

# Bield Housing Allocation Policy – Easy to Read

## Introduction

We help people live better lives in welcoming homes, with supportive communities. This rule about giving homes is very important. Our main goal is to help those who need homes the most while using our homes wisely



We have important values that guide us:



### Honesty

We always tell the truth and are clear in our decisions



### Equality and Diversity

We like everyone and treat them all fairly



### Ambition

We work hard to make things better for people



### Dignity

Everyone matters, and we respect them in all we do



### Integrity

We do the right things in the right way



### Caring

We truly care for our tenants and community



### Kindness

We are nice and helpful to everyone.

**Purpose** This policy helps us give homes fairly. We want:

- **Fair Homes:** Everyone can see how we give homes, and it's fair.
- **Equal Treatment:** We treat everyone the same and follow the same rules.
- **Helping Those in Need:** We help people who really need homes.

This policy helps us:

- **Follow the Law:** We follow the rules and laws for giving homes.
- **Fair for All:** Everyone gets treated the same and no one is treated unfairly.
- **Help Special Groups:** Sometimes, we give homes to some groups first.
- **Good Homes:** We give homes that match what people need.
- **Use Homes Well:** We use our homes in the best way.
- **Work with Others:** We work with local groups to help people find homes.

## **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion**

When we follow this policy, we also follow our Equality and Diversity policy. We want everyone to have a fair chance. We made sure this rule is fair for everyone. We also do extra things like:

- **Big Print:** We have a version with bigger letters for those who need it.
- **Translation Help:** We tell people we can help with translation.
- **Easy Version:** We have an easier version for people who find it hard to read.



If you have questions, just ask us. We're here to help!

## Definitions



These words are used a lot in this policy:

**Applicant:** Someone who wants a home from Bield.

**Application Form:** A paper or online form to fill out with info to get a home.

**My Bield:** A website where you can say you want a home and see your application.

**Tenancy Agreement:** A paper that says you can live in a home and need to pay for it.

## Access to Housing

This part talks about how to get a home and who can get one.

- **Who Can Apply:** Anyone over 16 can say they want a home.
- **How to Apply:** You can fill out a paper form or use the website 'My Bield.'
- **Getting Info:** We need to know about you and where you lived before.
- **Why We Ask:** This helps us understand what home you need.
- **Certain Things We Don't Check:** We don't care if you own a home before, how much money you have, or any debts. We only care about your need for a home.
- **Choosing a Home:** You can pick any home or area you want.
- **Age Limits:** Most homes are for people over 60. Some are for people over 50. Sometimes, we give homes to younger people who need them a lot.
- **Telling You About Homes:** We'll tell you about homes and if you can get one from us.
- **Special Homes:** If a home is special for certain needs (like wheelchairs), we give it to people who need it most, then to others who need special homes.

## Nomination Agreements

This part talks about agreements we make with local groups to help people get homes.

- **Why We Make Agreements:** We want more people to have homes, even if they didn't ask us directly.
- **Helping Councils:** We want to help Councils find homes for people.
- **Written Agreements:** We write down what we agree with Councils.
- **How Many Homes:** We give some of our empty homes to people local groups choose.
- **Some Homes Are Different:** Some homes might not be in these agreements.

## **Section 5 Protocol Agreements**

This part is about agreements with Councils to help people without homes, called "Section 5 protocols."

- **Agreements with Councils:** We make agreements with Councils to help homeless people.
- **Written Agreements:** We write down what we agree with local groups.
- **Why We Do This:** We want to help homeless people find homes when local groups ask us.
- **Thinking About Special Homes:** We consider homes for specific needs and services.
- **Working Together:** We want to help local groups and give homes to those who need them most.

## **Other Referrals**

This part is about special ways to get homes in some places.

- **Special Arrangements:** Some homes need different ways to apply, like HOOP in Glasgow.
- **Telling You:** We'll let you know if certain homes need different ways to get them.

- **Being Clear:** We want you to understand how to get these homes.

## Other Common Housing Registers (CHRs)

This part is about working with groups that help people find homes.

- **CHRs Explained:** Some areas have groups that help you find homes.
- **Joining CHRs:** Sometimes, we work with these groups to find homes for you.
- **Sharing Info:** We talk to these groups to find more homes for you.
- **Following the Rules:** In some places, we might need to change our rules a bit to help more people find homes.

## Assessment of Need

This part explains how we decide who gets homes based on their needs.

- **How We Decide:** We use a point system to see who needs homes the most.
- **Points System:** We have a system with points in different categories.
- **Categories of Points:** We have different reasons to give points, like where you live or if you need special things.
- **How Points Are Given:** We give points based on your situation, compared to others.
- **Who Gets Preference:** We give preference to people in tough situations, like those who don't have homes or live in bad conditions.
- **Special Homes:** If you need special homes, like for wheelchairs, we consider that too.
- **Giving More Points:** We give more points to those who need homes urgently.
- **Top of the List:** People who really need to move get priority.

- **Special Area Preference:** If you need to be in a certain area, we consider that too.
- **Reasons for Area Preference:** If you need support, have trouble reaching places, want to be near family, or have other issues, we consider that when giving homes.
- **Tie-Breaker:** If two people have the same points, we use the application date to decide.

## Pre-Allocation Assessment

This part is about checking applicants before we offer them a home.

- **Checking Before Offering:** People who will get a home need to be checked first.
- **How We Check:** We can check by visiting your current home, asking you to visit us, or talking on the phone.
- **When We Check:** Normally, we check in with you when you come near the top of the list. We want you to have your last check no later than 12 months ago before offering a home, as your circumstances might have changed.
- **When We Visit:** We usually visit if you have problems with your current home, personal safety, or moving around.
- **Why We Check:** We want to make sure the information you gave us is correct, and we answer any questions you have.
- **Special Homes:** If you need special homes, we might need more info like a medical report or social work assessment.
- **Being Sure Before Offering:** If we need more info, we wait until we're sure about your needs.
- **High Support Needs:** If you need a lot of help, we make sure you can get the help you need from the Council or other groups before giving you a home.

## Allocation of Housing

This part explains how we decide who gets homes.

- **Our Goal:** We want to give homes to those who need them urgently.
- **Offering Homes:** We usually offer homes to people with the highest points for a specific home.
- **Conditions for Offer:** We have some rules that need to be met for the offer to be valid.

## Household Composition and Bedroom Matching

This part explains how we match people to homes based on their family size.

- **Matching Family Size:** Your family size needs to match the size of the home.
- **Matching Bedrooms:** We consider you a match if you need the same or fewer bedrooms than the home has.
- **No Overcrowding:** We don't want homes to be overcrowded, so if you need more bedrooms, we might not match you.
- **Looking for Matches:** If we can't find a match, we work with others to find a home for you.

## Bedroom Matching Criteria for Children

This part talks about how we match homes for families with children.

- **Matching Bedrooms for Children:** We have rules for how children can share bedrooms.
- **Same-Sex Children:** Two children of the same sex under 16 can share a double bedroom.
- **Different-Sex Children:** Two children of different sexes under 10 can share a double bedroom.
- **Avoiding Overcrowding:** We don't want kids to share a bedroom with only one bed, so we avoid that situation.

## Transfers and Mutual Exchanges

This part explains how tenants can move to another property owned by the same landlord or do a mutual exchange with another tenant.

## Transfers

- **Moving Within Our Properties:** If you want to move to another property we own, you need to apply and go through the same process as new applicants.
- **Conditions for Transfers:** There are some conditions you need to meet, like agreeing to the rules in your current tenancy agreement.
- **Under Occupancy:** If you need a smaller or bigger home within Bield, we have specific rules about this.
- **Getting Advice:** We'll give you advice before you decide to accept an offer for a transfer.

## Mutual Exchanges

- **Swapping Homes:** You can exchange your home with another tenant from any housing association or local authority.
- **Conditions for Exchanges:** There are conditions you need to meet, like having had your tenancy for at least 12 months and meeting the rules for the property you want to move into.
- **Both Landlords Need to Agree:** Both landlords need to agree to the exchange, and both tenants should have followed the rules.
- **Conditions of Exchange:** You need to accept the home in the condition it's in.
- **Right to Refuse:** We can refuse an exchange if it doesn't meet the conditions.

## Special Arrangements and Sensitive Lets

- **Different Rules in Some Cases:** In some areas or for specific properties, there might be different rules for allocation.

- **100% Nomination Arrangements:** Sometimes, Councils nominate all tenants for certain developments.
- **Sensitivity in Allocations:** For unique properties, we consider the needs and preferences of potential tenants to make suitable matches.

## Local Lettings Initiatives

- **Purpose of Initiatives:** Sometimes, we might have different rules for certain areas or properties to achieve specific goals.
- **Stimulating Interest:** Initiatives can be used to get people interested in areas with low demand housing.
- **Prioritising Local Communities:** In high-demand areas, we might prioritise local residents who face difficulties accessing housing.
- **Creating a Plan:** Before starting an initiative, we create a plan to outline what we want to achieve.
- **Monitoring and Review:** We regularly check if the initiative is working well and if it needs any changes.
- **Legal Compliance:** Initiatives must follow the law and be fair to everyone.

## Management Allocations

- **In Extraordinary Cases:** In very rare cases where extreme or urgent housing needs fall outside the points system, we might consider management allocations.
- **When to Consider:** These allocations are only for extreme emergencies where no other suitable option is available within the regular policy.
- **Urgent Situations:** These allocations might be used for urgent cases like emergencies or when another housing provider requests help in rehousing their tenant.
- **Decision and Accountability:** Decisions for management allocations must be made at the level of Housing Services Manager or above, fully documented, and reported to the Board for accountability.

- **Exceptions:** Management allocations wouldn't usually be considered for transfers due to medical or personal reasons.
- **Monitoring:** We will closely monitor the use of management allocations to ensure they are used minimally and fairly.

## Reviews

- **Annual Reviews:** Applicant reviews are done annually to confirm continued interest and check for changes in circumstances.
- **Changes in Contact:** If an applicant updates their information or goes through a formal assessment before the anniversary, that would be considered their review.
- **Moving Address:** If you move to a different address, you need to fill out a new application as the old one won't be valid.

## Changes in Circumstances

- **Importance of Updates:** It's crucial to update us about changes in circumstances as it impacts your housing needs and offers.
- **Offer Withdrawal:** If an offer was made based on incorrect information, it might be withdrawn, affecting your application.

## Deferrals

- **Active Participation:** Deferrals encourage active participation and informed choices from applicants.
- **Modifying Choices:** You can modify your housing choices as long as you meet the criteria for the options.
- **Temporary Deferrals:** You might defer your application for up to six months due to circumstances like illness or upcoming hospitalization.

- **Long-Term Deferrals:** For deferrals longer than six months, you'll need to reapply when you're actively looking for housing.

## Suspensions

- **Reasons for Suspensions:** Applicants might be suspended from receiving offers for specific reasons like anti-social behaviour, previous convictions, rent arrears, and more.
- **Duration:** Suspensions are usually time-limited, up to a maximum of one year, depending on the situation.
- **Monitoring and Improvement:** Suspensions might be used to monitor and improve behaviour. If no further issues occur during the suspension, it might be lifted. If not, another suspension might follow.
- **Notification and Appeal:** Applicants will be notified in writing about suspensions, the reasons, and the duration. They have the right to appeal.
- **Consideration of Circumstances:** Decisions about suspensions take into account personal circumstances and housing need.
- **Decision Authority:** Decisions about suspensions and appeals are made by relevant authority levels within the organization.

## Cancellation of Applications

- **Grounds for Cancellation:** Applications might be cancelled under various circumstances, including at the applicant's request, upon their death, or for lack of response to review or assessment requests.
- **Cancellation after Suspension:** Applications suspended due to housing support and care needs not matching services might be cancelled after a significant period.

## Tenancy References

- **Request for References:** References from current rental accommodation might be requested to assess tenancy support and antisocial behaviour issues.
- **Unsatisfactory References:** An unsatisfactory reference might result in a suspension from receiving offers for up to six months, allowing time to assess suitability.

## False or Misleading Information

- **Commitment to Fairness:** Manipulating the allocation process through false or misleading information is not acceptable.
- **Declaration of Truth:** Applicants are required to sign a declaration confirming the accuracy of their information. False information can lead to reassessment, suspensions, and offer withdrawals.
- **Consequences:** Offers made based on false information might be withdrawn, and tenancies could be terminated.

## Housing Options and Information

- **Providing Comprehensive Information:** We aim to offer applicants thorough information about housing options and services for informed decisions.
- **Access to Information:** We will guide applicants to relevant services if we can't provide specific information directly.

## Promoting Equality

- **Equality Commitment:** Applicants won't be treated differently based on protected characteristics or any other factors that may disadvantage them.
- **Reasonable Adjustments:** We'll make reasonable adjustments for individuals with disabilities to ensure equal access.
- **Support for Minority Groups:** For minority groups, we'll ask about identification to offer appropriate support and create an inclusive environment.

- **Alternative Formats:** We'll provide information in alternative formats upon request.

## **Connections with Board**

- **Compliance and Regulations:** We comply with housing regulations and have adopted codes of conduct for Board members and staff to manage potential conflicts of interest.
- **Declaration of Connections:** Applicants need to declare any connections they have with Board members, employees, or related parties.
- **Management of Conflicts:** Perceived conflicts of interest will be managed in accordance with our policies.
- **Allocation Conditions:** Specific conditions apply if allocation is to be granted to individuals with connections to the organization. The allocation process must be fair and without special consideration. The individual involved must have no influence over the allocation. The allocation must be recorded in the Register of Interest.

## **Veterans and Individuals Who Have Served in the Armed Forces**

- **Commitment to Armed Forces Covenant:** We are committed to treating armed forces veterans fairly and providing appropriate support, following the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.
- **Application from Armed Forces Veterans:** While we don't usually receive applications directly from individuals leaving the armed forces, we'll ask applicants if they have served to better understand and support them.

## **Housing Managed Offenders**

- **Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA):** We work with Responsible Authorities to manage risks posed by sexual and violent offenders through MAPPA. Housing providers are Duty to Co-

operate (DTC) agencies within MAPPA, talking with Responsible Authorities to ensure public safety and reintegration.

- **Link Officer Role:** Link Officers manage housing-related aspects of MAPPA, exchange information, and work with Responsible Authorities.

## Data Protection and Confidentiality

- **Data Protection Compliance:** We comply with Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR, treating applicant information confidentially and securely.
- **Sharing Information:** With applicant permission, we might share information with relevant agencies to assess housing and support needs or if part of a common housing register.
- **Right to Access and Correct Information:** Applicants have the right to access their information and correct inaccuracies.

## Complaints

- **Complaint Procedure:** Those dissatisfied with any aspect of the application, assessment, or allocation process can follow the complaints procedure.

## Monitoring the Policy

- **Performance Monitoring:** We monitor allocation and void management performance to ensure policy objectives are met.

## Policy Review

- **Review Process:** The policy will be reviewed every five years or more frequently as needed.
- **Stakeholder Consultation:** During reviews, we consult with stakeholders, including staff, tenants, applicants, and other relevant parties, to gather feedback and insights.

## **Publicising and Accessibility**

- **Transparency and Accessibility:** The policy will be available on our website and internal intranet site for easy access by the public and staff.
- **Translation and Interpretation:** We provide translations or interpretation services for those who require it.

## **Training and Competence**

- **Training Sessions:** Training will be provided before policy updates and regularly thereafter to ensure staff are knowledgeable about policy changes.
- **Ongoing Professional Development:** Regular training sessions will occur to promote ongoing professional development and compliance with policy changes.

## **Scheme of Delegation**

- **Roles and Responsibilities:** The Scheme of Delegation outlines the responsibilities of the Board, Chief Executive, Head of Housing, and Customer Experience colleagues in implementing and overseeing the policy. The Board ensures policy adoption and compliance, the Chief Executive ensures policy alignment with strategic objectives, the Head of Housing monitors policy implementation, and Customer Experience colleagues implement the policy in their roles.

## **Complying with the Law and Good Practice**

### **Legislation and Compliance**

- **Legislation Considered:** The Allocations Policy development adheres to the following legislations:
  - Housing (Scotland) Acts 2001-2014
  - Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003
  - Management of Offenders Act 2005
  - Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006

- Equality Act 2010
- Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Bribery Act 2010

## **Regulation and Good Practice**

- **Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR):** As a Registered Social Landlord (RSL), we follow the guidance of the SHR, ensuring our policy aligns with good practice and meets their standards.
- **SHR Charter Outcomes:** The policy aligns with key outcomes in the SHR Charter, including:
  - Treating customers fairly and respecting individual needs.
  - Providing accessible communication and information to customers.
  - Offering information on housing options and allocation procedures.
  - Assisting those at risk of homelessness.
  - Providing transparent information about housing prospects and allocation.

## **Care Inspectorate and Health and Social Care Standards**

- **Care Provider Regulation:** As a care provider, we adhere to the standards of the Care Inspectorate.
- **Relevant Standards:** Standards related to care users' confidence in the care organization are considered in policy development.