

ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Statement of Purpose

We aim to provide good quality housing at affordable rents and prices to those in housing need and specific customer groups as specified by Local Authorities and the Housing Corporation. In addition we will seek to provide a range of tenure options.

Our primary focus is to meet housing need, however, we also have regard to the impact of allocations to support the sustainability and safety of communities.

Sentinel works with Local Authorities to maintain common waiting lists for the areas of housing options. In order for Sentinel to meet its aims to promote sustainable and balanced communities, we will from time to time adopt a local lettings and/or choice based lettings plan with the relevant Local Authority that will set out targets for allocations to a specified area.

When allocating rental properties, this policy and related procedure(s) will be applied in conjunction with the relevant local authorities' allocations policy and procedure. We will make our allocations procedure available to existing and potential customers on request.

Our Policy

1. All Properties will be allocated on the basis of housing need.
2. We will seek to offer choice in the allocation of housing.
3. We will aim to ensure equality of opportunity in access to and allocation of our accommodation.
4. Allocations, where possible, will support a safe and sustainable community, whilst taking into account local issues.
5. Nominations and allocations will be accepted and made in line with the agreements in place with the relevant local authorities and the Housing Corporation. These nomination and allocations agreements will be reviewed periodically.

Support Needs

6. In allocating homes we will assess all applicants for any support needs and work with other agencies to enable applicants to sustain their home.

Suspensions

7. Applicants who have been suspended have the right to appeal against this decision, as outlined in the Suspension Procedure. All suspended applicants will be reviewed on an annual basis. Rejected applicants will be referred to housing advice agencies

Management Transfers

9. In line with the relevant Local Authority points scheme, additional points can be awarded by the Assistant Director for Neighbourhoods, in agreement with the Local Authority, reflecting the need for an urgent move due to housing management reasons. Any offers made on this basis will generally be made on a “like for like” basis.

Decants

10. Sentinel will, in consultation with the Local Authority, allocate certain properties for decants in order to manage the need for temporary or permanent accommodation to enable regeneration schemes or major works.
11. In consultation with the Local Authority, transfers for existing tenants to release strategically required or adapted properties may also be undertaken.

Local Connection and Rural Exception Schemes

12. Rural Exception Schemes are developed as a result of Planning Agreements covering land which would not normally be considered for residential development, but where local needs cannot otherwise be met. Sentinel will also allocate homes in accordance with local connection criteria and policy as laid out by Local Authority partners.
13. Vacancies in a village arising from offers made in Rural Exception Schemes will be allocated to the household in greatest need with a village connection or as defined within the planning agreements.

Sheltered Property Eligibility

14. We will normally make offers of accommodation in sheltered housing to applicants or tenants who are 55 or over. In exceptional cases, we may offer this type of accommodation to people under 55 who have age related support needs.

Joint Tenancies

15. Will be offered to any couples who intend to cohabit or live together as a family/household unit.

Refusals

16. Sentinel may suspend applicants from rental property rehousing for 12 months where they have refused 3 reasonable offers of accommodation

Offers of Accommodation

17. Offers for rental properties will be made according to information in an applicants application form and Sentinel's property size and eligibility criteria as set out in the allocations procedure which reflects Local Authorities' policies. Some lower demand properties may be allocated through a multi-offer process whereby multiple offers and viewings will be made.

Misinformation

18. We will seek immediate possession of any rental property if we discover that a customer (or prospective customer) has supplied false or misleading information, or failed to supply relevant information. We will consider pressing for criminal prosecution in these circumstances.

Schedule One

19. We will ensure that all members of staff are aware of the provisions laid down under Schedule One Of the Housing Act 1996 together with the Housing Corporations latest Good Practice Note containing details of the exemptions to Schedule One, which ensure that any conflicts of interest between staff and customers are brought to the boards attention.

Discretion

20. There may be cases that cannot be assessed or handled within the general scope of this policy. In such cases, regarding rental properties, the Assistant Director for Neighbourhoods has the discretion to consider cases outside "points" systems. S/he will discuss any such cases with the local authority responsible for the applicant before instructing that an offer of accommodation should be made.

Appeals

21. Customers covered by this policy who feel that they have been treated unfairly or discriminated against can submit a complaint under our Complaints Policy.

Approval Stages

Named Director Sign off: Martin Nurse

Date: 13th March 2008

Committee Approval Date: 26th March

Implementation Date: 27th March 2008

ALLOCATIONS POLICY SUMMARY

Changes from previous version

Substantial redraft

Regulation & Legislation

We will comply with all relevant legislation and regulatory guidance in relation to allocations including the Homelessness Act 2002, the Code of Guidance on the Allocation of Accommodation, Equalities guidance on the Code of Practice for rented housing, and Housing Corporation guidance.

Equality & Diversity Impact

The association is committed to meeting the needs and aspirations of customers and communities in a fair, respectful, and proportionate manner. Our approach to diversity and equality is to promote inclusiveness by recognising that anyone, regardless of origin or background, can make a positive difference in the achievement of the organisation's vision and in the wider society.

For the purposes of this policy a household is defined as a group of people requiring rehousing together, irrelevant of their relationship to one another.

We will comply with best practice from legal, regulatory and inspection requirements. Codes of Practice and other guidance will be used appropriately to ensure progress on diversity.

Financial Impact Assessment

The allocation of properties is one of the cornerstones of the activity of this organisation. Both adequate training and resource must be in place in order to effectively carry out this fundamental activity. A 10% check of all allocations will be carried out on a quarterly basis. The frequency of any serious issue occurring is very low, however, if an occasion does arise it is likely to be challenged most seriously.

Risk Assessment

The allocation of properties ties in with a number of related activities across the organisation. Looking wider than the cost of building and maintaining homes, we can see that training and communication become key. This is a medium risk.

Consultation

The stakeholders below have been consulted on the following dates:

Policy Committee (direction setting): 6th December 2007

Tenant and Leaseholder Forum Group: 8th & 9th January 2008

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council: 25th January 2008

Hampshire County Council: 25th January 2008

Hart District Council: 25th January 2008

Rushmoor Borough Council: 25th January 2008

