

	Title	ALC 04 Allocations Policy		
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1. Purpose and scope

- 1.1 This policy sets out our approach to ensure that we allocate all properties available to let in a fair, transparent and efficient way making the best use of the housing stock and meeting the needs of a diverse range of customers and communities.

2. Responsibilities and risk

Your Home Team are responsible for letting properties.

Failure to follow this policy and relevant procedures could result in NCHA failing to manage our housing stock in a way that ensures that those most in need are let homes that are affordable and a breach of:

- The Regulator for Social Housing Consumer Standards
- Agreements with local authority partners

3. Policy details and guidance

- 3.1 We are committed to promoting choice for prospective customers ensuring equality of opportunity regardless of tenure and will:

- Relet our properties as quickly and efficiently as possible to minimise void loss and to ensure homes are available to customers as soon as possible
- Allocate our general needs homes in partnership with a local authority via Choice Based Lettings Schemes or direct nominations or from our LETS register. Where we are unable to allocate in this way we will advertise directly to the public
- Let Independent Living for Older Persons (ILOPs) homes through direct application to an independent living scheme
- Let Almshouses through direct application ensuring that applicants meet the beneficiary requirements for each scheme
- Let sub-market rent properties in line with a private sector lettings approach through Rightmove
- Let Rent to Buy properties through direct application via Rightmove to those with a valid Help to Buy application

- 3.2 Lettings not covered by this policy:

- Joint to sole and succession
- Other changes in tenancy such as conversion from a starter tenancy
- Mutual exchange
- Transfers
- Offers made to customer decants
- Under occupying successors or non-qualifying household members on the death of a customer
- Lettings to Care and Support projects
- Relets in Newark and Sherwood local authority area which are made through our LETS Policy

3.3 Local authority Choice Based Lettings schemes

- 3.3.1 We work in partnership with local authorities across the region and have nomination or Service Level Agreements in place to determine the criteria for advertising and allocating properties.

- 3.3.2 We support the housing function of local authorities including assistance with their homelessness duties.

- 3.3.3 Where we are a partner in a local authority Choice Based Letting (CBL) system we will follow the provisions set out in the Service Level Agreement. This may at times restrict our ability to let efficiently but the needs of the local community may be best served by this agreement. We will let our properties in line with the requirements of our Allocations Policy but there may be exceptions in which the local authority insist on a variation to meet their area's housing needs. Any request to vary from NCHA's policy will be considered on its individual merit and must be approved by the **Assistant Director of Homes and Wellbeing**.
- 3.3.4 A list of current local authorities that we work in partnership with and details of the CBL system they use is available at Appendix 1. The list also includes those local authorities who do not use CBL systems.
- 3.4 New build developments – nomination rights and Section 106**
- 3.4.1 With any new build scheme it is standard practice for the local authority to request 100% nomination rights on first tenancies. Thereafter, under the terms of the various CBL service level agreements in place the usual arrangement is for 75% of all subsequent lettings to be made through the CBL scheme (ie 75% nominations on relets).
- 3.4.2 New build developments require a considerable amount of work prior to letting and it is important that the NCHA protocol with the development department is adhered to. This involves a series of briefings and the opportunity to visit the site close to the handover date for staff to familiarise themselves with the new development.
- 3.4.3 It is essential that Your Home colleagues approach the local authority at least 3 months in advance of handover to discuss nomination rights and the process of advertising and letting the vacant units. Strong links are required with local authority staff to ensure that effective communication is in place.
- 3.4.4 Section 106 Agreements are designed to help make sure that new developments enhance local communities. They can help to create better quality environments in and around new developments by creating requirements for improving roads and building new community facilities or creating open spaces and improving local schools. They can also require that a percentage of the housing stock on a new development is reserved for affordable units which are then typically managed by a housing association.
- 3.4.5 Where Section 106 Agreements are in place the new developments will typically be situated in a rural location and we will be under an obligation to ensure that all customers of affordable rented housing association stock on the new site should be nominated by the local authority and should also have a local connection to the area where the development is located. This is to ensure that a percentage of new build development in the locality is reserved for local people in need of affordable housing. This type of housing is often in short supply in rural areas due to the effect on the housing market of commuters who wish to purchase rural properties outright.
- 3.4.6 Section 106 agreements should be strictly adhered to and copies of all agreements should be retained at all times for reference by the allocations team.

3.5 Direct lets

3.5.1 In certain circumstances we will allocate a property without advertising it through the local authority. Direct lets are recorded on lettings returns required by local authorities.

3.5.2 Examples of situations where direct lets will be undertaken are:

- Properties used for temporary decants
- Emergency transfers situations eg due to domestic violence or hate crimes (see Transfer policy)
- Management moves following a succession or change to tenancy approved by the Your Home Manager
- Almshouses and ILOPs voids are directly let to applicants for each specific scheme
- Sub market rent properties advertised through Rightmove
- Rent to Buy properties advertised through Rightmove

3.5.3 Periodically local authorities request details of all general needs allocations in the form of local authority return which vary by local authority. The Your Home Team monitor all lettings monthly per local authority to enable these returns be completed in a timely manner.

3.6 Local lettings plans

3.6.1 A local lettings plan may be used where our housing stock is concentrated on an estate.

3.6.2 Generally plans may be devised for new developments of 20 or more units of accommodation or new developments which contain a block of flats. Additionally plans may be developed for existing developments or areas identified by housing management staff, customers and other stakeholders where there are issues that affect sustainability eg high turnover and abandonments, high levels of ASB/criminal activity, high concentrations of vulnerable customers, a high number of transfer requests and properties that are generally difficult to let or low demand.

3.6.4 The objectives of these plans are to create sustainable, balanced and cohesive communities and to attain a mixture of occupancy and household types to encourage sustainability - refer to the Local Lettings Plan Policy.

3.7 Eligibility for property types

3.7.1 We publish information showing the types of accommodation that is available to different households and eligibility in Appendix 2. This clearly defined approach to allocation of general needs accommodation manages customer expectations of what is practical and achievable.

3.7.2 Customers who are under occupying their current NCHA general needs property will be accepted onto the transfer list and supported to apply to the local authority CBL Scheme waiting list and register for Homeswapper for a potential mutual exchange. Some financial assistance may be available via the Downsizing Policy.

3.7.3 In exceptional cases we will allow applicants to under occupy a general needs property. Applicants who will under occupy the property offered will be accepted if they have demonstrated an ability to pay the rent due and have signed a disclaimer agreeing to this.

3.7.4 Eligibility for Almshouses can vary across schemes. Often applicants must be over 55, **in financial hardship**, have a local connection to the area, have worked in a specific field or have been married to someone who did and are capable of living independently.

3.7.5 Scheme specific criteria are listed in Appendix 3. Priority will be given to applicants who **meet the Almshouse criteria and** are homeless or threatened with homelessness **as they are in the most urgent housing need**.

3.7.6 To be eligible for ILOPs properties applicants must be aged over 55 and capable of independent living with minimal support or have an agreed care package in place. **Applications will be assessed on a need and risk basis eg housing, health and social circumstances with allocations made to those in the highest housing need.**

3.7.7 Eligibility for sub-market rent and Rent to Buy properties is reliant on affordability and that the household would not be overcrowding.

3.8 **Vetting checks**

3.8.1 All applicants for general needs housing, Almshouses and ILOPs undergo a Pre-Tenancy Assessment (PTA). The PTA will determine if the applicant is eligible for NCHA accommodation. Any support requirements will also be identified at this point. The purpose of the PTA is to assess the ability of the applicant to sustain a tenancy and for the applicant to be advised of their responsibilities.

3.8.2 As part of the PTA it is an expectation that all applicants will undergo vetting checks by Your Home Allocations Co-ordinators or Scheme Managers for ILOPs schemes prior to becoming a customer to ascertain whether there are any reasons why they should not receive an offer of accommodation. Vetting checks will include:

- An income and expenditure assessment
- A reference from a previous landlord with proof of previous address
- Proof of employment, benefits and identity checks

3.8.3 On completion of vetting checks a risk assessment is completed and a decision will be made to make a final offer to the applicant. If there are issues raised at the PTA the Your Home Allocations Co-ordinator or ILOPs Scheme Manager will take measures to ensure support for the new customer is in place and will notify colleagues in the Your Community and Your Money Matters Teams that information is available about the customer.

3.8.4 Applicants for sub-market rent housing will undergo referencing comprising landlord reference, employment reference and credit checks.

3.9 **Ineligibility and exclusions**

3.9.1 In certain situations we reserve the right to exclude applicants from renting our properties. A strict assessment procedure is required to identify potential exclusions in order to protect other NCHA customers from the risk of anti-social behaviour and to reduce the risk of tenancy failure and high levels of rent arrears - refer to ALC 07 Ineligible Applicants Policy.

3.9.2 Housing Association accommodation is in short supply therefore where an applicant's income level or capital suggests that they have other housing options, eg shared ownership or outright purchase they will be given appropriate advice regarding other options available.

3.9.3 The following limits will apply when considering new applicants for general needs housing:

- Income (single people) £35,000
- Income (single person with children) £40,000
- Income (joint application) £50,000
- Income (joint applicants with children) £60,000
- Equity £35,000
- Savings £20,000

3.10 Sensitive lettings

3.10.1 Sensitive lettings are where restrictions on the criteria for applicant type are put in place in response to significant management issues which relate to a particular area.

3.10.2 Our colleagues identify areas with significant issues that can affect sustainability (eg high levels of turnover, abandonments, ASB/criminal activity, transfer requests along with concentration of vulnerable customers and generally difficult to let). Where these are identified and subject to approval of the Your Home Manager or Head of Communities, we reserve the right to allocate vacant properties to applicants whose tenancy is not likely to lead to a continuation of these issues.

3.11 Hard to let properties

3.11.1 A hard to let property will have had 2 failed advertising cycles or be of a type or size or in a location that has previously been hard to let. Properties that may be hard to let will be identified at termination and strategies for advertising and / or incentives to let will be agreed with Your Home Manager in order to secure a successful and timely letting.

3.11.2 Hard to let properties may be considered for sale.

3.11.3 If a property is to be retained but is still likely to prove hard to let the following list of incentives can be applied to the property in the advertisement by agreement with the Your Home Manager:

- Increased decoration allowance
- Decoration by (from incentives budget)
- Rent free weeks
- Fitted floor coverings

3.11.4 Multiple viewings after a couple of refusals will be carried out wherever possible assuming that there are sufficient applicants showing an interest in a property.

3.11.5 Re-advertisements of hard to let properties will be distributed more widely than is the case on first advertising. This can include contacting parish councils, leaving copies of adverts in post office windows and the windows of local shops where applicable. Individual adverts should also be placed in the NCHA office windows as appropriate.

3.12 Tenancy type

- 3.12.1 Our policy allows for different tenures depending on the type of stock offered, the funding regime and the background of the customer with regard to local authority tenancy strategies.
- 3.12.2 General needs tenancies could be let on Social or Affordable Rents (80% market value) and be let as Starter or Assured tenures.
- 3.12.3 Assured Shorthold tenancies are used for sub-market rent lettings and Rent to Buy.
- 3.12.4 Licences **in the form of letters of Appointment** are used in Almshouses.
- 3.12.5 Any applicant who is under 18 cannot by law be granted a tenancy but in general needs lettings, the legal estate can be held in trust until they reach the age of 18. A trustee will therefore be required to sign the tenancy agreement on their behalf until they are 18. This may be a family member or a third party agreed with the local authority and NCHA. The tenancy agreement will have extra provision to define the customer as a third party for the named applicant (occupant).
- 3.12.6 An Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement (Starter Tenancy) will be granted and reviewed on or after the applicant's 18th birthday. In these circumstances the Trustee will be required to execute a deed of surrender of the existing tenancy.

3.13 Applicants requiring support

- 3.13.1 Applicants in need of assistance with the application and bidding process will be supported by their Your Community Co-ordinator and / or referred to the local authority for assistance.
- 3.13.2 The Pre Tenancy Assessment will identify support needs for new tenants and appropriate referrals will be made to external providers or internally to our Community Support Team. New tenants will also receive low level support from Your Community Co-ordinators to maintain their tenancy in the longer term.

3.14 Adapted properties

- 3.14.1 Where possible we will allocate properties that have been adapted for persons with mobility needs or other disabilities to applicants who require the adaptations. The advertisement will clearly state that the property is adapted and that preference will be given to those applicants requiring the adaptations.
- 3.14.2 When an applicant is identified the Your Home Allocations Co-ordinator may need to confirm with an Occupational Therapist that the property is suitable or could be adapted further. If the Occupational Therapist does not consider the property is suitable then an offer cannot be made.
- 3.14.3 As there is a high demand from NCHA customers for accessible accommodation, existing customers who have been approved for a transfer will be considered when an adapted property becomes vacant.

3.15 Appeals and complaints

- 3.15.1 Where an applicant has an issue about the way in which their application has been handled this should be discussed with the Your Home Manager to see if we can resolve this.

3.15.2 If the applicant is still unhappy they may make a complaint in line with NCHAs Complaints Policy.

4. Supporting documentation and key legislation

4.1 Forms
None

4.2 Guidance
[Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England](#)
[Human Rights at Home: Guidance for Social Housing Providers updated 2019](#)
CORE Website

4.3 Legislation
[Localism Act 2011](#)
[Welfare Reform Act 2012](#)
[Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016](#)

4.4. Related policies
Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Tenancy Management Procedure
EST14 Tenancy Policy
ALC01 Housing of Board Members, Staff and Relatives Policy
ALC03 Transfer Policy
ALC02 LETs Policy
ALC07 Ineligible Applicants Policy
QM09 Complaints Policy
NCHA Domestic Abuse Policy

5. Monitoring and reporting

5.1 Allocations and lettings are monitored by the Your Home Manager with regular audits to ensure consistency. Where there are issues that may affect other business streams these are discussed internally.

5.2 The Head of Communities monitor's allocations and lettings performance and this reviewed monthly at the Homes and Wellbeing Senior Managers meeting.

5.3 NCHA will collect data on all lettings and report to internal and external partners as required.

5.4 NCHA will collect CORE information and input data on CORE website.

5.5 Data will be gathered on a quarterly basis to show:

- Customer satisfaction with the lettings process
- Customer satisfaction with the allocated property

5.6 Data will be gathered on a monthly basis to show:

- The average relet period
- Team performance against targets (both Property Services and Your Home teams)

5.7 All available data will be discussed at weekly operational relet meetings and at monthly Strategic Property meetings.

6. Definitions

CBL – Choice Based Lettings Schemes

ILOPs – Independent Living for Older People

PTA – Pre Tenancy Assessment

7. Equality and diversity

7.1 This procedure has been written in line with NCHAs Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Equality Statement.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Local Authority Choice Based Lettings Schemes

Appendix 2 – Eligibility Criteria

Appendix 3 – Almshouse locations and lettings criteria information

9. Policy Approval

9.1 This policy has been approved prior to issue by the Director of Homes and Wellbeing and NCHAs Customer Committee.