

PORT OF LEITH HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD ALLOCATION POLICY

1 Introduction

Port of Leith Housing Association is committed to the continuing improvement of housing conditions in Leith and to serving the needs of its community. It is the Association's aim to provide affordable, quality housing for those applicants with a wide range of housing need and/or support need, to make best use of available stock and to use the Allocation Policy to assist in the creation and maintenance of balanced, stable communities. A balanced, stable community is defined as one which encompasses a range of life employment experience and of ages and types of households.

Through the implementation of this Policy, we aim to allocate housing in a way which is transparent and demonstrates accountability to all our service users.

In formulating this policy, the Association has taken into account the following guidelines issued by Communities Scotland(now the Scottish Housing Regulator) and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, as well as relevant legislation:

Good Practice Guidance

SEDD Circular 1/2002:Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Housing Lists and Allocations
Performance Standards(2007)

Legislation

Housing(Scotland) Act 1987
Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
Homelessness, etc(Scotland) Act 2003

2 Associated Policies and Procedures

This Policy links with the Customer Care Policy and Procedure.

3 Objectives of the Allocation Policy

The Allocation Policy is designed to meet the following objectives:

- ❖ To be fair, efficient and consistent in allocating tenancies
- ❖ To ensure accommodation is suitable for the applicant's housing need
- ❖ To achieve stable and balanced communities
- ❖ To make best use of the housing stock
- ❖ To consider health and social factors and the capacity to improve an applicant's quality of life
- ❖ To facilitate mobility for reasons of family support and employment
- ❖ To allocate empty properties as quickly as possible to maximise income

4 Equality and Diversity

We aim to prevent and alleviate discrimination in allocation practice on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, age, gender, disability, family circumstances, political or sexual orientation, appearance or marital status. We monitor, through Edindex the Common Housing Register, the age, disability, ethnicity and gender of applicants. In addition to this, all allocations are monitored on the basis of gender, disability, ethnicity, household type and source of referral and an annual report submitted to Committee.

5 The Housing Lists

We are partners in the Edinburgh Common Housing Register, known as Edindex. Our housing lists are held on a computerised system monitored by Edindex, with applications pointed according to our own allocation policy. Separate housing lists are held on Edindex for general needs housing, sheltered and amenity housing. The Association maintains its own list for transfer applications from existing

tenants, who have held a tenancy for a minimum of six months and

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who wish to move from their present accommodation because it is no longer suitable for their needs.

6 Transfers and Mutual Exchanges

Existing tenants may wish to move to another property for a variety of reasons. The Association wishes to assist tenants to satisfy their housing needs and aspirations and to make best use of its available stock. The housing need of transfer applicants will be ranked in accordance with the points system although we reserve the right to waive this where a particular transfer will result in the most efficient use of our housing stock. Requests to exercise this waiver must be approved by the Housing Manager. Priority over all other cases will be given to our tenants in properties requiring major repairs where decanting is necessary to carry out the work.

Transfer applicants must have conducted their tenancies in a satisfactory manner and will require to have maintained a clear rent account for at least three months prior to an offer being made. Transfer applicants will require to leave their homes in a clean, satisfactory condition and a property inspection will be carried out prior to any offer of tenancy being made to ensure that the property is in a lettable condition.

In exceptional cases a management transfer may be used. A management transfer is a case where it is considered necessary to offer alternative accommodation to a tenant who would not be entitled to such a move, were the allocation policy being strictly adhered to. An example would be where there is serious antisocial behaviour due to a clash between neighbours and it is considered that it will be resolved if one party moves to another area. Management transfers will only be granted where there is substantiated evidence to support the case and must be authorised by the Housing Manager. Authorisation will be subject to the transferring tenant agreeing to meet relet costs in full.

Where we have authorised a management transfer, but do not have a suitable property available, we will seek assistance from other landlords. This will be a reciprocal arrangement and we will accept referrals from other landlords on a similar basis, with prior authorisation of the Housing Manager.

We will consider requests from existing tenants who wish to exchange with tenants within the Association, or with other Housing Associations or Local Authorities, to meet their housing need. Consent will not be withheld unreasonably and tenants can appeal to the Sheriff Court where they believe that we have refused requests unreasonably. In addition to this, we will participate in national mobility schemes and

will assist our tenants who wish to make use of such schemes.

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Tenants who express a wish to move into home ownership will be considered for shared ownership accommodation.

7 Access

All persons aged 16 years and over are eligible to apply and be assessed for housing.

All applicants for housing, except transfer applicants, require to complete an Edindex application form, available from all Housing Associations in Edinburgh and the City of Edinburgh Council. Our existing tenants who seek a transfer require to complete our own Transfer application form, available from our office. We will offer appropriate assistance to complete application forms.

We operate a Points and Groups system to assess applicants' circumstances, which is detailed in section 8 of this Policy. Some Edindex partners have adopted a choice based system of allocations and we will offer advice and assistance to applicants on how this operates.

Applicants with arrears of rent or mortgage will be allocated a tenancy if a suitable arrears repayment agreement has been made with their landlord, former landlord or mortgage lender, and has been kept for at least 3 months or the arrears are less than one month duration.

Current staff, former staff, Committee Members and their relatives may apply for housing. However, a tenancy will only be granted if the allocation complies with the requirements of this Allocation Policy, the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator and has been agreed by the Management Committee. Staff and Committee Members must declare an interest if a close relative applies for housing. Any such allocations will be noted in a register in compliance with Schedule 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

8 Nominations and Referrals

We have a formal arrangement with City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) who nominate applicants to us for rehousing and make referrals of applicants who are homeless. This helps the Council to meet its legal obligations towards homeless people. All nominations are assessed in accordance with our Allocation Policy. Successful nominees are offered a tenancy by us. Those who are unsuccessful return to the City Council Housing List. The specific agreements relating to this are available on demand.

We support the provision of care and housing support within local communities and work with a number of organisations who provide for people with support needs. We will target at least 5% of our annual vacancies as supported tenancies, under Management Protocols and Leases. In exceptional cases, where we and the supporting organisation have assessed an applicant as being very vulnerable and in need of intensive support to sustain a tenancy, a short Scottish Secure Tenancy for six months may be offered. Such a tenancy will only be offered after full discussion between us and the applicant and the supporting agency and with the applicant's agreement.

9. The Groups plus Points System

We have developed the points system we operate in conjunction with our Edindex partners to harmonise the assessment of housing need in Edinburgh. For those associations operating a common assessment of need, all applications are assessed in accordance with the points schedule in Appendix 1.

This is in line with good practice that recommends that an Allocation Policy should address a diverse range of housing need as well as considering applicants' preferences as far as possible.

Once points are awarded applicants are placed in the category or group for which they have been awarded the most points. The relevant groups and points are shown in Appendix 1.

If an applicant scores the same number of points in more than 1 group they will be placed in a group on a hierarchical basis as follows:

- ❖ Homeless
- ❖ Health
- ❖ Overcrowding/underoccupation
- ❖ Harrassment
- ❖ Below Tolerable Standard
- ❖ Support
- ❖ General

10 Management of Groups

On receipt of notification that a property will be vacated, we identify whether the allocation should be offered to a City of Edinburgh Council nominee or Section 5 referral, a transfer applicant or selected through Edindex.

Where the property is to be allocated through Edindex, the size

and type of property is the initial factor in identifying the group from which the shortlist will be selected.

Where the size and type of property does not in itself identify a group, or where shortlists from that group do not result in an allocation, a further selection will be made from the Groups Schedule. Effectively this means that a different group is selected each time reference is made to the schedule.

Where we are allocating a property through the Groups Schedule and the Group identified is the Homeless Group, we will restrict the shortlist to those applicants who have less than 100 points. Those with 100 points will be rehoused through our nomination agreement with CEC.

Appendix 2 shows how we will identify the appropriate group for shortlisting and Appendix 3 contains the Groups List.

11 Occupancy Standards

When assessing applicants' housing need the following occupancy standards will apply:

- ❖ Adults should not share a bedroom with a child.
- ❖ Adults living together as partners will be expected to share a bedroom unless there are circumstances that necessitate a separate room, e.g. specific medical needs.
- ❖ Single adults of 16 years and over should have their own bedrooms.
- ❖ No more than 2 children should normally share a bedroom.
- ❖ Children of the opposite sex where one is more than 6 years old should normally have separate bedrooms.
- ❖ Children of the same sex will be expected to share a bedroom up to age 14 years unless the age gap between the two is greater than 6 years.

In exceptional cases relating to very overcrowded transfer applicants where it is unlikely that either our Association or another landlord will be able to offer property of an appropriate size within an identifiable timescale, that household can be considered for accommodation that is larger than that they

currently occupy, even if it is still not of the optimum size for their requirements.

12. Amenity Housing

Applications will normally only be considered from applicants who are aged 50 or over.

13 Sheltered Housing

Applications will normally only be considered from applicants who are aged 60 or over.

Prior to any allocation of sheltered housing, the Housing Officer will discuss with the Scheme Co-ordinator the support needs of existing tenants (as formally identified in their support plans) to ensure a balance of needs and abilities within individual schemes. Where this results in some applicants being by-passed from consideration for a particular vacancy, this must be clearly recorded and authorised by the Housing Manager prior to any offer of housing being made.

Where an existing sheltered tenant requires to move to another flat due to substantiated mobility or health problems, that tenant will receive priority to move to an appropriate vacancy within that scheme.

14 Adapted Housing

Where a vacancy arises in a property that has been adapted for particular needs (e.g. where a wet-floor shower has been installed), we will make every effort to identify an applicant who would benefit from that adaptation.

15 Lettings Plans

From time to time we may develop Lettings Plans for specific areas, for instance where management issues arise in an estate or stair due to imbalance in tenant household composition and also where a number of new build properties are to be allocated in one area at the same times. Lettings Plans may also be used to assist key workers who are disadvantaged by the lack of affordable housing for sale in the Association's area of operation. This may involve some deviation from this Allocation Policy and this will be reported to the Committee of Management.

16 Suspension of Applications

All applicants who are 16 years or over are entitled to register on the Edindex Common Housing Register. However, we will consider suspending applications for rehousing by us in a limited number of situations. Examples of when applications may be suspended from active consideration for rehousing by us are:-

- ❖ Where false information is knowingly supplied or relevant information deliberately withheld. If an applicant is granted a tenancy on the basis of false information, we will commence eviction proceedings.
- ❖ Where an applicant refuses 2 offers of suitable accommodation, without reasonable cause.
- ❖ Where an applicant or anyone proposing to reside with them is the subject of legal action for anti social behaviour, any application for housing will be suspended until conclusion of the legal action.
- ❖ Where there are clear indications from an official source, or it is the considered opinion of our staff that an applicant would not be able to sustain a tenancy successfully, an application may be suspended pending the outcome of a housing support assessment and setting up of an appropriate package of support.
- ❖ Where applicants verbally or physically abuse or threaten staff, we reserve the right to suspend the applicant.

Applicants who are suspended will be advised in writing of the reasons for the suspension, the action they need to have the suspension removed and a timescale within which the suspension will be reviewed. Applicants can appeal to the Housing Manager if they disagree with the suspension.

17 Cancellation of Applications

An application will be cancelled where applicants fail to reply to our communications to them.

18 Access to Information/Confidentiality

The confidentiality of applicants' and tenants' personal information

revealed in their application forms, learned through interview or in contact with the applicant or tenant, will be scrupulously respected by any member of staff in possession of, or having access to, the information.

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 an applicant has the right to see any information stored about him or her on computer. We will respond to any request to view the information held on computer, or to have sight of any personal records maintained by the Association. An administrative fee may be charged for this.

19 Right of Appeal and Complaints

Any applicant who is dissatisfied with the allocation procedure and the way in which it has been administered, and wishes to make a complaint, has the right to do so. The applicant will be advised of the Association's complaints procedures with final right to complain to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Complaints should be directed in the first instance to the Housing Manager.

20 Review of the Allocation Policy

We will regularly review and monitor the effectiveness of the Allocation Policy, to ensure that the aims of the Policy are being achieved. We reserve the right to change or amend the Allocation Policy after review and to re-assess the priority of applicants in line with any changes and amendments in the revised Allocation Policy.

APPENDIX 1**Points and Groups Schedule**

Group	Area for Assessment	Points
1. Homeless	Homeless priority awarded by CEC	100
	Sleeping rough	100
	Demolition or extraordinary circumstances	8
	Non priority homeless presentation	6
	No security	6
	Tied accommodation and asked to leave	4
	Asked to leave	4
2. Health	Hospital, unable to return home	100
	Applicant/household member housebound in home	8
	Applicant/household member severely restricted in home	6
	Applicant/household member restricted in home	4
3. Overcrowding / Under-occupation	Each bedroom short (max 16 points)	4
	Each unused bedroom to a maximum of 6 points	2
4. Harassment	Violence in the home	8 or 6
	Violence by a neighbour	6 or 4
	Violence by unknown persons	4
	Antisocial behaviour / break-ins	2
5. Below Tolerable Standard	Statutory notice	6
	Environmental health	6
	Lacking cooking facilities	4
	Lacking bathroom/shower room	4
	Lacking inside toilet	4
	Lacking full central heating	4
	Major dampness	2
	Major repairs	2
6. Support	Supported accommodation	6
	Care needs	6
	Daily support	4
	Mental health	2
7. General	Economic – travel to work	4 or 2
	Access to amenities	4
	Social contact	4 or 2

Group Selection - General Housing

Stage 1	Is allocation for Nomination	Yes	Contact CEC to progress
		No	Go to Stage 2
Stage 2	Is allocation for transfer	Yes	Follow transfer procedure
		No	Go to Stage 3
Stage 3	Is allocation for special let	Yes	Contact agency to progress
		No	Identify group from which to shortlist following process below

Property Type	Group
All vacancies	1. BTS
Thereafter	
All wheelchair adapted property	1. Health
2 apt general needs ground floor flats	1. Health 2. Refer to Group List
2 apt amenity flats	1. Health 2. Underoccupation 3. Refer to Group List
2 apt flats other than ground floor	1. Refer to Group List
3 apt ground floor flats	1. Health 2. Refer to Group List
3 apt flats other than ground floor	1. Refer to Group List
4/5 apt ground floor flats	1. Health 2. Overcrowding 3. refer to group List
4/5 apt other than ground floor	1. Overcrowding 2. Refer to Group List
All Houses	1. Overcrowding 2. Refer to Group List

Comments:

It is anticipated that very few applicants will be placed in the category 'Below Tolerable Standard', which is why this group is being given prior consideration for all vacancies.

The Group List will work on a rotational basis, ensuring that that the groups not considered above (Homeless, Harassment, Support and General) will be considered through this Policy. Two offers will be made

to the identified group, before moving to the next.

APPENDIX 2(2)

Group Selection Sheltered Housing

1. If a tenant in scheme requires a move and property is more suitable for them, that tenant should be considered for vacancy. If more than 1 tenant is in this position, priority should be given to tenant in greatest need or, failing that, who has been on transfer list the longest.

If 1 does not apply:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|--|
| 2. Is allocation for Nomination | Yes | Contact CEC to progress |
| | No | Go to 3. |
| 3. Is allocation for transfer | Yes | Follow transfer procedure |
| | No | Identify group from which to run shortlist following process below |

Property Type	Group
All vacancies	1. BTS
Thereafter	
Wheelchair adapted property	1. Health
Ground floor	1. Health 2. Support 3. Refer to Group List

Each time there is a vacancy within a sheltered development, the Housing Officer will discuss with the Warden the current level of support needs amongst existing tenants and this may influence the offer made.

The Group List will work on a rotational basis, ensuring that that groups not considered above (Homeless, Overcrowding/Underoccupation, Harassment and General) will be considered through this Policy. Two offers will be made to the identified group, before moving to the next.

Appendix 1 and 2 show how the allocation process works. The first priority groups are Below Tolerable Standard(BTS), then Health and Overcrowding/Underoccupation for general needs vacancies. For sheltered vacancies the first priority groups are BTS, then Health and Support. If an allocation is not made from these groups then the group selection is on a rotational basis as follows:

General Needs Group List:

Homeless(low priority)

Harassment

Support

General

then back to Homeless group and repeat

Sheltered Housing Group List

Homeless(low priority)

Overcrowding/Underoccupation

Harassment

General

then back to Homeless group and repeat

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