

EastendHomes

LETTINGS POLICY

1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1 Tower Hamlets Council require all Social Housing Providers (RPs) in receipt of stock attained via the Housing Choice stock transfer process to become a Tower Hamlets Common Housing Register (CHR) partner landlords and adopt this register's Allocations Scheme, which is choice based.
- 1.2 EastendHomes works closely with Tower Hamlets Council and other partner landlords sharing a single common housing list and allocations scheme. Along with our partners, EastendHomes advertise available empty homes to enable applicants to exercise choice and express their interest in any home they wish to be considered for.
- 1.3 We are committed to a lettings policy that seeks to develop and support well-balanced and sustainable communities, and look to implement Local Lettings plans as specified in the CHR allocations scheme.
- 1.4 EastendHomes provides information to our tenants who register for rehousing about the Allocations Scheme, including guidance on eligibility, how to apply for housing and the assessment of housing needs. A summary of the allocations scheme is appended to this policy.
- 1.5 EastendHomes publicises and promotes all existing and proposed housing options and incentives available to our residents. The allocations scheme framework enables CHR partner landlords to maximise the pool of available homes accessible to their tenants thereby increasing their rehousing opportunity.
- 1.6 We actively support the aspirations of our tenants, as a CHR partner, with the Council and other Registered Social Landlords. Being a partner of the CHR enables us to:
 - Maximise the potential to reduce overcrowding including the ability to make direct offers via an Overcrowding Reduction Strategy specifically targeted at overcrowded EastendHomes tenants.
 - Maximise property availability and choice in terms of location, property area, type and bedroom size meeting specific health requirements and accessibility need as assessed by a Health Advisor.
 - Sub-regional developments enabling our tenants to access a wider pool of properties within the East London Housing Partnership sub-region.
 - Moving Homes 'umbrella' schemes that enable cross borough movement throughout the UK for those residents with employment and/or a social need to move.

- Tenants affected by Welfare Reform can move to accommodation one bedroom less than need (as long as the bed spaces are also only one less than defined need).

1.7 We will ensure that properties are let speedily, facilitating multiple viewings minimising the length of time they remain empty and maximising opportunities to assist those in housing need.

1.8 The Allocations Scheme Summary document is in the booklet of that name. At transfer registration a copy of the summary document is enclosed with the registration letter. A full version of Tower Hamlets CHR Allocations Scheme policy is available to download from www.thhs.org.uk. A full document is provided on request to those residents with or without IT access.

2. Equality, Diversity & Community

- EastendHomes is committed to providing equal access to its housing, regardless of race, nationality, ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, sexual orientation, gender; disability, age, illness, marital or employment status.
- EastendHomes will work to eliminate discrimination in all aspects of housing allocations.
- EastendHomes will maintain records of the ethnic origin of applicants and will monitor lettings made to all applicants.

3. Eligibility criteria for joining the Housing List

3.1 Normally anyone can join the housing list unless they are:

- Under 18 years old
- Applicants with no local connection - must have lived continuously in the Borough for 3 years at the time of registration and need to remain resident in Tower Hamlets to preserve that registration
- A person with a history of bad behaviour (e.g. anti-social behaviour, evicted for rent arrears eviction).
- Where there is a sole or joint income of £85,000 per annum or more. This figure, set as of 31st March 2013, will be increased annually by the rate of Retail Prices Index
- Homeowners. - An exception might be made where homeowners are unable to realise their assets to source their own housing solution.
- A person who the Government say cannot be on the list. Currently this means certain groups of people who are subject to immigration control.

Every application will be considered on its own merits and EastendHomes will consider all circumstances before making a final decision on eligibility for the housing list.

- 3.2 EastendHomes will consistently review and amend the Lettings policy to facilitate legislative directives received from Central Government and all adjustments discussed and agreed by Tower Hamlets Common Housing Register Partners Forum.

4. How Homes will be Let

- 4.1 Properties that are available to let will have their details advertised in the local housing offices, Tower Hamlets Home seekers websites and in other partner landlord locations.

- 4.2 EEH maintains a direct mailing list for vulnerable residents assist them to register their choice of property when requested to do so.

- 4.3 Eligible residents exercise their choice by selecting i.e. 'bidding' for suitable homes that are being advertised. A relevant shortlist of applicants is generated on the integrated IT Lettings system used by all Partner Landlords. The said property is then allocated to the most compatible applicant(s) matching with the highest housing priority as determined by the Allocation Scheme guidelines.

- 4.4 Existing tenants are expected to comply with the terms of their current tenancy agreement. This means that before making an offer, we will check with the applicant's current landlord for any breaches of the tenancy agreement, and we will provide this information on our tenants to other landlords on request. Non-compliance with the terms of the current tenancy agreement may lead to an offer not being made.

- 4.5 Applicants may request a review of any decision made about their application including the decision to amend their housing priority, exclude or demote their transfer application after refusing three reasonable offers of accommodation.

- 4.6 EEH will withdraw an offer of accommodation if after a financial assessment it is established that the applicant will not be able to afford the tenancy.

5. Priorities for letting

- 5.1 The Allocations Scheme is required to meet statutory obligations that the law says must be considered. In partnership with all CHR partner landlords, we must give 'reasonable preference' to the following groups:

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- Applicants who are accepted by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets as homeless under Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act will be allocated one offer of accommodation. If the offer is refused, the council is likely to end the provision of temporary accommodation and adjust their housing application as appropriate.
- People who are owed a duty by any housing authority under certain Housing Acts
- Those occupying unsanitary, overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory housing

- Those who need to move on medical or welfare grounds. *We will assist EastendHomes tenants wishing to transfer for health reasons. Applicants will be assessed for priority of need by Tower Hamlets Client Support Health Advisors and where possible in liaison with the resident and medical professionals identify an appropriate site within a new development for bespoke adaptation.*
- For those residents requesting to move home due to extenuating circumstances not covered within the Allocations Scheme a Housing Management Panel, of Senior Officers, will decide if an enhanced housing priority is appropriate for referred CHR applicants including existing tenants of EastendHomes.
- People who need to move to a specific area where failure to move would cause hardship to themselves or others.
- Priority Target Groups

5 Maximising Choice

- 5.1 Under occupiers. A higher priority will be given to people that wish to move and will give up at least one bedroom. This step enables us to tackle overcrowding and make the best use of the existing stock. A financial incentive is available for tenants downsizing. Additionally under-occupiers, at their request, can be allocated accommodation with 1 bedroom in excess of their assessed housing need, but not exceeding current size of accommodation.
- 5.2 EEH has joined the Homeswapper, House Exchange and Swap and Move national mobility schemes enabling EEH tenants to register and use these exchange schemes at nil cost.
- 5.3 EEH also promotes –
- Seaside and Country Homes Scheme for older tenants
 - First Steps to Home Ownership in London
 - Moving Homes London mobility scheme

6. Decants

- 6.1 We are mindful of the demands of redevelopment and regeneration programmes and any requirements to decant tenants whilst work is undertaken to their homes or their homes are demolished.
- 6.2 Any tenant who has been living at a property for at least 12 months before decant is agreed, will be entitled to a statutory *Home Loss* payment. The amount of payment is adjusted periodically. They will also receive reasonable removal expenses including the reconnection and disconnection of their telephone and/or electrical goods. Further payment will be made to enable the redirection of mail for a maximum of 3 months.
- 6.3 Decant tenants non-dependent sons and daughters registered for housing for at least 12 month prior to the decant notice will be eligible for one offer of accommodation with an enhanced housing priority that remains valid until

- A reasonable offer is refused - the priority will be removed and their application will revert to its primary status but is subject to review at the applicant's request.
- The main tenant is allocated alternative accommodation first - the priority will be removed and their application will revert to its primary status