

Guidance on the Minimum Hygiene and Public Health Standards required in communal centres used to temporarily shelter persons displaced from war in Ukraine

Version	Date	Changes
Version 1.0 (INTERIM)	29/04/2022	Original publication of <i>Guidance on the Minimum Hygiene and Public Health Standards required in communal centres used to temporarily shelter persons displaced from war in Ukraine</i>
Version 1.1	05/05/2022	Inclusion of guidance note on smoking/vaping; additional information re SPHERE

The war in Ukraine has caused a massive humanitarian crisis and large-scale displacement of people within Ukraine and across borders into neighbouring and other countries. The environment in which people live is a key determinant of their health (including their risk from infectious diseases), and is essential for their well-being and recovery from crisis. *The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (4th edition)*¹ outlines what must be in place at a minimum – to provide acceptable living conditions, and for people to survive and recover from crisis with dignity. It presents best practice, based on a broad consensus, through a set of universal minimum standards in core areas of humanitarian response.

As part of the HSE response to meeting the health needs of displaced people fleeing the war in Ukraine and arriving in Ireland, Public Health priorities were outlined in *Public Health Advisory 004* (accessible [here](#)). A key Public Health priority is to reduce the risk and minimise the transmission of communicable diseases.

This document outlines minimum standards for Hygiene and Public Health aligned with the Sphere Minimum Standards, providing detailed advice and guidance for communal settings in this regard.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline what is required in temporary/ relief centres in order to:

- Minimise the risk of spread of communicable diseases by outlining the Minimum Hygiene and Public Health Standards required – particularly those infectious diseases spread via airborne (aerosol/ droplet), faeco-oral (via the faeces/ stools to the mouth) or direct contact transmission that pose a particular risk in these settings
- Meet the Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response as outlined in *The Sphere Handbook* for recognised key preventive (Hygiene & Public Health) interventions that reduce the degree of exposure/infection and the risk of illness and death in crisis-affected populations, i.e. adequate and appropriately spaced and sited shelter, (sufficient and) safe food, sufficient and safe water, adequate sanitation facilities, environmental sanitation and waste disposal (*minimum acceptable living conditions*)
- Provide assistance that *reduces risks* that people may face in meeting their needs with dignity, in an environment that supports people’s own efforts to recover their dignity and rights, survive and rebuild their lives and to be safe.

¹ Sphere Association. *The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, fourth edition, Geneva, Switzerland, 2018. www.spherestandards.org/handbook. This handbook is the product of two decades of collective experience of people working with more than 450 organisations in 65+ countries around the world and using the Standards in front-line operations, policy development & advocacy

Target settings and population:

- planned communal living in collective accommodation, i.e. a pre-existing facility or structure (e.g. community centre, school hall, a conference room in a hotel or other facilities) where multiple households are offered shelter, and infrastructure & basic services are provided on a communal basis or access to them is made possible; this could also include a Point of Entry centre, e.g. CityWest
- under the governance of the Local Authority, and managed by the Local Authority and/or community-based organisations / NGOs
- established as temporary or relief accommodation with the expectation of short (≤ 7 days) duration of stay before moving on to more permanent accommodation
- for persons displaced from war in Ukraine, Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP) under EU Temporary Protection Directive (2001/55 EC).

The Minimum Standards outlined are standards for settings where there are no cases or outbreaks of infectious disease – enhanced measures will be necessary in case or outbreak settings.

2. Minimum Hygiene and Public Health Standards for temporary communal living centres

Key principles:

- Infection prevention and control (IPC) is a key activity in disease prevention in any situation as well as for outbreak response.
- Overcrowding and poor hygiene (personal and environmental) are major factors in the transmission of diseases with epidemic potential (measles, meningitis, diarrhoeal diseases etc).
- Site planning, organisation and improvement (as needed) should take place as early as possible in order to minimise overcrowding and make it possible to organise necessary priority infrastructure.
- Prioritising and reducing risks from **water supply, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)** should initially focus on the use of safe water, excreta (urine/faeces) management and handwashing (hand hygiene), as these are likely to have the greatest impact on preventing disease transmission and reducing public health risks.
- Also critical to preventing and controlling the spread of infections –
 - cough and hand hygiene ('cover your cough and sneeze'). Posters available [here](#).
 - frequent adequate environmental cleaning
 - ensuring adequate ventilation
 - vaccination for vaccine preventable diseases
 - prompt identification and isolation of ill individuals to reduce onward transmission.

THINGS WE CAN DO TO KEEP EACH OTHER SAFE



2.1. Shelter

- Living space should be adequate for daily activities such as sleeping, preparing & eating food, washing, dressing, storing food & water, and protecting household possessions and other key assets, i.e.
 - Minimum 3.5 square metres of living space per person, excluding cooking space, bathing area and sanitation facility
 - 4.5–5.5 square metres of living space per person where internal cooking space and bathing and/or sanitation facilities are included.
- It must ensure privacy and separation as required between sexes, different age groups and families within a given household according to cultural and social norms; ideally a minimum of 2 metres distance between different households. See *Table 1: Some quantified norms for site planning*.
- In collective accommodation, well-planned well-lit access routes through the living area with **partitions/ privacy screens** to screen personal & household space should be used to provide personal privacy & safety.
- Wherever possible, keep families together, including non-traditional families, and enable people from a particular village or support network to live in the same area.
- In collective accommodation, allow the option for peer groups to share space. For example, some LGBTQI individuals prefer living with friends and peers rather than with their own families.
- Adequate ventilation including in cooking areas – ensure windows can open
- Fire safety, evacuation plans
- Adequate food storage and cooking facilities to prevent foodborne illnesses. If catering is contracted or provided onsite then the food business operator should be notified to the HSE Environmental Health Service and the premises is open to inspection.
- Smoking/vaping should be confined to well ventilated designated areas only, ideally outside.

2.2. Water supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- There should be a **responsible person(s)** for –
 - operating and maintaining WASH infrastructure (e.g. maintenance, cleaning etc)
 - replenishing consumables: soap (for bathing, laundry and handwashing), toilet paper, menstrual hygiene management and incontinence materials, cleaning materials
 - ensuring that the guidance standards are monitored (*Table 2: Minimum Hygiene and Public Health Standards for temporary communal living centre – Checklist Audit Tool* may be a helpful format for monitoring).
- Stringent measures are necessary regarding water, hygiene and sanitation: a supply of good quality water (water points), well-maintained toilets and bathing facilities, with attention paid to the disposal of excreta, the hygienic disposal of wastewater from showers, hand washing, kitchens, etc., and the collection and disposal of solid waste.

- Water points include communal bathing, cooking and laundry facilities and toilets; with water required for drinking and domestic hygiene (food preparation, personal hygiene and dish/clothes washing). See *Table 1: Some quantified norms for site planning* for Sphere minimum standards.
- Wastewater collected from washing areas may be significantly contaminated, e.g. sewage water may contain faecal coliforms. Ensure appropriate water point drainage at communal washing, bathing, laundry, handwashing facilities and cooking areas so that wastewater does not pose a health hazard.
- Consider how personal hygiene items e.g. toothbrushes, tampons, will be distributed to ensure reasonable equity in distribution e.g. to heads of households or groups of families.

2.2.1. Laundry, Washing and Bathing facilities

- Handwashing: Provide Handwashing stations at key locations with safe clean warm running water, soap and alcohol rub, and safe drainage. Use “once only” towels.
 - Soap and alcohol rub are both necessary – e.g. Norovirus (vomiting bug) is not killed by alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR)/gel but is by soap; alcohol rub is effective against other viral infections
- Position facilities so that handwashing happens *before* touching food (eating, preparing food or feeding a child) and *after* contact with excreta (urine or faeces) i.e. after using the toilet or cleaning a child’s bottom/ changing a nappy.
- Timely access to the minimum quantity of essential personal & household hygiene items – prioritise essential items in the initial phase (such as soap, water containers, and menstruation and incontinence materials) over the “nice to have” items (such as hair brush, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrush)
 - Soap and water at a handwashing station (one station per shared toilet or one per household)
 - Potty, scoop or nappies to dispose of children’s faeces.
- See *Table 1: Some quantified norms for site planning* for Sphere minimum standards on soap and water provision. Note that people with incontinence or diarrhoea and their carers each need five times as much soap and water as others.
- Bathing facilities: If one bathing facility per household is not possible, provide separate facilities for men and women that ensure safety, privacy and dignity. See *Table 1: Some quantified norms for site planning* for Sphere minimum standards.
- Ensuring there is adequate privacy for menstrual hygiene and incontinence management in the centre may include using privacy screens or separate areas for changing.
- Consider need for greater access to hot water for bathing and laundry during specific contexts, such as responding to scabies or other communicable disease outbreaks.
- Water quality: measure water quality parameters (free residual chlorine (FRC) and coliform-forming units (CFU)) at point of delivery and point of consumption or use. If shower facilities have not been used in some time, they should be flushed through in the first instance followed by sampling for legionella where possible.

- **Laundry:** Space and essentials provided for laundry (washing machine, soap; see *Table 1: Some quantified norms for site planning* for Sphere minimum standards) and drying facilities (tumble dryer or outside line to dry clothes).

2.2.2. Toilets

- Toilets should –
 - provide privacy in line with users' expectations
 - be easy to use and keep clean (generally, clean toilets are used more frequently)
 - have adequate space for different users
 - have inside locks and adequate lighting
 - have easy access to water for handwashing, anal cleansing and flushing
 - have menstrual hygiene management options and hooks & shelves for menstrual hygiene supplies
 - be accessible for older persons/ persons with disabilities
- See *Table 1: Some quantified norms for site planning* for Sphere minimum standards.
- Children should be allowed to accompany adults in to a particular gender toilets and showers.
- Consider proximity to toilets for people with incontinence. Some people may be able to prevent incontinence episodes if they can access the toilet quickly. A toilet commode chair, bedpan and/or urinal bottle may need to be supplied. Local HSE services may be able to assist in this regard.

2.2.3. Cleaning:

- Contract cleaners for routine regular cleaning of the facility. Ensure cleaners have adequate training and are familiar and competent in use of PPE.
- Clean sanitation facilities (toilets, showers, washing area) with water & detergent.
- Provide communal items for maintaining environmental hygiene, such as solid waste bins and cleaning equipment & supplies, with written instructions on their use and storage translated into Ukrainian and/or Russian as necessary.

2.2.4. Waste collection/ disposal:

- **General waste:** Provide clearly marked, appropriate and adequate covered storage for waste generated in communal areas. Ensure designated waste collection points do not overflow with waste, and final treatment or disposal of waste is safe and secure
- Ensure people can safely dispose of childrens nappies and faeces/ urine.
- Provide appropriate facilities inside toilets for washing, or appropriate containers for disposal of menstrual hygiene or incontinence materials in order to prevent blockages of sewerage pipes.
- If there are residents with particular health needs that may involve the generation of healthcare risk waste for example needles/ sharps or medications e.g. insulin; ensure that appropriate disposal facilities are in place. Local HSE Public Health Nurse services may be able to assist in this regard.

- Consider need for pest control in the premises.

2.3. General preventive measures

- Health promotion materials (e.g. posters) in Ukrainian and Russian – see HSE website
 - to promote good respiratory etiquette: cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue or sleeve - put used tissues into a bin immediately after use
 - to promote hand hygiene ([poster in Ukrainian](#))
 - to promote prompt reporting of any symptom suggestive of an infectious respiratory or gastrointestinal illness, e.g. ‘think measles’, ‘think polio’, ‘think Hepatitis A’ etc under [Public Health Resources](#) on HPSC website; [COVID-19 information in Ukrainian](#) on the HSE website
- There should be adequate hand sanitizer dispensers throughout the facility
- There should be a **designated isolation facility** to promptly isolate symptomatic individuals while they await medical assessment and management. This will ideally be a separate room with dedicated toilet within the facility, but could be a prefab/caravan with dedicated toilet facilities.
 - See *Public Health guidance on Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases in Communal Centres hosting displaced people fleeing war in Ukraine*, available [here](#)
- To allow sufficient space for isolation, the facility should operate at a maximum 90% occupancy.

2.4. Complementary resources

2.4.1. *Prevention and control of infectious diseases*

[Public Health Resources on the HPSC website](#), e.g. Public Health guidance on Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases in Communal Centres hosting displaced people fleeing war in Ukraine; Norovirus guidance; COVID-19 guidance.

2.4.2. *Psychological support*

- Addressing the psychological support needs of people displaced by war in Ukraine is beyond the scope of this document. The Psychological Society of Ireland’s (PSI) Special Interest Group in Human Rights and Psychology has [Time of War Resources](#) on their website which they update regularly
- They have written a short guide to offer clear and practical guidance for those who meet, greet and care for fellow Ukrainians, their families and children – a **rapid response psychology tool** to aid the public’s assistance to Ukrainian refugees arriving in Ireland, i.e. [Not ReLIVING — But LIVING: Psychological First Aid for Refugee Care – Helpful Do’s and Don’ts](#).
- This is an excellent resource to facilitate your first steps in caring for those affected by the crisis, and would be useful to share with all staff/ volunteers helping in communal centres.

Table 1: Some quantified norms for site planning		
Shelter	Living space available per person, <i>excluding</i> cooking space, bathing area & sanitation facility	Minimum 3.5 square metres / person
	Distance between 2 shelters (or 2 households within a communal centre)	2 metres minimum (ideally with screens for privacy)
	Ventilation	Keep windows open during the day
Water	No. of people per water tap (based on a flow rate of 7.5 litres/minute)	250 people maximum
	Amount of water per person per day for drinking and domestic hygiene	15 litres minimum / person
	Water quality parameters e.g. free residual chlorine (FRC), coliform-forming units (CFU), turbidity & pH content, legionella	As per EPA guidance: https://www.epa.ie/publications/compliance--enforcement/drinking-water/2015_04_21_ParametersStandaloneDoc.pdf
	No. of handwashing stations	One handwash station per toilet Handwash stations outside dining area
Toilets	No. of people per shared toilet	Ideally, one toilet per 5 persons or one toilet per household/family. If this is not possible – 20 persons maximum per toilet AND 3:1 ratio of female: male toilets
	No. of single-access gender-neutral toilets with ramps or level entries, and enhanced accessibility inside the superstructure (Centre)	Minimum of 1 toilet per 250 people
Bathing	No. of people per bathing facility	Ideally, one bathing facility per 5 persons or per household/family. If this is not possible – 20 persons maximum per bathing facility (the same no. of bathing facilities as toilets) AND separate facilities for men & women
	Amount of soap for personal bathing (average bar weighs ~100-125g)	250g-500g / person per month (approx 1 bar of soap every week)
Laundry	No. of people per laundry facility	100 maximum
	Amount of soap for laundry per month	250g/ person per month

Environmental cleaning intervals	Showers/ toilets / high-touch surfaces	At least once a day
	Floors	Once a week
	Walls/ ceilings	Once every 6 months
	Beds/ sheets	After each individual
	Cooking/ food storage areas	At least once a day
Waste	General waste e.g. food waste, sweepings, general	Plan for 100 litres waste-bin per 25 persons
	Contaminated waste e.g. Health care risk waste in an outbreak	
<p><i>Adapted from:</i> Sphere Association. The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response, fourth edition, Geneva, Switzerland, 2018. www.spherestandards.org/handbook Médecins Sans Frontières. Refugee Health: An approach to emergency situations. Macmillan.</p>		

Table 2. Minimum Hygiene and Public Health Standards for temporary communal living centre – Checklist Audit Tool

1.1 Shelter					
	Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comment/Action required
	Is there adequate living space for daily activities?				
	Is there at least 2 metres distance between areas allocated per household?				
	Are there well-planned, well-lit access routes through the living area?				
	Are privacy screens available for between household groups?				
	Are families/ households kept together?				
	Are peer groups given the option to share space?				
	Is there adequate ventilation?				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windows that can open? 				
	Is there Fire safety evacuation plans?				
	Is there adequate food storage and cooking facilities to prevent food borne illnesses?				
1.2 Water supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)					
	Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comment/Action required
	Is there a named responsible person(s) for operating & maintaining WASH infrastructure (e.g. maintenance, cleaning)?				
	Is there a named responsible person(s) for replenishing consumables: soap (for bathing, laundry & hand washing), toilet paper,				

	menstrual hygiene management & incontinence materials?				
	Is there adequate good quality water supply for bathing, cooking, laundry and toilets?				
	Are the toilets well maintained?				
	Are the washing facilities showers & baths well maintained?				
	Is there plumbing in place for all wastewater?				
	Is there a contingency plan should health care risk waste stream be required at short notice?				
	Is there a distribution plan in place for personal consumables?				
1.2.1	Laundry, washing and bathing facilities				
	Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comment/Action required
	Are the hand washing basins dedicated to that function with safe clean warm running water & safe drainage				
	Are the hand washing basis suitably located?				
	Are there supplies of liquid soap at all sinks?				
	Are there supplies of alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR)?				
	Is there an adequate supply of single use paper towels suitably located close to sinks?				
	Are there supplies of menstruation hygiene materials?				
	Are there supplies of incontinence materials?				
	Are there supplies of washing detergent?				
	Are there laundry facilities, including washing and drying facilities?				

	Is laundry detergent available?				
	Is there a facility for incontinence management, including privacy screens/separate areas for changing				
	Do the bathing facilities provide for privacy and dignity?				
	Is there one bathing facility per 5 persons or per household/family?				
	Has water quality been checked for free residual chlorine (FRC) & coliform-forming units (CFUs)?				
	Have the shower facilities been in regular use or flushed through prior to the facility housing this cohort of service users?				
	Has water sampling for legionella occurred?				
1.2.2	Toilets				
	Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comment/Action required
	Do the toilets provide privacy in line with users' expectations?				
	Are they easy to use and keep clean?				
	Is there adequate space for different users (consider wheelchair/mobility)?				
	Are there inside locks and adequate lighting?				
	Is there handwashing facilities?				
	Is there an adequate supply of toilet paper, and replenishment plan?				
	Are there menstrual hygiene management bins?				
	Are there toilet commode chairs, bedpans and/or urinal bottles provided?				

	If yes, are there disposal &/ disinfection arrangements in place?				
1.2.3	Cleaning				
	Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comment/Action required
	Is there a regular cleaning service contract in place for the Centre?				
	Do the service users have access to cleaning equipment and supplies?				
	Are there written instructions on their use and storage that are translated as necessary?				
	Is there a routine and enhanced (in the case of an outbreak) cleaning schedule in place?				
1.2.4	Waste collection/ disposal				
	Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comment/Action required
	Are there adequate numbers of waste bins in communal areas?				
	Are there adequate numbers of waste bins in handwashing/ bathing areas?				
	Are waste bins at strategic locations of a 'covered in' type?				
	Are there waste bins allocated for children's nappies?				
	Are there arrangements in place for incontinence waste?				
	Is there a documented schedule of frequency of emptying of bins?				
	Is there a regular domestic waste service contract in place that can meet the needs of the centre?				

	Is there a secure waste holding area to store waste awaiting collection?				
1.3	General preventive measures				
	Item	Yes	No	N/A	Comment/Action required
	Are there posters to promote good cough hygiene?				
	Are there posters to promote hand hygiene?				
	Are there posters to promote prompt reporting of any symptom suggestive of an infectious respiratory or gastrointestinal illness?				
	Are there adequate alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) dispensers wall-mounted at appropriate points throughout the facility?				
	Are there designated isolation rooms/ facilities to promptly isolate person(s) with symptoms while they are waiting for medical assessment & management?				
	Are all the posters translated as appropriate and provide easily understood information, consider level of literacy?				
	Do you have adequate supplies of medical grade (surgical) masks, gloves, tissues, chlorine based disinfectants (bleach)?				