

Paragon Housing Association Limited

POLICY:	ALLOCATIONS
POLICY AREA:	HOUSING MANAGEMENT
DATE APPROVED:	12/02/18
DATE NEXT REVIEW:	April 2022

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1. AIMS

Paragon Housing Association aims to make the best use of the housing stock it has available by giving greatest priority to those in housing need whilst being as sensitive as possible to the individual circumstances of applicants.

The Associations Allocations Policy aims to provide housing of an appropriate size and type to applicants in most housing need and who should receive priority in being allocated a tenancy, and to exclude the possibility of inconsistency, favouritism or discrimination.

The Allocations Policy aims to assist the achievement of the Association's objectives set out in our Internal Management Plan

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Allocations Policy are to:

- To ensure that people have fair and open access to our housing list and assessment process.
- To effectively manage allocations to ensure needs and aspirations of applicants are met, sustainable communities are maintained and control voids to ensure minimum rent loss and maximize rental income.
 - To work with other relevant bodies to simplify access routes into our housing stock.
 - To promote social inclusion but ensuring a balance is struck between the interests of the individual and that of the community.
 - To let houses in a way that gives reasonable preference to those in greatest need and makes the best use of available stock.
 - To provide clear, accurate information and advice to allow applicants to make informed choices throughout the allocations process.

3. **LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

The Association seeks to ensure that its Allocations Policy reflects the legal framework and good practice.

4. **SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER – review charter outcomes**

This policy is designed to comply with the Scottish Social housing Charter (The Charter)

Charter Outcome No 1: Equalities

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

Charter Outcome No 2: Communication

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

Charter Outcome No 3: Participation

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

Access to housing and support

Charter Outcome No 7, 8 and 9: Housing Options

Social landlords work together to ensure that:

- people looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them
- tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options.

Social landlords ensure that:

- people at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness.

Charter Outcome No 10: Access to social housing

Social landlords ensure that:

- people looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and their prospects of being housed.

5. ELIGIBILITY

Sections 19 and 20 of the Housing (Scotland) Act, 1987 (as amended by Sections 9 and 10 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 entitles anyone aged 16 years or over to be admitted to the housing list including current Association tenants. This right to be admitted on the housing list is not the same as the right to be offered accommodation. An offer of housing is decided by the priority awarded to each housing applicant in accordance with the Allocations Policy.

All applicants will be treated equally and applications assessed strictly on the basis of housing need. There will be no residential qualification restricting those eligible to apply.

Couples or persons living together who decide to separate will be eligible to apply for alternative accommodation.

Owner-occupiers will not be excluded from applying. As with all applicants the overriding criteria for allocating a tenancy will be housing need. However, owner occupiers will have their points restricted unless they meet the criteria outlined below.

No-one will be debarred from applying for a tenancy by a previous eviction or a record of rent arrears, although these factors will be fully investigated by the Association before the applicant is considered for a tenancy.

A formal application form must be completed by each applicant, giving full details of all circumstances and the type/size/area of accommodation requested. A points system will be used to give a priority category to those applicants with the greatest need. The application form will be obtained from the Association's office and/or other outlets. If necessary the Association's staff will assist in completing the form.

6. CRITERIA

In allocating tenancies the Association will meet the following criteria:

- Ensure that applicants and properties are suitably matched up
- Ensure that the housing stock is put to the best use.
- In operating this policy, the Association will ensure that its staff act in a manner which will not discriminate against any applicant or potential applicant on the

grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In the event that there is no demand on the Association's waiting list from a particular vacancy it will initially seek a nomination from the Council. In the event that they fail to make a nomination which results in a let the Association may advertise the vacancy or will try to make the best possible use match from the applicants on the waiting list.

Acceptance of any application does not bind the Association to make an offer of tenancy within any specified period.

The Association will take up any references it sees fit to support an application, provided the applicant has given written permission to do so under the Data Protection Act 1998.

7. CHANGES IN CIRCUMSTANCES

The responsibility for notifying the Association of changes in circumstances lies with the applicant. All applicants should be aware that failure to notify the Association of any changes might affect their points' level and their priority within the system. It is therefore essential that all changes be notified immediately.

If an applicant has a change of circumstances which will result in them receiving increased points the applicant will not require to complete a new application form. However, the applicant's date of application will change to the date on which they advised the Association about their new circumstances.

It is the responsibility of applicant to ensure that they respond to contacts from the Association and failure to do so may result in their removal from the waiting list.

8. NOMINATIONS

The Association will consider nominations from Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Stirling Council's waiting list for up to 50% of vacant relet stock, through a formal nomination agreement with each Council. The nomination would be at the discretion of the Council and the Association will have no responsibility in determining who the Council nominates.

In the event that the local authority fails to make a successful nomination and the property is ready to let the Association will try to make the best possible match from the applicants on the direct waiting list.

Also in the event that there is no demand on the Association's direct waiting list it will seek a nomination from the Council and may **consider advertising the vacant property**

9. SECTION 5 REFERRALS

In accordance with Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 the Association will house homeless people referred by the local authorities in our area of operation unless there is a “good reason” not to do so as defined by the Scottish Executive guidance and protocol agreements with the local authority.

In the event that the local authority is unable to make a section 5 referral and the property is ready to let then the Association will allocate the property to an applicant on its direct waiting list.

10. OUR HOUSING STOCK

The Association’s housing stock includes properties that are designed to meet a number of housing needs

General needs

Anyone aged 16 years or over can apply to the Association and ask to be considered for its general needs housing.

Amenity Housing - Balfour Court, Pleau

The Association’s Amenity Housing at Balfour Court, Pleau is particularly designed to meet the needs of older people. It has no on-site staff, but tenants can opt to pay for access to personal support provided through the Mobile Emergency Care Service.

The Association will firstly consider applicants who are, or who have a permanent household member who is aged 60 years and over for amenity accommodation. Applicants who are, or who have a permanent household member who is aged 60 years and over, can apply to be considered for General Needs accommodation as well.

If we have available amenity housing and we do not have a prospective tenant who is aged 60 years and over, then the Association may let the property to an applicant who is younger who has similar identified housing support needs.

Housing for wheelchair users or with Medical Adaptations installed

The Association has properties which have medical adaptation installed or are designed to meet the needs of people who use wheelchairs in their home. Where one of these properties becomes available for let the Association will firstly only consider households who require occupying this type of accommodation.

Supported Housing

Sometimes, the Association may make agreements with housing support agencies that specific houses should only be let to people with support needs that the agency will meet. The Association will only consider applicants with the type of needs the support agency can meet for these houses.

11. APPLICATION FORMS

Each applicant would be asked to choose:-

- AREA - Each applicant will be allowed to choose as many areas as they like.
- SIZE – Occupancy Standard

Our occupancy standard is as follows:

Each couple (that is a partner of the same or opposite sex) and persons aged 8 years and over should have a room of their own.

However, a parent/guardian may choose to opt for the Welfare Reform Act 2012 under-occupation bedroom criteria. This means that the Association will allow any two children regardless of sex aged 8 to 10 and two children of the same sex aged 8 to 16 can to share a double bedroom.

The Association may in special circumstances consider an applicant for one bedroom more than the family complement requires. Special circumstances are:

1. Health grounds subject to a health assessment.
2. Applicants with access to children for overnight stays will be considered for 1 bedroom more than the family complement requires. The proof required from the applicants is as follows:
 - If an applicant was previously living as part of a household unit i.e. with spouse or partner and with the child/children concerned and there has been a family break-up and access to children agreed between both parties. In these circumstances we would require the main carer of the children to confirm details of the access agreed and the previous addresses where the applicant lived as a family unit, or
 - Confirmation by some form of documentation from the Child Maintenance Service showing that the applicant is supporting the child/children, or confirmation of court order detailing access rights determined by the court.
3. Where there is no demand for a larger vacant property from waiting list applicants or council nominees the Association may consider allowing an applicant to under-occupy a property. Such lets will rank below those households fully occupying the property in line with our occupancy standard and groups 1 & 2 above.

All applicants requesting an extra bedroom on the above grounds will be advised by staff that for social housing tenants who live in a house that is one bedroom larger than they need, as defined by the Welfare Reforms Act 2012 under-occupation criteria, their housing benefit entitlement is reduced by 14%. A household which requests housing in a property that is two bedrooms larger than they need, as defined by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 will be advised that their housing benefit entitlement is reduced by 25%.

- TYPE - Each applicant will be encouraged to choose as many types of accommodation as possible.
- TYPE OF HEATING - self-explanatory.
- IS GARDEN REQUIRED - self-explanatory

12. ENQUIRIES INTO APPLICATION DETAILS

The Association reserves the right to make enquiries that are considered necessary to validate the accuracy of information provided by waiting list applicants. In signing the application form applicants are giving the Association consent to make general enquiries. In some instances applicants may require to complete additional documents to allow the release of information from other agencies. This is dependent upon the data release procedures of agencies our staff need to contact.

Enquiries will also be made into the details provided by applicants nominated by local authorities, applicants for mutual exchanges, successions, assignations and other tenancy change applications.

13. REGISTRATION

Applicants will receive registration points when they apply.

14. APPLICATIONS BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND THEIR RELATIVES OR PERSONS EMPLOYED BY THE ASSOCIATION AND THEIR RELATIVES

Applications by any of the above will be dealt with in the same way as all others. However, if an application is made by Committee members and their relatives or by persons employed by the Association and their relatives, Committee members, officers and employees of the Association cannot put themselves in a position where their duties and personal interests conflict, or might conflict. A tenancy (whether by the allocation of a new tenancy, a transfer of tenancy or mutual exchange) will only be granted to an employee, former employee, Committee member or former Committee member, or a close relative of such a person if the following criteria are met:

- The allocation is fully compliant with the Allocations Policy.
- The person has had no involvement in or influence over the allocations process.
- The granting of the tenancy is approved by the committee or delegated sub committee.

Any tenancy allocated to any of the above individuals will be recorded in the Association's Register of Benefits.

15. TRANSFERS

The Association's existing tenants who need to transfer to another house will be eligible to apply under the Allocations policy.

Association tenants applying for a transfer who are awarded Health Priority will be considered for the type of housing to meet their needs before non-Association applicants where they have the same medical grading and the same total number of points.

For all other existing tenants, priority for transfer will be assessed in line with the Associations Allocations policy.

If a tenant applies for a transfer the policy regarding rent arrears, as set out in section 31, will apply.

A transfer will not be granted when the tenant has caused wilful damage or neglected the property or has carried out unauthorised alterations to the detriment of the property until the property has been restored to its original condition.

16. POINTS SYSTEM

The Association will use a points system to determine those applicants with the greatest need. The points system will apply to new applicants, and the Association's tenants wishing to transfer to another house. (The points system is detailed at Annex 1)

17. HEALTH ASSESSMENT

If an applicant is suffering from a long term serious condition which is caused or seriously aggravated by their current housing conditions and which would be improved by moving to more suitable housing, they can be considered for health priority points. A health assessment form is available from the Association's staff. The applicant must complete every question and explain the type of accommodation they wish to move to and how such a move would help their health problem. The Association's staff will be available to offer advice and assistance.

The completed form will be assessed and the applicant advised accordingly.

If an applicant has received an award of medical points by another social landlord, the Association will accept that assessment.

If an applicant is awarded health priority points they will only be granted those points for the specific type of accommodation recommended e.g. if a ground flat is recommended, the Association will not consider them for an upper flat or cottage type accommodation.

If an applicant wishes to be considered for a type of accommodation not recommended they will lose their health priority points.

18. HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is defined in accordance with the current legislation and it is the responsibility of local authorities to decide if a person is homeless. Homelessness points will be awarded where an applicant provides confirmation that the local authority has assessed that they are homeless, and not found to be intentionally homeless.

Applicants who are assessed by the local authority as becoming homeless intentionally will only be awarded Insecurity points.

Where the local authority has “discharged” its duty the Association will re-assess the application based upon the applicants existing housing circumstances i.e. they will not be given homeless priority.

Applicants who apply to the Association and who may be homeless will be advised to seek advice and information from their local authority so that an assessment within the terms of the legislation can be made.

19. INSECURITY & OTHERS SEEKING PERMANENT INDEPENDENT ACCOMMODATION

Insecurity points will be awarded to applicants who may become homeless within 6 months. This could apply where:

- The person is living with friends or relatives; (not a parental home)
- The person is living in a mobile home/caravan without a permanent site;
- The person has a short term tenancy – e.g., short Scottish secure tenancy, short assured tenancy, occupancy agreement, etc;
- The person has received a Notice to Quit - for lodgers a letter asking them to leave, for owners a letter from the lender or solicitor confirming that the property has to be sold;
- The person has difficulty remaining in the current accommodation due to a breakdown in relationship(s) with other occupants;

- The person is in financial difficulties with their rent or mortgage payments
- The person is living in a refuge with no limit on the length of stay;
- The person is currently in prison;
- The person is currently in tied or forced accommodation which they expect to leave within the next 2-6 months;
- The person is currently in a nursing/residential home and does not have their own home;
- The person is currently in care or an institution.
- The applicant is living within their parental home and wishes to leave to establish permanent and independent accommodation.

Applicants at risk of losing their homes will be given advice on preventing homelessness.

20. SUB-STANDARD ACCOMMODATION

Points will be awarded if the applicant's present accommodation is below "tolerable standard" and lacks one or all of the under-noted facilities:

- lacking a bathroom which has a fixed bath or shower and a wash-hand basin
- lacking a toilet within the house which is for the exclusive use of the occupants
- lacking a kitchen
- lacking plumbed hot water
- lacking electricity
- lacking an adequate piped supply of wholesome water within the house
- lacking an effective system for the drainage and disposal of foul and surface water
- lacking satisfactory provision for natural and artificial lighting, for ventilation and for heating
- lacking structural stability
- lacking satisfactory access to all external doors and outbuildings
- lacking satisfactory thermal insulation
- lacking an electricity system which is adequate and safe to use.

The property should also be substantially free from rising or penetrating damp.

It is the applicant's responsibility to provide evidence to the Association's satisfaction to substantiate any alleged sub-standard accommodation.

If the applicant has already applied to the local authority for housing and the local authority have already carried out investigations and accepted that an applicant is living in substandard accommodation and awarded them priority for this then in these circumstances the Association will also award the applicant substandard points.

21. OVERCROWDING

Applicants who are tenants will receive points for overcrowding if they need more bedrooms than they currently have at the moment. Owners will also be awarded overcrowding points if they meet the criteria outlined below.

Couples will be considered for a bedroom each if there has been a health assessment carried out which confirms they require separate rooms.

We consider that children over 8 years of age but under 16 years of age should have their own bedroom. However, a parent/guardian may choose that any two children regardless of sex aged 8 to 10 and two children of the same sex aged 8 to 16 can to share a double bedroom.

Where an applicant is living in a caravan, each sleeping area (excluding the main living area) will be treated as a separate bedroom. They may also be eligible to qualify for sub standard accommodation points.

The assessment for overcrowding will always assume that sleeping arrangements will make the best use of the accommodation available and which are reasonable for the household to adopt in the circumstances.

22 UNDER-OCCUPATION

Applicants will be awarded under-occupation points for each bedroom which is not required in their current home. Under-occupation will be calculated in accordance with the Association's occupancy standard.

If a parent/guardian chooses to opt for the Welfare Reform Act 2012 under-occupation bedroom criteria and wish any two children regardless of sex aged 8 to 10 and two children of the same sex aged 8 to 16 can to share a double bedroom they will be awarded under-occupation points for each bedroom which is not required in their current home.

These points will only be awarded if the applicant is moving to a smaller house. Under-occupation points will only be awarded to tenants of social landlords.

23 CHILDREN IN FLATS

Points are awarded to applicants with children under 16 years of age, living in flats with a communal entrance off a close or stairwell. They will not be awarded to applicants who live live in a ground floor flat with its own main door access.

These points recognise the aspiration of families wishing to move to cottage type or ground floor accommodation with its own door, but alone give a lower points award than for priority need groups.

Owners will only be awarded these points if they meet the criteria laid out below

24. TWO TENANCIES FOR ONE

Where there are two tenants who both hold a Scottish secure tenancy and they wish to move from their existing dwellings to live together, points will be awarded to one of the applicants (not both), normally the one with the highest priority, in order to release accommodation for re-let.

25. SOCIAL POINTS

In very rare cases the applicant may have an exceptional housing need which is not covered by other points categories. In these circumstances extra points in accordance with need can be awarded by the Housing Manager after consultation with all relevant agencies.

If the applicant receives additional points and refuses one offer of appropriate accommodation, the points will be withdrawn and their position on the waiting list will revert to the position on the waiting list to which their remaining points level entitles them.

1. Care and Support

Priority will be awarded where:

- There is a need for the applicant or member of his/her family to receive support from a relative or friend within a locality.
- There is a need for the applicant or a member of his/her family to offer support to a relative or friend in a particular locality
- There is a need for the applicant or a member of his/her family to move to a locality in order to be close to a specialist support facility.

Written evidence is required. In the case of support required on health grounds, a letter from the person's doctor is required to confirm that support is necessary.

The two grades would be:

Essential due to chronic ill health
Desirable due to general health condition

2. Harassment and Abuse

Priority will be awarded where an applicant or a member of the household is subject to actual or threatened violence, physically or mental abuse or harassment within the current household or locality (linked to race, gender, nationality, marital status, disability, sexuality, age, religion, HIV, mental health)

The Association treats matters of harassment and violence very seriously. Where incidents of racial harassment or violence are proved to the satisfaction

of the Housing Manager, the appropriate points will be awarded. Temporary re-housing may also be considered as an option.

Different degrees of priority will be awarded depending on the nature of the abuse or harassment

Extreme/Continuous Cases
Intermittent cases

3. Employment

Priority will be awarded where applicants (or members or their households) required alternative accommodation to take up new employment or who currently have to travel for more than one hour by public transport to their existing employment or where public transport to the place of employment does not exist. Written confirmation from the employer must accompany the application stating the type of work offered, and the starting date, if applicable.

Equal Points

Where applicants have the same point's total, then the length of time on the waiting list will normally be used to decide who will be offered the property.

However, if an Association tenant applies for a transfer who are awarded Health Priority they will be consider for the type of housing to meet their needs before non-Association applicants where they have the same medical grading and the same total number of points.

26. SPECIAL CASES

There may be very rare occasions where the Housing Manager is satisfied that there is ground to consider re-housing an Association tenant or assist with re-housing another landlord's tenant as a matter of priority for example cases of racial harassment or violence, fostering or kinship carers. These will be treated as special cases to receive priority housing and will operate out-with the normal Allocation's policy. Such cases will be closely monitored and subject of retrospective reporting to the Association's Housing Management & Investment Sub-Committee.

Examples of special cases include:

Fostering/Kinship Carers Points will be awarded to households with a date of fostering set and who need larger accommodation after being accepted for fostering. Points will also be awarded to households taking on formal kinship carer responsibilities and who require larger accommodation.

27. OWNER OCCUPIERS

Section 5 of the 2014 Housing (Scotland) Act removes the previous prohibition on taking ownership into account in allocating social housing., except in the following circumstances:

- in cases where the property has not been let, but the owner cannot secure entry to the property. This could for example be where it is not safe to enter the property due to severe structural faults or where there are squatters living in the property.
- Where it is probable that occupying the property will lead to abuse from someone who previously resided with the applicant whether in that property or elsewhere.
- Where it is probable that occupying the property will lead to abuse from someone currently living in the property.
- Where occupation of the property may endanger the health of the occupants and there are no reasonable steps that can be taken by the applicant to prevent that danger.

Except in cases where the above criteria apply the Association will not award priority points for over-occupation, or children in flats to owner occupiers.

28. OFFERS OF ACCOMMODATION

An applicant may refuse 2 offers of accommodation without loss of points. If a third offer is refused, the applicant will be invited in for a Housing Options Interview and any priority points awarded may be removed if they do not attend the interview.

In such cases the applicant can appeal against the removal of points following the appeals process outlined in section 40 below.

29. UNMET HOUSING NEED AND REFUSAL OF OFFERS

The 2014 Act qualifies it's categories of people who must be given reasonable preference (apart from the under occupying category) with the requirement that they have unmet housing needs. It says that people have unmet housing needs:

"where the social landlord considers the persons to have housing needs which are not capable of being met by housing options which are available."

Whether unmet housing needs exist in any given case will reflect two sets of factors; the circumstances of the applicant, which will vary widely among applicants; and the different housing options that are available to the applicant and whether these options are accessible to the applicant.

Where an applicant refuses two offers of accommodation the Association proposes to invite the applicant in for a Housing Options Interview. Failure to engage with this process may see the applicants points reduced.

In this way the policy is seeking to ensure that the issue of giving preference to those with unmet housing need is addressed.

30. REMOVAL FROM THE WAITING LIST

Applicants are only removed from the waiting list in the following circumstances:

- Upon the death of the applicant, providing that there is no other joint applicant who wishes to keep the application active in their name.
- Where the applicant requests the removal of his/her application in writing.
- At the annual review. Each applicant should be offered the opportunity to confirm the details of his/her application or update the details, if appropriate. A reminder should be issued. If no confirmation or update is received within a specified time scale, the application can be removed from the list, although the application should be reactivated without penalty if the applicant subsequently provides the information required. Right of appeal against removal should be explicit.
- If an applicant fails to provide information to enable the Association's staff to process an application then it will be cancelled.

31. ARREARS/HOUSING DEBT: - need to look at guidance in terms of whether stat homeless decision over-rides arrears or not

Where an applicant has arrears the Association will establish what, if any, arrangements exist between the applicant and the current/previous landlord.

The under-noted factors will not be taken into consideration:

- Any outstanding liability (such as rent) attributable to a house of which the applicant was not the tenant.
- Any rent or other arrears outstanding that is not more than one months rent payable by the applicant to the landlord in respect of the tenancy.
- Any outstanding debt (including council tax) of the applicant or anyone who it is proposed will reside with the applicant which does not relate to the tenancy of a house.
- Any rent or other arrears outstanding where the applicant has made arrangements with the landlord for paying the outstanding liability and has made payments in accordance with the arrangement for at least 3 months and is continuing to do so.

Any rent or other arrears accrued by the applicant on a previous tenancy which are no longer outstanding will not be taken into consideration.

After investigation and in special circumstances, the Housing Manager will have the discretion not to suspend an applicant with arrears arising from underpayment of housing benefit or the housing element of universal credit due to the Welfare

Reform Act 2012 bedroom criteria if it is considered a move of home would alleviate hardship.

31. HOUSING VIOLENT OFFENDERS & REGISTERED SEX OFFENDERS

Arrangements for housing of applicants falling into the above categories are subject to Forth Valley wide MAPPA arrangements between the Association and local authorities. These allow sharing of information within formal protocol arrangements.

Each applicant's case will be looked at on an individual basis. Consideration will be given to the seriousness of the risk posed to the wider community and to the type of accommodation required by the applicant. The Association will endeavour to house each applicant appropriately, in consultation with other agencies involved in each case.

The Association reserves the right not to re-house an applicant where a risk assessment has been carried out and the type of housing required is found to be inappropriate.

32. SPECIAL LETS/CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

The Association is committed to providing leases to agencies that provide support to enable people to live in the Community. To enable the Association to continue supporting care in the community the Association will from time to time give special consideration to certain recognised organisations including the Social Services Department and voluntary bodies. These will operate out-with the normal Allocations policy.

33. LOCAL LETTINGS INITIATIVES

The Association wishes to create and maintain stable and sustainable communities. In particular circumstances where the Association is aware of potential problems within an estate, street or close this may be achieved through the use of local lettings initiatives.

The introduction of any local lettings initiative within the context of this policy will require the approval of the Association's Management Committee.

34. MUTUAL EXCHANGES

The Association is aware that if a tenant applies for a mutual exchange this gives them an alternative housing option to applying for a transfer.

The Association promotes various ways for tenants to access exchange partners e.g. House Exchange. .

Applications for a mutual exchange will be considered between the following:

- 2 (or more) current Association tenants
- An Association tenant and the tenant of a registered social landlord or a local authority who has a Scottish secure tenancy.

All requests for a mutual exchange must be submitted on the relevant form.

The Association will not unreasonably refuse permission provided the reasons are valid and that no overcrowding will result in any Association property and all parties are in full agreement. Tenancy checks will be made to ensure they satisfy Association criteria regarding rent arrears in line with other applicants and the standard of house/garden must be satisfactory.

Written agreement must be obtained from the Association and the other relevant landlord prior to a mutual exchange proceeding.

The Association has a separate Mutual Exchange policy.

35. ASSIGNATIONS/SUCCESSIONS

The Association has a separate policy which covers assignments and successions.

36. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Association aims to promote equal opportunities and will ensure that its staff act in a manner which will not discriminate against any individual, household or group on the grounds of any of the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equalities Act 2010. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

To help fulfil its commitment to equal opportunity the Association will collect and monitor records of the ethnic/racial origin of those applying, being taken onto the list and those receiving housing. Statistics relating to these will be produced and made available on an annual basis.

37. INFORMATION AND ADVICE

The Association will ensure that people looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them.

It will provide applicants with information and advice about their housing application and an easily understood advice leaflet on the Allocations Policy. If an applicant needs help to fill in an Application form, or needs any advice or assistance, a member of staff will assist them. Details of their points etc will be provided to the applicants in writing. Members of staff will advise applicants about the alternative sources of obtaining accommodation and advice e.g. the local authorities and other housing associations in the area they would like housing.

The Association will treat all applicants for housing with courtesy, sensitivity and in complete confidence.

The Association will develop information and advice in a variety of formats such as large print and tape. Interpreting services will also be arranged where English is not the first language of the applicant.

Welfare Reforms

UK government welfare reforms introduce major changes for those in receipt of benefits. The Association has pledged to do what it can to help applicants and tenants get through this very difficult transition process.

Staff will make sure applicants are given advice on their housing and discuss the options that are available and how the welfare reform changes may affect them.

38. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information given by applicants will be treated as strictly confidential under the terms of the Data Protection Act, and will not be passed on to or discussed with any other person or organisation without their permission. The Association is registered with the Information Commissioner.

Information regarding an application must only be discussed with the applicant himself/herself or with another person who has been included on the application for housing. If a person who has not been named on the application form wishes to discuss the application, permission in writing must first be received from the applicant.

Where one of the Association's Committees is required to discuss an individual case, the identity of the applicant will not be revealed.

39. ABUSE OF THE ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Association expects applicants to provide full, accurate, up to date information regarding their application for housing. Where it is found that an applicant has deliberately provided false or misleading information to gain an advantage over other applicants on the housing list the application will be suspended for 6 months, after which time the application will be reviewed and the suspension removed. Any offer of accommodation that has been made will be withdrawn.

If the applicant has already taken up a tenancy on the basis of false information, legal action may be taken for the recovery of possession of their home. Failure to disclose relevant information, including a change of circumstances will be treated in the same fashion. In all cases applicants have a right of appeal against such action.

40. SUSPENSION OF APPLICATIONS

Applicants may at any time suspend (defer) their application from being considered for an offer of housing.

The Association will suspend an application where the applicant:

CRITERIA	SUSPENSION PERIOD
Has deliberately provided false and misleading information to gain an advantage over other applicants on the housing list.	6 months

CRITERIA	SUSPENSION PERIOD
If an applicant verbally or physically abuses or threatens staff	Verbal abuse – 6 months. Physical violence – 12 months.
Is failing to maintain their current house and/or garden in a satisfactory condition .	Indefinite suspension period – the applicant can ask to be considered for housing when they can show that their house and/or garden are in a satisfactory condition. Such suspensions will be subject to review by the Association on a three monthly basis

<p>In the event of proven tenancy-related anti-social behaviour/harassment (by the applicant and/or members of their household). The definition of anti-social behaviour/harassment is defined in our Neighbour Disputes and Anti-social Behaviour Policy check against final guidance of Part 2</p>	<p>Minimum period 1 year – the applicant can be asked to be reconsidered for housing when they can show that their behaviour has been satisfactory for the last 12 months.</p>
<p>Applicant in Arrears/Housing Debt</p>	<p>Where an applicant has arrears/housing debt the Association will establish what, if any, arrangements exist between the applicant and the current/previous landlord. The under-noted factors will not be taken into consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any outstanding liability (such as rent) attributable to a house of which the applicant was not the tenant. • Any rent or other arrears outstanding that is not more than one month's rent payable by the applicant to the landlord in respect of the tenancy. • Any outstanding debt (including council tax) of the applicant or anyone who it is proposed will reside with the applicant which does not relate to the tenancy of a house.

CRITERIA	SUSPENSION PERIOD
Applicant in Arrears/Housing Debt cont.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any rent or other arrears outstanding where the applicant has made arrangements with the landlord for paying the outstanding liability and has made payments in accordance with the arrangement for at least 3 months and is continuing to do so. • Any rent or other arrears accrued by the applicant on a previous tenancy which are no longer outstanding will not be taken into consideration <p>After investigation and in special circumstances, the Housing Manager will have the discretion not to suspend an applicant with arrears arising from underpayment of housing benefit/universal credit housing costs element due to under-occupation as per the Welfare Reform Act 2012 bedroom criteria if it is considered a move of home would alleviate hardship.</p>

Lifting of suspensions

Suspensions are not permanent and may be lifted for one or a number of reasons:

- A specified period of time has elapsed
- The behaviour of the applicant and/or members of their household has changed
- A satisfactory arrangement has been made to improve any outstanding arrears/debt and has been maintained to a satisfactory level.

41. THE ROLE OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The day to day operation of the allocations process, including every aspect of the assessment and selection process is undertaken by members of staff and not by our Management Committee. The role of our Management Committee is to discuss and agree the Allocations policy and monitor and review it. They will also discuss any allocations to staff or members of their family, allocations to members of the Management Committee or their family, consider any special cases and in certain cases may consider appeals.

42. APPEALS - rewrite to reflect other appeals processes

The operation of the Allocations Policy and procedures will be the responsibility of the Housing Manager who may delegate it to housing management staff.

Applicants who wish to appeal against the decision made will be able to direct these in the first instance to the Depute Director. They will look into the matter and reply to the applicant within 10 working days. Any applicant who is still aggrieved will be able to apply to the Housing Management & Investment Sub-Committee to have the decision reviewed. The Housing Management & Investment Sub-Committee will consider these within at least 20 working days, normally at the next scheduled meeting provided that there are at least 5 working days available in advance for the preparation of a report.

The Chair of the Sub-Committee –will write within 5 working days of the meeting at which the appeal has been heard to let the applicant know the decision.

43. COMPLAINTS

The Association is committed to providing high-quality customer services. It accepts that despite the best efforts of staff, problems may arise from time to time. If its customers feel dissatisfied, they may wish to make a complaint. Should such a situation arise staff are committed to investigating the matter fully and ensuring a satisfactory solution is achieved as quickly as possible.

The Association has adopted the SPSO's complaints handling procedure which sets out the standard approach to handling complaints which is to be used across the housing sector.

Tenants who are dissatisfied with the way that their application for housing has been handled can use the Association's complaints handling procedure.

Details of our Complaints Policy can be obtained from the office or from our website.

44. MONITORING

The Association will establish a clear monitoring system to ensure the effective working of this policy.

The Association will ensure that it complies with the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) Regulatory Framework for social housing and guidance for monitoring the Association's performance in achieving the outcomes and standards in the Charter.

It will ensure that it is also in line with the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Staff will monitor all applications for housing received, applications accepted and applicants housed. Monthly reports will be submitted at each Housing Management & Investment Sub Committee on the following:

The number of lets during the reporting year by source of let

- number of offers made for each relet
- reasons for refusals, offers refused
- number of voids - size, period, reasons for void
- length of void periods
- the number of lets to existing tenants;
- the number of lets to housing list applicants;
- the number of lets from other sources.
- the number of applicants who have been assessed as statutory homeless by the local authority; broken down by:
 - section 5 referrals (RSLs)
 - nominations from the local authority
 - other.
- The number of other nominations from local authorities.
- An annual report indicating the type of need met through the allocations process.

Types of tenancies granted for lets during the reporting year.

- The number of occupancy agreements granted in the reporting year
- The number of short SSTs granted in the reporting year
- The number SSTs granted in the reporting year.

Housing list

- Number of new applicants added to the housing list.
- Number of applicants on the housing list.
- Number of suspensions from the housing list.
- Number of applications cancelled from the housing list.
- Number of Section 5 referrals received.

The Association will also monitor to ensure that discrimination is not occurring at either application, admission to list or allocation stages.

A quarterly Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Report will be given to the Management Committee.

In addition, the Association participates in benchmarking processes with other registered housing associations and these statistics are presented to the Management Committee.

45. REVIEW OF WAITING LIST

All applications entered on the waiting list will be reviewed by the Association at least once every 12 months to ensure applications are kept up to date to reflect applicant's circumstances. At this time, applicants will be requested to complete a review form giving their up to date details. Failure to complete the review form could result in the application being cancelled by the Association.

46. POLICY REVIEW

The Association will review the Allocations Policy and its practical working on an annual basis in order to take account of any changes in legislation, changes in demand. In accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 the Association will consult with its tenants on any proposed changes to the Policy. All applicants will be advised and information on the revised policy and it will be made available to the public.

APPENDIX 1

THE POINTS SYSTEM

Category	POINTS
Registration	10
Health Assessment	
High	85
Medium	40
Homeless	100
Insecurity	40
Others Seeking Permanent Independent Accommodation	40
Sub-standard accommodation	50
Overcrowding - per bedroom deficient unless children sharing	30
Children in communal flats with communal stair case (per household)	10*
Under-occupation (per bedroom not used)	40
Social Points - BY DEGREE OF NEED	
Degree of need to be established by the Housing Assistant in consultation with appropriate agencies and approved by the Housing Manager.	
1. Give/Receive Care and Support	
Essential due to severe ill health	40
Essential due to general ill health	20
2. Harassment and Abuse	
Extreme/Continuous Cases	50
Intermittent Cases	20
3. Employment	30
4. Fostering & Kinship care	30
Two Scottish secure tenancies for one	30
Priority Points for one offer only to applicants downsizing due to Welfare Reform Act 2012 under-occupation criteria (Tenants of social landlords only)	0

- Children in communal flats, 1 award of points per household

SIZE OF ACCOMMODATION CONSIDERED

Family Size		1/2 apt Pend or 1 Bedroom	3apt 2 Bedrooms	4apt 3 Bedrooms	5apt 4 Bedrooms	6 apt 5 Bedrooms
Single applicant		YES				
Joint applicants/couple		YES	YES			
Single/joint applicant + 1 child			YES			
Single/joint applicant + 2 children	1 bedroom each child If parent or guardian elects for 2 children to share double bedroom		YES	YES		
Single/joint applicant + 3 children	single/couple 1 room 1 bedroom each child 1 child in own room + If parent or guardian elects for 2 children share double bedroom			YES	YES	
Single/joint applicant + 4 children	single/couple 1 room 1 bedroom per child If parent or guardian elects for 2 children to share double bedroom then 2 x 2 children share double bedroom 2 x 1 child in own room + 2 children share double bedroom			YES	YES	YES

Single/joint applicant + 5 children	<p>single/couple 1 room 1 bedroom each</p> <p>1 child in own room + if parent elects for children to share 2 x 2 children share double bedroom</p> <p>3 children own room + 2 x children share double bedroom</p>				<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p>	<p>YES</p>
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