



# LETTINGS POLICY

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**Executive Summary:**

This policy outlines the principles that govern how we will allocate our homes. The policy ensures that lettings are fair, transparent, and aligned with our commitment to support Rochdale Borough Council (RBC) to meet their statutory housing duties.

<b>Policy Grouping/Directorate</b>	Customer & Community	
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## **1 Introduction and Aims**

- 1.1 This policy sets out Rochdale Boroughwide Housing Limited's approach to allocating and letting our homes. Our objective is to provide the right home, to the right person, at the right time and with the right support in place. At the heart of this is a customer's ability to successfully take on the responsibility of a tenancy, including all the costs of running a home.
- 1.2 The aims of the policy are:
- To deliver a fair, transparent, accessible allocations and lettings service to all customers.
  - To create and support mixed, balanced and sustainable communities working with specialist support and housing agencies when required.
  - Work closely with Rochdale Borough Council (RBC) to assist them in fulfilling their statutory duties to secure accommodation for people in housing need.
  - Have regard to our responsibilities under the Equalities Act; assess monitor and take mitigating actions to ensure that our policy and procedures do not detrimentally impact on the housing opportunities of customers.

## **2 Context**

- 2.1 This policy explains how we make our empty homes available and who they will be allocated to. This includes applicants who bid via RBC Housing Solutions, applicants who apply to us directly, and current RBH customers who require an urgent move. Appendix 1 shows how homes are offered to a range of household types to ensure best use of our homes.
- 2.2 This policy does not apply to mutual exchanges, shared ownership, rent to buy, decants or rehousing due to regeneration as these are covered in separate policies which are listed in section 15 of this document.

### **2.3 Consumer Standards**

#### [Tenancy Standard](#)

Registered providers must allocate and let their homes in a fair and transparent way that takes the needs of customers into account.

Registered providers must support customers to maintain their tenancy or licence.

Registered providers shall offer tenancies or terms of occupation which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of their housing stock.

#### [Transparency, Influence & Accountability Standard](#)

Registered providers must treat customers and prospective customers with fairness and respect.

### **3 Values**

#### **3.1 The policy fits with the mutual values of RBH:**

##### **Putting People First:**

We take responsibility for ensuring that this policy has a clear approach to how we let our properties, which will advise the actions and processes RBH employs to enable people to become our customers.

##### **Doing What We Say:**

We earn the trust of the communities and customers we serve by acting on our words and ensuring we are accountable for our promises.

##### **Working As One:**

The policy and associated procedures have been developed with our customers, colleagues, and partners to achieve great outcomes for our customers.

##### **Delivering Quality:**

We invest wisely in our people and make it easy for them to deliver services and create places that our customers are proud to call home.

##### **Open & Transparent:**

We are curious, embrace diverse ways of thinking and seek feedback to help us improve.

### **4 Policy Statement**

#### **4.1 Applications and pre-tenancy checks**

4.1.1 We will let a minimum of 75% of available homes to applicants that have applied to RBC for housing.

4.1.2 We will act responsibly to ensure we are providing the right home, to the right person, at the right time and with the right support in place. Allocation decisions will be made considering applicants' individual circumstances to ensure customers have the best possible opportunity to succeed in their tenancies.

4.1.3 We will undertake a pre-tenancy assessment with all applicants, including existing RBH customers, to understand their ability to successfully sustain a tenancy.

4.1.4 Where a pre-tenancy assessment identifies that an applicant may need support to successfully maintain a tenancy, we will signpost them to appropriate support services or partner organisations. If suitable support cannot be accessed or arranged, we may decide not to allocate a home at that time. In such cases, we will provide the applicant with a clear explanation of our decision, along with guidance on the steps they can take to improve their chances of a successful application in the future.

4.1.5 As part of the pre-tenancy assessment, we will carry out an affordability assessment with applicants to ensure they can meet all household costs, not just rent. This applies regardless of how the rent will be paid. If a tenancy is deemed unaffordable, we may not offer a home at that time – but we'll explain our decision and offer guidance to help improve future eligibility.

## 4.2 **Direct Offers**

4.2.1 We will let a maximum of 25% of available homes to direct applicants and current RBH customers in housing need. This will enable us to make best use of our available homes to support individual customers and create diverse and sustainable communities.

4.2.2 Applicants who require a Direct Offer will be prioritised and allocated a banding that considers risks presented to the household first and then by date order.

a. Level 1 – risk of harm

b. Level 2 – medical/support needs

c. Level 3 – all other applicants

Level 1 Where accommodation is required and a permanent move is more appropriate (e.g. following major fire and flood; College Bank)

Level 1 Where rehousing is needed to enable RBH to fulfil safeguarding duties

Level 1 Urgent Need -Damp & Mould (recurrent cases which are untreatable or exacerbating a health condition)

Level 1 Urgent Need – Disrepair (with no recourse to planned/timely resolution)

Level 2 Lettings of specific property types (ILS; Adapted property)

Level 2 Over-crowding (extenuating circumstances impacting on health with consultant evidence, wellbeing or condition of property)

Level 3 When a risk assessment has been carried out across a neighbourhood or scheme (e.g. enduring ASB) or a decision is made that a mixed community would vastly improve neighbourhood sustainability

Level 3 Special circumstances where statutory duty cannot be met quickly and the landlord can support (including Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse)

Level 3 Statutory homeless (sensitive lets where the case has been referred by RBC)

4.2.3 We will not normally consider transferring customers who have outstanding debt owed to RBH or are otherwise in breach of their conditions of tenancy. However, this will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

## 4.3 **Eligibility**

4.3.1 As a landlord with charitable objectives, people housed by us under this policy will be primarily those who are unable to house themselves in the private sector.

We will let our homes to:

- People who have a specific housing need, for example because they are in need of special support due to disability, age or risk of abuse or neglect.
- People whose personal circumstances make it difficult to access owner occupation or private renting (e.g., job insecurity, self-employment).
- People whose financial circumstances mean that they cannot access owner occupation or private renting; we will use our financial assessment procedure to establish eligibility.

#### 4.3.2 **RBH colleagues**

RBH colleagues who are in housing need and meet the eligibility criteria under this policy can apply for a home in the same way as any other applicant by making a bid under RBC's Housing Solutions System

If an RBH colleague is successful in their application, Director approval will be required before a formal offer is made. Colleagues must also complete a declaration of interest to ensure that their application is open and transparent, and they must not interfere, or try and influence, directly or indirectly with the allocations and lettings process to secure a property.

#### 4.3.3 **Housing in Independent Living Schemes**

We will let these homes to people who meet the criteria for Intensive Housing Management and who:

- Are aged 60 and over.

We may consider applicants younger than 60 for schemes who meet the following criteria:

- Have a physical or mental disability.
- Are currently in receipt of PIP, ESA Support Group, the LCW/LCWRA (Limited Capability for Work/Limited Capability for Work Related Activity) components of Universal Credit or DLA (mobility and/or middle or highest rate care components) **and**
- Have a specific need for support services that cannot be delivered to an equivalent standard in general needs accommodation.

Decisions for the rehousing of applicants to ILS schemes may be given through a panel who may consider alternative housing options.

#### 4.3.4 **RBH Bungalows**

Applicants who require level access and/or the use of aids and adaptations will be considered for bungalows.

#### 4.3.5 **Extra Care**

In addition to our older persons housing, we also manage an Extra Care Scheme (Hare Hill) for older people requiring on site personal care as well as support.

Letting homes at Hare Hill will be agreed by the Hare Hill Allocations Panel. Referral to the Allocations Panel will be made via Adult Care Service, or self-

referral, following a Care Act Assessment. Decisions of the panel will be made in line with the Hare Hill Allocations Process.

#### 4.3.6 **Letting Homes against Household Size**

Generally, we will follow the criteria set by Housing Solutions for letting properties in a way that best matches household size with size of home.

We will consider under-occupation by applicants on an individual case basis, ensuring they are able to demonstrate their ability to afford all the rent. Cases where we may consider this include (but are not limited to):

- Where the home is in low demand.
- Where a Local Lettings Policy is in place which permits under occupation to promote scheme sustainability.
- Where a suitable household requiring accommodation of the size available is not identified.
- In exceptional circumstances to promote the welfare of the household e.g., where a disabled person requires internal storage space for equipment or an occasional bedroom for a carer.

#### 4.4 **Rent In Advance**

Customers will be required to pay rent in advance from the start of their tenancy in accordance with the terms of the tenancy agreement.

#### 4.5 **Local Lettings Plans**

4.5.1 Local Lettings Plans (LLPs) will be considered in consultation with RBC, in response to specific community sustainment issues and on any new build scheme and maybe used to combat social and economic deprivation with specific blocks of flats or densely occupied areas, particularly in areas of high anti-social behaviour.

4.5.2 We will work with RBC to apply specific criteria when advertising through Housing Solutions e.g., age restrictions or banding/grouping restrictions. Alternatively, we may consider changing the tenure mix, if appropriate, to deliver a more mixed community, leading to greater levels of sustainability.

#### 4.6 **Refusals**

4.6.1 We have a duty of care to all colleagues, customers, and local communities. To meet that duty, we will ask about the history and needs of applicants as part of the pre-tenancy assessment. We may consider not offering a tenancy at that time for the following reasons:

#### 4.6.2 **Anti-Social Behaviour**

- Where anti-social behaviour caused by the applicant or a member of their household has resulted in formal action including start of possession proceedings; the serving of a notice seeking possession; a possession order; an injunction; a conviction relating to anti-social behaviour. We will review this on a case-by-case basis, but no period of

exclusion will exceed two years from the initial housing application being made.

- Ongoing anti-social behaviour which is being investigated by us or another organisation.
- Specific threats of violence or harm have been made by the applicant or a household member against any RBH colleague. We will review this on a case-by-case basis, but no period of exclusion will exceed two years from the threats being made.
- Damage, caused deliberately or through neglect to a property, requiring extensive repair.

#### 4.6.3 **Debt and Affordability**

- Where the pre-tenancy assessment demonstrates that the financial circumstances of the applicant would be significantly worsened by accepting the property.
- Customers applying with any existing housing-related debt, either to RBH or other social landlord, or historical housing related debt that has not been cleared, will not normally be considered for an RBH property.

#### 4.6.4 **Special Circumstances**

- Where a property has been identified for a sensitive let and the applicant's circumstances do not meet the requirements of the sensitive let.

4.6.5 Where an applicant does not fulfil local lettings criteria that apply.

#### 4.7 **Appeals**

4.7.1 Appeals relating to the RBCs housing register prioritisation will be managed by RBC as per their policy and process.

4.7.2 Appeals relating to an RBH re-housing decision will be considered by Head of Neighbourhoods within 7 days of the decisions being made, by writing to:

Neighbourhood Services Lead  
Rochdale Boroughwide Housing  
Unique Enterprise Centre  
Belfield Road  
Rochdale  
OL16 2UP

Alternatively, you can email [priorityhousingrequests@rbh.org.uk](mailto:priorityhousingrequests@rbh.org.uk)

#### 4.8 **Tenancy Fraud**

We will take the necessary steps to ensure that opportunities for tenancy fraud are minimised by securing sufficient identification from the customer(s) at the start of the tenancy.

## 4.9 **Fairness and Transparency**

4.9.1 We will carry out audits 10% of all lettings each month to ensure fairness and transparency of decisions made to allocate homes.

4.9.2 To further ensure fairness and transparency when letting our homes, we will not award a tenancy to persons in the following categories:

- a) Board member or employee of RBH without appropriate permissions.
- b) A close relative of a person within (a) again without appropriate permissions.

Exceptions may be made only in accordance with, and subject to the controls of, our Fraud Policy.

## 5 **Monitoring**

5.1 Customers have engaged in reviewing this policy and its effectiveness through the Representative Body and customer Consultation events

Lettings performance is reported weekly to Head of Service, quarterly to RBC and is benchmarked annually.

## 6 **Review**

6.1 All RBH strategies, policies, service standards and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are 'fit for purpose' and comply with all relevant legislation and statutory regulations.

6.2 This policy will go through the full policy approval process every 3 years and will undergo a desktop review annually. This is to ensure that it is fit for purpose and complies with all relevant and statutory regulations.

## 7 **Links with Other RBH Documents**

7.1 This policy links to the following policies and strategies:

- Rent & Service Charge Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Income Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Fraud Policy
- Corporate Strategy
- Rehousing Policy

## **8 Inclusivity statement**

- 8.1 We are dedicated to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment for all. We ensure that everyone is valued and respected. Our policies aim to be inclusive, and will comply with UK laws, including the Equality Act 2010, to create a diverse and supportive environment for people to thrive.
- 8.2 We understand not everyone absorbs information the same way. If you have any difficulty understanding or interpreting this document please email [people@rbh.org.uk](mailto:people@rbh.org.uk) or call Freephone 0800 027 7769. We will work with you to ensure your individual needs are met.

Customers have told us that it is often difficult to navigate the housing application process due to jargon and/or technical language that is used in processes. We have produced an Appendix that explains these terms in a better way. See Appendix 2.

## APPENDIX 1

The type and size of a home offered to applicants will depend on the size, age and household make-up of the family. The following table shows how homes are offered to a range of household types to ensure best use of stock, though individual circumstances of the applicant may be taken into account for a different home.

<b>Type of Home</b>	<b>Household Type</b>
Houses and Maisonettes	Adult households Families with children
Flats above ground floor level with internal communal areas	All adult households. Households with uncaged pets are not accepted.
Flats without internal communal areas, and flats with internal communal areas but which are on the ground floor	All households
Studios / Bedsits	Single people and couples
Bungalows	Households requiring ground floor accommodation
Adapted properties (including wheelchair accessible housing)	Households requiring the adaptations
Independent Living Schemes and older people's accommodation	Single people and couples where all household members meet the age criteria or have a need for support

## APPENDIX 2

RBH	Rochdale Boroughwide Housing
RBC	Rochdale Borough Council
Statutory Duty	Legal obligations that are written in law
Housing Solutions	Rochdale Council's team who operate and manage the social housing provision for partners across the borough
Mutual Exchange	The process of legally swapping an assured social housing home with another social housing tenant
Decant	The temporary rehousing of a person or family (to a hotel or other accommodation), usually for a set period of time
Pre tenancy assessment	Checks made on applicants to ensure they are suitable for a tenancy and that they can maintain a successful tenancy
Affordability assessment	Checks made to ensure applicants will be reasonably able to afford their new tenancy to prevent failure in the future because of arrears
Direct Applicant	Someone who applies/is rehoused directly by RBH, not via the RBC housing register
ILS	Independent Living Scheme – older people's schemes which offer an extra level of support to ensure independence for longer
ASB	Anti-social behaviour
IHM	Intensive Housing Management – an extra benefit which can be paid to those who require more support in maintaining their tenancy
PIP	Personal Independence Payment – help with extra living costs for long term health conditions, disabilities or mobility issues
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance – help with living costs if someone is unable to work or to support them to get back into work
LCW/LWWRA	Limited Capability for Work/Limited Capability for Work Related Activity – extra payments for universal credit claimants
DLA	Disability Living Allowance (for children only)
Universal Credit	Payment to help with living costs for people who are employed and un-employed

Note – This glossary is subject to approval by the Representative Body