



## Allocations and Lettings Policy

### 1. Introduction

This Allocations and Lettings Policy details how the Association will work with Property Pool Plus to ensure our properties are let to those in housing need and will also explain how properties can be let outside of the Property Pool Plus scheme.

### 2. Housing the Homeless

The Association is required to assist Wirral Borough Council in discharging its duty to provide homes for those people that have been declared statutory homeless. Wirral Borough Council has been very successful at preventing homelessness and consequently the average percentage of lettings let to homeless applicants by Registered Providers is typically under 10%. The Council Homeless Team can nominate tenants for any of our properties advertised on Property Pool Plus. We will still carry out our usual allocations procedure before accepting the nomination.

As a Property Pool Plus member, Family Housing Association agree to let our homes to people registered on the Property Pool Plus waiting list. This can be achieved by:

- ◆ Advertising through the scheme, then letting to an appropriate applicant.
- ◆ Letting to an applicant of a similar property within a month of the advert.
- ◆ Properties let when a person applies direct to the Association when a property has failed to let from the initial advert and has since been placed on the Property Pool Plus Readily Available List.

Family Housing Association can allocate up to 10% of its lettings for management reasons, examples of which are given later in this report.

### 3. Letting to those in Housing Need

The Property Pool Plus team assesses each person registered and assigns them a priority banding based on their housing need. When allocating properties, those with the highest banding are offered properties first. Factors influencing priority banding include overcrowding, unfit property (such as severe damp or disrepair), medical grounds, violence or harassment, welfare grounds, under-occupation, and clearance.

### 4. Letting through Property Pool Plus

When a property becomes available to let the Association will:

1. Submit an advert to Property Pool Plus without delay as soon as the Association becomes aware that a tenancy is coming to an end. The Association will not wait for formal notice to be received or for the keys to be returned. Should the tenant change their mind the advert can be withdrawn.
2. Always indicate in our advert that references are required.
3. Await the list of applicants from Property Pool Plus.

4. Work through the list of applicants, in order, until a suitable tenant is found, completing our 'Applicant Assessment Form' in each case.
5. Check the Property Pool Plus computer system to ensure the applicants household size is appropriate and for any notes on the system.
6. Confirm the applicant's identity by requesting two forms of identification and their National Insurance Number. A copy of their identification will be retained on file.
7. Seek two references, ideally one from the current landlord and one from a person of professional standing such as a doctor, JP, teacher, accountant, civil servant, or local government employee. Our 'Confidential Reference Form' will be used to ensure appropriate information is requested.
8. Ensure references and identity checks are satisfactory and then carry out in-depth checks on the Property Pool Plus computer system to examine the applicant's history and any issues that it raises.
9. Arrange a viewing of the property.
10. Carry out a home visit and complete an application form with the applicant.
11. Offer a tenancy if Association Employees are satisfied that there is no reason to reject the application. An Assured Shorthold (Starter) tenancy will be offered unless the applicant is an existing Housing Association Tenant where an Assured Tenancy (Monitored for 12 months) is offered.
12. The latest version of the appropriate Tenancy Agreement will be used.
13. During Sign up, a member of Staff will take the Tenant through our 'Sign up Checklist' to ensure all relevant matters are discussed.

## **5. Letting outside of Property Pool Plus**

The Association can let 10% of its available homes outside of Property Pool Plus for Management reasons. This includes:

- ◆ To decant a tenant to allow improvement works.
- ◆ To move a tenant suffering from harassment or domestic violence.
- ◆ To decant a tenant following flood or fire damage.
- ◆ To handle 'Sensitive Lettings' where vulnerable neighbours make sensitive allocation critical to maintain community stability.
- ◆ To let 'Hard to Let' properties that could not be let through Property Pool Plus.
- ◆ To transfer an existing Association tenant.

Where the Association becomes aware of a prospective tenant who would be suitable for a sensitive letting, it will take their contact details. They will be informed that they are not on a waiting list and should apply for properties through Property Pool Plus. However, they will also be informed that we will retain their details on file in case a property becomes available that cannot be let through Property Pool Plus.

Should a sensitive letting arise, Association Employees will consider the list of potential tenants and contact those most suitable to ascertain whether they would be interested. Where there is more than one suitable prospective tenant, those who contacted the Association first will be given priority. If they are interested then an application form should be completed, references sought, and identity checks carried out.

The Chief Executive will have delegated authority to offer property outside of Property Pool Plus and the details of the letting will be reported at the next Board Meeting.

## **6. Transfers**

The Association will maintain a list of those tenants who would like to transfer. In normal circumstances, tenants cannot be added to the list in the first year of their tenancy, if they have rent arrears or are responsible for Anti-Social Behaviour. Transfers can be facilitated in two ways;

- 1) Through the 10% allocation of lettings outside of Property Pool Plus.
- 2) By advertising the property on Property Pool Plus as 'Existing Family Housing Association Tenants given priority'.

Staff will use the most appropriate option considering the individual circumstances of the case.

For each available property, Association Employees will consult the Transfer List to see if any current tenant affected by the 'Bedroom Tax' Welfare Reform would benefit from moving to a smaller property. Those tenants will be given priority over transfers for other reasons.

## **7. Appeals Process**

Whenever a property is let through Property Pool Plus it is likely that a number of the applications will be unsuitable, (e.g. Rent Arrears, Anti-Social Behaviour, unsatisfactory references etc.) We will record the reasons why an applicant is unsuitable on file, so that in the event of an appeal, we will be able to explain the reasons for our decision.

Any person who wishes to complain about being overlooked for a property is referred to the Association by Property Pool Plus. The Association should endeavour to explain its reasons for overlooking the applicant but if the applicant still wishes to complain they should be referred to our standard complaint's procedure.

## **8. Preparing Properties for Letting**

When a property becomes void, Staff will follow our Voids Procedure, following all the necessary steps to ensure the property is let in reasonable condition. They are guided through this process by our 'Void and Re-let checklist' that is generated by our Computer Software. Staff will carry out a void inspection and complete our 'Void Inspection Sheet' to record the condition of the property as it was left by the previous tenant. A surveyor will be instructed to carry out a Decent Homes Inspection to ensure the property meets the Decent Homes Standard when it is let.

## **9. Tenancy Type**

Family Housing Association offers tenants a 'lifetime' Assured Tenancy and does not utilise fixed term tenancies for any of its properties. When appropriate, new tenants are offered a Shorthold 'Starter' Tenancy for the first 12 months in accordance with our Starter Tenancy Policy.