

Allocations and Lettings Policy

VERSION [1.4]

Version Control

Note: minor updates increase version number by 0.1, major updates increase version number by 1.0.

Version Number	Sections Amended	Date of update	Approved by
1.0	First version of Abri policy	May 2021	Directors
1.1	Update to 3.10 adding job role	02/09/2021	
1.2	Definition of parlour room added	February 2023	Director of Housing and Community Investment
1.3	Minor updates Withdrawing an application added Policy & Procedure table update Office roles update	13/06/2023	Director of Housing and Community Investment
1.4	Policy review - minor updates	June 2025	Regional Assistant Director of Housing (South East) 02/07/2025

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Document author: Group Home Connections Manager

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 We are committed to ensuring our properties are accessible and prioritised to applicants who are challenged to find or excluded from other housing options. We will ensure our approach is efficient, transparent, and timely to make best use of our housing stock to achieve mixed, sustainable communities.
- 1.2 The aim of this policy is to:
- Allocate properties in a fair and transparent way.
 - Deliver a consistent and clear lettings process to minimise rent loss and reduce relet times.
 - Make best use of stock and supporting future successful tenancies.
 - Support Local Authority strategy to tackle homelessness and housing need.

2. This policy applies to...

- 2.1 Abri refers to Abri Group Limited, the parent company and all its subsidiary companies.
- 2.2 This policy sets out our approach to the allocation of Abri's¹ general needs, partnership living, independent living and extra care rented properties. Details of the tenancies we offer are contained in our separate Tenure Policy.

3. Policy

- 3.1 We hold housing stock within a large geography, located across many local authority areas. There are a variety of Local Authority partnership arrangements in place to guide our approach when allocating properties, such as Section 106 agreements (legal agreements between Local Authorities and developers), local lettings plans and Nomination Agreements.
- 3.2 We are committed to working in partnership with local authorities to support their strategic housing functions, in line with the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards and the general requirement on Registered Providers (RPs) to assist local authorities to discharge their statutory duties² and provide housing for customers in need.
- 3.3 We have developed a range of services and work collaboratively with a network of agencies to support vulnerable customers and are committed to support customers through the lettings process, including those who do not speak English as a first language, and/or have difficulties with written English.

¹ Abri will be used throughout this document to refer to all companies within the Abri group.

² Section 170 Housing Act 1996

3.4 The fundamental principles of this policy are:

- Openness, fairness and efficiency.
- Affordability.
- Adherence to the Equality Act 2010.
- Assessment of priority, based on housing need.
- Sustainability of neighbourhoods.
- Co-operation with local authorities in meeting their responsibilities towards those in housing need.
- Adherence to the Regulator of Social Housing Regulatory Standards; and
- Suitability of properties to meet the needs of individual households.

Housing Register and Choice Based Lettings

3.5 Housing Registers or Choice Based Lettings schemes exist in all areas of our operation (see 3.1). Applicants for housing, register one application in their local authority area, and are eligible for consideration by all the social housing providers within that area.

Direct Allocations

3.6 Direct allocations can come from various sources such as Abri waiting lists, external adverts, partnership agreements (for partnership living accommodation) and Estate Agent leads. All Direct Allocations will be subject to Right to Rent checks in line with the procedure and they will need to satisfy the tenancy management criteria for refusing and accepting nominations set out in paragraph 3.12 below. We can make direct offers in accordance with our nomination's agreements, full details are set out in our Allocations and Lettings procedure.

Transfers

3.7 We aim to help our existing residents have an opportunity to move to accommodation which is more suitable for their needs. This may be via Abri's internal transfer lists (Windsor and Longwood Park only), through Local Authority lettings schemes or by promoting mutual exchange schemes.

Occupation Criteria

3.8 Properties will normally be allocated in line with the occupation criteria as stated in Appendix A and in accordance with the relevant local authority Nominations Agreements.

3.9 We will, where possible, maximise the occupancy for each property to assist with the allocation of larger households. We will not generally over occupy properties but will work with the Local Authority if required to review larger households needs on a case-by-case basis and work in line with their housing and allocations policies.

3.10 Some of our stock of 3 and 4 bedroom houses have a self-contained parlour on the ground floor of the property. We inspect all properties with a ground floor parlour prior to allocating them to review if they can be used as an additional bedroom space to maximise the property occupancy. When reviewing the parlour room we consider aspects such as fire safety and providing a sufficient habitable space. For a parlour room to be considered as a sleeping space it must have its own door into the room direct from a hallway. This means a parlour room must be self-contained and not accessible via another room such as a kitchen or a lounge. If a parlour room is to be used as an additional sleeping space the property size (number of bedrooms) will not be changed in open housing as the property make up remains the same. We endeavour to make best use the living space to assist with housing larger families and not change the permanent makeup of the property.

Local Lettings Plans

3.11 Local lettings plans may be considered to promote sustainable communities, assisting a neighbourhood to become more balanced with a variety of different households. Local lettings plans will reflect, and help to deliver, our commitment to equality and diversity. All such plans will be approved by the relevant local authority and The Group Home Connections Manager.

Under occupation

3.12 We aim to make best use of our stock matching applicant needs with the size of the property, however at our discretion we will in exceptional circumstances allow under occupation (as agreed by the Group Home Connections Manager). An example of this is where the Local Authority makes a specific request to support someone living with additional needs.

Accepting and refusing nominations

3.13 All allocations will be in accordance with the relevant Local Authority's nominations agreement and this policy. For Extra Care, an extra care allocations panel (made up of internal colleagues and Adult Social Care) will assess all applications and agree care needs and housing priority on a case-by-case basis (depending on capacity within the scheme).

3.14 In some circumstances we will refuse to make an offer of permanent or temporary accommodation³. These include:

- The applicant has access to another property over which they have occupation and/or ownership rights and they choose not to live in this property. This includes properties owned by an applicant where they have let the property on a tenancy agreement for profit. Exceptions will be considered, and these include but are not limited to circumstances when an applicant can show they have a court order transferring rights, including any

³ In most cases Nominations Agreements allow us to refuse a nominee on these grounds but in some cases the right to refuse may be more limited. Nominations agreements should always be checked for any such restrictions before a decision to refuse is made

ownership or security of tenure, cases where Domestic Abuse is a factor and where someone is applying for Independent Living or Extra Care accommodation. We may exercise discretion on a case-by-case basis.

- The applicant does not intend to reside and continue to reside after the letting at the offered property as their only or principal home as required by the Housing Act 1985 and Housing Act 1988 (as amended) or any successor legislation.
- Where we do not have the ability to reasonably adapt the property to the specific needs and requirements of the applicant.
- The property will be statutory overcrowded.
- The applicant is a minor and it has not been possible to arrange a guarantor.
- The applicant has a current debt with Abri (or a subsidiary) - unless agreed as part of an approved management move, statutory overcrowding or a downsizing scheme.
- If the applicant has an outstanding former debt to Abri (or a subsidiary) or a current or former debt with another RP they must have maintained a satisfactory repayment agreement over a period of at least 6 months. If there are any debts outstanding at the start of any new tenancy the existing repayment agreement needs to ensure the debt would be cleared within a maximum of two years from the tenancy start date. In cases where this debt was caused by a reduction in benefit due to under-occupation and the move will remove this reduction, Abri may consider the move and allow the debt to be recovered under the new tenancy agreement.
- After affordability checks have been carried out the applicant cannot demonstrate an ability to pay rent and other charges including if they have no recourse to public funds.
- The applicant, or members of the household:
 - a) have been evicted for ASB, another breach of tenancy or abandoned a previous tenancy.
 - b) has been subject to tenancy enforcement action in the last five years for ASB.
 - c) have a history of drug, alcohol, or legal high misuse if it occurred within the last five years.

Discretion maybe given in cases where the applicant, or members of the household, have shown a commitment to rehabilitation. We will take into consideration engagement with support agencies and any references that support the application when deciding on rehousing. This will be done on a case-by-case basis

- The applicant, or members of the household, have been assessed as presenting a considerable risk to the community and/or our staff or they are considered unsuitable for communal living, following a risk assessment agreed by the Group Home Connections Manager. For supported accommodation this will be agreed by the Head of Supported Housing. Risks that would be reviewed as part of the assessment are - previous convictions, applicant, or applicant's household currently under investigation or has a history of repeated investigations for criminal acts that present a potential risk to the community and or our staff, applicants who have committed

fraud, applicants subject to Multi-Agency Public Protections Agreement (MAPPA) or are a Registered Sex Offender (RSO). For supported accommodation, it will also include whether it is considered the applicant requires more support that would be available at the scheme.

- The applicant does not meet the criteria as specified in the local lettings plan agreed by the relevant local authority.
- The applicants do not have the Right to Rent⁴. This relates to successions, assignments, nominations received via our internal transfer or waiting lists and nominations received from external sources if a property is deemed Hard to Let.
- The applicants who require a Right to Rent check and who have less than 6 months remaining on their temporary residency permits and have not applied for a renewal, where recourse to public funds will be an issue. This includes customers who are part of the Ukraine Family Scheme.
- The applicants has provided false or misleading information on their housing application and/or on their Pre-Tenancy Assessment.
- A transferring customer whose property failed a property inspection as part of the end of tenancy visit in accordance with Abri's Tenancy Termination procedure.
- The Applicant(s) have received an unsatisfactory tenancy reference from their previous housing provider (this could be the Local Authority or a Registered provider) and one or more of the above has been identified.

Withdrawing an offer of accommodation

3.15 There are some circumstances when we may need to withdraw an offer of accommodation. This could be but it is not limited to:

- A customer not responding to an offer of accommodation within the agreed timescales
- A customer not providing Abri with information relating to their personal circumstances by failing to or refusing to complete the pre tenancy assessment form
- A customer not being available to complete the tenancy sign up due to being away for more than 5 days after the ready to let date
- The property being considered for disposal in line with Abri's property disposal programme.

3.16 Any decision to refuse or withdraw an application for any of the reasons listed above will be made by a Home Connections Manager and Partnership Living Manager.

⁴ Under the Immigration Act 2014 and the statutory Code of Practice. Statutory Successions, direct nominations and nominated transfers are exempt from the right to rent requirements contained within the Immigration Act 2014. Additional adults not named on the nomination/referral must be subject to Abri's Right to Rent checks.

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- 3.17 Refusals to accept nominations may be appealed by the customer in line with our Appeals process. More information on the appeals process can be found within the Appeals procedure.

Disabled adaptations and lettings to disabled applicants.

- 3.18 We will ensure adapted properties, or properties that are suitable for adaptation, are, wherever possible, occupied by those who can make the best use of these properties. We commit to making homes available to maximise the independence of people with disabilities where practical.

Supported accommodation - this includes Independent Living, Partnership Living and Extra Care)

- 3.19 Accommodation in Independent Living schemes will be let in line with any local lettings plans, local authority housing allocation policy, or nominations agreements (including planning restrictions). As these schemes provide housing for older people, applicants and their occupants must be over 60 for our schemes with communal shared facilities. Applicants and their occupants must be over the age of 55 to be allocated to our dispersed schemes. Exceptions may be given for a live-in carer for our two-bed properties, on a case-by-case basis and with consent from the Senior Operations Manager.
- 3.20 Partnership Living accommodation will be let in accordance with the management agreement/service level agreement/lease agreement or nominations & voids agreement (as applicable).
- 3.21 Applicants for Extra Care will be mainly 55 and over. There will be circumstances where younger adults with disabilities would be considered (where there is a need for on-going and regular 24-hour support). Applicants must have been assessed to have a care need and to receive a package of care, they must have assessed needs that meet the Care Act eligibility criteria for care and support. All applicants must initially complete a self-assessment form and financial assessment.

Medical Transfers

- 3.22 For some geographical areas we hold our own internal waiting lists and applicants may apply for medical priority. We reserve the right to have the application assessed by an Independent Medical Assessor.

Management Transfers

- 3.23 Management transfers will be offered in exceptional cases, where a person's need for a move is so great they are deemed at risk. Once approved for a management move they are immediately given priority for a transfer. The priority will be dependent on nominations agreements and local authority housing and allocations policies. In most circumstances their application will be supported by external agencies.

- 3.24 Management transfers will normally be granted on a like-for-like basis and only one offer will be made. Management transfers will be agreed in line with the Management Transfer procedure.

Succession to Tenancies

- 3.25 When a tenant dies it is possible for someone living in the household to 'succeed' to the tenancy.
- 3.26 Individual succession rights are governed by the Housing Act 1988 and can also be detailed in each tenancy agreement. In general, if a tenant dies, their partner, (married, civil partner, co-habiting, or same sex partner) occupying the tenancy as their only or principal home, will automatically succeed to the tenancy. Succession can only occur once on the death of a sole tenant. If a joint tenant dies the tenancy automatically passes to the remaining joint tenant, through survivorship (which counts as a succession).
- 3.27 We provide an additional discretionary ground of succession for those who satisfy the succession criteria set out in this policy. In applying this discretion, we will ensure the circumstances of vulnerable under-occupying households are protected if necessary, through a reasonable offer of appropriate and alternative accommodation, which may be from another landlord.
- 3.28 We will also consider discretionary succession rights to: -
- Another member of the family who has lived with the tenant for a period of 12 months immediately before the death and has an identified housing need and or vulnerability and who resided at the property at the time of the tenant's death and who has no other home.
 - A person who has been caring for the tenant and living with them at the property for at least 6 months and who has no other home (except for Partnership Living accommodation where care has been provided by a support provider or managing agent).
 - A person who has accepted responsibility for the deceased tenant's child/children. The child, or at least one of the children if more than one, must be under 18 and they must live at the property and have no other home; and
 - Where there has already been one succession but there is an individual in occupation that would otherwise be entitled to succeed as a statutory successor (spouse, civil partner, or partner) or under one of the above categories.
- 3.29 None of the people above have an automatic right to succeed the property and we will decide each request on its merits, considering the nature of the accommodation, the needs and means of the individual and any relevant history known to us. This could include, but is not limited to, consideration of the following issues:

- Where occupation by the successor applicant would result in under-occupation. In this case, if otherwise satisfied that the individual would be entitled to a discretionary succession, a more suitable property will be offered, subject to availability (this may be with another landlord).
- Where the applicant has a known history of anti-social behaviour or criminal activity.
- Where the individual was previously a tenant of Abri (or a subsidiary) and was evicted or ended the tenancy owing rent arrears, which have not been discharged.
- Where the individual owns another property where they could reasonably be expected to reside.
- Where the individual or a member of their own household has some vulnerability due to, for example, age, illness or disability.
- Where the individual has dependent children.
- Where the individual would suffer undue hardship if not permitted to succeed.
- The ability of the individual to pay the rent and sustain the tenancy.
- Where the property has been specially adapted and there are housing applicants who have a need for those adaptations.
- Whether the applicant would be treated as eligible for re-housing under the statutory homelessness criteria.
- Where there are competing interests for succession from another member of the household.
- Whether the applicant and or members of the household have the Right to Rent (Abri's investigating officer to carry out all Right to Rent checks).

3.30 An individual wishing to apply for a discretionary succession must make their application in writing within four weeks of the tenant's death.

3.31 When deciding under the discretionary grounds, managers will also consider the degree of disadvantage caused to both the applicant as well as disadvantage which may be suffered by other applicants competing for scarce housing in the area, and any obligations to Joint Housing Registers, quotas or nomination rights.

3.32 In every discretionary succession case which is approved, an assured tenancy will be granted. (This new tenancy will not necessarily be for the existing property as individual circumstances of the applicant will determine the appropriate accommodation).

Mutual exchanges

3.33 We will fully support mutual exchanges to help meet residents' housing needs and aspirations and we will promote them wherever possible. This will be in line with the Mutual Exchange policy and procedure. We will provide a free advertising service to enable and support customers to complete Mutual Exchanges.

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Mobile Homes

3.34 For Mobile Homeowners we will work in accordance with the Mobile Homes Act 1983 (as amended) and will let Mobile Homes and plots, owned by us, in accordance with the appropriate procedure.

Monitoring

3.35 Allocations will be reported on regular basis to our Executive Board. Statistical data will be provided to the Continuous Recording of Lettings (CORE) and Local Authority partners, as requested. As part of this monitoring process, we will work in partnership with Local Authorities to monitor allocations to ensure that they reflect the diversity of our communities. Any offers of accommodation to colleagues, board/committee members, contractors or close relatives of the same are subject to approval and declarations of interest as per the Non-contractual Payments and Benefits Procedure.

Review

3.36 We will review this policy every two years as part of our approach to continuous improvement and/or in line with legislative changes, Government Incentives, and best practice. We will encourage customers to participate in this process through our customer involvement arrangements.

Data protection

3.37 We will comply with our data protection legal requirements when processing and handling data. For full details refer to the Data Protection Policy.

4. Legal & Regulatory Framework

List any legislation and regulations relevant to the policy

- Housing Acts, 1985, 1988 and 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Immigration Act 2014
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Localism Act 2011
- Mobile Homes Act 1983
- Regulator of Social Housing Tenancy Standard

5. Related Documents

Related Policies and Procedures
Complaints Policy
Customer Resolution Procedure
Allocations and Lettings Procedure
Tenure Policy
Anti Social Behaviour and Harassment Policy (ASB) Policy
Anti-social Behaviour Procedure
Domestic Abuse Policy
Domestic Abuse Procedure
Appeals Procedure
Fixed Term Tenancy Procedure
Mutual Exchange Policy
Mutual Exchange Procedure
Thames Transfer and Sheltered Waiting List Procedure
Longwood Park Internal Transfer List Procedure
Tenancy Changes Assignment Procedure
Right to Rent Procedure
Lettings to Minors Procedure
Void Management Procedure
Tenancy Termination Procedure
Management Transfer Procedure
Mental Capacity Procedure
Non-Contractual Payments and Benefits Procedure

6. Appendices

Appendix A - Occupancy Criteria for General Needs

Appendix B - Extra Care Allocation - Criteria for eligibility for assessed care

Appendix A

Occupancy Criteria for General Needs

	Number of Bedrooms	People
Single person	1	1
Couple	1	2
Two people not in a relationship but being accommodated together	2	2
Parent or Couple with 1 Child	2	3
Parent or Couple with 2 Children (both under 10yrs, regardless of gender)	2	4
Parent or Couple with 2 Children (both under 16yrs and same gender) - see note below *	2	4
Parent or Couple with 2 Children (one of which over 10yrs but of a different gender)	3	4
Parent or Couple with 3 Children (all under 16yrs)	3	5
Parent or Couple with 3 Children (one of which is over 16yrs and the other 2 are of different gender and over 10yrs)	4	5
Parent or Couple with 4 Children (all under 10yrs)	3	6
Parent or Couple with 4 Children (one of which is over 16 yrs and the other 3 are of different gender and over 10 yrs)	4	6
Parent or Couple with 5 Children (all under age 16 yrs)	4	7
Parent or Couple with 6 or more Children (all under age 16 yrs)	5	8

Pregnant applicants with a due date of less than 6 weeks can be considered for an additional bedroom but must be advised of the under-occupancy charge and how they will be affected if they are claiming benefit now or in the future if their circumstances change.

* Some of our Local Authority Partners have updated their Allocations and Lettings Policies to increase the ages for which children of the same sex can share a room. This means in some cases children of the same sex can share a room up to the age of 18 or 21. We will allocate our homes in line with the Local Authorities housing policy ensuring we do not create overcrowding in our homes.

Appendix B - Extra Care Allocation - Criteria for eligibility for assessed care

The criteria for eligibility for assessed care is based on identifying how a person's needs affect their wellbeing. Someone will be eligible for social care and support if their care needs are due to a physical impairment or mental impairment or illness and, as a result of their care needs, they are unable to achieve two or more of the things in the list below and as a result of not being able to achieve these things it has a significant impact on the adult's wellbeing:

- managing and maintaining nutrition
- maintaining personal hygiene
- managing toilet needs
- being appropriately clothed
- being able to make use of your home safely
- maintaining a habitable environment
- developing and maintaining family or other personal relationships
- accessing and engaging in work, training, education or volunteering
- making use of necessary facilities or services in the local community including public transport and recreational facilities or services.