



*A 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 homes to rent for people aged 60 and over in housing need enabling them to live independently with support.

The Society's Allocations Policy will set the standards and guidelines for managing our waiting lists and the allocation of our 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
- Respecting the individual specific choices of applicants

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 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

Pets are not permitted in any of our properties.

Smoking

Norwich Housing Society charges £30 per calendar month, over a 5-year period in addition to the rental charge for residents who smoke. This money will be kept and will be used for additional redecorating and cleaning costs of the flat at the end of the tenancy. Please note this is non-refundable. This excludes Leader Court which is strictly no smoking. This policy applies to all tenants when they move internally.

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
- Cannot afford their present accommodation
- Would benefit from re-housing because of their social or welfare circumstances.

5. Choice

- Applicants may select to be rehoused in specific schemes, or flats with specific locations; such as those with their own front door. However the wait for vacancies to arise may prove longer as a result
- Whilst we aim to meet preferences, offers of accommodation will be made on the basis of ensuring that each scheme remains a sustainable and balanced community

6 General Eligibility Conditions

Applicants need to be:

- Over 60 years old or, for couples, one applicant needs to be over 60 and the other over 55 years old.
- True and honest about their circumstances. Where an applicant has knowingly given false information, or has withheld information, the Society reserves the right to cancel the application.
- Legally Eligible to live in the U.K.
- Have a close link with Norwich (resident, employment, seeking / offering necessary support to Norwich family members)

Applications will not be accepted where applicants:

- have a history of anti-social behaviour, crime or any unspent convictions and/or who are likely to be a threat or nuisance to our tenants or staff
- evicted by / eviction sought by a former Landlord within previous two years
- have debts relating to previous accommodation or owed to the Society.
- own their home, unless it has been valued, is currently on the market for sale, and will not generate sufficient resources to secure alternative accommodation
- has contrived to worsen own housing circumstances in order to be perceived as being in greater housing need
- are not able to live independently in the medium term in the opinion of the Scheme Manager

7. Assessment of Applications

Applications will be made on the Society's application form which is available after contacting the office to discuss eligibility. Joint applicants will both need to provide personal information.

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.

Where an applicant has a current tenancy or has previously held a tenancy, the Society may seek references regarding the conduct and payment record of the tenancy.

If the applicant is, or has recently been, a homeowner, the Society reserves the right to seek references regarding payment record and confirmation that the house is on the market for sale.

If the applicant is found to have deliberately provided false or misleading information, the Society will 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 three monthly.

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.

8. 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.

9. Internal Transfers

The Society will accept applications from existing tenants who have progressed to an assured periodic weekly tenancy and 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. Those that are unable to get a letter from their GP will have an assessment carried out by a Scheme Manager. The completed assessment will then be discussed by a panel.

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. If there is a tenant dispute that is currently being investigated an Internal transfer will be refused. 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.

The smoking policy applies to current tenants when they move internally. Please see point 3 for information.

10. 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.

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.

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 matching their preference 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.

11. 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 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 paragraph 10 of this policy.

12. Successful Applicants

Following on from a successful application, if you accept a property with us we require a full weeks rent in advance, unless in receipt of housing benefit.

If the tenant owns a property that has not been sold before the end of the fixed term tenancy, an assured tenancy will not be issued. The fixed term tenancy will only be extended with evidence shown that the tenant has tried to sell the property.

13. 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.