

# The Allassar family

**The Allassar family experienced difficult times, spending five years in direct provision and an additional 12 years struggling in rental accommodation before Focus Ireland provided them with a home.**

To Palestinian-born Maher Allassar, his wife Alla Korilenko, his 15-year-old stepson Gleb, and their two-year-old daughter, Mariam, the development of the Focus Ireland housing at Greenmount Close has changed their lives forever.

This modern development for elderly or disabled residents is suitable for Maher's needs. He has polio and walks with a frame, albeit with difficulty. Allassar has great friends in the Irish Palestinian community, he says, particularly his GP, Dr Bassam Naser, who helped them to apply for social housing under the disability category.

Before Focus Ireland stepped in, the Allassar family

experienced one challenging housing condition after another, despite Maher being an Irish citizen. Maher recalled: 'The last flat was smelly, cooking odours lingered. Gleb had to sleep in the living room, and a loud neighbour meant none of them slept well. There was mould and damp. Mariam was sick a lot. It was really tough.'

In time Maher contacted Focus Ireland and after an interview, and assessment of their housing needs, the family were successful. He said: 'When we were told to come back I thought maybe we signed something wrong, but they said, "You have a house." My wife cried. Of course I cried. It was really emotional.'

In the evenings the family can now all sit around the table and eat together in comfort. Their teenage son has the space and silence to concentrate on his studies. Their young daughter has room to use her crayons and play. These are routines which many of us take

for granted, but they mean everything to the Allassars.

Now that they have a stable place to live – a place to call home – the Allassars can plan for the future. They hope to realise their dreams now that they are no longer struggling in unsuitable and poor standard accommodation.

Their home at Harold's Cross is tailored for Maher's mobility needs, Maher is minding his health. He is helping his children and contributing to a thriving community in the locality, along with his neighbours in the Focus Ireland development.

He said: 'Here we are in heaven. We have three bedrooms, a kitchen, living room and two toilets. We say, "Thank you, friends. Thank you, Focus Ireland. Thank you, Ireland".' Their new home is one of 28 provided on land donated to Focus Ireland by the Sisters of Charity 15 years ago.



# 28

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Maher Alassar with his wife, Alla Korilenko, and children, Gleb and Mariam at their new home in Greenmount Close, Harold's Cross.  
Photograph: Irish Times.