

**Allocations and Lettings Policy and Procedure**

<b>How are our values demonstrated/supported through this policy?</b>	We do what's right – we have transparent selection and allocation processes that ensure no young people are unfairly excluded from accessing our services.
	We work with heart – we ensure that we offer supported housing to people who need our services and take an assets balanced approach, balancing the risk with the need.
	We build real connection – we set out clearly what is on offer and provide opportunities for people to become the best version of themselves and acquire the confidence and the skills they need to live independently.
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Head of Operations East Sussex
<b>Equity, Diversity &amp; Inclusion implications of this policy</b>	Supported housing residents have a range of needs, requirements, vulnerabilities, and aspirations; by having in place transparent selection criteria and clear processes we aim to ensure that no one who requires our service is excluded and that we are able to provide services to some of the most vulnerable and hard to reach people in our communities.
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Head of Operations East Sussex
<b>Version Control Review information</b>	Version number: 07  <b>First published:</b> August 2014 <b>Reviewed:</b> August 2016, May 2018, July 2021, Feb-March 2024; Jan 2025 <b>Next Review Date:</b> Jan 2028

**Version Control**

Version #	Date of review	Reviewer	Summary of changes
06	27/01/25	Kirsten McCarthy	3.0 Responsibilities – Deletion of wording for Housing and Communities (HACs). Change of title for managers. 5.0 – Eligibility Criteria – deletion of (up to 35 in some projects) Addition of new link to Housing Risks Threshold document 6.0 Accepting Referrals and Interview process – new paragraph 7.0 – 11.0 – Paragraph renumbering; wording changed

**1.0 Introduction**

YMCA DownsLink Group (YMCA DLG) recognises its responsibilities and housing duties as a responsible provider of social housing. We are committed to providing good quality and affordable homes, where



children and young people are welcomed, supported, and inspired. All properties are maintained to the organisation's Letting Standard which sets out the condition a property must be in before it is allocated.

YMCA DLG endeavours to allocate its housing to applicants in a fair, consistent, and transparent way. Our processes are easy to follow and ensure that reasonable priority is given to applicants in greatest housing need, and who match YMCA DLG's assessment criteria, taking into full consideration the aspirations of the people and communities we serve.

We demonstrate our commitment to diversity and inclusion by fully considering the requirements of vulnerable young people and promoting equal opportunities in the selection of applicants.

## **2.0 Scope**

This policy applies to rented housing stock that YMCA DLG either manages for other Registered Social Landlords, leases, or owns. Our core business is the provision of supported housing to children and young people. However, we do provide housing to other client groups, as described in section 8.0; separate policies are in place or being developed for each of these and therefore Y Lettings are outside the scope of this policy.

## **3.0 Responsibilities**

Housing and Community Services operational teams will be responsible for the adoption of, and adherence to, this policy and for the effective management of YMCA DLG's housing stock. The heads of service will work closely with local Supported Housing managers, and safeguarding, to ensure the requirements of the policy are met.

## **4.0 Void Management**

We recognise the high demand for supported housing in the communities in which we work and make best use of stock by minimising void turnaround time and maximising availability for occupation. See the Void Policy and Procedure.

## **5.0 Eligibility Criteria**

In supported housing, the majority of our services are commissioned by local authorities and eligibility criteria will generally be based on the agreed service specification.

However, for both commissioned and non-commissioned supported housing all referrals should fall into the criteria set out below. Applicants should:

- be in the age range of 16 to 25
- have a local connection (though there may be a level of flexibility in certain circumstances e.g. young people leaving care or fleeing violence)
- be capable of basic self-care e.g. personal hygiene, keeping safe, laundry, shopping for and preparation of meals, etc
- be able to self-medicate where in receipt of prescribed medication.
- be in need of some element of support (whether it be low, medium or high)

Service thresholds are summarised here: [Housing Risk Thresholds](#)

We will always consider applicants in the context of the current needs and risks associated with established occupants and the wider community. We aim to encourage a supportive and balanced community within our accommodation in which the rights and needs of different individuals, as well as those in the wider community, are respected and everyone is kept safe. To meet this aim, we have transparent selection criteria, and applicants may be refused accommodation if they fall into one or more of the following categories:

- is identified as presenting a significant and/or unmanageable risk to self or others which exceeds the remit of the service

- is identified as presenting a significant and/or unmanageable risk to self or others when the existing level of risk currently held within a project is considered
- has alcohol dependency or substance misuse issues which impact on their ability to maintain adequate self-care
- has a history of fire setting and/or a conviction for arson: each case will be reviewed in context including what happened, the timeframe in which it took place, situation, place, were they alone, was there an intention to cause harm, including risk to property insurance. A conviction for Arson will not normally be accepted.
- has a diagnosed mental health issue which means their needs exceed the remit of the service and/or they are unwilling to engage with mental health services
- the level of need does not match the project design (eg. staffing and other resources)
- has recently been asked to leave from a YMCA DLG property (within the last six months); each case will be considered in context e.g., what led to their move on, whether there is an ongoing criminal investigation, were other residents harmed, etc?
- applicants on notice to leave another supported housing provider
- are unable or unwilling to meet their responsibilities in the license/tenancy agreement and comply with project expectations
- have any police involvement relating to, and/or convictions of, inappropriate sexual conduct with minors
- are unable or unwilling to accept support and/or participate in ~~group~~ group keywork/activities

However, we do not have blanket exclusions, and all referrals will be considered on a case by case basis. If the referral agrees, staff may contact any professional or voluntary workers from health or social services with whom the referral has been, or is, involved, to ensure they obtain additional information. If there are risks identified with a referral and the applicant refuses permission to contact partner agencies, this may result in our refusal to consider the referral on the basis that the level of risk is unquantifiable.

## 6.0 Accepting referrals and the interview process

As a landlord we have the final say and have to look at the community dynamics and property as a whole when accepting, deferring or declining a referral.

Referrals will be accepted, deferred or declined as per the Housing Interview protocol [HACS Interview Protocol Jan 23.pdf](#)

If an enquiry is made in person by an applicant at one of the services, staff will refer the person back to the local authority or referring agency and support the person to seek appropriate facilities for the interim period. If in any doubt, further advice must be sought from a director.

## 7.0 Accessible Communication

Residents should be given every assistance to move in and settle positively into their YMCA DLG homes; we will consider people with additional needs, for example those with literacy problems or who are either blind or partially sighted in accordance with our Accessible Communication policy.

To progress a referral, staff may use the following methods:

- The staff member who receives the referral form should ensure that they identify referrals with additional needs from the referral form and progressed in line with commissioned/local contracts and key performance indicators.
- Staff should consider their needs at interview, or before if necessary, and discuss with them their preferred methods of communication.
- Staff should seek to establish what the support needs are and identify ways of enabling the residents to participate fully at YMCA DLG. Examples of meeting particular needs include providing information in large print, braille or through a sign language interpreter.
- Where English is not the referral's first language, we will make arrangements for an interpreter; we have a subscription with Language Line and staff can find instructions on how to access the service [here](#).

## 8.0 Partnership Working

We work in partnership with local authorities and other housing and support providers strategically and operationally, to prevent homelessness, promote social inclusion and build sustainable and balanced communities of mixed tenure and income.

We will assist local authorities in fulfilling their duties towards homeless young people. Nomination rights vary across local authorities and projects but for the majority of our housing projects, referral arrangements and needs levels are set out in service specifications and contracts.

We will adhere to information sharing protocols as defined by commissioners and the local authorities

Wherever possible we will agree a time limit for district and borough housing partners to make an appropriate referral; generally, this will be five working days. Following this we will agree that we will consider referrals from other areas with the understanding that the referring partner will retain the referral on their housing register.

## **9.0 Other Accommodation**

### **9.1 General Needs Accommodation**

YMCA DLG uses some of its housing stock to house general needs tenants on Assured Shorthold Tenancies (AST). Such tenants are expected to be able to sustain their tenancy without support from YMCA DLG.

Applicants for general needs housing may not come with a needs assessment or risk assessment and may not require a full interview.

### **9.2 Non-commissioned supported housing**

In most localities YMCA DLG provides some housing which is not commissioned by local authorities; this housing, which may be shared or self-contained, provides a move-on pathway to fully independent living with a level of tenancy sustainment support and enhanced housing management.

Referrals may come from local authorities or from existing YMCA DLG supported housing projects; we can also accept self-referrals in some localities. For this sort of housing staff should follow the process outlined above in sections 8 and 9.

## **10.0 Quality and Performance**

YMCA DLG reports voids and lettings to the Regulator of Social Housing via the annual NRoSH return and internally to our Board of Trustees. Our impact measures (KPIs) are reported quarterly to the Board, and to managers; we report on performance annually to residents across our projects. We are compliant with regulatory standards relating to allocation and lettings by a Registered Provider.

For transparency, and in line with regulatory requirements certain types of lettings for social housing are recorded using the Continuous Recording of Lettings System (CORE). YMCA DLG completes CORE logs fully and accurately and ensures they are submitted to comply with regulations for performance monitoring.

## **11.0 YMCA DLG related policies and procedures**

- Void Management policy and procedure
- Equity Diversity and Inclusion policy
- Neighbourhood and Community policy
- Rent Arrears Procedure – former and current
- Information Sharing policy
- Safeguarding Children policy
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk policy
- Accessible Communication policy

## **Appendix 1 Procedure**

### **1.0 Selection Procedure**

In each locality the Head of Operations must agree a standard referral form with the local authority which includes information that is needed to make a decision about eligibility and suitability; this must include a basic risk assessment and up to date information on needs, risks and aspirations. See Assessment, Support Planning and Review Policy and Procedure for more detail on the interview and assessment process:

[Assessment, Support planning and Review](#)

Note: a separate process is in place for emergency/temporary access beds where this information is either likely to come later or be completed by YMCA DLG once the referral has been housed.

Upon receipt of the referral, the staff member should determine eligibility for the service using the criteria above in section 5 and the criteria agreed with commissioners and detailed in the service specification; assuming the referral is eligible they should arrange a face-to-face meeting with the referral, preferably at the project they have been referred for.

Two staff members should interview applicants using the standard interview and assessment form. The purpose of the interview is to confirm eligibility criteria, and to review the referral's presenting risks and needs, and discuss their aspirations and ambitions, in order to ensure that the project for which they have been referred is suitable and appropriate.

The applicant may be accompanied by a support worker or other suitable person.

Supported housing is a scarce resource and we therefore aim to ensure that it is used effectively: staff should explain what's on offer and the services that YMCA DLG offer.

Following the selection interview the staff member should complete a synopsis of the interview and applicant; inform the referral and the referring agency whether we can offer housing to the referral, when this is available and the details of the accommodation. This should be done both verbally and in writing as soon as possible after the interview. We aim to give a written decision within 2 working days. It is sometimes necessary to obtain additional information from a referee or support worker before a final decision can be made; when this is the case staff should make the referral aware of this.

For referrals deemed 'high risk' i.e.. they represent risks over and above what the service is established to manage, staff should obtain the agreement of the Head of Service before a service is offered; they or the Project Manager may seek advice from others as to the level of risk and need and appropriate mitigations.

When we decide not to accept a referral staff must provide the reasons for this decision in writing within two days of the interview to both the referral and the referrer; staff should provide information on how to appeal (see below). Where the service is commissioned, the service specification may require us to inform the commissioner and / or the local authority of any refusals and the reasons for the decision.

Staff should record the decision and the reasons for it on the client database In-Form and SharePoint (referral spreadsheet) and offer the referral information on alternative sources of advice and help within the local area.

False statements made by applicants in their application may disqualify them from subsequent housing, either before or after they obtain possession of the unit.

### **2.0 Allocation**

Any suitable applicant who meets the selection criteria will be offered accommodation or placed on a waiting list. Where an offer is made but refused by the applicant, the staff member will ask the applicant to give their reasons, and these will be recorded on the database. An applicant who is subsequently re-referred will be required to undergo a full interview and reassessment.

In shared accommodation staff should consider the rest of the household in relation to the referral. There may be a risk in placing an applicant with another specific person in which case the applicant will remain on the waiting list. The level of risk that a referral represents will be considered in relation to the level of overall risk held in a project or household so that a risk that precludes a referral from being accepted may not be considered too high a risk if overall risk reduces; conversely, sometimes a referral with a high level of risk will be accepted when previous referrals with the same type or level of risk have been refused.

Special consideration will need to be given to social, cultural, or individual factors which may affect their suitability or their ability to sustain their tenure; these may include recourse to public funds, religious requirements, factors associated with shared living, and specific adjustments that are required to accommodate physical disabilities or learning difficulties.

If a unit of accommodation has special features e.g., it has been adapted for someone with physical disabilities, then we will seek in the first instance to match a referral to the accommodation but may let it to someone with no requirement for specific adjustments if no referral has been received within a reasonable time frame of someone requiring specialist accommodation.

When they make an offer, staff should ask the referral to indicate whether they are accepting the offer within two days and agree a provisional moving in date.

### **3.0 Appeals**

Appeals on allocation decisions should be made to the relevant YMCA DLG Head of Service ~~Locality~~; they will review the decision referring to the referral paperwork, our policy and procedure, nomination rights, and local protocols for allocations and lettings. A decision on the appeal will be made within 10 working days.

### **4.0 Letting**

The applicant will be required to sign an occupancy agreement, which is usually an excluded licence agreement or Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST). Before being given keys and being able to occupy their accommodation, they must also complete a housing benefit form (where applicable) and agree a Rent Payment Plan and provide evidence that they have done so.

A staff member, along with the applicant, will complete an inventory of furniture and a Lettings Standard form. They will discuss information sharing with them and invite them to sign the information sharing form. The applicant will be asked to provide equalities data and next of kin details. A photo of the applicant will be taken to be added to YMCA DLG's database.