

## **Lilycross House – Frequently Asked Questions**

A planning application for a change of use of a former care home in Halton (Lilycross House) has been submitted to Halton Borough Council. If the planning application is successful, Serco will use it to provide initial accommodation for Asylum seekers.

### **1. Who is Serco?**

Serco is a service and outsourcing company that has been delivering essential public services for more than 40 years. In 2012, Serco was awarded the contract by the Home Office to provide accommodation and transport services for Asylum Seekers in the North West.

### **2. What is Initial Accommodation (IA)?**

Initial Accommodation is a block-based provision to accommodate Asylum seekers whilst the Home Office undertakes initial interviews. Length of stay is approximately one to four weeks after which asylum seekers are dispersed in to accommodation throughout the North West (excluding Halton), whilst their application for asylum, is being assessed.

### **3. What will the staffing levels be at Lilycross House?**

Fully trained support and management staff will run Lilycross House, with 24 hour cover provided, 7 days per week. In addition to the Support workers and Manager, there will be additional staff with responsibility for catering and cleaning.

### **4. Will catering be provided?**

Yes, there are full catering facilities on site and asylum seekers will be provided with three meals a day.

### **5. What other facilities are on site at Lilycross House?**

Laundry facilities will also be available as will space for a play area for children; a prayer/quiet room and private consultation rooms.

### **6. Will the Asylum seekers be using local schools?**

No. 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.

### **7. Will the Asylum seekers be using local health services such as GPs?**

All our asylum seekers are registered with a health care provider in Liverpool (UC24). Local services will only be required in the event of a medical emergency.

### **8. What about other social services?**

Social Services will be called upon if a person presents with complex needs and/or requirements, which need the help of specialist agencies.

### **9. What transport will Serco provide to the Asylum seekers?**

Serco plans to provide transportation to and from Liverpool to ensure there is continued access for interviews with the Home Office; the Healthcare provider (UC24) and support agencies contracted to The Home Office. Ad Hoc transportation, i.e. to attend places of worship, will be provided upon request.

### **10. How will Serco ensure the health, safety and well-being of the asylum seekers and the local community?**

The health and wellbeing of our asylum seekers and the local community is of the utmost priority. Serco will closely engage with the police and fire authorities to ensure any concerns are addressed in an open and transparent forum.

Serco has a dedicated relationship team who are responsible for any safeguarding issues. The team also engage with local community groups; 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and faith groups, to facilitate mutual understanding through workshops, drop-in groups and activities.

All of the above agencies, including police and fire, meet on a regular basis at the Multi Agency Forum (MAF), which Serco will also attend.

#### **11. What will the asylum seekers do every day?**

Asylum seekers are free to come and go and there are no restrictions placed upon their day to day whereabouts. There are a number of appointments they are required to attend with the Home Office. In addition our relationship team will facilitate on site activities.

#### **12. Are the asylum seekers able to work and/or have access to benefits?**

No, the 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 of £5.00 per person.

#### **13. What is the agreement between the Local Authority and Serco?**

The contract to provide initial accommodation services is between the Home Office and Serco. The Local Authority are consulted before any procurement of property takes place within their region. In this case the landlord has, at the request of Serco, submitted the planning application which will go through the due process.

#### **14. What are the requirements on Serco and the Local Authority to consult with the local community?**

There is no requirement on a change of use planning application to consult with interested parties, as this is part of the due process once the application is submitted and logged.

#### **15. What checks are made on the property?**

All Serco's properties adhere to a high standard in line with local and national legislation. In addition, Serco is bound by the contractual requirements as identified by the Home Office. Our in-house compliance team will be conducting audits on a regular basis. Similarly, the Home Office have their own audit team who regularly inspect our existing IA Blocks and dispersed portfolio. Lilycross House will be included in this audit regime.

#### **16. Lilycross previously accommodated 60 residents. How will it accommodate up to 120 people?**

Serco is able to place two Asylum seekers in each room. This is as per the room sharing criteria laid down by Local Authorities with appropriate access to facilities. Room sharing will only be implemented if there is an increase in demand.

#### **17. Is Serco concerned that Lilycross is away from local amenities and an "out of centre" location?**

No. We will be providing a full range of support 'wrap around' services on-site, along with additional transport provision.

#### **18. How will safeguarding work with a mixed group of families, children, single males, etc?**

Serco will accommodate a mix of singles people and families in a number of blocks currently used for initial accommodation. In this case, each floor has secure entry mechanisms so that only Asylum seekers who are allocated a room on a particular floor can gain access. In addition there will be support staff on site, who are fully aware of the safeguarding requirements

#### **19. Can you give staffing ratio numbers?**

Our normal ratio in Initial Accommodation is approximately one support worker to 60 Asylum seekers. In addition, there will be a permanent site manager with additional catering, cleaning and maintenance staff also on site.

**20. What criteria are used to locate Asylum Seekers to Lilycross?**

Serco will always match demand to availability. The number of single people and families that arrive varies throughout the year, so Lilycross will be used on the same basis as our other Initial Accommodation facilities.

**21. Do you envisage any site access safety issues - in vehicles or on foot - as Lilycross is on a busy junction?**

No. Serco briefs all our Asylum seekers on the basics of road safety as part of their induction. We do not anticipate traffic to significantly increase as only Serco authorised vehicles will be using the site.

**22. Do you have crime statistics for similar establishments?**

Through our close engagement with local police authorities, we are advised that crime has not increased in areas where any of our properties are located.

**23. Will Asylum Seekers hang around on the streets outside Lilycross?**

Serco advises Asylum seekers not to congregate in groups, as we are mindful that some members of the local community could perceive this as unsettling. However, Asylum seekers are free to come and go and there are no restrictions placed on their day-to-day movements.

**24. Does the site have suitable services (gas, electricity, sewerage) to meet the needs of 120 residents?**

Yes, we have been assured of this by the landlord and will confirm this with more in-depth inspections if the application for change of use, is granted.

**25. What will be the mix of single males, families and children?**

The property is able to accommodate an equal mix of single males, families and children, which will vary dependant on demand.

**26. What steps will be taken to minimise noise from Lilycross?**

We do not anticipate noise levels to be significantly high and as the property will be staffed 24 hours a day, this will be closely managed.

**27. Are records maintained to ensure Asylum Seekers do not “disappear”? What happens if they do?**

If any of our Asylum seekers do not obtain prior notification before leaving the Block for more than 24 hours, Serco will report any absences to the Home Office for further action.

**28. Are linguists on site to help with language issues?**

Yes. Serco has a contract for 24 hour access to a telephone based interpreter service.

**29. How many Asylum Seekers are currently located in Halton?**

Serco do not currently accommodate any Asylum seekers in Halton.