

Allocations

Policy Ref No	HOU01
Implemented by	Housing Manager
Approval Body	Management Committee
Approval Date	TBC
Review Date	TBC



0131 458 5480



enquiries@prospectch.org.uk



www.prospectch.org.uk

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS	1
2. LINK TO OTHER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	2
3. APPLYING FOR PROSPECT PROPERTY	2
4. PRIORITIES FOR REHOUSING	4
5. LETTING PROPERTIES	6
6. SUSPENSIONS, CANCELLATIONS AND APPEALS	8
7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING	8



1. INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

Prospect Community Housing's vision is "Providing homes and building communities together". Our Allocations policy outlines how we prioritise applications for our housing and how we allocate our properties. It has the following principles:

- We will provide everyone with fair and open access to our housing list
- We will avoid discrimination on any grounds in the way we allocate our properties
- We will give reasonable preference to those in housing need
- We will make best possible use of the housing stock we have available
- We will offer as much choice as we can to everyone who applies for housing
- We will always strive to help create and support sustainable communities
- We will work in partnership to meet legal and good practice standards

Within these principles, we also have a range of objectives which this policy helps us to deliver:

- To ensure that a balance of applicants from a range of circumstances are given the opportunity to be housed
- To assist City of Edinburgh Council to relieve homelessness
- To provide a source of housing to other organisations assisting those in housing need, who have additional support needs, through nomination agreements
- To maximise opportunities for applicants to make informed choices by providing good information and realistic advice about their housing options
- To ensure that successful applicants are offered accommodation suitable for their needs
- To assist in providing the opportunity for our current tenants to move as their needs change
- To operate a system of allocating houses that is consistent, fair, easily understood and simple to administer
- To ensure we comply with legislation and best practice
- To be as efficient as possible in terms of allocating our properties, ensuring our properties are of an appropriate lettable standard and minimise the time that properties are vacant.



THE SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER

The relevant standards and outcomes for the Allocation Policy are:

Outcome 1: Equalities

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- They support the right to adequate housing.
- Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs and rights recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

Outcome 2: Communication

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- Tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

Outcome 4: Quality of housing

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- Tenants' homes, as a minimum, when they are allocated are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS), and any other building quality standard in place throughout the tenancy; and also meet the relevant Energy Efficiency and Zero Emission Heat Standard.

Outcome 7, 8 and 9: Housing Options

Social landlords work together to ensure that:

- People looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them
- Tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options.

Social landlords ensure that:

- People at risk of losing their homes get advice and information on preventing homelessness.

Outcome 10: Access to social housing

Social landlords ensure that:

- People looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and on their prospects of being housed.

This policy complies with the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) 2014 Act and Housing (Scotland) 2001 Act.

2. LINK TO OTHER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Allocations procedures

- Antisocial Behaviour policy

3. APPLYING FOR A PROSPECT PROPERTY

Direct applications

We are members of the [EdIndex](#) common housing register and choice based lettings scheme. This means that any applicants who wish to apply for our properties, and are aged over 16, should complete and submit an EdIndex application form. EdIndex forms are available [online](#), from our office and from other social landlords within Edinburgh. Once an EdIndex application has been processed, the applicant is able to bid for any properties we advertise on the [Key to Choice](#) website.

Prospect tenants can also apply for rehousing by completing an EdIndex application form. We can help with this along with offering an appointment to discuss housing options. Prior to an allocation, a transfer applicant will be expected to bring their current house up to a lettable standard.

Referrals agreements with local agencies

We are a community-based association and work closely with local support agencies and organisations. We have referral arrangements with a few of these which means we offer a property to nomination from each of them each year. Any applicants which are nominated to us should meet at least one of the priorities outlined in section 4 below.

Our Management Committee may also choose to enter into nomination or referral agreements with other organisations. Properties identified as suitable for a referral applicant will not be advertised. These agreements are set out in our annual lettings plan.

Management Transfers

In situations where there is an urgent requirement to move a tenant, or where we would want to move a tenant so their property is freed up for someone else, a Management Transfer can be approved by the Housing Manager. Where a property is identified as being suitable for a management transfer, the property will not be advertised. Examples of where a Management Transfer may be approved are:

- Tenants who are suffering from severe harassment or other reason such as domestic abuse which means that they cannot remain in their current property.
- Tenants who are under-occupying their property and agree to a move. If tenants are downsizing by just one bedroom, then they will only be considered for a property that is the correct size for their household. If tenants are downsizing by more than one bedroom, they may be allowed to still have an extra bedroom in the property they are moving to and still be considered for a Management Transfer.
- Referrals from other Housing Associations who have a tenant in urgent need of a move (these would be agreed on a reciprocal basis).

Property Ownership

We will consider any ownership of property owned by the person applying for housing, a person who lives with or proposes to live with the applicant, where this is a suitable property that they can reasonably occupy. In these circumstances, we will not offer the applicant a property unless it is unsafe for them to occupy the property (i.e. a threat of abuse or it is structurally unsafe).

If we believe that the owner is likely to be able to live in their current home (e.g. if repairs are carried out or adaptations are made) a short Scottish Secure Tenancy (SSST) will be granted.

We will ask applicants to confirm if they own property and if proven that they have given false information legal action may be taken to end the tenancy.

Applicants in arrears

All current or former tenants of Prospect or another landlord with existing arrears of over 1 month's rent will have to have established an agreement with their landlord to pay these arrears and to have maintained it for 3 months. Proof will be required of this. If the arrears are under 1 month of rent, this will be disregarded when considering the applicant for a vacancy. 'Arrears' covers rent arrears and any other housing related debt e.g. re-chargeable repairs.

Where applicants have existing arrears which require to be addressed, they will be bypassed for any accommodation that they are shortlisted for. The applicant will be advised in writing why they have been bypassed and what they must do to be considered for offers in the future.

The exception to the above are applicants with a homeless priority. For these cases arrears must be disregarded to comply with the Housing (Scotland) 2001 Act provisions for section 5 referrals.

Applicants with a history of Anti-social behaviour

Prior to making an allocation, we will seek a tenancy reference from the applicant's current or previous landlord. If action has been taken against them for anti-social behaviour or neighbour nuisance, consideration may be given to refusing to make the allocation, within the grounds of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014. Alternatively, we will award a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement to a new tenant where that person, or other specified person within the applicant's household, has demonstrated antisocial behaviour within the previous 3 years. This decision will be made by the Housing Manager.

Prospect Members and Staff

Members of Prospect, including Committee Members, will receive no special priority for housing but may apply in the same way any other individual. However, as per our Entitlement, Payments and Benefits Policy, before a Committee Member, staff member or close relative, is allocated a house, the allocation must be agreed by the Management Committee.

4. PRIORITIES FOR REHOUSING

We need to make sure that we give the right level of priority to people with certain needs. These are

- Homeless people and people threatened with homelessness

- People who are living under unsatisfactory housing conditions
- Tenants of houses who are under occupying their homes.

We will give priority to these households through the Key to Choice, EdIndex allocations system as follows:

Hospital discharge	Urgent Gold priority
Unsatisfactory housing due to medical condition	Gold priority
Homeless households	Silver priority
Overcrowding	Silver priority
Demolition or disposal of home	Silver priority
Exceptional housing need	Silver priority

Gold Priority

Gold priority (urgent) is only awarded in exceptional circumstances, for example to enable a hospital discharge. This priority is also awarded to prevent long term hospital and care home admissions and forms part of a wider support and care package.

Gold priority is awarded when the current property does not meet, and cannot be adapted to meet, the housing needs of the applicant or a member of their household.

Silver Priority

This level of priority can be awarded for:

- 1) Homeless households following an assessment by City of Edinburgh Council.
- 2) Overcrowded households. This will be awarded to households that require:
 - a) Two more bedrooms to adequately house their family in accordance with the following:
 - A couple will be expected to share a room
 - Each household member over 14 years will be entitled to a room of their own
 - Two children under 14 of the same sex share a room
 - Two children under 7 of different sexes share a room
 - b) At least one extra bedroom if they are currently housed in one bedroom accommodation and have one or more children under the age of 16.
- 3) Households who need to move due to demolition of regeneration works in an area.
- 4) Exceptional housing need. This can be awarded an assessment by an Officer Panel. This may also include people living in Below Tolerable Standard housing (usually lacking basic amenities such as hot water supply or no kitchen) and people living in unacceptable circumstances.

All priority cases will be ranked by date of the award of priority.

Under occupation

Where a Prospect tenant is living in a property which has one or more bedrooms more than they need, we will support them to move with our downsizing assistance scheme. This is explained in section 5.

Letting Quota

All direct applicants to EdIndex will be placed into one of two categories based on their circumstances.

Movers – those who currently have a tenancy with a social landlord or who own their own home.

Starters – any applicant who does not fit into the mover category. This will include homeless applicants, private rented tenants, those staying with family/friends etc.

All applicants who do not have a priority as outlined above will be ranked by date of application for starters, and length of time at current address for movers.

We will apply quota groups to decide which properties will be advertised as starters, movers or starter and mover. We will also have a proportion of properties where, in usual circumstances, preference will be given to Prospect tenants as follows:

Starters	One half (50%) of all vacancies will be advertised for starters.
Movers	One quarter (25%) of all vacancies will be advertised for movers.
Starters or Movers	One quarter (25%) of all vacancies will be advertised for any applicant—starters or movers.
Transfers	One quarter of the properties advertised for movers will indicate in the advert that preference will be given to existing Prospect tenants. If no tenants are successful in being offered the property, then other applicants who have bid will be considered.

The starter, mover and transfer quotas will be reviewed each year as part of the Lettings Plan.

However, currently, in response to the Edinburgh Housing Emergency, we aim to allocate 70% of our vacancies to homeless households for 2025-26, with 20% to movers and 10% to transfers.

5. LETTING PROPERTIES

Choice based approach

As members of the EdIndex common housing register, applicants for our properties complete one application form which enables them to register their interest in any of the properties advertised weekly on <https://keytochoice.co.uk/>. The City of Edinburgh Council assess and verify all EdIndex applications on our behalf and award any priorities accordingly. We advertise all our vacant properties on the Key to Choice website except those used for a management transfer or referral applications. As EdIndex partners we can access the database which creates a shortlist, in priority order, of applicants who have registered an interest in any of the properties we have advertised.

Bedroom Requirements

We take the view that it is more appropriate for the applicants to decide, rather than us telling them, who can share a double bedroom. Therefore, we will allocate our properties as follows:

- Single adult: any single person aged 16 or over qualifies for one bedroom, single or double
- Couple: two people aged 16 or over in a relationship together as partners qualify for one double bedroom
- Two household members qualify for a double bedroom
- One household member qualifies for a single bedroom

This means that the family decides whether they are happy to live in the property, i.e. whether they are happy for their children/grandparents/step-children to share. We use a choice based letting approach where applicants chose the property they bid for and want to live in. We think that these days, with so many different family set ups, it is more appropriate for the applicants to decide, rather than us telling them, who can share a bedroom. Nevertheless, we will not allocate one property to more than one household.

Where medical conditions require alternative occupancy levels this will be considered on a case by case basis. Evidence may be required before a larger property will be approved.

Children involved in custody cases will be considered as permanent members of a household where regular access can be proved (i.e. at least 2 overnight stays per week or 8 weeks per year).

In cases of greater overcrowding/under occupation an allocation will be at the discretion of the Housing Manager and must be agreed to in writing by the applicant.

Specialist housing

We own some properties which are adapted for people who use wheelchairs. Priority will be given to applicants who can demonstrate the need for such accommodation.

We own a small number of properties where support is provided by an independent support provider. Given the expertise required to assess and compare the competing complex needs for this type of accommodation, we work in partnership with the support provider when shortlisting for these properties when they become vacant.

Sensitive allocations

Sensitive allocations or lets are aimed at ensuring that individual allocations do not lead to housing management problems and result in a sustainable tenancy. A suitable and sustainable allocation is one where there is a good probability of it providing a long term and stable solution for the applicant and surrounding neighbours.

We will treat certain properties as a sensitive let. A sensitive let can be used in a variety of circumstances where, in order to achieve sustainable tenancies and successful communities, we will not automatically take the applicant at the top of the shortlist.

In these circumstances, we will balance the applicants' housing need with the suitability of the available property and the needs of their prospective neighbours. An applicant can be bypassed if they do not meet the criteria for this sensitive let. This does not mean that they would be bypassed for other properties. A decision to bypass an applicant for this reason must be approved by the Housing Manager, with the reasons explained and recorded.

Downsizing Assistance Scheme

Tenants who wish to move to a smaller property, either through an internal transfer or to another social landlord (including Mutual Exchanges), can be considered for our Downsizing Assistance Scheme. This scheme offers £500 to the tenant to incentivise a downsize by helping to pay for removal costs, decoration, disconnection/reconnection of appliances etc. Thus, we can make better use of our stock and our tenants able to better manage their properties (in terms of rent levels, fuel costs etc). Tenants who take advantage of this scheme will not also be eligible to benefit from the Bethany scheme that we operate.

Where a tenant is looking to downsize we may be flexible regarding debts and poor property condition up to £1000. This will be looked at on a case to case basis considering the following:

- The tenant has been engaging with Prospect.
- The total of any debt owed and estimated re-charges in property will not exceed £1000.
- The payment from the Downsizing Assistance fund will be used to offset the debt and will therefore not be paid to the tenant.
- Tenants who have conducted their tenancy satisfactorily (i.e. no debts and good property condition) will be given preference on any suitable vacancies that arise.

Lettings Plan

We produce an annual lettings plan which includes the following information:

- Anticipated allocations, including new housing.
- Quotas for starters, movers, transfers.
- Quotas for our referral agreements with local agencies
- Any restrictions or quota variations being applied to particular areas or types of housing.

6. SUSPENSIONS, CANCELLATIONS AND APPEALS

Suspensions and Cancellation

We will not suspend or cancel applicants from the list, as this will influence other landlords using EdIndex. If we believe an application should be suspended or cancelled, we will pass

the information to EdIndex who will decide based on their published policy whether the applicant should be suspended or cancelled for all landlords.

Complaints or appeals

For any appeal that relate to a decision that we have made regarding an allocation, the applicant or tenant should contact the Housing Manager who will:

- acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 3 working days,
- reply within 20 working days at the latest, or, if more time is required,
- send an interim reply within 20 days giving the reason(s) why more time is needed and an estimate of when a reply may be sent.

For any complaint which relates to the way the allocation service was delivered, our Complaints Policy will apply.

Any complaint or appeal regarding the processing of an application or the awarding of priority should be directed directly to EdIndex who have their own complaints and appeals procedure.

7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

We monitor allocations performance via our Key Performance Indicators reports which are collated quarterly for Management Committee and the quarterly Tenant Performance Report.