ALLOCATIONS POLICY

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V1	April 2019	Housing & Property Services	
V2	August 2021	Housing & Property Services	Updated for TheseHomes NES
V3	May 2024	Management Committee	Introduction of IL Service replacing sheltered housing
V4	September 2026	Management Committee	Amended to reflect changes in legislation and housekeeping

1 INTRODUCTION

Castlehill Housing Association is committed to providing fair, transparent and accessible access to housing for those in housing need. This Allocations Policy sets out how we assess applications for housing, determine priority for rehousing and allocate our available homes.
The policy aims to ensure that our homes are allocated in a way that makes best use of our housing stock, supports sustainable communities and complies with all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements. It balances the principles of fairness, choice and housing need, while recognising our responsibilities to applicants, tenants and the wider communities we serve.
Castlehill Housing Association operates a Choice Based Lettings system through TheseHomes North East Scotland (TheseHomes NES), in partnership with Hillcrest Homes and Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association. This approach enables applicants to actively participate in the housing process by expressing interest in available properties and making informed choices about where they wish to live.

This policy applies to all applications for housing with Castlehill Housing Association and should be read alongside the TheseHomes NES Partnership Agreement and associated housing management policies. It will be applied consistently and fairly, taking account of individual circumstances and our duties under equalities and human rights legislation.

2. POLICY AIM

The key aims of Castlehill Housing Associations (CHA) Allocations Policy is:

- To maximise the opportunities for applicants to access our housing.
- To enable applicants to make informed choices through the provision of clear information and advice.
- To facilitate a straightforward application process.
- To empower applicants through the use of a Choice Based Lettings approach to allocations.
- To give suitable priority to people with significant levels of housing needs, without discriminatory restrictions.
- To promote sustainable communities, where people want to live, by making best use of housing stock and by working with partners, including Local Authorities, towards this aim.
- To promote equality of opportunity and to ensure that, in allocation of housing, CHA does not unfairly discriminate against any individual, household or group on the grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, religion or personal beliefs.
- To support tenants to sustain their tenancies.

3. RELATED POLICIES

The Allocations Policy aims to compliment other policies including:

- Management Transfer Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy

- Voids Management Policy
- Mutual Exchange Policy
- Audit Policy
- Duty to Co-operate Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Tenant Participation Strategy
- Complaints Procedure

4. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This policy operates within the legal framework provided by the Housing (Scotland) Act, 2001, the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, (as amended by the 2001 Act),and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.

The policy facilitates compliance with the published Social Housing Allocations: A Practice Guide (Scottish Government February 2019) and aims to reflect the aims of the Scottish Social Housing Charter, which states:

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.

Social landlords ensure that:

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

The full Scottish Social Housing Charter can be found at this link:

https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-socia l-housin g-charter-november-2022

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Role of the Management Committee

Monitor performance against published targets. Reviewing the Voids Management Policy and Allocations Policy.

5.2 Role of the Housing Services Manager

Management of the Housing Services Team and Co-chair weekly voids meeting. Prepare quarterly performance report for the Management Committee. Represent CHA at TheseHomes strategic and operational meetings. Monitor Housing Services Team performance.

5.3 Role of the Senior Housing Officer

Management of the Housing Officers. Sign off allocations. Monitor Housing Officer performance.

5.4 Role of the Housing Officer

First point of contact for tenants terminating. Producing adverts for TheseHomes. Allocate properties to new tenants. Carry out sign ups.

5.5 Role of the Housing Services Support Team Leader

Running monthly and quarterly reports.

5.6 Role of the Housing Services Assistant

Setting up new tenancies and terminate tenancies on the Housing Management System. Send offer letters, produce sign up paperwork and send termination paperwork.

5.7 Role of the Housing Allocations Support Officer

Running shortlists from TheseHomes. Assessing applications and awarding priority passes. Oversee production of adverts. Represent CHA at TheseHomes Operational meetings.

5.8 Role of the Property Services Manager

Management of Property Services Team and Co-chair weekly voids meeting. Contractor procurement. Monitor contractor KPI performance. Monitor Property Services Team performance.

5.9 Role of the Senior Property Services Officer

Day to day operational responsibility. Contractor KPI performance meetings. Monitor Property Services Officer performance.

5.10 Role of the Property Services Officer

Pre termination void inspection, void inspection and post void inspections. Day to day contractor monitoring. Arrange power supplies and change of supplier if needed.

6. KEY PRINCIPLES

6.1 ACCESS TO REGISTRATION

Any person who is aged 16 or over, or any household where there is at least one person aged 16 or over, may apply to be placed on the registration list and have their need for accommodation with CHA assessed.

CHA operates a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system for allocations through TheseHomes.com. CBL is used to let our rented housing stock in Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray and for our Shared Ownership properties. Applications are made online at www.thesehomes.com. A paper based application can be made available for any applicant who cannot access the website or a registration can be completed over the phone.

6.1.1 SUPPORT FOR USING CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

It is widely recognised that some groups may require support to use CHA Choice Based Letting System (www.thesehomes.com) which may include:

- The very elderly
- People with learning difficulties
- People with literacy difficulties
- People for whom English is not their first language
- People with limited access to the internet

To protect the interests of those who may face particular difficulties accessing housing with CHA, through These Homes, a number of mechanisms are in place with include but which are not limited to:

- Provision of personal assistance in navigating the registration process
- Contact with applicants with the highest priority (gold) if no interest in properties has been made within a set time
- Direct emailing or post of vacant properties to agencies and applicants upon request
- Facility to translate allocation information into other languages
- Proxy applications by advocates, family members, agencies etc

6.2 TENANT MOBILITY

CHA promotes the use of Mutual Exchanges as a housing option for tenants moving home both for need and aspiration. CHA is part of the House Exchange network through a partnership with other Housing Associations and Aberdeenshire Council and encourages and assists tenants in registering to find mutual exchanges.

6.3 REASONABLE PREFERENCE

CHA has set the priority awards for applicants under careful consideration of reasonable preference as detailed in Section 20 (1) of the 1987 Act (as amended by the 2014 Act) and reflects that reasonable preference must be given to applicants in the following needs categories:

- Homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness who have unmet housing needs;
- People who are living in unsatisfactory housing conditions who have unmet housing needs; and
- Tenants of houses which are held by a social landlord, which the social landlord selecting its tenants considers to be under-occupied.

CHA has set priority need awards against these categories with the aim that lets will be successful and sustainable for both the applicants and the wider community and will make best use of CHA's stock.

6.4 HOUSING STOCK

CHA's stock consists of general needs flats and houses and of properties specifically designed for older people including amenity housing (on a rented or shared ownership basis), Independent Living – Housing for Older People and very sheltered housing.

CHA will maintain a list of the locations of all our housing stock on CHA's website www.castlehillha.co.uk

- **General Needs Accommodation** – Properties for rent consisting of flats and houses where no permanent support service is attached to the property within our general needs stock. Some accommodation has specific adaptations to meet the needs of people with physical disabilities.

- **Amenity Accommodation** – Properties available to those normally over 55 years of age or with a medical or physical disability that requires some or all of the features of amenity accommodation. Accommodation will feature easily accessed facilities within the home and flatted properties will be no higher than two floors or have lift access.

  Historically, accommodation within the amenity stock at Links View was designated for a housing project for older people from the Chinese community.. There is no longer demand for this project and this block will be allocated as per all other amenity accommodation .

- **Amenity Shared Ownership** – Accommodation as described above but available only on a shared ownership basis.

- **Independent Living - Housing for Older People** Our Housing for Older People offers independent living for older people in safe and secure properties with staff onsite to provide an enhanced housing management service to tenants and signpost to any information they may need about other services. These schemes promote independence but the service is flexible to meet any changing requirements.

- **Very Sheltered Housing** – A high level of support service from staff 24 hours per day and additional facilities such as provision of a daily meal. Very sheltered housing will only be made available to older people with high levels of support needs. The care and support service is commissioned by the local authority.

6.5 TENANCY AGREEMENTS

All offers of tenancies in rented properties (other than in circumstances outlined below) will be on the basis of a full Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST). Short SST's will only be offered by CHA where grounds under Schedule 6 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 apply. In summary, these grounds are:

- Previous anti-social behaviour resulting in recovery of possession within 3 years of the offer of tenancy.
- Prospective tenant or other household member is subject to an Anti-Social Behaviour Order under Section 19 of the Crime and Disorder Act, 1998.
- Temporary lets to persons moving to the area for employment whilst seeking permanent accommodation.
- Temporary lets in properties awaiting development.
- Temporary homeless accommodation.
- Temporary lets to persons requiring or in receipt of housing support services.

- Lets in properties not owned by CHA but leased from other bodies.
- Any use of Short SST's will be reported to the Senior Management Team.

For shared ownership properties, an appropriate Occupancy Agreement will be used detailing the conditions of occupancy and size of share.

6.6 APPLICANT'S HOUSING REQUIREMENTS

As outlined in Section 2 of this policy, under the CBL scheme CHA will look at "best use" in making each allocation. This will take account of factors such as support needs (e.g. for very sheltered), requirements for adapted property and the size of accommodation needed by the household.

Whilst recognising the principle of "choice" for applicants, the following criteria may be used in determining "best use" of a particular size of property.

The following each require a separate bedroom:

- A single adult
- Two adults who are partners
- Children of different sexes where the eldest has reached age 8
- A young person who has reached the age of 14 years
- Children of the same sex where there is a 10 year or more age gap
- Where there is an assessed medical reason for persons who would normally share not to
- Where an additional room is required for medical equipment

Permanent carers and foster children who are part of a household will be assessed as part of the family.

6.7 APPLICATIONS FROM REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

CHA will consider applications for accommodation from, or on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers. In assessing such applications, CHA will require to ensure that the applicant has appropriate authority from the Home Office and that provisions are in place for the financing of any tenancy offered.

. UK legislation set out eligibility for persons from out with the UK; this can depend on various factors such as:

• Nationality (including that of family members)

• Economic activity of the applicant and that of their family member

• Immigration status and rules around asylum and immigration; and

• Entitlement to public funds

Any request to register from persons out with the UK will be assessed in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

The right to be admitted to the register differs from the right to be allocated a property.

Any applicants who may not have recourse to public funds should be asked to complete a Financial Assessment from the local authority. Discussion should take place with applicants to identify how they would meet the rent liability should their finance situation change.

6.8 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES/ SENSITIVE LETS

CHA will give consideration to household profile in terms of age range, sex or household type for specific allocations where this is considered necessary to address issues relating to estate management, vulnerability of other tenants or sustainability of the community within the properties managed by CHA. Upcoming voids will be identified prior to advertising the vacancy and a clear audit trail will be kept showing decisions made for Sensitive Lets.

6.8.1 LOCAL LETTINGS INITIATIVES

Taking account of Local Housing Strategies, CHA will work in Partnership with the Local Authority, and local communities to deliver locally agreed outcomes in rural locations. This will apply to new lets in new developments and a jointly agreed Local Lettings Initiative (LLI) will be agreed prior to handover. The LLI will be published and will be widely circulated to agencies within the community and will be made available on Castlehill's website. The LLI will operate within statute and guidance.

As an example, a LLI may be put in place in a location where there is high demand where CHA wishes to prioritise access for applicants living in rural areas, where there have been problems with recurring Anti-Social Behaviour or where there is a lack of essential workers and where these skills are in short supply.

Where a LLI is put in place, CHA will report on the outcomes of the LLI against its aims and monitor the long- term impact of the LLI. CHA may also – in consultation with the local authority – implement a Lettings Plan when allocating to new build developments. This will be to ensure a balanced community is achieved and will be approved by CHA's Director of Housing Services. Where this has been agreed, the plan will be published on Castlehill's website for applicants'' information.

6.8.2 LOCAL CONNECTION

CHA will not take into consideration how long an applicant has lived in the area however local connection will be considered in the assessment of personal circumstances where an applicant is moving to provide or receive support or who are working in the local area. Local Connection may also be reflected in LLI's where this has been agreed with partners.

6.8.3 APPLICANTS POSING A RISK

CHA is committed to working in partnership under the Multi Agency Public Protection (MAPPA) arrangements to ensure that communities remain safe and that appropriate allocations are made. Allocations will be made with reference to the National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders (NASSO) which sets out the overall objective to improve public protection by the adoption of consistent approaches to the assessment and management of risk and to ensure that appropriate resources are all allocated to the management of offenders. Applicants managed under MAPPA may pose a risk of Sexual or Violent Offences. A copy of the Duty to Co-operate Policy which details procedures for CHAs involvement in managing offenders is available on Castlehill's website.

6.9 ALLOCATIONS TO PERSONS CONNECTED TO CASTLEHILL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

If, under this policy, CHA employees, Committee members or relatives of these people qualify for the allocation of a tenancy, the offer must be approved by the Management Committee and registered appropriately in line with Schedule 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act, 2001.

6.10 ALLOCATIONS MADE OUT WITH THE CHOICE BASED LETTINGS SYSTEM

Part 2 of the Allocations Policy – Agreement on Key Principles sets out allocations that can be made without going through the CBL process. In addition to these, there may be circumstances presented by an applicant or tenant which are exceptional and do not fit into the normal system for assessing priority but where there is an urgent need for rehousing. In such circumstances, CHA will give consideration to the applicant/tenant out with the CBL system but only where the applicant has a need greater than others on the list. Such allocations will represent a tiny proportion of the total lets made by CHA and will not be used where the applicant/tenant is unhappy with the level of priority they have been awarded.

Allocations made under these circumstances will be reported to the Management Committee and a full audit trail will be evidenced.

6.11 ADVICE AND INFORMATION

In order to maximise access to our housing list CHA will publicise our properties through a wide range of sources and through links to the local Authorities in our area of operation. Castlehill will work in partnership with other organisations through TheseHomes North East Scotland (TheseHomes NES) to provide consistent advice and information. TheseHomes NES will publish a guide to our allocations system to summarise this policy.

6.12 APPLICANT FEEDBACK

Applicants are asked to complete a feedback survey on how they found applying for housing using TheseHomes NES after completing the online registration. The results will be presented to the Management Committee and are made available on Castlehill's website.

7. REPORTING

Monthly

- Number of homeless applicants housed, by Local authority area, by property size
- Number of properties let, by local authority area, by property size

Quarterly

- Number of properties let
- Number of homeless applicants housed, split into s5 and statutory
- Number of registrations
- Number of applicants on hold and reasons

- Number of passes removed
- Nature and number of formal complaints
  Number of priority passes awarded, split into categories and bandings

Annually

- Average days to let a property
- Number of refusals after offer made
- Number of applicants on hold and reasons
- Source of Let ie Where applicant was housed from e.g. direct applicant, transfer, homeless etc.
  Empty property rent loss
- Number of properties excluded from letting via *TheseHomes* ® NES

TheseHomes® NORTH EAST SCOTLAND - CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

INTRODUCTION

This section is produced jointly between Castlehill Housing Association, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association and Hillcrest Homes. It confirms the agreement on key policy issues in relation to allocation of vacant properties via Choice Based Lettings. This document forms part of each organisation's Allocations Policy.

AIMS

The following are the key aims in relation to this document:

- To set out the main criteria that will allow vacant properties to be let via a Choice Based Lettings system of allocations.
- To adhere to all legislative and good practice requirements.
- To promote choice and empowerment to applicants in relation to their housing or re-housing options and aspirations.
- To promote clear and agreed terms of partnership working between Castlehill Housing Association, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association and Hillcrest Homes.

CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

Castlehill Housing Association, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association and Hillcrest Homes work in partnership to allocate their vacant properties via a Choice Based Lettings System.
Choice Based Lettings is a system of allocation that allows applicants to apply for properties that they are interested in. Applicants with a significant housing need can apply for a priority award and this need will be assessed, which may aid applicants in increasing their priority to receive an offer of housing.

This will be delivered by the use of the TheseHomes software system.

In addition to this document, the following documents will be produced to clarify the method of delivery of the TheseHomes lettings service and to give clear terms of agreement between the three organisations:

- TheseHomes NES – A guide for applicants
- Partnership Agreement between Castlehill Housing Association, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association and Hillcrest Homes
- Choice Based Letting Homeless Protocols

KEY PROCEDURAL ISSUES

APPLICATIONS FOR HOUSING

In order to maximise access to housing, applicants will be able to register with TheseHomes NES by:

- Completing the online application at www.TheseHomes.com.info, if applicants do not have their own online access, they can access it at Castlehill Housing Association office or Hillcrest Homes office where there is online access to the TheseHomes website

In the event applicants cannot access the online application, arrangements can be made for a paper form to be sent to them.

Applicants will complete an online application, which asks for details and highlights any priority that the applicant may qualify for. The key aim will be to gather only information, which will be required to allow the applicant to be registered. At this point the applicant can apply without priority. The applicant will be given a unique reference number and the date of application.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants can apply for a priority award under the following categories:

- Housing Circumstances
- Overcrowding/Under-occupation
- Lacking Facilities
- Medical
- Personal Circumstances

Priority pass applications will be considered by the Administrator and where applicable, a Gold, Silver or Bronze priority pass may be awarded. Applicants can apply for properties without priority passes.

If the applicant's circumstances change in any of the following ways, they must advise TheseHomes at the earliest opportunity;

- Change in address
- Adding or removing other household members

If an applicant is successful in applying and is considered for a property, a home visit will be carried out by a Housing Officer. This visit will be used to verify the details provided in the application. Tenancy references will be requested at this stage if applicable.

PRIORITY NEED CATEGORIES

Three priority need awards will be available – Gold, Silver plus, Silver and Bronze. Gold priority will be the highest priority award followed by Silver plus, Silver and Bronze respectively.

Of the priority need awards listed above, the awards available in each category are listed below:

Priority Pass	*Possible Award*
Housing Circumstances	Gold, Silver plus
Lacking Facilities	Silver, Bronze
Overcrowding	Gold, Silver, Bronze
Under-occupation	Silver, Bronze
Medical	Gold, Silver, Bronze
Personal Circumstances	Gold, Silver, Bronze

Section three of this policy shows the allocations categories and definitions that will be used to assess applications for priority need.

Note: In relation to the Housing Circumstances priority pass, the Gold award will be given to applicants who have been classed as statutory homeless. The Silver plus award will be given to applicants who are *not* statutory homeless but are in a situation where they expect to be homeless is in the near future.

PRIORITY PASS RULES

In circumstances where an applicant applies for more than one priority pass, the highest priority award will be applied overall for applying purposes. For example, where an applicant is awarded a silver priority for Housing Circumstances and a bronze priority for Lacking Facilities; the silver priority pass award will be the overall award to the application.

To differentiate between applicants who have the same priority and establish which application has been in that degree of need for the longest period, the date the award was given to the overall priority will be considered.

Transfer applicants of Castlehill Housing Association, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association and Hillcrest Homes will be awarded priority in the same way as applicants who are not tenants. Transfer cases cannot be awarded priority for Housing Circumstances or for Lacking Facilities as they will have secure tenancies and properties that meet tolerable standards.

PRIORITY PASS TIME LIMITS

The gold priority pass awarded when an applicant is assessed as Statutory Homeless will be time limited for 6 months. Gold passes are awarded where the highest priority is applicable and where there is a need to quickly re-house the applicant due to their current circumstances. When an applicant holds a time limited gold priority award and does not bid for a suitable property, the system will remove the priority award unless extenuating circumstances applies.
In situations where no suitable properties have been advertised, the system will automatically renew the priority award where an applicant holds a priority pass and has not applied.
To ensure that appropriate use is made of adapted stock, tenants of Castlehill Association, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association and Hillcrest Homes who are occupying a property adapted for disabled use and which they no longer require, will be offered a gold priority pass. This is the only gold priority pass that will not have a time limit imposed on it.

PRIORITY PASS AREA LIMITS

Applicants are to be given the opportunity to limit the areas in which they use a priority pass. Choosing to limit areas may result in the applicant increasing the time that they wait for rehousing however this is explained to them in the TheseHomes guide.

In some situations, TheseHomes NES may limit the choice of areas where a priority pass can be used. For example, where an applicant is awarded gold priority due to homelessness, the use of the Gold priority pass would be limited to within the local authority area where the applicant presented as homeless. Within rural local authority areas, consideration will be made of the distance of available properties as this may be a practical reason as to why an applicant chose not to apply. (Note: applying circumstances will be considered on individual merit). Where an applicant applies for priority because they need to move to give or receive assistance, their priority pass will be limited by the Administrator to areas in and around the area they require to move to. The Administrator will consider the direct link between the assistance required or given, to the areas the applicant has chosen to limit. If the applicant applies out-with the areas that have been limited, the priority pass cannot be used.

APPLYING FOR PROPERTY LIMITS

Applicants will not be precluded from applying for as many properties as they wish in each fortnight. Applicants will be made aware that they will be considered for each property in the order that they apply are submitted and should consider this when making multiple applications for properties.

BEST USE

Best use will be the main consideration when allocating properties, followed by applications with the highest priority. For example, properties which have been adapted will be offered first to applicants who require and have a housing need for an adapted property. It will also mean that a 5 person, 4 apartment property would be considered ‘best used when allocated to a 5-person household. However, in such cases, consideration will be given to both single and joint applicants. This will ensure that single parent families are not discriminated against and considered on equal merit with joint applicants. Where best use is not met, the property will be allocated on highest priority. Where applicants have the same priority, date of award of need will be used to determine which applicant receives the offer.

RE-ADVERTISING OF PROPERTIES

Properties will be re-advertised where no applications that make best use of a vacant property have been received. Properties may also be re-advertised where applications have been received but there are a very low number or where the applications made are unsuitable due to the applicant not meeting the property requirements. In these circumstances, applicants who made an application will still be considered.

SUSPENDING, BYPASSING AND DEFERRING APPLICANTS

Castlehill Housing Association, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association and Hillcrest Homes will facilitate requests from applicants who wish their applications to be put on hold (Deferring) Applicants will be asked to define a specific length of time for this but may request that their application be made live again within that period.
Castlehill Housing Association, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association and Hillcrest Homes will accept applicants onto the Registration List but may exclude them from applying for or being offered accommodation for a **six- month** period in the following circumstances:

OUTSTANDING DEBTS

Applicants who have outstanding debts with their current or a previous landlord may have their application put 'on hold' if the debt outstanding is equivalent to more than one month's rent or where a reasonable repayment arrangement to reduce the debt has not been made, or kept for a period of three months. Where the applicant is a tenant of Castlehill Housing Association, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association or Hillcrest Homes the arrangement put in place to clear any outstanding debt must be on a basis, which is entirely satisfactory to Castlehill Housing Association, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association or Hillcrest Homes in terms of recovery of the debt.

In relation to this and other related documents such as the Allocation Policy, outstanding debts means any money owed to a landlord that is rent arrears; former tenant rent arrears; rechargeable repairs; legal costs; bank charges and any other related charges.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Where a Tenancy in Perpetrators Name

If the tenancy is in the perpetrator's name and the person experiencing domestic abuse wishes to move, we will assist in completing a housing application form. In recognition of the critical housing need and risk to the person and any children in the household, a Silver Plus priority pass will be awarded to any applicant fleeing domestic abuse. It is intended to give the applicant the option to avoid submitting a formal homeless application if they prefer not to. It also recognises that the individual's housing need is likely to remain significant, even after leaving a home due to domestic abuse.

Tenancy Held by the Person Experiencing Abuse

If the tenancy is held by the person who has experienced abuse, their safety—and that of any dependents—will be the primary concern. Should the survivor wish for the perpetrator to leave the home, we will support them in contacting the appropriate agencies, such as the Police or Women's Aid, to help facilitate this. Where the survivor does not feel able to pursue legal action themselves, the Association may consider applying for a Domestic Abuse Protection Order to end the perpetrator's tenancy, where this is necessary to safeguard the survivor and any dependents.

To support a swift and safe resolution, a Silver Plus Priority Pass will be awarded to the perpetrator to enable their timely relocation.

Joint Tenancies or Married/Civil Partnerships

Where a joint tenancy is held, both tenants have legal rights to the home. If one tenant is married to or in a registered civil partnership with the other, their partner also has the right to live in the family home,

even if their name is not listed on the tenancy agreement. In situations involving domestic abuse, the Association will support the person experiencing abuse in applying to the court for an exclusion order, which can suspend the perpetrator's right to reside in the home. A court will grant an exclusion order if it determines that it is necessary to protect the tenant or their children. In addition to exclusion orders, the Association may, where appropriate, apply for a Domestic Abuse Protection Order to end the perpetrator's interest in the tenancy, in accordance with Part 2 of the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Where an applicant has a history of anti -social behaviour, the applicant may be excluded from TheseHomes NES in the following circumstances:

- Where the applicant, or an individual forming part of the application has been evicted on the grounds of antisocial behaviour in the past three years **and where the applicant refuses support**
- Where any form of legal or court action has been commenced against an applicant or an individual forming part of the application under the terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 or the Anti Social Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004
- Where the applicant is currently subject to an Anti Social Behaviour Order related to a current home address
- A Sex Offender, where the applicant has refused a Risk Assessment to be carried out in order to identify suitable housing

SUSPENSIONS

Castlehill Housing Association, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association and Hillcrest Homes will accept applicants onto the Registration List but may exclude them from applying for or being offered accommodation for a **two-year** period in the following circumstances:

VIOLENCE AGAINST STAFF

Castlehill Housing Association, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association and Hillcrest Homes take staff safety seriously therefore any applicant who has behaved in a threatening manner to any member of staff will have their application put on hold.

FALSE INFORMATION

Applicants who have been found to have given false or misleading information about their circumstances and this has led to the applicant attracting higher priority for housing than was due.

DELIBERATE WORSENING OF CIRCUMSTANCES

Where an applicant had been found to have deliberately worsened their living circumstances in order to attract higher priority for housing. Before implementing this rule TheseHomes NES will require to be satisfied that the applicant knowingly altered his or her circumstances and that the resultant gain in priority was substantive.

ABANDONING OR NEGLECTING A PROPERTY

If an applicant's previous tenancy has been repossessed when abandoned under section 18(2) of the 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act, this means that an applicant could be suspended if they had because they had abandoned the property. It would apply whether they were a sole or joint tenant; or if an applicant's previous tenancy has been repossessed following a recovery of possession on the ground of deterioration of the property due to neglect then their application could be suspended for a maximum of 2 years. Each case would have to assessed on its merits. For example, the circumstances in which the repossession took place, is there rent arrears or rechargeable repairs outstanding.

This only applies to tenancies from the social rented sector. This also means that applicants can be suspended if they have abandoned or neglected any social rented sector tenancy not only a Castlehill Housing Association property.

PREVIOUS CONVICTIONS

An applicant may be suspended if they or a member of their household who is to be re-housed with them has a previous conviction. The type of conviction is detailed in section 20b of the 1987 Act. These are that the applicant, or someone who has lived with the applicant has been convicted of:

- Using a house or allowing it to be used for immoral or illegal purposes, or
- An offence punishable by imprisonment which was committed in, or in the locality of, a house occupied by the person.

EXCLUDED PROPERTIES

In order to meet current objectives and maximise best use of stock, it will be necessary under particular circumstances to exclude some vacant properties from the Choice Based Letting system of allocation. Below is a summary of circumstances under which this will happen.

FOR CASTLEHILL HOUSING ASSOCIATION, THIS WILL INCLUDE:

REFERRALS

Castlehill will consider referrals from other agencies if it is found that we can provide accommodation for the specialised needs of individuals. In such cases the Allocation Policy may not apply. For example, multi-agency next stage housing at Aberdeen City Council and Housing First Project.

ADAPTED NEW BUILD

In some circumstances, Castlehill will adapt a new build property for the needs of a specific household and this property will not be included in CBL. Subsequent re-lets of the property however will be advertised.

DECANTS/DEMOLITIONS

In the event that existing or potential tenants require to be re-housed to accommodate major works in their properties it may be necessary to identify a current vacancy and exclude this from Choice Based Lettings.

NEW BUILD

It may be necessary to exclude new build properties from Choice Based Lettings for example in circumstances where the local authority has nomination rights or where CHA wishes to apply criteria for a balanced community to ensure that there was not an over concentration of vulnerable tenant members in one area. Refer back to 1.10.1 Local Lettings Initiatives

MUTUAL EXCHANGES

Mutual Exchanges will be excluded from CBL however this route will be promoted by CHA as a route for re-housing using House Exchange website, which can be found at https://www.houseexchange.org.uk

SHARED OWNERSHIP BUY BACKS

Properties which are bought back by CHA and let to the former owner will be excluded from being advertised.

FOR SANCTUARY SCOTLAND HOUSING ASSOCIATION THIS WILL INCLUDE:

REFERRALS

Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association will consider referrals from other agencies if it is found that we can provide accommodation for the specialised needs of individuals. In such cases the Allocation Policy may not apply.

SPECIAL SUPPORTED HOUSING (EXCLUDING SHELTERED HOUSING)

At present Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association provides accommodation for a variety of specialist housing and care providers. It is recognised that it will not be possible to let these properties via Choice Based Lettings.

ASSET MANAGEMENT

Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association recognises that it has a duty to make best use of its housing stock whilst ensuring that households in difficult circumstances can access properties that match their housing requirements. On occasions, it will be necessary to exclude identified properties from the Choice Based Lettings method of allocation to ensure a direct match with those in particular circumstances.

DECANTS/DEMOLITIONS

In the event that existing or potential tenants require to be re-housed to accommodate major works in their properties it may be necessary to identify a current vacancy and exclude this from Choice Based Lettings.

NEW BUILD

It may be necessary to exclude new build properties from Choice Based Lettings for example in circumstances where the local authority has 100% nomination rights or where CHA wishes to apply criteria for a balanced community to ensure that there was not an over concentration of vulnerable tenant members in one area.

MUTUAL EXCHANGES

Mutual Exchanges will be excluded from CBL however this route will be promoted by CHA as a route for re-housing using House Exchange website, which can be found at https://www.houseexchange.org.uk

MOVE UK

Properties allocated through Move UK will only be advertised where the yearly quota has been met.

HILLCREST HOMES

REFERRALS

Hillcrest Homes will consider referrals from other agencies if it is found that we can provide accommodation for the specialised needs of individuals. In such cases the Allocation Policy may not apply. For example, multi-agency next stage housing at Aberdeen City Council and Housing First Project.

ADAPTED NEW BUILD

In some circumstances, Hillcrest Homes will adapt a new build property for the needs of a specific household and this property will not be included in CBL. Subsequent re-lets of the property however will be advertised.

DECANTS

In the event that existing tenants require to be re-housed to accommodate major works in their properties it may be necessary to identify a current void property and exclude this from Choice Based Lettings.

MANAGEMENT TRANSFER

In extreme circumstances it may be necessary to transfer a current tenant to a void property. This property will be excluded from Choice Based Lettings.

NEW BUILD

It may be necessary to exclude new build properties from Choice Based Lettings for example in circumstances where the local authority has nomination rights or where CHA wishes to apply criteria for a balanced community to ensure that there was not an over concentration of vulnerable tenant members in one area.

MUTUAL EXCHANGES

Mutual Exchanges will be excluded from CBL however this route will be promoted by CHA as a route for re-housing using House Exchange website, which can be found at https://www.houseexchange.org.uk

VERY SHELTERED HOUSING

Properties which are Very Sheltered will be advertised as such and applications will only be accepted from applicants who meet the age criteria. The age criteria if applying for Castlehill Housing Association is normally 60 unless the applicant has a medical or support need. In this type of accommodation, applicants should have a requirement for housing support.

Allocations for Very Sheltered properties can only be made where the applicant also meets the criteria for funding under the terms of Housing Support legislation and with the agreement of the Local Authority Care Management Services.

Applicants for Very Sheltered Housing will normally have a medical need and a Housing Support need to be rehoused. This will be assessed at the application stage from the information gathered in the Medical Priority Pass. The assumption will be made that where an applicant is applying for medical priority and is eligible to apply for Very Sheltered Housing, that there will be a Housing Support Need.

Further assessment will be required when applicants have applied for a very sheltered housing property and where possible, use will be made of the Single Shared Assessment system. This detailed assessment of need will allow the local authority to assess the Housing Support Need.

Where applicants are applying for Castlehill Housing Association Very Sheltered Properties, the decision on best use of the property will be made by a panel which will include Castlehill Housing Association personnel, Support Provider for the Very Sheltered Development, and representatives from the local authority Care Management Services. The panel meeting must take place before the allocation can be made.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REPORTING

To ensure that *TheseHomes* ® NES provides a first- class service that meets the needs and aspirations of its service users, the monitoring and evaluation of all process will be carried out on the following:

Monthly

- Number of homeless applicants housed, split into s5 and statutory by Local authority area
- Number of properties let

Quarterly

- Number of properties let
- Letting outcomes including size, type, area and how property allocated e.g. best use
- Number of homeless applicants housed, split into s5 and statutory
- Number of registrations and how applicants registered e.g. phone, online etc.
- Number of applicants on hold and reasons

- Number of passes removed
- Nature and number of formal complaints
- Number of priority passes awarded, split into categories and bandings
- Percentage of registrations; priority passes assessed within timescale
- Percentage of medical assessments within timescale

Annually

- Average days to let a property
- Number of refusals for successful applications including reasons
- Number of applicants on hold and reasons
- Where applicant was housed from e.g. transfer, waiting list etc.
- Number of refusals for successful applications including reasons
- Empty property rent loss
- Number of properties excluded from letting via *TheseHomes* ® NES

NOMINATIONS WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Castlehill Housing Association, Sanctuary Scotland Housing Association and Hillcrest Homes acknowledge that they have an obligation to assist the three local authorities (Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray) to allocate properties to homeless applicants and to accept Section 5 referrals under the duty placed on them in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

Both organisations have detailed their arrangements with the local authorities in a Choice Based Lettings Protocol. This Protocol will also ensure that applicants other than homeless, are not unnecessarily excluded from housing with TheseHomes NES, through regular monitoring of to whom properties are allocated.

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

An applicant who has a complaint about any aspect of the service they have received and/or any decision taken during the registration of their application, and during the allocation process when using TheseHomes NES can make a formal complaint.

In every case, TheseHomes will try to resolve the complaint informally however if required, further information on the complaints process and timescales are detailed in the Complaints Policy which can be found at https://www.castlehillha.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/complaintshttps://www.castlehillha.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/complaints-procedure-cha.pdfprocedurehttps://www.castlehillha.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/complaints-procedurehttps://www.castlehillha.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/complaints-procedure-cha.pdfcha.pdfcha.pdf

SHARED OWNERSHIP

Castlehill Housing Association provide Shared Ownership properties for applicants aged 55 and over or where an applicant has a medical condition that requires amenity type accommodation. Admission

and assessment for shared ownership housing is on the same basis as that for rented housing with the additional requirement that the applicant must have:

- Sufficient finance to purchase at least 25% share in the property, but:
- Insufficient finance to allow for the outright purchase of suitable property, if such property is available in their area of choice.

Castlehill reserves the right to seek sufficient financial information from the applicant to make the afore mentioned assessment and may reject an application if the applicant is not willing to provide this.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

TheseHomes® NES will ensure that its practices will not unfairly discriminate against any individual, household or group on the grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

3.0 - DEFINITION OF CATEGORIES AND PRIORITIES

HOUSING CIRCUMSTANCES CATEGORY

DEFINITION

Housing circumstances categories exist to recognise applicant's current housing situation and the degree to which they can be considered secure or otherwise.

HOMELESSNESS

- Statutory Homeless (including residence in Statutory Homeless Hostel)

Proof will be required from relevant local authority regarding homelessness status e.g. letter from local authority.

People who claim to be 'roofless', 'sleeping rough' or 'no fixed abode' should be encouraged to present themselves as homeless to their local authority, as no Gold priority award will be given without relevant verification.

IMPENDING HOMELESSNESS

Where **56 days notice or less** has been given to vacate current accommodation as defined below:

- In Care
- Lodgings
- Privately rented accommodation
- Bed and Breakfast, Boarding House or Hotel
- Owner Occupation (only where sale necessary)
- Short stay hostel
- Refuge
- Tied Accommodation
- HM Forces with confirmed leaving date
- Leaving an institutional care

Proof will be required of impending homelessness e.g. Notice to Quit, letter from accommodation owners, letter from solicitors, written confirmation from institution, employers etc.

PRIORITY			DEFINITION
Gold	6 Month Time Limit	TheseHomes NES area limit and feature limit	Statutorily Homeless

Silver plus	No Time Limit	No area or property feature limits	Impending Homelessness

LACKING FACILITIES CATEGORY

DEFINITION

The Housing (Scotland) Acts 1987 and 2001 define when accommodation should be considered to meet reasonable standards. This has been used in this category and states that housing is below reasonable standard if it fails to meet the following:

- Is structurally stable
- Is substantially free from rising or penetrating damp
- Has satisfactory provision for natural and artificial lighting, for ventilation or heating
- Has an adequate piped supply of wholesome water available within the house
- Has a sink provided with a satisfactory supply of both hot and cold water within the house
- Has a water closet available for the exclusive use of the occupants of the house and suitably located within the house
- Has a fixed bath or shower and a wash hand basin for the exclusive use of the occupants of the house, each provided with a satisfactory supply of both hot and cold water and suitably located within the house
- Has an effective system for the drainage and disposal of foul and surface water
- Has satisfactory facilities for the cooking of food for the exclusive use of the occupants within the house
- Has satisfactory access to all external doors and outbuildings

PRIORITY			DEFINITION
Silver	No Time Limit	No area or property feature limits	If three or more of the above definitions are not met
Bronze	No Time Limit	No area or property feature limits	If two of the above definitions are not met

OVERCROWDING CATEGORY

DEFINITION

The following each require a separate bedroom:

- A single adult
- Two adults who are partners
- Children of different sexes where the eldest has reached age 8
- A young person who has reached the age of 14 years
- Children of the same sex where there is a 10 year or more age gap
- Where there is an assessed medical reason for persons who would normally share not to
- Where an additional room is required for medical equipment

Permanent carers and foster children who are part of a household will be assessed as part of the family.

PRIORITY			DEFINITION
Gold	6 Month Time Limit	Applicant can area and property feature limit	3 or more bedrooms short
Silver	No Time Limit	No area or property feature limits	2 bedrooms short
Bronze	No Time Limit	No area or property feature limits	1 bedroom short

UNDER OCCUPATION CATEGORY

DEFINITION

This category will be awarded to tenants of Registered Social Landlords only to promote effective asset management and maximise the opportunity for existing tenants to move to smaller accommodation should they wish to do so.

PRIORITY			DEFINITION
Silver	No Time Limit	No area or property feature limits	Two or more bedrooms surplus
Bronze	No Time Limit	No areas or property feature limits	One bedroom surplus

MEDICAL CATEGORY

DEFINITION

Applicants who have a medical condition that they consider to be relevant to their application for housing will be assessed on the severity of the medical condition and the degree to which their housing circumstances affect this. A medical banding will first be awarded and then this will be translated into a CBL banding.

Medical bandings are defined as follows:

X-medical	Medical condition that requires immediate housing or re-housing
Sevwho	Severe condition that is wholly affected by present circumstances
Modwho	Moderate condition that is wholly affected by present circumstances
Minwho	Minor condition that is wholly affected by present circumstances
Sevmod	Severe condition that is moderately affected by present circumstances
Modmod	Moderate condition that is moderately affected by present circumstances
Minmod	Minor condition that is moderately affected by present circumstances
Sevmar	Severe condition that is marginally affected by present circumstances
Modmar	Moderate condition that is marginally affected by present circumstances
Minmar	Minor condition that is marginally affected by present circumstances
Assnil	No medical condition or suitably housed for medical condition

It should be noted that where it is considered that a medical condition is only marginally affected by current housing or where there is a nil assessment then no banding will be awarded under this category.

PRIORITY			DEFINITION
Gold	6 Months Time Limit	Applicant can area limit and feature limit. TheseHomes NES can also feature limit	• X Medical • Sevwho
Silver	No Time Limit	No area limit. TheseHomes NES can feature limit.	• Modwho • Minwho • Sevmod • Modmod

Bronze	No Time Limit	No area limit TheseHomes NES can feature limit	• Minmod • Sevmar • Modmar

PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES CATEGORY

DEFINITION

This category recognises personal circumstances that require to be taken into account when assessing an application for housing:

VACATING ADAPTED DISABLED

This recognises households who are vacating an RSL tenancy that is adapted for disabled use because the adaptations are no longer required. Note, there must be significant, permanent adaptations to secure a Gold Priority.

HARASSMENT OR VIOLENCE

Where an applicant or a family member is under threat of or actual violence, mental abuse, domestic abuse or harassment

CHILDREN AT RISK

Where a child or children within the applicant's family is considered to be at risk

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

Where a household's monthly rental/mortgage payments exceed 30% of monthly income

SEPARATED FAMILY

Where due to housing circumstances a family **has no choice** but to live separately

GENERAL ASSISTANCE

This recognises where an applicant requires to live in a particular area to access or to give assistance to a relative or family member. General assistance priority will only apply to areas where moving improves the applicant's ability to provide or receive assistance. General assistance is where the assistance makes a significant difference to the persons quality of life or ability to live at home. This priority is also awarded where childcare provided allows someone to work.

CURRENT NEIGHBOUR PROBLEMS

This recognises where a household is having mild or moderate difficulties with a neighbour that affects their ability to remain in their current accommodation.

TRAVEL TIME TO WORK OR EDUCATION AND ISOLATION FROM ESSENTIAL SERVICES

This recognises where a household member/s has to travel to reach work or education or is isolated from essential services and the household wish to move to be closer to these. These are awarded regardless of whether the household are car owners but they must live at least 10 miles away from the facilities they are travelling to or are isolated from.

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN

This recognises where a relationship has broken down and the couple wish to live separately but cannot do so until alternative accommodation is secured for one of them.

Proof/verification may be required for any of the aforementioned definitions.

PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES CATEGORY			
PRIORITY			DEFINITION
Gold	No Time Limit	No area or property feature limits.	• Vacating Disabled Adapted
Silver	No Time Limit	TheseHomes NES will limit areas when general assistance is being awarded.	• Harassment or Violence • Children at Risk • General Assistance • Financial Hardship
Bronze	No Time Limit	No area or property feature limits.	• Separated Family • Current Neighbour Problems • Travel time to work/education • Isolation from Services • Relationship Breakdown

APPENDIX ONE

Management Transfers

1.1 Castlehill Housing Association allocates properties according to its published allocations policy which is compliant with the relevant housing legislation and which sets out how we decide on priority for housing.

1.2 In exceptional circumstances, we may allocate out with the allocations policy by means of a management transfer. This is where a priority status is given to a tenant's transfer application because of the applicant's circumstances which may require an urgent move to more suitable accommodation. This is not an alternative to the transfer process, and will

only be approved where the circumstances are exceptional and urgent and when all other options have been exhausted or are inappropriate and there is no other appropriate course of action available.

1.3 There are broadly five circumstances where Castlehill would consider a management transfer would apply:-

- **Threats to the tenant's life or safety**: when a tenant or member of the tenant's family who lives at the same address is the victim of a threat or physical harm. In deciding if the threat is credible we will consider any current or previous actions or patterns of behaviour displayed by the perpetrators.

- **Escalating threats to the person, violence, harassment or intimidation:** when there is a continuous pattern of more severe threats to the tenant.

- **Exceptional social need:** this will depend entirely on the individual circumstances and can only be used in extreme circumstances, but may include severe overcrowding or as part of management action where there is evidence of widespread ASB concentrated in a local area.

- **Properties in need of major work**: when a property is in need of major work that cannot be reasonably carried out with the tenant in occupation. The tenant's individual circumstances will determine if they can be expected to occupy the premises whilst the works are carried out.

- **Moves within a block:** when a tenant has a particular need that could be met by a vacancy within their current block – for example ground floor access – and the vacation of their property would provide a property for allocation in the normal way for a CBL applicant thus allowing best use of stock.

1.4 As part of the assessment process, Castlehill will seek supporting information from the police, local authority, health professionals and support agencies, unless the application is as a result of domestic abuse. Where the tenant is at immediate risk, Castlehill will also support them to make contact with the local authority for a homeless assessment and the potential to move to temporary accommodation to remove them from any immediate risk. Castlehill's Anti-Social Behaviour policy will continue to apply.

1.5 Applications for management transfers will be considered and approved by either the Chief Executive or Director of Housing Services. Management transfers will only be approved where no other solution is possible. There is no formal right of appeal where an application has been refused, but any complaints about the process will be dealt with in line with our Complaints Handling policy.

1.6 Where a management transfer has been approved, one reasonable offer of alternative 'like for like' accommodation will be made, and this may be out with the applicant's area of choice due to limitations in available stock (although the circumstances which led to the management transfer and the tenant's needs will always be taken into account). An offer is reasonable if it will meet the tenant's known housing and locational needs, and allows continued access to services, based on the merits of the information provided by the tenant during the application process. For these reasons, the tenant will be encouraged to continue to apply for available properties on our Choice Based Letting system. If an offer made as a management transfer is unreasonably refused, the management transfer priority status may be withdrawn.

1.7 We will endeavour to make an offer as soon as possible, but this will depend on the accommodation available as well as the circumstances of any other tenants who also have

been awarded a management transfer priority. Individuals' priority status will be reviewed on a monthly basis by the Housing Services Manager and may be withdrawn if the tenant's circumstances change.

1.8 In order to monitor allocations made out with the allocations policy, a report will be provided to the Management Committee with the following:

- The number of applicants awarded management transfer priority status
- The number of offers made to tenants with priority status
- The number of acceptances
- The number of refusals and reasons for these refusals
- Equalities monitoring data