

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE – 27 OCTOBER 2014

REPORT ON: REVIEW OF COUNCIL ALLOCATIONS POLICY

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: 218-2014

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out the responses to the consultation on a review of the Council's Housing Allocations Policy. This report considers the responses to the consultation and outlines recommendations for changes to the Policy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the changes to the Allocations Policy (Appendix 1), summarised below, are agreed.

- (i) That all options for completing and submitting an application are retained and that the facility to apply on-line is pursued.
- (ii) Applicants for housing will be able to apply for any size of house. However, applicants who need the size of house on offer will be prioritised over those who merely desire that house. Where an applicant is potentially affected by the Housing Benefit bedroom surcharge or benefit cap, Housing staff will advise the applicant of their best housing option.
- (iii) We will apply the occupancy rule (in line with Housing Benefit regulations) which is separate bedrooms for children who are different sexes from the age of 10.
- (iv) To remove the Choice Group. Applicants who are currently tenants of the Council or a Housing Association with no assessed need will be placed in a new "Transfer Group". Applicants who are tenants of private landlords or owners with no assessed need will be placed in the General Needs group.
- (v) Adults aged over 16 (who are not a couple) will be assessed as needing separate bedrooms.
- (vi) A Transfer Group will be created which will incorporate housing applicants who:
 - a. Are current tenants who are adequately housed (i.e. have no assessed housing need). These applicants will receive no priority points.
 - b. Are currently tenants of the Council or a Housing Association and who have an assessed housing need (they will receive priority points in accordance with their assessed need)
 - c. Re-development applicants (tenants and homeowners whose house will be demolished to progress a regeneration programme) who will be awarded 70 priority points.
- (vii) Applications for Amenity Housing will be accepted from households where one or more of the household members are aged 50 or above. Households containing children aged under 16 will not normally be accepted but It is possible for households with children to be allocated amenity housing on the recommendation of the Medical Advisory Service.
- (viii) It is recommended that the target percentages for allocations to groups identified within the policy are set at:
 - a. General needs 30%
 - b. Homeless 40%
 - c. Transfers 30%

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

4. MAIN TEXT

4.1. Background

The Letting Policy was last comprehensively reviewed in 2006. There have been amendments to the policy in intervening years in response to comments from the Scottish Housing Regulator and legislative change.

The Housing Department is making good progress with local Housing Associations in the development of a Common Housing Register (CHR). The review has been carried out in partnership with Registered Social Landlords and will facilitate the further development of the Common Housing Register.

The Allocations Policy consultation ran from July 2013 until the end of September 2013 (12 Weeks). Prior to and during the consultation period presentations and meetings were offered to a number of representative groups. These included:

- Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations
- Registered Tenants Organisations
- Equality Groups and Community Care Strategic Planning Groups
- Local Community Planning Partnerships
- Elected Members of the Council.

The consultation sought written responses as well as completion of an on-line survey advertised through Dundee City council's website. The consultation was also advertised at tenant participation events across the city.

We received 39 responses to the questionnaire, though not all respondents answered all questions. Thirty of the responses were from individuals or anonymous groups. Eight responses were from identified Groups:

- Abertay HA
- Bield HA
- Hillcrest HA
- Sanctuary Scotland HA
- Dundee Violence Against Women Partnership
- Dundee Labour Group
- Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations
- DCC Social Work Department

Consultation on the Housing Bill was underway during the consultation period for the review of the Allocations Policy and comments were made on the need to be cognisant of any relevant changes to rules concerning allocations policies. The Housing (Scotland) Act received royal assent on 1 August 2014, secondary legislation and publication of guidance is awaited. However at this time it does not appear that changes to rules governing allocations policy require further amendments to the policy. The Act does state that consultation must take place when allocations policies are being reviewed and the Council has complied with this requirement.

The main outcomes from the consultation questions together with recommended changes to the Letting Policy are described below:

1. What is your preferred way to apply for housing		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
complete a form which is available at local housing offices	41.2%	14
download a form on my computer and return the completed form to my housing provider	20.6%	7

complete a form and apply online	73.5%	25
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Note that respondents could select more than one answer to this question.

Recommendation 1: That all options for completing and submitting an application are retained and that the ability to apply on-line is pursued.

2. Due to welfare reform there is now a reduction in housing benefit for households where there are more bedrooms than the household needs under benefit rules. Do you think applicants should still be able to apply for housing larger than their household needs?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	61.1%	22
No	38.9%	14

Recommendation 2: Applicants for housing will be able to apply for any size of house. However, applicants who need the size of house on offer will be prioritised over those who merely desire that house. Where an applicant is potentially affected by the bedroom surcharge or benefit cap, housing Staff will advise the applicant of their best housing option.

3. Housing Benefit rules say that 2 children, regardless of sex, can share a bedroom up until the age of 10. What age do you think is appropriate for children of differing sex to have separate bedrooms?		Response Count
Answer Options		
Age 14		1
Age 12		1
Age 10		16
Age 8		7
Age 7		3
Age 6		3
Age 5		5
Other (individual circumstance)		2

Recommendation 3: We will use the Housing Benefit rule for separate bedrooms for children who are different sexes at the age of 10.

4. The Scottish Housing Regulator recommends that social housing is allocated on the basis of housing need. Dundee City Council currently allocates 5% of all properties let, to the Choice group (applicants who have no housing need). Do you agree with the proposal to remove the Choice group and for those applicants to be combined with the Transfer group (applicants who already have a council or housing association house)?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	69.4%	25
No	30.6%	11

Recommendation 4: We will remove the Choice Group, applicants who are currently tenants of the Council or a Housing Association with no assessed need will be placed in a new "Transfer Group".

5. Presently no overcrowding points are awarded for two related adults of the same sex sharing a bedroom. It is proposed to introduce this for adults (aged over 16 and who are not a couple). Do you agree with this proposal?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	83.3%	30
No	16.7%	6

Recommendation 5: Adults aged over 16 (who are not a couple) will be assessed as needing separate bedrooms.

6. The Transfer Group will include applicants from redevelopment* and transfer* applicants. It is proposed that there is an award of 70 points for redevelopment applicants. Do you agree with this proposal? * Redevelopment applicants - applicants whose homes are to be demolished as part of a redevelopment programme **Transfer applicants - applicants who already have a Council or Housing Association house.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	83.3%	30
No	16.7%	6

Recommendation 6: A Transfer Group will be created which will incorporate housing applicants who:

- Are adequately housed (i.e. have no assessed housing need). These applicants will receive no priority points.
- Are currently tenants of the Council or a Housing Association and who have an assessed housing need (they will receive priority points in accordance with their assessed need)
- Re-development applicants (tenants and homeowners whose house will be demolished to progress a regeneration programme) who will be awarded 70 priority points.

7. Amenity housing has been introduced for applicants aged 50 or over. Where an applicant has family under age 50, or children who have not been assessed as needing amenity housing, should they be allowed to be included in an application for amenity housing?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	59.5%	22
No	40.5%	15

Recommendation 7: Applications for Amenity Housing will be accepted from households where one or more of the household members are aged 50 or above. Households containing children aged under 16 will not normally be accepted but it is possible for households with children to be allocated amenity housing on the recommendation of the Medical Advisory Service.

8. The Council currently aims to let 25% of houses to General Needs, 25% to Redevelopment, 45% to Homeless and 5% to Choice groups. What proportion of lets do you think we should target to General Needs, Homeless and Transfers?

Answer Options	Response Average Percent
General Needs %	36%
Homelessness %	41%
Transfers %	21%

Recommendation 8: This consultation question gathered a wide range of alternatives, the figures above display the average of the range of percentages suggested for each of the letting groups (resultantly they do not add to 100%). It should be noted that the average proportion of lets to homeless applicants in Scotland is 40.8% (SHBVN Benchmarking 2012/13). It is recommended that the target percentages are set at:

- General needs 30%
- Homeless 40%
- Transfers 30%

In addition to the specific consultation questions asked, a number of additional comments were gathered. In some cases this was additional comment to support responses to the set questions. In other cases these regarded additional issues. Some of the comments were regarding procedures rather than policy. These will be reviewed together with Housing Association partners in the Common Housing Register. Similarly there were some helpful suggestions regarding wording or phraseology and in the main these will be adopted.

The complete policy can be seen at Appendix 1.

Following on from the review of the Allocations Policy, existing Information Technology (IT) software will need to be re-programmed to support the implementation and operation of the Policy.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

There are no major issues.

6. CONSULTATIONS

The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services and Head of Democratic and Legal Services and all other Chief Officers have been consulted on the preparation of this report. No concerns were expressed.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

20 OCTOBER 2014

Appendix 1

Dundee Common Housing Register Allocation Policy

Introduction

This policy describes how people can apply for housing and how they will be prioritised for housing which becomes available. The Policy is used by Dundee City Council and the Housing Associations who have adopted this policy by working together on a Common Housing Register. The Common Housing Register allows access to housing of all landlords participating in the Common Housing Register through a single application.

A Housing Options approach to meeting housing need will be taken. This combines assessing a person's legal rights to a home with a broader look at all possible housing options open to them which may include: renting from the Council or a housing association; private renting; home ownership; support to assist tenants to stay in their homes. It is about providing clear, impartial advice and ensuring that applicants are empowered to make the choice that is best for them.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that everyone who applies for housing is treated fairly, consistently and with respect. This policy is based on the following principles:

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

The objectives of the Allocation Policy are:

- i. To give greatest priority to people with housing need, in particular:
 - a. Homeless people.
 - b. People living in poor housing conditions (i.e. below the tolerable standard).
 - c. People who are overcrowded.
 - d. People who live in houses or areas which are causing them stress (e.g. suffering racial or domestic abuse, people who need to live close to carers or support).
 - e. People who have a medical reason for rehousing.
 - f. People who are under-occupying a social-rented house.
 - g. People whose houses are to be demolished.
- ii. To let houses quickly
- iii. To enable regeneration programmes to progress by re-housing people who are affected by demolitions.

APPLYING FOR A HOUSE

We wish to make the application process as straightforward and as accessible as possible. We will achieve this by:

- Making application forms available in appropriate formats at all offices and on the websites of all participating landlords.
- Accepting applications from anyone aged 16 or over who wishes to live in Dundee.
- Allowing applicants to choose the type of housing in the areas they would prefer.
- Offering applicants help to complete their form if required.
- Providing, advice and information on the options and availability of houses in the City, as well as applicants' housing prospects.

Guidance on how to complete the application is included in the form. Applicants should telephone the City Council's Lettings Centre or their own landlord if they need assistance to complete the form.

The details the applicant gives on their form will be used to work out how many points they will be given and what housing to offer, so it is important that applicants are accurate when they are telling us what kind of a house they want. To help tenants to sustain their tenancies applicants should describe any support which they need e.g. the need for furniture etc.

Joint Applications

Joint applications are accepted from persons aged 16 or over who wish to be housed together, applicants may or may not be related but only two unrelated joint applicants may apply.

Applicants do not have to be living at the same address to apply, but each will have to supply details of their present circumstances, so that their application for housing can be assessed. Any priority for housing will be based on whichever applicant has the greatest need.

Processing an Application

Upon receipt, applications will be registered, assessed and acknowledged. Points will be awarded to reflect the applicant's housing need as set out in this policy. Applications will then be placed in a priority group. Applicants will be sent a letter to confirm:

- The group they are in.
- The points they have been awarded and how these have been calculated.
- Some information about their prospects of being re-housed
- How to appeal if they feel they have been treated unfairly.
- Where they can get further advice and information.

Review of Applications

All Applications will be reviewed at least once every year. We will take the opportunity to review the circumstances of any applicant whenever they contact us, There are two reasons that we review applications:

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

Applicants can make changes to their housing application at any time. This can be done by telephone, by e-mail, in person or in writing. to the Council City Council or a Housing Association in the Common Housing Register.

Transfer of Applications

On notification of an applicant's death, the application will automatically be transferred to the surviving spouse or partner as long as they were living with the applicant at the time of their death. Where there is no surviving spouse or partner, the application may be transferred to any other person named on the application form, provided the person is aged 16 or over and has been resident with the applicant for at least 6 months prior to the applicant's death.

Relationship Breakdown

In the event of a relationship breakdown, where the applicants now wish to be housed separately:

- Where the application is in joint names, the joint application will be cancelled and each person can apply for housing separately. A new assessment will be carried out for each applicant, based on their current circumstances. They will not lose the date of application originally made by them.
- Where the application was originally submitted in one name, but a joint applicant was subsequently added, each applicant will be entitled to the date they applied.
- Where there is a current joint application for housing, a new assessment will be carried out for each applicant based on their current circumstances. They will not lose the date of application originally made by them.

Suspensions from the Waiting List

Applicants may be suspended where there is evidence of serious anti-social behaviour, significant rent arrears or serious breach of tenancy. In cases of serious antisocial behaviour consideration will be given to offering a Scottish Short Assured Tenancy along with the provision of appropriate support.

The circumstances where an application may be suspended include:

- Where the applicant owes a debt related to a tenancy which is more than one-twelfth of the annual rent owed to the landlord, or

- Where an applicant has acknowledged any debt and has made an agreement to clear the debt but this agreement has not yet run for 3 months.
- 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.

Inactive Waiting List

Applicants on the inactive list will not be made offers of housing until they let us know that they wish to be considered again. We will still continue to review their application annually to ensure that their circumstances are up to date. Applications will be placed on the inactive list where:

- the application is deferred at the applicant's own request.
- the applicant is serving a custodial prison sentence, (6 months prior to an applicant's anticipated release date, their form can be re-activated and considered for offers of housing).
- where we are awaiting further information before a priority can be awarded.

Applicants who are deferred at their own request, are living in tied accommodation or who are serving a custodial sentence will be placed on the waiting list using their original date of application when they notify us to re-activate their application.

False and Misleading Information

Where an applicant deliberately makes a false statement in order to gain access to housing, or withholds important information, their application may be suspended for a period of 6 months. Once the period of suspension is over, the application will be reviewed and the applicant re-admitted to the active waiting list with the date that their suspension was removed. The Council or Housing Association may take action to repossess a tenancy that has been achieved by the tenant providing false and misleading information in respect of their housing application.

Cancellations

Applications can be cancelled in the following circumstances:

- At the applicant's request. Where it is a joint application both applicants must contact us in writing. The Applicant(s) will be sent a letter of confirmation.
- In the event of failure to respond to correspondence. If we cannot contact an applicant by telephone, or a letter we send to them is returned we will write again to their last known address. If this letter is also returned, or the applicant does not contact us, we will assume that they are no longer looking for a house and cancel their application.
- When the applicant has been re-housed by the Council or another RSL in the City. Applicants then have the option to have their application reviewed or cancelled
- On the death of the applicant.

Where an application is cancelled, the applicant has the right to appeal.

MAKING OFFERS OF HOUSING

In accordance with the terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, (Sections 9 and 10), when allocating housing, landlords cannot take account of:

- The age of the applicant (*provided they are aged 16 or over*).
- The length of time the applicant has lived in Dundee.
- The income of the applicant and their family.
- Whether they own or have owned a property.

- Whether the applicant is living in the same house as a spouse or partner.
- Whether a judicial separation or divorce has been obtained.
- Rent arrears or other tenancy related debt from a house where the applicant is/was not the tenant, there is no debt still outstanding, or the amount due is less than one month's rent.
- Any outstanding debts (*including Council Tax*) due by the applicant or their household that are not related to a tenancy.
- No offers will normally be made to applicants who have not passed the pre-tenancy check.

Size of Housing

Applicants will be asked to indicate their preferred house size. Dependent upon demand for housing, applicants may only be offered the size of property their household needs (refer to the guidance included in the table on page 5). Applicants will not be offered housing that would result in them being overcrowded. Any permanent member of the household who is temporarily absent is still included in the household for the purposes of assessing the size requirements.

The number of bedrooms needed will take into account future or occasional members of the household. This may include:

- An unborn child.
- Where there is a separated parent whose visiting or access arrangements mean they require larger accommodation to accommodate children on a part time basis (who may be allocated a house with *one extra bedroom*.) *
- Foster/adopted children where the applicant has Social Work approval and they need a larger house to provide care.*

*** Applicants should note that if they opt for bedroom accommodation greater than their assessed needs eligible for housing benefit, these benefits may be reduced by up to 25%.**

Definition of a Family

For the application of this policy a "family" is as defined in the Housing (Scotland) 2001 Act s108. as:

- A single adult, a married couple or a couple (*regardless of sex*) living as if married.
- their children, parents, grandparents, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces.
- A child raised or treated by the partner as if their own (even though the child is not related to them) shall be considered part of the family.
- Two unrelated households or people who apply for housing will be considered by us as one household.

An application for housing containing any of the above family relationships shall be accepted as a household which can be given a priority reflecting their needs. It may be that the applicant does not currently live with their extended family (or have not yet taken guardianship of an adopted or foster child) but wishes to obtain housing to accommodate them all.

Minimum Household Sizes for City Council Housing

Property	Bedspace	Household Size
Studio	Single	1 Person
1 Bedroom 1 Person	Single	1 Person
1 Bedroom 2 Person	Double	1 person or couple
2 Bedrooms 3 Person	1 Double and 1 Single	Single parent/couple with one child/pregnant woman
2 Bedrooms 4 Person	2 Double	Single parent/couple with 1 child or 2 children(of the same sex under 16 years of age)/pregnant woman
2 bedrooms/ 2 person	2 single bedrooms	Single parent with one child, couple or two adults.
3 Bedrooms 4 Person	1 Double and 2 Single	Single parent/couple with 2 children
3 Bedrooms 5 Person	2 Double and 1 Single	Single parent/couple with 2 or 3 children
3 Bedrooms 6 Person	3 Double	Single parent/couple with 2, 3 or 4 children, provided that no more than 2 children of the same sex(if over 10 years of age) have to share a bedroom
4 Bedrooms 6 Person	2 Double and 2 single	Single parent/couple with 4 children
4 Bedrooms 8 Person	4 Double	Single parent/couple with 4 to 6 children, provided not more than 2 children of the same sex (if over 10 years of age) have to share a bedroom
5 Bedrooms	5 Double	Single parent/couple with 6 to 8 children provided that not more than 2 children of the same sex (if over 10 years of age have to share a bedroom)

GROUPS AND POINTS ON THE WAITING LIST

All applications will be assessed and placed in one of three priority groups, these being Homeless, General Needs and Transfers. Within each of these groups applications will receive points reflecting their relative housing need. A description of each group and the points available for assessed needs can be seen below. The allocation policy ensures that each priority group gets a share of the available housing and we have targets for each of these groups. Targets will be subject to an annual review and will be published on the participating landlords' websites. When houses become available to let they will be offered in rotation to match the groups and targets that we have set.

Group	Target %
Homeless	40
General Needs	30
Transfers	30

1 Homeless Group – includes applicants who have been assessed by the City Council's Homeless Services Unit under the terms of Part 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended, and awarded a homeless priority. This group includes 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.

Points Awarded: People who have been assessed as being homeless or potentially homeless and who have a priority need will be given 70 points. Members of HM Forces without accommodation, applicants who are serving custodial sentences and applicants currently living in 'tied' accommodation and who have received a "notice to quit" will also be given 70 points and placed in this group. Applicants in the homeless group can only have medical points added to their homelessness points. No other types of points can be added.

2 General Needs Group – this includes applicants who do not have a tenancy with the Council or a Housing Association. Applicants will be prioritised according to a 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. The General Needs Group also includes applicants who are owners or tenants of private landlords adequately housed with no housing need. These applicants have no points and will be placed in date order of application.

3 Transfers Group – This includes applicants who currently hold a tenancy in Council or Housing Association Accommodation. Applicants will be prioritised according to a medical need, a social need, those who are living in overcrowded conditions or under-occupying property, those living in sub-standard housing conditions. This group includes transfers required as part of the City Council's redevelopment programme. The Transfer Group also includes applicants adequately housed with no housing need. These applicants have no points and will be placed in date order of application.

An application can be given multiple points if it is assessed as having more than one need (e.g. if an applicant is living in overcrowded conditions and has a medical priority, they will be given points for both needs). The applicant can only be placed in one group.

Points Awarded

Points given to the General Needs and Transfer Groups can be awarded for the following needs:

Social needs points:

People who are the victims of harassment, domestic abuse or who need to live in a particular area to give or receive support may be given points for social need. Where there is an identified child protection issue social needs points can be given. With the exception of domestic abuse, we will normally need proof from an applicant that they 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

A household is regarded as being overcrowded if they do not have all the bedrooms they need for their household. Excluding kitchen and bathroom, a household's requirements are for a living room plus bedrooms as follows:

One single bedroom where it will be occupied by only one person.

One double bedroom for:

- A single person, a couple, single parent or pregnant single woman.
- Two children of the same sex where both are under the age of 16.
- Two children of different sexes where both are under the age of 10.

We will treat a second public room, such as a dining room, as being a bedroom for the purposes of this calculation. No overcrowding points will be awarded to any applicant who intentionally overcrowds their house because they have allowed other people to move into their accommodation.

In some circumstances extra persons may join an existing household owing to no other housing option being reasonably available, and the house becomes overcrowded. Where such a circumstance occurs, overcrowding points will be awarded to the existing household. 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 a household is overcrowded, we will look at the number of people in the household and their relationships to each other, and compare that with the number of rooms (and their sizes) in their current accommodation. We will not award overcrowding points if the applicant has 2 household members of opposite sexes under the age of 10 sharing a bedroom. When one of them reaches their 10th birthday then 40 overcrowding points will be added to the application to allow them to have separate bedrooms.

If there are 2 people of the same sex in a household sharing a bedroom (whatever their relationship), no overcrowding points will be added to the application. Where they have reached the age of 16, they are entitled to ask for their own bedroom.

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

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

Under-occupation points

Where the applicant is a council tenant or tenant of a Registered Social Landlord and the house the applicant is living in is too big for their household, we will award extra points on their application. If the applicant has one bedroom more than needed we will award 40 points, where an applicant has two or more bedrooms more than needed we will award 70 points.

People Living in Sub-Standard Housing Conditions

This refers only to housing which is below the tolerable standard (BTS) as defined in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, s86 as amended. For an applicant to be awarded points their accommodation must fail one or more of the following measures:

- Is structurally stable.
- Is substantially free of rising and penetrating damp.
- Has satisfactory provision for natural and artificial lighting, for ventilation and heating.
- Has an adequate supply of piped and 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 each supplied with a satisfactory supply of both hot and cold water and suitably located in the house.
- Has an effective system for the drainage and dispersal of both foul and surface water.
- Has satisfactory facilities for the cooking of food within the house.
- Has satisfactory access to all external doors and outbuildings.

(Note: The City Council's Private Sector Services Unit/Housing Investment Unit should be requested to confirm whether a house falls below the tolerable standard).

Where an applicant is judged to be living in housing below the tolerable standard as outlined above, their application will be awarded 70 points.

Non-Householders

Applicants who do not have their own home, but aspire to have a tenancy will be awarded 10 points.

Applicants who are staying with family, friends or as lodgers and are sharing facilities with that household will be awarded an additional 20 points.

Applicants who have been assessed as homeless will not be awarded additional points under this category.

Medical Points

If an applicant's present accommodation is unsuitable for medical reasons, then they should complete a medical assessment form. Applicants will only qualify for this priority where a house move is expected to improve their medical needs/circumstances. The Tayside Medical Advisor will assess the form and may award a low, medium or high priority to reflect the applicant's needs. This will add 20, 40 or 70 points respectively to their application. The medical adviser may advise on the type, size and area of housing which is suitable.

Redevelopment Points

Where there has been a decision to demolish or redevelop their houses, applicants will be awarded redevelopment points. Where an applicant has a current application form, they will be awarded 70 points based on the date of the decision to demolish and their original date of application will be taken into account. Where an applicant has no current application, they will be awarded 70 points from the date they apply.

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 or they are the last tenant in a block that is being redeveloped.) Their case will be dealt with on an individual basis and a higher award of points may be made. Where emergency re-housing is needed, tenants may be offered alternative housing. Wherever possible this will be to housing of a similar type/demand. These cases will be assessed on an individual basis.

HOUSING FOR PARTICULAR NEEDS

Some of our housing has been built or adapted to meet the needs of people who have a particular need. A description of these house types and who qualifies can be seen below:

Amenity Housing

Amenity Housing provides independent accommodation for people aged 50 years or over in a warm, comfortable and secure environment. The accommodation is designed for older people who do not want or need a full sheltered warden service and who do not have significant physical impairment. Each property will normally comprise of a living room, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom or shower-room with heating throughout with one or more of the following features:

- Raised sockets and switches
- Bathroom handrails
- Non slip flooring
- Will be no higher than ground or 1st floor.

The accommodation does not provide a sheltered warden service but the following can be provided if required:

- Community Alarm
- Communal Cleaning
- Housing Support.

Applications for Amenity Housing will be accepted from households where one or more of the household members are aged 50 or above. Households containing children aged under 16 will not normally be accepted but It is possible for households with children to be allocated amenity housing on the recommendation of the Medical Advisory Service

Sheltered Housing

Sheltered housing is housing for older people aged 60 or over. A warden service and a community alarm is provided for which there is a charge. 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. (For example someone with a learning disability who needs a degree of housing support.).

In two bedroomed sheltered accommodation it is possible for a carer or able bodied relative to be part of the applicant's household. All applications for sheltered housing are assessed by the Tayside Medical Advisory Service, who will take into account the medical requirements support needs and current housing circumstances of the household and may award a low, medium or high priority to reflect need. This will add 20, 40 or 70 points respectively to an application.

Disabled Adapted Housing

Applicants for the above will have their medical needs assessed and prioritised by the Medical Advisory Service and will be awarded a low medium or high priority, with 20, 40 or 70 points respectively, to reflect the severity or urgency of their needs. For this type of housing we will match an individual applicant to a specific property ensuring best use is made of the accommodation.

Very Sheltered Housing and Housing with Care

Applicants for the above will have their medical needs assessed and prioritised by the relevant panel and will be awarded a low medium or high priority, with 20, 40 or 70 points respectively, to reflect the severity or urgency of their needs. For this type of housing we will match an individual applicant to a specific property ensuring best use is made of the accommodation.

MAKING OFFERS OF HOUSING THAT IS READILY AVAILABLE

Houses may be classified as "readily available" under the following circumstances:

- When there is little or no demand for a particular empty property, or
- The property has been formally offered and refused three times, or
- The property has been fit to view and had remained un-let after 3 weeks.

Properties deemed to be readily available will be let by advertising 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 participating landlords' web sites and in their offices.

LOCAL LETTING INITIATIVES

From time to time, landlords may introduce special rules for letting houses in certain areas of the City . This can be for a number of reasons including:

- Where houses are difficult to let, or
- Where there are management reasons which mean that we wish to depart from the agreed letting policy for a certain area or a certain type of 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 or the Boards of participating RSLs. The relevant landlords will monitor any local letting initiative to make sure that it has been effective.

When setting up Local Letting Initiatives, due regard will be taken of legislative requirements. Local tenants, residents and elected/ board members will be involved in the development of local letting and details of the scheme will be advertised. Initiatives will be reviewed every 6 months in order to assess their continued need.

PRE-TENANCY CHECKS

Prior to making an offer of housing, pre-tenancy checks will have been carried out for all applicants. Landlords who participate in the Common Housing Register will share information between them or seek references from other landlords operating outwith Dundee.

These checks will include carrying out interviews with applicants to confirm their current housing circumstances and check that their current tenancy is being maintained to a satisfactory standard, this may include carrying out home visits. Checks will be carried out for evidence of debt related to a tenancy, evidence of serious antisocial behaviour or other serious breaches of tenancy.

Where information indicates the applicant will not be able to maintain a tenancy straight away, the application may be suspended for a period of time (from a minimum of one month, for example to assess needs for support to a maximum of one year for evidence of serious anti-social behaviour), to allow further investigation, to allow a support package to be put in place or to allow the applicant to take the necessary steps to resolve their problem.

Where an applicant has been evicted as a result of antisocial behaviour within the past 3 years, where they are made an offer of housing, this will be a Short SST with support. Where there is evidence of antisocial behaviour, the applicant will remain on the active waiting list and have their behaviour monitored. No offer of housing will be made unless the level of behaviour is considered satisfactory by the Council or Housing Association.

Applicants who have a debt related to a tenancy that is worth more than one month's rent will be suspended and there is no repayment arrangement in place which has been maintained for at least 3 months. Their agreement to pay will be monitored and offers of housing will be dependent on evidence of satisfactory repayments. If the applicant is bypassed for an offer, they will receive written confirmation of the following:

- The reason why they will not be offered housing now.
- An explanation of the next steps in the process.
- The steps they can take to resolve the problem.
- Advice on when their case will be reviewed.
- Their right to appeal the decision.

National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders

This policy is subject to the National Accommodation Strategy for Sex Offenders (NASSO) published in January 2012, which sets out the arrangements for housing offenders subject to the sex offender notification requirements. Evidence of whether the applicant or anyone in their household is required to register with the police under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. In these circumstances we may still be able to offer a house to the applicant, but it may influence the location of any house we offer

OFFERS OF HOUSING

Number of Offers

Applicants will be made offers of housing to meet their needs, as stated in their application. However, in cases where the applicant refuses a number of reasonable offers (i.e. meeting the assessed needs and preferences of the applicant), landlords reserve the right to re-interview and re-assess the applicant's application.

In cases where the applicant is homeless, after a reasonable offer has been refused, the City Council may decide that their duty, or the duty of RSLs, to re-house the applicant under homeless legislation has been discharged.

Other Allocation and Exchange Schemes

Other than through the housing waiting list, there are other opportunities for tenants to be rehoused which may in certain circumstances be more appropriate.

Mutual Exchanges

Several of the landlords participating in the CHR operate the Dundee House Exchange Scheme for Mutual Exchanges. The scheme provides the facility for secure tenants to exchange their home:

- Registrations are advertised online at www.houseexchange.org.uk. The exchange must be with another Scottish Secure tenant whose landlord is a local authority, registered social landlord, water authority or sewerage authority.
- Applications will also be accepted from tenants who wish to exchange with a secure tenant of a local authority in other parts of the UK
- Both landlords must agree to the exchange. Applicants who wish to apply can contact the Letting Centre.

We will carry out a pre-tenancy check on our tenant/s. Where there is a debt that is related to a tenancy, it must be no more than one-twelfth of the annual rent owed to the landlord, or there must be an agreement in place to clear the debt and this must have been kept for a minimum of 13 weeks. Tenants must not be subject to ongoing action for antisocial behaviour prior to the exchange being approved. We will not refuse an application for a mutual exchange without good reason.

Management Transfers

A management transfer is used to assist in urgent re-housing cases where the allocation policy would not deliver a resolution quickly enough. Management transfers can apply to tenants of the Council or partner housing associations.

Management transfers should only be granted where there is a serious risk to the tenant should they remain in the current tenancy or where, for compelling and exceptional reasons, we wish to re-house the applicant as a matter of urgency. Examples of this are:

- Information obtained from Police or Anti-Social Behaviour Unit that the person is under threat if they remain in their present accommodation.
- Request from Social Work to remove an individual or family for personal safety reasons e.g. under MARAC.
- Other reasons as deemed necessary by the landlord.

Only one reasonable offer of a Management Transfer will be given and should this be refused the Management Transfer will be cancelled, unless there are highly exceptional circumstances which can be justified to permit a second offer.

APPEALS

If an applicant is unhappy with a decision, an offer of housing or the cancellation of an application, they have the right to appeal. If the applicant wishes, landlords will help them to complete an appeal, or they can have a friend or relative make the appeal for them, as long as the applicant gives their permission. The appeal will be dealt with by a more senior member of staff not related to the initial decision or offer of housing. Applicants will be advised of the outcome of the appeal in writing within 28 days. We will monitor the number of appeals we receive, analyse the data and use our findings to improve our future performance.

If an applicant is unhappy with a medical assessment made by the Tayside Medical Advisory Service, a separate appeals process exists. Where an applicant wishes to appeal, we will give them assistance.

Complaints

If an applicant or service user feels they have been treated unfairly or are unhappy with the level of service they have received, the applicant can complain by letter, by telephone, or by using a Complaints form which is available from landlords websites.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

Should an applicant or service user remain dissatisfied having exhausted the organisations' internal complaints procedures the applicant/service user can complain to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman:

SPSO
 Freepost EH641
 Edinburgh
 EH3 0BR
www.spsso.org.uk/online-leaflets
 0800 377 7330

Advice can also be had from Shelter:

Shelter
 Shelter Housing Aid Centre
 32 South Tay Street
 Dundee City Council

DD1 1PD
01382 225544

Other local advice agencies within Dundee can provide advice and advocacy on housing allocation matters. Details can be found on the Council's website.

Monitor and Review

We will review this policy every 3 years. It will also be monitored regularly to ensure that equality requirements are met in terms of access to and allocation of housing as set out in the Scottish Social housing Charter.

- We will monitor regularly the quality of a percentage of all offers of housing made to applicants in each of the 3 groups and review the data to ensure that we are meeting our objectives to giving greatest priority to people in need.
- We will monitor regularly the quality of a percentage of all application forms processed to make sure we are getting it right.
- 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.

Summary of Points Awards and Targets

	Points Group	Number of Points	Targets
Homeless Group	Homeless	70	40%
	People in Tied Accommodation with a Notice to Quit (not assessed as in priority need under the homeless legislation)	70	
	People who are within 6 months of their anticipated release date from Prison	70	
	Members of HM Forces who are within 9 months of their anticipated date of discharge	70	
General Needs	Housing which is Below the Tolerable Standard	70	30%
	Overcrowded - require one additional bedroom	40	
	Overcrowded - require two or more bedrooms	70	
	Under Occupied - 1 bedroom more than needed.	40	
	Under Occupied - 2 bedrooms more than needed.	70	
	Medical - Low	20	
	Medical - Medium	40	
	Medical - High	70	
	High Social Needs**	70	
	Social Needs*	40	
	Non Householders – Sharing facilities	20	
	Non Householders – Want own tenancy	10	
Transfers	Redevelopment	70	30%
	Overcrowded - require one additional bedroom	40	
	Overcrowded - require two or more bedrooms	70	
	Under Occupied - 1 bedroom more than needed.	40	
	Under Occupied - 2 bedroom more than needed.	70	
	Medical - Low	20	
	Medical - Medium	40	
	Medical - High	70	
	High Social Needs**	70	
	Social Needs*	40	

** Those who are at risk in their current housing and who would benefit from a move. This includes Domestic abuse where this is not being tackled through homelessness priority, Harassment where this is significant but not so great that it merits emergency re-housing/management transfer, Child Protection issues from MARAC/ where this not dealt with through management transfer/emergency re-housing.

* people who need to give support or who need to move because of employment/education.