

KEY HOUSING ASSOCIATION

POLICY REGISTER

ITEM B1

POLICY: Allocations Policy
(including Nominations, Transfers & Mutual Exchanges)

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KEY HOUSING ASSOCIATION

ALLOCATIONS POLICY

BACKGROUND TO THE ASSOCIATION

Key Housing Association was established in 1977 with the principal aim of providing accommodation in the community for adults with learning difficulties. The Association has projects throughout Scotland and currently manages a stock of houses and flats for letting on both an unsupported (general needs) basis and supported basis. Support services are provided to people in single and shared houses. A number of properties are registered with the Care Commission as housing with support services. Local statements for each service, containing details of the stock in that development are available from Key's Glasgow office.

One of Key's main principles is to create a balanced and integrated community within all our projects. To help achieve this, it is our policy to allocate a proportion of our housing stock to unsupported tenants. They would not be required to give any formal input into the project, but would be asked to be a "good neighbour".

Applications for Key's accommodation can be made in a number of ways. If you are seeking unsupported (general needs) housing you will require to be nominated by a local authority or other housing agency. Applicants must be over 16 years of age. Key does not hold a waiting list for this accommodation. Where individuals make a direct request to the Association to be included in their housing list, they will be advised to register with the local housing department or housing association. Advice and information will be given to all direct applicants. The Association acknowledges that it will be required to take nominations from councils where individuals are deemed to be homeless and in need of urgent re-housing. In those circumstances the Association would however make the council aware of the support needs of current tenants particularly around vulnerability.

The Association will enter into Section 5 Protocols with local authorities in terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

In circumstances where the association has been unable to obtain nominations from either the council or a local housing association, and a protracted void period is anticipated, the vacancy may be advertised in the local press.

If you require supported housing you should apply to the local council social work department or supporting people team for an assessment. If a vacancy arises in a house where Key currently provides support, the council will be approached for a suitable nominee. Supporting People grant would require to be approved prior to a nomination being accepted.

Key recognises that best use of all housing stock in an area is achieved through housing providers working collaboratively to meet housing need in the area. The association aims to assist in the process of meeting applicants' changing needs through appropriate allocation, transfers and mutual exchange.

The Association's policy has been written in accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and in line with good practice guidance and performance requirements of Communities Scotland.

THE AIMS OF THE ALLOCATION POLICY ARE:

- 1) To work in conjunction with the local authority and other housing agencies to give fair and open access to housing, meet the housing and support needs of individuals who live or work in the area, or who require to reside there for family reasons. The Association will give reasonable preference to those in housing need, will maximise choice where possible and help to sustain communities.
- 2) To create a balanced community as far as possible
- 3) To provide neighbourly support to tenants with learning disabilities
- 4) To operate a policy which is fair, open and accountable, and demonstrates consistency of treatment to all applicants.

These aims are amplified below.

1. To meet local housing needs

Key's properties are generally well maintained, centrally located and close to transport links and amenities. The number of properties available for let in any one year is very low. In contributing to a local strategy for meeting the housing needs of individuals, the association offers nomination rights to both the local authority and other housing agencies in the area. In terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 the Association will ensure that they work positively with each local authority to ensure there is an opportunity for individuals to have their needs recognised. These needs may be met directly through nominations or as part of wider plan using a number of different housing providers.

The association cannot make a significant contribution to an authority's homeless strategy. The points system will favour applicants who are homeless, threatened with homelessness or lack security of tenure.

It also recognises applicants who currently live in shared accommodation.

Those who require housing with support because of their learning difficulty will be able to access accommodation either through nomination from a local authority or other referral agency.

2. To create a balanced community

Key's housing developments have been built in areas where need for supported accommodation has been identified in conjunction with the local social work department or health authority. The number of unsupported (general needs) houses incorporated in each scheme will vary according to local circumstances and particular site characteristics. Where Key is developing new housing including supported accommodation, the Association would take account of the housing mix, both unsupported and supported when making final allocation decisions. Where the majority of accommodation is to be let on a supported basis, the Association will, where possible, ensure that minimum of 4 properties are available for unsupported letting.

In determining what is a balanced community, it is recognised that this will vary from development to development. It is also likely to change over time as tenants move in and out. There may also be a change in the balance of supported and unsupported tenancies. When allocating unsupported tenancies, the Association will take account of existing tenants living in properties adjacent to the vacant property. In some circumstances, where the applicant would, in the opinion of the Association not be an appropriate person for the vacancy, then the Association reserves the right to allocate to someone who has fewer points. These situations are principally where existing tenants would be deemed to be vulnerable or their support needs could be increased if the tenancy were allocated.

Where a decision is made in these circumstances, the case will be reported to the Management Committee

3. To provide neighbourly support

As supported tenants of Key will have housing and care needs associated with their learning disabilities it is important that unsupported tenants are made aware and understand the nature of these disabilities. For many of our tenants with learning difficulties Key will be their first experience of living in the community.

While Key expects no formal input from "good neighbours", we expect that they would help to create a supportive neighbourly environment in which it is recognised that some individuals may require additional assistance with meeting tenancy requirements, and recognise that it may take a little longer to adjust to life in the community.

Potential applicants for Key's unsupported housing will be made aware of Key's "good neighbour" policy and should be able to demonstrate a positive approach to its principles. Applicants will be asked for their views on care in the community and this will be taken into account when allocations are being determined. . As detailed in the previous section, the issue of vulnerability for all tenants will be taken into consideration and the effect that a particular allocation will make in terms of overall good neighbourly support.

4. To operate a policy which is fair, consistent and accountable

In line with Key's Equal Opportunities all applicants will be treated equitably irrespective of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, disability or age. Procedures will be applied uniformly. The association will publish its allocation policy and make it available on request.

Where appropriate, the Association will ensure that every assistance is given to those who require help with understanding the Allocations policy and their rights regarding the allocation process. Where an applicant is not satisfied with their treatment under the policy there will be a mechanism for confirming the details of the allocation decision. This is detailed under Internal Monitoring and Feedback.

NOMINATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR UNSUPPORTED HOUSING

1. All nominations for unsupported housing are made on the basis of this policy and are considered under the Association's points system detailed later in this document.
2. Where a satisfactory nomination arrangement exists, Key normally gives the local authority a minimum of 50% nominations on all new and re-let stock with the remainder being offered to other housing agencies. Where the local authority is the only provider of public sector rented housing, 100% nominations will be given. Key however retains a right of discretion to retain properties for our own transfer, or "special management" cases.

Circumstances under which Key would exercise this right would be where existing tenants have considerable housing need but may not qualify under the points system. This is discussed in more detail under the section on Transfers. These cases will be referred to the Management Committee for approval. Direct referrals may also be accepted from other housing agencies. Their applications would require to be considered under the points system.

The Association will enter into written nomination arrangements with each authority. (Details of local authorities with whom the Association currently has signed agreements are listed in Appendix 2) This arrangement would cover the right to nominate applicants on the council's list for any vacancy but should not be seen as an automatic right to allocation. Direct contact will be made with other landlords operating in the area to make them aware of the Association's stock in the area and to establish arrangements for nominations when a vacancy arises. Under the terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 the Association will seek to formalise arrangements with other RSL's which allows the Association to seek nominations from their waiting lists. The arrangements will clarify the circumstances under which nominations will be sought and will govern any situations in which the Association operates a veto on a nomination.

3. Landlords from whom nominations are sought will receive details of the vacant property and the household composition that would be considered by Key.

As the majority of Key's tenants require a degree of support the Association would not normally consider allocations of unsupported accommodation to individuals who would require some level of formal support unless nominated for a specially adapted property. Where the applicant is unable to demonstrate that they could sustain a tenancy, without support, an allocation will only be considered where formal support arrangements are in place prior to the granting of a tenancy.

4. The Association operates an Equal Opportunities policy and will monitor allocations in line with their internal procedures.

NOMINATION PROCESS FOR RE-LETS – UNSUPPORTED HOUSING

To minimise the void period, the Association asks the nominating authority or the housing agency to provide information on the nominees within 5 working days. A copy of the Association's allocations policy is provided to ensure that nominations meet the Association's priority criteria. Local authorities will be requested to confirm that certain pre-nomination checks have taken place. These would include confirmation that it is a live application, the applicant is interested in the particular area and that they wish to be nominated for a housing association property.

For any one vacancy four nominations are considered appropriate. Details of the property, amenities, rent, garden etc. are passed to the housing agency. The association decides on the appropriate household size for each property. In order to limit child density in particular developments, the household size may be restricted. Details of appropriate household sizes are in an attached schedule.

When considering allocations to individuals who require additional space due to shared custody or access for children who would not normally reside with them, the Association requires evidence of the arrangements from a solicitor. Only one additional bedroom would be allowed in those circumstances. On receipt of the nominations, Key writes to the nominees and arranges a time to visit them in their own home. This enables Key to establish a clear picture of the current living situation and to give out as much information as possible. An application form is also completed at this stage. Points are then awarded in relation to the existing accommodation in line with Key's own allocation policy.

NOMINATION PROCESS FOR NEW LETS - UNSUPPORTED HOUSING

Where a project is due to come off site and the Association has a range of properties of varying size and type to let, information will be passed to the council and other housing agencies, where appropriate.

Councils are given a minimum of 50% nominations to new build properties, with the remainder being offered to other local housing agencies. Where there is no other public sector landlord, councils will be given 100% nominations rights. Depending on the number of properties available to let, a range of nominations would be requested.

Applicants will be given an indication of the possible completion date, the rent, details of the property and have the opportunity to view the plans. Given that most new schemes will include supported accommodation information about the support arrangements is also provided.

Housing providers are asked to contact potential applicants prior to passing on their name to ascertain their interest. This would ensure that only those wishing to be considered by Key are visited. Once the nominations have been received, and applicants visited, the application forms are pointed according to the general principles of Key's Allocation Policy and our criteria of need.

MONITORING OF NOMINATION ARRANGEMENTS

Nomination arrangements with local authorities are monitored on a regular basis or as detailed in the individual arrangement with each council. Where the Council fails to meet the timescales detailed in the arrangement, the Association offers the vacancy to another housing agency. Nominations lost through this process are counted towards any targets set for that year.

ALLOCATION PROCEDURE FOR UNSUPPORTED HOUSING

The Association allocates on the basis of need as determined by Key's points system. All applicants are notified of the association's decision within one week of the visit, if possible. The successful applicant is asked to view the property and make a decision within 48 hours. The Association undertakes any repairs necessary prior to allocation, other than internal decoration.

For those nominated by other agencies, the association clarifies with the housing agency whether a refusal of the property, if offered, will affect their position on the housing list.

Once the property has been viewed and accepted the tenant is expected to sign the tenancy agreement and move in as soon as possible.

As the Association mainly provides accommodation for people who are vulnerable because of their disability, it reserves the right to contact the existing or previous landlords for information which may be material to the allocation of the accommodation. This would include information on arrears and any history of anti-social behaviour, including harassment or violence, drugs misuse or criminal activities related to drugs. Where there is evidence of the applicant having a record of anti-social behaviour or a poor arrears record, over a period of time, then the application will not be considered. If the applicant has arrears of more than one month, at the time of the visit, but has no long-term history of arrears, then the application will be considered.

An allocation will only be made if the arrears are cleared prior to the tenant taking up the tenancy, or arrears do not exceed one months rent due or there is an arrangement in place with the previous landlord to clear the outstanding debt and there is evidence that payments are being made on a regular basis. Tenants with arrears over £750 will not be considered.

The applicant is asked to sign a mandate included in the application form, which confirms that the permission is given to access information held on previous tenancies. Where applicants are living at a care of address, they are asked to supply proof of residence at that address, e.g. benefit books, regular correspondence, letter from an employer or doctor. Where no evidence can be provided then the association reserves the right not to pursue the application.

Where external reports or references indicate that the applicant has given misleading information, an offer may be withheld or withdrawn.

POINTS SYSTEM

In assessing each applicant their current housing circumstances will be taken into account and points awarded on the basis of the following criteria:-

Lacking Facilities

The Association takes into account the lack of the following facilities:-

w.c.	15 points
piped water	10 points
cooking facilities	5 point
bath/shower	5 points

The physical condition of the property will also be assessed to take account of dampness or structural problems. Where there is evidence of dampness, which has not been treated **5 points** will be awarded. Where there are serious structural problems, which are affecting the property and the applicant's ability to live comfortably within the property, **5 points** are awarded.

Evidence of dampness will be determined by the housing officer. Points will be awarded where there is mould growth which has led to the applicant being unable to use the room or rooms. Evidence of significant damage to walls, ceilings, window frames and decoration will also be considered.

Points will be awarded for structural damage where there is clear evidence of structural damage. This would include significant water penetration through a roof, evidence of subsidence which has impacted on the building being windproof and watertight.

Shared Facilities

Applicants may be sharing facilities in a number of situations. These are:-

- Sharing with family/relatives as part of the existing household, and has never held a tenancy
- Sharing with family/relatives, but not considered part of the household
- Sharing with friends, but not part of the household
- Sharing bed-sit or room in shared accommodation, and sharing facilities.

When defining overcrowding, it will be assumed that anyone over the age of 16 should be entitled to their own bedroom

Sharing in family home - overcrowding

Where the applicant is living in the family home as part of the household, but is seeking their own independent accommodation, points will be awarded where there is evidence of overcrowding. The Association will take account of the number of bed spaces that are lacking.

1 bed	3 points
2 beds	5 points
2+ beds	10 points

Where there is evidence that the applicant required to leave the premises within 60 days, e.g. the property is being sold, insecurity of tenure points will be awarded.

Where the applicant is required to share a bedroom with a family member of the opposite sex, over the age of 10, points will awarded on the basis of lacking 2 bed spaces (5 points)

Family member not considered as part of the household

Where an applicant is sharing with a member or members of their family or relatives, but is not viewed as a permanent member of the household, points will be awarded where there is a degree of sharing of bedrooms or the individual has no access to a bedroom on a permanent basis. Details of the last 3 places of residence will be required as evidence of having lived away from the accommodation for a period of time.

Where the applicant is sharing a bedroom with another member of their family of the same sex – 5 points will be awarded. Where they are sharing a bedroom with a family member of the opposite sex over the age of 10, 10 points will be awarded.

Where the applicant has no access to a permanent bed space, 15 points will be awarded.

Where the applicant is required to leave the accommodation with 60 days, e.g. the house has been sold or is being given up, insecurity of tenure points will be awarded.

The applicant will be awarded either overcrowding points or sharing points but not both.

Sharing with friends, but not part of the household

Where the applicant is lodging with friends but does not have exclusive use of a bed space and does not have any rights to remain in the accommodation, points for sharing facilities will be awarded. An additional 5 points will be awarded for every period of 6 months that the applicant has lived there, up to a maximum of 20. Documentary proof of residence at that address for the period of time being claimed, will be required .

Insecurity of tenure points will also be awarded as detailed.

Sharing Facilities

Where an applicant is sharing facilities either in a bed-sit or a shared flat, with a person/persons who are not members of his/her family, points will be awarded where the applicant does not have exclusive use of the following facilities

bedroom	10 points	kitchen	5 points
bathroom	5 points	living room	3 points

No additional insecurity of tenure points will be awarded, if the applicant has an agreement which allows them to remain in the accommodation and has unhindered use of the facilities.

Under-Occupation

Where the applicant is under-occupying his/her current accommodation **5** points are awarded

Security of Tenure

The Association will take account of the degree of security of tenure within the applicant's current accommodation. This is assessed in conjunction with other indicators of housing need.

Where the applicant is required to sell their current accommodation due to mortgage default, unsuitability due to health problems or marital breakdown, it is a requirement that the applicant confirms that the property will be sold prior to a tenancy being granted. Proof of the property being on the market will be required.

In the case of a marital breakdown, and the sale is not in process, evidence will be required of separation and that the house will be sold or the applicant intends to give up their interest in the house. In those circumstances, a short Scottish secure tenancy will be offered for an initial 6-month period. This will be reviewed after 6 months, and a decision made whether to continue the tenancy, either on a short Scottish secure or full Scottish secure tenancy basis.

Where the applicant owns property that is not up for sale, they will only be considered for allocation where the property does not meet their household needs. Where an applicant is re-locating for work and has not commenced sale of the property, a short Scottish secure tenancy may be offered for a period up to 1 year.

Threat of Homelessness

10 points will be awarded, if threatened with homelessness within 60 days. **5** points will be awarded where the applicant has evidence of being asked to leave the accommodation but no timescale has been given

Where the applicant does not own their home and is threatened with homelessness within 60 days, either through lack of tenure or security ending, **10** points are awarded. This includes tied accommodation. Where the applicant has no security of tenure but has a continuing right to live in the accommodation, **5** points are awarded. Where the tenancy is ending due to eviction the circumstances of the eviction are taken into consideration.

Social Circumstances

Harassment, including intolerable living arrangements, either social and/or environmental are taken into account. Points are awarded depending on the degree to which normal living is disrupted because of the prevailing conditions. Points may be awarded under the following headings:

Harassment

Individuals who are suffering considerable harassment due to race, religion, age, gender or disability, will be awarded 8 points. Evidence of harassment will normally be required, particularly substantiated reports from the current landlord or the police.

8 points will be awarded where the individual is suffering from significant marital abuse. Evidence is required from police, landlord, Women's Aid, etc.

Social and environmental conditions

Where individuals are suffering due to environmental circumstances which are out-with their control, related to problems associated with the area they are living in, such as drug abuse, extensive vandalism, high degree of empty properties, 6 points are awarded. Evidence will be required to substantiate the claim. This will be sought from the current landlord or other relevant agency.

Where the individual is living in a property which is unsuitable because of a medical condition which is being exacerbated by their current living arrangements, e.g. heart condition, asthma (related to dampness in the property), loss of mobility, mental health, 6 points are awarded. Medical certificates may be sought to substantiate claims.

Family commitments

Where an applicant needs to move to care for a family member or relative, or to receive care from a family member or relative, 4 **points** are awarded.

Evidence may be sought to substantiate the awarding of points. This would include a letter from a doctor to confirm the requirement to provide/receive care/support.

Employment

Where an applicant has an offer of employment, and requires moving 4 **points** are awarded. Evidence of the offer of employment will be required.

Good Neighbour Policy

Where applicants have scored the same points under the terms of the policy, the Association reserves the right to allocate to the individual or individuals who have indicated that they have an understanding of Key's Good Neighbour Policy and demonstrate a positive approach to their supported neighbours.

Internal monitoring and feedback

A post-visit form is completed which indicates the level of points awarded. These will be held for future monitoring of allocations. Any applicant is free to contact the Association to ask for confirmation of the points awarded and the reasons why an allocation was not made. Requests for information should be directed to the Housing Manager. The Housing Manager agrees to respond to any requests for feedback within 5 days.

In the event that the applicant is not satisfied with the response, an appeal can be lodged with the Management Committee.

NOMINATIONS AND ALLOCATION OF SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

Supported Housing

As Key no longer holds a waiting list for supported housing, the Association will now offer all nominations on vacancies direct to the local authority social work department or supporting people team. Any local allocations policies will be acknowledged. Confirmation of funding will be required prior to any allocation being made.

Registered Accommodation

When a vacancy arises in registered accommodation, the Association contacts the local social work department for nominations. In most cases voids will be allocated to social work nominees following a joint assessment process.

As the social work department will generally have a responsibility for paying for the individual to live in Key's accommodation, confirmation of funding from the local authority will be required prior to the offer of accommodation being made.

TRANSFERS AND MUTUAL EXCHANGE

Transfers

Existing unsupported tenants of the Association can register for transfers within the existing development or in other Key developments. Existing tenants will be considered where their current accommodation is unsuitable in terms of size, condition or family circumstances. These applications are considered as part of the Association's annual quota of 10% of all re-lets. In the event that the quota has been reached, then transfer tenants can be assessed along with nominations for a vacancy.

As detailed previously, tenants may be considered for a transfer out-with the points system in exceptional circumstances. This would include situations where the Association may require to meet need in terms of supported accommodation. Where a transfer for an unsupported tenant would make available a suitable property required for supported accommodation, their transfer application is considered prior to nominations for a vacancy being sought.

A transfer application will require to be completed prior to any transfer. Forms are held at Key's Glasgow office. When a vacancy occurs, reference will be made to any current transfer applications. Tenants are visited and the application form pointed in the usual way.

Tenants in arrears may be considered for transfers, at the Association's discretion. If the tenant has arrears amounting to less than one months rent due, no account will be taken of the arrears. If an arrangement has been made to clear the arrear, which should not exceed £750, and a repayment arrangement has been in place for 3 months then the applicant will not be excluded from consideration for re-housing.

If, following a property inspection, there is evidence of neglect or misuse of the house or flat, then a transfer will not be considered, until the necessary work is done by the tenant to bring the property up to an acceptable standard.

Supported tenants may apply for a transfer to a property which was previously unsupported accommodation. Applications should be made direct to the housing section or through support staff. The application is assessed by support staff and the Housing Services Manager or Senior Housing Officer

Mutual Exchanges

Mutual exchanges are considered by the Association. These may be within Key's own stock or with tenants from other public sector housing. Consideration will be given to tenants living in private rented housing.

Tenants in arrears are only considered for a mutual exchange where the arrears do not exceed £750, there is evidence of a repayment arrangement in place with the current landlord, and this has been maintained for a minimum period of 3 months. Where a property has not been maintained to an acceptable standard, an exchange will not be considered until any necessary repairs or re-decoration have been carried out.

The Association takes no part in the arranging of mutual exchanges between parties. When an exchange is being proposed the details should be notified to the housing section. Both parties will be interviewed prior to any exchange being concluded. No exchange can take place without the written agreement of the Association.

Tenants are not permitted to exchange where it would lead to under-occupation or over-crowding of the property, unless in exceptional circumstances. This would be where a particular size of accommodation is required to meet health needs or a physical disability.

The Association reserves the right to seek references. If on receipt of a reference there is an indication of significant rent arrears, or a history of non payment, (other than housing benefit arrears) the mutual exchange would only take place if the arrears are repaid prior to allocation or there is evidence of a repayment arrangement with the current landlord. An allocation will not be made where there is a history of anti-social behaviour.

The Association reserves the right to refuse any mutual exchange on the grounds detailed above. The Association may also refuse an exchange on grounds as detailed in the section on Creating a Balanced Community.

HOMES

The Association is not a member of HOMES, as turnover of unsupported housing is very low and the Association would be unable to meet the quota for receiving nominations. It has been agreed that where possible the association will liaise with local authorities or housing associations who are party to HOMES agreements. If a tenant is re-housed through this route, the local authority will be given nomination rights to the property vacated by the Key tenant.

IF YOU REQUIRE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OR ABOUT THE ALLOCATIONS POLICY, PLEASE CONTACT

Pamela Macintyre, Senior Housing Officer or Elspeth Mann, Housing Manager

AT: Key Housing Association's Glasgow office
Savoy Tower
77 Renfrew Street
GLASGOW G2 3BZ

TEL. No. 0141-332-6672

FAX No. 0141-332-7498

e-mail: elspeth.mann@keyhousing.org
pamela.macintyre@keyhousing.org .

APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY OF POINTS SYSTEM

Points associated with facilities or features of current property

Lacking Facilities

W.C.	15 points	Piped water	10 points
Cooking facilities	5 points	Bath/shower	5 points
Dampness (untreated)	5 points		
Structural faults	5 points		

Shared Facilities

Bedroom	10 points	Living Room	3 points
Kitchen	5 points	Bathroom	5 points

Overcrowding

Lack of bed spaces

1 bed	3 points
2 beds	5 points
2 + beds	10 points

Under-occupation

One or more beds	5 points
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Points associated with personal circumstances

Security of tenure

Threat of homelessness within 60 days	10 points
Threat of homelessness	5 points

Social Circumstances

Harassment (substantiated by police, other agency)	8 points
Marital abuse (substantiated by other agency)	8 points
Environmental circumstances	6 points
Medical (Unsuitability of property)	6 points
Employment (job offered)	4 points
Requiring care, or as carer	4 points

APPENDIX 2

List of local authorities with signed Nominations Agreements:

Argyll and Bute

Dumfries and Galloway

East Dunbartonshire

Highland

Inverclyde

North Lanarkshire

Stirling

Glasgow

Falkirk

North Ayrshire

APPENDIX 3

Household sizes and properties:

	1 apt	2p2a	2p3a	3p3a	4p3a	4p4a	5p4
Single person	*	*					
Couple	*	*	*	*			
1 / 2 adults, 1 child				*			
1 / 2 adults 2 children (under 10)					*	*	
1 / 2 adults, 2 children, mixed sex, under 10						*	*
1 / 2 adults, 2 children 1 under 12, 1 over 12						*	*
1 / 2 adults, 3 children							*

The maximum size of household which can be accommodated within Key's stock is 1 adult and 4 children, or 2 adults and 3 children

However the Association reserves the right to allocate out-with the above household sizes depending on the child density within each development.