



Housing Allocation Policy

April 2005

1. Introduction

a. Purpose of the policy

The purpose of the Housing Allocation Policy is to provide a framework in which vacant houses in the Association's housing stock are allocated to persons in greatest housing need whilst, at the same time, ensuring that the needs of existing tenants are also addressed.

b. Reference sources

In the preparation of this policy, cognisance has been taken of the undernoted pieces of legislation and guidance.

- i. SFHA : Raising Standards in Housing – Allocations (Revised March 2004)
- ii. Community Scotland Performance Standards
- iii. Housing (Scotland) Act 1987
- iv. Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- v. Homelessness, etc. (Scotland) Act 2003
- vi. UK Equality Legislation
 1. Race Relations Act 1976
 2. Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
 3. Sex Discrimination Act 1975
 4. Disability Discrimination Act 1995
 5. Human Rights Act 1998
- vii. Matrimonial Homes (Scotland) Act 1981
- viii. Data Protection Act 1988 (see section 4)

2. Key Principles

Maryhill Housing Association is designated community-based association, registered with Scottish Homes, and is controlled by an annually elected Committee of Management which includes local residents.

The Association has a role to improve unsatisfactory housing in the area, to build new housing for general and special needs and to contribute generally to the regeneration of its area of operation.

The following principles will underpin the Housing Allocation Policy.

□ **Housing Need**

The Association, in the allocation of housing, will prioritise allocations to applications with high levels of housing or support needs. No applicant will be discriminated against or restrictions applied to the application, except in consequence of the conditions set out in sections 4.c and 4.d in relation to applicants who are suspended or excluded from the waiting list.

□ **Choice and Empowerment**

Maryhill Housing Association will seek to maximise the opportunities for greater access to its housing and to enhance the ability of applicants to make informed choices about housing options through the provision of good information and advice.

□ **Accountability**

Maryhill Housing Association will be accountable to its tenants and the wider community for its allocation policy and processes. Therefore, the policy will be publicised widely. Regular reports will be made to the Management Committee giving (i) statistical data on applications, such as type of household, size of housing required and ethnicity of applicants, and (ii) details of houses let.

□ **Sustainable Tenancies and Communities**

The Association will work towards the creation and maintenance of communities in Maryhill where people will want live and remain. Within the allocation process, every effort will be made to ensure that applicants are housed in the area or areas requested by them and in their preferred type of housing. In addition, the Association's estate management and sustainability policies outline the support which will be given to new tenants to reduce the occurrence of short term tenancies. The Association will also make best use of the housing stock by examining how existing tenants can be relocated to other Association houses , both to meet identified housing need and to vacate houses for other applicants on the waiting list.

❑ **Partnership**

The Association will work in partnership with Glasgow City Council in meeting the needs of homeless applicants, and with other social housing landlords in the area, such as Glasgow Housing Association, to facilitate the housing redevelopment programme.

❑ **Equality of Opportunity**

The Association is committed to ensuring that no individual or household is unfairly discriminated against on grounds of sex, marital status, race, disability, age (except in the case of sheltered housing), sexual orientation, language or social origin, beliefs or opinions such religious or political beliefs or other personal attributes.

❑ **Compliance**

The Housing Allocation Policy meets all relevant legal requirements (as listed in section 1(b)) and complies with good practice and guidance provided by Communities Scotland and Scottish Federation of Housing Associations.

❑ **Ease of Understanding**

The aim of the Housing Allocation Policy is give a clear indication of the factors of housing need which will be taken into account of housing, and of the operation of the allocation processes. Every effort will be made to avoid confusion or misunderstanding

❑ **Customer Service**

All applications will be dealt with on a confidential basis. The Association will strive to maintain good and open communication with applicants throughout.

❑ **Role of Governing Body Members**

The role of the Management Committee of the Association is to be limited to setting, reviewing and agreeing to the allocation policy, considering appeals, and monitoring the outcomes of the policy. The administration of the allocation policy and process will be undertaken by the Association's staff.

❑ **Audit Trail**

The Association will maintain an audit trail of allocations which will show how and why particular allocations were made, with due regard being paid to data protection legislation.

□ **Monitoring and Review**

Regular reports will be made to the Management Committee giving (i) statistical data on applications, such as type of household, size of housing required and ethnicity of applicants, and (ii) details of houses let. The policy itself will be reviewed as and when required by legislative changes or following identification of particular faults or discrepancies in the operation of the policy. A full policy review will take place every three years.

3. Admission to the Waiting List

□ **Open waiting list**

The Association's waiting list is open to anyone over the age of 16 years of age. Every application will be assessed to determine extent of housing need. Each applicant will receive a letter advising of their points total.

□ **Exclusion and Suspension of Applicants**

The opportunity to apply and be assessed for housing will not be constrained by any unreasonable or blanket restrictions on categories of applicant. If at any time it is found necessary to exclude or suspend an applicant from the waiting list, this will be for reasons outlined in the allocations policy, with sufficient safeguards built in to ensure that applicants know why they have been excluded or their application suspended. The Association will monitor any exclusions or suspensions on an ongoing basis.

While there will be no automatic exclusion, the Association reserves the right to reject any applicant who verbally or physically abuses or threatens staff. In such instances the circumstances will be considered on their merits taking into account the views of the staff member(s) involved.

Applicants will have access to the Association's appeals procedure if they are unhappy with any decision made to exclude them from the waiting list..

□ **Rent arrears / Anti-social behaviour**

A applicant is not responsible for any rent arrears occurred for property for which they were not the tenant. Whilst an applicant for housing or for a transfer of house will be accepted and placed on the waiting list, if a tenant has current or former rent arrears owed to the Association or another social housing provider, the applicant will not be offered a house unless –

- the debt is paid in full
- the debt is less than one months rent
- a satisfactory and acceptable arrangement to clear off the debt has been made and agreed with the Association or other landlord and maintained by the tenant.

Where a tenant of the Association, or of another social housing landlord, is the subject of legal proceedings for anti-social behaviour, the applicant will not be considered until such times as the

anti-social behaviour has been corrected to the satisfaction of the Association or, in the case of another social housing landlord, with that landlord.

□ **Sources of Applications**

Applications for housing will be considered where an applicant -

- is homeless
- is living with another household
- wishes to attain a tenancy in their own right
- is living in overcrowded circumstances or under-occupying their present house
- is living in substandard accommodation or accommodation lacking certain standard amenities
- has a insecure tenancy or occupancy agreement
- has medical needs which can only be met by a change to a more suitable house
- has social needs, such as suffering harassment, having to travel an excessive distance to work, needs to be near family to give/receive support
- is a tenant of Maryhill Housing Association or Glasgow Housing Association and whose present house is subject to a demolition order or is to be removed under an area development programme
- is a Maryhill Housing Association tenant who needs to move for medical, overcrowding or social reasons
- is a Maryhill Housing Association tenant who wishes to move for aspirational reasons
- is a tenant of the Council or another RSL who has a defined and identifiable housing need for housing in the Maryhill area.
- is a homeless person nominated from Glasgow City Housing under as a Section 5 referral.
- is an applicant referred under the HOMES scheme

- is an applicant with support needs for whom the Association has agreed to provide accommodation and support is being provided by another agency

□ **The Housing Application form**

In terms of the Association's Data Protection Policy, only information necessary to assess the application will be sought. There will be a section on ethnic monitoring which applicants will be asked, but not required, to complete.

Applications will be reviewed on an annual basis. Should an applicant not return the revision letter then the application will be removed from the waiting list. Should it later be established that there was a satisfactory reason for the revision letter not being returned, the applicant will be reinstated without penalty.

□ **HOMES Mobility Scheme**

The Association will participate in the HOMES Mobility scheme and the Management Committee will be asked to agree a target for HOMES cases in the annual Allocation Plan.

The following criteria will be taken into account when considering if an application should be accepted.

- The applicant has is taking up employment beyond reasonable daily travelling distance
- The applicant needs support from a person living in Maryhill or Ruchill or wishes to move to provide support. Documentary evidence will be sought in support of the application.
- There are serious social reasons for the applications. Documentary evidence outlining the urgent need for a transfer will be sought.

Where it is estimated that it would take too long to deal with a particular nomination because of the lack of suitable housing of the size and type requested, the application will be refused. HOMES referrals will normally be made only one offer of housing by the Association but will be free to make application on the Council's waiting list.

□ **Nominations from other social housing providers**

The Association will consider nominations from other housing associations in instances where the rehousing of a particular tenant of that association is considered to be urgent. The decision on whether or not to accept a nomination of this type will be made by the Housing Manager.

❑ **Section 5 homeless referrals from Glasgow City Council**

The Association will accept Section 5 homeless nominations from the City Council where it is considered that an offer of housing can be made within a reasonable period of time. Where it is considered that it would take too long to deal with a particular nomination because of the lack of suitable housing of the size and type requested, the application will be refused. Section 5 referrals accepted by the Association will be offered housing on a priority basis.

Homeless referrals will normally be made only one offer of housing by the Association but will also be free to make application on the Association's waiting list.

❑ **Monitoring of applications and allocations for equal opportunities**

The Association will monitor the receipt of applications from persons in BME groups and a report will be made to the Management Committee at regular intervals. At the end of each year, a report identifying the number of BME applicants who have been housed will be considered by the Management Committee.

❑ **Options given to applicants for housing**

Applicants will be given the option of area of choice, being able to choose any areas from the eight listed on the application form. An option will also be given for type of house requested, though advice should be sought on the availability of particular house types in the various areas.

As regards the house size for which the applicant will be listed, options will be limited because of the low number of houses of larger than one-bedroomed flats which become available for allocation each year. Houses will therefore be allocated according to the following accommodation criteria:-

- only bedrooms are designated as sleeping areas
- one bedroom for applicant and partner
- one bedroom for every two children of the same sex under the age of 16
- one bedroom for every two children of different sexes under the age of 8.
- one bedroom for any son or daughter over the age of 16
- one bedroom for any remaining member of the household.

Only in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Housing Manager, will an applicant be offered a house where overcrowding in terms of this standard would result.

Only in the case of difficult-to-let houses would an applicant be considered for a house of a larger size than that required under the above standard.

□ Offers and Refusals

In the first instance where the applicant has given a telephone number then the applicant will be advised of an offer by telephone; otherwise a letter will be sent to the address given on the application form. The applicant will be given three working days to respond to the offer.

It is expected that applicants will not refuse an offer of housing without good reason if the offer is consistent with their choice for house type and area. As such, the reason for any refusal of an offer will be carefully considered. Should however, given that the Association has a low turnover of voids, an applicant refuses two offers of housing, the application will be removed from the waiting list and no further application will be accepted for a period of one year from date of the second refusal.

□ Local Lettings Initiatives

In line with the Association's aim of creation and maintenance of balanced, stable communities, there may be instances where the Association will work with local tenants forums and groups to devise and operate a local lettings initiative. The approval of the Management Committee and Communities Scotland on the establishment of a local lettings initiative will be necessary and the Committee will be kept advised on a regular basis on the operation of the initiative.

□ Transfer applicants

The Association will operate two transfer lists; one for tenants who are seeking a change of house because of a facet of housing need; the other for tenants who are seeking a transfer for aspirational reasons. On both lists, there will be a small number of points awarded each year for waiting time on the list.

□ In housing need

The Association will consider applications from tenants who wish to move to another Association tenancy and who have a degree of housing need as listed in the points scheme in section 6. Before an offer of rehousing is made, transfer applicants will require to meet the following conditions:-

- have been a tenant for a minimum period of 1 year in their present house, have maintained their tenancy satisfactorily and have a clear rent account.

- have no outstanding chargeable repairs or other debt owing to the Association.

Lets to this category of application will not exceed 10% of the annual number of lets.

□ **Aspirational**

The Association recognises that some tenants who have no apparent housing need for a change of house may wish to move to another Association house for aspirational reasons. Applicants on this list will only receive points based on length of application.

The same criteria regarding minimum length of tenancy and maintenance of the tenancy in a satisfactory manner will apply.

Lets to this category of application will not exceed 10% of the annual number of lets.

4. Factors which will be considered in assessing housing need

The Association will point applications on the basis of housing need as detailed below. The applications will be placed on one of two waiting lists – a general waiting list and a transfer list for existing Maryhill Housing Association tenants.

The points scheme will award points based on a variety of factors :-

- development areas
- security of tenure
- lack of household amenities
- shared amenities
- serious property disrepair
- overcrowding
- under-occupation
- medical
- social
- intensive support needs
- is accepted as a referral under the HOMES scheme
- for transfer applicants, one point is awarded for each six months of application

A summary of the points scheme is given in the next section. Where two or more applicants on the same list have an identical number of points, then date of application for housing will be the determinant factor.

Development areas

The Association will work with Glasgow Housing Association in areas of development to ensure that, where necessary, tenants or occupiers are moved to Association accommodation to allow for the redevelopment and demolition of houses in those areas. The points awarded will reflect the urgency of this need.

□ **Security of tenure in present accommodation**

Points will be awarded to applicants who are homeless (but not as section 5 referrals); who have limited or no security of tenure; who are living in temporary hostel accommodation; who have been issued with a legal Notice advising that the tenancy will be terminated, where this termination is not occasioned by the actions of the tenant or his/her family; or where the applicant lives in temporary accommodation, such as a mobile home or a caravan. The Association will seek documentary evidence from the applicant in support of these assertions.

□ **Degree of overcrowding or under-occupation in present accommodation**

Points will be awarded for overcrowding based on the following criteria:-:

- only bedrooms are designated as sleeping areas
- one bedroom for applicant and partner
- one bedroom for every two children of the same sex under the age of 16
- one bedroom for every two children of different sexes under the age of 8.
- one bedroom for any son or daughter over the age of 16
- one bedroom for any remaining member of the household.

Where the present accommodation does not meet the standards above, then overcrowding is deemed to occur and points will be awarded for each room falling short of this standard.

Where an applicant has accommodation in their present house which is not utilised in terms of the above standard, then points will be awarded for each bedroom not required.

Applicants who are living with another household, are homeless, living in temporary accommodation or in private rented accommodation, will receive points for overcrowding in respect of the size of accommodation they would need for their family size.

□ **Houses assessed as being Below Tolerable Standard statutory standards**

Applicants living in property which is below the tolerable standard as defined by statute will be awarded points to reflect this factor of need. Other aspects of disrepair, such as structural faults, timber infestation, defective plumbing or wiring, etc., may also be considered. Factors which would influence this would be the existence of a Statutory Repairs Notice or other evidence as to the seriousness of the complaint and the refusal or inability of the landlord to remedy these faults.

❑ **Lacking or sharing household amenities**

Points will be awarded where an applicant is living in accommodation which lacks certain amenities, such as an indoor W.C., a separate kitchen, inadequate hot water supply or no bath/shower. In these instances, a housing officer from the Association will visit the house to confirm the standard of amenities in the house.

or

Points will be awarded where an applicant and his/her family require to share amenities with another household, these amenities being a W.C., bathroom and kitchen.

❑ **Health needs**

The Association will consider instances where the applicant requires a house on medical grounds due to the unsuitability of the applicant's current accommodation. To assist the Association in determining the extent of the medical need, the applicant will be asked to complete a self-assessment medical form which will provide details of the applicant's medical condition and of the present accommodation. The application will then be awarded additional points on the severity of the medical need, viz. –

Severe : where there is an urgent need for more suitable accommodation

Moderate : where the applicant would benefit from a move to another house.

Applicants awarded medical points will normally only be offered ground floor housing.

Medical points will be awarded for physical health problems where the physical location of the present accommodation is not suitable for the applicant's health or that of another member of their family. Consideration for psychological medical conditions will only be considered after the submission of medical advice from a hospital consultant, confirming that not only does the applicant have a serious medical problem, but that the present accommodation is having a serious effect on the applicant.

The assessment will be based on the information provided in the self-assessment form. Should the applicant disagree with this assessment then the Association's appeals procedure should be invoked. To clarify certain medical issues, the applicant may be asked to produce additional medical information, to be provided at no cost to the Association, in support of the appeal.

□ **Social Points**

Harassment

- Where a tenant is suffering harassment and this is confirmed by Strathclyde Police.
- Where an applicant is suffering racial harassment and either the application has been referred by an appropriate agency confirming that this situation exists or the Association is satisfied that one of its tenants is suffering racial harassment.
- Where the applicant is fleeing violence and the application is supported by an appropriate agency, such as Women's Aid, and where ongoing support will be provided by the agency to the applicant.

Support Needs

In line with its objective of building 'a balanced community', the Association sees one of its roles is to support vulnerable members of the community, especially those who are homeless, who will require support from family or friends in the community.

Therefore points will be awarded where an applicant is seeking to either provide to a relative in the Maryhill area or to receive support from such a relative. Applicants will be asked to provide full information on the application form in support of this claim.

Points may be awarded in one of the categories but not in respect of both.

Require to be near to employment or schools

Points will be awarded where the applicant works in the Maryhill area and has to travel in excess of one hours travelling between current home and place of work.

Award of Social Points

Where an applicant qualifies in more than one of the social categories, social points will be awarded for one factor only and that will be the factor which attracts most points.

□ **Allocation of houses between waiting lists**

The Association will seek to allocate its vacant houses between the various housing lists to respond to housing demand. Each year, the Management Committee will be asked to agree a Lettings Plan for the following year.

The Points Scheme

Security of tenure	Homeless	5	Waiting list
	Living with relatives and friends	5	
	Private rented	4	
	Issue of Notice to Quit	5	
Lack of amenities	The property lacks inside W.C., bath/shower, kitchen, hot water supply, cooking facilities	6	Waiting list
			Transfer list
Shared amenities	The applicant shares any or all of the above amenities with another household	6	Waiting list
Property in Disrepair	Below tolerable standard	5	Waiting list
	Dampness	5	
	Other defects	2	
Overcrowding	Per apartment lacking (inc. living room if applicable)	5	Waiting list Transfer list
Under-occupation	Per bedroom unused	5	Waiting list
			Transfer list
Medical	Severe	6	Waiting list
	Moderate	2	Transfer list
Social	Living in multi-storey flat with children	2	Waiting list
	To provide support	4	Waiting list Transfer list
	To receive support	4	
	Travel to work	4	
	Racial harassment	6	
	Harassment	6	
Fleeing violence	6		
Intensive support needs	Care and support package agreed with Social Work / GGHB	10	Waiting list
Waiting points		2 per year	Transfer list
HOMES applicants	In addition to 'need' points	5	Waiting list

Allocation of Sheltered Housing

The Association has one sheltered housing complex for elderly people, at Shiskine Place, and vacancies within the complex are infrequent. Applications for sheltered housing will only be accepted from persons over 60 years of age unless there are exceptional medical or support needs which would warrant accepting an application from a younger person.

The Association considers that the standard points scheme, whilst suitable for general housing need, does not properly reflect an applicant's need for a sheltered house.

Therefore, the Association will maintain a separate waiting list and transfer list for sheltered housing and applications will be pointed in terms of the undernoted points scheme for a sheltered house and in terms of the standard points scheme if other areas or housing types are sought. The sheltered housing points scheme reflects the applicant's age, unsuitability of present accommodation and medical reasons to support their application for a sheltered house.

Age		60 to 70	2
		70 to 80	4
		80 on	6
Present House	Size	1 room extra	1
		2 rooms extra	2
		3 rooms extra	3
	Position	2 up	5
		3 up	8
	No tenancy	2	
Medical		Moderate	2
		Serious	6
Family Support		where applicant lives outwith Glasgow with family in this area	2

5. Other Issues

□ **Information and Advice**

The Association will provide written guidance to applicants on how to complete the application form for housing, together with details of how the housing allocation policy operates. A full copy of the policy will be available for perusal in the office and will be provided for applicants at a reasonable charge.

Applicants will be given advice in relation to their application in respect of areas of choice and availability of houses on request, but, given the low number of relet houses which become available for reletting, it will not be possible to advise applicants in other than very general terms how long they may have to wait before an offer can be made.

□ **Confidentiality**

Any information received from an applicant in respect of a housing application, or from persons or agencies contacting the Association in respect of the application, will be treated in strict confidence, in terms of the Association's Data Protection Policy.

□ **Management Transfers**

The Housing Manager will have discretion to make an allocation of housing to a tenant if such a move will enable the Association to deal with an anti-social problem or to allow the Association to proceed with the alternative use or improvement of the property.

□ **Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 Schedule 7**

The provisions of Schedule 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, previously contained in section 15 of the Housing Associations Act 1985, have the effect of ensuring that committee members or employees of housing associations, or their close families, cannot put themselves in a position whereby they would benefit from their connection with the association. Where such a situation occurs whereby such a person would benefit from the allocation of a house, the Management Committee will be advised and the allocation noted in a register.

□ **Mutual Exchanges / HOMESWAP Scheme**

The Association will approve applications between its tenants and tenants of the City Council, other local authorities, housing associations and other RSLs to exchange houses with each other, provided :-

- ❑ both tenants have a clear rent account at time of application or have maintained an agreed schedule of payment to clear outstanding arrears.
- ❑ both tenants have conducted their tenancies in a satisfactory manner
- ❑ the affect of the exchange is not to worsen the housing position of either of the applicants
- ❑ that the exchange is in good faith and that both parties intend to occupy the respective houses for a reasonable period of time.

The Association has also registered as a participating landlord in the HOMESWAP scheme.

- ❑ **Appeals**

Applicants will be advised of the Association's appeals procedure if they disagree with the offer made or the decision of the Housing Manager to penalise the application.

- ❑ **Common Housing Register**

The Association will cooperate with the City Council and other social landlords in the establishment of a common housing register. If it transpires that participation in a common housing register will require this policy, then the Management Committee will be advised.

- ❑ **Misleading Information**

If an applicant knowingly gives misleading application in their applicant for housing, the application will be removed from the housing list and no further application will be accepted for a period of one year. If an applicant has been allocated a house as a result of misleading information, the Association will take steps to recover possession of house in terms of the provisions contained in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

- ❑ **Delegated Authority**

Except where otherwise provided in this policy, responsibility for allocations is delegated to the Housing Manager.