

Allocations and Lettings Policy

Pending Board Approval

Our Vision

Building better lives through social care and housing in local communities.

Our Mission

We co-design and deliver services that offer innovative social care solutions and support people to thrive.

Our Values

We are **caring** and **compassionate**



We are **inclusive** and **trusted**



We focus on **excellence** and **innovation**



We work in **partnership** and are **one-team**



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 We allocate our general needs and unsupported housing in a lawful and transparent way that reflects organisational priorities. This approach ensures that lettings:
- meet housing need and help prevent homelessness in partnership with local authorities and other agencies
 - support tenancy sustainment and help people to live independently
 - contribute to stable and resilient communities
 - ensure homes are safe, warm and compliant before letting
- 1.2 This policy sets our strategic position. Operational steps, workflows and case-handling requirements are set out separately in the Allocations & Lettings Procedure.

Relationship with Voids Management

- 1.3 This policy governs how applicants are assessed, prioritised and allocated to general needs and unsupported housing. The preparation, classification, repair and compliance status of empty homes is governed by our Voids Policy. No allocation may proceed unless the property is confirmed as “ready to let” in line with the Voids Policy, including all required compliance checks and lettable standard work.
- 1.4 This policy applies to general needs and unsupported housing. Allocations for supported housing are governed by the separate Referrals and Assessment Policy, which sets out the assessment and placement pathway.
- 1.5 Although this policy does not apply to allocations into supported housing, it does apply to customers living in supported accommodation who no longer require support and are ready to move on to general needs or unsupported housing. These referrals follow the established move on pathway and are assessed in accordance with this policy’s eligibility, qualification and prioritisation criteria.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 For the purposes of this policy, “**unsupported stock**” refers to our self-contained and shared residential units that are not part of our support or care services. Some of this stock is designated under the GLA Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) and is allocated through the Clearing House. All remaining unsupported properties follow our internal allocations process and any relevant nomination agreements.

2.2 **Asset related letting**

A letting linked to an agreed asset strategy decision, such as the disposal or redevelopment of a property. These decisions require approval from the Director of Housing and Customer Services and must align with our long-term approach to stock use and investment.

2.3 **Clearing House**

A GLA coordinated pathway that provides self-contained accommodation for people with a verified history of sleeping rough. Referrals come through commissioned services and tenancy support is delivered by Tenancy Sustainment Teams. This pathway applies only to properties designated as part of the Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI).

2.4 **Commissioned Pathway**

A move-on or housing route required under a contract or service agreement with a local authority or statutory commissioner.

2.5 **Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse, as defined under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, includes physical, emotional, coercive, controlling, economic or threatening behaviour between individuals who are personally connected.

2.6 **General Needs Housing**

Self-contained accommodation let without on-site support, intended for households who are able to live independently and do not require structured support services

2.7 **MAPPA**

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements — statutory arrangements through which police, probation and other agencies work together to reduce risks posed by certain offenders living in the community.

2.8 **Move-on**

Transition from supported accommodation into more independent housing once a customer has been assessed as ready to maintain a tenancy without ongoing support.

2.9 **Overcrowding**

When a household lacks the number of bedrooms required under statutory bedroom standards or our own organisational space standards. Assessment will take account of household composition, age, gender and any specific health or welfare needs that affect room use.

2.10 **Rightsizing**

Ensuring that a property is appropriately matched to a household's size, layout needs and circumstances. Rightsizing includes supporting under-occupying households to move to smaller homes and enabling moves that release larger or adapted properties for households that need them.

2.11 **Sensitive Let**

A letting approach used to support community stability or manage specific risks. Sensitive lets require approval from the Housing and Income Manager or escalation where needed.

2.12 **Temporary Accommodation**

Short term housing provided or arranged by a local authority under homelessness legislation.

2.13 **Unsupported Housing**

Self-contained or shared accommodation that is not part of a supported or care service and does not include on-site or structured support provision. This stock includes both general needs units and any independent living arrangements that fall outside commissioned support pathways.

2.14 **Under-Occupation**

When a household occupies a home with more bedrooms than they reasonably need, based on organisational or statutory space standards.

2.15 **Voids Policy**

The policy that governs how empty properties are classified, repaired, inspected and brought up to lettable standard. No property may be let until it meets all relevant compliance and safety requirements set out in the Voids Policy.

3. **Policy Principles: Eligibility, Qualification and Exceptions**

3.1 Our eligibility criteria set out who may be considered for housing. Qualification describes whether an applicant has an evidenced housing need that justifies rehousing.

Eligibility

3.2 An applicant is eligible for consideration when all of the following conditions are met and evidenced:

- **Age**

Applicants must be aged 18 or over. In rare cases 16–17-year-olds may be considered where a statutory agency confirms responsibility for support and a joint support plan is in place before any offer is made.

- **Immigration and Residency Status**

Applicants must have lawful immigration status and evidence of their Right to Rent in line with statutory requirements.

- **No Alternative Suitable Accommodation**

Applicants must not hold another tenancy, licence or ownership interest in residential accommodation unless:

- the accommodation is unsuitable for their needs; and
- they are taking reasonable steps to end their legal interest.

- **Capacity to Sustain a Tenancy**

Applicants must show a reasonable likelihood of being able to sustain a tenancy - with or without support. Assessment will take into account:

- **Affordability:** Whether net rent and essential living costs are manageable based on verified income and expenditure.
- **Support Needs:** Where support is required, a support plan must outline needs and confirm available formal or informal support.
- **Tenancy History:** Previous tenancy failures, arrears or anti-social behaviour will be considered in context, taking account of change, engagement with support and risk management measures.
- **Risk Factors:** Any known risks must be manageable with an agreed risk management plan.

- **Domestic Abuse**

Applicants fleeing domestic abuse will not be treated as unable to sustain a tenancy solely because of financial dependency, limited tenancy history, disrupted documentation or credit issues caused by economic abuse. Assessment must focus on current safety and available support.

- **Conduct History**

Applicants with a history of serious anti-social behaviour or fraud may be considered only where an exception is approved by the Head of Housing and a risk management plan is in place.

- **False or Misleading Information**

Applicants who knowingly provide false, misleading or incomplete information during the application, assessment or verification process may be disqualified from consideration. Where appropriate, such cases may also be referred for investigation under tenancy fraud procedures or other relevant organisational policies.

- **Relationship Between Conduct History, Fraud and False or Misleading Information**

Fraud addressed under Conduct History refers to past behaviour, including confirmed tenancy fraud, benefit fraud or other serious misconduct relevant to housing risk.

The False or Misleading Information provision applies only to actions taken during the application process, including withheld, inaccurate or intentionally distorted information.

Both clauses may apply in different circumstances, but each is assessed independently to ensure fair and proportionate decision-making.

4. Qualification

- 4.1 Applicants qualify where there is an evidenced housing need, including:
- urgent risk or safety concerns (including domestic abuse)
 - homelessness or threat of homelessness
 - health or accessibility needs
 - overcrowding or under-occupation
 - move-on from supported accommodation
 - ability to sustain the tenancy (affordability, risk, support network)
- 4.2 Move-on cases must be supported by a formal readiness assessment completed by the relevant supported housing service. This assessment must confirm that the customer can maintain a tenancy without ongoing support, identify any residual support needs and outline any risks requiring management. The final decision on qualification rests with the Housing Team, taking account of evidence provided by support services.
- 4.3 Void classifications or asset related decisions under the Voids Policy do not affect an applicant's eligibility, qualification or priority, they determine only the route and timing of letting.

Exceptions

- 4.4 Exceptions to eligibility or qualification criteria may be approved on a case by case basis by the Head of Housing or Director of Housing & Customer Service. All exceptions must:
- be based on clear, documented and evidence based reasoning
 - show that the exception is necessary and proportionate
 - consider potential equality implications and community safety
 - include an Equality Impact Consideration (EiC) outlining any risks and mitigations
 - be recorded centrally for governance and audit purposes
- 4.5 Exceptions must not be used where doing so would conflict with statutory duties, nomination agreements or the organisation's equality obligations.

5. Priority Categories

- 5.1 We use priority categories - rather than bands or points - to ensure allocations reflect statutory duties, customer safety, housing need, tenancy sustainment, best use of stock and organisational priorities. Applicants are prioritised by category

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and then by priority date. Where statutory or contractual obligations apply, these always take precedence over internal allocations.

Statutory or Contractual Duty

5.2 Allocations required to meet a legal, statutory or commissioned obligation, including:

- local authority nominations
- Clearing House referrals for RSI-designated properties
- court orders
- any requirement under a commissioned pathway

Immediate Safety/Protection

5.3 For customers who need urgent relocation to ensure their safety, including:

- domestic abuse
- hate crime
- MAPPAs-related risks
- severe harassment
- accommodation that is unsafe or uninhabitable

Significant Health/Accessibility Needs

5.4 Where a customer's health or disability means:

- their current home is unsafe or unsuitable, or
- essential adaptations cannot be made, and a move is required to maintain safety or independence

Move-On and Homelessness Prevention

5.5 For customers who:

- are ready to move on from supported accommodation
- need a planned move to avoid homelessness or prolonged use of temporary accommodation

Overcrowding/Under-Occupation/Home Release

5.6 To make best use of stock, including:

- households who are statutorily or organisationally overcrowded
- tenants who are under-occupying and wish to downsize
- moves that release larger homes for families who need them

Social, Economic or Family Factors

5.7 Where a customer has a clear but non-urgent housing need, including:

- access to employment
- caring responsibilities
- family support networks
- education related needs

These cases do not involve risk or immediate safety concerns.

General Transfers (Non-Priority)

5.8 Customers who wish to transfer but do not have an identified priority housing need. These transfers occur only after all higher priority categories have been considered.

5.9 Management transfers, where a move is required to resolve a significant management issue or risk, will be assessed using the same eligibility and qualification criteria as other applicants. Management transfers will only be approved where clear evidence demonstrates that remaining in the current property is no longer safe, sustainable or reasonable. These cases are considered within the appropriate priority category rather than through the general transfer route.

Managing Conflicts Between Categories

5.10 Where more than one obligation or priority could apply, decisions follow the **hierarchy of obligations** set out below. If a conflict cannot be resolved through this hierarchy, the case must be escalated to the Head of Housing and Director of Housing and Customer Services for a joint decision with a written rationale.

6. Routes to Lettings

6.1 The routes in this section set out the decision-making framework for allocating general needs and unsupported housing. Day-to-day procedures, checks and workflow requirements are covered separately in the Lettings & Allocations Procedure. All allocation decisions must follow the hierarchy of obligations, applied in the order below:

- statutory duties
- contractual or commissioned obligations
- customer safety and risk management
- tenancy sustainment

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- strategic asset considerations

6.2 For the avoidance of doubt, immediate safeguarding concerns take precedence over all non-statutory obligations, including contractual or commissioned requirements. This applies to cases involving domestic abuse, MAPPA-related risks, hate crime, exploitation or any situation where delay could compromise safety.

Resolving Competing Obligations

6.3 If a property or applicant meets more than one obligation or priority, officers must apply the hierarchy above to determine the correct route. Where the hierarchy does not provide a clear answer, the case must be referred to the Head of Housing and Director of Housing and Customer Services for joint determination, including documentation of equality considerations and any associated risks.

6.4 All escalated decisions made under this section must be recorded. The record must set out the rationale for the decision, the evidence considered and how the hierarchy of obligations was applied.

Standard Relets

6.5 Where a property forms part of the Greater London Authority Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) or has been designated as Clearing House stock, it must be offered through the Clearing House in line with GLA eligibility and referral requirements. All other general needs and unsupported properties follow our internal allocations process.

Deviating from the Clearing House

- 6.6 A deviation may be approved only where one of the following applies:
- the Clearing House cannot meet a statutory or contractual obligation within required timescales
 - an immediate safety or protection need requires a faster allocation
 - the property has specific features that limit suitability - for example, specialist adaptations or safeguarding related location requirements
 - a Sensitive Let is required to maintain community stability or manage known risks
 - All deviations must be jointly approved by the Head of Housing and the Director of Housing and Customer Services
 - Each decision must record the specific threshold met, the rationale for deviating from the Clearing House pathway and how the hierarchy of obligations was applied. All deviations must be recorded for audit, reporting and assurance purposes.

Contractual Nominations

6.7 Where a nomination agreement, Section 106 obligation or other statutory or contractual requirement applies, the nomination route must be followed. These cases always take precedence over internal transfers or general allocations.

Temporary Accommodation Placements

- 6.8 Where an applicant is currently placed in temporary accommodation by a local authority, the allocation will normally proceed through the relevant local nomination agreement or statutory route specified by that authority. Internal routes will only be used where no contractual or statutory nomination applies or where the authority confirms that an internal letting is appropriate

Internal Transfers

- 6.9 Internal transfers are assessed using the same eligibility, qualification and priority categories that apply to all applicants. Transfers must follow the hierarchy of obligations and cannot override statutory or contractual duties.

Direct Offers

- 6.10 A Direct Offer may be used where the hierarchy of obligations shows that a standard route cannot meet an urgent or mandatory requirement. Direct Offers are most commonly used for:

- urgent safety needs (including domestic abuse, hate crime, MAPPA-related risks, and severe harassment)
- statutory or contractual duties requiring a faster allocation
- decants where continued occupation is unsafe or unlawful
- urgent homelessness prevention
- matching households to specialist or adapted properties

- 6.11 Where a direct offer is made due to a decant, the replacement property must be suitable for the household's needs and meet all safety and compliance requirements. Customers will normally be made one reasonable offer; however, additional offers may be considered where specific safety, health or accessibility needs prevent acceptance of the initial property. All decant related decisions must be documented, including the reasons for the decant and the suitability assessment of the new property.

Sensitive Lets

- 6.12 Sensitive Lets may be used to support community stability or manage identified risks. They must be approved by the Housing and Income Manager or escalated where appropriate. Decisions must reflect any relevant safeguarding needs, MAPPA guidance and the likely impact on existing residents.

Move-On Pathways

- 6.13 Applicants moving on from supported accommodation must be assessed as ready for independent living. Readiness is confirmed through a formal assessment completed by the supported housing service, outlining the applicant's progress,

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ability to sustain a tenancy, any ongoing risk factors and the support arrangements in place for transition.

6.14 The Housing Team will review the evidence and make the final decision on whether the applicant qualifies for move-on.

6.15 Move-on applicants are not automatically prioritised; they are assessed and allocated in line with the standard priority categories set out above. This pathway supports independence, makes best use of supported housing capacity and helps reduce reliance on temporary accommodation.

Mutual Exchanges

6.16 Mutual exchanges are permitted subject to eligibility, suitability and compliance checks. Officers must confirm that both properties meet safety and compliance requirements and that the exchange will not create overcrowding, under-occupation or unmanaged risk.

6.17 Exchanges may be refused where there are significant safeguarding concerns, MAPPA considerations, substantiated anti-social behaviour, tenancy breaches or outstanding compliance issues that would make the exchange unsafe or inappropriate.

6.18 Priority categories do not apply to mutual exchanges, although all statutory requirements relating to secure and assured tenancies must be followed.

Asset-Related Lettings

6.19 Asset related lettings include allocations linked to disposal, redevelopment, major works or other strategic asset decisions require Director of Housing and Customer Services approval and must align with the organisation's asset strategy.

6.20 Where a property is classified as a development, disposal or handback void under the Voids Policy, the selected lettings route must reflect decisions made through governance structures such as the Asset Management Group and the Risk Panel. Matching and allocation decisions remain subject to this Allocations & Lettings Policy.

6.21 Asset-related decisions may be approved only where:

- the letting supports a defined asset strategy objective
- the property's characteristics make standard routes unsuitable or inefficient
- the decision is needed to facilitate major works, strategic decants or use of specialist or adapted stock
- matching avoids underuse or unnecessary readaptation of specialist homes

6.22 All decisions must reference the relevant asset strategy objective and be logged for governance and audit.

7. Matching and Offers

7.1 A property may be offered only when all required checks have been completed and recorded. The following conditions must be met before any match or offer is approved:

- **Eligibility and Qualification Confirmed**

All eligibility and qualification checks must be fully completed and documented. No offer can proceed until these are verified.

- **Correct Priority Category**

- The applicant must meet the criteria for the priority category being used. If the evidence for a priority is unclear or incomplete, the case must be reviewed before an offer is approved.

- **Property Suitability**

Officers must assess whether the property is suitable for the applicant's household. This includes considering size, layout, location, safety, accessibility and any relevant support or compatibility needs. Suitability assessments will follow our organisational bedroom standards and, where relevant, the adaptations and shared accommodation protocols. Where a property contains specialist features, these must be matched appropriately to applicants who require them.

- **Tenancy Sustainment**

Affordability and risk management assessments must demonstrate a reasonable likelihood that the tenancy can be maintained. This assessment will include verified income and expenditure checks, essential living costs, benefit entitlement, and any factors that may affect financial stability, including the impact of rent levels, benefit caps or Local Housing Allowance limits. Officers must also identify any risks to tenancy sustainment and confirm that appropriate support or mitigation is in place.

- **Community Stability and Risk Management**

Placement decisions must take account of known risks, local circumstances, safeguarding considerations and the likely impact on existing residents.

- **Equalities and Fairness**

All offers must demonstrate fair treatment, comply with the Equality Act, and be free from discrimination across all protected characteristics.

- **Compliance and Safety Requirements**

A property may only be let once all safety and compliance checks have been completed and recorded in line with organisational standards.

- **Voids Lettable Standard**

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Every property must meet our Voids Lettable Standard before it can be offered. The Voids Policy sets out the compliance and condition requirements that must be met for every relet.

When Multiple Applicants Are Eligible

7.2 When more than one eligible applicant can be matched to a property, allocation will follow:

- the established priority category order, then
- the applicant's priority date

unless a statutory requirement or approved Sensitive Let takes precedence.

8. Appeals and Complaints

8.1 Applicants may appeal decisions relating to eligibility, qualification, priority category, route to letting, Sensitive Lets, Direct Offers, and the refusal or withdrawal of an offer.

Appeals Process

8.2 We operate a clear, time-bound appeals process. Each stage provides applicants with a written explanation of the decision and the evidence used, along with the opportunity to submit further information.

Stage 1 – Housing & Income Manager

8.3 A response will normally be provided within 10 working days, setting out the full rationale for the decision and the evidence considered.

Stage 2 – Lettings Panel (Chaired by the Head of Housing)

8.4 A review will normally be completed within 15 working days. The panel will consider whether the decision was procedurally fair, proportionate and in line with policy. In exceptional circumstances, where it is not possible to complete a review within 15 working days – eg, staff absence – a minimal extension of time will be agreed with the complainant.

Stage 3 – Director of Housing and Customer Services (Exceptional Cases Only)

8.5 A final review will normally be completed within 20 working days. The Director's decision is final.

Complaints

8.6 Complaints about service delivery are handled through the Complaints & Feedback Policy

9. Governance and Assurance

Roles

9.1 The following roles hold defined responsibilities within the allocations and lettings framework:

- **Housing and Income Manager** – responsible for operational decisions, including eligibility decisions, routine Direct Offers, Sensitive Lets and offer withdrawals. Cases involving significant risk, safeguarding concerns or unresolved conflicts between priorities must be escalated to the Head of Housing.
- **Head of Housing** – responsible for exceptions, complex or high-risk cases, deviations from the Clearing House, charring appeals, and overseeing equality considerations. Complex cases include those involving major risk factors, safeguarding issues, competing statutory and contractual obligations, or decisions with substantial community impact.
- **Director of Housing and Customer Services** – responsible for strategic oversight, asset related lettings, highrisk decisions, Clearing House deviations, and Stage 3 appeals. The Director also provides governance oversight where decisions may set precedent or have significant strategic implications.

Monitoring & Reporting

We monitor a range of indicators to ensure the allocations process remains fair, safe and effective. This includes:

- void relet performance and turnaround times
- compliance with lettable standards at the point of letting
- equality impacts and outcomes, including disproportionality analysis across protected characteristics
- tenancy sustainment at 6, 12 and (where relevant) 24 months
- lettings made through the Clearing House and any deviations from required pathways
- use of direct offers, sensitive lets and exceptions, including patterns and rationale
- trends in appeals, complaints and outcomes

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- local authority and partner feedback relating to nominations and allocations

Monitoring of void classifications, repair delays and landlord responsibility for void-related costs is carried out under the Voids Policy. These operational void factors do not determine eligibility, qualification or priority under this policy but may influence allocation and offer timelines.

Where properties are agent managed or managed on behalf of another organisation, contractual nomination terms and landlord responsibilities may affect timelines only; eligibility, qualification and priority remain unchanged.

Annual reviews and audits are carried out to ensure ongoing compliance, identify risks and support continuous improvement.

Record Keeping and Confidentiality

It is the Policy Owner's responsibility to update the Asset & Liability Register with any risks and/or information arising from the implementation of this policy.

We will comply with our Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy which can be found by clicking [Here](#) or visiting our website at www.lookahead.org.uk

Inclusion and Diversity

Services provided should be appropriate to the child and not discriminate for any reason, including - but not limited to - disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, culture or lifestyle. We will strive to ensure action taken is sensitive to and takes account of the child's gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture and race.

Policy Sign Off and Ownership

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Equality Impact Assessment	Across all decisions we are committed to eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and ensuring that allocations processes remain fair and evidence based.
Who was consulted?	Policy Group Housing Team
Approved By/Date	Policy Group, 18 March 2026
Date for Review	March 2031
Exec Director Policy Owner	Director of Housing & Customer Service
Author	Head of Housing
Related Policies/Procedures	Asset & Liability Register Voids Policy Safeguarding Adults and Safeguarding Children Policies Inclusion & Diversity Policy Domestic Abuse Policy
Relevant Legislation and Regulatory Requirements	Housing Act 1996 (Part VI) The Localism Act 2011 Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 Homelessness Code of Guidance Equality Act 2010 Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Right to Rent Framework Right to Move provisions Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidance

Version History			
Version	Date	Description of Changes	Author
1.0	March 2026	New Policy.	Joe Thomas