

CONTOUR HOMES LTD  
HOUSING POLICY PAPER 1.2  
LETTINGS

**1. Policy Objective**

- 1.1 Contour Homes Ltd is committed to “Delivering services which ensure that sufficient new and existing customers choose to live in its properties, leading to sustainable communities.”
- 1.2 To succeed in building sustainable communities, the Association aims to ensure that our Lettings Policy is fair, accessible, and takes account of a range of factors, including “need” when prioritising offers of accommodation.
- 1.3 This Policy provides us with a simplified mechanism for letting properties which is easy to explain to applicants, assists us in letting properties to people who want to live in particular communities, thereby increasing satisfaction, and to respond more effectively to issues around low demand.
- 1.4 The Association will deal fairly with all applicants regardless of age, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation or political view. The Association remains committed to maximising opportunities for applicants to choose where they live and enhance mobility.
- 1.5 The Association remains committed to working in partnership with Local Authorities to assist them in discharging their statutory duties, and in this respect nomination agreements will continue to apply to a proportion of vacancies. In addition we will continue to participate in the HOMES scheme which encourages mobility across Local Authority areas.

**2. Scope of the Policy**

- 2.1 This Lettings Policy will set out the following:
  - Mechanism for allocating properties
  - The Banding criteria
  - Letting Low Demand properties
  - Supported Housing
  - Sheltered Housing
- 2.2 For the purposes of this Policy, “applicant” could mean a person applying for accommodation who is not an existing Contour tenant, as well as those that are. A Supported Housing Tenant needing move-on accommodation will be treated as a Transfer.

- 2.3 This Policy will apply to all of our rented properties, with the exception of Supported Housing, Shared Ownership Properties and where Local Lettings Policies apply. Our properties at AvenQuest, Handforth, Avenues/Hollins, Rivers and Callon, which were acquired following stock transfers, will be specifically covered by their own Local Letting Policies.

### **3. Principles of the Policy**

- 3.1 This Lettings Policy provides us with a simplified mechanism for letting properties which is easy to explain to applicants, assists us in letting properties to people who want to live in particular communities, thereby increasing satisfaction, and to respond more effectively to issues around low demand.

- 3.2 This Policy will be used in conjunction with our Suspension Policy.

### **3.3 MECHANISM FOR ALLOCATING PROPERTIES**

- 3.3.1 The Policy is based on four basic bands for letting our properties, and an applicant, when applying for accommodation, will be placed into one or more of these bands.

- 3.3.2 The criteria for these bands is set out in section 3.4.

- 3.3.3 An applicant who is working will be placed in Band 3 unless they meet the criteria to be placed in Band 1. They will not be placed in Band 2 even in they have an element of housing need.

- 3.3.4 Within all bands applicants will be listed in order of the date they registered for accommodation and lettings of accommodation will be made in date order.

- 3.3.5 When a vacancy occurs, an offer of accommodation will be made to the longest standing applicant from Band 1, requesting that scheme. Band 1 is the Band designed to respond to urgent situations. If that is not applicable or the offer(s) are refused then the vacancy will be offered to applicants from Bands 2, 3, and 4 based on their date of application and on a rotation basis

- 3.3.6 This rotation will operate at a scheme level, therefore if a vacancy on a scheme is accepted by an applicant from Band 3 the next vacancy on that scheme will be offered to an applicant from Band 4. Using this system we are aiming to ensure that our communities are diverse and sustainable rather than concentrating high levels of need within one community.

3.3.7 We will take account of the size of a household when considering offers of accommodation to ensure that we make best use of our stock and do not cause overcrowding or significant under-occupation. We will also, however, operate flexibly when matching people to properties, to respond to the particular needs of communities and low demand properties. Specific guidelines will be incorporated into our procedures.

### 3.4 THE BANDING CRITERIA

<b>BAND ONE – EMERGENCIES</b>
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#### APPLICANTS PLACED IN BAND ONE MUST HAVE AREA MANAGER APPROVAL

<b>Decants</b>	A CH tenant who needs to be decanted for major works/demolition. This includes permanent moves.
<b>Serious Medical Condition#</b>	An applicant who has a life-threatening medical condition eg. HIV, Cancer etc and a move would be beneficial to the applicant's health.
<b>Harassment#</b>	An applicant being subjected to harassment in any form eg, racial, sexual, serious ASB
<b>Management Transfers*</b>	A CH tenant can be placed in group 1, if there is a management reason for them to move.

\*Recognising the complex reasons that can be involved in transfer requests Managers will have the discretion to place a tenant into Group 1 (Emergency Rehousing) if they feel that the circumstances warrant an immediate move or they wish to make best use of our adapted stock.

#As this is Band is designed for emergency rehousing unless applicants are decants or management transfers, they must choose more than three schemes. If the applicant choses less than three schemes then they must demonstrate that they have a local connection to the scheme(s) they have chosen.

<b>BAND – TWO HOUSING NEED</b>
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<b>Other Medical</b>	An applicant whose current accommodation is unsuitable in view of their (or their family's) medical condition.
<b>Overcrowding</b>	A bedroom is required as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Couples living together including same sex partners</li><li>• Each adult over 18 years of age</li></ul>

- A Single Parent
- Children over 10 of a different sex to other children
- People whose medical condition requires that they be in a bedroom of their own.

**Property in Poor Condition**

An applicant living in a property:

- With no basic facilities
- With basic facilities shared with other than family members
- With basic facilities in a poor condition

**Temporary or insecure Accommodation**

An applicant living in either temporary accommodation or with an insecure tenure

**Family Living Apart**

An applicant with a child or partner who will reside at the tenancy but is currently living in separate accommodation. They do not need to have lived together before.

**Inability to Pay Rent/Mortgage**

An applicant who is unable to afford the rent/mortgage in their current accommodation.

**Children in Flats**

An applicant with children under 10, living in accommodation above first floor.

**Elderly Needs**

An applicant who:

- Finds it difficult heating/maintaining their home
- Would benefit from living in sheltered accommodation
- Lives above first floor without a lift
- Has a medical condition which would make a move beneficial

<b>Neighbour Nuisance</b>	Subject to excessive neighbour nuisance problems.
<b>Support Needs</b>	An applicant who needs to move to either provide support or to receive support
<b>Relationship Breakdown</b>	An applicant who needs to secure alternative accommodation as a result of the breakdown of a relationship
<b>Education &amp; Training</b>	An applicant who is in full time education or undertaking employment training in the locality.
<b>Local Connection</b>	<p>An applicant will be deemed as having a connection with the locality they wish to move to if :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They have family living in the area</li><li>• They have previously lived in the area for at least 5 yrs</li><li>• They have children attending school in the area</li><li>• They are making a positive and supportive contribution to the local community eg. Voluntary work</li></ul>

**BAND - THREE  
ECONOMIC**

<b>Economically Active</b>	<p>An applicant who is currently working in the locality or an applicant who needs to move:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To take up a firm offer of employment</li><li>• To be closer to employment</li></ul>
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**BAND - FOUR  
CHA TENANT TRANSFERS**

**A Contour applicant who wishes to move to another property** Any CH tenant who wishes to move for whatever reason.

CH tenants who meet the criteria can also be placed in group one.

### **3.5 REHOUSING CHILDREN**

3.5.1 Applicants with children under 10 years of age will normally only be considered for flats on the ground floor or with first floor access. They will not be allocated flats above those specifically designed for the elderly.

### **3.6 LETTINGS TO PEOPLE UNDER 18**

3.6.1 The Association does not normally allocate properties to people under the age of 18 years. However in exceptional circumstances we will consider applicants referred through recognised agencies with the appropriate levels of support.

3.6.2 We will consider the young person's housing and support needs and their individual circumstances in making this decision. Our primary objective will be to ensure that a young person receives reasonable levels of support to sustain their tenancy.

### **3.7 LOW DEMAND STOCK**

3.7.1 Some properties are designated low demand properties as there are no applicants on our Waiting List. In some instances there may be a small number of people on the Waiting List but there is a high turnover on the scheme.

3.7.2 Such properties will be advertised as soon as we are aware of a vacancy and applicants will not be banded but offered accommodation on a first come first served basis.

3.7.3 The requirements of the Suspension Policy will apply.

### **3.8 SHELTERED HOUSING**

3.8.1 Sheltered Housing will normally only be offered to people who are over the age of 55 years.

### **3.9 SUPPORTED HOUSING**

3.9.1 The letting of tenancies in our Supported Housing schemes falls outside the scope of this policy.

3.9.2 The ability for Supported Housing tenants to move on to more independent living in general needs or Sheltered housing is part of this overall Lettings Policy.

### **3.10 ACCESSING CONTOUR ACCOMMODATION**

3.10.1 In order to ensure that our waiting lists are up to date, the Association will ask all applicants to re-register their interest in rehousing and to advise us of any change of circumstances. Applicants whose circumstances have changed and as a result are placed in a different band will maintain their original date of application. At this point we will also provide applicants with information about their opportunities for rehousing.

### **3.11 RIGHTS FOR INFORMATION AND REVIEWS OF DECISIONS**

3.11.1 An applicant has the right, on request, to be informed of any decision about the facts of the applicants case which has been or is likely to be taken into account in considering whether to make an letting which band they are in and why and any other relevant information

3.11.2 The applicant has the right, on request, to have a decision, relating to this Policy, reviewed using the Association's Complaints Policy.

### **3.12 PUBLICISING OUR SERVICE**

3.12.1 Contour Homes will ensure that advice and information about its Lettings Policy and demand for stock is made available.

## **4. Relevant Legislation and Regulatory Compliance**

### **4.1 Housing Corporation Regulatory Code**

*3.5 Housing Associations must provide good-quality housing services for residents and prospective residents:*

*3.5.1 by seeking to offer a choice of home, while giving reasonable preference to those in priority housing need;*

*3.5.5 by using lettings policies that are fair and reflect the diversity of their client groups*

*3.6 Housing Associations must work with local authorities to enable the latter to fulfil their duties:*

*3.6.1 to the homeless and people in priority housing need*

4.2 *Under ss170 and 213 of the Housing Act 1996, Registered Social landlords are required to assist local authorities in undertaking their duties to rehouse persons from the statutory register. This is further reinforced by the s213 of the Homelessness Act 2002 where RSLs are required to assist Local Authorities in discharging their statutory duties when requested to do so.*

**5. Risk Implications**

Failure to follow the principles of this policy could result in breach of the Housing Association Regulatory Code and our commitment to sustainable communities and providing equality of opportunity. The Head of Housing Management will oversee allocations procedures and monitor performance against targets.

**6. Policy Monitoring**

6.1 Targets will be set for

- Relet time
- Allocations to BME communities
- Nominations

6.2 This policy and performance against targets will be monitored by:

- Collection of Housing Corporation national performance indicators on an annual basis and comparison with peer organisations
- Quarterly monitoring reports to the Board

6.3 This Policy will be reviewed twelve months from the implementation date.

**7. Delegated Authority**

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| 7.1 | To approve applications for rehousing               | HA  |
| 7.2 | To accept applications for rehousing to Band One AM |     |
| 7.2 | To reject applications for rehousing                | HMO |
| 7.4 | To review a rehousing decision on appeal            | AM  |

7.3 To offer a property to a prospective tenant HMO

7.4 To sign up a new tenant HMO

**8. Outline procedure**

Contour Homes Lettings Procedure

**9. Relevant Documents**

Application Form

Renting a Home with Contour Leaflet