

<b>Policy Name</b>	Shared Ownership Allocations Policy
<b>Policy Category</b>	Housing Management
<b>Policy Number</b>	HM5
<b>Officer Responsible</b>	Operations Manager
<b>Date to Management Committee</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> November 2009
<b>Next Review Date</b>	November 2012

Deciding who is to be housed is one of the most difficult decisions we have to make. There is often greater demand for housing than we can meet. This is why an effective allocation policy is so important. We strive to make sure housing is allocated in the fairest way possible.

Our allocations policy explains all the factors that we take into account before deciding who is offered a house. This policy was reviewed in November 2009.

This policy that we have in place reflects tenants' and sharing owners' views, recognised good practice in allocations and complies with current legislation that governs housing allocations.

There is a lot of detail in this policy and we have tried to make it as user friendly as possible. If you are in any doubt about how this policy works or if you have any questions about your own situation please contact us for further information.

This policy applies to both new sales and re-sales.

The Association's main aim is to provide truly affordable housing to meet the needs of local communities and the Association's general allocations policy is based on the principle of giving priority to local people in housing need.

This principle is continued in the allocation of Shared Ownership properties. However, an additional assessment is applied to ensure that those applicants being considered have sufficient income to afford Shared Ownership.

The Shared Ownership allocations policy applies to both new sales and resales. It will be operated in accordance with the following core objectives and operating principles:

## **1. CORE OBJECTIVES**

### **(i) *To Meet Housing Need Fairly***

Lochaber Housing Association's Allocations Policy will be a needs focused policy which equitably addresses the housing, health and care needs of all applicants and their households.

### **(ii) *To Promote Stable, Balanced and Sustainable Communities***

Lochaber Housing Association's main aim is to provide affordable home ownership options to applicants in housing need, in order to help sustain Lochaber's many diverse communities.

### **(iii) *To Make Best Use of Available Housing Stock***

To work alongside the Local Authority and other housing providers to ensure the best use is made of the housing stock in the Lochaber area.

### **(iv) *To Monitor, Publicise and Improve Performance***

Lochaber Housing Association will monitor the impact of the Association's Allocations Policy in terms of meeting its core objectives and operating principles and to publicise its performance against these objectives. This monitoring of the allocations process will form the basis of the ongoing review of the effectiveness of its policy and its procedures, and any improvements which may be required as a result.

### **(v) *To Provide a Cost Effective Allocations Service***

Lochaber Housing Association will endeavour to ensure that houses are allocated expeditiously and that turn around times for re-letting of properties are kept to a minimum for the benefit of successful applicants and the Association.

## **2. OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

### **(i) *Consistency***

The Association's Policy will be consistently and fairly applied in the assessment and pointing of all applications.

### **(ii) *Openness***

The Association will not only make the Allocations Policy publicly available, but will also provide meaningful information about priorities and the allocations process, and keep applicants appropriately informed during the allocations process.

**(iii) Legal and Professional Accountability**

The Association will ensure that its Allocations Policy meets all statutory and regulatory requirements, including all those laid down by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, and will comply with the Scottish Housing Regulator and Scottish Federation of Housing Association's (SFHA) performance standards.

**(iv) Equal Opportunities**

The Allocations Policy will not discriminate between any individual, household or group on the grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

Equal opportunities monitoring will be carried out as part of the allocations process, and this will be reported upon to Committee on a quarterly basis.

**[vii] Consultation**

Lochaber Housing Association will consult with its tenants and sharing owners regarding any significant changes to the allocations policy, as part of the review process.

**[viii] Confidentiality**

Lochaber Housing Association will respect the confidentiality of individual applicants at all times, and will act in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**[ix] Right to Appeal**

Applicants will have the right to appeal an allocation, by writing to the Management Committee in accordance with the Association's complaints policy.

Management Committee Members will take no part in the operation of the allocations policy, but will set, review and monitor the policy, and hear appeals and special cases. All such appeals being heard by the Committee will be anonymised, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

## **SECTION B: ALLOCATING ACCOMMODATION**

### **1. ACCEPTING HOUSING APPLICATIONS**

Applicants will be asked to complete a Shared Ownership application form, and will be required to submit details of their income as part of the application.

Applications will be accepted subject to the following conditions:

- (i) The applicant has capital that would cover conveyancing fees;  
*and*
- (ii) The applicant has a “mortgage in principle” offer from a recognised mortgage lender; *or*
- (iii) The applicant has capital that would allow them to buy a share outright.

If the Association considers that an applicant earns sufficient income to seek alternative housing available on the open market, the applicant will be placed on a reserve list and only be considered should the Association not have any applicants with lower incomes.

All applicants will be awarded points in accordance with the Association’s points system, and allocations will be made strictly on the basis of the points system.

Preference will not be given on the basis of ability to purchase a greater share than the minimum 25%.

Preference will not be given on the basis of ability to purchase a share outright without the need for a mortgage or loan.

#### ***Joint Applications***

Joint applications will be accepted. If the application is successful, offers of accommodation will be in the form of a joint Occupancy Agreement.

#### ***Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, schedule 7***

Applicants will be required to declare any relationship with the Association’s staff or Committee members. Where there is a relationship to an applicant, the member of staff in question will take no part in the allocations process, and the final allocation will be approved explicitly by the Management Committee.

#### ***Overcrowding***

Although it is preferable that a separate bedroom should be provided for a couple and each child – e.g. a couple with two children should only be offered a three-bedroomed property – the Association recognises that this may not always be possible when maximising the

use of its stock to meet housing need. The Association's policy, therefore, is that where it is not possible to provide a separate bedroom for each child as stated above, a separate bedroom should be provided for each couple, and no child aged 6 or over should share a bedroom with a child of the opposite sex.

In allocating properties this criteria will be observed, and no offer of accommodation will be made that will create a household that is overcrowded. In exceptional circumstances this may be considered, but such an allocation can only be made with the approval of the Operations Manager, after careful consideration of the individual circumstances of the case.

Equally, when allocating a property, preference will be given to applicants with a housing need for the size of property in question.

### **3. PRIORITIES FOR HOUSING**

The main aim of Lochaber Housing Association is to provide good quality, truly affordable housing for local people in their preferred communities.

Lochaber Housing Association will allocate its properties in order to meet housing need. This will be undertaken on a points based system, which is set out in a separate part of the Allocations Policy.

In addition, when allocating Shared Ownership properties, priority shall be given to the following types of applicants:

- First-time buyers who cannot afford to buy outright.
- Existing tenants of Lochaber Housing Association or The Highland Council.

If there are insufficient applicants within the above categories, other applicants will be considered.

### **2. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

The Association will not discriminate on the grounds of race, religion, sex, marital status or sexual orientation and will assess applications solely on the basis of the rules set out in this policy.

### **3. ALLOCATIONS PROCESS**

- (i) All applicants will be required to complete an application form, and to provide details of income and capital as requested.
- (ii) Providing the applicant meets the required criteria, their application will be assessed by two members of staff – usually the Development Officer and a Housing Officer – who will award points according to the Association's points system.

- (iii) The Shared Ownership property will then be offered to the applicant with the highest amount of points, and applicants will be allowed 7 days in which to accept or refuse the offer. If the offer is refused, the property will then be offered to the applicant with the next highest amount of points. If the offer is again refused this process will be continued until there is an acceptance.
- (iv) Allocations of Shared Ownership properties will be reported to the Management Committee on a quarterly basis.

## SECTION C: POINTS ASSESSMENT

All applications will be assessed against the criteria detailed below.

Once all the applications for a particular property have been assessed, the property will usually be allocated to the applicant with the highest level of points, unless there is a local lettings initiative in place (see above).

<b><u>Criteria</u></b>	<b><u>Points Award</u></b>
<b>a) Shared Ownership Priority Categories</b>	
(i) First-time buyer who cannot afford to buy outright	20 points
(ii) Existing tenants of LHA, The Highland Council or another RSL	25 points
<b>b) Homeless Applicants</b>	
(i) Accepted as statutory homeless by the Local Authority; or points	25
<b>c) Under-occupation</b>	
<i>(defined as being where the person(s) have more rooms than required as detailed above in the definition "overcrowding" and more than the number of rooms for which they have applied)</i>	
by 1 room	2 points
by 2 rooms	3 points
by more than 2 rooms	4 points
<b>d) Overcrowded in Present Accommodation</b>	
Lacking 1 bedroom	5 points
Lacking 2 bedrooms	10 points
Lacking 3 bedrooms	15 points
<i>Overcrowding will only relate to those included in the application form. It will be based on the assumption of a separate bedroom for a couple and each child. For example, where a couple with two children are currently occupying a two-bedroomed property, they will be awarded 5 points.</i>	
(i) If a single person occupies a bedsit there is no overcrowding.	
(ii) If the overcrowding results from or is exacerbated by additional people living in the household on a temporary basis, then points	

*for overcrowding will not apply.*

- (iii) *If the overcrowding results from or is exacerbated by the letting of rooms to other people on a commercial basis i.e. lodgers then the points for overcrowding will not apply.*

*There will be an exception to (ii) & (iii) above where additional occupation comes about through fostering agreements entered into by the applicants or host households and Social Services. Applicants will require to provide supporting evidence where this applies.*

e) **Sharing Accommodation/Facilities**

*(points may only be awarded under (i) or (ii))*

- (i) Sharing facilities with close friends or members of family who are not on the application for re-housing with the applicant)

- Sharing cooking facilities 2 points
- Sharing bathroom or toilet facilities 2 points
- Sharing a bedroom 5 points

*A maximum of 7 points may be awarded in total.*

*Single people living at home over the age of 16 will be deemed to be sharing accommodation and will be awarded points in this category from the age of 19 onwards.*

- (i) Sharing facilities with people other than close friends or Relatives (who are not on the application for re-housing with the applicant)

- Sharing cooking facilities 4 points
- Sharing bathroom or toilet facilities 4 points
- Sharing a bedroom 8 points

*A maximum of 12 points may be awarded in total.*

f) **Inhabiting Caravans** 8 points

g) **Condition of Existing Property**

- Structurally unstable 10 points
- Suffers from rising or penetrating damp 5 points
- Suffers from excessive condensation 5 points
- Has insufficient natural or artificial lighting and provision for ventilation and heating 5 points
- Inadequate supply of wholesome water 10 points
- Has no hot and cold water supply to a sink 10 points
- Has no internal WC 5 points
- Has no effective drainage and disposal of foul and surface water 5 points
- Has no satisfactory facilities for cooking food

within the house 5 points  
Has no satisfactory access to all external doors and outbuildings 5 points

*In combination, these have a maximum of 20 points*

h) **Insecure Accommodation**

Insecure accommodation, including living at home where there is no immediate threat of homelessness 5 points

Persons leaving institutional care or supported accommodation 10 points  
*(applicants will be required to provide supporting information from a healthcare or other professional in order to be awarded points in this category)*

i) **Length of Time in Present or Similar Accommodation** 2 points per year after first 2 years (maximum 10)

*Points will be awarded in excess of 2 years that applicants have suffered present housing conditions. This only applies if points have already been awarded in categories d, e, f, or g.*

j) **Medical Condition**

*In order to qualify for medical points, applicants must have registered on The Highland Housing Register for rented accommodation, and been assessed and awarded points by the Medical Officer.*

Points awarded will be 1/5 of points awarded by The HHR

**Location**

(i) To be nearer place of work

Where an applicant is currently employed but is experiencing continual difficulty in travelling to work for financial or locational reasons and the move would bring them within 5 miles of their place of work 5 points

(ii) To be nearer relatives to give/receive support

Where an applicant of pensionable age wishes to be nearer relatives for support 10 points

Where any other applicant wishes to be near relatives for support 5 points

support  
*(applicants will be required to provide supporting information from a healthcare or other professional in order to be awarded points in this category)*

(iii) To be nearer other facilities/services 5 points  
E.g. hospital, shops or care facilities

**Other factors**

(i) Breakdown of relationship

Where an applicant has suffered a relationship breakdown and there is no danger to the applicant if they remain in the current accommodation 5 points

(ii) Other Social Factors

This may be awarded for unforeseen factors which may have a bearing in terms of the housing application but is not covered maximum 10 points  
adequately elsewhere in the Allocations Policy. Members of staff will have to specify in some detail why points are to be awarded in this category, and these awards must be approved by the Operations Manager.

*Some examples include:*

- (a) *To facilitate better access arrangements for children where applicants are parents who are divorced/separated.*
- (b) *To compensate for overcrowding by host family members to accommodate the current applicants, who would not otherwise be awarded points under 5(d).*

**(iii) Resolution of a tie**

To resolve a tie in the number of points awarded. Preference to be given to those with the strongest local connection. 1 point