

HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW

CONSULTATION REPORT 2019



In order to comply with the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, WGHC carried out a review of its Housing Allocation Policy. At the start of this process, we consulted with tenants by post and through an open consultation session in our offices.

As a partner in Edinburgh's Common Housing Register, we closely follow a shared assessment system through Key to Choice and EdIndex carried out a separate consultation with applicants.

WGHC Allocations Policy is generally 'Void Led'.

When a property becomes empty, applicants are considered in the following order:

- Section 5 referrals
- Other external agency referrals
- Reciprocal agreements
- Qualifying occupiers (exceptional circumstances only)
- Special circumstances – individual cases
- Management transfer
- Internal transfer applicants
- EdIndex /Key to Choice applicant

POSTAL SURVEY

In January 2019, we sent out a postal questionnaire to all tenants with a pre-paid reply envelope. This questionnaire was kept simple but informative, easy to understand and respond to and posed 6 questions (listed below) as well as inviting individual comments. Tenants were also invited to an Open Consultation session in our offices on 11 February. The closing date for responses was also 11 February.



We were pleased to receive 63 replies to the postal survey – a 17% response rate.

Q1 - Should WGHC advertise all empty properties through EdIndex, instead of holding a separate internal transfer list?

Yes 13 (21%)

No 49 (79%)

Therefore expressing a strong desire amongst tenants to keep our Internal Transfer List separate from EdIndex.

Q2 - Should WGHC continue to offer all vacant properties to WGHC tenants before EdIndex applicants?

Yes 53 (87%)

No 8 (13%)

Again, a strong endorsement for retaining the Internal Transfer list and our 'Void Led' Allocation Policy

Q3 - Should we continue to support aspirational transfer requests or just those with a housing need?

Yes 49 (80%)

No 12 (20%)

WGHC tries to meet aspirational as well as actual housing need when assessing Internal Transfers and this approach is popular amongst existing tenants

Q4 - Should we allocate a WGHC empty property to owner-occupiers who can safely access their home?

Yes 11 (18%)

No 49 (82%)

This question was used to gauge responses to a new provision under the HSA (2014) which allows landlords to now take home ownership into account when allocation properties.

Q5 - Should we award different levels of priority dependant on the number of extra bedrooms a tenant/applicant has? (i.e. award a higher priority the more extra bedrooms a tenant/applicant has)

Yes 46 (73%)

No 17 (27%)

The Act states that when allocating properties, we must give reasonable preference to those underoccupying their home but does not quantify the number of bedrooms under-occupied to be awarded priority. WG tenants feel strongly that a higher priority should be awarded to those downsizing the most.

Q6 - Should WGHC consider incentives to encourage people to downsize? For example, a cash incentive, help with removal costs or help with re-decoration.

Yes 44 (73%)

No 16 (27%)

A number of tenants commented that it was fair to pay incentives to compensate for inconvenience, moving costs and decoration.

There was a recognition in comments submitted that housing was a scarce resource, particularly in Edinburgh. Some tenants stressed the need for existing tenants to be considered first for vacant properties where there was a medical need or growing family.

OPEN TENANT CONSULTATION SESSION

An open consultation session was held in the WGHC Office on 11.02.19.

6 tenants attended facilitated by 2 staff who outlined the main legal and legislative changes brought in by the 2014 Act and the implications this may have on WGHC Housing Allocation Policy.

The session started with a discussion around WGHC having an Internal Transfer register separate from EdIndex and whether we should be part of EdIndex at all. It was pointed out that the Common Housing Register was set up to make applying for a house an easier process within Edinburgh it and was felt to be an open and transparent system. Attendees were vocal in their desire to keep the existing Internal Transfer List separate from the EdIndex List.

Those present also expressed a wish that WGHC households children should be given priority in allocations. It was stressed that this would not be possible under legislation and that WGHC children would be treated fairly, but without favour, under the EdIndex/Key to Choice system.

Home ownership did not raise any great concerns as long as applicants were not seen to profit by selling off a house and then being able to access social rent.

Attendees felt positive about awarding priority and incentives to those wishing to downsize. It was agreed that greater priority/incentives should be given to those giving up more rooms.

Finally there was a discussion around void standards, exiting tenants leaving the property in good condition and incoming tenants being able to expect a property in excellent condition.

HOW THE RESULTS FED INTO THE REVISED ALLOCATION POLICY

All tenants comments were taken on board and used to inform the revision of WGHC's Allocation Policy.

A summary of the main outcomes are listed below:

- the internal transfer list will be maintained rather than advertising all properties through EdIndex as a number of other landlords do.



- we will continue our practice of looking to our internal transfer list first when a property becomes empty before seeking Key to Choice applicants.

This approach helps to ensure we are meeting the housing needs of our tenants and also frees up empty homes to be allocated to the new preference groups within the Key to Choice system.

- Through our internal transfer banding system, we will continue to consider applications from tenants who wish to move for aspirational reasons.

However, such applications will only be considered once we are satisfied we have no suitable applicants waiting with housing need requirements.

- Within the internal transfer banding system, higher priority will be given to tenants who are overcrowded or underoccupying by 2 bedrooms or more.
 - We will take home ownership into account but continue considering those who cannot safely occupy their home.
 - We will continue to operate as a partner of the City-wide EdIndex Key to Choice System.
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