

lettings and allocations policy

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believe housing lettings and allocation policy

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the approach that believe housing takes to letting and allocating its properties.

2. Aims

Through its lettings and allocation policy, believe housing aims to:

- Meet the needs of people who need housing.
- Make the best use of our available homes.
- Contribute to sustainable and inclusive communities and affordable and sustainable tenancies.
- Let and allocate homes in an open, fair and transparent way.
- Provide choice wherever possible for applicants.
- Support the delivery of our strategic objectives and those of our partners.
- Let and allocate homes efficiently, minimising rent loss from empty homes.
- Ensure we meet regulatory and legislative requirements.

3. Scope

This policy covers all tenures and locations in which believe housing lets its homes.

4. Our approach

4.1 Social and affordable homes in County Durham.

Durham Key Options (DKO) is the choice-based lettings policy which believe housing uses to let its social and affordable homes within the local authority of County Durham. We register applicants, advertise properties and let according to this policy.

Nomination agreements with Durham County Council are also delivered through DKO. The full DKO policy is available [here](#).

Other tenures

We operate separate lettings policies for other tenures, both within County Durham and outside. These include:

- Rent to buy
- Shared ownership

Please check our website for a full list of our policies outlining our approach to other tenures.

4.2 Social and affordable homes outside County Durham

We also let social and affordable rented properties outside the Durham County Council area.

4.2.1 Nomination Agreements

Properties that we own and let outside the Durham County Council area are often subject to nomination agreements, linked to planning approval when the developments were initially agreed. These differ from development to development. Where there is a nomination agreement with a local authority then we will let our homes in accordance with the nomination agreement and the specific requirements set out in them, for example the need to have a local connection to the area.

The local authority that covers the area in which the development is located provides nominations according to their agreed processes.

If nominations are managed through a choice-based lettings scheme, (for example, Tees Valley Homefinder in the Teesside local authorities), we will follow the process outlined in that scheme, including eligibility, the awarding of needs-based priority and property entitlement. We will use DKO criteria to assess applications for affordability.

We will manage applications through local authority nominations that are not managed through a choice-based scheme by applying the following DKO criteria.

The DKO criteria used to assess these nominations are:

- Eligibility and disqualification
- Verifying applicant details
- Assessing affordability
- Assessing property entitlement

Nominations will be let on a first come, first served basis using the above criteria.

4.2.2 Other lets

On occasion, believe housing will let properties outside County Durham that are not covered by a nomination agreement with a local authority. believe housing will let these through one of the following routes:

- 4.2.2.1 Asking for a nomination from the local authority and applying the following DKO criteria:
 - Eligibility and disqualification
 - Verifying applicant details

- Assessing affordability
- Assessing property entitlement.

4.2.2.2 Advertising the homes on our own website and letting on a first come first served basis applying the following DKO criteria (these conditions to appear on the advertisement):

- Eligibility and disqualification
- Verifying applicant details
- Assessing affordability
- Assessing property entitlement.

4.2.2.3 Direct let – in exceptional circumstances we will make a direct offer without requiring applicants to bid for the property.

4.3 Adapted properties

Many of our properties have been adapted to make them more accessible, for example with ramps or walk in showers. We will let adapted properties to ensure we re-house the most suitable applicant, matching applicants with properties that best meet their needs. In some circumstances, we may make a direct let, without advertising, to make the best use of our available homes.

4.4 Targeted letting policies

In some circumstances we will allocate homes applying a targeted letting policy. These could apply to specific areas or types of home. Some examples of where this might be suitable include the following, although this list is not exhaustive:

- In areas where there is a shortage of a specific type of housing
- To ensure a balanced community and prevent anti-social behaviour
- To take into account rural or city-centre related issues concerning the demand for and affordability of housing
- In accordance with local connection requirements related to s106 planning agreements

If a targeted lettings policy applies, we will make this clear when advertising the property and publish the policy, so it is available to potential applicants.

4.5 Mutual exchanges

Tenants wishing to exchange within the Durham County Council area can register for a mutual exchange within DKO, using the HomeSwap option. Tenants seeking to move out of the local area are actively encouraged to use Homeswapper, the national online database for social housing tenants who want to move home.

5 Appeals

Appeals for lets or allocations managed through a local authority choice-based lettings scheme, such as DKO or Tees Valley Homefinder, will be carried out in accordance with the process outlined in the relevant scheme.

Appeals for lets or allocations that are not carried out through a choice-based scheme will be undertaken using the process outlined below:

Applicants are entitled to an appeal in the following circumstances:

- If we decide they are not eligible for or do not qualify because of unacceptable behaviour.
- They feel they have been unfairly treated in the lettings process, for example being unfairly skipped for a property that they think they are suitable for.

Applicants will have 28 days to appeal from the date of our notification letter.

We operate a two-stage appeal process. We will not hold a property pending the appeal's outcome.

The appeal process is as follows:

5.1 Stage one

If an appeal is submitted, we will acknowledge it within seven days and ask for any further written comments or new information that could be relevant. This must be submitted within 14 days.

The appeal will be considered by a senior employee not involved in the original decision. A decision and the reasons for it will be notified in writing within 14 days of the original appeal and all additional information required being submitted.

5.2 Stage two

If the applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of stage one, they may want to take it to stage two in which case they must ask to do so within 14 days of receiving the stage two decision letter and submit all information they wish to be considered. The stage two appeal will be considered by a senior employee not involved in either the original or the stage one decision.

We will notify applicants of the stage one decision and the reasons for it within 14 days of the appeal request.

6 False information or failure to provide information

Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence for anyone seeking assistance from the landlord to:

- Knowingly or recklessly make a false statement

- knowingly withhold information that the landlord reasonably requires in connection with a housing application.

Such offences can be committed in providing false information on or about an application form or any other aspect of the letting's process. If found guilty of providing false information applicants may be subject to a fine and believe housing may seek possession of a tenancy that has been granted as the result of a false statement by an applicant or anyone acting on their behalf.

7 Monitoring and review

We will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and review it periodically to ensure that it continues to reflect legislative and regulatory requirements.

This policy is due for review in three years, October 2025.