



PORT OF LEITH
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

SOCIAL HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

FULL REVIEW TRACKING

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Communication & Training Methods	Discussion at housing team meeting.
Date Last Approved	March 2017
Approved By	Board of Management
Review Cycle	3 years
Next Review Date	April 2020
The Policy has a direct link to the following PoLHA policies and procedures	Tenancy Sustainment; Financial Inclusion; Housing Sex Offenders; Void Management; Equality and Diversity; Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Management.
This policy complies with the requirements of these legal and/or regulatory documents	Housing (Scotland) Acts 1987, 2001, 2010 and 2014
Equality & Diversity Impact (EI) Assessment Status	<p>This document was EDI Assessed by Claire Ironside and Joyce Cuthbert using the organisation's set procedure in September 2016 and is considered to be free of anything which may lead to any unfair discrimination in its application.</p> <p>EI Assessment records are held by the Chief Executive's Office and can be accessed on request to the Head of Corporate Services.</p>

REVISION TRACKING

Revisions are minor changes which are made between Full Reviews which might be needed because of new ideas or changes

Revision Date	Part of doc revised	Reason for revision	Approved by
6/6/18	Paragraphs 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.6 and 4.5	To clarify commencement date of some of the provisions.	LT

1. BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Association is a partner in the Edinburgh Common Housing Register (Edindex), which allows applicants to complete one application form and to be considered for housing by all partner landlords.
- 1.2 The Association advertises and allocates available properties through 'Key to Choice', the choice-based allocation system where applicants bid for advertised properties they are interested in.
- 1.3 This policy sets out our approach to how we allocate our properties, as a partner in Edindex and within that system's parameters.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1 The objectives of our allocation policy are:
 - To be fair, efficient and consistent in allocating tenancies
 - To ensure accommodation is suitable for the applicant's housing need
 - To allocate empty properties as quickly as possible to maximise income and minimise rent loss
 - To ensure our policy complies with legislative requirements and best practice
 - To ensure equal opportunities in access to, and allocation of, our properties

3. RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE POLICY

- 3.1 The Board of Management has responsibility for approving this policy.
- 3.2 The Housing Manager has overall operational responsibility for the development, implementation and monitoring of the allocation policy, with responsibility for the day to day delivery of management of allocations resting with the members of the housing management team.

4. POLICY FRAMEWORK

4.1 Applying for housing

- 4.1.1 Anyone over the age of 16 is eligible to apply for housing. Applicants for sheltered housing must normally be aged 65 or over and applicants for amenity housing must normally be aged 60 or over. Applicants will only be considered for wheelchair and adapted properties on the basis of their health and mobility needs.
- 4.1.2 Current staff, former staff, Board Members, former Board Members and their relatives may apply for housing. However, a tenancy will only be granted if the allocation complies with this Allocation Policy; the requirements of the Housing Scotland Act 2010; the Association's Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Management Policy and has had prior approval of the Board of Management. Staff and Board Members must declare an interest if they are aware when a close relative (as defined in the Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Management Policy)

applies for, and is being actively considered for, housing by the Association.

4.2 Advertising our properties

4.2.1 We advertise our available properties for let through the Key to Choice website and in our office, with the exception of properties under management agreements or leases with support agencies or those properties required for decants, management transfers and support agency referrals. We make up to 5% of our stock available as special lets and leases to support agencies.

4.2.2 To ensure that a reasonable balance of our properties is made available to those who don't currently have a home and to those whose home is no longer suitable for their needs, we advertise our properties as being available for starter, movers or transfer tenants as follows:

- Starters only 30% of available properties
- Movers only 30% of available properties
- Starters or Movers 30% of available properties
- PoLHA Movers (transfers) 10% of available properties

4.2.3 We reserve the right to review and amend these letting categories as required and will notify the Council's Edindex team of any changes.

4.3 Assessing priority for allocation

4.3.1 Under Section 20 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, we must give reasonable preference (priority) to the following groups when selecting tenants. This is addressed via the silver priority rating awarded through Edindex for these categories:

- people living in housing below the tolerable standard
- people living in overcrowded houses or in large families
- people living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- people affected by homelessness and those threatened with homelessness

4.3.2 **From 1 May 2019**, under the Housing (Scotland) Acts 1987 and as amended by Part 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, we must give reasonable preference to the following groups:

- Homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness and who have unmet housing needs
- People living under unsatisfactory housing conditions and who have unmet housing needs
- Tenants of houses of a social landlord which the landlord considers to be under-occupied

4.3.3 There is no legal definition of 'unsatisfactory housing conditions' and the term covers a wide range of circumstances such as the physical condition of the property; its unsuitability as a result of a medical condition / disability; harassment or domestic abuse; overcrowding.

4.3.4 As a partner in the Edindex system, we agree priority for consideration for allocation along with other Edindex partner landlords, taking account of legislative requirements, and the Council awards priority accordingly, as follows:

4.3.5 **Gold Priority** – Awarded following an assessment by the Council's Advice and Assessment Team for medical or health issues.

4.3.6 **Silver Priority** – awarded for the following reasons:

- Homelessness
- Overcrowding
- Below tolerable standard
- Unsatisfactory housing conditions

These change to the following reasons (**from 1 May 2019**)

- Homelessness
- Unsatisfactory housing conditions and with unmet housing needs
- Under-occupation

4.3.7 Notwithstanding the above, we retain the flexibility to consider the allocation of a property to an applicant in exceptional circumstances, where they do not necessarily fit the criteria set out in this policy.

4.3.8 In addition to the priority categories above, the Association applies its own occupancy standards when assessing applicants' housing need and their match with the property size:

4.3.9 Overcrowding

- Adults should not share a bedroom with a child
- Single adults of 16 years and over should have their own bedroom
- No more than two children should share a bedroom
- Children should have their own bedroom unless they are same sex and both under 14 years or unless they are of mixed sex and under seven years of age.
- A single person or a couple will normally only be offered a one-bedroom property unless a second bedroom is required for medical or other support needs.
- A household with two children may be offered a two or a three-bedroom property depending on the age and sex of their children
- A spare bedroom is allowed where there is at least equal shared custody of children

4.3.10 The Association can take the needs of other groups into account as long as this does not dominate allocations at the expense of the reasonable preference groups above.

4.4 The Association cannot take the following into consideration when allocating our properties:

- the length of time an applicant has lived in the area
- outstanding arrears or other housing related debt as long as the debt is less than the equivalent of one month's rent or a repayment arrangement has been kept for at least three months or if they have been assessed as homeless
- the age of the applicant unless the property has been designed for people of a particular age group e.g. sheltered or amenity housing
- income

4.5 The Association will take the following into consideration (**from 1 May 2019**):

- Ownership of property – we will take into account any ownership of property owned by the person applying for housing or owned by a person who lives with or proposes to live with the applicant, where this is a suitable property that they can reasonably occupy. Where the owner requires some flexibility in the short term to make arrangements to otherwise meet their housing needs, we will consider offering a short Scottish Secure Tenancy to facilitate this.

4.6 We retain the flexibility to bypass an applicant at the top of the shortlist if we have concerns about their ability to sustain a particular tenancy because, for example, of its particular location or where a sensitive let is required. Reasons for bypassing someone on the shortlist in these circumstances are recorded on the Edindex system as an audit trail.

4.7 We retain the flexibility to have local letting arrangements or a local lettings plan to help ensure a balanced community or where particular properties may be more difficult to let.

4.8 We will take up references for current and/or previous tenancies held with registered social landlords and local authorities, where these are available, to confirm circumstances and to get feedback on how the tenancy was managed. The applicant's permission to obtain references is requested as part of the assessment process and we normally wish to ensure that references, where available, are satisfactory before offering a tenancy.

4.9 Transfers

4.9.1 Tenants of the Association who wish to be re-housed must complete an Edindex registration form and bid for available properties through Key to Choice. We will give priority to transfer applicants for 10% of our advertised properties and this will be stipulated on the advertisement. Conditions around occupancy levels and arrears and other housing debt also apply to transfer tenants.

4.10 Management Transfers

4.10.1 In exceptional cases of urgent housing need, where no other immediate or practical housing solution is available, we will consider a management transfer. Examples include where there is serious harassment or violence; urgent medical reasons or major repair work required.

4.10.2 Management transfers will only be granted where there is evidence to support the case and must be authorised by the Housing Manager. Tenants will normally only be made one offer of a suitable property which, if refused without good reason, will mean that their priority for a management transfer will be withdrawn. Tenants should normally have a clear rent account at the point of sign up for a new tenancy.

4.10.3 We operate a reciprocal arrangement with other social landlords to facilitate management transfers where no suitable property is available in the landlord's own stock.

5. ASSOCIATED PROCEDURE(S)

5.1 There are detailed procedures for allocation and void management available as guidance for staff.

6. POLICY & PROCEDURE EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

6.1 This policy's effectiveness will be measured using the following criteria

- Number of allocations
- Refusals
- Levels of satisfaction with the allocation process
- Allocations by age, ethnicity, gender and disability
- Allocations to homeless households.