

Lettings and Allocation Policy

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Approved by	Directors Group
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Lines of Defence/how is the document audited?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Lettings and Allocations Working Group2. Staff 121 Meetings with Allocations Officer3. Annual Review

1. Scope and Aims

- 1.1. Hexagon Housing Association (Hexagon) aims to provide decent, affordable homes for lower income households in South London.
- 1.2. Under the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Consumer Standards, and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, Hexagon is required to allocate and let our homes in a fair, transparent, and efficient way that takes the needs of tenants and prospective tenants into account. This policy aims to:
 - 1.2.1. Make the best use of available housing;
 - 1.2.2. Be compatible with the purpose of the housing;
 - 1.2.3. Contribute to local authorities' strategic housing function and sustainable communities;
 - 1.2.4. Provide a transparent application, decision-making and appeals process;
 - 1.2.5. Enable tenants to gain access to opportunities to exchange their tenancy with that of another tenant.
- 1.3. This policy applies to the letting of our existing properties as they become empty, as well as newly built or acquired properties. This policy does not apply to any commercial lettings, intermediate rented properties, leasehold, shared ownership or garages. It also does not apply to tenancies granted following a review of an existing tenancy, including a Starter or Fixed Term Tenancy.
- 1.4. This policy does not cover: the transfer of tenancies made by any appropriate Court Order; the letting of properties managed by others on behalf of Hexagon; lettings made in specifically designated temporary accommodation, the decanting of existing residents, or residents mutually exchanging their tenancies.
- 1.5. This policy is a statement of principle, it does not override our statutory, contractual, or other legal obligations.
- 1.6. Hexagon has the final decision to grant or refuse a tenancy, and whether to allow an applicant or transfer applicant to move into one of our properties.

2. Equality and Diversity

- 2.1. An equality and diversity impact assessment has been carried out and is attached as an appendix to this Policy. This Policy will be implemented in

accordance with Hexagon's responsibilities and duties under relevant legislation, including the Equalities Act 2010.

- 2.2. Hexagon will treat all customers fairly, and with respect, and will not discriminate against any person on the grounds of disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, age, sex, sexual orientation, or marriage and civil partnerships.
- 2.3. Hexagon monitors the protected characteristics of applicants to ensure that this policy is applied fairly and consistently. We review allocations data annually in comparison with statistics from local authority housing registers to promote equal opportunities and tackle social exclusion.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1. In letting our homes, Hexagon will work in partnership with local authorities, as well as facilitate mutual exchange or Band A transfers.
- 3.3. Hexagon maintain nomination agreements, whereby an agreed proportion of our homes are allocated to applicants proposed by another body, such as a local authority, for the purpose of a statutory offer of housing. Hexagon reserves the right to decline nominations in accordance with the provisions in those nomination agreements and this policy.
- 3.4. A small proportion of our properties are used to accommodate Transfers for those with a recognised housing need according to our banding scheme or transfer schemes. We advertise these homes through nomination agreements with local authority or make the transfer applicant a direct offer.
- 3.5. In exceptional circumstances, where we are unable to allocate a suitable property for a direct offer, we may seek a reciprocal agreement with a local authority or another housing association. These arrangements are made outside of nomination agreements.
- 3.6. On occasion a property may be classed as 'difficult to let'. This includes where a property is refused by more than 3 consecutive nominees, or there may be no suitable applicants currently matched to the property profile (for example in the case of disability adapted properties). In which case we may consider advertising homes on through other non-statutory or charitable organisations working in the Registered Provider housing sector.
- 3.7. Where a member of the household is not entitled to succession rights, no agreement will be entered into, and a Notice to Quit (NTQ) shall be served on the deceased tenant's personal representatives to obtain possession.

4. Principles of Letting

- 4.1. Hexagon will obtain full, reliable and comparable information about an applicant's housing situation and needs, from the applicant themselves, and from the nominating or referring organisation, before making an offer of housing. All information provided to Hexagon will be kept confidential though it may be shared with partner local authorities and other registered landlords. This will be held in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK-GDPR.
- 4.2. Medical needs are assessed by an independent advisor.
- 4.3. Adapted and Disabled access/accessible homes will be let in line with local authority nomination guidelines. However, if they are unable to source a nomination, Hexagon reserves the right to approach other specialist agencies.
- 4.4. Standard forms are used at all stages to ensure that applicants are assessed on the same basis.
- 4.5. All decisions on lettings are made by more than one person.
- 4.6. Details of all lettings are recorded using the government's National Core System.

5. Allocations

- 5.1. Hexagon does not operate a waiting list and will not consider direct applications from individuals seeking rehousing unless for urgent internal transfers. Existing tenants wanting to move need to be registered on the local Choice Based Lettings scheme, where they are eligible to do so, and/or pursue a mutual exchange.
- 5.2. Applicants will be assessed according to a banding scheme to determine their relative priority. There are 3 bands:
 - 5.2.1. Emergency Housing Need – (Band A / Category 1)
 - 5.2.2. Urgent Housing Need – (Band B / Category 2)
 - 5.2.3. Identified Housing Need – (Band C / Category 3)
- 5.3. Hexagon will not normally offer tenancies to people under 18 years of age, however we will in exceptional circumstances house 16 or 18-year olds where they have a guarantor in place or the service is contracted to work with them.
- 5.4. Hexagon seeks to provide housing for those who are in most need. All applicants must meet our eligibility criteria, as follows. Applicants must:

- 5.4.1. Have a housing need.
- 5.4.2. Not own their own home or hold another tenancy elsewhere.
- 5.4.3. Not currently be serving a custodial sentence.
- 5.4.4. Be able to demonstrate they can sustain a tenancy and manage risk, with support where required.
- 5.4.5. Complete an affordability review that demonstrates the applicant can also maintain a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of the applicant and their household, including food, clothing and other essentials as well as their rent.
- 5.4.6. Be nominated, or bid, for the appropriate size property that they are eligible for using our bedroom standard (see below).

5.5. Bedroom Standard: When considering re-housing requirements, in most circumstances the following will be deemed to be appropriate to needs:

Single Adult	One Single Room
Couple or Head of Lone parent household	One double room
One child in family	Single room of their own
Child over 16 years of age	Single bedroom of their own
Two children under 16 years of age, and of the same sex	Double room
Two children of the opposite sex where the oldest is not yet 13 years of age	Double room
Two children of the opposite sex where the eldest has reached 13 years of age	Two single rooms

- 5.6. In exceptional circumstances, up to one bedroom under-occupation or two bed space over crowding can be agreed by the Head of Housing Services.
- 5.7. In addition to the above eligibility criteria, General Needs applicants must not:
 - 5.7.1. Have been previously evicted from a Hexagon property due to a breach of tenancy, including anti-social behaviour, non-payment of rent or charges, tenancy fraud or misrepresentation.
 - 5.7.2. Be known to have, or members of their household are known to have, caused serious anti-social behaviour e.g. have been evicted or convicted due to antisocial behaviour.

- 5.7.3. Have outstanding debts to Hexagon as a result of failure to pay rent, court costs, rechargeable repairs or any other debt.
- 5.8. The local authority partners have each set their own thresholds for earned income, savings and/or asset value, Hexagon will adopt the same levels for Transfer applicant(s). Households exceeding these thresholds will be deemed to have sufficient resources to meet their own housing needs in the private sector. Welfare benefits are excluded from income thresholds. Applicants above these limits will only be accepted with the approval of the Director of Operations in exceptional circumstances. Non-disclosure of savings, assets or income later identified will be classified as fraudulent and could result in legal action to recover any property let under such pretences.
- 5.9. Hexagon will only consider applications from people who meet the criteria set out in the Housing Act 1996, the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, and the current statutory guidance.

6. Eligibility criteria for transfer applicants

- 6.1. A transfer applicant must:
 - 6.1.1. Have a housing need;
 - 6.1.2. Be able to demonstrate that they can sustain a tenancy in the new home, with support where required, including being able to afford to the rent;
 - 6.1.3. Be an assured, secure or fixed term tenant;
 - 6.1.4. Have maintained the property in good condition;
 - 6.1.5. Have complied with the terms of their tenancy;
 - 6.1.6. Apply for the appropriate size property that they are eligible for using our bedroom standard.
- 6.2. Tenants who have arrears of rent might only be considered at the discretion of the Director of Operations;
- 6.3. We will accept housing applications from anyone aged 16 or 17 years provided that a trustee is in place before an offer of accommodation is made. Hexagon will not act as a trustee.
- 6.4. In exceptional cases, we consider requests to transfer where a tenant does not fulfil the criteria set out here.

7. Violent, sexual and other dangerous offenders

- 7.1. Hexagon will not exclude high risk offenders including those subject to a Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) from accessing housing unless there is an unacceptable risk.
- 7.2. When assessing applications our overriding priority is the protection of the public, our residents, employees and contractors.
- 7.3. We will carry out a risk assessment for high-risk offenders including those subject to MAPPA and where appropriate will work with other relevant agencies in assessing the risk. We will refuse an application where measures to mitigate the risk are not sufficient.
- 7.4. We recognise that high risk offenders may themselves become a target of harassment and other crimes. We will ensure that the health and safety of high-risk offenders and their household are taken into consideration.
- 7.5. We will ensure that sensitive information is managed securely and will safeguard the rights of individuals regarding confidentiality and privacy. We will only share and disclose information when the law permits and in-line with the General Data Protection Regulations.

8. Eligibility of previously evicted applicants

- 8.1. Whilst previous customers who have been evicted might be nominated by a Local Authority as part of a future Homeless duty, any such applicant / household will be ineligible for Hexagon accommodation for the minimum periods stated below:
 - 8.1.1. Anti-social behaviour: 10 years (subject to risk assessment / review of legal action)
 - 8.1.2. Rent Arrears: 5 years (plus repayment of the debt)
 - 8.1.3. Tenancy fraud: Permanently
 - 8.1.4. Arson: Permanently

9. Management Transfers

- 9.1. A management transfer is a transfer that takes place outside of the usual Transfer process. Management transfers are offered under extremely limited circumstances and on a single offer only basis.
- 9.2. A management transfer can be considered if a tenant or member of their household is at risk of significant harm from someone not living in their

household. This can be due to serious domestic abuse, gang violence, or being a victim of cuckooing or hate crime.

- 9.3. Supporting evidence must be provided from an appropriate police officer, the chair of a safeguarding panel, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC) or via vulnerability matrix.
- 9.4. There will also be occasions where a management transfer is required where it has been identified that the resident or family are unable to evacuate the property in the event of an emergency.
- 9.5. There are circumstances where Hexagon will consider a management transfer following receipt of an official medical report from an occupational therapist or qualified medical practitioner detailing the following:
 - 9.5.1. Medical diagnosis and supporting documentation;
 - 9.5.2. Why the current property is unsuitable related to their medical condition;
 - 9.5.3. Any future housing needs.
- 9.6. For all agreed management transfer cases the tenant will be entitled to one reasonable offer of a property of the same bedroom size as they currently occupy. If the offer is refused, an appeal will be heard by the Head of Housing Services.
- 9.7. In the event that no suitable property is identified within a reasonable period from the date the management transfer is agreed (not exceeding twenty-four months), we will work with the local housing authority and any other relevant agencies to encourage a move to a suitable property outside of our stock.
- 9.8. If a management transfer has not been completed within six months, the risk will need to be re-confirmed by the relevant supporting agency at least every three months.
- 9.9. Offers will be based on bedroom need rather than current bedroom size/capacity, and location outside of the borough or area of risk rather than a resident preference.

10. Right to review / Appeals

- 10.1. New Applicants may not make an appeal against our decision and should direct their appeal to the nominating local authority. However, unsuccessful applicants may request a review to Hexagon based on our decision:

10.1.1. Not to offer them a home if they feel that all the information they have provided has not been taken into consideration;

10.1.2. If they feel they have been unfairly treated.

10.2. Requests to review the allocations decision should be made within seven days of being notified of the decision. Applicants must include the reasons why they are requesting a review.

10.3. A review will not be treated as a complaint but is in place to ensure that any decision made is reasonable and justified. The review will be conducted by a senior manager from Housing Services who was not involved in the original decision.

10.4. Where there is a dispute about an offer of accommodation, we will withdraw the offer and relet the property to ensure that rental loss is minimised.

10.5. We will ensure that alternative arrangements are made for applicants with impairments, learning difficulties, or where English is not their first language. These applicants will not be prevented from making an appeal as a result of any such difficulties.

11. Sensitive lettings

11.1. Hexagon may class a property, or properties, as requiring a sensitive letting if we need to set a lettings criterion for a property or a specific group of properties. This may include where there has been an eviction, ongoing anti-social behaviour, or where we have received a request from our statutory partners not to house certain individuals at specific locations.

12. False Information

12.1. An application may be cancelled if it found that false or misleading information has been given. If this is identified after the applicant has been granted a tenancy, we may take action for possession of that person's home in accordance with legislation.

13. Monitoring

13.1. Hexagon will record all lettings as required by the Continuous Recording of Lettings (CORE) system. This does not include personal information.

14. Legal Framework

- Social Housing (Regulations) Act 2023
- Housing Act 1985 and 1996

- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Equality Act 2010
- Regulator of Social Housing Regulatory Standards 2012
- Immigration (Residential Accommodation) (Prescribed Requirements & codes of practice) (Amendment) Order 2016
- General Data Protection Regulations 2018
- The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006

15. Related Hexagon policies, strategies and procedures

15.1. Mutual Exchange Policy

15.2. Decant Policy

15.3. Fraud, Theft and Bribery Policy

15.4. Lettings Procedure

15.5. Band A Transfers Procedure

16. Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment

Part one: Initial Screening

Name of policy, service or function	Lettings and Allocations Policy
Current or Proposed	Proposed
Persons completing Initial screening	Steve Hickman-Brown, Head of Housing Carly Foley, Neighbourhood and Estate Lead Anita Akinbayo, Allocations Officer
<p>Following a LEAN revision of the Allocations and Lettings Procedure, this new policy sets out how Hexagon will process nominations to all properties, outlining the expectations, criteria, caveats and exclusions in a transparent and open policy document.</p> <p>It will affect all new nominations received from local authorities, and those looking to transfer within Hexagons existing stock.</p> <p>This policy meets the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housings Tenancy Standards.</p>	

Screening

Protected Characteristic	Say if impact is positive, negative, or none			Reason
	Positive	Negative	No Impact	
Age			X	
Disability			X	
Gender			X	
Gender reassignment			X	
Race			X	
Religion or belief			X	
Sexual orientation			X	
Socio-economic status	X			The provision of social housing to those who are at risk of or currently homeless or on benefits. The nomination criteria for social housing is agreed between local authorities and housing association.

What are the arrangements for monitoring the policy and its impact on customers?

This policy will be reviewed every three years. CORE records essential criteria and a newly created Tenant Satisfaction survey will capture customer feedback specifically around Lettings and Allocation. Equality Data is gathered annually for the SDR and KPI's etc

As no negative impact has been determined, we will not proceed to part 2 of the Equality Impact Assessment.