

The YMCA logo is rendered in a bold, blocky, grey font. The letters are slightly shadowed, giving it a three-dimensional appearance. It is positioned at the top center of the page, set against a background of overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in various colors including pink, yellow, light blue, and purple.

YMCA

**REFERRALS, ASSESSMENTS &
ALLOCATIONS POLICY &
PROCEDURE**

**Effective from:
24 February 2023**



REFERRALS, ASSESSMENTS & ALLOCATIONS POLICY & PROCEDURE

APPLICATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document covers the process of receiving, assessing and interviewing referrals for void properties, and explains how all service delivery staff and managers across our sites should make decisions about referrals and inform the relevant parties of the outcome.

This document does not cover how to report voids or maintain void standards. See the Void Management Policy & Procedures for more information.

This Policy applies to all legal entities within the Group.

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 The Charity is committed to ensuring that all referrals are processed fairly and with compassion. To achieve this, this document outlines a clear, structured and transparent assessment process and aims to safeguard that anyone coming into contact with the Charity experiences it as a positive, professional experience.
- 1.2 The Charity will be open, transparent, fair, consistent, efficient and flexible in allocating accommodation.
- 1.3 Applicants are offered accommodation suitable to their needs.
- 1.4 Staff across all sites are responsive to individual circumstances and are non-discriminatory in the allocation of accommodation.

2. Equality Impact Assessment

- 2.1 The Charity is committed to treating everyone fairly, and recognises the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, the Charity will act sensitively towards the diverse needs of individuals in order to ensure that all void referrals are assessed and processed in a structured and fair way.
- 2.2 The Charity also aims to ensure that service delivery staff and managers across our sites do not discriminate against residents or make decisions based on value based judgements and follow the same procedure and timings in relation to processing referrals; additionally that they are not making value based judgements while following the process.
- 2.3 Any reasonable adjustments that need to be made to support the applicant to attend an interview will be made with support from the referral agency or any other suitable representative, particularly where English is not their first language or in our supported living schemes.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 **The Charity:** YMCA St. Paul's Group and all legal entities within the Group.
- 3.2 **Applicant:** a person seeking accommodation with the Charity.

4. Assessing and Placing Referrals

- 4.1 Known housing voids should be reported to the relevant referral or intake team.
- 4.2 Anyone who has been referred to the Charity for accommodation should be added to the system (Inform) as soon as the referral is received. This helps to:
 - ▶ Avoid duplication in instances where applicants are being referred to more than one YMCA St Paul's Group (YMCA SPG) service;
 - ▶ Highlight when an applicant referred has previously been a customer of the Charity. In these cases, information on the system will help to build a picture of the applicant and their risks/ needs or help to make a decision about their suitability for the service. This information should be used to inform the assessment process and should not alone be used to determine suitability.
- 4.3 When a referral is received an initial assessment of the applicant's application form (s) to assess suitability should be completed by the relevant service delivery staff or manager. Any missing information required to complete the application form should be requested from the referring party. The information obtained from the application form will be used as part of the interview conversation with the applicant where they will be given the opportunity to explain or elaborate on anything that has been identified.
- 4.4 Once all the information required from the referral has been received, the relevant service delivery staff member or manager will contact the applicant to arrange an interview. For supported living schemes, the support provider would be invited along to the interview.
- 4.5 The interview stage may be the applicant's first interaction with the Charity and therefore it is important they are treated with kindness, compassion and respect to ensure they feel welcome.
- 4.6 The interview is an opportunity for the Charity to learn about what the applicant wants, their risks and needs, but also for the applicant to decide whether they want to accept an offer of accommodation. Therefore, it is important for all applicants to be given both the information they need, and the opportunity to discuss risk, needs and aspirations in a supportive and non-judgemental way. For further information regarding conducting interviews and how to ensure all applicants are treated with respect, please see sections 5 and 9.
- 4.7 If the applicant is considered a suitable candidate, following the interview, a recommendation should be made to the relevant manager. This recommendation should be justified and based upon the information obtained from the referral, application form and interview.
- 4.8 The manager then will approve / reject the referral based on the recommendation and supporting evidence. The applicant and referral agents should be informed of the outcome of the interview as soon as possible.
- 4.9 In instances where the applicant is rejected, they must be notified in writing, outlining the reasons for the decision. They should also be given information on how to appeal the decision (see section 7 for the appeals process). All letters refusing accommodation should be approved by a member of the local management team. The applicant's record on our system should then be updated to reflect the new status of 'refused'.

4.10 In instances where the applicant is accepted, they should be notified and placed on the waiting list. If a room is already available then the applicant should be provided with a proposed move in date. The applicants on our system should then be updated to reflect the new status of 'active'.

5. Conducting Interviews

5.1 After an applicant's referral and corresponding application form has been reviewed, they will, if suitable, be invited for an interview.

5.2 During the interview the conducting service delivery staff member or manager will use the 'Initial Risk Assessment' form on Inform. The interview will be used to:

- ▶ Determine whether the applicant meets the eligibility criteria for the individual service.
- ▶ Assess the extent of housing need and the likely degree of support required by the applicant if accommodated.
- ▶ Enable the applicant to find out about the accommodation, facilities and support (where applicable) offered.
- ▶ Record information about the applicant so that the organisation and the referral agency can monitor the implementation of its equality and diversity policy and non-discriminatory customer selection.
- ▶ Record relevant information about the applicant's support needs and aspirations so that staff can begin to prepare a support and action plan or in the case of our supported living schemes, ensure they have a suitable support provider in place.

6. Reaching a Decision

6.1 Decisions whether to accept an applicant should be based on:

- ▶ whether they meet the criteria set out within the relevant service contract for that project
- ▶ whether the level of need is consistent with the capabilities of the service.
- ▶ risk factors, including recourse to public funds.

5.1 Priority for allocation should normally be based on the amount of time someone has been on the waiting list. However, priority should be given to any prospective residents presenting with a level of need that places them in a situation of extreme vulnerability, provided the service is able to meet those needs.

7. Appeals

7.1 Applicants who have been refused have the right to appeal against the decision if they feel there are valid reasons why their application has not been accepted or in instances where this policy has not been followed correctly.

7.2 Where an applicant has submitted a written appeal with regards to how their application was processed, they will be contacted within five working days, confirming receipt of their appeal and outlining when the appeal will be heard. The appeal will be heard by the relevant service delivery staff member or manager as soon as practicably possible. We will try to hear all appeals within 10 working days.

- 7.3 When the appeal has been heard and a decision has been made, a letter will be sent and a phone call made to the applicant informing them of the decision within 24 hours.
- 7.4 The purpose of this appeal is to decide whether or not the applicant should have been entered on to the waiting list. Management are not making a judgment about the appropriateness of the processing of the original application. The Manager's role is to ensure that the policy and procedures have been adhered to.

8. Possible Reasons for Unsuccessful Applications

- 8.1 There are some limited circumstances where, after careful consideration of the information received and the undertaking of an appropriate risk assessment exercise, an applicant is not offered accommodation.
- 8.2 Although the Charity does not have a policy to exclude or reject any applicant, each referral is considered on an individual basis. The following are common reasons for a referral being rejected:
- ▶ Applicant with a recent history of drug dealing;
 - ▶ Applicant who has recent history of violence related offending behaviour;
 - ▶ Applicant with known hostile relationship with existing residents;
 - ▶ Applicant may have higher support needs than the service can provide;
 - ▶ Applicant risk profile is too high for the good management of the scheme and existing resident base
 - ▶ Applicant who has lived with the YMCA before and has former arrears which they are not prepared to clear;
 - ▶ Applicant who has been evicted for anti-social behaviour within the past 6 months;
 - ▶ Applicant failed to attend intake appointments;
 - ▶ Applicant is not entitled to Housing Benefit/ applicant either does not have recourse to public funds or means to fund their rent and service charge;
 - ▶ Applicant requires property changes which are beyond the scope of 'reasonable adjustments'.
 - ▶ Applicant needing YMCA staff involvement in the administration of medication.
 - ▶ Applicant was non-contactable;

9. Transfers

- 9.1 Internal transfers within the same property can be requested by residents and decisions on suitability will be made by the relevant manager. Decisions by local managers should consider the following:
- ▶ Residents' support needs should be able to be sufficiently met.

- ▶ As transferring to another property will result in the end of one tenure, and the start of a new one, any existing arrears would become former resident debt. As such, transfers should only be approved if the resident's arrears are zero.
- ▶ These two criteria can be waived if the resident requires a transfer as a result of fleeing violence.

10. General Principles:

- 10.1 It is the responsibility of all service delivery staff to ensure that referrals are responded to quickly and consistently. When responding to a referral all staff members should ensure all communication is written in alignment with the Charity's Christian ethos.
- 10.2 Decisions must be transparently accompanied by clear justifications to maintain the integrity of the Charity's assessment process.
- 10.3 We must be transparent and fair in all our activities and we should be able to explain any referral rejections not only internally but also externally if required.

11. Access to Information

- 11.1 All information supplied by applicants will be held on the relevant housing management and support computer systems and all paper applications will be kept in locked storage facilities with access to relevant staff only. All unsuccessful application forms will be securely stored for 6 months, after which time they will be destroyed in compliance with our data retention policy.
- 11.2 Applicants have the right to know what personal data we hold in respect of their own application, including information held on non-computer records.
- 11.3 Applicants wishing to exercise their right should email the Charity requesting copies of their personal data, and put Subject Access Request in the subject line.