Access to autonomous housing for beneficiaries of international protection in Ireland

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Who are we talking about?

- Beneficiaries of international protection (recognised refugees)

Arrived in Ireland → Applied for asylum (asylum seeker) → Positive decision (recognised refugee)
Background

- Entitlements
  - Same as Irish citizens
- Material reception conditions end on receipt of status
- IPAS policy:
  - Don’t evict directly into homeless accommodation
  - Transfers to emergency accommodation after 12 months (single) or 24 months (families) with status
Who are we not talking about?

• Beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine
• International protection applicants (asylum seekers) (mostly)
• Resettled refugees
Background

• EMN-level inform: published January 2024

• National report:
  • Desk research
  • Stakeholder interviews
  • Consultations

• 12 stakeholders interviewed

• Consultation with 20+ external stakeholders (departments, NGOs, local authorities, researchers)
What is autonomous housing?

- Any housing solution outside of the reception system (IPAS)
- Social housing, state supported, completely private
Structure

• Outcomes
• Challenges/barriers
• Good practices
• Policy implications
Outcomes
How big is the problem?

Recognised refugees in IPAS accommodation, and % of total, 2020-2024

Source: Correspondence with DCEDIY, February 2024; DCEDIY (2024) ‘IPAS Monthly Statistics January 2024’.
What is driving the increase?

First instance decisions on international protection applications 2014-2023

Source: Eurostat (2024) ‘First-instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data’, extracted 1 March 2024.
Can recognised refugees access autonomous housing?

• Problem: no mechanism to track
• Significant challenges
  – Most NGOs: no meaningful access – housing market
  – Indicative of wider problem
  – Worse in recent years (since 2019)
• Some can exit:
  – 2,000 left IPAS in 2023
  – 14% in IPAS with status for over 2 years (Jan 2024)
Is housing adequate for those who have access?

• Mainstream mechanisms
  – Many inspected houses don’t meet standards

• Stakeholders:
  – Poor housing outcomes: suitability, tenancy, quality
  – Vulnerable situations: sleeping on couches, homelessness accommodation
Challenges/barriers
Challenges/barriers

- Mainstream barriers
- Barriers specific to the group
1. Housing market

Change in population and housing stock from previous census period, 2006-2022

1. Housing market

People accessing local government emergency homeless accommodation in Ireland, 2016-2023

NB: not all homelessness

1. Housing market

- Reliance on private sector for social housing
- High competition and additional disadvantages
  - Language barriers, lack of information, unusual documentation
  - Scope for discrimination, difficult to prove discrimination
- Supports more labour-intensive
2. Adequacy of support services

• Government services
  – HAP: availability within rental limits, need for top-up payments
    • Simon Communities December 2023:
      – 33 properties to rent within HAP limits across 16 urban, suburban and some rural areas analysed
      – 9 of 16 areas, no properties
    • RTB survey: 88% on rent support pay top-up
    • Entitled to Homeless HAP
      – Overburdened services (social housing, homeless)
      – Lack of translation services
2. Adequacy of support services

- NGO services
  - DCEDIY commissioned: Depaul/Peter McVerry Trust
    - Increased resources 2023 – 32 caseworkers, entire country
    - 185 people (112 households)/caseworker
  - Other NGO support services
    - Increase in numbers, little or no increase in resources
    - Geographic discrepancy
2. Adequacy of support services
3. Administrative barriers

- Lack of knowledge/clarity re rights and entitlements
  - Questions on immigration history
  - Asked for documents they are exempt from providing
  - Local authorities: high turnover, recruitment challenges

- Local connection test
  - Only entitled to apply in one local authority
  - At discretion of local authority to assess for social housing
  - Many want to move: opportunities, connections
  - 2019 memo, but non-binding
  - Application to emergency homelessness accommodation
4. Coordination/collaboration between different actors

- IPAS/local authorities
  - Context: IPAS transfers
  - Often after transfer and refusal
  - Told by each that within remit of the other
- Different approaches by different local authorities
  - Application of local connection test
    - Social housing
    - Homelessness Accommodation
  - Approach to reunified families
5. Family reunification

• Raised repeatedly as a challenge
  ‘Families are inevitably arriving into homelessness’ (Irish Refugee Council interview)

• What are reunified families?

• No advance planning
  – Local authorities not officially informed
  – Can’t make PPSN appointments in advance
  – Can’t register on social housing lists in advance
  – No facility to mark on refugee’s social housing application

• Administrative barriers: not on social housing lists, can be reluctance to provide with emergency accommodation
6. International protection system

- **Dispersal**
  
  ‘Where people are located matters: you have to consider their future and opportunities’ (Local authority interviewee)

  - Lack of long-term strategic planning on initial dispersal
    - Services, availability of housing
    - Employment or education opportunities
  - Length of process: integration
  - IPAs not included in housing targets
    - Different family compositions
Good practices
Good practices

- White Paper on Ending Direct Provision
  - Addresses several barriers related to:
    - Employment, social networks, English language, connections with government services, knowledge of the system
  - Integration from day one approach
  - Local authority integration teams
    - 4 permanent positions funded per local authority
    - Improved coordination
    - No formal role in accommodation – can support through guidance and improve integration outcomes
  - Transition services
Good practices

• Wraparound supports
  – On integration needs, education, healthcare, psychological supports...
  – Provision of transition services
    • E.g. Peter McVerry Trust/ Depaul
    • High-quality family hubs
Good practices

• Wraparound supports
  – Resettled refugees model: potential to improve housing and integration outcomes
    • Multistakeholder approach
    • Positive aspects include: caseworkers, early orientation and continued support (18 months), interpretation services, facilitating access to employment early on (first year).
Good practices

• Coordination
  – Multiagency/ multistakeholder approach
  – Can look holistically at the short-, medium- and long-term needs
    • Community response forums - Support a coordinated civil society and local governance response
  – Inter-departmental working groups
    • Cabinet Committee on Humanitarian Response to Ukraine - whole-of-government response to the arrival of BOTPs
  – Formal agreements and protocols to underpin collaboration – sustainability
Conclusion & Policy Implications
Conclusion

• Double challenge:
  – Mainstream
  – Developing capacity for inward migration

• Quick fixes and long-term approaches
Policy Implications

• Wraparound supports
  – Resourcing
    • Ireland unusual in providing targeted supports largely through NGOs
  – European examples: individual integration plans, transitional housing in separate centres with extensive supports, training social workers to support recognised refugees
Policy Implications

- Frontline staff
  - Capacity building
  - Communication and information provision
  - Sufficient resourcing
- Family reunification
  - Coordination, planning, communication
Questions?