

A MOVE ON PROTOCOL BETWEEN WILTSHIRE COUNCIL AND THE WOMEN'S REFUGES WITHIN THE WILTSHIRE COUNCIL AREA

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 provides that agencies work together, where possible, to prevent homelessness. The aim of this protocol is to provide a framework for moving women, who have experienced, or are at risk of domestic violence, on into more permanent accommodation.
- 1.2 Wiltshire Council has four refuges within its boundaries managed by Futures of Knightstone, Westlea Housing Association, Ridgeway Community Housing and House. Each refuge aims to provide safe, temporary supported accommodation for women and their dependents who are fleeing, or who are at risk of, domestic violence.

2. Eligibility Criteria

- 2.1 The refuges are for single women and women with dependant children who have low support needs, and are fleeing, or who are at risk of, domestic violence from an associated person. At present the refuges are unable to accommodate boys over the age of 13 years old.
- 2.2 Referrals to the refuges are accepted by telephone from statutory and voluntary agencies. Self-referrals from women experiencing domestic violence are not always accepted. There will be no discrimination against any applicant on the grounds of race, sexual orientation or religious belief.
- 2.3 If there is a vacant room available, the staff member will complete a referral form with the referring agency. Completion of this form is extremely important as it enables the refuge staff to make a fair and informed decision based on the additional information provided. This also allows for a full risk and needs assessment to be carried out.
- 2.4 On completion of the paperwork the refuge worker will make a decision as to whether the referral fits the selection criteria, and will contact the referring agency with the outcome. If it has been decided not to accept the referral, the reason for this will be explained.
- 2.5 Wiltshire Council will be given prior notice of any vacancies in order to refer an applicant.

3. Selection Criteria and Allocations

- 3.1 Applicants must satisfy the following criteria:

- Be a woman, with or without children who is currently experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, domestic violence from an associated person.
- Be able to live in a low support environment.
- Be willing to live within the rules of the project. These include maintaining the confidentiality of the project, and an environment, which is free of illegal, non-prescribed drugs.
- Be able and willing to share living areas with other women and children.
- Not have any on-going drug or alcohol dependency issues.
- The refuges will accept women who have low mental health support needs, i.e. depression. However, the refuges are low support environments and are not able to accommodate women who have high mental health support needs.
- The refuges are unable to accommodate boys over the age of 13.
- The refuges are unable to accept a woman who has no recourse to public funds.

3.2 Once a referral has been accepted to a refuge, the applicant will be allocated a room which is appropriate for her family size. At this point a refuge worker will contact the applicant to discuss directions to the refuge.

3.3 Rooms may be held for 24 hours if the applicant is unable to get to the refuge that day.

3.4 If an applicant is refused a placement at a refuge a letter will be sent to the referring agency outlining the right of appeal.

4. Move On

4.1 Once the applicant has been accepted for a place at a refuge, their allocated Housing Options Advisor will make enquiries regarding the accommodation they are fleeing.

4.2 Wiltshire Council will offer as many options as they can to either help the applicant either to return to their home, or to find alternative accommodation. Some of the options which will be considered are:

- Sanctuary Scheme
- Internal Transfer
- Wiltlets scheme
- Court Order/Injunction

4.3 Once the Housing Options Advisor is satisfied that the applicant can not return to their current home, and they have exhausted all other options, a report to this effect will be provided to the Homes4Wiltshire team, who will award Platinum Band status under the move on category.

- 4.4 If the applicant normally lives in the Homes4Wiltshire area and wants to return to that area, but has been placed in a refuge elsewhere due to a lack of available placements, this protocol will also apply.
- 4.5 The protocol does not apply to women who have applied and have been accepted under the homelessness legislation by another local authority, who are currently placed at the refuges.
- 4.6 The applicants will be allowed to remain in the refuges until suitable alternative accommodation is offered by Homes4Wiltshire.
- 4.7 The Housing Options teams will continue to work with the applicant and refuges to give any additional advice and assistance.

5. Ending the licence

- 5.1 Should it become necessary to issue a resident with notice to vacate the refuge the refuge worker will notify the relevant Housing Options team explaining the reasons for the notice.

6. Monitoring and reviewing

- 6.1 A designated officer, from the Housing Options team, will visit each refuge once a month to meet with staff and residents to discuss any housing problems they may have.
- 6.2 Officers will meet on a quarterly basis to review the effectiveness of the protocol and discuss any issues.
- 6.3 The protocol will be amended in the light of change in policy, procedures or legislation with reviews as necessary with the agreement of all parties involved.

Signed:on behalf of Wiltshire Council

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Date:

Signed:on behalf of

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