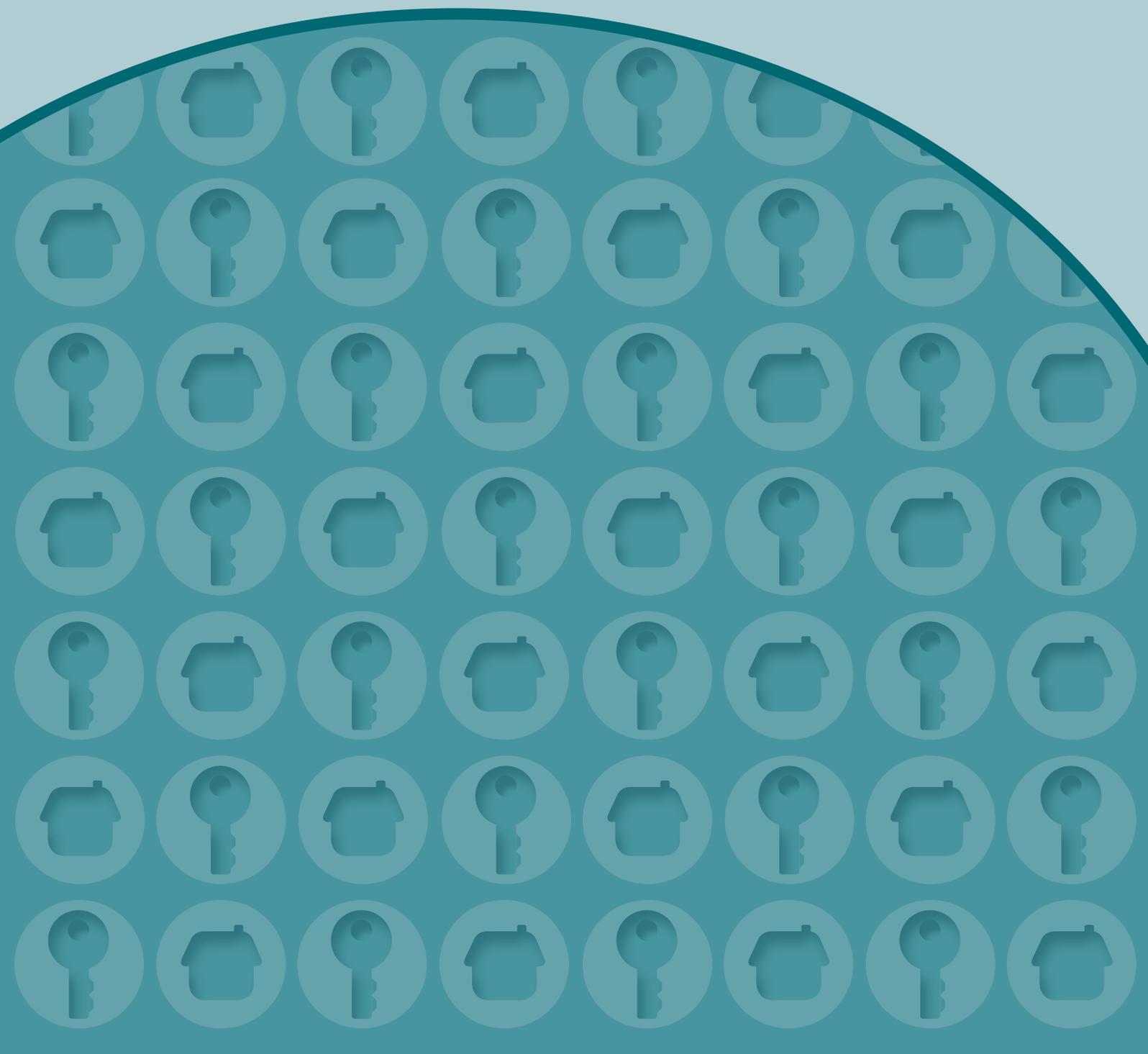


Housing Allocation Policy

Consultation Report February 2019



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Section one

1. Introduction

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 sets out a requirement for social landlords to consult with specific groups of customers on any proposed changes to their Housing Allocation Policy and to publish the results from the consultation.

This report sets out the approach taken to the consultation on the draft Housing Allocation Policy and sets out the feedback and comments received from consultees.

2. Background to the review of the Housing Allocation Policy

The previous Housing Allocation Policy was introduced in June 2009. Since its introduction, the policy has been amended on a number of occasions to reflect changes in legislation and to take account of local needs and circumstances.

In accordance with the Housing and Technical Resources Policy Review Schedule, the Housing Allocation Policy was subject to a full review during 2018/19. A key focus of the review was to ensure that the policy meets the legislative requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014. This Act introduces changes to the legal framework for the allocation of social rented housing in Scotland which come into effect on 1 May 2019.

In addition, the review also considered local and national policy developments, including: the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator; priorities within the Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022; and the Council and its partners' priority objectives to significantly reduce homelessness, as detailed within the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

3. Co-production of the consultative draft Housing Allocation Policy

A key focus in the development of the consultative draft Housing Allocation Policy was to ensure the effective involvement of tenants, other customers and key stakeholders.

During the last 18 months, tenant representatives from the Tenant Participation Co-ordination Group – Allocations Sub Group, supported by the independent Tenant Development Support Project met regularly to consider and discuss current policy issues, local and national policy developments, legislative compliance and good practice.

Tenant representatives were also involved in the co-production of this consultation report and approved the structure and format of the report.

Specific engagement also took place with Elected Members through an awareness session held in May 2018, which provided Members with information on the current policy, the legal framework for allocations and an opportunity to express views in advance of the development of the consultative draft policy and the formal consultation process.

This was followed by a seminar in December 2018, where the consultative draft policy proposals were presented, followed by workshop discussions. Further details of this event are provided in section two of this report.

This, together with engagement and discussion with specific interest groups and partner organisations ensured that the consultative draft Housing Allocation Policy was produced in partnership through joint working with key stakeholders.

4. The consultation process

The consultative draft Housing Allocation Policy was issued for a 12 week formal consultation period between 21 November 2018 and 11 February 2019.

The consultative draft policy document was published on the Council's website along with an online questionnaire which was based on key sections of the policy (see appendix 1). The draft policy and questionnaire was also issued to a wide range of local and national stakeholders (see appendix 2).

The consultation was publicised using a variety of methods including: within the autumn edition of Housing News, which is issued to all council tenants; through social media; email and SMS text messaging to customers on the 'interested individual register'.

In addition, individual consultation events, meetings and focus groups also took place with specific interest groups, including applicants on the housing register.

Section two provides further details of the feedback and comments received from these sessions and also from the online questionnaire.

Over 500 people took part in the consultation. This feedback has been considered and used to inform the revised Housing Allocation Policy which was presented to Housing and Technical Resources Committee for approval on 20 March 2019.

The revised policy provisions will be implemented from 1 May 2019.

Section two Consultation feedback and key themes

Feedback received through the online questionnaire

The consultation questionnaire was designed to guide responses in relation to the key sections of the draft policy and also gave respondents the opportunity to provide any additional comments.

In total, seven organisations and 149 individuals responded through the online questionnaire. In general, the feedback received was positive with the majority of respondents supportive of the proposals set out within the draft policy.

The table below summarises the feedback received in relation to the key sections of the draft policy.

Section 1 - Aims of the policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">78% of respondents agreed with the aims of the policy
Section 2 - Applying for a house
<ul style="list-style-type: none">86% of respondents agreed that the information was clear. It was highlighted that there is a need to ensure that those who are unable to use or access online services/information are provided with support
Section 3 - Housing List and Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">73% of respondents agreed with the list structure and categories of applicants defined within each list66% of respondents agreed with categories of applicants defined as urgent housing need77% of respondents were supportive of the proposal to make one priority offer of housing to applicants assessed as having an urgent housing need. It was highlighted that the offer made should be appropriate to the circumstances of the applicant59% of respondents agreed that different levels of insecurity of tenure should be taken into account within the policy75% of respondents expressed support for the award of points to applicants under-occupying their home. It was noted that under occupancy points would help to free up larger homes for families who need them57% of respondents did not support the introduction of a new points category for key workers68% of respondents agreed with the proposal not to take home ownership into account within the revised policy. There was a general view that only homeowners with a need for housing should be allocated a council property
Section 4 – Occupancy Standard
<ul style="list-style-type: none">84% of respondents agreed with the occupancy standard. It was highlighted that there needs to be a flexible approach to reflecting individual circumstances, for example where there is a medical need

Section 5/6 – Local Letting Plans and Targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 86% of respondents agreed with the approach to setting Local Letting Plans • 78% of respondents agreed with the process for developing and setting local letting targets
Section 7 – Managing Applications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 74% of respondents agreed with the proposed circumstances and timescales for suspending housing applications. Support was expressed for longer suspension periods to be applied in particular circumstances, such as anti-social behaviour • It was highlighted that the council's approach to suspending applications was robust
Section 8 –Medical Assessment and Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81% of respondents agreed with the proposed approach to the assessment of medical needs, the criteria and points
Section 9 and 10 – Appeals and Complaints and Miscellaneous provisions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific questions were asked in relation to these two sections of the policy and no general comments or feedback was received from respondents
Section 11 - Sheltered Housing Assessment and Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% of respondents agreed with the aims of the sheltered housing aspect of the policy. • 84% of respondents agreed with the criteria for who can apply for sheltered housing • 61% of respondents agreed with the proposal to increase the qualifying age to 66 years. Some respondents expressed a view that the qualifying age should be higher, while some noted that there was a need for flexibility in approach

Feedback and key messages from individual consultation events and focus groups

A key aim of the approach taken to the consultation on the Housing Allocation Policy was to ensure that as many customers and stakeholders as possible had the opportunity to comment and provide views on the policy proposals.

During the consultation, a range of events and focus group meetings and discussions took place with specific interest groups and key stakeholders, as shown in the table below:

Date	Stakeholder Group	Feedback
15/11/18	Partners in Practice (PIP) group	Discussion on the key policy proposals, with support expressed for: the one priority offer of housing, under-occupancy as a points category, consideration to be given to different levels of insecurity and the age criteria for sheltered housing to increase to 66 years.
28/11/18	Lanarkshire Ethnic Minority Action Group (LEMAG)	Supportive of general aims of the policy and the focus on meeting housing need. In terms of sheltered housing, agreement to the proposal to increase the age criteria to 66 years.
28/11/18	Springbank Park, East Kilbride Gypsy/Traveller Site	Support expressed for the policy proposals and general view expressed that the policy is fair and assists those in housing need.
3/12/18	Kear Campus	Support expressed for one priority offer and the criteria for sheltered housing. Mixed response to the proposal to introduce under occupancy points and felt consideration should be given to different levels of insecurity and taking homeownership into account.
24/1/19	East Kilbride Sheltered Housing Forum	General agreement on the aims of the policy, points categories and criteria. Support for the role of Local Letting Plans in the allocation process. Discussion on sheltered housing aspects of policy, with broad support for the proposed criteria, including raising eligible age to 66 years.
31/1/19	Clydesdale, Cambuslang/Rutherglen, Sheltered Housing Complexes	<p>General support for the aims and structure of the policy. Agreement to one priority offer of housing to those in most need and the proposed criteria for medical points. Consideration to be given to different levels of insecurity of tenure.</p> <p>Discussion on sheltered housing with support expressed for the proposed criteria for sheltered housing, although differing views on the proposal in relation to the eligible age. Noted the importance of taking account of medical needs and also felt that home ownership should be taken into account.</p>

Date	Stakeholder Group	Feedback
5/2/19	South Lanarkshire Youth Council	General agreement to the policy proposals and to continuing with Local Letting Plans and setting targets. Suggestion for under-occupancy to be given higher priority and consideration to be given to different levels of insecurity.
5/2/19	Seniors Together Focus Group	Support expressed for the policy proposals and the structure of the policy, points categories and criteria. Suggestion for under-occupancy to be given higher priority. Agreement with all proposed criteria for sheltered housing. Consider social isolation as a factor in the assessment of need.
7/2/19	PAMIS South Lanarkshire	Discussion on the issues that exist relating to customers' ability to access online services/information. The shortage of appropriate housing for families with complex housing situations was highlighted and the need for a holistic assessment of a household's needs.
13/2/19	South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership Housing Sub Group	<p data-bbox="687 887 1442 1081">Agreement to the policy aims and objectives. Discussion on the policy proposals with views expressed that priority applicants should receive more than one offer of housing, consider increasing points award to those under occupying and home ownership should not be taken into account.</p> <p data-bbox="687 1122 1426 1184">Agreement expressed in relation to the proposed criteria for sheltered housing.</p>
15/2/19	South Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership	<p data-bbox="687 1223 1442 1386">Consider awarding young people with additional support needs, in transition from the parental household and care experienced young people, priority for housing in order to help prevent homelessness among these vulnerable groups.</p> <p data-bbox="687 1426 1442 1518">Ensure policy is flexible in assessing those with Additional Support Needs (ASN) or those with a development disability, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).</p>

Elected Members

As highlighted in section one, specific engagement took place with Elected Members in May 2018 to inform the development of the consultative draft Housing Allocation Policy and again during formal consultation, at a seminar held in December 2018.

The format of the seminar was a presentation of the draft policy proposals followed by four local area based workshop sessions. The workshop sessions provided Members with the opportunity to discuss and consider the policy proposals from a local area perspective.

Based on the discussions that took place within the workshop sessions, there was broad support and agreement with the policy aims and objectives. A summary of the views of Members is detailed below:

- General support for the structure of the policy, categories of housing need and associated criteria
- Support expressed for the continuation of Local Letting Plans and letting targets as a means for ensuring local needs and circumstances are taken into account in the allocation of council housing
- A range of views expressed in relation to whether the policy should take account of different levels of insecurity of tenure
- Agreement to the award of points to tenants under occupying their homes
- General support for the sheltered housing provisions of the policy, with a range of views expressed in relation to the proposal to raise the age eligibility criteria to 66 years

Tenants and Residents

During the consultation, tenants and residents from across South Lanarkshire were also engaged through existing structures and networks including Tenants and Residents Groups, Local Housing Forums and Neighbourhood Boards. The key policy proposals were highlighted and discussed at meetings of these groups and feedback invited at the meetings and also through the online questionnaire.

Based on the feedback received, there was general support for the policy aims, structure and points categories, including the sheltered housing aspects of the policy. There was also support for Local Letting Plans and targets as a means for taking account of local circumstances. Specific comments and views were highlighted in relation to the following areas of the policy:

- A range of views expressed on the proposal relating to one priority offer to applicants with the highest housing need
- Agreement to taking account of under occupancy through the award of points. Consideration to be given to a higher points award
- If key workers are to be included as a category within the policy, some views expressed that they should only receive priority in exceptional circumstances
- General agreement to proposed criteria for sheltered housing, with some comments highlighted in relation to raising the eligible age to 66
- Mixed views on the proposal not to take home ownership into account

Applicants on the HomeFinder Housing Register

During January 2019, three focus group meetings, facilitated by Officers from Housing and Technical Resources, took place with applicants from the HomeFinder Housing Register. The aim of the focus groups was to obtain views on the policy proposals from those most directly affected and also to gain an understanding of their experiences of applying for social rented housing. The three applicant groups comprised:

- Applicants from the waiting and transfer lists
- Applicants with an urgent housing need (homeless applicants)
- Applicants wishing to be housed in sheltered housing

A summary of the views and key points highlighted by the three focus groups is provided below:

- The policy aims and objectives were agreed, with support expressed for the focus to be on meeting housing need
- Support for the continued use of Local Letting Plans and letting targets
- Mixed views expressed in relation to the proposal of one priority offer to those with the highest housing need
- Differing views were expressed in relation to the introduction of a key workers category, with the point made that if this was to be introduced, the criteria must be clearly defined
- Support for taking under-occupancy into account and for consideration to be given to the associated points level
- Support expressed for the proposal not to take home ownership into account
- Agreement to the proposals in relation to sheltered housing, however mixed views expressed on the proposed age criteria

South Lanarkshire Council employees, including Trade Unions

It was recognised that an important aspect of the consultation was to ensure that employees within Housing and Technical Resources and other council resources, who have working experience or a particular interest in the policy had the opportunity to comment and feedback views. A summary of the comments received from council employees is provided below:

- The proposal not to award insecurity of tenure points to those with a Private Residential Tenancy will have a positive impact on promoting this as a realistic housing option
- Positive move to recognise under occupancy as a housing need but consider increasing the level of priority

- Further develop and utilise Local Letting Plans to help address local issues and create balanced communities
- Consider enhancing the approach to medical assessment by involving an Occupational Therapist
- Medical needs should be taken into account in the assessment of an applicants need for sheltered housing

Section three

Ongoing engagement in relation to the implementation and monitoring of the revised Housing Allocation Policy

A commitment has been given to continue to engage with tenants, other customers and wider stakeholders to support the effective implementation and ongoing monitoring of the revised Housing Allocation Policy and Local Letting Plans.

On an annual basis a report highlighting progress in relation to the implementation of the policy and Local Letting Plans will be reported to Housing and Technical Resources Committee.

The Tenant Participation Co-ordination Group and wider customer groups will also continue to have a specific role in monitoring the policy to ensure that the aims are being met and the outcomes are as expected.

South Lanarkshire Council - Housing and Technical Resources Allocation Policy Review 2018 - Consultative Draft Consultation Questionnaire

Our Housing Allocation Policy has been developed in accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, and other relevant legislation, which sets out the legislation for managing social housing lists and allocating housing stock.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 introduces a number changes relating to housing allocation. These changes are around how we allocate our properties, some which we have to do and some which are optional. This allows some flexibility in how we let our properties to develop a policy which reflects local needs and circumstances. The consultative draft has been developed taking into account the changes introduced by the 2014 Act.

Please take a few minutes to complete our questionnaire. The views expressed during the consultation will be included in a report to our Housing and Technical Resources Committee in March 2019 where approval for the draft allocation policy will be sought.

Questions set out within the consultative draft policy document are provided below, whilst views are invited on any aspect of the draft policy, they are particularly welcome in relation to the following questions. **Please ensure you take time to read the consultative draft policy document before answering these questions.** The closing date for this consultation is 11th February 2019.

Are you responding to this questionnaire?

As an individual..... On behalf of an organisation

Which organisation are you responding on behalf of?

Section 1: Introduction

Do you agree with the aims of the policy?

Yes..... No

If no, what changes would you suggest?

Section 2: Applying for a house

Do you think that the information provided on 'Applying for a house' is clear?

Yes..... No

If no, what changes would you suggest?

Section 3: Housing list and priorities

Do you agree with the categories of applicants defined as urgent housing need and the qualifying criteria?

Yes..... No

If no, what would you suggest?

Do you agree with the proposed approach to making one priority offer to applicants on the urgent housing need list?

Yes..... No.....

If no, what would you suggest?

Do you agree with the list structures and categories of applicants defined as transfer list, waiting list and other categories?

Yes..... No.....

If no, what would you suggest?

Should different levels for insecurity of tenure points be awarded where an applicant may be at greater risk of being made homeless? (For example, someone living in private rented accommodation who has been served with a Notice to Quit)

Yes..... No.....

If yes, what factors do you think should be prioritised?

We are required by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 to take account of under occupancy within the allocation policy.

Do you agree with the approach to the award of categories and points levels?

Yes..... No.....

If no, what changes would you suggest?

Do you agree with the points categories and associated criteria?

Yes..... No.....

If no, what changes would you suggest?

Do you think points should be awarded for key workers who provide vital services?

Yes..... No.....

If yes, how would you suggest that we take account of key workers?

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 allows social landlords to take property ownership into account as part of the assessment of an applicant’s housing need and circumstances.

Our policy is based on an assessment of the applicant and their household's need for housing and prioritise those with greatest need. We do not therefore propose to take property ownership into account within our policy.

Do you agree with our proposal not to take account of home ownership?

Yes..... No.....

If no, in what way should owner occupation be taken into account within the allocation policy?

Section 4: Occupancy Standard

Do you agree with occupancy standard?

Yes..... No.....

If no, what changes would you suggest?

Section 5: Allocations between the housing lists

Do you agree with our approach in setting targets?

Yes..... No.....

If no, what changes would you suggest?

Section 6: Local letting plans

Do you agree with our approach in developing local letting plans?

Yes..... No.....

If no, what changes would you suggest?

Section 7: Managing applications for housing

Do you agree with the proposed circumstances and timescales for suspending applications?

Yes..... No.....

If no, what changes would you propose?

Section 8: Medical assessment and priorities

Do you agree with the approach to the assessment of medical needs for rehousing?

Yes..... No

If no, what changes would you propose?

Section 11: Sheltered housing assessment and priorities

Do you agree with the aims of the sheltered housing allocation policy?

Yes..... No

If no, what else would you suggest?

a) Do you agree with the criteria for who can apply for sheltered housing?

Yes..... No

If no, what would you suggest?

b) Do you agree with the qualifying age of 66 for sheltered housing?

Yes..... No

If no, what changes would you suggest?

Do you think that the circumstances we intend to take into account when assessing an applicant's need for sheltered housing are appropriate?

Yes..... No

If no, what would you suggest?

Comments

Do you have any other comments you wish to make in relation to the Allocations Policy?

If you wish to discuss the draft policy or any of the above questions in more detail please contact housing.strategy@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

South Lanarkshire Council

Elected Members
Executive Directors of Council Resources
Local Housing Offices
Medical Adviser

South Lanarkshire Registered Social Landlords**Homelessness**

Homelessness Strategic Group
Shelter
Blue Triangle
Loretto

Neighbourhood Boards**Local Housing Forums****Tenants and other customers**

Tenant Participation Co-ordination Group (TPCG)
TPCG Allocations Sub Group
East Kilbride Sheltered Housing Forum
Sheltered housing tenants
Tenants and Residents Associations
Tenant Participation Advisory Service
Tenant Information Service
Interested Individual Register
Transfer and waiting list applicants
Urgent Housing Need (homeless) applicants
Sheltered housing applicants

Equalities Groups

Lanarkshire Ethnic Minority Action Group (LEMAG)
Gypsy/Traveller sites
Seniors Together
Employee Network (Disability, Carers, Ethnicity, LGBT)
Positive Action in Housing
Disability Partnership – Housing Sub Group

Armed Forces/Veterans

Haig Housing
Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Families Association (SAFFA)
The Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP)
Veterans 1st Point

Local Authorities

Fife Council
Falkirk Council
Moray Council
North Lanarkshire Council
Glasgow City Council
East Ayrshire Council
East Renfrewshire Council
West Lothian Council
Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO)

Other specific groups/organisations

Alzheimer's Scotland
Lanarkshire's Association for Mental Health
Autism Resource Coordination Hub (ARCH)
National Autistic Society
Promoting a more inclusive Society (PAMIS)
The Haven
South Lanarkshire Carers Network
Citizen's Advice Bureau
Kear Campus Cambuslang
Partners in Practice Sub Group
Housing Services JCC (Trade unions)
Health and Social Care Partnership
South Lanarkshire Youth Council
Women's Aid
Salvation Army
Barnardos
YPeople



If you need this information in another language or format,
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Produced for Housing and Technical Resources by Communications and Strategy, 048575/Mar19. Housing allocation policy consultation report - issue 1