



**Allocations & Lettings 2008  
Adactus Housing Association**

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## **Allocations & Lettings Policy Adactus Housing Association**

### **1. Policy Statement**

Adactus Housing Association is committed to providing housing for people in housing need, this policy will provide guidance to staff to enable them to carry out the provision of housing services and allocate the Association's homes to applicants in housing need.

Adactus HA are committed to delivering services that are fair and transparent to our customers. A copy of this document will be provided free of charge upon request. The document will be available in other formats such as large print, Braille, audio or other languages on request.

### **2. Aims**

- To ensure a consistency of practice in the letting and management of our homes
- Provide customers with a simple, clear and easy way to apply and access our housing.
- Provide a range of affordable homes for single people, couples and families as well as specific schemes for older people and those with special or support needs.
- To increase choice and mobility for customers.
- Operate a policy to reflect the communities we work in and to ensure that these communities are sustainable.
- Ensure that the Association adopts the most suitable letting methods to compliment Local Authority strategy and offer choice to our tenants.
- Take a pro-active approach to ensure that no individual or group is discriminated against or treated differently as a direct or indirect result of our allocations policy. Adactus will ensure this service is flexible to accommodate individual needs such as translators, early morning or evening appointments, same sex interview staff and home interviews.

### **3. Scope**

This Policy covers all applicants to AHA from initial enquiry up to the stage of letting. It will also apply where Adactus HA works in partnership with Local Authorities through nominations agreements.

### **4. Links to other policies and strategies**

This policy has clear links to the following policies:

- Local Lettings Policy

- Suspensions Policy
- Starter Tenancy Policy
- Tenants Requiring Extra Support Policy
- Complaints Policy

#### **4. Context**

This Policy is designed to ensure that the Association can allocate and let its housing stock transparently and efficiently to meet the needs of our customers.

This policy has been produced in accordance with guidance provided by the Housing Corporation and the following legislation:

- Housing Act 1996
- Housing Act 1985
- Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (amended 2005)
- Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Children Act 1989
- Children (Leaving Care) Regulations 2001
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Crime & Disorder Act 1998

The following Government Policy is embedded in the aims of this document:

- Tackling Homelessness: The Housing Corporation Strategy (2006)
- Choice Based Lettings: Good Practice Note (HC 2006)
- Sustainable Communities: Homes For All; A Five Year Plan (CLG 2005)
- Sustainable Communities: People, places & prosperity (CLG 2005)
- Choice Based Lettings: Pilots & Evaluations (CLG 2004)

#### **5. Definitions**

Choice Based Lettings (CBL) - Choice-based lettings scheme are a new way that some local authorities and housing associations are letting their properties. Although there are differences between areas, the common feature is that once you have registered that you are looking for housing, you have to bid for properties that become available - rather than waiting to be offered one. Based on your circumstances you may be awarded a 'priority rating', and this will determine who gets a property if several people bid for it.

Nominations Agreements – A service level agreement whereby a housing association and a local authority will work in partnership to address housing need. The Housing Association will accept the council's 'nominations' from

their re-housing list for a specific percentage of their properties that become vacant. This figure is usually around 50%.

## **6. Our Approach**

### **6.1 Eligibility**

- Anyone who is a UK resident, who has recourse to public funds and over the age of 18 years can apply to be re-housed.
- Applicants under the age of 18 but over 16 may apply for re-housing subject to providing a rent guarantor, an assessment on ability to hold a successful tenancy shall also be carried out.
- Existing tenants of the Association can apply to transfer to another property or area if they have lived in their property for over 12 months. (in line with Starter Tenancy Policy).

All applications are subject to verification and reference checking.

### **6.2 Owner occupiers**

Applicants who are home-owners can apply for re-housing however an offer of a property will not be made if this will lead to them having a second home. The exceptions to this are people who require sheltered or supported housing schemes.

### **6.3 Suspensions**

The suspension policy applies to both direct applicants and members of the moving group and former tenants of the Association. There are a number of reasons why the Association would suspend an applicant from being offered a property. Please refer to the Suspensions Policy for details of:

- Reasons for suspension
- Period of suspension
- Review of suspension
- Appeals and Complaints

### **6.4 Applications**

Anyone interested in renting a property from us can make an enquiry or request for an application pack at any of our regional housing offices or alternatively visit our web site: -

[www.adactushousing.co.uk](http://www.adactushousing.co.uk)

An Adactus team member will contact the applicant and provide housing options advice.

Through the application process the applicant has the opportunity to choose:

- Areas for consideration

- Type of accommodation required
- Preferred number of bedrooms

## 6.5 Assessment of applications

Applicants that apply to the Association for re-housing are placed in one of three allocations groups according to their assessed needs as follows:

Group 1	Management Discretionary Lets, Under-Occupiers, Supported tenants with agreed move-on plans, Decants/Compulsory Purchase Orders and Emergency Applicants
Group 2	General housing needs applicants
Group 3	All other applicants

Refer to Appendix 1 for a more detailed breakdown of group's.

The Association's assessment of applicants housing need is reflected by placing them in one of the 3 priority groups in date order. The Association re-house applicants in date order in their group in the proportions as follows:

Group 1	33%
Group 2	33%
Group 3	33%

## 6.6 Joint Working

Adactus are committed to working in partnership with all appropriate local authorities through agreed scheme's such as Nominations, Choice Based Lettings (CBL) and Local Lettings Policies. Several local authorities have implemented Choice Based Lettings schemes in addition to or as the primary allocation schemes. In these instances our nomination agreement can be met through advertising properties through CBL.

Adactus are partners of the Manchester Housing Register and Preston Select Move, these services provide a single application process for customers wishing to be considered for re-housing from the local authority and a number of RSL's in Manchester & Preston respectively.

## 6.7 Mobility Options

Adactus are committed to offering a variety of mobility options to applicants and current tenants. We will advise customers on the following options:

- Appropriate allocation system for their areas of choice (waiting lists, nominations or CBL)

- Transfer's (for existing customers)
- 'Pinpoint' - sub-regional choice based letting
- 'Homeswapper' – national mutual exchange service

## **6.8 Local Lettings Policies**

A Local Lettings Policy can only be established after consultation and approval from the Housing Corporation and the Association's Board. To qualify, the Association must show that properties within a specific area have become empty more often than is normal or show another specific reason that an area would benefit from having a local lettings policy.

Each policy will be reviewed annually by the appropriate Neighbourhood Services Manager. The Local Lettings Policies are operated in accordance with the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy.

## **6.9 Housing Waiting List Reviews**

Six monthly reviews will take place of all housing waiting lists by the appropriate Neighbourhood Services Managers in conjunction with lettings staff. This review will determine if a waiting list should be temporarily closed. The decision will be made based on:

- Stock numbers
- Average turnover
- Number of applicants on waiting list
- Average waiting time of last 5 lets
- Prospects for being re-housed

## **6.10 Application Reviews**

All applications will be reviewed every 6 months to establish if they still wish to be considered for re-housing and if there has been any changes in circumstances.

## **6.11 Complaints or Appeals**

If a customer is not satisfied with the way their application for re-housing has been handled they can use the Association's Complaints and Appeals procedure. The procedure can be used by anyone who receives a service from the Association, is affected by a decision or action taken by the Association, or anyone who represents such a person.

## **7. Responsible Persons**

- *Operations Directors (Housing Management)* : Overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with this Policy, Performance Monitoring, Reporting to Board.
- *Regional Managers/Head of Supported Housing:* Implementation of Policy and Procedure at Local Level, Overall compliance with Service Standards at a Regional level.
- *Neighbourhood Services Managers/Operations Managers/Senior Project Officers:* Individual Officers performance, direction and guidance on appropriate course of action.
- *Housing Officers/Sheltered Housing Officers, Supported Housing Officers:* Day to Day Management and implement policy and apply procedure.
- *Customer Service Staff and Other Staff:* To implement policy and procedures and amend manual & computer records & systems.

## **8. Service Standards**

Aim to assess applications and put into priority group within 10 working days of receiving a form with all details completed including references where requested.

We will send a copy of the resident's charter, details of areas of stock and information on re-housing prospects.

Provide Tenants handbook and go through Tenancy Agreement before you sign it.

Your property should meet our re-let standard or a standard agreed with your housing officer, with re-let standard being reached within 4 weeks of tenancy start date.

## **9. Equality and Diversity**

The outcome of the impact assessment is pending.

## **10. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through service level agreements with partnering local authorities, the Allocations & Lettings Continuous Improvement Group, by Operations Directors and Board. Individual performance will be monitored as outlined in Section 7.

Customer Feedback will be received through:

- Allocations service satisfaction questionnaire
- Lettings service satisfaction questionnaire

## Group 1

### 1. Management discretionary lets

Regional managers retain the right to use discretion when required, especially in order to take into account individual circumstances and to make the best use of the Association's housing stock. Some examples of where discretionary lets can be made are where:

- An Overcrowded family occupy a property in a high demand area and are prepared to move to a larger property in a low demand area.
- The property or street has a history of anti social behaviour issues and special care must be taken to ensure the appropriate let, e.g. mature let
- The let is to a transfer within the same scheme or area for management because there is an urgent housing need or security reason.
- A vacant property has been adapted and meets the needs of an existing tenant (see Aids & Adaptations Policy).

Discretion must be fully documented and justified by Housing Officers and Customer Services Officers on a case-by-case basis and signed and approved by the Regional Manager.

### 2. Under-occupying

A property is considered to be under-occupied where one or more bedrooms are not in regular use as bedrooms. Group 1 priority for re-housing will be given if the tenant is prepared to downsize to a property with less bedrooms than their existing property.

### 3. Supported Tenants with agreed move-on plans

Supported Housing tenants that no longer require the level of support they are currently receiving. This must be agreed with the support workers and evidenced accordingly.

### 4. Decants/compulsory purchase orders

There are occasions when tenants will need to be moved out of their homes through no choice of their own. This is called a decant and could be for one of the following reasons:

1. Compulsory Purchase Orders. A legal order issued by the Local Authority to make landlords or owner occupiers sell their properties so that the Local Authority can reuse the land, for example for new buildings or roads.
2. Where the Association decides to sell a property
3. Where the Association manages a property owned by someone else and this arrangement comes to an end.

These applicants will only normally be offered property of the type and with the number of bedrooms that they currently need and not necessarily the same as they currently occupy. They will be eligible to apply for property in any area where the Association has stock. However, if they request high demand areas, they may queue exclusively for these only for **8 weeks**. If they have not been offered a vacancy within that time, they must extend their choices to include medium and/or low demand areas.

## **5. Emergency applicants**

Applicants that have been assessed as having an urgent housing need are also placed in Group 1. Applicants are considered to be in urgent housing need if they are:

### **5.1 Experiencing Domestic violence/ fear of violence**

Where the applicant is a tenant requesting a transfer, an investigation into the report of domestic violence will be available from the investigating officer in line with our published policy on domestic violence.

For all applicants, before domestic violence priority can be awarded there needs to be recorded evidence of the domestic violence as follows:

- Legal protection order e.g. injunction
- Surrender of permanent tenancy
- Residing in refuge
- Proof of other self-help measures such as police reports, legal action or victim support

As with many cases of domestic violence discretion must be used in a case-by-case basis and take into account personal circumstances as well as any recorded evidence.

### **5.2 Suffering Harassment-for example due to race, sexual orientation or from a landlord**

Before harassment priority can be awarded their needs to be recorded evidence of the harassment e.g. Police report, crime scene number, reported to Housing Officer.

As with many cases of harassment discretion must be used in a case-by-case basis and take into account personal circumstances as well as any recorded evidence.

### **5.3 Homeless applicants or applicants living in temporary accommodation**

Applicants that are homeless or living in temporary accommodation are advised that verification will be required prior to them receiving emergency applicant status. Examples of homeless applicants circumstances can be verified by providing:

- Notice to leave/quit from a landlord (including supported housing)
- Proof of statutory homeless status from council

- Copy of Fixed Term Agreements
- Copy of Repossession Orders
- Court hearing documentation for repossession
- Discharge paper (armed forces)
- Contract/of employment/Letter from employer (tied tenancy)

## **Group 2**

### **General housing need applicants**

Applicants that have been assessed as having a general housing need are placed in this category. Applicants are considered to be in general housing need if they meet at least one of the following criteria:

#### **1. Overcrowding**

In defining overcrowding the Association considers it reasonable that the following people require their own bedroom -

- Couple in a relationship living together.
- Single parent.
- Adult aged 18 years or over.
- Person with supported/documented medical grounds for their own room.
- Child over 5 years not to share with a different sex.
- More than two children sharing.
- Members of separate households living in one property.
- Children of same sex with 10 years and over age difference.

#### **3. Children living at height**

The Association does not consider flats above ground floor level suitable for families with young children (under 12 years old). The Association will not offer this type of accommodation to families with young children unless temporary and exceptional circumstances apply.

This category applies to applicants whose household includes children under 12 or women who are pregnant and whose current accommodation is unsuitable.

#### **4. Poor property condition**

The Association recognises that property in poor repair condition can have a detrimental effect on a person's general health. Housing need status will be awarded to non-transfer applicants who live in property that requires significant major repairs.

The Association will seek verification of poor property condition.

#### **5. Lacking basic amenities**

The Association recognises that lacking or sharing basic amenities or facilities within a property has a detrimental effect on the well being of people. Housing need status will be awarded for lacking or sharing amenities.

Sharing amenities will apply to sharing with other than immediate family members.

## **6. Medical condition**

The Association will award medical status where it is recognised that the medical condition will lead to a **significant improvement** in the applicants medical condition as a direct result of being re housed.

The Association will seek verification of medical condition.

It is recognised that some medical conditions, especially if they are temporary in nature, do not warrant re housing on medical grounds. Some examples of these include

- Pregnancy
- Stress as a result of noisy neighbours

## **7. Relationship breakdown where children are involved**

Priority can be given to applicants where a couple have split up but are still residing at the same address due to lack of alternative accommodation and dependant children are involved.

## **8. Moving nearer to work/college**

Priority can be given to applicants who are taking up an offer of employment or education who are experiencing travelling difficulty on a daily basis e.g. cost and time using public transport. Assessment will be made on individual circumstances and a guide would be a travelling time in excess of 2 hours each way. Applicants will be required to provide proof of the offer of employment or college courses.

## **Group 3**

### **All other applicants**

The only requirement for this group is that the applicant is eligible to apply for a home with the Association

Date approved by Board _____ Date for Board review _____
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