

Priorswood House (PACE) – Ireland

Introduction

Priorswood House is an accommodation service operated by PACE, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Dublin, Ireland. PACE provides a range of support services for individuals in contact with the Irish prison and probation systems, including accommodation, social enterprise employment, and prevention programmes. Unlike other facilities managed by the Irish Prison Service, PACE operates independently as a community-based NGO with a strong emphasis on rehabilitation and reintegration. Its mission focuses on supporting individuals to rebuild their lives through housing stability, employment, training, and the development of confidence and self-worth. Additionally, PACE operates another, smaller residential facility with seven rooms in the city centre.

Scale

Priorswood House accommodates up to twenty-two residents.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiation
- Community-integration

Differentiation

Target group

Priorswood House primarily accommodates men who are homeless following release from prison and individuals who have served long custodial sentences. For the latter group, the reintegration process begins before their release through a structured and gradual transition. During the final phase of their sentence, they may spend short periods such as day releases or overnight stays at Priorswood House, allowing them to familiarise themselves with life outside prison in a supported environment. After their release, they can move in full-time to continue their reintegration.

The facility also welcomes participants in the Community Return Programme (CRP), an incentivised early-release scheme managed by the Irish Probation Service. Eligible individuals are those serving sentences of up to eight years and who have completed at least half may finish their sentence in the community on the condition that they participate in unpaid community work. Residents on the CRP must sign in daily at work or, if not working, at a Garda station, and report weekly to the prison.

The maximum stay is typically eighteen months, though current housing shortages in Dublin often lead to extended stays and a waiting list for new admissions. Some rooms are managed flexibly; they may be used by residents in the final stages of long-term care who are trying out staying in the facility while still serving part of their sentence in prison.

Forms of security

Security at Priorswood House relies primarily on procedural and relational measures, rather than static security. The facility operates on the principle of trust, accountability, and engagement, consistent with PACE's community-based ethos. Residents are required to comply with house rules and room checks, and they must hand in their keys upon leaving the premises, enabling staff to monitor who is present at all times.

Alongside traditional risk assessments, staff use a needs and support planning approach, which focuses on identifying an individual's strengths, vulnerabilities, and reintegration needs. This method promotes personal responsibility while maintaining the safety of the wider community.

The staff team consists of eight members plus a manager, working in shifts (four day staff and four night staff). Their professional backgrounds include community work, addiction support, and social care. PACE strongly promotes the employment of People with Lived Experience (PLE), and one current staff member is a former resident reflecting the organisation's commitment to peer-led rehabilitation and inclusive leadership.

A culture of openness and honesty is encouraged, particularly concerning substance use or relapse. Residents who disclose cravings or lapses are supported non-punitively, provided the safety and wellbeing of other residents are not compromised.

Activities

Residents at Priorswood House engage in a range of structured and informal daily activities designed to support their reintegration into the community. These include employment, vocational training, education, and addiction recovery programmes, as well as participation in practical household tasks, gardening, and peer-led initiatives.

Each resident develops an individual reintegration plan and weekly schedule in collaboration with staff, which may also include social, recreational, and therapeutic activities. Progress is monitored using the

Outcome Star methodology, a visual tool that helps residents assess development across multiple areas, including emotional wellbeing, social networks, life skills, confidence, and employment readiness.

Residents are encouraged to take initiative in organising group activities, workshops, or personal projects, fostering responsibility, creativity, and collaboration. This flexible approach ensures that learning and personal growth continue both inside the facility and in preparation for life in the wider community.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

Priorswood House is located in a suburban residential area in Dublin 17, the capital city of Ireland. The property comprises fourteen bedrooms within the main house and eight smaller self-contained units, each equipped with cooking facilities. Bathrooms are shared between two residents. The ground floor includes communal spaces such as a living room, a kitchen, and an activity room. The garden surrounding the house is maintained by residents, who grow flowers and plants as part of their daily activities.

Interaction with the community:

Priorswood House is well integrated into its suburban surroundings. When the facility was first established, the house was donated to PACE before neighbouring homes were built, so the local community initially had no choice in its placement. Over time, relationships have developed positively, and the facility is now regarded as a familiar and accepted presence in the area.

Residents are encouraged to make full use of local services and amenities, including supermarkets, general practitioners, sports clubs, and public transport, helping them reintegrate naturally into community life. The activity room at Priorswood House is regularly shared with the neighbourhood, hosting events such as a local band rehearsal or Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, promoting openness and social exchange.

PACE's social enterprise initiatives, such as the Mug Shot Café and the manufacturing workshop, also provide opportunities for residents to interact with the broader community. These projects allow residents to sell products, engage with customers, and build practical skills, while fostering mutual trust and reducing the stigma associated with criminal records.

Priorswood house

Founded: 1949

Capacity: 22

Autonomy level: High level of autonomy

Nearest city: Dublin (Ireland)

Nature of interaction:

Interviewed by RESCALED
(13-08-25)

Residents also maintain the garden and hold a small public sale of flowers and plants every Thursday, inviting local residents to visit and buy their products. These informal interactions strengthen ties between residents and the wider community and reinforce the facility's model of community-based reintegration.

Publicity / Read more

- About PACE and its accommodation services at the official website of the organisation:
PACE Organisation. *Accommodation Services*. Retrieved March 6th, 2025, from <https://www.paceorganisation.ie>
- About the Community Return Programme at the official website of the Irish Probation Services:
Irish Probation Service *Community Return Programme*. Retrieved March 6th, 2025, from <https://www.probation.ie/en/PB/Pages/WP16000037>