

Our Lettings Policy & Procedures cover the following areas of the Association's work:

- All applications, nominations and referrals for housing
- Mutual exchanges
- Home visits and assessment interviews
- Allocation of vacant properties
- Offers of accommodation
- Viewings and lettings
- Promotion of sustainable tenancies
- Monitoring and reporting

**Key Objectives**

1. Achieve efficiency, accountability and diversity in the selection of applicants for housing, targeting diversity in all management areas.
2. Give priority in housing to those in the greatest housing need balanced with offering choice to applicants from different sources.
3. Make sure that we deal with all applications systematically, fairly and equitably to meet customers' needs for housing wherever possible, and monitor who is applying and whom we house.
4. Provide good quality housing, make best use of available stock and respond to local housing need.
5. Give tenancies that are sustainable in the long term and contribute to stable balanced communities. (All new tenants will be issued with Starter Tenancies where previously agreed with local authorities)
6. Co-operate fully and work in partnership with Local Authorities (especially in respect of the Authorities' statutory responsibilities towards homeless persons, asylum seekers and refugees) and other Registered Social Landlords in the establishment of Choice Based Lettings schemes and Common Housing Registers, if we consider this to be beneficial to the communities in which Springboard works.
7. Minimise void loss in low demand and high turnover schemes through proactive marketing of vacant properties.
8. Provide an efficient and equitable lettings service.

**Applications**

1. In instances where sufficient information is given on the application form and we may be able to assist with housing, applicants will be interviewed personally within four weeks of submitting completed application forms, in order that we obtain full, reliable and comparable information. In the case of local authority nominations, we will interview the nominee within five working days.
2. Standard forms are used at all stages of the lettings process so that all applicants are assessed fairly on the same basis of

factual information.

3. All information on the application form will be verified where necessary with relevant organisations. The information obtained will be treated as confidential and will be used in assessing whether or not an applicant is accepted for the housing list.
4. The points system is used in conjunction with void predictions to establish how many people we are able to register for each area and category of accommodation.
5. Persons aged 16 years or over are eligible to apply for a place on the housing list. However 16-18 year olds may have to meet additional criteria, before a tenancy is agreed.

**Lettings**

1. Our vacant properties are subject to Local Authority nomination agreements. Between 50% and 80% of net lettings are offered to people from a council housing register. This considerably reduces the number of vacancies available to the housing list, which will be open only in accordance with availability and demand.
2. We may offer other agencies a small percentage of homes by way of client referral. Agencies may be statutory bodies or voluntary agencies who can demonstrate that they are properly constituted, properly governed and financially robust.
3. We plan, although cannot guarantee, to house people from the housing list within 12 months of their initial application. Different areas and types of property vary in their availability and popularity. Local authority nominees would receive offers of housing on a one for one basis, as vacancies arise.
4. We monitor lettings performance against agreed targets as set out in the quarterly and annual performance indicators. An annual summary of lettings activity is included in the Annual Performance Information report to customers.

**Allocation**

1. Properties are allocated according to the following criteria:
  - Our procedures on household size/property size ratios.
  - The 'points' scheme.

(The points scheme is used to prioritise applicants on the housing list and also enables us to deal with applicants with a fair and methodical approach).

2. The Lettings Procedure incorporates a transfer procedure whereby existing customers may apply to move from their current home. Transfer applicants are allocated points in the same way as direct applicants, dependent upon their current housing circumstances. Reasonable preference will be given to transfer applicants:
  - where this meets priority housing need

- makes best use of stock; and/or
  - contribute to the building of a stable community.
3. People who are considered to be in severe housing need are those who
    - are homeless
    - are victims of violence or harassment, or
    - have a serious medical need or disability.
  4. Priority will also be given to households suffering a variety of other problems such as poor standard accommodation, overcrowding, families with dependent children or unable to live together as a family unit.
  5. Anyone may apply for accommodation but it is unlikely that we will be able to assist all applicants, and those who are registered with low points may have a longer waiting time unless they accept tenancies in difficult-to-let properties.
  6. We will assess the reasons for applicants' preferences for identified areas or property types and take them into consideration prior to making them an offer.
  7. Offers to transfer existing customers will generally not be given where the rent account is in arrears, but may be given where there are exceptional circumstances and certain conditions apply, (e.g. if a tenant is suffering harassment, or has a severe medical need and is paying off the arrears under a formal written agreement). Transfer applicants at the time of application or at the time of offer should not have any unresolved sundry debts owing to us.
  8. An offer of accommodation will not normally be made where the tenancy is subject to a Court Order or where legal action is being taken because of a breach of the tenancy agreement (for example antisocial behaviour).
  9. Certain categories of transfer request are not subject to the points scheme and are dealt with under separate arrangements and policies. These would include transfers from properties undergoing major works, transfers from our Shared Housing schemes, and transfers made to alleviate serious scheme management issues (see Decant Policy and Procedures).
  10. We give applicants in all categories a maximum of two reasonable offers. Upon refusal of a second reasonable offer applicants will be removed from the housing list. (See Lettings Procedures for definition of a reasonable offer).
  11. When applicants are penalised by removal from the housing list they will be informed in writing and advised of their right to appeal under our complaints and appeals procedures
  12. We will not allocate a tenancy of a flat to applicants with cats, dogs or other large pets unless there is access to a private

garden area, and they have obtained written permission from us prior to allowing pets on the premises.

13. If an applicant refuses an offer of accommodation, we ask them to define their reason for refusing; we record and monitor these reasons.

**Mutual Exchange**

1. Any customer wishing to exchange accommodation with another customer must apply in writing to us, and to any partner association or local authority involved in the transaction. Mutual exchange may proceed only with the written approval of the relevant landlords.
2. We will support an exchange if:
  - the tenancy is secure or assured
  - the application is made by the tenant or joint tenants
  - following the date of exchange, neither property will be seriously overcrowded or under-occupied
  - the property is accepted in the condition it is found excluding landlord repairs
  - no party is in breach of their tenancy conditions
3. Exchanges can be straightforward involving two of our customers, or one of our customers exchanging with a tenant of another housing organisation. There can also be exchanges involving a chain of three or more applicants.
4. Customers may advertise their willingness to exchange via registration with the House Exchange scheme. This involves a number of Housing Associations and Local Authorities, including Springboard which are part of a web-based exchange service. For more details and advice customers may visit our website [www.springboard.houseexchange.org.uk](http://www.springboard.houseexchange.org.uk)
5. We also run an internal exchange list for Springboard customers only. To apply, customers should contact their Housing Manager in the first instance.

**Homeowner Services**

The Homeowner Services department act as a main referral point for homeowners who are in need of a move to affordable rented accommodation due to financial difficulty. We deal with these applications in the same way as any direct application; we could offer the applicant a place on our housing list if there is any availability for the area/type of housing they require.

**Staff**

We are unable to accept direct applications from members of staff or close relatives unless they qualify under Lettings Procedures (2.7). Refer to Schedule 1, Part 1 (2) of the Housing Act 1996.

**Applications from Board or Committee Members**

1. We are unable to assist members of the Board of the Association as set out in section 105 of the Housing Act 1996, and in our Code of Conduct.
2. Paragraph 1 (above) does not apply to members of the

Springboard Customer Association unless they are also members of the Board.

**Legislative and Statutory Framework**

Children Act 1989  
Data Protection Act 1998  
Disability Discrimination Act 1995  
Family Law Act 1996  
Housing Act 1996  
Housing Act 1988  
Housing Act 1985  
Housing Corporation Regulatory Code 2002  
Human Rights Act 1998  
Race Relations Act 1976

**Related Policies and Procedures**

Adult protection  
Antisocial behaviour  
Arrears  
Buildings  
Child protection  
Complaints & appeals  
Confidentiality  
Customer accounts  
Customer improvements  
Customer involvement  
Decants  
Domestic Violence  
Equalities and Diversity  
Former customer arrears  
Gas safety and appliance management  
Harassment  
Health and safety  
Payments and benefits  
Properties into management  
Properties out of management  
Referral agencies  
Rents  
Rent arrears and eviction  
Responsive maintenance  
Right to acquire  
Right to buy  
Risk management  
Service charges  
Suspected abandoned properties  
Tendering  
Translation  
Voids