



ORE VALLEY HOUSING ASSOCIATION

ALLOCATION POLICY

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1. POLICY STATEMENT AND AIMS

- a) To be fair, efficient and consistent in allocating tenancies.
- b) To ensure that accommodation offered is suitable to applicants' needs.
- c) To make best use of housing stock.
- d) To help achieve stability and balance within sustainable communities.
- e) To consider relevant medical, social and any other special factors in assessing relative needs.
- f) To facilitate mobility for family support and employment.
- g) To fulfill our commitment and obligation to assist the Local Authority in its statutory housing role.
- h) To assist other agencies to address urgent re-housing needs.
- i) To maximise the Association's income by allocating void properties timeously.

2. RESPONSIBILITY

- a) The Management Board - has responsibility for ensuring that this policy complies with regulatory and legislative requirements and meets the Association's Business Plan and budget objectives.
- b) Chief Executive – has responsibility for ensuring that this policy is applied to ensure compliance with regulatory and legislative requirements and meets the Association's Business Plan and budget objectives.
- c) Housing Manager – has responsibility for ensuring that appropriate support and monitoring arrangements are provided to the Management Board, Management Team and other relevant members of staff.
- d) Housing Manager – has responsibility for ensuring that all procedures relating to this policy are being used appropriately and comply with regulatory and legislative requirements.
- e) Housing Manager – has responsibility for working with all relevant partners to ensure that all Protocols and joint working arrangements are being used appropriately and comply with regulatory and legislative requirements
- f) Housing Officer – has responsibility for dealing with housing offers and allocations and should operate at all times within approved policy procedures.

3. EQUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Association is committed to equality of opportunity in access to the waiting list and in allocation of housing. No applicant will be given less favourable treatment on the grounds of Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion and belief, Sex and Sexual orientation.

Applications and allocations are monitored in respect of ethnic origin and disability.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

All personal information given to the Association will be treated in the strictest confidence. Any cases which require to be considered by the Board will be referred to by reference number only.

5. ACCESS TO HOUSING

5.1 Eligibility Criteria

Anyone over the age of sixteen can apply to the Association for housing. All persons wishing to apply for housing must complete a Fife Housing Register (FHR) application form.

If any applicant requires assistance in completing their application or requires information to be translated into another language or format Ore Valley Housing Association will facilitate this.

5.2 Residence in the Association's Area of Operation

The Association will take no account of whether an applicant is resident in its area of operation if the applicant:

- a) is employed or has been offered employment in the area; or
- b) wishes to move into the area to seek employment and the Association is satisfied that this is the applicant's intention; or
- c) wishes to move into the area to be near a relative or carer; or
- d) has special social or medical reasons for requiring to be rehoused within the area; or
- e) wishes to move into the area because of harassment; or
- f) wishes to move into the area because he or she runs the risk of domestic violence

Applicants who are neither resident nor meet any of the above criteria may still apply and be admitted to the list; however they will not have a high priority for housing and will be advised accordingly.

6. APPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENT AND ALLOCATIONS

6.1 Fife Housing Register Applications

Applicants on the Fife Housing Register are awarded points and categorised in accordance with a common assessment of needs which OVHA shares with the other FHR partners

6.2 Application form

All applications must be made on a Fife Housing Register form.

The Association will also consider urgent referrals from other agencies (e.g. Women's Aid, other Housing Associations or Social Work). Such referrals will be required to complete an FHR form and they will only be considered for housing if their level of need is assessed as being greater than that of other applicants already on the FHR.

6.3 Joint applications

Couples or single people wishing to share accommodation must complete a joint application.

6.4 Assessment of application

All applications will be assessed for housing need and allocated points in accordance with the FHR pointing scheme.

All applicants will be notified within 28 working days of how their application has been assessed.

6.5 Housing List

All applicants will be registered on the Fife Housing Register. However, registration does not guarantee that an offer of housing will be made. Where an assessment identifies that the applicant has little or no priority, their application will be held on the list and reviewed on a regular basis. Applicants in this situation will be advised that it is unlikely that they will receive an offer of housing and appropriate advice about alternative housing options will be offered.

6.6 Size and Type of Accommodation

The FHR team will assess the size and type of accommodation required in accordance with our Policy¹ and applications will be entered onto the housing list for the appropriate type and size of accommodation.

6.7 Community based lettings initiatives

In order to make best use of social rented housing, the Association may develop lettings initiatives in respect of particular schemes, areas or applicant categories in order to achieve clearly defined aims and objectives.

Such initiatives will be developed in consultation with tenants and applicants and will also require the prior approval of the Board. Following approval, the initiative will be appended to the Allocation Policy and reviewed on an annual basis.

6.8 HM Forces

An access to housing protocol for people leaving HM Forces has been agreed by the FHR Executive. As part of a Fife wide commitment to support former HM Forces personnel to secure settled accommodation, the Association agrees to make available a minimum number of 2 offers per year to applicants leaving the armed forces.²

6.9 Prevention First

The Association recognises the specific commitment required to assist applicants in preventing homelessness. The Prevention First approach was extended throughout Fife in July 2012 and aims to reduce homelessness by putting prevention activities at the heart of what we do. This is done through the provision of:

- Early housing advice and assessment through the delivery of 'triage' interviews
- Enhanced Housing Options Interviews to provide in depth housing advice
- Crisis intervention for those threatened with homelessness within 7 days.

¹ Appendix 1 – accommodation required – size and type

² FHR Briefing Note – HM Forces – November 2013

- Early Intervention Housing Support
- A key fund and rent deposit scheme delivered through Fife Key Fund

As part of an enhanced approach to homelessness prevention the Association agrees to make available an annual quota of its allocations to Prevention First applicants.³

6.10 The Housing (Scotland) Bill (Part 2)

The Housing (Scotland) Bill as amended at stage 2 makes additional provision for reasonable preference in allocation of social housing to persons who have unmet housing needs and who:

- Are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Are living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- Are under occupying a property held by a Social Landlord

The Association can priorities other groups to reflect local housing needs and circumstances, as long as 'reasonable preference is given to these three statutory groups.

6.10.1 New Duty to Consult

Before making or altering rules governing the allocation of houses, a social landlord must consult on priorities within its allocation policies and then publish a report on the outcome of the consultation. Social Landlords will also have to take account of the Local Housing Strategy and any other guidance produced by the Scottish Government.

Social landlords must consult housing list applicants; their own tenants and any registered tenant organisation that they work with before making any changes to their allocation policy.

The Association will work with the other FHR Partners to ensure that we are complying with this new provision as soon as it comes into force.

6.10.2 Ownership of Property

The Bill makes provision to allow social landlords to take property ownership into account when determining whether to allocate a tenancy. Ownership must be disregarded where occupying the property could lead to abuse or endanger the health of the occupants, and there are no reasonable steps which can be taken by the applicant to prevent that danger.

Provision has also been made to enable social landlords to give homeowners a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy as a temporary solution whilst the applicant is 'making arrangements' to bring a property they own back into use as their home.

6.10.3 Suspensions – determining a minimum period

The minimum period during which a suspension will remain in force will be decided by Scottish Ministers through regulation. The Association will work with the other FHR Partners to ensure that our current grounds for suspension are included in the newly prescribed grounds and that our Suspension Policy⁴ complies with the regulations on minimum periods etc.

³ FHR Briefing Note – Prevention First Applicants – Dec 2013 / PF Guidance June 2014

⁴ Fife Housing Register – Suspension Policy (Oct 2013)

6.11 Anti-Social Behaviour

Where an applicant has lost a tenancy in the last 3 years due to Anti-Social Behaviour or where an Anti-Social Behaviour Orders have been obtained against the applicant(s) or a member of their household during the past 3 years the application will be suspended for a period of 12 months. This status will be reviewed every 12 months in order to assess whether the offending behaviour has been addressed.

If a suitable vacancy becomes available after the suspension period has elapsed the applicant will be offered a Scottish Short Secure Tenancy. In these instances, housing support will be made available during the period of the SSST in order to provide the incoming tenants with every opportunity to sustain their tenancy so that it can be converted to a Scottish Secure Tenancy.

6.12 Tenancy-related debts

The Association will suspend any applicant who has rent arrears relating to a current or previous tenancy (whether with the Association or another landlord) unless:

- a) The outstanding liability is attributable to a property of which the applicant was not the tenant;
- b) The rent or other arrears accrued by the applicant relate to a previous tenancy and are no longer outstanding;
- c) The amount of the arrears outstanding is less than 1/12th of the annual amount payable;
- d) The applicant has agreed arrangements with the landlord for paying the outstanding liability, has made payments in accordance with that arrangement for at least three months and is continuing to make such payments.

6.13 Verification of Information

The Association and FHR Team will carry out checks on applicants to confirm information as declared in the application form, including making enquiries into the conduct of current/previous tenancies.

In certain circumstances these enquiries could result in the application being suspended, or the applicant being asked to make a new application. Any applicant not satisfied with the decision taken has the right to submit an appeal using the Association's Complaints Procedure.

6.14 False or Misleading Information

Applicants must sign a declaration on the application form that all information given is true and accurate. If the Association establishes that false or misleading information has been submitted, or that relevant information has been withheld to obtain a tenancy, action may be taken to recover possession of any property for which a tenancy has been granted.

All such cases will be considered by the Housing Manager and the outcome reported to the Board.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to advise the Association or the FHR Team of any changes in circumstances which could affect their housing application.

6.15 Income and Property Ownership

The Association will take no account of the income of the applicant or any other member of his or her household.

6.16 Homeless referrals

Ore Valley HA has signed a joint protocol with Fife Council in order to meet the criteria contained within Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. The Association will house homeless applicants to an agreed quota from the Fife Housing Register and notify the local authority and the Scottish Housing Regulator as required. .

6.17 Approval of Allocations

The Housing Officer has delegated authority to approve all allocations made in accordance with the Allocation Policy.

6.18 Special Cases

There will be some cases of exceptional circumstances which cannot be properly dealt with by the Allocation Policy. The Housing Officer must refer such cases to the Housing Manager and a report will be presented to the Board for consideration.

6.19 Offers of housing

All offers of housing will be made formally in writing by Ore Valley Housing Association, although applicants may initially be contacted by telephone. The applicant will be given a maximum of five working days to accept or refuse the offer.

6.20 Refusal of offers

Applicants will normally be given two reasonable offers of housing suitable to their needs. Applicants should be aware that if they refuse the first offer that they will not necessarily be offered the next available vacancy in the areas of their choice. Further offers will be dependent on the relative priority of other applicants on the housing list.

If an applicant refuses two offers without good reason their application for housing will be suspended for a period of 12 months, and they will be asked to attend a Housing Options Interview so that their application for housing can be reviewed.

Homeless Applicants will be given one fair offer. If a homeless applicant refuses a fair offer their homeless status will be removed and they will be permitted one fair offer as a general needs applicant.

6.21 Enquiries, Complaints or Appeals

Any applicant wishing to query a decision should contact the Housing Officer in the first instance. This should ensure prompt and informal resolution of most problems. If an applicant remains dissatisfied, a formal complaint should be registered using the

Association's Complaints Procedure. Further information about making an enquiry, complaint or appeal will be made available on request.⁵

7. ALLOCATION CATEGORIES AND QUOTAS

7.1 Allocation categories

Ore Valley Housing Association will allocate properties by using five allocation categories to determine an applicant's housing need

Lack of Security – time limited tenancy, Notice to Quit, Certificate of Cessation/discharge papers, tenants without a lease or tenancy agreement, owners in the process of repossession or who have been advised to sell and non-householders staying friends or family.

Social/Medical – illness or disability which has a negative impact on a person's ability to live in their current accommodation, requirement for independent living, Social or personal care needs and violence or harassment.

Poor Housing – overcrowding factors, sharing facilities, lack of play space for children, dampness, no central heating, unsafe water supply or under-occupation.

Urgent Housing Homeless - statutory homeless applicants

Urgent Housing Need – harassment, domestic violence, management need for best use of stock.

7.2 Allocation quotas

The association will use a quota system to allocate suitable properties to applicants registered on the FHR. This quota system will be based on the allocation categories outlined above.⁶

7.3 Inter-organisational Transfers

Fifty per cent of Poor Housing and Social/Medical allocations will be made available to applicants wishing to transfer from an Association or FHR Partner property for overcrowding or social medical reasons.

7.4 Mutual Exchanges, Assignations and Successions

The Association has a separate policy for Mutual Exchanges, Assignations and Successions.

⁵ FHR Leaflet – Enquiry, Complaints and Appeals – March 2012

⁶ Appendix 2 - Housing Need Groups and Allocation Quotas (June 2014)

Appendix 1

ACCOMMODATION REQUIRED – SIZE AND TYPE

1. Size

The Association considers that a separate bedroom is required for:-

- 1.1 A couple living together. Couples can be considered for either one-bedroom or two-bedroom accommodation.
- 1.2 Any other member of the household, including children. Higher priority will be given to households where (i) at least one child of the family has reached the age of 14 or (ii) in the case of households where children are of opposite sexes that one of them has reached the age of 7.
- 1.3 Any single persons living together.
- 1.4 Divorced or separated applicants with children will be allocated housing of a size appropriate to their needs, i.e. one additional bedroom will be allocated where they have joint custody; or where overnight access is a minimum of 2 nights per week.⁷

2. Type

2.1 General Needs

The largest part of the Association's stock, comprising two-bedroom flats and two, three and four-bedroom houses. Most applications will be allocated this type of property.

2.2 Amenity Housing

The Association also has a mix of one and two bedroom ground floor flats and one and two bedroom bungalows. In the first instance applications for these properties will only be accepted where the mobility or independence of the applicant or a member of their household would be restricted by general needs accommodation. Applicants will be required to complete a FHR illness and disability form to assess their housing needs.

Applications from the General Needs housing list will only be considered for this type of accommodation if there are no suitable applicants on the waiting lists for amenity housing.

2.3 Wheelchair Housing

The Association has a small number of two and three bedroom bungalows purpose-built for wheelchair users. Only households with a wheelchair user will be considered for this type of property and the Housing Occupational Therapist Service based at New City House, Dunfermline, Fife, with the FHR team, determines suitability.

⁷ FHR Briefing Note – Access to Children – May 2012



ALLOCATION POLICY

**Housing Need Groups and
Allocation Quotas**

Priorities

In accordance with statutory regulations our Allocations Policy gives reasonable preference to people aged 16 years or over who are:

Living in unfit properties
Living in overcrowded properties
Homeless or threatened with homelessness

The Association will also take into account other needs by giving preference to:

People who are victims of domestic, racial or other harassment
People who need to move for medical, social, educational or employment reasons
People who under-occupy properties
People who have tied tenancies
People with disabilities who have an unmet housing need

Meeting Priorities

Tenancies will be offered to applicants in each of the housing needs groups detailed in the attached points schedule.

The Association has set percentage quotas for making allocations to each of the housing need groups.

The priorities and quotas set out in the Allocation Policy may be changed by the Association to meet new legislative requirements or comply with Scottish Government guidance or regulations.

Points Schedule

Points are awarded based on housing need. Applications are assessed by the Fife Housing Register Team in accordance with a common assessment of need.

Applications will be placed in the housing need group where the most points have been awarded, and the Association will check to confirm the applicants circumstances are assessed correctly before an offer of housing is made.

The housing need categories and allocation quotas being used by the Association are as follows:

<u>Housing Need Groups</u>	Quota	Change	Sub-Quota
Lack of Security (LOS)	35%	>5%	
Social and Medical Needs (SM)	15%		50%*
Urgent Housing Homeless (UHH)	35%**		
Poor Housing (PH)	15%		50%*
Urgent Housing Needs (UHN)	0%	<5%	
No Immediate Needs (NIN)	0%		
Management Transfer (MAN)	0%		

0% quotas are only to be used in exceptional circumstances

* Sub-Quota made available for inter-organisational transfer applicants, i.e. 15% transfer quota

** 5% of UHH allocation will be made available for Prevention First

Inter Organisational Transfers

The Association will respond to the housing needs of existing FHR Partner tenants by using a sub-quota for transfer applicants.

50% of allocations to applicants in the Poor Housing and Social Medical Needs Groups will be made available to transfer applicants. This will allow the Association to meet the needs of existing FHR partner tenants who are seeking a move for overcrowding or social/medical reasons.

This initiative aims to promote mobility for social housing tenants within the areas where the FHR partners have suitable properties.

Urgent Housing Need, Management Transfers and No Immediate Need

These categories will only be used by the Association for exceptional cases or for best use of stock, i.e. under-occupation. Use of this category for an allocation will require the prior approval of the Housing Manager.