

**If you are an agency and wish to refer a service user to the Winchester Churches Nightshelter (WCNS), the procedure is as follows:**

1. Please ring the WCNS to see if a vacancy exists – 01962 862050 (please note normal office hours, weekdays only, from 8.00am to 4.00pm).

2. Download Nightshelter “Referral and Risk Assessment” form.

3. Please complete this WCNS Risk Assessment as comprehensively as possible, we cannot accept referrals without fully completed paperwork.

4. Please email to admin@wcns.org.uk by 2.00pm if looking for same day admission.

5. Should there be a bed space available, the WCNS office will contact the agency for either further information or if we are able to offer a bed for that night. We will discuss the outcome of the referral with you; should you need a written explanation of the decision we make, please request a copy.

We prioritise the most vulnerable people and those with a Winchester connection, although we do accept referrals in from other Hampshire authorities and housing agencies (this does not include Portsmouth or Southampton as they are separate unitary authorities).

WCNS is committed to a policy of equality and diversity, as well as safeguarding adults at risk, regardless of gender, race, disability, sexuality or religion/beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, age, gender reassignment or pregnancy/maternity.

**Agencies PLEASE NOTE: If your client does not have any local connection to Winchester or Hampshire then we ask that you as the referring agency continues to search for accommodation for their client in their area as we will not be able to house clients here in Winchester owing to lack of available properties.**

All agencies need to be aware that at the end of eight weeks those with a proven connection to Hampshire will need to be reconnected back to your service as part of their care plan, so please plan for this at time of referral. Everyone needs to be aware that private rental in the Winchester area is extremely expensive and very limited. We plan on a longer stay of about three months for those with proven Winchester connection.

**Referral process:**

* **Please do not assume that because you have emailed the paperwork that a bed is guaranteed. The Night staff may make the final decision as to whether to admit or not – based on their risk assessment of the individual presenting at the door at that moment.**
* You are welcome to bring prospective residents around the WCNS to view our facilities if you wish, but please do book a visit in advance, or they can view the Nightshelter on our website.
* We are unable to pre-book beds in advance but you are welcome to send referrals through to us for assessment in advance of a bed space becoming available.

Please do pass on the following **IMPORTANT INFORMATION to your clients:**

* On entry we will require a National Insurance number, details of any benefits received and proof of ID.
* We try to keep the Nightshelter safe for all our vulnerable residents, so we do not allow alcohol or illegal drugs to come on site. We will test residents prior to entry for their alcohol levels on a nightly basis. The aim of the WCNS is to work with people in housing need and this includes those who currently use a range of legal and illegal drugs as well as alcohol. We offer specialist on-site support, as well as links to off-site support agencies for those coping with drug or alcohol addictions. However, we also have a duty of care to reduce harm and to ensure the safety of all our residents and volunteers, and for those reasons we do undertake drug and alcohol testing as we see appropriate. All prospective residents need to be aware of this before committing to stay.
* Residents should be aware that they can remain on site for meetings or training during the day. We do ask those not having meetings to leave the Nightshelter by 8.30am each morning. However, all are expected to attend weekly support meetings, budgeting advice sessions and other care plan meetings with staff or the Manager. There is a local Day Centre only ten minutes walk from the WCNS, open Monday to Friday, and Saturday mornings, where residents may spend the day and eat a mid-day meal if they wish. We are next door to the Winchester Discovery Centre (library), where our residents are made very welcome.
* For a map and information as to how to reach us please refer to our website, [www.wcns.org.uk](http://www.wcns.org.uk).

We trust this explains the procedure for you but please do contact us if you have queries.

**NEW RESIDENT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

**We offer a service to those with housing related support needs. This service is available for people who meet the following criteria:**

* Men and women, 18-65 years, who are not considered, after risk assessment, to be too high a danger to themselves, to staff, volunteers or other residents, or to need more support than we can offer.
* Are considered safe and suitable for admission by the admissions staff (or the Night Project Worker) who has the authority to determine whether we are able to allow entry to a prospective resident.
* All residents will need to fully engage with Support staff and WCNS Manager during their stay.

**We also expect that residents will be able to meet the following criteria** (we can offer help if residents have initial difficulties):

* National Insurance number
* Payment, when in receipt of benefits, of £2 per night
* ID (preferably in two forms)

***If there is more than one applicant for one bed space, the priority will go to the applicant with greatest need; if all applicants have a similar level of need, priority will be based on those with a local connection to Winchester or to Hampshire.***

**We are not able to admit individuals who:**

* Are over the legal limit (35µg/100ml) breath alcohol at time of entry at night (tested by breathalyser), or who are in possession of alcohol unless it is handed to the Night Project Worker for safekeeping until the next morning.
* Appear to the Night Project Worker to be under the influence or in possession of drugs, or drugs apparatus (we have facilities for the disposal of drugs, drug apparatus and alcohol before entry).
* Are not prepared to undergo search for banned/excluded items.
* Display violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour (or have a history of doing so) that would jeopardise the safety of other residents.
* Possess offensive weapons.
* Have a history of arson (before we can make further enquiries).
* Have been served an exclusion order (as determined by the WCNS manager) by the Nightshelter in the past. *Those trying to gain entry who have recently been excluded from another local agency or WCNS will need to wait for WCNS staff to discuss with the agency involved before a final decision on entry is made.*
* Anyone under MAPPA (before WCNS is able to discuss with the agencies involved).

In all cases the Manager is willing to meet up with and interview people in these categories and to determine specialised and specific care and support plans should it be safe to allow admittance to the Nightshelter.

Sadly we cannot accommodate families, couples, children or pets at the WCNS. However, in very exceptional circumstances we have provision for accommodation of dogs, not on-site but in professionally run boarding kennels which we arrange for a temporary period for those vulnerable and with proven Winchester connection.