



ALLOCATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Responsible Director: Director of Homes and Wellbeing

Responsible Manager: Head of Homes and Wellbeing

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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 NCHA will allocate properties in a fair, transparent and efficient way making the best use of the housing stock and meeting the needs of a diverse range of customers and communities.
- 1.2 We will allocate our homes in partnership with a local authority via Choice Based Lettings Systems or direct nominations or from our own LETS register. Where we are unable to allocate in this way we will advertise directly to the public.
- 1.3 We will promote choice for prospective customers and encourage customer mobility across Local Authority areas wherever possible.
- 1.4 We are fully committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and wish to ensure fair access to all aspects of the service that we provide.
- 1.5 In producing this policy we have taken account of the following documents:
 - NCHA Equalities and Diversity Policy
 - The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012
 - Human Rights at Home: Guidance for Social Housing Providers Updated 2017
 - NCHA Tenancy Policy
 - Welfare Reform Act 2012
 - Localism Act 2011
 - The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016
 - ALC 01 - Housing of Board Members, Staff and Relatives Policy
- 1.6 This policy is available on the NCHA website. Translations and Braille copies are available on request.
- 1.7 This policy has been the subject of consultation with customers groups and will be reviewed every three years by the Allocations Team, Affordable and Social Housing
- 1.8 We will allocate our properties as quickly and efficiently as possible to minimise void loss.

2. Lettings not Covered by this Policy

- 2.1 This policy will apply to all Allocations other than:
 - Joint to Sole, Succession or other changes in tenancy, including:
 - Conversion from a starter tenancy;
 - Offers made to customer decants or under occupying successors or non-qualifying household members on the death of a customer.

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3. In - House CBL (LETS)

- 3.1 LETS is the NCHA in-house CBL scheme and applies to 25% of general needs lettings in the areas in which it operates.

Please refer to the LETS Policy

4. Local Authority CBL schemes

- 4.1 NCHA works in partnership with Local Authorities across the region. Nomination or Service Level Agreements are in place to determine the criteria for advertising and allocating properties.
- 4.2 NCHA supports the housing function of the Local Authorities, including assistance with their homelessness duties.
- 4.3 Where NCHA is a partner in a Local Authority Choice Based Letting system we will follow the provisions set out in the Service Level Agreement. This may at times restrict NCHA's ability to let efficiently, but the needs of the local community may be best served by this agreement.
- 4.4 A list of current Local Authorities in partnership with NCHA with details of the CBL system they use is available below. The list also includes those Local Authorities who do not use CBL systems. Please see Appendix 1 below.

5. New Build Developments - Nomination Rights and Section 106 Agreements

- 5.1 With any new build scheme it is standard practice for the local authority to request 100% nomination rights on first tenancies. Thereafter, under the terms of the various CBL service level agreements in place the usual arrangement is for 75% of all subsequent lettings to be made through the CBL scheme (i.e. 75% nominations on relets). However, some schemes require 100% relet nominations in perpetuity.
- 5.2 New build developments require a considerable amount of work prior to letting and it is important that the NCHA protocol with the development department is adhered to. This involves a series of briefings and the opportunity to visit the site close to the handover date for staff to familiarise themselves with the new development.

Handover Policy

- 5.3 It is essential that lettings staff approach the local authority at least 3 months in advance of handover to discuss nomination rights and the process of advertising and letting the vacant units. The overriding objective should be to achieve back to back handovers and lettings with no vacant period in between. Strong links are required with local authority staff to ensure that effective communication is in place so that we are able to meet this target.

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- 5.4 Section 106 Agreements are designed to help make sure that new developments enhance local communities. They can help to create better quality environments in, and around new developments by creating requirements for improving roads and building new community facilities, or creating open spaces and improving local schools. They can also require that a percentage of the housing stock on a new development is reserved for affordable units, which are then typically managed by a housing association.
- 5.5 Where Section 106 Agreements are in place the new developments will typically be situated in a rural location and NCHA will be under an obligation to ensure that all customers of affordable rented housing association stock on the new site should be nominated by the local authority and should also have a local connection to the area where the development is located. This is to ensure that a percentage of new build development in the locality is reserved for local people in need of affordable housing. This type of housing is often in short supply in rural areas due to the effect on the housing market of commuters who wish to purchase rural properties outright.
- 5.6 Section 106 agreements should be strictly adhered to and copies of all agreements should be retained at all times for reference by the allocations team.

6. Direct Lets

- 6.1 In certain circumstances NCHA will allocate a property without advertising it through the Local Authority. Direct lets are recorded on lettings returns required by Local Authorities. (See 6.4 below).
- 6.2 Examples of situations where direct lets will be undertaken are:
- Properties used for temporary decants
 - Emergency transfers situations e.g. due to domestic violence or hate crimes (see transfer policy)
 - Management moves following a succession or change to tenancy, approved by the Service Manager Allocations
- 6.3 NCHA will monitor Direct Lets to ensure they are within the 25% limit for allocations.
- 6.4 Periodically, Local Authorities request details of all allocations in the form of Local Authority returns. These vary by Local Authority. The Allocations Team monitor all lettings monthly per Local Authority to enable these returns be completed in a timely manner.

7. Local Lettings Plans

- 7.1 A local lettings plan may be used where our housing stock is concentrated on an estate.

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- 7.2 Generally, plans may be devised for new developments of 20 or more units of accommodation or new developments which contain a block of flats. Additionally, plans may be developed for existing developments or areas identified by housing management staff, customers and other stakeholders where there are issues that affect sustainability e.g. high turnover and abandonments, high levels of ASB/criminal activity, high concentrations of vulnerable customers, a high number of transfer requests and properties that are generally difficult to let or low demand.
- 7.3 The objectives of these plans are:
- a. to create sustainable, balanced and cohesive communities
 - b. to attain a mixture of occupancy and household types to encourage sustainability
 - c. to complement the objectives of Neighbourhood Action Plans

Please refer to the Local Lettings Policy

8. Eligibility for Property Types

- 8.1 In order to be clear about our policy on allocating different sizes of accommodation and to not raise expectations above what is practical and achievable. NCHA has published information showing the types of accommodation which are available to different household types. This information is in tabular form in Appendix 2 Eligibility Matrix below.
- 8.2 In exceptional cases NCHA will allow applicants to under occupy a property. Applicants who will under occupy the property offered will be accepted if they have demonstrated an ability to pay the rent due and have signed a disclaimer agreeing to this.

9. Vetting Checks

- 9.1 All applicants will undergo a Pre-Tenancy Assessment (PTA), where possible conducted in the applicant's home. The PTA will determine if the applicant is eligible for NCHA accommodation. Any support requirements will also be identified at this point. The purpose of the PTA is to assess the ability of the applicant to sustain a tenancy and for the applicant to be advised of their responsibilities.
- 9.2 As part of the PTA it is an expectation that all applicants will undergo vetting checks by Lettings Officers prior to becoming a customer to ascertain whether there are any reasons why they should not receive an offer of accommodation. Vetting checks will include:
- an income and expenditure assessment; a reference from a previous landlord or a character reference with proof of previous address;
 - proof of employment and benefits; identity checks

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- 9.3 On completion of vetting checks a risk assessment is completed and a decision will be made to make a final offer to the applicant. If there are issues raised at the PTA the Allocations Officer will take measures to ensure support for the new customer is in place and will notify colleagues in Estates and Income Teams that information is available about the customer.

10. Ineligibility and Exclusions

- 10.1 In certain situations NCHA reserves the right to exclude applicants from the housing register altogether. A strict assessment procedure is required to identify potential exclusions in order to protect other NCHA customers from the risk of anti-social behaviour and to reduce the risk of tenancy failure and high levels of rent arrears.

Please refer to ALC 07 Ineligible Applicants Policy.

- 10.2 Housing Association accommodation is in short supply therefore where an applicant's income level or capital suggests that they have other housing options, e.g. shared ownership or outright purchase, they will be given appropriate advice regarding other options available.

- 10.3 The following limits will apply when considering new applicants for general needs housing:

- Income (single people) £35,000
- Income (joint application) £50,000
- Equity £35,000
- Savings £20,000

11. Sensitive Lettings

- 11.1 Sensitive lettings are ones where restrictions on the criteria for applicant type are put in place in response to significant management issues which relate to a particular area.

- 11.2 Areas with significant issues will be identified by lettings and estates staff. Where issues that affect sustainability have been identified, e.g. high turnover and abandonments, high levels of ASB/criminal activity, high concentrations of vulnerable customers, a high number of transfer requests and properties that are generally difficult to let, subject to the approval of the Service Manager (Allocations) or the Head of ASH. NCHA will reserve the right to allocate vacant properties to applicants whose tenancy is not likely to lead to a continuation of these problems.

- 11.3 Records must be kept of areas/properties which are subject to sensitive lettings and these areas must be reviewed periodically to check whether the original concerns which led to the adoption of this policy are still apparent.

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12. Hard to Let Properties

12.1 A Hard to let property will have had 2 failed advertising cycles, or be of a type or size or in a location that has previously been hard to let. Properties that may be hard to let will be identified at termination and strategies for advertising and / or incentives to let will be agreed with the Senior Lettings Officer / Service Manager (Allocations) in order to secure a successful and timely letting.

12.2 Properties may be sold if they fall into one or more of the following categories:

- property of non-standard construction
- low SAP rating (<35)
- relet costs > £7k
- anticipated profit on sale > £50k
- property located in a “hotspot” area
- poorly designed property
- property located in a low demand area

Please refer to the Property Disposal Policy.

12.3 If a property is to be retained but is still likely to prove hard to let the following list of incentives can be applied to the property in the advertisement, by agreement with the Service Manager (Allocations):

- increased decoration allowance
- Decoration by DMS (from Incentives budget)
- rent free weeks
- fitted floor coverings
- fitted blinds/curtains
- furniture packs

12.4 Multiple viewings after shortlisting will be carried out wherever possible, assuming that there are sufficient applicants showing an interest in a property.

12.5 Re-advertisements of hard to let properties will be distributed more widely than is the case on first advertising. This includes contacting parish councils, and leaving copies of adverts in post office windows and the windows of local shops where applicable. Individual adverts should also be placed in the NCHA office windows as appropriate.

12.6 Copies of adverts will be circulated to colleagues in the estates section.

12.7 Properties void for a period of 42 days will be re-assessed for sale.

13. Transfers

13.1 NCHA will seek to reserve a maximum of 10% of all lettings in any given year for transferring customers. Customers may apply for a transfer if they need to move urgently due to harassment or threats of violence; if there is a medical need for alternative accommodation. Other circumstances are where there is a

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risk that the tenancy cannot be sustained due to welfare reform or if the property is in poor condition and falls within the Property Disposal Policy.

- 13.2 Customers apply to their Estate Officer who will visit in their home and recommend that Management Transfer Status is approved. This is then authorised by the Service Manager Allocations.

Please refer to the Transfer Policy.

14. Mutual Exchanges

- 14.1 NCHA supports customers who may wish to move by promoting Mutual Exchanges. NCHA subscribes to HOMESWAPPER, a web based system to match applicants to alternative accommodation. Customers may register free of charge and NCHA will offer support to those customers who may need assistance to use this system.

Please refer to the Mutual Exchange Policy.

15. Under Occupation

- 15.1 Customers who are under occupying their current accommodation will receive a Management Transfer status and will be given advice and assistance to help them to move to a more suitable property, either by transfer, mutual exchange or via their local CBL scheme. Some financial assistance is available via the downsizing policy.

Please refer to the Downsizing Policy.

16. Allocations Monitoring

- 16.1 Allocations are monitored by the Service Manager, Allocations by regular audits to ensure consistency. Where there are issues that may affect other ASH business streams these are discussed internally, or at monthly Service Managers' meetings.

17 Tenancy Types

- 17.1 NCHA policy allows for different tenures depending on the type of stock offered, the funding regime and the background of the customer. Tenancies could be let on Social or Affordable Rents (80% market value) and be let as Starter or Assured tenures.

Please refer to the Tenancy Policy.

18. Age Restriction

- 18.1 NCHA is unable to grant a tenancy to a person below the age of 18.

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- 18.2 Applicants may be considered if they have been nominated by a Local Authority and are:
- Homeless young people to whom a duty is owed (Part VII, Housing Act '96) and who have been accepted as being owed a statutory homelessness duty
 - Care leavers with a firm recommendation from a Local Authority Children's Services Department
- 18.3 Any applicant who is under 18 cannot by law be granted a tenancy but the legal estate can be held in trust until they reach the age of 18. A trustee will therefore be required to sign the tenancy agreement on their behalf until they are 18. This may be a family member, or a third party agreed with the Local Authority and NCHA. The tenancy agreement will have extra provision to define the customer as a third party for the named applicant (occupant).
- 18.4 An Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement (Starter Tenancy) will be granted and reviewed on or after the Applicant's 18th birthday. If the conduct of the occupant has been satisfactory a further Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement (Starter Tenancy) will be offered to the occupant. In these circumstances the Trustee will be required to execute a deed of surrender of the existing tenancy.

19. Applicants Requiring Support

- 19.1 NCHA will attempt to identify customers who will require support at the point of registration or otherwise at the pre-tenancy assessment before they sign up for a property. Applicants in need of assistance with the bidding process will be given help at their regional office.
- 19.2 A "supported" status may be established as a result of the applicant being in receipt of existing support from statutory or voluntary agencies or as a result of discussions with the applicant at the pre-tenancy interview stage, where initial support may be suggested as a possible course of action with a view to assisting the applicant with tenancy sustainment.
- 19.3 Lettings, Estate and Income officers will be responsible for establishing the supported status of our customers. In addition they will advise on where help can be obtained. In relation to applicants for accommodation, this work will be carried out at a pre-tenancy interview where all existing information supplied in support of an application will be verified. NCHA may also provide support from a Tenancy Support Officer for the early stages of the tenancy.

Please refer to the Supported Customers Policy.

20. Adapted Properties

- 20.1 Where possible, NCHA will allocate properties that have been adapted for persons with mobility needs or other disabilities, to applicants who require the

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adaptations. The advertisement will clearly state that the property is adapted and that preference will be given to those applicants requiring the adaptations.

20.2 When an applicant is identified, the Allocations Officer may need to confirm with an Occupational Therapist that the property is suitable, or could be adapted further. If the Occupational Therapist does not consider the property is suitable then an offer cannot be made.

20.3 As there is a high demand from NCHA customers for accessible accommodation, existing customers who have been approved for a transfer will be considered when an adapted property becomes vacant.

21. Lettings Outcomes Monitoring

21.1 NCHA will collect data on all lettings and report to internal and external partners as required.

21.2 NCHA will collect CORE information and input data on CORE website (<https://core.communities.gov.uk/>) within 72 hours of tenancy sign up.

21.3 Data will be gathered on a quarterly basis to show:

- customer satisfaction with the lettings process
- customer satisfaction with the allocated property
- lettings completed by Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics
- team performance against targets

22.4 Data will be gathered on a weekly basis to show:

- the average relet period
- the total void loss
- the average cost of a relet

22.5 This data will be discussed at weekly operational relet meetings and at monthly Strategic Voids meetings.

23. Staff Training

23.1 Staff will periodically receive training in relation to the policies and procedures which form lettings work. Issues causing concern or which require clarification may be discussed with a line manager at supervision sessions or, where there is a wider application, during team meetings which will take place on a six weekly basis.

24. Appeals and Complaints

24.1 Where an applicant has an issue about the way in which their application for housing has been handled, this should be discussed with the Service Manager (Allocations)

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24.2 If the applicant is still unhappy they may make a complaint under the NCHA complaints policy.

Please refer to the Complaints Policy.

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APPENDIX 1

Local Authorities

Local Authority	CBL System
Amber Valley Borough Council	Home Options
Ashfield District Council	AM Homefinder
Bassetlaw District Council	A1 Homefinder
Blaby District Council	Blaby Homes
Broxtowe Borough Council	Home Search
Charnwood Borough Council	Charnwood Homes
Derby City Council	Homefinder
Derbyshire Dales District Council	Home Options
Erewash Borough Council	Home Options
Gedling Borough Council	Homesearch
Harborough District Council	Harborough Homes
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	Hinckley & Bosworth homes
Kettering Borough Council	Keyways
Leicester City Council	Leicester Home Choice
Mansfield District Council	AM Homefinder
Melton Borough Council	Melton Homes
Newark and Sherwood District Council	Easy Lets
North Kesteven District Council	Lincs Homefinder
North West Leicestershire DC	North West Leicestershire Homes
Northampton Borough Council	Northampton Home Choice
Nottingham City Council	Homelink
Oadby and Wigston Borough Council	Oadby & Wigston Homes
Rushcliffe Borough Council	Homesearch
Rutland County Council	Direct nominations
South Derbyshire District Council	Homefinder
South Kesteven District Council	Direct nominations

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APPENDIX 2

Eligibility Table

	Adult Sharers	Single Person	Childless Couple	Single OAP	Couple OAP	1 Child Family	2 Child Family	3 Child Family	4 Child Family	5 Child Family	6+ Child Family
Bedsit		X		x							
1 Bedroom Flat		X	x	x	x						
1 Bedroom Bungalow				x	x						
2 Bedroom Flat	x					x	x				
2 Bedroom Bungalow	x			x	x						
2 Bedroom Maisonette						x	x				
2 Bedroom House						x	x				
3 Bedroom Maisonette							x	x			
3 Bedroom House							x	x	x		
4 Bedroom House										x	x
5+ Bedroom House											x

The above table is intended as a guide to the type and size of accommodation that an applicant will be eligible for based upon common household types. If your household does not fit the above types then further rules may apply which will be available from your Regional Office.

Please note that pregnant women will count as an adult and child.