direct Provision, Diminished Development: An Exploration of the Impact that living in the Lissywollen Direct Provision Centre has had on the Social, Personal and Academic Development of Child Asylum Seekers

Paul Hogan

087-9054960

Consent form to use a Dictaphone

I agree to allow the researcher to record the interview by the use of a Dictaphone. I understand that the tape will be destroyed once the transcript is written up. I am aware that my name will not appear on the transcript and that my confidentiality and anonymity will be protected at all times. I am also aware that all transcripts and files will be destroyed after the research is concluded.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

9.4 Appendix D



Direct Provision, Diminished Development: An Exploration of the Impact that living in the Lissywollen Direct Provision Centre has had on the Social, Personal and Academic Development of Child Asylum Seekers

Paul Hogan

087-9054960

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Social Development

- The routine in the centre
- Meal Times
- Communal catering
- Procedures for leaving, returning and bring in guests
- Shower and toilet facilities
- Interaction with other residents
- Proposals for reform

Personal Development

- Personal space and privacy
- Effect of others getting status or deportation

- The delay and waiting for a decision

Academic Development

- Preparedness for school
- School lunches
- Study space
- Study motivation
- Extra-curricular school activities
- Interaction with class mates
- Academic Aspirations
- Proposals for reform



Direct Provision, Diminished Development: An Exploration of the Impact that living in the Lissywollen Direct Provision Centre has had on the Social, Personal and Academic Development of Child Asylum Seekers

Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

(e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

2. No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principle set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.

9.6 Appendix F



Direct Provision, Diminished Development: An Exploration of the Impact that living in the Lissywollen Direct Provision Centre has had on the Social, Personal and Academic Development of Child Asylum Seekers

Paul Hogan

087-9054960

Group Interview

- 1) What are your feelings on Direct Provision?
- 2) What challenges do young asylum seekers face in the education system?
- 3) What do you think of the communal facilities in Direct Provision Centres?
- 4) Do you think food is important in preparing people for school/college? Please explain.
- 5) Do you think the weekly allowance is adequate to cater for the needs of your family? Please explain.
- 6) What changes would you make to the asylum system in Ireland?

9.7 Appendix G



Direct Provision, Diminished Development: An Exploration of the Impact that living in the Lissywollen Direct Provision Centre has had on the Social, Personal and Academic Development of Child Asylum Seekers

Paul Hogan

087-9054960

Results Information Sheet

The findings indicated that direct provision is perceived to have impacted on the social, personal and academic development of the residents. The findings indicated that living in direct provision has impacted on the social development of residents in areas such as family relationships, the daily routine in the centre, lack of interaction, communal facilities and the financial support which does not provide the basic necessities.

The findings also indicate that living in direct provision has impacted on the personal development of the residents. The personal space and privacy afforded to each resident is inadequate to meet the need of residents. In addition, the affect of awaiting a determination on the application or the effect of others receiving their status or deportation orders has also impacted on the personal development of residents.

The results highlighted how living in direct provision is perceived to have impacted on the academic development of the residents. Asylum seekers are precluded from attending third level education. Residents of direct provision centres have to concentrate harder to be adequately prepared for school. The Supplementary Allowance of €19.10 per adult per week and €9.60 per child per week does not adequately meet the needs of their families and makes it difficult for residents to take part in extra-curricular activities such as sports clubs or dance/music classes because of an inability to afford the required gear or equipment. Most participants would like to see an overhaul of the direct provision system and it's replacement with a fairer and faster system for determination.