

## Policy Summary

# Lettings

### **Customer summary of a Genesis Housing Group policy**

This policy relates to the letting of general needs and supported housing across the Group. It covers the Group's policy in relation to transfers and mutual exchanges.

The policy only applies to PCHA and Springboard Housing Association. The letting of our other properties is covered by separate policies and procedures.

### **Introduction**

In letting our properties we seek to meet local housing need and work closely with local authorities. We will ensure that no one applying for accommodation is discriminated against or treated less favourably than any other person because of their age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion or disability.

### **Objectives of the policy**

- Meet local housing need and prevent homelessness by working in partnership with local authorities and other agencies.
- Offer choice to customers while giving reasonable preference to those in priority need.
- Create sustainable tenancies and contribute to the development of stable communities by effectively and responsibly letting homes.
- Make the process of letting our properties as efficient and transparent as possible.
- Enable mobility for customers by facilitating transfers and exchanges and promote the use of independently managed exchange programmes.

### **Eligibility criteria**

We try to provide housing to those who cannot adequately access the commercial housing market. Our aim is to let our homes, in conjunction with partners, to those in most need. We let our homes to:

- customers nominated by their local authority;
- customers nominated under local choice-based lettings (CBL) arrangements;

- existing Genesis customers seeking a transfer;
- customers applying directly to our waiting list (in certain circumstances); and
- customers referred to us by partner agencies.

We will consider granting a tenancy to people aged under 18 years. We provide housing for diverse groups including older people, customers with support needs and ethnic groups. We may ask applicants to meet eligibility criteria such as undergo a support assessment or provide a tenancy guarantor. We will also follow all current legal and regulatory requirements in assessing applications from people subject to immigration control.

### **Access to accommodation**

Our customers can access housing in different ways such as through nomination arrangements or choice based lettings schemes. We work with our partners to verify any information given by applicants to ensure that our housing is allocated and let according to the appropriate priorities.

### **Choice based lettings**

Customers in several boroughs can access homes with CBL system. We will work with local authorities and CBL schemes to make sure we continue to meet our obligations under nomination agreements where they exist.

### **Nominations**

We work with local authorities in order to assist them with their statutory duties towards the homeless and those in priority need. The proportion of homes let to applicants nominated by their local authority will vary according to local arrangements. In some cases we may agree to let 100% of our properties via a local authority nomination agreement.

We will keep a proportion of general needs properties to let to existing customers through our internal transfer arrangements. We will also work with our partners to enable move-on accommodation for those applicants living in supported accommodation.

## Referral arrangements

We will make some of our properties available to referral agencies that help customers with particular needs to secure housing. We have agreements with both voluntary and statutory agencies including homeless charities, domestic violence support programmes, local health authorities, social services and police.

## Lettings standards

We will only allocate empty properties that are physically fit for long term human habitation. Lettings standards are in place within each subsidiary to suit their services. When allocating homes we will follow legislation relating to statutory overcrowding and allocate properties to the appropriate sized household.

## Accepting nominations and referrals

We request and accept nominations and referrals from our partners in accordance with nomination agreements. Each nomination will be carefully considered before an offer of housing is made in order to ensure that the property is suitable for the proposed occupier. We may need to request additional information from the nominating local authority or housing association to support a nomination.

Occasionally, we may need to reject a nomination. Grounds for rejection will vary, but we may reject if we receive inaccurate information or believe the property isn't suitable for the applicant's needs. We will not take into account factors such as alleged housing management difficulties when deciding to accept or reject a nomination.

## Making a reasonable offer

We will consider transfer requests from customers who wish to move from their current home because it is no longer suitable for their needs. The decision to transfer customers may be subject to agreement with our partners.

Some categories of transfer requests are dealt with as a priority, which include transfers from properties undergoing major works, transfers to release under occupied properties, transfers from shared schemes and transfers to alleviate serious housing management issues, domestic violence and harassment (often referred to as 'management transfers').

Offers to transfer existing customers will generally not be given where the rent account is in arrears. We will not normally make an offer of housing where the tenancy is under a court order or where legal action is being taken due to a serious breach of tenancy; for example anti-social behaviour. Similarly, we will not normally permit a transfer within the first year of a tenancy.

Customers living in boroughs where a choice based lettings scheme is in operation are encouraged to register with the scheme in order to maximise their chances of finding a new home.

## Transfers between subsidiaries

In exceptional circumstances, we will help customers to transfer between the Group's subsidiaries, for example to escape serious harassment or domestic violence, as part of a witness protection scheme or to enable an urgent decant. Customers wishing to transfer to another subsidiary, whose case is not urgent, will be encouraged to register with their local CBL scheme or seek a mutual exchange.

## Mutual exchange and housing options

We recognise that housing supply is very limited in the areas where we work and we cannot always help customers as quickly as we would like. We encourage our customers to explore other ways of moving home such as mutual exchange.

Customers with a secure or assured tenancy have the right to exchange their property with another customer of a housing association or local authority. Customers with an assured shorthold tenancy do not have this right to exchange, and our policy is to refuse them to do so.

Customers can also register with services that manage mutual exchanges, such as 'Homeswapper' and 'House Exchange'. These schemes involve housing associations and local authorities throughout the UK and offer a web based service. We will also accept requests from customers who have identified an exchange by themselves.

A mutual exchange requires each tenant to take on the tenancy of the property they wish to move to. We will support an exchange where the customer's existing property is in good condition and their tenancy has been conducted in a good manner. We can refuse to allow an exchange to go ahead in some circumstances. If we refuse a request we will specify the reason for refusal.

## Local lettings plan

We will introduce local lettings plans to address housing management issues and help to develop a sustainable community in a specific area. A local lettings policy may be established to help allocate difficult to let properties or to help alleviate anti-social behaviour problems. We will ensure that the policy reasonably balances the demand for local housing need and desire to address the specific issues in the locality. Local lettings policies will be regularly reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the initial aims.

## Sensitive lettings

Where there has been a housing management issue at a specific property we may decide to treat the letting of that property sensitively to reduce the risk of the issue reoccurring. We may also sensitively let a property to protect vulnerable applicants to help them sustain a tenancy. By carrying out a sensitive let we will allocate the property to the most appropriate, priority applicant.

## Supported housing

Our supported housing services range from housing with very little support and low staffing levels, to high levels of support and experienced staff teams. Supported customers may include older customers and customers with learning disabilities or mental health issues. We approach the letting of these properties in the same way as our general needs stock. We will assess an applicant prior to making an offer to identify the support need and any risks, and ensure that an available property is suitable for the applicant.

## Tenancy support

We offer tenancy support to customers at the start of their tenancy to help them manage the moving process and establish themselves in their new home. A range of support services are available to our customers. In cases where we cannot provide support or advice ourselves, we will signpost the customer to a relevant agency. Tenancy support is available throughout a customer's tenancy.

## Application from staff and committee members

We will follow the Group 'payments and benefits policy', which observes the requirements set out in schedule 1 of Housing Act 1996 and any other requirements set out in legislation or regulation.

## Appeals and complaints

Appeals against a letting decision will be dealt with by the appropriate subsidiary complaints procedure. Customers can refer their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman if a matter is not suitably resolved. They may also seek independent advice and assistance from a local Citizen's Advice Bureau, law centre or solicitor.

## Confidentiality and information sharing

Information regarding our customers is sensitive and particular care will be taken to maintain confidentiality in line with the Group's confidentiality and data protection policies. However, responsible information sharing can play a key role in the letting of our homes. We will follow information sharing protocols with local authorities and partners where they are in place. Managers will use their discretion when sharing information with their colleagues.

## Monitoring and targets

We will operate robust monitoring systems to ensure that our lettings service is fair and managed in accordance with regulation and strategic key performance indicators. We will also seek feedback from our customers, once they have moved in to their new home, to gauge their satisfaction with the lettings service.

## Contact us



If you are a **PCHA customer** phone us on **020 8451 8000** or email **info@pcha.org.uk** **www.pcha.org.uk**



If you are a **Springboard Housing Association customer** phone us on **020 8475 0033** or email **info@springboardha.org.uk** **www.springboardha.org.uk**

**If you need any part of this information in large print, Braille, on audio tape or explained in your own language please contact us on the number below.**

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**Bengali**

Si necesita esta información en Braille, en CD, en cinta o en su propio idioma, póngase en contacto con nosotros en el teléfono siguiente.

**Spanish**

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**Arabic**

Si vous souhaitez obtenir une partie de ces informations en Braille, sur CD, cassette audio ou expliqué dans votre langue, veuillez nous contacter au numéro indiqué ci-dessous.

**French**

જો તમારે કોઈ પણ ભાગની આ માહિતી બ્રેઈલ, સીડી ઉપર, ઑડિયો ટેપ અથવા તમારી પોતાની ભાષામાં સમજી શકો તેની જરૂર હોય તો નીચે જણાવેલ નંબર ઉપર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

**Gujarati**

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**Portugese**

Haddaad u baahan tahay warkan afkaaga-hooyo, afka loogu talagalay dadka aan arki karaan – afka faraha ama CD-ga ama ajeladda rekorka nala xirir. Namberkan isticmaal.

**Somali**

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