



Iontaobhas Scoileanna Éamainn Rís
Edmund Rice Schools Trust

FUTURES ON HOLD

Edmund Rice Schools

A Position Paper
on direct provision and its impact on learning
and wellbeing for students and young people.

CLASS ROOM TOOLKIT

The background

A few weeks ago, Edmund Rice Schools presented our position paper, called *Futures on Hold*, calling for a reform of the direct provision system as a means of accommodating asylum seekers, in particular families and young people attending school.

The position paper, which is the first of its kind to be developed by a whole school network like ours, recommends that the direct provision system should be replaced by a different system, where no person, and particularly where no children, can end up in the direct provision system for more than six months.

Message came from you first

The idea to develop this paper came from you, the students.

At our *Walk in My Shoes* advocacy conferences over the past two years, students from a number of Edmund Rice Schools living in direct provision spoke openly and honestly about their experiences. They talked about the trauma they experienced in leaving their home countries, their often-dangerous journeys to Ireland and then the difficulties they experience living in direct provision centres.

You, the student advocates attending the *Walk in My Shoes* events, said that you wanted to do something together and to begin to campaign for a review of the system, which you regarded as unfair and something that needs to change.

Things you can do

We know that schools are really busy places with curriculum demands, exams, sports or other extracurricular activities.

So, we don't want to add too much to your already busy classrooms.

However, an important part of being an Edmund Rice School and student is that we take the time to look outside our own worlds and think about the worlds of others, in particular the worlds and experiences of people who may not enjoy the same advantages that many of us do.

We hope that you can take time to read through this Position Paper in your Religious Education class, your CSPE class or as part of your TY year, for example, and then think about taking some action that will help raise awareness about the need to re-think the way we care for asylum seekers when they come to Ireland.

On the next page, we have outlined 12 things that you could think about doing in your classes, or as a group of campaigning students. Some are really simple to do. Others will take a little bit more time. These are just suggestions only. You will have many of your own great ideas.

Remember, all of your actions - no-matter how small - can raise awareness and understanding, change minds and help bring about a reform in direct provision as it is currently operating, so that it can be replaced with a system of welcome that is compassionate, respectful, caring, fair and short-term.

Futures on Hold 12 Things You Can Do

Understand

1. **Read** Futures on Hold. Discuss it in your class.
2. **Talk** to your family and friends about what you have learnt.
3. **Keep up to date** on the issue by tracking media coverage.
4. **Invite** guest speakers to talk to your class about the reality of direct provision. You could ask a student in direct provision who may be attending your own school or another ERS school to tell their story. Or, you could invite a representative of a group like The Irish Refugee Council or the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission to talk about the work they are doing on this issue.
5. **Debate** the issue in your class or even with other schools.

Create and Imagine

6. **Design** a poster or postcards, for example, that you could use as part of a campaign to raise awareness about the need to change our direct provision system.
7. **Put yourself in their shoes.** Write an essay imagining that you have to leave your home, your family, your friends, your dreams to travel to a strange country.

Organise

8. **Plan** a day of action in your school. There are lots of international days that you could tie this to, for example:
 - November 20 Universal Children's Day
 - December 10 International Human Rights Day
 - January 24 International Day of Education
 - February 20 World Day of Social Justice
 - March 25th and 26th Walk in My Shoes, Cork & Dublin
9. **Join up** with other Edmund Rice Schools to organise a day of action.

Campaign

10. **Write to your local TDs**, Councillors and Senators asking them to work to change the system of direct provision that we currently have.
11. **Tell** your local newspapers and radio stations about your actions.
12. **Start a petition.** First in your school and then in your community calling for a change to the system of direct provision. Join with other schools to make this a network wide petition.

For more information on Futures On Hold and how ERST can support you contact:

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