

# TIGHT SPACES



**An Exploration of the Direct  
Provision system – created by  
young people for young people**

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## SPECIAL THANKS TO:

- Aoife Dare and Nick Henderson from the Irish Refugee Council for their support and valuable feedback.
- Anne Walsh and Sally Daly from NYCI for their encouragement and guidance.
- Michael Doorly, Sinead Morgan and Lauren Wright from Concern Worldwide for supporting from the very beginning of this journey.
- In particular, thank you to all the young people who generously and bravely shared their stories with us. We are so grateful for your courage and your trust in this project.

## FUNDERS:

Concern Worldwide and Irish Aid

**CONCERN**  
worldwide

 **Irish Aid**  
Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

## SUPPORTERS:

NYCI, ARD Family Resource  
Centre and Irish Refugee Council

**NYCI** National  
Youth  
Council  
of Ireland

 **Ardaun  
Roscam  
Doughiska**  
Family Resource Centre

 **Irish  
Refugee  
Council**  
30 years



# INTRODUCTION

**"Be kind and be patient.** I know it's a cliché but even one kind gesture can and has saved lives. And be patient with yourself. Just because you're having a hard time now, doesn't mean that you have failed. It means you'll be better tomorrow."

**Voice of a young person from this project**

## WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IS A **PRIVILEGE** THAT WE DO NOT TAKE FOR GRANTED.

In today's world, there are many challenging issues facing society. Kindness, empathy, solidarity and hope are what we all need when working towards tackling these issues and building a brighter future together. The young people involved in this project possess an incredible amount of these traits and we are very grateful to them for their generosity in sharing them throughout this project. These bright, talented and caring young people give us so much hope and optimism each time we have the pleasure of their company. We hope that you also feel this hope by the time you have reached the end of this resource.

The intention of this resource is to raise awareness of Direct Provision and the International Protection system in Ireland, to stimulate empathy and to inspire action.

Throughout the process of this project, we kept in our minds all of the people who have arrived in Ireland looking for protection and safety, in particular children and young people. As a group, we are calling for the necessary improved reception conditions to happen so that every person lives in dignity and has the opportunity to thrive and flourish here. We are calling for real, action-based manifestation of respect for Human Rights. We invite you to join our call.

In solidarity,  
Natasha and Cristina  
October 2022

# PROJECT OVERVIEW

THE SEED OF THIS PROJECT WAS SOWN BY A GROUP OF INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE FROM **ARD YOUTH PROJECT** IN DOUGHISKA, GALWAY.

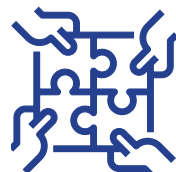
The seed of this project was sown by a group of inspiring young people from ARD Youth Project in Doughiska, Galway. In May 2021, this group of young people started exploring global justice issues in their Global Citizenship Group. In the late Spring of 2022, the group identified forced migration and Direct Provision as topics they felt were important to examine in greater depth and expand on their understanding of. Based on young people's inputs, us – the youth workers – started to think of ways to cater for their learning needs.

The project was guided by Youth Work principles and values, therefore as facilitators we have kept the structure open to young people's inputs and needs observed during the process, while purposefully working towards increasing awareness of the Direct Provision system and towards building solidarity with people subjected to it. From the start, we considered

and wished to involve young people from the Irish Refugee Council (IRC) Youth Group in this process. Apart from bringing their voices in this conversation, which we deemed fundamental, and consistent with our youth work values, our intentions have been to create connections, form lasting relationships between groups, and to explore possible actions together. Another important factor contributing to our rationale was that one of the facilitators (Natasha) works on a regular basis and closely with both youth groups, therefore we have considered this as a huge learning opportunity for each and all involved. In addition, we have considered the trust, relationships built over time and the insights from working with both youth groups, as precious resources to build upon. This guided us to reflect on and make careful considerations on what members from the IRC youth group would be invited to join this project, but moreover it supported us in finding the right time to bring the groups together, so that this encounter would be **safe and meaningful to all young participants**. These reflections fed into the stages and process of the project, hence our journey involved three main building blocks:



1. Journeying towards understanding



2. Journeying towards new group forming, solidarity building and collective action



3. Tying the threads and funnelling all voices involved



## Journeying towards understanding (May-June)

- Weekly workshops with ARD Youth aiming to build awareness and knowledge on Direct Provision.
- Young people explored different dimensions and injustices of the Direct Provision system
- Group activities, walking debates, circle discussions and powerful video materials on the topic<sup>1</sup>.
- Young people reflected and shared their learnings about family members/extended family or friends that had direct experience living in Direct Provision
- A few members of ARD Youth bravely shared their own lived experience of growing up in Direct Provision.
- Critical questions arising in the process:
  - Why is there a differentiated treatment of people seeking safety in Ireland?
  - On what grounds are these differences being made?
  - What impact do they have upon communities?
  - Why is there a gap in awareness among their age group on the topic of Direct Provision?
  - Why doesn't this conversation happen in school where they spend a significant amount of their time?
- They started to brainstorm ideas about possible actions they want to take.
- **Group idea and decision: creating "a booklet that is youth- friendly"** aiming to build awareness, knowledge and empathy with International Protection among their peers and young people in general.



## Journeying towards new group forming, solidarity building and collective action (June- August)

- Bringing IRC Youth Group together with ARD Youth
- Group building activities, defining together and supporting a space for sharing between members; as facilitators we have been conscious of the importance of creating honest and strong bonds in this new group formation process.
- Reflected on the common values
- This new group formed stronger connections
- They harvested and shared ideas on possible actions for bringing forward the voices of people living in Direct Provision.
- Planning for action and making this plan a reality: small teams of "researchers", "storytelling/interviewers" and "visual creators" were formed based on where each young person felt can contribute the best based on their skills and interests.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this resource you will find direct links for some of the video materials or websites we have referred to during our workshops



#### The research team

- Collected, compiled and wrote the main information on this topic
- Decided what was necessary to be included
- Considered how to present the information in a youth-friendly way



#### The storytelling/interviewers team

- Focused on capturing the voices of young people that have or had direct experience living in Direct Provision
- Led by young people from IRC Youth Group particularly because they acknowledged they have their own insights from their lived experience.
- Aimed to build an equal rapport between interviewer and interviewee for having these conversations with a strong emphasis on dignity and respect.
- In our conversations we acknowledged that this type of work has the risk of being extractive and we took caution to avoid it by all means. Based on these reflections, this team developed the questions for interviews and carefully considered whom from their IRC Youth group peers would extend the invitation for interviews.



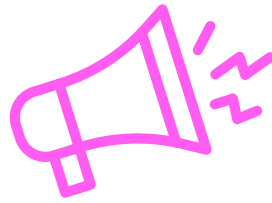
#### The visual creators team

- Focused on developing the overall concept and visual design of the resource
- Through consulting with the full group they arrived at the title of “Tight spaces” and harvested, discussed, sketched, collected or noted down visual elements associated with this theme.



### Tying the threads and funnelling all voices involved (Sept-Oct)

- The youth facilitators put together all materials created by young people.
- Worked further on writing and editing the resource.
- During this phase we have reflected upon what and how our contribution to this resource will look like. The principles that guided us throughout our work in finalising this resource are:
  - Making visible and purposefully channelling the voices of all young people involved in the process, including of those not directly working on the resource
  - Holding space and standing in solidarity with those who are seeking international protection here
  - Our commitment to Human Rights
  - Advancing our young people's vision into changemaking
  - “by the spirit, not in the letter”
  - Engaging and stimulating the target audience to become critical thinkers and learn more on the topic
  - Having in mind the audience intended (young people) we tried to pour in the resource some sprinkles from the tone and energy we have witnessed in the youth process. We hope we did justice in surfacing their work.



## Young people's reflections on their journey in this project:

- On their learning

**"Pretty much everything about Direct Provision. Our school system does not teach us."**

**"The processes that asylum seekers have to go through and the ways that they are treated in our society. I won't forget what I learned here and I will always bring awareness to these problems when I can. Learning what I did here helped me understand lots."**

- On what they were inspired by the most throughout their process:

**"Shared learning and new knowledge gained"**

**"Knowing that we are making a difference and bringing light to the situation"**

**"The environment around us, the people we met, the experiences we had together"**





# OUR TITLE

THE TITLE OF THIS RESOURCE  
**'TIGHT SPACES'** EMERGED  
THROUGH CREATIVE AND  
ENGAGING GROUP DISCUSSIONS  
DURING WORKSHOPS.

The group felt this title symbolised the physical and mental impact that seeking international protection can have on a person. They spoke about how a person may often need to embark on a dangerous and harrowing journey in order to reach a place of safety. This journey may involve a multitude of 'tight spaces' - packing belongings into a bag, a boat, lorry, sleeping bags. Then when a person arrives into Direct Provision they may unfortunately find themselves within a tight space of cramped living conditions. Due to the injustices embedded within this system, 'tight spaces' also represents the mental anguish that may be experienced, feelings of an individual's world being shrunk, horizons being reduced, a lack of freedom and agency, and restricted opportunities.







# HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

## TIGHT SPACES HAS BEEN **CREATED BY YOUNG PEOPLE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

**TO ALL YOUNG PEOPLE** coming across this resource we invite you to use this resource to learn, be inspired and take action. Please seek support from your teacher/youth worker/trusted adult to further your journey. Once you feel prepared consider facilitating an activity with your peers to continue this ripple effect of changemaking.

**TO ALL EDUCATORS, YOUTH LEADERS AND YOUTH WORKERS** we invite you to use this resource with young people who are 12 years and above. This resource delves into challenging topics that require sensitivity. As with all youth work practices, building an ethos of trust, respect and creating a safe space for dialogue is essential. Be mindful of who is in your group and consider if there are young people who are currently living in Direct Provision or from a refugee background. We recommend taking some time to read through pages 7 & 8 of Beyond Borders by Vicky Donnelly from Galway One World Centre. Vicky shares some reflections and suggestions for educators who are exploring challenging topics with young people (we also highly recommend using all of Beyond Borders): <https://galwayowc.wordpress.com/beyond-borders/>

Ideally, this resource has been designed to be engaged with from beginning to end. However, feel free to be flexible and work with what best suits the group of young people you are working with.

We have structured this resource so that you are presented with some definitions and facts at the beginning, setting the global context of what causes individuals and families to make the heartbreaking decision to flee their home and seek safety in another country. This follows with a deeper look at Ireland and the system of Direct Provision. The voices of young people currently living in Direct Provision are threaded throughout, as they express the reality they are facing. This is a very important aspect of this resource - it was the intention of all who were involved in its development that the voices of those impacted by this issue are central.

Throughout this resource, you are invited to critically reflect on topics and issues explored through group discussions and individual activities. We gained so much insight and understanding from group discussions throughout the process of developing this resource and we strongly wish for the same for you. We finish the resource with a 'Call to Action' section to encourage a building of solidarity that extends beyond the group of young people involved in this creation. It was very important to all of us that this resource sparks and inspires actions from those who engage with it.

Enjoy the process!



# DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

## **REFUGEE:**

Someone who is forced to leave their country because of fear of persecution or danger from war, race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. The risks to their safety and life are so serious that they feel they have no choice but to leave and seek safety outside their country. This may be due to the fact that their own government cannot or will not protect them from those dangers. Refugees have a right to international protection.

## **PROGRAMME/RESETTLED REFUGEES:**

have been accepted in groups ahead of arrival into Ireland. They are brought into Ireland by the government and are given refugee status. Ireland's resettlement programme has recently focused on Syrian people, who were either in Lebanon or Jordan.

## **PERSON SEEKING INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION:**

(also referred to as asylum seeker) someone who has applied for international protection from the government. They are not legally recognised as a refugee as they are waiting on a decision on their application for protection. The majority of people in this situation live in Direct Provision while awaiting this decision. This resource will be mainly focusing on this group.

## **TEMPORARY PROTECTION DIRECTIVE:**

People fleeing from the conflict in Ukraine are given Temporary Protection Directive (TPD). This allows them to have full rights to live, work, study and access health care and social welfare in Ireland

## **DIRECT PROVISION:**

This is the system of accommodating people in the International Protection process. Communal accommodation centres run on a for profit basis by private companies on behalf of the government. Residents of direct provision receive food and board as well as a weekly allowance of €38.80 for an adult and €29.80 per child and a medical card. The centres are mostly in former hotels or other forms of communal housing. This system was originally set up in 2000 to be a short term measure. However, many people end up having long stays in the centre while awaiting to find out if their application for international protection has been granted. The average wait is 24 months, but some people have had to wait much longer than this for a decision to be made.

## **AGE-DISPUTED YOUNG PERSON:**

Some young people who arrive into Ireland looking for international protection may not have their age accepted by the State. This means they are judged to be adults and miss out on vital support and protection that they are entitled to as children under Irish law. They are also placed in adult Direct Provision centres.

# A CLOSER LOOK AT NATIONAL CONTEXT IN 2022

WE BELIEVE THIS RESOURCE IS TIMELY AS 2022 WAS AN **EXCEPTIONAL** AND **UNPRECEDENTED YEAR** FOR **REFUGEE PROTECTION** IN IRELAND.

The year closed with approximately 70,000 people in the Irish international protection system (this number includes people who have fled Ukraine and those who are fleeing other areas globally).

When considering these figures, we should always remember that behind every number there is a person – a mother, a father, a sister, a brother, a child; each and everyone of them with dreams and aspirations for a safe and better future.

Currently, there is a strong need for safe refuge for people who have been forced to flee their homes.



In 2022, 13,319 individuals arrived seeking international protection and safety in Ireland from countries other than Ukraine. This is the highest number for such a period for more than 20 years. *(Figures from the Department of Justice)*

## What do YOUTH think?



Why do you think the numbers of people seeking international protection have increased in this way? What global happenings are you aware of that may cause people to have to flee their homes?

## YOUTH can learn more



Take some time to research what countries people are fleeing from and what countries host the most refugees:

<https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

<https://www.concern.net/news/largest-refugee-crises>

<https://www.concern.net/news/which-countries-take-in-the-most-refugees>



# WHY DO PEOPLE FLEE THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN?

- **WAR OR CONFLICT** - It might be dangerous to stay because of a war or conflict that is ongoing in their country or area.
- **BEING LGBTQ+** - There are still countries that do not accept LGBTQ+ members. It can be punishable by jail or death. According to research by LGBT Ireland, there are currently 57 countries that impose prison sentences for being part of the LGBTQ+ community.
- **GENDER** - Women and girls may face various forms of gender-related harm, persecution and gender-based violence. They may not have as many rights as men in certain parts of the world and life may be extremely dangerous for them. There may also be gender-based reasons why men may flee their countries, for example being forced to join their military through conscription.
- **ETHNICITY OR RELIGION** - being a member of ethnic /religious group that is persecuted. Individuals from these groups may no longer be able to rely on their own state for protection.
- **POLITICAL OPINION** - having a political opinion, or people thinking you have a certain political opinion, that is in opposition to the political system/leadership, may result in being persecuted. As can standing up for human rights that are being violated.



## What do YOUTH think?

Fleeing from NATURAL DISASTERS and CLIMATE CHANGE is not yet seen as a valid reason to seek international protection. In your opinion, should the definition of a refugee be expanded to include this?



## YOUTH can learn more

To explore in greater detail the global issues leading to forced migration, we recommend checking out Concern Worldwide and the work they do in various countries. We researched their work as part of this project and it helped us to understand the wider context of why people may need to flee their countries of origin.

<https://www.concern.net/where-we-work/afghanistan>



# LIVING CONDITIONS IN DIRECT PROVISION

Direct Provision has been widely criticised as an inappropriate system of accommodation. NGOs working to support people seeking international protection in Ireland have been calling for the end of Direct Provision over the past two decades. What was initially introduced in 2000 as a short term measure is still in place today and rather than living conditions improving, they are worsening.

In late 2022, the Irish Refugee Council released a policy paper: *Accommodation Crisis 2022: Responses and Recommendations* highlighting that the Irish protection system is in crisis and that the failure of successive governments' to prioritise and adequately resource this system has led to the deterioration of living conditions. This has worryingly culminated in a downward trajectory with individuals sleeping on floors and chairs, to tents, to having to sleep on the streets.

**"The quality of accommodation in Direct Provision has deteriorated very sharply, to the point where some people in some locations are sleeping on chairs. This is unacceptable."**

Nick Henderson, CEO Irish Refugee Council

For those living in Direct Provision, some of the main issues in regards to living conditions are:



## 1. SHELTER

- **Crowded rooms:** Often a family can be forced to share only one room among themselves. If you are here by yourself, you will more than likely be sharing a room with strangers.

Lack of privacy and very little personal space:

**"That is a major problem with Direct Provision, no one has privacy"** Jo, aged 21

- **Safety:** concerns arising because of sharing a room with strangers and feeling unsafe in this environment. Also, there are child safety concerns in a number of emergency accommodation centres due to children being in shared living spaces with adults who are not family members.

**"I was sharing with someone way older than me, from a different nation and a different religion, who was a bully to me...for 3 months."** Jo, aged 21

- **Restrictions:** in many DP centres you have to sign in and sign out. Also you are not allowed to have your friends visit.

**"There are a lot of conditions attached to it (Direct Provision). It's hard because you are living in a hostel where no visitors are allowed, even if you have friends no one can visit you".**

Ada, aged 18



### What do YOUTH think?

- What are the experiences of young people in Ireland who are homeless? Can you recognise any similarities with what young people face in Direct Provision?
- How would the living conditions of Direct Provision impact a young person's ability to do school/college work?
- How would the living conditions impact the overall wellbeing of a young person?



### YOUTH can learn more

To learn more about living conditions in Direct Provision from a young person's perspective, we recommend watching the documentary 'Growing Up in Direct Provision' on the RTÉ Player. This documentary features some of the young people who developed this resource. *Growing Up in Direct Provision Documentary*



## 2. FOOD

- The lack of culturally appropriate options and a lack of facilities to cook own meals can have a negative impact on individuals and families living in Direct Provision.
- The schedule can be strict in certain centres: breakfast, lunch and dinner is served at particular times. Meaning that a person may miss a meal due to their own commitments (school, college, work etc..).
- Also, people reported a lack of variety and poor quality in the food served.

**"I have not been eating well, I am still adjusting to the food."**

Ada, age 18

**"You have no option in what you eat."**

Jo, age 21



### What do YOUTH think?

- Do you have a favourite meal?
- How is a family/individual affected by the lack of access to cooking facilities while living in Direct Provision (keep in mind this can be two years or longer)?
- How is food connected to our identity?





### 3. FINANCIAL BARRIERS

- People seeking international protection are provided with a weekly allowance. However, this may not always be enough to meet basic needs. It's €38.80 a week per adult and €29.80 weekly per child.
- The amount of money is not always sufficient to cover additional costs related to education, clothing, transport and other elements that are essential to living a good quality of life.



### 4. BARRIERS TO EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

#### Education

- Every child in Ireland has a right to access primary and secondary education. Obviously this right extends to children seeking international protection here.
- However, this does not mean that there are no challenges for these children during their schooling. These challenges may include limited transport options to get to their school, the cost of transport, purchasing school materials and uniform, having access to additional English language support if needed, affording school trips and extracurricular activities and being able to prepare a lunch to bring to school.
- Children may even experience a delay in starting school due to not having all the documentation required.
- Transition year students often have an opportunity to go on an overseas school trip; however, anyone seeking international protection cannot travel outside of Ireland.
- Young people seeking international protection have limited opportunities to maintain or further progress their education. Every year young people prepare for their Leaving Certificate exams with the knowledge that they may not be able to progress onto college with their peers.
- The biggest barrier people face in accessing education is financial. We are all aware of the costs of accessing further education - transport, materials, laptop/tablet, lunch etc. This is even without taking fees into account.
- People seeking international protection cannot avail of free state Third-Level education. They may be quoted international student fees from colleges/universities. These fees can be €15,000+ per year.
- There have been welcomed improvements such as Sanctuary scholarships. These are scholarships for students seeking international protection who cannot avail of Susi and other student grants. However, there are limited scholarships available.

**"The community college has a limited number of courses so if the course you want is not an option, then you have to look to other places but the transport is never available because there is only one bus service."**

Eli, 22, living in a rural area.



- The Student Support Scheme is a grant accessible to people who are still waiting on a decision on their application for international protection for three years or more. Therefore, if you arrived seeking safety less than 3 years ago, you cannot apply for this grant.
- The living conditions within a Direct Provision centre can create challenges for residents who are studying. For example, there may be a lack of study space or there may not be adequate wifi available.
- Also, depending on where the Direct Provision centre is located, accessing college/university may be challenging due to a lack of public transport.
- Access to education at all levels; primary, secondary and further education, may be disrupted for individuals and families if they are transferred to a different Direct Provision centre in a different location.



### What do YOUTH think?

- What could your school do to support students living in Direct Provision?
- What other groups in Irish society may experience barriers to education?
- What recommendations would you suggest to make third level education more accessible and inclusive for all?



### YOUTH can learn more

'We Are Here Hear' is a project which highlights the barriers facing refugees when accessing further education in Ireland. We recommend visiting their website to read more about this issue:

<http://weareherehear.ie/about/>

# ACTIVITY



## Small group discussion

Form a few small groups of 3-4 participants per group, depending on the numbers of participants in the room.

Please read the following case scenario inspired by lived experience of young people living in Direct Provision:



### CASE SCENARIO:

Sam is 18 and she has been living in Direct Provision for 6 months.

She has been accepted onto a Level 5 Computer Science course in the nearest Further Education and Training Centre.

To attend classes Sam has to travel by bus for 45 minutes in each direction - the cost is €5.50 each day.

There are also costs associated with her course for materials and she needs to have access to her own laptop.

Sam has applied for her Labour Market Access Permit (work permit) to be eligible for employment, however she is waiting to receive this. Her class group has a trip to visit an IT company in Dublin and attendance goes towards her class mark. The cost of this is €20 per student.



In your small group, discuss the following:

- What financial barriers do young people in Ireland face today?
- How do you think Sam feels about this situation?
- Can you recognise any educational inequality in this scenario? What does it look like?
- What are the implications of the weekly allowance in accessing education and on an individual's mental health?

Come back to the full group and share main points arising from your discussions.





## Access to Employment

- Up until 2018, people seeking international protection in Ireland were not allowed to work. Ireland was one of only two EU countries who had this ban on employment.
- In 2018, the Supreme Court declared this ban as unconstitutional. A case was brought to the courts by a courageous individual who had spent 8 years living in Direct Provision and was prevented from working. Many NGOs have been advocating tirelessly for this issue also.
- Currently, people can apply for a work permit after they have been here for six months, however there may be delays/barriers for some people. It can be a lengthy process.
- The work permit lasts for 12 months and has to be renewed each year until a person receives a decision on their application for international protection.
- Once a person has a work permit they may still encounter barriers to accessing quality employment.
- There may be limited employment opportunities due to the location of many Direct Provision centres in rural settings and small towns.
- Language can be a barrier for access to employment, which results in some people not being able to access the roles they are qualified for.
- For some people, their qualifications are not recognised in Ireland, therefore they may need to re-start their education/employment journey and start from scratch.

**“The availability of jobs is an issue, there are not alot of job options and they are not usually hiring, the transport is also an issue because the jobs we can get as asylum seekers are in the outskirts of this town and there is no local bus to take us to and from work. Most people walk or cycle to work.**

Eli, 22, living in a rural area.

# ACTIVITY



## Small group discussion

Form a few small groups of 3-4 participants per group, depending on the numbers of participants in the room.

Please read the following case scenario inspired by lived experience of a young person living in Direct Provision:

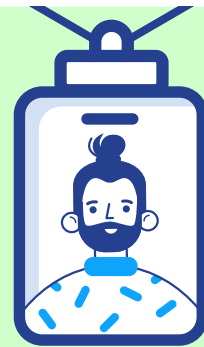


### CASE SCENARIO:

Abdul, age 25, fled Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover in August 2021.

Prior to this conflict, Abdul had been working at an engineering company in Kabul following his graduation from a Masters Programme in Kabul University.

Abdul arrived in Ireland after a difficult and dangerous journey to seek international protection here. He was hoping to continue building his career in engineering in Ireland and was excited about the new opportunities ahead of him. However, Abdul was told that in order for his qualifications to be recognised in Ireland, he would need to go through a costly and timely process. He has been unable to contact staff from the university in Afghanistan to help him get the documentation needed to begin this process.



In your small group, discuss the following:

- What impact will this have on Abdul as he tries to rebuild his life in Ireland?
- How would you feel if your qualifications were not recognised?

Come back to the full group and share main points arising from your discussions.



## 5. SOCIAL ISOLATION

- As already mentioned, some Direct Provision centres are located in remote areas, which can reduce opportunities for employment, education and social life.
- Building a life in another country is challenging- there may be a lack of social support, few opportunities to meet local people and get involved in the local community. Getting used to a new culture and adjusting to different weather conditions may be difficult.
- Language can be a barrier in connecting with the community and building new connections.



### What do YOUTH think?

- What challenges may young people living in rural areas face?
- What suggestions do you have to help increase social inclusion for young people living in Direct Provision?
- What initiatives does your school have for supporting students to feel included in the school and local community?



### YOUTH can learn more

NYCI have a very useful manual, 8 Steps to Inclusive Youth Work. We recommend using this to support creating more inclusive youth work spaces

<https://www.youth.ie/8-steps-to-inclusive-youth-work/>

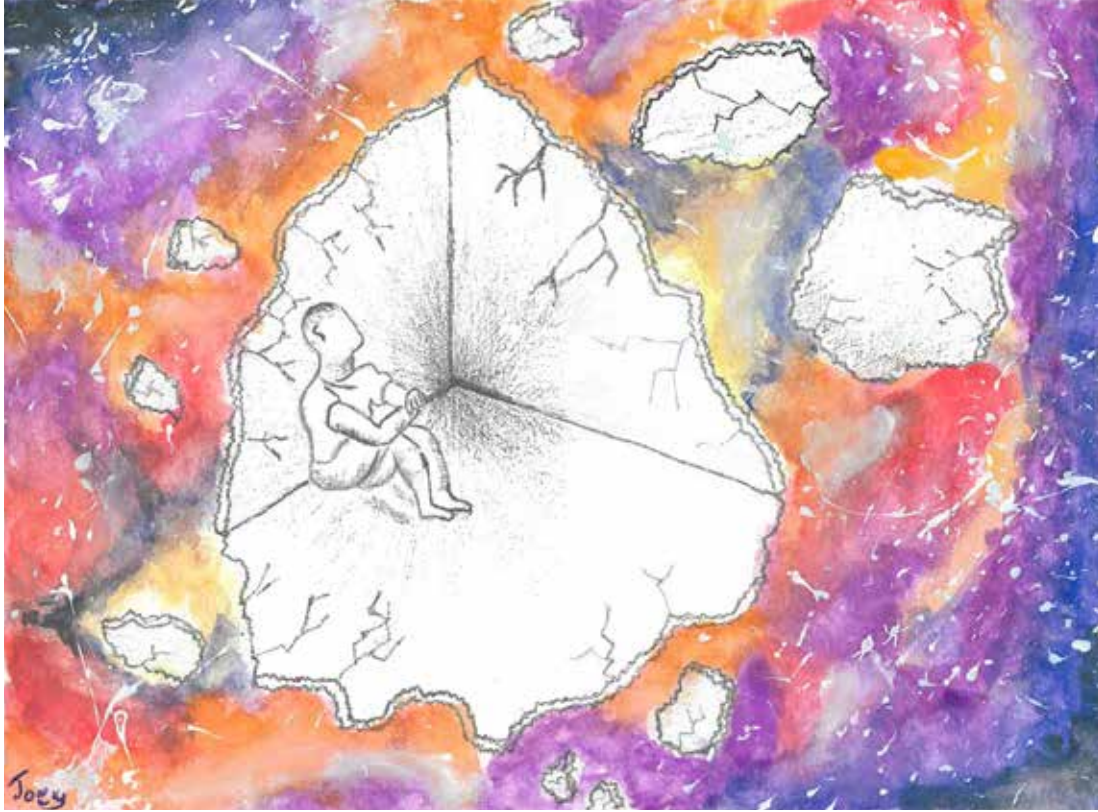
Youth Work Ireland also have insightful resources on supporting young people living in Direct Provision and engaging video materials

<https://www.youthworkireland.ie/youth-supports/young-refugees/>



# ACTIVITY

## What is the story behind this image?



*This image was sent to us by one young artist, Joey, who is aged 20 and currently living in Direct Provision. The artwork reflects his personal experience living within this system. In our group, we have found using visual activities to explore issues to be very impactful, therefore we are proposing one to you, based on the image that was gifted to us.*

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Look closely at the image, while thinking about the topic it tackles, then grab a piece of paper and a pen, write down your responses to the following:

- What feelings do you have looking at the image?
- What other images are coming to you? Describe images you associate with the picture
- What senses are triggered when looking at the image? (eg: touch, smell, hearing)
- What thoughts do you have about the image?
- What are the main messages of this image?
- Did this image change something for you about how you see people living in Direct Provision?
- Do you think through art we can build awareness and empathy on certain issues (in this case Direct Provision system impact on young people)?

Share your notes with the group, listen to what your peers share and note what are the common points in the group. How was it for you to work on this?

# FACTORS IMPACTING ON MENTAL HEALTH

"Staying alone without a family is a different ball game, because sometimes I will just be in my room alone without anybody to talk to. **I cry myself to sleep sometimes** because it is really really hard".

Ada, aged 18

It is clear that living in Direct Provision can have a detrimental impact on people's mental wellbeing and that it is not a healthy and safe environment for children and young people to grow up in. Numerous reports have highlighted this including - 'Direct Division' report from the Ombudsman for Children in 2019: <https://www.oco.ie/directdivision/direct-division-report/>

Some of the key factors negatively impacting mental health are:

- Length of time in the system
- The uncertainty of the outcome of their application
- Living conditions
- Lack of access to education
- Lack of information and support
- Lack of integration and opportunities to engage with local communities
- Lack of money
- Transport and Travel
- Discrimination, racism and harassment
- Social isolation
- Being separated from family and friends
- Being transferred to another DP centre at short notice without a choice



## What do YOUTH think?

Considering all the factors impacting on the mental health of young people living in Direct Provision, can you think of ways in which you can support their mental health in a positive way? What improvements would you call on the government to make?



## YOUTH can learn more

Mind Yourself is a mental health resource from the Irish Refugee Council created by young people for young people in the International Protection Process:

<https://irishrefugeecouncil.eu.rif.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=d3ea0ec9-b417-40d3-88e0-fee87e46c418>

# ACTIVITY

## Walking debate



We, the young people from ARD Youth Project connect and learn well from walking debates. It is one of our favourite group activities, because we feel heard, we have the chance to listen to each other's opinions, to learn from peers and from youth facilitators.

We also find room for laughter during walking debates, even if many times we tackle serious issues (trust us, it is possible! Humour helps, just watch out if your humour targets someone in a vulnerable situation, in that case it's not ok).

For this reason we are proposing one walking debate we have developed together as a group while working on this project. It is dedicated to our peers, please come along, share and learn with us!

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- This is a group activity, so make sure you gather your peers to do it.
- The group is invited to listen to each statement and after hearing it to decide whether they agree or disagree with it.
- Point out to the group first where in the room they should move if they agree or disagree. You can lay down on different sides of the room printed sheets with "agree" and "disagree".
- After group participants listen to the statement, and decide where to move in the room, they are invited to share their thoughts and motivations for their choice. And that's it, enjoy!

### Please note:

Since this walking debate is referring to forced migration and Direct provision system in Ireland, ideally the group has an introduction to the topic first. Nevertheless, there is no shame in not being aware of certain issues, reassure your peers that whatever they don't know yet, they will learn from each other during the walking debate.

### Important tip:

In our group we like to take time to discuss, and sometimes we get very passionate while sharing! From our experience, we would advise you should allow at least 30 minutes for this walking debate, depending on group numbers and knowing how chatty your peers are.

# ACTIVITY

## Walking debate statements

All children in Ireland are treated equally

Direct Provision is a fair system

Those in Direct Provision receive enough allowance for their basic needs.

Direct Provision centres are safe for everyone.

All refugees should be treated equally no matter what country they flee from.

All people living in Direct Provision can cook their own meals.

Third level education is accessible to all young people in Ireland.

Ireland should limit the number of refugees accepted.

It is possible to have a better system than Direct Provision

Young people can make a positive change in their communities and countries



# CALLS TO ACTION

**"There's light at the end of the tunnel".**

Ada, age 18

**"The power of change lies with young people"**

Nick Henderson, CEO Irish Refugee Council



## What would YOUTH do?

**"The only weapon you have when living in Direct Provision is your voice. Voice up, speak up for change".**

Jo, aged 21

Changemaking on this matter shouldn't be left on the shoulders of young people living in Direct Provision only. Will you **speak up for them and demand change?**

As young people we sometimes can get overwhelmed when becoming aware of injustices surrounding us. Every so often we feel that we don't have the power to change anything, but we are here to tell you that it's not the case!

We believe that young people have the power to bring a positive change, especially when we work together towards a common goal, bonding and building trust with each other.

Look around, look further, find your tribe and bring your voices together, speak up for change! There is more power in numbers.

Look around, look closer and see where there are adults you can trust, caring allies and mentors for when you need some guidance, or when you feel things get a bit... too much. We believe in the ripple effect: any contribution, any small action towards change matters, and it is within your reach!



Remember, this resource has been created by a group of young people for young people. It was our way to stand in solidarity with peers living in Direct Provision, to work alongside them and to start bringing awareness about their unjust treatment; but it is not the only way.

Throughout our group work we have gathered other ideas on possible actions you can take, here they are:

1. **Volunteer** in groups advocating for the rights of people seeking international protection, or volunteer with local groups supporting Direct Provision centres

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2. **Donate** to organisations working in this area

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3. **Educate** others about this issue, challenge misinformation and stereotypes

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4. **Lobby** local and national politicians on this issue

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5. **Join** public actions standing in solidarity and for the rights of International Protection applicants

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6. **Try to be welcoming** and friendly to people seeking international protection and refugees – be creative in ways to show your welcome! We love the example of Melting Pot Luck and Visionation Drama Group based in Galway – check them out on social media.

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7. **Organise/donate** to food, hygiene products and Christmas gift campaigns

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Please add your own creative suggestions below:

8.

9.

10.

# ACTIVITY

## Youth Pledge

**"I will influence and promote the generations in my community to help reinforce the message of human rights and to advocate for it in our daily lives and activities"** *ARD Youth Project member*

We hope that by this point we have brought you closer in spirit to our group of aspiring young changemakers.

Therefore before we depart, we have one more ask... Well, consider it more of an invitation: What is your pledge? What do you commit to do this year to contribute to positive change for people living in Direct Provision?

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Grab a piece of paper and a coloured marker and write down in capitals your pledge. Be honest about what you can commit to. Any action or contribution matters, remember?

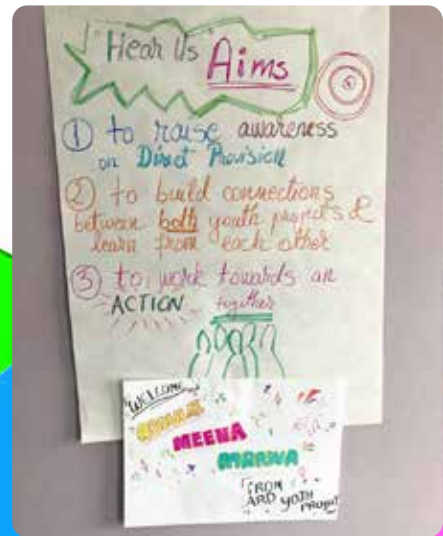
Then take a pen and write down some thoughts on what you think are the steps to do that and where you think you need more support to keep your pledge.

Share your commitment and discuss within your group/class, stick your page on the wall. See what your peers' pledges are, you might find some common actions, why not group and work together towards one...even bigger? Feel free to share your pledges with us, they will inspire us too!

Reach out and tag us on Instagram @ARDYouthproject @IrishRefugeeCouncil

**Best of luck, take care of yourselves & each other, and welcome to this tribe! 😊**





Photos from our journey creating this resource



Dear Friends,

We hope that you enjoyed your experience engaging with Tight Spaces and feel inspired. This resource aims to be an introduction to the topics of Direct Provision and International Protection. There is so much more to learn on these topics and we hope this sparks a continuation of your learning journey.

We will continue to deepen our learning and work towards creating positive change for our peers seeking international protection in Ireland. We invite you to join us. Together we are stronger.

We are hopeful for a brighter future for all young people.

In Solidarity,

Young Changemakers from ARD Youth Project and Irish Refugee Council Youth Project



**'WORKING AS A GROUP HAS A  
BIGGER IMPACT'**



# Notes





ARD Family Resource Centre, Doughiska, Galway  
[www.ardfamilyresourcecentre.com](http://www.ardfamilyresourcecentre.com)



Irish Refugee Council, 37 Killarney St, Mountjoy, Dublin 1,  
[www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie](http://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie)