

CASTLEHILL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

ALLOCATIONS POLICY AND CHOICE BASED LETTINGS SCHEME

Section 1 – Key Principles, Aims and Standards

Section 2 – Choice Based Lettings Scheme

Section 3 – Priority Needs Categories

Appendix 1 – Homehunt Application Pack

- **Registration Form**
- **Guide**
- **Priority Pass Application Forms**

Section 1 – Key Principles, Aims and Standards

1.1 Aims

The key aims of the Associations Allocations Policy are:

- 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, (and/or support needs, as appropriate), 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, the Association 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.

1.2 Regulatory Framework

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

The policy facilitates compliance with the published Social Housing Allocations: A Practice Guide (Scottish Government, March 2011) and aims to reflect the aims of the Scottish Government Performance Standards.

The main relevant standards are Activity Standards 1.1 to 1.4 and 4.10 as below:

- **AS 1.1 Access to housing** – We ensure that people have fair and open access to our housing list and assessment process. We work with others to maximise and simplify access routes into our housing.
- **AS 1.2 Lettings** – We let houses in a way that gives reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need; makes best use of available stock; maximises choice; and helps to sustain communities.
- **AS 1.3 Tenancies** – We offer the most secure form of tenancy compatible with the purpose of the housing.
- **AS1.4 Housing support needs** – We are responsive to people’s individual housing support needs.
- **AS 4.10 Accommodation provision** – We comply with requests from local authorities for accommodation for homeless people, unless we have good reason for not doing so. We make sure we treat homeless people fairly in terms of the quality of housing and location we offer them. Protocols which detail the

arrangements for Section 5 equivalent priority are in place with the relevant local authorities and reviewed with them twice yearly.

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1.3 Access to the Housing List

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 Housing List and have their need for accommodation with the Association assessed.

Where referred from Betterways, Aberdeen City or Aberdeenshire Social Work Departments, the Association may accept an application from a young person in the care of the Local Authority who is not yet 16 years of age.

The Association operates a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system for allocations through Homehunt North East Scotland. CBL is used to let our rented housing stock in Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray and for our Shared Ownership properties. Applications are made on the forms contained in Appendix 1 of this policy.

1.3.1 Groups Potentially Disadvantaged using Choice Based Lettings

It is widely recognised that CBL systems could disadvantage some groups which may include:

- The very elderly or infirm
- People with learning difficulties
- People with literacy difficulties
- Recent migrants and others with a limited understanding of English
- People with limited access to the internet

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

- Provision of personal assistance in navigating the application process
 - Provision of and access to a dedicated Ethnic Minority Outreach Worker
 - Contact with applicants with the highest priority (gold) if no interest in properties has been made within a set time
- Direct mailing of vacant properties to applicants and agencies
- Facility to translate allocation information into other languages
- Information on vacant properties advertised via phone
- Proxy bidding by advocates, family members, agencies etc

1.4 Tenant Mobility

The Association promotes the use of Mutual Exchanges as a vehicle for tenants moving home both for need and aspiration. The Association is part of the House Exchange network and is encouraging and assisting tenants in registering and finding mutual exchanges. A copy of the Mutual Exchange Procedures are appended to this policy.

1.5 Reasonable Preference

The Association 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) and reflects that reasonable preference must be given to applicants who:

Are occupying houses which do not meet tolerable standard, or
Are occupying overcrowded houses, or
Have large families
Are living under unsatisfactory housing conditions
Are homeless or threatened with homelessness

The Association has set priority needs award 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 the Associations stock.

1.5 Housing Stock

Castlehill'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), sheltered housing and very sheltered housing.

The Association will maintain a list of the locations of all our housing stock to be made available for interested parties including applicants.

- **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.

Some accommodation within the amenity stock has been designated for a supported housing project for older people from the Chinese community. Allocations for these properties will be made to older Chinese people with appropriate needs and priorities will be assessed as for other allocations. Other applicants, who meet the criteria for amenity housing, will be considered for tenancies only if the Association is unable to identify Chinese applicants in need of the accommodation.

- **Amenity Shared Ownership** – Accommodation as described above but available only on a shared ownership basis.
- **Shelt normally** over the age of 60 years and require support from resident or visiting staff. Additional communal facilities, e.g. residents lounge, may be provided in sheltered housing. Applicants under 60 years with a medical or support needs

may be considered if their housing and support needs can be met within the context of sheltered housing.

- **Very Sheltered Housing** – Similarly designed properties to sheltered housing, but with a higher level of support service from staff 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.

1.6 Tenancy Agreements

All offers of tenancy 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 the Association 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 the association but leased from other bodies.

Any use of Short SST's will be reported to the Management Committee.

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

1.7 Applicant's Housing Requirements

As outlined in Section 2 of this policy, under the CBL scheme the Association will look at "best use" in making each allocation. This will take account of factors such as support needs (e.g. for 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.

1.8 Applications from Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The Association will consider applications for accommodation from, or on behalf of refugees and asylum seekers. In assessing such applications, the Association 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.

EU nationals have the right to be admitted to the Associations housing list and they have the right to housing and homelessness assistance. Therefore, the Association has no requirement to make enquiries about immigration status when accepting an applicant to the housing list.

19 Sustainable Communities/ Sensitive Lets

The Association 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 the Association. Upcoming voids will be identified prior to advertising the vacancy and a clear audit trail will be kept showing decisions made for Sensitive Lets.

1.9.1 Local Lettings Initiatives

Taking account of Local Housing Strategies, the Association will work in Partnership with the Local Authority, Rural Housing Enabler 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 the Association wishes to prioritise access for applicants living 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, the Association will report on the outcomes of the LLI against its aims and monitor the long term impact of the LLI.

1.9.2 Local Connection

The Association 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.

1.9.3 Applicants Posing A Risk

The Association 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 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 the Associations involvement in managing offenders is attached available.

110 Allocations to Persons Connected to the Association

If, under this policy, Association 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.

1.11 Allocations Made Outwith the CBL 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, the Association 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 the Association and will not be used where the applicant/tenant is unhappy with the level of priority they have been awarded.

Lets made under these circumstances will be reported to committee and a full audit trail will be evidenced.

1.12 Advice and Information

In order to maximise access to our housing list the Association 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 Homehunt NES to provide consistent advice and information. Homehunt NES will publish a guide to our allocations system to summarise this policy and this is included in Appendix 1.

1.13 Applicant/ Tenant Feedback

Castlehill aim to complete a survey of applicants and housed tenants on at least a 3 yearly basis to receive comment on how they found applying for housing using HomehuntNES. This will be done jointly with Tenants First Housing Co-operative and the results will be

presented to the Housing Management Sub Committee.

1.14 Reporting and Monitoring

Quarterly reports will be presented to committee. These will include but are not restricted to:

- Number of properties let
- Lettings outcomes including size, type and area
- Number of homeless applicants housed
- Number of applicants registered
- Method of registration
- Average number of bids per property
- Number of applicants on hold and why
- Number of priority passes awarded by category and banding
- Applicant age profile
- Number of formal complaints
- Number of properties excluded from CBL
- Website Statistical Information
- Number of Sex Offenders/Violent Offenders registered

In addition, an annual Allocations Report will provide committee with details of:

- Review of policy for compliance
- Ratios of properties let by size against applicant demand
- Analysis of waiting list by need
- Prevention of Homelessness assistance provided by the Association
- Tenancy Sustainment Rates (as defined in the APSR)
- Analysis of applicants applying for and being awarded medical priority by category
- Cancellations
- Suspensions
- Review of Nominations Protocols
- Void Loss Analysis
- Average Void time by category
- Total numbers of properties not allocated through CBL with reasons
- Applicants processed by target
- Review of any LLI outcomes
- Community Profile against applicant profile (if available)

1.15 Related Policies and Documents for Reference

- Voids Policy
- Mutual Exchange Procedure
- Audit Policy
- Duty to Co-operate Policy
- Choice Based Lettings Protocols with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Council
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Tenant Participation Strategy
- Complaints Procedure

Still to Be Completed

Process Map for Applicant Registering to Housed
Summary of Policy

**CASTLEHILL HOUSING ASSOCIATION
- ALLOCATIONS POLICY SECTION 2**

***homehunt*[®] NORTH EAST SCOTLAND**

CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

AGREEMENT ON KEY POLICY ISSUES

Introduction

This document is produced jointly between Castlehill Housing Association and Tenants First Housing Co-operative. 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 and Tenants First Housing Co-operative.

Choice Based Lettings

Castlehill Housing Association and Tenants First Housing Co-operative 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 bid 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 Homehunt software system.

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

homehunt NES Registration Form
homehunt NES Guidance
homehunt NES Priority Pass Forms
Marketing Strategy

Partnership Agreement between Castlehill Housing Association and Tenants First Housing Co-operative
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 homehunt NES in the following ways:

- Applicants can request a registration form by phone
- Applicants can complete the registration over the phone (form will then be sent for signature and returned by the applicant)
- Registration can be completed on the homehunt website (form will be sent for signature and returned by the applicant)
- In person at the Castlehill Housing Association or Tenants First Housing Co-operative offices
- Registration forms will be available from both the Castlehill Housing Association and Tenants First Housing Co-operative offices, from the Homechoice Option Shop, at local authority area offices and at the offices of other local Registered Social Landlords.

Applicants will initially complete a registration form, which asks for basic details and highlights any further priority that the applicant may wish to apply 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 bid without priority. The applicant will be given a unique reference number and the date of application will be set when a signed application is returned to the Administrator. Applicants who complete a registration form online or over the phone will only be eligible to bid when a signed registration form has been returned.

Application Process

On full registration, applicants will be sent a card indicating their registration number and registration date. At this time they will also receive a pack, which contains the priority pass application forms. 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 bid for properties without priority passes.

If an applicant is successful in bidding and receives an offer of housing, a home visit will be carried out by a Housing Officer. This visit will be used to verify the details provided in the registration and priority pass forms. Tenancy references will be requested at this stage if applicable.

Priority Need Categories

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

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

<i>Priority Pass</i>	<i>Possible Award</i>
Housing Circumstances	Gold, Silver
Lacking Facilities	Silver, Bronze
Overcrowding	Gold, Silver, Bronze
Under-occupation	Silver, Bronze
Medical	Gold, Silver
Personal Circumstances	Gold, Silver, Bronze

Appendix One 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 award will be given to applicants who are *not* statutory homeless but are in situation where they expect to be homeless 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 bidding 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 and Tenants First Housing Co-operative 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 apply.

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 bid.

To ensure that appropriate use is made of adapted stock, tenants of Castlehill Association and Tenants First Housing Co-operative 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 homehunt guidance.

In some situations homehunt 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 bid. (Note: bidding 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 bids out-with the areas that have been limited, the priority pass cannot be used.

Bidding Limits

Applicants will not be precluded from bidding 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 their bids are submitted and should consider this when making multiple bids

Best Use

Best use will be the main consideration when allocating properties, followed by bids 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 only be re-advertised where no bids for a vacant property have been received. **If no bids have been received after the property has been advertised for four days, the Administrator may contact applicants who fit the property profile to see if they are interested in the property.** Where best use has not been met but bids have been received, allocation of the property will be made from those applicants who have made bids.

Applicants put 'on hold'

Castlehill Housing Association and Tenants First Housing Co-operative will facilitate requests from applicants who wish their applications to be put on hold. 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 and Tenants First Housing Co-operative will accept applicants onto the Registration List but may exclude them from bidding 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 and where an 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 or Tenants First Housing Co-operative, the arrangement put in place to clear any outstanding debt must be on a basis, which is entirely satisfactory to Castlehill Housing Association and Tenants First Housing Co-operative 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.

Anti Social Behaviour

Where an applicant has a history of anti social behaviour, the applicant may be excluded from homehunt 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

Castlehill Housing Association and Tenants First Housing Co-operative will accept applicants onto the Registration List but may exclude them from bidding for or being offered accommodation for a **two year** period in the following circumstances

Violence Against Staff

Castlehill Housing Association and Tenants First Housing Co-operative 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 have given false or misleading information about their circumstances and this had 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 homehunt NES will require to be satisfied that the applicant knowingly altered his or her circumstances and that the resultant gain in priority was substantive.

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.

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 100% nomination rights or where the Association 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 the Association as a route for re-housing using House Exchange.

NSSE//Shared Ownership Buy Backs:

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

For Tenants First Housing Co-operative this will include:-

Referrals:

Tenants First 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 Tenants First 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.

Moray:

At present Tenants First own one rural property within the boundaries of the Local Authority of Moray. This property will be excluded from Choice Based Lettings.

Asset Management:

Tenants First 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 tenant members 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 the Co-operative 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 the Co-operative as a route for re-housing.

Move UK:

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

Sheltered and Very Sheltered Housing

Properties which are Sheltered or Very Sheltered will be advertised as such and bids 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.

Allocation for Sheltered or 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 Supporting People team.

Applicants for Sheltered or 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 form. The assumption will be made that where an applicant is applying for medical priority and is eligible to bid for Sheltered or Very Sheltered Housing, that there will be a Housing Support Need.

Further assessment will be required when applicants have bid for a 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 and approve funding for the Housing Support Service.

Where applicants are bidding 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. The panel meeting must take place before the allocation can be made therefore publishing the outcome of the allocation may be delayed.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

To ensure that *homehunt*[®] 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 properties let
- Letting outcomes including size, type, area and how property allocated e.g. best use
-
- Where applicant was housed from e.g. transfer, waiting list etc.
- Number of homeless applicants housed, split into s5 and statutory
- Number of refusals for successful bids including reasons why

Quarterly

- Number of registrations and how applicants registered e.g. phone, online etc.
- Number of hits on homehunt NES properties on website,
- Number of applicants bidding in each format (eg by phone, in person, on website)
- 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
- Number of phone calls to *homehunt*[®] NES, Tenants First Housing Co-operative and Castlehill Housing Association
- Nature of phone call e.g. registrations, change of circumstances etc.
- Percentage of registrations; priority passes assessed within timescale
- Percentage of medical assessments within timescale

Annually

- Average days to let a property
- Empty property rent loss
- Number of properties excluded from letting via *homehunt*[®] NES

Nominations with Local Authorities

Castlehill Housing Association and Tenants First Housing Co-operative 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 homehunt 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 homehunt NES can make a formal complaint.

In every case, homehunt will try to resolve the complaint informally however if required, further information on the complaints process and timescales are detailed in the Complaints Policy and a copy can be made available on request.

Membership of Tenants First Housing Co-operative

Only applicants approved for membership of the Co-operative can be allocated a Co-operative property.

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 above mentioned assessment and may reject an application if the applicant is not willing to provide this.

Equal Opportunities

homehunt[®] 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.

CASTLEHILL HOUSING ASSOCIATION – ALLOCATIONS POLICY

SECTION 3

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.			
<u>Homelessness</u>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.			
<i>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.</i>			
<u>Impending Homelessness</u>			
Where 56 days notice or less has been given to vacate current accommodation as defined below:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 			
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	Homehunt NES area limit and feature limit	Statutorily Homeless
Silver	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. homehunt NES can also feature limit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • X Medical • Sevwho
Silver	No Time Limit	No area limit. homehunt NES can feature limit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modwho • Minwho • Sevmod • Modmod

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 applicants family is considered to be at risk

Financial Hardship

Where a households monthly rental/mortgage payments exceeds 25% 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 applicants 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 or not 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 above definitions.

PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES CATEGORY			
Priority			Definition
Gold	No Time Limit	No area or property feature limits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacating Disabled Adapted
Silver	No Time Limit	homehunt NES will limit areas when general assistance is being awarded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harassment or Violence • Children at Risk • General Assistance • Financial Hardship
Bronze	No Time Limit	No area or property feature limits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separated Family • Current Neighbour Problems • Travel time to work/education • Isolation from Services • Relationship Breakdown