

SOUTHERN HEALTH BOARD

Community Care Offices,
St. Finbarr's Hospital,
Douglas Road,
Cork.



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Facsimile Cover Sheet

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Date:	29- October - 1999
Subject:	Asylum Seekers
Pages including this cover page:	6.

COMMENTS:

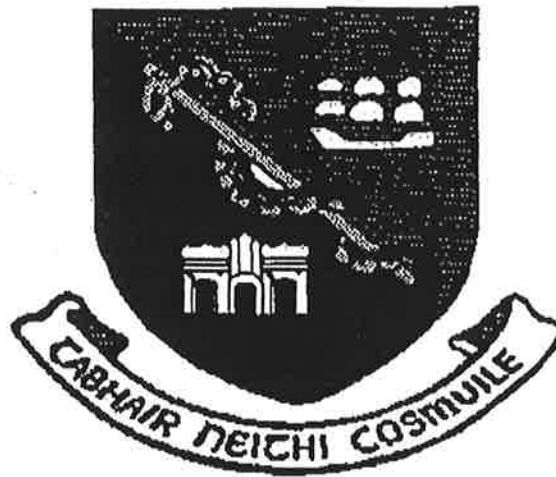
Mary,
Would you please copy this and give a copy
of it to Brian O' Raghallaigh and Mary Connell.
Raymond,
Tom.

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#ExploringDP



SOUTHERN HEALTH BOARD

PROTOCOL

ON THE PROVISION

OF SERVICES TO

ASYLUM SEEKERS

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21st October 1999

Protocol on the Provision of Services to Asylum Seekers

1. **Introduction**

The number of people entering this country and claiming Asylum at the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform (DJELR) under the 1951 United Nations Convention has increased substantial over the past two years. As a result the Eastern Health Board can no longer provide accommodation and other Local Authorities/Health Boards have been asked to assist in the relocation of Asylum Seekers out of the functional area of the Eastern Health Board. In order to ensure that all regulations and circulars continue to be complied with it is now necessary to put in place protocols for the reception of Asylum Seekers.

2. **Legal Position**

The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform are the relevant Department legally responsible for the care and reception of Asylum Seekers. It would appear that this responsibility has been given on an ad-hoc basis to the Eastern Health Board. From inquiries, which I have made both within the Eastern Health Board and within the Department of Social Community & Family Affairs this arrangement is unsatisfactory and should not be replicated within the Southern Health Board.

3. **Present Position**

The Government has decided that asylum seekers entering the state from a specified date will be accommodated outside of the function area of the Eastern Health Board.

It is proposed that a National Task Force will progress this, the membership of which has not yet been agreed.

At present we have accepted into the functional area of the Southern Health Board approximately 130 applications from Asylum Seekers and their dependants. To-date these people have been accommodated at two principle centers: (a) Stela Maris Hostel, Strand Street, Youghal, Co Cork. (b) Drishane Convent, Millstreet, Co. Cork.

The accommodation at both of these centers was pre arranged by Wexford County Council who arranged appropriate payments with the respective landlords.

Despite accommodation being pre-arranged by the relevant Local Authority these Asylum Seekers have now dispersed into 15 Community Welfare Officers locations and two of them are currently registered as homeless despite accommodation having been provided (see appendix 1).

4. Current Supplementary Welfare Allowance Circulars

In May 1993 an Inter Departmental Committee was set up to examine policy and practice with regard to Non Irish Citizens who are resident in the state including people who apply for Refugee Status.

There are a number of circulars and letters, which set out the procedures for dealing with Asylum Seekers.

- Supplementary Welfare Allowance – No. 1/1999 (see Appendix 2) which requests each Health Board to designate a Community Welfare Officer specifically to deal with Asylum Seekers.

Under the guidelines which were published in June 1996 each Health Board has nominated a designated Community Welfare Officer to deal with the reception of Asylum Seekers, so as to act as a co-ordinator and, to provide practical assistance with their special needs. Community Welfare Officers dealing with Asylum Seekers in different locations within their Health Board should keep in contact with their designated Community Welfare Officer.

The Department of Social Community & Family Affairs has directed that Asylum Seekers/Refugees who have been provided with accommodation by a Local Housing Authority should not be awarded Supplementary Welfare Allowance (Rent Allowance) (see Appendix 3 letter from Ms. Mary Lally, June 1999) as they are deemed to have been housed by the relevant Local Authority.

Procedures relating to the Post Draft Payment Method, Blue Temporary Payment Cards and Asylum Seekers are contained in Supplementary Welfare Allowance Circular no.2/1999. (see Appendix 4).

5. Government Decision

Government Decision (S180/20/10/0102A) dated 19/10/99 agreed to a proposal to advertise for the provision of full board accommodation to Asylum Seekers. It is our understanding that as a result of this decision Local Authorities, as Housing Authorities, will be expected to source suitable accommodation and Health Boards will be required to provide ancillary welfare and health services to Asylum Seekers.

6. Role of Southern Health Board

The Southern Health Board in exercise of its duties and responsibilities will provide the following pursuant to the Government decision of 19/10/99:

- a) Ensure that all persons eligible will receive their legal entitlements under the provisions of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme. This will include the payment of Basic Allowances to people with no income. Where their income from any source including Supplementary Welfare Allowance is insufficient to meet their needs then appropriate supplements will be paid. The Southern Health Board will make available when the need arises Exceptional Need Payments and Urgent Need Payments.
- b) Basic Entitlements to Health Services in accordance with the provisions of the 1970 Health Act will be made available where eligibility is established. This will include Full, General, Medical and Surgical Facilities under the General Medical Services Scheme.
- c) A Health Screening Service in accordance with the guidelines for health assessments prepared by the Department of Public Health (October 1998).
- d) In terms of housing accommodation a Homeless Forum has been established in conjunction with Cork Corporation to provide emergency accommodation for individuals presenting as homeless. This system is not appropriate for dealing with planned relocation of large numbers of persons.
- e) Overall in terms of housing accommodation the Southern Health Board notes that Cork Corporation, Cork and Kerry County Councils and relevant Urban District Councils are the appropriate authorities to provide accommodation to Asylum Seekers / Refugees.

In this context it is noted that Wexford County Council made planned arrangements to house Asylum Seekers in Youghal and met all accommodation costs. A similar situation also arose in relation to accommodation of Asylum Seekers in Millstreet, Co. Cork.

It is the Board's view that planned relocation of numbers of Asylum Seekers is the responsibility of the Housing Authorities, i.e. Cork Corporation, Cork and Kerry County Councils.

- f) On foot of Government decision of 19th October 1999 it is noted that the Local Authorities when advertising and seeking accommodation should do so in the context of full board provision.

Tom Ryan
Project Manager

Encs.