



LINK GROUP

LETTINGS POLICY

APPROVED: DEC 2007

EFFECTIVE DATE: 12TH DEC 2007

REVIEW DATE: DEC 2012

POLICY: LETTINGS**1. INTRODUCTION**

This policy has been devised to support the process of letting using the homehunt™ choice-based system. The operation of the system is detailed in Appendix 1 attached.

Link Group (“Link”) has delegated the responsibility for managing the letting process to Link Housing Association (“LHA”). LHA Board has undertaken to ensure that the process is managed to a high standard and to this end receives regular reports on outcomes and will set standards and targets necessary to meet statutory, customer and Link Group requirements. The Director of Housing & Technical Services will in turn report to Link Group Board in an agreed form and frequency.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the policy are to ensure that in its letting process Link:

- provides equal opportunities of access to our housing for all potential applicants by making information about vacant properties widely available. We shall provide a range of methods by which people may register and apply for vacancies.
- gives preference to applicants with significant housing needs
- ensures that best use of properties is achieved in terms of occupancy levels and features of design or adaptations
- helps to promote sustainable communities
- records all lettings and produces lettings plans to address developing or anticipated problems of low demand, or failure to attract target client groups
- reports regularly on outcomes against the objectives and priorities of lettings plans.

3. APPROACH AND METHOD

The Group Board, in its formal approval of the policy, acknowledges that it accepts full responsibility for its implementation. Day to day responsibility for the operation and monitoring of this policy lies with the Directors and Managers of both the Group and its subsidiaries. All staff have a responsibility to ensure that the policy is applied as instructed.

The policy will be implemented through:

- Devising procedures for compliance with the policy

- Initiating staff training sessions to ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities and obligations
- Monitoring adherence to policy requirements

4. MONITORING, PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING

The following areas will be subject to monitoring on a continuing basis:

- Risk management
- Provision of training to staff
- The need for review of procedures

These areas will be monitored by individual Managers for each company, and reported on regularly to their Board. Each Board will in turn report to the Link Group Board as required.

An annual audit of policy compliance will be conducted by the Internal Auditor and/or the Strategy, Planning & Risk Manager. The results of the audit will be reported to the Audit Committee.

5. POLICY AVAILABILITY

This policy is available [on the Link Group website,] to the Board on the Link Group extranet and to staff on the Link Group intranet.

Copies are also available on request and free of charge from Link. A summary of this policy can be made available in a number of other languages and other forms if required.

6. POLICY REVIEW

Link undertakes to review this policy regularly with regard to:

- applicable legislation, rules, regulations and guidance
- changes in the organisation
- continued best practice.

7. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The operation of this policy will always be in accordance with Link Group's Policy on Equality & Diversity.

Effective Date	Review Due	Approved by
12 th Dec 2007	Dec 2012	Link Group Board

Appendix 1

The homehunt™ system

General

- Prospective tenants aged 16 or over register their interest by providing brief household information. They may also apply for priority passes depending on their circumstances. The scope of priority passes is explained in Appendix 2.
- Link undertakes to provide clear information about vacant properties in formats which people can access using their preferred medium from a variety of visual and audio methods. We shall also publish details of lettings, showing how many people apply for each vacancy and the priority level.
- Vacant properties will be advertised on a regular basis and a closing date for applications will be shown. Any person who has registered may choose to apply for advertised vacancies.
- The house will be let to the person who is top of the list of those who have applied by the closing date. Link identifies that person as being the one
 - (a) whose household will make best use of the house
 - (b) who holds the most urgent priority pass, if any

Link chooses between people at the same priority level on the basis of the date on which they registered.

Restricted lettings

- Advertisements of sheltered properties, or of other properties specifically designed or provided with services for a particular client group, will specify the nature of the accommodation and describe the client group which will be considered for lettings.
- Advertisements of properties of a type and in a locality where an approved lettings plan is in operation, will specify the nature of the accommodation and describe the household type or client group which will be considered for lettings.

After the closing date for applications in response to these two categories of advertisement there will be a second stage of assessment of the applicants to select for letting. If more than one applicant needs the particular facilities and services provided in sheltered accommodation, or if more than one applicant matches the requirements of the lettings plan, then normal homehunt prioritisation will apply to those applicants, being highest level of pass, best use of rooms and time registered.

If no applicants need the special facilities or services provided with the property, nor match the requirements of the lettings plan, the property may be re-advertised, or withdrawn for letting outwith homehunt (see below).

Properties let not using the homehunt™ system.

- We may retain properties from time to time in order to decant tenants who are affected by major redevelopment projects.
- We may let houses to local authority nominees or to referrals from other agencies without advertising the vacancies.
- Mutual exchanges will take place outwith the homehunt™ system.
- Specially adapted properties may be let with assistance from other agencies if advertising under homehunt™ does not lead to applications from households who would make full use of the facilities provided.
- Lettings may be made, in cooperation with other agencies, in implementation of lettings plans approved by the LHA Board and current at the time of letting.
- Tenants for Link properties within the City of Edinburgh local authority area will continue to be selected using our Groups and Points allocations system within the Edinburgh Common Housing Register, Edindex.
- We may let properties to tenants of Link or other housing providers who need to move at short notice due to severe harassment or violence or other emergency. In these cases properties already advertised may be withdrawn without notice to other applicants, or vacancies not yet advertised may be used.
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Exclusion From Housing Lists

Applicants and registrants will be removed from our lists in the following circumstances:

- the applicant or registrant has requested removal, in writing.
- the death of the applicant or registrant.
- the failure of the applicant or registrant to confirm his / her interest in remaining on the lists on a regular basis.

Suspension From Housing Lists

Applicants and registrants will be suspended from consideration for allocations or from eligibility to apply for advertised vacancies for the following reasons and for the periods stated:

REASON	MAXIMUM PERIOD
Refusal of 3 suitable offers of tenancy	1 year
Giving false or misleading information during the application or registration processes	3 years from the date this is made known to Link.

REASON	MAXIMUM PERIOD
An ASBO has been issued against the applicant / registrant within the previous 2 years	Up to the end of 2 years from the issue date of the most recent ASBO (including any issued following application / registration).
The applicant / registrant has been evicted from a previous property due to anti social behaviour	Up to the end of 2 years from the date of eviction or the issue date of any more recent ASBO (including any issued following application / registration).
The applicant / registrant has been evicted from a previous property due to conviction for criminal offence at or in the vicinity of the property	Up to the end of 3 years from the date of eviction.
The applicant / registrant has a record of illegal use or supply of drugs	Up to 2 years
Registrants or applicants for transfers (existing Link tenants) will be suspended while their rent account is in arrears or rechargeable debts have not been paid	Until a repayment arrangement has been in place and operating properly for 3 months or the debt is less than one month rent
Suspension at the applicant / registrant's request	To be agreed with the applicant / registrant.

NB: Applicable periods shown may be reduced at the discretion of the local Regional manager in exceptional circumstances.

Appendix 2

Priority Passes

Priority Pass Type Level	Pass awarded if:
Homelessness and harassment	Homelessness and harassment passes at any level will only be issued after the registrant has presented for assessment by the local authority homelessness section.
Homelessness and harassment Gold plus	Assessed by local authority in the area where you wish to be housed as statutorily homeless and in priority need.
Homelessness and harassment Silver	Assessed by local authority in the area where you wish to be housed as statutorily homeless but not in priority need. <i>Typical situations would be:</i> Partnership breakdown - violence involved Harassment with actual or threatened or fear of violence
Homelessness and harassment Bronze	Have no home of your own, partnership breakdown, harassment or have been given notice to leave. Assessed as not being statutorily homeless. <i>Typical situations include:</i> Notice to quit Owner-occupier under notice of repossession
Exceptional circumstances Gold	Relocation pass awarded to Link tenants in properties in an eligible project for demolition or major renovation. The relocation pass prioritises a single permanent move for tenants who would otherwise be involved in moves into and out of decant accommodation. Link will determine eligible projects when funding to complete the project has been secured and the project forms part of the development programme.
Exceptional circumstances Bronze	Need to leave your current home. <i>Typical situations would be:</i> Tied tenant within three months of end of notice Notice to leave from landlord No proper lease - living in house with consent of occupier
Unsuitable housing Silver	Property in severe disrepair.

Priority Pass Type Level	Pass awarded if:
	<p><i>Typical situations would be:</i></p> <p>Structural problems</p> <p>Severe rising or penetrating damp</p>
Unsuitable housing Bronze	<p>Lack of basic amenities.</p> <p><i>Typical situations would be:</i></p> <p>No inside flushing toilet</p> <p>No piped hot water</p> <p>No kitchen / cooking facilities</p> <p>No bath/shower</p> <p>No heating</p> <p>No mains water</p>
Unsuitable housing Bronze Overcrowding	<p>Unsuitable design or location.</p> <p>Overcrowding passes are only available to tenants or to members of a household which has outgrown previously suitable accommodation. These passes are not available to registrant households which have come to stay with an existing household and have thereby worsened their housing situation.</p>
Overcrowding Silver	Three or more bedspaces short
Overcrowding Bronze	One or two bedspaces short
Medical Gold	Rehousing essential to allow independent living, or urgent to allow discharge from hospital, or to prevent admission to nursing or residential home, and it is not practical to adapt existing home.
Medical Silver	Rehousing would greatly improve quality of life and / or substantially reduce risk of physical injury, or present home makes essential activities of daily living difficult, and it is not practical to adapt existing home.
Need to be in a community Silver	<p><i>Typical situations would be:</i></p> <p>Main earner in household requiring to move after accepting job in area</p>
Need to be in a community Bronze	<p><i>Typical situations would be:</i></p> <p>Need to be closer to amenities and essential services etc, other than on health grounds</p> <p>Need to provide support</p> <p>Need to be nearer children to be able to exercise access / visiting rights</p> <p>Need to move so that main earner can sustain employment, due to transport or shift difficulties</p>