

REFERRAL GUIDELINES

REFUGEE SERVICES

These guidelines are designed to assist with referrals to Harbour's refuge services and should be read alongside the referral form.

Each Harbour Refuge consists of self contained accommodation units. Some refuges also have a room for emergency admissions but this is not suitable for long term stays, particularly with a family. A woman may be offered this space as a very short term measure but may then be offered another location if there is no expectation that a room or unit will be vacated within a few days.

HARBOUR REFUGES

<p>Hartlepool – 6 Units T : 01429 277 508 E: hartlepool@myharbour.org.uk Secure E-mail: Hartlepool.referrals@harbourdas.cjsm.net</p>	<p>Peterlee – 6 Units T : 03000 20 25 25 E: durham@myharbour.org.uk Secure E-mail: durham.harbour@harbourdas.cjsm.net</p>	<p>North Tyneside – 14 Units T : 0191 251 3305 E : northtyneside@myharbour.org.uk Secure E-mail: northtyneside.referrals@harbourdas.cjsm.net</p>
<p>Stockton – 7 Units T : 01642 553 323 E : stockton@myharbour.org.uk Secure E-mail: stockton.referrals@harbourdas.cjsm.net</p>	<p>Middlesbrough – 14 Units T : 01642 861 788 E : middlesbrough@myharbour.org.uk Secure E-mail: middlesbrough.referrals@harbourdas.cjsm.net</p>	<p>Head Office Whitburn House, 15 Whitburn Street, Hartlepool, TS24 7QR T : 03000 20 25 25 E: info@myharbour.org.uk</p>

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE REFERRAL PROCESS

In all dealings with referring organisations, Harbour seeks to be positive and transparent and expects the same from those making referrals. Harbour requires as much information as possible during the referral process to ensure the correct decision is made on the referral for the benefit of the individual woman and existing residents.

A referrer should expect an update or response from Harbour within one hour of making the referral.

When a woman leaves one of Harbour's refuges we will notify the referring agency by email to ensure they are made aware that she has left, along with any details that are available.

The following notes refer to the corresponding sections of the referral form:

1. THE REFERRER

Please indicate the time and date of the referral, this enables Harbour to monitor the time taken for referrals to be processed.

Harbour offers refuge services in Hartlepool, Peterlee, Stockton, Middlesbrough and North Tyneside, please indicate which refuge(s) the woman would accept a place in, should space be available.

2. BACKGROUND

Please give as much information as known.

Harbour's **eligibility criteria** are:

- a. The applicant must be female and 18 years or older.

- b. The applicant must be leaving a situation where she is experiencing domestic violence
- c. Where a woman presents with complex needs, Harbour must believe that it can effectively support the woman with the issues arising from the domestic violence
- d. The applicant cannot bring male children aged over 16 into the refuge except in exceptional circumstances
- e. The applicant should not present a risk to existing residents
- f. The applicant must have recourse to public funds, be self-funded or be funded through another agency.

Harbour seeks to ensure equality of access to our services and this includes access to our services for transgender women.

a) Age of applicant

In exceptional circumstances, a Service Manager may authorise the admittance of a woman aged under 18.

b) Domestic violence

Domestic violence is a pattern of controlling and aggressive behaviours from one adult towards another, within the context of an intimate or family-type relationship. It can take the form of physical, sexual, psychological, financial or emotional abuse. The violence and abuse can be actual or threatened and can happen once every so often or on a regular basis.

The refuge service operates principally as a crisis service for those women who are leaving an abusive situation and need the unique package of accommodation and support services. Women who have previously experienced domestic violence could be offered support from Harbour's Outreach service.

c) Complex Needs

Where an applicant has a range of complex needs, in particular addictive behaviours and/or mental health issues, Harbour needs to make a judgement whether it can effectively support the woman with her experiences of domestic violence. The balance of this judgement rests with whether the woman can demonstrate that she is functioning independently in her daily life, in which case she should be able to benefit from Harbour's support services.

When considering an application for a woman with complex needs, Harbour also reviews the balance of residents currently residing in the refuge as a woman requiring a lot of intensive support may not be able to receive this if existing residents also require intensive support.

Drugs

Each Harbour refuge can admit one woman on a registered drugs programme. The woman must be functioning in her daily life to access the refuge.

We will also look to other specialist agencies to work alongside us to implement a support plan for these clients.

Disability

Where a woman has a physical disability Harbour will endeavour to provide support within the refuge, providing the woman's physical, and possibly care needs can be met with support from other agencies. Harbour needs to be made aware at referral of any special requirements and a holistic multi-agency support package designed to meet her needs. The refuges can usually accommodate female carers if required. Wheelchair access is good in all refuges.

Women with mild learning disabilities can be accommodated but not if they are unable to function independently in their daily lives.

d) Male children over 16

In exceptional circumstances, a Refuge Service Manager may authorise the admittance of a woman with a male child aged over 16.

e) Risk to existing residents

Harbour will not admit a woman who is a Schedule One offender; that is a woman who has a conviction for an offence against a young person under the age of 18. Neither will Harbour admit a woman who has a history or predilection for violence or arson.

These conditions would also apply to any children who would be admitted into the refuge with the woman.

Where a woman does have unspent criminal convictions, account will be taken of the number of convictions, the nature of the offences and how long ago they were committed.

When considering whether to admit a woman, consideration is given for the safety of existing residents. For example it may not be desirable to have women resident in the refuge who know each other or live nearby as this could compromise confidentiality and safety. In such cases, the existing resident may be consulted.

f) Funding

Harbour cannot fund a woman's rent during her stay in the refuge so if she cannot access public funds the other options are that she funds the rent herself or another agency funds the rent payment. Harbour would require this agreement in writing before agreeing to admit a woman in these circumstances.

3. WOMAN'S PERSONAL DETAILS

Please provide as much information as is known.

4. CHILDREN'S DETAILS

Please provide details of any children who will come into the refuge if the woman is offered a place. Include date of birth or age where this is not known. Also indicate male or female.

5. PERPETRATORS DETAILS

Please provide as much information as is known.

6. FUNDING

See comments above in section f) of eligibility criteria.

7. PREVIOUS STAYS IN REFUGES

Harbour uses information about the woman's background and history in refuges to carry out an initial risk assessment. The member of staff may contact any refuge where the woman has stayed previously to obtain background information.

A woman who has been evicted from a refuge or other supported housing project, particularly for issues relating to violence or illegal activities, is unlikely to be offered a place within a Harbour refuge.

8. KEY AGENCIES WORKING WITH THE FAMILY

Please give as much information as known about other agencies working with the family.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

The purpose of asking about criminal convictions is to enable Harbour to assess the risk presented by this woman to other residents and Harbour staff.

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 places restrictions on the information Harbour can require to have disclosed. This Act defines the period of rehabilitation for criminal sentences, after which it is considered spent. The details are complicated but the key aspects are:

- Any prison sentence over 2.5 years never becomes spent
- Most sentences become spent after 5 years
- Prison sentences up to 6 months are spent after 7 years
- Prison sentences between 6 months and 2.5 years are spent after 10 years.
- Rehabilitation periods are halved if the person is under 18 when convicted.

As stated in section e) of the eligibility criteria, Harbour would not admit a woman or child who is a Schedule One offender or who has a history or predilection for violence or arson. Harbour would not expect any partner agency to knowingly refer a woman with any history of this kind.

Assessing the risk presented by a perpetrator is difficult and Harbour relies on referrers providing any relevant information. If the perpetrator is local and has a history of pursuing the woman, or previous partners, then for her safety and that of other residents, she may be better accommodated in another area.

10. OTHER INFORMATION

Information about secondary issues enables Harbour to ensure the woman meets section c) of the eligibility criteria, in other words that her primary support need is related to domestic violence and not another issue.

Other relevant information may relate to the woman's experiences or any special requirements she has.

Cultural/Faith/Language Needs

The referrer should provide any relevant information about specific needs and requirements of the woman in line with her culture or faith. Wherever possible, Harbour will endeavour to meet these needs, with assistance from other agencies as appropriate.

If a woman speaks no English whatsoever, it will be difficult for Harbour to support her. If she has some knowledge of English, then assistance can be brought in as required to ensure clear communication between Harbour staff and the woman.

11. DECISION ON REFERRAL

Harbour staff make a decision on each referral based on the information provided, taking account of the needs of existing service users and consulting a Service Manager where the circumstances are complex. Where the decision is that the woman cannot be offered space at a refuge, Harbour always provides a reason for this decision.

It may be that the woman could be supported by Harbour's Outreach services and a referral to Outreach can be facilitated by the Support Worker.

Where the reason for refusal is the lack of space in one refuge, the Support Worker will check availability in Harbour's other refuges if the woman would accept these options.

If a woman is self referring and she cannot be offered space, the Support Worker will take all reasonable steps to identify a solution for the woman, especially if she is in crisis.

APPEALING DECISIONS

If the referrer or the woman herself disagrees with the decision, the appeals procedure involves contacting the Service Manager in the first instance to express why the decision not to admit should be reviewed again.

If this does not lead to a resolution to the satisfaction of all parties, then a formal appeal should be made to the Chief Executive of Harbour, in writing, explaining clearly why the decision is disputed.

The Chief Executive will respond to such appeals, in writing, within five working days.
Further information about the appeals procedure can be obtained by calling 01429 270110 or e-mailing brigitterowell@myharbour.org.uk