



ALLOCATIONS POLICY

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ALLOCATION POLICY

1 Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to set out the framework for Easthall Park Housing Association to allocate homes that become available for let. By allocating, we mean the process of selecting people from our housing lists, offering them a house and, if they accept, signing a tenancy agreement with them.

This policy is based on a points plus group approach and has a clear focus on meeting housing need. It replaces the allocation policy associated with the Common Housing Register that Easthall Park Housing Association participated in previously.

2 Legislative and Regulatory Framework

This policy complies with relevant statutory requirements, the Scottish Social Housing Charter and “Social Housing Allocations – A Practice Guide March 2011”.

3 Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes

The following charter outcomes and standards are directly relevant to the allocation policy:

Charter Outcome 1 ‘Equalities’:

‘every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services’.

Charter Outcome 2 ‘Communication’:

‘tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides’.

Charter Outcome 4 ‘Quality of housing’:

‘tenants’ homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by April 2015 and continue to meet it thereafter, and when they are allocated, are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair’.

Charter Outcome 7,8 and 9 ‘Housing Options’:

‘people looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them’.

'tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options'.

'people at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness'.

Charter Outcome 10 'Access to Social Housing':

'people looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and their prospects for being housed'.

Charter Outcome 11 'Tenancy Sustainment':

'tenants get the information they need on how to obtain support to remain in their home; and ensure suitable support is available, including services provided directly by the landlord and by other organisations'.

4 Policy Statement

We are committed to providing high quality, affordable housing that meets housing needs. When allocating properties, we will aim to:

- Make sure we offer people accommodation that meets their needs.
- Maximise housing options.
- Make best use of the properties that are available for let.
- Help build communities by creating successful and sustainable tenancies.
- Work to provide excellent customer services to those seeking housing with Easthall Park Housing Association.
- Maximise income by letting empty houses quickly in accordance with timescales.
- Process personal information confidentially to meet relevant legal obligations.
- Deal with appeals and complaints fairly in accordance with timescales.
- Meet all our legal obligations and operate under the principles set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

We will do this by taking an approach to allocating homes that:

- Is fair, open and transparent.
- Takes a consistent approach to decision-making.
- Promotes equality.

5 Legal Requirements

We will ensure that the Allocations Policy satisfies legal provisions. The purpose of this section is to explain legal provisions for housing applicants.

Legal requirements on allocations are contained in the Housing (Scotland) Acts 1987, 2001, 2010 and 2014.

These requirements cover the following matters:

- Access to the housing list
- Groups that are to be given reasonable preference when letting houses
- Factors that must be disregarded when letting houses
- Information
- Publicity
- Access to personal information

5.1 Access to the Housing List

Any person who is sixteen years or over may apply to the housing list. This is not, however, an automatic right to receive offers of housing. Section 6 explains how we prioritise applications in line with legal requirements and good practice.

We will provide housing application forms at our offices and online. In line with our equality commitments, the housing application can be made available in different languages and in alternative formats. We may also offer interpreting services. On request, we can assist applicants to complete their application form.

In addition, housing applications can be made by referrals from agencies that have an agreement with Easthall Park Housing Association. An example being Glasgow City Council Homeless Service (also known as a section 5 homeless referral).

5.2 Reasonable preference groups

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 the law requires us to give reasonable preference to certain groups when letting houses. The groups to which we must give reasonable preference when letting houses are:

- (a) Homeless people and those threatened with homelessness and have unmet housing need.
- (b) People living in:
 - Unsatisfactory housing conditions and have unmet housing need.
 - Tenants of houses held by a social landlord which the social landlord considers to be under-occupied.

For clarity, a person has unmet housing needs where the social landlord considers the persons to have housing needs which are not capable of being met by housing options which are available.

We recognise that people may be in housing need for other reasons than those covered in the law. Section 6 details the range of housing needs that we address.

5.3 Factors not taken into account for access to the Housing List

In accordance with legislation, certain factors must be ignored by landlords when assessing applicants access to the housing list. These factors are:

- Length of time applicants have lived in the area.
- Housing debt not owed by applicants, for example, rent arrears owed by a partner.
- Housing debt now repaid.
- Any non-housing debt such as council tax
- Age of applicants unless under the age of 16
- Applicants' income or property, including income or property owned by other household members.
- Any rent arrears where the amount is not more than one month's rent and or where the applicant has been maintaining an arrangement for paying the arrears for at least three months and is continuing to make such payments.

Whilst these factors do not affect an applicant gaining access to the housing list. There are factors that can affect the status of an application. These include:

- Any rent arrears where the amount is more than one month's rent and or where the applicant has not been maintaining an arrangement for paying the arrears for at least three months and is continuing to make such payments.
- If you have been acted anti-socially within the last three years
- If you own a property.

Section 5.4 gives more information on reasons why an application would be suspended.

5.4 Suspension

We can suspend applicants for unpaid rent or other money-relating to current or previous tenancies. For instance:

- Unpaid rent and factoring charges.
- Outstanding rechargeable repairs. For example, if a tenant has lost their keys and costs have been incurred in changing the locks and not paid the debt.
- The cost of cleaning/clearing a house if you leave furniture or rubbish behind when you move out.
- Legal costs if applicant has been taken to court.

If an applicant owes money for unpaid rent, we will only suspend if:

- More than one month's rent is owed and there is no mutually agreed arrangement to repay it; or
- The applicant owes more than a month's rent, a mutually agreed arrangement is in place to pay it but has not been kept for three months.

We can also suspend applicants due to anti-social behaviour. For instance:

- The applicant has been given a final warning for anti-social behaviour in the last six months. The suspension will remain in place whilst the warning is LIVE.
- The applicant has been issued with a "Notice of Proceedings" (NOP) for antisocial behaviour in the last six months. The suspension will remain in place whilst the NOP is LIVE.
- The applicant or someone that lives with them has been given an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) or an interim ASBO (the ASBO must be removed by the Sheriff Court before we can end a suspension).
- The applicant has a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy because of anti-social behaviour.
- The applicant has been evicted for anti-social behaviour in the last 3 years.
- The applicant has been violent or aggressive towards staff.

We can also suspend applications due to other types of breaches of their tenancy agreement. For instance:

- The applicant has been given a "Notice of Proceedings" for breaching the tenancy agreement in the last six months (for example, a failure to maintain a garden to an acceptable standard).
- The applicant has been evicted for a breach of a tenancy in the last three years.

The decision to suspend an application will be at the discretion of the Housing Manger and the circumstances will be assessed on an individual basis.

When we suspend an application, we will write and explain why, how long the suspension is for and what needs to be done to remove the suspension. We will also write to the applicant when we have removed the suspension.

An applicant can appeal against a suspension. See section 8 for more information. An applicant also has a right to appeal to a Sheriff by the way of a summary application within 21 days of the decision.

5.5 Information

We make available a summary of this policy. Applicants may also obtain a full copy on request. The summary and full copy are provided free of charge and can be made available in alternative formats.

5.6 Publicity

We must make allocation guidelines and publish details of how we assess priority. These guidelines cover all applicants on the housing list, including existing tenants who wish to transfer to alternative accommodation.

We operate a separate Mutual Exchange Policy that covers tenants wanting to exchange their homes with other tenants. Scottish Secure Tenants have a legal right to exchange their homes with other tenants. Landlords can only refuse permission if it is reasonable to do so.

5.7 Access to personal information

Applicants have rights to access personal information in two ways.

Firstly, an applicant is entitled to view information supplied in connection with their application. This right is set out in the Housing (Scotland) Acts 1987, 2001, 2010 and 2014.

Secondly, an applicant may access personal information as determined by rights of access under the General Data Protection Act 2018 and any subsequent amendments.

We provide this information on request within 20 working days for which a small charge may be applicable for such requests.

6 Dealing with Housing Applications

This section explains the stages and procedures concerning the allocation process. Our staff procedures cover all these stages and contain audit trails to ensure that policy objectives are met.

6.1 Admission to the Housing List

In order to join the housing list, we ask applicants to complete a housing application form.

Application forms can be obtained by contacting our office:

- In person
- By phone
- By post/email
- Via website – online application

Our target for assessing completed application forms (this includes receiving relevant proofs) and informing the applicant of the outcome is 7 working days from receipt. Applicants are sent written confirmation of their housing application details, including their award of points.

Applications with insufficient information may be subject to delay. This means that housing applications cannot be processed until the relevant information is received by the landlord. Or, alternatively, housing applications may be processed but not given full points entitlement until the information is received.

Applicants may contact housing staff during office hours to discuss housing application details.

If required, we may provide support services including interpreters for hearing impaired applicants or people who do not have English as a first language.

Home visits and office appointments out with standard office hours to assist applicants complete their forms may be carried out in special circumstances.

6.2 Applying for joint tenancies

Applicants, including existing tenants, may apply to have a joint tenancy with someone who is staying (or intending to stay) with them.

We have a separate policy and procedure for processing joint tenancy requests for existing tenants.

6.3 Tenants' Rights

We provide information on tenants' rights and responsibilities at various stages of the application process. For instance, at the point of requesting a housing

application form and when an applicant initially views a property they have been offered.

We also explain tenants' rights in detail at the stage when applicants sign their tenancy agreement.

6.4 Information and processing applications

We process personal information provided on the housing application form in line with legal requirements. We have to make enquiries to confirm information provided in the housing application. Express consent is granted by the applicant by signing the declaration on the application form to allow the exchange of information with other agencies where appropriate and for their application to form part of any future tenancy record. We provide housing applicants with a Fair Processing Notice with the information pack.

We may ask for references from any landlord or mortgage lender to confirm housing and tenancy details. We request applicants' consent to do this on the application form.

We check application details before making offers. This is good practice to ensure that information is recorded accurately so that offers are appropriate. For instance, we may telephone applicants to confirm details are as recorded on their application form.

We may also carry out home visits to confirm application details. This is of particular importance if no references are available confirming household details. For example, at the home visit, application details may have changed, and an offer may no longer be appropriate.

If the information held is inaccurate, the application details are amended accordingly. This might result in an offer not being made or withdrawn.

If an applicant is re-housed based on false information that an applicant has made knowingly or recklessly, we are entitled to take legal action to evict the applicant and recover the tenancy.

Applicants are responsible for advising us of any changes to their housing circumstances. They are advised of this requirement on the application form.

6.5 Verifying applicant's circumstances

Examples of the verification required include:

Circumstance	Proof required
<u>All applicants</u> – proof of current address (2 pieces of correspondence)	<u>Proof of identity</u>
<u>All household members</u> – proof of current address (1 piece of	

correspondence with current address)	
Residency	Proof of residency – bank statement, driving licence, tenancy agreement
Homeless or threatened with homeless	Assessment undertaken by Glasgow City Council
Asked to leave current accommodation	Copy of valid Notice to Quit
In need of rehousing as health affected by current housing circumstances	Relevant medical documentation, full information from applicant
Access arrangements	Letter from child's other parent or lawyer Proof of child benefit required if child over 16 years of age but still in full time education
Household member temporarily living away from home	Letter from this individual confirming they wish to be considered as part of the household
Experiencing harassment	Corroborating evidence e.g. police, social work etc
Pregnancy	MAT B1 form or similar
Owner Occupiers	Proof of intent to sell property

6.6 People from Abroad

People subject to immigration control must declare this on the application form. Eligibility for housing will require to be assessed in terms of Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 and asylum and immigration legislation. People may remain on the housing list but will be asked to provide evidence of their immigration status before we can confirm if they are eligible for an offer of housing.

If a landlord cannot establish the identity of an applicant (or a member of their household), the Home Office can be contacted. The Home Office will then have 48 hours to provide their own verification, otherwise the landlord is free to allocate, and without penalty should there be illegal immigration involved.

6.7 Applicant Choice

Our allocation system ensures that applicant choice is taken into account. We aim to maximise applicant choice.

An applicant's choice of housing may be affected by legal orders and relevant guidance that we are required to follow. For instance, matrimonial interdicts and exclusion orders.

6.8 Offers

We make offers based on the applicant's housing needs and preferences after confirming details on their application form. This is good practice as it aims to reduce inappropriate offers.

Reasonable offers are those that reflect an applicant's stated choice. For example, we will not offer applicants house types that they have clearly stated they will not consider.

Nonetheless, we provide advice and information on realistic preferences, as demand generally exceeds supply.

Please note that an allocation of a property to a relative of a Management Committee member or an employee of the Association will be subject to audit and approval of the Management Committee.

6.9 Tenancies

We provide applicants who accept an offer of housing a Scottish Secure Tenancy in accordance with our legal obligations. In a limited number of instances, we may offer applicants a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy. This has limited security of tenure.

Examples of grounds for a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy agreement include:

- An applicant has been evicted for anti-social behaviour within the last three years.
- A tenant (or a member of their family) is subject to an anti-social behaviour order.
- The applicant owns a property that is not currently meeting their housing needs and requires housing on a temporary basis to enable their needs to be met whilst making alternative arrangements to the house they own.

6.10 House size

This section explains the house size for which applicants may be considered. It also outlines rules to address overcrowding and under-occupation.

Table 1: The size of property for which applicants may be considered.

Household size	1 apartment	2 apt	3 apt	4 apt	5 apt
Single person	√	√	√		
Couple	√	√	√		

Parent(s) with 1 child			√		
Parent(s) with two children under 14 years of same gender			√		
Parents(s) with 1 girl and boy both under 8 years			√		
Parent(s) with 2 children of same gender where 1 is 14 years or older.				√	
Parent(s) with 1 girl and 1 boy where oldest is over 8 years.				√	

Please note you will be placed on the housing list for the size of property you require based on your household composition. However, you may be able to obtain a property of a different size. See below for more information.

6.11 Overcrowding rules

Demand for larger houses often exceeds supply. On occasion, this makes it necessary to consider applicants for smaller houses than specified in the table above. It may also be necessary to consider applicants for smaller properties due to the changes introduced in April 2012 under The Welfare Reform Act ("bedroom tax").

We do not let houses to families if this would create statutory overcrowding, as this would constitute a criminal offence.

6.12 Under-occupation

In some circumstances, we will also allow under-occupation of larger accommodation.

For example, our policy acknowledges that there is a shortage of properties available for single people and couples, therefore in these circumstances, we may allow these applicants to occupy 2-bedroom properties.

This flexibility allows us to increase applicant's prospects of being rehoused and also allows us to make best use of our housing stock.

6.13 Gypsy Travellers

Applications from gypsy travellers, or other applicants living in a caravan, are placed in the appropriate group based on their present housing conditions and are awarded points based on their actual housing conditions.

Applications from gypsy travellers who have nowhere to pitch their caravan would be referred to Glasgow City Council's homeless service.

6.14 Reviewing applications

We review applications on at least an annual basis. This is important to maintain accurate information about applicants so that appropriate offers are made.

If no response is received after a standard review, we will make another attempt to contact applicants using a range of methods including letter, phone calls, emails and texts. If there continues to be no response following our attempts of contact, we will remove the applicant from the housing list.

6.15 Removal of applications

There are other occasions when we will remove applications from the housing list. We will remove an application if an applicant:

- Moves to a new permanent address.
- Specifically requests that we remove their application.
- Fails to respond to offers of accommodation within a reasonable timescale.
- We are notified that the applicant is deceased.

7 Our Allocations System

This section explains the type of allocations system we have adopted to ensure that we meet our policy objectives effectively.

7.1 Group plus points system

The group plus points system establishes a number of groups with individual applications placed into an appropriate group. Applicants in the group are then awarded points for any housing needs that they have.

The only exception to this is people who are placed in group 1 (homeless), group 7 (Exceptions) and Group 8 (Aspirational).

Applicants will only be placed in Group 7 if their needs are not covered by the policy and the Housing Manager approves an offer of housing via a special let or management transfer.

For those placed in group 8 this is because people in this group have an existing tenancy with us and their current home meets their housing needs. We do not award 'housing points' for aspirational applications. Instead, we add the application to group 8, and when a suitable property becomes available for offer to someone from the aspirational housing group, it is offered to the person who has been on the list (for that property type) longest and has the longest length of tenancy.

Order will be as follows –

1. Date admitted to list
2. Length of tenancy

Please note if a non-tenant applicant is assessed as having no housing need, they will not be placed into group 8. They will be placed into Group 6 (General Needs) with zero points.

If applicants share the same points within the same group, applications will be prioritised based on their time in housing need. Accordingly, if two applicants have the same points, the applicant who has been in housing need the longest will be given priority.

7.2 Advantages of a group plus points system

The key advantages are it:

- Addresses housing needs specified in law (the reasonable preference groups), as well as other housing needs.
- Facilitates monitoring of allocation practice, in particular how effectively we are meeting our legal responsibilities.
- Ensures accurate identification of housing needs and allows us to respond quickly to changing patterns of need.
- Provides for a wide range of housing needs to be tackled thereby promoting our objective of creating sustainable communities.

7.3 Our groups and placing applications

We have established a total of 8 groups. These groups cover the main needs covered in housing law and good practice guidance. These groups are listed in order of priority.

Our groups are as follows:

- Group 1 Homeless
- Group 2 Urgent Needs
- Group 3 Overcrowding
- Group 4 Unsatisfactory housing
- Group 5 Under-occupation
- Group 6 General needs
- Group 7 Exceptions (special lets & management transfers)
- Group 8 Aspirational

Group 3, 5 and 6 have sub-groups.

We place applications into a group using the following method: applicants are placed in the highest priority group reflecting their housing need.

Joint applicants with separate addresses are pointed at each address according to their circumstances. They are then placed according to the highest group, not the highest points. The applicant can appeal this decision if they are not satisfied with their placing and thereafter may be placed in a different group.

If an applicant has an urgent housing need, their application is placed in the urgent needs group (Group 2). This applies even if the applicant has other recognised housing needs.

If an applicant is living in overcrowding conditions and not in Group 2, their application is placed in the overcrowding group (Group 3). In this group we have two separate sub-groups: overcrowding for housing list applicants and transfer applicants.

If an applicant is not in Group 2 or 3 and is living in unsatisfactory housing, their application is placed in the unsatisfactory housing group (Group 4).

If an applicant is under occupying their current property and they do not qualify for Group 2 or 4, they will be placed into the Under-occupation group (Group 5). In this group we have two separate sub-groups: under- occupation for housing list applicants and transfer applicants.

All other housing list applicants who do not qualify for groups 2 to 5, are placed in the general needs group (Group 6). In this group we have two separate sub-groups: a) for single person and couples, b) for families.

All other transfer list applicants who do not qualify for groups 2, 3 or 5 are placed in the aspirational group (Group 8)

On the rare occasion that we have an applicant whose needs are not met by the policy, they will be placed in the Exceptions to Policy group (Group 7). Offers of housing to applicants in this group will be at the discretion of the Housing Manager.

An annual letting plan informed by housing need and demand will establish indicative percentage figures of anticipated lets from each group.

7.4 Group 1: Homelessness

We recognise our statutory responsibility in the prevention and resolution of homelessness.

All applicants who:

- the landlord has accepted as a Section 5 homeless referral
- are living in temporary homeless accommodation
- are in receipt of a homeless decision letter (date of decision letter will be the date of application when application is placed into Group 1)

Will be placed in Group 1. Applicants placed into Group 1 will not be eligible to receive points from any other groups as Group 1 is recognised as the highest priority.

Confirmation of homelessness will be confirmed at the time of offer. Should confirmation not be confirmed we may withdraw the offer.

7.5 Group 2: Urgent needs

The needs covered under this group are:

- Houses subject to demolition on regeneration
- Victims of harassment or domestic abuse
- People re-housed through care initiatives

(a) Houses subject to demolition or regeneration

Applicants whose houses are subject to demolition or regeneration due to action taken by their own landlord and who require permanent re-housing are regarded as being in serious need.

We will consider on case-by-case basis requests by local landlords to assist their clearance programmes.

Points awarded: 150

(b) People subjected to domestic abuse or harassment

This covers applicants who need to be rehoused as a consequence of harassment or domestic abuse.

Types of abuse and harassment we consider include:

- Domestic abuse
- Racial harassment
- Religious or sectarian harassment
- Homophobic harassment
- Transphobic harassment
- Harassment of disabled people, including those with a learning disability

Domestic abuse: We use Police Scotland's definition of domestic abuse as any form of physical, verbal, sexual, psychological or financial abuse which might amount to criminal conduct, and which takes place within the context of a relationship. The relationship will be between partners (married, cohabiting, civil partnership or otherwise) or ex-partners. The abuse can be committed in the home or elsewhere including online. If you give domestic abuse as the reason for applying for a house, we may seek information to support your case, including from Police Scotland, but will not contact the person that is responsible for the abuse.

Harassment: You are suffering from harassment in the event that you are being targeted in or around your current accommodation and you are not safe in your current accommodation. Harassment can take many forms including intimidating, threatening or aggressive behaviour, both verbal and physical, and can involve attacks on property as well as people. Harassment is often premeditated and reoccurring. An award of points due to harassment will require a recommendation from Police Scotland that a move is required to ensure your safety. An award will not be made for one off incidents or ongoing anti-social behaviour disputes between neighbours.

For applicants who receive an award of points for domestic abuse or harassment, we will carry out a review on a rolling 6 monthly basis to determine if the circumstances have changed.

Points awarded: 150 points

(c) People re-housed through care and support initiatives

This covers applicants who need to be housed as part of community care initiatives. Applicants are referred through Social Work or other support agencies.

Examples of such groups are:

- Young people “looked after” and accommodated by Glasgow City Council
- Residents of hospitals and other institutions who are returning to the community
- Residents in supported accommodation now ready to move to other accommodation

Points awarded: 150

d) Care and Support

Where a person requires support from a friend or relative and the applicant is either the carer or the person requiring support points will be awarded.

Because of the individual nature of this type of application, each application will be assessed on its merits. A number of factors will be taken into account:

- The current distance between the two individuals involved and whether there are other carers
- The dependency of one person on the other or any associated health/emotional problems
- The type and frequency of care being provided
- The recommendations of health/social work professionals in relation to care and support.

Once the information has been gathered an assessment will be made.

Points awarded: 20

Further evidence may be requested before points are awarded. There requires to be a fully justifiable reason for the support need, for example, child-minding in order to allow someone to retain employment.

7.6 Group 3:

a) Overcrowding (or large families)

When awarding points to applicants in this group, we use the below occupancy standard, Table 2. This standard is used to calculate if overcrowding (or under-occupation) exists.

Table 2: Occupancy standard

Household size	Bedrooms required
Single person	One
Couple	One
Same sex members who are under 14	One
Two children mixed sex under 8	One
Any other person	One

Table 2 shows that, as soon as one child reaches 8 years of age, overcrowding points are awarded if the child is required to share a bedroom with another child of a different sex.

We do not let houses to applicants if this creates statutory overcrowding. The size of houses that we let to applicants is based on our policy standard (See section 5.11, Table 1).

In the case of medical needs, extra room space may be required. This will be subject to confirmation and evidence provided by the applicant.

Overcrowding assessments include people who normally live in the house but who are temporarily absent. This could include family members working away from home for a short period or students.

Parents with shared access to children will be awarded with one additional bedroom regardless of how many children the applicant has access to.

In this group we have two separate sub-groups: overcrowding for waiting list applicants and transfer applicants.

If it is deemed by staff that the applicant has deliberately created a situation of overcrowding to improve their position on the housing list, overcrowding points will not be awarded. In these instances, we will contact the landlord of the address on the application to verify the applicant's permission to reside status. In the event an applicant submits an application from an address that they do not have permission to reside at, they will be deemed as having no fixed address and will be placed in the general needs group (Group 6).

Points awarded: 50 (for each extra room based on our occupancy standard)
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b) Care and Support

Where a person requires support from a friend or relative and the applicant is either the carer or the person requiring support points will be awarded.

Because of the individual nature of this type of application, each application will be assessed on its merits. A number of factors will be taken into account:

- The current distance between the two individuals involved and whether there is other carers
- The dependency of one person on the other or any associated health/emotional problems
- The type and frequency of care being provided
- The recommendations of health/social work professionals in relation to care and support.

Once the information has been gathered an assessment will be made.

Points awarded: 20

Further evidence may be requested before points are awarded. There requires to be a fully justifiable reason for the support need, for example, child-minding in order to allow someone to retain employment.

7.7 Group 4: Unsatisfactory Housing

We must give reasonable preference when letting houses to applicants living in unsatisfactory housing condition. This includes those:

- Living in housing below tolerable standard
- Living in other unsatisfactory housing that we refer to as accessibility or medical needs

Unsatisfactory housing is used in this policy to refer to housing needs relating to accessibility and medical needs.

(a) Housing below the tolerable standard

Housing falls below the tolerable standard if it does not meet the relevant legal standard. A house is below the tolerable standard if it fails to meet any one of the elements within the tolerable standard.

For example, a house must be substantially free from rising or penetrating damp and must have a sink that has a supply of both hot and cold water.

This must be verified by a letter from Environmental Health.

Points awarded: 150

(b) Accessibility or medical needs

Where the applicant or a member of their household suffers from any medical condition where rehousing would alleviate the medical problem, points may be awarded in recognition of this situation. The applicant will be required to complete a medical assessment form which will enable a decision to be made on the suitability for rehousing. Evidence from a medical practitioner may also be required.

There are two gradings placed on an application for medical priority and these are described below:

Priority A: Where an applicants' (or a named person on the application who is part of the household moving group) current accommodation is potentially life threatening or causing severe aggravation to his/her medical condition and where re-housing is extremely urgent. This refers to those housebound; applicants in hospital awaiting an offer of accommodation before discharge or cases where there is severe difficulty accessing the accommodation.

Priority B: Where an applicants' (or a named person on the application who is part of the household moving group) current accommodation is causing serious aggravation to an applicants' medical condition. This refers to cases where there is difficulty getting to and from the accommodation or the internal layout is unsuitable.

Medical Grade	Points Awarded
A	100
B	50

In the case of households where there are multiple members who have medical needs, the person with the most severe medical need will be awarded the adequate points. For additional household members with medical needs an additional 25 points per person will be awarded.

In the event that moving property will not alleviate or address the medical need, medical points will not be awarded. For example, if a wheelchair user is in a property that is a designated wheelchair adapted property, medical points would not be awarded.

c) Care and Support

Where a person requires support from a friend or relative and the applicant is either the carer or the person requiring support points will be awarded.

Because of the individual nature of this type of application, each application will be assessed on its merits. A number of factors will be taken into account:

- The current distance between the two individuals involved and whether there is other carers

- The dependency of one person on the other or any associated health/emotional problems
- The type and frequency of care being provided
- The recommendations of health/social work professionals in relation to care and support.

Once the information has been gathered an assessment will be made.

Points awarded: 20

Further evidence may be requested before points are awarded. There requires to be a fully justifiable reason for the support need, for example, child-minding in order to allow someone to retain employment.

7.8 Group 5: Under-occupation

(a) Under-occupation

Reducing under-occupation helps landlords to make best use of housing stock. Our policy also recognises that applicants may wish to move to smaller houses as their present home is too large.

In Group 5 we have two separate sub-groups: under-occupation for transfer applicants and waiting list applicants.

Group 5a includes existing tenants of Easthall Park Housing Association. Group 5b includes tenants from other Registered Social Landlords and tenants from the Private Rented Sector

Applicants can apply to move to accommodation that reduces present under-occupation levels even if the house remains under-occupied. Such applicants would be awarded under-occupation points only if under-occupation is reduced.

Only tenants (including private rented sector tenants) will qualify for under occupation points. No points will be awarded to owner occupiers.

Points awarded: 50 (for each room under-occupied based on our occupancy standard)

(b) Releasing housing for let to other applicants

If two Easthall Park Housing Association tenants want to live together and re-housing both households' releases both their houses for let, we award a fixed number of points.

Points awarded: 50

c) Care and Support

Where a person requires support from a friend or relative and the applicant is either the carer or the person requiring support points will be awarded.

Because of the individual nature of this type of application, each application will be assessed on its merits. A number of factors will be taken into account:

- The current distance between the two individuals involved and whether there is other carers
- The dependency of one person on the other or any associated health/emotional problems
- The type and frequency of care being provided
- The recommendations of health/social work professionals in relation to care and support.

Once the information has been gathered an assessment will be made.

Points awarded: 20

Further evidence may be requested before points are awarded. There requires to be a fully justifiable reason for the support need, for example, child-minding in order to allow someone to retain employment.

7.9 Group 6: General Needs

General needs include areas such as insecurity of accommodation and households who want to move into the social rented sector.

Only waiting list applicants (non-tenants) will be placed in Group 6.

Waiting list applicants (non-tenants) with zero points would be placed in here. Transfer list applicants (current Easthall Park tenants) with zero points will be placed into group 8.

In Group 6 we have two sub-groups:

- 6a) Single person and Couples
- 6b) Families

(a) Insecurity of accommodation

Applications from people living in insecure accommodation will be awarded points in this group.

Insecurity of accommodation covers a range of situations, including applicants who live in:

- Private sector accommodation
- Private sector accommodation with limited security
- Tied accommodation
- Armed forces personnel
- People of no fixed abode

(i) Private sector accommodation

Applicants who reside in privately rented accommodation will be awarded housing need points to reflect less security of tenure compared to that offered by social landlords and the realisation that affordability is a legitimate housing need.

Points awarded: 20

(ii) Private sector accommodation with limited security

This covers private rented sector accommodation that is ending due to actions by the landlord or agency to seek recovery of repossession. For instance, this might apply in cases where the landlord is terminating either an Assured or a Short-Assured tenancy through the correct legal procedures. (If points are awarded on these grounds, applicants will not be awarded the additional 20 points for residing in private sector accommodation).

Insecurity of tenure points may also be awarded to owners whose home is threatened because of mortgage default. This may happen if owners cannot afford to maintain mortgage payments and lenders have taken court action to recover the property for sale. Points are awarded once the owner has a date to leave accommodation. In processing applications, we carry out checks as required to confirm details.

Points awarded: 75

(iii) Tied accommodation

This applies to applicants living in accommodation as part of their employment duties. We award points under this category when the accommodation is ending due to termination of employment. Points are awarded six months before the person leaves employment.

Points awarded: 75

(iv) Armed forces personnel

This applies to Armed Forces personnel who occupy service accommodation and want to be re-housed in our community. We encourage applicants to apply as soon as possible before discharge. Applicants are required to provide a copy of their certificate of discharge. Points are awarded six months before the person leaves the services.

Points awarded: 75

(b) Relationship Breakdown

This applies to partners in a relationship breakdown who now want to live separately. As applicants for housing, they now form a separate household.

Points awarded: 75

(c) Shared amenities

We also award points to applicants who are living with other households if they share key amenities. The amenities for which points are awarded are kitchen, bathroom or toilet. Applicants need to only be sharing one of these amenities to qualify for the points.

Household type	Points awarded
Single person and couples	20
Families	30

Applicants who sublet part of their home or take in lodgers do not qualify for these points.

(d) No fixed address

Applicants with no fixed address are placed in this group.

For clarity, this would cover those applicants whose applications are registered c/o a Government agency such as the Job Centre or Social Work Departments.

Points awarded: 30

e) Care and Support

Where a person requires support from a friend or relative and the applicant is either the carer or the person requiring support points will be awarded.

Because of the individual nature of this type of application, each application will be assessed on its merits. A number of factors will be taken into account:

- The current distance between the two individuals involved and whether there is other carers
- The dependency of one person on the other or any associated health/emotional problems
- The type and frequency of care being provided
- The recommendations of health/social work professionals in relation to care and support.

Once the information has been gathered an assessment will be made.

Points awarded: 20

Further evidence may be requested before points are awarded. There requires to be a fully justifiable reason for the support need, for example, child-minding in order to allow someone to retain employment.

7.10 Group 7: Exceptions to the policy - special lets & management transfers

There may be exceptional cases where the Association considers it appropriate to make an allocation outwith the terms of this policy. It is not possible to predict all the exceptional circumstances that may arise, but these could include:

- Where new build properties will help meet housing needs that we have otherwise been unable to address.
- Where you are living in a property which has been specially adapted, no-one currently living in the house needs the adaptations but someone else on the housing list does.
- Where a landlord needs to make a management transfer in the event of an emergency.
- To free up a property of a type that is in very short supply and which is needed to meet an urgent housing need.
- Where a landlord makes an exceptional allocation to someone who does not qualify to succeed to a tenancy.
- Where two households both of which live in a social rented property wish to move together into a new home and both of their current properties would be available to be relet.
- Where the landlord and tenant agree that due to exceptional circumstances the tenant has to terminate their tenancy, but they will be looking to be rehoused within 2 years.
- If another agency, such as Police Scotland, asks for assistance.
- As part of a regeneration or similar programme or if a tenant's current home is subject to a closing order or is to be demolished, or part of a Housing Renewal Area, for example.

Due to the exceptional nature of these lets, the numbers involved will be very low and will be clearly documented for audit purposes. A Senior Manager must authorise any special lets or management transfers. Any lets made under these circumstances will be recorded against Group 7.

7.11 Group 8: Aspirational

Tenants of Easthall Park Housing Association who do not have housing needs recognised within the first five groups have their applications placed in the aspirational group, Group 8. A separate transfer list is important to meet policy objectives for the following reasons:

- It promotes households to move to other accommodation, in turn releasing stock for other applicants.
- It addresses the preferences of existing tenants, and this is important as preferences are a form of housing need.
- In meeting the needs of tenants, it is important to establish communities that are populated and sustainable.

As there is no housing 'need' element (in that your current home meets your housing needs), we do not award 'housing points' for aspirational applications. Instead, we add the applicant to the group, and when a suitable property becomes available for offer to someone from the aspirational housing group, it is offered to the person who has been on the list the longest and has the longest length of tenancy.

You can't be in any other group as well as the aspirational group at the same time; if you require a bigger house, or a smaller house, or another property because of a medical condition, then you have an element of 'housing need' and will be placed within another group.

8 Appeals and Complaints

8.1 Appeals

If you disagree with your application being suspended, the group your application has been placed in or the points you have been awarded you should contact the Association to discuss this matter. If you remain dissatisfied, you can appeal this decision. Appeals must be submitted in writing/email.

8.2 Complaints

If an applicant is dissatisfied with any aspect (out-with the awarding of points or group) in which their application has been dealt with by the Association, this will be managed in accordance with the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman complaints handling policy. A copy of this policy is available on request and can be provided in alternative formats.

9 Positive Action

We support the development of equality initiatives through all of our housing activities, including allocation practice.

An important part of this process involves developing positive action initiatives. Positive action involves establishing initiatives to address discrimination against particular groups such as disabled people or people from minority ethnic groups.

The following are examples of positive action concerning allocation practice that we have implemented:

- Publication of the allocation policy in other formats and different languages, on request
- Ensuring our allocation documentation is produced in plain language.
- Promoting awareness of the allocation policy to a diverse range of groups
- Providing interpreting services, on request
- Consulting with national bodies, as required, to promote good practice.

10 Training

Training is an important element in ensuring that this policy is implemented effectively. We provide ongoing training for staff, which includes training on:

- Allocation law and practice
- Allocation policy and procedures
- Information technology systems
- Other relevant legislation such as equalities

We monitor training through our training plans and annual staff appraisals that link training to strategic objectives and personal development needs.

11 Auditing and monitoring performance

11.1 Auditing performance

We ensure that proper mechanisms are in place to allow individual allocations to be audited.

11.2 Monitoring performance

Monitoring the implementation of the policy is an important part of quality assurance. It is also essential to ensure that allocation practices are subject to continuous improvement.

We ensure we monitor performance in the following areas:

- The number of new applications included whether or not they are processed within targets.
- Applications reviewed and deleted as part of the review process.
- The groups in which applications are placed.
- Household type and equality information.
- Offers houses let.
- Appeals and complaints.

Information on allocation trends is presented to our Management Committee on a regular basis. General allocation performance is published for all tenants and service users.

12 Tenant participation and policy review

12.1 General

We review this policy every three years, or as required. For instance, a review of the policy may be necessary to address legal changes.

We discuss changes to policy with our tenants, applicants and other service users through our Resident Engagement Strategy.

We use our performance indicators to discuss improvements to service delivery.

12.2 Methods of review

We use a range of methods as detailed in our Resident Engagement Strategy when reviewing the policy. We also conduct regular surveys of service users to gather their views concerning allocation services.