

Referral, Initial Assessment and Allocation

**Applicable to accessing services at
the Family Wraparound Service
(Ashkirk)**

Date Written: July 2017

Reviewed: August 2023

Purpose: To set out the approach of Bernicia in relation to referral, initial assessments, and allocations for the Family Wraparound Service (Ashkirk). This policy sets out Bernicia's approach for handling referrals, assessing applications, and allocating accommodation.

Scope: Referrals to Family Wraparound Service (Ashkirk). Clients. Ashkirk Staff. Referring Agency

Date For Review: August 2025

Responsibility: Head of Service – Care and Support

Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The policy deals with the referrals, initial assessment, and allocation of accommodation for the Family Wraparound Service at Ashkirk. It aims to ensure that:
- Everyone who applies or is referred to the Service for housing and wraparound services are assessed in accordance with the criteria for the scheme
 - Housing and wraparound services are provided to those in the greatest need

2. Policy statements

- 2.0 The Family Wraparound service will provide temporary, supported accommodation for families who are aged 18 years and over from the City of Sunderland or who have a local connection.
- 2.1 The accommodation provided may be at Ashkirk located at Lakeside Village, Sunderland, SR3 3DT or at one of the projects cluster units within the City of Sunderland boundary.

Referrals:

- 2.2 All referrals will be submitted via City of Sunderland's Housing Options Team (HOT). Direct referrals can be taken on behalf of HOT and will be submitted to HOT for recording and routing back.
- 2.3 Where information is incomplete following initial referral, the information required will be sought from HOT within 24 hours of receiving the referral.
- 2.4 We will complete a needs and risk assessment with the prospective family, which forms the second stage of the referral process.

Assessment

- 2.5 We will carry out needs and risk assessments at Ashkirk based in Lakeside Village, Sunderland, however if this is not possible suitable arrangements will be made with the family for this to take place at an alternative location.
- 2.6 We will assess each referral against the Referral Assessment Criteria (See Appendix A)

- 2.7 We will base assessment and acceptance on a number of factors including homeless status (in line with criteria set out in Part VII, Housing Act 1996) and housing related support needs.
- 2.8 We will advise HOT of the outcome of the referral.
- 2.9 We will advise HOT if the referral does not meet the Referral Assessment Criteria and provide a reason why.
- 2.10 We will offer a Right to Appeal to all unsuccessful applicants.

Allocation

- 2.11 Where possible we will pre-allocate a property up to 5 days prior to the property becoming available.
- 2.12 We will review all waiting list referrals at the time of pre-allocation to check and determine if the service is still required.
- 2.13 We will consider all current and waiting list referrals against the Pre-Allocation Criteria (See Appendix B).
- 2.14 We will award pre-allocation status to the applicant awarded priority need. HOT will be advised that a property has been pre-allocated to that referral. Pre-allocation does not, however, guarantee an offer of accommodation. Until an offer of accommodation is made, a pre-allocation can be superseded by a newly received referral of higher priority need. HOT will be advised of this.
- 2.15 An offer of accommodation will be made to the pre-allocated referral, where possible, at least 24 hours prior to the property becoming vacant.
- 2.16 Wherever possible, we will provide initial accommodation at Ashkirk Homeless Core Unit. Families may then be offered cluster accommodation depending upon support needs.
- 2.17 A Risk Assessment will be carried out with regard to any risk family may pose – either to themselves, their children or to other people e.g., staff and other residents. (Further information outlined in Risk Assessment & Management Policy Ashkirk)
- 2.18 Project Workers will familiarise themselves with information gained through the referral and application process regarding the family to enable a more detailed assessment to be undertaken as part of the support planning process.

Appeals

- 2.19 We will provide a Right to Appeal to all unsuccessful referrals.
- 2.20 Appeals can be made in writing to the Head of Service (Care and Support), Bernicia HQ, Oakwood Way, Ashwood Business Park, Ashington NE63 0XF

3. Responsibility for implementation

- 3.1 Project Workers will be responsible for following the policy in relation to referrals, assessment and allocations made to the Family Wraparound service.
- 3.2 The Head of Service (Care and Support) will be responsible for the effective implementation of this policy and for ensuring that staff are aware of and appropriately trained in Bernicia policies and procedures relating to Referral, Assessment and Allocation.

4. Actioning the policy

- 4.1 This policy will be actioned every time that a member of Ashkirk Staff receives a referral to the service.

5. Monitoring the policy

- 5.1 This policy will be monitored by maintaining a record of all outcomes of referrals made to the service and reviewing these on a quarterly basis to check compliance.

6. Resources

- 6.1 This policy is unlikely to impact upon resources as it is an intrinsic part of the service delivery.

7. Equality and Diversity

- 7.1 An equality and diversity impact assessment has been undertaken on this policy. In carrying out our services, we are committed to:
- Treating all customers positively regardless of any personal characteristics including gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender reassignment or religion.
 - Taking seriously all complaints and investigating and

- responding accordingly.
- Using plain language and providing information in other languages, large print, audio, and Braille on request.

Uncontrolled if printed – This may not be the latest version of the policy

All policies must be printed from Connect only – please make sure it is the latest version.

Referral Assessment Criteria

Appendix 'A'

General Criteria

The following families are eligible for the service:

- Families who have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for their occupation and which that household has a legal right to occupy;
- Families who have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it;
- The accommodation is a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation (such as a caravan or house boat) and there is no place where it can be placed to provide accommodation
- A family who have accommodation are to be treated as homeless where it would not be reasonable for them to continue to occupy that accommodation
- Families who have a local connection to Sunderland by either living in the area, having a family connection to the area or work in the area. Consideration may be given to families who do not have a local connection where it is deemed that they are at risk of violence and are fleeing violence.

Complex Needs

The service will be offered to families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and who also have complex needs. In the context of the service, complex needs describe those families who are beyond the realm of early intervention and are on the brink of statutory or other specialist intervention such as Child Protection or Youth Court proceedings. These families are often characterised by;

- i. Domestic Abuse in the home
- ii. Parental Mental Health problems
- iii. Parental Substance Misuse problems
- iv. Housing or debt problems
- v. Offending or anti-social behaviour
- vi. Child(ren) not attending or excluded from school
- vii. A cycle of worklessness in the family
- viii. Poor or inconsistent parenting
- ix. Child not meeting their developmental milestones
- x. Parental learning disability

Health & Social Issues

Alcohol dependency will not automatically result in rejection of a referral unless the family refuses to accept that there are issues and there is a history of unacceptable, offending, violent or abusive behaviour associated with this.

Families whose members have misused substances in the past can be considered and we will take families who are on a recovery programme, however, current users who are not receiving treatment and are not prepared to engage with treatment may be refused.

Families presenting with members with an immediate or high risk of self-harm or recent history of attempted suicide will be signposted to a 24hr service as we will be unable to provide the appropriate support.

Behaviour

As this is a family service, people who have criminal convictions or evidence of crimes of arson, violence or sexual abuse will not be considered as we may be unable to safeguard other families from risk. Families who are known to have negative relationships with existing clients or families who have a history of anti-social behaviour or have committed tenancy breaches in other supported accommodation will be considered on a case by case basis.

Income

Families who are working may not be entitled to full housing benefit. This is not in itself a reason to reject a referral, however, the family will need to fully understand the costs involved.

Pre-Allocation Criteria

Appendix 'B'

Priority Need

Available properties will be pre-allocated in order of priority need.

All current referrals will be considered and prioritised according to need. All accepted referrals will be deemed to be homeless, in priority need and in need of wraparound support. Families are defined as one or more parents expecting children or with children. Selection will be primarily prioritised on the following criteria:

- I. Homeless families with or expecting children with high support needs
- II. Homeless families with or expecting children with medium support needs
- III. Homeless families with or expecting children with low support needs.

Where more than one referral meets the highest criteria, a view will be taken on the individual circumstances of the service users and selection will be made on the basis of greatest support need. Where similar needs exist, pre-allocation will be made on the basis of earliest date of application.

