



6 May 2022

Ms Sarah Cremin  
Committee Secretariat  
Committee of Public Accounts  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

Ref. S0758 PAC

Dear Ms Cremin,

I refer to your letter dated 23 February 2022, concerning our correspondence dated 10 and 18 January 2022, regarding compliance with procurement guidelines, and information on A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to establish a New International Protection Support Service, which was discussed at the meeting of the Committee of Public Accounts on 27 January 2022.

This letter is in response to the Committee's request for an update in relation to: the External Advisory Group; and a timeline for the implementation of A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a New International Protection Support Service.

#### External Advisory Group

An External Advisory Group has been established to monitor and report independently on the progress of the White Paper reforms. Its members are: Catherine Day, former Secretary General of the European Commission; David Donoghue, former Ambassador of Ireland to the United Nations; and Lorcan Sirr, housing policy expert.

The External Advisory Group has met four times since its establishment in November 2021, most recently on 3 February 2022. At these meetings the Group was briefed by officials of this Department on progress in the implementation of the White Paper and the transition to the new International Protection Support Service. This included updates on the development of the implementation plan, detailed policies and funding models that will be required to give effect to the White Paper. The approved Terms of Reference are enclosed with this letter.

Further meetings of the External Advisory Group have been delayed due to the Department's response to the war in Ukraine, which has had an impact on the implementation of the White Paper. The Programme Board overseeing the reform



process was able to meet on 28 April 2022, and it is anticipated that a request will be made to the External Advisory Group to meet in the coming weeks too.

#### Impact of the Ukraine crisis

The war in Ukraine has precipitated a humanitarian crisis, which has required the Government to accommodate an unprecedented number of persons fleeing the conflict. Almost 28,000 Ukrainian refugees have come to Ireland under the Temporary Protection Directive, and over 19,000 have now been accommodated by the State to date.

This Department is responsible for providing short-term accommodation to Ukrainian refugees. It has had to deploy significant resources to this task since late February, and this has necessitated the temporary redeployment of staff from several areas of the Department, including the Units leading the implementation of the White Paper. These staff will progressively return to their work to implement the White Paper as additional staffing resources become available to support the Ukraine response effort.. Notwithstanding these unavoidable delays in some areas of the White Paper implementation process, there are a number of key areas that have seen significant progress in recent weeks.

Work is ongoing with the Programme Board Risk Committee to develop a detailed Risk Register. This will also include ways in which predicted risks can be mitigated, and will outline risk management strategies that can be put in place.

The Housing Agency has incorporated feedback from the Programme Board into the Funding Model it has developed for Approved Housing Bodies for accommodation in the community. It is planned to go ahead and to launch the Funding Model shortly. Work is continuing to acquire properties. As of 19 April there are 9 properties acquired and 44 properties with bids accepted.

Work has commenced on developing the approach to deliver the first of the six Reception and Integration Centres.

This Department and the County and City Management Association are working closely to put in place the permanent system of integration supports for international protection applicants. This will be led by Local Authorities and will expand the current Irish Refugee Protection Programme resettlement model. It is also planned to launch the new integration fund envisaged in the White Paper shortly. This will fund civil society organisations to support the integration of international protection applicants.

As indicated, the Programme Board overseeing the transition process met on 28 April 2022, and the next meeting is scheduled for 16 June 2022. The focus of this meeting will be on overall timelines for the implementation plan, including assessing underlying assumptions and any impact of the current humanitarian crisis arising from the war in Ukraine.

#### Work undertaken immediately prior to the Ukraine crisis

The International Protection Support Service Transition Team held a stakeholder meeting with representatives of other government departments who have a role to play



in the implementation of the White Paper. It is planned that these departments will feed into the implementation plan that has already been developed, before the plan is published later this year.

In relation to stakeholder management, the International Protection Support Service Transition Team held a briefing for the NGO sector in February. There were over 30 representatives from this sector present and they received an update on the progress and plans for the implementation of the White Paper. These briefings will take place on a quarterly basis.

A detailed communications strategy is currently being developed and the International Protection Support Service website was launched at the end of February, to coincide with the first anniversary of the publication of the White Paper. This will be a site where documents can be published and updates can be provided to all members of the public. It is also planned that there will be a section dedicated to International Protection applicants, so they can easily find more information.

I trust that this information is useful to the Committee. Further information can be provided to the Committee on the current system of international protection accommodation or on the new model on request.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Kevin McCarthy', is written over a faint, light-colored rectangular stamp or watermark.

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Kevin McCarthy  
Secretary General

*Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015*

Encl: External Advisory Group approved Terms of Reference



## **Programme Board to oversee the transition to the new International Protection Support Service**

### ***Finalised Terms of Reference***

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#### **Statement of Purpose**

To support the State in its commitment to end the current system of Direct Provision and replace it with a new international protection accommodation and supports system based on a not-for-profit approach, grounded in the principles of human rights, respect for diversity and respect for privacy and family life, as outlined in *A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a new International Protection Support Service*.

To this end, oversee and advise on the development and implementation of the new model, including the development of an effective governance model.

#### **Advice**

1. Provide guidance and expertise on the development and implementation of the new model of accommodation and supports for international protection applicants, as outlined in *A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a new International Protection Support Service*, to the DCEDIY International Protection Support Service (IPSS) Transition Team and to Departments and Agencies with responsibility for implementing the transition to the new model;
2. Contribute to the development of and annually review the implementation plans for the transition to the new model of accommodation and supports for international protection applicants.

#### **Information Exchange**

3. Act as an information sharing mechanism between Departments, Agencies, and other Non-Governmental Organisations with responsibility for implementing the transition to the new model of accommodation and supports for international protection applicants, including linking the IPSS Transition Team with key relationships, experts and supports;

4. Meet annually with representatives of inter-agency working groups to facilitate the exchange of good practice and to identify ways in which coordination can be improved at local level;
5. Develop and implement a communications/transparency strategy with the Department for all communications relating to the work of the Board and the outside world;
6. Meet regularly with the Programme Board set up by the Department of Justice to ensure effective coordination and timely information exchange between these two complementary reform processes.

## Monitoring

7. Monitor the transition to the new model (to enable this monitoring, information will be supplied to the Board by Departments and Agencies with responsibility for implementing the transition. Information will also be supplied by the Local Authority Inter-Agency Working Groups that will co-ordinate the delivery of the programme at local level);
8. Input to the development of a governance model which will oversee the delivery of integrated, high-quality, rights-based services, with a particular focus on children's rights, on dignity, respect and privacy; and on access to the right kind of information and support at all stages of the process, as stated in *A White Paper to End Direct Provision and to Establish a new International Protection Support Service*,
9. Appoint a Risk Committee from among its members to oversee the management of risks according to an agreed framework. Risks will also be identified, mitigated and managed through DCEDIY's existing risk management system;
10. Agree the progress and performance indicators against which it will monitor the transition to the new model;
11. Provide twice-yearly monitoring reports to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, these reports to be published on the DCEDIY website.