Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Domestic Violence Refuge Accommodation

Project Brief Design Guidelines

Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
gov.ie

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Note this guidance document is to support funding applications for Domestic Violence Refuges submitted to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage by Local Authorities. This document has considered the guidance in *Safe Ireland*'s *Safe Spaces Project: Safe Place (Strand 1)* in November 2022 and Tusla's *Review of the Provision of Accommodation for Victims of Domestic Violence* in February 2022. The findings of these and post-occupancy operational reporting from an Approved Housing Body to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in 2022 have been considered and incorporated into this design guidance where appropriate.

Images in this document were gathered from as-built refuges completed in Ireland and internationally, and also from publications and established organisations' websites referenced in Section 8.1. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage wishes to express our acknowledgements for their use in the drafting of these guidelines.

1 Introduction

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist in the appraisal of stage funding approval submissions to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage by Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies for capital works in the delivery of Domestic Violence Refuges.

Ireland, through the Department of Justice ratified the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention recommendations into Irish Legislation in March 2019 with the Domestic Violence Bill. This Bill puts into action the legislative framework to ensure the articles of the Convention can be implemented.

One of the obligations of the Convention is that a family refuge place (shelter) for victims of Domestic Violence be provided for every 10,000 of population.

1.1 List of Acronyms

AHB	Approved Housing Body
CAS	Capital Assistance Scheme
CWMF	Capital Works Management Framework
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DHLGH	Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage
DSGBV	Domestic Sexual Gender Based Violence
DoJ	Department of Justice
DV	Domestic Violence
DVR	Domestic Violence Refuge
HSE	Health Services Executive
LA	Local Authority
SH	Social Housing
Tusla	The Child and Family Agency

1.2 Domestic Violence Refuges - DVRs

This guidance relates specifically to the provision of purpose built permanent Domestic Violence Refuges.

In this guidance, these refuges are referred to as DVRs.

Given the nature and vulnerability of the DVR occupants needing specialist support services and security with accommodation, standard SH housing (temporary/emergency or permanent) may not be suitable in the first instance for emergency crisis accommodation for victims of DSGBV, hence the need for purpose-built DVRs.

This accommodation type has design brief requirements specific to the vulnerability of the occupants who are victims of DV with or without children, and who are at risk of homelessness. In response to the particular needs of this group, a level of DV support and services is needed alongside emergency accommodation. Accommodation can be provided in the short-medium term (from a few weeks to three months generally).

The Safe Ireland: Safe Place document guidance (2022) refers to DVR accommodation provision occupancy for a few weeks to up to a year in duration.

DVRs are not necessarily gender specific, however it is reported that the majority of DV victims presented to the DVRs are women with children.

These emergency accommodation refuges/ DVRs, are separate to the delivery of temporary emergency accommodation facilities/hubs by LAs, for single occupancy or families, pending the delivery of permanent social housing.

For those units addressing temporary standard social housing needs, (for occupancy of up to maximum 5 years only), there is separate Department guidance: *Guidelines for Development of New Emergency Accommodation (2022).*

The following publications have been considered in these Project Brief Design Guidelines for the purposes of the funding application of Capital Works, and are included in the list of references (8.1):

- SAFE Ireland Report 2016 – outlines the context of the need for DVRs
- *Department of Housing Rebuilding Ireland (RI) 2017 Policy and Procedural Guidance for Housing Authorities in relation to Assisting Victims of Domestic Violence with Emergency and Long-term Accommodation Needs* – outlines the accommodation funding support available in principle, for short-term crisis accommodation
- Tusla Report 2022 on the Review of the Provision of Accommodation for Victims of Domestic Violence
- SAFE Ireland Safe Spaces Project - Safe Place: Designing Centres for Domestic Violence Prevention and Response, published 2022
- Government Housing For All Policy objective 10.1

1.3 Capital Funding Application Process

There is a standard four stage approval process for the funding of DVR Accommodation projects, in compliance with the CWMF Approval Stages and in the context of the Public Spending Code, with associated funding application forms from inception to delivery of these projects.

Further details are included in section 6.0. Section 8.2 includes a checklist that can be used by AHBs/LAs, to ensure all necessary information is submitted at each Stage.

As for all funding applications, the emergency housing need for the DVR proposed must be appraised and supported by the LA in the funding application.

2 Spaces for Support Services and Management

Non-residential ancillary spaces are often included in the design brief for a DVR capital works project.

Examples include space to support ongoing treatment/counselling and management space for the DVR.

Funding applications must include confirmation of the availability of support funding to deliver those services from e.g. Tusla, HSE, DoJ, DCEDIY and the AHB.

3 The Functional Purpose of the DVR

The primary function is to provide short-term emergency accommodation in a managed secure place and space for on-site specialist support services.

The DVR typically includes a space for support services and management staff, including therapists/consultants/outreach workers providing information, education and advocacy. Support space should also include supporting play spaces (indoor and outdoor) for children. Refuge operators often provide space for training purposes, within a safe and secure environment as part of services to assist service users.

The DVR location should be appraised and supported by the LA with consideration for:

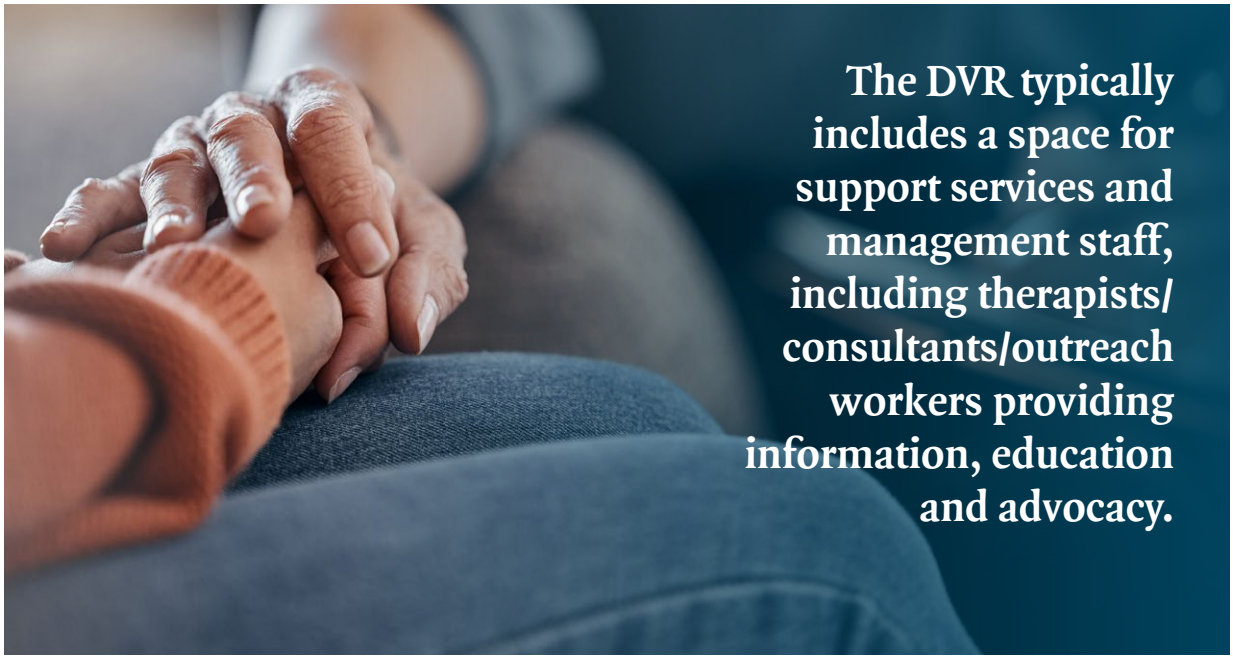
- ongoing demand for the service
- prioritisation by Tusla for the DVR services

The formal need for support and endorsement by the LA, based on their appraisal of needs and of the proposed facility in its location should form part of the standard Capital Appraisal document accompanying the funding application.

It is advisable that, in addition to the standard funding application documents to be submitted and recommended for funding by the LA (refer to sections 6.0, 8.2), the Capital Appraisal includes the following confirmations:

- the proposed site is in the priority locations as determined by Tusla
- the availability and funding of support services that will be in place at the time of its planned completion

This is to ensure the DVR is identified in the priority needs locations, the design brief is optimised to meet particular needs for accommodation and service requirements at the location, and that the spatial needs are not over or under specified.



4 Design Standards

Background

DVR facilities developed or proposed in Ireland typically consist of between 8-12 accommodation units, in a mix of new build schemes and refurbishment/ extension to existing structures, with associated support spaces.

Staff Accommodation

General indications based on feedback from Tusla, point to a need for on-site staff numbers of a minimum of two per ten self-contained apartments/units in some of these applications. Tusla's indicative requirements note that on site staff accommodation for 24/7 support is needed in each DVR. This would typically be provided in a fully accessible en-suite bedroom or self-contained accommodation unit. If this is a one bedroom self-contained fully accessible apartment unit, the kitchen/living space and wheelchair accessible WC/shower facility associated with this unit can offer a dual function as staff kitchenette/break space, if positioned appropriately in the building floor plan, and connected to staff management spaces.

Occupancy Duration

Permanent or long-term accommodation in DVRs or in their immediate vicinity on-site, and managed by the service provider is not advisable. Occupancy in a DVR is not considered to be a sustainable long-term housing solution, due to its function as emergency accommodation and the security function provided by the facility.

A large number of self-contained units in a DVR built environment is not considered to be appropriate. This is because it can create an institutional setting and can hinder occupants from connecting with the surrounding community and services. In order to avoid an over-concentration of occupancy for DV victims in any DVR at one location, a maximum of 12-16 self-contained emergency accommodation units is advisable.

The DVR is a permanent structure to address ongoing emergency accommodation and specialist support services for service users including their children.

In this context, new build accommodation units must be designed to address relevant parts of the following guidance documents, for **spatial area guidance within units and in the durability of key building elements:**

- DHLGH Design Manual for Quality Housing 2022
- DHLGH Design Standards for new Apartments 2022 in terms of space requirements for self-contained apartments/studios
- DHLGH Employers Requirements for Detail Design of Quality Housing 2020

Advised practice following DHLGH research, is **to provide individual self-contained units with controlled, secure and managed access into the development site.**

This design brief strategy (self-contained accommodation units) should recognise the need for privacy, autonomy, and dignity, and should support a sense of responsibility and associated healing. Self-contained units are advised alongside shared formal and informal communal spaces and spaces for support services.

Support spaces

These can include a communal living/kitchen space, shared garden and external and internal children's' play spaces, informal breakout spaces, counselling/meeting rooms, staff managed reception area and staff spaces, all within the secure and managed site.

To encourage a sense of security and support, visual connections are advised from the managed staff areas to the communal indoor and external spaces, and from within self-contained accommodation units (ideally through kitchen/ living space windows) to external play spaces and the communal garden / courtyard. The challenge in the design brief is to create a clear delineation between the public domain outside the DVR, with secured access, entrance and reception, the managed communal areas and the private zone of the self-contained unit, in a safe environment, while maintaining permeability to the surrounding existing community and built environment. Architectural design can reflect the need for progressive thresholds of security and privacy from the public frontage of the DVR at street level, through support and management spaces, to the self-contained accommodation unit.

Spatial room dimensions and areas of accommodation units should be within the standard guidelines noted. Indicative design brief building requirements based on feedback from Tusla to the DHLGH refer to the provision of two bedroom units (typically to accommodate one adult and four children), with 25% of the units in each DVR to have a flexible configuration to provide larger units for greater numbers of children. This can be provided by the provision in the design brief for 25% of the studio, one or two bedroom units to be interconnected to an adjacent unit, bringing the occupancy up to one adult and seven children if needed.

Advised practice is to provide individual self-contained units with controlled, secure and managed access into the development site.

Alternatively if all units are fixed in size, it is advisable that no greater than 25% of the units are three bedroom or larger. This is to optimise the development and maintain critical capacity in the DVR.

The use of bunk bed accommodation can optimise sleeping accommodation space for children. The provision of some one bedroom studio units (typically 37m²) can accommodate one adult with one-two children or one adult alone. One bedroom units (minimum 45-50m²) can accommodate one adult with up to four children. This Department would be supportive of the use of a combination of studio, one or two bedroom units, some of which can be enlarged by way of interconnection to an adjacent unit, in providing an optimised approach to crisis accommodation provision.

Bedroom Size

Post-occupancy feedback from a DVR funded by the DHLGH, also refers to the following advice in unit types: **one bedroom units to have a minimum 14-15m² floor area for the bedroom size,** to accommodate a parent with multiple children. This is based on the experience that when families are fleeing a crisis situation, young children will prefer to sleep in the same bedroom as the parent for a sense of safety.

This bedroom size can provide accommodation for a bed combined with single bunk beds, in one bedroom / studio self-contained units. Where two bedroom units are provided and where feasible, it is advisable that sliding or interconnecting doors can connect the adjacently positioned bedrooms, to provide an enlarged sleeping accommodation for a family, whilst increasing the sense of safety. It is important for the management of DVRs to ensure there is no potential of overcrowding in the type of units proposed, considering the anticipated needs. The Housing Act 1966 references a minimum floor area of 4.65m² per person (of ten years of age or older) to avoid overcrowding.

For new build projects/elements of a DVR, barrier free design principles are encouraged (as referred to in the Universal Design Guidelines by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design), and where required for minimum compliance with the building regulations.

The DVR should be designed to respond to diverse mobility needs for those in DSGBV crisis situations seeking emergency accommodation and support services in the long-term operational life cycle of the building.

The use of bunk bed accommodation can optimise sleeping accommodation space for children.

As also indicated in the Tusla indicative requirements report, consideration should be given to a minimum of one self-contained unit for wheelchair user occupancy (Universal Design standard). For a DVR with more than ten self-contained units, particularly in the case of a predominantly new-build facility, a second unit to Universal Design standards should be considered. The level of provision should be based on anticipated needs for the specific DVR, based on relevant experience in managing such facilities.

Should the refuge and accommodation be delivered through adaptation / extension of existing buildings, (and where minimum guided dimensions and areas in housing units cannot be met), a reasonable design approach to optimise the space available to address the critical anticipated needs would be satisfactory, while delivering value for money and in compliance with the applicable planning, building and building control regulations.

It is a matter for the service provider to propose the support spaces they need to deliver and manage their services adequately, based on ongoing, and anticipated need, operational support available from Tulsa/ DCEDIY/ other state agencies or non-government organisations, in the context of the intended occupancy capacity.

The proposal must also be supported in principle by the LA.

Design Brief Spaces

These are the key design considerations on the site location and space identified for the purpose of the refuge upon review of the above and other submissions to the DHLGH for funding, along with research carried out by the DHLGH on DVR case studies internationally:

4.1 *Site location and layout*

4.2 *Refuge entrance, management spaces and circulation*

4.3 *Support Services and Communal spaces*

4.4 *Accommodation Units*

4.5 *Internal support spaces for children*

4.6 *External space*

4.7 *Total Floor Areas*

Feedback from service providers with experience of operating such facilities, and Tusla, indicates that the typical design brief supports the principle of self-contained family units within a secured and managed setting, with shared communal and support services spaces, and staff spaces to manage the facility.

This may result in a gated or non-gated setting, dependent on the strategy of the service provider to manage the DVR, its location and surrounding environment.

4.1 Site Location & Layout

The proposed site location should be located within 1km of essential services or easily connected to those services by public transport connections. It is acknowledged that the sensitive nature of the refuge may require a discreetly located site for the privacy, and security of those seeking refuge at the emergency facility, or a central identifiable DVR in its surrounding environment, as appropriate, dependent on the service provider's assessment of the local needs and setting.

A balanced approach to the site selection is needed with regard to the scale of the facility and the need for proximity to particular facilities such as schools, healthcare centre, and community facilities such as sporting activities, libraries or easily connected to such amenities.

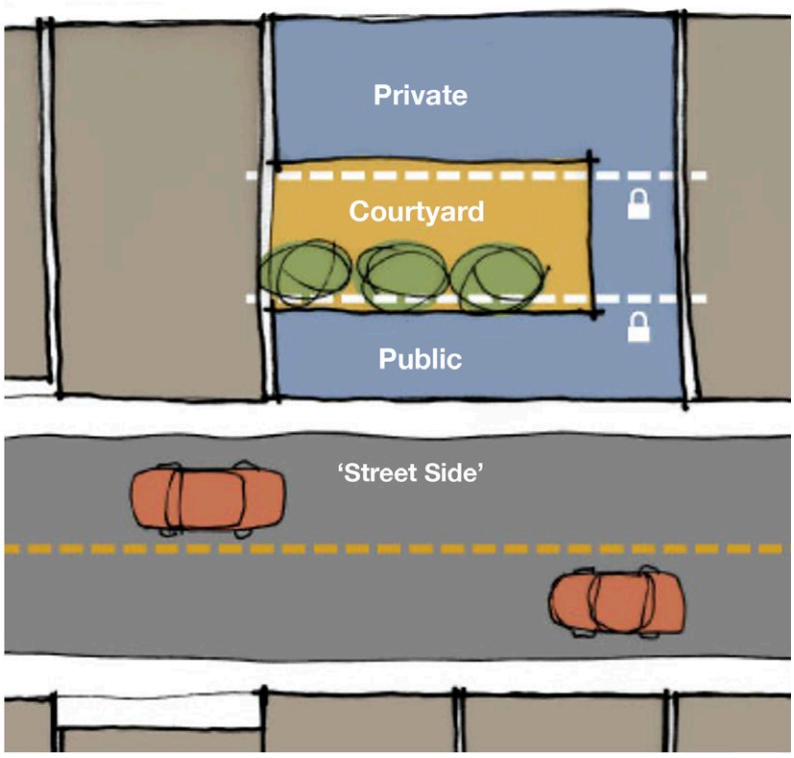
The DVR should be appropriate in scale to the surrounding built environment and not have an institutional appearance. It is primarily a collective home with on-site support services for short-term occupancy for those in DSGBV crisis at risk of homelessness.

Sites in or near urban centres in a mixed use environment can provide an element of anonymity for DVR occupants during a DV crisis more so than sites in established low density residential areas. However, every application needs to be assessed holistically on a case by case basis, with the availability for alternative sites in an area of need considered.

Sites proposed for emergency accommodation in remote or peripheral locations, being car dependent and more than 1km from local essential amenities/services are not recommended, notwithstanding the temporary nature of the occupancy proposed.

Remote locations can become an isolated campus or institutional setting, and are likely to need added amenities to be provided on site. This isolation does not encourage a progression to independent long-term housing solutions in more sustainable long-term housing locations once the initial crisis response and prevention support services have been provided. These peripheral locations also result in a disconnection from communities for children attending schools, or for adults to connect with work opportunities, community amenities and associated needed social support connections.

Diagram 1



The optimum site layout due to functional requirements is often the partially or fully enclosed courtyard site plan form. Such a layout can separate the secured entrance, reception, administrative and staffed/managed areas from communal spaces and from private self-contained units. This often results with the external play spaces/ communal garden centrally located and accessible from or visually connected to both individual units and the managed areas. External spaces consisting of any private/ communal external gardens/play spaces should not be exposed or visible from the public domain to ensure security and privacy is maintained.

Views of shared external amenity spaces, viewed from within the DVR secured areas only

If an enclosed or partially enclosed courtyard layout with central shared outdoor play and garden space is not feasible due to the site characteristics, the following principles provide guidance with regard to desired functional relationships:

- secured entrance area with access control, staff management and administration spaces located to the front of the site near the entrance addressing the public domain
- support services rooms, amenities and common internal and external areas located to address the shared external spaces where possible, not visible from the public domain
- self-contained accommodation units / private spaces located to the back of the site or on upper levels, removed from sight of the public domain at ground level

View of typical DVR secure site entrance.

4.2 Refuge entrance, management spaces and circulation

The secured DVR entrance and reception should be a single point entry into the building and is advised to be discrete in its location in the context of the surrounding built environment. A secured porch or double door entry lobby increases a sense of security.

The reception area (typically 20m²) should have passive surveillance of the access gate or entrance lobby with an area for seating and a wheelchair accessible WC.

View of typical DVR reception

Connected to this space are the staff management areas, and initial admissions assessment intake/ meeting room, management storage rooms. It is advisable that the intake room accommodates an area for small children to group/play while the initial assessment meeting is ongoing with the adult. Depending on the capacity and scale of the DVR this could double up as a Visitor's room (e.g. for visiting relatives) or separate to a Visitor's room, attached to the managed reception area.

On site management storage areas (approximately 30-40m² total, separate to individual storage in self-contained units) are advised for donated clothes, toys, buggies and food, in addition to building management, cleaning equipment, IT/ comms/ data storage rooms.

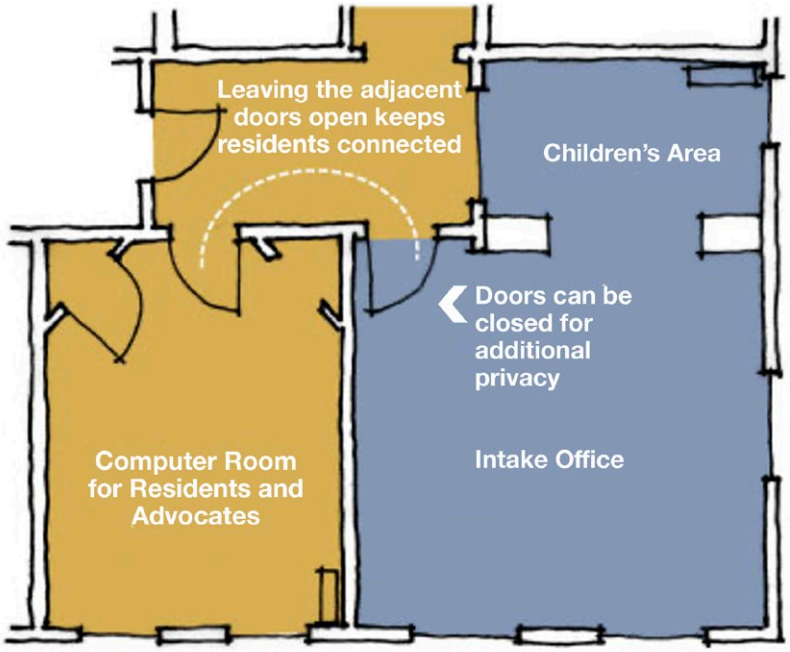
There needs to be a clear strategy for designated bin recycling and storage, considering the full capacity of the facility with staffed services and adequate access for their collection etc.

Excessive provision of internal circulation space is not advised. These areas can become difficult to manage and often result in an institutional atmosphere. However where circulation is needed, this space can be balanced with informal communal break-out spaces/ seated areas that can encourage social connection, particularly where overlooking a shared external garden, while ensuring compliance with Building Regulations in the provision of fire escape.

View above of secured entry and reception space

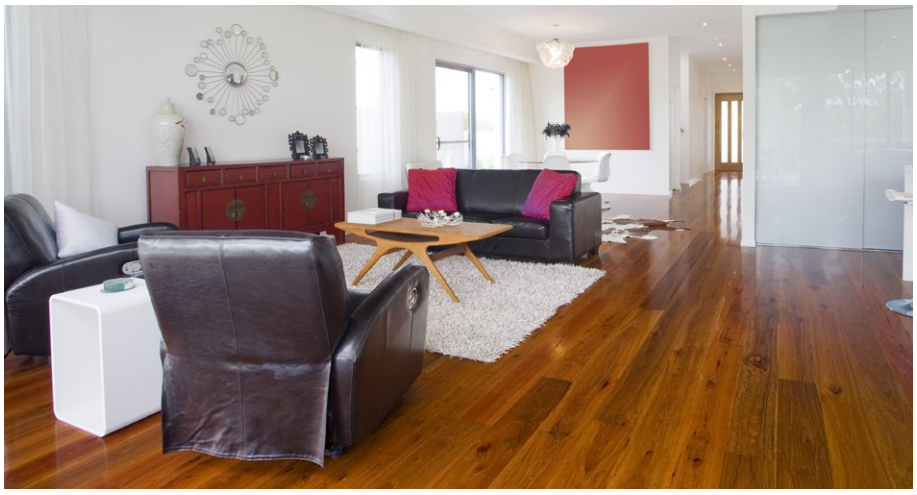
View above of children's play space area within a meeting consultation room

Diagram 2



It is advisable that the intake room accommodates an area for small children to group/ play while the initial assessment meeting is ongoing with the adult.

View of shared external space connected to internal communal spaces (children's play space)



View of typical DVR Living Space

View of typical DVR Communal Kitchen

4.3 Support Services and Communal Spaces

Admissions Assessment/Intake Meeting Room

For initial confidential assessment of DV victims, on first arrival at the DVR, this room should be located in the vicinity of the reception and planned to consider the occupancy of children during assessment. This room (approximately 12m²) can also have dual function as a visitor's room, or a counselling room accessible from the managed secure reception area.

Offices and Management Spaces

It is advisable that staff and management spaces are located together, connected to the front reception/secured entrance part of the building and so that overnight staff have passive surveillance to common areas, the reception and/ or entrance.

For a 12 x one or two bed unit DVR typically:

- Three/four 3m x 3m offices (three/four staff) or equivalent aggregated area (approximately 36m²) depending on anticipated staff occupancy and management strategy of services
- On-site overnight staff bedroom accommodation
- A designated staff wheelchair accessible WC shower room, kitchenette/break space. These staff spaces could be interconnected to the overnight staff self-contained bedroom accommodation to provide a more compact facility for efficient building management
- Where out-reach services are provided in the DVR, there may be a need for a dedicated staff helpline room
- A facility Manager's office (12m²) and /or CEO Manager's office (14m²- usable also as staff meeting room) can be considered, dependent on the scale and support functions of the DVR
- An emergency response room (with space for storage, pc desk, 10m²) can be considered if needed by the service provider.

Group Meeting / Counselling Rooms

To accommodate support services/interdisciplinary meetings. This functional space is common in funding applications for DVRs (minimum 24m²). This group meeting room can be multi-functional e.g. support/evening classes/training to accommodate up to eight persons.

This can be supplemented by up to two other counselling rooms (10m²) for 1:1 consultation such as psycho-educational work/legal aid, while providing views to the external/internal children's play areas and/or with designated play space for children's counselling within the room. These spaces should be connected to the reception or staff managed spaces, with views to shared communal external spaces (located centrally) where possible, while taking account of the privacy of residents.

Loneliness and social isolation can be experienced by DV victims, as can mental health issues as a result of the DV suffered. Providing spaces for managed support and informal communal spaces can create opportunities to connect with others in the refuge.

Diagram 3

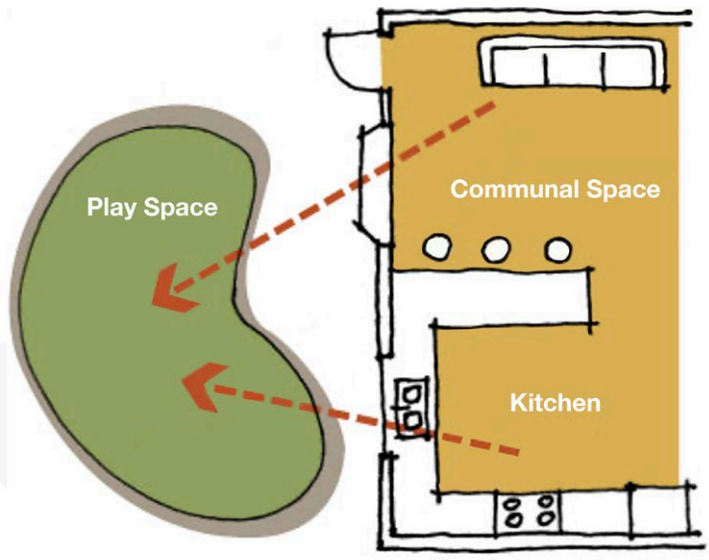
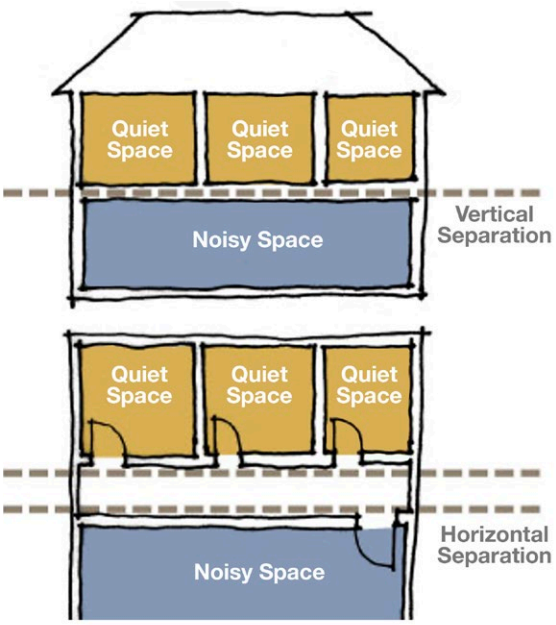


Diagram 4



Communal living spaces

These spaces can include:

- A Group kitchen/dining to facilitate events and informal supports/connections such as pre-school breakfast clubs with children, homework club, combined with or separate to;
- A Communal Living Space similar to the size of a large family home living space (approximately 40m² plus 10m² associated storage space)
- A proportionately sized freezer room/pantry storage room adjacent and connected to the communal kitchen is advisable. The group kitchen could, if needs be, interconnected to:
- An emergency overflow bedroom space (minimum 14-15m²), for accommodation service users if the DVR units are full, or for intake of victims during the night awaiting full assessment
- The Communal Living / Kitchen space should have easy access to wheelchair accessible WC/shower room, for use amongst the communal spaces
- A small quiet room/reflective space can be provided near the communal support and circulation spaces, but separate from staff offices
- A laundry space with the provision of minimum 2 washers and 2 dryers, adjacent to external drying space can be considered for communal use if needed

The communal living spaces can be multi-functional (e.g. informal group, group learning/ study or consultation spaces, shared by the occupants and managed by the service provider as needs arise).

The communal living space should open directly onto the outdoor play and external amenity spaces.

Daylight is of significant importance in all habitable spaces, along with surveillance onto the shared semi-private/ communal external spaces from communal/staffed areas.

Views of typical DVR Communal Living Space extending out to external communal space

4.4 Accommodation Units

Based on feedback from existing DVR operators, only 25-30% of the provision of self-contained units is advised for larger units, with the majority of units being one bedroom units (bedroom floor area space minimum 14-15m²).

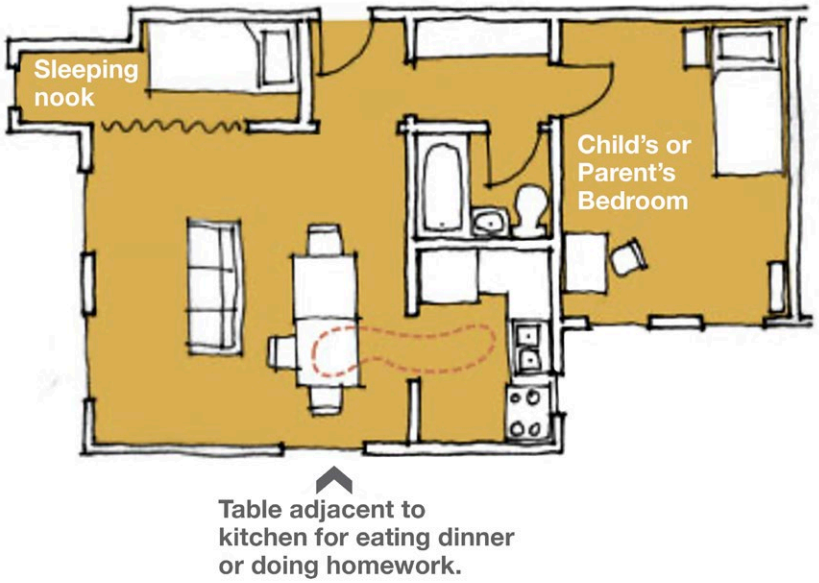
This can optimise the number of self-contained units available to address the number of families that can be temporarily accommodated. The 25-30% provision could also be reached with the provision of all 1 bedroom units, and 25-30% of those units being interconnected and expandable into the adjacent unit to accommodate larger families. This provision, allows the DVR to flex the accommodation to best meet the needs of those in crisis who present in need of emergency accommodation.

Units should be accessed only from the DVR secured and managed areas, or if this is not possible due to site characteristics and existing building constraints, through a controlled/gated site access. It is advisable that each unit entrance is not visible from public domain.

The following unit types are considered:

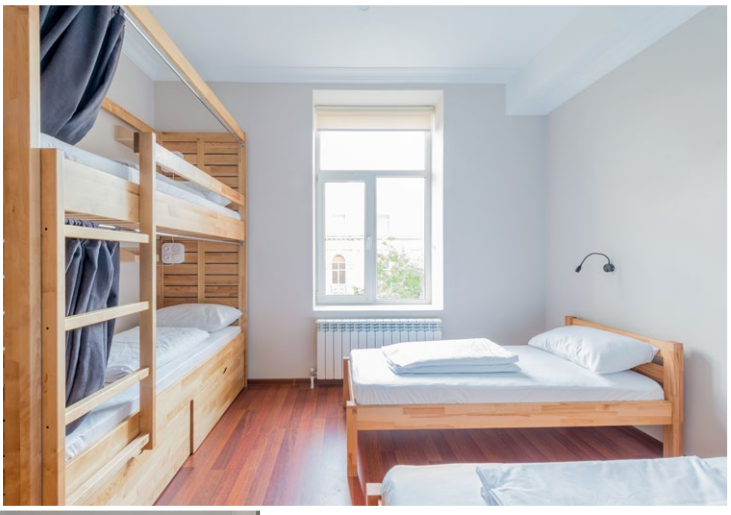
- One adult with up to two children/infants in self-contained studios (minimum of 37m²) or one bedroom units (minimum of 45-50m²) for one adult and up to four children/infants. The bedroom or sleeping area of the studio/ apartment should have a minimum of 14m²
- One adult, five - seven children/infants in two bedroom units (minimum of 73m²). Where feasible, the two separate bedrooms can be located adjacent to each other, with the additional option of sliding door connection to consolidate the sleeping areas as one large space. The main bedroom or sleeping area of the unit should have a minimum of 14m²
- Ideally 25-30% of the studio, 1 bedroom and/ or 2 bedroom units should be extendable to adjacent units, to optimise the emergency accommodation provision in each DVR and facilitate larger family groupings with minimum impact on the availability of emergency units. If all units are fixed (not extendable), it is advised that no more than 25% of units are large (three or more bedrooms)
- Intake/overflow sleeping accommodation of one bedroom (minimum 14m²) with nearby access to wheelchair accessible WC with shower, or with en-suite facility. This accommodation is for intake during the night, when full staff services may not be in operation for assessment, to provide temporary crisis accommodation, or as an overflow capacity if the DVR residential units are full. This space can be near/connected to the Communal Living Space for easy access to kitchen facility, and can have a dual function in the design brief support spaces/communal spaces (refer to 4.3). Alternatively it could incorporate a small kitchenette within the space. This space can be included only where the service provider considers it a need at the DVR site location.
- Minimum 1 wheelchair accessible one bedroom unit per DVR. This could be interconnected to an adjacent unit, allowing for the occupation of diverse family sizes and needs

Diagram 5



It is advisable that self-contained units be sized and appropriately dimensioned to accommodate the use of a temporary pull-out bed from the sofa in the living room space and/or a niche area where a temporary bed can be added, giving the flexibility for an additional child space occupancy, particularly for one bedroom units proposed (minimum of 45-50m² total floor area)

Kitchenette / kitchen area and bathroom with space for the use of a bath is important for family units. Spatial examples in images below are of optimised occupancy short term emergency accommodation for children/infants with adult in one/two bedroom accommodation units, with the use of bunk beds and adequate circulation.



Views of typical DVR unit bedroom, bathroom, living space

4.5 Internal Support Spaces for Children

There is a need for separate indoor areas for younger children (play spaces), older children and teenagers (homework club/TV/social activities amongst peers).

Although the designated communal children's play rooms/spaces in a DVR are not considered part of a childcare facility, their anticipated use is similar, but with supervision by the adult guardian. If a DVR has a dedicated childcare service, this would then need to be designed to comply with the requirements of Tusla and the relevant childcare regulations.

The following guidance is for space provision where there is no childcare service on site, and occupation is supervised by the respective adult guardian/ parent.

Guidance on minimum spatial requirements can be drawn from the *National Standards for Pre-School Services (HSE) and Childcare Facilities – Planning Guidelines (DHLGH).* These apply primarily to full day care services although it is noted in the guidelines that much of the content can apply to other service types. This general guidance refers to the need for up to 3.7m² clear indoor play space per child of 0-6 years old and a minimum children's space of 2m² per child for all ages (this could include teenage den or spaces for older children 7-12yrs). In the Planning Guidelines, the children's indoor space provision relates to: Full day care, Sessional, Drop In, and After School Care and would be relevant for the proposed use of children's spaces in DVRs. The above areas are free floor space required, exclusive of related recommended spaces for dedicated childcare services such as children's WC washroom and a small 1:1 room/space for 1:1 engagement with young adults/ older children.

In summary for indoor child support spaces, a DVR would be expected to have:

- children's play space (0-5yrs) with a separate area for older children (6yrs+) with floor area based on anticipated occupancy following guidelines above
- Teenagers social/break out space (approximately 30-40m² per DVR of ten units or more)
- Children's accessible WC and washroom (to accommodate the needs of wheelchair user)
- 1:1 consultation room (typically 10m²)
- Sensory room/therapy room /quiet room space (typically 9-12m²)

Indoor and external designated children's' spaces are best connected to the principle DVR building, with surveillance of these areas from the staffed areas and/or shared communal spaces.

Views of DVR typical children's play space with integrated storage

View of DVR typical children's' play space extending onto external communal amenity space

4.6 External Space

For a DVR providing emergency accommodation, shared external space is essential to support social interaction and in particular children, through external play space.

A safe and secure external garden and designated play space are key elements, with passive surveillance from the staffed areas, and indoor communal spaces to indoor and external play spaces, behind the principal building façade/ boundary line (i.e. external spaces not visible from the public domain). They are often the central focus spaces of the DVR and can be related to ongoing support services and classes (e.g. gardening plots).

The courtyard site layout strategy optimises the function of passive surveillance to a shared outdoor play spaces in the courtyard.

The courtyard layout also brings essential natural daylight into more plan spaces.

Careful design can ensure visual connections to outdoor communal amenity spaces from both the indoor managed communal/ shared spaces, and from the individual self-contained units. Where possible, the potential to connect indoor children's spaces directly to the outdoor play spaces should be facilitated. A minimum of 9m² external open space per child is advisable.

4.7 Total Floor Areas

Based on recent proposals for DVRs, feasibility studies carried out by architects engaged by AHBs, and a review of some international case studies, indicative areas for a new purpose - built DVR facility on a relatively unrestricted site will comprise approximately 1300m² - 1463m² total floor area for the following, including all staff management, accommodation, common and support spaces:

- 8 x two bedroom self-contained units (occupancy of one adult and up to five children/infants each)
- 12 x mix of two bedroom/one bedroom/studio units of mixed occupancy type

However, DVRs often involve the adaptation/ extension and refurbishment of existing buildings, including Protected Structures, and so the total floor area and budget needs to account for existing building conditions or site constraints. Communal, management and non-residential DVR services spaces amount to approximately 40%-50% of the total floor area of DVRs, based on the case studies viewed and the projects that have been funded to date by the DHLGH.

5 Capital Works Management Framework

As with all publicly funded capital works, it is essential that the achievement of best possible value for money is considered at all stages of the project delivery process. To this end, the works (and associated consultancy services) must be developed in accordance with the Capital Works Management Framework (refer to www.constructionprocurement.gov.ie).

6 Departmental Funding Approval Process

- The **Four Stage Approval Process** for the funding by the DHLGH of DVRs must be followed by each proposal submitted to the Local Authority, for stage approval at each project development milestone. Guidance on this is found in Appendix 8.2
- Proposals for DVRs should only be progressed where Tusla has agreed to the prioritisation of the proposal (location and capacity specific) and have confirmed funding availability for support services. Verification of this should be included in the Capital Appraisal document by the Local Authority supporting the funding application (at Stage 1)
- The purpose of the DVR is to provide emergency, short-term and specialist support services needs to assist those victims of DSGBV at risk of homelessness. The DVR is a permanent structure, with transient occupancy to address ongoing short-term needs. The DVR needs to be designed and built as a permanent facility, fit for purpose to deliver quality refuge space in the built environment on an ongoing basis.
- The design should comply, in principle, with relevant parts of the following publications (including minimum durability and internal spatial requirements):
  1. DHLGH Design Manual for Quality Housing 2022
  2. DHLGH Design Standards for new Apartments 2022
  3. DHLGH Employers Requirements for Detail Design of Quality Housing 2020
  4. The applicable Planning, Building Control and Building Regulations
  5. EC (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations

  and with these DHLGH Domestic Violence Refuge – Project Brief Design Guidelines (2024).

7 Conclusion

Given the nature and vulnerability of the DVR occupants needing specialist support services and security with accommodation, standard SH housing (temporary/emergency or permanent) may not be suitable in the first instance for emergency crisis accommodation for victims of DSGBV, hence the need for purpose-built DVRs.

This guide is intended to support in the proposal and assessment of DVR capital works projects submitted for funding from this Department. The Safe Ireland Safe Place Design Guidance 2022 may also be of assistance, particularly for detail design matters, as the principles of that guidance are supported by the DHLGH and considered in this DHLGH Project Brief Design Guidance for the funding of DVRs.

Pre-Stage funding application consultation with the DHLGH is encouraged to ensure each project is considered on a case by case and site specific basis, and to ensure efficient stage approval.

8 Appendices

8.1 Referenced Consultations, Publications and Images:

- SAFE Ireland Safe Spaces Project – Safe Place, published by Safe Ireland 2022

  https://www.safeireland.ie/policy-publications/
- Review of the Provision of Accommodation for Victims of Domestic Violence by Tusla, published February 2022
- Inter-departmental information share on indicative requirements for buildings in which to provide DVR and Associated Support Spaces, from Tusla to DHLGH, May 2022
- SAFE Ireland Report 2016 – outlines the context of the need for DV refuges
- Department of Housing Rebuilding Ireland 2017 Policy and Procedural Guidance for Housing Authorities in relation to Assisting Victims of Domestic Violence with Emergency and Long-term Accommodation Needs
- HSE/Housing Agency publication to promote independent living and mental health recovery; Design for Mental Health 2019
- Shelter Design Guidelines, British Columbia Housing (Canada), 2017
- Building Dignity Organisation– Design Strategies for Domestic Violence Shelter (US) – DHLGH acknowledges their permission to use some of their resource images in this document (pgs. 10, 12, 14-16, 19)
- University of Technology Sydney – Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion: Design Guide for Refuge accommodation for Women and Children, March 2020
- Architect's Journal (UK) – 2018 – Building Study of DVR designed by Amos Goldreich Architecture with Jacobs Yaniv Architects, and photograph by Amit Geron (pg. 11)
- Post operative feedback from Cope (AHB), Galway City DVR, designed by Simon J Kelly Architects
- Post operative feedback from Aoibhneas (AHB), Dublin
- Kevin Gilmore, Photographer, (images on inside cover, pgs. 11, 13, 17, 19)

8.2 The Four Stage Departmental Funding Approval Process for Domestic Violence Refuges (DVRs)

Guidelines to Local Authorities on Submissions for Stage Funding Approvals

These guidelines set out the documentation to be submitted by the LA at each of the four Approval Stages for a capital-funded DVR construction project. It also sets out the particular criteria the DHLGH will evaluate at each Stage, to ensure design quality, value for money and the delivery of sustainable communities.
The four approval stages reflect the mandatory capital funding approval stages for government funded capital works projects and the Project Review Stages as set out in the CWMF, as required in the Public Spending Code. Further guidance on compliance with the CWMF required is published by the Office of Government Procurement at: https://constructionprocurement.gov.ie/

This checklist can be used by LAs, to ensure all necessary information is submitted at each Stage. Stage submissions must be accompanied by the relevant DHLGH funding stream application forms.

Pre -Stage 1: Preliminary Discussion – Informally explore site suitability, potential issues and strategies.

Stage 1

Capital Appraisal & Project Review 1

1.1 **Identify the DVR Need –** The Local Authority referral to the 3rd NDSGBVS 2022 identified priority site locations, and Tusla support for the proposed DVR

1.2 **Recommendation** as to the best way to meet identified need

1.3 **Project Brief - Number & Type of Dwellings** – e.g. 10 no. 1 bedroom units and all associated DVR support and management spaces with any Special Needs identified, site area

1.4 **Sustainable Community Proofing** Site location drawing showing adjacent or nearby community facilities, amenities and public transport connections within 1 km

1.5 **Site Constraints & Site Abnormalities** - Any reasons additional costs may be admissible and therefore, whether the site is suitable

1.6 **Programme** – Timelines for main milestones, including Planning approval, tendering, start on site and estimated completion

1.7 **Project Management & Delivery** –Works related consultancy services to be engaged, Public Works Contract Delivery Strategy

1.8 **Cost Details – Completed Form for Stage 1 CWMF PR1 -** Using estimated costs (or actual costs if known) for the works, project management and design team fees, site acquisition and other associated costs.

Pre-Stage 2: Informal Consultation – with DHLGH Technical Advisors to confirm general consistency with these guidelines

Stage 2

Pre-Statutory Planning Approval - Project Review 4

2.1 **Confirmation of Procurement of Consultants** – Tender reports to show compliance with National or EU requirements

2.2 **Scheme Design Drawings** – Plans, sections, elevations to demonstrate general consistency with DHLGH Design Brief Guidelines

2.3 **Technical Report** – Respond to any Stage 1 Conditions, Design Brief Report including floor area schedule and reference to Pre-Planning consultations with the LA, reference to extent of site surveys, ground conditions investigations completed to inform the proposal and feasibility of connections to services capacity established (Uisce Éireann, Gas, Electricity, Broadband, LA drainage infrastructure etc.)

2.4 **Cost Plan – Stage 2 Completed form CWMF PR4** – Updated all-in budget details, Cost Plan in support of works budget; Explanations for any increase over Stage 1 and proposals for reductions

Stage 3

Pre-Tender, Post-Statutory Planning Approval – Project Review 6

3.1 **Updated Drawings** - Only required if changes to design since Stage 2 was approved

3.2 **Technical Report** - Respond to any Stage 2 conditions, any changes caused by planning or third party bodies, details of procurement strategy for the tender process

3.3 **Cost Details** – Stage 3 Completed Form CWMF PR6 (Pre-Tender Estimate) – Explanations for any increase and proposals for reductions

Stage 4

Tender Approval – Project Review 7

4.1 **Tender Report** - Schedule of tenders received, procurement process details, details of evaluation and assessment of tenders and a clear recommendation by the AHB, endorsed by the Local Authority

4.2 **Budget Report** - Respond to any Stage 3 conditions, tender process and costs compared to Stage 3 approval

4.3 **Detailed Cost Plan – Stage 4 - CWMF PR7 Form**– Explanations for any increase and Proposals for reductions

4.4 **Programme** - Planned completion date

Notes

Notes

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland