

Allocations Policy

Customer Policy



1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Society aims to provide good quality housing at affordable rents to those in housing need.

2.0 POLICY

The Society will allocate 75% of its property in accordance with the Gloucestershire Homeseeker countywide Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme and the agreed transfer nomination agreement. The remaining 25% of voids will be allocated taking several factors into account including housing need, community requirements, housing supply and demand, and sustainability of the tenancy using best practice and following KLOE 7 on Allocations and Lettings.

3.0 IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Access to Housing

The Society maintains a waiting list for 25% of its stock. The Society has agreed to use the Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL scheme for Gloucestershire for the remaining 75% of voids. In addition:-

- The Society wishes to ensure equality of opportunity in access to its accommodation and in allocation of property. In order to assess whether it is achieving this objective the Society monitors the ethnic origin of those who apply for housing and of those who are re-housed.
- Staff dealing with customers will be trained to advise on the service and other linked services.
- Staff will treat all customers with respect.
- Customers will be able to access the service through a range of methods including the internet, in person, by letter and telephone etc.
- Customers will be canvassed for their views on the service.
- Customers will be signposted to other agencies, both statutory and voluntary as well as other social landlords where appropriate.
- The Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL scheme policy document contains sections relating to this area (see www.gloshomeseeker.co.uk).

3.2 Priority for Allocations

On the Society 25% allocation of voids

Applications will be pointed in accordance with the Society's published eligibility criteria and allocation scheme.

The Society's current tenants will be placed on the Society's waiting list as transfer applicants and will be considered by the Society in accordance with this policy. All

applicants will have the ability to choose where to be housed based on a points scheme which reflects housing need.

In order to be re-housed by the Society, transfer applicants accepted onto the Society's waiting list must demonstrate that they are eligible for re-housing in accordance with the Society's criteria:-

- Rent accounts must be clear prior to application.
- Their property must be in an acceptable state of repair and decoration prior to allocation.
- Exceptional medical/social problems cases will be considered on an individual basis.

75% of allocations made under the Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL scheme

The eligibility and assessment criteria and bandings are detailed in the Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL policy documents attached (see www.gloshomeseeker.co.uk).

3.3 Review of the Society Housing Register

All applications on the Society waiting list will be reviewed every 12 months on a rolling review to ensure that customers' current needs are being addressed.

3.4 Local Authority Void Entitlement (75%)

As detailed above, the Society will make 75% of its voids available to the Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL scheme in Gloucestershire.

For all allocations whether through the Society waiting list or the Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL scheme all applicants will need to demonstrate their suitability as a potential tenant before an allocation is made. They may therefore be expected to show clear evidence that their behaviour is acceptable and that of their household members via the Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL eligibility and verification framework for Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL.

In deciding whether any applicant is guilty of unacceptable behaviour the following will be taken into consideration:

- whether a court would decide that it was reasonable to grant possession (taking into account the housing needs of the applicant and their household)
- whether the court would grant an outright possession order rather than a suspended possession order, and
- that in the circumstances at the time of the application the tenant/applicant was unsuitable to be a tenant by reason of the behaviour in question (previous unacceptable behaviour may justify a decision that an applicant is unsuitable to be a tenant)

It should also be noted that in cases where an applicant or any person on their application has been accepted as eligible but is subsequently found to exhibit unacceptable behaviour

as outlined above then they will be removed from the Society waiting list and reviewed under the Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL system.

Under the Society waiting list any applicant, and those who form part of a Housing Application who owe current arrears, or who have been evicted for rent arrears and who still owe Former Tenants Arrears to the Society, or who have been evicted for anti-social behaviour will not be accepted for re-housing by the Society, until any debts owed to the Society are paid and the applicant can provide clear evidence that instances of anti social behaviour will not recur.

Under the Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL system bidders may be excluded from bidding and their application suspended if there is a former or current debt or they have been guilty of anti-social behaviour which could lead to a possession order.

No offer will be made to an applicant for whom support is required but is unavailable. This assessment will be carried out by the Society in liaison with a relevant support agency.

3.5 Diversity

The Society:-

- will obtain information, where available, on its service user profile and will ensure that its service meets the needs of its users.
- will monitor the ethnicity, vulnerability and disability of its users and deliver an appropriate service.
- will display this policy and other linked procedures, together with the Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL policy etc on its website where a translation service is available
- will produce information in a format which fulfils the needs of service user's e.g. large print, Braille or on tape.
- Will not discriminate against any person on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, disability, gender, sexuality, age, class, appearance, religion, responsibility for dependents, unrelated criminal activities, being HIV positive or with AIDS, or any other matter which causes a person to be treated with injustice.

3.6 Prevention of Homelessness

The Society will ensure that its housing management policies have effective measures in place for dealing with rent arrears, supporting tenants in debt and effective anti social behaviour management.

The Society will strive to make sure that relationships work well with Local Authorities to the benefit of all customers.

3.7 Nominations for Young People

Nominations for persons below 16 years of age will not be considered by the Society.

Nominations for persons between 16 and 18 years will be considered but evidence of adult/social services support and a rent trustee will be required (either a parent/guardian/Social Services or the Local Authority) before an offer of housing is made.

3.6 Local Lettings Policies & Starter Tenancies

The Society has and will adopt Local Lettings Policies in consultation with the relevant Local Authority and with the approval of the Tenant Services Authority in specific areas. This is to create stable, balanced and sustainable communities and to deal with crime and disorder issues and will take into account high child density areas. Local Lettings Plans will usually be used in conjunction with Starter Tenancy Agreements.

Starter Tenancies are Tenancies which last for 12 months from the tenancy commencement date. If, at the end of this 12 month period, the tenancy has not been terminated, it will automatically convert to an Assured Tenancy. The use of Starter Tenancies will be confined to help control Anti-Social Behaviour in specific areas and will not be used as a blanket measure for all new tenancies. They will apply to all void properties whether a Society allocation or a Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL bid, where applicable.

3.7 Management Transfers

The Society will consider moving tenants

- who are subject to severe racial or other harassment or nuisance,
- who need to be moved due to major works to their home,
- who have serious social or medical problems requiring an urgent move,
- who need to be moved to facilitate Development sites

by way of a management transfer. Management transfers will also be considered where it would enable the Society to make best use of its stock and release properties needed for allocation to other applicants. Management transfers will be offered a property of the same size and type wherever possible.

3.8 Best Use of Stock

The Society will using its own waiting list from time to time also consider building chains so that its own tenants are considered for larger/smaller accommodation and the resulting vacancies will be placed in the Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL system.

The Society will endeavour to reduce under occupation when approached by our customers, taking into consideration the supply of retirement and extra care housing and bungalows, the surrounding community and mix of housing types.

The Society undertakes where possible to use its low demand properties i.e. two bedroom flats for single homeless and couples without children as referred to in our Local Lettings Plans which are currently in place within parts of Tewkesbury, Churchdown and Brockworth. This is due to the recognised shortage of one bedroom accommodation in the area.

In terms of development The Society is committed to providing affordable sustainable homes with or without grant funding based on housing need.

The Society will endeavour to regenerate areas to make properties more attractive i.e. Westside, Priors Park, and will carry out estate improvements to areas where demand for properties is lower, which will consequently assist in the housing of homeless nominees.

The Society will consider the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic households and disabled households to ensure that we are offering attractive and appropriate housing.

3.9 Mutual Exchanges

The Society encourages applications for mutual exchanges between tenants either of the Society or with a tenant of another Association or Local Authority. All applications must be approved before any move takes place.

The Society will not refuse an application to exchange unless an exchange does not comply with the statute covering mutual exchanges.

The Society Mutual Exchange Register can be accessed via the main office reception area and the Severn Vale Housing Society website.

3.10 Rent to Homebuy

Rent to HomeBuy is a way to 'try before you buy' and helps buyers onto the property ladder. Rent to HomeBuy will help prospective buyers who find that they are unable to access the housing market at the present time.

Households who would normally be eligible to purchase a New Build HomeBuy property will be able to apply.

Rent to HomeBuy is intended for people who cannot afford to buy a suitable home in any other way. Applicants must be in housing need and be unable to afford outright purchase. It is designed to help you save up for a deposit whilst living in the property that you will eventually be able to purchase on a New Build HomeBuy basis.

3.11 Special Needs

The Society will endeavour to meet the requirements of those with Special Needs for housing accommodation e.g. allowing hearing and guide dogs into flats with communal entrances. Where suitable accommodation is not available the applicant will be referred to the Local Authority for consideration under its Enabling role.

3.12 Access to Information

Guidance information is available for all applicants, including those who wish to transfer or exchange. Information is also available to applicants on their position on the Housing Register and the likelihood and time frame expected for rehousing.

4.0 Appeals

There is in place an appeals procedure which customers can use if they feel they have been treated incorrectly under the Society's allocation process. Every appeal received will be treated individually on its merits.

The Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL scheme has its own review/appeal procedures. (see www.gloshomeseeker.co.uk)

5.0 Responsibility

The Operations Director is responsible for the effective implementation of this policy. The Operations Director is also responsible for ensuring that all staff involved in the processing and selection of applicants for accommodation are adequately trained in the Society's procedures.

The Chief Executive has delegated authority to approve management transfers.

6.0 Consultation

The Society will consult regularly with local authorities and other relevant agencies in order to continually develop good practice in this policy area.

The Society will attend any forums existing now or in the future to encourage joined up working with Local Authorities or any other agency either voluntary or statutory.

7.0 Review

The Society will review its policy regularly and carry out Equality Impact Assessments. Monthly reports will be submitted to the Operations Director detailing performance figure in this process and void times will be reported to the Management Board of the Society in accordance with the EFQM.

There will be regular review meetings based around the Gloucestershire Homeseeker CBL scheme and regular monitoring will take place to check performance and customer satisfaction.

Other policies linked to this policy

- **Voids Policy**
- **Customer BME Policy**
- **Local Lettings Policy**

If you would like this policy translated into another language or supplied on cassette or in LARGE FORMAT TEXT please contact us on 01684 272749.

This policy is reviewed on a regular basis and was last updated and approved by the board on 15th October 2009.