

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>REVIEW DATE:</b>	<b>July 2018</b>
<b>ALLOCATION POLICY</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b>	<b>July 2018</b>
	<b>REVIEW DATE</b>	<b>2021</b>

## **ALLOCATION POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Teachers' Housing Association's primary aim is to provide affordable, good quality accommodation to people in need, particularly those associated with education. We provide general needs housing for people working in education or others in housing need in London. We also provide sheltered housing for older people. .

THA also aims:

- To contribute towards providing balanced and sustainable communities and where necessary will consider local lettings plans.
- To comply with the requirements of The Regulator of Social Housing Regulatory Code.
- To provide an annual summary of lettings
- To work with Local Authorities and other appropriate bodies in areas which the Association operates to identify and address issues around housing need
- To explore options for development in accordance with the Association's Business Plan and Development Strategy

The purpose of this Allocation Policy is to detail how our vacant (empty) properties will be let. THA aims to provide information on policies and procedures in clear language which is easy to read.

### **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

THA has adopted an Equality and Diversity Strategy. At all stages in the application and allocation process we will ensure, by regular monitoring procedures and that we comply with the principles of this strategy. Regular reports on performance will be made to the Operations Committee.

### **LEGAL STATUS**

This Allocation Policy meets the legal requirements set out in the following Acts and complies with Regulatory Framework and guidance of The Regulator of Social Housing .

- Housing Act 1996
- Housing Act 1985
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010

## **SOURCES OF APPLICANTS**

### **Local Authority Nominations**

In the past THA received grant funding from the Housing Corporation. In line with locally agreed protocols, THA has nomination agreements with some local authorities for a percentage of voids.

Where a Choice-Based Lettings System exists, THA will comply with the necessary requirements.

THA will consult with Local Authorities periodically on nomination arrangements.

### **See Summary of Nomination Agreements**

### **Direct applicants – Sheltered Housing**

THA has an open waiting list for each sheltered scheme. This is subject to review when any Choice-Based Lettings Schemes are introduced.

The priority of each application is assessed under the agreed Points System. This information will be verified during a Home Visit usually carried out by the Scheme Manager prior to an offer of accommodation being made.

It is THA's Policy not to give priority to applicants who have sufficient resources to rent or purchase privately. There are set limits on income and savings which reviewed every 3 years by the Board. These limits are reflected in the agreed Points System. Those who exceed these limits may still be accepted on to the waiting list providing they meet other qualifying criteria but they are awarded minus points.

Applicants must be aged 60 and over (55 for Dunham Gardens and New Park Gardens) and able to live independently. The applicant's ability to live independently will be assessed as part of the application process and during the home visit stage.

### **See Points System – Procedure & Guidance Notes**

### **Direct Applicants – Teacher, General Need and Family Housing**

The waiting list for teacher, general need and family housing is restricted to those in housing need who are employed in education in the Boroughs where THA have property. Applicants must meet minimum criteria to be accepted on to the waiting list and applications are assessed under the agreed Points System.

### **THA Staff**

THA will not routinely offer accommodation to members of staff or Board Members. Applications from their families can be considered providing they meet the eligibility criteria for the property they are applying for or are referred to the association via a Local Authority Nomination.

The relationship to a member of THA staff or Board must be disclosed as part of the application process and the staff member concerned is to play no part in the allocation of the property. In the event that the staff member concerned is on the Housing Management Team, the allocation process is to be overseen by the Chief Executive.

THA staff in residential posts that cease to be employed by the Association may also be considered for teacher, general need and family housing as outlined in the **Residential Staff Policy**. There are conditions on any offer of accommodation made to any such employees.

### **Referrals from Mobility Schemes**

THA may accept referrals under an agreed national mobility scheme from other housing associations and local authorities.

### **Transfer Applicants**

Tenants who have held their current tenancy for a minimum of 12 months may apply for a transfer provided that they are not in rent arrears, have caused no anti social behaviour or other tenancy breaches and their present accommodation is in good order and in a condition that is ready to let.

**See Transfer & Exchange Policy**

### **Applications via Mutual Exchanges**

Assured and Secure tenants have the right to exchange their home with either another THA tenant or tenants of another Housing Association or Local Authority. Tenants requesting a Mutual Exchange must complete an application form issued by THA and completed by both parties of the swap. Permission will not normally be granted if the tenant is in arrears or is subject to an active anti social behaviour case or the move will result in a property being over or under occupied. Assured Shorthold Tenants or Starter Tenants do not have the right to exchange their homes via a mutual exchange.

**See Transfer and Exchange Policy**

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information provided in connection with an application will be treated as confidential in accordance with THA's Confidentiality Policy. In accordance with The Regulator of Social Housing Regulatory Code and the Data Protection Act, all information that THA holds on tenants and applicants must be kept safe and secure and deleted when no longer required.

## **CORE (Continuous Recording System)**

The Association participates in CORE and uses the data provided to assess its performance year on year and also in comparison with similar Associations. This does not include lettings on Assured Shorthold tenancies.

## **SEX OFFENDERS**

THA will collaborate with the Local Authority, Police, Probation Service and Social Services under the Multi-Agency Public Protection (MAPPA) guidelines on any risk assessment and action plan for known offenders looking for housing. An allocation will only be made if the property and the area are considered suitable and appropriate.

## **CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS**

THA does not currently ask applicants about previous convictions but if information is brought to THA's attention the Association reserves the right to verify the information and assess the appropriateness of any allocation. This will only be done if the nature of the offence is likely to lead to estate management problems and is in line with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974)

## **RIGHT TO RENT**

In line with the governments Right to Rent checks introduced in February 2016, all applicants for housing will be required to verify their identity through a series of checks to ensure that they legally have the right to rent a property in the UK. Members of the Housing Management Team will use the Right to Rent Document Checks: A User Guide (issued by the Home Office) to verify the identity and right to rent of each applicant before any offer of accommodation can be made.

**See Right to Rent Documents Sheet**

## **HOW PROPERTIES ARE ALLOCATED**

THA uses a point's based system to assess the current housing and personal situation of the applicant. Applicants are awarded points based on the information they provide on their application form. The points are totalled giving an overall score and the application is added to the relevant waiting list depending on area and size of property required.

There are different application forms for both sheltered and teacher, general need and family housing and different pointing systems used.

**See Guide to General Needs Housing Points System  
Guide to Sheltered Housing Points System  
Points System for Internal Transfers**

Both point systems are reviewed every three years.

All applications to the Association must be made using the relevant and current application form. Upon receipt of the form at Head Office an applicant's priority for housing is assessed on the basis of the current Point System.

The information given on the form will be verified prior to any offer of accommodation being made. For all sheltered housing applicants a home visit will be carried out by the relevant Scheme Manager, Deputy Manager or other THA staff member to verify the information contained on the form. For teacher, general need and family housing applicants, the information on the form will be verified by the Housing Management Team before an offer of accommodation is made. In some cases a home visit may be required to further verify an application.

### **See Home Visit- Needs & Risk Assessment Procedures**

Acceptance onto the waiting list does not guarantee an offer of accommodation. THA will take up references from your current/previous Landlord before any offer of accommodation is made.

All applicants are unlikely to be offered accommodation if:

- They have sufficient financial resources to rent privately or purchase accommodation to meet their housing needs as set out in the Assets and Income Policy.
- We recognise the position for single persons under 35 with no dependents will be impacted by the adoption of Local Housing Allowance limits which reduces the amount of housing benefit they can claim to the shared accommodation rate, rather than for a self-contained one-bedroom flat. This change comes into force for social tenants from 1 April 2019 yet will apply to any tenancies signed from 1 April 2016. If an applicant under 35 cannot clearly demonstrate that they can afford the rent and other bills, we will be unable to offer the property to them. They will be advised to seek money, budgeting and employment advice. In the event the application is via a Local Authority Nomination, the nomination will be rejected.
- There is clear evidence from an official source that the applicant is or has been guilty of serious anti-social or racist behaviour and it is likely that housing the applicant will cause annoyance, harm or risk to Association tenants, staff or others living in the area
- They have rent or mortgage arrears and have not entered a suitable repayment agreement with their landlord or lender which has been kept to for at least 6 months
- Have an immediate need to be re-housed but no suitable property is immediately available.
- The applicant has knowingly given false information or information has been withheld deliberately

### **CRITERIA FOR APPLICANTS TO SHELTERED HOUSING**

- Applicants should normally be over 60, in housing need and able to maintain an independent lifestyle
- In schemes which are proving difficult to let, the age requirement may be reduced to not less than 55 years. This is subject to any restrictions placed by the funding arrangements
- In instances where applicants are assessed as having the same level of housing need, priority will be given to the person who has been on the waiting list the longest.
- THA's sheltered schemes are currently not designed to accommodate

wheelchairs

## **CRITERIA FOR DIRECT APPLICANTS TO GENERAL NEEDS**

The Association accepts direct applications from teachers and others associated with education. The Board has agreed that the following groups may be considered as direct applicants:

- Working teachers including
  - Peripatetic teachers
  - Teachers in state and independent schools
  - Nursery, primary and secondary teachers
  - Further Education and university teachers
  - Student Post Graduate Certificates in Education/ Bachelor of Education teachers
  - Supply teachers
- Those employed directly by schools as support staff such as Caretakers etc.
- Local authority education staff, including inspectors and advisers
- Education union and welfare staff
- Nursery nurses

**In Waltham Forest we can only accept applications from qualified, working teachers who are employed by the borough without exception.**

## **EMPLOYMENT CRITERIA**

### **(a) Areas of operation**

Direct applicants for teacher, general need and family housing must work within one of the six Boroughs in which the accommodation is situated namely, the London Boroughs of Bexley, Brent, Croydon, Haringey, Kingston upon Thames or Waltham Forest.

### **(b) Contracts of employment**

Applicants may be employed full or part-time (a minimum of 16 hours per week) on either permanent or temporary contracts. In the latter instance a minimum contract period of a year is required.

### **(c) Continuing employment**

If accommodation is offered it should be noted that it will be only for such time as the applicant is employed in the above listed Boroughs, or in an adjoining Borough, and in the field of education. Should this employment cease, alternative accommodation will need to be found by the tenant. Such applicants will be issued with Assured Shorthold Tenancies which will be reviewed annually and only renewed if the above criteria are fulfilled.

The Housing Services Director has discretion to extend a tenancy for a further 6 or 12 months if the tenant can demonstrate that they are actively looking for work in

education.

If an Assured Shorthold Tenant retires due to age or ill health and has held the tenancy for more than five years, the tenant will be offered an Assured Tenancy, though this may not be in their current property/area but will be in a property that is of an appropriate size and type.

## **ACCEPTANCE ONTO THE WAITING LIST**

Applicants will receive written acknowledgement either via letter or email that they have been accepted onto the waiting list and how many points they have been awarded.

Applicants are required to notify the Association of any change of circumstances.

Applicants are invited by the Association to renew their application annually.

Applicants will be considered for properties according to the Association's property size policy. A copy of which is available upon request.

**See Property Sizes**

## **APPEALS**

Any applicant who has a complaint regarding the service received from the Association should write to the Housing Services Director and a copy of the Association's Complaints Procedure will be sent to the applicant. All complaints and appeals received will be subject to ethnic monitoring.