



ALLOCATIONS POLICY

It is Linstone Housing Association's intention to ensure that the housing requirements of its customers are met by the provision of adequate good quality and affordable accommodation over a range of property types.

We will allocate vacant properties on the basis of greatest housing needs and develop a strategy to meet these requirements over an acceptable period of time.

There will be equal and open access to our housing for all sections of the community and no person will be treated less favourably than another person due to their ethnic origin, colour, sex, sexual preference, disability or marital status.

This policy will be reviewed every three years (as a minimum) or as required.

LINSTONE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

ALLOCATION POLICY

For ease of reference, this policy is divided into four parts. The purpose and contents of each part are explained below.

PART A: MAKING YOUR APPLICATION

This part identifies the steps required to make an application for housing to Linstone Housing Association. It provides guidance on: -

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PART A - MAKING YOUR APPLICATION

Section 1

a) Where to Apply:

An application for housing can be made to Linstone Housing Association at its main office, 32 Burnbrae Avenue, Linwood (situated in Linwood Regional Shopping Centre). or any of its estate based contact points currently available in Johnstone Castle (31 1/L Maple Drive), Corseford (33 Teviot Terrace) and Sandyflats (28 Longmeadow). Staff are available to help you complete the Application Forms if required. They can discuss your housing requirements, prospects and other information which you need to record on the form. Alternatively forms can be posted out for self-completion or home visits arranged for applicants unable to attend the office. If advice or assistance is required the applicant is encouraged to attend Linstone's main office where IT resources can help to provide accurate information about prospects.

From March 2003, Linstone and the other local housing providers in Renfrewshire are operating a common application form. The other organisations involved are Renfrewshire Council, Bridgewater Housing Association, Ferguslie Park Housing Association, Paisley South Housing Association and Williamsburgh Housing Association. This means that the applicant can apply for housing from any of the 6 landlords using only one form which can be submitted at any of the Landlords various offices.

For certain void properties which become available on a more regular basis and for which there is limited demand the process followed in making an application and how these are subsequently dealt with is different. In these cases special incentives can be awarded including rent free periods, decorations allowances etc and often the Association will take steps to specifically market/advertise these properties.

Decoration Allowance

In certain cases, where decoration is of a poor standard, new tenants may be able to obtain financial assistance towards the costs of re-decoration. This assistance is given at the discretion of the Housing Services Manager.

b) The Waiting Lists:

- (I) Linstone Housing Association will allocate up to 50% of its void properties through nominations from Renfrewshire Council. Whilst Linstone will generally accept the housing need points awarded by the Council there are a number which must be disregarded. These include any allocation of 'time' points, 'local connection' and certain 'relative in need' awards.

Following their removal, the applicant who now has the highest number of points will be selected.

The nominee must meet the Association's occupancy standards (see section 5 of this document) and any other aspects of the policy which applies.

If the Council is unable to provide a suitable nomination within the agreed timescale, the let will count as a failed nomination and revert to Linstone for direct allocation.

In circumstances where properties are designated "Higher Availability" and the District Council has failed to supply appropriate nominations, Linstone will initiate 100% selections from our own lists.

Such alteration to the mainstream policy will be confirmed to the Management Committee as part of the system of regular management reporting.

In the event of three nominees refusing the offer of a particular property, Linstone Housing Association reserves the right to relet the property directly.

The 50% quota will also be used to satisfy requests received from Renfrewshire Council for lets under Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. How this operates is clearly defined in the document "Protocol between Renfrewshire Council and Linstone Housing Association for Section 5 Duty (Housing (Scotland) Act 2001) to House Homeless Households.

- (II) Linstone will hold a waiting list to allocate a further 25% of its empty houses. Applicants will be placed on the list in order of priority, which will be determined by the number of points that they achieve.
- (III) Transfer applicants will also be assessed in accordance with the policy. 20% of our vacant properties will be offered to transfer applicants. This should help to address any mismatch within the housing stock.
- (IV) The remaining 5% of voids will be allocated through nomination via HOMES mobility scheme and referrals from other agencies such as Women's Aid, Positive Steps, Renfrew Council on Alcohol, Quarriers Homes Fountainview Project, Throughcare, and Renfrewshire Council Social Work Department (via community care assessment and confirming adequate support).

The referrals quota can also be used to assist households who are suffering extreme harassment on the grounds of race, colour, religion, sexual orientation or gender. These special cases will be referred to Linstone's Management Committee on an 'ad hoc' basis as required. This quota will also allow the Association to deal with cases which are not adequately addressed by this policy and which may require special consideration.

- (V) The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires the Local Authority, if requested to do so by the Scottish Executive, to prepare and submit proposals for establishing and maintaining a list of applicants to be kept jointly, or on behalf of housing providers within the area. This will be called the Common Housing Register.

Scottish Ministers will consider these proposals at the appropriate time and consultation will take place. Linstone is required to comply with any reasonable request made by the Local Authority in the establishment and maintenance of this list. This policy document will be reviewed once Renfrewshire Council's position in relation to the above is clearer.

Any applicant via i) to iv) above who unreasonably refuses two offers of housing will be offered a prospects interview to ensure that they are queuing correctly. If there is then a third refusal the applicant may be suspended for a period of one year although discretion may be applied by the Housing Services Manager should the applicant have any exceptional circumstances e.g. serious illness/personal trauma at the time of offer. Equally should there be a significant change to the applicants circumstances during the period of suspension they can apply to have it lifted.

A request for reconsideration of any decision in this respect can be submitted to the Housing Services Manager. If still unhappy, there is a right of appeal to Linstone Operations Director, Chief Executive and then to the Management Committee. Finally an approach can be made to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

Section 2 - Who Can Apply:

To be eligible to apply for housing with Linstone you must be 16 years of age or over. This includes Committee Members, Staff Members and their relatives. The Committee or Staff member must ensure, however, that any interest is noted in the Register of Interest. The Chief Executive will approve any such allocations and report will be submitted to Committee. This is in line with the requirements of Schedule 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

Married Couples/Partners

Where any household applying for housing contains a married couple or partnership, Linstone positively encourages submission of a joint application.

Engaged Couples/Those Wishing to Co-Habitate

Joint applications will also be accepted for couples meeting the above criteria and may be assessed using either of the houses occupied.

Marital or Relationship Breakdown

If you are applying for housing because of the breakdown of your marriage or relationship, you will be asked to provide evidence to this effect.

Previous Joint Applications

In the event that joint applicants no longer wish to be housed together each new application will be given a date equivalent to that of the original application.

Section 3 - Conduct of Tenancies/Mortgages

Tenancy Reports

If either you or a joint applicant: -

- Have held previous tenancies with Linstone, a local authority or any other landlord

AND/OR

- Are current tenants of Linstone, a local authority or any other landlord

You must provide details on the Application Form. Linstone will obtain reports on the conduct of one or a number of past or present tenancies. These will be taken into account in conjunction with your housing need.

When the application form is originally registered the applicant will be advised of Linstone's policy in respect of tenancy conduct. This should allow the applicant maximum time to address any potential barrier to rehousing.

Unsatisfactory Tenancies – Non Linstone Tenant

An offer of housing will be withheld if either your current or a previous public sector (i.e. Council/Scottish Homes/Housing Association) or private tenancy has been conducted in an unsatisfactory manner. Examples include:

- **Tenancy Debt**

Generally current and former tenants who have in excess of 1 months rent outstanding or a rechargeable repair account/Housing Benefit overpayment/court costs will not be considered until their account is cleared, unless an agreed repayment arrangement has been maintained for 3 months and is continuous.

The only exception will be where the arrear is caused by a delay in payment of Housing Benefit which is due to be paid directly into the account by the Local Authority.

Where a tenant has a regular arrangement in place for repayment of any outstanding monies and this has been adequately maintained for a period of 3 months an offer of rehousing can be made.

- **Anti Social Behaviour**

Any applicant or member of their household who is the subject of legal action in respect of his/her current tenancy on the grounds of harassment or anti-social behaviour will not be considered for rehousing until the outcome of the action is known. Once the results are available the application will be reassessed in light of these findings.

In a case where the applicant or a member of their household is the subject of an ASBO or has been evicted from a previous tenancy due to harassment/anti-social behaviour, they will be required to demonstrate in what ways their behaviour has now been modified e.g. through the involvement of specialist agencies.

Where a successful eviction has taken place any new tenancy offered will be a SSST and will be subject to certain support services.

If the current tenancy report indicates ongoing complaints of anti-social behaviour the applicant will be advised that a period of 6 months free from further incidents will be required before their rehousing request can be reconsidered.

- Current/former tenants whose house or garden has suffered damage or vandalism caused by them or a member of their household or any other form of physical anti social behaviour.
- Where there is evidence from an official body/professional source that the applicant(s) is/are unable to sustain a viable or satisfactory tenancy.

Unsatisfactory Tenancies – Current Linstone Tenant

An offer of housing will be withheld if your current Linstone Tenancy is being conducted in an unsatisfactory manner. Examples include:

- Current Tenancy Debt
Where a transfer applicant has no level of “housing need”, one of the categories detailed below, there must be a clear rent account before an offer of housing is made.

However if the applicant has housing need in one of the following categories

Overcrowding
Urgent Social Need
Medical/Community Care
Family Support
Underoccupation

then the following rules will apply

- 1) Reduce the arrear by 50% (if employed) or 25% (if unemployed) within 7 days of being selected for rehousing

or

- 2) Maintain an acceptable repayment arrangement for a period of 6 months.

- Anti Social Behaviour
Any applicant or member of their household who is the subject of legal action in respect of his/her current tenancy on the grounds of harassment or anti-social behaviour will not be considered for rehousing until the outcome of the action is known. Once the results are available the application will be reassessed in light of these findings.

In a case where the applicant or a member of their household is the subject of an ASBO or has been evicted from a previous tenancy due to harassment/anti-social behaviour, they will be required to demonstrate in what ways their behaviour has now been modified e.g.

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If the current tenancy report indicates ongoing complaints of anti-social behaviour the applicant will be advised that a period of 6 months free from further incidents will be required before their rehousing request can be reconsidered.

- Current/former tenants whose house or garden has suffered damage or vandalism caused by them or a member of their household or any other form of physical anti social behaviour.
- Where there is evidence from an official body/professional source that the applicant(s) is/are unable to sustain a viable or satisfactory tenancy.

In all of the above cases (i.e. both Linstone and Non Linstone) where an offer is being withheld a letter will be sent to the applicant confirming: -

- (i) Why offer will not be made.
- (ii) Actions required by applicant to resolve this situation e.g. set up repayment arrangement etc.
- (iii) The timescales involved in reassessment of their case i.e. 3 months for arrears, 6 months for anti social complaints.
- (iv) The right to appeal this decision.

Such restrictions can be lifted if the applicants individual or family situation can show material change or “good cause” e.g.: -

- (i) can demonstrate 6 months satisfactory behaviour within the community.
- (ii) any social, medical or other problem which may have contributed to previous behaviour e.g. drug or alcohol dependency has been under control for 6 months.

A request for reconsideration of any decision made under this section should be referred to the Housing Services Manager. If still unhappy there is a right to submit an appeal in writing to Linstone’s Operations Director and Chief Executive, and then to the Management Committee. Finally an approach can be made to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

Should this appeal process fail the applicant is entitled to request reconsideration of their case after 6 months.

Section 4 - Your Choice Of Areas

Number of Areas

There is no limit on the number of areas you can choose to live in. However, if you choose more than one area you will not be able to rank your choice. This means that you may be offered housing as it becomes available in any of your chosen areas.

Estate and Street Preferences

For each area you select, you are able to state your preference for particular estates or streets, although this could result in a long wait for housing.

Section 5 - Your Choice Of House Size

Some applicants are able to choose a maximum of two house sizes to suit their family circumstances, providing this does not lead to overcrowding or significant underoccupation i.e. applicant will queue for properties with the correct number of bedrooms for their family composition but can also choose to queue for properties with one bedroom more than they require. However, if you choose more than one house size, you will not be able to rank your choice. This means that you may be offered housing of either size as it becomes available.

Applicants who choose to queue for one bedroom size more than they require may request to be considered for this size of property only.

Linstone will use the following general guidelines when assessing the acceptable accommodation requirements for your family complement: -

- Separate bedrooms are required for persons of a different sex aged 10 years or over unless living together as husband and wife/partners.
- Separate bedrooms are required for different generations.
- Any member of the household who is temporarily absent will be included in calculating the size of accommodation required.
- A household including an expectant mother will be considered as if it included the additional child from 3 months before the expected date of birth.
- Every member of the applicant's household, irrespective of age, is counted as one person.

Subject to the above guidelines and in the interests of avoiding overcrowding, families will be allocated accommodation which has bedspaces equal to or greater than the number of people in the applicant's household.

In special circumstances, exceptions to the above may be given consideration, however, these will be at the discretion of the Housing Services Manager. This will normally be when there is acute housing need and no properties of the right size are likely to become available.

Applicants who have regular access arrangements for their children will have these included in the calculation of the appropriate house size.

We will be pleased to provide you with any further guidance in relation to this matter which you may require.

Section 6 - Your Choice Of House Types

Generally you can choose a wide range of house types and heating systems. However, certain house types and heating systems may not be available in your chosen areas. You should speak to our staff if you want more information about what is available in individual areas.

Please remember that the house types and heating systems which you select will apply across all your chosen areas.

Please also remember that the more you limit your choice of house types, the longer you are likely to wait for housing.

There are limited numbers of main door cottage properties within Linstone's areas of operation and since they are designed as family accommodation, single applicants will normally be bypassed. The Association believes this restriction allows it to make best use of its housing stock.

Where a single person household has some special circumstances e.g. medical/social need which indicates the only suitable property would be a cottage, the Housing Services Manager has discretion to allow them to queue.

Section 7 - Changing Your Choice

You may change or extend your choice of areas, house size and house types at any time.

An amendment form should be completed and any changes notified to our office will take effect within five working days.

Section 8 - Signing the Declaration

All applicants and joint applicants are required to sign a declaration when they make their application for housing. Please remember that when you sign the declaration you give Linstone the right: -

- To cancel your application if it is later discovered that you have deliberately supplied false information or deliberately withheld relevant information.
- To contact other landlords to obtain reports on the conduct of any past and present tenancies

Linstone reserves the right to raise legal proceedings for Repossession of the Property if it is found that a house has been wrongly allocated as a result of false information from the applicant.

Any applicants removed from the waiting list due to false or misleading information will not be allowed to reapply for a period of one year.

Section 9 - Entry to the Waiting List

Confirmation of Entry

Once you have completed the Housing Application Form, you should submit it to our office, where it will be immediately timed and dated.

Provided that you are eligible to apply and that you have supplied all the information requested by Linstone you should expect to receive a formal notification of your entry to Linstone's List within 10 working days. As well as confirming the details of your entry on the list, this notification will inform you of the points you have been awarded. (The system used by Linstone to award points to housing applicants is explained in PART B of this leaflet).

At this time Linstone allows all applicants to queue for their choice of areas and house types (subject to the guidelines of this policy) regardless of their points award.

Visit By Housing Staff

Before housing can be offered, all Housing List applicants may receive a visit from a member of staff. The purpose of this visit is: -

- To check there has been no damage to the house or garden due to misuse by any member of the household.
- To establish the current status of your rent or mortgage account (if applicable)
- To confirm that your present housing circumstances are as stated in the Application Form

Should some discrepancy between what is on the form and the actual situation occur the offer will not be made unless: -

- 1) There is no change to the level of housing need points awarded.
- 2) The discrepancy leads to a higher award of points.
- 3) Despite a reduction in points the applicant remains top of the list.

Section 10 - Changes in Circumstances

Duty to Notify Changes

Once your application for housing has been entered on the Housing List, it is your duty to keep Linstone informed of any changes in your address or your household circumstances.

Failure to notify changes could result in your application being cancelled by Linstone.

Purchasing Your Home

Housing List applicants who purchase a Linstone property under the Right To Buy legislation, will be deleted from the Transfer List but remain on the Waiting List.

Applicants who purchase other houses elsewhere will require to submit a fresh application.

Section 11 - Reviewing Applications

All applications entered on the Housing List will be reviewed by Linstone at least once every 12 months. At this time, applicants will be requested to confirm their up-to-date circumstances. Failure to respond to a review request could result in your application being cancelled by Linstone.

PART B - BEING AWARDED POINTS

Section 12 - The Priority and Points Scheme

Under Linstone's Policy the major determining factor in assessing all applications will be housing need, as addressed in the Priority and Points System.

Priority and points will be awarded according to your need for housing.

The basis for awarding points is explained in the next sections. At the end of this document there is also a detailed guide to the number of points that can be received for the different factors. (Appendix 1)

In the event of a tiebreak on points, we will consider the length of time you have been on the Housing List. The prospective tenant with the earliest application will be selected.

Properties will be allocated to the applicant with the highest priority and points award.

Applicants will queue for their requested areas and property types in priority type and then in points order.

There are three levels of Priority:

- Priority 1 Statutory Homeless Cases – This should be confirmed in writing by Renfrewshire Council's Housing Advice Centre.
(3000pts)
- Priority 2 Medical and Community Care Cases.
(2000pts)
- Priority 3 All other applicants including local moves and non-statutory homeless persons.
(1000pts)

Section 13 – Priority and Points for Housing Need

1) Priority Group 1 – Statutory Homelessness

When a homeless person applies to Linstone Housing Association for housing they will be advised to contact Renfrewshire Council who are the statutory body with responsibility for housing homeless persons. These applicants will also be accepted onto Linstone's waiting list.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 states that Linstone must comply with any reasonable request made by Renfrewshire Council to provide accommodation in connection with the discharge of its duty in respect of homelessness. Protocols will be drawn up to govern how this will operate.

Applicants will be awarded Priority 1 and points as follows:

- Homeless, i.e. roofless 200 points

Confirmation will be sought from Renfrewshire Council.

2) Priority Group 2 – Medical Problems

Where an applicant believes that their ill health is caused or worsened by current housing conditions, then a medical priority application can be submitted and additional points may be granted. All applications must be supported by either a General Practitioner, Hospital Consultant or other medically qualified practitioner. The Association will seek advice/guidance from an independent community medicine specialist in assessing when additional priority is appropriate.

Applicants with medical problems will be awarded points according to the following gradings.

I	<u>Medical Category A</u> – those cases in emergency/most urgent need	150 Points High Priority
II	<u>Medical Category B</u> – those cases in urgent medical need	100 points Medium Priority
III	<u>Medical Category C</u> - those cases in medical need	50 Points Low Priority

The medical points are not taken into account when the applicant requests a type of house and/or area which is not deemed suitable for his/her medical condition.

Should more than one member of the moving group have a priority and points award within this category, the higher of these will be taken into account.

If an applicant refuses two reasonable offers of housing in line with their medical award, the priority and points for this reason will be cancelled. The applicants concerned may submit fresh applications.

Community Care Panel

Applicants who meet the following criteria where both housing and support are required will be referred to Renfrewshire Council's Community Care Panel. The Panel consists of representation from the Council's Department of Housing and Property Services and Social Work Department, the Federation of Local Housing Associations in Renfrewshire (FLAIR of which Linstone is a member) and Argyll and Clyde Health Board.

Applicants will meet the criteria for referral to the Panel when the following applies:

- The applicant has a need as defined by the following legislation: NHS and Community Care (Scotland) Act 1990, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, the Children's (Scotland) Act 1997.
- The applicant is in need of housing and support.

- Single person who has never left the parental home will be awarded 40
This point award will also apply to applicants who leave the parental home but return within 1 year.

Any applicant wishing to claim an award of points under this category will be asked to provide proof of their current circumstances e.g. correspondence to c/o address, claim address for benefits, lawyers letter confirming relationship breakdown etc. Failure to provide the necessary evidence will mean points cannot be given.

b) Sub Tolerable Accommodation/Lack of Standard Amenities

Applicants may require points if their present accommodation is in an extremely poor state of repair, or if it lacks basic services or amenities. Linstone will assess whether the present housing is sub-standard and will award points accordingly. The standard points award for poor housing is 80

and will be granted in any/all of the following circumstances: -

Severe structural defect causing danger
Severe structural defects affecting habitation (e.g. severe rising/penetrating damp)
Lack of standard amenities e.g. w.c., fixed bath/shower, w.h. basin, sink, hot/cold water supply to the above
Lack of natural/artificial lighting; ventilation and/or space heating

Only one award of 80 points is given regardless of whether one, a number, or all of the above circumstances apply.

c) Overcrowding

Applicants will be awarded points if they need additional bedrooms in their present accommodation.

Bedroom requirements are based on the assumption that a separate room is required for:

- I Couples living together as partners/husband and wife
- II The parent of a single parent family
- III Each person, except for blood relatives i.e. siblings, sharing with a member of their own sex.
- IV Same sex relatives of different generations
- V Two siblings of the opposite sex who share a bedroom regardless of age and one of which is at least 10 years of age.

Bedspace requirements are based on one space per person.

Points will be awarded as follows: -

- For every bedroom lacking 15.
- For every bedspace lacking 15.

- A household including an expectant mother will be considered as if it included the additional child from 3 months before the expected date of birth.
- All bedrooms in the house occupied will be counted irrespective of current usage.
- Families separated due to current housing situation will have points calculated as if the missing person(s) was reunited with the household.
- The assessment of bedroom size i.e. whether it is single or double will be based on the definitions contained in Part VII of Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (or any subsequent replacement legislation).

d) Underoccupation

Tenants or owners whose present accommodation is too large for their needs will receive points for each bedroom which exceeds the current occupancy level.

Points will be awarded as follows: - 15 points per bedroom in excess of requirements.

e) Sharing Amenities

Applicants will receive points if they share one of the following facilities with people outwith their household: -

Living-room	5 points
Kitchen	5 points
W.C.	5 points
Bathroom	5 points

Points are awarded according to the number of people in the applicant's household who share facilities.

f) Urgent Social Need

Where applicants present living conditions constitute a particular housing need or hardship (e.g. domestic violence, racial harassment etc.) which could only be solved through re-housing, or the persons current locality causes hardship for a particular reason, points will be awarded as follows: -

Applicants who are likely to fall into this category include: -

Those whose homes have become subject to a closing order; demolition or other statutory order where date is within the proceeding 6 months 200

- Victims of racial harassment or other types of harassment (high level) 200

- Victims of racial harassment or other types of harassment (low level) 50

Harassment is defined as suffering physical or psychological injury as a result of violence/threats of violence/extreme nuisance arising from race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or different culture/lifestyle. High level points are awarded where there is threat of or has been serious physical assault.

The lower points award recognises verbal abuse and other nuisance over a prolonged period where there is little or no physical threat.

Points will not be awarded where investigations show the applicant has contributed in some way to the situation.

- Survivors of domestic abuse 200
- Family support - where relative/carer provides/requires high level intensive care and support (must be supported by a medical certificate) 150
- Family support - where relative provides/requires low level care and support 50
- Incoming workers to the Association's area of operation – who are experiencing travelling difficulties 25

Points will only be awarded where sufficient evidence can be provided by an appropriate independent body or agency to support the application e.g. Social Work Department, Police, current landlord, medical practitioner. In addition we may request supporting evidence from other sources such as neighbours, councillors, lawyers and any witnesses to alleged incidents (in cases of harassment). The applicant must be prepared to either obtain this proof or as a minimum supply details of appropriate persons to contact.

The above is not an exhaustive list. Linstone recognises that many other individual factors may create an urgent social need for rehousing.

g) Insecurity of Tenure

Applicants who are threatened with loss of their existing homes may receive a standard award of 40 points.

Applicants in this category would normally include: -

- Short term tenancy i.e. up to 6 months.
- People who have to give up tied accommodation (only awarded when notice is given that the tenancy is to be ended).
- The spouse/partner of a deceased person in tied accommodation.
- People leaving the Armed Forces (only awarded when notice is given that posting/employment is to cease).

- Owners whose homes are to be repossessed (where lender confirms intention to repossess but date still to be agreed).
- Residents from Institutions/Care in the Community cases.

Points for insecurity of tenure will only be awarded on receipt of written evidence from applicants to confirm the situation.

An additional 80 points will be added when a Notice to Quit is served, providing a date for leaving.

h) Unsuitable Accommodation

- A) Applicants who occupy upper flats in a common stair property will be regarded by Linstone as living in unsuitable accommodation if at least one of the following conditions is satisfied:
- Either the applicant or his partner has reached pensionable age
 - Another member of the applicants family has reached pensionable age
 - The applicant's household contains at least one child aged 15 years or under

Applicants who meet any of the above will receive a standard award of 25 points per

- I) Adult of pension age
- II) Child aged 15 years or under

Unsuitable accommodation points will not be taken into account if the accommodation for which they are being considered contains common stairs. These points only apply where the applicant is either tenant or owner of the common stair property. Those who are staying there as lodger or c/o receive priority for their situation via the Insecurity of Tenure category.

i) Sheltered Accommodation

Sheltered housing will normally be allocated to persons 60 years of age or over who have asked for sheltered housing and are in the greatest housing need. Applicants with special needs who are below 60 years of age may also be considered in some circumstances.

Assessment of the applicant's suitability for sheltered housing will generally be considered by the Housing Officer in accordance with Social Work guidelines.

If there is any dubiety about whether the applicant would benefit from sheltered housing the Social Work department will be asked to carry out a formal assessment.

j) Disabled Person's Housing

Disabled persons' housing will normally be allocated to applicants in the greatest housing need following discussions with appropriate agencies e.g. GPs, Social Work Dept etc.

Section 14 – Transfer Within A Property To Another House Within The Same Property

A Linstone tenant living within flatted property wishing to transfer to another house of the same size within the same property will be awarded additional priority. Providing there is no one with medical priority queuing for the property in question a transfer within the block will be dealt with first.

The applicant must specifically apply, identifying the actual vacancy, if he/she wishes to be considered under this priority.

Section 15 – Transfer to A Lesser Demand Property

A Linstone tenant who wishes to move from a house in high demand to one in considerably lower demand will be awarded additional priority.

Eligibility will be assessed by comparing;

- I) The highest placed applicant for the house type requested.
- II) The highest placed applicant for the house type currently occupied.

Where the difference is 150 points or more and there are no medical priority or “transfer within the block” cases an offer can be considered.

Section 16 – Guaranteed Rehousing

Where a Linstone tenant wishes to give up their tenancy in order to: -

- Move to residential accommodation; a group tenancy; give/receive support in a relatives home;
- Go into hospital
- Serve a prison sentence

Linstone may consider a guarantee of rehousing should there subsequently be a change in circumstances.

Applications must be submitted in writing before the tenancy is terminated.

Any offer made under this guarantee will be outwith the points scheme and will be for a property of no higher demand than the house originally vacated.

Decisions about whether to award priority under this category will rest with the Housing Services Manager in consultation with the Operations Director.

Section 17 – Two For One Rehousing

Where tenants of two or more Linstone properties wish to be rehoused together and such a move would result in two or more houses becoming available for relet the case will be referred to Housing Management Sub Committee for consideration of allocation outwith the points system.

PART C - WHEN HOUSES BECOME AVAILABLE

Section 18 - Matching Applicants

Matching Priorities

When a house becomes available it is matched to the applicant with the highest number of points. However, where two or more applicants have the same number of points priority will be given to the applicant with the earliest application.

Transfer Applicants

Occasionally a vacant property will not be offered to the applicant at the top of the waiting list.

Where it can be identified that a transfer applicant with fewer points would leave a property suitable for the person currently at the top of the waiting list then the vacancy can be offered to the transfer case. At the same time the original matched waiting list applicant will be offered the property vacated by the successful transfer applicant.

Adapted Houses

Where the house which becomes available has been specially adapted for people with disabilities, Linstone will try to ensure that the house is matched to a suitable disabled person on the Housing List. Suitable disabled applicants on the Housing List for all areas of the District will be considered, not just for those on the list for the community in which the vacant house is situated.

Section 19 - Offers of Housing

Making Offers

Linstone usually tries to issue a formal offer of housing very quickly after it knows a house will become available. In many cases, offers will be issued in advance of minor repairs being carried out to the vacant houses. Before an offer can be made a Housing Management visit, as described at Page 11, will be carried out.

In cases of newly built or converted houses, offers are issued while the work is still in progress. This gives applicants the opportunity to choose certain items for inclusion in the houses, such as the type of central heating to be installed and the type of kitchen units to be fitted.

Receiving an Offer

An offer of housing will normally be made at the time of the HM visit unless there is a requirement to carry out further checks. When an offer is made the applicant will be given 3 days from the date of offer to reply to Linstone. Failure to reply within the timescale will be treated by Linstone as a refusal of the offer. There will be a chance to view the house on offer and to discuss any problems with our staff.

Often a member of staff will accompany you when you view the house.

All new tenancies between husband and wife, applicant and partner, two or more adults, will normally be joint tenancies.

Number Of Offers

All Waiting List applicants are allowed a maximum of three offers of housing from Linstone. A system of penalties operates for applicants who refuse offers. These penalties are explained in the next Sections.

Section 20 - Refusing A First Offer

There is no penalty for refusing a first offer of housing; you will be entitled to two further offers.

Section 21 - Refusing A Second Offer

If you refuse two offers of housing within 2 years you will have 25 penalty points deducted from your points award. You will be entitled to one further offer should your application reach the top of the Housing List again. Alternatively applicants in the following categories will have the total number of points and their priority (if applicable) in that category removed.

Applicable categories : Urgent Social Need
: Special/Medical Cases
: Community Care Cases

NB. This deduction is instead of the removal of 25 penalty points. Such applicants will also be offered a prospects interview to ensure that they are queuing correctly.

Section 22 - Refusing A Third Offer

If you refuse a third offer of housing, your application will be removed from the Housing List. A ban of 1 year will be applied preventing you from re-applying during this period.

The Housing Services Manager has discretion not to apply such a ban if the applicant can demonstrate there has been exceptional circumstances e.g. serious illness/personal trauma which affected their ability to accept an offer. Equally should there be a significant change to the applicants circumstances during the period of suspension they can apply to have it lifted.

Applicants who have points removed or who receive a 1 year ban in accordance with the above will be able to submit a request to the Housing Services Manager asking that this decision be reconsidered. If still unhappy there is a right of appeal to Linstone's Operations Director, Chief Executive and then to the Management Committee. Finally an approach can be made to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

Section 23 - Accepting Offers

Re-Applying For Housing

If you accept an offer of housing from Linstone, the Council, Scottish Homes, a Housing Association or any other local authority, your application will be removed from the Housing List.

You will be able to make a new application for housing right away, but the points awarded under the old application will not be counted under the new one unless they remain relevant.

Section 24 – Difficult to Let Properties

Certain properties are designated by Linstone as being ‘higher availability i.e. they become void more often and are subject to limited demand.

The way these properties are dealt with varies from the standard process.

Linstone operates a system of ‘fast tracking’ for our higher availability stock. This generally means that applicants can choose up to 3 properties to view. Where the applicant is subsequently not interested in their selection, refusals will not be counted against the maximum of 3 offers permitted by the Allocations Policy. There will be no reduction in points.

In addition applicants using the fast track process will be offered a decoration allowance/re-decoration and a one off tidy up of the garden area.

The Housing Services Manager is authorised to publicly advertise properties which fall into this category and offer them to any suitable applicant.

Where any property, not specifically designated ‘Higher Availability’ has 3 refusals, the Housing Services Manager is authorised to select any applicant from the next 25 on the list.

Section 25 – Deliberate Worsening of Circumstances

If an applicant moves house or commits any other act in a deliberate attempt to increase their prospect of being rehoused, their entitlement to additional points will not be recognised for a period of 12 months.

Any action under this section requires to be authorised by the Housing Services Manager.

PART D - IF YOU HAVE SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Section 26 - If You Want an Exchange

Mutual Exchanges

If you are a Linstone tenant, you may be able to exchange your home by mutual agreement with another Linstone tenant, or with another tenant of a housing authority in Renfrewshire or elsewhere.

An application for a mutual exchange can be obtained from our office.

The following rules apply to Linstone's mutual exchange scheme: -

- No exchange can take place until Linstone gives its written permission. Permission may be refused if the present tenancy has been conducted in an unsatisfactory manner. E.g. rent arrears; contraventions of tenancy agreement such as anti social behaviour; damage to property etc.
- Permission to exchange will not be given to a Linstone tenant until all potentially re-chargeable repairs are carried out.
- Exchanges may also be refused if the house size is unsuitable for the family composition i.e. overcrowding or severe underoccupation would result.
- Houses specially adapted for someone with special needs may also be excluded in certain circumstances i.e. if no one in exchanging household meets the criteria for that type of property.
- Both tenants must occupy their new homes for a minimum period of 6 months after the exchange takes place. If either tenancy is given up during that time, the remaining tenant may have to return to his or her original home.
- Each tenant will accept the exchanged house and all its fittings as being in satisfactory condition.
- No payment may be made between the tenants in an exchange. Where it is later discovered that a payment has been made, Linstone may order both tenants to return to their original houses.
- Tenants who take part in an exchange, and who have previously applied for housing to Linstone, will have their applications removed from the Housing List. A new application for housing may be made right away, but the points awarded under the old application will not be counted under the new one unless they remain relevant.

Further details of how the Mutual Exchange process operates is contained in the policy document HM06 'Mutual and Reciprocal Exchanges'.

H O M E S (The National Mobility Scheme)

Linstone also takes part in H O M E S, the National Mobility Scheme. H O M E S is funded by the Government. It works with local authorities and Housing Associations to help people to move to another area for employment or social reasons. A leaflet about the scheme can be obtained from this office.

We would aim to allocate 4% of our net lets to HOMES applicants using the 5% quota system detailed in Section 1 b) (iv).

For further information please refer to policy document HMP03 'Homes Mobility Procedure'.

Section 27 - If You Have Medical Problems

If you feel that you should get extra priority for housing because of medical grounds, you need to ask your Doctor or Hospital Consultant to complete Part 8 of the Medical Application Form.

Alternatively this can be done by: -

Health Visitor
District Nurse
Occupational Therapist
Community Psychiatric Nurse

if appropriate.

The form must be returned to our office. It will then be assessed by a medical practitioner who will decide whether you should receive medical priority for housing.

Medical Priorities

A system of grading operates for medical priorities that have been decided by the Community Medicine Specialist. There are three grades: High, Medium and Low.

Please remember, however that: -

A high medical priority grade is usually only recommended for people with severe and permanent disabilities

Medical priority grades are not normally given for reasons such as dampness, problems with neighbours, harassment, pregnancy, marital difficulties, or other problems of a temporary nature.

An explanation of the housing need points that are awarded for medical priority grades is given in Section 13 of this leaflet.

Allocation of Housing

If you are awarded housing need points for a medical priority grade, Linstone will only offer you housing of the type recommended by the Community Medicine Specialist.

Review Of Circumstances

The circumstances of Housing List applicants who have been awarded medical priority grades will be reviewed by Linstone on an annual basis in line with the review of applications.

Appeal

Where a request for medical priority is refused or awarded at a lower level than anticipated the applicant has the right to submit a written appeal. This is confirmed to them in writing when notifying the outcome of their hearing. An appeal must be submitted within 28 days.

Following refusal of a medical award (including any subsequent appeal) the applicant is prohibited from submitting a further medical priority form for 6 months. The exceptions to this would be:-

- where a new medical condition has been diagnosed
- where there has been significant changes in the current medical condition which are severely affecting the suitability of current accommodation.

Section 28 - If You Require Care And Support

Linstone is committed to Care in the Community. Linstone will work closely with the Local Authority, Health Board, other housing providers and voluntary agencies to help meet the housing, care and support needs of: -

Elderly people
The physically disabled
People with learning difficulties
People with mental health problems
People with drugs and alcohol addictions
HIV and AIDS sufferers
Young homeless
Other special needs groups

Whilst many cases will be dealt with through the normal transfer or waiting list process some may be helped by the 5% quota available for referrals from other agencies.

Renfrewshire Council has a Community Care Panel which assesses cases with the other Housing Associations. Linstone contributes to this process by sitting on the panel and is happy to offer its stock for rehousing of these applicants where appropriate. Points allocated for this reason are recognised within this Policy.

Prior to allocation, Linstone will negotiate with care providers to ensure the correct level of service is agreed and in place.

Section 29 - If You Want To Lodge An Appeal

In the first instance concerns or queries about an application or allocation should be raised with the Housing Services Manager who will investigate.

If still unhappy the formal appeal process below should be used.
Formal Appeals Against Decisions

All Housing List applicants have the right of appeal against decisions which are made by Linstone in connection with their housing application. Applicants who wish to appeal against a decision that has been made by Linstone, must first of all submit the appeal in writing to the Operations Director within 14 days of the decision.

If not satisfied with the reply received from the Operations Director, a further appeal in writing can be made directly to the Chief Executive and then directly to the Chair of Linstone's Management Committee.

In the unlikely event that the applicant is still dissatisfied with the outcome of the Chair's investigation, a final appeal can be made to: -

THE SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN
23 WALKER STREET
EDINBURGH
EH3 7HX

Tel No: 0870 011 5378

Requests for Special Circumstances

A request for special consideration by Linstone of a housing matter affecting you should be submitted in writing to the Housing Services Manager, who will consider the request in consultation with the Operations Director.

PART E - GENERAL INFORMATION

30 – Scottish Secure Tenancy

The tenancy agreement offered by Linstone is a Scottish Secure Tenancy and does not have the Right to Buy (except for Linstone tenants who transferred directly from Scottish Homes who retain RTB for the house they tenanted as at 30/9/02).

31 - Succession

The Tenancy Agreement provides for the right of succession to either a spouse/partner or to a surviving, joint tenant or to a member of the tenants family who is 16 years or over and resident in the property concerned or to a carer who is resident in the property and who gave up their own home to care for the tenant or a member of the tenant's family. (See separate policy on succession, assignation and transfer of tenancy for fuller guidelines).

32 - Rent Increase

Linstone's rents are increased annually on 29th of March in accordance with the terms of our Rent Policy and following consultation with existing tenants.

33 - Equal Opportunities

Linstone Housing Association embraces the principles of equal opportunities to all sections of the community regardless of race, gender, disability, religion and other factors. The Association will commit to applying these principles with regard to access to and management of its properties, employment practice and use of contractors, consultants, agents etc. If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact us.

34 - Monitoring

Linstone Housing Association will record and monitor on a regular basis the origin of all tenants. We will also look at other issues relating to equal opportunities e.g. disability, age, gender etc.

Linstone operates an equal opportunities policy and the information contained in the attached extract from our application form (appendix 1) will be used for statistical purposes only to ensure we are complying with our policy.

Linstone will also monitor its performance in relation to this policy, in particular:

- Our quota of allocations to each list.
- Our compliance with our service pledges.
- Return rates on our applications.

THE PRIORITY AND POINTS SCHEME

APPENDIX 1

CIRCUMSTANCES	POINTS AWARDED
There are three levels of priority.	
Priority 1: Statutory Homelessness	200 points
Priority 2: Medical Problems	
A	150 points
B	100 points
C	50 points
Community Care needs priority award only	
A	150 points
B	100 points
C	50 points
Priority 3: All other applicants including local moves and non-statutory homeless persons.	
Homelessness (non-statutory)	40 - 80 points
Sub Tolerable/Lack of Standard Amenities	80 points
Overcrowding	
For each bedroom lacking	15 points
For each bedspace lacking	15 points
Underoccupation	
For each bedroom in excess	15 points
Sharing	
Points awarded per person sharing and per room/facility shared	5 points per person per facility
Urgent Social Needs	
According to degree of urgency	25 to 200 points
Insecurity of Tenure	40 points
Unsuitable Accommodation	25 points

APPENDIX 2

1st Applicant

What is your ethnic group?

A White

- Scottish Other British
 Irish
 Any other White background
(please write in):
-

B Mixed

- Mixed background (please write in):
-

C Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British

- Indian Pakistani
 Bangladeshi Chinese
 Any other Asian background (please
write in):
-

D Black, Black Scottish or Black British

- Caribbean African
 Any other Black background
(please write in):
-

E Other ethnic background

- Any other background (please write in):
-

2nd Applicant

What is your ethnic group?

A White

- Scottish Other British
 Irish
 Any other White background
(please write in):
-

B Mixed

- Mixed background (please write in):
-

C Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British

- Indian Pakistani
 Bangladeshi Chinese
 Any other Asian background (please
write in):
-

D Black, Black Scottish or Black British

- Caribbean African
 Any other Black background
(please write in):
-

E Other ethnic background

- Any other background (please write in):
-

Do you consider yourself disabled:

Yes No

Do you consider yourself disabled:

Yes No

Are you registered disabled:

Yes No

Are you registered disabled:

Yes No