



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Marian Hostel, Tullamore, Accommodation Centre

Information for communities



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About the new centre:

Marian Hostel, Tullamore Accommodation Centre

The Marian Hostel Accommodation Centre will open as an accommodation centre for people in the International Protection process (also known as asylum seekers) in March 2020.

The centre will eventually be home to 168 people, made up of small families and single people. Residents will move into the centre on a phased basis while their claims for international protection are being examined.

The centre comprises the old Marian Hostel, which has been extensively renovated and upgraded, and three adjacent properties. The centre will provide dedicated spaces for families and singles. This will ensure additional privacy and comfort for all residents.

The centre will facilitate independent living for residents. This means that all residents will have access to cooking facilities and an in-house food hall where they can get their groceries using a cashless points-based system.

The centre also features a dining area and recreational spaces.

The centre has an onsite laundry facility and will also provide an outsourced service for larger items when required.

Families will live in a dedicated area of the centre, with its own cooking and recreational area, while single individuals will live in a separate area of the centre, also with their own cooking and recreational space.

Staff will be on site 24/7 and will be available to answer any questions the community may have.

Following a regional procurement process, the Marian Hostel was offered to the Department of Justice and Equality by Bridgestock Care.

Bridgestock Care will employ up to 20 locally based staff, who will oversee management, reception, catering, housekeeping and general maintenance of the centre.

Bridgestock Care has committed to sourcing all supplies from within the locality, wherever possible.

Tullamore previously welcomed international protection applicants when Bridgestock Care managed an accommodation centre on Church Road from 2004 to 2006.



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Activities Co-ordinator

While all of the centre management team will be actively involved in promoting integration initiatives and opportunities for residents, an Activities Co-ordinator is being appointed to take overall responsibility.

The Activities Co-ordinator will be from the local area and will develop strong collaborative working relationships with sporting, cultural and community projects and groups in the area that can cater for the recreational needs of all of residents. In addition, the Activities Co-ordinator will also help residents to find suitable employment (if they have been granted permission to access the labour market), access further education, volunteering and sporting opportunities, etc.

All residents in the Marian Hostel Accommodation Centre will be informed about the various integration and recreational activities at the Centre and within the community.

Becoming part of the community

Integration has hugely positive effects for both centres and communities alike by increasing friendships and understanding.

A Friends of the Centre group will be established in the centre. This initiative aims to bring residents, community and voluntary groups together with a view to increasing integration opportunities and providing for the development of greater community linkages with the residents and the centre.

In accommodation centres across the country, Friends of the Centre groups have proved hugely successful in helping the centre and its residents to integrate into and contribute towards the local community.

If you or anyone else in the community would like to get involved in the Friends of the Centre group, please contact marianhostel@bridgestock.ie.



About the Direct Provision system

What is the Direct Provision system?

Under EU and international law, Ireland, like other countries, is obliged to examine the claim of any person who comes here and claims international protection (“asylum”) under defined grounds. These grounds relate to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, nationality, religion, political opinions or membership of a particular social group or where the person would be at risk of suffering serious harm if returned to their home country.

The term ‘Direct Provision’ refers to a suite of Government services and supports that are offered to people who are seeking the protection of the State. These services and supports are directly provided by a number of Government Departments and Agencies.

For example:

- The Department of Justice and Equality provides accommodation, food, utilities and the Minister for Justice and Equality grants labour market access permission to eligible applicants.
- The Department of Health and the HSE provide healthcare services.
- The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection provides relevant allowances including the weekly payment for residents (which is currently €38.80 for adults and €29.80 for children).
- The Department of Education and Skills provides school places for children.

Over the last twenty years, more than 65,000 people have been supported by the system.

What are accommodation centres?

Accommodation centres provide a safe and supportive environment for people who have sought the protection of the State where they can live and socialise while their international protection applications are being determined. There is no obligation on any asylum seeker to accept the offer of accommodation and some choose to live with friends or family already living in the wider community or to source and provide for their own accommodation.

Improved Standards

Significant improvements have been made to living standards across centres in recent years. This includes the introduction of cooking facilities and independent living (like residents in Tullamore will have) and residents also now have access to the services of the Ombudsman and Ombudsman for Children.

In August 2019, new National Standards were published for all accommodation centres and service providers. The Standards form part of any new contracts issued to accommodation providers and current providers will be granted a two-year window in which to bring accommodation in line with the National Standards.

These Standards were developed with the support of UNHCR Ireland and NGOs working with asylum seekers. You can access the full standards [here](#).



Why is an accommodation centre opening in Tullamore?

The Department of Justice and Equality needs to find new accommodation centres because the number of people arriving to seek international protection in the State continues to rise (40% increase in 2019 compared to 2018).

Due to a sharp rise in the number of applicants in 2019, we currently have over 1,600 people accommodated in hotels and guest houses nationwide on an emergency basis.

To meet that demand - and to comply with our international legal and humanitarian obligations - the Department of Justice and Equality has been seeking expressions of interest for the provision of accommodation centres. Marian Hostel was offered as part of this regional tender process and has a two-year contract.

Will local services be impacted?

Once it is confirmed that an accommodation centre is opening, the Department of Justice and Equality links in with the other service providers to ensure that the necessary supports are put in place with no disruption to services for the local community.

In terms of access to healthcare, where GP lists are full, the HSE will arrange for access to GPs who have availability in the surrounding area.

Residents will be linked in with English language classes run by the local Education and Training Board.

Do centres have a positive impact on local communities?

Local communities across Ireland have helped to create a warm and welcoming environment for people who have come to Ireland seeking our protection.

There are currently 39 accommodation centres and one Reception Centre located in 19 counties across the country and there are positive relationships between residents and local communities in all cases.

Each centre has a 'Friends of the Centre' group. This initiative brings residents, community and voluntary groups together to increase integration opportunities and provide for the development of greater community linkages with the residents and the centre.

Integration has hugely positive effects for both centres and local communities by fostering friendships and understanding. This results in increased cultural awareness and helps build a more inclusive environment.



Are particular locations chosen for accommodation centres?

The Department of Justice and Equality does not select any particular areas as locations for centres. Premises are offered to the Department via an open procurement process. This procurement process is taking place regionally, throughout Ireland, including in Dublin.

Additionally, to meet the short-term needs of the Department, advertisements are placed in the national press seeking expressions of interest from accommodation providers for suitable premises.

Services provided to the Department of Justice and Equality are sourced through competitive tenders and expressions of interest. This ensures value for money for the taxpayer while also providing residents with a place to stay while their application is assessed.

How are asylum applications assessed?

The asylum system operates to allow us to identify, at the earliest stage possible, those who need our protection and those who can safely return to their home country.

Each application is assessed individually on its own merits by the International Protection Office (IPO).

Can asylum seekers work?

After nine months, asylum seekers are eligible to work if they have not received a first instance decision on their application.

Permissions are granted by the Minister for Justice and Equality with no cost to the applicant. Applications are generally processed in 2-3 working days.

Applicants granted a labour market access permission have access to all sectors of employment, with the exception of the Civil and Public Service, An Garda Síochána, the Irish Defence Forces and Embassies or consulates accredited to the State.

There is no minimum or maximum salary threshold, no language requirement/assessment, and no evidence of a job offer is required before a permission is granted. However, minimum wage/legal requirements will apply.

There are no restrictions relating to temporary or permanent jobs, or to full-time or part-time work. They can also become self-employed.

Over 3,870 permissions have been granted to date, including over 2,860 permissions to residents in accommodation centres.

