

confederation of co-operative housing

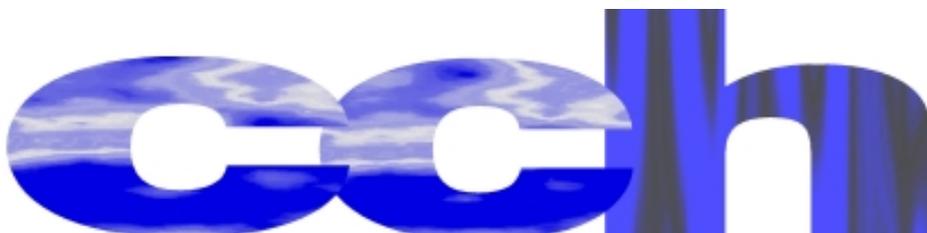
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allocations

model policies & procedures

introduction

- These policies and procedures are for co-ops managed by a management committee.



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allocations policy

OBJECTIVES OF THIS POLICY

The allocations policy has the following objectives:

- to enable the co-op to offer low cost housing to those who cannot meet their housing needs elsewhere
- to allocate properties by balancing housing need with “co-operability”
- to ensure that the co-op’s Equal Opportunities Policy is implemented in allocations, transfers and exchanges

1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 1.1 The co-op will not discriminate against any applicant on the grounds of race, religion, gender, ethnic origin, age, disability or sexuality.
- 1.2 The co-op will abide by all relevant equal opportunities legislation including sections 20 & 21 of the Race Relations Act 1976, the Commission of Racial Equality Code of Practice, sections 2 & 30 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The co-op undertakes to observe Section 15 of the Housing Act 1988 with regards housing staff, members and their close relatives. The co-op will also comply with the requirements of the Housing Corporation’s Tenants Guarantee 1989.
- 1.3 Applicants will be invited to describe their ethnic origin, sex and disabilities for monitoring purposes on the application form. Figures on applications and allocations will be compiled on an annual basis and if there is a wide variance between the percentage of allocations to minority groups and the surrounding population, the co-op will examine this issue.
- 1.4 The co-op supply information on applying to the co-op in languages spoken within the local community, and in large print, braille and cassette, as necessary.

2 ACCESS

- 2.1 The co-op will not restrict access by requesting deposits, rent in advance or by having residential qualifications. References will only be sought from

other responsible social landlords.

3 APPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The co-op will allocate 50% of its properties to local authority nominees, and for each vacant property, will request 3 nominations from *** Council.
- 3.2 The co-op will allocate the other 50% of its properties, and any properties for which *** Council fail to make allocations for within reasonable timescales, to persons on the Co-op’s waiting list.

4 THE WAITING LIST

- 4.1 The co-op will ensure that the operation of its waiting list is publicised as widely and as fairly as possible, both in the local area and, if appropriate, across the whole local authority area. The co-op will pay particular regard to advertising its waiting list to ethnic minorities and other potentially disadvantaged groups who may otherwise find it difficult to obtain housing.
- 4.2 The waiting list will be opened and closed at the discretion of the management committee. It will include new applicants and exchange applicants, and will include separate waiting lists for 1-bed, 2-bed etc accommodation. Membership of the waiting list will be reviewed once every 6 months.
- 4.3 A person who refuses 3 offers of accommodation without good reason will be removed from the waiting list
- 4.4 The co-op will send to each of the applicants to the waiting list:
 - information on the co-op
 - an application form to become a tenant of the co-operative
- 4.5 The co-op will provide help and advice on completing the application form as requested.

5 ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The co-op will establish an allocations sub-committee consisting of at least 2 members of the co-op who will consider applications. If any

applicant is known personally by a member of the allocations sub-committee, that member should declare an interest and not be party to that allocation of property.

5.2 The allocations sub-committee will determine whether a vacancy will be offered to *** Council or to the Co-op's waiting list.

5.3 The allocations sub-committee will consider 3 applications per vacancy and considerations will be primarily on the basis of housing need. However the co-op will also consider the applicant's desire to participate in the co-op and their previous history of community involvement.

5.4 The committee will consider the following factors when considering housing need:

- problems with existing accommodation, such as:
 - a homelessness
 - a overcrowding
 - a lack of self contained accommodation
 - a lack of facilities
 - a poor condition of property
 - a insecurity of tenure
 - a harassment
 - a the need to live nearer to other family or household members
- other problems which make present accommodation unsuitable, such as:
 - a medical circumstances
 - a age
 - a infirmity
 - a disability
 - a family disputes
 - a the need to live independently of family or current household
- the availability of alternative solutions, such as the applicant's ability to buy their own home
- the co-op's ability to meet the applicant's needs, and whether the property available is suitable for the applicant.

5.5 The allocations sub-committee will also make an objective judgment on the applicant's likely involvement with the housing co-op ("co-operability"), based on:

- an assessment of whether the applicant will attend housing co-op meetings
- an assessment of the applicant's interest in co-operative housing
- an assessment of whether the applicant is likely to get involved with the co-op
- the applicant's previous history of voluntary or community involvement
- the potential skills that the applicant is prepared to devote to the running of the co-op

All successful applicants should demonstrate a willingness to get involved in the running of the co-op.

5.6 The co-op will balance housing need with "co-operability" by using a points system which allocates a minimum of two-thirds of possible points allocated to housing need. The co-op's points system will be regularly reviewed (after 4 allocations are made) to ensure that the allocations system is free and fair.

5.7 No assessment will be made of the applicant's housekeeping standards.

5.8 The co-op will not ordinarily house applicants who own their own home, or who are in a position to own their own home.

6 INTERVIEW

6.1 All applicants will be invited to interview, and will be interviewed if they respond.

6.2 Interviews will normally be conducted at the applicant's current residence, unless there are particular reasons why this is not possible or unless this presents a security risk to any of the parties involved.

6.3 Interviews will be conducted by 2 members of the co-op, who will give some information about how the co-op works, assess the applications and determine to whom the property should be allocated.

6.4 The co-op will write to each applicant advising of the outcome. Where an application is refused the co-op will offer any relevant advice on other housing providers operating in the area.

7 ACCEPTANCE

- 7.1 Once the successful applicant has accepted the property, they will be invited to a “handover” of the property at which:
- the new tenant will be given a copy of the co-op’s policies, and will be informed of the date and place of the next co-op meeting
 - the new tenant will be invited to pay a £1 share to become a member of the co-op. If for any reason the prospective tenant refuses to pay a £1 share and become a member of the co-op, they will not be allowed to become a tenant of the co-op
 - the co-op will explain fully the terms of the tenancy agreement and the tenancy agreement will be signed by the new tenant(s) and a co-op representative
 - particularly if the new tenant has previously been a local authority or housing association tenant, the differences between statutory and contractual tenancies will be explained, particularly in relation to the Right to Buy
 - the co-op will explain how the new tenant can pay their rent to the co-op and will offer help to the tenant with housing benefit applications
 - other information about the property and area will be given to the new tenant.
- 7.2 The co-op will formally agree the successful applicant as a member of the co-op at the next available co-op meeting.

8 TRANSFERS & EXCHANGES

- 8.1 Prior to requesting nominations from the local authority, the allocations sub-committee will also consider whether there are requests for transfer from existing co-op tenants. A transfer application will only be accepted if the property to which the member wishes to transfer is suitable for their needs. If a transfer application is accepted, the co-op will seek nominations from the local authority for the property they are vacating.
- 8.2 The co-op will receive requests for transfer from members with rent arrears, but at the point of transfer, there should be no arrears outstanding on the tenant’s rent account. The co-op may be prepared to make an exception to this if the transfer is on the grounds of racial or other harassment including domestic violence, urgent medical grounds or other social reasons (for which

reasonable evidence will be required). In these cases, the tenant will be asked to sign a form accepting responsibility for their rent arrears.

- 8.3 Members will be allowed to carry out mutual exchanges with other tenants of the Co-op, of other housing co-ops, and other social landlords who give assured or secure tenancies, provided the incoming tenant(s) meet the co-op’s membership criteria; both properties are suitable to the housing needs of the parties and the allocations sub committee approves membership.
- 8.4 The co-op will participate in the HOMES mobility scheme where appropriate. For each tenant(s) of the co-op allocated an alternative home under the HOMES mobility scheme, a co-op property will be made available to the HOMES scheme.

9 JOINT TENANCIES

- 9.1 All persons residing in each property over the age of 18 will be eligible for membership of the co-op. All persons over the age of 18 who become members of the co-op will have to be listed as joint tenants of the property, and all tenants listed on the tenancy agreement must become members of the co-op.
- 9.2 In the event of a partnership breakdown, where one tenant has to move out of the property, the tenancy will normally be transferred to the member who has custody of children living in the property, subject to any court determination.
- 9.3 The co-op does not have the facility and will not be obliged to offer alternative accommodation to other joint tenant(s). A joint tenant’s membership of the co-op will cease if they move out of the property. However, the co-op may consider a nomination from the local authority favourably if it is from a former joint tenant of the co-op (awarding points under relevant housing need criteria).

10 REPORTING

- 10.1 The co-op will keep records of all nominations and allocations decisions.