

**ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

**1.Introduction**

Lambeth & Southwark Housing Association (LSHA) is an Industrial and Provident Society, registered with the Homes and Community Agency. Our main purpose is to provide good quality homes and housing services in the local community. Currently we have 314 properties located in the London Borough of Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham.

Lambeth & Southwark Housing Association (LSHA) is committed to the following:-

* Making the best use of our available housing
* Developing and delivering allocations process that can be used by

the full range of existing and potential customers

* Making our allocation and letting decisions in a fair, transparent and
* efficient way
* Working in partnership with local authorities and other agencies to

provide sustainable housing for people in housing need

* Meeting our legislative, regulatory and contractual requirements
* Giving reasonable priority to those in most housing need
* We record all lettings as required by the Continuous Recording of Lettings

 (CORE) system

The Association retains its right to refuse to accept the nomination or referral of any household or individual for reasons including the following:

The applicant is:

* A tenant or owner of another home
* Earning a high income and can be expected to buy or rent privately
* Has unmet support needs which we cannot meet
* Has provided false or misleading information on the application
* Cannot pay the rent
* Has outstanding arrears with another landlord which he/she is not repaying
* Has broken the terms of a previous tenancy and the previous landlord has taken legal action, for example, anti-social behaviour
* Does not have a valid immigration status.

**2. Policy Scope**

The Homes and Communities Agency, which regulates registered providers of

social housing (i.e.Housing Associations) require us to let available properties

in a fair, transparent and efficient way. In accordance with this requirement, this policy

explains that we participate in Choice Based Lettings schemes when it is in our

business interests to do so. We cooperate with local authorities at a strategic

and operational level and enter nomination and referral agreements to give

reasonable preference to people who are homeless or who have a high level

of housing need.

For the purposes of this policy all applicants, including existing customers and

garage renters will be referred to as ‘applicants’.

Registered providers shall let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient

way. They shall take into account the housing needs and aspirations of

tenants and potential tenants. They shall demonstrate how their lettings:

* make the best use of available housing

- are compatible with the purpose of the housing

There should be clear application, decision-making and appeals processes.

Registered providers shall enable their tenants to gain access to opportunities

exchange their tenancy with that of another tenant, by way of internet based

mutual exchange services.

**3. Objectives**

**3.1** To ensure a fair and equitable basis for the allocation of housing accommodation.

**3.2** To ensure, in the light of all the information available, that the accommodation is directed to those persons in the greatest housing need.

**3.3** To ensure, as far as is practical, that allocations meet the applicant’s needs and wishes.

**3.4** To ensure as far as possible, that where accommodation is provided to meet a particular need, e.g. adapted for a wheelchair user, it is allocated to a person requiring that type of accommodation.

**3.5** To promote the maximum use of the Associations housing stock, avoiding over and under occupation where possible.

**3.6** To review from time to time the procedures for allocations, to ensure that in the light of changing circumstances, the Association can best fulfil the objects in its’ governing rules.

**4. Allocations according to size of accommodation**

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| --- | --- |
| **Size of household** | **Size of property** |
| Single person | 1 bedroom or bedsit |
| Couple ( no children ) | 1 bedroom – 2 person |
| 2 Adults not living as a couple | 2 bedroom – 3 person |
| 1 or 2 adults and 1 child | 2 bedroom – 3 person |
| 1 or 2 adults and 2 children (different sexone under 10 years) | 2 bedroom – 4 person |
| 1 or 2 adults and 2 children ( different sex one over 10 years) | 3 bedroom – 4 person |
| 1 or 2 adults and 3 children (where 2 children can share) | 3 bedroom – 5 person |
| 1 or 2 adults and 3 children (where 2 children cannot share) | 4 bedroom – 5 person |
| 1 or 2 adults and 4 children (where 2 pairs of children can share) | 3 bedroom – 6 person |
| 1 or 2 adults and 4 children (where 1 pair of children can share) | 4 bedroom – 6 person |
| 1 or 2 adults and 4 children (where 4 children cannot share) | 5 bedroom – 6 person |

**4.1** Family accommodation i.e. flats or houses with 2 or more bedrooms are allocated on the following basis as possible.

* Children of different sexes will be expected to share a bedroom unless the eldest one is 12 years old or over.
* Children of the same sex will be expected to share a bedroom unless the eldest child is aged 16 years or over.

**4.2 Bedsit flats in Butler House and Otha House** are let to single women.

**4.3** Wheelchair adapted accommodationis reserved for those households with a wheelchair user, or someone who is likely to become a wheelchair user.

**5. Local Authority Nominations**

**5.1** The Local Authorities have a right to nominate households to a proportion of the Association’s voids as a condition of the Association’s funding. **Nominations Agreements** are therefore entered into with Lambeth and Southwark Councils. In general terms, these agreements commit the Association to allocating 75% of’ family sized voids (2 bedrooms plus) and 50% of single person or couple voids (one bedroom, or bedsit) to Council nominees. Terms of these agreements may vary in detail as they are renegotiated roughly annually, and special agreements are made to cover some new developments to give the Local Authority 100% nomination rights to family sized units.

 The majority of these nominees are homeless families, the remainder being council tenants requiring decanting or transfer, or single young people leaving home or care. In addition to these, the Councils have the right to nominate a homeless household to voids which arise as a result of a tenant purchasing a property using the Homebuy scheme.

**5.2** Nominations are requested for specific voids as they arise, and all nominees will be interviewed at the office. Being nominated by Lambeth or Southwark Council automatically satisfies the Associations ‘local connection’ criteria. (see 6.5).

5.3 If the Operations Manager has concerns about the nominee’s ability to cope with living in their own home, then their care and support needs will be discussed.

**6. Referral Agencies**

 Referral agencies are used to refer applicants for other voids to which the nominations agreements do not apply.

**6.1** More than half of the Association’s housing stock is either bedsit or one bed-roomed accommodation. Although the Local Authorities are entitled to nominate to 50% of the vacancies that arise in these flats, their take up is actually very low (especially for small bedsits), and in fact the majority are let to single people or very occasionally couples who are referred to the Association by one of the **Referral** **Agencies** on the approved list (see Appendix 1).

**6.2** The referral agencies used are reviewed from time to time to ensure that they are referring appropriate people and that they have good equal opportunities practices.

**6.3** The Association has a relatively slow turnover of vacancies, making about 15-20 lettings a year. It is therefore not able to make specific commitments to allocate a definite quota of voids to any agency. Normally agencies will be contacted in turn as vacancies arise.

**6.4** Referrals are requested as voids arise. A request for a referral does not constitute an offer of accommodation although it will usually result in one, and referral agencies must make this clear to applicants. Referrals may be rejected without making them an offer for the same reasons as set out in 1.4, or if they do not have a clear local connection to Lambeth or Southwark.

**6.5 ‘Local connection’** must mean that they either currently work, live or study in one of the Boroughs, or they need to move into the area to take up a job or a course of study, or to give/receive support.

6.6 **HomeSwapper**

LSHA is a member of HomeSwapper and pays for any LSHA tenant to sign

up for its services. HomeSwapper is a national organisation that electronically

matches tenants needing to move for possible mutual exchanges.

**7. Responsibilities**

**7.1** The Operations Manager is the responsible officer for all allocations and transfers in respect of the Association’s accommodation and shall ensure that all aspects of the Association’s policies are carried out. The Housing Officer is responsible for carrying out the procedures based on those policies. They shall also ensure that sufficient and appropriate records are kept and maintained in order to carry out the policies. No offers of accommodation are made without the Operations Managers approval.

**7.2** The Association will use its best endeavours to ensure that all its housing stock is kept fully utilised.

**7.3** We have prepared this policy to meet the requirements of the Housing Act

1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

7.4 **Decision-making and Appeal Process**

If an applicant is unhappy with any decision, they may appeal by using our

Complaints Policy. A third party may represent an applicant at any stage in an

appeals process. All complaints relating to dissatisfaction with a decision made or

our service will be dealt with under “Stage 1” of our Complaints Policy. All

Complaints should be addressed to the Operations Manager who will investigate the complaint and respond within 15 working days.

If the applicant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may take their complaint to

Stage 2 of our policy. At this stage the complaint will be heard by the Chief

Executive.

 A full copy of the Association's complaints procedure is available on our website [www.lsha.org.uk](http://www.lsha.org.uk) or a written copy can be requested from the office.

* 1. If the complainant remains dissatisfied they have the right to make a final appeal to:-

The Independent Housing Ombudsman

81 Aldwych

London

WC2B 4HN

**APPENDIX 1**

**Referral Agencies**

The following local referral agencies have been approached and agreed that they would be able to conform with the Association’s criteria for selecting new tenant. The Management Committee have agreed to accept referrals from agencies on this list.

1. Cardinal Hume Centre
2. The Passage

**LETTINGS PROCEDURES**

1. When a void arises, a nomination or a referral is requested from the appropriate local authority or referral agency, by email, unless the void is required for decanting or an urgent internal transfer.
2. When the nomination or referral is received an office appointment is arranged and a Housing Application Form is filled in.
3. Offer is then approved or not by the Operations Manager.
4. If offer approved, an offer letter is sent out, and accompanied viewing arranged.
5. If offer is refused, the reason is recorded and process start again from 1.
6. If offer is accepted, tenant is signed up.
7. At signing up interview :
* The main points of the Tenancy Agreement are explained.
* The Tenancy Agreement is dated no more that 1 week from the date of the viewing.
* 2 copies of the Tenancy Agreement are signed and one given to the tenant.
* Copies of the Tenants’ Handbook are given.
* Rent payment is discussed, either;
* complete HB form
* complete Direct Debit mandate / Standing Order form and take 1st payment.
* Order an ALLPAY card and take 1st payment in advance.
* Complete CORE lettings log form, keep a copy on file.
* Hand over keys.
* Notify the appropriate Local Authority or Referral Agency.
* Six week Settling in visit arranged and date given to the tenant
1. The Finance Officer is given Lettings form signed by the Housing Officer and the Operations Manager to enter the new tenancy onto the computer and set up the new rent account.