

MEARS



Regency House
Management and
Operations Plan

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Introduction

In January 2019, Mears Group (“Mears”) were awarded a 10 year Asylum and Accommodation and Support Contract (AASC) by the Home Office. The contract requires Mears provide a range of services to asylum seekers (“Service Users”) across three regions of the United Kingdom: - North East Yorkshire and Humber (NEYH), Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Under the terms of the contract, Mears is required to provide two distinct forms of accommodation to Service Users in the NEYH:

- **Initial Accommodation (“IA”):** - Mears houses Service Users in hostel-type accommodation (“an IA”) for a 4-6 week period during which their claim for Asylum support is assessed by the Home Office;
- **Dispersal Accommodation (“DA”):** - Once Service Users receive Section 95 status, Mears is required to disperse such Service Users to private houses or houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) across the participating local authorities in the NEYH region.

IA represents the first stage in the Service User journey. As such, the numbers requiring IA at any time are directly related to the number of Service Users entering the system and can fluctuate significantly. Mears is obliged to make available a minimum nightly capacity of 330 IA bedspaces but must also provide “Overflow IA” bedspaces on occasions when demand exceeds 330.

Mears has a sub-contract in place with Urban Housing Limited for the provision of 330 dedicated IA bedspaces at Urban House, Wakefield, a facility that provides Service Users with a unified and coherent welcome centre along with health screening and welfare facilities. Since contract commencement, IA demand has consistently exceeded 330 [see table below]. Mears is currently housing these additional Service Users in a range of locations including HMOs and hotels. It has identified a compelling need to commission an Overflow IA facility as a means to enhance the safety, security and wellbeing of Service Users.

Mears contingency accommodation breakdown

Date	Number of Children	Number of families	Number of family SUs	Number of Single people	Total
02/12/2019	101	85	293	323	616
03/12/2019	110	98	286	332	618
04/12/2019	118	93	281	323	604
05/12/2019	131	102	290	328	618
06/12/2019	137	99	306	333	637
09/12/2019	142	100	311	337	648
10/12/2019	152	103	325	348	673
11/12/2019	152	106	337	344	681
12/12/2019	151	109	338	334	671
13/12/2019	144	105	327	348	675
16/12/2019	139	109	322	333	648
17/12/2019	138	102	315	318	633
18/12/2019	139	102	323	315	638
19/12/2019	142	102	334	313	648
20/12/2019	144	104	327	320	647
23/12/2019	140	101	311	321	636
24-26th/12/2019	142	102	317	319	636
27/12/2019	141	100	311	313	624
30/12/2019	132	96	299	316	615
31/12/2019	119	93	280	318	598
02/01/2020	120	94	283	316	599
03/01/2020	119	91	276	313	589
06/01/2020	111	87	256	311	569
07/01/2020	103	85	252	300	553
08/01/2020	103	89	251	306	557
09/01/2020	107	92	262	314	575
10/01/2020	106	86	245	291	536
13/01/2020	106	86	246	299	545
14/01/2020	108	87	250	293	544
15/01/2020	104	84	244	286	528

This document sets out the proposal to utilise Regency House, Sheffield as Mears' NEYH Overflow Initial Accommodation facility for the NEYH region. In explaining our operational plan and proposals, we summarise how we will ensure the safety, security and wellbeing of Service Users.

Mears has built extensive relationships with key stakeholders during the tendering process, mobilisation and transition process and the aim is to continue building on these relationships as we move into Business as Usual in the operational period.

For the duration of AASC, the housing and support provider must create an Initial Accommodation service for an Asylum Seekers stay' in NEYH region. Integral to Mears' delivery model is the provision of an integrated Overflow Initial Accommodation (OIA) facility that will house Service Users during the first three to four weeks of the asylum process.

Mears is committed to providing Service Users with decent, safe and secure accommodation. The proposed facility in Sheffield will fully comply with both the Home Office specification and Sheffield City Council planning/licensing requirements.



History and
logistics of the site

Location

- **Regency House**
75-77 St Mary's Rd
Sheffield
S2 4AN

Former and Proposed Use

Up until 2019, Regency House provided self-catering accommodation for up to 75 students in Higher Education. The facility incorporated a range of communal facilities including a games and TV rooms. The site benefits from good connections to Sheffield city centre.

Mears propose to utilise the building as a self-catering Overflow Initial Accommodation (OIA) facility incorporating 73 rooms, including 4 accessible bedrooms. The facility will be used by a combination of family and single Service Users. Mears propose to make modifications to the building to ensure that that it is fit for purpose for its intended use.

Proposed Site Layout

We have attached preliminary drawings that set out the proposed site layout.

As detailed in the drawings

- **The ground floor will comprise:**
 - **4 accessible bedrooms**
 - **A Reception and Administration facility**
 - **Separate communal rooms for families, females only and mixed gender**
 - **A courtyard facility**
 - **A teaching room**
 - **A suite of offices, meeting rooms and welfare rooms**
 - **Storage / laundry facilities**
 - **Toilets**
 - **Migrant Help confidential room**
 - **Provision for Health provider**
- **The first, second and third floors of the building will comprise**
 - **73 bedrooms**
 - **16 communal shower facilities**
 - **14 communal WC facilities**
 - **7 En suite toilet and shower facilities**

Service User Cohort

The facility will provide temporary accommodation for asylum seekers (“Service Users”) who are generally towards the start of the process of claiming asylum in the UK. The Home Office process dictates that all such Service Users must be housed in an Initial Accommodation facility for a period of approximately 4 – 6 weeks prior to their further dispersal into participating local authority areas.

Within the North East, Yorkshire & Humber (NEYH) region, the principal IA facility will continue to be Urban House, Wakefield. Urban House is a 330 bedspace facility through which all Service Users dispersed to the NEYH region will continue to be processed. Upon arrival at Urban House, all Service Users:

- **Receive a detailed induction**
- **Undergo health screening**
- **Have access to dedicated resident welfare support**

Regency House will complement Urban House in Wakefield by providing overflow IA bedspaces. Mears envisages that the Service User journey will operate as follows:

- **All new Service Users will continue to access Urban House where they will receive induction, health screening and welfare support services**
- **During periods of high volume (e.g. in which overflow bedspaces are required), those Service Users deemed as more independent / requiring less welfare support will be transferred to Regency House part way through their IA stay, from which they will subsequently be dispersed into participating local authority areas.**

We note the need to manage traffic and to minimise any adverse impact on the local community. As such, arrivals and departures will be scheduled within working hours. All Service Users will be transported in small groups, using unmarked vehicles as required by Mears’ contract with the Home Office. Service Users will be dropped off at the building entrance to the rear of the building. The road is quiet and has space available for drop offs, where service users can safely transfer from vehicles to Regency House.

We envisage that the Service User’s average length of stay in Regency House will be significantly less than 4 weeks. However, we note that this will be affected by factors such as overall volumes, availability of dispersal accommodation, etc.

Staffing Structure

The building will be run and staffed 24/7 and 365 days of the year. There will be out-of-hours Security Officers on site who will be able to escalate any situation to an on-call member of the management team if necessary, providing 24/7 management. This will ensure a visible presence and point of contact for local residents and Service Users is on site at all times.

We will be looking to recruit all staff from the local area and anticipate that the staffing structure to incorporate the following roles:

- **Manager (Hostel Manager)**
- **2 Resident Welfare Workers**
- **1 Head of Security and 3 Security Staff**
- **1 Housekeeper and 3 Housekeeping Staff**
- **2 Maintenance Operatives**

Mears staff will always conduct themselves professionally and will be trained to specifically deal with engaging with Service Users, identifying vulnerabilities, and determining an appropriate dispersal strategy that is sensitive to each individual and family cohort.



Service
User Requirements

Regency House will provide sufficient facilities and service to cater for the needs of Service Users. These are detailed below:

Catering

Regency House is a self-catered facility, with each room containing all the equipment needed to provide a fully self-contained kitchen facility, where Service Users will be able to prepare their own meals. Mears will assist by providing information to Service Users of the amenities around them, taking in to account specific dietary requirements i.e. Halal Butchers.

By providing Service Users with their own cooking facilities we are enabling them to ready themselves for dispersed accommodation, where they will be expected to prepare and consume their own meals, without assistance from any staff on site. Staff at Regency House will be available to assist Service Users with food preparation should they require it.

Housekeeping and Laundry

Service users are responsible for ensuring their own rooms are kept clean and tidy and they will be provided with the resources to do so. Assistance will be given to residents if required. The housekeeping team will service all bedrooms prior to arrival and on departure of all Service Users. Bed linen and towels will be provided upon arrival to every Service User and will be replenished weekly.

Housekeeping staff will also ensure that all Service Users have access to laundry facilities, where they can do their own laundry.

Welfare

Service Users will have access to dedicated Resident Welfare Managers (RWM) with whom they can discuss welfare matters on a drop-in basis. In addition, space will be made available to Migrant Help in their capacity as the national Advice, Issues Reporting and Eligibility (AIRE) provider thereby enabling AIRE representatives to meet with Service Users on site.

A key focus for one of the RWM will be meaningful activities for the occupants. The RWM will dedicate 20 hours per week to organising and facilitating a varied programme of activities focusing on the different Service User types. This could be basic ESOL / conversation sessions, play sessions for children, craft activities, Life in the UK sessions etc. We will also be working with local VCS organisations to support and expand these activities where appropriate.

Migrant Help

Migrant Help is a national charity offering support and guidance to vulnerable migrants, helping them feel protected, informed and safe.

Their asylum services, AIRE contract, provide free independent advice, guidance and information on the asylum process, accommodation, financial support, finding legal representation and any other asylum related matters. They run a national helpline that is free and accessible to all asylum seekers in the UK.

Service Users will have their initial induction from Migrant Help in Wakefield, where we anticipate them staying for 7-10 days.. They will then be transported to Regency House, where Migrant Help will have use of a dedicated, confidential office on site. At Regency House Service Users will have access to drop in sessions from Migrant Help on dedicated days throughout the week, where they will be offered Q&A sessions, advice and guidance, should they require it.

Health Partner

All Service Users will first be accommodated in Wakefield where they will be seen by the dedicated health team on site who are commissioned to deliver health screenings. It is only those SUs with no health vulnerabilities or complex needs that will be moved to Regency House. However, it will be necessary to have a local agreement in place in Sheffield for Service users to be seen if they become unwell. We are currently in talks with NHS England to determine the specific health provision for Service Users.

We have an existing relationship with the Mulberry Practise was we may explore further depending on the steer from NHSE. The Mulberry practice is a 15 minute walk from Regency House and is currently used by Service Users in Dispersed Accommodation.

Transport

Mears is required to provide transportation to and from Urban House / Regency House, which includes the arrival into IA and from IA to Dispersed Accommodation. Transport would also be provided to attend interviews with the Home Office as well as any other Home Office approved journeys. Service users will not have their own cars. All Service Users will be transported in small groups, using unmarked vehicles as required by Mears' contract with the Home Office. In order to minimise disruption to the local community Mears would anticipate all drop offs to be once a day, Mon – Fri, within the hours of 09:00 – 17:00.

Communal Facilities

Communal rooms will be provided for different cohorts of Service Users. All rooms will adhere to HMO space standards and all communal areas, corridors, fire escapes and building entrances will be monitored using CCTV. Communal spaces will be provided for:

- **Families with a children's play area**
- **Females only**
- **Mixed gender**

The IA facility provides a shared living model allowing people to access peer support and companionship to help combat the loneliness and fear that many people feel in those first few weeks in a new country. As a nation committed to improved mental health, Mears believes that the IA provides first and foremost, a safe space with structure, choice, essential services, privacy, communal space, recreational activities and play areas for children – all of which combine to provide a welcoming, holistic, supported environment for asylum seekers when they arrive in Sheffield. The communal spaces will be utilised for providing opportunities for involvement and activities on site for Service Users.

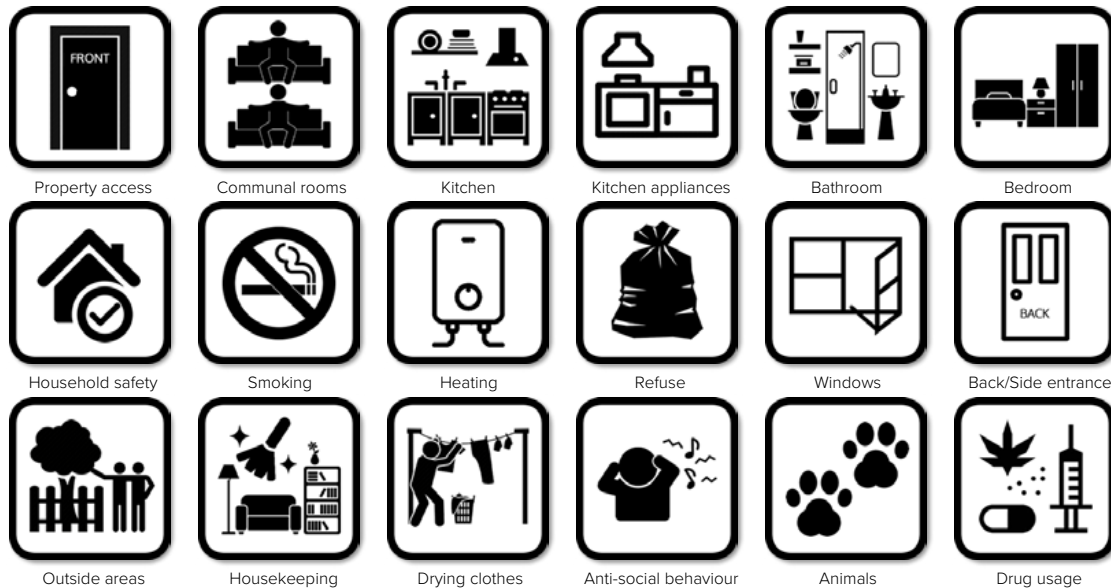
Example Activity Timetable (Currently run at Urban House):

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
10.00am - 12.00pm	English conversation class	Children's Group	Children's Film	Children's Group	English conversation class	Children & Women's Group
	Provided by City of Sanctuary Volunteers	Provided by City of Sanctuary Volunteers	Provided by In House Urban House/NHS	Provided by UHS Wakefield Volunteers	Provided by City of Sanctuary Volunteers	Provided by UHS Wakefield Volunteers
	Aimed at All SU's in the Hostel	Aimed at All SU's in the Hostel	Aimed at all families in the hostel	Aimed at all families with children	Aimed at All SU's in the Hostel	Aimed at all families in the hostel as well as single women
	Classroom	Playroom	Family Lounge	Playroom	Classroom	
			RED CROSS Retracing Service 10.00 -12.00			
		Bingo - UHS Volunteers	Arts & Crafts - UHS & NHS			
2.00pm - 4.00pm	Women's Group	Music & Art Group	H.A.R.P	Boardgames	Children's Society	
	Provided by UHS & volunteers, Wakefield	Provided by Refugee Council	Health Access Related Program	Provided City of Sanctuary Volunteer	Provided by Refugee Council/ Barnardo's	
	Aimed at Women and children	Aimed at all SU's in Hostel	Provided by Refugee Council	Aimed at Single SU's in hostel	Aimed at families with children	
	Playroom	Classroom	Aimed at All SU's in Hostel	Quiet Lounge	Quiet Lounge	
2.00pm - 4.00pm	Children's Film	Children's Film	Children's Film	Children's Film	Children's Film	
	Provided by In House Urban House/NHS	Provided by In House Urban House/NHS	Provided by In House Urban House/NHS	Provided by In House Urban House/NHS	Provided by In House Urban House/NHS	
	Aimed at all families in the hostel	Aimed at all families in the hostel	Aimed at all families in the hostel	Aimed at all families in the hostel	Aimed at all families in the hostel	
5.30pm - 7.30pm	MESMAC HIV/ AIDS SUPPORT	English conversation class			Bingo	
	Provided by MESMAC Wakefield	Provided by City of Sanctuary Volunteers			Provided by City of Sanctuary Volunteers	
	Aimed at all SU's who require support with HIV related health needs	Aimed at All SU's in the Hostel			Aimed at all SU's in Hostel	
	Quiet Lounge	Classroom			Classroom	

Induction / Orientation Process

All Service Users will receive their main induction at Urban House, prior to their stay at Regency House. They will receive a comprehensive induction upon their arrival at Regency House, which will be delivered via specially trained Mears Resident Welfare staff and will form an essential part of ensuring the safety and security of Service Users. It will be used to make Service Users aware of the features of the building, evacuation procedures, house rules, acceptable behaviours along with any security advice in respect of accessing the city centre / surrounding areas. They will be given information on the local area and all activities available to them.

Service Users will be allocated rooms – All rooms will be occupied by either singles or families. Single Service Users will have sole occupancy of a room and will not be required to share.



Local Amenities

Service Users will be provided with welcome packs upon arrival, which will include information on accessing local amenities and green spaces.

Supermarket Aldi is situated to the south-west and is approximately a 5 minute walk away. The City Centre to the north includes Sainsbury's and Tesco Express which are around a 10 minute walk away.

For open space, the majority of this is to the south or east of the site. Within 20-minute walking distance there are several areas of open space and parks. This includes smaller pocket parks within 5 minute walking distance, such as Clough Road Square and Duchess Road Park to the south, as well as larger recreational parks including Mount Pleasant Park, Norfolk Park and South Street Park.



Site Management

Maintenance of site

Regency House will be fully inspected every month by Mears' on-site maintenance operatives, who will be responsible for the regular upkeep and maintenance of the site, ensuring all routine maintenance is carried out. As per contract requirements, the Home Office will also complete a regular audit to ensure that all standards are maintained.

Mears will ensure that:

- **All areas are clean, safe and secure.**
- **All external areas will be kept clean, free of litter and rubbish will be stored safely and securely with regular collections.**
- **Graffiti or rubbish is removed as quickly as possible.**
- **Any damage or defects notified to the Manager will be repaired as soon as possible and in line with contractual timeframes by the maintenance team.**
- **All fixtures and fittings will be inspected and comply with relevant statutory obligations.**
- **All communal spaces are kept clean and in a good state of repair.**

Security and Health and Safety

Prior to the site being occupied, both a Health and Safety Risk Assessment and a Fire Risk Assessment will be carried out. We will ensure that fire escape routes and extinguishment materials are incorporated into the building as per statutory requirements and guidelines.

Staff will undertake health and safety training in issues appropriate for their area of responsibility. All Service Users will be made aware of evacuation plans during their induction to Regency House. As part of their induction, all Service Users will be briefed on safe cooking methods, escape routes and assembly points.

The security team will always have 2 members of staff on duty, 24/7, 365 days a year. Additional security is provided by CCTV cameras, which will be monitored by the security team. This footage can be stored for a period of time should they be required at a later date.

Whilst Service Users are allowed to enter and exit the facility at all times during daylight hours, it is important to note that Mears will impose the following rules / processes on Service User behaviour / usage of the facility:

- **All Service Users will be required to sign in / sign out of the facility, thereby allowing Mears to keep a record of who is in the building at any one time**
- **Entrance to the building will be via an intercom system, thereby enabling Mears staff to control unauthorised access to the building**
- **All staff, visitors and residents are required to sign in and out when entering and leaving the site.**
- **It will be a condition of the IA that Service Users do not stay out overnight: any absence without prior agreement will not be permitted. We will require that all Service Users are back in the building by 10pm, thereby minimising any adverse impact on the local community**
- **Service Users will be required to refrain from any activity that might cause nuisance to local residents or bring undue attention to individual Service Users and / or Regency House**
- **Service Users will be advised not to congregate in groups.**
- **We do not anticipate noise levels to be high as Mears operate a zero-tolerance policy on alcohol and we will have 2 members of staff on site at all times.**

If a service user does not comply with the rules of the site they will be issued with a warning letter and the Home Office will be informed. Any continued ant-social behaviour could put a service users Home Office support at risk.

We will engage with the local Police to work in partnership with them, inviting them to visit the site regularly. Any criminal activity will be reported immediately to the Police and the Home Office informed.



Local Community

Community Liaison

The Mears Resident Welfare staff will be supported by a Partnership Manager who will provide dedicated links and representation at regular multi agency, VCS and local housing forums and will ensure that all interested parties are kept informed with any updates on Regency House.

We will ensure that:

- **A responsible member of staff will be available on site outside normal working hours.**
- **A Mears representative will be available to meet with and discuss any concerns which adjoining residents and local members of the community may have.**
- **Any complaints or comments received about the site or its occupants will be dealt with in a timely and courteous manner, and that the person who made the complaint will be notified of the action taken and outcome.**
- **We engage with the police and fire authorities to ensure any concerns are addressed in an open and transparent forum.**
- **The team will engage with local community groups, third sector and faith groups, the local authority and all key stakeholder to facilitate mutual understanding and sharing of information.**

The health and wellbeing of our Service Users and the local community is of the utmost priority. The IA will deliver the first in a series of positive outcomes for Service Users. It will help to provide assurance that they have the tools and capabilities to integrate into communities once sustainable place-based dispersal takes place.

Managing the Impact on local Service / Community

Mears recognises the need to minimise any adverse impact on both local services / local community. From our experience of running similar IAs across 3 regions of the UK, we set out projected impacts below.

In order to qualify for Home Office accommodation, Service Users need to be able to self-care. As such, any impact on Social Services should be minimal. However, Social Services may be called upon, on rare occasions, if a person presents with complex needs and/or requirements and may need the help of specialist agencies. In this respect, we note our intention to utilise the Urban House site in Wakefield for any Service Users with specific vulnerabilities / needs.

All Service Users within NEYH will receive a health screening appointment within the Urban House facility. Any Service User who presents with a specific health need will continue to be accommodated at Urban House for the duration of their stay in IA. As such, we do not envisage that Regency House will create any specific pressure on local health services.

Given the short amount of time asylum seekers remain in Initial Accommodation, children are not registered at schools until they are moved to their dispersed accommodation.

Asylum seekers are not allowed to work whilst their claim for asylum is being assessed, nor do they have access to any benefits that would be afforded to a UK citizen. They do however receive a daily payment for subsistence. There are a number of local shops close to the site and the city centre is within walking distance of the site.

Engagement to Date

We have had several meetings with Sheffield City Council that culminated in a visit to Regency House by a delegation consisting of – Lead Member / Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities, Community & Cohesion Manager, Exec Director of Housing and Communities. Sheffield City Council are supportive of the provision of high quality accommodation and support services to service users and stated their desire to ensure that the ‘customer journey’ for each service user is maximised.

Sheffield City Council has some concerns about the building namely:

- **Concerns about the risk of children running out onto the busy dual carriageway**
- **Concerns that occupancy levels could be increased above 75 bedspaces**
- **Concerns about the lack of external leisure space for singles and lack of external play are for families.**
- **Questions around how the building would be managed from a security and a health and safety perspective.**
- **Concerns about the proximity to the City Centre**

Mears have responded to all the concerns raised, in summary they will be dealt with in 3 ways:

- 1. The redesign of the entire ground floor to control access and egress and to make provision for**
 - **External space**
 - **Training / Meeting rooms**
 - **Vehicular access**
 - **Controlled access through the facility**
- 2. Provision of a bespoke operation and management service that will provide a 24/7 operational, FM and security service.**
- 3. Implementation of an effective service specific allocations procedure, which will see this facility working in unison with the Wakefield IA service at Urban House. Those service users that do not require intensive support will be moved from Wakefield to Sheffield thereby ensuring that the Wakefield IA facility is always available for those that need it.**

We have already started engaging with the LA - Public consultation and community engagement to commence as stated above - We have a planning consultant on board to support with this.

Works required to the building are detailed in the preliminary drawings attached. Works to include a redesign of the entire ground floor to control access and egress, provision of external space, provision of training and health screening rooms. We will also have controlled access through the facility. A number of rooms will also need to be adapted to accommodate families.



Regency House
Accommodation Schedule

Regency House Accommodation Schedule

Floor	Description	No. Bedrooms
Ground	Accessible Rooms	4
First	Family Rooms	4 (Rooms 103, 104, 110, 115, 124 & 126)
	Single Rooms	17
Second	Family Rooms	7 (Rooms 229, 231, 232, 240, 242, 250 & 251)
	Single Rooms	15
Third	Family Rooms	6 (Rooms 354, 361, 364, 366, 367 & 369)
	Single Rooms	11
Fourth	Family Rooms	2 (Rooms 473 & 476)
	Single Rooms	7
TOTAL		73