



Rural Stirling
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Housing Allocation Policy

Rural Stirling Housing Association, Stirling Road, Doune, FK16 6AA . Registered as a Scottish Charity No. SC037849	
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1.0 Overall Aims of the Association

Rural Stirling Housing Association Ltd aims to provide affordable housing for rent and low-cost home ownership for those in housing need throughout the North and Western Rural area of Stirling Council's area.

2.0 Legal Requirements and Performance Standards

The Association will comply with legal requirements in relation to:

- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- The Matrimonial Homes (family protection) (Scotland) Act 1981
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Data Protection Act 1998

Performance Standards for Registered Social Landlords have been jointly developed by Communities Scotland and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations. Rural Stirling aims to meet these Standards and in particular those that are applicable to the housing allocations process:

Activity Standard 1.1: *Access to Housing*: We ensure that people have fair and open access to our housing list and assessment processes. We work with others to maximise and simplify access routes into our housing.

AS 1.2 *Lettings*: We let houses in a way that gives reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need; makes best use of the available stock; maximises choice; and helps to sustain communities.

AS 4.10 *Accommodation provision*: We comply with request from local authorities for accommodation for homeless people, unless we have good reason for not doing so. We make sure we treat homeless people fairly in terms of the quality of housing and location we offer them.

3.0 The Aims and Objectives of the Allocations Policy

The Allocations Policy aims to ensure that those households which are in greatest housing need are allocated homes which meet their needs at costs which are affordable to them.

The Points System aims to rank households in housing need in order of priority for being allocated a home.

The Association aims to operate its policy and procedures in a way which can be shown to be fair, efficient and effective. The Association is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities in all areas of its work and will ensure its Equal Opportunities Policy is applied to the operation of the Allocations Policy.

The Association supports the aims of care in the community and will seek to work with specialist organisations and support agencies to ensure that a range of applicants with special needs for particular types of accommodation, or for support, can be housed by the Association.

In addition to its principal aim, the Allocations Policy has the following objectives:-

- a) to be fair and consistent in allocating homes;
- b) to ensure accommodation is suitable for a household's needs;
- c) to achieve stable and balanced communities;
- d) to make best use of the Association's housing stock;
- e) to consider medical and social factors and the capacity to improve a household's quality of life;
- f) to facilitate mobility for reasons of employment or family/social support; and
- g) to complement the provision of housing by the local authority by allowing for 50% nominations from the local authority.

4.0 Eligibility , Suspensions and Removals from the List

Who May Apply for Housing

Anyone who is 16 years of age or over is eligible to apply and have their application held on the Association's waiting list.

Applicants may register their interest in any housing for which they are eligible.

The Association recognises however, that it will only be able to offer housing to a small minority of those who approach it. It will therefore, assess applications and give an indication of their priority.

When will an Application be removed from the list?

- ◆ Upon the death of the applicant, providing that no other member of the household wishes to keep the application active.
- ◆ Where the applicant requests the removal of his/her application in writing.
- ◆ Following annual review of the application or at other times where no response is received from the applicant after reasonable steps have been taken to contact them. In such cases the application will be reactivated, without penalty, if the applicant subsequently gets back in touch.

4(cont)

Applicants will be notified of their right of appeal against a decision to remove their application from the list.

When Can an Application be Suspended?

- In the event of tenancy-related debt (of more than one month's rent) to any social landlord, unless there is an arrangement in place to repay the debt and that this arrangement has been adhered to for three months.
- In the event of false information having been being provided, or relevant information withheld, by the applicant, where this had the intended effect of increasing the chances of re-housing. Applications will be suspended for 6 months.

The reason for a suspension will be notified to the applicant, and they will be informed of their right of appeal.

5.0 The different ways to access the Association's housing

The Association aims to meet needs in accordance with the following categories:

- Applicants on the Association's own waiting list
- Existing tenants wishing to transfer to another tenancy within the Association.
- Nominations received from Stirling Council in accordance with the Nominations Agreement. This provides for up to 50% of available lets to be offered to the Council, once lets to internal transfers have been taken into account. A copy will be made available on request.
- Referrals received from the Council in accordance with Schedule 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. A protocol has been agreed with the Council to ensure the smooth operation of this statutory duty. A copy will be made available on request.
- Mobility referrals received by agreement from other social landlords under the auspices of the MOVE UK national mobility scheme.

Lettings targets

The Association will annually review the target proportion of lets to be made to each of the above categories, in accordance with an assessment of relative levels of need and demand.

6.0 Waiting Lists

The Association will maintain separate Waiting Lists for rented housing and for low cost home ownership (Shared Ownership). Applicants may be on either or both lists. All applicants will be entered onto the list. Low cost home ownership will be available to those who are in housing need and who can afford the costs involved.

6 (cont): Applications will be assessed by at least two members of staff to ensure that they are properly assessed and fairly dealt with.

The Association will set target time-scales for assessing and responding to applications received.

Applicants will be sent a breakdown of their points and advised of their right to appeal. In order to manage the waiting list effectively, applicants' priority will be graded high, medium or low and an explanation given as to the likelihood of housing.

Rented housing will be available for those categories of people most in housing need and will include all general and special needs groups.

Applicants will be free to register an interest in, and go on the waiting list for, all and any areas where there is accommodation for which they are eligible. There will be no restriction on the number of offers that are made and no penalty applied to refusals of offers.

All applications will be acknowledged and a record kept of all applicants received. The Waiting Lists will be the subject of a full Annual Review.

7.0 Determining Priorities

Housing need factors will be used to determine priorities. These will include Insecurity of Tenure, Lack of Amenities/Condition of Property, Overcrowding, Under Occupation, Health Factors, Harassment and Locational Factors which relate to housing need. Details are given in the Points System.

In practice, individual applicants will usually have a number of the above housing need factors to support their application.

Local Lettings Initiatives

The Association aims to contribute towards the creation and maintenance of balanced and sustainable communities. From time use may be made of Local Lettings Initiatives (LLIs) to this end. In doing this the Association will comply with statutory and regulatory requirements.

LLIs may provide additional criteria for determining priority between applicants for lets in a particular area.

Where an LLI is being considered the Association will:

- Carry out an assessment of housing needs and fully consider the implications of operating an LLI as intended.
- Consult with community representatives, applicants who may be affected and the local authority housing department in drawing up specific proposals.

Following the operation of the LLI the Association will monitor the outcomes, draw conclusions and have regard to these.

8.0 The Allocation of Tenancies

Tenancies will be allocated in the following manner.

- a) A short list for each development/vacancy will be drawn up based on points and applicants on it will be visited and a Standard Report Form will be completed. This home-visit will verify an applicant's housing need prior to final short-listing and any offers of housing.

The number of applicants to be visited will be related to the number of properties available but will normally be around three applicants for each vacancy.

- b) Where applicants have equal points on housing need grounds, consideration will be given to the time an applicant has been in housing need.
- c) A clear documented Audit Trail will be maintained for each offer of housing and allocation made. The authorisation of the Co-ordinator will be required for any allocation made.

Schedule 7 Allocations to Committee and Staff members and their Relatives.

These will be dealt with in accordance with the Association's separate policy and procedures on Schedule 7 (copy available on request). In accordance with regulatory and good practice requirements the Management Committee must give prior approval for any offer made to someone who is, or has a close relationship to, a member of staff or Committee covered by the provisions of Schedule 7.

9.0 Transfers and Exchanges

Exchanges

To help achieve the best use of all available housing, any tenant may apply for an exchange with another Housing Association or Local Authority tenant.

These requests will be treated in accordance with the Association's separate Policy on Mutual Exchanges (copy available on request).

Transfers

Existing tenants will be eligible to apply to be re-housed by the Association. Each application received will be assessed in accordance with the points system. Lets will be made to transfer applicants in accordance with the lettings targets. The same rules on suspension from offer will apply to transfer applicants as to waiting list applicants.

10.0 Mobility Referrals

The Association is a member of MOVE UK, a nation-wide scheme to assist tenants of social landlords to move home.

Two schemes are operated:-

- a) MOVE UK Mobility Scheme is a single nomination scheme which helps social landlords to help their tenants move to another area. This scheme operates throughout the U.K.
- b) HOMESWAP is a national mutual exchange scheme. Any Council or Housing Association tenant living in self-contained, permanent rented accommodation can register to try and find someone with whom to swap their home.

The Association will consider incoming nominations and will assist its tenants who wish to move through the scheme.

11.0 Information

The Association reserves the right, with the applicant's consent, to contact the applicant's present or former landlord to obtain relevant information concerning adhering to the conditions of tenancy, including regular payment of rent.

Applicants will be entitled to access information about their applications in accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and the Association's Policy on Access to Information.

12.0 Confidentiality

All information will be strictly confidential. The Association is registered under the Data Protection Act 1998 and will operate its provisions relating to computer data.

13.0 Policy review and monitoring

A comprehensive review of this Policy is scheduled to be complete by December 2005.

The Association's Management Committee will receive regular reports on allocations to all vacancies and will monitor the operation of the Allocations Policy and review it annually. To ensure confidentiality, the individual identity of applicants will not be disclosed to Committee Members.

The Committee will receive quarterly reports on:

- Actual lettings made against lettings targets for each category.
- The numbers on the waiting list and an analysis of the current status of these (including the numbers currently suspended and cancelled).
- Performance in processing applications against the target time-scale.

14.0 Publicity

The Association will widely publicise the availability of its housing in accordance with good practice guidance.

A general leaflet giving details of all developments which the Association has in management and under construction/planned and a guide to the Allocations Policy will be made available (free of charge) to each applicant.

Copies of the general leaflet, guide and full Allocations Policy will be distributed regularly to local sources of information and advice including local authority housing offices and libraries, advice agencies, other housing organisations in the area, community councils and local elected representatives.

Other means will include:

Advertise in local, community newsletters.

Ensure accurate information is held on the Home Point Directory that can be accessed through the Internet.

Other specific locations identified as being effective means of reaching people in need who may otherwise not be aware of the opportunity to apply.

15.0 Appeals Procedure

The Association has a Feedback and Complaints Procedure.

Anyone wishing to register a complaint or appeal against a decision should take this matter up with the appropriate member of staff in the first instance. If the problem cannot be resolved, details in writing should be addressed to the Agency Co-ordinator. Failing agreement at this stage, the applicant will have the right of further appeal to the Management Committee. Beyond that there will be the opportunity to appeal to the Public Services Ombudsman.

APPENDIX ONE - THE POINTS SYSTEM

Points will be awarded to applicants as follows:-

1. Insecurity of Tenure

POINTS

Points will be awarded as follows:-

Roofless i.e. No Fixed Abode
Subject of Notice to Quit/Repossession Order **20**

Living in Temporary Accommodation e.g. bed and breakfast, refuge,
hospital, hostel, "half-way house" type supported accommodation, towing/non
-residential caravan **15**

Living in tied housing
Tenancies/Leases up to 6 months
Living with family/friends where previously living independently
Couples living under one roof who wish to separate **10**

Living with family/friends (others) **5**

2. Lack of Amenities/Sharing/Condition of Property

a) Lack of Amenities

Separate points will be attributed to each of these factors, as below:-

Hot & Cold Water Supply at fixed bath/shower **3**
Hot & Cold Water Supply at Wash Hand Basin **3**
Hot & Cold Water Supply at Sink **3**
Inside WC **3**
Adequate Storage **1**
Drying Space **1**
Central Heating **1**

A maximum of 15 points may be awarded

b) Sharing

All Housing Applicants who require to share facilities with another
household of any size will be awarded **5**

c) Condition of Property

POINTS

The severity of some factors such as structure and dampness problems will be taken into account. Applicants with disrepair problems will be placed in LOW, MEDIUM, or HIGH Disrepair group as follows:-

LOW	Substantially free from dampness, although fails the Tolerable Standard due to other state of repair factors	3
MEDIUM	Is not structurally unstable, but does have moderate dampness, and other problems, which contribute to it failing the Tolerable Standard	6
HIGH	If property is defined as structurally unsafe i.e. Demolition Order, or is seriously damp	9

3. **Overcrowding**

Points will be awarded as follows:-

1 Bedroom less than required **10**
 + an additional 5 points for every further bedroom lacking, according to family size.

Maximum points that can be awarded **20**

The number of apartments (bedroom and living room) in the household's present house will be compared with the number of apartments the household needs. The number of apartments a household needs is calculated as follows:-

A living Room which is not used for sleeping :
 + 1 Bedroom for each husband and wife (or co-habitee).
 + 1 Bedroom for every two persons of the same sex under the age of 12 years.
 + 1 Bedroom for every two children under 8 years of age.
 + 1 Bedroom for any remaining members of the household.

4. **Under Occupation**

The number of apartments in the household's present accommodation will be compared to the number of apartments the household needs.

The points will be awarded as follows:-

1 Bedroom in excess of need **5**
 + an additional 3 points for every further bedroom.

Maximum points that can be awarded **11**

5. **Medical Priority**

Points will be awarded for health reasons to any applicant whose household includes a person who is sick or disabled and whose condition would be significantly helped by rehousing and points allocated depending on the degree of medical priority.

Medical Points will be awarded on the following basis:-

Priority	A	High	20
Priority	B	Medium	15
Priority	C	Low	10

The awarding of medical points will be at the discretion of the Housing Officer, on the basis of advice received from the applicant and from their medical practitioner, if the Association deems this necessary.

The Association may also act on the advice of an Occupational Therapist or other appropriate professional.

6. Victim of Harassment

When an applicant is the victim of repeated racial or other harassment or is subject to recurring violence then each case will be considered on the basis of a specific report from an appropriate body which confirms the applicant's need for rehousing. **20**

In cases of less severe harassment where supporting evidence can be produced from an appropriate body which confirms the applicant's need for re-housing. **10**

7. Local Connection

Points will be awarded for locational factors relating to housing needs as below. The Association's Waiting List areas will be used as the basis for locational factor points.

Employed in area	5
Wishes to give/receive support to/for family/friends	5
Requires to access social/medical support facilities in area	2

A maximum of **10** points will be awarded in this category.

8. Specialist Accommodation

The above is the basis on which the Association selects its tenants. When providing accommodation for those with Special Needs, different considerations have to be used as the accommodation will have been designed to meet a specific need. The category includes:-

- Housing for elderly (e.g. amenity, sheltered)
- Housing for people with disabilities or mobility requirements (e.g. full wheelchair standard)

The Association will attempt to build all future developments to barrier free standards and continue to assess tenants to enable adaptations to be carried out within the tenants' homes, thereby avoiding where possible the necessity to move house.