

# **Allocations Policy**

**April 2005**

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## **Part 1 - General**

### **1 Introduction**

Loretto Housing Association is a registered charitable non-profit making Housing Association providing homes for rent for those who are in housing need.

Set up in 1977, the Association provides both mainstream and supported housing in West and Central Scotland.

The Association is committed to a policy of equal opportunities to ensure that all groups and individuals have equal access to our housing and that they are treated equally when they become tenants.

The Allocation Policy should be read in conjunction with the Allocation Procedure.

### **2 Aims of the Allocations Policy**

Loretto Housing Associations key aim is to provide affordable, secure and suitable housing to households in housing need.

In accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, the Association will give reasonable preference in the allocation of its houses to those with high levels of housing need, including those who;

- a. Are occupying houses which do not meet tolerable standard
- b. Are homeless or are threatened with homelessness
- c. Are living in overcrowded conditions
- d. Have a need for support
- e. Are living in unsatisfactory housing conditions

### **3 Objectives of Allocations Policy**

- a. To ensure open access to the allocations process for all households without discrimination on the following grounds: sex or marital status; race; disability; age; sexual orientation; language; social origin; or other personal/religious/political beliefs.

- b. To work towards a set of criteria that identifies those in most housing need.
- c. To ensure that applications are dealt with fairly and in a prompt and efficient manner.
- d. To ensure that all applicants are made aware of how the allocations process works, what service standards they can expect and their own role in the process.
- e. To ensure that applicants are in the position to make informed choices by providing good information and advice and reducing complexity of the process where possible.
- f. To develop partnership working with other Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords. To assist Local Authorities in relieving homelessness where possible.
- g. To ensure that allocations are made sensitively to ensure that balanced, stable communities are created and maintained.
- h. To provide high quality accommodation.
- i. To provide existing tenants with the opportunity to transfer to other accommodation if their housing need has changed.

#### **4. Complaints Policy**

Anyone who feels that his or her application form has not been dealt with in a fair and consistent manner and in accordance with this Policy may register a complaint.

The Complaints Procedure leaflet details how to begin this process.

#### **5. Public Services Ombudsman**

If having followed the Complaints Procedure, applicants to Loretto Housing Association are still dissatisfied, they can complain to the Public Services Ombudsman;

The address is:      The Public Services Ombudsman  
                                 4 Melville Street  
                                 Edinburgh  
                                 EH3 7NS

## **6. The Legal Framework & Good Practice**

### Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

The Allocation's Policy adheres to this Act which contains guidance on admission to housing lists, how properties are allocated, transfers to other landlords, and exchanges.

The Policy is made accessible to the public in full format and in a summary version.

### Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003

The Allocations Policy takes into account that this Act will lead to increased numbers of homeless households and will make provision, where possible and within the restrictions of stock to assist Local Authorities in re-housing homeless households.

### Discrimination & Equal Opportunities

The Association will ensure that applicants are not discriminated against on the grounds of race, gender, marital status, disability, age, sexual orientation, language, social origin or other personal/social beliefs. Loretto has therefore taken into consideration when reviewing it's Allocation Policy, the following: -

- Race Relations Act 1976
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981

### Data Protection Act 1998

The Association will ensure that information collated during the allocations process will be dealt with correctly and in accordance with the above Act.

### Communities Scotland Performance Standards

The Association will ensure that the Allocation Policy and Procedures comply with the following Communities Scotland Performance Standards:

- Performance Standard: AS1.1 Access to Housing

- Performance Standard: AS4.3 Access
- Performance Standard: AS4.5 Assessment Process
- Performance Standard: Gs3.2 Information & Advice
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## **7. Reviewing, Reporting & Monitoring the Allocation's Policy**

### Review

The Association will review the Allocations Policy every 3/5 years or as changes in legislation require

### Reporting

The Association will monitor the effectiveness of the Allocations Policy, comply with the monitoring requirements of Communities Scotland and report the results to the Housing Services Sub Committee. In Addition an Annual Allocations Report will be made.

### Monitoring of the Housing List

The Association will monitor the Housing List and ask applicants to reconfirm the details of their application form annually. All applicants will be provided with a tear off slip and freepost envelope for ease of return.

Categories also monitored for purposes of the Housing List include: -

- race & ethnicity
- disability
- homelessness
- gender
- household composition
- origin of application

## **8. Tenant Involvement & Consultation**

The Association will endeavour to consult with existing tenants over the Allocations Policy. Various methods will be employed to gain tenants views on: - their experience of the Allocations Process – applying, moving into their new home etc.

## **Part 2 – Access to Housing**

All applicants to the Housing Association aged over 16 are entitled to be admitted to the housing list. No applicant, regardless of any local connection, residence outside the UK, or nationality, will be discouraged from making an application.

All applicants will have their circumstances assessed and no applicant will be screened out at the beginning of the application process.

Applicants can use the following methods to access Loretto Housing Association:

### **1. The Associations Housing List**

Applications can be made at any time by obtaining an application pack from the Association's offices. Applications will be assessed in accordance with the allocations points system.

Once assessed, applications will be entered onto the Housing list for the area specified by the applicant.

### **2. Nominations Agreement**

The Association works closely with Local Authorities to assist them in relieving homelessness, poor housing conditions and those in housing need who they are unable to assist. Loretto has entered into Nomination Agreements with the Local Authorities within whose areas it operates.

The usual percentage of lets to be given to applicants from the Local Authority Housing List is 50% (excluding transfers, referrals, exchanges).

Applicants applying directly to the Association will be made aware of the nominations process where possible.

### **3. Common Housing Registers**

Loretto Housing Association is involved in the development of a Common Housing Register with most of the Local Authorities where we have housing.

### **4. Section 5 Referrals**

In accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Loretto will comply with a referral of a statutorily homeless household if there is a suitable vacancy available.

## **5. Mutual Exchange**

Loretto's tenants can apply to the Association to exchange their property with a tenant of another Housing Association, Local Authority, or other landlord.

Requests for a mutual exchange must be made in writing to the Association. A request will not normally be refused, however where a move would result in overcrowding or under occupying this will not be permitted.

## **6. Internal Transfer**

Existing tenants who require to move house and wish to stay with Loretto can apply for a transfer. Priority will be given to tenants in circumstances where they are: -

- Serious health problems where a change of accommodation, location or storey height would help
- Families where increased numbers have caused overcrowding
- Applicants who wish to move because of racial harassment, domestic violence or other harassment

Transfer applicants who have outstanding arrears of more than 1 month, may be suspended from the transfer list until the account has been cleared or an arrangement for re-payment has been in place for at least 3 months.

## **7. HOMES**

The Association participates in the HOMES scheme. This allows access through nomination for people who require to move from locations out-with the area in which they live for employment or social reasons and puts people in touch with others across the country who may wish to exchange their homes.

## **8. Confidentiality**

All information provided to the Association by applicants is treated in the strictest confidence under the Data Protection Act 1998 and will not be passed onto or discussed with any other person or organisation without the applicant's permission.

**9. Equal Opportunities**

The Association will consider all applications on the basis of housing need irrespective of sex, religion, race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability or marital status.

Information will be provided to all applicants in plain language and will be available in different languages and formats that suit the communities the Association works within.

**10. False, misleading or withholding information**

An application can be refused or cancelled if it is found to be based on false or misleading information. In signing a tenancy agreement with the Association, applicants are required to declare that they did not provide any false or misleading information in order to obtain the tenancy. If it is found that this has happened, the Association will raise legal proceedings to re-gain possession of the property.

## **Part 3 - The Assessment Process**

### **1. Application Form**

All applicants must complete a standard application form, if assistance is needed with completion of the form, a member of Housing Management staff will help. The form includes an Area Choice Sheet, Ethnic Minority Monitoring Form (which is voluntary) and information about the Allocations System and The Association.

### **2. The Points System**

The Association will take account of a wide range of factors to determine the degree of housing need experienced by an applicant. Points are awarded on the information given by the applicant.

Two Housing Officers will point all application forms, noting any request for further information required. Applicants will be notified in writing of the points they have been awarded.

Any change of circumstance should be notified to the Association in writing. If an applicant has changed their address a new Application Form will have to be completed in order to assess the new circumstances.

Points will be awarded through the points system.

### **3. Allocating a tenancy**

When a vacancy arises the 3 or more applicants with the highest points will be visited at the address given on their form to establish if their circumstances are still the same. Applicants will be required to provide proof of their residence and former tenancies will be checked by seeking a tenancy reference from former landlords.

When an applicant accepts an offer of accommodation they will sign a tenancy agreement and be provided with a tenancy pack.

### **4. Suspended Applications**

There are certain circumstances where an application may be suspended (not removed) from the Associations Housing List.

#### Anti – Social Behaviour

If it is brought to Loretto's attention through a tenancy reference that an applicant or their partner has conducted a serious breach of tenancy, or

has convictions or pending convictions for offences in connection with the use or supply of drugs or has otherwise been convicted of using previous accommodation for any immoral or illegal purpose.

### Rent Arrears

If it is brought to Loretto's attention that an Applicant has rent arrears in excess of 1 month and has no arrangement for re-paying the arrears.

### Abandonment

If an applicant has absconded from previous accommodation.

### False or misleading information

If an applicant has provided false or misleading information to obtain a tenancy.

The applicant will be informed of any suspension from the Housing list and be given clear reasons why this has happened. They will also be informed of the appeals procedure they can use.

## **5. Removals and cancellations of applications**

Applications can only be removed from the waiting list in very specific circumstances, including:

- (a) the applicant has requested removal (usually in writing)
- (b) the death of the applicant
- (c) The failure of the applicant to respond to a periodic review

## **6. Eligibility**

All applications from those 16 and over will be accepted onto the Housing List. There are no screening processes in place. Every application will be assessed and pointed then placed on the Housing list. However, in accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, reasonable preference will be given to applicants that:

- Are living in overcrowded conditions
- Are living in houses that do not meet the tolerable standard
- Are living in accommodation which is no longer suitable due to health reasons
- Require to move to give/receive support or to take up employment
- Are living in insecure or temporary accommodation
- Are victims of domestic violence, racial or other harassment
- Do not have a home of their own

## **Part 4 – The Allocation Process**

### **1. Selection Process**

When a property becomes available, the Housing Officer will look to allocate it by using the Housing list or seeking nominations. A transfer will also be considered if a request has been placed.

#### Housing List

If the allocation is to be made from the Housing list, the Housing Officer will look to visit the 3 or more applicants who have the most points in order to confirm their circumstances.

The Allocation of accommodation will mainly be made to the applicant with the highest points, taking into consideration the following factors:

- Groups that reasonable preference should be given to

Also, creating and maintaining Sustainable Communities by:

- Matching people with appropriate properties
- Housing people in appropriate locations
- Avoiding potential clashes of lifestyle
- Avoiding over concentrations of one particular household type or housing need in one area.

#### Nominations

If a previous vacancy in an area has been filled by a direct applicant, the Housing Officer will look to fill the vacancy by seeking nominations from the Local Authority. The Association would contact those applicants nominated to get them to complete an application form and follow the visit procedure.

#### Home Visits

Two members of staff (usually the Housing Officer and Housing Assistant) will visit at least three applicants. This will usually be the three applicants with the highest points. However, if the vacancy is adapted or on ground floor, the Housing Officer will look at the housing list for any applicants specifically requiring this type of accommodation.

The purpose of the home visit is to provide the applicant with information on Loretto, check the applicants details and get written evidence of the applicants residency.

## 2. Offer of Accommodation

Accommodation will be offered to applicants based on the need they have for re-housing and the size of household they have. Loretto will not allocate accommodation to an applicant that would lead to overcrowding or underoccupying.

The standard occupation guidelines are as follows:

<b>Property Size</b>	<b>Permitted numbers in the household</b>
1 bedroom	Single Person Or Couple
2 Bedrooms (1 double & 1 single)	Couple & 1 child; 1 Parent & 1 child; 1 Parent & 2 Children; 2 single adults (ie.Brother & sister);
2 Bedrooms (2 double rooms)	Couple or 1 Parent & 2 children (where the children are the same sex or diff sex under 10 years)
3 Bedrooms (1 double & 2 single rooms)	Couple or 1 parent & 2 children of a different sex over 10 years
3 Bedrooms (2 double & 1 single room)	Couple or 1 parent & 3 children (where 2 children under 10 years (same or diff sex) are sharing or 2 children of diff sex over 10 years.
Larger Accommodation	Families with the number of people for the house design.

In certain circumstances, the Association may offer accommodation outwith the above specifications. For example, if a person requires a carer and has sufficient supporting evidence.

## 3. Offers and Refusals

The recommendation to allocate a property will be made by the Housing Officer in accordance with the above information and comply with current legislation. The recommendation will be checked and countersigned by the Senior Housing Officer on the Allocation Record Sheet.

If a number of applications have the same amount of points following the home visit, the Senior Housing Officer and Housing Officer will look at who could be given reasonable priority as described above.

The reason for re-housing an applicant is recorded on the Allocation Record Sheet.

#### **4. Proof of Circumstances**

The Association awards points on the circumstances provided on the application form. The applicant must therefore provide proof of their living circumstances as described in their application. This should be in the form of an official letter/bill/benefit book.

If an applicant is unable to provide this, an offer of accommodation will not be made and the application will be suspended until adequate evidence is produced by the applicant.

#### **5. Alleviating Homelessness**

Loretto work towards alleviating homelessness in the following ways:

##### Mortgage to Rent Scheme

Loretto will work together with Communities Scotland to try and alleviate owner occupiers in extreme financial difficulty becoming homeless. Under this scheme, Loretto can purchase an owners home and allow them to become a tenant and receive a landlords service.

##### Supported Accommodation

Loretto continue to build accommodation for tenants who can live independently in their home, but who require support with elements of maintaining their tenancy.