



Referral Policy

Hartlepool Baby Bank believe that every child needs a village, and we seek to fill gaps and support families in raising their children.

Hartlepool Baby Bank seeks to work with pregnant women or families with under 2s across Hartlepool and surrounding areas.

Purpose of a referrals policy

Our referrals policy is designed to ensure that: - we can support as many families as we can, with the appropriate level of dignity, whilst ensuring we meet their material and emotional needs as fair and transparently as possible.

We seek to make sure each item given meets the identified need

Who can refer?

We accept referrals from professional bodies, those working in schools, medical or health settings, churches and community centres who may be working with families who meet our criteria.

We also accept self-referrals.

Each referrer must complete a wishlist for themselves /the family in need.

Referral Criteria

Hartlepool Baby Bank seeks to work with pregnant women or families with under 2s across Hartlepool and surrounding areas.

Whilst anyone can contact the Baby Bank, we reserve the right to prioritise based on the following criteria

Low Income – this may be due to benefits, loss of job, or unexpected pregnancy etc.

Immediate Safety Needs – a child at immediate risk of harm will have extra priority.

Loss of home – fire, homelessness or fleeing violence etc.

Domestic Abuse

Disability

Asylum Seekers and those with no recourse from public funds

Guidance for providing a referral.

If a referral partner is in doubt about whether a family meets the criteria for seeking support from Hartlepool Baby Bank we would recommend they speak to the trustee in charge of the session.

Providing items requested

If a wishlist is completed at the Baby Bank, where possible items will be provided to take away at the end of that contact. Particularly clothing, nappies, toiletries. An arrangement will be made to deliver larger / not in stock items and regular updates will be provided as appropriate with regards to a time frame for expecting missing items.

Where a wishlist is completed online, contact will be made within 48 working hours to confirm receipt of wishlist and confirm the need of items. A decision will then be made with the service user as to whether items are to be collected or delivered (as best appropriate) and within what time scale.

No items are given until a service user is a minimum of 28 weeks pregnant (unless in case of medical emergency) or already has a child meeting our criteria.

Large 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. Or a cot to swap for a travel cot when we have families who have neither travel cot or cot.

As stock availability allows, a newborn pram can be returned to be swapped for a pushchair suited for an older child. Or a Moses basket for a cot.

If due to Coronavirus or other exceptional events we are unable to provide our standard service we will communicate this clearly to our referral partners and service users. We will also display updates on our website and social media platforms.

Frequency of referral

We understand that some people will need more support than others and as such as allow repeated use of the Baby Bank as need allows.

However we will only provide items such as nappies and wipes once a week and items such as clothing and shoes once a month.

We reserve the right to refuse items such as clothing for families who have already received large quantities in order to ensure provision for others.

Where a family has **ONLY** children over the age of 5. Signposting will be done to Hartlepool Reloved Clothing instead of completing a wishlist as they have a larger range for older children and this will allow us to concentrate on younger children **NOT** covered by other agencies/charities.

Returning items

We do ask where possible larger items are returned to the Baby Bank such as sleeping spaces and prams. If items are broken we ask that we are notified in a timely manner.

Items may be returned to the Baby Bank or re-gifted to local families for free as we seek to encourage family to family support.

Anyone found to be selling on or making a profit from items provided by Hartlepool Baby Bank will be given one chance to return the items before they are subsequently banned from using the service.

Grounds for refusal of a referral.

In the rare case we feel a family is unsuitable for support from Hartlepool Baby Bank we will clearly explain this and offer the family the right of appeal. If their circumstances change in the future they remain welcome to speak to us about support again. **Unless this person has sold goods previously supplied by us.**

Hartlepool Baby Bank retains the right to refuse access to the Baby Bank from families from a distance not considered to be local to Hartlepool, unless the family is unable to access support from any closer Baby Bank/ Support service. If a family states they are unable to access support from a baby bank in their town we will seek permission to speak to this Baby Bank and verify this before we supply any items.

If we feel another Baby Bank is more suitable due to location we will seek to pass contact details on of both parties (where appropriate consent has been received) and make a direct referral where possible.

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.

Policy Number 7

Reviewed 4th November 2023.

Next review End of November 2024.

