

Title: ALLOCATIONS POLICY

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Author: Adele Pettecrew

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1.	Purpose
	<p>1.1 St Vincent's aim is to provide good quality affordable homes for rent or shared ownership.</p> <p>1.2 The purpose of the policy is to outline the way we aim to provide first class services to new and existing customers. The policy aims to contribute towards the achievement of St Vincent's five year Vision.</p> <p>1.3 Vision Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st Class Homes • 1st Class Services • Better neighbourhoods and communities • Better support for independent living • Being effective and growing • Delivering through people <p>1.4 We aim to ensure St Vincent's is at the forefront of the rental market and become a Housing Association of choice.</p>
2.	Scope
	<p>2.1 Housing Associations are in a competitive market and this policy aims to ensure that we have healthy waiting lists by marketing our properties and working with our partners and local authorities.</p> <p>2.2 We will work in partnership with local authorities and usually 50% of all our allocations will go to nominations supplied by the local authorities providing they meet the Association criteria. There are exceptions where the Association has signed up to any local or regional joint initiatives with Local Authorities where it is deemed to be more beneficial to the local community:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolton Choice Based Lettings 100% of the lets • Manchester Common Register. 50% of the lets. • Pinpoint (Greater Manchester Choice Based Lettings) 10% of lets across Great Manchester. • B with Us (East Lancs CBL) 100% of lets across Nelson, Hyndburn, Burnley, Blackburn and Darwen • Calderdale 75% nomination for new developments <p>2.3 The policy aims to promote social inclusion and create mixed and balanced communities within the areas we work. The Association aims to rehouse those in the most housing need but taking in account existing communities and their right to occupy their home in quiet enjoyment.</p> <p>2.4 This Policy will apply to all our general needs and sheltered properties. It does not apply to supported housing, shared ownership, local lettings policy or where a scheme is managed under a management agreement by another provider.</p>

3.	References
	<p>3.1 The Allocations Policy Links in with a number of the Association's Policies and Strategies:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Strategy • Financial Inclusion Strategy • Younger People's Strategy • Local Lettings Policies • Homelessness Strategy • Customer Service Statement • Nomination Agreement • Single equality scheme • Diversity strategy • B with Us Policy
4.	Key Objectives
	<p>4.1 To provide a full range of housing options to customers in overcoming their housing problems. This will include providing options for new applicants and existing tenants with other solutions such as mutual exchange and downsizing.</p> <p>4.2 Where there are difficult to let properties in particular area's the Association will work with partners and Local Authorities to introduce Local Lettings Policies.</p> <p>4.3 We will take part in any joint rehousing exclusion list operating in an area where possible.</p>
5.	Customer Involvement
	<p>5.1 We aim to consult with customers in developing the policy and the services we provide.</p> <p>5.2 Customer panel members have been involved in agreeing the terms of the Allocations policy.</p> <p>5.3 Consultation was carried out with waiting list applicants.</p> <p>5.4 We will involve customers any future reviews.</p>
6.	Monitoring against the Customer Top 10
	<p>6.1 Community safety</p> <p>6.2 Responding to queries</p> <p>6.3 Being interested in communities</p> <p>6.4 Good communication</p> <p>6.5 Developing new homes and services</p> <p>6.6 Getting the basic right</p>

7.	The Policy
	<p>7.1 WHO CAN APPLY</p> <p>7.1.1 Anyone over age of 18 can apply for rehousing and all are treated equally regardless of their sex, sexuality, marital status, colour, ethnic or national origin, religious beliefs, political views, age, disabilities or HIV/Aids status (for further details refer to the leaflet ‘Equality and Diversity Policy’).</p> <p>7.1.2 Applications will not be accepted from persons who have no “right to remain” in the UK or other persons subject to immigration control.</p> <p>7.1.3 Applications from people aged 16-17 will be accepted where there is a need i.e.:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving care • Have been assessed as Homeless • Teenage parents and expectant mothers under 18 <p>7.1.4 When rehousing young people under 18 the Association will use Equitable tenancies. At the age of 18 or after the first 12months, they will become full Assured tenant’s or will remain a starter tenant until they have completed 12 months of their tenancy. Provided there are no issues with the tenancy.</p> <p>7.1.5 The Association recognises that young people who have not had a tenancy before may be vulnerable and will encourage them to take up tenancy support in the first 12 months to ensure they can sustain their tenancy successfully.</p> <p>7.1.6 Other applicants who may be vulnerable such as people with mental health issues, drug or alcohol dependency etc will be encouraged to continue with any current support or to engage with tenancy support services to help them sustain their tenancy. This is will be discussed with applicants and any support workers before a final offer is made.</p> <p>7.1.7 If an applicant refuses to engage with support services and the Association feels this would have a detrimental effect on them being able to successfully sustain a tenancy. The Association may withdraw any offers. Applicants would be able to appeal against this through the complaints policy.</p> <p>7.1.8 Applicants who have previously been involved with any conduct of anti-social behaviour or have had legal action against them for this may also be encouraged to engage with support services such as Family Intervention Project, Childrens Services, Probation Services and any other services before an offer is made in order to create more sustainable communities.</p> <p>7.1.9 Applicants with children under the age of 14 will not be rehoused in apartments with communal blocks, unless there is a specific lettings policy or agreement with the local authority, which permits this.</p>
	<p>7.2 REFERENCE AND BACKGROUND CHECKS</p> <p>7.2.1 All applicants will be expected to provide relevant housing history and two</p>

references, one of which should be a landlord reference. Where applicants are unable to provide a landlord reference the Association may request other information to ensure the applicant is suitable. This is to help prevent Anti-Social behaviour and Criminal activity in accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

7.2.2 In these cases applicants will be requested to provide a criminal record which can be obtained from the Police Central Records Office at the direct request of the applicant at a cost of £10.00 (this cost is subject to any increase without the knowledge of the Association).

7.2.3 Where there is a previous criminal record and where the offences may result in further criminal behaviour or potentially destabilise the community, applicants will be refused accommodation.

7.2.4 The applicant can appeal using the Association's Complaints Procedure.

7.2.5 Applicants who are unable to provide satisfactory references and have conducted any current or previous tenancy which has resulted in any of the following breaches will be rejected and removed from the waiting list.

- Applicants who were evicted from a previous tenancy for housing management reasons;
- Applicants who have arrears over 8 weeks rent with a current or previous social landlord
- Applicants who have arrears under 8 weeks will be only considered if they have kept to an agreement to clear the debt and have been doing so for 6 months continuous. If any payments have been missed the applicant will be rejected.
- Applicants who have abandoned a previous tenancy;
- Applicants who have a proven history of anti-social behaviour or nuisance in a previous tenancy;
- Applicants who are subject to Anti Social Behaviour Order (ASBO)
- Applicants who have caused wilful and substantial damage to a property;
- Applicants who have a criminal record where the offences committed may adversely affect the way they live in their home and neighbourhood e.g. burglary, sex offences.

In cases of other breaches all circumstances will be taken into consideration before rejecting the applicant.

Where there has been previous anti-social behaviour and the applicant has engaged with support services to change their behaviour they will be considered provided there have not been any Anti-social behaviour in the previous 2 years.

These decisions are made taking into account all other policies and procedures e.g. Equality and Diversity and Anti-Social Behaviour. The Association is also committed to the Respect Standard for Housing Management and we will base our decision to ensure we meet this Standard to ensure fairness to the Applicants and existing tenants.

7.3 ASSESSING HOUSING NEED

7.3.1 Before an application can be assessed correctly all the supporting information must be provided, i.e. proof of homelessness, medical information and references.

The application will be assessed using the Associations banding system and given priority A, B or C.

Priority A

- Homeless, in priority need and vulnerable
- Severe harassment
- Clearance and re-development
- Serious medical cases
- Under Occupation for applicants wishing to move from family (3 bedroom and above only) homes to 1 or 2 bed apartments.
- Exceptional management supported cases

Priority B

- overcrowding
- Medical applications
- Potentially homeless
- Less serious harassment
- Extensive disrepair
- No fixed abode/itinerant status
- Move On/Leaving Care
- Applicants wishing to move for employment reasons
- Less serious disrepair
- Support Reasons
- Leaving Armed Forces
- Leaving Prison
- Children/elderly at height (those living above ground floor accommodation)

Priority C

- No formal housing need or assessment of reasonable preference.

7.3.2 Once an application has been assessed for housing need the waiting list will be sorted by date order. Therefore the list will be organised by applicants in highest priority and the earliest registration date.

7.3.3 This priority banding will be used to assess all applicants with the exception of:

- Homeless Nominations
- Joint Allocation Policies
- Partner CBL systems

7.4 OFFERS

7.4.1 The Association operates a banding rotating system for all lettings made from the Associations list. Offers will be made in accordance with housing need and therefore an offer should be made to the applicant at the top of the list in the first instance. So this would usually be to an applicant in Band A. If this applicant refuses the property then the next offer will be made to an applicant in Band B.

Thereafter each letting will initially be made to Band A and if that Applicant refuses it will be made to Band C applicant.

7.4.2 In order to promote social inclusion and create a mixed and balanced community and take account of the health and safety needs of applicants it is important for the Association to allocate sensitively. A number of allocations will be made outside of the normal priorities to people who will benefit the wider community. The percentage of flexible lettings will vary from area to area but should not exceed 15% of the annual allocations for each scheme.

All flexible lettings will be approved by the Lettings Manager and reported to the Operations committee.

7.4.3 Applicant will be made no more than 2 offers on schemes for which they are registered. Further offers may be made in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Lettings Manager. If an applicant refuses the two offers then they will be removed from the waiting list and will not be able to reapply for 12 months.

7.5 Transfers

7.5.1 Transfer applicants will be prioritised in accordance with their housing need in the same way as other waiting list applicants.

7.5.2 Transfers will not be considered where:

- the tenant has rent arrears
- the tenant owes the Association any other debt
- the tenant has not complied with the Tenancy Agreement in respect of maintaining the property internally and redecoration (home visit by the Neighbourhood Officer to assess).
- the tenant has caused nuisance within the previous 2 years
- the tenant has been in their current property less than 12 months except in exceptional circumstances as agreed with the Neighbourhood Manager.

7.5.3 The Neighbourhood Manager/Lettings Manager may permit a transfer in extreme circumstances, such as domestic violence, racial harassment or severe medical needs.

7.5.4 Exceptions may be made in the case of difficult to let properties or in the interests of creating balanced communities.

7.5.5 In a relationship breakdown the Association will try to take a sympathetic

	view but realistically may not be able to accommodate both partners.
	<p>7.6 Mutual Exchange</p> <p>7.6.1 The Association will offer a mutual exchange service to its tenant through the national Homeswapper Scheme. (SUBJECT TO BUDGETS with a provisional start date of March 2010)</p> <p>7.6.2 This service is a web based service and tenants can complete their details on this system to register for mutual exchanges locally or across Local Authority area's. If tenants are unable to access this services due to disabilities or vulnerability staff will assist them.</p> <p>7.6.3 Once a tenant is registered the Lettings Officer will check they are eligible for a mutual exchange before making the tenant live on the system.</p> <p>7.6.4 Tenants will not be eligible for a mutual exchange if:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tenant currently holds a Starter Tenancy, Assured Shorthold, Equitable Tenancy or a License Agreement. • the tenant has rent arrears • the tenant owes the Association any other debt • the tenant has not complied with the Tenancy Agreement in respect of maintaining the property internally and redecoration (home visit by the Housing Officer to assess). • the tenant has caused nuisance within the previous 2 years • the tenant has been in their current property less than 12 months except in exceptional circumstances as agreed with the Local Manager. <p>7.6.5 If the tenant is not eligible for any of the above reasons the Lettings Officer will inform them of this. They will be advised to contact their Neighbourhood Officer to resolve any of the issues. Once the issues are resolved they will then become eligible re-register on the scheme.</p>

8.	Appendices
8.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appendix 1 –Equality Impact Assessment

Policy/Procedure being assessed:	Allocation Policy
Section:	Operations
Date of assessment:	October 2009
Person (S) Responsible for assessment:	Adele Pettecrew / Asif Iqbal
Is this a new or existing policy?	Existing

1. Briefly describe the function being assessed	Full review of the Allocation policy and procedure		
2. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the function?	Tenants, applicants, staff, partner agencies and Board.		
3. Who will be consulted as part of this EIA? What types of consultation will be carried out?	Staff, Customers, Board		
4. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact on racial groups ?	Yes ✓	No	
What evidence exists to support your analysis?	We currently have 13% BME tenants (profile data as of 8 th October 09) we also have high 7% of BME applicants. These groups may find it difficult to access our service due to language barrier.		
5. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact due to gender ?	Yes ✓	No	
What evidence exists to support your analysis?	Profile data as of 8 th October 09. 58% tenant are female, 41% male, less than 1 % not disclosed, less than 0.04 transgender. Need to ensure staff are representative of our customer base. Currently all front line staff are female.		

6. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact on disabled people ?	Yes ✓	No				
What evidence exists to support your analysis?	6% of our waiting list live applicants have a disability (as of 12/10/09) 4% of our current tenants have a disability (as of 12/10/09 on 35% of profile data for general needs and sheltered schemes) Accessibility maybe an issue for those who are housebound or with serve disability.					
7. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact due to age ?	Yes ✓	No				
What evidence exists to support your analysis?	Properties that have an age restriction due to local letting policy may be challenged.					
8. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact due to sexuality ?	Yes	No ✓				
What evidence exists to support your analysis?						
9. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact due to religion or belief ?	Yes	No ✓				
What evidence exists to support your analysis?						
<p>If the answer is NO to <u>all</u> questions 4-9 and no differential treatment has been found there is no requirement for a full Equality Impact Assessment. Please go back regularly and review the cycle.</p> <p>If the answer is YES to any of the questions 4-9 please continue to question 10</p>						
10. In what areas could the differential impact identified in 4-9 be considered to be an adverse impact in this function? (Please tick if yes)	Race x	Gender x	Disability x	Age x	Sexuality	Religion /belief
11. What solutions will be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Front line staff who represent customer make up 					

<p>introduced to overcome these adverse impacts and /or create positive impacts?</p>	<p>profile data?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment –attract men to front line post to represent applicant and customer make up. • Availability of language line to address translation issues, availability of translation service for people who cant read English. • Young person action plan – create equitable tenancies for 16-17 year old • Review of local letting polices on age restricted areas to ensure they do not unduly discriminate against young people • Update of IT database to identify adapted properties to better inform customers of properties available. • Ensure wide as possible accessibility options are available for people with disability or those with frailty, this is done by providing access through website, part of choice base lettings schemes, local surgeries point, mobile working so officers are able to g to the customers.
<p>12. Which Action Plans have these solutions/strategies been transferred into?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young persons strategy • Homelessness action plan • Local lettings policy • Recruitment strategy • Marketing • Mobile working • Single equality scheme

Signed off by (Director):

Date:.....