

HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Introduction

Mace Housing co-operative provides housing for homeless people, on low incomes. This policy aims to set out the procedure for allocating property to both co-op members and waiting list applicants in as fair and efficient a way as possible, with regard to the Co-op's Membership and Equal Opportunities policies.

1.0 Key Aims and Objectives

1.1 The key aims and objectives of this policy are to:

- a) Ensure those in housing need are given preference for housing, in accordance with the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002 and relevant Codes of Guidance
- b) Promote mobility for existing social tenants
- c) Meet local needs and local circumstances
- d) Allow members an element of choice in where they live.
- e) Contribute to the prevention of homelessness
- f) Ensure all sectors of the community have equal opportunity for a decent home
- g) Make best use of the Co-op stock in by carrying out an assessment of each housing applicant, including a financial assessment
- h) Ensure that the process of applying for a home is open, fair, transparent, easily understood and accessible
- i) Contribute to the reduction of the number of voids occurring and to the length of time properties remain empty
- j) Recognise and address the housing and support needs of vulnerable people
- k) Demonstrate awareness of and consideration for the diverse needs of applicants.

2.0 The Housing Register

- 2.1 The Co-op maintains a register of applicants in housing need including Members who wish to transfer to a more suitable home. Through the Housing Register assessment process, applicants' housing needs are assessed and a level of priority awarded using a points and date order system.. The level of priority, and time on the Housing Register, determines who is housed.
- 2.2 Housing Register and applications are reviewed annually on the basis of a target time of no longer than 6 months wait.

3.0 Applications

- 3.1 In applying this Housing Allocations Scheme the Co-op is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities for all applicants regardless of race, colour, gender, nationality, religion, sexuality, disability, marital status, family circumstances or age.
- 3.2 The following groups of people are eligible to be included on the Housing Register:
 - a) People aged 21 and over whom the Council has accepted a housing duty in the

boroughs where the Co-op has properties.

- c) People referred to the Co-op from Referral Agencies as approved by the Management Committee that are in need of housing including the Borough Councils. Approved Referral Agencies are listed in Schedule A

4.0 Allocations to existing members.

Existing co-op members requiring re-housing have first priority for housing. Amongst this group priority is given as follows: -

- A - members facing violence or harassment or the threat of violence or harassment in their present accommodation, including domestic violence;
- B - members facing handback of their current accommodation;
- C - members wishing to transfer for any other reason, e.g. family status, to be closer to work or study.
- D - members who have been away from the co-op but have remained prospective tenants and who are currently in housing need.

Members of Group D will only be considered for re-housing where they had made previous arrangements with the co-op to retain their membership, e.g. whilst studying away. The absence can be for no longer than one year and any rent arrears must be fully paid up before returning to the co-op.

The above bands A - D are an initial guide only, individuals will also be assessed for transfers and re-housing according to the co-ops points system.

5.0 Allocations to Waiting List Applicants.

Those people on the co-op's waiting list will be allocated offers of housing after existing members according to the co-op's points system.

6.0 Referrals to one bedroom flats.

The co-op will keep a separate transfer waiting list of existing members who wish to be re-housed in one bedroom flat.

This list will be updated annually. These properties will be allocated on 'first in first out' basis

Applicant for one bedroom flat MUST be a member for at least 2 years. Waiting list applicants will only be considered for these properties when no existing member on the transfer waiting list takes up the offer.

7.0 Applications for Housing.

Stage 1 - Initial Approach.

The applicant approaches either the co-op directly or through an approved referral agency. In both cases, following an initial check for suitability, applicants will be given information on the Co-op.

Stage 2 – Interview.

The applicant attends a formal interview, which is held once a week for new applicants. This is strictly by appointment only.

Stage 3 - Assessment.

Completed application forms are then assessed according to the Co-op's criteria for membership. The Allocations Committee will consider applications that are particularly difficult to assess.

Stage 4 - Notification.

Applicants who are accepted will be entered on the waiting list and then notified in writing. Applicants who are not accepted will be notified of the reason for this decision and given alternative housing advice, as appropriate. (See appeal section).

8.0 Waiting List.

The Co-op shall keep an open waiting list.

Each waiting list applicant may receive up to three offers of housing.

Individuals will be removed from the waiting list in the following circumstances: -

After three reasonable, unsuccessful offers;

After a period of six months applicants must confirm their continuing interest in being offered housing.

After failing to respond to a request to confirm continuing interest in being offered housing

After being found that any aspect of the original application was false.

Individual positions on the waiting list will be determined according to the co-op's points system.

Offers, however, will be given to the most suitable applicants for the particular vacancy and not simply to those with the most points.

9.0 Offers of Housing.

Where a vacancy exists in a co-op house the appropriate co-op worker will notify the remaining tenants to nominate someone of their choice to fill the vacancy from the waiting list. The tenants will have one week from the date of notification to submit their nomination. Each household can give up to two preferences. Any unreasonable requests shall be referred to the Allocations Committee. Should no suitable tenant be found after a period of one week the household will be required to consider applicants not meeting their original preferences.

With this information the worker will select suitable transfer or waiting list applicants. Both the applicant and the household will then be informed in writing and given contact numbers, where available. It is then their joint responsibility to arrange to meet within 7 days.

Where an existing tenant is away for a period of more than one week the remaining members of the household are authorised to make a decision to accept an applicant. Following the meeting the household and the applicant should report their verdicts to the co-op.

If both sides are agreeable a tenancy should be offered. If one or both sides wish to refuse the offer a reason must be given and recorded.

Once a household has rejected two applicants from the waiting list, the household will have no further rights of rejection.

10.0 Existing members' responsibilities.

As laid out in the co-op's membership policy it is a requirement of membership that members abide by and co-operate with the co-op policies. This is particularly relevant to allocating rooms in shared housing where the co-op wishes to give existing members choice in selecting tenants for vacancies within their households.

Failure to co-operate with the allocation procedure, e.g. not arranging for applicants to visit the house, extends the homelessness of waiting list applicants and is therefore a serious breach of co-op rules. Failure to co-operate also has financial implications with regard to the lack of rental income from empty rooms.

Where members are not co-operating with the allocation process their conduct will be first considered by the Allocations Committee who will recommend a course of action. Should this fail to remedy the situation the Management Committee will consider a recommendation to either expel the member (or members) or to terminate their tenancy agreement(s).

In the case of expulsion the procedure laid out in the co-op rules will be followed.

11.0 Appeals.

A member who has been referred to the Management Committee for non-compliance with this policy will be invited to represent himself or herself, either in writing or in person, at the Management Committee meeting. At least seven days notice of the meeting will be given, along with the reason for the referral. The decision of the Management Committee shall be final.

Waiting List applicants who are removed from the waiting list for any of the reasons outlined above will be given fourteen days from the date of notification to appeal in writing to the Chair of the Allocations Committee.

The Allocations Committee will then meet within a further fourteen days to consider the appeal and make a recommendation to the Management Committee. The applicant will be informed of the date and time of the Allocations Committee meeting and may attend to represent him or herself if they wish. The decision of the Management Committee shall be final.

12.0 Allocations Committee.

There will be an Allocations Committee consisting of at least Five co-op members (at least two of whom should also be Management Committee members) and the appropriate worker. The committee will oversee the implementation and annual review of this policy.

13.0 Transfer allocation point system

Everyone applying for a transfer either to a self-contained flat or to another shared house will initially have their housing needs priority assessed within a very simple points scheme.

The points scheme

There are twelve levels:

- Clear rent account - 250 points
- Rent arrears - -250 points
- Maintenance work for own property - 50 points
- Maintenance work for Mace properties – 50 points
- Management Committee member - 50 points
- Sub Committee member - 30 points

- Attending committee meetings - 20 points
- Any ASBO - -50 points
- Regular with payment of bills 50 points
- Co-operating with staff/housemates 50 points
- members facing violence or harassment or the threat of violence or harassment in their present accommodation, including domestic violence 400 points
- Members facing handback of their current home Shall be given priority status 500 points

Having calculated the points, the application will then be put in one of the bands, in a date order, with the oldest case first.

14.0 Letting bands:

Every applicant will be placed in one of the following bands based upon the points their case attracts:

Band Points Range

Emergencies 250+

Urgent 100 – 240+

General 30 – 90+

The Emergency and Urgent band will include members in A to C who are suffering from harassment or violence or in properties that are to be handed back to landlords.

The General band will be all other applicants

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