



ALLOCATION POLICY

Prepared by:
J49 BOARD

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MANAGEMENT

Allocation Policy

J49 Ltd.

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Summary

This policy applies to the allocation of social housing managed and owned by J49 Ltd. J49 is committed to being a long term social housing provider and whilst providing housing for general needs housing, will at times, work with local authorities and community organisations to meet the housing needs of specific categories of those in housing need such as 18-35 year olds, or move on housing etc. There are particular high needs areas of housing that are location specific and demographically defined. In working with local authorities and community organisations, we will look to provide housing that takes in to consideration all these aspects and set out policies that reflect these aspirations on a location and relationship (particularly local authorities) basis whilst following all the statutory requirements necessary.



Social Housing Provider

As a developing Social Housing provider we need to understand the needs of communities where we operate and manage our properties. We ensure that no-one applying for a property is treated less favourably than anyone else or discriminated against. We want to let the homes in an efficient and timely manner and ensure that the properties are not overcrowded and in order that we can make the most efficient use of our stock.

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1. Definitions.

- **Allocation** refers to how we decide the suitability of a property for an applicant.

Letting refers to the process whereby we let a property.

Social housing refers to properties let at a sub-market rent.

Affordable rent is a social rent product charging up to 80% of market rent.

Social Sector Size Criteria refers to Government rules for the size of accommodation that Housing Benefit will cover.

2. Access to Accommodation

2. Access to accommodation

Access to housing is usually managed with RPA's (relationship partnership agreements) using nomination agreements, referral arrangements or choice based lettings schemes. Our RPAs will be established throughout the different areas of London we work in. We work with our partners to verify any information given by applicants to ensure (The RPA's on the whole are mainly local authorities, but also consist of the GLA and charity based groups that are part of J49's RPO's (relationship partner organisations).)

2.1 Nomination agreements

Nomination agreements are an arrangement whereby a certain proportion of homes provided by a registered provider are allocated to applicants proposed by another body, such as a local authority or community organisation, for the purpose of a housing offer.

We are committed to assisting local authorities with their statutory duties in relation to the homeless and those with top priority housing needs. We work with RPAs and agencies to reach an agreement on the proportion of

empty homes to be offered to nominations. This proportion will vary according to the specific needs of the area and local authorities.

We also work with RPAs to enable move-on accommodation for applicants living in supported accommodation, as well as with the Greater London Authority to fulfil all allocation policies regarding pan-London nomination criteria that are specified by them.

2.2 Choice based lettings (CBL)

CBL refers to a process of letting homes which allows applicants living in certain local authorities, including existing tenants who want to transfer, to apply for accommodation. Applicants are awarded a banding level, with priority given to those with an urgent need to move. Applicants can see the full range of available properties and can bid for any home to which they are matched. The choice will increase as J49 grows its' housing stock in different areas of London.

We will continue to meet obligations under nomination agreements where they exist.

2.3 Referral arrangements with specialist agencies

Several properties will be made available to referral agencies with whom we have an agreement. Agreements will be made with both voluntary and statutory agencies in order to help residents with particular needs to secure appropriate housing. These agencies will include homeless charities, domestic abuse support programs, local health authorities, social services, adult social care and the police, as well as charitable organisations that support individuals' housing needs.

J49 will specialise in 18-35 year-old housing needs, utilising communication with our RPAs and local authority housing nominations agreements to keep a balance between this specialty and other housing needs that occur.

2.4 Re-lets

Some nomination agreements will set out a proportion of properties that we have the right to offer to existing tenants transferring to another home. We use these properties to accommodate the following:

following:

- Tenants who have an urgent need to move on medical grounds
- Tenants moving to independent living from supported housing
- Households who are overcrowded or under-occupied
- Management transfers (see 4.1) and direct offers (see 4.2)
- Decants. This is where there is an urgent need to move an existing tenant because of major works or to allow for the redevelopment of the scheme. Further information will be provided in our decant policy when the need arises.. We will advertise these homes, with the exception of direct offers, through CBL.

3. Who is Eligible? (for new applicants)

J49 aims to provide housing for those not adequately served by the commercial housing market, letting our homes to those in most need. All applicants must meet the eligibility criteria set out below.

We follow all current legal and regulatory requirements in assessing applications from people, subject to immigration control.

3.1 Eligibility criteria (new customers)

Applicants must:

- have a housing need
- be over 18 years of age
- Have leave to remain in the UK and recourse to public funds and not be subject to immigration control or be a European Economic area (EEA) national exercising their treaty rights.
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- not own their home or their own residential accommodation elsewhere
- not hold another tenancy elsewhere
- not currently be serving a custodial sentence
- have not been previously evicted through breach of tenancy from a J49 property
- not been known to have or members of their household are known to have caused serious anti- social behaviour e.g. have been evicted or convicted due to antisocial behaviour.
- not have outstanding debts to J49 housing as a result of failure to pay rent, court costs, rechargeable repairs or any other debt
- be able to demonstrate that they can sustain a tenancy and manage risk, with support where required, including afford to pay the rent

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- be nominated, or bid, for the appropriate size property that they are eligible for using our bedroom standard

3.2 Creative Local lettings plan. (CLLP)

We want to introduce 'creative local lettings plans' to address housing management and sustainability issues, considering the needs of the area in order to help develop creative and diverse communities that are about more than just housing needs.

We want the housing to be socially rented and where we adopt a CLLP, we will consult with RPAs including the local authority to ensure that the plan reasonably balances the demands of local housing need and the desire to address the specific housing related issues in the locality. CLLPs will be regularly reviewed to ensure that they continue to achieve the aim of helping to develop diverse and sustainable communities.

3.3 Eligibility criteria (existing customers)

A transfer applicant must:

- have a housing need
- be able to demonstrate that they can sustain a tenancy in the new home, with support where required, including afford to pay rent
- have no outstanding debts to J49, including rent, court costs or charges
- be an assured shorthand tenant
- have maintained the property in good condition
- have complied with the terms of their tenancy

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- apply for the appropriate size property that they are eligible for using our bedroom standard

3.4 Household members

Eligible household members include a person who was part of the household on the original tenancy file or is recorded as being subsequently added to the household (e.g. children).

We will investigate applications where intentional overcrowding has occurred. We expect adult household members to supply evidence that the tenancy address is their main and principal home (in cases of overcrowding). We reserve the right to determine the appropriate property size for applications that include additional household members

4. Transfers

As we are a new RP we are developing a transfer policy that may include the following:

4.1 Management transfers for tenants.

A management transfer can be requested by a tenant who requires a move due to a serious housing management issue, domestic violence, harassment or severe financial hardship. An offer of accommodation may be made through CBL.

We will assess each case on its merit and must be satisfied that problems prompting the transfer request will be alleviated by a move to a new home. We request evidence of any claimed risk through reports provided by external agencies, such as the police, the GP or social services. We may award priority banding based on the evidence provided and our assessment of the case. Where a transfer is granted due to domestic abuse where the perpetrator and victim are joint tenants, we will offer a new tenancy to the victim and seek possession of the property.

We will review all management transfers after they are approved to confirm that the tenant's circumstances remain the same and they still require priority status.

4.2 Direct offers

In cases where a tenant faces an imminent risk by remaining in their home, and has provided suitable evidence of this, we may make a reasonable direct offer. This is a single offer of a specific available property made directly to the tenant, not through CBL. A reasonable offer is one that alleviates the imminent risk to the household by moving them to a different location.

The direct offer and the property the tenant moves from will be like-for-like, with the same number of bedrooms. We do not consider housing circumstances such as overcrowding when making a direct offer. In cases where, due to unavailability, we have been unable to find a like-for-like property within three months, we will consider offering a similar property.

We will only make one direct offer. Where a tenant refuses a reasonable direct offer, we will consider whether the transfer request can be dealt with as a management transfer.

4.3 Under-occupation

We recognise that the welfare reforms around size criteria adversely affect some of our tenants and may lead to financial hardship. We will support tenants to move to the most appropriate accommodation for their needs and financial circumstances.

4.4 Transfer applicants with no priority need

We will not consider transfer requests from tenants who do not present a priority need. Instead we will offer these tenants advice about appropriate housing options including mutual exchange, London Housing Moves, shared ownership and market rent opportunities.

5. Tenancy type and rent level

5.1 Fixed term tenancy

Applicants who have not held a tenancy before are issued with a five year assured short hold tenancy.

6. Property Allocation criteria

When allocating a property, we consider the household size, support needs of the applicant and the type of property that we have available to determine whether the property is suitable for the applicant.

6.1 Bedroom size

When allocating homes, we observe Part X of the Housing Act 1985 in relation to statutory overcrowding. We take account of the number of rooms as well as floor area available for sleeping and allocate properties to appropriately sized households.

6.2 Bedroom standard

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 included the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) social sector size criteria, which introduced housing benefit reductions for working-age tenants considered to be under-occupying their homes. Our allocation criteria reflects the social sector size criteria. We allow for one bedroom per person (single adult) or couple living as a household and an extra bedroom for:

- any other person aged 16 years or over
- two children of the same gender under the age of 16
- two children who are under the age of 10 regardless of gender
- a child or adult who requires overnight care from a non-resident carer
- a child or adult who is unable to share a bedroom because of disability

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- a foster child where the resident is an approved foster carer, whether they have a child placed with them or not (as long as they have been approved or had a placement in the last 12 months).

6.3 Affordability

All applicants will be required to undergo an affordability assessment and we aim to meet the 'formula rent calculation' for all tenants. It is recognised by the government that there is some flexibility in this figure: "The government's policy recognises that registered providers should have some discretion over the rent set for individual properties, to take account of local factors and concerns, in consultation with tenants. As a result, the policy contains flexibility for registered providers to set rents at up to 5% above formula rent (10% for supported housing). We expect providers to use this flexibility in a balanced way, and not set all rents at 5% (or 10%) above the formula rent." (Government policy on rents and housing 2018)

The property is considered unaffordable unless the applicant can demonstrate through the above affordability assessment the ability to meet their financial obligations, to sustain rent payments and meet other essential living costs.

6.4 Tenancy support

We want to create sustainable tenancies. Where appropriate we will carry out needs assessments to identify where additional financial support is needed at the start of new tenancies. By offering this support we aim to reduce failed tenancies and subsequent homelessness.

Support advice may be provided by us or by referral to partner support agencies. Such support is not exclusive to new residents and will be available throughout the tenancy.

7. Refusals and acceptances

We will let our homes in a responsible and ethical manner. To achieve our goal of sustainable communities we want to minimize factors that

contribute towards tenancies failing. As a result, we may reject an applicant who is unable to demonstrate their ability to manage the tenure or where the applicant needs a level of support that we cannot facilitate. In cases where we refuse a nomination, we will provide clear reasons why and if possible some advice about where that applicant can next take their request.

6.1 Nominations and referrals

We request and accept nominations from our partners in accordance with nomination agreements and the eligibility criteria set out within this policy. Each nomination is 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, statutory agency or housing association to support a nomination. Additional information could include medical evidence, risk assessments, occupational therapist reports, tenancy records from a previous landlord and eviction dates (for those facing homelessness).

Grounds for rejection of an application may include submission of inaccurate or insufficient information, unsuitability of property for the applicant's needs or the applicant's inability to sustain the tenure. We do not consider factors such as perceived housing management difficulties when deciding to accept or reject a nomination.

We will work with our RPAs, the local authority and relevant agencies in cases where the applicant has a history of serious offences, for example: arson, drug use or sexual assault. This seeks to ensure that everyone has fair and equal access to housing but also enables us to manage the potential risk by monitoring and liaising with these RPA's and hence protect other residents and local communities from becoming victims of offence.

If an applicant refuses an offer of housing, we will ask for their reasons for refusing and keep a record of their answers. These details will be included in any reports to nominating RPA's

8. Accommodation standards

We only allocate empty properties that are physically fit for long term human habitation in accordance with our minimum lettings standard. These standards are set in accordance with the GLA “Home standard document 2015” which can be found here www.gov.uk/hca

9. Appeals and complaints

An applicant can appeal a decision if they are dissatisfied with the way their application, selection, offer or allocation has been handled. Appeals will be considered by officers who were not involved in the original decision. If dissatisfied with the appeal decision, applicants will be advised to follow our complaints process.

10. Confidentiality and information sharing

Information regarding our customers is sensitive and we maintain confidentiality in line with our data protection policies. Some responsible information sharing plays a key role in the letting of our homes, but we follow information sharing protocols with local authorities and RPAs where they are in place and all the latest GDPR regulations concerning data protection.

11. Monitoring and targets

We will operate monitoring systems to ensure that our lettings service is fair and managed in accordance with regulation and strategic key performance indicators (KPIs).

We work closely with local authorities to monitor our nomination arrangements and provide regular lettings data (LA ‘returns’). The monitoring and provision of data may vary between local authorities. We will provide standardised data to regulators as necessary, including Continuous Recording of Lettings (CORE) data collection.

We will aim to gather feedback from residents once they have moved into a new home to gauge their satisfaction of the lettings service, and report back any needed improvements.

12. Client empowerment

We aim to empower tenants by listening to any feedback offered. We will be setting up a LMO's (Local management organisations) for each new set of properties that come on stream. This will consist of tenants, community facility project leaders and local community J49 staff. This will ensure that the development of the management system and any necessary changes can be locally actioned and will also marry with our CCLP aims

13. Diversity and inclusion

We will conduct diversity and inclusion assessments in conjunction with our LMGs to monitor the community cohesion of individual resident areas. We recognise that certain areas will have an orientation towards particular client groups, but we want to provide diverse and multifaceted residential communities that reflect the locality and its demographics.

14. Legislation, regulation and guidance

This policy takes into account the government's social housing reforms as set out in the Localism Act 2011 and Welfare Reform Act 2012. The Localism Act gave local authorities greater discretion to determine who can register for housing. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced measures to reduce the welfare benefit a household can receive if they are deemed to under-occupy a socially rented home.

Some key legislation and guidance relevant to this document are listed below:

- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1996
- Local Government Act 2000

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- Homelessness Act 2002
 - Housing Act 2004
 - Equalities Act 2010
 - Housing Regulator's Tenancy Standard
 - Homes and Communities Affordable Homes Programme Framework 2011-15 Guidance
 - Localism Act 2011
 - Welfare Reform Act 2012