

North Staffs Mind – Housing Service Referral, Eligibility and Prioritisation Criteria

Availability of Service

North Staffs Mind's Housing Service exists to provide supported housing for people with mental health problems. One of the core values that informs the organisation's work is that it supports recovery and independence and to this end is committed to service users moving forward in their lives.

Our aim is work with our tenants, and alongside other voluntary and statutory agencies, to provide the highest quality of life and the greatest degree of independence that is attainable for each of our individual tenants. Our Housing Service is funded by the Supporting People programme in Stoke-on-Trent.

North Staffs Mind Housing Service comprises the following provision:

- Three 5 bed group homes and one 2 bed group home owned by Midland Heart. North Staffs Mind provides the housing management and support services for these properties.
- One 2 bed group home, one 4 bed group home, two x 1 bed flats, three x 1 bed flats and one x 2 bed flat. North Staffs Mind owns and maintains this accommodation in addition to providing support services within these properties.

The shared accommodation offers individual residents the privacy of their own room whilst being able to share with others facilities such as living and dining areas. The self-contained flats are suitable for people who feel that they can cope with more independent living whilst still having access to support when needed and 24 hour emergency call-out.

The Housing Team comprises five members of staff who have a wealth of knowledge and experience of delivering supported housing to this client group.

Properties are offered to individuals who have mental health problems and who are likely to require long-term visiting support to maintain a tenancy. Potential applicants are expected to have a significant level of independence but require some support to maintain independent living, improve their life skills and social networks, and gain access to education, training and community resources such as day opportunities. The service works on long-term outcomes and goals with service users from their first engagement with the service, through formal support planning structures.

Referrals to the Service

There are various ways to refer applicants to North Staffs Mind. The following are typical although the list is not fully exhaustive:

- Client self-referral
- Referral by Housing Officer
- Referral by carer or relative
- Health or Adult Social Care referral
- G P referral
- Referral from an organisation already offering care or support.

Referrals should be made on North Staffs Mind's Housing Application Form which can be supplied on request by contacting **Pauline Boustead, Housing Admin Officer on 01782 262100**. Alternatively you can download a copy of our Housing Application pack from our website at www.nsmind.org.uk. Information can be made available in larger print and other languages if required. Please contact us for more information.

Self-referrals are welcome but it is anticipated that the application form will be completed jointly between the person applying and the professional making the referral. The person making the referral needs to counter-sign the application and undertakes that, if supported housing is offered by North Staffs Mind, they will give their commitment to be actively involved throughout the trial period and to offer guidance and support to the individual, particularly in the event of the placement breaking down.

The Housing Project Manager will ensure that when vacancies arise the CMHTs and other relevant parties/networks and partnerships are informed of housing availability.

Eligibility Criteria

Each service user:

- Must have some form of diagnosed mental illness or history of a mental health problem.
- Must be over 18 and will usually be under 65 years of age.
- Must have housing related support needs.
- Must be capable of living independently in the community, provided that visiting support is available eg. with minimal assistance be able to budget and look after their own monies, and provide themselves with an adequate diet.
- Must be willing to engage with the service and with the support offered and to participate in the production of their own support plan.
- Must have no outstanding housing debt (exceptions may be possible where steps are being taken to reduce the level of arrears).

North Staffs Mind's service is available to anyone with a diagnosed mental health problem, within the age ranges noted above, regardless of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religious belief, sex or sexual orientation, marital status, HIV antibody status, AIDS and disability.

In some cases referrals we receive may not be eligible for our Housing Service eg. where care rather than support is required. Where we are clearly unable to accept referrals we will explain why this is the case and we will endeavour to signpost the client to more appropriate services where we are not in a position to help.

Exclusion Criteria

An individual may be refused a service if:

- They have a history of violence, arson, drug or alcohol misuse and/or there is a perceived risk to the health and safety of support workers or other residents.
- With respect to our group homes the Housing Project Manager feels that the existing equilibrium/dynamic is likely to be unduly disrupted by the admission.
- The type or degree of required intervention is assessed as being incompatible with the funding criteria, skills or capacity of the service.

Applicants whose primary difficulties are related to substance abuse will not be accepted and it should be noted that the use of, or dealing in, illegal substances on our premises is prohibited.

Prioritisation Criteria

Referrals will be prioritised on the basis of presenting needs and the current capacity of the service.

Applicants whose housing needs would be defined as “high” include those individuals who are experiencing mental health problems who are:

- Homeless or potentially homeless (eg. as a result of long-term stay in hospital)
- Victims of harassment whose safety is at immediate risk
- Victims of a social environment where the health of the applicant is being affected
- Socially isolated and at risk of a deterioration in their mental health
- Seeking to re-gain independent living skills with minimal support.

If no other factors are relevant then referrals will be dealt with in chronological order.

Where demand for our service, or the specific type of accommodation within our service, exceeds the housing provision available North Staffs Mind will operate a waiting list or advise of the availability of providers elsewhere locally who operate similar services.

Where more than one party is interested in a vacancy then the Housing Project Manager will decide on which placement is most appropriate, based on a full consideration of circumstances and on the service’s ability to best meet presenting needs.

Assessment and Allocation Processes

- All applications are filed until a vacancy arises. At this time selection from the waiting list will be determined on which applicant can make best use of the accommodation available whilst taking into account any circumstances that might make them a “high” priority as noted above.
- All individuals who approach North Staffs Mind for re-housing need to provide details of a referee with regard to their potential tenancy and references are taken up in writing as a matter of course for all potential tenants.
- Once a service user has been referred to North Staffs Mind a thorough assessment of circumstances will be made prior to agreeing to offer any form of support. A considered decision must be made as to whether to work with a service user, based on a good understanding of their background, mental health and current needs.

- A thorough assessment of the information provided on the application form will be carried out by a member of the Housing Team who will obtain as much supplementary information from as many sources as possible. This will include talking to the referring agent to discuss any initial concerns and obtaining copies of relevant documentation (where they exist). As part of the assessment process the prospective tenant will be offered the chance to look round suitable properties and meet support staff.
- If a placement is not considered suitable then the reasons why will be clearly explained by the Housing Project Manager to the referring agent and the service user concerned. The reasons why will be recorded in writing if requested.
- The next stage would be for the service user to visit the property on a few occasions to meet other residents and at this stage a detailed needs and risk assessment will be carried out by a member of the Housing team following North Staffs Mind's policy and procedure. It is important that any information about known risks is shared with North Staffs Mind. This can include risks to other service users or staff.
- Following the visits if the placement is considered suitable then the service user will move into the property on a 28 day protected licence. Support staff will then ensure that the tenant signs and has a copy of the protected licence and completes any other relevant paperwork or arrangements relating to their tenancy at this stage. This allows them time to get to know their own home and the people supporting them. A support plan will be drawn up in consultation with the service user as soon as possible. The service user will be provided with a copy of this plan for reference (which will be reviewed initially at the three month stage and six monthly thereafter) and all support staff will be made aware of its contents.
- During the 28 day period of the protected licence the service user will have the opportunity to discuss with the Housing Team their progress and the suitability of the placement. The tenancy can be terminated at any time during the 28 day period according to the terms of the licence and North Staffs Mind's Fair Exit policy. If there have been no concerns identified then the service user will be offered a Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement.

For further information on any aspects of North Staffs Mind's Housing Service please contact **Deb Key, Housing Project Manager on 01782 824529.**

Date of most recent review	June 2012
Date of next review	June 2014