

Board Approval Date: Oct 06 Last Reviewed: <i>not amended</i> This Version Issued to Staff: Jul 07 Next Review Date: Oct 09	Policy & Procedure No: HM011 Manchester Lettings	
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Section 1 The Policy

1. Aim

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure that People First makes property available to those in housing need. We also want to ensure that we are able to help those who wish to live in the Hulme area but who would not usually have a high priority for re-housing based purely on their housing need.
- 1.2 It is recognised that lettings policies that rely on housing need alone work against many people who want to live in a particular area but who may already have accommodation that meets their needs elsewhere. They may want to live in an area because of links with family, friends or because they wish to rent good standard accommodation at reasonable rents.
- 1.3 Our policy aims to address this by offering different ways of applying for a home with People First. New applicants will be able to apply through different streams, depending on the reasons for wanting a move.

2.0 Regulatory Environment

- 2.1 This policy is issued to comply with:
 - a) **The Housing Corporations regulatory code point 3.5.1** that states housing association must be properly managed "*by seeking to offer a choice of home, while giving reasonable preference to those in priority housing need*".
 - b) **The Housing Corporations regulatory code point 3.5.5** that states: housing associations must be properly managed "*by using lettings policies that are fair and reflect the diversity of their client groups*".

- c) **Housing Corporation Regulatory Circular Number: 07/04** on the use of starter tenancies the states that: *“Associations that use assured shorthold tenancies as starter tenancies should do so as part of a managed strategy for dealing with ASB either: across their whole stock; across their stock in a local authority area; or in defined street areas or estates.”*
- d) **The Nominations Rights Deed between the Association and Manchester City Council** to house people in priority need.
- e) **The Agreement between the Association and Manchester City Council** on the operation of a common housing register.
- f) **Service level agreement between the Association and the People First Manchester Irish Project** to create a small number of supported tenancies.

3.0 Re-Housing Streams

3.1 ***Nomination from Manchester City Council Stream***

- 3.1.1 50% of all properties that become available to let will be offered to Manchester City Council in line with the Nomination Rights Deed.

3.2 **Housing needs stream**

- 3.2.1 This stream is for those whose present accommodation or location is unsuitable for their needs. Priority for re-housing will be based on a points system – applicants will be allocated points based on a range of criteria. These are listed at Appendix I.

3.2 ***Hulme Community and Economic Stream***

- 3.2.1 The community stream is for those who want to live in Hulme because they receive help from, or give help to, family or friends or because they can contribute positively to the community.
- 3.2.2 Community stream applicants need to apply through the Manchester Housing Register but also need to complete an additional short form explaining why they wish to apply through this stream (for example, to receive support from someone in the area, or because the applicant is active in the community).

- 3.2.3 The economic stream is for people who are able to pay rent without the assistance of Housing Benefit and applicants may or may not be in housing need.
- 3.2.4 Economic stream applicants ideally would apply through the Manchester Housing Register however it is recognised that in this style of letting time may not allow this. Applicants also need to complete an additional short form that requests information on income.
- 3.2.5 Priority for re-housing through the stream is considered in the following way:
- 3.2.6 Applicants whose annual income is less than £30,000 but does not entitle them to Housing Benefit (this includes all members of the household) will be given priority when a property is available through this stream. An offer of a property to an applicant will be then made on the basis of date order.
- 3.2.7 If there is no available applicant for the particular property then those applicants with an annual income above £30,000 will then be considered. Any offer will again be made on the basis of date order.
- 3.2.8 Priority for re-housing through the community and economic stream is based on date order.

4.0 Supported Lettings

- 4.1 Some lettings are designated as supported letting because of the nature of the property or a particular need of a client group. The list of designated supported properties and the designated referral agencies are in appendix 3.
- 4.2 When a vacancy arises in a designated supported accommodation a referral will be sought from the specific referral agency in the first instance.
- 4.3 The applicant must be on the Manchester Housing Register and will either be a nomination from the City Council or housed under the housing need stream with points disregarded.
- 4.4 Where an applicant is on the Manchester Housing Register Re-list they will not be housed without the agreement of a

representative of the Manchester City Council Central re-housing team

5.0 Transfers

- 5.1 Existing tenants of People First properties would continue to be able to apply for re-housing to another People First property through transfers.
- 5.2 If existing tenants applied for a transfer through the Manchester Housing Register (MHR) they may be placed at a disadvantage. The MHR assesses applicants based on need. It is unlikely that People First tenants would be awarded points for lacking amenities (e.g.; lack of a bath, or hot water) or for poor property condition as all our properties are newly built. People First transfer requests will therefore be considered separately.
- 5.3 Transfer applicants will be considered on the basis of a combination of housing need (e.g., overcrowding) and community support (e.g., receiving support from family). A separate range of point's criteria is listed at Appendix 2.

5.0 How we will allocate between the different lists

- 5.1 Because there are four different ways of letting a property we need to ensure that there is a balance between them. Our commitment to meeting housing need is still high and most of the lettings during the year will be made on this basis.
- 5.2 When a home becomes empty, we will decide whether it should be offered to an applicant from one of the three streams or to an existing People First tenant through the Transfer list. If we offer the home to one of our existing tenants, this will release another home. We will then usually let this to someone from the three streams

- 5.3 Below is how we will let our properties during the year:

Nominations stream	50%
Housing needs stream	15%
Hulme Community and Economic stream	35%

- 5.4 Two members of staff will make the decision on which stream will be used for letting property and which applicant will be offered the property. If the *Housing Needs stream* is selected the

property will normally go to the person with the highest number of points for that type of property. Occasionally, the property may be offered to someone with fewer points. In this circumstance, the reason will be recorded. If one of the other two streams is selected, the applicant will be selected on the basis of date order.

6.0 People we will not re-house

6.1 We are keen to ensure that Hulme remains a popular place to live. To this end, we may refuse to re-house people who:

- Have a history of anti-social behaviour or crime and have lost their home as a result of this behaviour in the three years prior to applying for re-housing.
- Still owe rent or mortgage payments on a previous home and there is no repayment plan that has been agreed and kept to with a previous landlord/mortgagor

6.2 To enable us to make a decision on whether we will re-house someone we will ask for references from previous landlords and from others. We will also refer to the Manchester Housing Register exclusion list.

6.3 Applicants have the right of appeal against any decision not to accept them onto our housing register. This can be made through the Association's complaints procedure. If they are not satisfied at the end of this procedure you are able to take up their complaint with the Housing Association Ombudsman. Details of the complaints procedure and the Ombudsman service are available on request.

7.0 Providing support

7.1 We want to make sure that if you need support to run a home then this is available. We may not be able to re-house people who would find it difficult to meet our tenancy conditions unless support was provided. We will try to assist in getting support if it is needed to maintain a tenancy by working with other agencies, friends or family.

8.0 Category 1 Properties

- 8.1 16 properties are designated as Category 1 and they will be let in line with this policy with the exception that they will only be let to people over 55 years of age at the date the property is offered. The category 1 properties are specified in appendix 2.

9.0 Starter Tenancies

- 9.1 Where there is a evidence that a new tenant might pose a risk of causing anti-social behaviour (for example in the supported tenancies) they will be offered an Assured Shorthold tenancy for 12 months to be made into an Assured Tenancy on a successful review after the 12 month period months.

10.0 Conclusion

- 10.1 The aim of this policy is to widen access to our housing while at the same time continuing to address the serious problem of re-housing those in most need of accommodation. It aims to strike a balance between the two objectives. It also aims to allow us to be more careful in allowing access to our re-housing lists by carrying out simple checks on the background of applicants. Anti-social behaviour can have a serious detrimental effect on an area and an exclusion policy strengthens our ability to deal with this problem.

Section 2 The Procedure

1.0 Aim

- 1.1 The aim of this procedure is to ensure that all applicants for housing get accurate and consistent information and levels of service from the association.
- 1.2 That the association meets its obligations under its regulatory role and the commitments to partner agreements.
- 1.3 That People First Housing Association contributes to creating a balanced sustainable neighbourhood in the areas that we work.
- 1.4 That People First Housing Association continues to make property available to those in housing need.

2.0 Monitoring the waiting lists and performance targets

- 2.1 The Housing Management Team will meet annually to agree a performance target for the letting of property that will be agreed by the Chief Executive and the board.
- 2.2 Every other week the Housing Services Manager and the Housing Officer (Service Delivery) will meet to discuss the allocation of property to monitor that it is in line with the policy and meeting the target timescales.

3.0 Contact with the association

- 3.1 When customers make contact with the association for re-housing they must be asked the name of their current landlord and their present address.
- 3.2 If the customer are in a private sector property in the Hulme area or live in a People First property and wish to be re-housed through the housing register they will be given a Housing Application pack and asked to return it completed to the office.
- 3.3 If the customer fulfils the criteria for the economic or community stream they must be given an application pack including the local letting application form.
- 3.4 If they are currently homeless or require emergency housing they should be referred to the city council.

- 3.5 If they are tenants of other Registered Social Landlords or resident outside Hulme they must be directed to their landlord, a housing register landlord in their area or to the Manchester City Council "Home Finder" service.

4.0 City Council Nominations

- 4.1 On notification of the termination of a tenancy, a Housing Officer shall contact the City Council Re-housing team to request a nomination immediately. The re-housing team shall send a list to the Association within three working days. A reminder will be sent to the re-housing team if there is no response within three days. If no response is received after one day, an applicant will be selected from the Manchester Housing Register (MHR - see below). In these cases the allocation will count as a nomination.
- 4.2 The Housing Officer will contact the first nominee in writing on the same day as the nomination is received. The nominee will be given three working days to respond to register an interest. If the interest is positive, the nominee will be invited to view the prospective home. If the property is accepted, an appointment to sign up for the tenancy will be arranged. If there is no positive response from the first nominee, the second nominee will be approached, followed by the third nominee if necessary.
- 4.3 If there is no positive response from the first three nominees, the Housing Officer will contact the Re-housing team by telephone immediately to request further nominations. The original list will count as failed nominations. A further list will be supplied and this will be dealt with as outlined above.
- 4.4 If the additional nominees fail to respond or decline the property, the Housing Officer will select an applicant from the MHR. The second list will also count as failed nominations.
- 4.5 Results of all nominations should be returned to the Re-housing team on the prescribed forms once a letting is made.
- 4.6 If the nominated applicant accepts the property the Housing Officer must register their acceptance immediately on the MHR to prevent other landlords approaching the applicant.

5.0 Manchester Housing Register

- 5.1 The Housing Register is a common waiting list between Manchester City Council and partner associations.

- 5.2 Each association and the City Council have different allocations policies. The Register takes each policy into account and therefore someone with one level of points with People First may have a different level with another association. The City Council operates a system based on different levels of priority rather than points.
- 5.3 Applicants for housing should be given the Manchester Housing Register application form and asked to return the completed form to People First. The City Council may require additional forms to be given to applicants (e.g., reference request forms) who wish to be considered for their property. Guidance will be provided by the Re-housing team where information provided to applicants is subject to change. Applicants should also be provided with a copy of the Applicants Charter. This is produced by the Housing Corporation and set down standards which applicants should expect from housing associations dealing with their application for re-housing.
- 5.4 On return of the form, the details shall be inputted in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the Manchester Housing Register manual. Where a form is incomplete or where clarification is necessary, the applicant shall be contacted by telephone or by returning the form with the areas requiring clarification clearly marked. The Senior Re-housing Officer at the City Council is also available to provide advice where necessary.
- 5.5 The case papers for each applicant will be held at the office of the landlord where the completed application form is received. Where a form is returned to People First the case papers shall be held at the People First office. However, queries on individual applications (e.g., prospects advice) can be dealt with at any housing office. Applicants must only be referred to the office where their case papers are held when they wish to make an alteration to their application.
- 5.6 Applications should be reviewed every six months to ensure that the Register is kept up to date. Applicants must be contacted by writing to ask if they wish to remain on the Register. If no reply is received within ten working days then the application shall be deleted. However, if an applicant contacts the Association after deletion to confirm that they wish to stay on the Register, then the application can be restored.
- 5.7 When selecting applicants for a property, three applicants should be selected by priority. A letter should be sent to the applicant with the highest priority the same day (except in

exceptional circumstances). The applicant must be asked to contact the office within three days to arrange a home visit.

- 5.8 For further information on allocating a property please refer to the procedure on Relets and Voids

6.0 Economic and Community Lettings

- 6.1 When an application to join the local lettings waiting list is received it is date stamped and placed in the local lettings file.
- 6.2 The Housing Officer (Service Delivery) will assess the application and determine whether it should be accepted onto the waiting list (this may include a home visit).
- 6.3 When an applicant is accepted onto the list they will be written to inform them of the decision and to remind them that the list will be reviewed every 6 months and that they will be removed from the list if they fail to confirm that their circumstances have not changed.
- 6.4 Where an applicant is unsuccessful they will be written to inform them of the decision, to re-state the policy and to give them an opportunity to complain through the associations policy.
- 6.5 Every 6 months a Housing Officer will write to all applicants on the Local Waiting List to ask if their circumstances have changed and give them a deadline to respond.
- 6.6 The Housing Officer will check the responses after 14 days and delete from Sassa the records of those who do not respond and place their original application in the applicant archive.

7.0 Supported Lettings

- 7.1 Where a property becomes available that is a designated supported property the housing officer must request a referral within 2 working days.

8.0 Transfers

- 8.1 Existing tenants can apply for a transfer by completing a local letting application form.
- 8.2 Their application will be held on the local lettings file and maybe allocated outside the date order with the approval of the Housing Services Manager.

9.0 Starter Tenancies

- 9.1 Where there is evidence of the applicant causing Anti Social Behaviour that is not sufficient to exclude applicants or where they are supported they will be offered an Assured Shorthold tenancy for 12 months.
- 9.2 The Housing Officer (Service Delivery) will visit the tenant after 4 weeks, 6 Months and 9 Months to assess the progress of the tenancy.
- 9.3 After 9 months the tenant will be informed whether the tenancy will be made into an Assured Tenancy or ended at the expiry of the 12 months term.
- 9.4 If the tenancy is to be ended a Notice Requiring Possession will be served in line with section 21 of the Housing Act 1988. The Notice will be accompanied by a letter explaining why the notice has been served.

Appendix 1

Housing Need – list of criteria and points

Need factor	Points value
<p>Overcrowding A bedroom is necessary for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A couple • A single parent • Persons over 16 • Each child over 8 who would otherwise have to share with the opposite sex 	<p>20 (for each bedroom lacking)</p>
<p>Separated family Where a family is forced to live apart because of a lack of suitable amenities</p>	<p>25</p>
<p>Medical/welfare need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious medical or welfare needs, supported by a Doctor's statement or by Health/Social Services support worker. • Poor health exacerbated by the current accommodation 	<p>75 45</p>
<p>Access to amenities If the applicant is lacking, or sharing (points in brackets) any of the following amenities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bath or shower • Wash hand basin • Inside toilet • Kitchen • Living room • Hot water 	<p>20 (10) 20 (10) 20 (10) 20 (10) 10 (5) 20 (10)</p>
<p>Property condition (as defined by Environmental Health)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfit • Needing major repairs • In poor condition • Lack of central heating 	<p>30 20 10 5</p>

Non-standard accommodation e.g., hostel, B&B, hospital, institution, caravan, etc.	10
Security of tenure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless 100 • Imminent - within 28 days 75 • Insecure – within 6 months 50 	
Persons living above ground floor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elderly – above ground floor without a lift 20 • Children – aged 8 or below and aboveground floor 20 	
Social need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racial, sexual or other forms of harassment, domestic violence 60 • Relationship breakdown, severe family strain 30 	

Appendix 2

Transfers – list of criteria and points

Need factor	Points value
<p>Overcrowding A bedroom is necessary for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A couple • A single parent • Persons over 16 • Each child over 8 who would otherwise have to share with the opposite sex 	<p>20 (for each bedroom lacking)</p>
<p>Separated family Where a family is forced to live apart because of a lack of suitable amenities</p>	<p>25</p>
<p>Medical/welfare need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious medical or welfare needs, supported by a Doctor's statement or by Health/Social Services support worker. • Poor health exacerbated by the current accommodation 	<p>75 45</p>
<p>Property condition (as defined by Environmental Health)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfit • Needing major repairs • In poor condition • Lack of central heating 	<p>30 20 10 5</p>
<p>Persons living above ground floor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elderly – above ground floor without a lift • Children – aged 8 or below and aboveground floor 	<p>20 20</p>
<p>Social need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racial, sexual or other forms of harassment, domestic violence • Relationship breakdown, severe family strain 	<p>60 30</p>

Designated Supported Properties and Referral Agencies

Property Address	Designated Referral Agency
Flat 1 37 Royce Road	People First Housing Association Irish Project
Flat 2, 37 Royce Road	People First Housing Association Irish Project
Flat 2, 37 Royce Road	People First Housing Association Irish Project
Flat 2, 37 Royce Road	People First Housing Association Irish Project
3 Halston Street	Manchester Equipment and Adaptations Partnership
5 Halston Street	Manchester Equipment and Adaptations Partnership
Flat 2, 61 Ribston Street	Manchester Equipment and Adaptations Partnership
12 Upper Moss Lane	Manchester Equipment and Adaptations Partnership

Category 1 Properties

Property Address
19 Chevassut Street Flats 1 - 6
1 Chevassut Street Flats 1-6
60 Royce Road Flats 1 - 4