



# Allocations Policy

## Reference: HSP1

<b>Contents</b>	<i>Page</i>
1. Aims and objectives	2
2. Statutory and Regulatory Requirements	2
3. Definitions	2
<b>Policy Statement</b>	
4. Eligibility	2
5. Priority	3
6. Suitability	4
7. General Information	4
8. Equality and Diversity	5
9. Related Policies and Procedures	5
10. Monitoring	5
Appendix 1 - Bands	6
Appendix 2 – Property suitability	7

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Lead Officer:	Head of Business Improvement and Allocations
Policy drafted by:	Andrea O’Callaghan
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## **1. Aim and Purpose**

- 1.1 Swan aims to provide high quality and well managed rented homes which are allocated through a lettings service which is transparent, fair and efficient and ensures void times are kept to a minimum.
- 1.2 Swan is committed to working in partnership with local authorities to assist them to meet their statutory obligations to people with housing needs.
- 1.3 The aims and objectives of this policy are to increase choice and mobility for existing residents by making better use of stock and creating mixed and sustainable communities.

## **2. Statutory and Regulatory Requirements**

- 2.1 This policy is supported by detailed procedures and takes into account statutory and regulatory requirements such as those detailed in the regulatory framework for Social Housing and partnering Local Authority Tenancy Strategies.

Properties must be let in a fair, transparent and efficient way and take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants. We should be able to demonstrate how we make the best use of our available housing, our lets are compatible with the purpose of the housing and contributes to local authorities strategic housing functions and sustainable communities.

- 2.2 Under the term set out in local authority nominations agreements a percentage of all Swan general needs properties must be offered to each council's housing department. This percentage will normally be 100% for all newly built properties and no more than 75% for re-lets of family sized properties and at least 50% of one bedroom properties.
- 2.3 Nominations to supported housing properties will usually be received from local authority departments such as social services or via another partnering agency.
- 2.4 This policy is reviewed every 3 years or in response to a change in regulatory guidance, best practice or legal precedent.

## **3. Definitions**

- 3.1 General needs properties will be let to those registered on Swan's transfer list through a Choice Based Letting (CBL) system wherever possible. Exceptions will include:-
  - when there is a need for transfer following a management priority decision
  - there is a need to make a positive contribution to the sustainability of an area
  - there is little or no demand for an area or property type
  - to make better use of existing housing stock
  - to make an offer of accommodation under the National Witness Mobility Service
  - under the terms of a local lettings policy
  - under the terms of Swan's Tenancy Policy

## **Policy Statement**

### **4. Eligibility**

- 4.1 All Swan assured, secure or 5-year fixed term tenants will be eligible to register on the transfer list for a move to another home as long as they have lived in their current home for at least one year. Tenants with starter tenancies and assured short-hold tenancies living in general needs properties are not eligible to register on the transfer list.
- 4.2 Applications will normally only include immediate family members. i.e., the applicant, their partner and any dependants and/or children. Extended family members may register independently on their own application and cannot be included on the main tenant's application.
- 4.3 Tenants who have moved through a mutual exchange cannot register for a transfer until they have been living in their home for at least one year.

- 4.4 Tenants who have breached their tenancy will not be allowed to register on the transfer list or if they have already registered before the breach, will be suspended until their breach is amended.
- 4.5 Those who owe monies to Swan may not be considered for a transfer until all debts are cleared, this includes rent arrears, recharges, court costs and housing benefit overpayments. Exceptions to this restriction will include those who wish to downsize who are in rent arrears due to restrictions to their housing benefit payments as a result of the bedroom size criteria or the benefit cap.
- 4.6 Those who have committed acts of anti-social behaviour will not be considered for a transfer for at least 6 months from the last proven act of anti-social behaviour. Note this clause does not apply to transfers of accommodation made under the terms of the Harassment Policy and/or the Domestic Violence Policy where applicants have been awarded Management priority.
- 4.7 All transfers will be subject to a satisfactory property inspection which will be carried out prior to any offer being confirmed.
- 4.8 Independent adults without an interest in a property, living in a Swan home for longer than three years may register on the transfer list for a one- bedroom home within the same local authority, though they will not be considered a priority over those with a Swan tenancy.
- 4.9 Tenants living in a Swan supported housing property may register on the transfer list for consideration to transfer to a general needs property. An offer will not normally be considered until the applicant has successfully lived in a Swan home for at least one year.
- 4.10 Swan will not normally offer a tenancy to someone less than 18 years of age in its general needs accommodation unless the local authority has agreed to be a guarantor.
- 4.11 Swan will not normally offer a tenancy to someone who previously held a tenancy with them which was breached.
- 4.12 Prior to an offer of accommodation being confirmed a satisfactory financial assessment must be carried out to confirm the person nominated will be able to meet the rental charges.

## 5. Priority

- 5.1 Applicants registered on the transfer list will be placed in one of the following bands:
- **Band 1:** those with the highest level of housing need and an urgent need to move or under occupying by at least two bedrooms
  - **Band 2:** those with a high level of housing need
  - **Band 3:** those with a moderate level of housing need
  - **Band 4:** those with a lower level or no housing need to move
  - **Band 5:** those living in a Swan property other than the tenant with some housing need
  - **Band 6:** those not living in a Swan property with some housing need
- 5.2 Priority will be given in each band for time waited only. If an applicant changes band, their time priority will start anew so no-one will be disadvantaged by time waited.
- 5.3 Band 1 will include those who have been given priority status due to a management move and such applicants will normally only be made one suitable offer of accommodation with priority status removed if the offer is refused without good reason.
- 5.4 Those seeking medical priority must complete a medical priority request form and be aware that their GP or Consultant may be contacted and asked to provide supporting evidence for their application. Band 1 priority will only be given if it is evidenced that the applicant's current accommodation is having a severely detrimental effect on their medical condition.
- 5.5 Tenants who wish to downsize from a two bedroom or larger property into a one bedroom will be eligible to apply for the downsizing scheme. Those who are successful will be granted Band 1 status if they are giving up two bedrooms or more, or Band 2 status if they are giving up one bedroom.

- 5.6 Priority for overcrowding will be given to households under the terms in the 'bedroom standard'. This means a separate bedroom is required for children of the opposite sex aged over 10 years. Higher priority may be awarded to overcrowded households when bedrooms are exceptionally small. (ie., suitable for one person only). Priority will not be awarded if the household has deliberately made their household overcrowded.
- 5.7 Priority can be given to an adult living in Swan home following a relationship breakdown. This will normally only be awarded if the living arrangements are having a detrimental effect on an existing household member.
- 5.8 Those not currently living in a Swan property but wishing to do so will be categorised as Band 6. Offers will only be made to Band 6 applicants if the other 5 bands have been exhausted. Priority will be awarded to those over 25 years of age, in work and with a local connection. Only one and two-bedroom flats will normally only be available for Band 6 and Swan retain the right to withdraw a property which a Band 6 applicant has applied for at any time.
- 5.9 Detailed priority band classifications are defined in Appendix 1.

## **6. Suitability**

- 6.1 Property and household ratio guidelines are provided and followed whenever possible though there may be occasions when properties are let to households outside of the guidelines. See appendix 2.
- 6.2 Children will not be taken into account on an application if they have a permanent home elsewhere. Applicants will be asked to evidence proof of child benefit entitlement and proof of residency or custody order.
- 6.3 Houses will first be offered to households with a local connection and child under the age of 12 years or someone downsizing from another house.
- 6.4 Swan retains the right to refuse an application from a vulnerable adult unless it is satisfied that an appropriate support package is in place.
- 6.5 Swan will only consider applications from sex offenders when the local authority can confirm they have investigated the risks associated with rehousing in an identified property and monitoring arrangements are in place.
- 6.6 Swan will not normally offer accommodation to any person who has an interest in a property elsewhere, either through ownership or a tenancy.
- 6.7 Properties with an adaptation will normally only be let to a household who has been assessed as in need of such an adaptation.
- 6.8 A transfer or mutual exchange will not be permitted if the household are unable to demonstrate they can afford the property. A household seeking to carry out a mutual exchange to a property with one bedroom in excess of their needs who will be impacted by the Spare Room Subsidy will not be permitted.

## **7. General Information**

- 7.1 Available properties will be let through the HomeHunt choice-based lettings scheme. Properties which are identified for an urgent management move may be directly let with the agreement of the Head of Business Improvement and Allocations.
- 7.2 Transfer applicants who have bid and received an offer on a property which they then turn down without good reason will have their application suspended for six months. A further refusal without good reason within 12 months will result in their application being re-listed from the date of the refusal.
- 7.3 Transfer applicants have the right to request their application is reviewed if they have information which they believe has not been considered when their priority status has been decided. Reviews should be made directly to the Allocations Team with an explanation as why the review is being sought.

- 7.4 The length of time taken for an offer of accommodation to be made is dependent on several factors including:
- Banding category
  - The size and type of property required
  - The area(s) of preference
  - Suitable properties becoming available

It is not therefore possible to advise applicants when they are likely to be offered accommodation. Though some information is available on the number and type of properties in an area and the number of transfers made previously.

- 7.5 Overcrowded households may qualify for assistance when a move to a larger home is not possible. This may include storage items and space saving furniture.
- 7.6 Those seeking to downsize into a smaller home may qualify for financial and practical assistance with moving.
- 7.7 Transfer list applicants are encouraged to seek a mutual exchange to increase their chances of moving and as such Swan is a member of the Homeswapper scheme. All potential exchanges of property must be approved before they can take place. Further guidance is provided on mutual exchanges.

## **8. Equality and Diversity**

- 8.1 Swan Housing Group strives to meet the needs of all customers and is committed to reducing inequality, eliminating discrimination and promoting good relations between people of different groups. We will be sensitive to the specific needs of all new applicants and nominations.
- 8.2 We will ensure that no-one is disadvantaged on the basis of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, gender, disability, religious, sexual orientation, marital status, age or any unjustifiable criteria.

## **9. Related Policies and Procedures**

- Tenancy Policy
- Hate Crime and Anti-social Behaviour Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Mutual exchange procedure
- Downsizing procedure
- Management move procedure
- Medical priority procedure
- Lettings procedures
- Tenancy issue procedures

## **10. Monitoring**

Properties let will be monitored as follows:

- Property type and location
- By tenancy and rent type
- Number of refusals
- Applicant type

APPENDIX 1

Category	Circumstance
1	Has medical category A
1	Has been awarded a Management Move
1	Currently under-occupying a 3 bed or larger home will move to 1 bed
1	Qualifying household member unable to succeed
1	Is experiencing harassment as a result of disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity
1	Is fleeing domestic violence
1	Current property needs to be demolished or disposed
1	Housing benefit restricted by 25% due to the Welfare Reform
2	Has medical category B
2	Currently under-occupying their home but still needs 2 bedrooms
2	Currently living in adapted property and no longer need adaptation
2	Has children of opposite sex sharing bedroom at least one over 10 years
2	Has more than 3 children sharing a bedroom
2	Child over one year living in a studio with parent(s)
2	Currently occupying a 2 bed, but will move to a 1 bed
2	Housing benefit restricted by 14% due to the Welfare Reform
3	Has medical category C
3	Has children of opposite sex sharing bedroom both under 10 years
3	Has children of same sex sharing bedroom at least one over 10 years
3	Has more than 2 children sharing bedroom
3	Child under one living in a studio with parent(s)
3	Child over one living in a one bed flat with parent(s)
3	Has child(ren) under 5 years living in flat on 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor or higher in an un-lifted block
3	Single person living in swan supported housing (i.e., Foyer)
3	Needs to move due to employment opportunities or support
4	Has children for weekend and holiday access
4	Wants to move to similar property in different area
4	Wants to move nearer family or friends
4	Current property needs minor repairs
4	Is registered foster carer
4	Assessed as needing a live in carer
4	Has children of same sex sharing bedroom under 10 years
4	Has MP or local councillor support
4	Is a victim of anti-social behaviour
5	Aged over 21 years other than the tenant living in Swan property
5	Extended family of the tenant living in Swan property
6	Aged over 25 years not currently living in a Swan property

APPENDIX 2

	Bedsit	One bed	Two bed	Three bed	Four bed or larger
Single person or couple	✓	✓	✓		
Household with one child		✓	✓		
Household with two children			✓	✓	
Household with three children			✓	✓	✓
Household with four or more children				✓	✓