



Lettings Policy

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Lettings Policy (the Policy) outlines the principles and approach taken to determine the allocations and lettings of the properties we manage.

2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 Our homes are let in a fair, transparent, and efficient way, in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory frameworks. Specifically, this policy ensures that the allocation and letting of our homes meets the Regulator of Social Housing's expectations set out within the Consumer Regulations, including the Tenancy Standard.
- 2.2 This policy outlines the approach to allocating homes and signposts to specific lettings Policies in place across geographical area(s) where we provide homes.
- 2.3 The purpose of this policy is to:
- Make the best use of our stock and to maintain sustainable and balanced local communities.
 - Meet the needs of those people who need housing.
 - Ensure our approach to letting homes is open, transparent, and fair, providing reasonable preference to those in priority need.
 - Provide choice wherever possible for housing applicants.
 - Support the strategic ambitions of strategic housing partners and those of Livin.
 - Help let our homes as quickly as possible, minimising rent loss and making the process of letting homes efficient.
 - Ensure our approach adheres to the relevant legislative and regulatory environment.

3.0 Principles

- 3.1 We are committed to sustaining tenancies in sustainable places, and we will seek to assist and support tenants to remain in our homes wherever possible.
- 3.2 We will work in partnership with relevant Local Authorities and local stakeholders to ensure our homes are allocated equitably and efficiently and to support delivery of strategic housing responsibilities.

4.0 Definitions

- 4.1 The key terms used in this policy are defined below.

Local Lettings Plan	Plans are used by Registered Providers and Local Authorities to develop policies and letting solutions that respond to specific local housing need and demand.
Nominations Agreement	An agreement negotiated between a Local Authority and a Registered Provider (RP) which guarantees the Authorities' ability to access RP owned accommodation.
Lettings Policy	The criteria through which social homes will be allocated.
Choice Based Lettings (CBL)	The system for registering new housing applications and advertising properties for let.

5.0 Scope

- 5.1 This policy is relevant to all our employees and stakeholders who may deliver or manage allocations and lettings of our homes.

6.0 Contribution to Plan A

- 6.1 This policy contributes directly to the delivery of Plan A by ensuring our homes are allocated fairly and effectively contributing to sustainable tenancies and places
- 6.2 The policy contributes to the delivery the following strategic objectives:
 - Objective 17: Provide tailored interventions to sustain tenancies, improve health and wellbeing and maintain independence.

7.0 Legislative and regulatory framework

- 7.1 The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) requires registered providers to let their homes in a fair, transparent, and efficient way and contribute to local authorities' strategic housing functions and sustainable communities. These requirements are set out within the Tenancy Standard.
- 7.2 Registered providers are also required to enable tenants to gain access to opportunities to exchange their tenancy with that of another tenant, by way of internet-based mutual exchange.

8.0 Policy statements

8.1 Choice Based Lettings

- 8.2 We participate in the Durham Key Options, Darlington Borough Council Lettings Policy 2023-28 (Home Search), Tees Valley Lettings Partnership (Homefinder) and Hartlepool Home Search Choice Based Lettings (CBL) schemes.
- 8.3 Our homes are allocated in accordance with the allocations and lettings criteria applicable within these CBL schemes, except where there are local lettings plans in place that vary the allocations criteria within those locations.
- 8.4 In exceptional circumstances, homes may be allocated to applicants via a direct offer, but these will still be offered using the allocations the criteria for the relevant Choice Based Lettings scheme or Local Authority Allocations Policy.

8.5 Mutual Exchange

- 8.6 Tenants wishing to exchange locally can register for a mutual exchange within the Durham Key Options, Darlington Borough Council, Hartlepool Borough Council and Tees Valley Lettings Partnership CBL schemes. Tenants seeking to move outside of these CBL scheme areas are actively encouraged to use Home Swapper, the national online database of social housing tenants who are wanting to move home.
- 8.7 Mutual exchange will be promoted as an avenue of choice for those seeking alternative accommodation but have no specific housing need as they are unlikely to access alternative accommodation through choice-based lettings due to demand.

8.8 Local Lettings Policy (LLP)

- 8.9 Local lettings policies are used in limited circumstances where they are required to create balanced, safe and sustainable communities or in response to bespoke localised need and/or within a defined geographical boundary. They are set up to meet defined community cohesion needs and may also be used in accordance with lettings requirements set up as part of s106 agreements, for example.
- 8.10 Local lettings policies can be used in the following circumstances (not an exhaustive list):
- Help meet unmet needs within an area.
 - Help regenerate areas.
 - Help to target the best use of properties in higher demand areas.
 - Help promote properties which are in low demand.
 - Encourage greater community cohesion and sustainability.
 - Respond to housing management issues, for example where significant problems of antisocial behaviour, nuisance or crime occur.
 - Help achieve balanced communities when letting new developments.
- 8.11 Any advertisement of properties within a local lettings policy area will clearly set out what the local lettings criteria are as part of the advertisement.
- 8.12 Local lettings policies are agreed in advance with our strategic partners, are set up within a defined locality and/or to address a specific need and are reviewed regularly for appropriateness. The specific requirements for local lettings policies are set out within each individual policy.
- 8.13 Copies of individual local lettings policies are available on request and are published on the relevant CBL scheme website.

9.0 Roles and responsibilities

9.1 Roles and responsibilities under this policy are outlined below.

Board	Board will formally approve this policy and review it every three years (or sooner if there is a change in legislation or regulation).
Executive Director of Housing and Communities	The Executive Director of Housing and Communities is responsible for the effective delivery of this policy.
Head of Housing and Community Regeneration	The of Housing and Communities has operational responsibility for the management of allocations and lettings.
Strategic Housing Managers	The Strategic Housing Managers are responsible for overseeing the delivery of allocations and lettings and ensuring associated procedures are followed.
Housing Team	The Housing Team will implement the policy and procedures.

9.2 This policy will be communicated to our customers and employees via our website and intranet. Those responsible for implementing the policy will where required receive appropriate training, advice, and/or guidance.

10.0 Related policies and procedures

10.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

Durham key Options Common Lettings Policy	Sets out the criteria and procedure through which social housing will be allocated via the Durham Key Options Choice Based lettings scheme.
Durham County Council Nominations Agreement	Sets out the way in which Durham County Council will access our homes and nominate applicants from their housing register.
Tees Valley Lettings Partnership Common Allocations Policy	Sets out the criteria and procedure through which social housing will be allocated via the Tees Valley Home Finder CBL scheme.

Tees Valley Nominations Agreement	A common nominations agreement covering the local authority partners within the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership.
Hartlepool Home Search Allocations Policy	Sets out the criteria and procedure through which social housing will be allocated via the Hartlepool Home Search CBL Scheme.
Hartlepool Nominations Agreement	Sets out the way in which Hartlepool Borough Council will access our homes and nominate applicants from their housing register.

11.0 Monitoring and review arrangements

- 11.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years but will be subject to earlier review if there is significant change to either the legislative/regulatory environment or in the light of significant learning from good practice or customer complaints.