



<b>Policy Number</b>	<b>Review Date</b>	<b>Next Review Date</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>March 2021</b>	<b>March 2022</b>

## **Little Village Referrals Policy**

Little Village's mission is to create small, warm communities of families to support one another when times are tough. Our vision is that no child in the capital is without the essential items they need to thrive, and that every parent has a role to play in making that happen.

### **1. Purpose of a referrals policy**

Our referrals policy is designed to ensure that:

- we can support as many families as we can, with love and dignity;
- there is trust from families that they will be treated with transparency and fairness;
- there is trust from donors that kit given to Little Village will meet an identified need.

This policy is designed to guide the work of our referral managers within the organisation, and our network of trusted and highly valued referral partners.

### **2. Who can make a referral**

Referrals will be accepted from any established organisation including council services including children's centres, NHS services such as midwifery and health visitors, schools, nurseries and tutors, civil society groups such as other charities and faith-based organisations, community groups, Councillors or MPs. Referrals can only be submitted for families with children 5 years and under (including pregnant mothers) that meet the criteria set out below.

Referrers may be volunteers or employees of the referring organisation but must have authority to refer from a senior manager. Referrals should be made using an organisational email, not a personal account.

New referrers will be provided with an introductory document, detailing services on offer, the referral process and how families are supported on an ongoing basis.

Personal referrals and self-referrals will not be accepted.

We ask that all partners, irrespective of the nature of the partnership, make referrals through the formal channels.

Where a referral partner is new to Little Village, we may request more information about the nature of their organisation, and welcome the chance to learn about each others' organisations in order to foster strong collaborative working.

### **3. Referral Criteria**

This policy is updated to reflect our operating practices during restrictions on social distancing in response to the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Referral partners are requested to make an assessment of need on behalf of Little Village. We request that referral partners make all reasonable effort to understand the family situation to enable them to make a fair and informed decision.

Potential criteria are provided on the referral form and detailed here for clarity:

- Low income: the household has had persistently low income, at 60% of the median income or less, for at least 3 out of 4 years, or are experiencing immediate crisis such as loss of job/ change in employment status, illness or acute debt such as experiencing a house fire or large overpayment of benefits
- No recourse to public funds: formal status for non-UK nationals who have no entitlement to most welfare benefits. Temporary accommodation: accommodation secured by a local authority in order to meet its duty under a homelessness application.
- Asylum: those seeking asylum and awaiting a decision, appealing an asylum decision, or who have been denied asylum but cannot immediately leave the UK; as such entitled to health care and other support, such as education for children
- Homeless: families without a home, and may be staying with friends or family, in a hostel, night shelter or B&B, or street homeless.
- Disabled or disabled family member: individual or family member with a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- Domestic abuse: either personally or an immediate family member dealing with the impact of abuse, including but not limited to- physical or sexual, psychological and/or emotional, financial or economic, coercive control and/or honour-based.
- Dealing with substance misuse: either current use of, or dealing with the impact of recent use of, drugs in an amount or method which is harmful to the individual or to others.
- Single parent/carer: a family with only one parent/carer involved in the upbringing of any children.

We ask that referral partners make reasonable efforts to see evidence of a family's status under these categories. This could include seeing evidence of:

- Home Office status letters / ID cards;
- Universal Credit letter or other benefit letters;
- Housing letter.

A category of 'other' is included for use at the discretion of referral partners. We would encourage referral partners to provide detail on the family situation if using 'other' as a criteria, to aid us with needs analysis.

#### **4. Levels of Support**

##### **UPDATE – Coronavirus Amendment:**

Clothing and kit packs containing clothes and kit, plus toiletries and nappies, sent from our local sites

We are currently only able to provide Clothing and Kit packs for families living in the following London boroughs:

Brent, Barnet, Bromley, Camden, City of Westminster, Croydon, City of London, Greenwich Haringey, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea Kingston Upon Thames, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Richmond Upon Thames, Southwark, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth.

During the pandemic period, where our operations are impacted, we may be forced to tighten our referral criteria in order to prioritise those families in greatest need. We will communicate clearly on our website and on the referral form if this is the case.

Tightened referral criteria may mean we are only able to fulfil referrals for families meeting the following status:

- Newborn babies (mothers 30+ weeks pregnant, or with a newborn under 3 months);
- Families with nothing (i.e. those recently rehomed due to domestic violence or recent migrants seeking asylum or refugee status).

As of Oct 2021, we will be broadening our criteria to accept all referrals for those that need our support, who live in the boroughs outlined above.

#### **5. Guidance for providing a referral.**

We appreciate that we are asking referral partners to make a substantial assessment of need on behalf of Little Village. If a referral partner is unsure whether a family qualify for support, we would always recommend discussing with the Little Village referral manager. In order to ensure that families are seen without high barriers to entry we are happy for referral partners to use a 'reasonable doubt' assessment of need.

#### **6. Providing the items requested**

##### **UPDATE – Coronavirus Amendment:**

We are currently unable to welcome families to drop-in sessions as we would normally do, and instead are offering a delivery system.

On receipt of the referral, the Little Village team will:

- Only contact you if there are any questions relating to the referral. If not, you will not hear from the team again relating to that referral

- Only contact the family if larger kit items such as beds, buggies need clarifying
- Confirm the delivery time window and address with the family via text the day before the delivery.
- Deliver via courier on the agreed day
- Contact the family approximately 2 weeks post delivery to welcome them to Little Village and offer any additional signposting.

**Please note:** if (post submission of referral) the family has moved or been re located outside our delivery area; Little Village will request that the items are delivered to an alternative address within one of the boroughs we operate. This for example could be but not limited to a relative/close friend's address or referral partner's place of work. We hope to soon revert to our normal operating practices where families are provided an appointment to attend a Little Village site.

Under normal operating conditions families are provided up to 40 items of clothing per child (not including outerwear, accessories & shoes) plus any kit.

Major items (defined as beds including moses baskets, travel cots, cots, cot beds and cribs; buggies including singles, strollers and doubles/ triples) are limited to one type per child ie a newborn baby will be offered a crib or a moses basket but not both; an older child will be offered a cot or a cot bed.

Where items are in limited supply and the family already have an item that is safe and fit for purpose, a second item will not be offered. For example, families with a buggy looking for a second lightweight buggy to take on holiday.

**UPDATE – Coronavirus Amendment:**

During the pandemic period, where our operations are impacted, we may be forced to tighten our kit offerings to only clothing, beds, mattresses, nappies, wipes and toiletries. If this is the case, we will communicate clearly on the referral form.; inform existing referral partners and ensure families are also made aware during their delivery confirmation call.

**7. Frequency of referral**

If a family's need continues, they are welcome to visit Little Village again for further support. We ask that families leave at least three months in between referrals for kit and clothing (and will be provided enough kit from their first referral to last three months at least).

If and when families return to Little Village for subsequent visits, we are unable to provide second copies of kit items again if they have already been provided.

The exception to this would be if an item has been outgrown, for example if a family had received a newborn buggy, and they were now requiring a double buggy due to the arrival of a second child, we would provide a double buggy. We would, however, request that if possible the family swap back the original item provided.

**8. Partnership arrangement**

Where referral partners are working with a specific group of families who all qualify for support from Little Village, we may develop a partnership arrangement to support those families in the partner organisation. In that instance, bespoke referral arrangements will be made between the two organisations.

## **9. Returning items**

Once items have been gifted on to a family, they are theirs to use and dispose of as they wish. We do, however, encourage families to donate back any items that are no longer needed so that they can be re-gifted out to more families – further our mission of bringing local families together to support one another.

In order to facilitate supporting as many families as possible, families may be requested to bring back any major items they have been given by Little Village which they no longer need if they are moving on to the next format. For example, a family who have been provided a buggy suitable from birth and who now need a double buggy for a toddler and newborn will be asked if they are able to bring the original buggy back.

Whilst we encourage the regifting to another family of items which have been provided by Little Village, we do understand that families may need or want to sell on items that have been provided by Little Village once those items are no longer needed.

## **10. Grounds for refusal of a referral by a partner**

Whilst we encourage referral partners to make the Little Village service as accessible as possible for families, we do support referral partners in the event they decide not to grant a referral. Grounds for this may be:

- family income is deemed to be such that the families' needs (including any additional needs due to extenuating circumstances) could be reasonably met by the family;
- families are requesting items which have previously been sourced from Little Village;
- families are requesting items which have been provided by another supporting organisation;
- families have been evidenced to be repeatedly selling on items supplied by Little Village and requesting replacements for these or similar items.

In these situations, Little Village would ask that:

- the reasons for refusal of a referral are clearly explained to the family;
- the family is made aware that if their circumstances change, they are welcome to discuss a new referral with either the referral partner or Little Village directly;
- the occurrence of a refusal, the name of the family, and the reasons for the refusal are communicated with the relevant site Referrals Manager.

We would also welcome referral partners deferring referrals from families if they know a family have recently visited a Little Village site (within three months). Per the policy above, they would then be welcome to have a referral after the three month window. Again, we would ask that the referral partner fully explain the reason for deferring the referral.

On such occasions, it may be that the family will approach another referral partner to secure the referral; one who may not be as familiar with the family situation. In this instance, we would ask that the original referral partner, within the bounds of data protection, support Little Village in the communication of the grounds for refusal to the second referral partner.

### **11. Grounds for refusal of referral by Little Village**

In very rare situations, Little Village may be in possession of wider information on a family than the referral partner. If that information enables the Little Village Referral Manager to assess that the family fall into any of the categories detailed above for refusal of a referral, Little Village reserves the right not to accept a referral.

In this instance:

- Little Village will communicate clearly to the referral partner what the grounds for refusal are.
- Little Village will communicate directly with the family to explain why the referral has been rejected.
- Little Village will communicate clearly with the family that if their circumstances change, they are welcome to discuss a new referral with the Referral Manager.

All families attending Little Village are requested to have a referral. If a family arrives at a Little Village site without a referral they will be asked to return when they have a full referral. This is because we do not have the capacity to safely look after families at our sites if we become overcrowded with families without appointments. The exceptions to this will be if:

- A family present in a state of extreme distress;
- Where they are carrying a newborn in arms with no appropriate means to transport the baby (where a buggy will be provided if possible and the family will be asked to secure a referral for any further items).

In some circumstances we will request that a family seek support from another provider, rather than from Little Village. This may be because:

- Little Village sites are receiving unprecedented demand that we are unable to support in a timely manner and in a way which meets our standards of quality and safety;
- There is provision for support geographically nearer to the family's location;
- We have reasonable concerns that the family will not be able to transport equipment supplied home safely and practically due to the distance.

In these circumstances, Little Village will refer on to local support, and inform both the family and the original referrer that an onward referral has been made.

### **12. Transporting Items Home**

#### **UPDATE – Coronavirus Amendment**

Little Village is currently delivering all items to family homes to aid with social distancing. By prior arrangement, it may be possible for referral partners to collect items from our sites; we are unable to welcome families to our sites at all at the moment.

In normal circumstances, Little Village is unable to provide transport home for families or for kit, as a matter of course.

Volunteer-based delivery of large items such as beds may be provided:

- This will be at a time when a volunteer can be sourced, and may require some flexibility from the family waiting in for the delivery – although we will make all efforts to find a mutually suitable time;
- This may require a wait by the family as volunteers are not always immediately available

In exceptional circumstances, sites may be able to support families with a taxi home with large equipment. However this is only in the following situations:

- The journey is less than 10 miles;
- The family have urgent need for the kit (i.e. baby is due within days);
- The items chosen are too big to be carried on public transport.

Referrers are requested to discuss transport home with families in advance of making a referral to ensure that families are clear that transport cannot be provided by Little Village except in rare emergency situations.

### **13. Policy Reviews**

We are happy to discuss the referrals policy at any time with our referral partners and welcome their feedback on our processes, in the interests of making them as accessible and welcoming as possible for the families we support.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Sophie Livingstone,  
CEO, Little Village

Reviewers:

Claire Ellaway, Referrals Manager

Nijma Khan, Trustee

Emily Compston, Head of Operations

Review Date: March 2021