



Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG)

Allocations Policy

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Responsible director	Executive Director – Customers and Communities
Policy monitoring body	Board
Resident input into Policy date	Customer Experience Committee – September 2022
Date for policy review	September 2025
Linked strategies/policies	See Section 24
Version/date	V2 – September 2022
Owner	Simon Melloy – Head of Housing Services

1. Statement and Background

- 1.1 Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG) is committed to developing sustainable communities and recognises that an effective Allocations Policy is a key driver in achieving this. We are therefore positive about the impact that successful allocations can have on our existing communities.
- 1.2 WCHG will ensure that the Allocations Policy is open and transparent and as easy for customers to understand as possible. We will ensure that we are able to provide fair access to housing that meets the diverse needs of our community. We will also ensure that clear, accurate and consistent information is available to applicants.
- 1.3 WCHG will ensure that applicants are prioritised according to their individual circumstances giving due regard to the legislation available. We will aim to maximise customer choice in relation to size of property and area as far possible.

2. Scope and Definition

- 2.1 This policy applies to all customers who apply for social or affordable housing to WCHG. Nominations to WCHG will be prioritised according to the policy of the Local Authority making the nomination.
- 2.2 An applicant is a person who completes an online application form to apply for housing.

3. Eligibility

- 3.1 Applicants registering for rehousing will be required to have a local connection to Manchester, and the WCHG eligibility will mirror that of Manchester City Council's so that all applicants in the City are treated equally. As part of the online registration they will be asked about their connection. There are several reasons why an applicant will have a connection to Manchester. They include the following:
 - Currently living in Manchester and have at least 2 years' continuous residency
 - Exceptional Reasons – an example may be an applicant who needs to live in Manchester to receive medical treatment that cannot be received anywhere else
- 3.2 Anyone over the age of 18 can apply to be registered on the WCHG waiting list. WCHG will accept applications from 16 and 17 year olds in exceptional circumstances. Applicants under the age of 18 will require a rent guarantor. Applications should only include:
 - The applicant
 - The applicant's spouse, civil partner or partner
 - any close adult relative living with the applicant who is dependent on the applicant for care or who provides care to the applicant
 - children of the applicant and/or the applicant's partner, as long as they are aged under 21 and normally live with the applicant or the applicant's partner

- grown up children who have continuously remained a member of the moving group household since they reached 21. This includes any grown-up children that may have left the household temporarily to study provided they returned to the household outside of term time
- a carer (non-relative) if they need to live with the applicant to provide overnight support (see appendix 4 for definition of “carer”)
- any two people who wish to live together in non-family type accommodation

3.3 Owner occupiers who are able to buy a property will not be accepted onto the waiting list, with the exception of:

- Applicants over 55 who wish to move to Retirement or Extra Care Housing.
- Applicants who require an adapted property as their current home cannot meet their needs in the long term and the household does not have financial means to purchase suitable accommodation.
- Applicants who are in significant mortgage arrears and have been assessed as requiring priority after they have been offered, taken and followed the advice of appropriate advisors who specialise in the prevention of homelessness through mortgage arrears.

3.4 Applicants with savings over £30,000 will generally not be accepted onto the waiting list. The exceptions to this will include older persons looking for sheltered or extra care housing.

4. Applications from Board members, WCHG staff or close relatives.

4.1 The application form requires applicants to state if they are related to Board members or staff members. In addition, applicants will be asked again at the point of being made an offer. Staff and Board members of WCHG and their relatives cannot receive any non-contractual benefits as a result of their association with the company.

4.2 Staff and Board members have all completed a ‘Declaration of Interest’ form which lists any potential conflicts of interests, but staff are also required to complete a ‘Matters of Probity form’ when granting a tenancy to an applicant who is a member of staff or Board member or a relative of a member of staff or Board member.

4.3 Members of staff who are responsible for making offers are well aware of the need to complete the relevant form and obtain authorisation when dealing with these cases. All cases which involve offers to staff members, Board members or their relatives must have authorisation from the Executive Director of Customers and Communities before the offer is made to the applicant.

5. Applicants Consent and Declaration

5.1 When an applicant applies for social housing online via Manchester Move they will be required to acknowledge a consent and declaration statement on the application form to confirm that:

- The information they have provided is true and accurate.
- They will update their application online detailing any change in circumstances that affects their housing situation.
- They understand that information may be shared with other relevant parties.
- They consent to the Registered Partner making enquires of any relevant persons to confirm that the information on the application form is correct.
- They consent to the release of any relevant information.
- The information may be used to help in the detection and prevention of fraud.

5.2 False Statements and Withholding Information

Applicants are expected to provide WCHG with accurate information at the time of the initial application, when processing changes to circumstances and at the offer stage.

Any persons who have knowingly or recklessly made a statement which is false or misleading, or knowingly withheld information that WCHG has reasonably requested them to provide in connection with their rehousing application, may have their application removed from the Manchester Move Rehousing System.

WCHG may seek possession of a property or take criminal proceedings if a tenant has induced WCHG to grant a tenancy by knowingly or recklessly making a false statement when they applied for the accommodation.

5.3 Tenancy Fraud

Tenancy fraud is unlawful and in some cases is a criminal offence. In partnership with Manchester City Council & other local registered housing providers, WCHG is committed to identifying and dealing with tenancy fraud and may prosecute offenders under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013. Fraud may include giving false information or withholding information to obtain housing as well as subletting properties.

6. **Applications from Serious Offenders**

- 6.1 WCHG is a member of the Manchester Move Partnership (MMP), and as part of this, applications from applicants declaring serious criminal offences will be assessed by the Serious Offenders Panel at Manchester City Council (MCC), which will make a recommendation on rehousing to WCHG.
- 6.2 WCHG will have the overall say if an allocation can go ahead based on local knowledge of the area and suitability of the applicant

7. **Applications from Persons from abroad**

- 7.1 “**Right to Rent**” checks were introduced by the Immigration Act 2014 (“the Act”) whereby the landlord must not authorise any adult to occupy premises under a residential tenancy agreement if the adult is disqualified as a result of their immigration status. (Section 22 of the Act)

7.2 WCHG is a member of the Manchester Move Partnership and as such, all applications from persons from abroad will be assessed by Manchester City Council who will make recommendations to WCHG in relation to the eligibility for housing.

8. Verification and References

8.1 Before any application is made live on the waiting list all applicants must provide:

- National Insurance number
- Proof of identification
- Proof of housing need (if applicable). All applicants will be provided with guidance about what is considered appropriate proof of housing need.

8.2 All applicants will need to provide one reference from their current or former landlord. The reference will be requested at point of the applicant being made an offer. In order to verify a household's circumstances certain evidence may be required. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide WCHG with all evidence requested.

9. How we will prioritise applications

9.1 All applicants will be required to complete an application as all information provided on this form will be used to assess an applicant's individual need.

9.2 We will use the form that enables applicants to be registered on the Manchester Move system so that access to housing across the Manchester area is given. This improves the level of service offered to applicants, as they only need to register for housing once, and this application will be entered onto the Manchester Move system and accessible to all partners who are part of the MMP.

9.3 WCHG operates a priority system which consists of three groups:

- Group W1 – Urgent housing need
- Group W2 – Priority housing need
- Group W3 – Low housing need
- Group W4 – No housing need

9.4 Once priority has been established the applicant will be placed in one of three groups in date order of the application. The details of the circumstances and the group they will attract are given below. Applicants will be placed into the group that reflects their current housing need and circumstances, and will be encouraged to inform us of any changes so that if this results in a change from one group to another we will be able to amend their application.

9.5 Applicants who can demonstrate a local connection to Wythenshawe and who offer a positive contribution will be awarded additional merit in the form of 12 months' additional time on the list. This is to offer our local communities a better opportunity to acquire social and affordable housing in the area that they have strong community links and where they are likely to have support networks, or be part of a support network for a more vulnerable person.

9.6 In order to obtain the additional merit, an applicant will need to demonstrate that they have both the local connection and that they contribute in a positive way. Applicants who meet only one of the criteria will not be awarded the additional merit and their application date will be unchanged. Applicants will be asked to self-certify that they meet the merit criteria, and this will be verified at point of offer. If it is found that the merit award has been falsely claimed, then it will be removed and the applicant's date will revert to the original date.

9.7 The local connection can be one of the following:

- Lives in Wythenshawe currently and has done for at least 3 years
- Previous connection to Wythenshawe which amounts to 3 of the last 5 years
- Children currently attending one of the Wythenshawe Schools (primary or high school)

9.8 The positive contribution can be one of the following:

- Working household – at least one member of the household moving group is in employment for at least 16 hours a week, or is self-employed, and has been in employment for at least 9 of the last 12 months.
- Volunteering – at least one member of the household moving group carries out a volunteering function for at least 10 hours per month.

9.9 The additional merit will apply only to WCHG areas through the WCHG policy and will not be effective in any of the other Manchester areas.

9.10 If during the application period the applicant's circumstances change, then they should contact WCHG to discuss whether this affects this merit award.

9.11 Evidence of the connection and positive contribution will be required should any offer of accommodation be made.

9.12 The additional merit will apply only to WCHG areas through the WCHG policy and will not be effective in any of the other Manchester areas.

9.13 If during the application period the applicant's circumstances change, then they should contact WCHG to discuss whether this affects this merit award.

Group W1	Urgent housing need
Circumstance	Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgent exceptional need to move 	<p>You are suffering from serious domestic abuse, violence or harassment that means it is genuinely dangerous to stay living in your home.</p> <p>Your household is suffering actual violence or a very real threat of violence that means it is genuinely dangerous to stay living in the area. Any move must be at least 3 miles away from the area where the incident has taken place</p>

	<p>You need to be discharged from hospital and have no suitable accommodation to go to.</p> <p>You have a legal right to succeed a WCHG property but need to move to a more suitable property. (The property is either adapted or it would be under occupied).</p> <p>Families where their circumstances may lead to children being taken in to care if alternative housing is not addressed (not enough bedrooms).</p> <p>Prospective foster/adoptive parents once approved by the family placement panel. (if there is an extra bedroom requirement this would be allowed before the child is placed).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care leavers/ prevention in to care 	<p>You are a vulnerable person ready to move out of residential or supported care and would be at risk of being homeless; your service provider must have agreed a to a move and arranged a package of support for you.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Armed Forces discharge 	<p>Applicants who have served in the armed forces and also have an additional reasonable preference to move i.e. overcrowding</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urgent medical need 	<p>You have been assessed by MCC medical team as having the highest medical priority.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Severe overcrowding by 3 or more bedrooms 	<p>You are overcrowded according to the bedroom standard rules by 3 or more bedrooms.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demolition/ or unsafe property 	<p>You live in a WCHG property that is going to be demolished or part of a clearance programme, and have been issued notice.</p> <p>You live in a property that has been classed as unsafe and is in need of urgent major repair.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under occupation 	<p>You are under occupying a high demand family home and seeking a smaller and lower demand property and are affected by the bedroom tax</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WCHG Tenants 	<p>You are a current tenant of WCHG and you are seeking a move due to urgent housing need not covered in one of the bands above.</p> <p>This award will be given to:</p> <p>WCHG tenant living in a 1 bed flat with 2 or more children</p> <p>WCHG tenant living in a first-floor cottage flat with two or more children and the eldest child is 10 +</p> <p>WCHG tenants living in a multi storey and walk up flat with one or more children.</p>

	<p>WCHG tenants living in a 2-bedroom property with 3 or more children.</p> <p>This award will not be given for medical need, or other forms of overcrowding.</p>
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Group W2	Priority housing need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless 	<p>The Council has told you that you are officially classed as Homeless and that you are not Homeless intentionally. The Local Authority has awarded you a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2011, for either prevention or relief assistance.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service provider needing accommodation 	<p>You are a member of a religious order residing at accommodation provided by your place of worship and your term of service is coming to an end.</p> <p>You are a member of a religious order and need accommodation in the WCHG area to accept a term of service at a place of worship.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over crowding 	<p>You are overcrowded according to the bedroom rules by 2 bedrooms or you form a separate family group and are living in another person's home and overcrowded by at least 1 bedroom.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical need 	<p>Applicants have been assessed by MCC medical team and provided evidence of the positive effect a move will have to improve their health.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insecurity of tenure 	<p>You have been served a court order advising that you have to leave your current home (or current accommodation) within the next 4 weeks – but have not been officially classed as Homeless.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Split families 	<p>Your family have previously lived together, but are forced to live apart in separate homes.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship breakdown 	<p>Your relationship with the partner you live with has broken down and one partner needs to leave. (The award will only be made to the leaving partner, providing the carer of any children is staying in the property)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor property condition or lack of facilities 	<p>Applicants who live in a private rented property or who own their property and the property has failed under the Housing Health & Safety Ratings System.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move on from supported accommodation 	<p>You are living in Supported Accommodation and have been engaging in a move on programme, and have been advised you are ready for move on.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child under 10 in unsuitable housing 	Applicants who occupy an unsuitable flat or maisonette and live with children who are 10 years old or younger and the property does not include access to a garden (not communal).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to provide or receive support 	Applicants who need to provide or receive support/care and the current travelling time is more than one hour away.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to move near work 	You work in a WCHG area and your journey to work is made on 3 or more days a week and the average daily travel time is three hours or more or the average daily travel cost is £8 or more.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial difficulties 	You cannot pay your mortgage because you have lost your job and it was not your fault (redundancy).

Group W3	Low housing need
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for Independence 	Single applicants/couples who form a separate family group living with a parent family, other family members.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lodgers 	You are living with family or friends but want your own home.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcrowded by 1 bedroom 	All other cases of applicants who are overcrowded by 1 bedroom.

Group W4	No housing need
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10. Transfer tenants

10.1 All WCHG tenants can apply for a transfer for an alternative WCHG property. WCHG will prioritise transfer tenants' applications using the same criteria as general applicants. Transfer tenants must:

- Have been a continuous tenant for 12 months before they can apply
- Not be subject to any legal action for rent arrears or tenancy breaches, including anti-social behaviour, except in exceptional circumstances
- Have been assessed as suitable for a move under the rent arrears policy and be keeping to any arrangements for re-payment.
- Have had a property inspection, and the property must meet a reasonable standard. The tenant will be made aware of the standard required at the point of registration.
- All transfer tenants will be required to register on Homeswapper (or any subsequent mutual exchange facility).

10.2 If there are exceptional circumstances surrounding the need to move then WCHG will consider each case on an individual basis.

10.3 In certain circumstances, WCHG tenants needing to move will be awarded additional priority, particularly if this will achieve a wider strategic aim, for example, tenants of 4 bedroom or 3-bedroom parlour houses will be awarded a 5 year backdate on their application date in order to achieve the aim of freeing up these properties for larger families in urgent housing need.

11. Offers

11.1 WCHG is committed to promoting applicants' choice and operates a Choice Based Letting (CBL) system. All of WCHG properties are allocated under CBL. CBL allows applicants for social and affordable housing (and existing tenants seeking a move) to apply for vacancies which are advertised online. Applicants can see a full range of available properties and can bid (i.e. apply) for any home to which they are matched (e.g. a single person would not be eligible to bid for a three-bed house). The CBL system provides applicants with relevant information that will assist them with making their own rehousing choices.

11.2 WCHG has a nominations agreement with MCC and therefore is committed to offering 50% of its vacancies to Manchester; these properties will be advertised under Manchester's Allocation policy (Nominations). In Manchester, applicants in lower bands will not be able to make bids on higher demand properties.

11.3 WCHG will occasionally advertise properties on other systems where appropriate, for example, if properties are outside of Manchester or if we have no demand using the Manchester Move system.

12. Refusing offers

12.1 Applicants who are active on the register will bid for properties, and as such have already indicated that a particular property is suitable and meets their needs. Applicants who then refuse a reasonable offer following a bid will be closely monitored. Applicants who refuse 2 or more offers will be invited to an interview to discuss the refusal reasons and review the applicant's requirements, which may result in the demotion of the application.

13. Lettings

13.1 WCHG aims to make the best use of the available stock and respond to local need when letting vacant properties.

13.2 Applicants, both nominees and transfers, are required to undergo a financial assessment prior to any letting, and any offer will be subject to meeting the requirements of the assessment. The aim of this financial assessment is to ensure that applicants being rehoused are able to pay the rent now and for the foreseeable future, with the help if necessary of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

13.3 WCHG reserves the right to reject any applicant who does not meet the financial assessment criteria or who does not agree to or cooperate with a financial assessment.

- 13.4 If an applicant does not satisfy the financial assessment criteria, this will be deemed to be a rejection by WCHG, not a refusal by the applicant.
- 13.5 Where an applicant refuses or does not co-operate with a financial assessment, this will be deemed by WCHG to be a refusal of offer.
- 13.6 WCHG will include restrictions on certain property types such as age and family composition – all restrictions will be published when the property becomes vacant and is offered for allocation.
- 13.7 WCHG will allocate available properties in line with the guidelines on property type and household criteria as set out in the table in [Appendix 1](#), and the bedroom entitlement is based on the Bedroom Standard in [Appendix 2](#). Where under occupation is taking place, this will be subject to an affordability assessment. Applicants will be able to bid on properties that are larger than their immediate need, but only where they are able to demonstrate affordability. Children of any sex under 10 can share a bedroom, as can children of the same sex until the age of 21.
- 13.8 All applicants, other than those in receipt of **full** Housing Benefit, accepting an offer from WCHG will be required to pay at least one week's rent in advance when collecting the keys. Those wishing to pay monthly will be required to pay one month's rent in advance. All new tenants will be required to set up a direct debit where practicable.
- 13.9 Applicants will only be matched to properties that meet the medical assessment of the applicant's needs. For example, an applicant with medical priority, where the medical assessment states that they require a property without stairs would not be able to use their priority if bidding for a house.
- 13.10 WCHG will where possible match applicants with medical needs to existing suitable adapted properties.
- 13.11 Occasionally WCHG may need to allocate properties out of turn to meet local needs. Any such letting must be authorised by the Head of Housing. All such cases would be formally recorded and would be the result of exceptional circumstances.
- 13.12 There are occasional situations where households have been given permission to remain in a property on a temporary basis pending the availability of a more suitable property. Examples of this include successors where the current property is bigger than they are eligible for. Under these circumstances, the applicant will be eligible to bid via Manchester Move, but may also be subject to direct allocation if this is more appropriate. This type of applicant will be entitled to one offer only.

14. Decants

- 14.1 As part of WCHG's asset management strategy, there are occasions where we require vacant possession of a property either to carry out extensive repairs, or to dispose of a property. If an occupied WCHG property is urgently required for such reasons, we may make a direct allocation of a suitable alternative property to the tenant concerned. This will be after discussion with the tenant concerned and where WCHG and the tenant have agreed that the alternative property is suitable. Where a direct

allocation is not to be made the tenant will be registered for rehousing and a relevant priority award made. In this instance tenants will be able to bid on Manchester Move CBL for a suitable alternative property. All households will be entitled to three offers only.

- 14.2 There may be occasions where WCHG requires vacant possession of an occupied property, but the tenant in occupation is not co-operating with efforts to find them reasonable alternative accommodation. This may lead to a situation where WCHG decides to take legal action to gain possession of the property. Under these circumstances WCHG would ensure that suitable alternative accommodation was available by making a direct allocation, and the household would be entitled to one offer only.
- 14.3 WCHG may on occasions require a tenant to move out of their property on a temporary basis, whilst work is to be carried out. It is intended that on these occasions the tenant can return to their substantive property at the earliest opportunity. WCHG will work with these tenants to find a suitable alternative property to move to on a temporary basis.
- 14.4 Tenants decanted on a temporary basis will be asked to sign a Decant Agreement confirming they understand that the decant is temporary, they will return to the substantive home once works are complete and that the original tenancy agreement will continue during the period of decant. Rent will be paid in respect of the substantive property and not the decant property.

Home Loss Compensation

- 14.5 Residents are entitled to Home Loss compensation under the Home Loss payment (prescribed amount) (England) Regulations 2008 where a permanent decant is required. A permanent decant for these purposes is where WCHG require vacant possession and the resident cannot return to their property, for example, where properties are due for demolition. Home Loss compensation will be paid at the current statutory amount and will only be paid where the resident has been residing at the property for a minimum of one year. Outstanding payments e.g. arrears and recharges will be offset against any Home Loss payment offered.

Disturbance payment

- 14.6 Under the Land and Compensation Act 1973, residents will be eligible for Disturbance Payment for the reasonable costs of moving. WCHG will offer Discretionary Disturbance Payments to cover those moving on a permanent or temporary basis for both the move to the decanted property, and the move back to their substantive property. Services associated with the move and covered under Disturbance Payments will be arranged and these costs will be paid directly to the relevant supplier.

WCHG will offer the following service where required:

- Disconnection and reconnection of appliances and utilities
- Removals (including returning to the property)
- Installation of disability adaptations

WCHG may also consider the use of discretionary payment where residents have been residing at their property for less than one year and do not qualify for Home Loss Compensation.

15. Local lettings policy

- 15.1 Local lettings policies on particular blocks or streets may be applied from time to time in consultation with tenants' groups and the local authority. This may be to alleviate issues such as anti-social behaviour, child density or management issues on existing properties. Any local lettings policy to be applied will be subject to research and options appraisals and will be authorised in advance by WCHG's Executive Team.
- 15.2 When WCHG is allocating a new build scheme it will, as set out in the nomination's agreement with the Local Authority, adhere to the conditions set out, currently 100% nomination. It will, however, allocate new build schemes to support wider strategies in consultation with the Local Authority, for example, to relieve under occupancy or overcrowding in existing properties.
- 15.3 WCHG lets a proportion of their homes at Affordable Rent. Whilst the allocation of these homes will be in accordance with this Allocations Policy there may be occasions where it is necessary to apply a local lettings policy.

16. Rehousing Review List (RRL)

- 16.1 WCHG operates a review list for applicants where applications are suspended if they, or a member of their household:
- Owe WCHG any money over £100
 - Are causing concern to WCHG or partner agencies regarding poor conduct of their tenancy or anti-social behaviour
 - Where an applicant or member of their family have been threatening, disruptive or violent to a member of WCHG staff, this may be extended to partner agencies
 - Where any current or former tenant has caused wilful damage to any property belonging to WCHG
 - Where applicants are known to be on MCC's review list
 - Where legal action against the tenant has commenced for breach of the tenancy agreement
- 16.2 In order for applicants to have an RRL case reviewed and to be made live on the waiting list applicants will need to;
- Reduce any outstanding debt by 50% and maintain a payment pattern for a minimum of 26 weeks and the outstanding debt must be below £1000 and there must be no legal action outstanding.
 - Applicants with a housing related debt which is included in a bankruptcy or debt relief order will remain live on the RRL until the 12-month discharge date has been reached (unless the debt is paid prior to this date).

- Be able to demonstrate that they will be able to maintain a satisfactory tenancy. There needs to be a minimum period of 12 months to demonstrate a sustained change in behaviour and demonstrate that there is no longer a potential risk/threat to WCHG, tenants of WCHG or the community.
- All debt regardless of its age owed to WCHG or its subsidiaries will need to be addressed under the criteria above.

16.3 All applicants have a right to appeal against a decision to place them on the review list; this will be required in writing to the Relevant WCHG Manager. Where the following circumstances apply an applicant / member of the applying household may be accepted onto the waiting list, even if they fall within one or more of the categories. WCHG can override any application suspension in exceptional circumstances:

- Demonstration of life-threatening circumstance which means they need to be moved from their present accommodation, i.e. domestic violence, racial or other harassment
- Housing need as a result of emergencies such as fire and flood
- Mitigating circumstances identified by a WCHG Officer

16.4 If a decision is made to remove them from the review list, this is the date they will be made live and join the waiting list.

17. Starter tenancies

17.1 Where the law permits all general needs applicants will be offered starter tenancies otherwise known as Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs). Where there is a change to housing legislation and new tenancy types are introduced, the most appropriate tenancy will be offered at that time.

17.2 WCHG will monitor all tenancies within the first 12 months for breaches of tenancy including anti-social behaviour.

17.3 At the end of the AST period (usually 12 months) WCHG will decide whether to extend the AST for a further period or whether to give the tenant a full Assured Tenancy. This will be done in accordance with the Tenancy Management Policy.

17.4 Photographs of all new tenants (or both joint tenants) will be taken at the sign-up appointment for the purpose of identification during the tenancy life.

17.5 The information will not be shared with any third party outside of WCHG and will be used solely for the purposes of detecting tenancy fraud.

18. Under Occupation

18.1 WCHG aims to make the most effective use of its housing stock and maximise tenant satisfaction by supporting tenants who are currently under-occupying and wish to downsize from larger homes.

18.2 WCHG will work with all tenants who express an interest in downsizing to help them achieve a move to a smaller property, using a combination of support, advice and assistance.

19. Incentives

19.1 WCHG recognises the importance of making best use of its stock and therefore offers a range of incentive packages to support tenants in moving to more appropriate accommodation. Any tenants wishing to engage and support us in this area may be offered an incentive package.

20. Partnership with Local Authorities and other agencies

20.1 WCHG works positively with MCC, and is a committed partner of the MMP, along with several other partner organisations. We will continue to support partners to develop policies and systems that deliver the most effective outcomes for customers and communities.

20.2 If any new properties are developed by WCHG, we will work positively with our partners and with MCC to ensure that nominations are appropriate for the climate, and that any national drivers are effectively considered. We may consider local lettings policies for individual estates in the future, and these policies will be designed to support the sustainability of the community.

21. Statutory and Legislative Framework

- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1988
- Housing Act 1996
- Localism Act 2011
- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Land Compensation Act 1973
- Immigration Act 2014

22. Consultation, Monitoring and Review

22.1 The Allocations Policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if changes to relevant legislation or the MCC Scheme determine that an update is required any review will include consultation with our customers and partners.

22.2 We will monitor our performance as follows;

- No of days taken to let properties
- Lettings by banding, property type and bedroom size
- Percentage of lettings to homeless households
- Percentage of lettings to applicants with the WCHG award
- Percentage of lettings to working households
- Percentage of lettings from MCCs and WCHGs policy

22.3 WCHG will monitor lettings across protected characteristics in order to identify whether any particular group/s are under-represented in lettings which may lead to a review.

23. Diversity

23.1 WCHG will ensure that the Allocations Policy and procedure is accessible to its diverse customers and will take into account the different needs of our customers when explaining the tenancy/property occupation at sign up.

23.2 WCHG Group has a responsibility to serve the needs and promote the interests of its entire staff and all its customers/service users. WCHG's Equality & Diversity Strategy works towards developing services, facilities and working practices, which are equally accessible and non-discriminatory for all its customers. This is irrespective of their gender, age, race, sexuality, disability, religion, marital status/civil partnerships, pregnancy/maternity and economic status, and in line with the nine protected characteristics part of the new legislation under Equality Act 2010.

23.3 A key element of the equality standards involves carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment on all existing and, in particular, new policies to ensure they do not have an adverse impact or promote any form of discrimination to particular groups or associated protected characteristics. An Equality Impact Analysis has been carried out to this policy and will be reviewed on a yearly basis

23.4 We will provide information in languages other than English, in Braille, Large Print and Audio format. Our reception and interview rooms are fitted with a hearing loop system and the use of mobile loop systems.

24. Associated Policies

- Void Management Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Anti- social Behaviour Policy

25. Complaints

25.1 Where an applicant is dissatisfied with the way their application has been handled or assessed they will have the right to complain through WCHG's Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy, a copy of which is available on request

Appendix 1 – Property Type and Size Entitlement

Property Type	Permitted Household Composition
Studio flat	Single person
1 bed bungalow	Single person/couple aged 55+
1 bed house-style flat ground and 1st floor	Single person or couple
1 bed multi-storey all floors	Single person or couple
1 bed flat in a low block all floor	Single person or couple
2 bed house- style flat ground floor	Family, all adult group needing 2 bedrooms, single person/couple
2 bed house-style flat 1 st floor	Family, all adult group needing 2 bedrooms, applicant with access to child/children, single person couple.
2 bed flat in low rise block ground floor	Family, all adult group needing 2 bedrooms, single person/couple
2 bed flat in low rise 1 st or 2 nd floor	Family, single person, all adult group needing 2 bedrooms, applicant with access to child/children, single person or couple
2 bed maisonette ground floor	Family, all adult group needing 2 bedrooms, applicant with access to child/children, single person or couple
2 bed maisonette 1 st and 2 nd floor	Family, all adult group needing 2 bedrooms, applicant couple with access to child/children, single person or couple.
2 bed multi storey all floors	Single person, all adult group needing 2 bedrooms
2 bed house	Family needing 2 bedrooms or single person/ couple needing care, approved foster care
3 bed flat in a low-rise block ground floor	Family, all adult group needing 2 or 3 bedrooms, approved carer needing 2/3 bedrooms
3 bed flat in a low-rise block 1 st and 2 nd floor	Family, all adult group needing 2 or 3 bedrooms, approved foster carer needing 2/3 bedrooms, applicant with access to children needing 2/3 bedrooms
3 bed multi storey all floors	All adult group needing 2 or 3 bedrooms., all adult household requiring 2 bedrooms plus carer

3 bed house	Family needing 2/3 bedrooms, approved foster carer needing 3 bedrooms.
3 bed house with parlour	Family needing 4 bedrooms or family needing 2/3 or 4 bedrooms one of which must be on the ground floor for medical reasons
4 bed house	Family needing 4 bedrooms, approved foster carer needing 4 bedrooms
4 bed house with parlour	Family needed 5 bedrooms or family needing 4 or 5 bedrooms one of which must be on the ground floor for medical reasons.
5 bed house	Family needing 5 bedrooms, approved foster carer needing 5 bedrooms
5 bed house with parlour	family needing 6 bedrooms or family needing 5 or 6 bedrooms one of which must be on the ground floor for medical reasons
6 bed house	Family needing 6 bedrooms, approved foster carer needing bedrooms in total
Retirement housing/independent living scheme	Single person or couple 55 years +

Appendix 2 - The Bedroom Standard

The statutory guidance “Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England” (DCLG, 2012) recommends using the bedroom standard to assess the number of bedrooms needed by applicants for social housing. This is the standard used to determine bedroom need in the MCC Scheme, and WCHG’s policy adopts the same standard.

The bedroom standard in the guidance states that a separate bedroom should be allocated to:

- a. a married or cohabiting couple
- b. an adult aged 21 years or more
- c. a pair of adolescents aged 10 to 20 years of the same sex
- d. a pair of children aged under 10 regardless of sex

In addition, WCHG will allocate a separate bedroom to:

- e. a pair of children/adolescents of the same sex where one is aged 10 to 20 and the other is under 10
- f. any person under 21 in any case where she or he cannot be paired with another occupier of the dwelling so as to fall within (c), (d) or (e) above

WCHG will treat an application with someone who is pregnant by 28 weeks or more as though having another child and allocate an additional bedroom if required under this standard