

RAILWAY HOUSING ASSOCIATION

POLICY STATEMENT

LETTINGS

1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1 The Association will let to applicants in greatest housing need from the client group for which the property is designated; making best possible use of available stock and where possible creating balanced communities.

2. Implementation of the Policy

- 2.1 Lettings will be made from the Association's Waiting Lists and to nominees from the appropriate local authority in accordance with specific agreements. Fifty percent of re-lettings will usually be made to local authority nominations. The proportion of lettings of newly built properties that will be made to nominees will be agreed with the local authority that supported any bid for public funding. Each nomination will be assessed in accordance with the Association's published Lettings Policy and points system.
- 2.2 The Association operates a points based system and applications are assessed using housing needs points; giving the greatest number of points to those applicants in greatest need. The system is designed to recognise and balance the needs of applicants against the needs and aspirations of existing residents; and the length of time an applicant has spent in their current circumstances.
- 2.3 The following criteria are used in the assessment of housing need:
- unsatisfactory housing conditions
 - temporary/insecure accommodation
 - the need for settled accommodation on medical/welfare grounds
 - domestic violence or harassment
 - the need for settled accommodation due to social/economic circumstances
- 2.4 The published points system reflects the Association's priorities between these circumstances.
- 2.5 All applicants will be dealt with in accordance with the Association's Equality and Diversity Policy, and an annual target will be set for achieving a number of lettings to Black and Minority Ethnic applicants.
- 2.6 Waiting Lists will be maintained by location and property type. Each Waiting List will be kept to a number which reflects the expected annual turnover and enables applicants to be re-housed within a reasonable length of time.

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- 2.7 The Waiting Lists will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the circumstances of all applicants are up to date.
- 2.8 Applicants in the following categories may be excluded from the Association's Waiting Lists:
- Persons requiring accommodation for a short period.
 - Persons under the age of eighteen. This does not include a nominee to whom a duty is owed under the Children's Act 1989.
 - Persons who have deliberately worsened their circumstances may not receive any resultant increase in points for twelve months.
 - Persons who owe arrears of rent or associated sundry debts from a current or previous tenancy. Waiting list applicants may only be accepted on to the list if they have made and kept to an agreement to re-pay the arrears for a reasonable length of time (e.g. six months) and has substantially reduced the amount owed (e.g. by 50%).
 - Persons who have deliberately given false information on an application form may be excluded for twelve months from the date that the fraud is discovered.
 - Persons whose application is a result of their own unreasonable behaviour may be excluded for two years from the date of the conviction. This will include people guilty of harassment or domestic violence.
 - Persons who have been or have threatened to be violent to staff may be excluded for two years from the date of the incident.
 - Residents of Railway Housing Association, other Registered Social Landlords or Local Authorities who have been served with a Notice of Seeking Possession may be excluded until the Notice expires and no further action is to be taken.
 - Persons who have been convicted of an offence against the community may be excluded for two years from the date of the conviction. This would include burglary, theft, criminal damage, assault occasioning bodily harm and drug trafficking.
 - Applicants may be excluded if, within the two years prior to their application, the applicant or a member of their household has been convicted of an anti social offence, or had an injunction, anti social behaviour order or tenancy enforcement action has been taken against them for anti social behaviour.
- 2.9 Applicants will not be excluded automatically from the waiting lists if their circumstances fit one or more of the above categories. Each case will be judged on its merits.

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- 2.10 In cases of severe housing need, the Association reserves the right to accept applicants who fall within these excluded categories.
- 2.11 Applicants and members of their family who do not meet the age criteria for properties will not automatically be excluded from the waiting list. Each case will be considered on its merits and individual circumstances
- 2.12 Applications for transfers will be considered from any existing resident. All residents wishing to transfer will be assisted in accordance with the points system on the basis of housing need.
- 2.13 Priority transfers may be granted in the following circumstances:
- Where the resultant vacancy is of a similar size and type as the property applied for, and the resident has held a tenancy for at least one year. (In cases where there is more than one transfer request, the decision will be based on time on the list).
 - Where the resultant vacancy is of similar demand as the property applied for and the move will resolve a management problem that cannot be satisfactorily resolved by any other means. In these exceptional circumstances only one offer of suitable alternative accommodation will usually be made. All such lettings will be assessed and approved by the Director of Housing Services and reported to the Housing Services Committee.
- 2.14 Transfers will not normally be granted where residents are in breach of their tenancy agreement. Transfer applicants who owe arrears of rent or associated sundry debts will be accepted onto the list but will not usually be made an offer of alternative accommodation until their rent account and any associated sundry debts are cleared.
- 2.15 In exceptional circumstances, the Board may consider a transfer application from residents in breach of their Tenancy Agreement.
- 2.16 Transfer applications which would result in excessive under-utilisation or overcrowding of the property would not be accepted.
- 2.17 Secure residents may exchange their tenancy with another resident from a local authority or housing association. Permission will not be withheld except on the grounds of Schedule 3 of the Housing Act 1985.
- 2.18 The Association participates in national and local mobility exchange schemes.
- 2.19. There is no limit on the number of offers that will be made to an applicant. However, if an applicant does not accept an offer of suitable accommodation within the area of their choice then no further offers of accommodation in that area will usually be made to them. The exception to this is if the applicant has serious social or medical reasons for refusing the offer, or if there are no other applicants for the properties.

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- 2.20. Re-letting of properties with major adaptations will be made to applicants in most need of such facilities.
- 2.21 In the exceptional circumstances of two cases of equal housing need, preference will firstly be given to members of the Benefit Fund (railway staff, working or retired) in accordance with the Association's Trust Deed and then consideration will be given to the points weighting between the applications.
- 2.22 Any applicant may appeal against a decision made in respect of their application for housing. The appeal will be dealt with in accordance with the Association's Complaints Procedure.

3. Responsibility

- 3.1 The Director of Housing Services is responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

4. Monitoring

- 4.1 Lettings will be reported to the Housing Services Committee every quarter.

5. Review

- 5.1 This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, including consultation with residents.

October 2009

This policy can be made available on request in other languages, large type, Braille or in audio format