



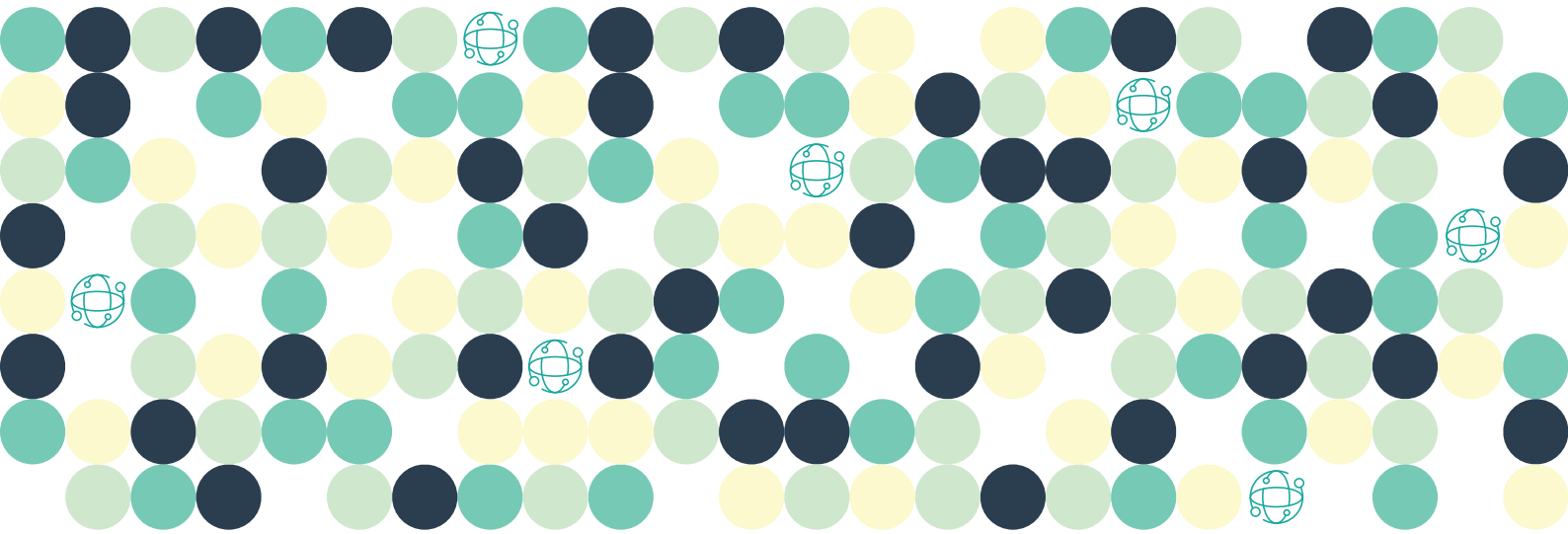
**Health  
Information  
and Quality  
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis  
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

# Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

HIQA monitoring and inspection of International  
Protection Accommodation Service Centres

January 2024



## **What is HIQA’s role in international protection?**

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is an independent statutory authority established to promote safe and high-quality health and social care services in Ireland. HIQA’s mandate covers a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector services. You can find out more about our work at [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie).

HIQA has assumed responsibility for monitoring the quality of permanent International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) centres provided by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

## **What is an IPAS centre?**

IPAS is an accommodation service for people seeking international protection in Ireland. This service is operated by IPAS, a division of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). This system was previously known as ‘direct provision’. The majority of these accommodation centres are provided privately on a contractual basis with the DCEDIY. IPAS centres vary in the way they operate. Some provide catered services in congregated settings and in others, people can cook for themselves and have private living arrangements. In addition, IPAS centres are designed to support people living there to access community-based supports in relation to their physical and mental health, educational opportunities and employment opportunities.

## **How many IPAS accommodation centres are there in Ireland?**

There are 48 IPAS accommodation centres in Ireland.<sup>1</sup> This figure refers to permanent centres and not emergency, reception, or other types of accommodation for international protection applicants.

## **What will HIQA’s role be?**

At the request of the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, HIQA now monitors and inspects permanent IPAS centres provided to people seeking international protection, against the 2019 [\*National Standards for accommodation offered to people in the international protection process\*](#). This monitoring function will be limited to what has been termed as ‘permanent centres’, which means that HIQA does not have a role in relation to emergency, reception, or other forms of accommodation offered to people seeking asylum in Ireland.

In 2021, the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth published the [‘White Paper to End Direct Provision<sup>2</sup> and to Establish a new](#)

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<sup>1</sup> This is subject to change.

<sup>2</sup> The White Paper is subject to review and revised recommendations.

[International Protection Support Service](#)'; therefore, HIQA's function is intended to be a temporary one during the transition period.

### **What does this mean?**

HIQA will monitor permanent IPAS centres for compliance with the national standards for as long as it has the legal basis to do so. This will involve carrying out inspections of centres and the publication of inspection reports on its findings.

### **Will HIQA investigate individual complaints made to it about permanent IPAS centres?**

HIQA cannot investigate individual complaints made to it about IPAS centres. However, it considers all information it receives about IPAS centres and uses this information to decide what, if any, action is required. For example, a series of complaints could trigger HIQA to carry out an unannounced inspection of an IPAS centre. HIQA also sign-posts complainants to relevant agencies, such as the Office of the Ombudsman, which has the legal remit to investigate complaints it receives about services.

### **Why are emergency accommodation centres not included?**

HIQA must carry out its functions in line with relevant legislation. Under the current legislation, HIQA's function extends to permanent IPAS centres only. Any broadening of the scope of HIQA's remit is a matter of national policy.

### **Does HIQA inspect accommodation for Ukrainian refugees?**

No. The scope of HIQA's monitoring function does not extend to accommodation for Ukrainian refugees. Any broadening of the scope of HIQA's remit is a matter of national policy.

### **Will HIQA inspections be announced beforehand?**

HIQA will carry out both announced and unannounced inspections. As this new function progresses, the majority of inspections will be unannounced.

### **What will HIQA look for on inspection?**

HIQA inspectors will visit IPAS centres to ensure that a safe, quality service is being provided in compliance with national standards. Inspectors will speak with the people who live there, service providers, members of staff and service managers to get an insight into the running of the centre. Inspectors will also look at documentation other relevant records held by the service. Some inspections will be announced, while others will be unannounced.

## **What happens after the inspection?**

After an inspection, HIQA inspectors will prepare a report on what it is like to live in the IPAS centre and whether the service provider is compliant with national standards.

## **Will the inspection reports be made public?**

HIQA aims to publish all of its inspection reports, however, there may be occasions where this is not feasible. For example, if the anonymity of a person living in a centre cannot be maintained. All published reports can be found on [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie).

## **Will HIQA have the power to take action if a service provider is not complying with the standards?**

Under Statutory Instrument (S.I.) No. 649 of 2023, HIQA can monitor and inspect IPAS centres against nationally-mandated standards. IPAS centres are not registered by HIQA like other services, such as nursing homes. Therefore, HIQA cannot take enforcement action. However, where improvements are required in accommodation centres, service providers will be expected to submit a plan to HIQA on how and when these improvements will be made, to ensure the provider is compliant with national standards. The implementation of these plans will be closely monitored by HIQA. Under current legislation, HIQA will report the findings of inspection and ongoing monitoring to the Minister for Integration. This includes the escalation of any significant risks identified, to ensure that appropriate action can be taken by the Department to address significant risks.

## **Will HIQA monitor the new system once 'direct provision' has been abolished?**


HIQA will continue to engage with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in relation to any future role it may have once the direct provision system has been replaced.

## **English is not my first language – where can I access information about this in Albanian/Arabic/Somali?**

An information booklet describing what HIQA does and its function in relation to international protection accommodation service centres is available at [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie) in the following languages:

- Albanian
- Arabic
- French
- Georgian

- Somali
- Urdu.

To access this information, follow this symbol  on our website: [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie)

### **What legislation underpins HIQA's role?**

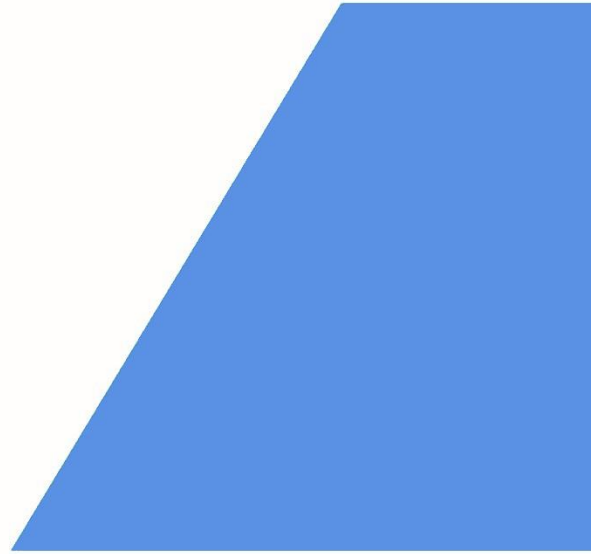
The legislation that provides HIQA with the authority to monitor and inspect international accommodation service centres is the European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 which were amended by way of the [European Communities \(Reception Conditions\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2023 S.I. No. 649 of 2023](#).

### **Has HIQA published any guidance or other documents for providers of IPAS centres?**

HIQA has published several documents for providers of accommodation service centres, which include an assessment-judgment framework and a guide to monitoring IPAS centres. These are available at [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie)

### **Where can I find out more?**

Visit our website [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie) or follow us on social media for updates.



**Published by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA).**

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