



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND LAW REFORM  
AN ROINN DLÍ AGUS CIRT, COMHIONANNAIS AGUS ATHCHÓIRITHE DLÍ

# **Report of the Working Group**

**to review**

**RIA House Rules and**

**Procedures**

**MAY 2008**

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## 1. Introduction

On 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2001 the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) was established under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The remit of the RIA was to provide accommodation and ancillary services to asylum seekers through the systems of direct provision and dispersal, responding to crisis situations which result in relatively large numbers of refugees arriving in Ireland within a short period of time and supporting the voluntary repatriation of non-economically active accession state nationals. The integration function of the RIA was assigned to the Integration Unit of the Office of the Minister for Integration, an office newly created in July 2007, under the Minister of State, Mr. Conor Lenihan, T.D.

As at end April 2008, there were over 6,850 people residing in accommodation provided by the RIA.

A working group was established in 2002 by the RIA to put in place a formal protocol for dealing with complaints and incidents in reception and accommodation centres. The working group, chaired by Jack Marrinan, was set up to make recommendations in relation to the resolution and avoidance of disputes between residents, centre management and the RIA. This Working Party agreed a draft set of rules which were adopted by RIA and have since applied to all centres within the RIA Accommodation portfolio.

One of the recommendations of the original working group was that the House Rules and Procedures be reviewed at appropriate intervals. In light of that recommendation and with a view to the experience garnered by the RIA in the period since the implementation of the original House Rules, the RIA established a Working Group in September, 2007 to review the House Rules and Procedures applying in Direct Provision Reception and Accommodation Centres.

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## 2. Membership

The members of the Working Group are as follows:

Mr. Séan Ó'Riordáin	Chairman
D/Supt Thomas Dixon	An Garda Síochána
Ms. Deirdre Ryan	Health Service Executive
Ms. Catherine Kenny	Refugee Information Service
Mr. Jerome Connolly	Irish Commission for Justice and Peace
Mr. Deogratias Ladislas Ndakengerwa	Irish Refugee Council
Mr. Phelim McCloskey	Mosney Accommodation Centre
Mr. Pat McKenna	Mosney Accommodation Centre
Mr. Shane Timony	Cliffview Accommodation Centre
Mr. Denis McFadden	Office of the Attorney General
Ms. Linda Keating	RIA
Mr. Pat O'Riordan	RIA
Ms. Siobhan O'Higgins	RIA
Ms. Bernie Loughrey	RIA – Secretary to the Group

## 3. Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference of the Working Group are:

1. To review the operation of the RIA House Rules and Procedures, agreed in 2003, in particular the element that relates to the Complaints Procedure and to consider whether amendments are required in light of experience.
2. Notwithstanding any possible substantive amendments to the House Rules and Procedures, to review the wording of the procedures for the purpose of greater simplicity and clarity.
3. Make recommendations to the RIA on foot of these considerations.

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#### 4. Meetings:

The Working Group met on twelve occasions between 5<sup>th</sup> September 2007 and 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008. It received submissions from:

- Birchwood House Residents Committee
  - Waterford Immigration Network
  - SONAS,
- and a joint submission from
- Irish Refugee Council, Integrating Ireland and the Refugee Information Service

A subgroup of the main group also visited four accommodation centres and spoke with residents and a number of local support groups.

#### 5. Draft Revised House Rules and Procedures

The Working Group recommends the amendments to the RIA's Draft Rules and Procedures outlined in Appendix 1, as incorporated in the revised Draft Rules and Procedures in Appendix 2.

The Chairman acknowledges that, in order to reach consensus on the revised House Rules and Procedures, all parties recognised the need to identify common ground. Signing up to the agreed report does not prejudice organisations in terms of continuing to hold strong views relating to other aspects of the rules.

## 6. Key Collateral Recommendations

The Working Group also made the following collateral recommendations:

- The House Rules and Procedures should be proofed for clarity and simplicity by a professional 'English language proofing' company,
- the House Rules and Procedures should be available in the principal languages spoken in the accommodation centres,
- an up to date copy of the House Rules and Procedures should be available on the RIA website and any ongoing amendments should be flagged,
- where there are recognised official standards or guidelines which apply, information on these should be available from the RIA or from other Government Departments or Agencies,
- steps should be taken, on adoption of the Revised House Rules and Procedures, to ensure that they are brought to the attention of asylum seekers, of centre managers and of relevant staff in accommodation centres and in the RIA,
- each asylum seeker should be asked to formally acknowledge, by their signature, the receipt on admission to the accommodation centre, of a copy of the House Rules and Procedures. This should be followed up by induction meetings with groups of new residents at which centre management would outline the principal features of the House Rules and Procedures, provide information on the complaints procedures and forms etc. and deal with any queries which arise.
- RIA should ensure, specifically, that the management and staff involved in the operation of the House Rules and Procedures in accommodation centres and in the RIA receive appropriate briefing and training in the amendments to the Rules and the ongoing operation of the revised Rules and complaints procedure,
- a computer based system should be developed by the RIA – in the context of the ongoing AISIP project - under which all major issues and complaints raised either with management in centres or direct with the RIA are recorded and categorised in an appropriate standardised format, and,
- it was agreed by a majority of the Working Group to recommend that a Consultative – Review Group, with membership similar to the Working Group, should be established. This Consultative – Review Group, which would hold its first meeting in May 2009, would consider the operation of the revised House Rules and Procedures. The views and recommendations of the Consultative – Review Group would be incorporated in a report to the RIA .

## 7. Conclusion

The Chairman wishes to express his appreciation to the members of the Working Group for the very considerable work which they have put into the revision of the House Rules and Procedures. He especially wishes to record his own appreciation and that of the Working Group to the help and assistance given to us by the RIA representatives, Linda Keating, Pat O'Riordan, Siobhan O'Higgins and by the Working Group Secretary, Bernie Loughrey.

*Séan O' Riordáin*

Mr. Séan Ó'Riordáin  
Chairman

*Thomas Dixon*

D/Supt Thomas Dixon  
An Garda Síochána

*Jerome Connolly*

Mr. Jerome Connolly  
Irish Commission for  
Justice and Peace

*Deogratias Ladislas Ndakengerwa*

Mr. Deogratias Ladislas Ndakengerwa  
Irish Refugee Council

*Pat McKenna*

Mr. Pat McKenna  
Mosney Accommodation Centre

*Denis McFadden*

Mr. Denis McFadden  
Office of the Attorney General

*Pat O' Riordan*

Mr. Pat O'Riordan  
Reception and Integration Agency

*Bernie Loughrey*

Ms. Bernie Loughrey  
Reception and Integration Agency  
(Secretary to the Working Group)

*Deirdre Ryan*

Ms. Deirdre Ryan  
HSE

*Catherine Kenny*

Ms. Catherine Kenny  
Refugee Information Service

*Phelim McCloskey*

Mr. Phelim McCloskey  
Mosney Accommodation Centre

*Shane Timony*

Mr. Shane Timony  
Cliffview Accommodation Centre

*Linda Keating*

Ms. Linda Keating  
Reception and Integration Agency

*Siobhan O' Higgins*

Ms. Siobhan O'Higgins  
Reception and Integration Agency

14 May 2008

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