CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	“Care and compassion gets these students across the line”: the experience of school staff supporting second-level students from Direct Provision
Authors	Flavin, Maria;Buckley, Katie
Publication date	2023
Original Citation	Flavin, M. and Buckley, K. (2023) “Care and compassion gets these students across the line”: the experience of school staff supporting second-level students from Direct Provision. Cork: Community-Academic Research Links, University College Cork.
Type of publication	Report
Link to publisher's version	https://www.ucc.ie/en/scishop/rr/
Rights	©2023, Maria Flavin and Katie Buckley.
Download date	2026-11-04 03:04:28
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/15625



UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

“Care and compassion gets these students across the line”: The Experience of School Staff Supporting Second-Level Students from Direct Provision.

Maria Flavin and Katie Buckley

CARL Research Project

in collaboration with

school staff from a second-level DEIS school

Name of student(s):	Maria Flavin and Katie Buckley
Name of community group:	Anonymised
Name of community group liaison person:	Anonymised
Academic supervisor(s):	Dr Kenneth Burns
Name and year of course:	Master of Social Work Year 2
Date completed:	July 2023

What is Community-Academic Research Links?

Community Academic Research Links (CARL) is a community engagement initiative provided by University College Cork to support the research needs of community and voluntary groups/ Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). These groups can be grassroots groups, single-issue temporary groups, but also structured community and voluntary organisations. Research for the CSO is carried out free of financial cost by student researchers.

CARL seeks to:

- provide civil society with knowledge and skills through research and education;
- provide their services on an affordable basis;
- promote and support public access to and influence on science and technology;
- create equitable and supportive partnerships with civil society organisations;
- enhance understanding among policymakers and education and research institutions of the research and education needs of civil society, and
- enhance the transferrable skills and knowledge of students, community representatives and researchers (Living Knowledge Network).

What is a CSO?

We define CSOs as groups who are non-governmental, non-profit, not representing commercial interests, and/or pursuing a common purpose in the public interest. These groups include: trade unions, NGOs, professional associations, charities, grass-roots organisations, organisations that involve citizens in local and municipal life, churches and religious committees, and so on.

Why is this report on the UCC website?

The research agreement between the CSO, student and CARL/University states that the results of the study must be made public through the publication of the final research report on the CARL (UCC) website. CARL is committed to open access, and the free and public dissemination of research results.

How do I reference this report?

Author (year) *Dissertation/Project Title*, [online], Community-Academic Research Links/University College Cork, Ireland, Available from: https://www.ucc.ie/en/scishop/rr/ [Accessed: date].

How can I find out more about the Community-Academic Research Links and the Living Knowledge Network?

The UCC CARL website has further information on the background and operation of Community-Academic Research Links at University College Cork, Ireland, http://carl.ucc.ie. You can follow CARL on Twitter at @UCC_CARL. All of our research reports are accessible free online here.

CARL is part of an international network of Science Shops called the Living Knowledge Network – website and on Twitter @ScienceShops. CARL is also a contributor to Campus Engage, which is the Irish Universities Association engagement initiative to promote community-based research, community-based learning and volunteering amongst Higher Education students and staff.

Are you a member of a community project and have an idea for a research project?

We would love to hear from you! Read the background information here and contact us by email at carl@ucc.ie.

Disclaimer

Notwithstanding the contributions by the University and its staff, the University gives no warranty as to the accuracy of the project report or the suitability of any material contained in it for either general or specific purposes. It will be for the Client Group, or users, to ensure that any outcome from the project meets safety and other requirements. The Client Group agrees not to hold the University responsible in respect of any use of the project results. Notwithstanding this disclaimer, it is a matter of record that many student projects have been completed to a very high standard and to the satisfaction of the Client Group.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, to the community partner who recognised the need for this research through their awareness and dedication to the students they support. You go above and beyond your role as educators and the students are privileged to have you. Without the participants this research would not exist. For the honesty, integrity, and commitment to care, thank you.

To Dr Kenneth Burns, your' expertise, guidance, patience, and wit have encouraged our development and allowed us to create a piece of research we are proud of. Thank you for challenging us to step outside of our comfort zone and commit to such a rewarding piece of work.

To our practice teachers, and colleagues from our MSW placements, thank you for creating the environment for us to grow and learn as a professional and as an individual. Thank you to all the course staff on the MSW for all that you have taught us over the last two years. and to all our course colleagues for the experiences that we've shared and supported each other through.

To our families and friends, for listening to us talk endlessly about social work and our research. We are so fortunate to have so many people in our life that support us the way that you do.

Abstract

As of June 2022, 2,800 children were living in Direct Provision in Ireland, in a system which subjects them to "institutionalized poverty." Education can be a key tool to help children transcend poverty, but students from Direct Provision often face educational disadvantages. This research was done as part of the Community-Academic Research Links (CARL) initiative (CARL) at University College Cork (UCC). Through this initiative, a second-level school identified the need for research to be carried out on the topic of the education of students from Direct Provision. This research examines how staff members in a DEIS secondary school support the retention, educational attainment, and further progression of these students. The study included two focus groups with seven school staff members. The staff identified significant barriers, such as accommodation, dispersal, deportation, language support, and resources, to the education of second-level Direct Provision students. Best practices were also identified, including individualised care, access to DEIS supports, and raising educational aspirations. Recommendations for addressing the gap in service provision for staff members included structural changes, such as implementing proposals within the White Paper on Ending Direct Provision, prioritizing structured EAL support, evaluating the possibility of greater in-house support in schools, and increasing flexibility in the education system. The study concludes that while schools play an essential role in supporting Direct Provision students' education, the government needs to make structural changes to ensure that Direct Provision children have the same educational opportunities as their peers.

Glossary

Abbreviations

CAO	The Central Applications Office
CARL	Community Academic Research Link
CBPR	Community-Based Participatory Research
EAL	English as an Additional Language
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison
IPO	International Protection Office
MSW	Master of Social Work
OT	Occupational Therapy
SCP	School Completion Programme
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SLT	Speech and Language Therapy
UCC	University College Cork

Definitions

Asylum Seeker	Persons seeking protection as refugees. Also referred to as international protection applicants.
CAO	The Central Applications Office (CAO) processes applications for undergraduate courses in Irish Higher Education Institutions.
Direct Provision	The provision of services by the Irish government to those seeking international protection.
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) is a national programme aimed at targeted schools to help bridge the gap of disadvantage.
Further & higher education	Tertiary education following second-level including but not exclusive to college and university.
IPO	The International Protection Office (IPO) is an office within the Immigration Service Delivery (ISD) responsible for examining and processing applications for international protection.

Permission to remain	If the IPO does not recommend refugee status or subsidiary protection, the Minister of Justice may grant permission to remain based on a person's circumstances including the person's connection to Ireland, humanitarian considerations and a person's character and conduct in Ireland and abroad.
Refugee	A person granted asylum or international protection on the grounds that they have a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside of their own country and cannot or will not return there because of the well-founded fear of persecution and cannot be protected in their own country
Second-level education	Education provided post primary consisting of a junior cycle for those aged 12-15 (approx.) and a senior cycle for those aged 16 to 18 (approx.).
Subsidiary protection	Granted if a person does not qualify as a refugee but may be granted subsidiary protection if there were a risk that they would suffer serious harm they returned to their own country. The risk of harm is not based on who the person is, but because there is a general risk of harm in the country.
UCC PLUS	UCC PLUS (now known as Access UCC PLUS Programme) is a university programme that targets students from DEIS schools and provide motivational and educational assistance to them throughout their secondary schooling to enhance their ability to compete for third-level places.
Unaccompanied minor	An unaccompanied minor is a child under the age of 18 who arrives at a port of entry or at the International Protection Office (IPO), and who is not in the custody of an adult.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....3

Abstract.....4

Glossary.....5

Abbreviations.....5

Definitions.....5

Chapter One: Direct Provision and Education.....9

1.1 Research Background.....9

1.2 Community Partnership.....11

1.3 Rationale.....11

1.4 Research Title.....12

1.5 Research Aim and Objectives.....12

1.6 Research Questions.....12

1.7 Dissertation Chapter Outline.....12

Chapter Two: A Review of the Literature.....14

2.1 Introduction to the Chapter and Methodology.....14

2.2 Education Laws and Policies.....14

2.3 Educational Experiences of those in Direct Provision.....15

2.4 Conclusion.....20

Chapter Three: Research Methodology.....21

3.1 Introduction.....21

3.2 Theoretical Perspective and Epistemology.....21

3.3 Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR).....22

3.4 Research Methodology.....23

3.5 Research Methods.....23

3.6. Sampling.....24

3.7 Data Collection and Thematic Analysis.....24

3.8 Ethical Considerations.....25

3.9 Limitations of Study.....26

3.10 Researcher Reflexive Positioning – Katie Buckley.....26

3.11 Researcher Reflexive Positioning – Maria Flavin.....27

3.11 Conclusion....28
Chapter Four: Findings & Analysis....29
4.1 Introduction....29
4.2 The Impact of the Irish Asylum Process....29
4.3 Educational Policies....33
4.4 Student Engagement Supports....35
4.5 English Language Supports....37
4.5 Financial Barriers to Education....39
4.6 Emotional Needs of Students....41
4.7 Parental Engagement....44
4.8 Discussion....46
4.9 Conclusion....47
Chapter Five: Conclusion & Recommendations....48
5.1 Introduction....48
5.2 Identifying the Issues....48
5.3 Identifying What Works....48
5.4 Identifying the Gaps....49
5.5 Next Steps for the Researchers....49
5.6 Recommendations: Structural Changes....49
5.7 Recommendations for Schools....51
5.8 Recommendations for Research....51
5.9 Personal Reflection – Katie Buckley....51
5.10 Personal Reflection – Maria Flavin....52
5.11 Chapter Conclusion....53
Bibliography....54
Appendix A: Confirmation of Ethical Approval....60
Appendix B: Information Sheet....61
Appendix C: Consent Forms....63
Appendix D: Interview Guide....64
Appendix E: Debriefing Sheet....66

Chapter One:

Direct Provision and Education

1.1 Research Background

Education is perhaps the most powerful tool we have in reshaping our futures and allowing for generations existing in the margins of society to move beyond lives of poverty. Improved access to education can strengthen social cohesion and lessen inequality in turn effect progressive change (Fleming, 2017). For many children in Ireland, the right to equal and fair education is denied. Following an increase in numbers of asylum-seeking refugees in Ireland, the system of Direct Provision was established in April 2000 (Ni Rhallalaigh et al., 2015). Direct Provision is managed by The Department of Justice and Equality through the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) who bear the responsibility to accommodate, clothe, and provide meals for those awaiting a decision on their application for refugee status (O' Riordan & FitzGibbon, 2020). Since its inception, the system of Direct Provision has been widely criticized as confining children to marginalization and creating victims of State imposed poverty (O' Riordan & FitzGibbon, 2020). Initially intended to be a short-term process, the reality is many asylum seekers have remained in the system for several years due to ineffective integration strategies and poor government migration management (Glynn, 2014). Over the past decade the conditions of Direct Provision have been uncovered as inhumane, sub-standard, and unconstitutional (O' Riordan & FitzGibbon, 2020). Figures from 2022 show 11, 689 people accommodated in Direct Provision approximately 2, 800 of whom are children (Pollack, 2022). The impact of Direct Provision on children is best captured through the words of the children themselves:

> *"I would love a home. I want to go to college. I want to know I can stay in Ireland. I have lived with my family in Direct Provision for six years. That is too long. If I could change just one thing it is that Direct Provision ends."* (Edmund Rice Schools Trust, 2019, p. 1)

In the *Fifth Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection,* former Special Rapporteur on Child Protection Geoffrey Shannon acknowledges how the system of Direct Provision subjects these children to "*institutionalised poverty*" (Shannon, 2012, p. 75). Recent reports have outlined that due to the cost-of-living crisis, children in Direct Provision are at a "*higher risk of living in consistent poverty*" and that conditions have become worse since the publication of the *White Paper on Ending Direct Provision* (Ní

Aodha, 2022, para. 17; Irish Refugee Council, 2022). This group of children are some of the most vulnerable in society and so, there is a significant need for both Irish society and the Irish state to better support these children.

Education is viewed as a tool to improve one's opportunities in life; however, the issue of educational disadvantage persists in Ireland, particularly for students in Direct Provision. Educational disadvantage sees students from Direct Provision unable to engage and participate in the education system to the same degree as their peers due to structural and societal issues including a lack of financial, social, or cultural capital (Kellaghan, 2001). For many of these children education access, attainment and progression are crucial determinants of life choices (Lynch, 2002) and so it is important that research is done to see how students at the second-level education are best supported to access education, progress and fulfil their educational potential. This research will examine the experience of students from Direct Provision accessing the education system through knowledge obtained from the school staff who offer education and support.

1.2 Community Partnership

This research is conducted as part of a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) project with a second-level DEIS school. The school proposed a research idea to University College Cork under the Community Academic Research Links (CARL) initiative, following their observations of retention rates among students from Direct Provision. After numerous consultations with the school, it was decided that the school will remain anonymous until a review of the report is undertaken by the Board of Management and research participants. At this time, due to the sensitivity of the subject and identifying information relating to students, the school will remain anonymous throughout this report. The research was undertaken jointly by Maria Flavin and Katie Buckley under the supervision of Dr Kenneth Burns.

1.3 Rationale

The rationale behind this research is threefold. Firstly, this research was proposed by a second-level school through the Community-Academic Research Links (CARL) initiative in UCC and so the research is guided by the needs of the community. The research engages with a second-level school to better understand the experiences of school staff in supporting these students from Direct Provision. Engaging with school staff offers specialised insight into the gap between policy and practice and it offers the reality on the ground for staff.

Secondly, this research would address an identified gap in the literature. One perspective that didn't feature in the literature review to date is the experience of the school staff in supporting the students and how they in turn are supported. This research will look to highlight their experiences and offer greater insight into what hinders and supports students from Direct Provision in second-level education.

Lastly, conducting this research will provide the researchers with the knowledge that will better allow them to understand the experience of students and people living in Direct Provision. Developing a deeper understanding of the experience of these students will lead the researchers to be better-informed social worker workers in terms of understanding the structural issues faced by minorities.

1.4 Research Title

This research is titled *"Care and compassion gets these students across the line": The Experience of School Staff Supporting Second-Level Students from Direct Provision.*

1.5 Research Aim and Objectives

The research aims to explore the experience of school staff in a DEIS secondary school supporting the educational attainment and emotional needs of students from Direct Provision. To do so, this research will look to achieve the following objectives:

- A review of the literature to gain an understanding of the current research on the education of students from Direct Provision including student experiences, best practices, and legislation/policy.
- Carry out focus groups with second-level school staff from the community partner school to understand the experiences of supporting students from Direct Provision.
- Develop specific, reasonable, and relevant recommendations for the school and research team to support the education of students from Direct Provision based on the research findings.

1.6 Research Questions

This piece of research will address three research questions:

1. What do school staff identify as the factors that support the education of second-level students from Direct Provision?
2. What do school staff identify as the barriers to the education of second-level students from Direct Provision?
3. What would address the gap in service provision for the staff to support the education of students from Direct Provision?

1.7 Dissertation Chapter Outline

Chapter One: Introduction	This chapter will provide the background to the research topic, the rationale for the study and information regarding the community partner. It will outline the aims, objectives, and research questions.
Chapter Two: Literature Review	This chapter will explore the educational barriers that present for students from Direct Provision, and the impact of the system of their emotional wellbeing.
Chapter Three: Methodology	This chapter will present the methods applied to this research, the theoretical approach that underpins the study and the reflexive standpoint of the researcher. The ethical issues that were considered prior to conducting the research will be discussed and the limitations to the research will also be presented.
Chapter Four: Findings & Analysis	This chapter will investigate and explore the findings from the data gathered during the focus groups. The data will be presented in the form of a thematic analysis followed by a discussion on the data connecting it to relevant literature.
Chapter Five: Conclusion	The final chapter will conclude with recommendations and concluding marks from the researcher including the researcher's reflections on the process of conducting a CARL research project.

Chapter Two:

A Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction to the Chapter and Methodology

This research looks to explore the experiences of how school staff support the education of students from Direct Provision. As this research pertains to formal second-level education, the provision of which is mainly provided for by the Irish state, the first part of this chapter will review the standing of education provision in Irish law and policy. With an understanding of the structural context, the existing literature documenting the experiences of asylum seekers in second-level education will be examined.

A review of laws and policies was conducted using the Irish Statute Book and the websites of the government of Ireland. With regards to the literature outlining the experiences of students from Direct Provision, a search was conducted using UCC Library One Search, and Google Scholar. Using a Google search, community organisation reports and news articles were also considered viable data for the process of literature review as these sources provided the research with current data and discourses.

2.2 Education Laws and Policies

The Irish Constitution (1937) as an instrument for rights and responsibilities in the state is an important place to start in understanding the place of education in society and law. Articles 40-44 of the Constitution outline personal rights afforded by this instrument including Article 42 which outlines rights as they pertain to education. Article 42.4 of the Constitution protects the provision of free primary education to all with a mention of the provision of other educational facilities "*when the public good requires it*". However, in the supreme court ruling of *Sinnott v The Minister for Education* (2001), it was determined that this right to free primary education ends at the age of 18 and is not dependent on the need of the person.

Article 42.3.2 outlines that "*the State shall, however, as guardian of the common good, require in view of actual conditions that the children receive a certain minimum education, moral, intellectual and social*." The *Education Welfare Act 2000* expands on this in that a child (between the ages of 6 and 16, or those

who have not completed 3 years of post-primary education) who is a resident in the state, shall be required to attend school. However, this 'certain minimum' has not been defined in any education policy or legislation. Both the Constitution and the *Education Welfare Act 2000* form the basis for the foundation of equality of opportunity.

Two legal provisions which feature in the literature as a means towards the realisation of equality in education are the *Equal Status Acts* (2000-2018) and the *Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018*. The *Equal Status Acts* (2000-2018) protects persons from discrimination on a number of grounds including race which includes nationality, ethnicity or national origin. The *Education (Admissions to Schools) Act 2018* builds on this further in reinforcing the equality of opportunity through non-discrimination. This includes the standardisation of admission policies under sections 62 and 63 as well as the prohibition of reserving the right to use religion as a basis for admission or priority under section 11. Through these legal protections, students from Direct Provision may not be excluded from education on the basis of their having a different religion or ethnicity.

However, exceptions exist within the *Equal Status Acts* (2000-2018) which provide a legal loophole. In relation to third-level education, the acts allow for these institutions to treat non-Irish/EEA nationals differently in relation to admissions fees, attendance, and allocation of places. It also allows for the differential treatment of non-Irish/EEA nationals in relation to accessing education grants. This has direct implications for educational progression which is discussed at a later point.

Policy reflects the political will of a state and must be reviewed also in relation to the provision of education. The most recent *Department of Education: Statement of Strategy 2021-2023* (2021) makes brief reference to assisting those living in Direct Provision and refers to the *Migrant Integration Strategy: A Blueprint for the Future* (Department of Justice and Equality, 2017). This strategy mentions a number of education-related goals which include the need to explore the extension of free fees initiative to those in Direct Provision, a review of the adequacy of language supports, a review of the effectiveness of diversity and racism training for teachers, the monitoring of enrolment policies, and a review of schools' support of parent's participation.

2.3 Educational Experiences of those in Direct Provision

The experiences of asylum seekers in second-level education are evident in a wide range of literature including government reports and strategies, academic research, news articles, and organisational reports. Across the range of literature, a number of themes arise when looking specifically at the experience of

second-level students from Direct Provision and their progression to third-level education which are accommodation provision, financial difficulties, trauma, lack of English language supports and exclusionary school practices.

2.3.1 Accommodation and the Policy of Dispersal

The policy of dispersion which underpins Direct Provision seeks "*to respond to fears at the time that access to Irish levels of social welfare and other supports would constitute a 'pull' factor in attracting economic migrants*" (Day, 2020, p. 19). Remote locations of these Direct Provision centres have shown to directly impact educational participation and lead to attendance issues (Day, 2020; Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2022). Transport issues have emerged as a barrier to attendance due to the financial costings of accessing public transport and the practicality of accessing services in rural and remote areas (Edmund Rice Schools Trust, 2019; Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2017; McMahon, 2015). The accommodation provision of Direct Provision has been under intense scrutiny since its inception in 2000 (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021; McMahon, 2015). Ogbu (2014) highlights the need to understand practical and psychological implications for educational participation outside of the formal school setting. The accommodation provision under Direct Provision takes away privacy from the people living there through the CCTV surveillance throughout the centres or be that the accommodation centre which places families together in one room (Dreyer, 2019; Ombudsman for Children's Office, 2020).

Relocation during education is a normal occurrence by those normally residing in Direct Provision centres. Relocation is at the discretion of centre management and this policy of dispersal is used as a deterrent for applicants (Thornton, 2013; O'Brien, 2014). Another issue that emerges in literature is the disruption to education for 'aged out' unaccompanied minors. At the age of 18, these students are often moved from state care to Direct Provision accommodation which often involves the relocation of a considerable distance as evidenced in Ní Raghallaigh & Thornton (2018), Edmund Rice Schools Trust (2019) and *Enguye v Health Services Executive* (2011). This disruption to their lives can have a significant psychological impact which in turn can impact on their ability to engage in school (Ní Raghallaigh & Thornton, 2018).

2.3.2 Financial Difficulties

Both primary and secondary school is provided free by the state in Ireland to asylum-seeking children. However, when looking at their economic means which consists of the back-to-school allowance and the Daily Expenses Allowance, there is a gap between the financial support afforded to those in Direct Provision and the cost of actual participation in education in Ireland (Barnardos, 2020; Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2017; ILCU, 2021). This financial welfare provision alone proves insufficient at covering costs associated with schooling such as book rentals, extracurricular activities, and transport to the school (Day, 2020; Edmund Rice Schools Trust, 2019; McMahon, 2015).

When it comes to accessing third-level education, significant financial barriers arise in the literature which presents the progression from second-level to third-level education for asylum seekers. Progress has been made in recent years including the removal of international fees for post-leaving certificate courses in 2021, and the introduction of the International Protection Student Scheme in 2015 which has continued to expand since (Citizens Information, 2022; Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, 2022). The Student Support Scheme provides grants to eligible school leavers who are in the international protection system in line with the current Student Grant Scheme (SUSI) (Citizens Information, 2022). There has also been an expansion of SUSI eligibility in recent years (O'Halloran, 2020). The expansion of these supports leads to a greater financial ability for those in Direct Provision to progress onto third-level education.

As it stands the free fees eligibility criteria still exclude most asylum seekers from accessing undergraduate courses and so they are subject to substantial international fees required. This has been highlighted by the Mahon Report (2015), the Day Report (2020) and White Paper on Ending Direct Provision (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021). Further recommendations offered have been second chance and vocational training opportunities where the post-primary setting may not be the most appropriate for their needs (Day, 2020).

2.3.3 English Language Supports

Those in Direct Provision often do not speak English before coming to Ireland and may have difficulties acquiring the languages (Harmon, 2018). There are a number of challenges facing the provision of English language support. This in turn creates significant barriers for these students to access the curriculum. In a monitoring report by The Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (2019), the adequacy of EAL (English as an Additional Language) support allocations is still under review meaning that the status of this service provision has not been directly addressed by the government. However, the

issue of inadequate language support has been directly highlighted in both academic literature and recent news reports (Ní Raghallaigh et al., 2019; O Kelly, 2022a). The issue of access to EAL supports directly impacts the student's ability to engage with schooling. An issue that then arises from this is that the level of a subject that a student chooses to take for their examination is determined by their English proficiency rather than their academic ability in relation to that subject (Harmon, 2018). This in turn can have implications for third-level matriculation requirements and the ability to compete in the CAO system.

2.3.4 Trauma-Informed Education

The occurrence of post-traumatic stress disorder in refugees is reportedly higher when compared to the wider population. Refugee children frequently suffer with trauma and loss and are at increased risk for mental health disorders (Velu et.al., 2022). It is widely evidenced that those seeking asylum in Ireland are often fleeing from life threatening situations to create a safer, better life for their families (O' Reilly, 2020). Much of the literature states that mental illness and depression are prevalent within Direct Provision owing to the unsuitable living conditions and long periods of time awaiting a decision regarding their refugee claim (O'Reilly, 2018; Ni Raghallaigh et al., 2016).

Children in Direct Provision are not exempt from the negative consequences of Direct Provision on their mental health. Hayes (2012, p. 428) contends that children in Direct Provision are victim to "heightened vulnerability". He argues that the inhumane conditions of Direct Provision can be considered neglect, a considerable form of child abuse. The impact of Direct Provision and mental health difficulties can further compound the challenges children face when accessing education. Arnold (2012) highlights when children from Direct Provision have difficulty engaging and accessing the education system it can have adverse effects on their wellbeing.

In 2019 Ireland's largest independent mental health service provider, St Patricks Mental Health Services, made a submission to the Committee on Justice and Equality consultation on Direct Provision and the international protection application process. Throughout this submission they highlight the welfare, mental health difficulties and needs of people accommodated in Direct Provision and provide recommendations to the committee. They advised of the need for "increased awareness and understanding of trauma informed approaches amongst… staff directly working with people living in Direct Provision centres "(2019, p. 5).

There is limited evidence to suggest that those tasked with educating and supporting students within second level school have adequate training on trauma informed care. Martin et al. (2018) highlights that schools and teachers are inadequately equipped to provide appropriate support to the needs of students

from Direct Provision. Providing adequate training to teachers regarding refugee relevant policies and the structural barriers they impose in children could assist teachers to provide appropriate guidance and care to their students (Bajaj et al., 2017).

Scanlon and McKenna (2018) argue that educational needs cannot be understood narrowly as just as material needs but requires an expansion to physiological needs such as belonging and safety. Harmon (2018) speaks to the trauma of dislocation within a new country and educational system which can impact on the educational confidence and attainment of a student. Research informs us of the trauma, and mental health issues experienced by these children as a result of their experience before coming to Ireland and the experience within Direct Provision (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021; Edmund Rice Schools Trust, 2019; LePine at al., 2004). This trauma has been argued to have a direct impact on learning and critical thinking skills (LePine et al., 2004). With this considered, the need for a trauma-informed approach to education is echoed in the recommendations within government reports (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021; Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2022). This would allow school staff to better understand the impact of trauma on cognitive development and help to design schools which build supportive and safe learning environments that address the students' emotional needs.

2.3.5 Inclusive Education

Similarly, the need for more inclusive education has also been identified in the literature (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2022). Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers now includes programmes on inclusive education (Day, 2020). Inclusive education emphasises the importance of creating a sense of community and belonging. It also seeks to promote positive engagement through the development of students learning, behaviour and wellbeing (The National Council for Special Education, 2011). However, the effectiveness of such training from school staff around diversity and racism has been highlighted as needing further review by the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration (2019).

2.3.6 Exclusionary School Practices

Improvements have been made in recent years to address exclusionary school policies as discussed above with regards to a religious preference for admission and inconsistent admissions policies (Irish Human

Rights and Equality Commission, 2022) (Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration , 2019). Work is still being done to support the participation of parents in children's education and improve the dissemination of information to those in Direct Provision regarding the registering of children for school (Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration , 2019). Despite this, bureaucratic and structural issues persist. Recent delays in the processing of PPSNs for those in Direct Provision resulted in the denial of access to back-to-school grants and also wrongly affected some parents' enrolment applications (Fletcher, 2022).

2.4 Conclusion

The analysis of student experiences in the literature review provided thematic areas which will inform primary research question formation. This research hopes to contribute to this research and also to give an individualised piece of research to the second-level school involved in the research. One perspective that didn't feature in the literature review to date is the experience of the school staff in supporting the students and how they in turn are supported. Understanding that this experience feeds into informing a holistic and ecological approach to the research aim, this informed the inclusion of staff"s experience in the research questions.

Chapter Three:

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The following chapter will outline the methodology applied throughout the research. It will provide an overview of the theoretical perspective and epistemology that underpin the research thus allowing the reader a greater understanding of how the data was collected, processed, and analysed (Carey, 2013). It will provide an overview of Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) framework utilised throughout the study as part of the Community Academic Research Links (CARL) initiative in University College Cork (UCC). "Community-Academic Research Links (CARL) at UCC is a small initiative of mainly academic staff who give their time voluntarily to support Civil Society Organisations and students who are interested in CBR "(Bates & Burns, 2012, p. 6). The research methods applied to this study will be discussed, along with the limitations of each. To conclude, the chapter will outline the ethical considerations and reflexivity of the researcher.

3.2 Theoretical Perspective and Epistemology

To support social work research a suitable theory should be applied; this can "support our capacity to make sense of what it is we are doing and help us to explain and understand our findings" (Carey, 2013, p. 55). Utilizing a theory also provides a framework to support and inform the research. Following discussion with the community partner, it was decided the most ethically suitable approach would be to examine the experience of school staff in supporting students from Direct Provision. An interpretive approach was applied as it allows the researcher to *"*uncover the meaning and 'reality' of people's experiences in the social world" it also encouraged the researcher to "understand the opinions, emotional responses and attitudes articulated by participants*"* (Carey, 2013, p. 60).

Social constructivist epistemology is utilised which compliments an interpretivist theoretical perspective. Carey (2012, p. 79) defines epistemology as "*the nature of knowledge and knowledge production*". It is imperative to examine how the epistemological approach was chosen for this research project and how

that in turn will inform the production of knowledge. Using a social constructionist epistemology allows for the subjective experiences of the participants to be shared and allows for diverse opinions and debates on the research questions posed (Jupp, 2006). This research will examine and analyse the experiences of seven individuals as they jointly construct meaning and a greater understanding of the educational system in which they find themselves.

3.3 Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR)

This research was done as part of the Community-Academic Research Links initiative (CARL) at University College Cork (UCC). Through this initiative, the school identified the need for research to be carried out on the topic of the education of students from Direct Provision and they put forward this proposal to UCC. This is in line with the CARL commitments to supporting participation in research, addressing exclusion, and promoting equality (University College Cork, 2022). The nature of the CARL project is regarded as community-based participatory research (CBPR). The strengths of this approach discussed by Coughlin et al. (2017) includes the utilisation of the strengths and knowledge of the community partner to identify issues, prioritise the needs of the community partner, and develop solutions. Through this process, the experience of the community is highlighted which is important when their experiences have not been strongly represented in the literature as evidenced in the literature review in the previous chapter. For the student researcher, completing a CARL report allows them the opportunity to complete primary research within the community which may benefit the Civil Society Organisations (Bates & Burns, 2012). An observation by the community partner noted the retention of students from Direct Provision was becoming increasingly challenging. Based on this, it was decided that consulting with the educational staff would allow us to identify the barriers and supportive factors to education.

A designated liaison person was selected to function as the co-ordinator for the community partner and research team. They were consulted with during each stage of the process and assisted with the recruitment of suitable participants, deciding the research method, and creating an interview guide. The participatory nature of CBPR means that the community partner has shared power and decision-making ability in the research process (Bates & Burns, 2012). Consistent communication between the community partner and the researcher team is an intrinsic part of the participatory approach. The community partner will be regularly updated on changes to format, structure, or direction of the report. Similarly, the researchers are open to all suggestions from the community partner.

3.4 Research Methodology

The methodology decided by the research team and community partner for this research was primary qualitative research. “A qualitative methodology enables you to further your knowledge of the situation when seeking to describe social reality” (Alston & Bowles, 2003, p. 64). Qualitative data can produce significant amounts of rich data to be analysed. After examining the literature outlined in Chapter Two, the researchers consulted with the community partner and collectively decided a primary approach was the most suitable method to reach the research aims. Qualitative research allows us to explore themes such as attitudes, behaviour, experiences of particular social groups and social problems in greater detail (Carey, 2013). Conducting primary qualitative research will allow us to honour the voices of school staff, tell their stories and capture the nuances of their experience.

3.5 Research Methods

Focus groups were chosen by the research team and community partner as the method to gather the data. These groups can create a space for specific themes or issues to be extensively explored (Bryman, 2008). The availability of research participants was considered and following discussions with the community partners liaison, focus groups were agreed as the most suitable method that would generate sufficient data. Questionnaire style surveys and interviews were decided against as the researchers sought to capture the lived experiences of school staff and wished to generate data from open discussions.

As per Carey (2012) qualitative research frequently takes place in a natural setting that is familiar for the participants, such as their place of work. Two school rooms were identified as being suitable spaces for the focus group by the community liaison. As a qualitative semi-structured focus group both an open and flexible approach will be used by the researchers to allow for discussions to cover the “perspectives and meanings that are important to the people being researched” (Alston & Bowles, 2003, p. 10). A total of two focus groups will be conducted in person and last for approximately one hour. Time will be allocated after the focus group to allow members to debrief where required. An interview guide (see Appendix A) was created by the research team and the liaison for the community partner. This consists of nine questions grouped according to themes to generate data relating to the research aims and questions. Prior to conducting the focus groups, the research team conducted a pilot focus group with the research supervisor. This data was not included in the study and was purely performed for the benefit of the researchers in order to develop an interview guide, to establish a joint working style and to practice the researchers facilitation skills.

3.6. Sampling

The participants consisted of school staff who have had direct involvement with students from Direct Provision. Staff members who have not had direct involvement with students from Direct Provision will be excluded from participating in the research. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling. The designated liaison for the school recruited the participants based on the participant's interest to participate and their involvement with students from Direct Provision, criteria for purposive sampling outlined by Alston & Bowles (2003). Purposive sampling allows the researchers to choose the "sample for the study for a *purpose"* (Alston & Bowles, 2003, p. 89). The researchers produced a comprehensive information sheet and ensured it was accessible clear and informative, this was emailed to the staff body by the liaison member as per "researcher driven recruitment" (Bryman, 2011, p. 511). Contact details of the research team were included to allow further discussion with participants if required.

From this, the liaison member recruited seven suitable participants for the research. Suitable applicants received a consent declaration from the liaison member who then hand delivered these to the research team. Seven participants were selected due to their experience of direct work with students from Direct Provision. The participants included core curriculum teachers, members of management and special needs assistants. All participants were white, six female and one male.

3.7 Data Collection and Thematic Analysis

The research team communicated regularly with the liaison community member regarding suitable times for focus groups. Two dates and times were agreed upon and the liaison member agreed to communicate these to participants. The team will secure a Dictaphone from UCC library to record the groups. The recordings will be uploaded to Microsoft Word under UCC registered credentials. The Microsoft Word dictate option will be used for both groups to create a transcript. Following this, time will be allocated to review the transcripts and to ensure the accuracy of these transcripts. To maintain confidentiality, all identifying information will be removed from the transcripts. UCC'S Data Protection Policy will be adhered to throughout the process (University College Cork, 2018).

The data will be divided between the researchers and analysed according to themes. Applying a Thematic Analysis requires the researchers to search for themes within the data (Carey, 2013). The researchers have highlighted themes appropriate to their aims and encouraged each other to consider emerging themes that were not pre-anticipated. The researchers will work from a shared document strictly accessible to them only on a UCC secure and approved data storage platform. They will highlight data

throughout the transcripts and code it according to themes, also highlighting emergent themes and leaving suggestions boxes available and adding commentary for both to view. Following this, the team will discuss the themes and begin to categorise them according to key themes with subheadings. This will allow for discussion on relevancy and what themes could be removed, owing to the limited word count.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

As per Alston & Bowles (2003) research is never free from values, ethical considerations are a crucial component of all research. They further justify that an awareness of ethical consideration requires researchers to ensure no harm is placed upon participants and the research will be of benefit to those being researched.

For this research one joint application was submitted to UCC's MSW Research Ethics Committee, by Maria Flavin on behalf of the research team. This application was completed together with the study design and data collection instruments co-designed with the school. During the ethical consideration processes both researchers and the community partner wished to retain the dignity and respect of the students at the heart of the paper. It was decided directly interviewing students from Direct Provision was unsuitable for several reasons. Firstly, it required them to discuss a traumatic process and the accommodation setting where they may still reside. Secondly, as current students they would not have the additional benefit of time outside the education system allowing them to reflect on what they recognised as a barrier or protective factor. This decision corresponds with Barnes (1979) who believed being ethically informed requires researchers to make decisions and chose a certain process over another based on what is morally correct.

Confidentiality was a key consideration when completing the ethical application for the research. The terms regarding confidentiality were outlined in the information sheet distributed to participants (see Appendix B). The researchers will ensure that written consent is received from all participants prior to conducting the focus groups. The participants will also be invited to remove themselves from the study during the introduction period of the focus group, should they wish to. As the school staff may share traumatic or sensitive information relating to the students all identifying information will be removed during the analysis stage of the research. The school will be anonymized throughout this report as per their request.

Finally, the ethics of placing the principal and vice principal in a focus group with other staff were considered. To ensure that the focus groups allow for open and honest discussion it was decided to conduct a separate focus group for the principal and vice principal of the school.

3.9 Limitations of Study

Children's experiences are often presented in research through the lens of adults' interpretations which doesn't equate to an accurate representation (White, 2011). For this reason and to give a voice to the students about whom this research concerns, the engagement of students from Direct Provision was initially explored. Due to ethical and logistical concerns, it was decided to not research the experiences of students. There is a small number of students from Direct Provision in the school and so students would be easily identifiable. This would mean that anonymity could not be assured. It was also flagged that due to the policy of dispersal, these students may be moved at any stage of the research process. It was therefore decided that the research engage with the school staff instead of students. Another limitation of the research was the restraints of the scope of the research project in which the data collected must be contained within a minor dissertation. Further research could be expanded to include additional schools to offer a greater diversity of experiences across multiple schools which may find themselves in different geographical, or socio-economic contexts.

Another limitation of the research was the restraints of the scope of the research project in which the data collected must be contained within a minor dissertation. Further research could be expanded to include additional schools to offer a greater diversity of experiences across multiple schools which may find themselves in different geographical, or socio-economic contexts.

3.10 Researcher Reflexive Positioning – Katie Buckley

*"*Every aspect of the research is influenced by our theories and values. The important point is to become aware of what our underlying theories and values are, how they influence our choice and general approach to the topic, and to incorporate this understanding into our thinking as we develop our conceptual framework or plan for the research" (Alston & Bowles, 2003, p. 29).

Developing awareness of my personal values, biases and position on the research was a crucial aspect of ensuring they did not infringe on the research process. As per Wise (2001) to consolidate a reflexive approach one must consider their life biography and personal life experiences. Past educational experiences for me had not been entirely positive, and so I reflected on the reasons for this which allowed me to unravel my prejudices relating to the Irish education system. I had previously conducted secondary

research on educational disadvantage within the Irish system and wondered how students from Direct Provision could ever compete in a meritocratic system. This created feelings of frustration towards the Irish education system, and I improperly assumed this experience would *solely* highlight the barriers and struggles faced by these students. This was reflected in my first draft of research aims and questions where I failed to acknowledge the possibility of the school being a protective factor for the students from Direct Provision.

Maintaining my awareness required ongoing critical reflection throughout the process. Dr Kenneth Burns facilitated a safe space during the supervision process to allow honest reflection. Frequent engagement with Maria Flavin, my research partner, encouraged open discussion on feelings that presented during the research process.

3.11 Researcher Reflexive Positioning – Maria Flavin

Researchers should aim to be "*as neutral as possible in the collection, interpretation and presentation of data*" (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 22). However, interpretive epistemology acknowledges the role that the researcher is not neutral and has a role in the construction of knowledge (Gray, 2018). It is therefore important to understand the positioning of the researcher within the construction of this knowledge. Engaging in personal reflexivity has allowed me to reflect on and manage how my "*personal values, attitudes, beliefs, and aims have shaped the research*" (Gray, 2018, p. 689).

I enter this research with a great personal value around education and professional experience of working in education outreach for many years. I also bring with me my values around human rights with a particular interest in the advocacy around the issue of Direct Provision. My previous research has focused on the deficits of the system of Direct Provision and so I am cognisant to bring a balance into this research using a CBPR which takes a strengths-based approach towards the issue. I was also aware of assumptions that I may be bringing into the designing of the research questions and interview guide. I engaged in research supervision with Dr Kenneth Burns, liaised with the community partner, and had regular meetings with Katie Buckley, my research partner, with the aim of gaining an "*empathic neutrality*" towards the research (Ritchie et al., 2014).

3.11 Conclusion

This research applies a social constructionist epistemology to understand the collective experiences of school staff in supporting students from Direct Provision in their education. The research was underpinned by community-based participatory research principles which informed the collaborative

process of the research design. Qualitative data was collected through two focus groups with school staff and then thematically analysed by the researchers. The next chapter will discuss the themes and findings that emerged through this proces

Chapter Four:

Findings & Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present and analyse the findings relating to young people's experiences of the education system while living in Direct Provision and the experiences of school staff in supporting them in their education. The data collected from these focus groups were thematically analysed by the researchers as outlined in the previous chapter and the following themes were identified:

1. The impact of the Irish asylum process
2. Educational policies
3. School engagement supports
4. English language supports
5. Financial barriers to education
6. Emotional needs of students
7. Parental engagement

The themes were decided to ensure that they addressed the research questions which were: What does school staff identify as the barriers to education for students from Direct Provision and knowing this, what supports both the educational potential and retention of these students?

4.2 The Impact of the Irish Asylum Process

At the core of this research is the system of Direct Provision that these students find themselves in. In the focus groups, staff highlighted how the threat of deportation, the policy of dispersal, and the accommodation itself were impacting the lives and education of the students. ‘Brutal’ and ‘prison’ were some of the words used by our participants to describe the home of the students in Direct Provision. The accommodation provision for these students has been highly criticised and highlighted by the McMahon

(2015) and Day (2020) reports. Remote locations of these Direct Provision centres have been shown to directly impact educational participation and lead to attendance issues due to a lack of access to transport (Day, 2020). This is further supported by the experiences shared in these research findings.

4.2.1 Deportation and Dispersal

With the system of dispersal being a prominent part of asylum policy, the staff discussed how students moving from centres disrupts their education. This includes some students being moved around different centres up to nine times while living in Ireland. Participant 4 discussed how they've encountered students who have left the school, sometimes with the staff not knowing what ever happened to them:

> *"[The student] left us after just settling in like and we had a great relationship with her, she was actually quite funny and same with her mother, and she just disappeared."* - Participant 4

While the issue of dispersal was brought up in the focus groups, the staff also spoke about the threat of deportation for these students:

> *"They get a half an hour. That's when they swoop on them… they were always worried that that may happen to their child, their [child] that were attending here."* – Participant 7

In the focus group, Participant 1 proudly explains how the school creates relationships with students and families over generations in the local area. For these students from Direct Provision, the system of dispersal means that the majority of the students are moved from the school and so the chance for a continuing relationship is often denied. With the likelihood of students moving after a few years or the chance they may be deported, there is a real threat to the student's stability and continuity of care that the school could offer. As per The Immigrant Council of Ireland and Edmund Rice Schools Trust argue the "practice of moving families from centre to centre has an additional disruptive effect on children's education and integration" (Dunbar et al., 2020, p. 54). This does not support students to successfully integrate within communities when some are living on the cusp of being transferred.

The majority of staff in the focus groups identified that the threat of deportation has a significant psychological impact on children and that awaiting the status of their application is a difficult and ever-present burden for a young person to carry. Speaking of the psychological elements, the fear of deportation and the policy of dispersal can and does create psychological distress for these students. Ní Raghallaigh and Thornton (2018) highlight how the disruption of dispersal negatively impacts the retention of these students. With the staff's understanding of deportation, comes an understanding of how significant it is for these students to be granted asylum or permission to remain. In the school, staff noted

how when it does happen that a student is told that their future in Ireland has been secured, the school makes a point of marking this event with the students:

> *"And then the other side of it is that they're getting their passports now which is a nice occasion for them, and we celebrate it here like you know, when they do get their papers… it's great."* - Participant 4

The majority of participants identified the importance of developing an understanding of Direct Provision and how this has allowed them to respond to the needs of the students. These visits by members of the school to Direct Provision are advantageous as O' Riordan, Horgan, Martin & Blaney (2013) noted when teachers have a low level of knowledge of the Direct Provision living conditions of their students it can act as a barrier to education. In comparison, this research highlights the participants level of knowledge and experience of the Direct Provision system and how it informs their practice. The school of sanctuary model, a best practice highlighted by IMMERSE (Integration Mapping of refugee and migrant children), highlights three principles for creating a "*welcoming and inclusive environment for families seeking sanctuary*" (IMMERSE, 2019, para. 4). One of those principles outlined for schools is to learn about refugees and hear their stories. Creating this understanding is highlighted as an important step in promoting integration and building positive connections between children and their educational experiences. While the harsh reality of the system comes through in our findings so too does the reality of the care and compassion of the school staff.

4.2.2 Knowledge and Experience of Direct Provision

It emerged through the focus groups that the majority of participants had direct experience of visiting the centres. The staff's experience, in turn, informed their understanding of the students. Participant 6 discussed some behavioural issues that she was seeing in the students which in her opinion occurred as a result of the accommodation provision:

> *"The only thing I would say is I suppose from being up there, if maybe there's a behaviour or something there, you know, it's probably something to do with up there."* – Participant 6

One staff member recalled how her visit to the Direct Provision centre helped her to better understand and support her students:

> *"We went up and did a tour of the place…We actually had Christmas dinner there… and just sat down with them … I found it very good our visit up there when we were there, it sort of felt like if*

there are any problems, at least we know how to you know, tune into it if something did crop up in school." - Participant 7

Interestingly, two participants connected the experience to their role as parents seeing the centre as an unsuitable setting for families and children.

"Absolutely brutal to be honest with you… We both have kids; you know it's just not conducive to raising a family like."- Participant 1

"…It wasn't homely, you know? I felt it wasn't a nice place to raise a child." - Participant 2

The participants discussed this further and compared the center to an old medical setting stating and also highlighted a feeling of being enclosed drawing comparisons to the COVID-19 pandemic *"because in a way they're all in their own little lockdown up there"* (Participant 1). This was an interesting comparison as it served as a reminder of the lockdowns endured by people during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in comparison these were periods of time we exited when deemed safe to do so. In the case of Direct Provision, the 'lockdown' far exceeds the lockdowns experienced by the wider public.

"Because they get up in the morning…the first thing there's no privacy, the whole family in the one room." - Participant 7

"Everyone even in the common room, there's males and females there and even thinking of it, the whole lot of brothers and sisters all in the one bedroom you know with puberty and everything." - Participant 6

During the focus groups, all participants spoke negatively of the accommodation provision for the students living in Direct Provision. Some staff spoke about both their views and the students' views of the Direct Provision centres:

" [talking about the Direct Provision centre] … one girl described [it] as a prison when I was asking about it before." - Participant 4

Ogbu (2014) discusses how accommodation has been shown to have both practical and psychological implications for educational participation. This is very much echoed by all of the participants. Lack of privacy and lack of spaces for homework are some of the practical barriers to education engagement identified within the focus groups. A few staff also discussed how the lack of privacy and lack of study space in these centres were particularly amplified by the COVID pandemic:

"So, trying to get online for the second one [lockdown] was the big issue for them… It was a big family. They were in one communal living space… It was really hard to do, to talk to them online

because there was cooking going on there was little brothers and sisters running around the place…" - Participant 2

4.3 Educational Policies

In both focus groups, participants discussed the direct impact of educational policies on the outcomes of the students that they were supporting from Direct Provision. This encompassed discussions around government priorities, high-level decisions around curriculum design and discussions around their views of the current education system.

4.3.1 Government Initiatives

In our focus group, participants 1 and 2 both discussed how this academic year was the first year in which cultural minority groups were explicitly targeted in the DEIS strategic planning:

"*Every school in DEIS has to improve in seven areas like attainment, attendance, and so on partnership, but this year was the first year that we were told that you need your targets and specialise targets from students from cultural minorities groups."*– Participant 2

While targets were highlighted to reflect a positive change in policy, another staff member emphasised that the bureaucracy of targets doesn't capture the intangible elements of their work:

"They don't care, they want targets. Are you reaching this target…, you know? And it's the care and compassion that gets these students across the line, you know, as well as the education." - Participant 4

While all staff praised some government initiatives to support students from Ukraine, the majority of staff identified the disparity between this support and the support offered to students from Direct Provision. Staff members questioned why this disparity exists and were vocal about the inequalities within support provision. The staff also highlighted their opinions about the structure of the current education system in addressing the needs of students, and in particular the students from Direct Provision whose needs are often complex. The voices of all of the participants were indicative of a sentiment towards educational reform that is less standardised and more focused on students' individual needs.

"That's why I think the second level, it's a blunt instrument in this country. It should be much more flexible or adaptive." – Participant 5

> *"You know, we as teachers are qualified to differentiate, which means to make different lesson plans. But the reality on the ground is that that's not effectively working."* - Participant 4

It is positive to see that cultural minority groups are being specifically targeted at a national level within the DEIS strategic planning. However, this may very much echo the brief reference to assisting those living in Direct Provision in the *Department of Education: Statement of Strategy 2021-2023* (Department of Education, 2021). The lack of sufficient support to meet these targets highlighted by the school creates challenges for the school to translate policy into action. On a positive note, DEIS funding does afford additional support to the students including the running of a breakfast club that meets the basic needs of students (Department of Social Protection, 2023).

When looking at education on a structural level, the staff identified that the current system in place is not effective. Some of the school staff also stated that there is a need for more flexible and adaptive education provisions to allow them to respond to the complex needs of students from Direct Provision. Some suggestions include the incorporation of team-teaching as well as the possibility of a stand-alone class for students wishing to re-engage with education. However, schools need adequate staffing to successfully implement these approaches. The staffing of second-level schools has been a national challenge with a recent study showing that almost half of second-level schools in Ireland are experiencing staffing shortages (McGreevy, 2023).

4.3.2 Curriculum

While staff predominantly discussed English language provision (which is discussed in more detail later), they also discussed how the limit of languages recognised on the leaving certificate can be a barrier for some students from Direct Provision:

> *"You have your Irish exemption based on you being in the country after you're 12, yeah that's fine, but then they don't have French… So they may have another language, but the Department of Education does not recognise [that] yet in that they don't examine [it]"* – Participant 2

> *"There's no leaving cert exam for Filipino so like that would be [a] guaranteed A for them but while if we had someone from Russia let's say well, they'd get a guaranteed A."* – Participant 2

The findings also unfortunately highlight the educational disadvantage faced by students in Direct Provision, be that denial of the same supports offered to Ukrainian students or curriculum disadvantage

due to language. School staff explained that while some students' first languages are recognised on the leaving cert curriculum, many languages are not. The government recently announced that Ukrainian shall be an examinable language by the year 2025 showing that the potential for other languages can be realised (Casey, 2023). For students to have their first language as a leaving cert subject, acknowledges the value of their language alongside other languages. Furthermore, having this language as an examinable subject allows the students to acquire points which can provide them with an advantage through the CAO system. This in turn can create an impact on third-level progression and educational outcomes.

4.4 Student Engagement Supports

Historically, the retention of students from Direct Provision has been a major issue:

> *"We're holding onto a lot of what we have now like. My experience in the past is that typically they wouldn't have made it to leaving cert. A lot of them would have dropped out for various reasons."* – Participant 1

Participant 2 in this discussion identified attendance and engagement in school to be key to student retention in recent years. Throughout the focus groups, staff identified that having individualised support has been a mitigating factor in relation to this.

4.4.1 Retention and Engagement

The School Completion Programme (SCP) is a service provided in schools by TUSLA and is a "*targeted programme of support for … young people who have been identified as potentially at risk of early school leaving*" (Tusla, n.d.-a, para 1). It was identified in both groups the positives that the School Completion Programme offered to deliver individualised retention plans for students from Direct Provision:

> *"In addition to a number of other supports… gym membership was paid for in terms of well-being and feeling confident…. It all had a positive impact… [the gym membership] got her to engage like."* - Participant 1

Participants 1 and 2 discussed that the school completion budget comes from the TUSLA education support service and so while it is a valuable resource, it is one that is being stretched among schools. With DEIS status, the school is also allocated provision for a Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) which "*seeks to promote partnership between parents, teachers and community family support services*" (Tusla, n.d.-b, para 1). This service has provided support to the families of students in Direct Provision:

> *"…[the] approach is very much student centred like you know it's developing a strategy or approach to allow the child to flourish enrolled in school whether it's something simple like providing resources or something else like for example linking mom or dad into the language courses or doing something to develop their confidence their self-esteem raise their own expectation for themselves like."* – Participant 1

However, like many of the school resources, the resource is also being stretched. Participant 3 spoke about the difficulties she faces in addressing the high level of need for the service in the school:

> *"The recommended is roughly 5% [of the school's parents], but by nature… [the HSCL] actually works with 30%".* – Participant 3

Through the staff's perspective, the role of the HSCL has been shown to foster the relationship between the family and the school. The *Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion* 2021-2027 (European Commission, 2020) highlights how building relationships between schools and the families of migrant children contributes to better integration in communities. This leads to increased participation in education which has a strong correlation with future educational attainment and progression.

Other supports, such as EAL and SEN, were identified as provisions which help students to engage with the curriculum. However, there has been a reduction in the provision of these supports which undermines their efficacy.

4.4.2 Aspirations

In terms of educational aspirations, the role of the guidance counsellor was identified in supporting the student's aspirations for pursuing further or higher education:

> *"What helps them, I suppose it's a lot of what [refers to the guidance counsellor] does you know, in terms of aspirations"* – Participant 5

> *"But I'm very passionate about giving every student in this school an opportunity to go to college…."* – Participant 4

Participant 1 also discussed the value of the awards ceremony organised by the PLUS Programme in engaging families from Direct Provision with the local University:

> *"The awards night for example for second-year students. The number of parents have never set foot you know over the threshold of UCC ever it's just it's phenomenal so like our students from Direct Provision benefit from that as well like you know it's all very positive."* - Participant 1

Improving educational aspirations has been highlighted by staff to impact retention and progression. Improving educational aspirations involves allowing students to realise their potential, be that through discussion with the guidance counsellor or through visiting UCC's campus with family. Research has shown that educational aspirations can be raised through 'being' in a university environment. Programmes and events that allow the students to take part in activities and events on university campuses aid these aspirations as it allows the students to physically visualise the possibility of their future participation in these spaces (Geagea & MacCallum, 2022).

Lynch & Crean (2018) suggests that when students have limited exposure to those around them progressing onto third-level education, they may feel a sense of difference and disconnection, which could negatively impact their educational aspirations. Students who are given the opportunity to interact with members of their community who have progressed to third-level education, are better able to envision their place and advancement within the system. This can in turn bolster their self-esteem and confidence. Without this social support and cultural capital, students may encounter internal barriers to full participation in education. School staff identified the strength of the existing Traveller mentoring programme in supporting the progression to third-level education of a minority group facing educational disadvantages. A similar mentoring programme is offered to those in Direct Provision through organisations such as NASC or the Cork Migrant Centre (n.d.) and could be a possible support for students in the school.

4.5 English Language Supports

The challenges of providing English language support pose a significant barrier to accessing education. For those in Direct Provision who may not speak English before entering the Irish educational system or may have difficulties with the language, staff emphasised how the student's engagement with the curriculum is limited by their language proficiency:

> Participant 2*: "The language barrier, that's a big one... that is without a doubt the biggest. The rest then seems to fall into place, doesn't it?"*
>
> Participant 1*: "If they're able, they seem to do fine."*

4.5.1 English Language Support

All participants discussed the stretched resources within the school and the unstructured policy around EAL provision:

> *"The things that would stand out to me really are just the barriers, you know, the levels of English and the very un-structured kind of…. It's really come to the fore, the lack of provision, like the lack of structured formalized provision for students who have English as a second language. You know, up to this point it's very much been sort of ad hoc and kind of It depends on school depends on the staffing arrangements on how the resource classes are delivered."* – Participant 5

In the *SIRIUS Network Policy Brief Series: Refugee children in education in Europe. How to prevent a lost generation*? Crul (2017) identifies some best practices for how countries in Europe support the education of the host country's language. In the Netherlands and Germany, children avail of an immersion host language class for one or two years which may be extended depending on the student's proficiency after this time. In comparison, Ireland has a very unstructured approach to EAL provision which shows that change is needed in Ireland to match best practices. Staff have highlighted the need to put greater structure and resources into EAL provision in Ireland. The current education system is failing to adequately meet the English language needs of students, which furthermore subjects them to educational disadvantage where they are not able to engage, progress or realise their full educational potential.

A team-teaching approach to support the complex and differing needs of students was recommended by a few staff members as a possibility to support EAL needs in class. This approach is also supported in the IMMERSE working paper *Report on Psycho-Social and Wellbeing of Refugee and Migrant Children* (Martin, et al., 2021). This paper highlighted that the PDST (Professional Development Service for Teachers) Team-Teaching for Literacy approach can support culturally, linguistically, and diverse learners in education. Addressing the EAL provision would allow schools to engage students better and allow students to realise their full educational potential and progress onto further education.

Separate application forms for requesting EAL support exist for Ukrainian students that exist for other students such as those in Direct Provision (Department of Education, 2023). Schools have highlighted that this dual process means that supports are being made available to Ukrainian students that aren't available if the application was for other children with the same EAL needs (O'Kelly, 2022b)This was echoed by the views of the school staff who stressed that all students should be afforded the same support to support their education. Freedom from discrimination is a right outlined in Article 21.1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (European Union, 2000) under Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) and within the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (United Nations, 1965). Despite Ireland ratifying these international instruments, the discrepancy regarding the governmental allocation of EAL provision on the basis of nationality is at its core a racist policy and is blatant educational discrimination.

4.5.2 The Intersection of SEN and EAL

The lack of English language support also exasperates the difficulties of students with additional special educational needs. The staff in the second focus group discussed one student whom all the staff had found difficult to communicate with due to language difficulties. Participant 5 had then come to learn recently through an assessment that her non-verbal reasoning test is lower than 1 percentile. The participant confirmed that due to language barriers, special educational needs are being missed.

For students, it is often their English proficiency rather that their actual ability to understand the subject which prevents them from accessing the curriculum. This creates a gap of inequality between the student's aspirations and their potential which is not being realised:

> *"Like I have one student now who's in 6th year and you know, she wants to do higher level English. I'm her English teacher, I think she's a bright girl, but she has a lot of problems in English. And I definitely have my concerns to whether she's going to pass the exam or not… But she's just sort of disconnected between kind of her aspirations and where the reality for her is, you know."* – Participant 5

> *"Between the points and HPAT, she'll be the best doctor probably ever but will not get into it because of that [not enough language support]."* - Participant 4

4.5 Financial Barriers to Education

As outlined in the Day Report (2020) the financial cost of education continues to act as a barrier to participation while simultaneously creating financial difficulties for families. As per The Irish Refugee Council (2022) the most pertinent barrier to students accessing education is financial. Being aware of the varying financial statuses of its students, the school has attempted to ease the financial burden of education on families. Where possible, they waive fees to supervised study, provide books via a free book scheme, and minimise the cost of school trips to ensure accessibility. This is a welcome attempt to ensure all students are entitled to the same experience and may offer students from Direct Provision a greater chance at integration.

> *"Like our trips you know we do go abroad…we keep it under such a certain amount"* - Participant 2

> *"We have a book loan scheme like we do try to support them in terms of the provision of resources…"* - Participant 1

"Kids from Direct Provision sometimes attend supervised study…there was a fee but like we generally waive it for supervised study" - Participant 2

"One of the students I've enrolled in our School Completion Programme…the main support there as well is financial support…. for example, one of the financial supports there would have been a gym membership, you know something that maybe one couldn't possibly afford otherwise…you could see how the impact of that enhanced their lives" - Participant 3

The staff spoke about how they best use the resources available to them. In this case applying to the School Completion Programme to fun gym membership for a student had a positive impact on their life. Gym membership has the added benefit of being positive for a person's mental health however it may be out of the realm of possibility for these students as their parents prioritise their weekly allowance.

4.5.1 Access to Transport

The policy of dispersal means that Direct Provisions centres are in areas which are often remote with poor access to transport services (Day, 2020). Some staff members mentioned how this access to transport to and from school impacted the education of their students. One of the issues identified was that access to transport was directly impacting the student's engagement with after-school activities:

"*She couldn't do supervised study cause then she'd be leaving and getting a bus and then what time would she be getting home in the evening like, you know…"*- Participant 5

To alleviate this challenge, the school made significant efforts to cover the cost of transport for students from Direct Provision and advocated to the Department of Education for additional funding to support this.

"Giving them the bus passes, the uniform, the books you know, let's not let anything stand in your way from accessing education." - Participant 2

"We do pay, we understand they can't pay for buses, so we have to look for the money and I'm often fighting or trying to get them to see that…." - Participant 4

"She couldn't do supervised study cause then she'd be leaving and getting a bus and then what time would she be getting home in the evening…. that's one thing I always think about them is transport. They should automatically be given transport to school." - Participant 5

The school has on occasion supported transport costs, but this is not sustainable long term. It also does not address the structural issues including the inappropriate locations of Direct Provision centres and the

lack of financial support that would contribute towards transport costs. The *White Paper to End Direct Provision* (2021) outlines the plan for a new system to be implemented by 2024 which is looking less than optimistic in the current economic and political climate.

4.6 Emotional Needs of Students

Both focus groups generated discussions on overall wellbeing and emotional needs of students. This data gave a greater context to the question relating to barriers to education. Timm (2016) contends the basis for learning is positive emotional and psychological wellbeing. Evidence from literature reviewed in Chapter Three informs us of the emotional wellbeing and trauma of those living in Direct Provision. Participants also highlighted student's basic physical and emotional needs had to be met before they could meaningfully engage with education:

> *"They have to be fed, happy, looked after a little bit of TLC and then the learning comes in easier… they can't learn if they're cold or hungry…"* - Participant 6

Cohen (2023) highlights that in addition to academic support, emotional support from school can be effective in promoting positive and successful educational experiences for refugee students. Throughout the discussion the participants revealed the attention they pay to the overall wellbeing of the students. Through their morning breakfast club, they ensured all students had hot meal before beginning the day and a safe space to talk should they wish.

4.6.1 Trauma and Education

> *"We don't have any idea the level of trauma that they've experienced before they come here"* - Participant 4

A submission report to the Oireachtas in 2019 detailed the issues within the Direct Provision system and outlined recommendations and improvements that should be made to reform the placement system. The report states that "Many of those seeking international protection in Ireland will have experienced trauma, exploitation or be escaping war or violence "(Joint Committee Justice & Equality, 2019, p. 29). However, the school system has been attributed as a positive role in the lives of students from Direct Provision (Mohamed & Thomas, 2017). When examining the transcripts, trauma was a recurring theme throughout the focus groups and carried significant weight to the experience of students from Direct Provision. This data could not be omitted as it allows the reader a greater understanding of where the students come from, the current situation and the impact it has on their educational experience. However, according to Dunbar et al., (2020, p. 80) there was "no published data on the actual or estimated number of children who are

suffering from mental health difficulties while living in Direct Provision". Discussion within the groups circulated around the impact of trauma on educational attainment:

> *"Emotionally they just weren't able to engage like ya know, they had a lot of baggage a lot of issues they had to process themselves…"* - Participant 2

> *"She was totally traumatised… and I said look you're safe now"* - Participant 3

Participants evidenced how the trauma presents in students and how the school staff endeavour to create a safe environment for them to engage regarding the trauma experienced by students. One participant recounted a particularly profound interaction with a student. She remembers thinking that "something was off" with the student and wondering what was wrong. What followed was a conversation whereby the student told her about her arduous journey to Ireland. At ten years of age, she was collected from school by a family member, she recalled thinking she was going home, but what followed was transatlantic flights and a harrowing journey to Ireland. This story appeared to have a long-lasting impact on the teacher who stated:

> *"Imagine that a ten-year old didn't know where she was going before she moved, that's how she got out of the country."* - Participant 3

Other students shared their traumatic experiences in ways that appears unique to education by writing them in personal essays:

> *"It's just horrific like...his leg was blown off in an improvised explosive device and then his mother committed suicide. Jumped off a bridge or something and they wrote about it in their personal essay."* - Participant 4

All participants were aware of the profound impact of trauma and the lived experiences of the students on their ability to engage with education:

> *"…they are afraid…some of them they've seen people slaughtered and butchered…they live with that inside everyday"* - Participant 6

> *"But we teach that in the classroom in geography, about these wars and earthquakes and they've experienced it."* - Participant 4

Participants discussed the impact of trauma on retention rates:

"...ones who like didn't make it to leaving cert or don't progress afterwards for various reasons and I suppose the reasons why they don't progress are multi-faceted but like kind of being emotionally able to engage" - Participant 1

What was common to all participants when discussing the level of trauma among the student from Direct Provision was empathy and at times disbelief at the level of trauma the students experienced. All participants wanted to provide adequate care for the students, but worried about their lack of training or expertise on the subject. The school staff appeared eager to support the students to the best of their ability and ensure they were provided with equal opportunities to engage with education, with some suggesting they were open to students returning later in life:

"If we could establish a post leaving cert programme that would allow students to come back to the system again when they're able, like once they have dealt with their baggage…and then like create a link with UCC…like frequently these students are very able like really very able just that they're not in a position to engage" - Participant 1

"But I'm very passionate about giving every student in this school an opportunity to go to college …" - Participant 4

4.6.2 Trauma and Staff Support

As mentioned, it emerged during discussions that staff did not have training specific to Trauma Informed Practice. All participants expressed concern, empathy, and dedication to ensuring students were supported in dealing with their trauma:

"…like nobody could question the level of care and effort that we put in." - Participant 5

However, participants explained that this is not a requirement for all staff, and they did not recall trauma related training during their professional education training. When staff have engaged with a student who requires trauma support their colleagues often offer collegial and moral support:

"The staff help each other, it's our own support. We facilitate you know; you can go and have a debrief, but you can't have that in every staff room" - Participant 4

"... go back to the staff member afterwards and be like how are you? You, okay? Do you need to go home? "- Participant 2

"Everyone just kind of pulls in" - Participant 2

Participants credited their open communication as beneficial to them offering support amongst themselves and to the students:

> *"I found thank God that everyone is on the one hymn sheet… that was great support and if you're worried about a student or somebody else …no matter how bad the dealings, that you had the support of your colleagues, which is major for anybody."* - Participant 7

> *"Probably the thing that happens in this school is the relationships that the staff have in that we have very open lines of communication…"* - Participant 5

When asked if specific supports were available to staff engaging with traumatised students, there was no explicit resource:

> *"The supports aren't there for us I guess on any level. Like, I go back to your question about supports that are there for us, the answer is none."* - Participant 3

4.7 Parental Engagement

When discussing the students from Direct Provision throughout the focus groups, participants highlighted the relationship between child and parent, educational success and parental involvement, and the engagement of the school with parents. As highlighted by IMMERSE (Integration Mapping of Refugee and Migrant Children) A Report on the Psycho-Social and Wellbeing of Refugee and Migrant Children 2021, a positive relationship between teachers and parents is valued and is known to be important to the child. 37

4.7.1 Parental Encouragement

> *"Sometimes it's their parents keep them here. Keep them coming. Because they want a better life for them, you know, which is natural"* - Participant 6

The school staff acknowledged throughout focus group discussions their efforts to encourage and support students to remain in school, they also evidenced the positive impact of family support. The participants spoke about students with successful education journeys and how their parents had a role in attaining this. They also discussed parents aspiring for their children to have greater opportunities at succeeding:

> *"It's all about developing their [parents] confidence, raising their own expectations for themselves and for their children as a result of that..."* - Participant 1

Participants spoke about the importance of building relationships with the parent to encourage their involvement with the school:

> *"So, it's about providing the care and attention to educate the parents, get the information to send them on..."* - Participant 5

The participants also offered recommendations to assist the parents with supporting their children with education:

> *"it's developing a strategy or approach to allow the child to flourish enrolled in school...for example linking Mum or Dad into the language courses or doing something to develop their confidence their self-esteem"* - Participant 1

4.7.2 Parental communication with school

The relationship between school staff and parents is important to ensuring the student is best supported to participate. Participants spoke about how they communicate with parents, particularly when they are experiencing a language barrier. To begin to build this relationship the school has made information on their website accessible to all:

> *"I know it's just something small, but we did put the google translate on our website"* - Participant 2

Following this, the staff meets the parent in place accessible and suitable for them at times visiting Direct Provision centres to meet them in person:

> "Meeting new parents, sometimes there's an issue that needs to be dealt with, I'd call up and sit with the parents there [Direct Provision]"- Participant 1

The participants observed the impact of trauma and living in Direct Provision on the parent during their interactions and offered a safe space for the parent to openly engage:

> *"I remember the first meeting with Mum, the distress, the build-up of emotion and anxiety. The first time I met her all she did was cry."* - Participant 3

> *"She says to me every time please pray...to get some place else ya know? so I see the situation where they're fighting hard to work, just to get out of that situation."* - Participant 3

This highlights the school staff are aware of the impact of trauma on the wider family, and offer supports, when possible, particularly the Home School Community Liaison whose role involves building relationships with and supporting families in need. A challenge to the communication is the language

barrier when conducting parent teacher meetings, solutions included having a sibling attend and translate, or the child in question. While participants agreed this was not an ideal solution, it was at times the only means to translate for a parent:

> *"Usually, the student themselves would act as an interpreter... or it could be an older sibling of the child, or it could be an aunt or uncle…"* - Participant 2

As highlighted by Fahie & Nee (2022) children can often have a higher level of English than a parent which can leave them with the responsibility of acting as a translator. This can pose as a stressor to the child where they may be asked to translate conversations of a sensitive or emotive nature from parent to teacher or vice versa.

4.8 Discussion

Throughout the findings and analysis, a thread of commitment to care from the school staff ran concurrent to all themes. While the participants highlighted the complex struggles, living situation and barriers to education faced by the students they faced these issues with continuous support and compassion despite structural issues. Although each theme presented as a negative barrier, the participants provided a solution-focused approach and attempted to reduce the barrier. The participants spoke with compassion, empathy, and admiration for the students they supported and their families. When faced with financial barriers, staff made all efforts to waive the costs, they discussed reduced school trips, waived costs to supervised study, paying for public transport passes, and providing assistive devices during the COVID-19 pandemic:

> *"We understand they can't pay for the buses, so we have to look for the money."* - Participant 4

The participants understood the connection between family support and educational attainment and suggested language courses to parents to increase their awareness of college and further progression. They also recognised this could increase encouragement and raise familial aspirations for the students. The issue of language was discussed throughout both groups, participants explained a lack of understanding of English naturally put the students at a disadvantage. However, what stood out to me more than the language barrier was the lengths the participants went in assisting the students with language. One participant recalled a poignant incident where a former staff member would volunteer her time to meet students during a free period and read 'Ladybird Books' with them. For many Irish children, Ladybird books are artefacts of childhood and learning to read. They are aimed at toddlers to primary school students. The participant said it might appear 'babyish'; however, she saw the difference it made to their command of English in particular sentence structure. This highlights the innovative approaches of

staff to improve language proficiency to increase the student's opportunity to secure educational success and engage with peers. The issue of trauma often presents hand in hand with being a young person who is a refugee, often they have fled war torn countries and carry such complex trauma that a participant stated,

> *"I've never heard a traumatic story in my life like it"* - Participant 4

Trauma was evidenced throughout the focus groups; however, participants could not direct us to specified supports available to them. Recommendations from The White Paper to End Direct Provision (2020) included training for school staff when supporting children from Direct Provision. "The Advisory Group Report recommended that teachers working in schools which receive child applicants should be provided with specific training opportunities to help them understand situations which may arise due to trauma suffered by these pupils" (2020, p. 113). From conducting this research, it is not evident that this recommendation has come to fruition.

4.9 Conclusion

This research looked to answer what school staff identified as the barriers to education for students from Direct Provision and knowing this, what supports these students' education. The findings show that significant structural issues exist in terms of accommodation provision and educational support resources.

The staff in this research expressed their difficulties in trying to address these structural issues in the provision of support to these students. In an attempt to address these structural issues, they are going above and beyond in their roles only to feel let down by the educational system:

> *"The supports aren't there for us I guess on any level. Like, I go back to your question about support that are there for us. The answer is none."* - HSCL

The next and final chapter will utilise these findings to construct the recommendations proposed by both the school staff and the research team with the aim to support the education of students from Direct Provision. The report will then end with concluding remarks and a personal reflection on the research.

Chapter Five:

Conclusion & Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to examine how school staff support the retention, educational attainment, and further progression of students from Direct Provision in a DEIS secondary school. This chapter will first provide the conclusions of the research based on the findings and analysis presented in chapter four. Upon these remarks, recommendations will be outlined as it relates to structural recommendations, community-level recommendations, and suggestions for future research. The final section of this chapter shall be a reflective piece by the researcher about engaging in this CARL research project.

5.2 Identifying the Issues

The first research question asked the staff to identify the barriers to the education of second-level students from Direct Provision which were highlighted in the findings of this research. Accommodation was identified as one of the main challenges, with students experiencing a lack of privacy and limited access to resources such as a quiet study space. Dispersal and deportation also emerged as significant issues, with students being relocated or deported at short notice, which can significantly disrupt their education. Language support was identified as an essential component of successful engagement with the curriculum with many students struggling to participate to their full potential due to their English proficiency. Finally, resourcing and inequality of resources were identified as significant barriers, with students from Direct Provision often lacking access to the same resources and opportunities as their peers.

5.3 Identifying What Works

The second research question looked at what the staff identified as the factors that support the education of second-level students from Direct Provision. From the findings emerged best practices that have been effective in supporting these students' education. At its core, what was evident was that what works for

this school is the care and understanding staff who go above and beyond to support these students. Being a small school with a focus on individualized care and attention was identified by the school as a factor that supports these students' education. DEIS funding and associated supports (such as the free meal scheme, HSCL, and SCP), emerged as key to ensuring that these students receive the holistic support needed to address their complex needs. Additionally, raising aspirations through support from the school and access to programmes at the University College Cork (UCC) was found to be effective in improving outcomes for these students.

5.4 Identifying the Gaps

The third research question asked, what would address the gap in service provision for the staff to support students from Direct Provision? In doing so the staff identified potential for further service provision and support which are outlined in the recommendations of this report.

5.5 Next Steps for the Researchers

Following the submission of their individual dissertations, this research was presented at the UCC annual Master of Social Work Conference May 2023. During this conference the research was disseminated, and the researchers advocated for further research to be conducted by new students. The researchers also attended a meeting with the community partner to present the research findings and share resources with them. The researchers further disseminated their report by engaging with a Trauma- Informed- Care expert from the school of psychology in UCC and arranging a seminar for the school staff. To maximise awareness building, this report will be made available on the CARL website promoting OpenAccess to the research findings for use by communities and academic alike.

5.6 Recommendations: Structural Changes

While this research will provide recommendations for schools and for future research, it is important to note that this is not with the view of responsibilising the school for the structural issues created by the government. As captured in *Futures on Hold* (Edmund Rice Schools Trust, 2019, p. 8):

"Schools cannot compensate for a Direct Provision system that isolates young people, that keeps them trapped in poverty, that fails to provide basic rights to privacy and family life and that too often leaves young people feeling lonely, dispirited, without hope and without the chance to pursue their ambitions and futures."

For that reason, these recommendations will begin with a summary of the structural recommendations for government and policy.

- The government should implement proposals within the *White Paper on Ending Direct Provision* (2021) which address issues around accommodation, access to services, the policy of dispersal, and processing times. This will ensure that first and foremost the basic needs of these students are met.
- The government should prioritize implementing sufficient and structured EAL support and offer equality of opportunity in alignment with international and European law which Ireland has ratified. This will ensure that children in Direct Provision have equal access to engage in education.
- To help address the complex needs of asylum-seeking children, the government should evaluate the possibility of implementing greater in-house support in schools. For example, the government could consider adopting a pilot program, like the one that incorporates occupational therapy (OT) and speech and language therapy (SLT) within schools (Murray, 2018). This may also involve incorporating the role of social work in schools to support students with complex needs.
- The government should prioritise a Trauma Informed Practice training in all education courses throughout the country and should also provide culture awareness training for school staff supporting students from Direct Provision.
- To address barriers to education, free transport should be a requirement for school attending students from Direct Provision
- The flexibility of the education system should be increased to allow for addressing complex needs, such as providing additional support for children with special educational needs, trauma, or mental health issues.
- The government should continue to include students from minority groups in DEIS strategic planning to ensure that their needs are met and that they are given equal opportunities to succeed in school.

5.7 Recommendations for Schools

- Schools should establish links with local organisations such as the Cork Migrant Centre to learn more about the various supports available, including the mentoring programme. By working in collaboration with the centre, schools can ensure that students from Direct Provision have access to all the necessary resources and support they require.
- Additional English language supports should be provided within the community to support students from Direct Provision.
- I will continue to engage with the school on their interest in applying for the Schools of Sanctuary status, and I would be available to further support them in their application process. This will include how the research findings could support the application and provide evidence of the school's commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for students from Direct Provision.

5.8 Recommendations for Research

- These research findings will be disseminated widely including through the publication of the CARL report and the presentation of the findings at the UCC MSW research conference. Further research dissemination will be discussed with the community partner to maximise the reach and impact.
- While it was outside the scope of this current project, further research should be conducted with other schools to collate a diverse range of experiences. This research could also involve interviews, surveys, or focus groups with students, and their families.
- Research should also be conducted to identify re-engagement possibilities for students from Direct Provision who have disengaged from education. This research could effective strategies and structures of education to support re-engagement.

5.9 Personal Reflection – Katie Buckley

Conducting this research has been one of the highlights of my MSW journey. I always wanted to conduct primary research but my self-doubt regarding my academic abilities left me feeling this was a dream that

would never be realised. Having conducted the research, I now understand research to be a skill and one I have just began to develop. This research required much more than strong academic capabilities. It required strong teamwork, communication skills, commitment, and adequate organizational skills to name but a few.

This opportunity has allowed me to further develop these skills and I believe this will strengthen my ability to practice as a newly qualified social worker. I could never have envisioned the privilege and honour I would feel conducting this research. I continuously reminded myself that for every statistic, fact or quote I shared, there was a student living in Direct Provision behind it. At times, trying to understand their educational disadvantage I became hyper aware of my privilege, this called for ongoing reflection throughout the process. It also motivated me to aspire to produce a high standard of research, a difficult task with a ten-thousand-word limit and a short period of time.

Given the opportunity, I would extend the research to more than one school and recruit more participants to generate greater data. A highlight of the research process was conducting focus groups as it increased my capacity to act as a skilled communicator in new settings. Interestingly, during our initial focus group, the principal's office appeared to trigger me to revert to a second level student and I felt almost eager to prove I was a good student and not causing trouble, due to this as a researcher I was slow to steer the direction of the focus group, rather allowing the principal total control. Upon reflection, it has increased my awareness of the importance of settings when meeting clients. If I were to conduct this research again, I would attempt to engage with those in a management position, in a more informal setting to allow them step out of their authoritative role.

5.10 Personal Reflection – Maria Flavin

A valuable learning experience for me was the opportunity to collaborate with my research partner, Katie Buckley. From the outset, we encountered the challenges of being both peers and research partners. To overcome this, we established boundaries between our personal and professional lives. This experience also highlighted for me the importance of having a critical friend. Having someone to challenge my assumptions and thought processes helped them to refine their approach to constructing knowledge. This experience has reinforced the value of being reflective in practice and seeking external forms of reflection.

Reflecting on my research project, I found the choice of focus groups and semi-structured interviews valuable in gathering rich data to answer their research questions. However, if I had the opportunity to

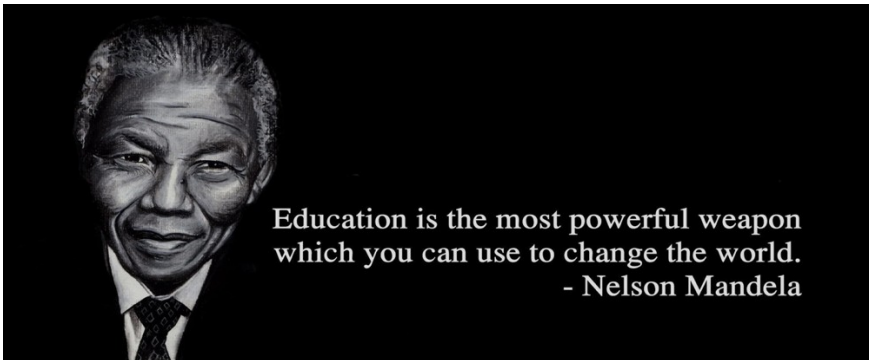
redesign the study, they would like to include the perspectives of students and their families. Additionally, expanding the research to other schools would have provided a greater diversity of experiences and insights. If I were to change anything about how we conducted the research, I would better organise the spaces selected for the focus groups. A formal office space for the first focus group made it feel rigid, while a parent's room with a large board table and beverages for the second group felt more relaxed. Different spaces can evoke various discussions, making it essential to consider the use of space in professional practice.

In my initial expression of interest, I explained that this research would be a marriage of two of the things I am most passionate about: advocacy around the rights of those in Direct Provision and access to education. Through this research, I have learned more about systemic disadvantages faced by those in Direct Provision which in turn will make me a more informed social worker in practice. From start to end, I have become invested in this research project and see that within my professional practice that I might come to situate the role of social work in education.

5.11 Chapter Conclusion

The final chapter aimed to present the concluding remarks against the research questions leading to the outline of recommendations. The findings presented have been shown to add rich knowledge and understanding to the research questions posed and have highlighted several recommendations. To conclude this chapter and piece of research, the researcher's reflection was included.

The study concludes that while schools play an essential role in supporting Direct Provision students' education, the government needs to make structural changes to ensure that children in Direct Provision have the same educational opportunities as any other child.



Bibliography

Alston, M., & Bowles, W. (2003). *Research for Social Workers: An Introduction to Methods* (2nd Edition ed.). Allen & Unwin.

Arnold, S. (2012). 'State sanctioned child poverty and exclusion: The case of children in state accommodation for asylum seekers'. Irish Refugee Council. http://www.ypar.ie/wpcontent/uploads/2011/10/RCI-State-sanctioned-child-poverty-and-exclusion.pdf Accessed 21st August 2022

Bajaj M., Argenal A., Canlas M. (2017). Socio-politically relevant pedagogy for immigrant and refugee youth. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 50(3), 258–274.

Barnardos. (2020). *The Real Cost of School; Back to School Survey Briefing Paper.* Barnardos.

Barnes, John Arundel (1979). *Who Should Know What?: Social Science, Privacy and Ethics.* Cambridge: Penguin Books.

Bates, C., & Burns, K. (2012). Community-engaged student research: Online resources, real world impact. In C. B. A. Marcus-Quinn, *The Digital Learning Revolution in Ireland: Case Studies from the National Learning Resources Service* (pp. 1-11). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods*. 4th Edition. Oxford University Press.

Carey, M. (2012). *Qualitative Research Skills for Social Work: Theory and Practice.* Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Carey, M. (2013) *The Social Work Dissertation.* Using small scale qualitative methodology. Second edition. Open press university.

Casey, J. (2023, March 10). *Ukrainian to be made a Leaving Cert exam subject in two years*. The Irish Examiner. Retrieved from: https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-41090125.html

Citizens Information. (2022, July 1). *Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses* . Citizens Information. Retrieved from: https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/vocational_education_and_training/post_leaving_certificate_courses.html

Cohen, E. (2023). "We Aren't Only Here to Teach": Caring Practices of Teachers in the Context of Inclusive Refugee Education in Jordan. *American Educational Research Journal*, 60(1), 335. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312221138267 49

Constitution of Ireland (enacted in 1937), Article 42.3 2° [on education]. Retrieved from: http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/cons/en/html

Cork Migrant Centre. (n.d.). *Community Based Mentoring*. Cork Migrant Centre. Retrieved from: https://cmc-youth-initiative-against-racism.ie/mentoring/

Coughlin, S., Smith, S., & Fernández, M. (2017). *Handbook of Community-Based Participatory Research.* Oxford University Press.

Crul, M. (2017). *SIRIUS Network Policy Brief Series Refugee children in education in Europe. How to prevent a lost generation?*. SIRIUS.

Day, C. (2020, October 21). *Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support including Accommodation to Persons in the International Protection Process.* Gov.ie. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/634ad-report-of-the-advisory-group-on-the-provision-of-support-including-accommodation-to-persons-in-the-international-protection-process/

Department of Children and Youth Affairs. (2017). *Report of DCYA consultations with children and young people living in Direct Provision.* Government of Ireland.

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. (2021). *A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support.* Government of Ireland.

Department of Education. (2021). *Department of Education Statement of Strategy 2021-2023.* Government of Ireland.

Department of Education. (2023). *Forms for post-primary staffing arrangements*. Gov.ie. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/2d706-staffing-arrangements-at-post-primary-level-forms/

Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. (2022). *International Protection Student Scheme (for FE/HE Students) 2022/2023.* Government of Ireland.

Department of Justice and Equality. (2017). *The Migrant Integration Strategy* . Government of Ireland.

Department of Social Protection. (2023). *School Meals Scheme*. Gov.ie. Retrieved from :https://www.gov.ie/en/service/29a3ff-school-meals-scheme/

Department of the Taoiseach. (2020). *Programme for Government; Our shared future.* Available at :https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7e05d-programme-for-government-our-shared-future/

Dreyer, M. (2019). Place, Power and Belonging: A feminist informed perspective on the provision of housing for asylum applicants in Ireland. *Displacement and Domesticity: Working Paper Series*, 109-144.

Edmund Rice Schools Trust. (2019). *Futures on Hold.*

Education (Admissions to Schools) Act, Government of Ireland. (2018). Dublin: Stationary Office.

Education Welfare Act, Government of Ireland. (2000). Dublin: Stationary Office.

Enguye v Health Services Executive. [2011] IEHC 507, Mr Justice Gilligan, Judge of the High Court, 26 October 2011). Retrieved from: https://www.casemine.com/judgement/uk/5da056774653d07dedfd5cb3

Equal Status Acts, Government of Ireland. (2000-2018). Dublin: Stationary Office.

European Commission. (2020). *Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027.* European Commission.

European Union. (2000). *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.* European Union.

Fletcher, L. (2022, September 2nd). *Asylum seekers 'unable to get kids to school' due to PPSN delays*. RTE News. Retrieved from: https://www.rte.ie/news/2022/0902/1320176-international-protection/

Geagea, A., & MacCallum, J. (2022). Murdoch's Aspirations and Pathways for University (MAP4U) Project: Developing and Supporting Low SES Students' Aspirations for Higher Education Participation Using School-Based University Outreach Programs. In G. Crimmins, *Strategies for Supporting Inclusion and Diversity in the Academy* (pp. 287–306). Palgrave Macmillan.

Gray, D. (2018). *Doing research in the real world* (4th Edition ed.). Sage Publications.

Harmon, H. (2018). *Supporting and Including Refugee and Asylum Seeking Children in Education.* National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE).

ILCU. (2021, July 15). *ILCU back to school survey shows cost of sending child to secondary school now averaging €1,500*. Irish League of Credit Unions. Retrieved from: https://www.creditunion.ie/news/latest-news/annual-ilcu-back-to-school-survey-shows-cost-of-se/

IMMERSE. (2019). *Schools of Sanctuary, Ireland*. Retrieved from IMMERSE: https://www.immerse-h2020.eu/online-digital-database-resource/?data_id=1800

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. (2022). *Ireland and the Rights of the Child Submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Ireland's combined fifth and sixth periodic reports.* Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

Irish Refugee Council. (2022). *Accommodation Crisis 2022: Responses and Recommendations.* Irish Refugee Council.

Jupp, V. (2006). *The Sage dictionary of social research methods.* Sage.

Kellaghan, T. (2001). Towards a definition of educational disadvantage. *The Irish Journal of Education, 32*, 3-22.

LePine, J. A., LePine, M. A., & Jackson, C. L. (2004). Challenge and Hindrance Stress: Relationships With Exhaustion, Motivation to Learn, and Learning Performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 89*(5), 883–891.

Loyal, S., & Quilley, S. (2016). Categories of State Control: Asylum Seekers and the Direct Provision and Dispersal System in Ireland. *Social Justice, 43*(4), 69-97.

Lynch, K. (2002). *Equality and Power in Schools: Redistribution, Recognition and Representation.* Routledge/ Falmer.

Lynch, K., & Crean, M. (2018). Economic Inequality and Class Privilege in Education: Why Equality of Economic Condition is Essential for Equality of Opportunity. *Education for All? The Legacy of Free Post-Primary Education in Ireland*, 139-160.

Martin, S., O'Riordan, J., Horgan, D., Maier, R., Marouda, M., Koutsouraki, E., & Farakouki, L. (2021). *Report on Psycho-Social And Wellbeing Of Refugee And Migrant Children (2021)*. IMMERSE.

McGreevy, R. (2023, April 9). *Schools to be allowed to share teachers to help alleviate shortages*. The Irish Times. Retrieved from: https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/education/2023/04/09/schools-to-be-allowed-to-share-teachers-to-help-alleviate-shortages/

McMahon, B. (2015). *Working Group to Report to Government Working Group on the Protection Process on Improvements to the Protection Process, including Direct Provision and Supports to Asylum Seekers.* Department of Justice.

Mills, C. (1959). *The Sociological Imagination.* Oxford University Press.

Murray, N. (2018, May 14). *Pilot in-school therapy to improve access to services*. The Irish Examiner. Retrieved from: https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-20470597.html

Nee, C.M & Fahie, D. (2022). *Examining the Challenges Faced by Service Providers and Organisations Working with Children in the Direct Provision System in Ireland, Child Care in Practice*, DOI: 10.1080/13575279.2022.2093329 Accessed 18th March 2023

Ní Aodha, F. (2022, December 07). *Concern expressed for children in 'worsening' Direct Provision centres as Government misses target to end system*. The Irish Independent. Retrieved from: https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/concern-expressed-for-children-in-worsening-direct-provision-centres-as-government-misses-target-to-end-system-42201378.html

Ní Raghallaigh, M., & Thornton, L. (2018). Vulnerable Childhood, Vulnerable Adulthood: Direct Provision as Aftercare for Aged-Out Separated Children Seeking Asylum in Ireland', Critical Social Policy, 37(3), pp: 386-404.

Ní Raghallaigh, M., Smith, K., & Scholtz, J. (2019). *Safe Haven: The needs of refugee children arriving in Ireland through the Irish Refugee Protection Programme – An Exploratory Study.* Children's Rights Alliance.

O'Halloran, M. (2020, Nov 22). *Five-fold rise in number of direct provision students qualifying for Susi grants*. The Irish Times. Retrieved from: https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/five-fold-rise-in-number-of-direct-provision-students-qualifying-for-susi-grants-1.4416337

O'Kelly, E. (2022b, June 13). *Schools criticise Dept over language support procedures*. RTE News. Retrieved from: https://www.rte.ie/news/education/2022/0613/1304634-ireland-schools-ukraine/

O'Riordan, J., & FitzGibbon, M. (2020). *Direct provision: Asylum, the academy and activism.* Peter Lang Ltd. International Academic Publishers.

O'Brien, C. (2014). *Lives in Limbo*. The Irish Times. Retrieved from: https://www.irishtimes.com/news/lives-in-limbo

O'Kelly, E. (2022a, June 14). *Dublin school granted extra resources for refugee children*. RTE News. Retrieved from https://www.rte.ie/news/education/2022/0614/1304765-st-francis-primary-school/

O'Reilly, Z. (2018) '"Living Liminality": everyday experiences of asylum seekers in the "Direct Provision" system in Ireland', *Gender, Place & Culture*, vol. 256, pp. 821–842. doi: 10.1080/0966369X.2018.1473345 Accessed 01 September 2022.

Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration . (2019). *The Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2020: Progress Report to Government.* Government of Ireland.

Ogbu, H. (2014). Parenting in Direct Provision: Parents' Perspectives Regarding Stresses and Supports. *Child Care in Practice, 20*(3), 256-269.

Ombudsman for Children's Office. (2020). *Direct Division: Children's views and experiences of living in Direct Provision.* Ombudsman for Children's Office.

Pollack, S. (2022, June 8). *More than 11600 people in direct provision as numbers rise to record.* The Irish Times. June 2022. Available at: https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/socialaffairs/2022/06/08/more-than-11600-people-in-direct-provision-as-numbers-rise-to-recordlevels

Reception and Integration Agency (RIA). (2018) *Monthly Report October 2018*, Available at: https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/d9f43-international-protection-accommodation-servicesipas/?referrer=/en/RIA/October%202018%20monthly%20report%20updated%20.pdf/Files/Octo ber%202018%20monthly%20report%20updated%20.pdf

Ritchie, K., Lewis, J., McNaughton Nicholls, C., & Ormston, R. (2014). *Qualitative Research Practice* (2nd Edition ed.). Sage Publications.

Scanlon, & Mckenna. (2018). *Home Works: A Study on the Educational Needs of Children Experiencing Homelessness and Living in Emergency Accommodation.* Children's Rights Alliance.

Shannon, G. (2012). *Fifth Report of the Special Rapporteur on Child Protection A Report Submitted to the Oireachtas.* Oireachtas.

Sinnott v The Minister for Education. [2001] IESC 63, Keane C.J., Mrs. Justice Denham, Mr. Justice Francis D Murphy, Murray, J., Hardiman J., Mr. Justice Geoghegan, Mr. Justice Fennelly, 12 July 2001. Retrieved from: https://justis.vlex.com/#vid/793513641

The National Council for Special Education. (2011). *Inclusive Education in Post-Primary Schools*. The National Council for Special Education. Retrieved from: https://www.sess.ie/special-education-teacher-allocation/post-primary/inclusive-education-post-primary-schools

Thornton, L. (2013). Social Welfare Law and Asylum Seekers in Ireland: An Anatomy of Exclusion. *Journal of Social Security Law, 20*(2), 66-88.

Tusla. (2019). *Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice* (2nd Edition ed.). Tusla – Child and Family Agency.

Tusla. (n.d. -a). *SCP - School Completion Programme*. Tusla. Available at: https://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/scp/

Tusla. (n.d. -b). *HSCL - Home School Community Liaison.* Tusla. Available at: https://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/hscl/

United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* United Nations.

United Nations. (1965). *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* . United Nations.

University College Cork. (2018). *Data Protection Policy.* University College Cork.

University College Cork. (2022). *About CARL*. Retrieved from University College Cork: https://www.ucc.ie/en/scishop/ac/

Velu, M. E., Martens, I., Shahab, M., de Roos, C., Jongedijk, R. A., Schok, M., & Mooren, T. (2022). Trauma-focused treatments for refugee children: study protocol for a randomized controlled trial of the effectiveness of KIDNET versus EMDR therapy versus a waitlist control group (KIEM). *Trials,* 23(1)https://doi.org/10.1186/s13063-022-06178-z

White, A. (2011). 'Every Wednesday I Am Happy': Childhoods in an Irish Asylum Centre. *Population, Space and Place, 18*(3), 314-326.

Wise, S. (2001). Auto-ethnography as reflexive inquiry: the research act as self-surveillance, In I. Shaw & N. Gould (eds) *Qualitative Research in Social Work*. Sage

Appendix A: Confirmation of Ethical Approval

Email from Dr Kenneth Burns to Maria Flavin and Katie Buckley on November 23rd 2022:

MSW REC Decision

MSW Research Ethics Committee
School of Applied Social Studies

Applicant: Katie Buckley and Maria Flavin, 2022/23
Committee Date: 23rd November 2022
Tutor(s): Dr Kenneth Burns
Reference: 2022-3 and 2022-4

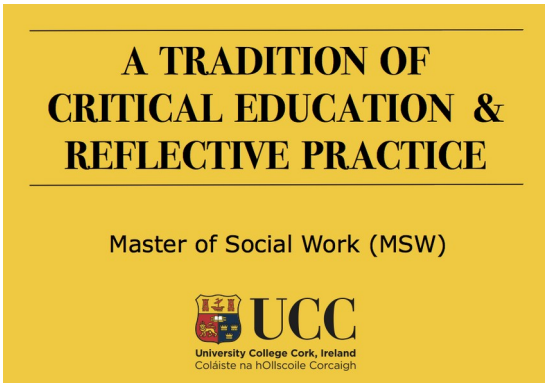
Dear Katie and Maria

Thank you for your resubmission to the MSW research ethics committee.

Your application is approved. The committee made the following observations below: you need to discuss these with your tutor, but you do not need to resubmit.

Both reviewers agree that this is an excellent, comprehensive, and coherent research application and an interesting and valuable piece of research.

Appendix B: Information Sheet



Research Information Sheet

Thank you for considering participating in this research project. The purpose of this document is to explain to you what the work is about and what your participation would involve, to enable you to make an informed choice.

What is this study?
The Community-Academic Research Links initiative, CARL, is located at University College Cork and invites non-profit voluntary or community organisations (CSOs) to suggest potential research topics that can be pursued by students on their behalf across a wide range of academic disciplines in UCC. This research will examine the educational attainment and integration of students from Direct Provision in [school name retracted]. The purpose of this research is to contribute to the understanding of the second-level education system experience of students from Direct Provision in Ireland.

Participation:
Staff members from [school name retracted] who have had direct involvement with students from Direct Provision are invited to participate. For those wishing to participate, you will be invited to attend a focus group with other staff members, which will be facilitated by the research team. These focus groups will consist of four staff members per group and will take 1hr15minutes max to complete. The focus group will be structured around 10 questions and will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

Participation in this research is voluntary. Participants may contribute what they are comfortable with and may withdraw from the research at any stage of the focus group. Participants may withdraw their contribution up until two weeks after the focus group has taken place. However, a

full retraction of the participants contribution may not always be practical. Staff members may note that there will be no negative consequences from the school for their participation or non-participation.

Confidentiality:
All information provided will be anonymized and confidential. However, participants should be aware that information may be attributed to them by other staff in the school. Any names mentioned in the recording will be anonymised upon transcription. To protect the confidentiality of the staff and students, the school's name will be anonymised in the final report. Any other identifying information pertaining to the location of the school will also be anonymised (extra-curricular activities, resources, after-school clubs in local area, etc.). All participants are asked to also uphold the confidentiality of the focus group discussion.

While confidentiality is an important component of research, participants will be advised that if any information is disclosed that indicates there is a child protection concern, the researchers are mandated to report such concerns to TUSLA as stated in the Children First Act 2015 and the Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice (2019). Confidentiality may also be broken if the information provided suggests there is a serious risk to you or to others.

Data usage:
The researchers, Maria Flavin and Katie Buckley, will be responsible for the recording of the audio and the transcription of the audio from the focus groups. The audio will only be uploaded to Microsoft word which is registered using UCC credentials. The transcription of the focus group audio will be stored on a private share point created with UCC credentials. This Share Point will be accessible by student researchers Maria Flavin and Katie Buckley, and Kenneth Burns as their academic research supervisor. The information will be anonymised upon transcription to ensure the confidentiality of all persons involved. The transcripts will not be shared with [school name retracted].

As this research is jointly undertaken by the Community-Academic Research Links, the school will have access to the findings which will be anonymised. Data will be stored for a period of thirteen months after the appeal period has expired as outlined in UCC's Data Retention Policy as it applies to taught postgraduate programme research. The findings of this focus group will contribute to the student's dissertation. This report will also be accessible by the public and used for conference presentations.

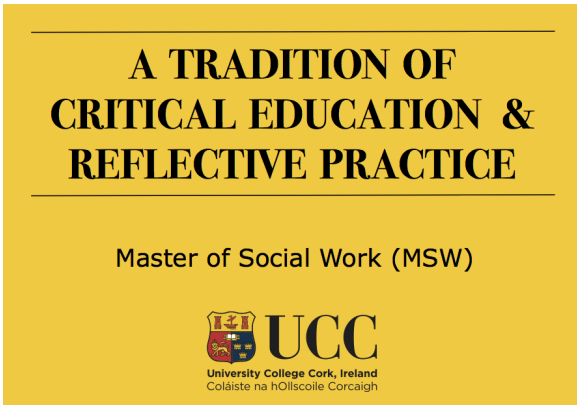
This study has been ethically approved by the UCC Social Research Ethics Committee.
If interested, please sign the consent form overleaf and return to the research team.

Maria Flavin
Email: 113398461@umail.ucc.ie

Katie Buckley
Email: 120111634@umail.ucc.ie

If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the researchers. You may also contact the academic research supervisor Kenneth Burns at K.Burns@ucc.ie.

Appendix C: Consent Forms



Consent Form

I……agree to participate in Maria Flavin and Katie Buckley's research study.

- The purpose and nature of the study have been explained to me in writing.
- I am participating voluntarily.
- I give permission for my focus group with Maria Flavin and Katie Buckley to be audio recorded.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use my data within two weeks of the focus group, in which my material will be deleted from the transcript; however, for the reasons outlined above, I understand that this may not be possible. All audio files will be deleted 13 months after the transcript is complete.
- I understand that data from fellow participants in the focus group will be retained.
- I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity. I also undertake to maintain the confidentiality of the focus group.
- I understand that disguised extracts from the focus group (e.g. my name / location won't be used) may be quoted in presentations and publications (e.g. article, book chapter, student thesis, social media publicity of the study's findings, etc.)

If I give permission below (please tick one box):

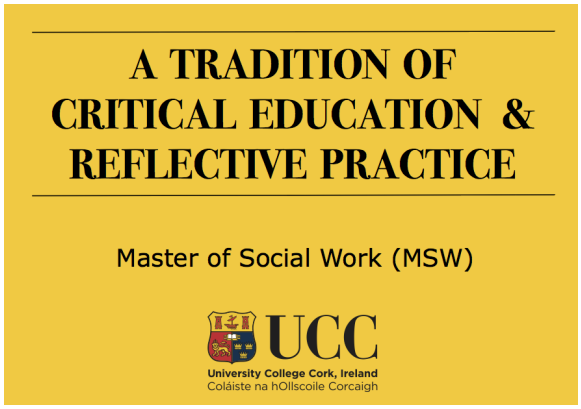
I agree to participate in this study ☐

I do not agree to participate in this study ☐

Signed: ……. Date: ……..

PRINT NAME: …….

Appendix D: Interview Guide



CARL Research Focus Group

Part One: Introduction (10 minutes)

The information sheet and consent form will be reviewed with participants for them to make an informed decision regarding their participation. Participants will be consulted throughout the process to ensure clarity around participation and their right to withdraw at any point during the research.

Participants will be advised of the voluntary nature of their participation and advised of their right to withdraw throughout the recruitment process and throughout the focus groups. Participants may withdraw their contribution up until two weeks after the focus group has taken place. Potential participants will be advised that there will be no negative consequences from the school for their participation or non-participation.

All information provided will be anonymized and confidential. However, participants should be aware that information may be attributed to them by other staff in the school. Any names mentioned in the recording will be anonymized upon transcription. To protect the confidentiality of the staff and students, the school's name will be anonymised in the final report. Any other identifying information pertaining to the location of the school will also be anonymised (extra-curricular activities, resources, after-school clubs in local area). All participants are asked to also uphold the confidentiality of the focus group discussion.

While confidentiality is an important component of research, participants will be advised that if any information is disclosed that indicates there is a child protection concern, the researchers are mandated to report such concerns to TUSLA as stated in the Children First Act 2015 and the Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice (2019). Confidentiality may also be broken if the information provided suggests there is a serious risk to participants or others.

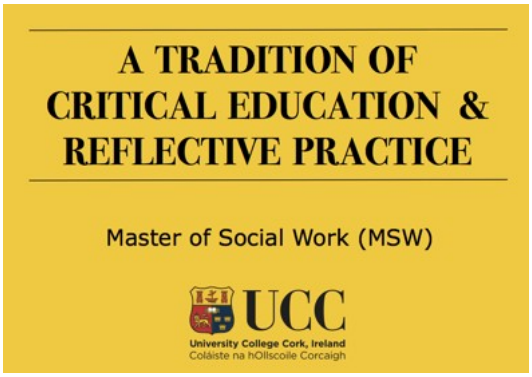
Part Two: Focus Group Discussion Questions (1 hour)

1. **Introduction/Warm up Question:** What is your knowledge of Direct Provision?
2. **Language:** What has been the English proficiency of students you've worked with and has this impacted their ability to engage in class and engage with their peers?
3. **Integration:** What support does the school offer to assist students from Direct Provision integrating into the school?
4. **Academic:** What do you believe helps or prevents students from Direct Provision to excel in school?
5. **Experience:** What helps students from Direct Provision to enjoy school?
6. **Retention:** What do you believe contributes to students from Direct Provision not completing second level education?
7. **Social Inclusion:** How have students from Direct Provision engaged with extracurricular activities in the school?
8. **Support:** What is there to assist you as teachers to support these students?
9. **Community:** Does the school support the parents of students from Direct Provision? How?
10. **Ending/Moving Forward:** Based on our discussion today, what do you believe would help the educational attainment and integration of students from direct provision?
11. **Closing question:** Is there anything you want to add that we haven't discussed?

Part Three: Debrief (5 minutes)

Time will be allocated after the focus group concludes for the purpose of debriefing. Should the research cause any unforeseen emotional distress, staff will be advised to contact their GP for further support. A debriefing sheet will be provided to participants (including seeking help, immediate sources of help, and how to look after themselves following the research).

Appendix E: Debriefing Sheet



Debriefing Sheet

Thank you for participating in this research project concerning your experience of supporting students from Direct Provision as a staff member of [school name retracted]. The purpose of this research is to contribute to the understanding of the second-level education system experience of students from Direct Provision.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the researchers:

Maria Flavin
Email: 113398461@umail.ucc.ie

Katie Buckley
Email: 120111634@umail.ucc.ie

If your participation in this research has caused any emotional distress, we advise you to consult with your GP for further support and guidance. If you require immediate psychological assistance, you can contact the following resources:

- Samaritans (Call: 116 123) - provides free emotional support 24/7 for anyone who is struggling to cope, who needs someone to listen without judgment or pressure.) - 116 123
- 50808 Crisis Text line (Text Hello to 50808) - 50808 is a free, anonymous, 24/7 messaging service providing everything from a calming chat to immediate support.
- Ambulance/ Emergency services (Call: 112 or 999)

Ways to look after your mental health:

- Speak to a trusted friend or family member.
- Practice positive self-care - this is unique to each individual and may include mindfulness, breathing techniques, reading and exercise. Consider finding what works for you and incorporating it into your routine where possible.