

Allocations Policy



Working with our Tenants

All DGHP publications can be made available on tape, in Braille, large print and community languages.

For further details please contact our Customer Service Centre
0800 011 3447 (freephone)
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Dumfries & Galloway Housing Partnership

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Introduction

- 1.1 This Policy describes the rules Dumfries & Galloway Housing Partnership (DGHP) uses to manage access to its housing list, and how we let our houses.

2. Allocations Policy aims and objectives

- 2.1 DGHP's aims are:
- a) To provide access to good quality, affordable rented housing for people from all sections of the community who have high levels of housing or support needs.
 - b) To help create and maintain thriving, stable communities which are attractive places to live.
- 2.2 In addressing these aims, we will be responsive to the diverse needs of communities in Dumfries and Galloway, including regeneration areas in the main towns and fragile rural communities. We will make sure our housing is accessible to existing residents and to people wishing to move or return to the region.
- 2.3 The objectives of our Allocations Policy are:
- a) To meet all of our legal obligations and provide access to our houses in a way that is clear and fair to all.
 - b) To provide everyone who applies to us for a house with good quality information and choice about where they want to live.
 - c) To make the best use of our houses, by letting our houses to the people who will benefit most from the types of houses on offer.
 - d) To support Dumfries and Galloway Council in meeting the needs of people who are homeless and other vulnerable people.
 - e) To work closely with all of DGHP's partners (the Council, other social landlords, voluntary agencies and tenant/community groups), so that housing allocations contribute to achieving wider aims for communities throughout the region.

3. Equal Opportunities

- 3.1 DGHP's core values include being fair and equitable, respecting diversity, and treating every individual with courtesy and respect.
- 3.2 In implementing this Policy, DGHP will strive to provide equality of opportunity. We will do this irrespective of factors such as sex or marital

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status, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or other personal attributes, such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

- 3.3 DGHP will meet its specific legal duties to prevent direct or indirect discrimination in providing services, because of a person's gender, race, disability, sexual orientation or religion or belief. These duties are set out in legislation and in statutory Codes of Practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- 3.4 To put our commitment to equal opportunities into effect, we will:
- Publicise our housing widely
 - Be flexible in how we provide information and advice, to remove barriers to communication and understanding
 - Monitor access to the housing list and re-housing outcomes for different groups
 - Give priority to the housing needs of disabled people and people who are victims of domestic abuse, racial harassment and other hate crimes
 - Ensure our working practices and procedures are fair and accountable.

4. Legal and regulatory requirements

- 4.1 DGHP will assess housing applications and let houses in line with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements. We have taken account of these obligations throughout this Policy and in our working procedures.
- 4.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, requires us to:
- Provide open access to our housing list.
 - Give reasonable preference, when we are letting houses, to:
 - People who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness;
 - People living in houses that do not meet the tolerable standard;
 - People living in houses that are overcrowded;
 - Large families;
 - People living under unsatisfactory housing conditions.
 - Take no account of certain factors (such as applicants' age, income, property ownership, length of residence in our area) when we are letting houses.
 - Publish our rules for letting houses.
 - Meet equal opportunities requirements in all of our services.
 - Provide the local authority with access to some of our houses, for people who the Council has assessed as being homeless.

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- 4.3 The letting of houses to past and present employees and board members of DGHP, and their close relatives, is subject to statutory controls (Schedule 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and regulatory guidance). We will comply fully with these requirements, and ensure that anyone in these categories who applies for a tenancy does not receive any special treatment as a result of their connection with DGHP.
- 4.4 DGHP will also follow the regulatory guidance contained in “Performance Standards for social landlords”. Our performance in meeting these Standards may be examined by the Scottish Housing Regulator from time to time. The Standards oblige us to:
- Provide fair and open access to our housing list and assessment process.
 - Work with others to maximise and simplify access routes into our housing.
 - Let our houses in a way that gives reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need; makes best use of available stock; maximises choice; and helps to sustain communities.
 - Ensure that our approach to letting houses is well managed, and that we achieve high standards of customer service, information and consultation.

5. Service standards for housing applicants

- 5.1 DGHP aims to provide a first-class service to everyone who applies to us for a house. These are the main things we will do to help achieve this:

Service Standards

- 1) You can apply to us for a house and be added to our housing list at any time.
- 2) We will give you a leaflet on “How to get a house”, along with any help you need to complete your housing application. We will also give you a free copy of our Allocations Policy or a summary of the Policy if you ask us for this.
- 3) All information and letters we give you will be in plain language.
- 4) If you need information in another language, or in another format (such as Braille, large print or audio tape), we will give you this free of charge, as soon as we can. We will also arrange for a translator if you need one.
- 5) We will write to you within 10 working days of receiving your application, to confirm that you have been placed on the housing list. We will tell you what points you have received and your position on the housing list.
- 6) If we need any additional information to complete our assessment, we will tell you clearly what you need to provide. We will also contact you each year, to ask you to tell us about any changes in your circumstances.

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- 7) We will treat as confidential any information you give us. If we need to get information from anyone else to assess your application, we will get your written consent for us to do this.
- 8) If you wish to see any personal information we hold about you, you can ask to see this.
- 9) You will be able to state your preferred areas and house types when you apply. We will not put any limits on the on the areas you can choose.
- 10) We will give you information about our houses, so that you can assess your chances of being re-housed in your preferred areas.
- 11) We will normally make you up to three offers of re-housing, in line with the choices you have made in your application form.
- 12) If you turn down an offer, we will contact you to discuss the reasons and to ask whether you want to change your choices.
- 13) Before making an offer of housing, we will visit you at home if you live in Dumfries and Galloway, to make sure that your housing application is correct and up to date.
- 14) We will arrange for you to view any house that we offer you.
- 15) After you receive an offer, you will have 2 working days to let us know if you wish to accept the offer.
- 16) If you turn down three offers that meet your choices without a good reason, we may not make you any further offers for six months.
- 17) If we suspend your housing application, we will tell you the reasons, the length of time your application will be suspended for, and what needs to happen before we can consider you for offers.
- 18) We will tell you how you can appeal if you do not agree with any of our decisions – for example, about the points you receive, or if we decide to suspend your application.
- 19) We will tell you how to complain, and investigate your complaint fully and fairly, if you are dissatisfied with the service you have received from us.
- 20) We will ask all new tenants and a proportion of people on the housing list for feedback about the quality of service we have provided. We will use your feedback to improve our service and working practices.

6. Applying to DGHP for a house

Who can apply

- 6.1 Anyone aged sixteen or over who applies to us at any time will be placed on our housing list.

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- 6.2 If you want to exchange your house with another tenant, you do not need to join the housing list to do this. We have a separate policy on mutual exchanges, available from any DGHP office.

How to apply

- 6.3 To get onto the housing list, you will need to fill in a Housing Application form, telling us about your housing needs and where you would like to be re-housed. You can get an application form from:

- DGHP's Customer Service Centre: **Freephone 0800 011 3447**
- Any DGHP office
- The DGHP website (www.dghp.org.uk)
- The offices of all other social landlords in the region.

- 6.4 You can also be considered for housing if you are:

- Referred to us by Dumfries and Galloway Council as homeless
- Referred to us by an agency that has a re-housing agreement with us.

- 6.5 Our information leaflet, "How to get a house" explains what information we need from you and the procedures we follow when making decisions.

Other social landlords

- 6.6 Your chances of being re-housed may be greater if you also apply to other social landlords, as well as DGHP.

- 6.7 We are currently examining the possibility of using a common housing application form with three other social landlords in the region. These are Loreburn Housing Association; Irvine Housing Association; and Home Scotland.

- 6.8 When introduced, the common application form would allow you to say which landlords you wish to apply to, by filling in the same form. You would then be added to the housing list of each of the landlords you have chosen. Each landlord would keep its own housing list and follow its own rules in deciding how to let its houses.

Placing Applications on the Housing List

- 6.9 After registering your application, we will assess your housing application. This will take account of:

- Your present housing circumstances and needs
- The size of house you need
- The areas and house types you have said you would like to be considered for

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- Whether you have any particular needs such as a ground floor or adapted house
- Whether you have applied to us directly, or are being considered for housing because you have been referred to us by Dumfries and Galloway Council or another agency

Reviewing applications

- 6.10 We aim to review all housing applications every year, to make sure the information we have about your needs stays up to date.
- 6.11 We will do this by contacting you, to ask you to highlight any changes in your circumstances, housing needs or preferences.
- 6.12 If you do not respond to contact from us, we will try to contact you a second time. If you still do not respond, we will write to you to tell you that you will be removed from the housing list.
- 6.13 In addition to these reviews, you should tell us if there are any changes to your household's circumstances – this could affect your chances of being re-housed. You can also contact us at any time if you want to change the choices you stated in your original application.

Deferred Applications

- 6.14 You might wish to apply for housing, without being considered for offers in the immediate future. You can ask to have your application placed on hold until a future date. This means that we will not make offers of housing during the period you have stated.
- 6.15 We will check whether you wish your application to stay on hold, when we review your housing application each year. Or you can contact us at any time, to tell us that you now wish to be considered for offers.

Suspended applications

- 6.16 Everyone has a right to have their application added to our housing list. But there are some circumstances where you may stay on the list but we will not consider you for re-housing for a specified period of time.
- 6.17 DGHP aims to minimise the use of suspensions and will assess each case individually. More information about suspensions is provided at the end of the Policy, but the reasons for placing an application on hold may include:
- You owe us, or another landlord, a tenancy-related debt which is more than one month's rent, and you have not kept to a repayment arrangement for a 3 month period
 - You or a member of your household have behaved in an anti-social manner
 - You have given false information on your application form

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- You or any members of your household have broken some condition of your tenancy agreement, such as causing damage to your home
- You have not provided information we need to assess your application despite reminders
- You have refused 3 offers of housing and have not reviewed your choices for housing when asked to do so.

7. Priority for Re-housing

Re-housing categories

7.1 DGHP gives priority to applicants based on their housing need, and by taking account of the legal requirements we must meet. We place applicants into the five categories shown below, and then decide who has the highest priority for re-housing in each category, based on their needs:

Category	Who this category covers	How we decide who has priority for re-housing
Housing list	People who are not already DGHP tenants who apply to us direct for a house	DGHP points system
Transfer	People who are already DGHP tenants who apply for a move to another house, for example because their current home is no longer suitable	DGHP points system
Homeless referrals	People who Dumfries and Galloway Council passes to us as homeless and eligible for permanent re-housing under the law	Referral agreement with the Council (we have a legal duty to re-house people passed to us by the Council)
Regeneration	People living in DGHP houses who need to move because their current house is being demolished or redeveloped as part of a regeneration scheme.	DGHP re-housing procedures for regeneration areas
Other priority needs	This category includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People passed us for re-housing under agreements with other agencies (e.g. people leaving care). • People who apply to DGHP direct and who need to be re-housed as a matter of urgency because of domestic abuse or serious harassment 	Referral agreements with other agencies (for people leaving care) DGHP Allocations Policy (these cases are dealt with as a priority rather than under the points system, because of the exceptionally urgent circumstances involved)

7.2 DGHP's points system for housing list and transfer applicants is shown at the end of this Policy, with a summary in the "How to get a house" leaflet.

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7.3 In summary, these are the housing needs for which you can receive points:

- 1) You are living in a house that is in very poor condition, is below the tolerable standard or does not have basic amenities
- 2) You are living in a caravan on a permanent site, and the caravan is in very poor condition
- 3) You do not have secure accommodation
- 4) Your accommodation is overcrowded or is too large for your household
- 5) You have to share basic facilities such as a kitchen or bathroom with others
- 6) Your present home is unsuitable because you have problems with mobility or a medical condition
- 7) You cannot continue to live in your present home because of domestic abuse or serious harassment
- 8) You need to move to give or receive care and support
- 9) You have young children and are living in a flat with no private garden

Annual Lettings Plan

7.4 Each year, we will let some of our houses to people in all of the categories we have set, so that we can respond to different types of housing needs and contribute to our aim of maintaining sustainable communities.

7.5 DGHP prepares an Annual Lettings Plan each year. This sets out how many houses we expect to become available in the year ahead, and how many of these we plan to let to people in the five lettings categories.

7.6 We set a target number of lets for each lettings category. This is a broad guide rather than a fixed quota. For example, if the Council refers more homeless households to us for re-housing than we expected, we have a legal duty to provide accommodation even if this would mean exceeding the target we set for lets to homeless households.

7.7 We will publicise our lettings plans to local agencies and people on our housing list. During the year, we will monitor progress in implementing the Annual Lettings Plan, and report this to DGHP's Customer Services Committee. DGHP will also consult with the Council regarding changes to the annual lettings plan. The Customer Services Committee is responsible for approving any changes that need to be made to the targets.

Making the best use of our houses

7.8 We put each application on the housing list according to the type and size of the house that you need. This helps make sure that each house is let to a household that will make the best use of the house.

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7.9 We work out the number of rooms you need as follows, based on who will be living permanently in your household:

- No more than two people should have to share a bedroom
- One bedroom for couples/partners
- One bedroom for single adults/parents
- One bedroom for two children of different sex up to 8 years old
- One bedroom for two children of the same sex up to 12 years old
- One bedroom for each child of 12 years or over

7.10 We make common sense exceptions to these rules, depending on individual circumstances. For example:

- If you need an extra bedroom for a medical reason
- If someone living in your household is pregnant (and has passed the first three months of the pregnancy)
- If you need a specially designed or adapted house
- If you have access to children who do not live with you
- If you provide foster care, or have been pre-approved to provide foster care or to adopt children.

We will normally ask you to provide information in support of your application, if you need a larger house than normal.

7.11 We will also consider you for a larger house than you need, if there are no other applicants who need the size of house on offer.

7.12 We will not normally offer a house if it is too small for your household. We will make an exception if you are already overcrowded and the house on offer would improve your situation. If you are re-housed in this way, you can stay on the housing list for a bigger house.

Medical priority

7.13 If you need to be re-housed for medical reasons, we will ask you to complete a medical application. This will be independently assessed by a Community Medical Specialist from Dumfries and Galloway Health Board's Public Health Department. DGHP will pay for the cost of the assessment.

7.14 The Community Medical Specialist's report will tell us whether you qualify for medical priority and what level of priority we should give. The report will usually recommend what type of home would be most suitable, for example a ground floor property with no stairs. DGHP will only offer re-housing in line with the Community Medical Specialist's recommendations.

7.15 If you receive the highest level of medical points, we will contact you regularly if we feel that your area choices are limiting your chances of being

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re-housed more quickly. We will give you advice on whether you should consider changing your preferred areas.

8. How we let our houses

Deciding who will receive an offer

- 8.1 Joining the housing list does not mean that we will always be able to make you an offer. This depends on your housing need, demand from other people on the list, the number of properties that become available, and the number of houses we need to meet homelessness and regeneration obligations. You will not necessarily move up the list just because of how long you have been waiting.
- 8.2 While most of our properties are popular, there are different levels of demand for some of them. This may mean that we can consider people with lower points levels for properties or areas where there is less demand.
- 8.3 When a property becomes available for let we will let it in line with this Policy. Firstly, we will decide which category of applicant the house will be offered to, taking account of the Policy, our Annual Lettings Plan targets, whether the property is required for homeless or regeneration area applicants, and best use of our housing. To make sure we do this in an accountable way:
- Our staff record the reasons for their decisions about which category of applicant a house is offered to;
 - We will monitor lets to each category, so that applicants in all categories are receiving a fair deal (for example, based on the type of houses and the popularity of areas being offered).
- 8.4 Then we will select the applicant with the highest priority, taking account of who is waiting for that size of house and area.
- If a property is being let to a homeless person referred by the Council, we will base our decision on the criteria specified in the referral.
 - If a property is being let to a regeneration area applicant, we will base our decision on when applicants need to vacate their present home.
 - If a property is being let to a housing list or a transfer applicant, we will normally offer the house to the applicant with the most points. If two or more people have the same number of points, we offer the house to the person who has been in housing need the longest.
- 8.5 If a house is refused 3 or more times, or it is proving difficult to identify anyone interested in it, we may consider advertising or other methods of finding a tenant. We may also contact other agencies for referrals of suitable candidates.

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- 8.6 Our lettings staff will maintain a clear record of how individual lettings decisions were made. The decision-making process will be scrutinised by a second member of staff before the house is allocated, and decisions will be reviewed regularly by the team manager for quality assurance purposes.

Sheltered housing

- 8.7 We will only offer sheltered housing to people who have a current medical, social, safety or security requirement. People living alone or couples are eligible, and in the case of couples, only one partner needs to meet this criteria.

Adapted housing

- 8.8 We will consult with Occupational Therapists when we allocate houses adapted for people with disabilities. If an adapted house meets the professional recommendation for more than one person on the list, we will offer the house to the person with the most points. If two or more applicants have equal points, we will take account of the number of medical points and who has been in housing need the longest.

Special Lets

- 8.9 In very exceptional circumstances, we may consider allocating a property to respond to a situation which is not provided for in this Policy. We will only do this if there is an urgent and demonstrable need.
- 8.10 Decisions about any special lets will be made by the Customer Services Committee. If an allocations decision needs to be made outside the Committee's meetings cycle, a panel of at least three members of the Committee will have delegated authority to do this, with its decision reported to the next meeting of the full Committee.

9. Other allocations issues

Homeless applicants referred by Dumfries and Galloway Council

- 9.1 DGHP works closely with Dumfries and Galloway Council, to help the Council meet its legal obligations towards homeless people and people threatened with homelessness.
- 9.2 In some cases, people who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness approach DGHP in the first instance. DGHP will provide advice and assistance, by referring the applicant to the Council and by encouraging them to make a direct housing application to DGHP.
- 9.3 DGHP has a legal duty to provide permanent accommodation, where the Council refers people to us for this purpose under Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. To manage this process, we have agreed homeless referral procedures with the Council.

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- 9.4 The Council's policy is to ensure that one reasonable offer of re-housing is made to applicants it has referred to us under Section 5. DGHP will therefore make one suitable offer in responding to the referral.
- 9.5 In responding to homeless referrals, we will offer accommodation that meets the specified needs as soon as a suitable property becomes available. If more than one homeless applicant has an equal need for a property, we will offer the property in date order, based on the date of the homeless application.
- 9.6 We will take positive measures to make sure that homeless applicants are treated fairly in relation to the quality of offers they receive. We will do this by:
- Working with the Council and the applicant, to clearly identify the applicant's re-housing needs (for example, in relation to the size of the house; its location in relation to support networks and the household's places of employment or education; and taking account of any medical, support or social needs);
 - Matching our offer, as far as possible, to the applicant's needs and preferences;
 - Making further offers, if the Council upholds any appeals about the suitability of the original offer;
 - Monitoring the re-housing outcomes for individual households and for homeless households as a whole, to ensure that homeless households are receiving fair access to all of our house types and stock areas.
- 9.7 If a Section 5 referral does not result in the applicant being re-housed for whatever reason, the applicant will be entitled to receive three offers in respect of their housing list application.

Serious harassment

- 9.8 Everyone has the right to live free from violence and abuse. Serious harassment can take different forms including:
- Hate crimes (for example, racial harassment, harassment against people with mental health issues, disabled people, gay, lesbian or transgender people or people with HIV); and/or
 - Violence and unprovoked assault.
- 9.9 DGHP will work closely with the Police and other agencies to take action against any of our tenants who are the perpetrators of harassment.

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- 9.10 We will also support victims of hate crimes and serious harassment who wish to be re-housed:
- If you have not already made a homeless application or contacted the police or a victim support agency, we will provide advice and assistance about how you can do this.
 - We will make the re-housing of victims an over-riding priority under our own Allocations Policy.
- 9.11 If your situation meets the criteria for urgent re-housing, we will consider your case under the “Other Priority Needs” category of the Allocations Policy, rather than with reference to our points system. However, you should note that this priority category is intended only for cases involving hate crimes and serious harassment, where there is a danger to your life or safety. We will not give priority for lower-level situations such as neighbour disputes.
- 9.12 We will normally adopt a position of belief and give priority for re-housing if you tell us that you have been the victim of a hate crime or have suffered serious harassment and need to be re-housed because your life or safety is at risk. If the information available to us or subsequent events show that the claim is unfounded, we will remove your application from the priority category
- 9.13 Decisions to award priority for hate crimes or serious harassment will be made by DGHP’s Head of Housing Management.
- 9.14 We will make you one offer if we give priority. If you refuse the offer we make, this will normally result in your priority being withdrawn, although you will be able to stay on the housing list and will keep any points you may have for your other housing needs.
- 9.15 We will use our best efforts to offer a property away from the area where the harassment took place, and close to areas where you have a local connection.

Domestic abuse

- 9.16 DGHP will provide assistance with re-housing people experiencing domestic abuse. We will do this whether the abuse is physical, sexual or emotional; whether the victim is male or female; and whether they already live in Dumfries and Galloway, or are seeking to move or return the area to escape the abuse.
- 9.17 We will normally adopt a position of belief if somebody tells us they are experiencing abuse. We will not insist that they should provide evidence of the abuse they have experienced. Nor will we take account of any previous housing applications they have made to us, since it may be difficult to leave the home in many cases.

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- 9.18 We recognise that safety is paramount and will always respect the confidentiality of information to preserve victims' safety.
- 9.19 If the person experiencing abuse has not already made a homeless application or contacted a support agency, we will provide advice and assistance about how you can do this.
- 9.20 Where appropriate, and with the victim's agreement, we will request assistance from the Council's homelessness team or other suitable agencies like Women's Aid to provide emergency accommodation.
- 9.21 We will make the re-housing of victims of domestic abuse a priority under our own Allocations Policy. We will consider applications from people experiencing abuse under the "Other Priority Needs" category of the Allocations Policy, rather than with reference to our points system.
- 9.22 We will make you one suitable offer if we place your application in this priority category. If you refuse the offer we make, this will normally result in the priority being withdrawn, although you will be able to stay on the housing list and be considered under the points system.
- 9.23 We will try to offer a house where you have a local connection (such as family, school or employment), and in a place where you feel safe.

Relationship breakdown

- 9.24 If you live with somebody and your relationship breaks down you can join the housing list. We will provide advice and help on your rights. If you have made a joint application with a former partner, we will give each partner separate points according to their new housing circumstances.

Community Lettings Initiatives

- 9.25 In support of its aim of creating and maintaining stable communities, DGHP's Board may approve the use of community lettings initiatives. This involves modifying the normal allocations policy, to address particular issues at community level that cannot be met through the normal processes.
- 9.26 Community lettings initiatives need to be tailored to the specific needs of local areas where the normal Allocations Policy may not be sufficiently responsive or flexible. For example:
- In certain fragile rural communities where the supply of affordable housing is extremely limited, the aim may be to make housing more accessible to people who intend to live in and contribute to the local community. This could include existing residents who would otherwise have to leave the area, and incoming workers.
 - In areas where houses are difficult to let, the aim might be to target people who would otherwise not apply for housing in that area.

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- 9.27 The principles we will follow if we establish such initiatives are that:
- There must be a sound evidence base to show how local needs are not being addressed by the standard allocations process.
 - Local organisations should be actively involved in helping to identify community housing needs.
 - The contribution that housing allocations can make should be part of a broader approach to sustainable communities, involving the local authority and community planning partners.
 - Clear objectives should be set and monitoring and evaluation carried out, so that successes and failures can be identified.
 - Lettings initiatives will be time-limited, so that outcomes can be established and considered.
 - Lettings initiatives must always comply with the law on access and allocations. This means that we must still give reasonable preference to meeting certain types of housing needs and that we cannot impose any qualifying conditions based on the length of time applicants have lived in a particular area.

People with housing support needs

- 9.28 DGHP will enter into referral agreements with the local authority, health board and other agencies, to provide re-housing in the community for people who need support to maintain their tenancy, and for people who are leaving hospital or long-term residential care. In addition, people who need support can apply to us direct.
- 9.29 Housing support can be provided by DGHP's own support service, or by the wide range of support service providers we work with.
- 9.30 If an applicant needs support in order to sustain a tenancy, but there are no support arrangements in place, we will assess whether it is reasonable in all of the circumstances to make an offer of housing. The assessment will have regard to:
- The applicant's current circumstances
 - Any risks to the applicant or to others if a tenancy was granted without support.
- 9.31 If we decide that it would not be appropriate to give a tenancy without support being in place, we will tell the applicant the reasons for our decision, and advise them of their right to appeal against the decision.

Community Safety

- 9.32 Social landlords have a legal duty to consider the housing requirements of all applicants, including sex offenders. We acknowledge that not all sex

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offenders present a risk to the community, and the needs of offenders will be assessed in accordance with this Policy.

- 9.33 DGHP will seek to ensure that any risks to community safety are minimised. We will therefore request that the Police and criminal justice social work service carry out a risk assessment before a tenancy is granted. Where the risk assessment indicates that a sex offender poses a medium or high risk to the community, that person's housing needs will be assessed in the light of the reported risk. Therefore, any accommodation we offer will be appropriate to the assessed risk in relation to the type and location of the house, and the offender will be managed by the Police and criminal justice social work service, as appropriate.

Choice-Based Lettings

- 9.34 Under choice-based lettings initiatives, houses are advertised and applicants are short-listed based on responses to the advertisements rather than a general housing list.
- 9.35 DGHP does not currently operate choice-based lettings. We may investigate the benefits of introducing choice-based lettings on a pilot basis, for some of our housing stock. If we do this, we will develop clear criteria for any pilot scheme, and ensure that it is consistent with our legal obligations and regulatory and good practice advice on such schemes.

Tenancies

- 9.36 DGHP's general policy is to provide a Scottish Secure Tenancy when we re-let a house. We may offer Short Scottish Secure Tenancies in the specific circumstances permitted by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

Appeals and complaints

- 9.37 You have the right to appeal against:
- The points we give to your application
 - A decision to suspend you from receiving offers
 - A decision to cancel your housing application
 - Any decision we make which you believe has not been dealt with in accordance with our Allocations Policy.
- 9.38 You can ask raise your concerns informally with lettings officers in the Allocations Lettings and Voids team, or ask for a formal review of your case by the Allocations Lettings and Voids Manager.
- 9.39 If you are a section 5 referral, and feel that the accommodation offered does not meet your personal requirements, you can appeal immediately for the Council to review the. In these cases, we hold the property for five days to allow the review to be completed. If the Council agrees with the appeal, we will make an offer of another property to you. If the Council disagrees with

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the appeal, you will be allocated the same property as long as the decision is made within five days.

- 9.40 If you have applied for medical priority and wish to appeal against the independent adviser's decision, you should contact DGHP and we will pass on your appeal to the Community Medical Specialist service.
- 9.41 If you are dissatisfied with how we have considered your appeal or about the standard of service you have received, you can make a complaint using DGHP's Complaints Procedure. Information about how to make a complaint is available from DGHP offices. Complaints about allocations matters will be dealt with in accordance with DGHP's Complaints Policy
- 9.42 Having used DGHP's appeals procedure and then the complaints procedure, you can contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman if you wish to have your complaint considered by an independent body. Details are available from our offices or by contacting the Ombudsman direct at:

Freepost EH641
Edinburgh EH3 0BR
Telephone: 0800 377 7330
Email: ask@spsso.org.uk

10. Managing the Allocations Policy

Staff and Board roles and responsibilities

- 10.1 DGHP's Board is responsible for approval of the Allocations Policy, and for ensuring that our policy objectives and legal obligations are met.
- 10.2 Through DGHP's Standing Orders, the Board has delegated authority to the Customer Services Committee for the following activities:
- Detailed scrutiny of DGHP's policies for service delivery, before these are approved by the Board
 - Monitoring service performance and quality
 - Approval of DGHP's Annual Lettings Plan
 - Approval of any lets which are Special Exceptions under Schedule 7, Part 3 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

DGHP's four District Management Committees also play an important role in contributing to scrutiny of our policies and performance.

- 10.3 The officers with overall responsibility for the implementation of the Allocations Policy are the Director of Customer Services and the Head of Housing Management. DGHP's staff are responsible to the Board, through the Director of Customer Services, for ensuring the effective implementation of the Allocations Policy, and the services provided to housing applicants.

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- 10.4 Day to day service management is carried out by the Allocations Lettings and Voids (ALV) team, led by the ALV Manager. The AVL team is supported in its work by DGHP's Neighbourhood Managers, who carry out activities such as home visits to housing applicants, property viewings, and tenancy sign-ups.
- 10.5 Staff are involved in assessing and prioritising applications and giving information to applicants regarding their chances of re-housing. All of our housing management staff are fully trained in our Allocations Policy and have detailed procedures to follow.

Performance monitoring and continuous improvement

- 10.6 DGHP will closely monitor its performance in relation to access to housing and lettings. In addition to monitoring by management, regular reports on performance will be provided to the Customer Services Committee, which meets quarterly, and to District Management Committees.
- 10.7 Reports to the Customer Services Committee will provide information on housing applications received; turnover and houses let; re-letting performance; housing needs being met; homeless nominations and referrals; and performance against lettings plan targets. The Customer Services Committee will also receive annual reports providing a more detailed analysis of trends in applications, lettings outcomes, service user feedback and performance in meeting equalities objectives.
- 10.8 Performance and monitoring information will be used to inform the Annual Lettings Plan. We will also use this information to assess the quality of our services and what needs to be improved, to meet our policy objectives and customers' needs.
- 10.9 We will provide service users with information about our performance in letting houses, through newsletters, our annual report and other appropriate methods.
- 10.10 We will review this Policy in 3 years time, or earlier if required.

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**Appendix 1
Points Scheme for Housing Applications**

DGHP uses the following points scheme for all housing applications, except for:

- People referred to us by Dumfries and Galloway Council as homeless, where the Council has a duty to secure permanent re-housing;
- DGHP tenants who need to be re-housed because their current house is included in a DGHP regeneration scheme;
- People who are victims of domestic abuse, hate crimes or serious harassment, who need to be re-housed as a matter of urgency;
- People who are referred to us by the Council or other agencies, under formal agreements with DGHP.

The information below shows the points you can receive, and how we make decisions about each type of points. We will not give points if you deliberately provide false information, or if you deliberately and unreasonably make your housing situation worse to obtain a higher position on the housing list.

Type of Points	Points	How we will assess whether you will receive these points
1) Registration Points	5	All applicants will receive 5 points when we register your housing application.
<p>2) Your current accommodation is in poor condition and/or lacks basic amenities</p> <p>You can receive these points if your main and principle home is in poor condition, or does not meet the tolerable standard, or does not have basic amenities.</p> <p>If your accommodation fails <u>one</u> of the standards shown opposite</p> <p>If your accommodation fails <u>more than one</u> of the standards shown opposite</p>	<p>40</p> <p>45</p>	<p>If you tell us that there are problems with the condition of your accommodation, we will ask the Council's Environmental Services to inspect your accommodation to see if it has any of the following problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural problems • Severe rising or penetrating damp or water penetration • Unsatisfactory natural and artificial lighting, for ventilation and for heating • Unsatisfactory thermal insulation • No adequate piped supply of wholesome water within the house • No sink with an adequate supply of both hot and cold water within the house • No inside toilet for the exclusive use of the people living in the house • No fixed bath or shower and wash-hand basin, with hot and cold water • No effective system for the drainage and disposal of foul and surface water • Unsatisfactory or unsafe electricity supply • Unsatisfactory facilities for the cooking of food • Unsatisfactory access to external doors and

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Type of Points	Points	How we will assess whether you will receive these points
		outbuildings
<p>3) You live in a caravan on a permanent site, and your caravan is in very poor condition</p> <p>You can only receive these points if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your caravan is located on a permanent site, and • It is your main and principle home, and • It has one or more of the problems listed opposite 	40	<p>We will visit your caravan, to confirm whether it is affected by any of the following problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has no hot or cold water; • It has no inside toilet; • It has no fixed bath or shower • It suffers from severe damp and/or water penetration
<p>4) You do not have secure accommodation</p> <p>You can receive these points if you do not have secure accommodation or are threatened with homelessness. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You live in private rented accommodation and your lease has expired or you have been served with a notice to quit by your landlord through no fault of your own • You face mortgage repossession • You live in tied accommodation and your employer has told you that will have to leave your accommodation within the next 6 months (for example, as a result of retirement or redundancy) <p>We will provide everyone who receives points under this category with advice and assistance on homelessness, and refer you to Dumfries and Galloway Council.</p>	45	<p>We will ask you to provide us with appropriate evidence that you should receive these points, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of the notice to quit served by your landlord • A mortgage repossession order or affidavit confirming your intention to sell your house • A letter from your employer, if you are having to leave tied accommodation through no fault of your own <p>If you live in tied accommodation, you can apply for housing at any time and ask to have your application put on hold. You should tell us when you know exactly when you will have to leave your tied accommodation. Your points for insecure accommodation can be awarded up to 6 months before that date.</p> <p>If you are currently an owner-occupier, you can apply and be assessed for housing at any time. We do not take account of whether you are a property owner, and you can be considered for all of the types of points set out in the Policy. But to receive points under the “no secure accommodation” category, you must show us that you are having to give up your home.</p> <p>You will not receive these points if you are living in temporary accommodation provided by Dumfries and Galloway Council. If you are in this situation, the Council may refer you to us for permanent re-housing, when it has made a decision on your homeless application.</p>
<p>5) Overcrowding and under-occupation</p>		<p>You will receive points based on the information in your application form. We will visit you at home before you receive an offer, to make sure your points</p>

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Type of Points	Points	How we will assess whether you will receive these points
<p>Overcrowding</p> <p>You can receive overcrowding points if your current accommodation is not large enough for the people living with you.</p> <p>If you need <u>one</u> extra bedroom</p> <p>If you need <u>two</u> extra bedrooms</p> <p>If you need <u>three</u> extra bedrooms</p> <p>If you need <u>four or more</u> extra bedrooms</p> <p>Under-occupation</p> <p>You can receive points for under-occupation if you are already a DGHP tenant and your house is too large for your needs.</p> <p>If you have <u>one</u> extra bedroom</p> <p>If you have <u>two</u> extra bedrooms</p> <p>If you have <u>three</u> extra bedrooms</p> <p>If you have <u>four</u> extra bedrooms</p>	<p></p> <p>20</p> <p>40</p> <p>60</p> <p>80</p> <p></p> <p>15</p> <p>30</p> <p>45</p> <p>60</p>	<p>are correct.</p> <p>We will work out the number of rooms you need as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No more than two people should have to share a bedroom • One bedroom for couples/partners • One bedroom for single adults/parents • One bedroom for two children of different sex up to 8 years old • One bedroom for two children of the same sex up to 12 years old • One bedroom for each child of 12 years or over <p>If your present accommodation has a box room, we will count this as a bedroom if the room has a window and there is space to fit and use a single bed, a small wardrobe and a small chest of drawers.</p>
<p>6) Sharing Facilities</p> <p>You can receive these points if you are sharing a bathroom, kitchen or living room with anyone - including your parents - who is not going to be re-housed with you.</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>You will receive these points based on the information in your application form. We will visit you at home before you receive an offer, to make sure your points are correct.</p>
<p>7) No Fixed Accommodation</p> <p>If you are sharing facilities because you have no fixed accommodation (for example, because you are having to move from place to place, among friends or relatives)</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>If you have no fixed accommodation, we will ask you to provide information about addresses where you have stayed or have had mail delivered, or where you are receiving any benefit counter payments.</p>
<p>8) Medical need for re-housing</p> <p>You can receive these points if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have difficulty with mobility and/or serious long term or 		<p>We will ask you to complete a medical application form. This will be assessed by an independent Community Medical Specialist, whose report will be paid for by DGHP.</p> <p>The Community Medical Specialist will recommend if</p>

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Type of Points	Points	How we will assess whether you will receive these points
<p>terminal health problems, AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your difficulty with mobility or your health problems are being made worse by your current housing situation, or would be alleviated or managed more effectively by being re-housed. <p>There are three categories of medical points, as described opposite:</p> <p>Category A</p> <p>Category B</p> <p>Category C</p>	<p>75</p> <p>50</p> <p>25</p>	<p>you should receive medical points, and at what level.</p> <p>Category A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have an extremely serious health or mobility difficulties (for example, where you cannot leave the house because of disability or illness, or are suffering from a terminal condition), and Your current home is completely unsuitable and you need to be re-housed as a matter of urgency. <p>Category B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have serious health or mobility difficulties and your present home seriously affects daily activity. For example, getting up and downstairs is impossible and it is not practical to adapt your house, and Your current home is unsuitable and re-housing would alleviate your health or mobility difficulties and/or improve your quality of life <p>Category C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have less serious health or mobility difficulties but your present home hinders daily activity. For example, getting up and down stairs is hard to manage and it is not practical to adapt your home, and Re-housing would alleviate your health or mobility problems and/or improve your quality of life.
<p>9) Care and support</p> <p>You can receive these points if you or a member of your household need to move home for one of the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive care or support – for example, you want to move to be near your carer To provide care and support to somebody else – for example, you want to move to be near somebody you are going to care for. To provide or receive family or other personal support To help you manage child care arrangements, to allow you to work 	<p>20</p>	<p>We will assess whether the distance or travelling time involved is too great to be reasonable.</p> <p>We do not use a standard way of assessing this, as everyone's circumstances are different.</p> <p>If you tell us in your application form that you need these points, we will ask for information about the type and frequency of support to be provided or given (for example, shopping, medical, child care, domestic, help with maintaining a tenancy).</p> <p>We may ask you to provide us with evidence of the support arrangement described in your application. Or, with your agreement, we may ask third parties (for example, other agencies who know about the care and support arrangements) to confirm that you should receive these points.</p>

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Type of Points	Points	How we will assess whether you will receive these points
10) Environmental Issues You can receive these points if your household includes children aged under 12, and you currently live in a flat with a shared entrance and/or no private garden.	20	We will base this on who lives in your household. You will only keep these points until the children in your household reach the age of 12.

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Appendix 2

Procedures for Cancelling and Suspending Housing Applications

Removal from the Housing List

- 1) We will only remove an application from our housing list if:
 - An applicant has asked to be removed from the list or has died;
 - An applicant has failed to respond to a periodic review of the housing list, despite contact from DGHP.

Suspension from being eligible to receive offers

- 2) DGHP will only suspend an application where it is reasonable to do so and having considered the individual circumstances of the case.
- 3) We will inform applicants in writing if we suspend their application. We will provide reasons for the suspension, the timescale and/or any action applicants need to take to end the suspension. Applicants will also receive details of how to appeal against our decision.
- 4) We will review all suspended applications after 6 months and each month after that.

Criteria for Suspensions

Tenancy related debts

- 5) We will suspend applications if the applicant is responsible for an outstanding tenancy-related debt (e.g. rent, rechargeable repairs) where the debt is:
 - More than one month's rent, or where
 - The outstanding debt exceeds one month's rent, and a repayment arrangement has not been maintained for at least 3 months.
- 6) Applications will be suspended until the debt has been reduced to no more than one month's rent, or until an acceptable repayment arrangement has been maintained as described above.

Anti Social Behaviour

- 7) We will suspend applications if an applicant or a member of their household has behaved in an anti-social manner, and the conduct involved is of a serious nature, relatively recent, and is confirmed by an official source.
- 8) Examples of anti-social behaviour include certain relevant criminal convictions, such as drug dealing from a tenancy; acts of violence, harassment or threats to neighbours; excessive noise; and damage to landlords' property.
- 9) We will take account of:

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- The nature, frequency and duration of the behaviour involved
 - How long ago the incidents occurred, i.e. whether within the last 12 months, or within the last 3 years for serious anti-social behaviour which resulted in an ASBO or criminal conviction
 - Whether there is a current Notice of Proceedings for anti-social behaviour
 - The effect on others
 - The extent to which the behaviour is affected by persons other than the applicant, including actions by other members of the household.
- 10) We will normally apply a suspension period of 6 months, and then review the case.
- 11) We will lift the suspension when:
- A period of six months has elapsed without any incidents of unacceptable behaviour; or
 - The ASBO has expired, or the Notice of Proceedings ceases to be in force or is withdrawn by the landlord.
- 12) If we continue a suspension, we will review the case each month as outlined above. We may also consider the use of a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy with support, as an alternative to continuing a suspension.

Refusal of Offers

- 13) Applicants refusing three suitable housing offers will be suspended for a period of 6 months.
- 14) To minimise suspensions on these grounds, DGHP will discuss the reasons for refusals with applicants as they occur, and encourage applicants to change their preferences as appropriate.

Failure to provide information

- 15) Applicants who fail to provide information required to confirm their points level will not be eligible to receive offers until the information is provided. Applications placed on hold for this reason will be reviewed monthly.

Fraudulent or false information

- 16) Where an applicant has deliberately provided fraudulent or false information, we will suspend their application for six months. We will review their circumstances after six months and ask the applicant to confirm their correct details.

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Housing support

- 17) We may suspend an application where DGHP has carried out a risk assessment and believes that an applicant would not be able to maintain a tenancy without support, and no such support is in place. In all such cases we will seek an independent assessment of the applicant's housing needs. The suspension will be lifted when appropriate support services are put in place.

Applicants subject to immigration controls

- 18) We will register applications from asylum seekers on our waiting list, but will suspend their application until they have been granted leave to remain in the United Kingdom.
- 19) Refugees granted leave to remain in the United Kingdom and European Economic Area nationals (including migrant workers from the A8 accession states) are not subject to suspension because of their immigration status.

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Appendix 3: References

1) Other DGHP policies and procedures

Mutual Exchange Policy

Arrears Policy

ASB Policy

Supporting People Policy

Vulnerable Adults Policy

Successions and Assignations procedure

Sub letting Procedure

Voids Policy

Recharge Policy

2) Legislation

Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (as amended)

Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

Housing (Scotland) Act 2006

Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended)

Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended)

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended)

Equality Act 2006

Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Data Protection Act 1998

Human Rights Act 1998

Asylum and Immigration Act 1999

Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2001

Data Protection Act 1998