

RENTAL ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Introduction

A key aim of the Sustainable Communities Plan is to improve the quality of life for all. This must be achieved through a balance of meeting housing need whilst promoting social inclusion and choice to individual households. An allocations policy, which adopts this approach is recognised as an essential tool to achieving this goal.

Policy Statement

The Association will assist its local authority partners to meet identified housing need, in a way that creates choice, mixed and sustainable communities and which treats anyone applying for housing in a fair and consistent manner.

More specifically the Association will:

- Operate within the requirements of the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code for registered Social Landlords (the Code) and any appropriate legislation and regulatory guidance
- Work with local authorities to assess local housing needs and assist them to fulfill their obligations to secure accommodation for the homeless and for those in need
- Work with local authorities to establish a common approach to allocations that is customer focused and promotes an element of choice
- Work with local authorities to jointly develop under occupation schemes, to maximize the use of existing stock
- Promote mobility through appropriate transfer and exchange schemes and be party to any endorsed national schemes
- Ensure lettings are undertaken as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- Set targets, monitor performance, and make information available to key stakeholders including residents

Working with Local Authorities and other organizations

Our policy is to work positively and in a variety of ways with local authorities and other statutory agencies to assist them with their duty to house the homeless and others in need of housing.

This assistance will include the granting of nomination rights in accordance with any formal agreement as well as supporting strategic research to identify current and future housing needs.

The Association will supply to the Housing Corporation and to partner local authorities a copy of this policy and will consult with those local authorities on the policy from time to time.

Local Lettings Plan

The Association has an Asset Management Policy that seeks to ensure its housing contributes to sustainable communities.

Where evidence gathered as a result of the Asset Management Policy suggests that a particular area or estate is showing a decline in popularity, the Association will wish to react accordingly.

The appropriate response may include setting up a Local Lettings Plan that looks to re-address the balance of household types in the area or estate.

Any local lettings plan must be agreed with the relevant local authority, be approved by the Board and comply with relevant Housing Corporation guidance.

The outputs achieved as a result of introducing a Local Lettings Plan will be monitored using the Association's Sustainability Index.

Rehousing Sex Offenders

The Association will assist, where possible, in the rehousing of sex offenders when approached to take part in risk assessment discussions through the Multi-Agency Protection Panel.

Before making any offer of accommodation the Association will:

- Consider the impact of any lettings decision on the wider community
- Ensure the applicant fulfils the eligibility criteria
- Ensure a formal support package is in place for when the tenancy commences.

Applicants will be given an Assured Shorthold Periodic Tenancy, which will be reviewed after one year. If the tenancy has been conducted satisfactorily the tenant will be granted a full Assured Tenancy.

Asylum Seekers

The Association will assist where possible in the temporary rehousing of Asylum Seekers. Those Asylum Seekers with 'limited leave to remain' will be given an Assured Shorthold Tenancy and must be referred by the Local Authority or National Asylum Support Service (NASS). If their status subsequently changes to 'leave to remain' and the tenancy has been conducted satisfactorily the tenant will be granted a full Assured Tenancy.

If Asylum Seekers have been granted 'leave to remain and recourse to public funds', they will be eligible to apply to join the Association's waiting list and will be offered a full Assured Tenancy.

Transfers and Mobility

The Association will give residents a number of options to help promote mobility:

Transfers

The Association will operate a transfer scheme for existing residents.

To promote an element of choice, residents can apply for a transfer through one of two streams, 'need' or 'choice'.

Each year a target will be set for the total number of transfers as a % of all lettings. Of those lets to transfers 75% will be made to those residents who apply on the basis of need and 25% will be made to those residents who apply on the basis of choice.

The Association will also operate a Management Transfer scheme that will give staff, with the approval of the Head of Housing, the option to 'fast track' emergency transfer cases i.e. residents fleeing violence or racial harassment.

Mutual Exchange

The Association will operate a mutual exchange register and will take part in any local or national register of tenants seeking to exchange their home.

Consent to a mutual exchange will only be withheld on grounds set out in Schedule 3 of the Housing Act 1985.

National Mobility Schemes

To assist residents to move to other parts of the Country the Association will participate in national mobility schemes.

Priority Categories

Where the Association operates its own housing list (including the 'needs' based stream for transfers) priority will be given to those in the following categories of housing need in line with Section 167 of the Housing Act 1996:

- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People occupying housing accommodation that is temporary or occupied on insecure terms
- Families with dependent children
- Households consisting of or including someone who is expecting a child
- Households consisting of or including someone with a particular need for settled accommodation on medical or welfare grounds
- Households whose social or economic circumstances are such that they have difficulty in securing settled accommodation.

Applicants who can demonstrate a housing need will be added to the list and prioritised in date order. The appropriate date being the date their application is formally approved.

Occupancy Levels

Where appropriate the Association will seek to match family size with property types in the following ways:

Bedsit	Single person
1 bedroom	Single person or couple
2 bedroom Flat	Adult(s) with one or two children (aged 10+)
2 bedroom house	Adult(s) with one or two children
3 bedroom Flat	Adult(s) with two to four children (aged 10+)
3 bedroom house	Adult(s) with two to four children
4 bedroom house	Adult(s) with four or more children

Where an applicant has access to a child/children for three or more nights per week and proof has been provided, Midsummer will treat the child/children as resident with the applicant.

Exceptions

In exceptional circumstances, the Association reserves the right to accept a specific application that would not normally be accepted.

Exclusions

In line with Housing Corporation Regulations, the Association will not adopt 'blanket bans' in respect of exclusions.

The Association will publish a list of circumstances where applicants (including transfer applicants) will be excluded from applying, where the Association may reject a nomination from a local authority or where an application may be removed from the housing list. Applicants will not be excluded automatically if their circumstances 'fit' a defined category. Every case will be judged on its merits and efforts made to resolve any possible ineligibility.

The list will also stipulate any properties that the Association deem suitable for specific client groups.

In accordance with the Regulatory Code, local authorities will be consulted on the exclusions list.

A copy of the Exclusions list is appended to this policy.

Appeals

All rejected applicants will receive information and access to the Association's appeals process. Adjudicators who were not involved in the original decision to reject the housing application will consider appeals.

Refusals

To promote an element of choice applicants will be allowed to refuse up to two offers, after which they will remain on the list but their date of approval on to the list will be changed to the date of the last refused offer.

Setting targets

Each year a range of targets will be agreed by the Board to assess the performance of the policy.

Targets will be set in relation to:

- The % of lets made available to local authorities
- The % of lets to Homeless households
- The % of lets to Black and Minority Ethnic Households
- The % of lets to transfer applicants
- The % of lets to applicants nominated through any national mobility schemes
- The % of refusals by applicants
- Average void periods

Monitoring

Reports will also be provided to Board to monitor wider allocation activities, including:

- An annual lettings out-turn report
- Exclusions – number by access route, ethnic origin, gender disability, type of household, property type and size needed, income and employment status of household.
- Stock turnover
- Service User satisfaction, complaints and appeals

CORE

To assist with monitoring the Association will participate in the national CORE scheme and information on those households housed will be reported to the Board each year.

Equal Opportunities

The Association is mindful of its legal obligations in relation to equal opportunities and will seek to ensure equality to all applicants regardless of sex, race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, sexuality, marital status, or disability.

Schedule 1 - Housing Act 1996

Applicants for housing will be asked to declare if they have an interest that conflicts with the terms of Schedule 1 and where necessary the approval of the Housing Corporation and the Association's Board of Management will be sought prior to the acceptance of an application.

Confidentiality

Any information provided as part of the application or lettings process will be treated in the strictest confidence and in accordance with current data protection legislation.

Legislation

In fulfilling its obligations under this Policy the Association will have regard to a range of legislation including:

- The Housing Act 1985 (section 106)
- The Landlord & Tenant Act 1985 & 1987
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Housing Act 1996 (sections 7, 169 & 213)
- The Homelessness Act 1996 (s182)
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Asylum & Immigration Act 1999

Linked Policies

- Asset Management
- Equality and Diversity
- Customer Service Charter
- Domestic Violence
- Racial Harassment
- Harassment
- Aids & Adaptations
- Data Protection
- Confidentiality

ALLOCATIONS POLICY - EXCLUSIONS LIST

Introduction

Midsummer's Allocation Policy states that the Association will publish a list of circumstances where applicants (including transfer applicants) may be excluded from applying for housing, or where a nomination from a local authority may be rejected or where an applicant may be removed from any housing list.

Each application for housing will be judged on its own individual merits but the Association reserves the right not to accept an application, to reject a nomination or remove an applicant from a housing list or transfer list in the following circumstances.

Where any party to the application:

- is shown to be making a false or fraudulent application or deliberately created their position of housing need.
- has seriously breached the terms of a current or previous tenancy or the terms of a mortgage.
- has a history of non-payment of rent or other housing related charges (except where arrears are demonstrably beyond the responsibility of the tenant i.e. delays in Housing Benefit or where the tenant has maintained a repayment agreement without fail for 6 months.)
- has been associated with any anti-social behaviour, harassment, serious neighbour nuisance or actual/threatening behaviour towards staff or other residents within the last five years

- has committed an offence that has a specific relevance to Midsummer's housing stock or to the local community within the last five years
- is a European Union National of an Accession State (A8 member), namely Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic.
- the applicant is unsuitable for the vacant property for other reasons e.g. applicant in need of support that is not available or the required level of support would undermine the quality of service offered to others
- Where, in the case of those applying for elderly persons accommodation, the applicant is under the age of 55 years or in the case of a couple, both applicants are under the age of 55 (consideration will though be given to the housing needs of carers).
- Where, in the case of those applying for sheltered housing, either applicant is under the age of 60 (consideration will though be given to the housing needs of carers).

Exceptions

The Association reserves the right to accept a specific application from a household who would otherwise be excluded in exceptional circumstances.