



ALLOCATION POLICY

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1. POLICY STATEMENT AND AIMS

This policy is the set of rules we use to decide how we allocate our housing. Some of these rules are based on the law, and others have been agreed following consultation with our tenants, applicants on the housing list, registered tenants organisations and such other person's as we considered necessary.

These rules cover:

- who can join the housing waiting list
- how we decide who gets priority on the waiting list
- Fife Housing Register (FHR) Transfers

Ore Valley Housing Association (The Association) must comply with these rules for letting our houses and we can't make decisions based on any 'rules' which are not included as part of this policy.

We aim to be:

- a) To be fair, efficient and consistent in allocating tenancies.
- b) To ensure that any accommodation offered is suitable for the applicants' needs.
- c) To make best use of housing stock.
- d) To help achieve sustainable **and diverse** 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 Fife Council 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. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 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.

EQUALITY ACT 2010

The Association is committed to equality of opportunity.

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.

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.

3. REASONABLE PREFERENCE

In selecting tenants for our homes we must give reasonable preference to:

- homeless person and person's threatened with homelessness and who have unmet housing needs
- people who are living under unsatisfactory housing conditions and who have unmet housing needs; and
- tenants of houses which are held by a social landlord and which the social landlord selecting its tenants consider to be under-occupied.

4. ACCESS TO HOUSING

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 the Association will assist with facilitating this.

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;
- b) wishes to move into the area to seek employment and the Association is satisfied that this is the applicant's intention;
- c) wishes to move into the area to be near a relative or carer;
- d) has special social or medical reasons for requiring to be rehoused within the area;
- 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 abuse, violence or harassment.

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.

5. APPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENT AND ALLOCATIONS

Fife Housing Register Applications

Applicants on the Fife Housing Register (FHR) are awarded points and categorised in accordance with a 'common assessment of need' which we share with the other Fife Housing Register (FHR) partners.

Application form

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

The Association will also consider urgent referrals from other agencies such as Women's Aid or Social Services. All referrals will be required to complete a Fife Housing Register (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 list.

Joint applications

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

Assessment of application

All applications will be assessed for housing need and allocated points in accordance with the Fife Housing Register (FHR) pointing scheme.

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

Housing List

All applicants will be registered on the Fife Housing Register (FHR), 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 and appropriate advice about alternative housing options will be offered.

Size and Type of Accommodation

The Fife Housing Register (FHR) team will assess the type and size 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.

Community 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, these initiatives will be appended to the Allocation Policy and reviewed on an annual basis.

HM Forces

A Housing Access Protocol for people leaving HM Forces has been agreed by the Fife Housing Register (FHR) partners . As part of a Fife wide commitment to support former HM Forces personnel to secure settled accommodation, the Association agrees to make available an agreed minimum number of offers per year to applicants leaving the armed forces.²

¹ ANNEX A – accommodation required – size and type

² FHR Briefing Note – HM Forces – July 2019

Prevention First

The Association recognises the specific commitment required to assist applicants in preventing homelessness³. The Prevention First approach 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.
- 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.⁴

Duty to Consult

Before making or altering rules governing the allocation of our properties, we will consult our tenants and housing applicants on any changes to the priorities within this policy, and we will publish a report on the outcome of the consultation. We will also take account of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) and any other social housing allocations guidance produced by the Scottish Government.

The Association will work with the other Fife Housing Register (FHR) partners to carry out shared consultation whenever this is deemed appropriate.

Ownership of Property

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 allows us to take property ownership into account when determining whether to allocate a tenancy. Ownership will be disregarded where occupying the property could lead to abuse or could endanger the health of the occupants, and there are no reasonable steps which can be taken by the applicant to prevent that danger.

Where the applicant owns and currently lives in a property that they need to sell due to a relationship breakdown, ownership of this property will not be taken into account.

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.

There is no obligation under this policy for us to provide this option for homeowners, but a request of this nature will be considered, taking into account the circumstances of the homeowner and the suitability of any available properties.

³ FHR Protocol for dealing with Access to Homelessness - July 2016

⁴ FHR Briefing Note – Prevention First Applicants – Dec 2013 & PF Guidance - June 2014

Suspensions and Withdrawals

The Fife Housing Register (FHR) partners have agreed a protocol for suspensions and withdrawals⁵ which has been revised to take into account of the Scottish Government's Guidance regarding the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, Legal Framework for Allocations and Suspensions.

The terms suspension refers to a temporary period of time during which an applicant will not be considered for an offer of housing. If we make a decision to suspend or withdraw an application there will be clear evidence to support this.

All suspended applicants will receive a letter advising why their application has been suspended and for how long; and they will also be told what they need to do to have their suspension lifted.

An applicant can be suspended for the following reasons:

- Anti Social Behaviour
- Previous convictions for ASB offences related to a tenancy
- Recovery of Possession or Eviction
- Abandoning or neglecting a property
- Rent Arrears or any other tenancy related debt
- Making a false statement on an application for housing
- Refusal of a fair offer of housing

Anti-Social Behaviour

Where a housing applicant has been evicted for anti social behaviour during the 3 year period prior to their date of application, or where an Anti-Social Behaviour Order has been obtained against the applicant(s) or a member of their household during the same period 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.

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;

⁵ FHR Access to Housing Protocol - Suspensions and Withdrawals - April 2019

- 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.
- e) The tenancy arrears at the date of application are over 3 years old and the landlord cannot evidence that they are still actively pursuing the debt.

Verification of Information

The Association and Fife Housing Register (FHR) Team will carry out checks on applicants to confirm information as declared in the application form, including making a reference request for 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.

False or Misleading Information

Applicants must sign a declaration on the Fife Housing Register (FHR) 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 Fife Housing Register (FHR) Team of any changes in their circumstances which could affect their housing application, i.e. a change in household members or a change of address.

Homeless referrals

The Association 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 Fife Council and the Scottish Housing Regulator as required.

Approval of Allocations

The Housing Officer has delegated authority to make a formal offer of housing to applicants in accordance with the Allocation Policy. All allocations will also be verified and approved by the Senior Housing Officer for auditing purposes.

Exceptional Cases

There will sometimes be exceptional cases where we consider it appropriate to make an allocation to an applicant who does not fit within the rules set out in this policy. This could include an exceptional allocation to someone who does not qualify to succeed to a tenancy - or a family member who needs to move to provide urgent care or support for someone who needs to remain in their own home.

The Housing Officer must refer such cases to the Housing Manager and a report will be presented to the Board for consideration.

Offers of housing

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

Refusal of offers

Applicants will normally be given two reasonable offers of housing suitable to their needs. Applicants will be made aware that if they refuse the first offer that they will not necessarily be offered the next available property in the areas of their choice. Further offers will be dependent on the relative priority of the applicant and 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 6 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.

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.⁶

6. ALLOCATION CATEGORIES AND QUOTAS

The Association will use the Fife Housing Register (FHR) allocation categories to determine an applicant's housing need.

Urgent Housing Need – Homeless, Severe Harassment, Domestic or Sexual Abuse.

⁶ <https://www.fifehousingregister.org.uk/complaints/>

Lack of Security – Time Limited Tenancy, Notice to Quit, Tied Accommodation, HM Forces Accommodation, 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 with friends or family.

Social/Medical – illness or disability which has a negative impact on a person’s ability to live in their current accommodation, need for independent living, social or personal care needs, or harassment from a near neighbour or from anyone else who is not your partner or a former partner, and who is targeting you and knows where you live.

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

Management Needs – Awarded by Housing Manager for best use of stock.

Allocation Quotas

The Association will use a quota system to allocate suitable properties to applicants registered on the Fife Housing Register (FHR). This quota system will be based on the allocation categories outlined above.⁷

Transfers

An agreed quota of our Poor Housing and Social/Medical allocations will be made available to applicants wishing to transfer from a Fife Housing Register partner property, for overcrowding, under-occupation or social medical reasons.

Increased Access to Housing for Single People

The Association will allocate an agreed quota of our two-bedroom flats to single applicants who have a one-bedroom entitlement.

⁷ ANNEX B - Housing Need Groups and Allocation Quotas (April 2019)



ACCOMMODATION REQUIRED

SIZE OF ACCOMMODATION REQUIRED

The Association considers that a separate bedroom is required for:

A couple living together. Couples can be considered for either one-bedroom or two-bedroom accommodation.

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.

Any single persons living together.

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.⁸

TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION REQUIRED

General Needs

The largest part of the Association's stock, comprising two-bedroom flats and two, three and four-bedroom houses. The majority of the offer we make will be for this type of property.

Increased Access to Housing for Single People

The Association will allocate an agreed quota of our two-bedroom flats to single applicants who have a one-bedroom entitlement.⁹

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 an 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 list for amenity housing.

⁸ FHR Briefing Note – Access to Children – May 2012

⁹ ANNEX B - Housing Need Groups and Allocation Quotas (April 2019)

Wheelchair or Adapted Housing

The Association has a small number of two and three bedroom bungalows designed specifically for wheelchair users. Only households with a need for a wheelchair adapted property will be considered for this type of property, and the Association will work closely with the Fife Housing Register (FHR) Housing Occupational Therapist service to confirm the suitability of the property prior to a formal offer being made.

ANNEX B



**Housing Need Groups and
Allocation Quotas**

April 2019

REASONABLE PREFERENCE

In accordance with statutory guidance¹⁰ our Allocation Policy gives reasonable preference to people aged 16 years or over who are:

- homeless or threatened with homelessness and who have unmet housing needs
- living under unsatisfactory housing conditions and who have unmet housing needs; and
- tenants of houses which are held by a social landlord and which we consider to be under-occupied.

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 have tied tenancies
- People who we consider have unmet housing needs which are not capable of being met by housing options which are available to them.

WEIGHTING REASONABLE PREFERENCE GROUPS

The Fife Housing Register (FHR) award points to housing applicants based on an agreed 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.

Tenancies will be offered to applicants in each of the housing needs groups outlined below. The Association will set and review percentage quotas for making allocations to each of these housing need groups.

The priorities and quotas set out in this Policy may be changed by the Association to meet Local Housing Strategy (LHS) targets, legislative requirements or to comply with Scottish Government guidance or regulations.

¹⁰ [Scottish Government, The Legal Framework for Social Housing Allocations, Statutory Guidance for Social Landlords, Housing Scotland Act 2014 - October 2016](#)

ALLOCATION QUOTAS

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

<u>Housing Need Groups</u>	<u>Quota</u>		<u>Sub-Quota</u>
Lack of Security (LOS)	30%	<5%	
Social and Medical Needs (SM)	15%		50%*
Urgent Housing Needs (UHN)	45%**	>10%	
Poor Housing (PH)	10%	<5%	50%*
Urgent Housing Needs (UHN)	0%	<5%	
No Immediate Needs (NIN)	0%		
Management Needs (MAN)	0%		

0% quotas are only to be used in exceptional circumstances

* Sub-Quota to be made available for transfer applicants, i.e. 12.5% available for transfer.

** 35% of UHN allocations will be made available for Homeless allocations

*** 5% of Homeless allocations will be made available for Prevention First

Transfers for Fife Housing Register (FHR) Partner Tenants

The Association will respond to the housing needs of existing FHR Partner tenants (including our own 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 due to under-occupancy, or 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.

HM Forces

A minimum of 2 allocations per year will be made available for applicants who have been awarded HM Forces only status (75 points).

Increased Access to Housing for Single People

50% of our 2 bedroom flats will be made available for single person applicants.

Management Needs 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.

