

1. POLICY	Choice Based Lettings Allocations Policy		
		Date	July 2010

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. South Staffordshire Housing Association aims to provide good quality housing at affordable rents to those in housing need. We comply with the Tenant Services Authority regulatory code by providing good-quality housing services for residents and prospective residents by seeking to offer a choice of home, while giving reasonable preference to those in priority housing need and by offering the most secure form of tenure compatible with the purpose of the housing and the sustainability of the community.
- 1.2. The Association co-operates with the Local Authority in discharging its statutory housing duty by the use of nomination agreements for a proportion of its vacant properties, such allocations being made in accordance with the District Council's Allocations Policy.
- 1.3. Preference is given to certain categories of household, including people owed a main homelessness duty, people living in poor, overcrowded, temporary or insecure accommodation and people with a need for settled housing because of health or welfare considerations.
- 1.4. The Association reserves the right to allocate properties in a manner which makes best use of available stock, complies with any agreement entered in to as part of a new or acquired development financial agreement and contributes to a balanced and sustainable community. For the avoidance of doubt properties built and funded under rural exception sites will not be allocated under this policy but under the terms agreed for each specific site (or where specific local lettings policies apply).

2. Eligibility for Housing

- 2.1. In considering applications for housing, the Association determines if an applicant is eligible for accommodation or excluded for allocation under immigration control legislation. The Association reserves the right to exclude those persons who are not approved

- by the Home Secretary, or given refugee status or exceptional leave to remain.
- 2.2. In addition the Association determines that certain categories of applicant are normally non-qualifying persons for the Housing Register, including:
 - 2.2.1. Applicants, members of their household or visitors to that household, who are perpetrators of anti-social or unacceptable behaviour linked to Housing or Neighbourhood Issues; (within the two years previous to date of application);
 - 2.2.2. Applicants who are unable to meet the conditions of an occupancy agreement without provision of support which the Association or other agencies are not able to provide;
 - 2.2.3. Applicants who have outstanding debts in respect of rental or associated payments relating to a tenancy or who have breached the terms of a tenancy or mortgage agreement for which there are statutory grounds for possession.
 - 2.3. In line with our charitable objectives the Association will only rehouse owner-occupiers if they are in housing need. In addition in these circumstances the applicant needs to satisfy the Association that their housing need cannot be met by any other means.
 - 2.3.1. Where the re-housing request comes as a result of a medical need, the applicant must satisfy the Association that their property cannot be suitably adapted and the proceeds from the sale of this property would be insufficient to purchase alternative, suitable accommodation within the South Staffordshire area.
 - 2.4. The Association will co-operate with the Local Authority in the rehousing of Sex offenders. The decision to accept such applicants onto the Housing Register will be taken by the Director of Customer Service following a full review and Risk Assessment by the Multi Agency Public Protection Panel. For the avoidance of doubt the Association reserve the right to exclude such applicants from the Housing Register if in the view of the Association following such a process that the applicant poses a high risk of re-offending in a particular area of stock.
 - 2.5. Applications made by persons below 16 years of age will not normally be considered by the Association. Applications made by persons between 16 and 17 years of age will be accepted but evidence of a complete support package from Social Services must be in place before the offer of any accommodation can be made.
 - 2.6. Applicants in the above categories are not deemed as non-qualifying until their circumstances have been investigated and, if deemed to be non-qualifying, they have recourse to the Association's Appeals Procedure. Such decisions on eligibility are reviewable after 2 years.

- 2.7. Any non-qualifying applicants will be referred to housing advice agencies.
- 2.8. South Staffordshire Housing Association tenants will be ineligible for rehousing within twelve months of their previous tenancy start date unless there are significant changes in circumstance.

3. Priority for Housing

- 3.1. All eligible applicants will be placed in one of three priorities depending on housing need but can also be awarded a priority card as detailed later in this policy
- 3.2. The Association will advertise its empty properties each week. All eligible applicants will then be invited to express their interest in the properties advertised.
- 3.3. The Association will allocate each property to the eligible applicant in the highest band who has expressed their interest in the property. Where there is more than one applicant for each property in the same band then priority will be given to the applicant who has been accepted by the Association for the longest period of time.
- 3.4. Should an applicant move into a higher priority band then the date of registration will commence from this new date. If the applicant moves to a lower priority band then the original date stands.
- 3.5. Previous applicants under the previous Points Based Allocations System (which ended on 18th May 2009) who were already registered on the waiting/transfer list will keep their date of registration.
- 3.6. The Association will take possession action under Ground 17 of the Housing Act, as amended by the Housing Act 1996, against any applicant knowingly and recklessly provides false information that results in the allocation of a property.

4. The following priority bands are used:

- 4.1. **Band 1 (High)** – The applicant needs to move urgently and can no longer live in their current home.
 - 4.1.1. Where the property is subject to a closing order from the Council's Environmental Health Department.
 - 4.1.2. Households who have been accepted as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need by the Homelessness Department at South Staffordshire Council.
 - 4.1.3. Where the applicant lacks facilities such as a hot water supply, a bathroom or inside WC etc. (supporting evidence will be required)

- 4.1.4. Where the applicant has been awarded a high medical priority to move to other accommodation.
 - 4.1.5. Where there is statutory overcrowding as determined by the Council's Environmental Health section.
 - 4.1.6. Applicants who have suffered domestic violence and or abuse (supporting evidence will be required).
 - 4.1.7. Victims of crime, racial harassment or threats of violence from outside the home which prevents the individual(s) from remaining in their property (supporting evidence will be required).
 - 4.1.8. Applicants who are considered vulnerable by Social Services or any other appropriate agency and whose current housing is unsuitable and is having a detrimental effect on their way of life.
 - 4.1.9. Tenants of the Association who need to move to smaller accommodation
 - 4.1.10. Tenants of the Association seeking a transfer to another South Staffordshire Housing Association property who live in properties where there is evidence of overcrowding. Overcrowding is based on the standard that a separate bedroom is required for each of the following:-
 - Applicant and spouse/partner
 - Where children of different sexes share a bedroom and one is 10 years of age or above.
 - Where 3 or more persons share a bedroom
 - Where each person requires a separate bedroom on health grounds
 - 4.1.11 Where an applicant has three or more housing needs in band 2.
- 4.2. **Band 2 (Medium)** – The applicant's current home is not suitable for their needs, but they are able to stay there whilst they choose another.
- 4.2.1. The Association's Tenants residing in bed sits.
 - 4.2.2. Homeless Households who have no priority need.
 - 4.2.3. Medium medical priority to move to other accommodation.
 - 4.2.4. Where the applicant has to share a kitchen, living room, WC and bathroom with other occupants who are not family members. (i.e. occupants other than husbands, wives, partners, parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts or uncles). Applicants who live in properties where there is

evidence of overcrowding. Overcrowding is based on the standard that a separate bedroom is required for each of the following:-

- Applicant and spouse/partner
- Where children of different sexes share a bedroom and one is 10 years of age or above.
- Where 3 or more persons share a bedroom
- Where each person requires a separate bedroom on health grounds. This includes when the applicant needs a separate bedroom for his/her spouse/partner.

4.2.5. Where the applicant needs to move closer to permanent work (supporting evidence will be required).

4.2.6. Where the applicant needs to receive support from or give support to a close family member (supporting evidence will be required).

4.3. **Band 3 (Low)** – The applicant's current home meets their needs but they want a move, this will include:

- Low Medical Need
- No need to move – ie they have none of the priorities identified in bands 1 and 2.
- Those who are intentionally Homeless Households – Where South Staffordshire Council have processed their homelessness application and deemed that they are intentionally homeless.

5. Priority Cards

5.1. In both meeting its duty to meet the needs of homeless applicants who are in high housing need but have not been registered for any length of time and for those who have multiple circumstances (in band 1) priority cards will be awarded for re-housing.

5.2. Each card is valid for three months in the following circumstances:-

5.2.1. Where an applicant has been accepted as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need by South Staffordshire Council

5.2.2. Where an applicant is in specialist accommodation and it is no longer suitable for their needs, and by vacating that property it is being made available for occupation for a household for whom it is suitable. For example, accommodation provided by South Staffordshire Council to a homeless household (Tildesley court, Bed and Breakfast etc), and other supported housing.

- 5.2.3. Where an applicant is awarded urgent medical need and they are waiting to be discharged from hospital and their current property is no longer suitable and they are unable to return.
- 5.3. The Association will award a priority card for their tenants when signed off by the Director of Customer Services on the grounds of specific issues encountered by individuals which prevent them from living in their home (for example, domestic violence, racial harassment and/or threats of violence). Supporting evidence will be required from agencies.
- 5.4. Where an applicant has multiple needs (3 or more) in band 2 they will be moved into band 1 to ensure that they are not disadvantaged. If the applicant has multiple needs in Band 1 (3 or more) they will be given a priority card as outlined above.
- 5.5. Applicants with priority cards are required to bid on all eligible properties that are advertised. The Association and the Local Authority reserve the right to place bids on the applicants behalf on any suitable property. The Association reserves the right to withdraw any priority card after three months should there be no valid reason for the lack of bids for properties from the applicant.

6. Eligibility for Property

- 6.1. Each property owned by the Association has clear eligibility criteria for the applicant and their family who should be housed within it.
- 6.2. It will be made clear to applicants that they can only apply for a property if they meet the eligibility criteria as laid out below.

Property Type	Beds	Occupancy	Disability	Additional information
Bungalow	1	+ 55 years age (or high medical and the allocation of a bungalow is the only way that the applicant's housing need can be met)	Yes if adapted	Yes if adapted
Bungalow	2	+ 55 years age (or high medical and the allocation of a bungalow is the only way that the applicant's housing need can be met) Single person or	Yes if adapted	maximum 2 children (subject to overcrowding limitations as at 4.1.10) or 1 carer

		Couple age 55+ (or younger with a high medical need and allocation of a bungalow is the only way that the applicant's housing need can be met) with dependents or carer met)		
Bungalow	3	+ 55 years age (or high medical and the allocation of a bungalow is the only way that the applicant's housing need can be met) with minimum 1 dependents or carer met)	Yes if adapted	maximum 4 children or maximum 2 children and 1 carer (subject to overcrowding limitations as at 4.1.10)
House	1	Single/Couple	Generally no – only in exceptional circumstances	
House	2	Single/Couple with minimum 1 dependent child	Generally no – only in exceptional	Maximum 2 dependents subject to overcrowding limitations as at

		or carer	circumstances	4.1.10
House	3	Single/Couple with minimum 2 dependent children or carers	Generally no – only in exceptional circumstances	Maximum 4 dependents subject to overcrowding limitations as at 4.1.10
House	4	Single/Couple with minimum 3 dependent children or carers	Generally no – only in exceptional circumstances	Maximum 6 dependents subject to overcrowding limitations as at 4.1.10
1 st floor flat or above	1	Single/Couple	Generally no – only in exceptional circumstances	
1 st floor flat or above	2	Single/Couple) + 1 or more dependents	Generally no – only in exceptional circumstances	Maximum 1 dependent at allocation
Ground flat	1	Single/Couple	Y	Yes if adapted
Ground flat	2	Single/Couple + 1 or more dependents	Y	Maximum 1 dependent at allocation Yes if adapted
Sheltered flat	Bedsit /Flat	+ 60 years age	Y	

- 6.3. Specialist properties such as those that have been adapted for specific client groups may be allocated from the Disabled Persons Housing Register and thus be excluded from the Choice Based Scheme.

7. Medical Needs

- 7.1. Medical Needs are determined by the Association as being either urgent , high or medium. In cases of doubt the Association reserves the right to seek further expert medical advice. Unless medical needs falls into either of these categories, the Association will not consider them.
- 7.2. Urgent medical priority is defined as where an applicant is waiting to be discharged from hospital and their current property is not suitable for them to return.
- 7.3. **High medical priority** is defined as:
 - 7.3.1. Extreme physical disability requiring care assistance which renders the applicant incapable of undertaking any of their own care tasks and renders their current property un-inhabitable.
 - 7.3.2. Instances of wheelchair dependency within the home where the facilities are all located above ground floor or are inaccessible to the applicant.
 - 7.3.3. Instances where an applicant is to be discharged from hospital and their accommodation is completely unsuitable.
- 7.4. **Medium Medical priority** is defined as where the applicant suffers from some physical disability, incapacity or mobility problem, which either prevents them, accessing all facilities within the home, or only reaching them with severe difficulty. For example, people suffering from disabling arthritis, severe asthma or angina preventing them from climbing stairs inside the home, or steps outside the home.

8. Advertising of Properties

- 8.1. The Association will ensure that all properties are advertised as widely as possible. This will include (but is not limited to):
 - 8.1.1. Individual contact with vulnerable tenants
 - 8.1.2. SSHA Website
 - 8.1.3. SSHA offices
 - 8.1.4. SSDC offices
 - 8.1.5. Local Authority Leisure Centres
 - 8.1.6. Local Libraries
- 8.2. Proxy bids for properties will be accepted from designated support workers for vulnerable tenants.
- 8.3. Including proxy bids from SSHA's Resident Liaison/Tenancy Support Officer subject to a signed disclaimer.
- 8.4. Within each weekly advertising cycle any applicant can express an interest in up to 3 properties.

9. Feedback to Customer

- 9.1. Feedback will be provided at the end of each month and will be available on the Home-finder website. Feedback can also be provided over the telephone, in writing or in person.

10. Data Protection

- 10.1. The data of any applicant who has not made a bid (successful or unsuccessful) will be removed after two years from the date of their last bid (or application). They will receive written confirmation of the deletion of their application.
- 10.2. If any applicant is successful in their bid for a property they will be asked to provide:
 - 10.2.1. 2 forms of ID for each tenant and details of any person over the age of 18 moving into the new home (e.g. driving licence, bank statement, utility bill, benefit letter etc).
 - 10.2.2. Children's ID – (e.g. Child Benefit letter or Family Tax credit letter.)
 - 10.2.3. Any other details that are required to support the applicants move (e.g. Doctor's letters)
- 10.3. Should the above information in support of the application not be provided the Association reserves the right to cancel the application and offer the property to the next bidder.

11. Review of Policy

- 11.1. In light of the importance of this issue this policy will be reviewed annually in light of CORE data

Appendix One

Allocation Policy for Extra Care and Dementia Accommodation

1. All accommodation designated as being for extra care or dementia clients shall not be allocated through the Association's Choice Based Lettings scheme but shall be allocated separately into account the unique nature of individual applicants and the management arrangements within the scheme.
2. In some cases where there is low demand the Association may allocate extra care properties for those with low care needs through its normal CBL scheme. All applicants seeking older persons or supported housing will be encouraged to apply through CBL for sheltered properties and through the Extra Care Scheme if appropriate.
3. In all cases the Association shall endeavour to meet housing need but always take into account the best interests of the existing residents and the proper ongoing management of each scheme.
4. Each Extra Care scheme shall have agreed occupancy levels agreed by the Board of Management at the commencement of each scheme. These occupancy levels shall take into account a balance between those individuals with low, medium and high care needs. In addition where relevant the scheme shall have agreed specialist provision for, those residents with other needs, e.g. Dementia.
5. Any variation to these occupancy levels on a long term basis must be agreed by the Board of Management.
6. Each scheme shall have an agreed application review panel normally comprising of the Court Manager, Neighbourhood Team Leader and the representative from Social Services. The panel will jointly agree all allocations for each scheme when vacancies arise.
7. Applications shall be registered using the Association's extra care application form.
8. On receipt of an application for extra care accommodation and assessment by the court manager, the Association shall band the application in either High, Medium or Low level Care on specialist depending on the unique nature of the applicant. For the avoidance of doubt the banding is normally
 - a. High Care need – Applicant needs or is currently receiving over 15 hours of care per week.
 - b. Medium Care need – Applicant needs or is receiving between 7 and 15 hours of care per week.
 - c. Low Care Need – Applicant needs or is receiving between 1 and 7 hours of care per week.
9. The application review panel on receipt of notice of a vacancy for each property shall meet to agree a new allocation and a reserve. This allocation that best meets the agreed ratios between High, Medium, Low, and Specialist care needs.
10. Once the agreed level of care available is agreed then the panel shall meet to agree a new allocation (and a reserve) based on the level of care available and will offer the accommodation to the person in the

appropriate band that is on the highest level of need taking into account.

- a. Length of time on waiting list
- b. Best use of Association stock
- c. Multi – agency problem solving as raised by Social Services such as NHS bed blocking, delivery of respite care or related issues.

11. In any case of dispute the allocation will be referred to the Head of Care and Support by applicant (or their nominated representatives) through the Housing Appeals Policy.
12. The minutes of each meeting to make a decision shall be recorded and reviewed by the Head of Care and Support. The Head of Care and Support shall report every six months to the SSHA Board of Management on the allocation process, nominations made by the panel, waiting list for each scheme and the appeals made and their outcomes.
13. Once an offer is made applicants shall have 7 days to accept such an offer or it may be withdrawn and offered to a reserve applicant.
14. The Association reserve the right to allocate properties in a manner which makes best use of the available accommodation outside of the above criteria. This includes allocations to under 55's who have a care and support need that can be met within the scheme but which cannot be met in suitable alternative accommodation in the local area. There would only be a limited number of homes made available to under 55's (to ensure the broad principles of the Extra Care scheme are maintained).

Policy Data

Risk Assessment	There is a low/medium risk that an application is incorrectly assessed and/or a property is not allocated in line with this policy. This could mean that best use is not made of available housing stock and risk of complaint to the Ombudsman with associated publicity. This risk will be mitigated by an ongoing process of internal checks and annual internal audit review.
Resident Consultation	Any changes to be approved by the Resident Sounding Group.
Issues for Equality and Diversity	An Equalities Impact Needs Assessment has been undertaken for this policy. The Association operates an open waiting list and anyone can apply for housing. There are clear reasons for refusing to accept a housing application and a right of appeal.
Associated Policies and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt and Registration of Applications • Selection of Tenants • Dealing with Nominations From South Staffordshire Council • Appeals
Associated Documents / Leaflets	Diversity Strategy Guide to Services
National Standard	Tenancy Standard
Responsibility	
Director	Director of Customer Services
Manager	Head of Housing
Reporting	Quarterly to Board of Management (performance reports) Annually to applicants and tenants CORE monitoring of all new tenants
Policy Creation Date	2007
Review Period	Three Years
Previous Review Dates	June 2008, February 2009, July 2010, December 2010
Review	SSHA Board
Version Number	1.4
Date Last Amended	February 2009

Amendments	06/08 Addition of clause 2.3-25 and 3.6 02/09 Minor changes to take account of best practice 07/10 Updated to reflect extracare allocations 12/10 Minor changes to reflect allocation of extracare properties to under 55's with a care and support need
Authorised By	SSHA Board
Review Date	November 2013