

Letting Policy Summary

Introduction

This leaflet summarises Dundee City Council's policy for letting houses. It explains how you can get on our list and how we make you offers of housing.

Aims

It is the aim of the Council's allocation policy to:

- Accurately assess your housing need, and
- Let houses to people with the greatest need, whose household fits each empty property best.

Principles

The policy is based on the following principles:

- Fairness and accountability
- Equality, openness and transparency
- Confidentiality
- Consistency of decision making

Applying

Anyone aged sixteen or over can apply for Council housing. You can apply on your own or with a joint applicant. Application forms are available at any District Housing Office, Dundee House, by telephoning the Lettings Centre or by download from the Council's website www.dundee.gov.uk/housing. Completed forms can be handed in at any District Housing Office, at Dundee House or posted to the Lettings Centre.

The Lettings Centre
169 Pitkerro Road, DUNDEE DD4 8ES
Tel: 0300 123 9023 or 01382 307400

Guidance on how to complete the application is included in the form. Please refer to it as you go through the form, and if you have any questions, please speak to someone at the Letting Centre, Tel: 01382 307400. Please also ask us if you would like us to help you to complete the form.

The details you give on your form will be used to work out how many points you will be given. Please also be very accurate when you are telling us what kind of a house you want. We will use this information when we are making offers to you. If, for example, you tell us that you only want a house on the ground floor, then that will be the **only** type of house we will offer you.

You can also tell us if you want us to give your name to housing associations that have properties in Dundee. We will be able to nominate you for appropriate houses when a housing association asks us to give them names from our waiting list. You will then be considered according to each Housing Association's policy when they are allocating their houses. If you are housed by another landlord you will be given the opportunity to either have your application reviewed or to have it cancelled.

It is very important that you give us as many contact details as possible because we may want to telephone you if there is anything else we need to know about your application, or if you have missed some details off your form.

From receipt of a completed form, we will assess your application and write to you telling you that your name is now on our waiting list within 15 days. Your letter will advise you of the size, type and location of the accommodation you have chosen along with the group we have placed you in and any points awarded. The letter will also contain some advice on your prospects of being housed. Please check the details to see they are correct and let us know if there is anything that needs to be changed.

Changes of circumstances

You can make changes to your application form at any time. This can be done in person at a Housing office, in writing or by telephone. Examples of changes you might wish to make are, changing your areas of choice or adding a baby to your household. It is important that you tell us about any changes as this may affect the number of points you have or the house you might be offered.

Review of applications

We will review your application every year. We will also review your form and your circumstances every time we telephone you. There are two reasons that we review your application:

- To check that you still want to be on our waiting list, and
- To make sure that the information we hold is accurate and up to date.

Cancellations

We will try to telephone you and write to you when we need to discuss your application. If we cannot contact you by telephone or a letter we send to you is returned we will write to you again at the last address we have for you. If this is returned, or you do not contact us, we will assume that you are no longer looking for a house and cancel your application. You can also cancel your application form at any time by contacting us.

If you want to stay on our list, but don't want to be offered a house for a period of time, eg to recover from a stay in hospital, just let us know and we will not offer you a house for an agreed length of time, or until an agreed date.

Groups on the waiting list

The waiting list is divided up into four groups. We use a group and points system when we assess your application. We will make our assessment according to the details you provide on your form and award points according to your current housing situation as well as your needs. Your application will then be placed in one of the following four groups:

- **Homeless Group** – includes applicants who have been assessed by our Homeless Services Unit and awarded a homeless priority. If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness, please ring the Homeless Advice Line **0800 633 5843** for helpful advice and information. This group will also include members of HM Forces, those released from prison and applicants in tied accommodation with a notice to quit. Personnel serving in HM Forces will be considered for housing up to nine months prior to their discharge. Applicants who are serving custodial sentences will be considered for housing up to six months prior to their release. All 'tied' applicants will be considered for housing up to three months prior to the date of their notice to quit.
- **Redevelopment Group** – includes applicants where a formal decision has been made to demolish or redevelop their property. Applicants in this group will have points awarded to reflect the length of their tenancy with their current landlord as well as points for any other need.
- **General Needs Group** – includes applicants with a variety of needs including medical need, a social need, those who are living in overcrowded conditions or under-occupying property, those living in sub-standard housing conditions and applicants who are staying with family and friends or as lodgers or sub-tenants.
- **Choice Group** – includes applicants adequately housed with no housing need.

Your application can be given multiple points if you are assessed as having more than one need (e.g. if you are living in overcrowded conditions and have a medical priority, you will be given points for both needs). You can only be placed in one group. This will be according to your overriding need. Applicants in the 'Choice' group will not have points, and will therefore be placed in date order. Applicants in the homeless group can only have medical points added to their homelessness points. No other types of points can be added.

Points

Your application will be given points which reflect the extent and urgency of your housing need. The following points may be given:

(1) Homeless Group	Points
After a homelessness assessment	70
HM Forces personnel, prisoners and 'tied' applicants	70

(2) General Needs Group	Points
Housing below tolerable standard	70
Overcrowded	40
• require 1 additional bedroom	70
• require 2 or more additional bedrooms	
Under-occupied	40
• by 2 bedrooms	70
• by 3 bedrooms	
Medical Award	
• low	20
• medium	40
• high	70
Social Needs	40
Insecure accommodation	20
Want own tenancy	10

(3) Redevelopment Group	Points
Less than 5 years tenancy	20
5 - 10 years tenancy	40
More than 10 years tenancy	70

(4) Choice Group	Points
Choice (Applicants shall be listed in order of Date of Application)	0

Dundee City Council allocates properties in a way that ensures each group gets a share of the available housing and we have targets for each of the groups. Targets will be subject to an annual review and will be published in the local press and on the Council's website.

Group	Target %
Homeless	45%
General Needs	25%
Redevelopment	25%
Choice	5%

Homeless points

People who have been assessed under the terms of Part 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended, as being homeless or potentially homeless and who have a priority need will be given 70 points. Members of HM Forces, applicants who are serving custodial sentences and applicants currently living in 'tied' accommodation and who have received 'notice to quit' will also be given 70 homelessness points. HM Forces applicants can be considered for housing up to nine months prior to their discharge date and prisoners can be considered for housing up to six months prior to their release date.

Social needs points

People who are the victims of racial harassment, domestic abuse or who need to live in a particular area to give or receive support may be given 40 points for social need. Where there is an identified child protection issue social needs points can be given. We will normally need proof from you that you have a social need before they will be awarded. People who are given medical points by the Medical Advisory Service because of a social need will not be able to have social needs points added to their application if they are for the same reason as the medical points.

Overcrowding points

Where the size of an applicant's household means that they need one more bedroom than they currently have, 40 points will be added to their application. Where their need is for two bedrooms (or more) than they currently have, 70 points will be added to their application.

When we check to see if your household is overcrowded, we will look at the number of people in your household and their relationships to each other, and compare that with the number of rooms (and their sizes) in your current accommodation. We will not give you overcrowding points if you have two household members of opposite sexes under the age of eight sharing a bedroom. When one of them reaches their eighth birthday then 40 overcrowding points will be added to your application to allow them to have separate bedrooms. If there are two people of the same sex in your household sharing a bedroom (whatever their relationship), no overcrowding points will be added to your application, no matter what age they are.

A child can be considered as part of the household if they stay in the household a minimum of 3 or more days and nights a week. Proof of access (e.g. a copy of the separation / Joint Custody agreement) will be required.

Where the applicant has access to children who stay overnight on a regular basis, the family can be assessed as needing an additional room (or rooms,) although they will not be awarded overcrowding points.

Under-occupation points

If the house you are living in is too big for your household size, we will give you extra points on your application to be rehoused. If you have two bedrooms more than you need, we will give you 40 points and if you have three bedrooms more than you need we will give you 70 points.

Sheltered housing

Sheltered housing is linked by an alarm system to a nearby warden. If you are aged 60 years and over you can apply. It is possible for people under the age of 60 to be allocated sheltered housing but this is exceptional and will only be done on the recommendation of the Medical Advisory Service.

All applications for sheltered housing are assessed by the Medical Advisory Service who will take into account medical requirements and current housing circumstances and may award a low, medium or high priority to reflect need. This will add 20, 40 or 70 points to an application.

Disabled Adapted Housing/Very Sheltered Housing and Housing with Care

Applicants for the above will have their medical needs assessed by the Council's Medical Advisor/Assessment Panel/Single Shared Assessment and will be awarded a low medium or high priority, with 20, 40 or 70 points to reflect the severity or urgency of their needs. For this type of housing we will match an individual applicant to a specific property.

Medical points

If your present accommodation is unsuitable for medical reasons, then you should complete a medical assessment form. You can get a form by telephoning the Lettings Centre. The Council's Medical Advisor will assess the form and may award a low, medium or high priority to reflect your need. This will add 20, 40 or 70 points to your application. You will only qualify for this priority where a house move is expected to improve your medical needs/circumstances.

Exceptional Circumstances

In some cases, applicants may be given extra priority (e.g. where an applicant is unable to be discharged from hospital as their current house is unsuitable). Their case will be dealt with on an individual basis and a higher award of points may be made.

Where emergency rehousing is needed, tenants may be offered alternative housing. Wherever possible this will be to housing of a similar type. These cases will be assessed on an individual basis by the District Manager.

Redevelopment points

Where applicants are living in accommodation which is due to be demolished, their application will be given points which reflect the length of continuous tenancy, or tenancies, with their present landlord. Points will be awarded on a sliding scale ranging from 20 to 70 as detailed in the table on page 3.

Available Now Properties

Where there are no suitable applicants for a property or it has been refused more than three times, for property based reasons, we may advertise it so that people who are on the waiting list can let us know that they are interested in being considered for it. The applicant's needs and household size must be suitable for the property. We will allocate the property to the applicant with the highest number of points and the greatest need.

Properties will be advertised on the Council's web site, www.dundee.gov.uk, and in Council offices.

Local Letting Initiatives

From time to time we may introduce special rules in certain areas of the City in order to let our houses. This can be for a number of reasons including:

- Where houses are difficult to let, or
- Where we convert sheltered houses to standard housing

When we do this we will publish the special rules, consult with local residents and seek the permission of the Council's Housing Committee. We will monitor any local letting initiative to make sure that it has been effective.

Pre tenancy checks

As part of the process we will carry out a series of checks before we offer you a tenancy. These include (for the past three years):

- A history and/or evidence of serious antisocial behaviour (both you and anybody aged sixteen or over in your household), and
- Evidence of any tenancy related debt, and
- Evidence of whether you or anyone in your household is required to register with the police under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. In these circumstances we may still be able to offer you a house, but it may influence the location of any house we offer you

We may also carry out a home visit or seek references from other landlords.

Assigning a house to a Group

When we are notified about an empty house, the computer will automatically put it into one of the four groups above. It will do this strictly in rotation to match the targets on page 4 so that all applicants have the same chance of being offered a house in every area of the city. The number of houses becoming available in different areas of the city will vary, so your chances of being offered a house in some areas will be better than in others. If you want more detailed information about the length of time you may have to wait to be housed in the areas you have chosen on your application form, or any other matter related to your housing application, please telephone the Lettings Centre on 0300 123 9023 or 01382 307400.

Offers of housing

When we know that a house is about to become empty, the computer will identify a queue of applicants whose needs match it, with the applicant with the highest number of points at the top. Where more than one applicant has the same number of points, we will then consider who has been in that group the longest. We will telephone (usually the top ten) applicants at the top of that queue and review their application to see if they are still interested in that type of house and that their circumstances are still the same.

The person at the top of a list when that house is ready to be formally offered will be contacted either by telephone or in writing to make a viewing appointment.

If you decide to refuse the offer of a house, we will record your reasons and make any changes that are needed to your application form.

Inactive Waiting List

All of our applicants can ask to be placed on the Inactive Waiting List. This means that they will not be made offers of housing until they let us know that they wish to be considered again. This can be for any length of time that the applicant chooses. We will still continue to review their application annually to ensure that their circumstances are up to date.

We may in some cases bypass applicants for the offer of a house in some circumstances. This may include:

- Where they refuse to acknowledge any debt they may have, or
- Where there is a current ASBO against anyone in the household or evidence of serious antisocial behaviour in the household, or
- Where the applicant is assessed as requiring a support or care package before they can maintain a tenancy, or
- Where the condition of their current house is unacceptable, or
- Where they have not supplied us with adequate information to allow us to fully assess their housing application

Where we have placed applicants on this list we will regularly review their circumstances and decide whether or not they should remain on it.

Size of Housing

The size of accommodation we offer you will depend on the size and needs of your household. The table below sets out the size(s) of house we will assess you as needing according to the number of people in your household. You will not be offered housing that would result in you being overcrowded. You can ask for one extra bedroom on your application if you wish, but when we are allocating houses, we will always give priority to the applicant whose household best matches the property size.

Household Size	Property Size & Bed Spaces										
	Studio	1 single bedroom	1 double bedroom	1 single bedroom & 1 double bedroom	2 double bedrooms	2 single bedrooms & 1 double bedroom	1 single bedroom & 2 double bedrooms	3 double bedrooms	2 single bedrooms & 2 double bedrooms	4 double bedrooms	5 double bedrooms
1 person	◆	◆	◆								
Couple			◆	■	■						
Single parent with 1 child/ Pregnant woman				◆	◆						
Couple with 1 Child				◆	◆						
Single parent with 2 same sex children				◆	◆	■	■	■			
Couple with 2 same sex children					◆	■	■	■			
Single parent with 2 children (of different sexes both under the age of eight)				◆	◆	■	■	■			
Couple with 2 children (of different sexes both under the age of eight)					◆	■	■	■			
Single parent with 2 children (one or both children over the age of eight)						◆	◆	■			
Couple with 2 children (one or both children over the age of eight)						◆	◆	■			
Single parent with 3 children						◆	◆	◆			
Couple with 3 children							◆	◆			
Single parent with 4 children **							◆	◆	◆	■	
Couple with 4 children **								◆	◆	■	
Single parent with 5-6 children **									◆	◆	■
Couple with 5-6 children **										◆	■
Single parent or Couple with 7-8 children **											◆

** No more than 2 same sex children can share a bedroom.

Appeals

If you are unhappy with a decision we have made, or an offer of housing we have made, you have the right to appeal. When we write to you, we will include an appeals form that you can use for this. If you wish, we will help you complete an appeal, or you can have a friend or relative make the appeal for you, as long as they have your permission. The appeal will be dealt with by a more senior member of staff not related to the initial decision or offer of housing. You will be advised of the outcome of the appeal in writing within 28 days.

Complaints

If you feel that you have been treated unfairly or are unhappy with the level of service you have received from Lettings Centre staff, you can complain by letter, by telephone, or by using the Corporate Complaints form which is available on the Council's website.

Monitor and Review

We will regularly monitor the quality of a percentage of all offers of housing made to applicants in each of the four groups and review the data to ensure that we are meeting our objectives to giving greatest priority to people in need. We will also regularly monitor the quality of a percentage of all application forms processed to make sure we are getting it right.

We will closely monitor the entire process to ensure that our equalities requirements are being met and that every applicant is being treated fairly and consistently.

We will review the targets for lets to each group every year and regularly ask our customers what they think of our policy and service.