



# **Selection & Allocation Policy**

Revised October 2007

## **Introduction**

We are committed to the provision of good quality housing, care and support services to meet local needs and to contribute to the development of sustainable communities. We have an overall aim of providing accommodation for people in the greatest need of housing who are unable to obtain good quality and affordable housing through the private market or other means.

This policy is a statement of principle for the guidance of the Association but should not be considered binding on it. It does not override our statutory or contractual or other legal obligations. The Association has the final discretion to grant or refuse a tenancy.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our information leaflet "Letting our homes".

## **Objectives of the Selection and Allocation Policy**

Our principal objective, working in partnership with local authorities and other housing providers is to allocate our homes to those in housing need, contributing to satisfying housing demand in the areas where we operate. We work closely with local authorities in re-housing people identified as having priority need for housing.

We will support Local Authorities in their development of choice Based Lettings Schemes to enable applicants to have choice in the accommodation and areas they wish to live. We will be proactive in our management of the nomination agreements we hold with Local Authorities and flexible where needed to ensure the most effective use of our homes.

This policy aims to provide information and advice to applicants to ensure they understand the basis on which we select them and allocate our homes. It aims to provide ready information on their prospects of finding a home with Estuary Housing Association.

Our policy is designed to ensure that we deal with applications in a sensitive, fair and consistent manner. We intend to fulfill all the duties we owe to applicants, in line with the guidance and performance standards issued by the Housing Corporation, including the Charter for Housing Association Applicants and Tenants and relevant legislation, including that contained in the Housing Acts.

We aim to make the most effective use of our stock of homes and to offer homes of a suitable size that meet the needs of each applicant's household.

We aim to let tenancies that are sustainable in the long term, in other words, tenancies that can continue to be held in a reasonably economical and self-

governing way. We want to help create and develop stable and sustainable communities.

A key element of our policy is to give our applicants an opportunity to choose. We aim to achieve this by trying to meet their preferences, and giving them the choice to wait until an area, estate or property they want becomes available.

### **Equal Opportunities policy**

Our policy is governed by our corporate policy on Equal Opportunities.

We aim to treat all applicants and their households fairly taking into account the diversity of their culture, background and circumstances.

We will monitor the ethnicity of our applicants for housing and re-housing to help us meet our objectives. Applicants who feel they have suffered discrimination under any of the criteria set out in this policy document, directly or indirectly, for example by being turned down for the waiting list or by being offered undesirable accommodation, can use our appeal process and customer feedback policy.

### **Equality & Diversity**

We provide safe and sustainable communities, we are committed to equality of opportunity and the principles of fairness for all.

We feel it is our duty as an important presence within the communities that we serve, that we take a leading, proactive and forceful approach in continually improving equality and diversity in our business through accountable and measurable actions.

We apply this policy to all staff, members, residents, contractors, agents and partners in all areas of activity concerning Estuary Housing Association.

A full copy of our policy can be provided on request.

### **Access to Information**

We believe that all applicants have a right to see personal information that we hold about them on file. We will take account of the Data Protection Act 1998 and any other legislation that may be introduced and will ensure that written information held on files is accurate and accessible.

## 1. Selection & eligibility

To be eligible for housing, you must normally have some form of housing need. We assess this on current circumstances. Following assessment you are awarded points from the categories set out in section 2.

- 1.1. If you are awarded no points, but your current accommodation cannot meet your long-term needs, you may still remain on our list.
- 1.2. We do not hold a waiting list for all areas where we manage properties. A list of those areas where we are currently holding a waiting list is available from our office. This list is subject to change to allow us to make the most effective use of our homes and ensure the time they are left empty is kept to a minimum.
- 1.3. Where we are a member of a common housing register or Choice Based Lettings Scheme we may decide to allocate all our properties through this scheme.
- 1.4. If you are nominated to us by the local authority we will ask you and your household for proof of identity and residency. You will be awarded points in line with the criteria set out in section 2.
- 1.5. There is no residency criteria, you do not need to be living in a particular area, except where we have some rural homes, where a strong local connection is required before we can accept you.
- 1.6. We will consider applications from people under 18 years old, but you must have adult or social service support. We may expect you to take a housing support package. In these cases we may grant you a tenancy provided that a local authority social services department guarantees your rent and agrees to act as your representative.
- 1.7. We do not normally accept applications from people that owe money to us or another landlord. Each case is considered individually and where attempts are being made to repay arrears of rent or other debts we will consider this favourable.
- 1.8. Equally if you have caused anti social behaviour, nuisance or harassment in a previous tenancy, particularly where there is evidence of Anti Social Behaviour caused by either the applicant or their household, e.g. previous eviction, injunction or ASBO then we are unlikely to accept you for housing. These incidents of Anti Social Behaviour will not be taken into account where incidents have not occurred for 2 or more years prior to your date of application and that any tenancy held in the interim has been conducted satisfactorily during this period.
- 1.9. Current tenants cannot apply for a transfer whilst they have starter tenancy, this is usually for the first 12 months. In addition, all current tenants will not be allowed to register for a transfer where there are arrears outstanding on their accounts. This does not apply where the debt is due to housing benefit payment cycles, unless part of the debt is also what is owed by the tenant. Consideration may be given where tenants have made arrangements to repay the debt and this is being

maintained, or where there are exceptional circumstances and we are being asked to consider the case for a management move. Current tenants will also not be allowed to apply for a transfer where we have taken action against other breaches of tenancy for example anti social behaviour unless there are extenuating circumstances. We will also undertake an inspection on all current tenants' properties prior to any offer of accommodation. Where we identify that the tenant has failed to maintain the property and garden to an acceptable standard we will suspend their transfer application until such time that the property and garden (where applicable) have been reinstated to a satisfactory condition.

- 1.10. In exceptional circumstances we will consider applications from homeowners or people with an ownership share or those with substantial savings or higher incomes. You must meet the basic principals set out in this selection and allocation policy. Each case is considered individually and we will always consider whether or not you are unable to buy a home in the area where you wish to live.
- 1.11. We consider applications from people who may require additional housing support (where this support can be provided) or from vulnerable or marginalised applicants, for example schedule one offenders or those convicted of other serious offences. These applications are considered individually and decisions made on the merits of the individual households circumstances. We will carry out a risk assessment in consultation with the police, social services, probation service and any other voluntary group or other organisation involved in providing support.

We take into account the overall safety of our residents and the surrounding community as well as support arrangements they are being offered. An applicant may be excluded from our waiting list if they are unable to meet the conditions of the tenancy without additional support and where the support is unavailable or the level of support required will seriously undermine our ability to support other residents in a scheme.

We are sensitive in assessing applicants and allocating homes to them. Where we judge that we are unable to help an applicant, we tell them how to apply to local authorities, and information regarding their rights.

- 1.12. Asylum seekers may seek help in finding accommodation. We are committed to assisting local authorities in providing temporary housing for applicants who are asylum seekers in the United Kingdom and are referred to us by the local authorities and social service departments.

We are unable to offer assistance over and above that agreed in nomination quotas but will accept nominations of asylum seekers to fill those quotas for local authority nominations.

Asylum seekers given temporary leave to remain in the United Kingdom will be offered assured shorthold tenancies and applicants must understand that recovery of that tenancy will commence if leave to remain is refused or withdrawn at a future date.

Asylum seekers given indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom or have been given refugee status will have their application considered and be offered permanent housing in accordance with this selection and allocation policy.

## 2. Our priority system

- 2.1. Our priority or “points” system is designed to place applicants for housing in an order of housing need and attempts to meet the objectives set in this selection and allocation policy.

In general terms it takes account of current housing conditions, the severity of inappropriate housing conditions and the households’ ability to cope with the conditions. It considers other housing options available to applicants.

- 2.2. Points awarded for applications are provided in the table below and are applied strictly and objectively.

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <p>Lack of bedroom (resident household members only)</p> <p>We consider a separate bedroom necessary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For children of the same sex if one has reached the age of 10 and their age difference is 3 years or more</li> <li>▪ For children of different sex when one reaches the age of 6</li> <li>▪ When more than 2 people currently occupy a bedroom</li> </ul> | 20 |
| <p>Families needing extra bedrooms for</p>   | 5  |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| non resident children (in other words, where residency is elsewhere)  |     |
| <p>Lack of amenities &amp; sharing of amenities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No living room 10</li> <li>▪ No kitchen facilities 15</li> <li>▪ No bath or shower facilities 15</li> <li>▪ No inside toilet 15</li> <li>▪ No hot water supply 15</li> <li>▪ Shared living room 5</li> <li>▪ Shared kitchen facilities 10</li> <li>▪ Shared bathroom 10</li> <li>▪ Shared toilet 10</li> </ul> |     |
| <p>Medical priority</p> <p>Applicants are awarded medical priority if their housing conditions affect their medical condition or their present accommodation has worsened their medical condition. All priority allocations under this section are awarded by our independant medical advisor.</p> <p>Level 3 200<br/>Level 2 120<br/>Level 1 40</p>  |     |
| Nomination from a local authority (no other points are awarded if this priority is applied)   | 700 |
| Non statutory homeless as determined by the local authority   | 50  |
| <p>Social Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Households split as a result of 100</li> </ul>   |     |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>current housing conditions (for example where children are forced to live away from parents or couples are forced to live apart)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To be near employment (awarded where applicants are employed or a firm offer of employment exists and the applicant wishes to live within a five mile radius of their employment base) 10</li> <li>▪ Support reasons (awarded where the applicant needs to provide or receive support from family or carer and the applicant wishes to move within a five mile radius of the family member or carer) 10</li> <li>▪ Domestic Violence (awarded where you or any member of your family have been subjected to acts or threats of violence that have been investigated and where there is a recommendation that alternative accommodation is needed) 600</li> <li>▪ Decant moves (awarded where we need to move the tenant either permanently or temporarily whilst undertaking works to the property.) 600</li> <li>▪ Exceptional circumstance moves (existing Estuary residents only). These points are awarded only at the discretion of the Director of Housing Operations and are only applied in extreme circumstances. (No other points are awarded if this priority is applied). 600</li> </ul> |  |
| <p>Under occupation of a home (existing Estuary residents only)</p>   |  |

|   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Those who under occupy their existing Estuary home by one bedroom</li> <li>▪ Those who under occupy their existing Estuary home by two or more bedrooms</li> </ul> | <p>100</p> <p>150</p> |
| Transfer applicants (all Estuary transfer applicants are awarded these points)  | 30                    |

### 3. Selection process

- 3.1. When we receive an enquiry for housing, we will send out an application pack including an application form where we have an open waiting list. We carry out an assessment using the information supplied on the application form and will request further information if needed. After completing the assessment we will tell all applicants the results of the assessment, including a full breakdown of how priority has been awarded and prospects of housing with the Association. If we accept an application it is automatically added to our waiting list and additional information is provided about Estuary. Information about the tenancy agreement that is to be entered into will be provided at the time an offer of accommodation is made.
  - 3.1.1 Applicants that are refused entry to our waiting list will be provided details of how our decision has been reached. Applicants will have the right to appeal the decision and should submit this in writing to the Housing Services Manager within 14 days of being notified of the decision. Applicants must clearly state the reasons for their appeal. The applicant will at this stage also be informed of other Housing Advice Agencies they can contact for advice and assistance.
- 3.2. The Housing Services Manager will consider the appeal and make a decision within 10 working days of receiving the full information on the appeal. We will tell you of the decision in writing. If the appeal is upheld the application is reassessed accordingly. Where appeals are turned down the application ends. Applicants who are still dissatisfied can make a further appeal to the Director of Housing Operations through our Customer Feedback Policy. If applicants remain dissatisfied the remaining stages of the Customer Feedback Policy are applied to conclusion with a complaint being referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service. Details of our Customer Feedback Policy are available on request.
- 3.3. We aim to periodically check applications and will review applications annually as a matter of course. We cancel applications that are not re-registered at the time of the review.

- 3.4. Applications must ensure that their circumstances remain current with Estuary at all times, as offers of accommodation are made on the basis that information provided to us is current and valid. Offers of accommodation that are made where we subsequently find priority has been applied that is no longer valid are likely to be withdrawn.
- 3.5. Where applicants deliberately falsify the information on their forms to acquire accommodation we will take action to recover any property offered and the application will be removed from our list.
- 3.6. We will reassess all applications where there are major changes to household circumstances. This may result in additional or reduced priority being awarded.

#### **4. Allocations**

We aim to maximise the use of our properties and to offer homes of a suitable size for each household. We do not normally consider accommodation that would allow a spare bedroom. In deciding whether a property is suitable to meet a particular household's need we take into account both the number and size of rooms. We also aim to ensure that our tenancies offered are sustainable for the long term wherever possible and that we are creating sustainable estates and tackling social exclusion. To achieve this aim we will be more flexible in considering child densities on our estates, and will look to limit the number of two children households we house in 2 bedroom flats. For the purpose of this policy an adult is considered as someone of 18 years or above.

- 4.1. In general, wherever possible, we use the following principles but have the right to consider other factors as we think appropriate according to circumstances:
  - Single adults are usually offered a studio or one bedroomed home
  - Two adults living together as a couple are usually offered a one bedroomed home
  - Adults sharing accommodation but not living together as a couple, are offered separate bedrooms (including residential carers)
  - Two children of the same sex are expected to share a bedroom, except where one has reached the age of 10 and there is an age difference of 3 or more years between them
  - Single or joint parents are offered separate bedrooms from their children
  - Children of different sexes are offered separate bedrooms when one or the other reaches the age of 6 (although we will try and accommodate with separate rooms from the outset wherever possible)
- 4.2. While we follow these basic principles, we take a flexible and sympathetic approach where there is a medical or overriding social

need for accommodation of a different size. This will be at the discretion of the Director of Housing Operations.

- 4.3. We will also consider whether it is more appropriate to adapt or extend a property where feasible in line with our Alleviation of Overcrowding policy.
- 4.4. Our homes are allocated to applicants mainly from the following groups:
  - Households nominated by their local authority
  - Transfers of existing residents
  - Referrals by other partner agencies such as local homeless groups and hostels
  - Direct applicants through our waiting list where applicable

## **5. Under-occupation**

- 5.1. We give priority to our existing residents whose present accommodation is greater than their needs and who request a smaller property. We support any incentive scheme run by the local authority that encourages people to give up their properties for smaller homes.
- 5.2. Existing residents who occupy larger homes than they need may be offered housing that includes one extra bedroom if they are leaving something much larger. For example, we could move a couple currently occupying a four bedroom house to a two bedroom home. In addition we operate an incentive scheme for residents wishing to move to smaller accommodation.

## **6. Exercising choice**

- 6.1. We aim to ensure that our offer of accommodation matches the requirements of the applicant as closely as possible. However, we are unlikely to be able to meet everyone's hopes and wishes in full.

Although transfer applicants may select an area of their choice for housing it should be noted that we do not hold a waiting list for all areas where we hold accommodation, and those applicants applying to us directly for re-housing will only be able to apply where we hold an open waiting list.

Applicants who choose to remain on our waiting list for particular homes will not receive offers elsewhere in the meantime.

Applicants will be made up to two suitable offers of accommodation. Should both offers be refused your application will be suspended for a period of 6 months. After this time you may make a new application for housing.

- 6.2. In some circumstances we will re-open waiting lists where we have identified a shortage of suitable applicants to match the properties on

offer and/or where we are running a high percentage of void (empty) properties that we need to let.

## **7. Local letting arrangements**

- 7.1. To create or maintain stable communities (or both) we may from time to time, in consultation and partnership with the local authority, use a local letting plan that may differ from some of the principles of this policy.
- 7.2. This plan will be applied to a strict location and is designed to solve or prevent community problems.
- 7.3. It will take effect following consultation with existing residents (where this is not a new build site) and when it has been agreed with the Federation of Estuary Residents. All local lettings arrangements are reported to our board of management.

## **8. Allocations process**

- 8.1. We maintain a computerised lettings system that matches an available home to a potential resident from our waiting list. The system gives priority on the basis of the number of points awarded and the suitability of the available home. It does not take into account the time spent waiting for an offer.
- 8.2. In some circumstances we may invite applicants to a “group viewing” of a home before we make firm offers of accommodation. If applicants are invited to attend a viewing contact must be made with us. Failure to make the pre arranged appointment without providing any explanation will result in the application for housing being removed.
- 8.3. Applicants are offered two suitable homes in accordance with their choices and preferences. If applicants refuse, or fail to respond to an offer this is included in the maximum of two offers. Refusing two offers of accommodation or failing to respond to two offers of accommodation will result in the application being removed from the waiting list. In these circumstances applicants must wait six months before they may reapply.

## **9. Our Customer Feedback policy**

- 9.1. The Association adopts a Customer Feedback Policy that is applied to all our services. Copies are available upon request. The Customer Feedback Policy includes information on how to make a complaint or compliment about our services.

## **10. Monitoring and review**

- 10.1. At regular intervals, generally every year we review our policy to ensure that it continues to meet the objectives set out in this selection and allocation policy.
- 10.2. The review of the policy is carried out in consultation with stakeholders, including applicants and residents.

Insert final page showing a chart of the number of vacancies for the previous year and where these properties were allocated e.g. nominations, transfer, WL etc.

**If you would like this document in another language or format, or if you require the services of an interpreter, please contact us.**

**HINDI**

यह दस्तावेज़ यदि आपको किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य रूप में चाहिये, या आपको आनुवाद-सेवाओं की आवश्यकता हो तो हमसे संपर्क करें

**GUJARATI**

જો તમને આ દસ્તાવેજ બીજી ભાષા અથવા રચનામાં જોઈતો હોય, અથવા જો તમને ઈ-ટરમિટરની સેવાઓ જોઈતી હોય તો, કૃપા કરી અમારો સંપર્ક સાથો.

**URDU**

یہ دستاویز اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہو، یا اگر آپ کو ترجمان کی خدمات چاہئیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کیجئے۔

**BENGALI**

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান অথবা যদি আপনার একজন ইন্টারপ্রেটারের প্রয়োজন হয়, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

**ARABIC**

إذا أردت هذه الوثيقة بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، أو إذا كنت بحاجة إلى خدمات مترجم، فنرجو أن تقوم بالاتصال بنا.

**CHINESE**

本文件可以翻译为另一语文版本，或制作成另一格式，如有此需要，或需要传译员的协助，请与我们联系。

**FRENCH**

Si vous souhaitez obtenir ce document dans une autre langue ou sous un autre format ou si vous avez besoin des services d'un interprète, veuillez nous contacter.

**TURKISH**

Bu belgenin Türkçe'sini edinmek ya da Türkçe bilen birisinin size yardımcı olmasını istiyorsanız, bize başvurabilirsiniz.

**SOMALI**

Haddii aad ku rabtid dokumentigaan luqado kale ama daabacaad kale, ama haddii aad u baahan tahay turjibaan, fadlan nala soo xiriir.

**SPANISH**

Póngase en contacto con nosotros si desea obtener este documento en otro idioma o formato, o si necesita los servicios de un intérprete.

**PORTUGUESE**

Se gostaria de ter este documento noutra idioma ou formato, ou se necessita de um intérprete, contacte-nos.

**POLISH**

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać ten dokument w innym języku lub w innym formacie albo jeżeli potrzebna jest pomoc tłumacza, to prosimy o kontakt z nami.