

Introduction and Overview

This document outlines the procedures that staff should follow when dealing with the administration of the waiting list and the allocation of houses. This document should be read in conjunction with the Association's Letting Policy, Schedule 7 Allocations Policy and procedures and the Association's Housing Application Suspension & Cancellation Policy and procedures.

Letting Procedures

The document outlines the Association's procedures in relation to the following sections:

- General Guidance for Best Practice;
- Receiving, Registration and Assessment of Housing Application Forms;
- Maintenance of the Housing Register;
- Referrals from External Agencies;
- Allocations.

General Guidance for Best Practice

The fundamental aim of dealing with housing applications is to maintain and update a waiting list to ensure the allocation of properties are prioritised to people with the highest level of housing need (and / or support need, where applicable) without discriminatory restrictions.

While ensuring that allocations are being made to those in greatest need, Housing Management staff will seek to maximise the opportunities for greater access to housing and the ability of applicants to make informed choices through the provision of good information, advice and housing options information, and by reducing complexity and bureaucracy wherever possible.

Housing Management staff will endeavour to make the best use of available stock, and use the allocations process to assist in the creation and maintenance of balanced communities where people want to live and remain.

This procedure is a guide to the main steps in dealing with a housing application and managing the allocations process. In order to provide good customer service, open communication with applicants will be observed at all stages of the allocations process.

Housing Management staff will keep full and accurate records of contact made with applicants and external agencies, and will ensure that records are updated regularly.

Receiving, Registration and Assessment of Housing Application Forms

Housing Options

The majority of housing applicants will complete their application by completing a housing options form during an office interview with a member of staff. Once the application has been completed the form along with supporting documentation will be placed within mail-in and the information will be date stamped before being handed back to the Housing Management Department. The date of the application will be the date that the interview takes place. Due to an applicant's circumstances (i.e. mobility issues, location) it may not always be possible for a housing options interview to take place in the office. In such cases a home visit or telephone interview should be arranged and the applicant asked to forward relevant supporting information. Where a telephone interview is carried out, Housing Management staff should then post the relevant 'consent to share' and 'declaration' to the applicant for signing and return.

Once received by Housing Management, staff should enter the applicants details on to a computerised log (AD01 Applications Received) and a reference number attached. Applications will be entered on to the log in date order. The details of the housing options form should also be entered into the Housing Options Spreadsheet.

Registration & Acknowledgement

When a traditional application form (not a housing options form) is received it will be date stamped before being handed to the Housing Management Department. The date of application will be the date that the application is received by the Association.

Once received by Housing Management, Housing Management staff should enter the applicants details on to a computerised log and a reference number attached. Applications will be entered on to the log in date order.

Within three working days of receiving an application form, an acknowledgement letter will be issued to the applicant confirming the receipt of their application and confirming their reference number.

Assessment

Once the application has been registered, Housing Management staff should carry out an assessment of the application form. The assessment will be used to determine the applicants housing need and to establish what supporting documentation the applicant has provided (e.g. proof of residency, confirmation of local employment, copy of tenancy agreement).

In accordance with the Association's Letting Policy it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that they provide all necessary supporting documentation to allow their circumstances to be assessed. If the applicant fails to provide the necessary supporting documentation, or in the case of non-housing options forms, the application is incomplete, resulting in the applicant being awarded zero points, the applicant must be advised of this by letter within fourteen days of their application being received.

Where the applicant has provided all necessary supporting documentation with the application form, the applicant will be awarded a points level based on their housing need assessed in accordance with the Letting Policy. The applicant will be informed of their point level by letter within fourteen days of their application form being received.

All point level decisions must be agreed by two members of Housing Management staff.

Once Housing Management staff has assessed the application form and confirmed the points level, the applicant's details will be entered into the computerised waiting list and classified as 'To be Allocated'.

Where a traditional application form has been received and the Association needs to clarify an applicant's living circumstances, Housing Management staff should contact the applicant by telephone or by letter within fourteen days of receiving the application form inviting him / her to attend an office interview in order to discuss their circumstances and housing options. Any outstanding information should be requested at the same time.

Once Housing Management staff has attached a reference number and requested an office interview, the applicant's details should be entered into the computerised waiting list and classified as 'To be Allocated'. The applicant will provisionally be awarded zero points until the office interview has been carried out and their circumstances confirmed.

During the office interview Housing Management staff will discuss the applicant's circumstances in close detail and advise the applicant of their housing options. It is hoped that following the office interview Housing Management staff will have all the relevant information to process the application form. If an applicant fails to provide outstanding information at the interview, Housing Management staff should request this information during the interview.

Once the applicant has attended the office interview and the Association has received supporting information, Housing Management staff will complete the assessment of the application form and award a points level based on the applicants housing need assessed in accordance with the Letting Policy. The computerised waiting list will be updated to reflect the applicants points award and where necessary effective date. The applicant will be informed of their point level by letter.

Application Review

When an applicant gets close to the top of the waiting list and may be likely to receive an offer of housing in the near future, Housing Management staff should review the details provided on the application form.

Tenancy reports should be issued with a copy of the signed declaration to landlords where an applicant states that they have or have had a tenancy with a registered social landlord.

Depending on the applicant's circumstances (e.g. age of the application form, complicated circumstances) Housing Management staff should, if appropriate, contact write to the applicant with a view to reviewing the applicants circumstances. Contact can be made by telephone or in writing (WL09) asking them to attend an office interview. Once the applicant's circumstances have been confirmed and / or all tenancy reports have been received the applicant's waiting list entry should be updated accordingly.

In the event that a home visit has to be carried out (e.g. to confirm overcrowding / property defects) Housing Management staff will contact the applicant to arrange this visit. Contact can be made by telephone or in writing requesting a home visit. Once the applicant's circumstances have been confirmed and / or all tenancy reports have been received the applicant's waiting list entry should be updated accordingly.

Home visits should be carried out by two members of Housing Management staff.

While an application is under review their status on the waiting list should be marked as 'review' until any interviews, home visits or tenancy reports have been completed. Once all information has been updated following a review the application status should be changed to 'To be allocated'.

If during either the office interview or home visit the applicant cannot confirm all the details provided, the points level will be revised to reflect the details that can be confirmed. Housing Management staff should notify the applicant by letter of the revised points level.

Suspending an Applicant from Receiving an Offer of Housing

Where Housing Management staff is satisfied that the application should be suspended in accordance with the Association's Lettings Policy and Housing Application Suspension and Cancellation Policy, the applicant's waiting list entry should be updated with details of the date, reason and where appropriate date of reactivation. The classification of the application should be amended to 'Suspended'. The applicant will be notified in writing of the reasons for the suspension and where appropriate how the application may be re-activated.

Cancellation of Application

Where a housing application is received but should be cancelled in accordance with the Association's Lettings Policy and Housing Application Suspension and Cancellation Policy, Housing Management staff will notify the applicant in writing of the cancellation and the reason for cancellation. The applicant's details should be entered onto the waiting list and then classified as 'Cancelled'. The date and reason for cancellation should be recorded on the computerised waiting list. The records of applicants who have been cancelled should be removed from the 'Live Applications' tab and moved to the 'Cancelled Applications' tab of the computerised waiting list.

Applicants wishing to Suspend / Cancel their Housing Application

In the event that an applicant wishes to suspend or cancel their own application, the following procedures should apply.

1. If the applicant notifies the Association in writing of their wish to suspend or cancel their application, their waiting list entry should be updated by Housing Management staff to reflect either a 'Suspended' or 'Cancelled' classification. The date and reasons for suspension / cancellation should be recorded on the waiting list.

2. Where an applicant provides verbal confirmation of their wish to suspend or cancel an application, Housing Management staff should enter this information into the waiting list entry and change the classification to either 'Suspended' or 'Cancelled'. The date and reasons for the suspension / cancellation should be recorded on the computerised waiting list. Housing Management staff should request that the applicant confirms in writing their wish to suspend or cancel the application.

Maintenance of the Housing Register

Change of Circumstances

Where an applicant notifies the Association of a change of circumstances Housing Management staff will re-assess the application form based on the change in circumstance. The reassessment will be carried out in accordance with the Assessment section of this procedure. Housing Management staff will update the computerised waiting list accordingly and issue a letter to the applicant confirming his / her revised points level.

Where the applicant changes address Housing Management staff will arrange an appointment for an updated application form to be completed. Housing Management staff will ensure that the applicant's Reference Number and original date of application is written on the new application form before it is issued.

Once the new application has been received by the Association, the computerised log and applicant's waiting list entry will be updated to reflect the applicant's change in circumstances. Housing Management staff will then reassess the application in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Assessment section of this document.

Applicant Provides Additional Information

If an applicant provides further information that may result in a change in points level, Housing Management staff should update the applicant's waiting list entry to reflect the revised points level. Housing Management staff should then confirm in writing the applicant's revised points level.

Waiting List Review

In order to ensure that the information stored on the waiting list is accurate and up to date the Association will carry out regular reviews. Appropriate times for a review to be carried out are:

1. Immediately following a Lettings Policy Review.
2. Following a change in legislation or good practice that impacts upon housing allocations.
3. On a regular basis where there are no changes to the Association's Lettings Policy or Procedures.

During the review process the applicant will be lettered asking if they wish to remain on the waiting list. If the applicant fails to respond within fourteen days of the initial letter being issued the applicant will be issued with a second letter giving a further fourteen days for the applicant to respond. If an applicant fails to respond to the second review letter the application will be cancelled. Housing Management staff will then inform the applicant in writing that the application has been cancelled. The records of applicants who have been cancelled as a result of the review should be removed from the 'Live Applications' tab and moved to the 'Cancelled Applications' tab of the computerised waiting list.

Where a waiting list review takes place following a review of the Lettings Policy, the applicants who respond to the review letters will have their applications reassessed in accordance with the new policy. Housing Management staff will then notify the applicant of any revision to their points level.

Referrals from External Agencies

Section 5 Referrals

In the event that the Association receives a Section 5 Referral from a local authority, the details of the referral will be logged on to a computerised 'Section 5 Referral Register'. Once the details are recorded the following procedures should be followed:

1. If the applicant has already submitted an application for housing with the Association the assessment process described in the Assessment section of this document should apply if the application has not yet been pointed.
2. If the applicant has already submitted an application for housing with the Association and the application has been pointed, the procedures in this document relating to the provision of new information should be followed.
3. If the applicant has not submitted an application form, one should be issued to the applicant within three working days of the Referral being received. Once the application form has been received the assessment procedures within the Assessment section of this document will apply. If the applicant does not return the application form issued, the referral will not be processed and the applicant will be referred back to Glasgow City Council.

Housing Management staff will notify the local authority within three working days of receipt of the Referral and of the decision taken. The Housing Offer will inform the local authority of one of the following decisions:

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| Case A | The Association indicates a willingness to comply but cannot indicate when a suitable property will become available within a six week period or beyond. |
| Case B | The Association indicates that it will be able to comply with the request. |
| Case C | The Association indicates a willingness to comply but cannot indicate when a suitable property will be available. |
| Case D | The Association indicates it has good reason not to comply. |

Responses issued to the local authority in relation to the cases above should be carried out in accordance with the Association's Homelessness Duty Protocol Procedures.

Allocations

Applicants will be made a maximum of two offers of accommodation. If an applicant refuses two reasonable offers of housing their application should be suspended from receiving a further offer for a period of twelve months. If an application is suspended from receiving a further offer Housing Management staff will write to the applicant confirming their suspension and the date which the application will be reactivated. Where an applicant is suspended after refusing two reasonable offers of housing, the applicant's waiting list entry should be updated to show the date, reason and date of reactivation. The classification of the application should be amended to 'Suspended'.

Making an Offer Housing

At the point of offer a computer print out of the applicants, in points order, will be produced for audit purposes. An offer will normally be made to the applicant with the highest points (subject to the housing choices that the applicant selected when completing the application form). Where more than one applicant has the same number of points, the length of time the applicants have been in recognised housing need (effective date), will be the deciding factor. Housing Management staff will make the offer to the relevant applicant in writing, and will include details of the property. The applicant will be given three working days to contact the office to arrange to view the property. Failure to respond to this letter will result in the offer being withdrawn and offered to the next qualifying person on the waiting list.

If an applicant wishes to view a property, the viewing will be carried out once the keys have been returned to the Association and Maintenance Services are satisfied that the property is safe to view.

During the viewing applicants will be made aware that the internal decoration of the property is the responsibility of the incoming tenant and that the Association will only award a small decoration allowance in exceptional circumstances.

An offer of accommodation must be accepted or refused within one working day of viewing. Where an offer is refused, the applicant should complete a form giving their reasons.

If an applicant refuses an offer of housing, Housing Management staff must update the computerised waiting list and then make the offer to the next qualifying person on the waiting list.

If an applicant accepts an offer of housing, arrangements will be made by Housing Management staff for the applicant to sign up within two working days of viewing the property. The applicant will be expected to occupy the house within two weeks of the date of tenancy.

Target Groups

In order to ensure that the needs of a wide range of applicants are met, the Association operates a Target Group / Points allocation system. In order to meet the targets published in the Association's Lettings Policy, Housing Management staff may make an offer of housing to a person within any target group even if that applicant is not top of the overall waiting list. A computer printout will be provided as an audit trail when such an allocation is made.

Exercising Discretion

In order to achieve a balanced community, and to take account of the needs of other residents, there may be occasions when it is not considered appropriate to allocate a property to the person with the highest points total. Such an allocation would require to be approved by two members of Housing Management staff. A computer printout will be provided as an audit trail and this must be accompanied by a case note signed by two members of Housing Management staff explaining the reasons for the offer being made to that particular applicant. The details for such an allocation will be clearly recorded in the Register of 'Discretionary Allocations'.

Local Lettings Initiative

Where the Association's Management Committee have granted approval for a local lettings initiative to be introduced which places restrictions on the allocation of certain properties, there may be occasions when it is not considered appropriate to allocate a property to the person with the highest points total. Where a person with a higher points level is by-passed in accordance with the local lettings initiative, such an allocation would require approval by two members of Housing Management staff.

A computer printout will be provided as an audit trail and this must be accompanied by a case note signed by two members of Housing Management staff explaining the reasons for the offer being made to that particular applicant. The details for such an allocation will be clearly recorded in the Register of 'Discretionary Allocations'.

Allocations of Governing Body / Staff Members

Before an offer can be made under the Association's Allocations of Governing Body / Staff Members, Housing Management staff must present the application and audit records to the attention of the Management Committee at the first subsequent meeting for recording. The details of the allocation should be entered in the minute of that meeting and recorded in a separate register designated for this purpose.

Once Management Committee records the proposed offer, Housing Management staff must make the offer to the applicant within one working day of the meeting. Once the offer has been made the allocation procedures described in this document will apply.

If the Management Committee refuses permission for the proposed offer, Housing Management staff must make the offer to the next qualifying person on the waiting list.