

**North and East Housing Association CLG:
Lettings and Allocations Policy**

Version History

	Modification	Date modified
1	Initial approval of policy	February 2020
2	Most recent review and approval by Board	28 th May 2024
3	Date of next review by Board	May 2027

Amendments to policy

Old version number	Reason for updating	New version number & date of issue
001	(a) Review overdue (b) To ensure fit for purpose following introduction of CCMA Code of Practice AHB Allocation Process May 2022 (with update January 2024)	002

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the principles around and the approach to managing lettings and allocations within North & East. It gives direction to Tenant Services and Engagement staff when letting a new scheme or re-letting a casual void unit. It is also designed to ensure that our lettings and allocations practices are fair and transparent for everyone who has an interest in how we allocate our homes.

North and East is an approved housing body that currently provides homes to 750 households across a large number of local authority areas. We aim to deliver consistent services to achieve efficiency and improve the quality of life for our tenants. We are committed to providing new homes to help tackle the housing shortage and help those in housing need.

We want to make our homes places that people want to live, and the make-up of our communities is crucial in achieving this. As a not-for-profit business with social objectives, we are committed to meeting housing needs and supporting vulnerable people, but we believe that we can best support people in mixed, vibrant communities. This policy will inform how North and East uses housing allocations to help create sustainable, active communities and ensure that the needs of existing tenants are balanced with those of new applicants.

2. Scope

This policy reflects Equal Status Legislation in respect of lettings and allocations to tenants and takes account of the Code of Practice recently agreed between AHB's and CCMA.

3. Definitions

"Void management" is the term used to describe how North & East deals with vacant properties to ensure homes are made available to housing applicants in a good condition and in a timely manner.

4. Policy Statement

1. North & East aims to provide housing for those who cannot meet this need from their own resources.
2. North & East will consult with the relevant local housing authority on all allocations.
3. North & East aims to conduct its allocations in an equitable and non-discriminatory manner.
4. North & East aims to make full and effective use of its housing stock including tight guidelines for void management.
5. North & East aims to create viable and sustainable communities and will allocate its housing stock accordingly.
6. North & East may consult with tenants on its general lettings policy and procedures.
7. North & East will seek nominations from the allocations section of the local authority within which the void is located.

8. North & East will ensure that all information relating to housing applications will be maintained in the strictest confidence and in accordance with Data Protection.

5. Housing for older persons and special needs housing

1. North & East will, when possible, accommodate older people and individuals with disabilities or other special needs on all its schemes where the availability of suitable properties exists.
2. North & East also aims to develop specialist schemes that cater specifically to the needs of older people.
3. Applicants in this category will be assessed using the same principles detailed at 6. below. However, referrals may also be accepted from relevant statutory and non-statutory support agencies and the agreement of the local authority will be sought prior to allocating properties.
4. North & East will have regard to external sources of support – through service level agreements - and its own housing management capacity when determining the level of allocations to households who may have difficulty settling and sustaining a tenancy because of special needs.

6. Nominations, Assessments and Allocations

This process will be managed by the Association's Housing Officer responsible for the area and overseen by the Tenant Services & Engagement Manager. The step-by-step process which will be followed is outlined below:

Step One:

North and East will request a nomination from the relevant local authority. A full property description, jpeg photograph and current BER certificate (if available) will be provided where Choice Based Letting is operated.

Step Two:

Once a provisional nomination has been provided, North and East will send an email acknowledgement of receipt to the Local Authority. North and East will make contact with the prospective tenant, and an interview form and rent assessment form will be sent immediately.

Step Three:

On receipt of the completed interview form and rent assessment form, the nominee/s will be invited for a meeting. This meeting will enable North and East to provide information on exact details of the accommodation and to gather tenant details. This pre-tenancy meeting is deemed invaluable in clearing up any queries and informing tenants about the proposed property and the AHB.

Step Four:

North and East will provide a report to the relevant Local Authority stating:

- Offer of accommodation

- Acceptance of accommodation
- Other e.g., non-contactable / failure to provide relevant information

In situations where North and East identifies reasons why a nominee may not be suitable for the allocated property, North and East will bring its concerns to the local authority who will then make the decision to either approve or refuse the nominee. Ultimately, the local authority will make the final decision.

More detailed guidelines for Housing Officers in the application of this process are contained in the Operational Guidelines document.

7. Transfers, Mutual Exchanges & Succession

North & East recognises that, for a variety of reasons, occasions may arise when some tenants may need to move to an alternative property and we will facilitate this, whenever possible and under certain conditions. This can be achieved by transfers and mutual exchanges. All transfers, mutual exchanges must be agreed by the local authority for the area.

7.1 Transfers

- Existing tenants of North & East may apply to move to another property by completing a Transfer Application form.
- Internal Transfer applicants will be considered along with local authority nominations when allocating properties, subject to local authority approval.
- Tenants seeking to transfer will be advised to register their transfer request with the local authority and follow the procedure of their local authority.
- Transfer applicants seeking to move to another social housing landlord or to a local authority will be advised to apply directly to the relevant organisation/authority.
- Tenants who request a transfer will be sent a transfer application by the Housing Officer to complete and return.
- Transfers will only proceed when the existing dwelling is deemed to be in good condition, clean and free of damage to the property other than acceptable wear and tear.
- Transfers **will only be granted** on one or more of the following grounds:
 - Under occupation
 - Overcrowding
 - Health and mobility reasons, confirmed by health professional
 - Social reasons confirmed by social worker or support agencies
 - Management reasons where the transfer would be to the benefit of the Association
 - Job relocation where confirmed by the Employer
 - To give support to or receive support from a close relative (the type and extent

of support required must be confirmed)

- h) Victimisation/Anti-social behaviour – last resort option
- viii. Transfers **will not be granted** to tenants where:
 - a) the tenant has resided for less than 2 years at their current address
 - b) the tenant does not have a clear rent account for the preceding six months
 - c) legal/quasi-legal action has been taken or is ongoing against the tenant
 - d) the tenant has not maintained his/her existing home to an acceptable standard - or unauthorised alterations have been carried out – until the issues have been rectified
 - e) the tenant is in other breach of the tenancy agreement

7.2 Mutual Exchanges

- i. Applications for exchanges will only be accepted from tenants who have lived at their current address for at least a year.
- ii. Mutual transfers should be cost neutral to North & East and therefore the incoming tenant must accept the dwelling from the outgoing tenant in the condition the outgoing tenant leaves it in. North & East will attend to vital safety checks and requirements only.
- iii. The Housing Officer will not approve the mutual exchange where:
 - the exchange would result in either of the properties becoming overcrowded or under occupied
 - the exchange would result in properties, which are provided for elderly or disabled people, being occupied by someone who does not need those facilities
 - either tenant rent account has not been kept clear for the preceding three months
 - either tenant has not complied with tenancy conditions

7.3 Succession

- i. Succession is the passing on of a tenancy to a surviving close family member when the tenant dies.
- ii. Where there is a joint tenancy, and one tenant dies, the tenancy automatically remains with the surviving tenant. However the joint tenancy will be ended and a new sole tenancy and rental agreement put in place.
- iii. Where a sole tenant dies, North & East has the right to take back the property. North & East will consider granting a new tenancy to a member of the deceased's immediate family where the family member used the dwelling as their normal place of residence for a minimum period of the preceding six months.
- iv. Succession is not an automatic right. Each case is considered in terms of the current housing need of the applicant and the size of the existing unit of

accommodation.

- v. North & East will not authorise a succession where the property in question has been designated for a specific client group (example older person's accommodation) and the person wishing to succeed the tenancy does not meet the criteria for this type of accommodation. Where such a decision would render the applicant homeless, North & East will liaise with the local authority and endeavour to accommodate the applicant elsewhere.
- vi. Criteria for applicant seeking succession
 - have resided on a full-time basis with the tenant for a minimum of 6 months immediately preceding his/her death
 - have no legal rights to any other property
 - be over the age of 18 years
 - be willing to occupy the property as their principal home
 - proof of need for social housing
 - no substantive estate management concerns

8. Roles and Responsibilities

The Tenant Services & Engagement Manager is responsible for policy implementation, monitoring, evaluation, ensuring effectiveness and addressing any issues that arise. The Housing Team is responsible for implementing the policy and related procedures and for communicating effectively with all stakeholders including North & East's Finance, Development & Property teams as well as local authorities, tenants and applicants.

9. Related Documentation

- CCMA Code of Practice AHB Allocations Process, May 2022 (updated January 2024)
- NEHA Rent and Service Charge Policy
- NEHA Void Management Policy
- Operational Guidelines for Lettings and Allocations (appended)
- Operational Guidelines for Change in Standing/Tenancy (appended)
- Operational Guidelines for Ending a Tenancy (appended)

10. Complaints and Appeals

North and East will deal with all complaints about any perceived shortfall in the operation of the Lettings and Allocations policy in accordance with its Complaints Policy.

11. Legislation and Compliance

North and East Housing manages tenancies in accordance with the provisions of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 and Residential Tenancy Board (RTB).

North and East Housing will adhere to the Data Protection Act 2018 in order to ensure that

information provided by an applicant or sought by North and East Housing is relevant only to assessing their housing need and is treated in the strictest confidence. Under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 individuals are entitled to request personal data which is held by the Association.

North and East will comply with the Equality Act 2010 which protects persons from being discriminated against. In particular, North and East will not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment or sexual orientation.

12. Policy Review

The Lettings and Allocation Policy will be reviewed every three years, unless an earlier review is necessary following e.g.

- legislative, regulatory and good practice requirements
- the views of tenants and staff