Refugee and migrant rights organisation, Doras, launched a new report examining living conditions in the international protection accommodation system.

The report, called Reception Gap: Permanent International Protection Accommodation versus Emergency Accommodation, compares conditions in permanent centres with those in emergency accommodation provided through International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS). While permanent centres have received significant scrutiny in recent years, the organisation said that emergency accommodation, where the majority of international protection applicants are now housed, has remained largely unexamined, weakly regulated and without independent oversight.

Chief Executive of Doras, John Lannon, said that emergency accommodation was originally intended as a short-term response to surges in applications but has effectively become the norm.

He said the absence of inspections by the Health Information and Quality Authority has created what he described as a two-tier oversight system, where some residents live in conditions subject to stronger governance while others experience substandard conditions without equivalent regulation. He said this regulatory and inspection gap should be addressed urgently.

Drawing on a national survey, peer-led focus groups and stakeholder interviews, the research describes a system characterised by dysfunction, harmful practices and systemic failures.

Testimony from residents highlighted the impact on daily life and family wellbeing. One survey respondent described overcrowded conditions that left little space for children to crawl or learn to walk.

Lannon said that the hospitality sector has been tasked with managing accommodation and many aspects of life for people who have experienced severe trauma. He emphasised that residents in the international protection system are not hotel guests, but children, women and men who require trained staff and trauma-informed supports to meet their needs and assist with integration. He added that the current system is not fit for purpose.

Lead researcher Ciara Smyth said that everyone seeking international protection should have access to the same standards of accommodation, safeguards and supports. She said the research is intended to inform reforms as Ireland prepares

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to implement the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. She warned that if the issues identified are not addressed, there is a risk that the shortcomings associated with Direct Provision system Ireland could be repeated or further entrenched under the new legal and policy framework.

Doras is calling for all accommodation housing international protection applicants to fall within the inspection remit of the Health Information and Quality Authority and to be subject to National Standards and the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. The organisation also said that emergency accommodation should only be used as a last resort when an unforeseen surge in demand temporarily exceeds capacity, rather than becoming a routine element of the reception system.

In addition, Doras is calling for all accommodation within the IPAS system to be delivered through a social care framework and supported by a suitably qualified and professionally regulated workforce.

Source(s)

- Doras (3 March, 2026), [No floor space for children to crawl: new research reveals lasting damage of prolonged congregated living in Ireland’s protection system], https://doras.org/news/no-floor-space-children-crawl-new-research-reveals-lasting-damage-prolonged-congregated-living

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