



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND LAW REFORM  
OIFIG AN ARD-RÚNAÍ, AN ROINN DLÍ AGUS CIRT, COMHIONANNAIS AGUS ATHCHÓIRITHE DLÍ

Doc 12

26 October, 1999.

Dear Eddie,

I am writing to you regarding the decisions taken by Government on 10th September and 3rd November 1998 and 19th October, 1999 concerning the introduction of a system of direct provision to meet the basic needs of asylum seekers.

While this Department has been charged with the overall responsibility for preparation of a direct provision plan, the Government is agreed that Health Boards and Local Authorities must continue to have the primary role in the actual delivery of the various services that will form part of the direct provision regime. The Government has also decided that the Interdepartmental Committee on Immigration, Asylum and related issues will continue in being but will be expanded to include the relevant expertise to work out exactly how direct provision will operate.

This Department has had a team of two people at A.P. and A.O. levels working on this matter for some time. They have researched the situation in a number of EU countries and have kept in close contact with the team planning for the implementation of direct provision in the UK (expected to commence in April 2000). It is now necessary to get down to detailed planning of a direct provision system here so as to be in a position to meet the Government's wishes. The Minister (who has been mandated by the Government to Chair the Interdepartmental Committee) will be expected to report progress to Government at regular intervals - it is his aim to complete the planning stage for a direct provision system before the end of this year.

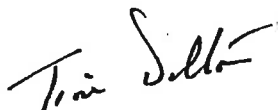
The representatives of each Department on the Interdepartmental Committee are at principal level and as all of those concerned have heavy work commitments in their respective Departments, it would be unrealistic to expect that they would have the time to devote to the detailed planning now required. What is needed I believe is a dedicated project team comprising personnel at A.P. level or equivalent with the relevant expertise from Departments and Agencies currently involved in the provision of support to asylum seekers. The function of the project team will be to formulate detailed proposals for consideration by the Interdepartmental Committee. To do this effectively and efficiently it will be necessary in my view that the project team be assigned to one Department and to work as a unit. We will make the necessary arrangements for accommodation and whatever equipment may be required.

I am writing to you now to ask you to nominate a member of staff with the relevant expertise at A.P. or equivalent level from your Department to be seconded to the project team for a period of six months. I would appreciate if you could give this your personal and immediate attention as the need to address the problems posed by the ever increasing inflow of

asylum applicants is understandably considered by Government to be deserving of the highest priority.

Finally, in selecting an official from your Department, might I mention that the project team will need IT expertise especially when considering the introduction of a smart card or debit card system. I understand that your IT people already have experience in implementing a pilot debit card scheme in the Ennis area. It would seem ideal, therefore, if you could assign somebody from your IT area with experience of this project who would also have sufficient experience to represent your Department's interests more generally.

Yours sincerely,



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Tim Dalton  
Secretary General

Mr. Edmond Sullivan,  
Secretary General,  
Department of Social Community and Family Affairs,  
Aras Mhic Dhiarmada,  
Store Street,  
Dublin 1.