

CLEARING HOUSE

Referral and Waiting List Policy & Procedure



Monitoring

This policy is reviewed every two years or in line with service changes, whichever comes first.

1. Purpose

This policy will provide guidance around the RSI referral process and clarity in relation to the management of the waiting list by Clearing House. The policy will also set out the expectations and requirements of all parties involved in the RSI with specific reference to referrals.

2. Policy statement

Clearing House is committed to matching eligible clients with appropriate accommodation and ensuring that the waiting list is fairly, effectively and appropriately managed. In order to ensure waiting list times are minimised and that clients are able to transition quickly and easily into an RSI property Clearing House will work closely with referral agencies in ensuring the consistency and quality of referrals received.

To ensure clients are ready to move at the point of nomination, Clearing House will periodically request updates on a client's circumstances and support needs. It is essential that at the point a client's circumstances changing significantly, the referring agency informs Clearing House so as to ensure the client will be correctly and effectively resettled.

3. Eligibility for referring agencies

- 3.1. Agencies working with current or ex-rough sleepers such as hostels, supported housing services, outreach teams and day centres can refer to Clearing House.
- 3.2. Agencies must know the client's history and support needs well and also confirm that they will continue to have regular contact with the client after the referral is made.

4. Eligibility for clients

All clients referred to Clearing House must meet all of the eligibility criteria to be accepted on to the waiting list unless agreed otherwise by the GLA:

- 4.1. Clients must be a CHAIN verified rough sleeper with at least one bedded down street contact (verification can be confirmed with the CHAIN or Clearing House teams).
- 4.2. Clients must be willing to engage with the TST support service for the duration of their tenancy; addressing drug and alcohol needs, health issues as well as training and employment.
- 4.3. The client must agree and understand that they will move-on from their accommodation and support once they have been assessed as no longer requiring support.
- 4.4. The referral worker has completed the Clearing House information session with the client and the client has understood the information.
- 4.5. The client understands and accepts that they will be issued with two year fixed-term tenancies that are renewable as long as on-going support is required.

Procedure

1. Client information

- 1.1. All information relating to the client must be complete and accurate. This will include a housing history of at least the last five years (with any gaps clearly explained). Estimated tenancy start and end dates are acceptable where the client is unable to provide definitive dates. For each entry in the client's housing history a reason for leaving the tenancy must be provided.
- 1.2. Where the client has rent arrears and debt the referral agency must provide details of current or historical issues. Details should be provided by the referral agency around how the debt or arrears are being managed (i.e. details of repayment agreements).
- 1.3. Referral agencies must provide accurate details of the client's current benefit claims, amounts received and when the claims were initiated (this can be estimated).
- 1.4. Where appropriate referral agencies must provide details around the client's current employment, training or education – detail around hours worked or studying must be provided including income from employment.
- 1.5. Details of other support agencies or services working with the client must be provided to ensure the client can transition from the referring service to TST support and all relevant agencies and services can be involved and updated.
- 1.6. The monitoring information must be completed, where possible, in full. This is so that the Clearing House service can be appropriately monitored and ensures that the service is meeting the needs of the rough sleeping population in London.

2. Support needs and risk assessment

- 2.1. Clearing House requires detailed and comprehensive information relating to the client's support needs. This information must be provided by the referring agency so that Clearing House can accurately assess an individual's ability to manage and live independently. Information provided by the referral agency must meet the minimum referral standards - this guidance document can be found on the Clearing House website.
- 2.2. Referring agencies are required to provide details regarding the client's risk by completing the Clearing House risk assessment form. The referring agency must provide details, such as examples, recent incidents or any other relevant information, about any areas highlighted as a risk.

3. Referrals process

- 3.1. **Referring to Clearing House:** Referrals to Clearing House must be made online via the Clearing House system: www.clearinghouse.force.com , paper referrals will not be accepted. Agencies wishing to refer to Clearing House must contact the Clearing House to request access.
- 3.2. **Declaration & consent:** All users of the system will be asked to agree to terms of use, outlining requirements around data protection and information sharing. Clients will be required to sign a form giving their consent for personal and sensitive data about them to be submitted to Clearing House. A scanned or photographed form can be uploaded the Clearing House system. The original should be kept by the referrer.
- 3.3. **Borough choice:** Clients will be required to select a minimum of three boroughs but should be encouraged to choose more boroughs where they would be happy to live as this is likely to reduce their time on the waiting list. Due to their special status, RS205 clients may choose only one borough, but should also be encouraged to consider more to reduce their waiting list time.

By choosing a borough the client is agreeing to accept an offer of housing anywhere within that borough. In some instances the client may specify that they should not be housed within a particular geographical area of a borough due to risks to their welfare

and safety. Additionally, clients may require close proximity to specialist services within a locality or have mobility issues. Details of these requirements must be provided in full in the referral form – Clearing House will consider these requests on a case-by-case basis and they will be agreed where the best interests of the client can be met.

Clearing House has limited or no housing stock in the following boroughs: City, Havering, Kingston, Sutton, Redbridge, Merton, Richmond, Bexley, Harrow, Bromley, Barking and Dagenham, Hillingdon and Croydon. As such, any client selecting one of these boroughs will be required to choose an additional borough – in short, these boroughs will not count towards the minimum of three required and additional borough(s) must be selected.

- 3.4. **Pets:** Referring agencies must declare if the client has a pet. If clients have a dog it must be explained to the client that this will cause significant delay in their waiting time (up to and over two years). Clearing House will only nominate clients with dogs to appropriate properties where the housing provider deems the property dog-friendly (i.e. a ground-floor property with a garden). Clearing House endeavours to increase its dog-friendly housing stock, but such property is extremely rare, hence the lengthy waiting times.
- 3.5. **Floor levels:** Referring agencies must declare and provide details of any mobility issues that would prevent the client living above a certain floor level. The referrer must select those which would be suitable when completing the referral form.
- 3.6. **Referral status:** The following referral statuses will frequently be used on the Clearing House website and in communications from Clearing House:

Not submitted: the referral has been started by the referral agency but has not been submitted to Clearing House for assessment; it will still be available to be edited by the referral agency.

Pending Assessment: The referral has been submitted and is awaiting assessment by the Clearing House Team. The referral is locked and cannot be edited.

Information required: the referral has been submitted to Clearing House and assessed as being incomplete or requiring further detail and clarity. Clearing House will communicate with the referring agency via email detailing the actions required on the referral form, which will be made available for editing again.

Accepted – on waiting list: The referral has been submitted to Clearing House, assessed and accepted on to the waiting list. The referral cannot be edited by the referral agency, but 6-monthly updates will be required and ad hoc additions can be made by contacting the Clearing House team.

Rejected: The referral has been submitted to Clearing House, assessed and rejected on the grounds that the client does not meet the eligibility or suitability criteria for the Clearing House service. The referral is locked and cannot be edited.

On hold: Applied to a referral that has already been accepted onto the waiting list; In agreement with the referring agency, Clearing House will place the referral on-hold during which time the client will not receive nominations. The referral is locked and cannot be edited, and no updates are requested until it is agreed that the client is again ready to return to the waiting list.

Expired: A referral will expire if it has a status of Not Submitted and has not been edited within the last 90 days. The referral is locked and cannot be edited. If the referring agency then wishes to re-refer the client, they will be required to complete a new referral form.

Nominated: The referral/client has been matched to a property. The referral becomes visible to the Landlord of the property and TST providing support to the property.

Cancelled: If the referral is removed from the waiting list it will show a status of cancelled.

Housed: The referral status is visible once the client is housed, but can no longer be viewed by the referrer.

Tenancy Ended: The referral status is visible once the client has moved on from their Clearing House tenancy, but can no longer be viewed by the referrer.

3.7. **Assessment updates:** Clearing House requires referring agencies to provide support needs and risk assessment updates every six months. When due, Clearing House will notify referral agencies to complete this action. However, if there are any significant changes in the client's circumstances in the intervening time that would likely impact on their resettlement via Clearing House, the referring agency must notify Clearing House immediately, regardless of whether the 6-monthly update is due. Where support need and risk assessments are out of date, the Clearing House will not nominate the client for a property until they have been updated.

3.8. **Couples:** Clearing House accepts referrals for couples. Where both individuals are eligible for Clearing House accommodation two separate referrals will be required. The referring agency must explain that the clients are part of a couple who intend to live together and should include the necessary details.

Where only one individual is eligible for Clearing House accommodation and support, the referring agency must refer only this client, but should clearly state in the referral that they are being referred as part of a couple who intend to live together.

3.9. **Transfers:** In instances where a transfer request is made TST will be required to update the tenant's support needs and risk assessment which will be assessed under the same process and criteria as all referrals to Clearing House.

3.10. **On-hold periods:** Referral agencies can request on-hold periods for their clients for a total of 12 weeks or two six week periods that can be taken at any time. The client will not receive nominations at this time but will continue to move up the waiting list. It is expected that after the 12 weeks are exhausted the client be ready for nomination. If the client is still unready for nomination; they will be removed from the waiting list but can be referred again at a later date. In exceptional circumstances an extension of the 12 week hold period may be agreed by the Clearing House Team Leader.

3.11. **Nominations:** When a client is matched to a property by Clearing House notification emails are sent to the referring agent, relevant TST team and housing provider to inform all parties of the property match. When clients with special statuses are nominated (such as RS205, Housing First or SIB clients) additional emails are sent to ensure all parties are aware of any variations in process, additional responsibilities or actions required.

6. Priority client groups

6.1. **High priority transfers** are the highest priority group on the Clearing House waiting list. These clients are transferred to appropriate housing as quickly as possible and take priority over other referrals on the waiting list.

6.2. **RS205** clients have an increased priority on the waiting list, as well as this RS205 clients will receive additional support from TST once their tenancy starts.

7. Removal from the waiting list

Clearing House is responsible for managing the waiting list and ensuring that RSI housing stock is made available to those who are eligible and for whom the service is appropriate. In order to make sure that this aim is met under certain circumstances referred and accepted clients may be removed from the waiting list if:

- 7.1. There is an increase in the client's support needs or risk to/from self/others; this will be assessed when updated support needs and risk assessment are submitted by the referring agency or at any point when new information comes to light.
- 7.2. The client is not ready or available for immediate move-on and it is unclear when the client will be, and/or when the client has exhausted the 12 week on-hold period.
- 7.3. If the client has found an alternative suitable housing route such as being eligible for priority housing via the local authority.
- 7.4. The client has declined a reasonable offer of housing (nomination) via Clearing House having no justifiable reason for doing so.
- 7.5. The referring agency fails to update the support needs and risk assessment as required by Clearing House – despite repeated reminders to do so.
- 7.6. The client has disengaged with the agency that referred him/her (e.g. has abandoned their hostel room).

Clearing House will advise the referring agency via email of the client's removal and reason why.

8. Re-referral

- 8.1. A client removed from the waiting list may not be re-referred for 12 months from the date of removal. After the 12 month period, a new referral must be completed for the client and it will be assessed under the same Clearing House criteria as any new referral.
- 8.2. Under exceptional circumstances Clearing House will agree to accept a client back on to the waiting list waiving the 12 month period. Where the referring agency feels there are extenuating circumstances in the removed client's situation an appeal can be made detailing this and requesting the client be able to re-access the waiting list.
- 8.3. Where an appeal is accepted Clearing House will endeavour to ease the process of re-referral where possible by making the previous referral form available to the referring agency for update.

9. Appeals

Any client who wishes to appeal their rejected referral or removal from the waiting list has the right to do so where the referring agency is in support of this wish. All appeals must be made in writing to the Clearing House in line with the Complaints and Appeals policy and procedure.

10. Applicability

This policy and procedure is intended for referral agencies (this will include TST in the case of transfers) as well as the Clearing House team.

11. Getting Help

For help and advice about this policy or procedure please contact a member of the Clearing House Team on 020 3856 6008 or at ch@mungos.org

12. Related policies, references and forms

- Nomination policy and procedure
- Complaints and Appeals policy and procedure
- Minimum standards for referrals guidance
- Transfers policy and procedure
- Guidance for the resettlement of couples