



VHA Policy Document

ALLOCATION POLICY

Reviewed: May 2022

Next Review Due: May 2025

VECTIS HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

1. Policy Statement

VHA is committed to ensuring that the allocation of our homes is based on housing need and fairness. It is important that all of our homes are let in a transparent, accountable and non-discriminatory way as prescribed in law and social housing regulation. The objectives of this policy are to:

- Make the best use of housing stock
- To create and maintain balanced, stable and diverse communities
- To allocate properties to those most in need
- To work with the Local Authority and other partners to reduce homelessness and create suitable tenancies

2. Background

VHA is a member of the Isle of Wight Register Housing Partnership alongside other Housing Associations operating on the Island. Therefore:

1. Working as a partner in the Isle of Wight Housing Register, Island Homefinder is a Choice Based Lettings system where we aim to offer eighty per cent of our vacant properties to the highest banded applicants on the register best suited to each vacancy. The Association will make direct nomination from the Housing register. However, there is the exception of the allocation of our Housing Association Lead properties. A number of these properties where subsidy is received from the Isle of Wight Council, a nomination will be sought from the Homelessness section of the Isle of Wight Council. The remainder of the lease properties will be advertised to locally through our Working Families Scheme.
2. Isle of Wight Council is responsible for assessing housing need and bedroom/property type need. Priority will be given to the following category of applicant household, in accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002:
 - People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness including homeless 16 and 17-year old's, care leavers aged 18, 19 and 20 and people who are vulnerable as a result of time spent in care
 - People who have spent time in the armed forces or are vulnerable due to time spent in prison or custody

- People who are vulnerable because they have fled their home because of violence (or threats of violence likely to be carried out) who require urgent re-housing;
- People who have been accepted as homeless and to whom the Council has a duty to arrange suitable housing. This includes households who are occupying temporary housing arranged by the Council;
- People occupying other housing accommodation which is temporary or occupied on insecure terms;
- People whose social or economic circumstances are such that they have difficulty in securing settled accommodation;
- Families with dependent children, including someone who is expecting a child;
- People with a need for settled accommodation on medical or welfare grounds;
- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory conditions;
- Those who need to move to a particular locality to avoid hardship to themselves or others. This would also cover:
 - the location of family/carers, and facilities essential to the applicant;
 - the needs of key workers to live within reach of their work, or others who need to move to a different location for the purposes of work, education or training;
 - the needs of households where members are forced to live separately;

A Local Lettings Plan may be in place for some areas. This is an agreement between the Council's Housing Services and the association which sets out how properties will be allocated in exceptional circumstances to meet area specific issues.

3.Exclusions / Suspensions

1. Tenancy checks of all current and previous tenancies of housing applicants will be made. Any applicant who has outstanding rent arrears with any landlord member of the Isle of Wight Housing Register partnership, and whose repayment agreement has not been maintained for a reasonable period of time, will not be offered a tenancy.
2. Other exclusions from being offered a VHA tenancy include any unsatisfactory tenancy report (such as a history of perpetrating violent behavior), any health or disability issue that could have a bearing on tenancy sustainability and any evidenced case of the applicant committing tenancy fraud.

3. Applicants who are current tenants of the Association are required to hold no housing debt with the Association before being considered for an offer of tenancy, except in the case of re-housing in an emergency.
4. An offer of tenancy will not be made to an applicant where there is evidence of a previous eviction, or convictions of the applicant, or members of their household, for anti-social behaviour, within two years of the eviction or conviction.
5. The association will have due regard to information shared by the Local Authority concerning MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) where these are in place to ensure community safety.
6. Up to two reasonable offers of accommodation will be made to an applicant with the greatest housing need. If the second offer is refused, no further offer will be made for a period of at least twelve months.

4. Deposit / Guarantors and support

1. We require new tenants to pay a month's rent in advance on signing a new tenancy agreement. Any difficulties in paying a month's rent in advance an agreement will be put in place.
2. Applicants for housing will not be requested to provide a guarantor, except in offer to minors. Applicants aged 16 and 17 will not be disqualified from acquiring a tenancy; however a person cannot legally hold a tenancy until they are 18 years old. Therefore, any tenancy granted to a 16 or 17 year old will be an equitable tenancy held in trust. This means that a Guardian or Guarantor will need to sign for the tenancy and hold that tenancy on behalf of the young person until they reach 18 years of age.
3. All applicants are assessed on the basis of housing need. The association does not allocate housing using affordability criteria. Affordability checks to sometimes used by housing associations to ensure that those moving into their homes are able to afford and maintain their tenancies without falling into rent arrears. The check calculates all costs of running a tenancy; including Rent, Council Tax, and other expenses. However, where an applicant indicates a need for support to sustain their tenancies the association will respond to this. This may mean setting up financial support with an external agency such as Citizens Advice or the Isle of Wight Law Centre.

If further support is required VHA will make a referral to the relevant agencies that will be able to assist.

4. The association operates a separate Equal Opportunities Policy and is committed to ensuring equal access to all our services. Translation and interpreting services and other reasonable adjustments will be made to support housing applicants.

5.Procedure

All information provided by the local Authority and applicant to assess housing need will be treated in line with General Data Protection Regulation. The association has a separate policy that deals with this.

- i) In order that the selection process can be seen to be as fair and reasonable as possible, the Isle of Wight Housing Register Partnership operates a pointing system based upon the information provided by applicants on the standard application form.
- ii) Applicants must comply with the local connection requirements set out in the Island Homefinder Scheme Guidelines.
- iii) Applicants with sufficient savings or income may be deemed ineligible for access to social rented accommodation. In such circumstances they may be offered the opportunity to register for VHA intermediate rent property.
- iv) Applications considered by housing staff to be appropriate for any specific vacancy, are extracted from the Housing Register in priority order. VHA will operate to the system of priority award set out in the Island Homefinder Guidelines.
- v) When an applicant is being considered for a vacancy, arrangements may be made for interview in order to verify the content of the application form and to establish whether the applicant's circumstances are appropriate for the particular vacancy on offer. A home visit form will be completed, and recommendations made accordingly. Points awarded may be modified in the light of the interview.
- vi) The assessment and final selection will be made on the circumstances of each case.
- vii) All unsuccessful applicants have the right to appeal against the decision by writing to the Chief Executive, within seven days of receipt of notification that they have not been offered the vacancy on this occasion. Applicants may further appeal to the Housing Ombudsman Service, provided the Association's complaints procedure has been exhausted.
- viii) A record is maintained of all applications for housing on the Housing Register. Enquiries may be made via the Association's offices, or at the Council's Housing Services office. Applicants have the right to inspect information contained about them.
- X) The Association will record all details of visits, offers, discussions, acceptance or refusal detail, and monitor all allocations made from the Isle of Wight Housing Register.
- Xi) Checks are in place to ensure that properties are allocated in accordance with this policy and performance reports are supplied to the Board in order to review and monitor performance.

6. Transfers

The Association assists tenants who wish to transfer to other VHA Homes, for which purpose a separate policy operates. Up to twenty per cent of lettings may take place outside the scope of the Housing Register in order to properly accommodate transfer applications.

In the case of emergency situations, the association also operates a Management Transfer procedure.

7. Mutual Exchange

The Association will support tenants who wish to exchange to another property either within VHA own stock or another HA, for which purpose a separate policy operates.