

GLEN HOUSING ASSOCIATION

ALLOCATION POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy outlines Glen Housing Association's aims, and principles in respect of applying to our housing list and the allocation of properties. The Policy is a requirement of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and is drawn up with references to guidance from SFHA and Communities Scotland.
- 1.2 Glen Housing Association is a partner in Fife Housing Register (FHR) and applicants will be assessed in accordance with a Common Assessment of Need as agreed between the partners. Points will be awarded and applicants added to the housing list which can be accessed by all the partners for allocations.
- 1.3 Notwithstanding the requirements of 1.1 this policy acts as an "umbrella" document drawing together other policies and documents e.g. Transfer Policy, Mutual Exchange Policy and Assignment Policy.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1 The Association will allocate individual tenancies fairly, consistently and efficiently by making the process open and accountable to prospective applicants while being responsive to individual circumstances and needs.
- 2.2 The Allocation process will seek to identify those applicants who should receive priority in being allocated a tenancy. Priority will be determined by the level of points awarded outlined in the Common Assessment of Need (Appendix 1).
- 2.3 The Association and its partners will use information from the housing list regarding levels of housing need in Fife to inform decisions on housing types provided in future developments.

3. KEY PRINCIPLES

The Association aims to allocate available properties to those in the greatest housing needs, and the principles of the Policy are:

- To work in conjunction with Fife Housing Register partners and other housing agencies to maximise housing opportunities for individuals.

3. KEY PRINCIPLES (Continued)

- To ensure as far as possible that the accommodation offered matches the applicant's housing need
- To be fair, efficient and consistent in allocating tenancies
- To help to promote and sustain balanced and stable communities
- To make best use of housing stock
- To consider medical and social factors and the ability to improve the applicant's quality of life
- To assist applicants to move for reasons of family support or employment
- To promote social inclusion
- To provide good quality housing information
- To work towards the prevention of homelessness

4. ELIGIBILITY

- 4.1 Anyone aged 16 or over may apply to the Association for housing. This will be via Fife Housing Register, by completing an application form and indicating Glen HA as a preferred landlord. Applicants with a medical condition made worse by their housing situation will also be required to complete an Illness and Disability form.
- 4.2 The applications will be assessed centrally through FHR using a Common Assessment of Need as agreed by FHR partners. Points will be awarded and applicants added to the housing list for all partner landlords they have chosen on the form. Medical points will be awarded by the Housing Occupational Therapist/Assistant and verified by the Clinical Assistant, Fife Health Board.
- 4.3 Applicants will be advised of their points award and will be retained on the list regardless of the level of points and the likelihood of being housed. However admission to the housing list does not give applicants a right to be housed.

4. ELIGIBILITY (Continued)

4.4 In allocating houses, no account will be taken of the following:

- (i) The length of time an applicant has lived in the area.
- (ii) Rent arrears or other housing debt for a house of which the applicant was not the tenant.
- (iii) Rent arrears or other housing debt on a previous tenancy which are no longer outstanding.
- (iv) Rent arrears or other housing debt where:
 - (a) The amount outstanding is no more than 1/12th of the annual amount payable.
 - (b) The applicant has agreed arrangements with the landlord for paying the debt and
 - (c) Has made payments as agreed for at least 3 months and is continuing to do so.
 - (v) Any outstanding debt of the applicant or their household which does not relate to a tenancy.
 - (vi) The age of an applicant provided he/she is aged 16 or over except in the allocation of houses designed for particular age groups.
 - (vii) The income of the applicant and his/her family.
 - (viii) Whether, or to what value the applicant or any of the applicant's family owns or has owned any other property.

5. SUSPENSION FROM THE HOUSING LIST

Applicants with rent arrears or other housing debt amounting to more than 1/12th of the annual rent of the property where the debt accrued, may have their application suspended if there is no arrangement in place to clear the debt. The suspension will be reviewed if an arrangement to pay is agreed with the landlord.

5. SUSPENSION FROM THE HOUSING LIST (Continued)

Applicants who have lost a tenancy in the last 3 years due to Anti-Social Behaviour or where Anti-Social Behaviour Orders have been granted against an applicant or members of their household during the past 3 years will have their application suspended for a period of 12 months. The application will be reviewed annually and the suspension may be continued for a further period, or lifted whereby the applicant may be offered a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy with a suitable support package.

Information on applicants will be obtained by the FHR team from tenancy references, Fife Council records or from other recognised agencies.

Applicants who are suspended from the list will be advised in writing of the reason for the suspension, the length of time it will apply and the action they need to take to have it lifted. They will also be advised of their right of appeal against the suspension. [See Appendix 2 Suspensions Protocol].

6. PERSONAL DETAILS/CONFIDENTIALITY

6.1 The information given by the applicant and sought by Fife Housing Register on behalf of the Association is aimed at accurately assessing housing need. This information will be treated as confidential and will not be passed on to or discussed with any other person without permission from the applicant in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

6.2 The Data Protection Act 1998 gives applicants the right to see information which is held by the Association about him/her. Any data held with regard to applicants will not normally be seen by any member of the Committee of Management.

7. ACCESS ROUTES TO HOUSING

Applications can be received in a number of ways. However the same principles, objectives and priorities underpin all routes to the provision of housing. The most common route, direct application, is covered in Section 8. However the alternative access routes are detailed as follows:

7. ACCESS ROUTES TO HOUSING (Continued)

7.1 Emergency/Special Cases

Can arise where urgent decants are required from fire or flood damaged properties. In addition there may be cases that cannot be adequately assessed under the Common Assessment of Need, but where the Association may be able to assist. These cases may be considered by the Housing Officer and the Director, and may be referred to the Housing Management Sub-Committee in exceptional circumstances.

Any allocation outwith the normal Allocation Policy shall be recorded in the Register of special Cases.

7.2 Mutual Exchanges

Can allow tenants of the Association and other housing associations and Fife Council to solve their own housing needs. The Association encourages this housing option as it results in increased tenant satisfaction without any loss of rent or void property costs. (The Associations Mutual Exchange Policy outlines the eligibility and timescales of an exchange).

7.3 Transfers

Tenants of the Association may apply to move in order to satisfy the need for another bedroom, or where their house is now too large, or where a medical need has arisen for a move to a more suitable property. Transfers are facilitated by the Association wherever possible - eligibility criteria are outlined in the Transfer Policy.

7.4 Mobility Schemes

Mobility Schemes are promoted by the Association including moveUK.

7.5 Section 5 – Homeless Referrals

The Association has entered into an agreement with Fife Council whereby a proportion of lets are made available to homeless applicants with a Homeless Priority. The Association will aim to let 20% of its vacant properties annually to this group of applicants but the actual number will depend on the type of properties becoming available in any given year. Section 5 Referrals will be dealt with in accordance with the Protocol agreed with Fife Council and will be monitored through Fife Council Nominations Group.

7. ACCESS ROUTES TO HOUSING (Continued)

7.6 Assignment

This can allow applicants who meet the Association's Assignment Policy requirements to assume a tenancy where a tenant wishes to terminate.

8. THE ALLOCATION SYSTEM

8.1 Structure

The Association will consider applicants in the following groups:

- Single People and Couples
- Family Groups
- Older People/ People requiring Barrier Free or Wheelchair Adapted Housing

Applicants may be in one or more of these groups and can request housing in the Glenrothes or Levenmouth area.

8.2 The Pointing System

The pointing scheme is held on Fife Housing Register and points are awarded on the basis of assessed housing need. The Association accesses applications from the shared list and offers of accommodation will be targeted to those in greatest housing needs. (Appendix 1 – Common Assessment of Need).

The following categories make up the pointing scheme:

- **Urgent Housing Need** – Statutory Homelessness, Severe Harassment, Closure Order
- **Lack of Security** – Time Limited Tenancy, Notice to Quit, Tenants without a Lease, Owners in the Process of Re-Possession or Advised to Sell, Non-Householder
- **Poor Housing Circumstances** – Lacking Amenities, Unsafe Water Supply, Inadequate Drainage, Rising or Penetrating Damp, Lack of Central Heating, Overcrowding, Underoccupation, Sharing Facilities, Children's Social Needs

8.2 **The Pointing System** (Continued)

- **Social and Medical Needs** – Move to Give or Receive Support, Medical Conditions Made Worse by the Applicant's Current Housing
- **Management Needs** – Awarded by Managers for Best Use of Stock

Full details of the points awarded within each category are detailed in Appendix 1.

9. **DETERMINING PRIORITIES**

- 9.1 In practice, individual applicants will usually have a combination of the housing need categories listed at 8.2 and will be listed in the Category within which they have the most points award.
- 9.2 Applicants whose points award places them in a position to receive an offer will be visited by the Housing Officer prior to an offer being made to confirm that the points assessment remains accurate.
- 9.3 Allocations will normally be made to the applicant with the highest points in any group. However, in the interests of achieving a balanced mix of tenants within a neighbourhood the Association reserves the right to allocate to a lower pointed applicant. This will only be done in exceptional circumstances and the Association will ensure an alternative offer is made to any applicant by-passed, as quickly as possible.
- 9.4 Where there are applicants with an equal level of points, consideration may be given to the overall mix of tenants in an estate when determining which applicant should be made an offer or the offer may be made to the applicant who was on the housing list first.
- 9.5 Allocations will as far as possible be made to applicants in the different categories on a rotational basis although this will largely be determined by the size and type of the property available.

10. APPLICATIONS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS, STAFF OR THEIR RELATIVES

Applications will be accepted from staff and close relatives or family members of staff and Committee Members. The Committee of Management must approve any allocation made to someone in this category in accordance with this Policy. Details of the Allocation will be entered in the Benefits to Staff and Committee Members' Register held by the Association.

11. AN OFFER OF ACCOMMODATION

11.1 The Director has delegated authority to make offers of accommodation to applicants within the context of the Association's Allocations Policy.

11.2 Applicants refusing two reasonable offers of accommodation from the Fife Housing Register partners will have their application suspended for a year. Where an offer of an Association property is refused, the Housing Officer will interview the applicant to ascertain the reasons for refusal, decide whether the offer was fair and ensure that FHR records are accurately updated so that the need for suspension is minimised.

12. CANCELLATION OF APPLICATIONS

12.1 An application may be cancelled:

- At the applicant's request
- On the death of the applicant
- If the applicant does not reply to correspondence from the FHR Team

13. INFORMATION AND ADVICE

13.1 The Association aims to provide a comprehensive advice service to all potential applicants covering access to the housing list in Fife and housing options with FHR partners. Applicants will be issued with a Housing Information Guide and offered an interview to discuss their housing situation and other housing options.

13.2 Copies of the Association's Allocation Policy are available on request and a summary of the policy can be made available in a number of other languages, in larger print and on audio tape if requested.

14. APPEALS PROCEDURE

- 14.1 All applicants have the right to appeal against any decision made concerning the assessment of their housing application. The appeal should be made in writing in the first instance and will be referred to the FHR Management Team for a decision.
- 14.2 Applicants who wish to appeal against a decision concerning the allocation of an Association property should do so in accordance with the Association's Complaints Procedure, a copy of which can be obtained from the Association's offices or by post.

15. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 15.1 The Association will embrace diversity, promote equal opportunities for all and eliminate unlawful discrimination in all areas of work. We welcome applications from anyone in housing need regardless of colour, race, religion, gender, disability, age or sexual orientation. Applications and applications are monitored to ensure that no applicant is discriminated against on any of these grounds.

16. MONITORING AND POLICY REVIEW

- 16.1 The allocation of social rented housing is a key area of the Association's operations. It is essential that the allocation process is monitored effectively.
- 16.2 Quarterly reports are made to the Housing Management Sub-Committee on property allocations covering: house type, number of offers made and source of application. In addition, annual reports are presented outlining gender and ethnic origin, family composition and the basis on which allocations have been made.
- 16.3 The Association completes SCORE monitoring forms for every allocation, enabling an annual performance comparison to be made with other housing providers.
- 16.4 The monitoring of performance will enable the Association to set future targets in relation to the allocation process and help to shape the three yearly policy review.

17. IMPLEMENTATION AND USE OF THIS POLICY

As an "umbrella policy", this policy should be viewed in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:

- Mutual Exchange Policy and Procedure
- Transfer Policy and Procedure
- Section 5 Protocol (Homeless Persons)
- Internal Management Plan
- Standing Orders and delegated authorities
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Racial Harassment Policy
- Complaints Procedure

Future legislation and requirements from Communities Scotland may require more Policies or at least amendments to the above. Such changes will take into account their relationship with this Policy.

18. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The Association is affected by a number of legal issues governing the Allocation Policy. Listed below are the relevant Acts and it should be assumed that amendments and additions to them have been included:

- Housing (Scotland) Act Ltd
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended)
- Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981
- Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003
- Data Protection Act (1998)
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Reference has also been made to:

- SFHA Raising Standards in Housing Allocations
- Performance Standards for social landlords and homelessness functions AS1.2 Lettings.

Appendix 1 – Common Assessment of Need

The Pointing Scheme – The Scheme is held on Fife Housing Register computer system and points are awarded on the basis of assessed housing need.

URGENT HOUSING NEEDS

Statutory Homelessness	100 pts
Severe Harassment	100 pts
Close Order / Closure for re-development	100 pts

POOR HOUSING CIRCUMSTANCES

Lacking Amenities	12 pts
Unsafe Water Supply, Inadequate Drainage, Rising & Penetrating Dampness	12 pts
Lacking Central Heating	5 pts

Overcrowding short i.e. Points awarded when:	25 pts per room
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 share a bedroom – child of 8 years or over sharing with sibling of opposite sex • Any child reaches 13 • Child shares a bedroom with a step-sibling • Child shares a bedroom with parent 	
Severe Overcrowding (2+overcrowding factors)	extra 10 pts

Under-occupation	5 pts
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Sharing Facilities	6 pts
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Children Social Needs	10/20 pts
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LACK OF SECURITY

Tenancy	
Time Limited Tenancy (no NTQ)	5 pts
Notice to Quit	75 pts
Tied Accommodation	75 pts
Short Assured Accommodation	75 pts
HM Forces Accommodation	75 pts
Tenants Without a Lease	25 pts

Owner Occupation	
Process of Re-possession / Advised to Sell	25 pts

Non-Householder (single people of families living "care of")	
Not sharing a bedroom	25 pts
Sharing a bedroom with sibling	25 pts
Sharing a bedroom with someone other than sibling	25 pts
No bedroom	25 pts
No fixed abode	25 pts
Families with children overcrowded	extra 25 pts

MANAGEMENT NEEDS

Awarded by Housing Managers for Best Use of Stock	120 pts
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SOCIAL AND MEDICAL NEEDS

Illness and Disability	20 / 40 / 60 pts
Sheltered Housing	25 / 30 / 50 pts
Special Needs Accommodation	20/ 60 pts

Violence and Harassment	10 / 30 pts
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Independent Living	
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Social / Personal Needs	10 / 25 / 40 pts
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Care Arrangements	10 pts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respite Care 	20 pts

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to Children• Foster Care	20 pts 20 pts
Children's Educational Needs	5/ 20 pts

Fife Housing Register Common Suspensions Protocol

Introduction

The following represents the recommendations of the CHR Project Team as the primary principles of suspension to operate for all partners within the CHR environment and to be applied at the point of application where circumstances permit but may be identified by an allocating officer.

Principles of Suspension

BEHAVIOUR

Anti-Social Behaviour and Harassment

General Applicants and Members of their household	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current ASBO • Evicted for an anti-social behaviour in the last 3 years • Is known to be involved in harassment including racial harassment – evidence requested from the police, HIT, Area Officer. Where legal action is being taken consult HIT for advice as appropriate 	<p>Suspended from the Housing List for 12 months then reviewed</p> <p>Organisations have the discretion to offer a SSST where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support is available • The applicant/household is willing to accept support • Best use of stock reasons
Tenants	Have an ASBO granted	Tenancy converted to SSST – <i>(organisation procedures apply)</i>
Both	Minor incidence of anti-social behaviour	Application remains live on list. Organisational discretion at the point of allocation

Criminal Behaviour

i.e. prostitution, fire raising, damage to residential property, violence against employees and others, dealing in illegal substances – all within residential property and proof of court action is required.

General Applicants	Conviction for criminal behaviour in the last 2 years within a residential property	Offered SSST with appropriate support (as determined by receiving landlord organisation)
Tenants	Conviction for criminal behaviour in the last 2 years within a residential property and going for eviction	Must not be moved

DEBT

Housing Benefit Overpayments

General Applicants and Tenants	Must show that a suitable arrangement in place to repay the debt	Housed and the Overpayment pursued by HB Section
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Rent Arrears / Past Tenants Arrears / Former Landlord Debts

General Applicants	With substantial rent debt	Offered SSST (only in cases of extensive housing need)
General Applicants and Tenants	With current or former tenancy rent arrears of more than one twelfth of the annual rent	Will be suspended pending a satisfactory arrangement (as determined by the debtor landlord) being maintained for a minimum period of three months and continuing to pay
General Applicants and Tenants	With other former tenancy debts	Will be suspended pending a satisfactory arrangement (as determined by the debtor landlord) being maintained for a minimum period of three months and continuing to pay

Tenants	With decree for eviction held	Must not be moved
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Fife Housing Register Common Suspensions Protocol

ACCOMMODATION STANDARDS

Unsatisfactory Tenancy Standards

Personal housekeeping standards should be disregarded and only the condition of fixtures and fitting need apply.

Transfers	Where the Re-let Exit Standard is applied and found to be unsatisfactory	Tenant(s) should be asked to bring it up to standard
Transfers	If work is not done in respect of the above and within the agreed time-scale	Application suspended until work is done
General Applicants	Private tenancies must be visited on the point of allocation and dealt with in a similar manner to Council/Housing Association tenants	<i>See Unsatisfactory Tenancy Standards above</i>

OTHERS

Offers of Housing

General Applicants and Tenants	Refusing 2 fair offers of housing without good reason <i>Good reason – hospitalisation, family trauma, long-term illness or, any other exceptional circumstance(s). Management discretion should be applied</i>	Suspended for 12 months then reviewed At the point of re-instatement should be asked to review their choices to ensure that they are made offers in the future which best suit their needs Applicants will not be allowed to remain on live lists and not receive offers of housing – applications withdrawn and applicants advised to make a revised application when they are ready to receive an offer
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Sexual Behaviour (moved to end)

General Applicants and Tenants	This is not necessarily about suspensions but to protect individual and community safety interests	Refer to established protocol
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Fraudulent Information

General Applicants	At the point of allocation (or earlier) the applicant is found to have supplied deliberately false or misleading information.	Applicant should be given the opportunity to rectify the situation to the satisfaction of the receiving landlord
General Applicants	When deliberately fraudulent information has been given to allow the applicant to be housed and this is not rectified	The application should be withdrawn and the applicant requested to complete a new form
Tenants	Fraudulent information found after allocation and it can be shown that the property was obtained by deception	Landlords reserve the right to take legal advice and any appropriate action as required

Exceptions and Discretion

Exceptional cases of hardship due to overcrowding or health problems (including unmet support needs) where suspension would normally apply, will be referred to the CHR Management Group for consideration and decision.

In the case of statutory Homelessness Referrals the suspensions protocol will be set aside.