

Allocations & Lettings Policy – Control Sheet

Title:	Allocations & Lettings Policy	
Context:	The Society is committed to providing homes for those whose choice is limited.	
Owner:	Operations Director	
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Version:	Date:	Details:
1.0	January 2016	Updated
Next Review	January 2019	

Allocations & Lettings Policy

Introduction

The Society is committed to providing homes for those whose choice is limited and will:

- Participate in the local choice based lettings systems
- Follow the principles of the Homes and Communities Agency regulatory guidance
- Work closely with local authority partners to ensure we assist them to address their strategic priorities
- Ensure that our lettings support the sustainability of our homes and our estates.
- Ensure that all applicants are able to sustain their tenancy financially

Policy

The Society, in order to achieve its overall aim, will prioritise the following groups in its allocation of property:

- People living in temporary or insecure accommodation
- People living in unsanitary, overcrowded or unsatisfactory conditions
- Households with dependent children
- People whose needs are based on medical or welfare grounds
- People whose social or economic circumstances would otherwise prevent them from securing their own accommodation
- Society tenants wishing to move

Equality of Opportunity

The Society has an expressed aim of allocating homes fairly and providing equality for all in the allocation of its homes.

Appropriate statistics will be collected and communicated to CORE (Continuous Recording of Lettings).

The Society will review the statistical returns annually to ensure appropriate monitoring against the objectives set out in its Equality and Diversity Policy.

Access to the Society's Housing

Potential applicants are identified or referred to the Society through a variety of mechanisms which include:

- Local Authority Choice Based Lettings Schemes
- Mutual Exchange
- Internal Transfers
- Decant Procedures
- Succession and Assignment

Local Authority Choice Based Lettings (CBL)

The Society is committed to providing allocations through the CBL schemes. The Society's involvement in such schemes does not compromise its independence. The Society sets its own priorities according to this lettings policy and will not normally consider applicants/nominations who can afford to purchase their own homes.

Mutual Exchanges

Society tenants are afforded the right to mutually exchange their property in accordance with current legislation and the terms of their tenancy agreement

Internal Transfers

Existing tenants of the Society may apply for a transfer to accommodation better suited to their needs, subject to availability. Priorities between transfers are determined according to need or the ability to make better use of the accommodation.

In exceptional circumstances an offer may be made to an applicant who does not fulfil all the above criteria. Exceptions will only be made in extreme cases such as urgent transfers for those who have had domestic violence, harassment (as defined under the Society's harassment policy) or hate crimes directed against them, or on the advice of a medical assessor. In all such cases the reasons for disregarding the above criteria will be documented on the house file.

Properties will be allocated to transfer applicants in accordance with the criteria for allocating property.

All internal transfer applicants who refuse two reasonable offers without good reason will not be considered for future transfers for the following 12 months.

Transfer applicants must inform the Society of any changes to circumstances that affect their application. Any offer made to an applicant subsequently found to be fraudulent will be withdrawn.

Decants

Decanting will only be authorised where urgent repairs or improvements cannot be carried out with the tenants in occupation, or where property disposal is intended.

All decisions will be taken in line with the Society's Decants policy. However, the urgent need for decant may take priority over all other lettings and nomination arrangements including transfers.

Succession and Assignment

Succession in the event of death and assignments of tenancy are granted in accordance with current legislation and the terms of the tenancy agreement.

Priority of allocation

Priority in the first instance will be given to the Society's tenants who wish to transfer, are required to be decanted or are eligible to succeed to a tenancy all subject to them meeting conditions identified in the relevant sections.

Subsequently, the remaining allocations will be drawn from the Local Authority Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

Certain exceptions will be made in respect of:

- The requirement to decant tenants and to offer alternative accommodation
- Housing where planning restrictions have to be met (Section 106) in which case the legal requirements will take precedence over the Society's targets
- Rural exception schemes where there is a requirement for local lettings
- Local lettings plans - On new developments or on estates where there are significant management problems, the Society may consider a local lettings plan to achieve stable communities and sustainable tenancies.

Eligible Applicants

Those eligible will be:

Anyone over the age of eighteen who:

- Cannot afford to provide their own housing
- Is in housing need
- Has established a local connection or has reason to move into the area, for example, employment, providing care or support to another family member (family in this context is not exclusive to immediate blood ties and may include same sex partners and transgender partners)
- People relocating for reasons of domestic violence or hate crime perpetrated against them
- People relocating for support needs or for reasons of health and well being

- Older people requiring accommodation with support who are unable to secure such housing for themselves.

Members of the Society's Board, any of their relatives and the Society's employees or any of their relatives, may only be rehoused within the provisions of this policy. Such cases will require the consent of the Board before any housing can be offered.

Re-housing of Asylum Seekers and applicants from the European Union A8 countries; applicants in these cases will be eligible to be considered providing there is:

- A positive status determination by the Home Office in the case of Asylum seekers
- Compliance with the Home Office Workers Registration scheme in the case of A8 applicants.

Exclusions

The Society does not operate a blanket policy of refusing applications for specific reasons, but we may not consider people for housing in certain circumstances. Each instance will be considered on a case by case basis and if we decide to exclude an applicant on any of the following grounds then the applicant will be advised that they can appeal against our decision using our complaints procedure. Applicants will be informed of the actions that they need to take before they can be reconsidered for housing with the Society.

The examples below are instances where we may refuse to consider applicants for housing:

- Those who have sufficient income and/or savings to secure their own housing solution, except for applicants who are older people requiring accommodation with support, where they are unable to secure such accommodation for themselves.
- Those who have no or very low levels of need.
- Those who have suitable alternative accommodation available.
- Those who have rent arrears or other housing debts with their existing landlord (other than delayed housing benefit or as a result of domestic violence). The Society will consider each case individually taking into account any repayment plans.
- Those who have breached the terms of their present or a former tenancy within the last two years. The Society will consider each case individually and will take account of the seriousness of the breaches and the evidence available.
- Those who have deliberately threatened to or committed acts of violence, abuse or harassment against staff or other tenants of the Society or of another social landlord.
- Those who are perpetrators of harassment, domestic violence or hate crimes.
- Those who have deliberately deprived themselves of adequate housing with the intention of being re-housed by the Society.

- Applicants with support needs where the Society is unable to ensure the support is available or the level of support required will seriously undermine the Society's ability to support other residents in the scheme.

Special Cases

In exceptional circumstances the Operations Director has discretion to authorise the acceptance of an application from a household with circumstances listed in sections 7- in addition, other cases may be considered as special cases as follows:

- Young people over the age of 16 and resident in the Society's areas may be able to register for housing if they are in housing need. Support from Social Services and/or a guardian will be required to act as a guarantor for any tenancy offered.
- Consideration may be given to key workers whose jobs are important to the local community.
- High risk ex- offenders - where the Society is asked to house applicants who are ex-offenders and are likely to pose a risk to the community. A full risk assessment, including liaison with the police and the local authority will be undertaken to support any final decision.

Criteria for Allocating Properties

Properties will be allocated on the basis of:

- The number of bedrooms matching family size.
- The physical layout and design of the property matching the applicants needs, as assessed by a medical expert.
- The location of the property, if the offer is made on the basis of harassment/hate crime or domestic violence.
- The location of family or other relatives if support is a requirement.

The following principles will apply when allocating housing:

- Children of the same sex may share a room unless there is an age difference of five years or more.
- Children of different sexes qualify for a separate bedroom at the age of seven.
- No more than two children to share a bedroom.
- Adults sharing accommodation but not living together as a couple will be offered separate rooms.
- Joint tenancies are given to couples or to single sharers as long as they are joint applicants or nominated jointly

In specially adapted accommodation or supported accommodation, these principals may be waived to meet demand or medical requirements (i.e. elderly couple requiring separate rooms).

In all cases, these principles may need to be waived in exceptional circumstances to meet acute and demonstrable need. The Society's Under-Occupation Policy will be referred to in such cases.

The Lettings Process

All offers of accommodation are made in writing.

Applicants, nominees, referrals and exchanges are given the opportunity to view the accommodation in which they are interested before deciding whether to accept the offer or not.

The signing of the tenancy agreement can either take place in the Society's offices or at another convenient site. Tenants are provided with full information about the property, including service charge liability, the agreement itself and details of local amenities.

Applications will be rejected or suspended in respect of reasonable offers made, in line with the procedures outlined above.

Appeals

Applicants who are dissatisfied with their treatment at any stage of the re-housing process will have their complaint dealt with promptly and fairly.

If people wish to challenge any decision made in connection with their housing application they have the right to have a review of the decision and in this first instance should direct this to the Operations Director. If the matter is not resolved the applicant should use the Society's complaints procedure.

The procedure does not prevent anyone from seeking independent help or advice from independent advice agencies, such as Citizens Advice.

Monitoring

The Society will monitor all its allocations to ensure that it is meeting its expressed targets contained within this policy and within its equality and diversity strategy. It will report this annually to Board

EFFECTIVE DATE	REVIEW DATE	RESPONSIBILITY
January 2016	January 2019	Operations Director