

FAQs – Canonsgrove:

Why is Canonsgrove being hailed as a success?

The approach taken at Canonsgrove to support rough sleeping has not been seen in the County before. The commitment from all partners to provide joined-up support to our complex and vulnerable clients has made a real difference. The commitment of the YMCA Dulverton Group, the District Council, Mental Health Services, SCC Social Care Services, the NHS, Drug and Alcohol Services, Open Door, Salvation Army, RAFT and others has meant that many of our clients have been able to get the support they need, in safe accommodation and start to rebuild their lives. We know that our interventions have saved people's lives.

To date we have moved on 16 people from Canonsgrove into other accommodation. For some of these, the idea of them having built enough resilience to move on into more independent accommodation would have been unthinkable before Canonsgrove.

What are your plans for Canonsgrove for the future?

We are looking to extend the lease for 18 months with break clauses to allow us time to determine what the future accommodation need in our District is for rough sleepers and single homeless and what is the best accommodation mix to deliver this. We will then undertake an options appraisal to consider how best we can deliver this for the future. We will look at Canonsgrove as one of the options, but it is by no means the only option and we are also in discussion with Arc about accommodation in Taunton and will consider other alternatives as well. We will then bring back to Scrutiny and Executive the proposals for Somerset West and Taunton Council members to consider. We are also working with the Health and Wellbeing Board (a formal committee of the County Council responsible for promoting better partnership working between health and local government) to ensure that future provision has strong multi-agency commitment to make it work. In summary although we are considering whether Canonsgrove could be part of a longer term solution for homeless people, no decision has been taken and it is only an option at this time.

Does the future accommodation solution need to be at Canonsgrove?

No. Although we have achieved significant success at Canonsgrove, some of which has been due to the site layout, accommodation and surrounding open space, the most important factor is the multiagency working to look at the holistic needs of individuals and to address these collectively. We are working with the Health and Wellbeing Board and partners to build on this commitment to make this approach part of whatever future longer-term accommodation we progress.

We have heard that our clients don't want to be at Canonsgrove and want to be in town. Is this true?

We know that some clients have said it is the best thing that has happened to them and love the accommodation and location. Others would prefer to be closer to the town. All clients that are placed at Canonsgrove are there by choice and are free to leave although there are limited alternatives of supported accommodation available.

Are you allowing people from outside of the District to stay at Canonsgrove?

Homelessness legislation only gives us a responsibility for having a homelessness duty for those with a local connection to Somerset West and Taunton (lived in the district for six of the past twelve months, or three of the past five years; or employed on a permanent contract of not less than 16 hpw, or have immediate family living in the district). For other people who arrive in the district seeking help, we will determine the District area where they have a Local connection and work to reconnect them with this District where they can then receive the necessary support and assistance. There are exceptions to this rule, namely those fleeing violence or harassment or domestic abuse and for who it would be unsafe to stay in their areas of Local Connection, the majority of people who approach us for accommodation who don't have a local connection are refused.

Why do people from Canonsgrove behave in the way they do in our community?

Every one of our clients is an individual and has their own story that has led to them ultimately becoming homeless. Our clients' backgrounds cover all walks in society from teachers and chefs to care leavers and those who left school without an education. A high proportion of them have underlying health conditions (physical and mental). The impact of rough sleeping on a person's health is significant; rough sleepers on the streets only have an average life expectancy of 47.

National studies show that 80% of homeless people in England have reported poor mental health with 45% having been diagnosed with a mental health condition. Some of our clients

have addictions as well, with the most common being alcohol dependency. For some, if they were to suddenly stop drinking, they would die.

At Canonsgrove we are trying to support them in a joined-up way with partners to help them move on with their lives.

What should I do if I see criminal or anti-social behaviour?

If the concern is in relation to criminal activity, contact the police on 101

You can also report antisocial behaviour to the police on: www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report/anti-social-behaviour . You should then receive a reference number that can be reviewed by the Neighbourhood Policing Team or the Streetwise Team.

If it is an emergency, contact the police on 999.

If it is in relation to our clients committing antisocial behaviour, please notify us through Canonsgrove@ymca-dg.org

What are the House Rules at Canonsgrove?

A copy of the House Rules is attached. This is a living document that is under constant review.



Canonsgrove
House Rules - Revised

What is your policy on drug use on and off site, including the purchase of drugs?

We do not condone illegal drug use of any kind, whether that be on or off site. We are vigilant to ensure that there is no drug dealing on site and clients are made very aware that such activity could lead to immediate eviction. Drug dealing off site is a more difficult issue as it is hard, if not impossible, for YMCA Dulverton Group and local authority staff to be able to consistently watch off-site areas even though we regularly drive and walk around the local area and are vigilant when we do so. Local people are advised to contact the police if they believe that drug dealing is taking place off site. If there is sufficient evidence that an identifiable Canonsgrove client has been involved in dealing drugs off-site, we will take strong action which could lead to eviction. It must, however, be said that two people standing on a street corner talking to each other is not necessarily a drug deal – some of our clients have friends who visit them near Canonsgrove and, as clients are not allowed unofficial visitors on-site, such meetings take place away from the campus. These meetings, although they might appear it, are not always drug-related.

We recognise, however, that a number of Canonsgrove clients have drug issues and will sometimes be on site under the influence having taken drugs off site or on-site away from the sight of staff or the CCTV cameras. Although many are already engaging with our partners in drug and alcohol services, some are not yet ready to address that issue and to reduce or eliminate their drug use. We will continue to work with our clients to encourage them to work with such services but, for some, this will be a long road rather than a quick solution.

Under what circumstances do you evict your clients?

The decision about whether or not to evict someone is always difficult as we have to be make a proportionate decision based on their mental health, addictions and other circumstances and we know that clients who are asked to leave are very likely to be returning to the streets. However, a serious breach of the House Rules can lead to immediate eviction as can consistent minor breaches. Clients are generally given the opportunity to change their behaviour before an eviction takes place but, with serious breaches (such as drug dealing or violence toward another client – both of which are thankfully rare) it is not always possible to give them that opportunity.

When we can evidence a client has been involved in an issue, on or off site, we will (dependent on the severity of the issue) follow the below.

Low Level: Talk to the clients and explain the situation and why it is an issue for others. We identify whether there is any additional support they require in their understanding of this issue and implement this accordingly. We also explore the behaviours surrounding the issue and again implement further support if needed. The conversation is written up.

Medium Level: A repercussions meeting with a Housing Officer will be booked. Here they will have explained to them about their housing placement, what their priority need is (if they have one under homeless legislation) and the consequence to them if a further breach occurs – this could include being asked to leave provision and the council would not have a further duty to assist them in their housing need any further. Again this would be written up.

Continuous: If continuous breaches occur then a conversation between YMCA Dulverton Group staff and housing will occur to discuss next steps for accommodation. It may be that they identify the provision is not suitable for them should they not be able to follow the rules of placement. If the issue is of a serious nature, and a serious breach, then the YMCA Dulverton Group Manager would evict the client.

Are SWT Council putting the YMCA under pressure not to evict clients?

No, this is not the case. The Council trusts YMCA Dulverton Group to manage the site and make the correct decisions on when a client should be evicted.

What happens to clients when they are evicted? (we have seen some stay in the area afterwards)

We generally offer to arrange transport for evicted clients so that they can get back into town but often they don't want such transport and prefer to make their own way. We have experienced a small number of evicted clients staying in tents nearby in the hope that we will take them back. When we are aware that they are doing this, and know where they are camping, we challenge them and ask them to move on. They have then gone back into town. It should be noted that, after someone has been evicted from Canonsgrove, the council's Rough Sleeping team and/or Housing Options team continue to engage with them, and provide them with support, to explore any appropriate alternatives that might prevent any long-term return to rough sleeping.

What are you putting in place to address the concerns of Trull residents?

We are committed to improving the situation so please allow us some time to move this forward. Some of the positive steps we are taking include:

- Bringing in more directly recruited YMCA Dulverton Group staff to manage the site, reducing the reliance on agency staff and bringing consistency. We are now able to do this as our plans are to keep the site operational for 12-18 months.
- Seeking to obtain a minibus to organise daily transportation in and out of town to reduce the footfall
- Putting in place more robust measures to address behaviours of those causing concerns (and from the information we are receiving, it is a minority). We have asked residents to provide us with as much detail as possible in describing the incidents causing concerns but importantly the individuals perpetrating this.
- Improving our communications with the residents of Trull and the parish council, we will be providing regular updates and information and will get this started as soon as we can. This will include answers to frequently asked questions. We will be providing regular officer attendance at future parish council meetings.
- Increase the range of activities provided on site to encourage our clients to stay within the grounds more.
- Revisiting officer shift patterns to provide patrols outside of the premises during some night times to assess impact and behaviour and address any issues.
- Consider what additional capacity is required outside of the grounds to improve visibility and address any continuing concerns identified. For example we are currently in discussion with Taunton Street Pastors to ask whether they have capacity to provide a presence during key times (such as the school run). We will also consider what other steps we can take.

What responsibility do you have for your clients when they are off site and away from the premises?

Whilst every effort is made by the management and staff at the hostel to educate clients on appropriate behaviours when off site, the YMCA Dulverton Group cannot be responsible for

clients once they have left their premises. The funding for this type of accommodation covers management of clients on site only and if staff were to patrol the streets, it would leave insufficient capacity to manage those premises.

That said, the YMCA Dulverton Group is a community organisation and are keen to address issues and respond to concerns of antisocial behaviour and neighbour nuisance. Any complaints received relating to a client allow staff to react swiftly and promptly. It also assists staff to address behaviour issues as well as identify a client's further needs such as help with drug and alcohol addiction or mental health concerns.

Somerset West and Taunton District Council has worked in partnership with Avon and Somerset Constabulary to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and Crime over the past two years with the forming of the Streetwise Initiative. This initiative investigates persistent reports of ASB and Crime and has been extremely successful. The Streetwise Initiative is working closely with the YMCA Dulverton Group to assist in problem solving and seeking solutions to the concerns that have been raised by the residents of Trull in relation to Canonsgrove.

If at any time you believe you have witnessed ASB then please report this to Avon & Somerset Constabulary on;

www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report/anti-social-behaviour

By reporting this online you will ensure that you receive a reference number immediately that can be reviewed by the Neighbourhood Policing Team or the Streetwise Team.

You can also report ASB or other non-urgent matters needing police assistance by calling 101. IN AN EMERGENCY PLEASE CALL 999.

The YMCA Dulverton Group has a dedicated email address for you to report any concerns that you may have; Canonsgrove@ymca-dg.org Please provide as much information as possible describing the incident and the person doing it.

What is the responsibility of the YMCA Dulverton Group and Council to address antisocial behaviour in our community?

The Canonsgrove House Rules include a requirement for clients to not upset our neighbours and to not make excessive noise after 10pm. This could potentially lead to eviction if it was persistent, but to evict someone we need to have evidence that the person continues to behave in a certain way and has not taken on-board warnings. The YMCA Dulverton Group doesn't have a legal responsibility for an individuals' behaviour off site (just as a private landlord would not) however as a Community Organisation they are keen to work with Trull residents to respond to matters of neighbour nuisance. The main challenge for them is ensuring we are made aware of the issues and that there is sufficient evidence to act on. The staffing levels at Canonsgrove are designed for managing the site, and are not set or funded to be able to also patrol the community. That said, we are currently looking at how we can bring more capacity to help with this.

We have been told that the people causing the issues are a small minority. Why can't you just evict them or move them elsewhere?

The complaints we have received are in relation to a small number of clients. We readily acknowledge that some of our clients have complex needs and do not behave in a way that the clients of Trull will be used to, however this does not always constitute criminal or antisocial behaviour, particularly where they have a diagnosed mental health condition that qualifies as a disability under the Equalities Act 2010. This is why simply evicting, moving or dealing with them is not as straightforward as it first may appear. If someone has a disability that results in them having loud outbursts, then evicting them on that basis would be classed as disability discrimination. That said, we are committed to taking proportionate action against our clients where appropriate and this will include eviction where their behaviour warrants this. We have a vested interest in both the Canonsgrove project and the Trull community and will continue to work hard to ensure that we improve relations and the current situation being experienced by residents.

Unfortunately alternative supported accommodation options are limited to move people to.

Why are we seeing more Police in the area?

The Police are working in close partnership with the YMCA Dulverton Group and the Council to manage issues in the community. To support this they have increased their visibility and patrols in the area, including an increased in marked police vehicles, cycle patrols and foot patrols. We have received a number of emails from residents remarking that the increased policing is a worrying sign, but to date, this has been due to partnership working and visibility rather than because of a surge in demand.

Why won't you put a curfew on your clients?

It must be remembered that our clients are homeless – they are not at Canonsgrove because of criminal behaviour and we would have no legal right to deprive them of their liberty by preventing them from leaving the site if they wanted to do so. We can advise, we can persuade and we can encourage them to stay on site but we can't force them to do so through the imposition of a curfew. Even if we could, Canonsgrove is not a prison that is locked up at night and we could not enforce such a rule

What Covid 19 restrictions are currently in-place on-site ?

We undertake robust and ongoing risk assessments to keep all risk mitigation measures under regular review so that staff and clients continue to feel and be safe.

We always consider;

- The most up to date guidance from the government and Public Health England.
- The number of staff and clients that will be in a particular space and accommodated safely and appropriately.
- The circumstances of the staff and clients to include but not limited to those that are clinically vulnerable.
- Procedures that mitigate infections such as the two meter distancing rule where possible, and promoting good hand hygiene by providing hand cleansing stations on site.
- The provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate to any activity.
- The provision of clear information to both staff and clients.

At present there are no COVID restrictions other than those required by law or that are necessary.

What further restrictions will be imposed in the event of the re-introduction of "lockdown"?

That will be dependent on the nature of the lockdown and the rules the government imposes at the time. We will continue to put in measures to encourage clients to comply with good social distancing, hygiene etc.

Do your clients need Canonsgrove as their address, in order to claim State benefits ?

This is not a straightforward answer. While they are at Canonsgrove, they claim benefits which covers the cost of the accommodation. If they were not at Canonsgrove, some would be eligible for benefits: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7698/>

Are you housing RSOs or violent criminals at Canonsgrove and what consultation are we undertaking with schools and other bodies on this matter?

RSO's and violent criminals are thankfully rare in our society but are living in all accommodation types throughout the District, Owner-occupied, Private rental and Social Housing. The Police and probation services are charged with managing these individuals regardless of their accommodation type. These individuals are managed via a Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) which sets out clear responsibilities for the Police, Probation and Prison Services and will have considered detailed risk assessments and contain detailed risk management plans. Information regarding the location of these individuals is kept confidential in order to allow them the opportunity to build new lives after having served their time in prison. Any risks to the local community will have been considered as part of the MAPPA process and the on-going management of this is the responsibility of the Police and Probation services and this will include any consultation with other parties if appropriate. We are unable to disclose information on individuals or their locations. For more information about MAPPA please see <https://mappa.justice.gov.uk/connect.ti/MAPPA/groupHome>

Are there people other than homeless living at Canonsgrove?

Yes – The accommodation is split into three blocks of which we are currently using one. Prior to us occupying the site the NHS already had a long-standing arrangement with Bridgwater and Taunton College to occupy another block to accommodate student doctors. SWT, YMCA Dulverton Group, the College and The NHS are in dialogue to ensure that this arrangement continues to work over the coming months whilst our clients are staying there.