**Sphere Minimum Humanitarian Standards: Case Study**

The shelter you are assigned to has now been open for three months!

The shelter is in a former school located in a small town. It belongs to the local authority and is operated by the local charity you work for.

It is a 2-storey building which has not been in use for quite some time, but it is still connected to central water supply and heating.

Before the first group of displaced people arrived, the local authority did some work to convert the old school into a shelter.

   

They turned the former classrooms into dormitories, with 6 bunk beds per classroom of around 30m2. This means that around 100 persons can be housed in the shelter.

On each floor there are two toilets with 2 stalls each; stalls are separated by wooden partitions which do not reach to the floor; some of the locks are broken. The toilets are old, squatting-type.

There are 2 showers on each floor.

There are 2 washing machines in a room downstairs.

There is a big room with microwaves where residents can warm up food and eat it.

At the beginning, the displaced people just stayed a few nights and moved on, but as winter is coming, it is likely some residents will be staying for a while.

Last week, a group of residents requested a meeting with you and raised the two following issues that they are not happy with:

1. Toilet and washing facilities: the families do not feel that these are sufficient given the number of people in the shelter. Teenage girls have reported feeling unsafe due to the shared nature of the facilities. They don’t like going there on their own, especially at night. Some would rather not wash than use the showers. Toilets are occupied all the time and people are complaining that the locks are broken.
2. Arguments are beginning to break out between families regarding use of communal facilities. Not only are families fighting over the microwaves, but mothers are worried that living only off microwaved food is not nutritious for their children. They are also not able to wash and dry their clothes sufficiently, so children are wearing either dirty or damp clothes. Morale in the shelter is low. Some of the teenagers just stay in bed all day. A member of staff has found the work very stressful lately and has been signed off sick for at least 3 weeks, which is putting the rest of the staff under even more pressure.

One of the residents left a letter on the desk in the office this morning:

Dear Shelter Staff,

I am writing to express my concern about my nine-year-old son, who has been wetting the bed almost every night since we got here, something he has not done for years. With little privacy and not enough washing machines, we are finding it very difficult to manage this situation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely, Irina

Among the residents are two teachers, who often act as spokespersons for the rest. There are also women who have worked in factory canteens, and men who have worked in construction.

Tomorrow you will have a meeting with a large national charity and the local authority to discuss how conditions at the shelter can be improved. It seems that the local authority may have access to a disused old peoples’ home next door, and the large national charity may be able to provide portacabin toilets and containers for sleeping in. You can see references to Sphere on the large national charity’s website.



**Group Task**

**Use the Sphere Handbook to help prepare for your meeting with the local authority.**

**How will you prepare for the meeting?**

**What will you say to or ask of the local authority?**

**What do you hope the meeting will achieve?**

**Make a note of any information and guidance in the Sphere Handbook that helped.**