



Crosscare Submission to the National Action Plan Against Racism for Ireland, July 2021

Introduction:

Crosscare is the Social Support Agency of the Archdiocese of Dublin. Our work includes interventions in the areas of homelessness, food and community needs, work with migrants and refugees and work with young people. In 2020 9,514 people in 4,459 households from 122 countries benefited from Crosscare's information and advocacy service [1]. Crosscare works with people who have complex and multiple needs, experience a high degree of social isolation and find it difficult to access appropriate services and support. Our supports are for all people regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, religion, beliefs, or sexual identity. We welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the National Action Plan Against Racism for Ireland.

Overarching Recommendations:

- 1) Commit to implementing equality, diversity and inclusion training (EDI) across all public services by 2022, including local authorities.
- 2) Ensure all policies and practices relating to housing and homeless services (emergency, social and private sector) are audited to assess if they directly or indirectly lead to segregation and enact laws to prosecute housing providers if their actions are racist or exclusionary.
- 3) Establish a legal right to interpreter and translation supports where needed across all public services.

Specific Recommendations:

Issue 1: Crosscare is aware of people experiencing difficulty accessing public services and experiencing racism within public services, for example Dept. of Social Protection (DSP). The current DSP complaints portal is for general complaints, and provides no possibility for racism to be flagged as an issue. In our experience, assisting clients to submit complaints which included the experience of racism, the DSP resolutions did not acknowledge or address the element of racial discrimination and responded to the complaint in a general manner. Therefore, the issue of racism appeared to be filtered out or ignored.

Recommendations:

- Implement equality data collection on public services. We believe that it is impossible to identify patterns of discrimination without generating data - either

quantitative or qualitative. Ireland has a legal duty of equality data collection on public bodies. It should be carried out sensitively with consultations with NGO groups working with ethnic minorities. The data collected should be used to identify how ethnicity impacts on the outcomes people receive from using a public service, with the objective of identifying and eliminating discriminatory barriers.

Ref. -<https://equityhealthj.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12939-019-1107-y>

- Ensure that both interpreter services and access to translated printed/web materials are available throughout all public services.
- Develop a common complaints system that has a specific route for racism related complaints and compile statistics on complaints of racial discrimination
See: Crosscare's *Do You Speak English* <https://www.migrantproject.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Do-You-Speak-English.-A-Study-on-Access-to-Public-Social-Welfare-Offices-in-Ireland.-Crosscare.2018.pdf>)

Issue 2: We are aware that the state is developing a new national strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence following an audit carried out in early 2021. It is hoped this will include references to the submission that Crosscare made to this audit highlighting the difficulty of migrant communities in accessing gender-based violence-related support services. Additional difficulties are experienced by migrant communities of non-binary and transgender backgrounds.

Direct provision centres are not always perceived as sites where domestic violence can occur. However, it often does. Some centres do not have accessible information on what supports victims can access.

Recommendations:

- Crosscare recommends that the proposed anti-racism strategy is explicitly linked to the forthcoming DSGBV strategy, specifically regarding access to relevant support services.
- We also recommend that these services are explicitly made available to people experiencing GBV in Direct Provision and homeless services.
See: https://lgbt.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/LGBT_Ireland_Oireachtas-submission-29.5.19-1.pdf

Issue 3: Crosscare is aware of the long term, multi-generational impact of direct provision, particularly in areas related to housing and integration.

Recommendations:

- Crosscare looks forward to the implementation of the recommendations of the Report of the Advisory Group on the Provision of Support, including Accommodation, to Persons in the International Protection Process ('Day Report').
- Crosscare believes that a system which mainstreams access to housing, the labour market and social supports for asylum seekers will have a net positive effect, reducing the likelihood of homelessness or poverty upon exiting direct provision. Crosscare recommends that future alternatives to direct provision be subject to audits and independent scrutiny to ensure that they function with an anti-racist

framework. We recommend that the new National Action Plan Against Racism includes a mechanism to monitor the development and implementation of the alternative to direct provision, to ensure the construction of a human-centred and explicitly anti-racist system is built.

See: Crosscare's *Coming Home in Crisis* (https://www.migrantproject.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Crosscare-Migrant-Project_Coming-Home-In-Crisis_Oct-2019.pdf)

[1] Crosscare Information and Advocacy Services comprises Crosscare Housing and Welfare Information, Crosscare Refugee Service and Crosscare Migrant Project – see: www.crosscare.ie, www.migrantproject.ie, www.livinginireland.ie