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## **Introduction**

The Association has recently reviewed both its Letting Policy and Housing Application Suspension and Cancellation Policy. As part of the review process, the Association had a duty to consult with tenants, housing applicants, Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) and any other persons the Association considers appropriate.

The Association also has a duty in accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 to prepare and publish a report on the consultation relating to the review of these policies. This report provides details of the consultation process and the outcomes.

The report will cover the following:

- The scope of the consultation;
- The methods of consultation adopted;
- The outcomes to the consultation; and
- How the consultation influenced the review process.

## **The Scope of the Consultation**

The primary scope of the consultation was to seek feedback and opinions from stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of the Association's current policy and practices and whether these should be amended. In addition to the Letting Policy, the consultation process also incorporated questions in relation to the Housing Application Suspension and Cancellation Policy.

Stakeholders were asked to provide feedback and opinions in relation to the following issues:

- How we assess applicants with medical needs and whether our approach remains fit for purpose.
- How we assess applicants with social needs and whether our approach remains fit for purpose.
- Whether we should be increasing the level of points awarded to social housing tenants who under-occupy their property.
- The circumstances in which home owners should be awarded priority.
- The factors that the Association should consider before suspending an applicant from receiving an offer of housing.
- Whether the Association's approach in relation to the suspension of housing applicants who refuse offers of accommodation is appropriate, and whether this approach should be changed.

## **Methods of Consultation**

The formal consultation process took place between January and March 2025. The Association used its website and December 2024 newsletter to publicise the forthcoming review of both policies.

From January to March 2025 the Association consulted with 665 tenants and 1,455 housing applicants. The Association does not have any Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs).

The formal consultation process involved the Association writing to tenants and housing applicants on an individual basis. As part of the consultation process, tenants and housing applicants were issued with a comprehensive information booklet that detailed the legislative framework as well as the Association's current practices with regards to the allocation of housing. Those consulted were also asked to provide their feedback and opinions by completing and returning a questionnaire based on the information provided in the consultation booklet. The questionnaire was also available to complete online, via telephone or face-to-face with a member of staff. Those consulted were given the opportunity to request the consultation documentation in alternative languages and formats.

The Association published specific details of the consultation, along with the Association's current Letting Policy and Housing Application Suspension and Cancellation Policy on its website, and provided an online option for completing the questionnaire. This allowed the consultation to be opened up to the wider public.

## Consultation Questions & Outcomes

During the consultation process tenants and housing applicants were asked to answer a series of questions. The Association received 147 responses representing a response rate of 6.9%. Of the 147 respondents, 54 (36.7%) were received from tenants and 93 (63.3%) were received from housing applicants. The questions and answers provided by respondents are detailed below:

### Letting Policy

1. The Association's Letting Policy currently provides three levels of medical priority. Do you think that the three levels of medical priority currently in the policy are adequate?

	Response
Yes	86.4%
No - Three is too many and should be reduced	3.4%
No - Three is not enough and more should be introduced	10.2%
No Answer	0.0%

Outcome: The survey indicates that the majority of respondents consider the Association's approach to assessing applicants medical needs to be adequate.

2. The Association's Letting Policy currently provides four levels of social priority. Do you think an additional level of social priority should be awarded?

	Response
Yes	10.2%
No	87.1%
No Answer	2.7%

Outcome: The survey indicates that the majority of respondents consider the four levels of social priority currently provided for in the Association's existing Letting Policy to be adequate. Only 9.6% of respondents considered it necessary to introduce further social priority categories.

3. If you answered yes to Q2, in what circumstances should social priority be awarded?

- "Elderly people who are homeless"
- "People who provide support for childcare"
- "People in the household who have disabilities"
- "Families which are large but live in a one bedroom flat"
- "People who are isolated"
- "People having to move to another city due to trauma as they do not want to live in the same place"
- "People who have children with additional needs"

Outcome: A small number of respondents made suggestions as to groups of applicants who should receive social priority. The circumstances suggested by respondents are currently provided for under other sections of the Letting Policy (e.g. overcrowding, medical / health needs and care and support needs) .

**Consultation Questions & Outcomes** (continued)

4. The awarding of points, in line with our Letting Policy, includes those with care and support needs. Of those listed below, which care / support needs do you think should be given priority?

	Response
Family Support (applicant assisting family with daily living or personal care)	27.4%
Personal Support (applicant requires assistance with daily living including personal care)	26.2%
Support with Childcare (applicant needs to be close to schools / family support)	23.6%
Support with Household Duties (family / friends required to help with household tasks)	21.8%
Other	1.0%
No Answer	0.0%

A small number of respondents made suggestions in relation to other circumstances in which they think care and support priority should be awarded. These suggestions are:

- "I have no friends were I live, I don't want to die alone, my family is alone"
- "Families that require more space"
- "People feeling isolated or suffering from medical problems"
- "Those living and working in the area"

Outcome: The most common circumstances considered appropriate for care and support priority points are family support and personal support. This is followed closely by childcare support and help with household duties. These circumstances are currently accounted for within the Letting Policy.

A small number of respondents suggested additional circumstances where care and support priority should be awarded. These suggestions are currently provided for under other sections of the Letting Policy (e.g. overcrowding, medical / health needs and social needs).

5. Points are awarded to social housing tenants who under-occupy their property. Do you think that higher points should be awarded in cases where there is a higher level of under-occupancy?

	Responses
Yes	68.7%
No	30.6%
No Answer	0.7%

Outcome: The survey indicates that a significant majority of respondents think that under-occupancy should be given more priority with 68.7% stating that increased points should be awarded to applicants in cases where higher levels of under-occupancy exist.

**Consultation Questions & Outcomes** (continued)

**6. Should owner-occupiers who can safely reside in their home be given points for any other priority need / housing conditions?**

	Responses
Yes	21.8%
No	76.2%
No Answer	2.0%

As part of the consultation, stakeholders were advised of the circumstances, in accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, in which landlords may not take property ownership into account. These are:

- In cases where the property has not been let, but the owner cannot secure entry to the property. For example, this may be where it is not safe to enter the property due to severe structural faults;
- Where it is probable that occupying the property will lead to abuse from someone currently living in the property;
- Where it is probable that occupying the property will lead to abuse from someone who previously resided with the applicant; and
- Where occupation of the property may endanger the health of the occupants and there are no reasonable steps that can be taken by the applicant to prevent that danger.

Outcome: *The majority of respondents have indicated that owner-occupiers who can reside safely in their home should not receive priority in relation to any other elements of housing need.*

**7. If answered yes to question 6, please state the circumstances in which owner-occupiers should be awarded priority.**

The reasons in which respondents considered it appropriate to award priority to owner-occupiers who can reside safely in their home are:

- "Having to reside with an ex-partner is unsuitable"
- "Living with someone else can lead to abuse"
- "The size of the property is unsuitable"
- "All my kids sleep in one bedroom, all five of them. There is no space for them"
- "If it is the only way to leave someone or if they have no family"
- "Owner occupiers should be treated equally to tenants in some cases"
- "I don't want to die alone, I have had many traumas at my previous address. This is a risk to my health and mental health"
- "Living in property will threaten health of applicant and applicant has done all it can"
- "They need funds to purchase other property. When retired other property might not suit needs"
- "Mental health is a big problem in society so it is important for people to be in a comfortable environment"
- "They need an escape route, who is to say they have the finances to buy another property and escape abuse"
- "If there is a danger in the home that causes a danger to the owner such as stairs"
- "To be closer to friends and relatives in area as they get older"

Outcome: *A small number of respondents suggested circumstances where they thought that it was appropriate for owner-occupiers who can safely reside in their home to receive priority for other elements of housing need.*

*The majority of these suggestions relate to circumstances where residing at the property could lead to the occupier being subjected to abuse or their health and safety being endangered. However, in such circumstances, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 stipulates that property ownership cannot be taken into account.*

**Consultation Questions & Outcomes** (continued)

**Housing Application Suspension and Cancellation Policy**

- 8. Which of the following factors should the Association consider as appropriate grounds to suspend a housing application?**

	Responses
Anti-social Behaviour	18.3%
The Applicant has Provided False and Misleading Information	16.1%
The applicant has Previously Abandoned a Tenancy	13.8%
Previous Conviction for Offence Punishable by Imprisonment	13.2%
Refusal of a Previous Offer without a Valid Reason	12.9%
Rent Arrears or Tenancy Related Debts	12.7%
Recovery of Possession has Previously been Granted Against the Applicant	12.2%
Other	0.0%
No Answer	0.8%

**Outcome:** *The most common reasons that respondents stated were appropriate grounds for suspending a housing application were anti-social behaviour, applicants found to have provided false and misleading information and applicants who previously abandoned a tenancy. These grounds are included within the Association's current Housing Application Suspension and Cancellation Policy as reasonable grounds for suspending a housing application form.*

- 9. If you think that an applicant should be suspended after refusing an offer of accommodation, do you consider the Association's current policy of being allowed to refuse two offers before being suspended for a period of 12 months to be reasonable?**

	Responses
Yes	89.1%
No	10.2%
No Answer	0.7%

**Outcome:** *In accordance with the existing Housing Application Suspension and Cancellation Policy, a housing applicant can be suspended from receiving an offer for a period of twelve months after refusing two reasonable offers. Almost 90% of respondents consider this practice to be reasonable.*

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**Consultation Questions & Outcomes** (continued)

10. If you answered no to Q9, please state the number of offers that an applicant should be allowed to refuse before receiving a suspension. Please also state the length of suspension that you think should be applied?

Number of Offers

	Responses
1	0.0%
2	0.0%
3	60.0%
1 or 2	20.0%
2 or 3	20.0%

Of the 10.2% of respondents who considered it unreasonable for the Association to suspend a housing applicant for twelve months after refusing two reasonable offers, the majority (60.0%) considered it reasonable for a suspension to be imposed after an applicant refuses three reasonable offers.

How long should an applicant be suspended for if they refuse an offer of accommodation?

	Responses
1 month	20.0%
2 months	0.0%
3 months	20.0%
4 months	0.0%
5 months	0.0%
6 months	60.0%

Of the 10.2% of respondents who considered it unreasonable for the Association to suspend a housing applicant for twelve months after refusing two reasonable offers, the majority (60.0%) considered it reasonable for a six month suspension period to be applied.

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## **Conclusions**

Despite a relatively low response rate, a number of trends were identified and taken into consideration when reviewing the Letting Policy and Housing Application Suspension and Cancellation Policy.

From the survey, it was noted that the majority of respondents considered the Association's approach towards the assessment of medical priority to be appropriate and fit for purpose. Despite receiving positive feedback regarding the three levels of medical needs priority currently offered, the policy has been updated to include a fourth medical need category. This additional category is introduced to differentiate between applicants with low level medical needs that are affected temporarily owing to their living circumstances, and those whose living circumstances aggravate a more permanent condition.

The Association's Letting Policy allows social needs to be assessed under four categories. The majority of respondents (87.1%) considered this approach to be appropriate therefore no changes have been made to the Social Needs section of the policy.

From the survey, it was noted that a high number of respondents agreed that priority should be given to applicants who are seeking housing in order to either provide or receive care and support. Respondents agreed that the care and support should continue to be provided to applicants who provide or receive personal support, family support, childcare or assistance with household duties and domestic tasks. However, no other circumstances were recommended for inclusion within the policy. Since these categories are currently provided for within the current Letting Policy, no amendments are therefore recommended to the Care and Support section of the policy.

When considering the priority levels which should be attached to applicants who under-occupy, the majority of respondents (68.7%) stated that the level of points awarded for under-occupancy should be increased in cases where under-occupancy levels are higher. In response, an amendment has been made to the policy where increased points are awarded to households who under-occupy by more than one bedroom. Specifically, an additional five points is now added to the each additional room allowance that the applicant qualifies for.

With respect to home owners, the majority of respondents did not think that home owners who can reside safely in their home should be given priority on the waiting list. In accordance with the current policy, homeowners are only awarded priority based on the statutory grounds defined by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014. In response to the survey results no changes in relation to the priority attached to home owners was recommended to the Letting Policy.

With regards to the suspension of housing applicants, the majority of respondents considered the provision of false information, anti-social behaviour and abandonment of a previous tenancy as reasonable grounds for imposing a suspension. These grounds are accounted for within the Housing Application Suspension and Cancellation Policy and have been retained.

From the survey, 89.1% of respondents considered the Association's policy of suspending an applicant for a period of twelve months for refusing two reasonable offers to be reasonable. A very small number of applicants suggested that a suspension should only be applied after three offers have been refused. Furthermore, a small number of applicants suggested that a six rather than twelve month suspension period would be more appropriate.

Given the survey results, it was considered appropriate not to change the Housing Application Suspension and Cancellation Policy, retaining the current practice of suspending an applicant should they refuse two reasonable offers. It was also considered appropriate to retain the existing suspension timescale of twelve months should an application be suspended under this ground.

It can be demonstrated that the results to the Letting Policy Review 2025 have led to some recommended changes to the Letting Policy and procedures – particularly in relation to under-occupancy.

This report provides a summary of the review process but further information about the consultation exercise can be obtained by contacting Housing Services on 0141 950 9052 or by emailing [housing@yokerha.org.uk](mailto:housing@yokerha.org.uk). A copy of this report is also available to download at [www.yokerha.org.uk](http://www.yokerha.org.uk).