

ELIGIBILITY AND SERVICE ACCESS POLICY

Eligibility and Service Access

WHAT WE OFFER

St Paul's hostel has 46 beds. Six of these beds are for females and these rooms have increased security. There are two double rooms for males and one double room for females. Bathrooms are shared. Male and female residents are not allowed to access each other's rooms under any circumstances. There are laundry facilities.

There are also two one-bed self-contained flats co-located on the hostel site.

In addition to the hostel rooms, there are a further 8 beds in two Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) that are called 'Resettlement' houses. These are located in the community but within short walking distance from the hostel.

You usually get a Project Worker who can help you. We also offer a range of support activities. These services are free, but the activities might change so please enquire with our staff if you want to know more. Typically, they include counselling, mindfulness, access to work coaches and other re-employment services.

CRITERIA

The essential criteria to access our services are;

- a. Must be aged 18 years or above; and
- b. have identification (or provide a reasonable expectation that it can be obtained) to show proof of;
 - i. Social security benefits (for example a letter from the Job Centre)
 - ii. Identify (for example your National Insurance card or a passport or driving licence)

We accept people with;

Addictions (drug, alcohol, gambling for example) and we operate a risk reduction approach that encourages access to treatment. This is a dry hostel.

In pre-agreed circumstances;

- a. We could accept people who do not have recourse to Public Funds and who therefore cannot claim benefits. They require liaison and discussion between a referral agency and St Paul's Staff before a Service Referral is made. A Senior Manager makes every decision in these cases. The authority to decide is never delegated.
- b. Small pets such as snakes, canaries and gold fish can be brought but we must agree this before we accept into Service. This is because we must be certain they will be adequately cared for.

In very exceptional circumstances;

- a. We may consider allowing dogs. This would only occur after we have considered the risks to others and our buildings and implemented appropriate measures to reduce the risk of harm.

b. We may be able to accommodate people who have been convicted of arson or have attempted arson. The hostel is not insured for occupants who have either a conviction for arson or attempted arson. Therefore, the hostel insurers are to be approached and necessary information about the person disclosed so that additional insurance might be purchased.

We do not ever;

- a. Accommodate females after their 5th month of pregnancy but will work with Local Housing Teams to provide alternative accommodation.
- b. Accept referrals for individuals with sexual offences against children

We may decline:

- a. Individuals with violent offences (Assault, Battery, Wounding with intent) whom have offended in the last twelve months and do not show signs of change
- b. Individuals who have used multiple services and cannot help themselves or allow others to help them
- c. Individuals with sexual offences or whom are deemed high risk to women
- d. Individuals with problematic substance use that poses a risk to themselves or others or those who have recent convictions for supply of illicit substances.

These decisions will be made by two members of the Senior Management Team and will be made based on levels of risk to members of the Hostel community. These referrals may be deferred instead of declined as per below.

Occasionally we might accept someone into our service but defer (known as a Service Deferral) his or her arrival. There are a number of other reasons for a Service Deferral such as room refurbishment, managing the current dynamic of the Hostel community as well as balancing the capacity of staff to cope with residents with higher support needs.

Where a referring agency does not agree with the decision made regarding an individual's referral then this is to be escalated to the Chief Executive Officer for review in the first instance.

Local Connection:

- a. Referrals will only be considered from agencies and local authorities within Worcestershire.
- b. In exceptional circumstances, we may consider a referral from outside of the County but this will be on a case by case basis and only when authorised by the Housing Manager.

ACCESSING OUR SERVICES - GENERAL

A Service Referral is the term we use to describe the process to access to our services. Normally we require a Service Referral form that contains information about the potential resident and this is completed by one of many partners in the County. For example, the local Drugs & Alcohol Service provider, Local Authority Housing Teams, Magg's Day Centre or Probation Services. The details are sent to our staff by secure email. We aim to process all Service Referrals quickly, with a target of less than 72 hours.

It is not usually possible to access the hostel directly (known as 'direct access') and move into our service's straight way. We must assess risks to others and evaluate how the new person may change the dynamics of the hostel community.

Where there is a risk to life, serious harm or deterioration of health then we will always seek to short cut the Service Referral process to provide 'direct access' but we may have to put in place measures to mitigate risk. Where risks are deemed to high the on shift staff will liaise with on-call housing teams, the No Second Night Out (NSNO) or during adverse weather the Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) to keep the person safe.. Staff always keep records of anyone who tries to access the hostel directly in order to influence the development of services in the county.

We use pre-Service Acceptance meetings in cases where a person has been referred to access but their individual situation requires a more thorough assessment. It may be they have particular criminal convictions or support needs. These meetings, normally held at the hostel, are attended by several staff and the agency referring the person is invited to attend.

A waiting list is kept. Individuals are contacted before space becomes available so they can access quickly. It is the responsibility of the person waiting to access to ensure up to date contact details (usually a telephone number) are held by the hostel staff.

We will not support any upgrading of banding on Home Choice Plus unless we are certain they are warranted. In other words, we do not support the practice of moving people up the housing list, to private or social landlords, because they are difficult to work with. Our services do have limits and when we are reaching our limits with a particular person, we will tell them what they need to do to remain in our services.

HOSTEL ACCESS

Our Psychologically Informed Hostel environment and our Trauma Informed approach has taught us the fundamental importance of creating safety. In general terms, we operate a 'first come, first served' allocations approach to space at the hostel. We have learned the circumstances and support needs of every person must be considered on their own merits and within the entirety of other residents. This is to make sure the hostel is (and feels) safe and secure for everyone living here.

People who have been on the waiting list longest are contacted before those who have been on the list for a short period.

OCCUPANCY OF SINGLE FLATS

There are two one-person flats on the hostel site. Each has a small kitchen and bathroom. Occupancy is not on a 'first come, first served' but determined by an assessment of a person's readiness against our Theory of Change. It could be thought of as a 'first ready, first served' approach.

Upon moving into these flats, the principle we uphold is the person does not consume meals in the hostel. The Housing Manager can waive this principle where doing so is to the benefit to the occupant and St Paul's Hostel. The decision is never delegated.

OCCUPANCY OF RESETTLEMENT PROPERTIES

We do not want a person to endure another episode of homelessness because we know how damaging this can be to a person's health. 'Moving on', as it is often called, into our resettlement properties, Social Housing or Private Landlord requires the person to be ready and able to live in the property. We undertake a thorough assessment of their ability to do so. This is based upon our Theory of Change.

Access to our resettlement housing generally follows a stay in the hostel. It is very unusual for a person to access resettlement directly. Access to resettlement is not on a 'first come, first served' but determined by an assessment of a person's readiness against our Theory of Change. It could be thought of as a 'first ready, first served' approach.

SERVICE TRANSFER

We use the term 'Service Transfer' to describe moving from Hostel to resettlement (or sometimes vice versa). The factors that are considered in this assessment are outlined in the table below;

People can manage emotional and psychological pressures

- o Harmful addictions are replaced by other compulsive comfort seeking behaviour that will not kill or put the person in prison.
- o They are self-aware, know their triggers and know where to get help.
- o They are able to come to terms with what happened to them and think about themselves in a positive way.

People feel their place is safe, stable and secure

- o Supported Housing meets their needs
- o Rent is paid on time and they have built up a rent credit.
- o They are able to manage their money and budget ahead.

People do purposeful things with their time, good things happen, they feel good about themselves and they willingly share these with those they trust.

- o They are connected to at least 5 new positive relationships
- o They are earning or learning new things and new ideas
- o They are giving to others

RENT AND SERVICE CHARGES

Our accommodation has a service charge. This is unavoidable and is part of the Housing Benefit funding mechanism. The monthly payment cycle of Universal Credit transfers a financial risk to St Paul's Hostel. It is our policy therefore that non-eligible rent (often called personal contribution or sometimes, incorrectly, 'rent') is always payable a week in advance. The Universal Credit Advance payment scheme is for this purpose. Sometimes the Local Housing Authority or another organisation may pay a rent advance.

On a case by case basis, where extending a person's time rough sleeping will happen then this rule may be relaxed. These decisions are always taken carefully and are always taken by a Senior Manager in accordance with our Rent Policy.

Rent and service charge if employed. It is not usually possible to undertake full or part time employment while accommodated as the hostel. Employment will trigger housing benefit to be reduced.

You usually need to claim housing benefit to pay for your stay in any hostel or resettlement properties. You will need to pay a service charge because some services are not covered from Housing Benefit. A discount is available if these service charges are paid in advance or paid by Standing Order or Debit Card. This Service Charge will cover: a. Breakfast, evening meal, unlimited tea and coffee and snacks b. Heating and lighting c. Laundry

Not paying the weekly Service charge or failing to complete the necessary administration to obtain Housing Benefit will result in Service Exit.

We inform Local Housing Authorities of the reasons for Service Exit so they can take this into account when deciding whether a person is Priority Need for housing.

SERVICE EXPECTATIONS

St Paul's has clear values and we use these to guide our decision-making. We prefer 'expectations' to the word 'rules'. It is expected that everyone who accesses our service will adhere to these values.

Our values are;

- a. Respect for others. We will always treat people in the way we would want to be treated ourselves.
- b. People can change. With encouragement, perseverance and through appropriate relationships, people can change.
- c. Fairness. We will treat everyone in our services fairly. This means we will do our very best to get everyone what they need. Being fair does not mean everyone will always get the same things; it depends on a person's assessed needs.
- d. Self-help. Individual responsibility for change is important, if change is to occur
- e. Knowing our limits. We know what we are good at and what we are not. There are limits to the help we offer and where we cannot help, we always explain why.
- f. The Community. The individual is important, but we have a bias towards the well-being of the community.
- g. A strength-based approach. In helping people, we take into account, what a person has and what they can do, rather than what they do not have and what they cannot do.

ALCOHOL POLICY

This is a dry hostel. The consumption of alcohol anywhere on our premises is not permitted. Where consumption of alcohol is suspected then our staff will take action and this may result in Service Exit. Whenever alcohol is found it will always be removed, not returned and disposed of.

When a person is not engaging with alcohol services to reduce their addiction, despite our persistent encouragement to do so, then we may decide that our Service Limit is reached and Service Exit may follow.

DRUG POLICY

We understand our responsibilities and obligations within the Misuse of Drugs Act (1971). Our key obligations under Section 8 acknowledge services which work with people who use drugs and they make clear that service providers may not 'knowingly permit or suffer' certain drug-related activities on their premises, specifically:

- a. Drug production
- b. Drug supplying
- c. Preparing opium for smoking
- d. Smoking cannabis or opium

Where we suspect or find these activities or the consumption, supply, preparation of other illegal drugs or supply of prescribed drugs we will always notify the Police.

ST PAUL'S SERVICE EXPECTATIONS

- These expectations are to keep everyone safe. We have considered these carefully and consulted residents in developing them.
- Be respectful to others at all times.
- Do not threaten violence or intimidate anyone at any time.
- Undertake all administration to secure your means to stay.
- Pay service charges on time and work with us to build up a small credit so that you are able to access resettlement or other social housing
- No consumption of cigarettes, e- cigarettes in bedrooms or public rooms
- You are responsible for your prescribed medication. Staff can store your medication but they are not permitted to administer it to you.
- Treat the hostel furniture, garden and other property with respect.
- No alcohol or illegal drugs on our premises.
- No dealing, passing, facilitating the supply of drugs to others
- No borrowing of money or lending of money • No knives or other items that can be reasonably considered weapons
- No entry to male bedrooms by females. No entry to female bedroom by males
- Make your bed and keep your room tidy.
- You are allowed up to 3 nights per week out of the hostel but you must inform staff before you leave.

