

CLEARING HOUSE

Eligibility Policy

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Aim of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to clearly define the new eligibility criteria for the Clearing House service. It describes how services and individuals can access the Clearing House.

It also details the framework by which the Clearing House service will apply these criteria to make fair and consistent decisions.

Scope

This policy applies to all clients and referring services unless an exemption is made by the Greater London Authority at its discretion. It is to be used by prospective referring services and the Clearing House service.

Diversity Implications

This policy aims to provide clear, fair and transparent criteria for access to the Clearing House service. It expands the previous criteria in order to increase the number of services and individuals able to access the service, whilst retaining sufficient controls to ensure that people sleeping rough in London, or with a history of doing so, are the main beneficiaries.

To achieve these aims, the policy recognises that not all people who sleep rough in London will have a CHAIN record, for example women who are more likely to remain hidden from services. It also recognises that not everyone with a history of rough sleeping will currently be engaged with, or supported by, a rough sleeping-specific service. And finally, it recognises that the benefit of the Clearing House service to those sleeping rough is not necessarily direct, for example, if the Clearing House facilitates a person without a demonstrable rough sleeping history to successfully move out of a hostel, that hostel space then becomes available and can be accessed by a person moving directly off the streets.

All Referral Induction Sessions, bespoke refresher sessions, team meeting attendance and data reports mentioned in this policy are free of charge. Referral access to the Clearing House is also free of charge.

Definitions

CH – the Clearing House, commissioned by the GLA and managed by St Mungo's, is the referrals and allocations service which manages access to ring-fenced social housing properties.

CHAIN – the Combined Homelessness and Information Network is a multi-agency database recording information about people sleeping rough and the wider street population in London. The system is commissioned and funded by the GLA and managed by Homeless Link.

GLA – The Greater London Authority consists of the Mayor of London, the London Assembly and the functional bodies that support them.

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TSTs – Tenancy Sustainment Teams are floating support services commissioned by the GLA to support tenants of Clearing House properties.

Policy Overview

Prior to the issuing of this policy in Autumn 2022, Clearing House eligibility criteria was restricted to those with a verified CHAIN number. However, recognising the range of experience of those rough sleeping, Clearing House has now been broadened, with the aim to widen access to those who would have otherwise been excluded.

This policy supersedes previous versions, for more information around the changes please read the FAQs or contact the Clearing House managers via the helpdesk ch@mungos.org.

Eligibility Requirements Summary

For the Clearing House to expertly match clients and tenancies, and to maintain trusting relationships with partnering landlords, there are a number of eligibility requirements and an in-depth referral form. The requirements are summarised below and then each explained in further detail;

Clearing House Eligibility Requirements

1. The referral worker must attend a Referral Induction Session and obtain a log-in to the Clearing House Portal **AND**
2. The clients' support needs can be met by 1 hour of fortnightly support from the Tenancy Sustainment Team **AND**
3. The client either;
 - a. has a history of rough sleeping **OR**
 - b. is resident in an accommodation based service that primarily supports rough sleepers.

Eligibility Requirement 1. The Referral Worker

The referral worker is the member of staff who will complete the referral to the Clearing House on behalf of the client wishing to be referred.

All referrals into the Clearing House are made via referral workers who have attended a Referral Induction Session and obtained a log in to the Clearing House portal.

The referral workers need to be;

- A permanent employee of the referring service,
- Be regularly working in a client facing role completing key working activities,
- Have the knowledge and skill to make an accurate assessment of a client's support needs,
- And be a point of contact throughout the process, which may be a number of months.

Alternatively, referring staff may be a suitably qualified professional who, despite not seeing a client regularly in a homelessness setting, is in a position to form sound judgement and liaise with others in the client's support network and gather information related to their homelessness e.g. a client's allocated probation worker. It is still expected they would have ongoing and involved contact with the client.

Referral Induction Session

These sessions provide detailed information about the service the Clearing House offers, how to make a successful referral and how the nomination process works. Currently these are 2-hour sessions run online via Google Meets monthly.

Please email ch@mungos.org to book onto an induction session.

Clearing House Portal

The online system for making referrals, requesting nominations and managing cases can be accessed by logging in at <https://clearinghouse.force.com/login>. Referral workers are given a login once they have attended the referral induction session.

Clearing House Champions

To manage capacity for the Clearing House team, and increase the skill set within referring services, there are limits on the staff numbers from each team able to access the Clearing House system and attend the training. These staff members are known as Clearing House Champions. The aim is they will attend the Referral Induction Session, and then become practiced and skilled in submitting Clearing House referrals. They are not able to share their log in details but are encouraged to collaborate with colleagues to submit referrals for clients in their service.

Referral induction sessions are organised via contacting the [helpdesk](#).

Eligibility Requirement 2. The Clients' Needs

Clearing House is a service for people who would be unable to sustain an independent tenancy without some support, but no longer require the level of support provided by accommodation-based services with on-site staff.

Below is a description of the support offered and an overview of the level of need the Clearing House is most suited to.

One Hour of Support per Fortnight

The floating support associated with the Clearing House service, provided by the GLA's two commissioned Tenancy Sustainment Teams (TSTs), is flexible, but typically provides an average of one hour of focussed support per person per fortnight. This can be in-person, via phone, text or email, or a combination.

Support offered;

- **Transitional support** – working with the client to set up and settle them into their new tenancy.
- **Sustaining tenancies** - Providing support and advice on housing difficulties, e.g. rent arrears, disrepair or neighbour disputes, as well as crisis intervention for people under the threat of eviction.
- **Promoting health and well-being** - Facilitating access to health services, encouraging attendance at appointments and promoting healthy eating and exercise.
- **Maximising income** - Providing benefits advice, support to maximise income or reduce debt and helping with budget planning.
- **Move on** – supporting the client with regular tenancy reviews and supporting them to move into an independent tenancy after two years.
 - The tenancy does not automatically end after two years. Tenancy reviews are conducted with the housing officer, floating support worker and client, who make joint decisions about the most suitable move on option and route for the client. This may include extending the tenancy, supporting them to apply for general needs housing with the housing provider, or moving into the private rented sector.

In the Referral Induction Sessions more detailed information about support needs is given and discussion around suitable clients is facilitated.

Level of Need

For the Clearing House service to be deemed suitable for a client, the above level of support must be considered sufficient to meet their needs.

The one hour of fortnightly support is mandatory and clients must engage throughout their tenancy, therefore if a client does not need any floating support they may not be suitable for the service. Equally, if a client requires daily or weekly support to maintain a tenancy and their independence, the referral may be deemed unsuitable for a Clearing House property.

Typically, clients have often been living in some form of supported accommodation where their acute needs can be met and are then referred to the Clearing House for the next stage of their recovery.

The Clearing House is best suited to clients being referred from accommodation-based services for a number of reasons;

- Their tenancy support needs are best identified by a worker with a long-term relationship with the client who is able to assess them in an accommodation based setting. The better understanding of support needs, the better understanding the Tenancy Sustainment Team (TST) working with the client will be able to work with them.
- The TST worker meets clients roughly once every fortnight. For clients coming directly from the streets, their initial needs may be too acute to be met by the level of support of TST.
- Clients and their workers need to be easily contactable throughout the process. Viewings, sign ups and moving in can require a lot of back and forth communication that is very challenging with clients on the street, or in very short term accommodation.

Despite this, clients from day centres and outreach teams are able to access the service and there are many examples of successful tenancies. The Clearing House will work with the team and referring organisation to support where possible.

Referral workers are encouraged to contact the helpdesk with enquires about suitable clients. Every referral is assessed by a skilled Clearing House officer, who can also offer support to the referrer during the process. Officers are available in working hours via 020 3856 6008 or at ch@mungos.org

TST PRS

The Clearing House team also assess and allocate referrals for a short term, transitional floating support service working with clients who have moved into the private rented sector (TST PRS). If your client is more suited to living independently but would benefit from some transitional support please contact tstprsreferrals@mungos.org for a referral form and a leaflet.

Please note TST PRS provide floating support once accommodation has been found by the referring service, this service does not provide accommodation.

Eligibility Requirement 3. History of Rough Sleeping or Resident in a Rough Sleeping Service

The third requirement for the Clearing House service is that either clients must have a history of rough sleeping, or be resident in an accommodation based service that primarily supports people with a history of rough sleeping. One of these requirements must be satisfied.

3a. History of Rough Sleeping

The client must have a history of rough sleeping. This can be verified in two ways;

- The client has a verified CHAIN number.
- The client has self-reported their history of rough sleeping, and the referral worker is confident this is accurate.

Self-reported rough sleeping needs to be evident in the Housing History section of the referral form. The Housing History asks for five years of addresses, if the rough sleeping occurred six years ago or more this can still be added in as an entry. In order to avoid imposing arbitrary measures for clients to prove their rough sleeping, the Clearing House aims to be flexible and reasonable in the types of ways rough sleeping can be self-reported. The expectation is the referral worker is confident the disclosure of rough sleeping accurately reflects the clients' experience.

3b. Resident in an Accommodation Service that Primarily Supports Rough Sleepers

Alternatively, an accommodation-based service that primarily supports people with a history of rough sleeping will have the potential to refer in clients, regardless of the individual client having a CHAIN number or rough sleeping experience.

Each service wishing to access this referral route into the Clearing House will need to be verified by the Clearing House team. Please see the [Assessment of Services](#) and [Identify Services](#) sections of this policy for more information.

Accommodation Based Service - This refers to a service that provides a room or flat to residents, most likely to be supported housing where clients either receive a licence or assured shorthold tenancy. This is most likely to be local authority commissioned supported housing, or voluntary/third sector supported accommodation.

Primarily Supports Rough Sleepers – The majority of clients have a history of rough sleeping and referrals into the service are received from outreach teams.

'Majority' roughly equates to more than 50%, although the Clearing House aims to be flexible and avoid arbitrary measures which may block access for clients. Each service will be

individually reviewed via a transparent process and all decision making processes are documented in the resource library on the website. Each decision can also be appealed.

Assessment of Services & Rollout of New Criteria

The process of how the Clearing House team will rollout the new criteria is pictured below, and more detail is provided via the subheadings;

Clearing House Rollout of New Criteria



Clearing House Contacting Rough Sleeping Commissioners and Borough Leads

For each London borough there will be an on-boarding process, available from November 2022.

The Clearing House management team will contact commissioners and borough leads for each individual London Borough. Clearing House managers are approaching this systematically and will reach out to local authority leads to contact, however **commissioners** can contact managers proactively via the [helpdesk](#).

Identify Services

Each individual service (i.e. a supported housing project) wishing to use the [3b. referral route](#) must be identified and on-boarded before they are able to refer in non-CHAIN verified clients.

Clearing House managers will meet with borough commissioners to map out their pathways and identify which services are most suitable to refer into Clearing House. They will assess;

- ➔ The services' referral route and criteria.
- ➔ Where the service sits within a commissioning pathway.
- ➔ The client group and targeted level of need.
- ➔ The expertise and skills of staff.

On-board Services

On-boarding services is the process to ensure the service and staff are set up correctly on the Clearing House Portal and the staff have the ability to make referrals.

For Existing Services

The process for on-board existing services (services that already refer into Clearing House) will involve approval on the portal from a member of the management team. This is prompted via the commissioner or borough lead identifying the service with Clearing House managers. The on-boarding process may also include providing refresher support for Clearing House Champions (referral workers), or a member of the Clearing House team attending a team meeting to promote the service.

A reminder that the new eligibility criteria only broadens access to the service, all clients that were previously eligible to be referred are still able to be and can continue to access the Clearing House as before.

For New Services

The process for on-boarding new services will involve the service being set up on the Clearing House portal, and for one or two members of the staffing team to attend the Referral Worker induction session (see [eligibility requirement 1](#)). Services are identified by commissioners or borough leads.

Exclusions

In order to ring-fence this resource for those most in need, there are some exclusions to accessing the Clearing House;

- Clearing House will not accept referrals directly from Local Authority Housing Options/Homeless Persons Units. Clients who are accessing support from their local authority while also engaging with other services are potentially eligible to be referred in by relevant outreach services or day centre staff.
- Clearing House will not accept referrals for clients who are owed a statutory housing duty, or who may be owed one pending assessment.

Amendments and Reviews to the Policy

This policy will be reviewed one year after being issued, and thereafter every two years or in line with service changes, whichever comes first.

The Clearing House and the GLA's Rough Sleeping Commissioning team reserve the right to change the Eligibility Criteria if needed outside of these times. Any changes will be

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communicated via the website, via email communications to relevant commissioners and service managers.

Any changes, amendments or additions can be suggested in writing to the helpdesk, ch@mungos.org FAO Service Development Manager.

Relevant Documents, Policies and Procedures

Additional policies are available on the Clearing House website in the Resource Library.

<https://www.mungos.org/our-services/clearing-house/>

- FAQ's
- Complaints and Appeals Policy & Procedure
- Minimum Standards for Referrals Guidance
- Referral and Waiting List Policy & Procedure
- Nomination Procedure Guidance

Getting Help

For help and advice about this policy please contact the Clearing House Partnerships and Innovation Manager on 020 3856 6008 or at ch@mungos.org.