

## **Temporary Accommodation Request**

### **Background**

Asylum seekers presenting in the UK are first placed into Initial Accommodation centres (IA). They then undergo early assessments before being moved into dispersed accommodation while awaiting a decision on their claim for asylum.

Due to Covid19, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March the government announced that it would not move any people from this group out of their residences. This has meant that new accommodation needs to be sought quickly to meet the needs of new arrivals, as no dispersed accommodation will become available during this time.

Asylum seekers are normally only housed in local authorities who are designated dispersal areas, of which York is not. However, due to the immense pressure on the system, the Home Office has lifted this legislation, meaning that they can now be housed in any local authority.

### **Proposal**

Mears Group Ltd manage the contract for housing asylum seekers in Yorkshire. They have received an offer to use a hotel in York for a minimum of 3 months. Mears Group and the Home Office have approached City of York Council and the local CCG to note the use the hotel for this purpose. They have already setup a number of hotels across Yorkshire and the North East for this purpose since the start of Covid19.

Around 90 people would be placed at the hotel and they would only use one hotel in York. The residents are all expected to be individual adults. Families and children are already being housed in different areas. Mears Group will be responsible for providing food and welfare to the residents, under their contract with the Home Office. A welfare support manager would be on site during day time with on-call support available 24 hours. Hotel staff will be present round the clock. Migration Yorkshire, an independent non-profit organisation, are in place to support councils oversee and monitor the service provided.

There is no financial cost to CYC for the services and accommodation. Officers will take part in liaising and monitoring with stakeholders will be required and arrangements are in place. The only external statutory

responsibility is healthcare provision. York Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have led the response in this area and have confirmed that support will be available to residents if needed.

Due to the extended period of time people will be living in the hotel it is advised that the Council coordinates additional support through the voluntary sector. Communication is ongoing between the key voluntary groups and Migration Yorkshire to help understand their potential roles. Grant funding has been identified should the voluntary sectors responsibilities expand during the accommodation period.

There is no legal requirement for the Home Office to seek the Council's approval and there will be no formal contract.

The use of the hotel as an Initial Accommodation centre does not obligate the Council to house the user group beyond the temporary accommodation period. Once the pressures on the system have reduced, the people staying in York will be moved into dispersal accommodation across the wider region and continue through the normal asylum process. Note that the temporary accommodation in York is for a minimum of 3 months but this could be extended depending on pressures on the system from Covid19.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Council notes that Mears Group Ltd will be using the property in York for temporary accommodation. This is to ensure that asylum seekers continue to have access to accommodation and welfare during this challenging period.

It is recommended that the Council notes that the York CCG have agreed to the request from the Home Office to provide health support as required. The Council will therefore continue to engage with this temporary programme, in partnership with the Home Office, CCG, Mears Group and community partners.