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Question No: 418

Ref No: 5438/06

To the Minister for Social and Family Affairs

* To ask the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the full range of entitlements available to refugees and asylum seekers; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- John Deasy.

* For **WRITTEN** answer on Tuesday, 14th February, 2006.

REPLY

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Séamus Brennan)

Since April 2000 the needs of asylum seekers are catered for under the direct provision system operated by the Reception and Integration Agency of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Under the system asylum seekers are provided with full board accommodation and other facilities such as laundry services and access to leisure areas. To take account of the services provided, a direct provision allowance of €19.10 per adult per week and €9.60 per child per week is payable in respect of any personal requisites required.

Following the introduction of the statutory habitual residency condition in May 2004, asylum seekers are generally not entitled to receive social welfare support. Since then, the payment of this weekly direct provision allowance is being made on an administrative basis by the Community Welfare Division of the Health Service Executive on behalf on the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Intro as an SWA
payment!!

??
So
it
suddenly
became
an admin
payment!
NOT THE CASE!!

This is an interim measure pending finalisation of arrangements by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to integrate payment of an allowance with its management of accommodation and related services for asylum seekers. It continues to be open to any asylum seeker to seek assistance for a particular once-off need by way of an exceptional needs payment under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme.

In addition a small number of asylum seekers are in receipt of other social welfare payments such as unemployment payments, one-parent family payments, pensions, disability allowance and child benefit. These payments were authorised prior to the introduction of the habitual residency condition.

Refugees, i.e. people whose claim for asylum is successful, are entitled to assistance under the social welfare system on the same basis as Irish citizens. For example, they can seek employment but if they are unable to secure employment they will qualify for unemployment assistance if they fulfil the standard conditions of being available for, capable of and genuinely seeking work and if their means are below the qualifying limit. Similarly, they may qualify for other supports, such as one-parent family payment or unemployment assistance subject to the same conditions that apply to all other applicants for these payments.