

WEST GRANTON HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED

POLICY DOCUMENT

ALLOCATIONS (2013)

This policy was approved by the Committee of Management on 10th April 2013. It should be reviewed again no later than 2017.

Significant changes to policies must be approved by Committee. The main body of a policy may be amended by the CEO to correct typographical errors or to update references. Appendices to policies may be amended by the CEO to incorporate changes in best practice, the law or the working environment. Any changes will accord with the principles set out in the main body of the policy. (*WGHC Governance Policy, Section 5.*)

REVISIONS

On June 11th 2014 Committee approved the following changes to the allocations policy:

Paragraphs 7.25; 7.26; and 7.27 were added to section 7.2.

Bullet point 5 in section 13 was reworded.

The final paragraph of section 18.1 was added.

On December 19th 2014 the CEO approved two additions to the appendices to clarify procedures.

The final sentence was added to Appendix 1 section G(viii).

The first paragraph was added to Appendix 4 Section B.

WGHC aims to comply with all relevant legislation. The following legislative requirements have been considered in relation to this policy:

Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and Housing (Scotland) Act 2010

Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981

Homelessness (Scotland) Act 2003

Civil Partnership Act 2004

Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006

Equalities Act 2010

WGHC aims to comply with all relevant best practice. The following have been considered in relation to this policy:

The Scottish Social Housing Charter

Scottish Government: *Social Housing Allocations: A Practice Guide 2011*

Chartered Institute of Housing: *Allocations and Lettings (Scotland) Good Practice Guide*

WGHC has a suite of policies, procedures and documents covering all aspects of our operations. Those most closely linked with this policy are:

WGHC's Tenancy Management Policy

WGHC's Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement

All policies and procedures are on the WGHC internal web site.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Principles

This Allocations Policy explains how West Granton Housing Co-op (WGHC) processes housing applications and allocates vacant properties. It also covers tenancy changes such as succession, assignation, mutual exchange, subletting and transfer of tenancy.

Policy changes must be approved by the Committee of Management. However if during day to day work an aspect of this policy is unclear or appears to conflict with another policy, regulation or best practice the CEO is authorised to interpret or clarify.

The main body of a policy may be amended by the CEO to correct typographical errors or to update references. Appendices to policies may be amended by the CEO to incorporate changes in best practice, the law or the working environment. Any changes will accord with the principles set out in the main body of the policy.

This Policy is based on the following principles:

- **Legality**

WGHC seeks to ensure that this Allocations Policy reflects the Scottish legal framework and good practice. Legislation governing the allocation of social housing is contained within Sections 19–21 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. A copy of this policy will be sent to City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Housing Regulator.

- **Consistency**

WGHC seeks to apply this policy in a consistent manner so that all applicants with similar characteristics are treated in a similar manner to achieve similar outcomes.

A minimum of two staff members will be involved in allocating each property. In all cases the decision to match an applicant with a vacancy will be agreed with, and countersigned by, a senior staff member. A formal offer of housing can only be made to persons approved for membership of WGHC.

Committee Members will have no direct involvement in the allocation of houses. Their main role is to discuss and agree allocations policy and monitor performance.

- **Openness**

WGHC will provide a copy of this full policy, free of charge, to anyone who requests it. If an applicant has difficulty in reading this document, WGHC will make reasonable efforts to provide assistance or advice. This policy is summarised in an information leaflet, copies of which can be obtained from the office of WGHC or on our website.

- **Responsiveness**

WGHC seeks to have a framework which is capable of responding to a wide range of complex individual needs and circumstances, including a separate appeals and complaints process. Committee Members may consider appeals or special cases. Applicant's personal details are always withheld from the Committee in such circumstances.

- **Equality**

WGHC seeks to ensure that this Policy does not discriminate against applicants on the grounds of Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex or Sexual orientation.

Where appropriate, WGHC will take disability, illness and age into account when allocating properties specially built, adapted or otherwise best suited for such groups. Such criteria will be specified clearly in the Lettings Plan found in Appendix 1.

1.2. Policy aims & objectives

This Policy aims to meet housing need by the provision of good quality, affordable housing for those in housing need. WGHC provides mainly general needs housing but also has some properties for elderly people and people with disabilities.

The objectives of this Policy are:

- To make best use of the available stock to meet housing need.
- To try to avoid foreseeable lifestyle clashes or social problems by responsibly matching applicants to appropriate types and locations of houses. The criteria we use to help us achieve this are set out in our Lettings Plan (see Appendix 1).
- To address housing needs in the area and where possible, to take into account applicants' housing aspirations.
- To assess applications for housing in an objective, consistent and fair manner, complying with relevant legislation and best practice.
- To sustain and promote local communities as far as is possible.
- To monitor and review performance and report outcomes regularly to the Committee of Management.
- To ensure that the Allocations Policy is accessible to all applicants and produce information in plain language that is clear and understandable.

2. Our stock

WGHC stock is situated in the North Edinburgh areas of Granton Mains, Granton Mill, West Pilton, Craigmuir Place, Ferry Road Avenue and ForthQuarter.

In total we own 380 properties, including:

- Semi detached and terraced family houses with self contained front and back gardens;
- Bungalows and ground floor flats designed for people with limited mobility;
- Four-in-a block style flats each with their own private garden and parking.
- Part furnished flats aimed at first time householders;
- Flats which may suit a wider range of households including families with children;

A detailed breakdown of our stock is given in Appendix 3.

On average each year less than 10% of our properties have a change of tenancy. This includes mutual exchanges, successions and assignments as well as relets. On average less than 6% are relet through internal transfers or to external applicants.

There is no right to buy any property rented from West Granton Housing Co-operative.

3. Eligibility & Accessibility

For WGHC tenants wishing to move within our own stock we will operate an internal transfer housing list. This list will remain open at all times.

To maximise housing opportunities we will consider mutual exchanges and assist tenants who wish to apply for moves through the Edinburgh House Exchange.

We will advertise empty properties to external applicants through a choice based lettings system maintained by EdIndex (the Edinburgh Common Housing Register). Where possible, we will display a copy of the adverts in our Reception area; this is in addition to the advert being placed on the EdIndex Website and in the Edinburgh evening newspaper.

Anyone aged 16 years and over may register with EdIndex. Any WGHC tenant aged 16 years and over may apply to be placed on our internal transfer housing list.

Information on how to apply for our housing will be contained in leaflets and newsletters and our website.

4. Reasonable preference

We will give reasonable preference to persons in housing need in accordance with the relevant housing legislation. As at March 2013 this includes persons:

- Who are occupying houses which do not meet the tolerable standard or;
- Who are overcrowded or;
- Who have large families or;
- Who are living in unsatisfactory housing conditions or;
- Who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

These reasonable preferences are taken into account by the City of Edinburgh Council in awarding priority to external applicants who apply through the EdIndex Choice Based Lettings System.

We also give reasonable preference to WGHC internal transfer applicants as set out in section 5.7. Details of our Internal Transfer Priority Banding System can be found in [Appendix 4](#).

5. How we will allocate empty properties

There are 8 routes through which WGHC can allocate an empty property. These are set out in 5.1 to 5.8 below.

Any applications or agreements covered by 5.1 to 5.6 will generally be considered first. However these are unusual circumstances which will result in relatively few lets.

Thereafter we will adopt a transfer led system where first priority will be to internal transfer applicants. We use this approach to meet the needs of both transfer and direct applicants (since the internal transfer will produce a second vacant property in our stock).

If there are no suitable internal applicants, properties will be advertised via EdIndex. A formal offer of housing can only be made to persons approved for membership of WGHC.

5.1. Section 5 referrals

In accordance with Section 5 of the 2001 Act we will house homeless applicants referred to us by the City of Edinburgh Council (unless we have a “good reason” not to do so as defined by the Scottish Government’s guidance). However, while WGHC subscribes to the EdIndex housing register (see 5.8), the Council will not use Section 5 referrals.

5.2. Other external agency referrals

WGHC will consider referrals from other local authority departments or external agencies for applicants in housing need.

5.3. Reciprocal agreements

WGHC may enter into agreements with other housing providers or external agencies to target a particular group in housing need and improve mobility for tenants and household members.

5.4. Qualifying occupiers

Where it would resolve a serious housing management issue WGHC will consider allocating a tenancy to an applicant who is currently a qualifying occupier in another WGHC tenancy. This would be exceptional and requires the consent of the CEO.

5.5. Special circumstances – individual cases

WGHC will consider allocating a property to an applicant where exceptional circumstances apply. This may include moving to care for family members. In such cases there must be a significant need and a significant benefit must arise from the allocation. Such cases will be exceptional and require the consent of the Committee of Management or a delegated subcommittee.

5.6. Management transfer

At times it might be appropriate to transfer a tenant to a suitable vacant property because their current home is unsuitable due to ill health or some other significant housing management related problem. This is known as a Management Transfer.

This may be considered where a tenant (who may or may not be on the internal transfer list) whose circumstances are exceptional would benefit from an immediate move. Management Transfers must only be used in exceptional cases and be authorised by the CEO.

5.7. Internal transfer applicants

Having considered any applications under Routes 5.1 to 5.6, we will then try to meet the needs, demands and aspirations of our own tenants by considering applications from the WGHC Internal Transfer list.

Housing Need will be used to decide the priority for re-housing in accordance with our Internal Transfer Priority Banding System which can be found in [Appendix 4](#). Applicants with no identifiable housing need are included on the list to recognise aspiration and choice as reasons for seeking a transfer. Applications will be prioritised in accordance with the banding system and date of application.

Generally, the allocation will be made to the applicant whose criteria matches the property type within the highest priority band. When producing a shortlist, if two applications have the same date and band, the Housing Manager will exercise discretion over the allocation taking into account the individual circumstances of each applicant and the benefits to be gained from moving. In such cases a written explanation of why the decision was made will be attached to the audit trail paperwork.

5.8. EdIndex

This is the common housing register used by most Edinburgh social landlords. WGHC will allocate from EdIndex using Key to Choice which is a choice based allocations system. Properties are advertised and home seekers registered with EdIndex are invited to submit bids for properties they are interested in. Further information on EdIndex is in section 8 of this policy.

6. Changes to the tenancy

There are a number of possible tenancy changes available to Scottish Secure Tenants. Each requires the consent of WGHC.

6.1. Succession

Where a person living in a WGHC house, after the death of the principal tenant, wishes to become the tenant. If we decide the person is a qualifying person as defined in Section 7 of the tenancy agreement, a new tenancy will not be created; an addendum will be attached to the existing tenancy marking the level of succession (i.e. 1st or 2nd).

6.2. Assignment

A WGHC tenant cannot assign the tenancy without the written consent of WGHC. If we agree to the request to assign the tenancy we will end the existing tenancy and create a new tenancy.

6.3. Sub-letting

A WGHC tenant may not sublet the tenancy or take in a lodger without the written consent of WGHC. Grounds for refusal would include unreasonable rent or other payments being expected of the subtenant or lodger. The rent charged to a subtenant or lodger cannot be increased without the consent of WGHC.

A prospective subtenant must apply for and have been granted membership of the Co-operative. It is anticipated this situation would be exceptional since it conflicts with the general principle of one membership per house. Since lodgers have no tenancy rights, they have no need to apply for membership.

6.4. Mutual exchange

Where a WGHC tenant wishes to exchange houses with a tenant who currently has a Scottish Secure Tenancy they must have the written permission of WGHC. In accordance with Section 33 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, WGHC has the right to refuse permission on reasonable grounds. Grounds for refusal would include where the house type is not best suited to the incoming household or if the WGHC tenant does not comply with their obligations in relation to ending a tenancy. If we agree to the request to exchange we will end the existing tenancy and create a new tenancy.

6.5. Transfer of a Tenancy

Where a person living in a WGHC house applies to become the tenant.

Transfer of the tenancy is at the discretion of WGHC, subject to the rights of the existing tenant and any relevant legislation and/or court orders. There are two circumstances in which WGHC will consider transferring a tenancy:-

6.5.1. By court order

In certain circumstances a court may ask that a tenancy is transferred from one spouse or civil partner to the other. WGHC will have an opportunity to object or support the applicant and the court will take this into account. If we agree we will end the existing tenancy and create a new tenancy.

6.5.2. End of tenancy

When a tenancy is due to end (e.g. by notice or by court order) another occupant of the house may apply to have the tenancy transferred to them. The prospective tenant must be the spouse or civil partner of the tenant; or have had occupancy rights granted by a court; or have been living as a couple with the tenant; or be a member of the tenant's family for whom the house is their only or principal home.

WGHC may take into account the size of the property, the size of the household, any rent arrears and the length of time the prospective tenant has lived in the house.

WGHC will only agree if there are exceptional reasons to do so. WGHC will not agree if we don't think the prospective tenant would be able to manage the tenancy.

If we agree we will end the existing tenancy and create a new tenancy.

6.6. Procedure for requests for changing the tenancy

Our Tenancy Management Policy and Section 4 of the WGHC Tenancy Agreement sets out the conditions which apply to requests to change the tenancy. We will reply to any request to change the tenancy within one month to avoid giving assumed consent.

In the first instance all requests will be refused because it is recognised we generally require further information from the tenant in order to fully consider their request.

To help us process requests, all tenants will be expected to complete and return the relevant WGHC application forms. We may also need to carry out a home visit to verify details. A completed application will be treated as a new request and we will respond to it within one month.

With all these requests, a formal offer of housing can only be made to persons approved for membership of WGHC.

7. WGHC's Internal Transfer List

We will maintain a fully inclusive list of WGHC tenants who wish to move within our stock. This list will recognise both housing needs and aspirations and remain open at all times.

7.1. Admission to WGHC's Internal Transfer List

All transfer applications will be accepted on to our waiting list, even when there is no identifiable housing need. Acceptance of an application onto the list does not guarantee that an offer of re-housing will be made.

To access the list tenants must have completed an internal transfer application form. Admission to our list will be immediate on receipt of a completed application.

We will assess all applications on receipt, rather than waiting until we have received all the supporting evidence we require to confirm an individual's housing need. This will ensure that applicants with urgent housing need are added to the list without delay.

Before any formal offer of re-housing is made, applicants must produce all the necessary supporting evidence requested by us to corroborate their housing need.

Applicants will be given the opportunity to state if they wish to be considered for only a specific property type, property or street. In such cases, applicants will be made aware that they will continue to be bypassed on our housing list until we are able to match them to a suitable empty property that meets their needs and/or aspirations.

If demand is high or the applicant does not meet the criteria for a specific property or property type, we will advise them of a realistic likelihood of them being made such an offer and provide them with other information about other housing options available to them.

In the case of joint tenants both must apply. Any internal transfer must involve ending the tenancy in one property and the entire household vacating the property.

Applications will be prioritised in accordance with the procedure detailed in Appendix 4 of this policy, [Internal Transfer Priority Banding System](#).

7.2. Suspension of WGHC internal transfer applicants

Only a senior staff member can decide if offers to an applicant can be suspended and in each case the applicant will be notified of this decision and the reason for the suspension in writing. An applicant has the right to appeal this decision.

If an applicant is suspended from receiving offers they must be advised in writing that the suspension will be for a maximum period of 6 months. After the suspension period has expired, the applicant must be informed in writing that the suspension on their application has been lifted. Each suspension and the reason(s) for each suspension will be recorded.

There are 4 instances in which we may suspend an internal transfer applicant from receiving offers of housing:

7.2.1. Awaiting receipt of supporting information

An applicant may be suspended from receiving offers of housing until we have all the supporting information required by us to corroborate their housing need. If an applicant is unable to provide the necessary information within a reasonable timescale, we will proceed to make an offer of housing to the next suitable applicant.

7.2.2. Applicants with rent arrears

An applicant may be suspended from receiving housing offers if they have rent arrears which amounts to more than one month's rent and have not had a repayment agreement in place for at least 3 months; or have failed to adhere to a repayment agreement which has been in place 3 months or longer. In making this decision, we may also take into account personal circumstances and the extent of the housing need of the applicant.

7.2.3. Applicants with a history of anti-social behaviour

An applicant may be suspended from receiving housing offers if they have a history of anti-social behaviour.

In deciding whether a suspension is appropriate, WGHC will take into account the following:

- The extent to which the behaviour is because of acts by people other than the tenant;
- The nature, frequency and length of the behaviour;
- The effect the behaviour is having on other people; and
- Any other action taken by the landlord to address the behaviour;
- The extent to which the tenant has engaged to try and improve or resolve the behaviour

7.2.4. Applicants who have refused offers

If two reasonable offers of housing have been refused we may suspend an applicant from receiving any further offers until we have held a review interview with them to talk about their preferences and housing options.

7.2.5. Applicants who have not taken reasonable care of their house

An applicant may be suspended from receiving offers of housing if they have not taken reasonable care of their existing house or common parts; or have caused damage to the house or common parts; or they have carried out alterations without consent; or they are otherwise in breach of their tenancy agreement.

7.2.6. Applicants who owe money to WGHC

An applicant may be suspended from receiving offers of housing if they owe money, other than rent, to WGHC and have not made a satisfactory agreement to repay it;

7.2.7. Applicants who delay in responding

An applicant may be suspended from receiving offers of housing if they delay in responding to an offer of housing and WGHC considers the delay unreasonable.

8. EdIndex Applications and the Choice Based Lettings System

WGHC works in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council and 20 other Edinburgh based social landlords to operate EdIndex, the Edinburgh Common Housing Register. WGHC uses EdIndex Choice Based Lettings System to advertise empty properties to external housing applicants.

Anyone aged 16 years and over is eligible for admission to the EdIndex Common Housing Register. The right to be admitted to this list does not mean the applicant has a right to be allocated a tenancy. All applicants wishing to be considered for WGHC housing through this route must have a live EdIndex application form.

8.1. Assessment

EdIndex applicants will be either categorised as a starter or a mover. Starters are generally applicants who do not have their own home. Movers are existing Council or Social Landlord tenants who have their own home, but need or want to move.

Starters are prioritised by the length of time since registration and movers are prioritised by length of time tenancy held or length of time in current home.

Ex-service personnel who apply within 3 years of leaving the armed forces will have their period of service taken into account and added to the time they have been registered on EdIndex.

Additional priority may be awarded to applicants who need to move for urgent circumstances i.e. homelessness, harassment, medical reasons or overcrowding. Priority will be awarded where applicants meet the Council's current assessment criteria as follows:

- Gold Priority

Awarded following an assessment by the EdIndex Advice and Assessment Team for a medical or health issue. Urgent Gold Priority may also be awarded in exceptional circumstances e.g. to enable a hospital discharge.

- Silver Priority

Awarded for the following reasons:

- Homeless and in priority need;
- Demolition/regeneration tenants;
- Overcrowding/Under-occupancy;
- Exceptional housing need (e.g. living in a home below tolerable standard).

8.2. Advertising and Bidding

Vacancies will be advertised on a weekly basis in a supplement paper in the Edinburgh Evening News and on the EdIndex Website at keytochoice.scotsman.com.

WGHC will use the “Starter” and “Mover” categories to ensure that allocations are spread across a range of types of housing need in accordance with the Lettings plans and any approved performance targets.

To enable us to allocate our vacant properties to applicants from a wide range of household types and needs we will, where practicable, advertise:

- a third of all Choice vacancies suitable for Starter households
- a third of all Choice vacancies suitable for Mover households
- a third of all Choice vacancies suitable for Starter/Mover households

This ratio may not always be achievable as the Choice category will be very much dependent on the property type, location and any (potential) estate management or housing management issues. In addition, we may choose to apply our own additional eligibility criteria including household size, age, mobility needs, etc.

Adverts will advise whether the property is suitable for home seekers with or without children or both.

Occasionally, it may be necessary to withdraw a property from allocation after it has been advertised. This may be because the sitting tenant has decided not to move or the property is extensively damaged and requires repair.

EdIndex will generate a list for WGHC of all the bids received in response to an advert for a WGHC property. WGHC staff will apply restriction criteria according to property type, to produce a shortlist of suitable candidates. Further information can be found in Section 9.

8.3. Suspension of EdIndex applicants

This suspension process will be managed by EdIndex. Requests to suspend an applicant will be sent to the EdIndex/Choice Panel Co-ordinator. The decision to suspend an applicant from receiving offers will be made by an officer panel in accordance with EdIndex policy framework to support the decision making process. EdIndex will take responsibility for advising the applicant and monitoring the case.

9. Matching applicants to a vacancy

When a vacancy arises the Housing Manager will determine from which of the routes set out in section 5 the shortlist will be drawn. Any applications or agreements covered by 5.1 to 5.6 should be considered first. Thereafter first priority will be to internal applicants. If there are no appropriate internal applicants the house will be advertised via EdIndex's choice based lettings system.

WGHC staff will apply restriction criteria to the chosen shortlist according to the property type. The most common restriction criteria used for general needs housing will be size of household. For amenity or wheelchair adapted properties further criteria may be applied to restrict the shortlist to those applicants who have restricted mobility. Other specific lettings criteria may be used in shortlisting and are detailed in Appendix 1 [Lettings Plan](#) and Appendix 2 [Lettings Restrictions Criteria](#).

Vacancies will be matched to the applicant for whom the property type is suitable and who is top of the relevant shortlist. If the applicant at the top of the list does not match the criteria they will be bypassed and the next applicant on the list will be assessed and this process will continue until a match is made. For audit purposes, a reason for each bypass will be given and noted. WGHC will not write out to an applicant if they have been bypassed as part of the matching process.

There may be times when two applicants appearing at the top of the shortlist have the same number of points. In such cases, the key criteria used in deciding which applicant receives the offer will be the length of time on the waiting list and/or their housing need and/or any other reasonable housing management criteria.

10. Verification of applications

When an applicant is matched to a vacancy they will be contacted to verify the information on their application. If we are unable to make successful contact with the applicant at this stage or they fail to attend an assessment interview with us we will bypass their application and move on to the next applicant on the shortlist.

Where practical, WGHC staff will carry out a home visit to verify details and confirm interest. If a home visit is not practical then the applicant will be invited to attend an interview at the WGHC office.

We may contact external agencies or relevant persons to confirm or request information concerning the applicant and their household relating to rent arrears, health issues, anti social behaviour, support needs, etc. In signing the declaration statement on the application form (contained in both the EdIndex and WGHC Internal Transfer Application Form), the applicant is giving us their permission for such enquires to be made.

If the verification process indicates that the applicant does not match the restriction criteria because the information on the application is not accurate, the application will be re-assessed.

This re-assessment may result in the applicant being bypassed on the shortlist because they no longer match the criteria for the vacancy. The next applicant on the shortlist will then be contacted to verify the information on their application. This process will continue until WGHC are satisfied they have an applicant who satisfies the criteria and matches the vacancy.

11. References

We will seek references from the applicant's current and former landlords. We will not normally take up references for tenancies which ended more than 3 years prior to the date of our making contact to verify an applicant's details, except in cases where we have been unable to obtain a current tenancy reference.

We recognise that private landlords may not keep detailed tenancy records and will therefore not refuse an offer of housing just because we have been unable to obtain a tenancy reference. In the case of owner occupiers we may request statement information from the bank or building society.

The reference will not ask for an opinion about the applicant but will only seek information about payment of rent or mortgage and/or any reported breaches of a tenancy agreement. WGHC will take into account from these or other sources any history of anti social behaviour, significant rents arrears or other relevant and reasonable information.

12. Factors we will not take into account

When considering an applicant for housing, including internal transfer applications, we will not take into account:

- The length of time an applicant has lived in the area;
- Rent or other arrears or liabilities for a house where the applicant was not the tenant;
- Rent or other arrears from a previous tenancy which are no longer outstanding;
- Rent or other arrears are outstanding but which amount to less than the equivalent of one month's charge or where an agreement to repay is in place and being kept to and has been kept to for three months. In the case of internal transfer applicants we would generally expect the rent arrears and any other tenancy debt to be paid in full before making a formal offer of re-housing to another WGHC property ;
- Any outstanding debts, which do not relate to the tenancy of the house (e.g. council tax);
- The income of the applicant(s) and their family;
- Any property owned or previously owned by the applicant(s) or their family;
- The age of the applicant, unless they are under 16 or the property for which they are being considered has been designed or adapted for a particular age group.

13. Reasons for refusing to allocate housing

WGHC reserves the right not to allocate housing to an applicant:

- if we are satisfied that the applicant has knowingly given false information or knowingly withheld relevant information.
- if we are satisfied that the applicant or a member of their household or someone acting for them:
 - has verbally or physically abused or intimidated staff or committee members;
 - has bribed or attempted to bribe or otherwise sought to obtain favour from staff or committee members;
 - has a history of anti social behaviour which we are satisfied is likely to recur and cause nuisance to our tenants or within our area of operations.
- if the applicant has rent arrears from a current or previous tenancy of more than one month and has not made or is not abiding by an agreement to clear the debt.
- if we are satisfied that the applicant has been in breach of the tenancy agreement in relation to a current or previous tenancy on the grounds of anti social behaviour and has received a written warning, a Notice of Proceedings for Recovery of Possession, an eviction order or an Anti-social behaviour order.
- if a WGHC internal transfer applicant fails to bring the tenancy to a lettable standard at the conclusion of the tenancy. Alternatively WGHC may decide to recharge the tenant for any expense incurred by WGHC in bringing that property up to a lettable standard.
- if we are satisfied that the applicant has unreasonably refused an offer of housing.
- if an application for membership of the Co-operative has been refused.
- if we are satisfied that it is reasonable to do so on some other grounds.

WGHC may take the decision not to allocate housing to an applicant at any point from receipt of application and prior to a tenancy agreement being signed. In the case of false information given in an application, this can also be grounds for the Co-operative seeking to end a tenancy should it come to light at a later date.

Other than in the case of refusal of membership, the Co-operative will not automatically refuse to allocate if any of these grounds apply but will consider each case on its merits.

The decision will be agreed with, and countersigned by, a senior staff member. The applicant will be informed in writing of the decision. The applicant may appeal if they disagree with the decision. In the case of rent arrears or breach of tenancy agreement, if the issues are resolved a future application may be considered.

WGHC will keep a list of all those applicants who have been refused housing and the reason(s) for the refusal.

14. Refusal of offer of housing from WGHC

Until an applicant has signed a Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement with WGHC, they have the right to refuse an offer of housing from WGHC. WGHC will keep a record of all offers refused and the reason(s) for the refusal. Where an applicant has failed to respond to an offer letter, WGHC will consider this as a refusal.

15. Reviews

- EdIndex Register

EdIndex will review their register of applications on a regular basis in accordance with the City of Edinburgh Lettings Policy.

- WGHC Internal Transfer List

To help us monitor housing need and demand within our own stock, we will review our own internal transfer housing list once a year. This will involve us sending out letters to applicants asking them to advise us of any change in their circumstances and if they wish to remain on the list. We will use freepost envelopes to encourage responses. Failure to respond to the initial review letter will result in a second reminder letter being sent. If the applicant fails to respond to this second letter we will cancel their application and remove their details from our list.

16. Cancellations

WGHC will only cancel applications in the following circumstances:

- Where the applicant asks for their application to be cancelled;
- On the death of an applicant; or
- If the applicant fails to respond to a review of the list.

17. Monitoring & audit trail

All decisions made in relation to an application will be recorded in writing and where appropriate confirmed in writing to the applicant. Committee will receive regular updates on allocations and will review and revise this policy on a regular basis.

Using the EdIndex Choice Allocations System, WGHC Staff will print off each shortlist from EdIndex which will include the reasons for bypassing any applicant(s). A list of the restriction(s) criteria applied to each shortlist will be generated by WGHC Staff and attached to the shortlist along with a copy of the advert for each vacancy.

Where possible, Staff will print off all available audit trails for each allocation from the EdIndex System. Audit trails from EdIndex are to be used to complement the allocation audit trails generated internally by WGHC Staff for each allocation.

Periodically a Senior Staff Member will review a random sample of allocation decisions and associated paperwork to ensure that the required standards are being followed.

Shortlists, unsuccessful applications and audit trails will be held on file for two years and disposed of thereafter as confidential waste.

18. Appeals & Complaints

Properties will not normally be kept vacant pending decision on complaints or appeals. If a decision means that the applicant should be reconsidered for an allocation then they will be considered for the next suitable let.

18.1. Appeals

Customers may appeal against decisions taken in relation to allocations. Appeal procedures are set out in the [WGHC Governance Policy](#).

Decisions which may be appealed would include:

- refusal to allocate a property;
- refusal of request for mutual exchange;
- refusal to be considered for a particular size of property;
- refusal to be considered for a particular property type;
- refusal of a request to assign or transfer a tenancy;
- Any other decision relating to allocations which affects an applicant.

Where an appeal relates to the allocation of an individual property (e.g. a refusal to allocate to an applicant); WGHC will not delay the allocation of the vacant property pending any appeal. If an appeal is successful the applicant will be considered for the next available suitable property.

18.2. Complaints

A complaint is quite distinct from an appeal against a decision.

WGHC define a complaint as “An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about West Granton Housing Co-operative's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of West Granton Housing Co-operative.”

In the context of allocations a complaint would have to be about the way we applied our allocations policy or administered the process, rather than about the decision itself.

Complaints are processed in accordance with [WGHC's Complaints Handling Policy](#).

APPENDIX 1: Lettings Plan

A Introduction

This lettings plan indicates how we intend to allocate empty properties after dispensation of any legal obligations, within a consistent, fair and non-discriminatory framework. It complements the WGHC Allocations Policy and will be used as a tool to help build and sustain the balance of existing communities.

B Lettings Criteria

This Lettings Plan has been developed to ensure that a wide range of applicants can be considered for our properties. In order to create and maintain a stable community WGHC may not always allocate its properties to maximum occupancy. To determine the most suitable household composition for each empty property we will make reference to Paragraphs F to J of this Lettings Plan.

In addition, to create well managed and well maintained communities and to assist with tenancy sustainment for individual households we will also refer to the criteria detailed in Appendix 2 (Lettings Restrictions Criteria).

The decision on which designations and criteria are to be used for an individual vacancy will be made by the Housing Manager at the point a property is to become void. The decision will take into account the property type, its situation within the estate and surrounding stock types, and any other relevant housing management factors.

C Sensitive Lets

Sensitive Lets are for cases where it is necessary for us to exercise discretion in tenant selection and there is a departure from our standard allocation rules, such as selecting an applicant from the top of a shortlist. The aim of sensitive letting is to secure the social well being of the applicant and the cohesiveness of the local community and neighbourhood.

Sensitive letting will involve applying discretion when making the decision whether or not to offer the applicant the vacant property, in a way which is both justifiable and accountable.

Allocation decisions should aim to provide a stabilising influence in the street, block or cul-de-sac concerned. For this reason we may sometimes bypass an applicant at the top of the list who is an inexperienced household or because of their age. For example, an applicant at the top of the list aged significantly younger than the remaining tenants in a 4-in-a-block development may have differences in their lifestyle and might therefore not provide a stabilising influence in that block. Additionally, we may use sensitive lets to avoid an over concentration of vulnerable or inexperienced households.

D Applicants with no recourse to public funds

WGHC may let a maximum of one property each year to an applicant who has no recourse to public funds. Applicants will only be considered through the formal nominations agreement route set up between WGHC and the City of Edinburgh Council's Asylum & Immigration Team. For this reason all Choice applicants who appear on our shortlists and who have no recourse to public funds will be bypassed.

E Household Composition

In all cases the onus will be on the applicant to establish clearly and with evidence who the permanent members of the household are and that they will all be moving into the proposed tenancy.

WGHC may request supporting evidence such as a child benefit award letter and other documentation from various local or national government agencies confirming the permanent address or residency of a household member.

F Child Densities in Flatted Developments

WGHC owns 134 flats.

These properties vary in size and numbers within particular stairs and developments.

We will allow households with children to be considered for flatted properties, however, we will generally allocate ground floor, main door flats to applicants who are aged 60 years or over or who have mobility difficulties.

Each time an empty property becomes available for relet within a flatted development we will look at the existing number of households with children living in the stair.

To avoid an over concentration of children in a particular stair or to avoid potential life style clashes, the Housing Manager will exercise discretion over whether the empty property is to be allocated to a household with or without children.

Adopting such a flexible lettings approach to these property types will help us to sustain and promote local communities within our flatted developments.

G Determining the number of bedrooms required by a household

Detailed below are the number of bedrooms for which various household types will qualify.

i) Persons considered to need a separate bedroom:

- A single adult;
- Two adults who are partners (i.e. a couple);
- A young person who has reached the age of 16 years (i.e. an adult)
- Where there is an assessed medical reason for a couple not to share the same room;
- Where an additional room is required for medical equipment;
- Permanent carers and foster children who are part of a household;
- Tenant with disabilities who needs a non resident overnight carer.

ii) Child age mix

A child is someone under 16.

- Children under 16 years of same gender are generally expected to share one double bedroom
- Children under 10 years regardless of gender are generally expected to share one double bedroom
- A family with two children of different sex with one under 10 and one over 10 will be entitled to a bedroom for each of the children.
- A family with two children of the same sex with one under 10 and one over 10 can be considered for a property with a bedroom for each of the children.

iii) Under occupation

From April 2013, the Government will state the number of bedrooms a household should be occupying in order to receive full housing benefit.

Applicants may wish to be considered for a property which results in under-occupation according to the housing benefit size criteria rules and this lettings plan. For example, a couple with two children of different sexes under 10 may wish to apply for a 3 bedroom property.

WGHC will consider such allocations and this may result in allocating properties to households who are deemed to be under occupying.

In such cases applicants will be advised at the assessment stage how under occupation of the home may affect their housing benefit entitlement.

Prospective tenants will be asked to sign a declaration at the sign up appointment to confirm that they have been made aware that under occupation may affect their housing benefit; and that they accept their obligation to pay the full rent and service charge (if applicable) for the property regardless of what level of benefits they receive.

iv) Access & Fostering

If a household provides confirmation that they have access to a child for part of the week this may be taken into account in determining household size.

Where a single applicant or couple with no other permanent household members has access to a child/children for part of the week they would only be considered for a 2 bedroom flat and not a family house.

For applicants already with children as a permanent part of their household, but who in addition have access to another child/children for part of the week, we may consider one additional bedroom is required. However, this is dependent on the property type and the maximum occupancy standards for that property in accordance with this Lettings Plan.

In reaching a decision regard may be had to: the child's prime residence; who claims the child benefit; who the child is dependent upon for daily care; and where the child goes to school.

Applicants who foster children, or wish to be considered for housing large enough to enable them to foster children, must provide evidence from the relevant government agency confirming the arrangements.

v) Two bedroom properties

A household consisting of a single person or couple may be considered for a two bedroom property if they can satisfy WGHC they have a reasonable need for a second bedroom.

In such cases we would normally only allocate a flat and not a house. The exception to this would be the houses in West Pilton Terrace where the second bedroom is considerably smaller in size in comparison to the rest of our 2 bed houses.

If an applicant states that a flat is not suitable for their needs because of a disability, illness or some other reason, they must be able to satisfy WGHC of their need for a particular property type. In such an instance we would require written evidence from a healthcare professional or government agency.

vi) Downsizing

In order to assist internal transfer applicants with downsizing we may choose to allocate them a property which would exceed their bedroom requirements but still be smaller in size than their current tenancy.

vii) Aspirations

If there are no suitable internal transfer applicants defined as being in housing need on our list, then offers of accommodation may be made to those who have an aspiration to move to a similar size property or a different property type within our estates, including another flat in the same development or another house in the same street.

viii) Taking future household needs into account

In seeking to build and maintain a sustainable community these standards may be applied flexibly to take account of future household needs in terms of their bedroom requirements.

This may mean offering larger properties to give households the capacity to remain in the property and as part of the local community as their children would get older. As a guide this would apply where the age/gender of children in the household would mean that they would be eligible for a larger property within the next 12 months.

If an applicant is pregnant WGHC will not recognise the need for an additional bedspace or bedroom until the child is born.

ix) Bedroom sizes

Bedroom sizes vary considerably across the stock. Generally a double bedroom is taken as being of more than 10 m². Single bedrooms within our stock range from 6.5 m² to 10m² (average 9 m²) and double bedrooms from 10.5m² to 13.5 m² (average 12m²). It may on occasion be useful to take this into account where bedrooms are at the lower or higher end of the range.

H Best use of amenity and wheelchair properties

These properties were designed as elderly/amenity housing and as such will only be allocated to households who are 60 years and over and/or who have an assessed need for this type of accommodation.

In order to achieve this we may use mobility, wheelchair use or age restrictions in shortlisting or we may allocate to a household which might not achieve maximum occupancy of the property. We may also by-pass a household with a higher ranking on the shortlist if there is no-one within the household who needs this type of accommodation.

If a wheelchair adapted property becomes available to relet and we have no suitable applicants in need of such accommodation we may approach the local authority to ask for suitable nominations or choose to allocate this property type to a household with an assessed mobility need with no wheelchair use.

I West Pilton Drive and West Pilton Green – Low Demand Lets

WGHC owns 9 renovated flats in mixed tenure tenements in West Pilton Drive and Green. Although our flats have been renovated and are of a good standard the tenements and common stairs are fairly run down. These flats can be difficult to let. Each flat has a living room and two bedrooms. However the dimensions vary and they are classed into two groups : 4 x Large and 5 x Small. The 4 large flats also have a separate dining room. To avoid these flats becoming a house of multiple occupation we will only allow up to two single unrelated adults to live in the property. Three related adults is permissible.

See Appendix 3 for Property Information Table for West Pilton Drive & Green Flats.

J Dogs

WGHC tenants must ask permission to keep a dog. In relation to properties with enclosed gardens permission will not be unreasonably withheld.

Within the West Pilton Bank and Forth Quarter Development dogs are strictly prohibited, with the exception of dogs which are considered fully qualified assistance dogs.

Within all other flatted developments, dogs will not be permitted with the exception of ground floor flats with an enclosed garden or for a fully qualified assistance dog. This is because we consider flats an unsuitable location for dogs and that nuisance to neighbours is inevitable.

APPENDIX 2: Lettings Restrictions Criteria

DESCRIPTION	LETTINGS & RESTRICTIONS CRITERIA
Wheelchair adapted houses and flats	<p>Preference will be given to households that require this type of accommodation. No age restrictions.</p> <p>Problems may be experienced finding suitable applicants for these types of properties therefore they may be advertised to both Starters and Movers with or without children (dependant on the property type).</p>
Amenity bungalows & Amenity flats (ground floor, one bedroom flats)	<p>Available to applicants aged 60 years and over or where a member of the household has a mobility/long term health condition. May be advertised to both Starters and Movers with or without children (dependant on the property type).</p>
General needs ground floor flats	<p>Available to applicants 60 years and over or where a member of the household has a mobility/long term health condition.</p> <p>May be advertised as suitable for Starter or Mover or both and generally suitable for households with or without children.</p>
Upper flats	<p>Considered to be general needs housing. May be advertised to Starter or Mover or both. Housing Manager may exercise discretion whether property to be advertised as suitable for households with or without children (dependant on number of households with children already living in the stair).</p> <p>Exception: 4-in-a-block flats: ground floor flats in these blocks are generally occupied by tenants of pensionable age, so Housing Manager will exercise discretion under Sensitive Lets when considering suitable applicants for the upper flats in these blocks.</p>
Granton Mill Crescent Starter Flats with white goods and blinds	<p>Single applicants who are homeless or first time households will be considered for these flats.</p>
General Needs Houses	<p>May be advertised to Starter or Mover or both. Where the property type is a house with 3 or more bedrooms and a private garden, WGHC will generally give preference to households with children.</p>

APPENDIX 3: WGHC Stock Profile

Size & type of property	Number	Totals
1 bedroom flat	39	
1 bedroom amenity flat	15	
2 bedroom wheelchair flat	4	
2 bedroom flat	72	
3 bedroom flat	3	
	all flats	133
1 bedroom amenity bungalow	27	
2 bedroom amenity bungalow	19	
2 bedroom wheelchair bungalows	3	
3 bedroom amenity bungalow	2	
	all bungalows	51
2 bedroom house	71	
3 bedroom house	98	
4 bedroom house	24	
5 bedroom house	3	
	all houses	196
	Total all properties	380

Notes:

- Amenity flats and bungalows are on the ground floor. Most have wet floor showers. Where they do not these are generally fitted when void.
- Properties of the same general type are not identical. The size of properties and of rooms within properties vary. Some houses have additional dining rooms and/or utility rooms.
- Some amenity bungalows and some 4 and 5 bedroom properties may be suitable for a household where one member is confined to or uses a wheelchair.
- The characteristics of each individual property should be taken into account when considering the household type for whom it is best suited.

West Pilton Drive & Green Renovated Flats

WGHC owns 9 renovated flats in mixed tenure tenements in West Pilton Drive and Green. Each flat has a living room and three bedrooms. However the dimensions vary and they are classed in two groups : Large and Small.

Size	Address	Floor Height	Furnishing	Max no. of people
TYPE A Large	23/5 West Pilton Drive	Second	Part	4
	35/1 West Pilton Drive	Ground	Part	4
	06/5 West Pilton Green	Second	Part	4
	02/1 West Pilton Green	Ground	Part	4
TYPE B Small	05/4 West Pilton Drive	First	Part	3
	23/4 West Pilton Drive	Second	Part	3
	35/2 West Pilton Drive	Ground	Part	3
	35/4 West Pilton Drive	First	Part	3
	04/5 West Pilton Green	Second	Part	3

APPENDIX 4: Internal Transfer Priority Banding System

A Priority Bands

We will prioritise applications using the following bands. (Note: housing need can apply to tenants and/or household members.)

Band A: Acute Housing Need

- Where a tenant needs to be discharged from hospital but cannot return to their current home because it is unsuitable for their needs
- Where a tenant has a severe health problem that is being worsened by their current property
- Where a tenant requires an adapted property to meet their needs and their current home cannot be adapted
- Where a tenant has extreme difficulty moving around their current property and has difficulties in accessing any of its facilities
- Where there are multiple needs that combine to make a severe need for re-housing: each case will be considered on its own merits and must be approved by the Housing Manager
- Where a tenant has been identified for a management transfer

Band B: Urgent Housing Need

- Where the tenant has a health problem and their current property is unsuitable or their condition may deteriorate without suitable accommodation
- Where the tenant lacks two or more bedrooms
- Where the tenant under-occupies by two or more bedrooms
- Where the tenant is releasing an adapted property in high demand
- Where the tenant's property is in disrepair
- Where the tenant is suffering severe hardship and urgent rehousing to a smaller property is required. Each case will be considered individually by the Housing Manager and priority awarded in exceptional cases only.

Band C: Moderate Housing Need

- Where the tenant has less severe health problems which are moderately affected by the current property and may improve by moving
- Where the tenant lacks one bedroom
- Where the tenant under-occupies by one bedroom
- Where the tenant has a reasonable need for a second bedroom
- Where the tenant has a child 11 years or under and lives in a flat above the ground floor level.
- Where the tenant is releasing a family home to move into a flat

Band D: No Identifiable Housing Need

- Where the tenant is in a suitable property for their needs
- Where the tenant does not meet the criteria set out in Bands A-C
- Where the tenant has no identifiable housing need but aspires to live in a different part of the estate or a different property type

B Movement Between Bands

If an applicant experiences a change in circumstances they will be required to complete a *Change of Circumstances* form. Their application will then be reassessed which may result in a change in their suitability for a particular property type, level of housing need or Band.

Applicants can move between Bands if:

- Their circumstances change
- Additional information is received about a medical or welfare issue

If an applicant moves up to B or A their award date will be the date they were moved to this Band. If an applicant moves to any other Band their award date will remain the same.

C Evidence which may be required to confirm a medical condition or disability

To help us accurately assess an applicant's housing need we may request the following:

- Details of their current medications, frequency and dosage;
- Details of any disability benefits being received;
- Details of physical problems with the house that are impacting on their health;
- Details of any social problems which are having an impact on their health;
- Any other information the applicant considers relevant;
- A home visit to verify the housing need.

APPENDIX 5: Property Size Assessment Guide

Table of Household Code and Property Sizes

<u>Household Type</u>	PROPERTY SIZE NEEDED			<u>Number of bedrooms</u>
	<u>Household Code</u>	<u>Disability</u>	<u>over 60</u>	
1 adult	1A	no	no	1
1 adult	1A	yes	or yes	1 or 2
2 adults	AC; 2AS			1 or 2
3 adults	ACAS;3AS			2 or 3
4 adults	AC2AS; 4AS			3 or 4
5 adults	AC3AS; 5AS			4 or 5
1 adult or couple + 1 child	1A1C; AC1C			2
1 adult or couple + 2 children	1A2C; AC2C			2 or 3
1 adult or couple + 3 children	1A3C; AC3C			3 or 4
1 adult or couple + 4 children	1A4C; AC4C			4
1 adult or couple + 5+ children	1A5C; AC5C			5
2 adults + 1 child	2AS1C			3
2 adults + 2 children	2AS2C			3 or 4
2 adults + 3 children	2AS3C			3 or 4
2 adults + 4 children	2AS4C			5
1 couple + 1 adult	ACAS			2
1 couple + 1 adult + 1 child	ACAS1C			3
1 couple + 1 adult + 2 children	ACAS2C			3 or 4
1 couple + 1 adult + 3 children	ACAS3C			4
1 couple + 1 adult + 4 children	ACAS4C			5
1 couple + 2 adults	AC2AS			3
1 couple + 2 adults + 1 child	AC2AS1C			4
1 couple + 2 adults + 2 children	AC2AS2C			4 or 5
1 couple + 2 adults + 3 children	AC2AS3C			5
1 couple + 3 adults	AC3AS			4
1 couple + 3 adults + 1 child	AC3AS1C			5

Note:

Number of Bedrooms depends on the individual circumstances of the applicants and must fall within the guidelines outlined in the Allocations Policy and Lettings Plan.