

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Scottish Borders Housing Association Limited (referred to in this Policy as either the “Association” or “SBHA”) is a Registered Social Landlord with the primary objective of providing affordable social rented housing for those in the greatest housing need.
- 1.2 SBHA’s housing stock is located throughout the Scottish Borders with the exception of Berwickshire.
- 1.3 This Allocations Policy sets out principles and general guidance for the Association’s staff, tenants and applicants to ensure that properties are allocated fairly to those in housing need, whilst providing the greatest choice possible for applicants. The Policy applies to all housing applicants including those looking for a transfer and those seeking sheltered or amenity housing.
- 1.4 This Policy complies with current housing legislation, (including the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Management of Offenders (Scotland) Act 2005), and the Scottish Federation of Housing Association’s good practice guidance.
- 1.5 This Policy should be read in conjunction with SBHA’s Equal Opportunities Policy, Rent Arrears Policy, Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Mutual Exchange Policy.

2.0 ELIGIBILITY FOR ADMISSION TO THE ASSOCIATION’S HOUSING LIST

- 2.1 SBHA accepts applications from anyone aged 16 years or over. Applications will be accepted regardless of race, colour, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, disability, nationality or political opinion.
- 2.2 Provided an applicant is aged 16 years or over, SBHA does not take age into account when deciding on the applicant’s eligibility for housing, except in relation to Sheltered or Amenity Housing. For Sheltered or Amenity Housing, the main applicant applying for housing must be over the age of 60 years at the date of application.
- 2.3 Persons wishing to apply to the Association to be housed should complete and submit to SBHA an application form. The form can be completed on line as well as in paper form. Applicants will then be awarded points according to their housing need. (Details of how points are awarded are set out in **Appendix 1** to this Policy). All applicants must provide contact details when applying as all offers of tenancy will be communicated using telephone, text or email.
- 2.4 Incomplete applications are followed up by letter or telephone to ensure that applicants less able or familiar with forms receive equal consideration. Where an applicant seeks re-housing on medical or health grounds, he/she will be required to complete a health self-assessment form which is available to all applicants on request.

- 2.5 Applicants are required to declare on their application form that all information supplied is true. Applicants must contact SBHA to advise of any changes in their circumstances. Where the Association can demonstrate that an applicant has deliberately sought to distort or omit information to gain advantage over other applicants, their application will be suspended and priority removed. Should it come to the Association's attention that false or misleading information has been given, or information withheld in order to obtain a tenancy, action will be taken to recover possession of any property for which a tenancy has been granted.
- 2.6 Anti-Social Behaviour - If an applicant has been evicted for anti-social behaviour within the last 3 years, or the applicant (or a member of the proposed household) has been responsible for serious anti-social behaviour resulting in an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO), the Association will assess what steps the applicant has taken to remedy that behaviour before activating the application and allowing the applicant to bid for vacant properties. The decision on whether to suspend the applicant from bidding will be made by SBHA's Housing Manager and such suspensions will be for a maximum period of 1 year. SBHA will engage with the applicant to review their status at regular intervals during the period of suspension.
- 2.7 Tenancy-related debt - If an applicant (or member of the proposed household) has outstanding rent arrears or other tenancy related debt such as recharges from a former or current tenancy, the Association will suspend the applicant from bidding for vacant properties until the debt has reduced to a balance of less than one twelfth of the annual rent, or the applicant (or member of the proposed household) has kept to an agreed payment arrangement with the landlord for a period of no less than 3 months.
- 2.8 Current and former members of SBHA staff and the Board of SBHA and their close relations, are eligible to apply for housing. Any resulting allocation will be made on the basis of housing need in line with the other provisions of this Policy and will meet the current requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator in terms of Schedule 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. All such allocations will require to be approved by the Board of SBHA.
- 2.9 Transfer tenants - Existing SBHA tenants who would like to transfer from their current property should complete and submit an application form to the Association. Such persons will be entitled to bid for any property following submission of their application, provided that they are not ineligible under paragraph 2.6 or 2.7 of this Policy, and are not in breach of the terms of their current Tenancy Agreement. The condition of the transfer tenant's current property (including any garden area) must be of an acceptable standard (as defined by the Association in its Lettable Standard) before any confirmation of an offer will be provided by SBHA.
- 2.10 A satisfactory Landlord's reference in relation to the condition of the property and garden will also be required.

3.0 BIDDING FOR HOUSING

- 3.1 All of the Association's void properties will be advertised to applicants unless there is a good management reason for not doing so - e.g. a requirement for decanting.
- 3.2 Once an application has been registered by the Association, applicants can bid for any of the Association's available properties, details of which will be advertised in the local press, the Association's offices, on the Association's website etc. Bids may be submitted online or via automated telephone lines (charged at local rates). Any applicant experiencing problems should contact their local SBHA office. No written bids will be accepted. SBHA staff cannot place bids on behalf of applicants.

- 3.3 After the closing date set by the Association for bids for a particular house, bids will be analysed and the property offered to the applicant with the highest number of points. In the event of two or more bidders having the same number of points, priority will be given firstly to the applicants making best use of the property, or secondly in the event that there is still a tie, by date of application. If the tie break is between two or more Section 5 referrals, then the applicant whose application is received earliest by SBHA will be offered the property. (SBHA date stamp strictly applies).
- 3.4 All successful applicants will be contacted by the identified means of contact stated on their application form by 4pm on the closing date. If the applicant does not respond to contact by 4pm then this will be deemed a refusal.
- 3.5 A home visit will be made to all successful applicants (where appropriate) to confirm the applicant's circumstances before SBHA confirms the offer of tenancy.

4.0 SUSPENSIONS

- 4.1 If a successful bidder rejects 2 allocation offers, then SBHA will contact them to discuss the reasons for their refusals. If SBHA judges that the applicant needs support in the bidding process then SBHA will ensure that support is provided either by SBHA or via signposting to the appropriate agency. If after contact, an applicant turns down a further offer, then they will be suspended from bidding for a period of 3 months.
- 4.2 Bidders who have been awarded points because they have been the subject of a Section 5 homeless referral will only be allowed one refusal before losing their homeless priority points.

5.0 ADVICE AND SUPPORT FOR APPLICANTS

- 5.1 SBHA will provide information on how to apply and bid for properties in leaflet and poster form in all its offices and in other appropriate locations. Information will also be provided on the SBHA website.
- 5.2 Information will be translated into relevant languages (currently SBHA makes the information available in Portuguese, Russian and Polish but other languages will be accommodated according to circumstances) and can also be made available in large print or Braille or in audio form on request.
- 5.3 SBHA will ensure that other Statutory and Voluntary agencies are aware of the application and bidding process so that vulnerable adults can be supported in accessing housing.
- 5.4 SBHA staff will provide help and support with completing application forms and logging bids, when requested.

6.0 PUBLICATION OF LETTINGS

- 6.1 SBHA will publish the bidding outcomes, in anonymised form, on a monthly basis on the SBHA website. The purpose of this is to provide transparent information on SBHA allocations and to indicate to potential bidders the level of demand for particular property types and locations.

7.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 7.1 SBHA will conduct regular surveys of applicants to assess how they find the process of applying and bidding for properties.
- 7.2 SBHA will continually monitor the level of applications and bids from vulnerable adults, and ensure appropriate ongoing liaison with Statutory and Voluntary agencies to ensure that help and support is given to this group of people.
- 7.3 SBHA will evaluate all bids made annually, by size of property, area, numbers of bids made and publish the results on the SBHA website.
- 7.4 SBHA will collect information on behalf of SCORE for the purposes of national monitoring and recording of housing allocations. Information is sent to St Andrews University for Housing Policy Research and is disaggregated.
- 7.5 This Policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management every three years, or earlier if required by changes in legislation or best practice.

POINTING OF APPLICATIONS – APPENDIX 1

The pointing system acknowledges the requirement of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 for Registered Social Landlords to provide housing for homeless applications under Section 5 of the Act.

Applicants living in properties designated by Environmental Health as Below Tolerable Standard, should contact the Homeless Team at Scottish Borders Council's Jedburgh Office.

The pointing system also acknowledges that SBHA has a limited pool of fully wheelchair adapted properties, and level access properties and wishes to ensure that these are allocated appropriately.

In the event that a Section 5 referral and an applicant with identified specific housing adaptations both bid for a property, then the allocation will be made to the applicant requiring the specific adaptation.

The pointing system takes account of multiple needs.

ATTRIBUTE	POINTS
Section 5/Duty to Co-operate referral	150
Overcrowding or under occupation	20 points for each bedroom under or over occupied. A maximum of 80 points to be awarded
Health - based on the Unified Health Assessment	A – 40 points B – 30 points C – 20 points D – 10 points E – 0 points
Need for an adapted property	150 for full wheelchair or fully level access property

Overcrowding definition

All children, unborn children (with Certificate of Confinement) will count as 1 person.

Same sex children up to the age of 16 can share a bedroom. (Once the person reaches the age of 16 they are entitled to apply for housing independently if they so wish).

When a child attains the age of 10 years they will not be expected to share a bedroom with a child of a different sex in their new tenancy.

Access to Children

Parents who have access to children (see definition of overcrowding above) for 3 nights per week or more will be entitled to receive points for the appropriate number of bedrooms. Written confirmation will be required.