



## An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí Department of Social Protection

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### GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES INCREASE TO THE DIRECT PROVISION ALLOWANCE FOR CHILDREN

The Government has today announced that it will increase the Direct Provision Allowance (DPA) for children by an additional €6.00 per week. This will bring the allowance to €15.60 per week for each child.

The increase to the allowance will directly benefit children and their families living in Direct Provision centres and those coming to Ireland under the Irish Refugee Protection Programme and the UNHCR-led Resettlement Programme.

Speaking after the Government meeting, the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton, T.D., said, ***"The Government is committed to reforming direct provision to ensure a more compassionate system at every stage that treats asylum-seekers with dignity and improves their quality of life while their applications are being processed. The Working Group's report is now being examined in depth with a view to ensuring all necessary supports are put in place. As an interim step while that process continues, we are increasing the rate of Direct Provision Allowance for children. This will have a positive effect on all children residing within the Direct Provision system and provides for a modest increase in the income for families, enhancing their social inclusion and integration into local communities."***

An increase to the allowance had been proposed by the Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers. The Report of the Working Group was published by Government on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015 and its recommendations are under active consideration by the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform.

The Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald, T.D. said ***"The Tánaiste and I believe that it is appropriate to provide for an immediate increase in the allowance payable in respect of children which the Working Group identified as a particularly vulnerable group within the system of Direct Provision. The increase, while modest, will provide valuable additional discretionary expenditure for children in the direct provision system."***

The Minister of State with responsibility for New Communities, Culture and Equality and Drugs Strategy, Aodhán Ó Ríordáin, T.D., also welcomed the increase saying, ***"This is a positive first step in the implementation of the findings of the Working Group report"***

***regarding financial supports. Through engaging with the NGOs who were represented on the group and visiting Direct Provision Centres, I have witnessed first hand the issues facing those living in Direct Provision. I welcome the Government's decision today and I look forward to further decisions on the implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group by the Cabinet Committee "***.

The payment is a cash supplement for personal incidental expenditure and is paid in addition to applicants for international protection being provided with all basic necessities, including food and accommodation. It is also open to any asylum seeker to seek assistance for a particular once-off need by way of an Exceptional Needs Payment as provided for under the Department of Social Protection's Supplementary Welfare Allowance scheme.

Minister Fitzgerald also commented that the increase should not be seen as an isolated measure. It comes at a time of significant reform to our asylum system following the signing into law of the International Protection Bill. Minister Fitzgerald said ***"The reforms to our asylum system, which are being implemented under the International Protection Act, will significantly streamline and speed up our processing of protection applications, thereby reducing the amount of time that persons will spend in the Direct Provision system. The introduction of a single application procedure will also bring Ireland in line with the arrangements for the processing of protection applications in all other EU Member States and delivers on the commitment made in the Statement of Government Priorities 2014-2016. It is, I believe, a significant reforming measure in our asylum system."***

ENDS.../

#### **Note for Editors:**

The weekly Direct Provision Allowance (DPA) of €19.10 per adult and €9.60 per child was introduced in 2000 and is paid by the Department of Social Protection. The increase announced for the child payment will bring the weekly allowance for children to €15.60 per child.

The Working Group to Report to Government on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers was established arising from a commitment in the Statement of Government Priorities 2014-2016. The terms of reference of the Working Group were directed towards improving existing arrangements for the processing of protection applications and showing greater respect for the dignity of persons in the system and improving their quality of life. The Report of the Working Group was published by Government on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015 and contains a total of 173 recommendations. These recommendations are under active consideration by the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform.

The International Protection Act, which was signed into law by the President on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2015, provides for the introduction of a single application procedure for the

processing of protection applications. The Act provides for the transfer of responsibility for the processing of protection applications from the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) to the Department of Justice and Equality. A Protection Office will be established within the Department for this purpose. The Act also provides for the establishment of an independent International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT). The introduction of a single application procedure will also bring Ireland in line with the arrangements for the processing of protection applications in all other EU Member States. The new procedure will significantly streamline and speed up the processing of protection applications and will reduce the length of time that persons spend in the Direct Provision system. Existing best practice will be protected and embedded within the new regime.

**Ends**

**05 Jan. 16**