



Comhairle Cathrach Chorcaí
Cork City Council

BISHOPSGROVE SUPPORTED STUDENT ACCOMMODATION ALLOCATIONS & REFERRALS POLICY

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Bishopsgrrove is:

- 1.1 Adopting and adhering to a fair and consistent approach to the student accommodation assessment process
- 1.2 Promoting a transparent process to individual applicants, referring agencies and key stakeholders
- 1.3 Accurately assessing the needs and suitability of individual applicants
- 1.4 Attempting to meet the needs of individuals whilst maintaining the objectives and ethos of Bishopsgrrove

2. POLICY CONTEXT AND REFERENCES

- 2.1 This document is based upon the principles contained within the following legislation:
 - Equality Acts 2000 -2004
 - Equal Status Act 2000 -2012
 - Housing Act 1988
 - Residential Tenancies 1996
 - Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2004 -2012
 - Housing (Misc Provisions) Act 2009 - 2014
 - Human Rights Act 1999
 - Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission Act 2014
 - Ombudsman Act 2012
- 2.2 This policy should not be viewed or operated in isolation, but within the context of the Bishopsgrrove ethos and objectives, existing policies and procedures and legal obligations.
- 2.3 This policy has operational linkages to:
 - The Bishopsgrrove Application Form
 - Initial Needs Assessment
 - The Bishopsgrrove Student Handbook
 - Bishopsgrrove Confidentiality Policy
 - Equal Opportunities Policy (Agency Specific)
 - Visitor Log

3. BISHOSGROVE OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 To provide a safe, friendly environment with a combination of affordable student accommodation and minimal support to help young people aged 18-25 maintain 3rd level education or equivalent full time accredited training i.e. (Fetac Level 5 (QQI) Courses, Apprenticeships)
- 3.2 To divert a targeted sector of society without stable or safe accommodation away from the homeless services in Cork
- 3.3 To bridge the current gap to mainstream 3rd level education and equivalent accredited training and promote partnership working with colleges
- 3.4 To support young people in meeting their achievable goals and targets as outlined in their Personal Support/Care Plan, where applicable
- 3.5 To equip young people with the skills to live independently, where applicable
- 3.6 To provide the necessary resettlement support, allowing young people to achieve full independence
- 3.7 To contribute to the achievement of sustainable communities
- 3.8 To avoid creating licences which are unsustainable
- 3.9 To provide equality of opportunity in the provision of its accommodation and support services and to take positive action against discrimination

4. ACCOMMODATION & SUPPORT SERVICES

- 4.1 Bishopsgrrove uses a multi-agency holistic approach when supporting young people, through offering development opportunities, accessing specialist services and working in partnership with other organisations, including other accommodation providers. Bishopsgrrove support services include:
 - Staff support with a range of personal support issues, if required
 - Access to a named Key/Social Worker
 - Support accessing specialist services i.e. Counselling (subject to availability & if required)
 - Advice and guidance around education, training and employment opportunities
 - Student participation opportunities through organised events or via the Student Committee
 - Furnished en-suite accommodation and shared kitchens
 - A safe and secure environment to live, with onsite evening and night security
 - Guidance and assistance around resettlement

5. **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

5.1 A person is eligible to be considered for student accommodation in Bishopsgrove if he/she at the time of application:

- Is single and between the ages of 18 and 25
- Is in need of housing, lack a safe or stable home i.e. leaving care, or is living in temporary unsecured or emergency accommodation
- Is attending a 3rd level education course, or an equivalent full time accredited training course for a minimum of one academic year i.e. an apprenticeship or a QQI level five course
- Has been accepted for a 3rd level education course or an equivalent full time accredited training course for a minimum of one academic year i.e. an apprenticeship, a QQI level five course. Evidence of course acceptance will be required
- Are completing their leaving certificate at school
- In receipt of, or eligible to receive social welfare benefits i.e. BTEA, JSA, Aftercare Payments and/or Aftercare Accommodation entitlement (for specified units)
- Is willing to commit to the Bishopsgrove ethos and an agreed Personal Care/Support Plan, **if required**
- Is able to live within the stipulations of the Bishopsgrove Licence Agreement and Codes of Behaviour
- Special circumstances will apply to expectant mothers i.e. level of agency support, agreed move on arrangements in place
- Couples who are unmarried will be considered providing both meet the eligibility criteria in their own right

5.2 Those attending other types of full time training i.e. a CE Scheme, full time training with the National Learning Network etc, will be considered on an individual basis. The applicant must demonstrate that they have attended the course consistently for a reasonable period of time. This will require the applicant's written permission to contact their course tutor/supervisor.

5.3 Successful applicants that are currently residing in the Cork Foyer will take priority over all other external applicants on the waiting list.

5.4 **Applicants in third level education will take priority above all other courses.**

5.5 Applicants between the ages of the 25 to 27 will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Certain criteria would also have to be met which include the following:

- The person is in full time Education or Training, as per the normal eligibility criteria
- Has the financial means to pay their weekly licence fee

- The person is known to the referring agency or a partner agency advocating on their behalf
 - They are in an emergency situation and or have lost their accommodation through no fault of their own and have not been evicted from accommodation due to anti social behaviour
- 5.6 Applicants who are successful and are between the ages of 25 to 27 when they move in to Bishopsgrove, will only be accommodated for a maximum of 3 years, subject to regular reviews.
- 6. EXCLUSIONS FROM APPLYING**
- 6.1 A person who may be eligible to be considered for student accommodation shall be excluded if he/she:
- Is not completing their leaving certificate at school
 - Has not secured (**evidence to be presented**), or is not attending full time 3rd level education or an equivalent full time accredited training course for a minimum of one academic year i.e. an apprenticeship or a QQI level five course.
 - Has a drug dependency problem, or is currently attending a substance misuse treatment programme to overcome drugs or dependency problems
 - Has support needs that cannot be met by the low level support service at Bishopsgrove
 - Has a history of problematic or disruptive behaviour
 - Has personal care support needs, e.g. bathing, dressing
- 6.2 Whilst Bishopsgrove works very closely with the voluntary and statutory sector, the Cork Foyer Project Manager reserves the overall right to refuse applications where the application, or initial needs assessment indicates that the young person involved:
- Presents an unmanageable risk to Bishopsgrove and its minimal staffing operations, or the students and staff at Bishopsgrove
 - Would create a potential conflict of interest for staff, Cork City Council, Cork Foyer Management Committee, or the Bishopsgrove Sub-Management Advisory Committee Members
 - Does not meet the entry criteria
- 6.3 Bishopsgrove is a multi occupancy project that accommodates up to 39 students, many deemed as vulnerable. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that Bishopsgrove would offer accommodation to any young person convicted or charged of an offence involving arson, violence, criminal damage to property or incidents of a serious nature, including those of a sexual nature.
- 6.4 **FORMER STUDENTS** may re-apply to Bishopsgrove. Former students will be expected to undergo the current Bishopsgrove allocation and initial assessment process to ascertain their up to date circumstances and support needs. Former students must have cleared their former Licence fee account of any arrears and meet the current eligibility criteria at the time of applying.

- 6.5 Former students that have been evicted will not normally be considered or placed on the waiting list for a period of 12 months after their eviction date and while they owe any Licence fee arrears. Former students that have been evicted for substance misuse, drug dealing, criminal damage, violent or aggressive behaviour, serious anti social behaviour or persistence breaches to the Bishopsgrrove Codes of Behaviour/Licence Agreement will not be reconsidered for accommodation at any time in the future either at Bishopsgrrove or the Foyer Project.

7. REFERRAL AND ALLOCATION PROCESS

- 7.1 All applicants who apply to Bishopsgrrove must complete a Bishopsgrrove Application form.
- 7.2 Applications will be recorded on one central student accommodation register held securely on the Cork City Council's server. Applications will be listed by the agency who intends to support the applicant.
- 7.3 On receipt of the Application form, it shall be checked by the Bishopsgrrove Key Worker for accuracy and completeness. If there are any omissions or inaccuracies on the application documentation, these shall be checked with the referring agency or with the individual applicant concerned to clearly establish whether or not the eligibility criteria have been met. If the relevant information is not provided or the applicant is found to be ineligible by an Assessment Panel, the application should be rejected and the applicant/referring agency informed in writing. The letter should state the reason for rejection and include reference to the appeals process.
- 7.4 A maximum of 2 attempts will be made to contact the applicant to arrange an assessment. Should no contact be made with the applicant, they will be registered as uncontactable and will not be reinstated on the Bishopsgrrove student accommodation register until contact has been made by the applicant.
- 7.5 Once an assessment date has been confirmed with the applicant, should the applicant fail to attend an accommodation assessment on two occasions, their application will be declined and removed from the Bishopsgrrove student accommodation register. The applicant cannot re-apply until 12 months has lapsed from the date of the second assessment.
- 7.6 Before conducting an accommodation assessment, the Assessment Panel should familiarise themselves with the application and make the necessary arrangements to meet individual needs i.e. interpreters, wheel chair access. The Assessment Panel should also encourage referring agencies, or other appropriate professionals to attend accommodation assessments.
- 7.7 In most cases, the assessments will be held at Bishopsgrrove. The assessment shall be conducted in a room where the discussion can remain confidential. If the Assessment Panel does not know the applicant, the Assessment Panel must take the necessary safety precautions i.e. have access to a panic alarm/mobile, conduct the interview in a room where they are visible to other staff and position themselves nearest the door.
- 7.8 The Assessment Panel must always consist of 2 members of staff, one being the agency that is considering offering accommodation and supporting the applicant and the other being an appropriate representative from Cork City Council. To assist the Assessment Panel, an assessment checklist has been provided on the front of the

initial needs assessment. All items on the checklist should have been implemented prior to offering a Licence.

- 7.9 The application and assessment documents provide the framework for the assessment process. The information attained through the assessment process should feed into the individuals Support/Care Plan (**if required**) held by the relevant agency. All documents completed by the Assessment Panel should be eligible and accurate.
- 7.10 At the end of the assessment, the next stage of the process should be clearly explained to the applicant/referring agency and contact details of all concerned affirmed.
- 7.11 In order to verify information provided on the assessment documentation and during the assessment interview, references may be sought from specified referees and agencies/organisations to which the applicant has had contact, which may involve a verification check with the Gardaí, if necessary. The application/assessment documentation will provide the applicants authority to conduct such checks.

8. OUTCOME OF THE INTERVIEW/ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 This section of the needs assessment should always be completed by both Assessment Panel members. If it is clear from the assessment that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria and the applicant is offered a Licence, a letter of offer must be given to the successful applicant/referring agency. The letter must provide the applicant with a proposed move in date and contact name. All letters will be sent by the Administrator/Key Worker.
- 8.2 If doubt exists as to whether the applicants should be offered a Licence or if references are awaited, the Assessment Panel member must see the process through to completion.
- 8.3 If the applicant does not meet the eligibility criteria or has not been successful in his/her application, the applicant must be informed in writing. The letter must offer the opportunity to appeal against the assessment decision.
- 8.4 All exclusions & allocations must be recorded on the central log (Appendix 1). All applicants who have been unsuccessful or excluded, will be given a date when they may reapply. This date is usually 6-12 months after the last assessment date.

9. APPEALS PROCEDURE

- 9.1 Each Partner organisation shall provide a nominated name to assist with the appeals process for their represented organisation. The nominated person must not be involved in the initial assessment process.

9.2 Stage 1 – Submit Appeal

If the applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Assessment Panel, the applicant or their advocate can appeal to the Cork City Council Foyer Manager in writing within 28 days of notification. The letter of appeal should specifically outline the applicant's grievance. **The Foyer Manager will acknowledge receipt of the appeal letter within 10 working days and may invite the applicant to meet with them to explain the situation in person.**

9.3 Stage 2 - The Foyer Manager Appeal Review

The Foyer Manager shall:

- Consider whether the information provided was detailed and accurate enough to make a valid assessment
- Consider whether the outcome of the assessment was based on factual information
- Consider whether the applicant was declined in accordance with the Bishopsgrrove Allocations Policy
- Consider whether correct procedure was adhered to

The Foyer Manager shall respond to the letter of appeal within 14 days of receipt.

Applicants who clearly do not meet the Bishopsgrrove eligibility criteria will be informed in writing. However, if the applicant is still dissatisfied with the action taken by the **Foyer Manager** or feels the assessment has been mishandled, the applicant shall be informed that they have the right to use the Bishopsgrrove complaints procedure commencing at **stage 3**.

If an element of doubt exists surrounding a Bishopsgrrove application or the assessment process, the **Foyer Manager** shall arrange for the applicant to attend a second assessment interview in which whole or part of the assessment process may be conducted again. When possible, the assessment interview should be conducted by different members of staff and a second decision given to the applicant within **14 days of the interview**. If the applicant is dissatisfied with the 2nd assessment panel's decision or feels that the second assessment has been mishandled, the applicant shall be informed that they have the right to have their appeal put forward to the Chair of the Foyer Management Committee. The applicant may also wish to write to the Chair of the Foyer Management Committee to ensure their position is fully understood.

9.4 Stage 3 – Foyer Management Committee Appeal Review

The Chair of the Foyer Management Committee shall elect 2 or more members of the Foyer Management Committee to review the applicants appeal and present their recommendations at the next Management Committee meeting for formal approval on their decision. The applicant or members of the Assessment Panel may be invited to meet with the Foyer Management Committee members. If the applicant is still dissatisfied with the action taken by the Foyer Management Committee, or feels the review has been mishandled, the applicant shall be informed that they have the right to use the Bishopsgrrove complaints procedure at **stage 4**.

9.4.1 All excluded applicants have the right of appeal. The complaints and appeals system operated by Bishopsgrrove does not preclude an applicant from using other external offices to handle their appeal/complaint e.g. Office of Ombudsman, An Bord Pleanala. Bishopsgrrove shall fully encourage applicants to use an advocate throughout the appeal or complaint process.

9.4.2 In the best interest of multi–agency relations, under no circumstances shall another partner agency provide accommodation at Bishopsgrrove for a person who has already been excluded.

10. BISHOPSGROVE ACCOMMODATION REGISTER (WAITING LIST)

10.1 Once an applicant has been successfully interviewed, his or her details will be logged on the Bishopsgrrove Student Accommodation Register in order of the date upon

- Disability Available ground floor rooms
- Ethnicity To be allocated in line with available local population statistics

13.1 The above targets need to be continually reviewed against staff resources, support from external partners/agencies and the suitability of other applicants available on the Student Accommodation Register.

13.2 The rooms accessible for wheel chair users will be let to able bodied young people. However, a successful applicant who requires a ground floor room will have preference and the existing student will be reallocated the next available room in line with their Licence Agreement.