

Title: Responding to asylum seekers living on the margins of Irish society: The experiences of social work practitioners

In Ireland asylum seekers are accommodated under a system known as 'direct provision'. This system, which provides food, a small allowance and accommodation in institutional type settings, has received much criticism in recent years, particularly in relation to the marginalization that asylum seekers experience and the negative impact that the system has on children and families. This paper will draw on research conducted with social workers about their perspectives in relation to the child protection and welfare implications of this system.

An online survey was circulated by the Irish Association of Social Workers to its members and was completed by 149 social workers. Fifteen practitioners also elected to participate in qualitative interviews. Descriptive statistical data analysis was employed for the quantitative survey data and thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data.

The views of the social workers highlight the multiple challenges faced by asylum seeking parents and children within the direct provision system. In addition, the challenges faced by social workers trying to respond in an equitable way to their clients are evident. Yet, despite these challenges, the data suggests that social workers work in innovative ways with their clients in order to ensure that asylum seekers' sense of marginalization is reduced.