



Lettings and Allocations – Policy Overview

Purpose

YMCA Black Country Group provides safe, affordable and supportive accommodation to help young people, vulnerable adults and families move towards independence. This policy explains how we allocate accommodation fairly, transparently and in line with housing legislation and regulatory standards. Our aim is to ensure that the right accommodation is offered to the right person at the right time, while supporting individuals to build stable and positive futures.

Our Approach – Person Centred, Co-Produced, Strengths Based and Trauma Informed

All lettings and allocations must follow trauma-informed principles. Staff should:

- Focus on “What does this person need?” rather than “What is wrong?”
- Ensure applicants feel safe, respected and supported
- Work collaboratively with referrers, local authorities and partner agencies
- Consider each application individually rather than applying blanket exclusions
- Support applicants to access alternative housing if YMCA accommodation is not suitable

Our approach recognises that past experiences of trauma may impact housing stability, and we work to create services that people trust and want to use.

Accommodation We Provide

YMCA Black Country Group offers several types of accommodation across the Black Country and Staffordshire Border areas:

- Supported Accommodation - For young people or adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and require housing support.
- Supported Lodgings - Accommodation within a family environment for young people who need additional stability and support.
- Y-Living Accommodation - Affordable accommodation for young people aged 18–35 who want safe, secure housing while working, studying or building independence.
- Living Springs - Accommodation for young families who need a safe and supportive environment.

All accommodation contributes to YMCA’s charitable purpose of supporting people experiencing hardship or housing need.

Terms of Occupation

Different types of accommodation use different housing agreements depending on the service provided. These may include Excluded Licences (common in supported accommodation), Licence Agreements, and Assured Periodic Tenancies (typically used within Y-Living and family accommodation). Most YMCA accommodation is transitional, meaning residents are usually expected to stay between three months and two years before moving on to more independent housing.

Eligibility and Referrals

Eligibility varies depending on the service, but applications are assessed individually based on need and suitability. General eligibility considerations include:

- Meeting the relevant age criteria
- Being homeless or at risk of homelessness (for supported services)
- Having appropriate support needs for the service
- Having a local connection or a valid reason for relocation
- Being able to contribute to a safe and balanced community

Applications may come through Local Authority Homelessness Pathways, Children’s Services or Adult Social Care, Housing Options Teams, Partner agencies (education providers, Youth Offending Teams etc.), Health professionals and Self-referrals. If an applicant is not suitable for YMCA accommodation, staff should offer advice and signposting to alternative housing options.



Assessment Process

Applicants are assessed to ensure the accommodation is safe and suitable for their needs. This may include completing an application or referral form, an assessment interview with housing staff, a risk and support needs assessment, verification of references or financial checks (for Y-Living) and credit checks where appropriate. The assessment helps determine housing need, support requirements, suitability for the service and whether the applicant can contribute to the community environment. Applicants will be informed of the outcome and next steps following assessment.

Waiting Lists and Offers

If suitable accommodation is not immediately available, the applicant may be placed on a waiting list. Waiting lists are reviewed regularly and applicants must inform YMCA if their circumstances change. When accommodation becomes available, a formal offer will be made, a move-in date will be agreed, and relevant paperwork and agreements will be completed before move-in.

Transfers

In some cases, residents may request to transfer to another YMCA property. Transfers are considered based on the resident's circumstances and needs, eligibility for the new service, community balance within the accommodation and any history of tenancy or licence breaches. Transfer requests must be made in writing and are usually responded to within 14 days.

Appeals

Applicants or residents may appeal decisions relating to refusal of accommodation, being removed from the waiting list, refusal of a transfer or the type or length of occupancy agreement offered. Appeals must normally be submitted within 21 days of the decision. Appeals are reviewed through a two-stage process, first the Housing Manager review and then the Head of Housing review (final stage). Appeals should be handled fairly, respectfully and within reasonable timescales.

Preventing Tenancy Fraud

YMCA takes steps to prevent and investigate tenancy fraud. This includes verifying identity and residency, completing reference and background checks, conducting property checks and tenancy audits, training staff to recognise signs of fraud and working with local authorities and partner agencies. Where fraud is identified, action may include tenancy enforcement, repossession or legal action.

Staff Responsibilities

Staff involved in lettings and allocations must:

- Follow the eligibility and assessment process
- Treat applicants fairly and consistently and ensure decisions are transparent and well documented
- Work with partner agencies and referral pathways
- Maintain balanced and safe residential communities
- Provide advice and support where accommodation cannot be offered

Key Message for Staff

Our role is to:

- ✓ Allocate YMCA accommodation fairly and transparently
- ✓ Ensure housing is safe, appropriate and suited to the individual's needs
- ✓ Work in a trauma-informed and person-centred way
- ✓ Support applicants through clear assessment and referral processes
- ✓ Help residents move towards independence and long-term housing stability