



*A Community Benefit Society*  
*Reg. No. 11676R*

**Incorporating**

**STUART COURT MEMORIAL CHARITY**

# **ALLOCATIONS**

# **POLICY**

# Norwich Housing Society Allocations Policy

## 1. Policy Aims and Objectives

Norwich Housing Society (The Society) is a non-profit making organisation providing affordable homes to rent for people aged 60 and over in housing need, enabling them to live independently with support.

The Society's Allocations Policy will set the standards and guidelines for managing our waiting lists and the allocation of our properties.

The Society will allocate properties to applicants who have a current housing need, as determined by the information provided on the application form, the home assessment and its priority-based points system.

We seek to contribute to achieving stable and balanced communities. We will meet our legal and regulatory obligations when allocating properties. We will provide good quality information and advice to support applicants to make informed decisions relating to their housing need.

## 2. Legal or regulatory framework

The Regulator of Social Housing states that Registered providers shall let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. They shall take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants. They shall demonstrate how their lettings:

- Make the best use of available housing
- Applicants' needs are compatible with the housing provided
- Contribute to local authorities' strategic housing function and sustainable communities

There should be clear application, decision-making and appeals processes.

## 3. General Principles

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Society is committed to equal opportunities and will ensure that all applicants are treated fairly and equally in the allocation process regardless of Protected Characteristics.

### Confidentiality and Data Protection

- All information provided by applicants on the application form will be for the sole purpose of enabling the Society to assess the application for housing in accordance with this Policy, and the Data Protection Act 1998.
- Applicants and tenants are entitled to see any information that the Society holds on them, except information provided in confidence by a third party or

- confidential information regarding a member of their family. Applicants will need to make their request for information in writing.
- The duty of confidentiality may be waived in circumstances where the disclosure is in the wider public interests, for example the prevention or detection of crime.

### **Appeals and Complaints**

All applicants have the right to appeal against a decision relating to their application. This could relate to where the applicant feels we have unfairly cancelled their application or where applicants consider we have made an unreasonable offer of housing. Details of the Appeals policy and the Complaints policy can be found on our website or requested from the office.

### **4. Current Housing Need**

The Society aims to help people in current housing need who would benefit from supported housing because of their financial, medical, social or welfare circumstances. However the Society is unable to offer emergency housing.

### **5. Choice**

- Applicants may apply to be housed in specific schemes, or in specific locations. However the wait for vacancies to arise may prove longer as a result.
- Whilst the Society aims to meet preferences, it reserves the right to make offers of accommodation based on efficient use of its resources.
- A reasonable offer should, in the opinion of the Society, meet the applicant or tenant's needs in terms of the type and size of property they require. All properties should meet the Society's current minimum Lettable Standard.
- If a property should not meet this Standard, the Society may offer a decoration allowance to ensure the Standard is met. If the allowance is offered, this will be treated as a 'reasonable offer' of accommodation. Further details on the Lettable Standard can be requested from the Society.

### **6. Emergency Circumstances**

- The Society reserves the right to withdraw properties for allocation or to rehouse tenants for exceptional reasons such as major repair programmes, to meet strategic priorities or following disaster or emergency.

### **7. General Eligibility Conditions**

Applicants need to:

- Be over 60 years old or, for couples, one applicant needs to be over 60 and the other over 55 years old
- Be truthful and transparent about their circumstances
- Have the right to rent in the U.K.
- Have a Norwich connection (a current resident, via employment, or seeking/offering support to family members)

- Be able to sustain a tenancy or have the appropriate support package in place

**Applications will not be accepted where applicants:**

- Have a history of anti-social behaviour, crime or any unspent convictions and/or who are likely to be a threat or nuisance to our tenants or staff
- Evicted by / eviction sought by a former Landlord within the previous 5 years
- Have outstanding debts relating to previous accommodation or owed to the Society
- Have assets and/or income which would enable them to generate sufficient resources to secure alternative accommodation
- Have contrived to worsen their own housing circumstances in order to be perceived as being in greater housing need
- Are not able to live independently with the support the Society offers
- Are currently adequately housed according to the Society's Assessment Criteria
- Have pets, as they are not permitted in any of our properties

**8. Assessment of Applications**

Applicants should initially contact the Office to discuss eligibility. If they meet the criteria they will then need to complete the Society's application form. Joint applicants will both need to provide personal information.

On receipt of the completed form, a home assessment (or office-based assessment if the applicant/s do not live locally) will be undertaken by two Scheme Managers. The assessment is carried out to verify the accuracy of the application details and to request supporting information.

Where an applicant has a current tenancy or has previously held a tenancy, the Society may seek references regarding the conduct and payment record of the tenancy.

If the applicant is found to have deliberately provided false or misleading information, the Society will cancel the application.

After completion of an assessment the application will be discussed by a panel, and the applicant's need will be assessed on the basis of the Society's banding system. If accepted, the application will then be placed on the waiting list and prioritised by housing need.

All applications will be reviewed every six months.

We will cancel applications in the following circumstances

- Where an applicant requests a cancellation
- The death of an applicant
- If the applicant has been rehoused in suitable accommodation
- If the applicant fails to respond to their six monthly review or other requests for information

## **9. Internal Transfers**

The Society will accept applications from existing tenants who have progressed to an Assured Tenancy and need to move on a health basis, where housing circumstances and needs have changed since the initial allocation. An assessment and a property inspection will be carried out. Tenants who are in breach of a condition of their tenancy (including tenants who have neglected their property) will not have their transfer application accepted. The completed assessment will then be discussed by a panel.

Transfer requests will not be considered from tenants who have rent arrears or any other outstanding debt to the Society. Tenants who have cleared a debt with the Society must have had a clear rent account for at least 6 months.

## **10. Mutual Exchanges**

We will consider requests for mutual exchanges between the Society's tenants and with tenants of other registered social housing landlords.

We will not unreasonably refuse permission for a mutual exchange. Conditions regarding exchanges are detailed in the Society's Tenant Handbook.

We will also support individuals who want to move to another local authority area by providing details on landlords in their area of choice.

## **11. Offers & Refusals**

Social housing in Norwich is in extremely high demand and the Society seeks to ensure that its efforts and resources are focused on those in greatest need.

Applicants will be advised in writing as to whether their application has been successful and feedback will be provided to the applicant if requested.

If an applicant is made a maximum of three reasonable offers of accommodation matching their preference and refuses it, the Society reserves the right to remove them from the waiting list.

## **12. Successful Applicants**

Following a successful application, the tenant will be given a one-year Fixed Term Tenancy. This will be converted to an Assured Tenancy if they have complied with the terms of tenancy. If they accept a property with us we require one week's rent in advance, unless in receipt of housing benefit.

If the tenant owns a property that has not been sold before the end of the Fixed Term Tenancy, an Assured Tenancy will not be issued. We can consider extending the Fixed Term Tenancy if the property remains unsold.

If a tenancy is granted and is found to have been allocated on the basis of false or

misleading information, the Society may take legal action to end the tenancy.

The Society manages the day-to-day operations of the Stuart Court Memorial Charity who own 29 alms-houses over 3 sites in Norwich and is a member of the Almshouse Association.

Alms-houses do not have a power to grant a tenancy. The residents occupy the premises under license evidenced by a Letter of Appointment as a beneficiary of the Charity.

The license is not a contractual arrangement and does not create any form of secure tenancy. The relationship with the resident is that of a trustee and beneficiary, not landlord and tenant. Licensees do not have the right to a mutual exchange.

### **13. Review**

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis, to ensure that the Aims and Objectives are being achieved, and that best use is being made of the housing stock. The Society reserves the right to change or amend the policy after review, subject to the approval of the Society's Board, and to re-assess the status and priority of applicants in accordance with policy revisions, significant changes to legislation or other local circumstances.