

PARTICK HOUSING ASSOCIATION
ALLOCATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES
REVIEWED JANUARY 2003

INTRODUCTION

Partick Housing Association was founded in 1975 and in March 2001 merged with Meadowside and Thornwood Housing Association. The association is registered with and monitored by Communities Scotland (formerly Scottish Homes).

The allocation policy has been formulated after consultation with Glasgow City Council, other housing providers, advice agencies and the local community. The policy complies with the appropriate relevant legislation and the Performance Standards applicable to registered social landlords.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- to ensure that houses are allocated to those in greatest housing need – as identified in our annual demand statement (see appendix 1) and reflected in our points system
- to ensure the allocation process is fair
- to assist the local authority in meeting its statutory obligations for homelessness
- to assist external agencies to provide housing where the need and support has been identified
- to make the best use of the stock available
- to meet the changing needs of existing tenants
- to help create and sustain balanced and stable communities. Partick Housing Association defines such communities as those which encompass a wide range and socio-economic households.

ACCESS TO HOUSING LIST

- The association maintains an open housing list and accepts applications from anyone aged 16 and over

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Partick Housing Association will only discriminate on the grounds of housing need as stated in our aims and objectives.

The association has an equal opportunities policy and action plan which includes a commitment to:

- equality of access to the housing list
- record and monitor relevant information to identify trends, and take appropriate action to try to redress imbalances
- ensure that more than one member of staff is involved in assessing applications and allocating properties
- provide application forms and ensure information on the policy and procedure is available in the following key minority languages – Urdu, Punjabi, Mandarin.
- ensure access to interpreting services
- provide information in Braille in large print and on audio tape
- ensure hearing loops are installed at both offices

The association has established contacts with local advice agencies and organisations which provide support to ethnic minorities and ensures that its application form and information on its policy is available in a wide range of locations.

All applicants are asked to indicate whether they are related to a committee member, officer or employee of the association. Management committee approval is required prior to any offer of accommodation being made to such an applicant and any offer made is recorded in the association's Section 15 register for Communities Scotland audit purposes.

NOMINATION ARRANGEMENT WITH GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL

Partick Housing Association is committed to assisting Glasgow City Council (GCC) in meeting the needs of the homeless in the city. We have therefore established an arrangement with the local GCC offices at Anderston and Anniesland to assist with meeting the needs of this group.

This agreement, in its present format, will ensure that 19% of the association's prime vacancies will be made available to this group; this agreement is reviewed annually.

Where the association feels it is appropriate, a support package must be in place before an offer is made.

SPECIAL NEEDS

The association is committed to supporting vulnerable groups to return to or remain in the community and currently supports a number of special needs projects where it has established a support package is in place. The association will consider requests of this nature and aim to allocate 6% of all lets to applicants referred from such support agencies. Each case will be assessed on its merits.

OTHER HOUSING OPTIONS

Applicants to the housing list who currently hold a tenancy with a registered social landlord should also consider the following options:

- Homeswap – the national mutual exchange scheme
- Homes mobility scheme - for those moving from outside Glasgow
- Mutual exchanges
- Shared ownership

Any application for housing will still be considered against the association's rules of eligibility.

RECIPROCAL ARRANGEMENTS

In exceptional circumstances where an urgent move cannot be facilitated under the HOMES scheme a direct referral from another Registered Social Landlord will be accepted; a property would be offered on the understanding that a reciprocal offer would be made.

SENSITIVE ALLOCATIONS

In accordance with the association's aim of achieving a balanced community, and to take account of the needs of other residents, there may be occasions when it is not considered appropriate to allocate a property to the person with the highest points total. Such an allocation would require to be authorised, with supporting evidence by the Customer Services Coordinator or other senior officer.

HARASSMENT AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Applicants with a History of Anti-Social Behaviour

Where there is evidence of serious anti-social behaviour on the part of an applicant or members of their household the association may refuse to grant a tenancy until it is satisfied that they have demonstrated that no further such breaches will occur.

If the applicant has been evicted for anti-social behaviour within the last 3 years or the applicant or anyone living in the property is subject to an Anti Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) a probationary tenancy may be given; we would ensure that appropriate support is provided where required with a view within 12 months to converting to a contractual assured tenancy.

Applicants suffering Harassment/ Anti-Social Behaviour

Transfer cases

Where a tenant of the Association is subject to any form of harassment and appears to be at risk the Association will do everything within its power to offer alternative temporary or permanent accommodation.

Where the Association believes that rehousing within the locality will not alleviate the harassment or risk it will assist the tenant by making referrals to another landlord of the tenants choice.

In situations such as the above the Association will also seek to take appropriate action against the perpetrator of the harassment/violence where it has the powers to do so but this must not prohibit alternative rehousing being secured if it is felt to be the best course of action for our tenant.

Direct applications

Where a direct applicant is subject to any form of harassment and appears to be at risk the Association will do everything within its power to offer alternative temporary or permanent accommodation.

The Association reserves the right to refuse rehousing of direct applicants where it believes that an offer of accommodation within its locality will not alleviate the harassment or risk. It will however offer advice and guidance on alternative housing options available to the applicant.

In cases such as these the Association is not in a position to take action against the perpetrators of harassment/violence.

Points Award

Where an applicant is awarded "Subject to harassment" status the applicant will be awarded sufficient points to reach the top of the housing list and will be considered for the first suitable property that becomes available.

Where more than one applicant, competing for similar property types, has such status, the Association will give due consideration to other needs groups identified within the allocations policy and give priority to the applicant considered to be in greatest housing need. Where the needs identified are equal

the Association will allocate to the applicant who has suffered the harassment for the longest period of time.

Only two offers of suitable accommodation will be made. Where both offers are refused the Association will remove the applicants "Subject to harassment" status.

Appeals

Any applicant may appeal against the decision to refuse the award of "Subject to harassment" status or to remove the award on the basis that two offers of suitable accommodation have been refused.

RACIAL HARASSMENT

The association has a separate racial harassment policy. A copy is available on request.

HOUSING ACTION AREAS

Where the association acquires property for the purpose of improvement any owners who become tenants of the association will be decanted to temporary accommodation or offered a permanent move as priority applicants.

SPECIAL CASES

Where there are exceptional circumstances to which the normal rules of eligibility do not apply, these cases will be referred to the management committee for consideration

SHARED OWNERSHIP

Shared ownership is a scheme which allows you to part rent/part buy a property. The association currently has 57 shared ownership properties and although there is a waiting list, turnover is very low. Shared ownership applications are assessed on the basis of housing need as set out in our allocations policy.

ASPIRATIONAL MOVES

In order to meet the needs and aspirations of the local community the association will allocate a small quota of properties to housing list applicants currently living within the association's geographical boundary.

TENANT OPTIONS FOR REHOUSING

TRANSFERS

The association will allocate 25% of its annual lets to current tenants to endeavour to meet their changing needs within the constraints of our stock. Applications will also be assessed on the basis of points (see below).

A transfer application may be suspended where:

- the house is in an unsatisfactory condition
- there are outstanding repairs for which the tenant is responsible
- unauthorised alterations have been carried out
- there are outstanding rent arrears of one month or more
- there are other charges owing to the association

and the tenant has refused to remedy the situation

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN

Tenants whose relationship has broken down are eligible to apply to the housing list and will be assessed under our relationship breakdown procedure.

OTHER HOUSING OPTIONS

The association also aims to maximise options for tenants who may not qualify for a move within our own stock or who wish to move elsewhere and information on the following options is available from our offices:

- ❑ **Mutual exchanges**
- ❑ **Homes** - employment/support for those moving from outside Glasgow
- ❑ **Homeswap** – the national mutual exchange scheme

MUTUAL EXCHANGES

Where two tenants agree with each other to swap houses they must receive the approval of both landlords. The association holds a register of tenants who are interested in exchanging into/out of the Partick area and details are held for 6 months. The association would only approve an exchange if the following conditions were met:

- ❑ no overcrowding or underoccupation would occur
- ❑ both rent accounts are no more than one month in arrears at the time of exchange or suitable repayment arrangements have been made and adhered to
- ❑ the tenancy record of the incoming tenant is satisfactory
- ❑ there are no repairs required for which the tenant is responsible
- ❑ there are no unauthorised alterations
- ❑ written permission must be obtained for a household pet

All tenants who mutually exchange to Partick Housing Association will be offered a contractual assured tenancy.

TARGETS

In order to meet our aims and objectives we have established the following targets which are monitored on a monthly basis:

- ❑ 25% transfers
- ❑ 40% housing list applicants
- ❑ 4% HOMES mobility scheme
- ❑ 19% nominations (Statutory Homeless)
- ❑ 6% referrals from supported agencies
- ❑ 5% aspirational moves
- ❑ 1% reciprocal

The association aims to ensure that allocations to applicants from ethnic minorities reflect the % applying.

REVIEWS

All applications accepted for housing will be reviewed on the anniversary of their date of application. The allocation policy will be reviewed and amended where there is a need to respond to new legislation and policy guidance in conjunction with the local community.

APPEALS/COMPLAINTS

All applicants have the right to appeal/make a complaint on the following grounds:

- ❑ the way their application has been assessed
- ❑ the points awarded
- ❑ being suspended from the list

full details of the Association's 'Appeals Procedure' is available on request

POINTS

Properties will be allocated on the basis of this points system:

Where you live

One award per application:

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notice to quit | 25 points |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hostel | 25 points |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Separating spouses
(including domestic abuse) | 25 points |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caravan | 25 points |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tied accommodation | 25 points |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living with family/friends | 15 points |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insecure tenancy | 10 points |

Where applicants are living apart but are applying to be housed together, the application will be based on the application attracting the highest number of points

Lack of amenities

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> no inside wc | 20 points |
| <input type="checkbox"/> no bath/shower | 10 points |
| <input type="checkbox"/> no kitchen | 12 points |
| <input type="checkbox"/> no separate/inadequate kitchen | 6 points |
| <input type="checkbox"/> serious property defects | 10 points |

PHA tenants in living kitchens require a minimum tenancy period of 2 years before qualifying for 6 lacking amenity points for a 2 apartment.

Sharing amenities

For each of the following amenities:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------|
| wc | 6 points |
| bath/shower | 6 points |
| kitchen facilities | 6 points |

Overcrowding:

Where the following person/s do not have a separate bedroom 7 points are awarded:

- applicant and partner
- each person over 16 years
- two people of same gender where one is 16 years old or over
- two people of different gender where one is 10 years old or over
- custody/access arrangements – bedrooms will only be allocated for children where the applicant has full or equal custody

Notes:

A double bedroom has a minimum floor area of 10m²

Points will be calculated on the basis of the level of overcrowding which affects the applicant's household only

Harassment/Anti-Social Behaviour

Where an applicant has been awarded 'subject to harassment' status they shall be awarded 100 points to ensure that they are afforded the highest priority to reflect their immediate need for rehousing.

Medical

Points will only be awarded where a move to alternative accommodation will alleviate the problem. Medical priority will be determined by an independent medical assessor and points allocated dependent on the unsuitability of the present accommodation, with points awarded on a sliding scale from 5 to 30 points depending on the severity of the medical condition.

Where more than one applicant qualifies for medical points the highest number of points will be awarded.

Family support

5 points are awarded where it has been established that the applicant requires to move to the area in order to offer/receive a high level of support; points will only be awarded where the need for support has been confirmed by the independent medical assessor.

Underoccupation –

For every bedroom not required by applicant's household 10 points

ASSESSING APPLICATIONS

In cases where two applicants have equal points, priority will be assessed on the basis of length of time in need.

PROCEDURES

AIM

To ensure that all applications are processed efficiently and fairly and that all allocations are made according to policy.

ACCESS TO HOUSING LIST

- where an applicant has rent arrears of one month or more an offer of accommodation may not be made until the association is satisfied that a repayment arrangement has been established and adhered to
- where the association believes an applicant requires support to sustain a tenancy and the applicant refuses, or support is unavailable, the association reserves the right to refuse a tenancy
- the association reserves the right to suspend and re-evaluate applications where the applicant verbally or physically abuses staff or committee members

THE ALLOCATIONS PROCESS

APPLICATION PACK

On applying for housing, all applicants will receive:

- ◆ main application form
- ◆ medical questionnaire
- ◆ equal opportunities monitoring form
- ◆ guidance notes on completion
- ◆ information sheet, including points list

PROCESSING THE APPLICATION

- ❑ forms can either be collected from the office or will be posted
- ❑ all applications are pointed and checked by two members of Customer Services staff within 2 days of receipt
- ❑ details are entered on computer by front office staff, given an individual reference number and filed appropriately
- ❑ a letter is issued detailing the points awarded and size of accommodation applicable
- ❑ timescale from receipt of form to issue of letter not to exceed 5 working days
- ❑ applicants who have completed the medical questionnaire will be assessed by an independent medical assessor
- ❑ Customer Service staff will send medical questionnaires to the independent medical assessor, with a stamped addressed envelope, as they are received,
- ❑ all applications awaiting an assessment are held in a pending file and monitored daily
- ❑ where an application is incomplete the applicant will be requested to contact the office; until then the form is held in a pending file
- ❑ all application forms will be retained for 5 years
- ❑ where there is a difference of opinion in applications the Customer Services Co-ordinator's decision will be final
- ❑ the information provided on the application form is treated confidentially. Equal opportunities monitoring forms to be filed separately and used for monitoring purposes

ASSESSING POINTS

The main categories for which points are awarded are:

- ◆ **Tenure**
- ◆ **Lacking amenities**
- ◆ **Sharing amenities**
- ◆ **Overcrowding**
- ◆ **Underoccupation**
- ◆ **Family support**
- ◆ **Medical**
- ◆ **Harassment**

All applications are assessed on the basis of the attached points list and most applications will be straightforward. The following should be used for guidance:

TENURE

- ❑ where applicants are living apart but are applying to be housed together, the assessment will be based on the application attracting the highest number of points
- ❑ asylum seekers would require to demonstrate Home Office leave to remain
- ❑ tied accommodation points are only awarded within 6 months of a confirmed discharge/retiral date
- ❑ tied accommodation applications will be accepted from armed forces personnel and those required to leave their contractual employment
- ❑ applicants facing imminent homelessness must provide a legal notice to quit (AT6) and will be issued with a points award letter and advised to contact GCC in case we are unable to rehouse them in time; their application will be reassessed at their end of tenancy date unless they are referred by GCC as a nomination (see nominations)
- ❑ applicants who have no fixed abode cannot be assessed in terms of the points system and will be given housing advice and advised to contact Glasgow City Council with a view to a possible nomination

Relationship breakdown

- ❑ normally both parties will be interviewed to establish relevant details and mandates completed
- ❑ advice will be offered to both parties including temporary rehousing options eg Women's Aid/Hamish Allan Centre
- ❑ if appropriate, advice must be sought from other agencies
- ❑ where the property has more than one bedroom and there are children involved, the partner with custody will normally be expected to remain in the family home
- ❑ where voluntary agreement cannot be reached then either partner may be required to resort to the courts to establish rights to the present accommodation; the association will not become involved in any such court action
- ❑ no temporary accommodation will be offered to either party during this period
- ❑ the outcome of any application to the court will determine which partner will remain in the house and which partner will be seeking separate accommodation
- ❑ where the partner not seeking custody of the children refuses to leave a family sized property the association may, where **domestic abuse or violence** is present, consider legal action for a compulsory transfer to smaller accommodation
- ❑ the separating partner can apply to the association's waiting list but no new tenancy will be granted until all tenancy and occupancy rights for the current home have been rescinded
- ❑ in the case of a joint tenancy, both partners will sign the end of tenancy and the renunciation of occupancy rights documents and a new tenancy granted to the partner remaining in the house
- ❑ no information must be divulged to anyone other than the applicant, especially where there is a suspicion or allegation of domestic violence or abuse

LACK OF AMENITIES

Points awards for serious property defects include dry rot, structural instability, water penetration.

SHARING AMENITIES

Only one award of points per amenity shared.

OVERCROWDING

- ❑ points will be calculated on the basis of the level of overcrowding which affects the applicant's household only (ie any overcrowding which will remain once the applicant's household is rehoused is not eligible for overcrowding points)
- ❑ where a member of the household to be rehoused is staying elsewhere and there is a valid reason which prevents them living with the applicant, overcrowding points will be awarded as if they were all staying at the same address

FAMILY SUPPORT

Points will only be awarded to applicants currently outwith the G11 area who require to live near their immediate family to provide/receive care for/from them as a result of illness or disability; assessment of medical support will be carried out by the independent medical advisor.

MEDICAL

Points will only be awarded where a move to alternative accommodation will alleviate the problem. The medical points to be awarded will be at the discretion of the independent medical assessor.

- Applicants will complete a separate medical form to be assessed by an independent medical assessor
- The decision of the independent medical assessor is final and the association will only review a case if additional relevant information becomes available.

HARASSMENT/ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Given that harassment/Anti-Social points will take an applicant to the top of the housing list the Association will require a written statement detailing the nature and history of harassment, supported by a police report where possible. Priority will only be given to those applicants who have demonstrated that either they, or a person/s living with them, are at immediate risk. Priority harassment points can only be awarded by the Associations Customer Services Manager.

SPECIAL CASES

Where a Customer Services Officer identifies a situation where there is a need for rehousing and s/he determines that the allocations policy does not allow the application to be considered a report should be submitted to the appropriate committee.

VULNERABLE CLIENTS

Where an application is received from someone who appears to have significant support needs in addition to housing need, the Customer Services Officer will contact the appropriate support agencies, subject to the applicant's consent, to ensure that a support package is in place prior to an offer of accommodation being made.

TRANSFERS

Transfer applicants will be visited at home by a Customer Services Officer to complete an application form; the purpose of this visit is to inspect the house to:

- identify repairs for which the tenant is responsible
- identify unauthorised alterations which must be removed or approved
- obtain signature from tenant agreeing their responsibilities on repairs/alterations

Where necessary a further home visit will be carried out before an offer of accommodation is made to ensure that all work has been carried out to the association's satisfaction

If one month's rent or more due by the tenant is outstanding, or other charges are due to the association an application may be suspended and the tenant will be notified in writing.

Customer Services Officers should ensure that tenants are aware of their obligation to leave the property in a reasonable and clean condition, clear of all furniture and personal possessions.

Tenants are allowed one full week to move before becoming liable for both rents; discretion will be used where there is disability or other special circumstances

HOME VISITS

Tenants of other Registered Social Landlords/GCC

- applicants will not require a home visit
- a full report will be required from the landlord confirming all relevant tenancy details

Non Registered Social Landlords applicants

- ❑ when an applicant has sufficient points and is near the top of the list, a letter will be sent asking him/her to contact the office to arrange an appointment for a visit and explaining the purpose of the visit
- ❑ a mandate will be enclosed with this letter authorising the association to seek appropriate references or make relevant enquiries to confirm information offered verbally or in writing by the applicant; where a satisfactory response has not been provided an application will be cancelled and this will be confirmed by letter
- ❑ all adult members of the applicant's household will be required to complete:
 - ◆ confirmation of address form, signed and stamped by employer/DSS or similar
- ❑ the applicants will also be asked to provide:
 - ◆ two other confirmations of proof of residence (eg utility bill, driving licence)
 - ◆ details of previous addresses

where this information is not provided an application may be suspended

- ❑ if an applicant fails to respond to letters on more than two occasions the association will cancel the application and confirm this by letter
- ❑ two members of the Customer Services Team will carry out a home visit to confirm the details provided on the application form and the points award and collect these forms and mandate
- ❑ points may be amended following a visit and a revised points letter issued

OFFERS

- ❑ applicants will be made a maximum of two offers of accommodation
- ❑ for each vacancy a computer print out of the applicants, in points order, will be produced
- ❑ an offer will normally be made to the applicant with the highest points
- ❑ when a name is bypassed an explanation must be annotated and signed by two Customer Services Officers
- ❑ an offer will be made in writing and include details of the property, rent, the type and duration of the tenancy and refer to the declaration on the application form
- ❑ the applicant is given 3 working days to contact the office to arrange to view the property
- ❑ an applicant who fails to view or refuses a second offer without good reason may be suspended from the list for a year

VIEWING

- ❑ all viewings will be carried out jointly with a Customer Services Officer
- ❑ viewings will normally be arranged prior to the end of tenancy and at a time convenient for the outgoing tenant
- ❑ applicants will be made aware that the internal decoration of the property is the responsibility of the incoming tenant and that the association will only award small decoration allowances in exceptional circumstances
- ❑ no keys will be issued overnight or over weekends
- ❑ following the viewing the applicant must contact the Customer Services Officer within 24 hours to advise if they are accepting or refusing the offer and, if accepting, to arrange a time to sign up
- ❑ where an offer is refused, the applicant must complete a form giving their reasons
- ❑ no further offer can be made until this form is received

SIGN UP

- ❑ applicants accepting a property are expected to make arrangements to sign up within 2 days of viewing the property
- ❑ at the sign up the following documents are completed/issued:
 - ◆ missive of let
 - ◆ change of tenancy notification to council tax
 - ◆ housing benefit application (if appropriate)
 - ◆ tenants handbook
 - ◆ good neighbour charter
 - ◆ share membership
- ❑ the Customer Services Officer will use this opportunity to highlight tenant and landlord obligations and advise of new tenant visit in 6 weeks time

NOMINATIONS

The procedure to be followed is detailed in the local agreement with GCC.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE HOUSING LIST

For administrative purposes applications will be categorised by apartment size as follows:

- ❑ general list for those requesting any floor level
- ❑ medical list
- ❑ transfer list for those requesting any floor level
- ❑ transfer medical list
- ❑ wheelchair list for those requiring wheelchair adapted accommodation
- ❑ aspirational list

All applications will be reviewed annually on the anniversary of their date of application

QUALITY AUDIT

- ❑ random samples of allocations will be reviewed by the Customer Services Co-ordinator

ROLE OF COMMITTEE

- ❑ the committee delegates responsibility for the operation of the allocations policy and procedures to staff
- ❑ the committee will receive quarterly demand reports illustrating the number of applicants coming on and off the list, statistics relating to those rehoused (no details of individual applicants will be given) and developing trends

On the basis of reports provided by Customer Services staff the committee makes decisions on:

- ❑ whether to award special case status
- ❑ whether to suspend an application from an applicant who has been verbally or physically abusive to staff or committee members
- ❑ section 15 allocations

SECTION 15

Applicants will be required to declare any close connection or relationship with a staff or committee member. Special procedures to be followed where a relationship does exist are contained in policy document A007.

RECIPROCAL ARRANGEMENTS

Any requests from other RSLs for reciprocal moves will be approved by the Customer Services Co-ordinator or other appropriate senior officer.

APPEALS PROCEDURE

The aim of the appeals procedure is to provide a review mechanism for applicants who feel their application for housing has been unfairly assessed. There are two appeals mechanisms which are open to all applicants:

- ◆ an appeal relating to the award of points or suspension from the housing list
- ◆ an appeal relating to administrative errors or to the service

Award of points or suspension from the housing list

The following procedures will apply:

- the applicant should write to the association giving their reasons for appeal
- the application is then reassessed by staff not involved with the original assessment
- if the applicant feels reassessment should involve a home visit, this will be arranged at a mutually convenient time
- a written response will be provided within 5 working days outlining any new decision
- if the applicant is still dissatisfied he/she should make an appointment to attend the management committee surgery (held on the last Wednesday of each month)
- the committee will investigate all circumstances and will respond to the applicant in writing within 5 working days. The management committee decision is final.

Administrative errors or quality of service

Appeals will be dealt with in accordance with the association's complaints procedure.