

POLICY

Allocations Policy

**Performance Standard:
B1.1 (AS1.1 AND 1.2)**

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0. **Introduction**

0.1 This is the Policy within which Dalmuir Park Housing Association considers applications and allocates its housing stock in what we believe to be the fairest and most equitable manner possible. The policy complies with all Communities Scotland Guidance and Performance Standards (particularly GS2.1 equal opportunities, AS1.1 Access to housing, AS1.2 Lettings, and AS4 homelessness) and the Scottish Federation of Housing Association's (SFHA) Raising Standards document.

0.2 Dalmuir Park Housing Association operates within the West Dunbartonshire Council area therefore we will attempt as far as possible to complement the activities of the Council and other housing providers within this area.

We will ensure open and fair access to the housing list and work with others to maximise and simplify access routes into housing.

We will liaise regularly with the Council with regard to the operation of the policy.

We will let houses in a way that gives reasonable preference to those in housing need and make best use of available housing stock and help sustain our community.

We will also monitor and analyse the effectiveness of the policy and make arrangements for change where necessary. Our policy will reflect the identified requirements highlighted in the West Dunbartonshire Council Housing Plan and also the Joint Community Care Plan for the area.

0.3 **Operation of the Policy**

The Allocation Policy is primarily a Points System together with a range of quotas, which are designed to meet the needs of a wide range of client groups.

The Information contained in the Housing Application Form will be assessed, pointed and recorded on a computer that will place all applications on an appropriate list. Those with the greatest points level on each list will be eligible for an offer of the next available property suitable to their needs subject to the further conditions contained in this policy.

A full procedure note will accompany this policy.

0.4 **Letting Plans**

We will annually calculate the likely turnover over the next year and number of lets in each category and report this to the Committee and within publicity documents.

0.5 Information

The Association has copies of a summary of this Policy available at its offices and seeks to ensure that applications are available at many others convenient locations such as Citizens Advice Bureaux, other Social Housing Providers and community organisations. Information can also be obtained on the website www.chconline.org.uk . The Association is also assisting in developing a Common Housing Register with partners in West Dunbartonshire. Advice on the completion of application forms is available within the office. Arrangements can be made for home visits by staff if you are unable to call at the office because of illness or disability.

0.6 Process

All persons seeking accommodation with the Association must complete a Housing Application Form accurately and in full. The details requested will assist us in deciding if applicants can be housed based on the points allocated. Applicants will be contacted within 28 days of application by letter explaining the prospects and any specific queries or issues relating to the application. Some relevant checks may be carried out such as contacting landlords.

0.7 Home visits

All applicants so far as is practical will be visited at home to determine their present housing circumstances, to verify the details on their application and to obtain updated information on present circumstances. No account will be taken of housekeeping standards nor will the visit be used as a method of vetting applicants.

0.8 Confidentiality

The process is confidential. Only specified staff will have access to your application and will keep your details secure both in paper and electronic form. Only specific people such as the current landlord or certain Council staff, Police and other social housing providers will be provided with applicants' details but solely under the terms of the mandate signed by the applicant. The process is governed by the Data Protection Act 1988.

1. Definitions

This policy has been written in a way that should be clearly understood by the majority of people in clear English. There are definitions and “jargon” that are an everyday part of our operations that many people may not easily understand and the following is an attempt at defining these. The list is not comprehensive but covers a number of the major terms that we use:-

House Any property available for rent including flats, houses etc that the Association owns

Homeless Where a family (or in certain specific circumstances a person) does not have a house, is threatened with losing their home and has been assessed by the Local Authority as Homeless under Homelessness legislation.

Insecure accommodation Accommodation where the tenant does not have a tenancy agreement or is threatened with homelessness within a relatively short period of time.

Former Tenant An applicant who has had a previous tenancy with the association or other housing provider.

Quota system A method or setting aside a specific number of properties to certain groups of applicants (E.G. couples, single persons).

SFHA The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations. They assist all Associations in campaigning, training and provision of advice to their members.

Communities Scotland The Scottish Executives' department that monitors the work of the Association.

Points System A recognised method of placing applicants on a waiting list that takes into account their housing needs and present family and property circumstances.

Transfer The offer of a house to an existing tenant.

Discretion The process where a staff member is allowed to overrule the allocations policy in specifically agreed areas.

Reasonable preference Allowing applicants to have a choice of housing within specific limits.

Unsatisfactory housing conditions A situation where the property occupied has specific housing related problems that prevents a member of the family to enjoy a reasonable quality of life (e.g. dampness, lack of a bedroom, too many stairs).

Open Waiting List A register maintained that allows new applications without restrictions such as age limits, residence qualification, points level or waiting time.

Nomination A request to house an applicant usually by another housing or voluntary agency. There is a nominations arrangement with the local council where we agree to house a specific percentage of our houses to people referred by them

Tolerable Standard A measure of the quality of the conditions in a house that meets generally agreed or legislative standards.

2. The Aims and Objectives of the Allocations Policy

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- 2.1 The Association, in allocating housing based on the housing need of applicant using a points system, will recognise a wide range of housing need factors.
 - 2.2 The Association will aim to satisfy internal transfer requirements and relieve existing housing stress.
 - 2.3 The Association will liaise with other bodies to provide housing for particular needs, and aim to provide a mix of house types to meet the demands of the applicants on the waiting list.
 - 2.4 Applicants will be “matched” to houses depending on their requirements and the Association’s desire to contribute to the creation and maintenance of balanced communities. The Association considers that all applicants should not be restricted unduly as to their choice of house types but due to the high demand and restricted supply of some types of property the Association may restrict choice.

The Association’s definition of ‘Balanced Communities’ is as follows: -

‘Balanced Communities should reflect the population mix in the country with a range of ages and family groupings and have regard for the increased demand for single person accommodation, elderly accommodation and special needs accommodation. It will also have regard for the balance between people in work and those who do not work.’

Our objectives in creating and sustaining balanced communities are: -

- To sustain family networks by ensuring that where possible when allocating properties we recognise peoples desire to live within close proximity to family members in order that support can be given.
- Reduce the likelihood of areas being created where there is an over concentration of vulnerable groups.
- Recognise the stigma that can be attached to an area where there is a known dependency on benefit and actively work towards creating a balance between those on higher and lower incomes.
- The Association will allocate properties sensitively to avoid lifestyle clashes and use discretion when allocating from the housing list to allow a good mix within any given group of properties.

- Where a group of properties have been identified as difficult to let and show characteristics which are at odds with the concept of Balanced Communities Housing Staff will be given authority to seek to redress tenancy imbalances by the prudent use of discretion to allocate the properties to specific client groups. Any such initiative will require formal approval from the Departmental Sub-committee to whom the Housing Services Manager will report on the progress on a regular basis.

2.5 This Allocations policy is intended to be a fair method of allocating vacant properties to our identified client groups.

3 Access

- 3.1 The Association operates an open waiting list. Any person aged 16 or over may apply and be assessed for housing at any time. There are no residential restrictions on the eligibility of applicants for housing
- 3.2 Each application completed shall be assessed under this policy to determine whether it can be accepted and placed on one of the lists.
- 3.3 Application forms and copies of this policy in full, summary, tape and in translation shall be made available widely and in particular advice centres, local housing providers' offices, referral agencies and agencies assisting Ethnic Minorities and those with particular housing needs.
- 3.4 The Association has a formal Nominations Agreement with West Dunbartonshire Council and agrees to let 50% of its available properties to nominations after satisfying internal transfers. Nominations will be assessed on the basis of this Allocations Policy. The Association is further developing its access arrangements through a Common Housing Register which it is envisaged will be in operation by 2006. This will allow applicants to apply to any social housing provider using a single application form and may result in allocations being processed centrally.

4 Equal Opportunities

The Association believes that all persons shall have the same opportunity to apply for and be granted housing. We will not discriminate unfairly on the grounds of race, culture, colour, nationality, sex, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation or health when operating the Allocations Policy.

The opportunity to apply for housing will be encouraged not only locally but throughout the country. Access to the list will be specifically encouraged for persons with particular needs and from ethnic minorities.

The effect of this policy will be monitored by the recording of statistics on application and allocation. Monthly reports on lets will be presented to the Departmental Sub-Committee.

Targets

The outcome of this Policy is anticipated that for each category the percentage of applicants on the list will result in the similar percentage of lets made on an annual basis. Should the allocations of housing not reflect the demand pattern from each group, the Committee shall take appropriate steps to ensure that this is addressed.

5 Points Categories

A points system is a method of allocating houses which assigns a range of points to applicants with specifically defined personal and property circumstances.

This section defines the points categories adopted by the Association as the main indicators of Housing Need. We consider our highest priority for housing the following categories and we therefore give the highest weighting of points allocations: -

- People living in houses that are below the tolerable standard as defined in section 102 of the Housing Scotland Act. (E.G. people with no access or only shared access to standards amenities such as a kitchen, a bath or hot water.)
- Families who are overcrowded
- Larger families (although it is accepted that this Association has only a small number of large sized properties)
- People who are homeless
- People in unsatisfactory living conditions (this may include people living in accommodation that is unsuitable for their medical condition or families suffering from the effects of anti social neighbours.

5.1 Overcrowding

A house is considered to be overcrowded when the number of bedrooms required is more than that available to the applicant's household (i.e. overcrowding is measured in terms of bedroom deficiency). For this purpose the number of bedrooms required by the applicant's household is calculated as follows: -

One bedroom for each husband and wife, or persons living together as such;

+ One bedroom for each pair of children up to the age of 12 of the same sex;

+ One bedroom for each child over the age of 6 where of different sex;

+ One bedroom for each remaining member of household.

- Where a separate bedroom is required for medical reasons, medical evidence must be provided. The Housing Services Manager will then decide if there are sufficient grounds to allow the applicant/member of applicant's family to be awarded points accordingly.
- In an effort to ensure that the time in overcrowded conditions is reduced to a minimum, the Association will award overcrowding points to pregnant women as soon as the applicant's doctor confirms the pregnancy in writing, and where the future birth of a child will result in overcrowding in terms of the above bedroom deficiency.
- Where an applicant lives in a restricted person household (e.g. 3 person 4 apartment) overcrowding points shall be awarded where the number of persons resident exceeds the allowable number. Where a tenant applies who has been living in a bedsit/ living room cum bedroom /kitchen, the tenant shall have completed at least two years tenancy prior to being considered for separate bedroom accommodation.
- Where an application is received from two unrelated persons of the same sex over 16 years the Association will place them on the 2-bedroom list unless otherwise notified. This does not discriminate against gay or lesbian couples who can be placed on the one bedroom list. The points weighting for two unrelated persons not in a relationship is placed at a level that will not discriminate against couples with children. 5 points will be awarded to applicants for each child in an overcrowded household.
- Assessment and confirmation of overcrowding points will be made by the Housing Officer. Where the application is made from separate households a visit will be made to determine the degree of overcrowding which is experienced. If one of the applicants is overcrowded then an award of points will be made

5.2 Under-Occupation

Points will be awarded to tenants of under-occupied public sector housing. The number of bedrooms required compared to those available in the present accommodation are calculated as for overcrowding.

The following table shows the points awarding in each situation.

<u>Apartments Required</u>				
1	2	3	4	5

	1	0	50	100	150	200
Apartments	2	50	0	50	100	150
In Present House	3	100	50	0	50	100
	4	150	100	50	0	50
	5	200	150	100	50	0

5.3 Lacking Facilities

This category concerns any applicants who completely lack the following facilities at their present address: -

- * No internal toilet. 25 points
- * No bath/shower 25 points
- * No separate kitchen 25 points
- * No hot water supply 25 points
- * No central heating 10 points

5.4 Sharing Facilities

This category concerns any applicant who shares the following facilities:

- * Shared bathroom or toilet. 15 points
- * Shared kitchen 15 points

5.5 Relative in Need

Points will be awarded to applicants who require to move to DPHA property in order to give or receive support to/from relatives in need in the Dalmuir letting area (as defined by West Dunbartonshire Council) where no support is currently available. Evidence must be provided.

10 points

5.6 Medical Priority Points

Medical priority points will only be awarded where:

- a) The applicant is handicapped by serious illness, injury, deformity or disablement of a nature likely to be permanent or long standing.
- b) The accommodation occupied is, by its design, location or condition aggravating the applicant's medical condition.

Points will be awarded as follows: -

a) Where the accommodation occupied is causing extreme distress to the applicant's medical condition. 100 points

b) Where the accommodation occupied is causing serious distress to the applicant's medical condition. 50 points

c) Where the accommodation occupied is causing significant discomfort to the applicant's medical condition. 25 points

In most circumstances medical priority points are normally only awarded for medical conditions that restrict mobility and you are living in a property that is above the ground floor.

The applicant will complete a Self-Certification Form, which will be assessed according to the above categories. The Association will use a Medical Advisor to assist in determining points.

Only in exceptional circumstances will an applicant be considered for housing other than on the ground floor.

5.7 Homelessness

Any applicants presenting themselves as homeless will be referred to West Dunbartonshire Council Homeless Department who will determine their status under the terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. WDC can refer homeless applicants to the Association under our Nominations Agreement and if accepted the Association will award: -

100 points

The Association has a duty to comply with the Council's request unless it has specific reasons for refusing.

5.8 Domestic Abuse

The Association recognises that any person has the right to live their life free from violence and abuse or the threat of violence and abuse from within their home.

The Association will offer confidential advice and assistance to all persons who apply for housing having been subjected to/threatened with domestic violence or abuse. All applicants of this nature will be referred to West Dunbartonshire Council – Homeless Persons Section and if accepted will be given the same priority as a homeless applicant.

5.9 Insecure Accommodation

a) Points may be awarded where an applicant has their own accommodation but is in danger of losing it within 28 days through no

fault of their own. This category will include tenants of DPHA who are experiencing a marital breakdown. Proof of separation will be required and the tenant must have been resident for at least 1 year.

80 points

b) Points may also be awarded where it is found that an applicant is not eligible to succeed to the tenancy of a former DPHA tenant and occupancy rights have been established.

80 points

c) Applicants who have previously had their own accommodation and were forced to leave through no fault of their own (for example relationship breakdown). This category applies to applicants who are not currently DPHA tenants.

10 points

d) Any applicant staying in a hostel, bed and breakfast or hotel will be classed as having no bedrooms and sharing bathroom and kitchen facilities in addition to any other points awarded.

5.10 Separated Households

A couple or family whose circumstances are preventing them from living together will be awarded.

5 points

5.11 Travel to Work

Points can be awarded where an applicant resides at a distance of over 20 miles and has difficulty in travelling to a full time job located within the Dalmuir area and has other housing need factors.

5 points

5.12 Unsuitable Accommodation

Where an applicant lives above the second floor and there is no lift, and has a child/children aged 3 or below.

5 Points

5.13 Physical Condition of Property

Points can be awarded where an applicant's residence is suffering from rising or penetrating dampness or defect that is injurious to health

5 points

The award of points will be confirmed only after a house visit and where appropriate a submission of a medical certificate.

5.14 Social Factors

The Association's Departmental Sub-Committee will consider request for social priority points in exceptional circumstances, which are not catered for within the points system. Points award will be determined by the committee based on a full report indicating the severity of the case.

5.15 Tie Break

We do not take into account the length of time an applicant has stayed in the area, the household income nor do we require applicants to be resident in the area. When we need to decide between applicants with equal points, we will take into account the following as a tiebreak.

Where two or more applicants at the top of the list have equal points then the offer will be made to the applicant who has the greater need to live in the Dalmuir area. The following will be taken into account: -

- a) The applicant has lived in the Dalmuir area for at least 1 year over the last 10 years.
- b) The applicant has family living in the Dalmuir area
- c) The applicant is working in the Dalmuir area
- d) There is a medical or social reason for living in Dalmuir

Where the applicants can satisfy any one of the above criteria then the offer of accommodation will go to the applicant who has experienced the longest time in need.

6 Restrictions to Access /Removal or suspension from list

The following categories of applicant will not normally qualify for the allocation of a house or may be removed or suspended from the list. All such decisions will be made with due respect to the terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 where the Association will ensure that it takes into account:-

The nature of the applicant's issues, the reasonableness of the Association's action, the effect of our action or inaction on the applicant and the community.

All such cases will be decided by the Housing Services Manager and the applicant will have the right of appeal as described within the Association's Complaints Procedure.

Cases where the Association may remove or suspend applications are:-

- Where the applicant fails to qualify for the minimum number of points required as defined in section 7 of this document.
- The applicants' needs cannot be met within the Associations present or proposed stock profile.

- Where it appears that an applicant has previously had suitable accommodation and has either given it up voluntarily or lost it as a result of their own actions without good reason. The applicant may apply again to the Association for a period of one year from the date of termination of the previous property.
- Where the applicant has an unsatisfactory tenancy or former tenancy or has been responsible for causing damage to property or distress or nuisance to neighbours. The Association must be satisfied that all issues have been resolved to the satisfaction of the applicant's current/former landlord.
- The applicant has rent arrears unless they have kept to an agreed arrangement to repay the debt for a period of 3 months. Any debt owed to the Association by a former tenant must be paid or a similar arrangement to repay has been made before being accepted onto the waiting list.
- Applications from former tenants who have absconded from the property.
- Tenants whom the Association are forced to evict.
- Ex-Offenders

The Association will accept applications from ex-offenders but reserves the right to investigate their background to establish potential for sustaining the tenancy within the community particularly in respect of sex offenders and those persons who had committed crimes within the action area.

- Applicants who have failed to respond to a periodic review of the waiting list.
- Applicants who have used threatening behaviour or abused staff within the office or in the course of the staff members duties.

7 The Quota System

In order to meet its objectives the Association operates a quota system. Annually the Association will endeavour to ensure that allocations will be made in the following proportions: -

DPHA Transfer List	15%
DPHA Waiting List	42.5%
WDC Nominations	42.5%

The Nominations from West Dunbartonshire Council will include nominations from their Homeless Department.

In order that couples applying for housing have the same prospect of being housed as single persons 30% of allocations on the 2apt waiting list will be allocated to couples. This will be reviewed regularly and an analysis of lets to applications will be made at the year-end to determine the effectiveness of the quota system

8 The Cut Off Point

The Association recognises that it will not be possible to re-house all prospective applicants given the limited housing stock. The Association will, therefore, operate a “cut off point”, decided by the Management Committee, below which an applicant has no realistic prospect of being housed within a reasonable time. Such applicants will not be placed on the list but informed of this and advised to reapply should their circumstances relating to their application change.

For applicants who are placed on the list but remain towards the bottom of the list they are not likely to be housed within the short term. It is likely that, unless a larger number of properties become available, or applicants at the top end of the list refuse properties in greater numbers, they may remain on the list for an extended period. The purpose of retaining them on the list is therefore,

- To continue to allow access to the list
- To appraise the overall demand for housing using the list as a planning tool for the service
- To have a sufficient number of applicants available should supply increase.

8.1 Numbers on each List

Currently the cut off point restrictions are as follows:

2apt Waiting List (single persons)	70 applicants
2apt Waiting List (couples)	30 applicants
3apt Waiting List	100 applicants
4apt Waiting List	25 applicants
5apt Waiting List	25 applicants

8.2 Expected waiting times

While every effort will be made to advise applicants of the length of time they will have to wait to be made an offer, the turnover of properties and the demand from other applicants makes it impossible to be accurate. Information on the turnover of properties will be presented to the Association’s Management Committee together with a letting plan that anticipates the number of available properties during the coming year. A summary and extract will provide the basis for information to be published for applicants to consider.

9. Additional Rules

9.1 Owner Occupiers

Owner occupiers may apply for Housing and should their housing need result in their application reaching the top of the list an offer will be made on the condition that they sign a agreement to sell their existing property along with written confirmation from the applicant's solicitor that the house is on the market under reasonable conditions. The tenancy will be revoked if the Owner withdraws the property from the market, sub-lets or alters the terms of sale unreasonably. The Association's Management Committee shall determine "reasonable" in this context.

9.2 Marital Breakdown within DPHA

Under the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) Act 1981, the Sheriff Court has the power and the discretion to award occupancy rights or transfer tenancies from one spouse to another.

In the case of marital breakdown the following general rules will apply:

- Regardless of whether a joint or single tenancy agreement has been signed the Association will support the application of the spouse who has the custody of the children to retain the tenancy.
- The Association will accept an application from the remaining spouse requiring a separate tenancy and this will be assessed only on the basis of points entitlement (see section 4.8).

9.3 Custody and Access

Under the terms of the Childrens Act 1995 the Association will not discriminate against a family that have not determined custody through the courts and have an informal custody arrangement.

9.4 Mutual Exchanges

An Association Tenant may apply for an exchange with another DPHA, Council, Communities Scotland or other approved Landlord. The Association cannot refuse an application unreasonably (these reasons are contained within the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.) The Association will not refuse the exchange unless:-

- the exchange will result in over-crowding or under-occupation by more than one room
- either tenant is in arrears as described above
- either tenant is given an adverse tenancy report from their Landlord (that report being compiled after a home visit from each landlord)

Both parties must remain in the property for at least 1 year.

9.5 Sheltered Housing

Sheltered Housing is allocated only to applicants over the age of 60 years who are able to live independently but could benefit from the additional support of an alarm or warden services in emergencies. There is no upper age limit but assessment by the Council and Social Work departments may exclude older persons who may require greater support than Sheltered Housing could provide. Applicants must apply direct to West Dunbartonshire Council as the Association allows the Council to nominate applicants for all of its Sheltered Housing properties. This allows wider access to the properties. The tenant must accept Housing Support and pay for the Sheltered Housing Service as a condition of tenancy. The Association has the right however to allocate from its own transfer or waiting list where:-

1. Several offers have been refused.
2. Priority housing is required for an Association tenant.

9.6 Succession to Tenancy

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 details the rights of an individual to succeed to a tenancy. Where an applicant is not eligible under the Act to succeed to the tenancy of a former DPHA tenant the applicant will be treated as having insecure accommodation with points being awarded under section 4.8 of the allocation policy. This will only apply where occupancy rights have been established.

9.7 Single Persons (16 and 17 year olds)

The Association accepts the vulnerability of this particular group of applicants and the potential difficulties that can arise with young persons obtaining a first home. The Association will assess each case individually and where appropriate, it will refer such applications to the West Dunbartonshire Council Housing Through Care and Youth Homelessness Team and Social Work Department for assistance and assessment. The Association will seek to guarantee an offer of housing to such cases based on written guarantees of support or a written report detailing their assessment of the referral's ability to sustain a tenancy.

The Association will however allow free access to the list for all young single persons.

9.8 Referrals

The Association has an agreement with WDC Social Work Department about the procedure for accepting referrals. Each case shall have:

- Appropriate documentation and support guarantees from a Senior Social Worker.
- Attended a case conference with DPHA and the social worker in attendance.
- A valid reason for moving to the area,(e.g. family support)

The Departmental Committee will consider the request and make a decision on an individual basis.

9.9 Reciprocal Exchanges/Management Transfers

The Departmental Committee will consider applications from other housing providers who may require a tenant to transfer to Dalmuir for specific social reasons. The transfer will be dependent on a similar request from DPHA being guaranteed in appropriate circumstances in the future.

In addition the Association has entered into a local agreement with other Housing Associations within West Dunbartonshire to consider management transfers in appropriate circumstances.

9.10 HOMES

The Association is a member of HOMES (Housing Organisation Mobility and Exchange Scheme), an Organisation which assists mobility throughout the U.K. for tenants and housing applicants. Persons wishing to move to another area for medical, social or employment reasons may be considered for this scheme.

9.11 Like for Like Moves

Association tenants who apply to move to another property of the same size will only be considered where there is a medical or social reason, a non-resolvable dispute with neighbours or a threat of violence from outwith the property. DPHA will only consider these requests supported by evidence from police.

9.12 Furnished Accommodation

The Association will consider providing furnished accommodation to certain groups of applicants (such as young single persons on low incomes or homeless families) with the package of furniture tailored to meet the needs of individuals. The cost of the furniture will be met through a service charge added to the rent.

9.13 New Build Developments

The Departmental Committee will decide an appropriate level of transfers to new build property. Consideration will be given primarily to existing tenants in housing need.

9.14 Number of Offers

Applicants may receive a maximum of two offers of housing and will be suspended from the list for one year if both are refused unless the Housing Services Manager accepts that there was reasonable ground for refusal.

9.15 Tenancy Agreements

The Association shall adopt the SFHA Model Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement as a standard agreement for all new tenants. The Model Short Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement will be used at the discretion of the Departmental Sub-Committee and only in limited specific circumstances such as: -

- Short term tenancies
- Certain Social Work referrals
- Furnished accommodation

The Model Management Agreement will be used where the Association enters into a partnership with another agency for supporting special needs residents.

9.16 Variation and review of the Allocations Policy

The Association's Management Committee reserves the right to vary or review the Allocation Policy at any time subject to consultation on major variations. The Policy will be regularly assessed for compliance with standards good practice and legislative changes.

9.17 Consultation

We will consult residents about any significant review of this policy.

9.18 Appeals and Complaints

Any applicant who has a complaint about how the application has been assessed or has comments about the operation of the Policy should write in the first instance to the Housing Services Manager.

9.19 Framework for use of discretion

The Housing Services Manager will be allowed to exercise discretion in the allocation of properties where there is evidence that a particular property, close or group of houses are experiencing characteristics such as difficulty in letting,

over concentration of vulnerable client groups, lifestyle clashes or difficulties in conflict with the Balanced Communities definition.

The issues must be reported to the Committee and approval of the use of discretion obtained. Thereafter the Housing Services Manager will be allowed to bypass applicants until selecting a case that is the best 'fit' for the property in terms of the declared aim.

This is in addition to the normal discretionary process.

9.20 Allocation of housing to Staff members or their relatives

Section 15 of the Housing Association Act 1985 requires a benefit given to a member of staff or their relatives to be declared and that benefit approved by the Association's Management Committee. A tenancy is included in this rule and the selection information and details of the proposed let must be presented to the Management Committee for approval prior to the tenant signing the Tenancy Agreement.

9.21 False Information

Where an applicant has secured a property by means of falsely providing information then the Association will take steps to take back the property from the applicant. Initially the applicant will be required voluntarily to remove himself or herself from the property but failing to do so will result in the Association commencing court action. The applicant will have access to appeal to the Management Committee who can decide whether to pursue this course of action.

9.22 Common Housing Register

The Association is working towards a Common Housing Register where applicants can apply to the association and upon request can also be placed on the waiting list for the Council and other Associations' available properties.

9.23 Availability of this and associated documents

It is the intention of the Association to provide copies of this policy in Braille, audio tape or other languages in order that minority groups and others with sensory impairments can have an equal opportunity to have access to the service.

9.24 Review of the List

The Association will carry out an annual review of the list to ensure that applicants' details are up to date. A letter will be sent to the address requesting that the applicant replies to confirm that they wish to remain on the list.

9.25 Compliance with legislation and Good Practice

The Association will comply with all legislation etc and will review the Policy annually or as necessary.

10 Risk Management

The Association will attempt to minimise risk by identifying potential difficulties in this Policy and adopting procedures to address them. The main areas of risk are: -

RISK	PROCEDURE
Fraudulent representation of housing need	Home visits to applicants Written proof of residence
Allocations to Anti Social Tenants	Housing reports from previous landlord
Low demand housing	Properly formulated Void Management and Maintenance Procedures Balanced Community Policies Good Management Practices
Failure to meet Demand	Liaison with Council Bid for Development Funding Nominations Arrangements