

LINCOLN WOMEN'S AID

Procedure for applications to be admitted to refuge

Follow the Refuges Referral Form. Remember that LWA has a comprehensive Equal Opportunities Policy which should ensure fair access to services and if in doubt please refer to that policy. It is very important that workers make every effort to gather as much information as possible prior to offering a refuge place.

Referrals may come via other agencies or may be self-referrals by the applicant herself. The referral and application process can be conducted over the phone or face to face at the Women's Centre. Follow the referral form as closely as possible. If conducted face to face please ask the woman to check and sign the referral form in order to confirm that the information she has given us is correct. If you are taking the referral from an agency please ask for the name, position and phone number of the referring worker.

If we cannot accept the referral/application we will signpost the woman to other agencies as appropriate. Feedback can be given to agencies if we have turned the application down **only if** the woman has given her consent. Consider whether support via the Women's Centre or outreach is appropriate even if we cannot accept the family into the refuge.

ONLY THE MANAGER OR DEPUTY MANAGER CAN AGREE THAT A WOMEN MAY BE ADMITTED TO REFUGE

- **Is it domestic abuse?**

By domestic abuse LWA means physical, emotional or sexual abuse from anyone with whom the applicant has or did have a relationship. This can be a family relationship e.g. father, son, mother etc. or a sexual relationship e.g. husband, ex-partner, boyfriend, female partner. LWA does not accept referrals from women who are solely being abused or threatened by neighbours.

Risk and Needs Assessment

When a woman (or agency on behalf of a woman) applies to come into the refuge the risk assessment process is important for providing initial information with regard to any risk the woman may pose – either to herself, her children or to other people e.g. staff and other residents.

An initial risk assessment at least is carried out during the referral process using the refuge referral form. Serious risks identified at this stage may mean the woman's application is rejected (e.g. eviction from another refuge for threatening behaviour, conviction for arson) or it may be that the risk can be managed within the refuge (e.g. she uses methadone, has some mental health problems but has never previously presented a risk to others), and the refuge workers need to have information about the risk in order to plan risk management. If risks of a moderate or serious nature are identified during the initial risk assessment then a full risk assessment should be completed in order to decide whether the level of risk can be managed in the refuge.

The needs assessment process at the application stage is undertaken in order to ensure prior to admission that LWA's service can meet her / her children's needs and to give project workers a starting place for a more detailed needs assessment when she gets to the refuge as part of the support planning process.

- **Check that the woman being referred is not on our 'Not to be Readmitted' lists.**

These lists must be updated regularly by refuge staff. Women's names are placed on the 'Not to be Readmitted' list if they have been asked to leave the refuge on health and safety grounds and / or staff have reason to believe that if they were to be readmitted there would be a significant risk to other residents or staff. If the woman's name is on the list then she will not usually be able to be admitted to either of LWA's refuge. The only exception to this is if the woman or referring agency can demonstrate that the woman's circumstances have changed significantly and therefore the risk has been reduced or eliminated e.g. child with destructive behaviour no longer with her.

- If there is serious **alcohol** dependency, we would ask can the woman live independently and in such a way that her behaviour is not a serious nuisance to other service users? If she can, we can admit her but find out if other workers are involved and whether they can give information as to her level of alcohol dependency.
- Drug use – see policy. If **drug** dependent, (not recreational use) we will only accept if the woman is on a support programme – including methadone programme locally (or if she is on a programme elsewhere and this can be easily transferred and would not cause undue risk to the woman or other residents), and LWA do not allow illegal drugs on the premises under any circumstances. If recreational user, assess on individual basis after getting as much information as you can.
- If there are any **convictions for or history of violent behaviour**, we will not usually accept. Again this is a difficult judgement to make and should be discussed with other workers taking into account – when the violent behaviour dates from, was it a one off or part of a pattern of violent behaviour etc.
- Ensure that you also check for convictions relating to **arson** and **offences relating to children**. Offences of this nature will probably mean we are unable to admit.

Support needs - find out what support the woman/child would need to enable them to live in the refuge if their particular needs mean they may require additional support while living in the refuge. Discuss with a Manager or Deputy if we can provide the additional support, and if the woman's / family's special needs are appropriate for living in a communal setting before making a decision. If there is a support package already set up (e.g. if the woman/child is disabled and needs social services support workers to visit) it may be appropriate for this to be transferred to the refuge to enable the woman/child to live there –

- **Physical disability or learning difficulty** – find out as much as possible about the disability and how it affects the person (woman or child's) daily life. Does someone do some caring for them now? If so what? Can they cook, clean, do washing, shopping themselves? Do they need a care package setting up before they are admitted.
- If **English is not their first language** this should not present a problem as we

will access interpreting or translation services as necessary, but the woman / referral agency may need to be informed that there is nobody on the staff team that speaks their language, if this is the case.

- Find out the woman's **source of income** – if she is working and intends to continue doing so, explain that we will have to negotiate a rent with her taking into account her outgoings e.g. childcare.
- If woman has previously been in **other refuges or other supported housing** (homeless hostels etc.) always ring them to check the circumstances of her departure (at least two if they have been in 2 or more projects) or any issues that arose while she was resident that may present a risk to LWA's service users or staff. If we find there have been problems, we may not accept -
- Has she a **Social Worker** – if she has, ring them. Why has she got one? Does the SW think refuge accommodation will be suitable? Are there any risks we should be aware of? Ask whether the children are subject to either Child in Need or child protection plans.
- Has she a **Probation Officer** - will highlight other issues we may need to be aware of. Ring them. Again consider risks to other residents or staff.
- **Is there any further information the referring worker or the woman herself feel/s we need to be aware of?** There may be risk issues not covered by any of the questions we have asked so far – this is an opportunity for the woman herself or the agency to let us know anything else about the families circumstances that may affect their time in the refuge. It is also the opportunity for the woman to raise anything that she is concerned about or wants to clarify / ask questions about.

Other information

Some of the information we ask for is for monitoring purposes Always try and get as much information as possible from woman/referral agency e.g. ask for the woman's mobile phone number if she has one.

- **Children** –. Ask if children need a cot so that project workers can ensure there is one available. Has she got children that are not with her? Have they been removed from her care, if so why?
- Under **Ethnic Origin**, consider: any special requirements needed, and if there are immigration issues check whether the woman has **recourse to public funds** - if not. Discuss immediately with manager or Deputy
- If we are **refusing referral**, tick appropriate issue on back of form 'unable to admit due to' Explain the reasons to the woman or referral agency – unless this puts another service user at risk e.g. if the current service user thinks she knows the applicant.
- If the manager or Deputy has agreed that you can **accept the referral**, discuss travel arrangements - the referring agency may assist with this. If the woman is coming by herself we can help if she is local (i.e. order a taxi on our account). She may need to get help from elsewhere with money for travel i.e. DSS, Social Services. If someone is bringing her Take a mobile phone number if she has one.

Encourage her to bring as much ID as she can, money, toiletries, special toys, spare keys for her house, food etc..

Application Appeal's Procedure

If someone is dissatisfied with LWA's decision not to offer them accommodation to the refuge they should appeal in the following way:

Stage 1

They will be given an opportunity to **speak to a Manager or Deputy** not already involved in the decision to refuse you a refuge place (on the phone or face to face where possible). **This will happen within the same working day if possible but at least within 24 hours or the next working day.**

Stage 2

If the service user is **not satisfied** with the response she has received, she can **take her complaint further to the Chair of Lincoln Women's Aid's Management Committee**. It must be put in writing, indicating clearly on the envelope that the contents are a **confidential Stage Two complaint**, for the attention of the Chair of the Management Committee and sent to 2nd Floor, Brook House 32-33 Silver Street Lincoln LN2 1EW. **The Chair will investigate the complaint and respond with the outcome of the investigation within a further 28 working days.** If for any reason the investigation cannot be completed within that period, the service user will be informed in writing and told what date the investigation will be completed by.

Stage 3

Should the woman remain dissatisfied following the Chair of the Management Committee's decision with regard to her complaint, **she may make a further complaint.** To Supporting People

Whichever member of staff is trying to deal with the appeal, they should follow these guidelines:

- Get clear information from the woman making the appeal about why she feels the decision was unjustified.
- If her appeal is the result of a poor service or mistake by Lincoln Women's Aid, this should be rectified immediately and an apology made to the woman.
- In all cases, the member of staff must reply to the woman letting her know the outcome of her appeal. She should be told this in writing but should be given support in discussing and understanding the situation with a member of staff to ensure that she feels an acceptable resolution has been found if she wishes to do so.