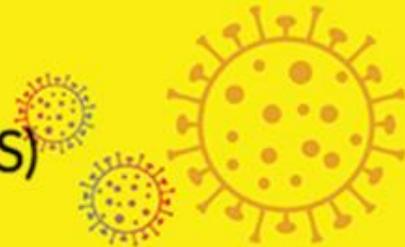


Coronavirus **COVID-19**



International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) COVID-19 Update



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
agus Comhionannais
Department of Justice
and Equality

9 April 2020

Updates for Residents, Friends of the Centre Groups and NGOs

For updates on Coronavirus visit:

- www.hse.ie/coronavirus
- www.gov.ie/health-covid-19

**For the Department's latest press release, issued today,
on COVID-19 supports for Direct Provision residents visit:**

- <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR20000052>

This update is also available on:

- <https://www.accommodationcentres.ie>

Message from Oonagh Buckley, Deputy Secretary General

Dear Residents, Friends of the Centre Groups and NGO colleagues,

This is a challenging time for all persons living and working in direct provision accommodation as we all try to halt the spread of COVID-19. All residents aged 65 or older have now been cocooned due to their particular vulnerability to this virus. The HSE is identifying residents requiring cocooning on serious medical grounds and supports will put in place as a priority.



The Department is guided by the HSE and the National Public Health Emergency Team in all measures and our centre managers are working closely with us, the HSE and residents to ensure that centres are safe and that guidelines on social distancing are observed.

Since the COVID-19 public health crisis emerged, contingency planning IPAS in collaboration with the HSE has been underway across all accommodation centres. Measures include:

- Relocating 600 residents in the last 2 weeks to support social distancing and cocooning measures. More than 250 residents were relocated last weekend.
- 850 additional temporary hotel beds to support the measures required for vulnerable residents; to provide offsite accommodation for self-isolation; and to help with social distancing measures by reducing overall numbers in some existing centres.
- Four hotels contracted to provide 299 dedicated self-isolation rooms in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Dundalk.
- Residents who are suspected of having the virus, or who have the virus without requiring hospital treatment, can be cared for in these facilities with the help of on-site HSE health care and social care support organisation.
- A partnership with HSE and Safetynet for a public health advice phone line for centre staff.

I would like to thank all the volunteers supporting our residents through the Friends of the Centre Groups and our NGO colleagues for their continued efforts to support and assist residents through this crisis.

Oonagh Buckley,
Deputy Secretary General

Creating space in the centres for social distancing, self-isolation and cocooning

IPAS have been working to thin-out centres to create space to facilitate cocooning, self-isolation for those with symptoms, and to address social distancing pressures. IPAS fully acknowledges that this has been disruptive for residents, however, this is a necessary step in order to protect the vulnerable.

Through these moves IPAS has sought to ensure that no more than three non-family members will share a room during this crisis. Persons who have been transferred will be facilitated to return to their original accommodation, in as far as possible, following the crisis. Centres have been asked to have a minimum of two but ideally three contingency spaces for self-isolation.

Last week saw 118 persons move to the Central Hotel in Dublin, 74 persons to the Travel Lodge in Galway and 63 persons to the Travel Lodge in Cork – 255 persons altogether. This week 50 single females have moved to new temporary hotel accommodation. The vast majority of these rooms are twin rooms, accommodating two people. The HSE will forward a list of relocated persons to receiving GPs.

All rooms that have been temporarily vacated following these recent moves will remain empty to be utilised for cocooning, self-isolation, and to facilitate other moves or inter-centre transfers by IPAS during this period.

In offsite self-isolation facilities all residents have their own bedroom and their own bathroom. The first offsite self-isolation facility in Dublin, opened on Monday 6 April, has health care supports provided onsite by the HSE and social care and support for residents provided by the Peter McVerry Trust.



Cocooning: extra care for vulnerable persons

Cocooning is a measure to protect people who are over 70* years of age or those who are extremely medically vulnerable by minimising all interaction between them and others. The Department has had to ensure as a priority that cocooning measures can be put in place for all of our residents who fall within one of the six criteria of serious medical illnesses published by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) on Friday 26th March 2020. Cocooning is for persons:

- over 70* years of age;
- persons living in a residential home or long-term care;
- who are extremely medically vulnerable.

** While the Government guideline for cocooning is 70, **IPAS has implemented the measure for residents aged 65.***

Cocooning differs from self-isolating in the sense that those cocooning are more vulnerable and must be protected from coming into contact with the virus in order to keep themselves safe, while persons self-isolating should seek to curtail their movement and capacity to transmit the virus to others.

The numbers of persons who require cocooning is small at present. Residents who need to cocoon continue to be accommodated in their accommodation centre. The rationale for this is that persons will continue to be supported by their local GP without disruption. Cocooning guidance for residents of direct provision accommodation centres, in particular includes:

- Food or medicines delivered to residents should be left outside the door.
- Residents cocooning should not attend any gatherings, including gatherings with family, friends or other residents anywhere.
- Residents cocooning should not go outside the centre.
- If residents need to contact their GP or other services they should use the phone.
- Residents should phone their doctor if they have any [symptoms of coronavirus](#).

Centre staff managing a person who is cocooning have been advised to follow HSE social distancing, self-isolation, and hand hygiene for the period of lockdown. Information and posters have been distributed to all centres and further resources are available [here](#).

Self-isolation protocols in centres and new facilities

Centres have been advised that if they have residents who are urgently required to self-isolate and the centre does not have available space, they must contact IPAS who, in consultation with HSE colleagues, will advise on an appropriate course of action.

Residents who refuse to self-isolate having been advised to do so are putting the health and well-being of other residents and centre staff at risk. We would greatly appreciate all of your support to advise residents to follow public health advice.

IPAS continues to work with the HSE to develop facilities around the country for persons who need to self-isolate.

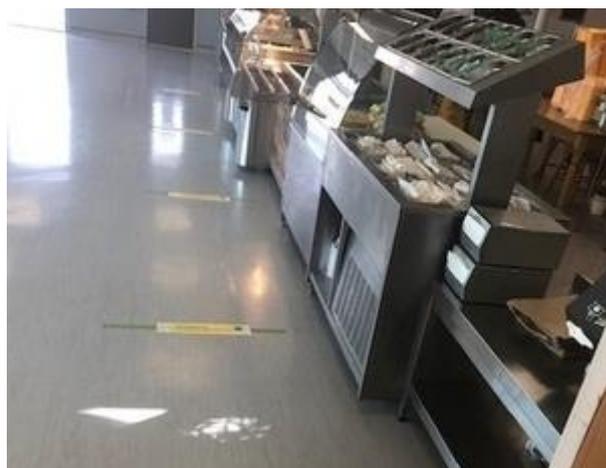
Residents staying in self-isolation facilities will have their own bedroom and their own bathroom. The facility in Dublin opened on Monday 6 April and the three other facilities will be opened by the end of this week.

If a resident is certified by the HSE as being clear of the COVID-19 virus and has completed their recommended self-isolation period they are permitted to return to their normal accommodation in the relevant centre.

Social distancing in centres

In line with social distancing guidance issued by the HSE, centres have been asked to consider how to improve social distancing measures. Advice includes:

- Staggered meal times.
- Reducing tables in dining areas.
- Signs and floor tape setting out two metres, to be installed in all areas where residents might gather in the centre or have to queue for service.



Centres without independent living arrangements (where applicants can cook

for themselves and their families) have been asked to implement staggered meal times or to provide takeaway facilities where canteens have been temporarily closed to ensure the safety of residents and staff. Rotas for laundry should also be considered to ensure social distancing.

Caring for children

IPAS has asked all parents residing in accommodation centres to nominate someone to care for their child(ren) in a situation where the parent cannot. The centre manager should be made aware of the person they are nominating.

Non-residents of an accommodation centre cannot move into an accommodation centre to care for a child, however, the non-resident can accommodate the child in suitable alternative accommodation for the duration of a self-isolation period. If a situation develops where the other parent or the nominee doesn't have somewhere suitable to mind a child, centre managers have been advised to contact the Tusla representative in IPAS who will try and facilitate accommodation elsewhere. The Tusla contact working in IPAS for such instances is Bernard Cantillon.

If a parent needs to be hospitalised or becomes so unwell that they are not able to care for their child(ren) and they are not able to find nominated persons to care for the child on their behalf, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency will assist in providing alternative care and accommodation for the child until they are well again. This would be done in the first instance by voluntary care agreement under Section 4 of the Child Care Act 1991 between Tusla and the parent or guardian. The voluntary care agreement will end and the child will return to the parent or guardian when the parent or guardian is well enough to resume care.

IPAS accommodation notice to all residents regarding the COVID-19 emergency

An IPAS notice issued on 31 March 2020 advising residents who wish to temporarily reside elsewhere during the COVID-19 emergency that they may do so without losing their bed space. Residents will, however, be required to remain offsite until the current restrictions are lifted. This public health measure is designed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in congregated settings. Any resident who is absent from the centre for one night or more, without a good reason notified in advance to centre managers, will not be permitted to return to the centre for public health reasons. They are required to formally apply to IPAS to be re-accommodated. The IPAS contact to apply for re-accommodation is ipasinbox@justice.ie.

If a resident must leave the centre for one night due to exceptional circumstances the request must be made to the manager who will seek IPAS permission to allow the exception or not.

Transfer Policy during COVID-19

Given the current crisis all transfers have been temporarily suspended. Residents' requests for transfer will be considered when the crisis is resolved.

Transfers for special medical reasons will be continue to be considered. All transfer requests for special medical reasons must be emailed by residents to ipasinbox@justice.ie with all relevant supporting documentation. Once this information is received, it will be examined and a response will issue to the resident.

Visitors Policy during COVID-19

In order to reduce the spread of infection, residents should not be visited by other persons during this period in line with the current public health advice and the restrictions in place on the wider community. The Department welcomes the supportive care offered to residents both online and over the telephone by Friends of the Centre groups and NGOs.

Tips to prevent the spread of infection



Wash

Wash your hands well and often to avoid contamination and spreading of bacteria



Cover

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and discard the tissue safely



Avoid

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands or if you have not used hand sanitizer



Clean

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces that would be used regularly to avoid contamination



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The information contained in this newsletter is intended for Managers and Staff of accommodation centres. Any queries should be directed to IPASinbox@justice.ie