

**A NEEDS ANALYSIS OF ASYLUM  
SEEKERS RESIDENT IN KILMARNOCK  
HOUSE, KILLINEY**

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## **Introduction**

### **Research aims**

This research was undertaken under the auspices of Southside Partnership's Unite Project. In the past, the Unite Project has conducted research into the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area (2002). This research represents a continuation of Unite's work with new minority ethnic communities who are being accommodated in the area.

The main aim of the research was to examine the needs of the two main groups of asylum seekers resident in Kilmarnock House: those who were formerly classified as unaccompanied minors and accommodated in the Old School House in Dun Laoghaire, and those who have moved to Kilmarnock House from other accommodation. A needs analysis of these two groups of people was conducted, with the aim of highlighting particular areas where local groups can work to improve services for those living in Kilmarnock House. It should be noted that due to the uncertainties about how long residents will stay in the area, and indeed in Ireland, the research only gives a picture of people's needs at a particular point in time. However, as is pointed out in this report, some of the issues highlighted have also been identified by previous research with asylum seekers, and will therefore probably continue to be pertinent for people who are accommodated in Kilmarnock House in the future.

### **Rationale for conducting the research**

The initial impetus for the research arose when a group of young asylum seekers were moved from the Old School House hostel in Dun Laoghaire town centre to Kilmarnock House in Killiney. The young people had all been identified as unaccompanied minor asylum seekers. As residents of the Old School House, the young people were provided with accommodation and a weekly social welfare allowance of €119. These payments covered food and all other living expenses, with the exception of transport costs for school. However, on turning 18, unaccompanied minors are deemed to be adults and are moved into the direct provision system. This means that they are provided with accommodation in a designated centre, where they receive three meals a day. They are entitled to social welfare payments of €19.10 per week, to cover all other living expenses such as clothing, transport, toiletries, and entertainment. The former residents of the Old School House who had "aged out" (as the process of turning 18 is referred to) were moved to Kilmarnock House in December and entered the direct provision system.

As a result of concerns raised about young people who had been moved into the direct provision system throughout Dublin City, representatives of the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform initiated a series of consultative meetings. These included young people who had "aged out" and representatives of various statutory and voluntary organisations who work with them. Amongst the concerns identified were the following:

- Difficulties adapting to the reduced social welfare payments provided to those in direct provision;
- Difficulties with the standard of food/becoming accustomed to the food provided in the direct provision accommodation;
- Lack of motivation about attending school, associated with not being able to progress to third level education;
- Concerns about the length and outcome of the asylum application process;
- General boredom, including a lack of recreational opportunities.

Following a meeting that was held in Kilmarnock House in February, concerns were also raised about other residents who had not previously been accommodated in the Old School House. It was therefore decided that a needs analysis should be carried out, in order to establish what main supports and services were required by residents, and to examine the extent to which these could be provided within the local area.

### **Structure of the report**

Section One covers definitions of some of the terms used in the report and discusses the rights and entitlements of asylum seekers in Ireland. It sets out a brief statistical overview of the numbers of people seeking asylum in Ireland, and provides a profile of the residents of Kilmarnock House. In Section Two, some of the findings of previous research conducted with asylum seekers are outlined. This includes a summary of the findings of the Unite Project's 2002 needs analysis of refugees and asylum seekers in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area. Section Three outlines the methodology used to conduct this research, and sets out some of the ethical issues arising. Section Four discusses the findings of the research with former residents of the Old School House, while Section Five sets out the findings of the research into the needs of other residents. Finally, Section Six includes recommendations for future developments and initiatives that can assist with meeting these needs.

## Section One: Definitions, entitlements, and background information

This section discusses some of some of the terms used throughout the report, in addition to setting out the rights and entitlement of asylum seekers in Ireland. A brief overview of the numbers of people seeking asylum in Ireland in the past decade is provided, and the specific situation in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown and in Kilmarnock House is discussed.

### 1.1 Definitions

Ireland is a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention. Under the Convention, a **refugee** is defined as a person who has fled his or her country and is unable to return because of a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. According to the terms of Article 1(1) of the 1996 Irish Refugee Act (as amended), the term “membership of a particular social group” has been extended to include membership of a trade union and membership of a group of persons whose defining characteristic is their belonging to the male or female sex or having a particular sexual orientation.

An **asylum seeker** is a person who has applied to be granted refugee status. Under the Geneva Convention, Ireland is obliged to examine each application for asylum that is lodged in the state. Anyone who is waiting for a decision to be made about his/her application is therefore legally allowed to reside in the state. According to Section 8(5) of the 1996 Refugee Act (as amended), an **unaccompanied minor** is a child under the age of eighteen who has arrived at the frontiers of the state or entered the state and who is not in anyone’s custody. Unaccompanied minors are also commonly referred to as separated children.

### 1.2 Rights and entitlements of asylum seekers<sup>1</sup>

The vast majority of asylum seekers who have arrived in Ireland since April 2000 have been accommodated within the direct provision scheme. Under the scheme, asylum seekers are provided with accommodation and full board at specified centres throughout Ireland. They are entitled to a weekly income supplement of €19.10 for adults and €9.60 for children. In addition, they can apply to their community welfare officer for exceptional needs payments.

It should be noted that on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004, the government introduced a habitual residency condition for access to social assistance payments. Since that date, all applicants for these payments, regardless of their nationality, are required to be habitually resident in the state to qualify for them. In general, an applicant who has not spent most of his or her life in Ireland will need to have been present in the state for two years or more, be working in the state, and have a settled intention to make it her or his permanent home in order to satisfy the habitual residence condition. Amongst the Social Assistance payments covered by the

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<sup>1</sup> Information adapted from *Immigration and Residency in Ireland: An overview for education providers*, Ward, T.; City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee and Co. Dublin VEC, Dublin, 2003; *Information Leaflet for Applicants Seeking Asylum in Ireland*, Reception and Integration Agency, January 2003. Supplementary information regarding the habitual residency condition was obtained from the Children’s Rights Alliance, May 2004.

habitual residency condition are child benefit and supplementary welfare allowance, other than once-off exceptional and urgent needs payments.

The residents in Kilmarnock House are all accommodated under the direct provision scheme. However, the people who moved from the Old School House had different financial entitlements. As unaccompanied minors, they were provided with accommodation and income support of €119 a week. They did not receive food, but catered for themselves out of this allowance.

Asylum seekers are entitled to health care on the same basis as that of an Irish national, ie, they have the right to a medical card, subject to a means test. Services available free of charge under the Medical Card Scheme include GP services, prescriptions and medicines (with some exceptions), women's health services, and optical tests and glasses. Applicants are entitled to access specialised medical and psychological treatment on the same basis as that of an Irish national. A free medical screening (for infectious diseases such as TB, Hepatitis B & C, and HIV) is also available for all asylum seekers. It is provided on a confidential basis and is independent of the application for refugee status.

Anyone who applied for asylum after July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1999, does not have the right to work, unless s/he has been granted some other form of immigration status, eg, residency rights stemming from marriage to an Irish or EU citizen. In reality, there are very few, if any, asylum seekers who applied for asylum before this date and who have not yet received a decision on their application. In relation to education, all children under age 18 have the right to state-funded primary and secondary education. According to the White Paper on Adult Education (2000), asylum seekers over age 18 are entitled to free access to literacy classes, language classes and mother culture supports.

### **1.3 Overview of asylum applications in Ireland**

For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ireland did not attract a large number of people seeking refugee status. The situation has altered dramatically in the last decade, as evidenced by the fact that the number of people applying for asylum in Ireland increased from 39 applications in 1992 to 11,634 in 2002. Data for 2003 indicate that the overall numbers decreased during 2003, to 7,900 applicants. In that year, the main countries of origin of asylum seekers were Nigeria (38.4%), Romania (8.8%) and DR Congo (3.2%). In 2002, the main countries of origin were Nigeria (34.8%), Romania (14.4%), and Moldova (4.8%)<sup>2</sup>.

Direct provision is provided in a total of 72 centres throughout Ireland. These include three reception centres (the Parnell West Hotel, Kilmacud House and the Baleskin Centre), 63 accommodation centres, and six self-catering centres. According to the Reception and Integration Agency, there were 1,306 asylum seekers accommodated in direct provision in Dublin at the end of January 2004.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: ORAC Monthly Statistics, December 2003 Issue, available at [www.orac.ie](http://www.orac.ie)

### Age profile of asylum seekers in direct provision, January 2004<sup>3</sup>

Age	Numbers in direct provision
0-4	21.6%
5-12	7.5%
13-18	5.8%
19-25	14.8%
26-35	34.5%
36-45	10%
46-55	2.5%
56-65	Less than 1%
66+	Less than 1%

The following is a breakdown of the duration of stay by applicants in direct provision, as compiled by the RIA (ibid).

### Duration of stay by applicants in direct provision

0-3 months	3-6 months	6-9 months	9-12 months	12-18 months	18-24 months	Over 24 months
13%	19%	19%	18%	18%	6%	7%

### 1.4 The situation in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown

The Dun Laoghaire Rathdown area has hosted asylum seekers for the past number of years. According to the Unite Project's 2002 report<sup>4</sup>, there were approximately 367 asylum seekers and refugees living in the area on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2002. These comprised people of over 25 different nationalities, with Nigerians, Romanians and Cameroonians forming the largest groups. In the past, asylum seekers were accommodated in the Old School House and Sandycove House in Dun Laoghaire, and in Kilmarnock House in Killiney. Sandycove House has been closed since 2003, and the nature of the accommodation provided in the other two centres has changed somewhat. In September 2003, single mothers and single males over age 18 were moved out of the Old School House, which is now primarily used as self-catering accommodation for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers.

**Profile of residents of Kilmarnock House<sup>5</sup>:** Until 2003, Kilmarnock House was used to provide short-stay accommodation for people before they were moved to provincial centres. It is now used as a longer stay direct provision accommodation centre. In the week ending April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004, 92 people were registered as residents in Kilmarnock House. Two of these were marked as "missing/gone", leaving a total of 90 residents. Of these, 31 were children or infants. Twenty-four residents had been moved from the Old School House, of whom

<sup>3</sup> Source: RIA Monthly Statistics Report, January 2004. Please note that no date of birth was available for 3% of the people on the RIA's database.

<sup>4</sup> *Needs Analysis of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Area*, Unite Project, May 2002

<sup>5</sup> Source: Information provided by the management of Kilmarnock House.

two were infants who moved with their parents. The remaining 37 residents were adults who had moved from accommodation other than the Old School House. A breakdown of residents' gender was not available, but it was estimated that six of the 37 other residents were male. This suggests that there are a large number of women in a lone-parenting situation who are living in Kilmarnock House. The residents came from a total of 16 different countries; the main nationalities recorded were Nigerian (35 residents) and Irish (20 residents).

**Country of origin of residents, April 2004**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number</b>
Nigeria	35
Ireland	20
DR Congo	8
Ghana	3
South Africa	3
Zimbabwe	3
Angola	2
Cameroon	2
Rwanda	2
Poland	2
Sierra Leone	2
Kenya	1
Iran	1
Togo	1
Kosovo	1
Liberia	1
Not recorded	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>

It is important to note that since the survey was completed in April, the profile of residents has undergone some changes. In May, several lone parents with young children were moved into Kilmarnock House, and some of the families resident in the hostel were moved to different accommodation centres. The fact that the profile of residents can change on a frequent and rapid basis has many implications for service providers.

## Section Two: Literature review

In this section, a brief overview of the findings of several research studies conducted with asylum seekers is outlined. A summary of the findings and recommendations of the Unite Project's previous research is set out.

### 2.1 Issues for asylum seekers in Ireland

In the past, studies conducted with asylum seekers have highlighted issues of concern that include accommodation, access to education, access to health services, and integration. A report by the Irish Refugee Council (2001)<sup>6</sup> noted problems for asylum-seeking children living in hostel accommodation that included a lack of privacy and inadequate living arrangements. The Southern Health Board (SHB) has carried out research into the health needs of asylum seekers in the Cork/Kerry area<sup>7</sup>. As noted in their report (2002:5),

Specific accommodation difficulties, that have been highlighted by recent Irish studies of asylum seekers, include overcrowding, boredom, welfare dependency and a lack of suitable accommodation specifically for children and for single men.

In focus groups that were held with asylum seekers for the SHB's research, it was found that a lack of control created a great deal of frustration among participants, with people disliking the fact that they had little choice over their day-to-day living. Many felt that their life in Ireland had been unproductive, as a result of their not being allowed to work. Food also emerged as a contentious issue and the one that was felt to be most in need of change. All the participants stated that their days revolved around food:

The repetitiveness of food and the fact that it was not culturally appropriate to all residents created concern among respondents...[However] they acknowledged the difficulties that arise when trying to cater for different nationalities within a centre. (ibid:23)

In relation to accessing medical services, the problems highlighted by the study included communication difficulties, a lack of understanding of the role of service providers, and a need for orientation and training for both service providers and asylum seekers. The provision of basic information on services for asylum seekers was suggested as one crucial development that was needed (ibid:36).

### 2.2 Education

A number of studies relating to educational provision for asylum seekers have been undertaken since 2001<sup>8</sup>. These have primarily focused on language and literacy needs: as outlined above, the 2000 White Paper on Adult Education states that asylum seekers are entitled to English language and literacy classes and mother culture supports. The following were amongst the potential difficulties for asylum seekers noted in the studies:

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<sup>6</sup> Fanning, B. et al (2001), *Beyond the Pale: Asylum Seeking Children and Social Exclusion in Ireland*, Dublin: Irish Refugee Council.

<sup>7</sup> Foley Nolan, C. et al, (2002) *A Better World Healthwise; A health needs assessment of immigrants in Cork and Kerry*, Southern Health Board

<sup>8</sup> Eg, studies undertaken by the IVEA, NALA, City of Dublin VEC and County Dublin VEC.

- asylum seekers often feel that they do not have adequate access to information regarding available classes in the area in which they are accommodated. Although information about classes may be placed in accommodation centres and other venues that are used by asylum seekers, both literacy and language issues amongst the target group may impact on their effectiveness;
- in the past, consultation with minority groups rarely took place when classes were being planned, which resulted in the provision of classes not suitable to students' needs;
- ensuring that language classes are located in appropriate learning sites is a major factor in educational provision, eg, provision of accessible venues, ensuring that times are suitable for students;
- many asylum seekers highlighted the need for childcare facilities;
- issues relating to motivation were also raised: some asylum seekers stated that they sometimes found it difficult to find the motivation to attend classes, or that they could be occupied by other problems;
- another difficulty highlighted was the fact that social-psychological factors can create barriers to second language learning for under-educated language minority adults. Language and culture shock can also make the language learning process extremely difficult.

### 2.3 Research conducted in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown

In 2002, the Unite Project carried out a needs analysis of asylum seekers and refugees living in the Dun Laoghaire area. A total of 74 respondents participated in the study – 57% were female and 43% were male. The majority of participants were aged between 15 and 17 years (43%) and between 18 and 21 years (25%). In total, 50% of respondents were Nigerian. Seventeen other countries were also represented, including Cameroon, Angola, Albania and Romania. Twenty-nine percent of respondents stated that they had children who were living in Ireland and of these, 38% said they were living in a single parenting situation.

In total, respondents named 28 different languages as their first language. In terms of language needs, 45% stated that they spoke English very well, but only 5% named English as their first language.

First language of respondents, Southside Partnership survey (2002)

First language	Percentage
Yoruba	28%
Edo	9%
Igbo	7%
Albanian	5%
English	5%
Others (including Portuguese, Romanian, Pashto, Russian and Arabic)	46%

Thirty-two percent of respondents said that they were taking part in English language classes. According to the research, 53% of respondents were participating in some form of

education or training. Amongst the main reasons for not participating in any training or education classes that were cited by the remaining 46% of respondents were:

- parenting responsibilities
- English language problems
- Difficulties with accessing information on courses
- Not knowing how to find a course
- Not finding a course they are interested in.

A number of recommendations were made in relation to the provision of English language programmes. These included providing classes for people with different standards of spoken and written English, ensuring that classes are accessible for all sections of the asylum seeking community, and improving the provision of information about available language services. In terms of general education and training, it was also suggested that existing information services should be promoted, and that childcare provision should be available to enable parents to attend classes.

Regarding health services in Ireland, over 50% rated the services they had used as “good” or “very good”. Amongst the problems raised by respondents were difficulties expressing what was wrong with them and detailing accurate symptoms; difficulties understanding doctors; difficulties understanding procedures used; and difficulties understanding the causes of illness. The recommendations arising from these findings were improving access to interpreters and cultural mediators, and the provision of cultural awareness training for all medical staff.

It was further suggested that voluntary work opportunities could be explored and developed for asylum seekers and refugees,

“thus alleviating boredom and the issue of isolation from the community at large and also up-skilling the individual.”

Other issues raised included the provision and availability of information, such as the development of a specific information service for asylum seekers and refugees, and the development of a welcoming pack about the area, which should be done in consultation with the two groups. It was also recommended that information on facilities available in the area should be promoted, and that people should be encouraged to become involved in local sports groups and facilities.

The suggested recommendations for service providers covered the topics of training programmes, developing links with national organisations that offer translation services, and including asylum seekers and refugees in future developments. Other suggestions included the development of a drop-in room in the local area, and ensuring that all services are accessible and welcoming to non-nationals and ethnic minorities. The report took account of the fact that special provision may need to be made for more marginalised groups within the refugee and asylum-seeking population, eg, unaccompanied minors, women, people with disabilities. Additionally, it was recommended that

“Integration must form the basis of all services and so where possible appropriate services should be kept within mainstream provision. However, this is not always possible and specific needs may require alternative service provision.”

## **2.4 Educational provision in Kilmarnock House**

In conjunction with UCD's Education Department, Dun Laoghaire VEC is currently completing research into ESOL provision from both learners' and tutors' perspectives. This research is being undertaken as part of their continuing involvement with the Grundtvig Research Project. Dun Laoghaire VEC has been involved in the provision of English language and literacy classes for minority ethnic groups resident in the area for the past number of years. One of the areas on which it has focused is examining the quality of educational provision for minority ethnic groups who are not native English speakers. Tutor training has been provided for teachers working with this group, and a pool of trained tutors has been developed. Efforts are also being made to institute ongoing, accredited training for tutors.

In relation to educational provision for asylum seekers who are living in Kilmarnock House, the Dun Laoghaire VEC has been involved in this area for the past number of years. An ESOL outreach worker visits Kilmarnock House on a weekly basis, and provides on-site English language and literacy classes, in addition to referring residents to other educational classes that they are entitled to attend. The VEC also runs a women's programme, which is held at an off site venue. At present, there are two groups participating in this programme, which lasts for 10 weeks. The programme, which has a total capacity of approximately 16 participants, has been developed in response to the needs of residents. Participants are provided with bus tickets that cover their transport costs to the off-site venue. In the case of participants who have children, arrangements have been made so that the women from one group take care of the other women's children while they are attending the classes, and vice versa.

Amongst the issues that have arisen for VEC tutors in the past include:

- The fact that the residents of Kilmarnock House may only be there for a short amount of time, which affects their ability to take part in classes on a continual basis;
- The fact that many residents do not require English language or literacy training, but would benefit more from general adult education programmes, in which they are not entitled to participate;
- The fact that Kilmarnock House is not a very suitable venue for classes: some residents and tutors find it depressing and would prefer to attend/hold classes in an off-site venue;
- The fact that it is difficult to provide residents with information about classes: the outreach worker has spent a lot of time simply making contact with individual residents to inform them about classes, or to organise a suitable time for on-site classes.

Staff of Dun Laoghaire VEC have highlighted that asylum seekers' restricted educational entitlements makes it very difficult to provide classes that are suitable and engaging for everyone, given the fact that some residents of Kilmarnock House have excellent English language and literacy skills, coupled with high levels of previous education.

## **Section Three: Research methodology**

This section outlines the research methodology used to conduct the study and discusses some of the ethical issues involved in the data collection.

### **3.1 Research methodology**

The research took place between during March/April, 2004. Two questionnaires were drawn up, one for former residents of the Old School House and one for other residents aged over 18 years. The design of the questionnaires was informed by issues raised by former residents of the Old School House at a consultative meeting, consultations with key stakeholders, and a review of other studies conducted with asylum seekers. The questionnaires comprised a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data, with the aim of recording demographic information and respondents' opinions about services and facilities available to them. For the former unaccompanied minors, the questionnaire covered the topics of background information, the move to Kilmarnock House, information about their participation in the Irish educational system, health services, voluntary work, hobbies and interests, and suggestions for the future. The questionnaire for other residents covered broadly similar topics, but differed in the emphasis it placed on participation in the educational system and also included a section for parents with children of school-going ages.

Within the limited timeframe of the data collection, it was decided that the best strategy would be to visit Kilmarnock House and discuss the survey directly with respondents. These visits were organized with the assistance of the RIA and the management of the hostel. An initial information meeting took place on March 26<sup>th</sup>. A representative from the Dun Laoghaire Refugee Project (DRP) attended the meeting, to introduce the researcher and explain that the DRP was also involved in the Unite Project. The meeting was used as an opportunity to provide an overview of the research and to pilot the questionnaire with representatives from the two groups (people who had moved from the Old School House and the other residents). Two representatives from each group went through the questionnaires, after which a number of minor amendments were made to the wording. A total of four further visits were made to Kilmarnock House to collect data. Information leaflets stating the date and time that the researcher would be present were posted in the reception area, and residents were consulted to see what times would be most suitable. The first visit was well attended, as some residents had also been informed about the survey by people who were involved in the piloting process. On subsequent visits, it was necessary to approach people in the reception area, to explain the purpose of the survey and ask if they were interested in taking part. Approximately 15 of the respondents were accessed in this manner.

In order to ensure that respondents were aware of the aims of the survey and what the findings would be used for, the researcher discussed the questionnaire with each respondent. In some cases, respondents had no knowledge, or a very limited knowledge, of English. In these cases, other residents who were completing the questionnaire and who were able to translate into the relevant languages acted as interpreters and assisted with the completion of the questionnaire. Respondents were asked if they would like the researcher to go through the questionnaire with them and fill in their responses, in case of literacy issues or difficulties

with writing in English. This also proved an effective technique for mothers with small children who were unable to complete the questionnaire while holding their children.

In total, 33 completed questionnaires were received: 13 of these were from former residents of the Old School House, and 20 were from residents who had moved there from other accommodation. As outlined in Section 1.4, it was estimated that 24 of the residents were people who had moved from the Old School House, including two babies for whom the questionnaire was not relevant. The total number of completed questionnaires from this group therefore represented a response rate of just under 60%. It was estimated that 37 of the adult residents were people who had moved from other accommodation: the completed questionnaires for this group represented a total response rate of just under 55%. The remaining 31 residents were children or infants, who were not directly included in the questionnaire.

### **3.2 Ethical issues**

Asylum seekers can form a particularly vulnerable group within Irish society, as they may not be familiar with Irish culture or the English language. Additionally, many will have come from situations that will have imbued them with a distrust of imparting information to officials or any person who may be connected with the government. The following measures were taken to ensure that respondents who participated in the study were aware of its aims and of what would be done with the information they gave:

- An information sheet was drawn up about the project, which included contact details for the person conducting the survey;
- Initial contact with the potential respondents was made with the assistance of the Dun Laoghaire Refugee Project, which is an NGO that works extensively with refugees and asylum seekers in the Dun Laoghaire area;
- The questionnaire was piloted with residents of Kilmarnock House, to ensure that the questions were appropriate and culturally sensitive;
- Before completing the questionnaire, all respondents were given verbal information about the survey, and informed that it was not in any way connected with their asylum application. It was explained that participation was completely voluntary, and that all the information would be anonymous when the report was written up;
- All respondents were asked to sign a consent form, but told that their names would not be used at any stage, or passed on to any third parties;
- It was stressed that participation in the survey was entirely voluntary;
- Respondents were told that copies of the report would be distributed in Kilmarnock House, so they could see what had been written arising from the survey.

A further issue that was given consideration from the outset was that of participants' possible expectations as a result of the survey. It was therefore stressed before the data were collected that Unite would not be able to deal with issues about food, finances or the asylum application because these were regulated by the Irish government. Instead, the survey focused on topics that could be improved by community and other local organisations. The information sheet highlighted that not all of the participants' wants in these areas could be met, but that residents' input was extremely important in order to develop areas in which they identified a lack of service provision.

## Section Four: Former Residents of the Old School House

Section Four provides an overview of the findings of the research conducted with former residents of the Old School House. The findings are presented under the headings of demographic information, education, health services, voluntary work and social interests, and suggestions for the future.

### 4.1 Demographic information

In total, completed questionnaires were received from 13 former residents of the Old School House. This represents a response rate of just under 60% of the people who have moved from Dun Laoghaire to Kilmarnock House within the last 8 months<sup>9</sup>. Five of the respondents (38%) were female, while 8 (62%) were male. All of the respondents were aged either 18 or 19.

#### Age

	Frequency	Percent
18	7	54
19	6	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents came from a total of five countries, with the majority (53%) stating that Nigeria was their country of origin.

#### Country of origin

	Frequency	Percent
Nigeria	7	53
Sierra Leone	2	15
Liberia	1	8
DR Congo	1	8
Zimbabwe	1	8
Not stated	1	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents were asked to list the languages that they spoke. They were not asked to rate their knowledge of these languages. Instead, the language that the respondents put first in their lists was taken as the main language that they used on a daily basis. Twelve of the respondents listed English first, while one listed Yoruba. Of the languages listed second, Yoruba was the most frequent (60%). One respondent listed a third language, Zulu. Through conversation with the respondents, it became apparent that many of them spoke several languages, but did not list them all, as they did not use them to communicate with others on a regular basis.

<sup>9</sup> As noted previously, 24 residents were moved from the Old School House, two of whom were infants living with their parents and who were therefore not directly included in the survey.

### Second languages

	Frequency	Percent
Yoruba	6	60
Krio	1	10
French	1	10
Shona	1	10
Lingala	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Four of the respondents said they had one child who lived with them. Of these, two were parents of the same child, while two were not living with the other parent of their child, or another partner. The three children in question were all under one year of age: one was 3 months, one was 7 months, and one was 8 months.

All of the respondents had been resident in Ireland for at least one year: the longest period of residency recorded was three years (15% of respondents). Ten of the respondents had lived in Ireland for between two and three years.

### Length of time in Ireland

	Frequency	Percent
13 months	1	8
Two years	8	61
Two-and- a-half years	1	8
Two years, eight months	1	8
Three years	2	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

In terms of the length of time they had been living in Kilmarnock House, the majority (77%) stated that they had moved within the last four months, while two (15%) had lived there for just over seven months.

### Length of time in Kilmarnock House

	Frequency	Percent
3-4 months	10	77
5-6 months	1	8
7-8 months	2	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents were asked to rate any changes in their life since moving from the Old School House. The question was non-directive, and a scale from “much easier” to “much more difficult” was used. As can be seen from the table below, a large majority (85%) said that their lives had either become “more difficult” or “much more difficult”.

### How has your life changed since the move?

	Frequency	Percent
No change	2	15
More difficult	5	39
Much more difficult	6	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents were asked to list the ways, if any, in which their lives had changed since they moved to Kilmarnock House. The responses covered a range of topics, from the changes in their diet to the financial impact of moving into direct provision. According to one respondent,

“The main reason why my life has changed is because in Old School House I cook for myself and people there are friendly but here in Kilmarnock House they cook for us and they are not friendly.”

Another stated that there was a lack of a balanced diet in Kilmarnock House, and said that it was a “miserable life in general.” One respondent said that s/he liked the fact that the food was provided in Kilmarnock House, and that this was better than self-catering, but stated that her/his social life was very changed because of a lack of money for socialising. According to another respondent, the attitude of the management towards the residents was racist and not as friendly as in the Old School House. Additionally,

“The food being given to us is worse. I attend hospital frequently.”

Another commented on general negative changes in finances, food, and the living environment. One said that s/he was now very far from school. One respondent noted only that “everything has changed,” while another said that things had changed for the worse

“because I collect very little money which is not enough for me, my friends are not with me and also I don’t like the food we eat.”

Respondents were asked if they got information about the move to Kilmarnock House before it took place. Six of the respondents (46%) said they had received information about the move, while 7 (54%) said they had not. Of the six who had received information, the following comments were made about what was provided and how useful it was:

“That I was going to be transferred into the Direct Provision, as a result was being moved to an adult hostel”.

“As in I got a letter to say that I will be moving to Kilmarnock in a week’s time.”

“I was informed two months before.”

One stated that the information s/he received was from previous residents of Kilmarnock House, who had complained about the management and their attitudes towards non-nationals and asylum seekers. It should be noted that since the end of 2002, all unaccompanied minors who apply for asylum are given a letter stating that on reaching the age of 18, they will be moved into the direct provision system and their accommodation provision will be the remit of the RIA rather than the Health Board.

The respondents were asked to list any of the information that they thought would be useful to give people moving to Kilmarnock House in the future. Suggestions included information about the food and its quality, information about transport and the location of the hostel, and details about the type of neighbourhood that the accommodation is located in (ie, middle class/wealthy). Other suggestions included:

“They must really prepare their mind that they are coming to face another part of life in Ireland.”

“I still need to advise asylum seekers. The manager is too racist, not willing to listen.”

A further comment that possibly reflects grievances about not receiving more information about the move was

“I don’t have any information to provide for them because when the Justice move people they never ask our advice.”

## **4.2 Education**

As noted previously, everyone under the age of 18 is entitled to attend primary and secondary school on a non-fee paying basis, regardless of their citizenship status in Ireland. Respondents were asked if they were in secondary school at present. Five of the respondents (38%) stated that they were currently in school, while 8 (61%) said they were not. The respondents who were still in school were enrolled in a variety of schools throughout the area: Holy Child Community School, CBC Monks town, St. Laurence’s, Rockford, and Cabinteely Community School. All said they were in 6<sup>th</sup> year, and none of them were repeating the Leaving Cert.

Those who were still in school were asked if they belonged to any study group or homework club. Four said no, while one said that s/he was in a home study group in Kilmarnock House. One stated that s/he would like to be in such a group, but that it was too expensive. When asked if they received any extra help with their homework, all said that they did not. Respondents were asked to list whom, if anyone, they discussed their school problems with. Two of the respondents who were completed the Leaving Cert filled in this part of the questionnaire, saying that they had received help from the manager in the Old School House and representatives of the Dun Laoghaire Refugee Project. Of the five respondents who were still in school, four said “Nobody”, while one said a teacher in her/his school.

Of the remaining eight who were not in secondary school at present, five stated that they had been enrolled in the past, and that they had completed the Leaving Cert. Four stated that they were currently in another form of education. The courses they were attending included Youthreach, literacy classes, a part-time PLC course, and a course run by the VEC in Ballsbridge. The respondents generally attended these courses between twice and three times a week. Of the four who were not enrolled in any form of education, two stated that this was because of difficulties getting childcare or a lack of entitlement to any further courses. One person said s/he had completed a further educational course in the past, and one person did not respond to the question.

Respondents were asked to list the educational courses they would be most interested in doing in the future. A high proportion (46%) did not respond to this question, which is possibly reflective of their awareness that they are not entitled to complete any third level

course on a non-fee paying basis. Two respondents said they would like to do nursing, and one said nursing or medicine. One stated law, another said catering, and one said learning a trade.

### 4.3 Health services

All of the respondents stated that they had attended a GP in Ireland: seven (54%) had also been to a hospital at some stage. The methods of getting information about accessing health services included the following:

	Frequency	Percent
Social worker	7	54
Project worker	2	15
Community Welfare Officer	1	8
Friends	1	8
No response	2	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100</b>

None of the respondents said that they had difficulties with using the health services. In spite of this, 8 (61%) felt that it would be useful to receive training on using health services in Ireland.

### 4.4 Voluntary work and social interests

Four of the respondents (31%) said that they were involved in voluntary work. The groups or organisations with which they were involved were Voluntary Service International, the Dun Laoghaire Festival of World Cultures, and church groups. All seven respondents who did not do any voluntary work said they would be interested in doing it in the future. One respondent currently doing voluntary work for a church group said s/he would like to do more, stating “I still need to get involved in my community.”

The main hobbies or interests listed included computers (six respondents) and music (four respondents). Sports were mentioned by most, including football, basketball, jogging, judo, and mountain climbing/hiking. Other interests included drama, art and reading. When asked if they were involved with any groups connected with their hobbies/interests, three (21%) said they were. The groups named were a football team and church groups. All three had heard about the groups from friends. One stated that s/he had been part of a football team in the Old School House, but that this had not been able to continue since moving to Kilmarnock House. Eight of the respondents (61%) said that they would be interested in joining a group.

The respondents were asked to list any reasons why it might be difficult for them to join a group. Two stated that childcare would be an issue; five said that transport costs would be a problem, eg, “Transport fare because I cannot afford it.” Another respondent said that it would be good to have a football team of some kind in Kilmarnock House, but that there would not be enough people to form it. Finally, one respondent outlined the following issues:

“Not enough funds, stress, inadequate information on groups about registration or joining.”

Of the 11 respondents who answered the question about attending religious services, 9 said that they attended some form of service. One person said that s/he was involved with a choir connected to their church.

#### **4.5 Suggestions for the future**

Respondents were asked to list any activities that they would like to see provided in Kilmarnock House. The answers included a gym, a basketball court, and games “to keep people busy”. Other suggestions included cable TV and computers. One respondent stated that many of the other residents were not familiar with using computers, which would make life very difficult for them. It was suggested that residents who knew how to use them could teach the other residents basic skills. Three people suggested trips or excursions: one said “Going on trips as we used to do in Old School House.”

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any suggestions about services that could be introduced that would help to improve the quality of their lives in Ireland. The question helped to capture some of the residents’ aspirations about areas that were not covered in the rest of the survey. The answers included an anti-racism committee that is effective and dedicated; voluntary work; computer classes; and trips. One respondent suggested that the RIA should recognise the importance of groups working to protect refugees. Another suggested

“Counselling maybe because it is really boring and sad staying indoor all day.”

Continuing education was also mentioned, with some respondents commenting on the fact that people who have completed their Leaving Cert were becoming very de-motivated because there were no further educational or employment opportunities for them. The majority of answers to this question related to receiving refugee status and to being allowed to work/getting a work permit. The comments included the following:

“In the future, I would suggest the Irish government to give work permit to people to stay in Ireland because I believe that would build a more stronger Ireland. Because by then none will need Social Welfare.”

“The government need to allow asylum seekers right to work. This will not only improve my life but also contribute to the economic development of Ireland. I am not lazy, the government should stop making me lazier. Let me contribute my quarter to the development of the country who feed me for two and a half years.”

## Section Five: Other residents of Kilmarnock House

This section outlines the findings of the research with other residents of Kilmarnock House, who had moved there from accommodation centres other than the Old School House. The information is presented under the headings of demographic information, education, health services, parents and children, voluntary work and social interests, and suggestions for the future.

### 5.1 Demographic information

In total, completed questionnaires were received from 20 residents who had not formerly lived in the Old School House. This represents a response rate of just under 55% of these residents<sup>10</sup>. The data collected indicated that the profile of these residents is quite different to the former residents of the Old School House, in terms of gender, age range, length of time in Ireland, etc. The majority of respondents (80%) were female, while 20% were male. Of the total 37 residents in question, 6 were male, so the gender breakdown of respondents is relatively representative of the overall numbers of males and females.

#### Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Female	16	80
Male	4	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

The age range of respondents ran from 18 to 46, with the majority of respondents (55%) aged between 25 and 33.

#### Age

	Frequency	Percent
18	2	10
20	2	10
25	1	5
27	3	15
29	1	5
31	2	10
32	2	10
33	2	10
36	1	5
37	1	5
45	1	5
46	1	5
Not stated	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

<sup>10</sup> As noted in Section 1.4, there were 37 adult residents living in Kilmarnock House who had moved there from accommodation other than the Old School House.

Respondents came from a total of seven countries: as with the former residents of the Old School House, the majority came from Nigeria (45%) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (25%).

**Country of Origin**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Nigeria	9	45
DR Congo	5	25
Ghana	2	10
Iran	1	5
Angola	1	5
Poland	1	5
South Africa	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

When asked to list the languages they spoke, 7 of the respondents (35%) put English as the first language. Five (25%) put French first, while two (10%) put Yoruba first. Benin, Efin, Farsi, Igbo, Lingala and Polish were put first by one respondent each.

**Languages (1)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
English	7	35
French	5	25
Yoruba	2	10
Benin	1	5
Efin	1	5
Farsi	1	5
Igbo	1	5
Lingala	1	5
Polish	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

In terms of second languages listed, English was the most commonly mentioned (35%), followed by Lingala (20%).

**Languages (2)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
English	7	35
Lingala	4	20
French	2	10
Ghanaian language	2	10
Yoruba	2	10
Benin	1	5
Sotho	1	5
No other language stated	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

Two respondents listed third languages: one listed Igbanke and one listed English. It is interesting to note that English was not mentioned anywhere by five respondents (25%), indicating no knowledge, or a very limited knowledge, of the language.

A total of 13 respondents (65%) said that they had children who were living with them. Of these, four were couples living together with their children, while the remainder were living in a lone parenting situation. The respondents had a total of 19 children who were living with them. Five lone parents and one couple said they had one child, three lone parents had two children, one couple had three children, and one lone parent had four children. The ages of the children ranged from less than six months to nine years of age. Eleven of the nineteen children were aged 2 years or less.

#### Age of respondents' children

	Frequency
2-6 months	8
9 months	1
2 years	2
3 years	2
5 years	2
6 years	1
7 years	2
9 years	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

The amount of time that respondents had been resident in Ireland ranged from less than 3 months to just under three years. Of these, the majority (55%) had been in Ireland for between six and twelve months. A total of 5 respondents (25%) had been resident in the state for less than six months.

#### Time in Ireland

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 3 months	2	10
3-5 months	3	15
6-12 months	11	55
13-23 months	1	5
24-29 months	1	5
30-36 months	1	5
Not stated	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

Respondents were asked to state the amount of time they had been living in Kilmarnock House: the majority (80%) had been living there for less than 6 months.

**Length of residency in Kilmarnock House**

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 2 months	3	15
2-3 months	5	25
4-5 months	8	40
6-8 months	2	10
Not stated	2	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

The majority (55%) had been living in the Baleskin Reception Centre before moving to Kilmarnock House. Other accommodation listed included Chester House, Francis Street, the Parnell West Hotel, and Tallaght.

When asked if they had received any information about Kilmarnock House prior to moving there, 18 of the respondents (90%) said they had not, while two (10%) did not answer the question. The question about how useful the information was did not therefore apply. Suggestions for information that could be given to people who were moving in the future included general information about Kilmarnock House and the number of residents living there, and about the nature of the area in which it is located. Details about transport, the location of Kilmarnock House and its distance from Dun Laoghaire and the city centre were also suggested. Some respondents listed a map of the area, including details of doctors, hospitals and schools as suggestions. Finally, one resident suggested that people should be provided with a list of their rights as residents.

**5.2 Education**

In total, 18 of the respondents (90%) stated that they had gone to school in their home country, while two stated that they had not. The following table indicates the length of time that respondents had spent in primary or secondary school in their country of origin.

**Length of time spent in school (primary and secondary)**

	Frequency	Percent
6 years	4	20
9 years	2	10
10 years	1	5
11 years	1	5
12 years	7	35
16 years	1	5
Not applicable	2	10
Missing	2	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>

It can therefore be seen that 16 of the respondents (80%) had spent at least six years in primary or secondary education, and thus have some experience of the formal education system. Furthermore, 7 (35%) stated that they had gone to university, or to some form of higher education. Of these, one had gone for one year, two had gone for 3 years and four had gone for 4 years. Five had obtained a qualification from a third level institute. The

qualifications listed were an electrician’s diploma, a BA in education, a BSc in computer science, a BSc in Sociology, and a degree in Public Administration.

In terms of participating in any type of educational course in Ireland, four (20%) stated that they had participated in a course at some stage of their residency in Ireland. These included courses run in the Catherine McAuley Centre, English classes in SPIRASI, a Youthreach course, and a beauty therapy course. The majority (80%) said they had never participated in a course. Of the two respondents who stated that they were currently enrolled in courses, one was still attending the Catherine McAuley Centre and one was attending courses in SPIRASI. Both had started these classes while living in the Baleskin Reception Centre. The two stated that they had difficulties continuing these courses, as the transport costs of getting to the classes were high and they had been told that they were not eligible for extra financial support to cover these costs. One of the courses is located in Baggot Street, while the other is on the North Circular Road. Both of the respondents said they tried to attend the classes on a twice-weekly basis.

The remaining 18 people were asked to list the reasons why they were not attending an educational course, with the answers ranging from not being entitled to enroll in a course (50%) to childcare issues (15%).

**Reasons why respondents were not enrolled in an educational course**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Childcare	3	15
No suitable courses available	2	10
Not allowed	10	50
No money for transport	1	5
N/A	2	10
Not stated	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

When asked to list the type of educational course they would be most interested in doing in the future, English classes were the most frequently mentioned (30%), with one further respondent listing advanced English lessons. Computer classes were mentioned by five respondents, with one specifically stating IT classes. A further five listed nursing, while two stated courses for becoming care assistants. Two respondents said they would like to do the Leaving Cert, one listed public relations, and one said teacher training. One respondent said that s/he had been attending a Youthreach course before the birth of her/his child, and would like to return complete it, but could not because of childcare issues.

**5.3 Health Services**

All the respondents stated that they had attended a GP in Ireland, while 17 (85%) had been to hospital. The sources from which they received information about the using health services are listed below<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Please note that some respondents refer to the Community Welfare Officer as “the Social”, and may therefore have been referring to the CWO rather than a social worker.

**Sources of information on accessing health services**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Social worker	5	25
Project Worker	2	10
Community Welfare Officer	3	15
Other residents	5	25
Voluntary group	1	5
Management – KH	1	5
Management-Balseskin	2	10
Not stated	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

According to the respondent who had received information from a voluntary group, representatives from the group had come into her/his previous accommodation and explained various issues relating to going to the doctor and the hospital, the location of GPs and hospitals, and practical issues about making appointments. S/he felt that this had been extremely useful and had made it much easier to use the services. The need for such training is reflected by the fact that a large number of the respondents (75%) felt that it would be useful to get training on using health services in Ireland.

Six respondents (30%) said that they had not encountered any problems when using Irish health care services. However, a range of difficulties were listed by the remaining participants. The most frequently mentioned were difficulties explaining what was wrong with them and difficulties understanding what the doctor or nurse was saying to them. Other respondents said that they had difficulties understanding when to take their medication, while two mentioned that they had had difficulties making an appointment, and transport difficulties while going to the GP or hospital. Four of the respondents (20%) said that they had encountered all of these difficulties. One respondent was the parent of a seriously ill child, and stated that this had resulted in particular difficulties. Two of the respondents said that they attended a local GP who spoke some French, and that this was very useful for them. They had heard about the GP from other residents in Kilmarnock House.

**5.4 Parents and children**

Four of the respondents stated that they had at least one child who went to school. Of these, two were parents of the same school-going child. A total of 4 of the respondents' children were in school. One of the children was in first class, two were in second class, and one was in fourth class. All of the parents stated that they received help from the children's teachers: one couple, who spoke very little English, said that their child's teacher spoke some French, which was extremely useful.

Two of the children were in a local pre-school. One of the parents said that s/he would very much like her/his child to join a local pre-school, and felt that the child would be ready to enrol as soon as possible. The parents of the 11 children who were aged 2 and under all said that they would like their children to attend pre-school in the future.

### **5.5 Voluntary work and social interests**

Nineteen of the respondents (95%) said that they did not do any voluntary work, while one did not respond. In total, 18 (90%) said that they would be interested in doing voluntary work. Three of the respondents were very keen to become involved as soon as possible, and asked if they could be given a list of potential organisations immediately. Some of the areas of interest mentioned included working with the elderly, and working with children.

Respondents were asked to list any of their hobbies and interests. The most frequently mentioned interest was music (35%). Most of the respondents listed some form of sports, including basketball, football, swimming, running, cycling, tennis, table tennis, and cricket. Reading was frequently listed (30%), as were computers (20%). Other interests included sewing and handicrafts, art, drama and dancing. One respondent listed learning English, and one listed minding children and older people. Only one respondent stated that s/he was involved with a group that practised their hobbies, which was a church choir. Information about the group had been found through friends. Of the 16 people (80%) who responded to the question about whether they would be interested in joining a group, all stated that they would. When asked if there would be any particular difficulties for them about joining a group, 12 (60%) said that transport costs would be an issue. Six said that they would have difficulties getting childcare, and one stated that it would be difficult to find the money for registration fees. The number of people involved in religious groups was high, with 13 (65%) stating that they went to some religious service. Of these, 3 were involved with a choir group affiliated with their religion.

### **5.6 Suggestions for the future**

When asked to list their suggestions for activities that could be provided in Kilmarnock House, the topics raised reflected many of the respondents' role as parents. The provision of a playground or a play area was mentioned by several, as were toys for the children. Other suggestions centered on physical activities for adults, including a gym, basketball, and a football team. The most frequently mentioned suggestion (30%) was a library, or some kind of reading materials. Five respondents also suggested educational activities, including English classes, computer classes, and cookery classes. The desire for a women's group was mentioned by five respondents, who suggested possible group activities such as handicrafts, art, music and hairdressing. Two respondents suggested cable TV. Four suggested trips or excursions of some sort. Finally, two suggested the presence of friendly welfare workers, with one suggesting "someone who listens to our problems seriously."

When asked about general services that could be introduced that would help to improve the quality of life in Ireland, four stated education, including English classes. Two said more consultation about their needs, and one suggested the provision of more information about the local area. Finally, work permits were mentioned by eight respondents (40%). Their comments included the following:

"The government should allow us to show our talents and not rust inside. We should be able to look after ourselves, and the government should not waste money on us."

"Staying here every day like this you feel useless and bored."

"To be allowed to work and cater for my children".

"They should please allow us to take care of ourself by working in the country."

## **Section Six: Discussion and recommendations**

As is highlighted by the findings of the survey, the two groups of residents have particular needs to be addressed. In general, the former unaccompanied minors have been resident in Ireland for longer periods, are younger than the other residents, are not as likely to have children who are living with them, and are much more likely to have some experience of participating in formal education. They are also more likely to be English speakers. However, many of them also stated that their life has become more difficult or much more difficult as a result of their move into the direct provision system. Particular issues raised included changes in their financial situation, changes in their social life, and difficulties with having food provided for them rather than the self-catering system to which they were accustomed.

In terms of education, the residents had a wide range of needs. For the former unaccompanied minors who were still in school, issues included not being a member of a study group, not getting any extra help with their school work, and not having anyone with whom they could discuss their problems in school. One respondent who had been participating in an educational course had had to leave it because of childrearing responsibilities. Others stated that they were not entitled to do any further courses, having finished the Leaving Cert. The issue of demotivation and boredom arising from not being able to progress within the educational system was raised several times, including at the initial consultation meeting.

The other residents had more varying educational needs. The survey highlighted how the majority of them had spent some time within the educational system in their home countries, ranging from six years of schooling to four years of third-level education. However, only four of them had taken part in an educational course in Ireland, and only two of them were doing so at the time of the survey. Their educational aspirations included English language classes, computer classes, and completing the Leaving Cert. Amongst the main barriers to participating in classes listed were transport costs and childrearing responsibilities.

In terms of accessing health services, the former unaccompanied minors were less likely to list any difficulties, possibly because they have been living in Ireland for longer and because they are more likely to speak English. Several of the other residents stated that they had had difficulties when using the health services, often because of language issues. Problems included difficulties explaining what their illnesses were and difficulties understanding what the doctor or nurse was saying to them. A large majority of both groups said that they thought it would be useful to get training on using the health services in Ireland.

In relation to social interests, many respondents listed sports (eg, football, basketball, going to the gym). Other interests included reading, art, drama, music and handicrafts. For both sets of respondents, there was a low level of participation in any social groups that were not associated with the religious groups with which they were involved. Finding money for transport to any activities not based in Kilmarnock House was raised by many respondents. Child-minding responsibilities were also cited by a number of parents with young children. While the majority of respondents were not involved in voluntary work, a very large number of them said that they would be interested in it.

When asked about their suggestions for activities that could be provided in Kilmarnock House, participants listed ideas such as a library or access to reading materials; the provision of sports facilities, such as a basketball net; establishing a women's group that could include activities such as art, drama, and handicrafts; and going on excursions. Reflecting their role as parents, many respondents suggested a playground or play area for children, and more toys for children. In relation to services that could be provided in the future to improve the quality of life in Ireland, the majority of respondents referred to gaining the right to work and being allowed contribute to Irish society and cater for themselves financially. Other suggestions included encouraging anti-racist activities and groups, and recognizing and supporting groups that work with refugees and asylum seekers. The need for a support worker in Kilmarnock House to listen to people's problems and provide them with advice was also suggested.

An important finding highlighted by the survey was the fact that so many residents of Kilmarnock House are children, including a substantial number of infants. The respondents from both groups had a total of 22 children between them. Of these, four were in a local primary school, while two were in a pre-school. The majority (12) were under the age of one year. Many of the residents were in a lone-parenting situation, which can increase their isolation from the general community as they may not be in a position to leave their children while they attend courses or get involved with other groups. It can also be difficult for parents of children who are slightly older to find activities for their children before they are old enough to join a pre-school group. For local schools, an increase in the number of children being accommodated in Kilmarnock House for longer periods will have implications for their service provision. As has been highlighted, it is possible that some of the parents and some of the children will not have fluent English-language skills.

## 6.2 Recommendations for the future

As noted in the needs analysis, several issues need to be born in mind when planning any future service provision for residents of Kilmarnock House. These include:

- Uncertainties about the length of time that residents will be present in Kilmarnock House;
- The fact that the profile and specific needs of residents will probably be subject to change over relatively short periods of time;
- The fact that asylum seekers can find it difficult to remain motivated about their participation in groups and activities, as a result of their circumstances;
- Transport costs and child-rearing responsibilities may also affect people's ability to participate in activities.

However, it is also important to remember that many asylum seekers are very eager to participate more fully in Irish society, but may be prevented from doing so because of issues that include a lack of information about activities.

The following recommendations aim to address some of the issues raised throughout the needs analysis. **Due to the extremely limited availability of funding, most of the recommendations are constrained to activities that could be implemented by the community and voluntary sectors. It should be noted that the implementation of the**

**recommendations would be greatly progressed if funding were available for a link worker, even on a part-time basis.**

Finally, Unite's previous research into the needs of asylum seekers and refugees highlighted the need for training programmes for service providers, which would include training in the areas of rights and entitlements, cultural awareness and anti-racism. Access Ireland runs a cultural mediation project that aims to facilitate communication and understanding between service providers and clients from minority ethnic backgrounds. The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) also offers intercultural and anti-racism training for service providers. Subject to funding availability, it is suggested that this training be available for any service providers in the area who are working with asylum seekers and refugees.

## **A. Information about the area**

*Recommendation 1:* A welcome pack about Kilmarnock House and the general area should be compiled and distributed to all residents in advance of their move, if possible. If not, it should be given to residents on their arrival.

*Action:* Southside Partnership has developed a welcome pack for asylum seekers living in the Dun Laoghaire area. This pack could be adapted to include information on the Killiney/Ballybrack area. Additionally, an information pack has been developed for residents of the Old School House, which could be used as a reference. The welcome pack should be piloted with residents, and should be available in a range of languages.

*To be implemented by:* The provision of information on the local area is the remit of the accommodation's managers. Copies of Southside Partnership's welcome pack and the Old School House's information pack could be forwarded to the management and the RIA for reference.

*Recommendation 2:* There is a need for discussion between the RIA and former unaccompanied minors who are being moved into the direct provision system in the future.

*Action:* Prior to any future move, a meeting should be held between staff of the RIA, representatives from the ECAHB, and the people who are being moved. This will help to ensure that the transition from self-catering to direct provision, and the reasons why the move is occurring, are thoroughly explained. It would also serve as an opportunity to distribute information about Kilmarnock House and the surrounding area.

*To be implemented by:* the RIA, in conjunction with the ECAHB.

## **B. Food**

*Recommendation 1:* Community nutritionists should be asked to conduct a catering assessment report in Kilmarnock House.

*Action:* A meeting should be organised between residents of Kilmarnock House and a community nutritionist regarding the food that is provided. The nutritionist could then conduct a catering assessment report, to be provided to catering staff.

*To be implemented by:* This action would involve the participation of the management of Kilmarnock House, the ECAHB, the RIA, and the residents.

## C. Education

*Recommendation 1:* An off-site homework club/study group for people completing the Leaving Cert should be established.

**Action:** Dun Laoghaire VEC has identified the Youth Wing group's premises in Loughlinstown as a possible location for the group. The possibility of extending these facilities to residents who are involved in other educational courses should also be examined. A homework club of this type would represent the kind of facility that could be available for people both before and after their move into the direct provision system.

**To be implemented by:** Dun Laoghaire VEC and the Youth Wing group.

*Recommendation 2:* The possibility of setting up a "study buddy" programme, such as the one organised in the Old School House, should be examined.

**Action:** The programme in the Old School House is run by the Education For All group, and involves teachers who visit the hostel twice a week, on a voluntary basis, to provide assistance and one-to-one attention for students. It may be possible to replicate this group in Kilmarnock House, or to encourage students who move from the Old School House to continue their attendance at this group.

**To be implemented by:** Education For All, subject to the availability of their volunteers.

*Recommendation 3:* The possibility of providing a mentoring system for students who are completing the Leaving Cert should be considered.

**Action:** This could involve volunteers who would be available to listen to and provide practical advice to students on school-related issues. Meetings between students and mentors could take place in Kilmarnock House, or at an off-site venue, if available. A mentoring scheme could be available for students while they are resident in the Old School House and could continue after their move to Killiney, which would assist with one aspect of the transition into the direct provision system.

**To be implemented by:** UCD's Quinn School of Business may be interested in becoming involved; the DRP and Southside Partnership; residents of the Old School House and Kilmarnock House.

*Recommendation 4:* On their arrival in Kilmarnock House, residents should be provided with a list of local language and educational classes that they are entitled to attend, including contact details and location.

**Action:** At present, the VEC's ESOL outreach worker visits the hostel on a weekly basis and provides residents with information about on- and off-site language classes, both in the local area and throughout the city. This action should be complemented by the provision of a list of these classes, to be distributed by the management to all residents on their arrival. Any such list should be updated on a regular basis. Details of organizations based in the city that provide educational classes should also be included, eg, information about SPIRASI and the Catherine McAuley Centre. As recommended by Unite's previous research, existing information services on education and training need to be promoted with both asylum seekers and with those who work directly with them, eg, hostel staff, voluntary groups, and Health Board workers.

**To be implemented by:** Hostel staff, voluntary groups, and health board workers should pass on information to residents about Dun Laoghaire VEC's classes. General information about these classes and about organisations that offer other classes should be included in the information pack that is given to residents on their arrival. If a link worker is available, s/he could pass information about education to residents and to other groups that work with them.

**Recommendation 5:** The possibility of providing transport or transport fare for people who are interested in attending classes needs to be examined in conjunction with the Community Welfare Officer.

**Action:** As highlighted throughout the research, issues relating to financial entitlements are not within the remit of Unite's members. However, accessing funding for transport to educational courses is an important consideration for residents who are living within the direct provision system. It is therefore worth re-stating that this issue needs to be considered by Community Welfare Officers.

**To be implemented by:** This issue should be considered by Community Welfare Officers and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

**Recommendation 6:** Childrearing responsibilities are an obvious concern for many residents, and need to be considered when organizing any educational classes.

**Action:** As noted in the Unite Project's previous research, childcare provision could take place in accommodation centres or in educational venues. At present, residents who are participating in the VEC's women's educational programme take turns minding each other's children, which allows them to attend classes on alternate days. Further recommendations concerning the provision of childcare are contained in Section 5.

**To be implemented by:** Residents of Kilmarnock House, in conjunction with groups that are organising educational classes.

**Recommendation 7:** In the long-term, consideration could be given to training asylum seekers with the relevant language skills as language and literacy tutors.

**Action:** For people who have completed the Leaving Cert and who are not eligible to attend third-level education, training as language and literacy tutors could provide an opportunity to up-skill and remain involved in continuing education. This action would be dependent on the availability of funding for tutor trainers, and on the availability of suitably qualified tutor trainers.

**To be implemented by:** The VEC, subject to the availability of funding and resources.

**Recommendation 8:** Computers should be provided in the hostel for residents' use.

**Action:** Any local businesses or organisations that may be upgrading their computers should be approached about the possibility of donating their old equipment. Possibilities include Dell, Ericsson and Cabinteely Community School. In consultation with the management, space could be designated in Kilmarnock House for a computer area.

**To be implemented by:** Southside Partnership and the DRP, following consultation with the management; local businesses and organisations.

**Recommendation 9:** The possibility of providing computer classes for residents at a venue in the local area should also be examined.

**Action:** These would need to be provided on a voluntary basis, as asylum seekers have no specific entitlement to ICT classes. Local libraries offer classes on using the Internet, which

is one possibility that could be availed of by residents. If computers are installed in Kilmarnock House, volunteers could be recruited to provide training. This could include the involvement of residents who are proficient in the use of computers.

**To be implemented by:** local libraries; volunteers (possibly sourced by the DRP); residents.

## **D. Health Services**

*Recommendation 1:* All residents should be provided with information about the location of doctors and hospitals. Details about female GPs/GPs who speak French should be included.

**Action:** A list of health services available in the area should be drawn up for inclusion in the information pack that is distributed to residents prior to or on their arrival. This list should be updated when necessary.

**To be implemented by:** the management of Kilmarnock House.

*Recommendation 2:* In the short-term, residents who are new to the country should be provided with an overview of how to use Irish health services.

**Action:** The NAHB's video on Irish health services should be made available for use within the hostel. Where possible, a representative of the Health Board should be present when the video is being shown to new arrivals, to answer any questions they may have.

**To be implemented by:** The ECAHB, through the assistance of the Area Medical Officer or the Public Health Nurse.

*Recommendation 3:* In the long-term, and subject to their availability, the peer-education group HIP could be asked to come in and provide training courses on using health services for residents.

**Action:** The provision of training on using health services in Ireland. While this will probably not be relevant for the former unaccompanied minors who have been living in Ireland for long periods, they could be very useful for other residents.

**To be implemented by:** HIP, in conjunction with the RIA and the management of Kilmarnock House.

*Recommendation 4:* Health professionals and the asylum seeker community should be able to access interpreters.

**Action:** Information on accessing an interpreter should be provided to both asylum seekers and health professionals.

**To be implemented by:** the RIA and the ECAHB.

*Recommendation 5:* Cultural awareness training should be available for all medical staff.

**Action:** GPs and nurses working in the area should be contacted to ascertain their interest in undertaking cultural awareness training. An information event could then be scheduled, involving representatives of Access Ireland, which offers a cultural mediation service. Their involvement would be subject to funding availability.

**To be implemented by:** Access Ireland, in conjunction with Southside Partnership and the Dun Laoghaire Refugee Project. Funding could possibly be accessed through the RIA's small grants fund.

## **E. Parents and children**

*Recommendation 1: A play-group should be established within Kilmarnock House for younger children.*

**Action:** The play-group should be established with the input of the Dun Laoghaire Co. Childcare Committee and Southside Childcare Action Network (SCAN). It would involve the designation of one area of Kilmarnock House for the group's activities. Where possible, the times of the group should be organised to tie-in with any classes that parents are attending.

**To be implemented by:** The County Childcare Committee, in conjunction with SCAN and the residents of Kilmarnock House. Consultations should be held with the management and the RIA to ensure that the play-group can be established on the premises. Staff of Barnardos, who have expertise in this area, should also be consulted when the play group is being organised. The Needs Forum Committee of the Dun Laoghaire County Childcare Committee could also be involved.

*Recommendation 2: A mother and toddler group should be established in Kilmarnock House.*

**Action:** This group could be established when the play-group is in operation, and could use the area designated for play activities. Subject to their availability, representatives from Cuidu could be involved in the activities of this group.

**To be implemented by:** Cuidu (subject to their availability), in conjunction with SCAN and the Needs Forum Committee of the Dun Laoghaire County Childcare Committee. Again, the establishment of this group would involve consultations with the management and the RIA to establish suitability, etc.

*Recommendation 3: Local crèches should be asked to allocate a certain number of places each year for children living in Kilmarnock House.*

**Action:** The local crèches could be asked by members of SCAN if they would be willing to allocate 2 spaces each every year for children from Kilmarnock House. This would also be dependent on the availability of funding to pay for the places: some funding may be available through the RIA's small grants fund.

**To be implemented by:** SCAN has already contacted local crèches/playgroups, who have requested the names of children to go on their waiting lists for September 2004. At present, local groups could potentially provide places for 8 children. Accessing deposits/funding to pay for these places is an issue: one possible source is through the RIA's small grants fund.

*Recommendation 4: In the long-term, consideration should be given to setting up a crèche in Kilmarnock House.*

**Action:** Dependent on the availability of funding, a crèche such as the one previously operated in the Old School House by Barnardos could be set up.

**To be implemented by:** Barnardos, under the aegis of the RIA (depending on funding availability). The Community Childcare Committee could also be involved.

*Recommendation 5: Facilities such as a playground or indoor play area for the children should be considered.*

**Action:** Subject to consultation with the management to ascertain whether these facilities can be established and where the most suitable location would be, local groups should be

involved in helping to set them up. SCAN and the Community Childcare Committee could provide advice on equipping a designated indoor play area, and groups such as the SVP and local shops could be asked to donate the relevant materials. The play area could also be used as the venue for the play group. The Active Retirement Group's carpentry class could be approached to construct items for the outdoor play area. The possibility of involving students from DLIADT or volunteers from the Bray Volunteer Bureau/Volunteering Ireland in decorating an indoor play area could be considered.

**To be implemented by:** The Community Childcare Committee and SCAN, in consultation with the management and residents; local shops and community organisations such as the SVP and the Active Retirement Group; students from DLIADT; volunteers.

*Recommendation 6:* Cultural awareness training should be made available for staff of local primary and pre-primary schools.

**Action:** Because Kilmarnock House now provides accommodation on a longer-stay basis, there will probably be an increase in the number of children who are attending local primary and pre-schools. Staff should be approached to ascertain their interest in participating in cultural awareness training. This could include the involvement of a facilitator from the County Childcare Committee.

**To be implemented by:** The County Childcare Committee, in conjunction with a link worker (if available) and staff of local schools.

*Recommendation 7:* Residents who are parents should be provided with information about local schools, pre-schools and other children's groups.

**Action:** A list of local schools, pre-schools and children's groups located in the area should be drawn up for inclusion in the information pack that is distributed to residents prior to or on their arrival. This list should be updated when necessary.

**To be implemented by:** The County Childcare Committee can provide a list of relevant information, to be distributed to residents on their arrival in Kilmarnock House.

*Recommendation 8:* Summer activities should be developed for school-going children

**Action:** Efforts should be made to link younger school-going children in with any summer activities that are taking place in the area. This would involve liaising with local schools (possibly through the home-school coordinator), the Dun Laoghaire Youth Service, children's groups and providing parents with information about what is available.

**To be implemented by:** At present, there is no particular person or group who could undertake this action, which highlights the need for a link worker. It may be possible to access funding for a summer project through Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

## **F. Voluntary work and social interests**

*Recommendation 1:* A list of local groups that would welcome involvement of asylum seekers as volunteers should be compiled.

**Action:** Members of the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Community Forum should be contacted to see whether they would be interested in taking on volunteers. Information about Volunteering Ireland should also be passed on to residents. The involvement of the volunteer bureau in Bray should also be encouraged.

**To be implemented by:** Southside Partnership could contact the Community Forum and the Bray volunteer bureau, and the information about groups who are interested in taking on volunteers could be passed back through the DRP. Again, a link worker would be ideally placed to undertake this work.

**Recommendation 2:** Cultural training should be offered to groups who are recruiting volunteers.

**Action:** This training could include information about people's limited financial resources for transport and childcare needs.

**To be implemented by:** In the absence of a link worker, the DRP could be asked to host an information evening for groups.

**Recommendation 3:** A women's group should be established with residents of the hostel.

**Action:** This could be organised in conjunction with local groups. Possible activities for the group could include handicrafts, hairdressing, art, music and drama.

**To be implemented by:** Ann Cannon, community facilitator and member of SWAN, and the DRP are currently examining the possibility of establishing a women's group with residents of Kilmarnock House.

**Recommendation 4:** Information on facilities and groups located in the area should be promoted.

**Action:** This could be undertaken through drawing up and distributing a list of these facilities and of local groups involved in sporting and other activities. Residents could be encouraged to become involved in these groups through initial outreach visits by members.

**To be implemented by:** In the absence of a link worker, raising awareness about local activities and groups is very much dependent on informal means. Members of the Unite project could be asked to circulate information about Kilmarnock House to local groups with which they are in contact. Information could also be passed on to the Dun Laoghaire Community Forum. The Dun Laoghaire Youth Service could be involved in visiting Kilmarnock House to provide information about activities for young people. A member of STAG has suggested that residents could become involved in the organisation's environmental group, which includes activities such as craft-making. Ann Cannon, community facilitator, has also raised the possibility of organising an excursion for mothers and children to the Glencree Centre, which would include the involvement of the Glencree Women's Group.

**Recommendation 5:** Summer activities for young people should be promoted.

**Action:** Efforts should be made to encourage young people to participate in local summer projects/activities. Again, this would involve liaising with local schools and with the Dun Laoghaire Youth Service to ascertain what is available in the area and how residents can become involved. Contact could also be made with Foroige, to see what activities they could provide. The possibility of accessing funding for excursions through the small grants fund provided by the RIA has been raised. In the longer term, consideration should be given to involving groups in developing specific projects for young people resident in Kilmarnock House. For example, Voluntary Service International could be asked to become involved in setting up a summer project.

**To be implemented by:** In the absence of a link worker, it would be necessary to rely on the availability of staff from Southside Partnership or volunteers from the DRP to liaise with the schools, the Dun Laoghaire Youth Service, and organisations such as the VSI. Some

funding could be possibly be accessed through the RIA's small grants fund. Additionally, it may be possible to access funding for a summer project through Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

*Recommendation 6:* The possibility of involving community gardai in providing transport for excursions should be given consideration.

*Action:* Given the limited financial resources of residents, transport costs may form a barrier to participation in activities. In the Old School House, the community gardai have been involved in the provision of transport to and from a variety of activities. When a list of activities/events with which residents wish to become involved has been drawn up, the community gardai could be contacted to ascertain their availability to provide transport.

*To be implemented by:* The community gardai.

*Recommendation 7:* Links should be established with local libraries, to encourage residents to join and avail of the services offered.

*Action:* The libraries' Fusion Committee is currently examining services for minority ethnic groups and has produced a leaflet in several languages that provides information on libraries and what they offer. Services which are being extended and which may be of interest to residents include Internet training and mother and toddler groups. The local mobile library is no longer in operation, but a member of the Fusion Committee will raise the issue and see whether it may be possible to provide any services for Kilmarnock House. The library in Deansgrange has already donated books to Kilmarnock House. Additionally, staff of the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Co. Council Library Service are examining the possibility of starting a weekly workshop for children aged 5+, which would be based around African board games and storytelling. These activities have already been run by Ronke Arogundade in several Dublin libraries and have proved to be very successful.

*To be implemented by:* Staff of Deansgrange Library, staff of the Library Service, Southside Partnership and volunteers from the DRP have already started to implement these actions. If the workshops are successful, funding will need to be sourced for them to continue after the initial phase, which the Library Service can fund.

*Recommendation 8:* Consideration could be given to encouraging residents to establish a social committee.

*Action:* Members of a social committee could pass on suggestions for activities to any voluntary groups and also relay information about available activities to other residents. This action would depend on the presence of a link worker who could access and pass on information from local groups and from the residents.

*To be implemented by:* residents in conjunction with a link worker, whose presence would be dependent on the availability of funding.

*Recommendation 9:* Activities that raise local people's awareness of the situation of asylum seekers should be developed.

*Action:* A starting point for awareness-raising activities could be through the involvement of the transition year in local schools. For example, the winning project in the 2004 young Social Innovators competition was based on the reception centre in Mosney. Contact could be made with local schools to develop ideas about projects with which transition year students could become involved.

**To be implemented by:** Link worker (if available), in conjunction with local secondary schools.

## **G. Other supports**

*Recommendation 1:* Encourage the involvement of local groups who have experience of working with people living in situations of poverty.

**Action:** To inform groups such as the SVP about the presence in the area of asylum seekers who are accommodated within the direct provision system, and encourage their involvement with residents who may require financial support above that to which they are entitled within the system.

**To be implemented by:** Link worker (if available) and groups such as the SVP.

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