



Allocations Policy (interim) 2018



1. Principles and Objectives

This policy describes how West of Scotland Housing Association will manage applications for housing and how we will allocate properties. In North and South Lanarkshire we have adopted the Local Authority points frameworks as part of the Common Housing Register in each area.

The policy operates within the following principles:

Allocations policy - principles

- We will provide everyone with fair and open access to our housing list
- We will avoid discrimination on any grounds in the way we allocate our properties
- We will give reasonable preference to those in housing need
- We will make best possible use of the housing stock we have available
- We will offer as much choice as we can to everyone who applies for housing
- We will always strive to help create and support sustainable communities

Within these broad principles, the policy is designed to meet a number of more detailed objectives:

Allocations policy – objectives

- To ensure that a balance of applicants from a range of circumstances are given the opportunity to be housed
- To assist Local Authorities and other housing organisations to relieve homelessness, poor housing conditions and other housing need through nomination agreements
- To provide a source of housing to other organisations assisting those in housing need, who have additional support needs, through nomination agreements
- To maximise opportunities for applicants to make informed choices by providing good information and realistic advice about their housing options
- To ensure that successful applicants are offered accommodation suitable for their needs
- To assist in providing the opportunity for tenants of other social landlords to move as their needs change

Allocations policy – objectives (continued)

- To operate a system of allocating houses that is consistent, fair, easily understood and simple to administer
- To ensure we comply with legislation and best practice
- To maintain our waiting lists and allocate properties as efficiently as possible
- To make the best use of our housing stock, make sure our properties are of an appropriate lettable standard and minimise the time that properties are vacant

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

The following acts of legislation have a bearing on the way we allocate houses:

- Housing (Scotland) Act 1987
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Civil Partnerships Act 2005
- Welfare Reform Act 2010
- Antisocial Behaviour Act 2004
- Equalities Act 2010
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003
- Family Law (Scotland) Act 2008

In addition, this policy is intended to reflect best practice as defined by the Scottish Government's Practice Guide on Social Housing, published in 2010 and the revised Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) issued by the Scottish Housing Regulator in 2017.

The Outcomes and Standards outlined in the SSHC that are relevant to this policy are:

Outcome 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

Outcome 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 the decisions and services it provides

Outcome 4 - Quality of Housing

Social Landlords manage their businesses so that:

- Tenants' homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by April 2015 and continue to meet it thereafter, and when they are allocated, are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair and also meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) by December 2020

Outcomes 7, 8 & 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
- People at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness

Outcome 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

3. Applying for a house

There are a number of ways for people to access housing with the Association.

Direct application

Most applicants will apply to us directly and will be included on our waiting list. Anyone over the age of 16 can choose to apply in this way. Applicants who wish to apply for housing will normally attend a Housing Advice interview where an open discussion will take place about preferences and housing prospects.

Transfer application

People who are already tenants of the Association can apply for rehousing by contacting their Housing Officer who will arrange a home visit to discuss options and prospects.

Common Housing Registers (CHR)

We allocate our properties in North and South Lanarkshire through the respective Local Authorities' Common Housing Registers. Applicants should complete the

relevant CHR application form if they wish to apply for housing in either of these areas.

Section 5 referrals

We receive referrals from Local Authorities under Section 5 of the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003. These referrals are for people who have been assessed as statutorily homeless by the Local Authority. We will process these in line with statutory obligations and agreed protocols with the appropriate Local Authority.

Nomination from Local Authority

In some areas we have agreements with the Local Authorities to allow them to nominate applicants to the Association. We contact the local authority when we have an available property and they provide us with a nomination from their own housing lists. We currently have agreements in place with East Ayrshire Council, North Ayrshire Council and South Ayrshire Council.

Agency referrals

We have agreements with and accept referrals from a range of support agencies to assist them in providing housing help and support to people in housing need.

Supported Accommodation

The Association has a range of specially built or equipped properties where support is provided by an independent support provider. Funding for these is usually provided by the Local Authority or Health and Social Care Partnership. Given the expertise required to assess and compare the competing complex needs for this type of accommodation, we work in partnership with the support provider and/or funding body when shortlisting for these properties when they become vacant.

4. Assessing priority for rehousing

When a Housing Advice interview or Transfer request meeting has taken place and we have a completed Housing Application form, the Association will assess the application and points will be awarded based on the applicant's current circumstances. Table 1 (below) shows a summary of the points categories and the number of points which are awarded in each category.

Table 1 - Points categories & levels

Category	Points awarded
Overcrowding	5 per person who is overcrowded. Table 2 shows details of the Association's overcrowding standard
Under-occupation	3 per bedroom under-occupied, capped at 6 points for non-RSL applicants
Health	15 – high 10 – medium 5 – low 3 – additional points if more than one person in family will benefit, capped at one additional award
Harassment	15 – high 10 – medium 5 – low
Domestic abuse	15
Social factors	5
Property condition	12 – for people living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
Sharing amenities	8 – where applicant is sharing cooking/toilet/bathing facilities with another household
Insecure tenancy	10 – where applicant is living in insecure tenancy situation
Armed Forces	10 – applicant is serving in the Armed Forces

The next section sets out how points are awarded.

Overcrowding

Overcrowding points apply when there are insufficient bedrooms in an applicant's existing property and they need to move to a larger property that is suitable for their needs. Our bedroom requirement standard is outlined in Table 2 (below).

Table 2 – Bedroom requirements

Family circumstances of applicant	Bedroom Requirement
Single person	One bedroom
Couple living together as partners	One bedroom
Parent in single parent family	One bedroom
Two children of the same sex under 16 years old	One bedroom
Two children of opposite sex	Two bedrooms
Any member of the household, other than applicant or partner, aged over 16 years old	One bedroom

Overcrowding points shall not be awarded in cases where single people occupy bedsit or studio type accommodation.

A property with an extra bedroom may be offered to an applicant where someone in the household has a carer or requires an extra bedroom for a verified health condition.

In cases where an applicant has regular custody of a child, the child will be considered part of the applicant's household if they regularly stay overnight. In cases where there is more than one child, the Association can offer a property with one extra bedroom over and above what we would normally offer.

Pregnant applicants will be queued for a property size that assumes the new born child/children will be living in the property.

On occasion, the size of property offered to an applicant may be out with the bedroom requirement standard outlined above. This will normally occur to alleviate housing need and where there is no suitable applicant on the waiting list for a specific property.

Under-occupation

Under-occupation points are awarded when an applicant lives in a property which is too large for his or her household. The Association determines the level of under-occupation using the same bedroom requirement standard as set out in Table 2.

Health

Health points are awarded where an applicant has a health condition which is affected by their current living circumstances and which could be alleviated by moving to another property. If more than one member of the household has a medical condition which would benefit from a move, then three additional points can be awarded. This is capped at one additional award per application.

West of Scotland Housing Association tenants may be able to remain in their homes with some adaptations being made. This will be considered when an application is made.

Harassment

Harassment points are awarded where applicants are experiencing some form of harassment in their current home which could be alleviated by moving house.

The Association is aware that harassment can take many forms; racial, sexual, harassment against people with mental health problems, learning or physical disabilities, people with HIV, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. Each case shall be dealt with sensitively and on its own merits, based on the evidence that it is possible to gather.

Domestic Abuse

The Association has a separate Domestic Abuse policy that recognises that people have the right to a life free from violence and abuse and guides staff on offering a

victim-centred service to tenants. As well as trying to re-house victims of domestic abuse quickly and in the location of their choice, we will give appropriate advice and assistance and can contact other agencies on their behalf.

Social factors

Social points are awarded where an applicant has particular need to move to an area for specific reasons, including to provide or receive care and/or support, access employment/education.

Property condition

Points can be awarded where the Local Authority has confirmed that an applicant is living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.

Sharing amenities

Points can be awarded to applicants who have to share cooking, toilet and/or bathing facilities with others who are not part of the same household.

Homelessness

The Association will implement agreed protocols to assist each Local Authority meet its obligations under the relevant homeless legislation.

Insecure tenancy

Insecure tenancy points are awarded if an applicant has a tenancy that is not a Scottish Secure Tenancy. These points will also be awarded to applicants who have sole occupancy of a property but do not have a tenancy agreement.

Armed Forces

Applicants serving in the Armed Forces can apply one year before their date of discharge and 6 months after. They must have completed three years service or one full tour of duty.

Home Ownership

The Association will not take account of home ownership when assessing applications for housing.

Management Priority move

Occasionally, the Association may have to look to rehouse an applicant quickly. An applicant who is in an emergency situation can be given a Management Priority move. This must be authorised by a Director of the Association or the CEO.

5. Choices for applicants

People applying for housing will need to make some important choices when they attend a Housing Advice interview to complete an application form. They will need to choose the location, type and size of property they wish to be considered for, in accordance with policy guidelines. Applicants will be provided with the Association's Housing Advice booklet which contains information on our Allocations Policy and

procedures, along with information about other routes into housing and support agencies.

Areas

The Association owns properties across Glasgow, Lanarkshire and Ayrshire. These properties are divided into different 'lettings areas' to help applicants choose which areas they wish to live in. A list of these areas will be available at the Housing Advice interview or Transfer request meeting and applicants will be able to choose up to 5 areas.

Amenity and Sheltered Housing

The Association has a number of properties which have been built to amenity standard. We also manage a variety of sheltered accommodation. These properties will normally be allocated, in the first instance, to households that have at least one person aged over 60. However, the age limit may be lowered where the applicant has a specific medical or social need that can be met within sheltered housing.

Wheelchair Housing

The Association owns some properties which are specially adapted for people who use wheelchairs. Priority will be given to applicants who can demonstrate the need for such accommodation.

Medically Adapted Properties

Some of the Association's properties have specialised features, for example, community alarm provision, medical adaptations, ramps and fire safety appliances. Where possible, we will allocate these properties to households that have a medical need for this type of accommodation.

6. Letting properties

Quotas

The Association uses a quota system to make sure that we are able to house a mix of applicants from different sources. We aim to house a percentage of lets from:

- Nominations from Local Authorities
- Homeless nominations
- Direct applicants
- Transfer applicants
- Nominations - other agencies

Priority Group	Quota
Nominations from Local Authority	As agreed with appropriate Local Authority
Homeless nominations	As agreed with Local Authority homeless protocol
Direct applicants	75% of balance after Local Authority nominations and homeless nominations
Transfer applicants	20% of balance after Local Authority nominations and homeless nominations
Nominations – other agencies	5% of balance after Local Authority nominations and homeless nominations

These quotas are annual targets for allocations. A report will be presented to the Board, on a yearly basis, detailing the statistics for the previous year.

Local Lettings Initiatives (LLI)

We may agree LLIs to achieve aims specific to a particular area. They will be developed where the Association feel that specific and targeted action is required to achieve balance and stability in particular communities or to achieve the aim of a particular development, including new build estates. LLIs will require the approval of our Board.

7. Annual review, suspension, cancellation & appeal

All applicants are responsible for informing the Association of any changes to their circumstances as this can affect their application and any potential offer of housing.

Annual review

We will write to all applicants once every year, around the anniversary of their application, to ensure they want to remain on our housing lists and that their information is up-to-date and accurate. Applicants who do not respond to this review within 28 days will have their application cancelled.

Suspension

In certain circumstances we may suspend an applicant from receiving offers of housing. This may be for a number of reasons, including:

- applicants who have been convicted of using their home illegally or have been convicted of an offence committed in the home or in its locality
- applicants who have previously been evicted by court order
- applicants who have who lost a tenancy through abandonment
- applicants who have rent arrears which are not being paid/were not paid
- applicants who have lied to get a tenancy

- applicants who have unreasonably refused three offers of housing. In these cases, applicants can be suspended from the waiting list for a period of three months

We will notify, in writing, any applicant that has been suspended from receiving an offer of a house. The letter will state:

- the reasons for the suspension
- the length of the suspension
- how the applicant can appeal against the suspension

Cancellation

The Association will only cancel an application for housing where:

- the applicant has requested in writing or by telephone that they wish to be removed from the waiting list
- the applicant has died
- the applicant has failed to respond to the periodic review of the waiting list
- the applicant cannot be contacted regarding an offer of housing and there is no response within the specified timescale. We will inform the applicant in writing

Appeal

Applicants have the right to appeal any decisions made in connection with their application. A senior member of the Association's staff who was not involved in making the original decision will consider any appeals. If the applicant remains dissatisfied then they should refer to the Association's complaints procedure.

8. Other matters

Granting of tenancies to people related to staff or Committee Members

Any allocation of accommodation involving members of the Board and/or staff of the Association or their near relative will comply with the Association's Payments and Benefits policy.

Review of this policy

In line with the Association's policy review schedule, this policy will be reviewed in 2019 to take account of the new legislation introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.