



A Co-operative and Community Benefit Society
Reg. No. 11676R

Incorporating

STUART COURT MEMORIAL CHARITY

APPLICATION & LETTINGS
POLICY

Norwich Housing Society Application & Lettings Policy

1. Policy Aims & Objectives

Norwich Housing Society (The Society) is a non-profit making organisation providing affordable sheltered homes to rent for people aged 60 and over who are in a housing need.

The Society's Allocations Policy will set the standards, guidelines and procedures to be used in the admission of applicants to the waiting lists and the allocation of its properties.

The Society will allocate properties to applicants who have a current housing need, as assessed by the home assessment and priority based points system.

2. Legal or regulatory framework

The Regulator of Social Housing states that '*registered providers shall let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. They will take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants*'.

This will be achieved by:

- Making the best use of available housing
- Applicants' needs are compatible with the purpose of the housing.

3. General Principles

Equal Opportunities

The Society is committed to equal opportunities and will ensure that all applicants are treated fairly and equally in the allocation process regardless of age, race, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, colour, ethnicity.

Confidentiality

All information provided in connection with an application will be treated as confidential in line with the Society's Confidentiality Policy, the legal requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and any other subsequent statutory requirements. The Society complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 in relation to personal information that you give to us and ensures that it is not misused. The Regulation defines a set of rules and guidelines we must follow when handling your information; these are referred to as the General Data Protection principles. Further details can be found in the Society's GDPR privacy notice.

Pets

The Society has a no pet policy.

4. Current Housing Need

The Society aims to help people in current housing need. This includes applicants who:

- Occupy temporary or insecure accommodation
- Require independent accommodation
- Live in overcrowded conditions
- Live in unsanitary housing conditions
- Require re-housing due to medical problems
- Have low incomes
- Cannot afford their present accommodation
- Would benefit from re-housing because of their social or welfare circumstances.

5. General Eligibility Conditions

Applications for sheltered properties will be considered for persons of 60 years of age or over or, for couples, one applicant needs to be over 60 years of age and one over 55 years of age.

Applicants are expected to provide a true and honest disclosure of their circumstances. Where an applicant has knowingly given false information, or has withheld information, the Society reserves the right to cancel the application.

Applicants who do not have a legal right to reside in the United Kingdom will be disqualified from applying for accommodation.

An application will not be taken from persons who have a history of anti-social behaviour or crime and/or who are likely to be a threat or nuisance to our tenants or staff.

The Society, its staff and tenants have a right to expect certain standards of behaviour. As such, the Society has the power to determine whether, in its opinion, applicants or members of their household have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour significant enough to determine that they would be unsuitable to be tenants.

An Application will not be taken where the Society and/or other Registered Social Landlord, Local Authority or Private Landlord has previously evicted or sought to evict the applicant or member of the applicant's household for a breach of tenancy within the previous 2 years.

Applicants who have debts relating to previous accommodation or an outstanding debt to the Society will not have their application accepted and will not be able to re-apply until the debt is cleared.

Where it is assessed that an applicant has contrived to worsen their own housing circumstances in order to be perceived as being in greater housing need, for example by selling or giving away their property, the Society will not accept an application.

Applicants with an offending history will only be re-housed in property appropriate to their circumstances and in consideration of the interests of existing residents.

The Society reserves the right to exclude from its waiting lists applicants who will not be able to manage their tenancies independently, and where there is no support provided to enable them to do so.

6. Assessment of Applications

Applications will be made on the Society's official application form which is available after contacting/visiting the office, where a potential applicant will be asked or advised about the following:

- Name
- Age
- Address/telephone number
- How they heard about the Society
- Current situation
- 5 year housing history
- Identification, including National Insurance number
- If they own their own property and how much it has been valued at
- If they have any pets and, if so, will be able to rehome them
- That a home assessment/office based assessment will need to be carried out once we receive their completed application
- That our waiting list is based on need, following a points validation process, resulting in applicants being given a priority score of low/medium/high

Couples will need to fill in separate application forms.

2 bedroom properties are generally reserved for couples who request them, but may in certain circumstances be offered to individuals at the Society's discretion.

On receipt of the completed form a home assessment, or office based assessment if the applicant/s live outside Norwich, will be undertaken by a Scheme Manager. The assessment is carried out to verify the accuracy of the application details and obtain any additional information required.

Applicants may be asked to fill out and sign a budget form before being interviewed. Further information about this may be requested.

Where an applicant has a current tenancy or has previously held a tenancy, the Society reserves the right to seek references regarding the conduct of the present or previous tenancy.

If the applicant is, or has recently been, a homeowner, the Society reserves the right to seek references regarding payment record.

If permission to seek references is not obtained, the Society may withhold the allocation of a tenancy.

The Society will seek confirmation that accounts held with previous landlords are clear before an offer is considered.

If the applicant is found to have deliberately provided false or misleading information, the Society reserves the right to cancel the application.

After completion of an assessment the application will be discussed by a panel and the applicant's need will be assessed on the basis of the Society's points system. The application will then be placed on the waiting list by priority of their housing need.

Where applicants on the waiting list have an equal number of points, priority will be given to applicants who have been in housing need for the longest period.

All applications will be reviewed regularly.

In special circumstances if, after completing a home/office assessment, the Scheme Manager feels the applicant is in urgent need, and there is a vacant property, he/she will liaise with one of the Housing Administrators and another Scheme Manager (preferably one who resides/visits the scheme of the vacant property) to discuss fast tracking the applicant through the process.

If a tenancy is granted, and is found to have been allocated on the basis of false or misleading information, the Society may cancel the tenancy.

7. Points Validation Process

In line with the Policy's objective, the Society aims to allocate accommodation on a fair and equitable basis for people in housing need.

Housing needs will be assessed and prioritised using a points system. Points will be awarded on the basis of the applicant's existing housing situation and personal housing needs.

8. Internal Transfers

The Society will accept applications from existing tenants who need to move on a health basis where housing circumstances and needs have changed since the initial allocation. The existing tenant will need to have a supporting letter from their GP to support their request to move.

Transfer requests will not normally be considered from tenants who have rent arrears or any other outstanding debt to the Society; or whose tenancy has been conducted unsatisfactorily. Tenants who have cleared a debt with the Society must have had a clear rent account for at least 6 months. Tenants who are in breach of a condition of their tenancy will not have their transfer application accepted, nor will tenants who have neglected their property.

Tenants on the internal transfer list will be considered favourably compared to the General Waiting List. If more than one tenant is on the list to move then the tenant who has been on the waiting list the longest will be offered the first viewing.

9. Offers & Refusals

Social housing in Norwich is in extremely high demand and the Society seeks to ensure that its efforts and resources are focused on those in greatest genuine need of them.

Applicants will be advised in writing as to whether their application has been successful and feedback will be provided to the applicant if requested, on the reasons for the Society's decision.

If an applicant is made a reasonable offer of accommodation and refuses it, the Society reserves the right to remove the applicant from the waiting list.

If we have been unable to meet the applicants housing requirements within a year, we reserve the right to remove the applicant from the waiting list.

10. The Waiting Lists

The Society operates the following waiting lists. All applicants are allocated properties on the basis of need. Each application will be given a level of priority based on the assessment of the information on the Application Form plus any accompanying documentation, provided at the home/office based assessment.

The Sheltered Waiting List

This list is open to all applicants who are not tenants of the Society and over the age of 60 years old or in the case of a couple one over 60 and one over 55 years of age and in need of supported housing.

The Internal Transfer List

This list is open to existing tenants of the Society who fulfil other policy criteria as detailed in section 8 of this policy.

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis, to ensure that the Aims and Objectives are being achieved, and that best use is being made of the housing stock. The Society reserves the right to change or amend the policy after review, subject to the approval of the Society's Board, and to re-assess the status and priority of applicants in accordance with policy revisions.