

CHANGING LIVES

HOMES

ALLOCATIONS & LETTINGS POLICY

Policy Summary

Policy Aim: This policy outlines Changing Lives Homes' approach to allocating and letting homes. To provide excellent standards of service our customers in compliance with legal and regulatory legislation.

Statutory Compliance: To make the process of letting properties efficient, effective and to give reasonable preference to those in priority need. To make the best use of stock and to promote, achieve and maintain sustainable and balanced local communities.

Review and Monitor Requests: This policy will be reviewed every three years unless there are business, sector developments or significant changes to best practice, regulatory or legislative requirements.

Document Name: Allocations & Lettings Policy

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Approval Standard Required: SLT

Date of Approval: April 2025

Next Revision Date: April 2028 (Every 3 years)

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This standard applies to all the work undertaken by Changing Lives Homes and its subsidiaries, and in all locations that the charity operates. This standard is accompanied by specific guidance for colleagues. Therefore, the information within this standard is primarily intended for use by managers and supervisors.

Revision	Date	Record of Changes	Approved by
1.0	10/03/2025	Initial Creation	SLT

Changing Lives Homes' approach to letting its properties, fulfils the following policy objectives:

- Contributes to the development of balanced and sustainable communities.
- Maximises access and informed choice for housing applicants.
- Promotes social inclusion and equality of opportunity.
- Provides an open, fair, and transparent allocation process.
- Makes effective use of available properties.
- Maximises Changing Lives Homes income by minimising void losses.
- Adheres to relevant legislation and/or regulatory requirement

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline Changing Lives Homes' approach to offering its empty homes and signposts to specific lettings policies in place across Changing Lives Homes' geographical locations.

To meet the needs of those people who need housing, whilst making sure that Changing Lives Homes' properties are let as quickly as possible.

To make the best use of stock and to promote, achieve and maintain sustainable and balanced local communities.

To make the process of letting properties efficient, effective and to give reasonable preference to those in priority need.

This policy does not go into the detail of specific lettings policies of those housing providers we work with in relation to the legal context of the reasonable preference groups or how each organisation prioritises housing needs.

Reasonable Preferences

The law says reasonable preference must be given to 5 groups of applicants:

- People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within the meaning of Part VII (7) of the Housing Act 1996.
- People who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2), or 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996 Act
- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including any grounds relating to a disability).
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the authority's district, where failure to meet the need would cause hardship to themselves or other.

Policy Detail

Changing Lives Homes provides Housing in the following areas:

- Northumberland
- Newcastle Upon Tyne
- North Tyneside
- Gateshead Home choice
- South Tyneside
- Sunderland
- Durham
- Tees Valley (covering Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton)
- Doncaster
- Dagenham

Changing Lives Homes stock in all area's is allocated through a local authority nomination agreement. Except for our Homelife properties where Applications can be received directly.

Changing Lives Homes eligibility criteria for making an offer

Changing Lives Homes will apply the following eligibility test prior to making an offer of accommodation in accordance with The Localism Act amended by the Housing Act 199 which enables registered providers to disqualify people whose behaviour makes them unacceptable for an offer of accommodation. These criteria will apply regardless of which way an applicant comes to us for housing.

In accordance with s.166A(5) of the Housing Act 1996, applicants will not be considered for an offer if we are satisfied that they or a member of their household who will live with them or intends to live with them:

- Has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour that is serious enough to make the person unsuitable to be offered housing and, when we consider the application, we believe that the person remains unsuitable to be offered housing because of that behaviour.

Changing Lives Homes may regard an applicant, or any member of their household as having been guilty of unacceptable behaviour if any of the following statements applies to them (this is not an exhaustive list):

- They have been convicted of a drug-related offence.
- They have been convicted of a violent criminal offence that we consider makes them a threat to the local community.
- They have been convicted of a sex-related offence that we consider makes them a threat to the local community.
- They have any other conviction which, in our opinion, makes them a threat to the local community.
- They have perpetrated violence, domestic violence, racial violence, hate crime or harassment.
- They have been abusive to, attacked or threatened staff.
- They have a history of anti-social behaviour or are subject to an anti-social behaviour order or equivalent.
- They have a record of unacceptable rent/mortgage arrears* to Changing Lives Homes, other local councils or other landlords/lenders (including associated court costs).
- They have been evicted on any of the grounds in Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 or any statutory amendment or re-enactment of it.
- They have unsatisfactory tenancy reports which may include condition of property.

- They have damaged a current or previous rented home and owe money for rechargeable repairs.
- They have knowingly given a false statement or given false information when applying to join our housing register.
- Tenants who have (a) signed up to a new tenancy in the last 12 months, and (b) who we regard as adequately housed. All new adequately housed tenants will be disqualified until one year after their tenancy start date unless they have had a material change of circumstances since their tenancy start date. *
- Any applicant who has refused three offers of a suitable property from Changing Lives Homes and is making a new application within 12 months of the last refusal date. *

Changing Lives Homes may in the cases shown by * waive these exclusions if appropriate and will consider each application on a case-by-case basis.

Not with standing the foregoing provisions, Changing Lives Homes will also have regard to the mental and physical wellbeing of any applicant and may decide to make an offer of accommodation.

Verifying information provided before Changing Lives Homes will make an offer

Changing Lives Homes will request from the applicant the information detailed below prior to making any offer of accommodation. This is not an exhaustive list:

- A full housing history for the last 6 years. We will use this housing history to determine if there is any history of rent or mortgage arrears or any unacceptable behaviour which Changing Lives Homes believes would make them unsuitable to become our tenant. When looking at housing history we will consider each application on a case-by-case basis.
- Proof of identification for the main applicant and any joint applicants, this should be photographic ID such as a passport or driver's license
- Proof of residency where possible (for example utility bill, letter from the person an applicant is staying with). If this is not possible, we will consider each case on its own merit.
- Evidence of an applicant's immigration status if they are not normally resident in the UK or have come to the country from abroad.
- Evidence the applicant has been awarded settled status
- Proof the applicant has the right to rent – such original immigration documentation or confirmation

via an online identity service provider (IDSP)

- Proof of income, so we can assess whether the applicant/s can afford the property we offer.
- Proof of joint custody, if applicants would like to be considered for a larger property than the household make-up would require.
- Proof of pregnancy to show the need for an extra bedroom where applicable.
- Proof of fostering or adopting status, if an applicant would like to be considered for a larger property than the household make-up would normally require.
- Proof that applicants and their partner cannot share a bedroom for medical reasons.
- Proof that 2 children cannot share a bedroom for medical reasons.
- Proof of an overnight carer from outside the household, if a larger property is needed to accommodate the carer.

In addition, prior to making an offer we will seek references to determine whether an applicant is suitable to receive an offer of a Changing Lives Homes property this may include but is not limited to:

- Current and former landlord references
- Reference from mortgage provider
- Criminal record check such as a Basic DBS check or Safer Estates Check
- Supporting information and support plans. In the case where any support needs and/or vulnerabilities are identified as requiring more intensive involvement than Changing Lives Homes can provide we may decide not to make an offer of accommodation. In such instances support and clear advice regarding alternative housing options will be offered.

Changing Lives Homes reserves the right to request the applicant provides references before we will make an offer.

Property Entitlement when making an offer

Changing Lives Homes aims to create balanced and sustainable communities and also to make best use of its housing stock.

When considering what type of accommodation, we will offer we will take into account that a separate bedroom is considered necessary in each of the following circumstances:

- A single person aged 16 or over.
- A couple.
- Two children of the same sex under 16.
- Two children of opposite sex under the age 10.
- Any additional child including any unborn child on proof of pregnancy.
- A non-resident carer providing 24/7 care.
- A household member with a disability where there is medical evidence that they need their own room.
- A foster child.

Changing Lives Homes will allow under occupation in the following circumstances:

- Where there is a local letting policy in place.
- Properties in an area where there is a shortage or no provision of a particular property type for example one bedroomed properties.
- Properties which have been adapted and are suitable for certain applicants.
- For specific management reasons for example where properties have been through an advertising cycle and have not been allocated, we may allow under occupation. Under occupation is only allowed where an applicant can demonstrate that they meet the affordability criteria.

The criteria above will apply to both housing register customers and existing Karbon tenants.

Refusal of Offers

If an applicant refuses 3 suitable offers made by Changing Lives Homes within a 12-month period, they will not be made any further offers of accommodation for a period of 6 months from the date of their last refusal. The suitability of offers will be decided by Changing Lives Homes.

Withdrawal of an Offer

We may also withdraw an offer of accommodation at any stage of the allocation process, when we do this, we will explain to the applicant why we have done this.

Examples of why we may withdraw an offer include:

- The applicant has provided false or misleading information
- The applicant has withheld information
- The outgoing tenant has withdrawn their notice
- Changing Lives Homes no longer intends to let the property.
- Where the customer's circumstances change, and they are no longer eligible for the property
- Other circumstances that make the property unsuitable due a risk of harm to the applicant or members of their household if they were to be rehoused in that property or the area the property is in. Changing Lives Homes will consult with relevant support agencies (such as social services) or with the police when making this decision.
- We may withdraw an offer of a property which is not adapted when an adapted property becomes available which meets the customer's needs.

This list is not exhaustive, and the withdrawal of an offer does not oblige Changing Lives Homes to make a further offer to the applicant or grant them a tenancy.

Direct Lets

In some circumstances we may offer a property directly to an applicant outside of the normal offer process. For example:

- Where there is urgent or immediate rehousing required.
- An emergency plan has been activated.
- Where the shortlist list has been exhausted.
- Where someone is being housed as part of a witness protection programme.
- Where a property has had significant adaptations, which makes it suitable for specific housing need.
- Other exceptional housing management reasons.
- Where offered as an immediately available home

When considering a Direct Let the applicant should be given appropriate housing advice to enable a move to be made quickly

Unless there are extenuating circumstances there will only be one offer, which Changing Lives Homes has determined is suitable, made to an applicant. If this offer is refused, then this may result in the offer of a Direct let being removed.

Sensitive Lets

In some schemes Changing Lives Homes may introduce additional eligibility criteria to address issues such as previous anti-social behaviour. This will be clearly stated on the advert. Properties or areas subject to a request for a sensitive let will be monitored and reviewed by a manager involved in the allocation process in conjunction with another appropriate manager on a quarterly basis to see if they still are relevant to our objective of creating sustainable, safe communities.

Viewing the Property

Once the applicant has viewed the empty home, they will have up to two working days in which to confirm their acceptance or refusal of the property. Changing Lives Homes will carry out multiple viewings or online viewings where we feel it is appropriate. We will make it clear to any customer invited to attend a multi viewing that failure to attend and not letting us know that they are not attending will be considered a refusal.

Updating Applications

Where Changing Lives Homes has processed their application, the applicant must tell Changing Lives Homes of any changes in circumstances which may affect their application for housing or eligibility to remain on the waiting list.

Any change of circumstances identified at the point of offer will result in Changing Lives Homes reassessing the application. Applications may be suspended, and any offers made will be withdrawn while the reassessment process is undertaken.



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