This booklet was created by young people for young people. We explain the asylum process and show pictures of actual buildings and interview rooms to make seeking asylum less scary for children.
This is the Irish Refugee Council (IRC). They helped make this booklet with a group of young people who have been in Ireland and applied for asylum.

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IRC Children and Young Person’s Team:
- Samantha Arnold - Amy Sheils
- Stella Légrádi - Maja Haals Løndorf

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- Cyndi Njoki - Anau Dollah
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- Robert Varga - Luke McDermott

Animator: Dearbhla Kelly
Photographer: Turlach O’Broin
Editing: Samantha Arnold
Booklet Design: Sharon Waters and Stella Légrádi

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Do NOT forget you are not alone and can always ask for help.
This booklet is intended to provide information about the asylum process in Ireland. However, no information in either the booklet or the video should be construed as legal advice.

Young People wishing to seek asylum should consult their legal representative.

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Who is a Refugee?

An asylum seeker is someone who is seeking to be recognised a refugee.

United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951):
Anyone who has to flee his or her country because they fear they are in danger of persecution because of their:

Nationality ‘I have a different nationality to my country’s. This has caused some serious problems for me.’

Race ‘I am from a tribe that other tribes do not like. I am afraid of what they might do to me and my family.’

Religion ‘I have a different religion than most of the people in my country and this can make things difficult.’

Political opinion ‘I do not like my country’s government and I have been told I can no longer voice these opinions or I will be punished.’

Membership of a particular social group ‘I am a lesbian in my country where if you are found to be gay, they will kill you.’

Seeking Asylum in Ireland

Firstly, when you arrive in Ireland, you have to prove that you are a refugee.

This is not easy, but remember that it is your right to have your views and wishes taken into account. Decisions should be taken that reflect your best interests!

Asylum seekers face the same problems as anyone moving to a new country:

Language barriers
New customs and culture
New food
Making new friends
Confusing education system
Going through the asylum process is hard, but there are people who might be able to make it a bit easier, such as your social worker, lawyer and several organisations.

If you plan to seek asylum in Ireland, you will work with at least two people: a legal guardian (which could be a social worker or a parent) and a lawyer. The guardian is the person responsible for looking after your needs like finding you a place to live and getting you into school when the time is right.

Your lawyer is responsible for helping you to apply for asylum.

You can trust your lawyer and it is important to be open and honest with him or her so that they can make the best case for you to get protection in Ireland.

Applying for Asylum

This is ORAC, or ‘the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner’. When you arrive in Dublin this is the office you will be referred to.

Remember!
If English isn’t your first language, you can request an interpreter at any point.

The people working here will interview you and decide whether you are a refugee or not.
Sometimes your social worker will think it is not a good idea to apply for asylum when you first arrive. If you disagree, make sure you explain this to your social worker, or your social worker’s boss!

The HSE is responsible for you. You will have a social worker who looks after your accommodation, food and education.

The ‘Short Interview’ at ORAC

This is where you will be asked questions like: What is your name? What is your date of birth? Where are you from? And why are you seeking help from Ireland?

If you are with your parents, the person asking questions will probably just ask your parents questions. If you have a different reason for needing help from Ireland to your parents – it is important that you say this to your parents or to your lawyer or the person asking questions.

If you do not understand your interpreter, do not be afraid to ask a new one.

Remember! Try to keep calm, these people are there to help you.

Remember! You can ask to talk to a lawyer before you talk to the people at ORAC and you can ask your lawyer to come to ORAC with you.

During this interview, a person from ORAC will ask you some questions and fill out a short application form with you. They will ask you to sign your name at the end, so it is important that
The ‘Short Interview’

If you are over 14 years old, ORAC will also take your fingerprints. If they find that your fingerprints were taken in another European country, you may be returned to that country.

Ask your solicitor if you need more information about this or want to know how to join your family (or have your family join you) if you became separated on the way here.

You will also be given a day to come back to have a longer interview.

After this interview you will have to fill in a questionnaire. You have 2 weeks to fill it in.

You can ask for a questionnaire in your own language and/or request an interpreter for help filling it in!

Ask your lawyer or social worker for help filling in your questionnaire or if you need more time!

Where will I live?

If you are with your family, you and your family will go to a big centre a little bit outside of the city where you will have some space for your family and food prepared for you. After a while, you will be moved to a different centre that could be anywhere in Ireland.

If you are here alone, your social worker will take you to their office and ask you a few more questions and find you a place to live with other young people like you.
The ‘Long Interview’

This interview will take place after your Short Interview. A decision to grant refugee status will be made after this interview. Your Long Interview will take place in a room like this. Your room will be slightly different if you are with a parent. In this room, you might have a number of people, especially if you are alone, including an interpreter, your social worker or parent(s) and an interviewer.

The interviewer will ask you a few questions. Some of these questions you have been asked before at your short interview. The questions will be based on your questionnaire. This interview will be longer than your last one.

Remember!
This is your interview. Do not be afraid to ask questions and make sure your interviewer gets things right.

If you need a break, feel free to ask! If you feel like you can’t finish and need to have your interview continue on a different day when you are feeling better, tell the interviewer or your social worker!

At the end, you will be asked for your signature, so make sure you understand everything.

Make sure you are able to say everything and that your whole story is heard. If you forgot to say something or think there was a mistake tell your lawyer to write in to ORAC as soon as possible.

What happens next?

A decision can take up to 6 months, but sometimes it can be as fast as 5 weeks. If it takes longer than 6 months ask your lawyer to find out why it has taken so long.

⚠️ If the decision is positive then you are a refugee in Ireland and you have most of the rights of an Irish person. You can also apply for family reunification. ⚠️

If the decision is negative:

Do not panic!
You can talk to your lawyer about how to appeal this decision.

If you do not know how to contact your family, or you do not know where they are, the Irish Red Cross might be able to help you.
The Appeal

This is the RAT, or ‘The Refugee Appeals Tribunal’

In case of negative decision you can appeal at the RAT. Your lawyer can help and explain your options. Be aware of the fact that refugee laws are always changing, ask your lawyer to keep you up-to-date!

If you do not win your appeal and you still have a negative decision, your lawyer can still help you. If you think both ORAC and RAT made bad decisions, you can talk to your lawyer about going to the Irish High Court. The High Court can look at the decisions and see if they made a mistake.

You can apply for:

- Subsidiary Protection
- Leave to Remain

We here at the Irish Refugee Council wish you the best of luck and we hope you found the answers you were looking for!
The Independent Advocacy Project (IAP) provides support to separated children to help them find their voice. The IRC matches separated children with advocates who will act as a mentor to promote: the young person’s integration into Irish society and their understanding of the asylum process and their new host society. The Independent Advocacy Programme works with separated young people outside of their country of origin and separated from both parents or previous guardians, and aged-out minors.

The advocates will help in accessing supports and activities, and help to prepare for the future and arrange fun activities.

Children and Young Person’s Officer at Irish Refugee Council

Find us on facebook!

https://www.facebook.com/separatedchildren

Who else you can turn to?

Dun Laoghaire Refugee Project assists refugees, those with Leave to Remain and asylum seekers, especially the young, with accessing education and training. Arrange for one to one discussions with individual asylum seekers who need advice. www.drp.ie

CrossCare YASS, Youth Aftercare Support Service is a non-residential Aftercare Service that works with 16-25 year old separated children and young adults and focused on both prevention and crisis work. www.crosscare.ie/youth2

CDETB, Separated Children Education Service various range of education related services as well as an outreach and youth service. Its aim is to empower separated children and young people aged 10 - 21 to live independent and healthy lives and to integrate into and participate fully in society. www.cdvec.ie/Targeted-Programmes/Seperated-Children.aspx

EPIC, Empowering People in Care works throughout Ireland, with and for children and young people who are currently living in care (residential, foster or hostel care). www.epiconline.ie
VSI, Voluntary Service International – works to promote peace, social justice, sustainable development and intercultural understanding through volunteering abroad and in Ireland. www.vsi.ie

Spirasi – works with asylum seekers, refugees and other disadvantaged migrant groups, with special concern for survivors of torture. Spirasi encourages self-reliance and integration into Ireland. www.spirasi.ie

Ruhama – works with women affected by prostitution. They provide a service to women who are currently involved in on-street and off-street prostitution, women who are exiting prostitution, women who are victims of sex trafficking and women who have a history of prostitution. www.ruhamai.ie

BeLonGTo – the national organisation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgendered (LGBT) young people, offer a safe space where they can meet like-minded friends. There is a special project for young people who are asylum seekers and refugees. www.belongto.org

Dublin Aids Alliance – works to improve conditions for people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS. Offering services to youth groups, caregivers, families, agencies and schools. www.dublinaidsalliance.ie

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre – offers a wide range of services to women and men who are affected by rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment or childhood sexual abuse. National 24-hour helpline. www.drcc.ie

Free Legal Advice Centre – offers some basic, free legal services to the public and for those who are unable to vindicate their rights or resolve their difficulties. www.flac.ie

Barnardos – aims to provide practical and professional supports to children and families in difficult situations. www.barnardos.ie
**Unicef Ireland** saves and protects the lives of children through fundraising, advocacy and education in Ireland. Unicef speaks out on behalf of children, especially in cases where children’s rights are at risk. [www.unicef.ie](http://www.unicef.ie)

**UNHCR Ireland** works to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people in Ireland. The office also handles cases in which refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons are in need of assistance, support and advice. [www.unhcr.ie](http://www.unhcr.ie)

**ISPCC, The Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children** – is an Irish charity that advocates for children’s rights and provides services for children in need. ISPCC provides a range of independent unique services. [www.ispcc.ie](http://www.ispcc.ie)

**The Irish Red Cross** – Provides family reunification for refugees, if you would like to contact your family members – even if you do not know where they are – the Irish Red Cross can help you. [www.redcross.ie](http://www.redcross.ie)

**Foróige** – Ireland’s leading, most successful youth organisation. Its purpose is to enable young people to involve themselves consciously and actively in their own development and in the development of society. Offers various youth projects. [www.foroige.ie](http://www.foroige.ie)

**AkiDwA** – promotes the equality of migrant women in Irish society, free of gender and racial stereotyping. The organisation applies a complete approach to integration, promoting a migrant and gender-specific approach to public services as well as encouraging migrant women’s access to mainstream services and initiatives. [www.akidwa.ie](http://www.akidwa.ie)

**Independent Law Centre of Irish Refugee Council** – provides and delivers early legal advice and representation to asylum seekers in the early stage of the asylum process, in advance of their interview with ORAC. [www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/law-centre](http://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie/law-centre)

**Refugee Legal Service of the Legal Aid Board** – Provides confidential and independent legal services to persons applying for asylum in Ireland. Legal aid and advice is also provided in appropriate cases on immigration and deportation matters. [www.legalaidboard.ie/lab/publishing.nsf/Content/RLS_Services](http://www.legalaidboard.ie/lab/publishing.nsf/Content/RLS_Services)