Statement on the recent increase in Covid-19 outbreaks in Direct Provision

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The recent increase of COVID-19 outbreaks in Direct Provision centres is made all the worse by the fact that it was avoidable. The Department of Justice was warned of the potential for rapid spread and increased risk of infection within crowded Direct Provision centres from the very beginning by experts, organisations, and public bodies, including Amnesty International.

Simply put, if these warnings were heeded and people had been moved to suitable accommodation, this would likely not be happening.

People in Direct Provision continue to face this unprecedented crisis in settings where they are not given the opportunity to follow the public health guidelines. Social distancing is simply not possible when strangers are expected to share bedrooms, bathrooms and living spaces. And this pandemic has shown us that we are not safe unless we are all safe. People in Direct Provision want to do their part in stopping the spread of Covid-19 like everyone else, but how can they if they can’t follow the official guidelines?

The pandemic has shown us in a truly brutal way why Direct Provision must end. This needs to happen as a priority and the new approach must be human rights compliant. Given the increase of COVID-19 cases, urgent and effective measures are needed right now to protect the lives and well-being of those living within the Direct Provision and emergency accommodation system.

If we are truly all in this together, we should all have the same access to care and safety. People in Direct Provision must not be left behind.