



Renfrewshire Common Housing Allocation Policy

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1. Introduction

1.1 About this policy

The Renfrewshire Common Housing Allocation Policy (the policy) has been developed in partnership between Renfrewshire Council, Bridgewater Housing Association, Linstone Housing Association, Paisley Housing Association and Williamsburgh Housing Association.

This policy is a public document and will be made available on each of our websites. Copies will also be available from our offices.

It sets out an agreed, common approach that partner landlords will use to allocate homes that become available for let. By allocating, we mean the process of selecting people from our housing list, offering them a house and, if they accept, signing a tenancy agreement with them. In certain circumstances, participating landlords may choose to exercise all or some of the optional conditions as set out in this policy. This would be done on a case by case basis, to allow the fair and efficient operation of the letting process.

This policy is based on a group plus priority approach and has a clear focus on meeting housing need. It replaces all previous allocation policies of the partner landlords. We will review the policy every 3 years, unless changes to legislation, regulation or the results of our performance monitoring require otherwise.

1.2 The partner landlords

Summary information on each of the four landlords that operate the policy is set out below. Further information about each landlord, including where they have properties and how many properties usually become available for let, can be accessed on each landlord's own website or by visiting one of their offices.

Renfrewshire Council is the largest social rented sector landlord in the area with around 12,500 properties across Renfrewshire. These include general needs housing, housing for older people and sheltered housing properties.

Bridgewater Housing Association has around 800 properties in Erskine. These include general needs, sheltered and extra care housing as well as amenity and wheelchair accessible homes.

Linstone Housing Association has over 1,500 properties located mainly in Linwood and Johnstone with the remainder spread throughout Paisley, Renfrew and villages throughout Renfrewshire. Their properties include general needs housing and housing for older people.

Paisley Housing Association has around 1,200 properties, the majority of which are for general needs but they also have some amenity properties and homes for wheelchair users. The properties are in Foxbar, Glenburn, and in the South, West and Town Centre of Paisley.

Williamsburgh Housing Association has around 1,600 properties. The majority are general needs but they also have some amenity properties and homes for wheelchair users. Their properties are in Paisley East, West and North, Renfrew and Johnstone.

A number of other social landlords provide housing in Renfrewshire. Further information on these landlords can be found in the housing section of the Renfrewshire Council website at www.renfrewshire.gov.uk and in Appendix 1 of this document.

1.3 Our policy aims

We are committed to providing high quality, affordable housing that meets housing needs. When allocating properties, we will aim to:

- Make sure we offer people accommodation that meets their needs.
- Maximise housing options.
- Make best use of the properties that are available for let.
- Help build sustainable communities by creating successful and sustainable tenancies.
- Work to provide excellent customer services to those seeking housing in Renfrewshire.
- Meet all our legal obligations and operate under the principles set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

We will do this by taking an approach to allocating homes that:

- Is fair, open and transparent.
- Takes a consistent approach to decision-making.
- Promotes equality.

- Treats all applicants with respect, including respecting the confidentiality of information given to us.

1.4 Equality and diversity

We are committed to preventing discrimination and providing equal opportunities for everyone who applies to us for housing. In applying this policy, we will not discriminate against any individual, household or group on grounds of race, gender, sex, marital status/civil partnership, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, language, social origin, disability, age or other personal attribute.

We will make this policy available in alternative formats such as large print or Braille on request. Translation services for other languages can also be made available. Where practical, we will arrange for an interpreter if you speak a language other than English. We can also provide a British Sign Language interpreter if required.

1.5 Confidentiality and data protection

Any information given to us as part of the application process will be processed in compliance with Data Protection legislation.

You can ask to look at the information held on your record. If you wish to do this, you should make a written request to the relevant landlord. We will respond within one calendar month.

We will not keep your personal information longer than is needed.

1.6 Law, good practice and the Scottish Housing Charter

This policy has been developed to be compliant with housing and other relevant legislation. A list of the laws which have been taken into account are set out in Appendix 2.

The policy also takes account of good practice guidance from the Scottish Government and the Scottish Housing Regulator. This includes the standards set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Further information can be found on

the Scottish Government's website at:
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2012/03/2602>

1.7 Developing and reviewing this policy

We will consult with housing applicants, tenants, registered tenant organisations and others when developing and making changes to this policy.

We will review this policy every three years, or earlier if required in light of changes in the law or good practice guidance.

2. Making an application

2.1 Who can apply?

Each of us operates our own separate housing list. You can get information on how to join each landlord's list by contacting them directly. Contact information for each of us is included in Appendix 1.

Anyone aged 16 years or over is entitled to apply and be placed on any of the lists, provided they are eligible to receive an offer of housing.

You can make a joint application with another person or people who want to live with you, even if you are not living in the same household at the moment.

2.2 Information and advice for applicants

We recognise the importance of offering high quality information and advice to those applying for housing in Renfrewshire. Someone making an application may be invited to attend an interview with the landlord to whom they are applying. We will provide information on:

- How we will process your application.
- How long it will take to process and decide on your application.
- Affordability, including the average cost of renting a property.

Some landlords may also be able to discuss other housing options with you. In many areas of Renfrewshire, the demand for housing is considerably higher than the supply. We may not be able to make everyone an offer of housing or people might have a long wait. This is most likely to be the case if you have no or low-level housing need and you are looking to be housed in one of the areas for which demand is higher and the number of properties becoming available is low.

However, in areas in which demand is lower and more properties become available, you may have a greater chance of being made an offer. We will give you realistic advice about the likelihood of being re-housed based on the choices you have made. We will also provide information on opportunities to find housing with other local providers.

If you cannot call into the office of the landlord(s) to which you have applied because you have health or mobility problems, a member of staff will visit you at home or arrange a telephone interview. If you live outwith Renfrewshire, or we are not able to visit for some other reason, we will send you an application by post.

2.3 Information provided by applicants

It is important for us to have accurate and up-to-date information on your circumstances. If you fail to provide the necessary information to support your application, this may mean that your application cannot be fully assessed. We will ask you to provide any required information and will re-assess your application once that information has been received. If we do not receive the information we have asked for within 30 days of us asking for it, your application may be cancelled.

If you deliberately provide false or misleading information, or withhold information, your application may be suspended. Any offer of housing that has been made may be withdrawn and if a tenancy has been granted on the basis of false information, your landlord could take action to end the tenancy.

You must tell us if your circumstances change as this could affect your housing application. Changes of circumstances might include you moving to a new house, someone moving into or out of your current home or someone having a baby. Changes such as these could affect the size of property you require and how your housing need is assessed. It is important to contact each of the landlords you have applied to and tell them about the changes.

2.4 Persons who are subject to Immigration Control

The law covering asylum and immigration is complex and applies differently to the Council and the housing association partners.

If you could be affected by the legislation, you must tell us. We may be unable to assist but may be able to provide details to you of agencies who can help you.

2.5 Applications from staff, elected members or committee members

Applications made by staff, elected members or management committee members will be accepted onto the housing list in the same way as other applicants. We will comply with all relevant legislation, regulatory guidance and best practice in dealing with any of these applications.

To make sure that no-one benefits from a personal connection, applicants will be asked and required to declare whether they are related to a member of staff, management committee member or elected member for the landlord to which they are applying. Further information will be set out in the housing application form.

3. Assessing what size of home you need

3.1 Number of bedrooms

We will work out the number of bedrooms that you require based on who will be living with you. Although we want to give you as much choice as possible, we need to balance this with making best use of the properties that become available. We also want to work with you to make sure your choices are affordable.

Our starting point will be to assess the number of bedrooms required as follows:

- Couples/partners share one bedroom.
- Other adults or single parents have one bedroom.
- Two children of the same sex under the age of 16 share one bedroom.
- Two children under the age of 10, regardless of their sex, share one bedroom.
- Children of different sexes will need a bedroom each once they reach 10 years old, unless there is another child in the household of the same sex with whom they could share a bedroom.
- No more than two people should share a bedroom.
- Where applicants or other members of the household are pregnant, we will include their unborn child/children when working out the number of bedrooms required from 3 months before the due date.

Household size	House size
Single person	1 bedroom or bedsit
Couple/partners	1 bedroom
Couple/partners or single parent with 1 child	2 bedrooms
Couple/partners or single parent with 2 children	2 or 3 bedrooms (depending on the age and sex of the children)
Couple/partners or single parent with 3 children	3 or 4 bedrooms (depending on the age and sex of the children)
Couple/partners or single parent with 4 children	3 or 4 bedrooms (depending on the age and sex of the children)
Couple/partners or single parent with 5 or 6 children	4 bedrooms (depending on the age and sex of the children)

The type and size of properties becoming available will vary depending on the stock of each landlord. In particular, some landlords may have properties with smaller bedrooms.

Some partners have properties with bedrooms which they have classed as single bedrooms. If a bedroom has been classed as a single bedroom, any offer made by the landlord will be based on only one person occupying that bedroom.

We will aim to make good use of each property becoming available by offering it to a household which needs a property of that size. However, if there is limited interest in a property amongst those needing a property of that size, we may consider making offers to other households.

In certain circumstances, when offering a property, landlords may choose to make offers of properties of one bedroom more than the applicant requires. This would be for high priority applicants, where Renfrewshire Council requires to fulfil their statutory duty. This would only be done where the applicant has indicated that they would accept a property that has one more bedroom than they require.

We also recognise that some applicants may prefer that children do not share bedrooms. You can request that the bedroom requirement be assessed based on children aged 10 or over having their own bedroom. However, we would only consider you for a property with the higher number of bedrooms if there is no other household in housing need and requiring a property of that size. If you did decide you would prefer to have the additional bedroom, this bedroom would not be taken into account when assessing any priority based on overcrowding.

There is a very limited supply of larger properties. If you need a property with 4 or more bedrooms we will work with you to make sure that your area choices maximise your chance of being made an offer. However, given our stock limitations and lack of suitable supply of appropriately sized homes, we may in some circumstances have to make an offer of a property that will reduce a household's overcrowding or under occupying, but may not fully meet their accommodation requirements. This will only be done under exceptional circumstances to improve a household's overall housing situation.

3.2 Child residence, contact and access arrangements

For parents, guardians and kinship carers with formal residency rights and overnight contact orders or overnight access arrangements that are shared on an equal basis (child staying overnight an average of at least 3 nights a week at each home), a child may be entitled to a bedroom within each home in accordance with our bedroom entitlement.

Where a child or children stay less than an average of 3 nights a week at the home, one additional bedroom more than required by the rest of the household may be provided. This will be irrespective of the number of children for whom the home will not be their principal home. This bedroom would not be taken into account when assessing any priority based on overcrowding.

In exceptional circumstances, a senior officer may exercise discretion in deciding upon the size of a home a household requires.

3.3 Other reasons for additional bedrooms

We understand that there may be other circumstances which can affect the number of bedrooms you need. The Department of Work and Pensions regulations covering the UK Government's Under-Occupancy charges also recognise certain circumstances under which you may require an extra bedroom. We will discuss this with you on a case-by-case basis.

You may be entitled to an additional bedroom under the following circumstances:

- If there is a **health, care or mobility reason** for needing an additional bedroom. For example, for a carer (or team of carers) that provides someone in the household with overnight care or if a long-term condition (such as dementia) makes it difficult for a couple to share a room. This bedroom entitlement would be used to assess any priority based on overcrowding.
- If someone in the household is, or wishes to be, a **kinship carer for a child or children** but those children are not yet living in the household. This bedroom entitlement would be used to assess any priority based on overcrowding.

- If someone in the household is ***caring for a foster child*** or has been accepted as a foster carer but has no child living with them, as long as the period without a child does not exceed 12 months. If someone has applied to foster and have been approved in principle, pending suitable housing, they could be listed as looking for a property with an additional bedroom. However, we would not make an offer of a property with an additional bedroom until their application to foster has been approved by Renfrewshire Council or any other fostering agency. This bedroom entitlement would be used to assess any priority based on overcrowding.
- If someone in the household is ***adopting a child*** or has been approved in principle pending suitable housing, they could be listed as looking for a property with an additional bedroom. However, we would not make an offer of a property with an additional bedroom until their application to adopt has been approved by Renfrewshire Council or any other adoption agency. This bedroom entitlement would be used to assess any priority based on overcrowding.

4. The housing list and how applications are prioritised

This policy has been developed to give priority to those in the greatest housing need and all applications will be assessed and given priority in accordance with this policy.

4.1 Factors we must take into account

There are certain factors which the law states we must consider when deciding to whom we offer any homes that become available. Housing legislation states that we must give reasonable preference to:

- People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and who have unmet housing needs.
- People living under unsatisfactory housing conditions and who have unmet housing needs.
- Social housing tenants who the landlord allocating a property considers are under-occupying their current home.

These reasonable preference categories have been considered in the development of this policy.

4.2 Unmet housing needs

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 sets out the categories of applicant to whom social landlords must give reasonable preference if they have unmet housing needs. This means that landlords should consider whether applicants have housing needs which cannot be met through other housing options which are available. Landlords should consider what those other options might be and whether they are accessible to the applicant.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 removes the prohibition on taking ownership of property into account in allocating social housing. This means that if you or someone else on your application owns land or property, or previously owned land or property, we may take this into account when deciding on your priority for social housing. This applies to existing tenants as well as new applicants.

4.3 Factors we cannot consider

There are also certain factors which the law states we cannot consider when allocating housing. These are:

- How long an applicant has lived in the area.
- Any debt relating to a house of which the applicant was not a tenant.
- Any rent or other debt the applicant built up on a previous tenancy which has now been paid.
- Any amount which still needs to be paid where:
 - The amount owed is not more than 1/12th of the yearly amount due (or which was paid) by the applicant to the landlord for the tenancy; or
 - The applicant has an agreement in place with the landlord to repay the money, has made payments in line with the arrangement for at least three continuous months, and is continuing to make these payments.
- Any outstanding debts (including missed Council Tax payments) which do not relate to the tenancy of a house.
- The age of the applicant, as long as he or she is 16 or over except when allocating:
 - Houses which have been designed or substantially adapted for a particular age group; or
 - Houses for people who are, or will be, receiving housing support services for people of a particular age group.
- The income of the applicant and his or her family.

4.4 Our group system

Our housing list is divided into five groups. Your application will be assessed based on your circumstances and will then be placed into one of those groups.

Homelessness: Applicants will be placed in this group if the Council has found them to be unintentionally homeless.

Mobility Group: Applicants will be placed in this group if they require a home which is suitable for someone needing an adapted or accessible property. All

applicants, including those who are already a tenant of the landlord they are applying to but are looking for a move, will be placed in this group

General Applicants Group: Applicants will be placed in this group if they have been assessed as having a housing need but are not a tenant of the landlord to which they have applied. This group includes but is not restricted to: owner-occupiers, tenants of private landlords, people living 'care of' and tenants of social landlords other than the one to which they are applying.

Transfer Applicant Group (with housing need): Applicants will be placed in this group if they have been assessed as having a housing need, are a tenant of the landlord to which they have applied, and they do not need an adapted or accessible property (in which case they will be placed in the Mobility Group).

Transfer Applicant Group (no housing need): Applicants will be placed in this group if they are assessed as not being in housing need, are a tenant of the landlord to which they have applied, and they do not need an adapted or accessible property (in which case they will be placed in the Mobility Group).

Depending on the group your application has been placed in, we may also award a level of priority to your application. We use four levels of priority, with Priority A being for those in the most urgent need. If you have more than one type of housing need you will be awarded an additional level of priority. We refer to this as a 'plus' award. Our approach is set out in the table below.

Statutory Homeless	Level of Priority	Mobility Group (general and transfer applicants)	General Applicants Group (not landlord's own tenant)	Transfer Applicants Group (with housing need)	Transfer Applicants Group (no housing need)
No other award required	<p>Priority A: Critical Need</p> <p>Priority A +: Critical Need and one or more other need (Priority A to C)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires a mobility property Critical health and social care, mobility, domestic abuse, harassment, insecure accommodation, leaving institutions or specialist accommodation, overcrowding or below tolerable standard. + award: another of the above or one or more of the B or C awards below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical health and social care, domestic abuse, harassment, insecure accommodation, leaving institutions or specialist accommodation, overcrowding or below tolerable standard. + award: another of the above or one or more of the B or C awards below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical health and social care, domestic abuse, harassment or overcrowding. + award: another of the above or one or more of the B or C awards below. 	<p>No need based award possible</p> <p>Based on date of application</p>
	<p>Priority B: Urgent need</p> <p>Priority B +: Urgent Need and one or more other need (Priority B or C)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires a mobility property Urgent health and social care, mobility, social, community or family support, harassment, overcrowding, under-occupying or relationship breakdown. + award: another of the above or one or more of the C awards below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urgent health and social care, social, community or family support, harassment, overcrowding, under-occupying, relationship breakdown. + award: another of the above or one or more of the C awards below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urgent health and social care, social, community or family support, harassment, overcrowding, under-occupying, or relationship breakdown. + award: another of the above or one or more of the C awards below. 	
	<p>Priority C: Moderate need</p> <p>Priority C+: Two or more moderate housing needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires a mobility property Moderate health and social care, mobility, social, community or family support, insecure accommodation, leaving institutions or specialist accommodation, overcrowding, under-occupying, take up or stay in employment. + award: another of the above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate health and social care, social, community or family support, insecure accommodation, leaving institutions or specialist accommodation, overcrowding, under-occupying, take up or stay in employment. + award: another of the above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate health and social care, social, community or family support, overcrowding, under-occupying, take up or stay in employment. + award: another of the above. 	
	<p>Priority D: No housing need</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lives in a property that meets their mobility needs. Would need to be rehoused into a mobility property. No housing need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No housing need. 	<p><i>(Placed in Transfer with no housing need group)</i></p>	

4.5 Responding to critical housing need

Our policy is designed to allow us to respond to critical housing need. We are committed to ensuring that people in critical housing need are rehoused as quickly as possible.

If you receive an A+ or A priority you have been assessed as having very serious housing needs and we will work with you to make sure we can make you a reasonable offer of housing which meets your needs.

However, we will not expect you to be unnecessarily restrictive in the types of housing or areas for which you will be considered. In particular, if a flat or maisonette would meet your needs we may offer you a property of that type and would consider that to be a reasonable offer. We will also ask you to be flexible about the areas in which you would consider being housed. If we have not been able to make you an offer in one of your areas of choice within 28 days of receiving your A+ or A priority, we may ask you to consider adjoining areas.

If we make you an offer of housing which you refuse, we will invite you to a housing options and information interview to discuss the best way of ensuring we are able to help you.

4.6 Health and Social Care Priority

Health and Social Care Priority is awarded by the Health and Social Care Panel. This Panel assesses the housing and/or support needs of people with specific requirements, to allow them to live in the community. Applicants, or members of their household, who have housing or support needs, will have their circumstances referred to the Panel. The Panel is made up of Renfrewshire Council officers, health professionals and local housing associations.

Applicants will include those who:

- Have received or are receiving, treatment for serious health issues. This may include physical disability (not covered by a mobility award), post-traumatic stress disorder and other related conditions.
- Have a learning disability.
- Have mental health needs.

- Have medical needs not addressed by the mobility priority.
- Have any other significant health and social care needs not covered elsewhere in this policy.
- In particular circumstances, victims of crime may also be eligible.

A referral will be made on behalf of applicants with a health and social care need by appropriate Renfrewshire Council services, housing associations, support workers or health professionals.

The Panel considers each case that has been referred to them in order to provide appropriate housing and/or support. This is intended to help applicants keep their tenancy longer-term, taking account of things like:

- The applicant's wider support network.
- Their ability to use community facilities.
- Particular needs outlined by the agency that referred them.

The Panel will decide the type and location of suitable accommodation and award a priority appropriate to requirements. We will make offers in line with the Panel's decision to grant increased priority awards.

The Panel is one of a range of options we have to help people with particular needs to live in the community. As a result, the Panel may not always be the most appropriate option.

If more than one person in an applicant's household has a Health and Social Care award, we will only take account of the highest priority when allocating housing but will take into account the needs of those with the awards.

4.7 Critical housing needs (Priority A)

The following housing needs will be awarded an A priority:

Can be awarded to Mobility, General Applicants and Transfer with Housing Need Group

Health and social care A: To be given an A award by the Health and Social Care Panel, you will have critical health or social care needs, other than mobility needs,

which are not met by your current housing situation and which are impacting on your well-being. The Panel will make an A award to people whose needs are critical. This can include where current accommodation makes it impossible to carry out day to day tasks.

See point 4.6 for more information about the Health and Social Care Panel.

Domestic abuse A: We use the Scottish Government's definition of domestic abuse as gender-based abuse which can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse, sexual abuse and mental and emotional abuse. If you give domestic abuse as the reason for applying for a house, we may seek information to support your case, including from Police Scotland, but will not contact the person that is responsible for the abuse.

Harassment A: You are experiencing harassment that is specifically targeted at you, in or around your current accommodation and you are not safe in your current accommodation. Harassment can take many forms including intimidating, threatening or aggressive behaviour, both verbal and physical, and can involve attacks on property as well as people. Harassment is often premeditated and reoccurring. The A level priority will, unless in exceptional circumstances, require a recommendation from Police Scotland that a move is required to ensure your safety.

Overcrowding A: Your current home has three or more bedrooms fewer than the number you need. We will calculate the number of bedrooms you are short by comparing the number you have and the number we have assessed you as needing. If members of the household applying to live together are currently living in different properties, we will assess overcrowding against the home which comes closest to meeting the combined household's needs.

Can be awarded to Mobility Group only

Mobility A: Your current accommodation makes it impossible for you or a member of your household to perform day-to-day tasks or poses a danger to life because it does not meet your or their mobility needs. If you receive a mobility award your application will be placed into the Mobility Group. The assessment process will include a recommendation of suitable house types or adaptations needed in the house to meet your mobility needs and we will only make offers in line with this recommendation.

Can be awarded to Mobility and General Applicants only

Insecure accommodation A: If you have a definite date, within two months, when you will lose your accommodation through no fault of your own. For example, you are losing accommodation which is linked to your employment or have been issued with a Court Notice to leave your private rented or owned accommodation within two months (such as a Notice to Leave or Mortgage Repossession papers).

Leaving institutions or specialist accommodation A: You are leaving the armed forces, hospital, long-term residential care, supported accommodation or accommodation provided by Renfrewshire Council as a corporate parent, and you have a date to leave but have nowhere to live when you leave.

Property below tolerable standard A: You are living in a property which is below tolerable standard according to the definition as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001). Being below tolerable standard will include things such as not having a sink with a supply of both hot and cold water or not having an effective system for getting rid of waste water. The full definition is contained in Appendix 3. Renfrewshire Council must confirm in writing that a house is below the tolerable standard for this to be applied.

4.8 Urgent housing needs (Priority B)

The following housing needs will be awarded a B priority:

Can be awarded to Mobility, General Applicants and Transfer with Need Group

Health and social care B: To be given a B award by the Health and Social Care Panel, you will have urgent health or social care needs, other than mobility needs, which are not met by your current housing and which are impacting on your well-being. The Panel will make a B award to people whose needs are urgent and this can include where current accommodation makes it difficult to carry out day to day tasks.

See point 4.6 for more information about the Health and Social Care Panel.

Social, community or family support B: You need to move to be closer to a family member to give or receive essential support to carry out day-to-day tasks and the support you give or receive is necessary to allow you or your family member to live independently. You would receive this award if it is not possible or reasonable for you to give or receive the support where you currently live and you are looking

to move to within a reasonable distance of the person giving or needing the support.

Harassment B: You are experiencing harassment that is specifically targeted at you, in or around your current accommodation, but you are safe in your current accommodation. Or you fear violence, and this fear is justified. Harassment can take many forms including intimidating, threatening or aggressive behaviour, both verbal and physical, and can involve attacks on property as well as people. Harassment is often premeditated and reoccurring. The B level priority will usually require a recommendation from Police Scotland that a move is required to ensure your safety.

Overcrowding B: Your current home has two bedrooms fewer than the number you need. We will calculate the number of bedrooms you are short by comparing the number you have and the number we have assessed you as needing. If members of the household applying to live together are currently living in different properties, we will assess overcrowding against the home which comes closest to meeting the combined household's needs.

Under-occupying B: You live in a social rented property and your current home has two or more bedrooms more than you need. We will calculate how many extra bedrooms you have by comparing the number in your current home and the number we have assessed you as needing. You will only receive this level of priority if you are looking to move to a property that has two or more fewer bedrooms than you currently have.

Relationship breakdown B: If the relationship between you and a partner with whom you live has broken down, you are still living together and you wish to move to another property. The priority will only be awarded to the household wishing to move out of the current home.

Can be awarded to Mobility Group only

Mobility B: Your current accommodation severely restricts your or a member of your household's ability to carry out day-to-day tasks because it does not meet your or their mobility needs. If you receive a mobility award your application will be placed into the Mobility Group. The assessment process will include a recommendation of suitable house types or adaptations needed in the house to meet your mobility needs and we will only make offers in line with this recommendation.

4.9 Moderate housing needs (Priority C)

The following housing needs will be awarded a C priority:

Can be awarded to Mobility, General Applicants and Transfer with Housing Need Group

Health and Social Care C: To be given a C award by the Health and Social Care Panel, you will have health or social care needs, other than mobility needs, which are not met by your current housing and are impacting on your well-being. The Panel will make a C award to people who have health or social care needs, which can include where current accommodation makes carrying out day to day tasks less easy.

See point 4.6.for more information about the Health and Social Care Panel.

Social, community or family support C: You need to move to be closer to a family member to give or receive support to carry out day-to-day tasks and the support you give or receive is necessary to allow you or your family member to live independently. You would receive this award if it is difficult for you to give or receive the support where you currently live and you are looking to move to within a reasonable distance of the person giving or needing the support.

Overcrowding C: Your current home has one bedroom fewer than the number you need. We will calculate the number of bedrooms you are short by comparing the number you have and the number we have assessed you as needing. If members of the household applying to live together are currently living in different properties, we will assess overcrowding against the home which comes closest to meeting the combined household's needs.

Under-occupying C: You live in a social rented property and your current home has one bedroom more than you need. We will calculate how many extra bedrooms you have by comparing the number in your current home and the number we have assessed you as needing. You will only receive under occupation priority if you are looking to move to a smaller property.

Take up or stay in employment C: If you need to move so you can keep your job or you have an offer of employment and need to move to take up the offer. We will only make this award if the move you are looking for will mean you live closer to your place of employment and/or to suitable public transport links.

Can be awarded to Mobility Group only

Mobility C: Your current accommodation does not fully meet your mobility needs and moving will improve your ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. If you receive a mobility award your application will be placed into the Mobility Group. The assessment process will include a recommendation of suitable house types or adaptations needed in the house to meet your mobility needs and we will only make offers in line with this recommendation.

Can be awarded to Mobility and General Applicants only

Insecure accommodation C: You have no home of your own and are living in accommodation you have no right to occupy but you do not have a date when you will have to leave.

Leaving institutions or specialist accommodation C: You will be leaving the armed forces, hospital, long-term residential care or supported accommodation and will have nowhere to live when you leave but you do not have a date when you will have to leave. Also, if you are leaving prison and irrespective of whether you have a date to leave or not.

4.10 No assessed housing needs (Priority D)

This means that you do not have any of the housing needs set out above. However, you are looking to move to another property. This might be because you would like to live in a different area or you would like a property of a different type.

You may already live in one of our properties, you could be a tenant of another social rented sector landlord or you might not have a social rented sector tenancy but would like one.

4.11 Further information on Statutory Homelessness Group

Your application will be placed in this group by Renfrewshire Council if you have made a homelessness application to the Council and the Council has found you to be unintentionally homeless.

The Council's Housing Advice and Homeless Services Team assess homeless applications. Under Part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003, the Council must assess applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. If you are assessed as being unintentionally homeless, or unintentionally threatened with homelessness, the Council must give you advice and support, provide temporary accommodation if necessary, and find you permanent accommodation.

Offers of permanent accommodation could be made by the Council or one of the housing associations. The housing association landlords have a duty to assist Renfrewshire Council in securing permanent homes for households experiencing Statutory Homelessness.

When offering accommodation to statutory homeless applicants, we will take account of what housing is available, and where relevant how close housing is to schools, family support and your place of work.

Homeless legislation states that if you are deemed to be unintentionally homeless, Renfrewshire Council has a duty to make you at least one reasonable offer of housing. We may make up to two reasonable offers. In deciding what is a reasonable offer, the Council will take account of the factors listed in the Homelessness Code of Guidance. If you refuse both these offers, you may lose your homeless priority. Where you had a pre-existing application for housing registered with Renfrewshire Council and you are able to update your current circumstances following your homeless priority being lost, Renfrewshire Council will reassess your application and your application will be moved into the most appropriate group for your assessed need. If you did not have a pre-existing application, you can apply at any time and be placed on our housing list.

Homeless applicants have the right to appeal against these decisions, under the homelessness procedures, and Renfrewshire Council will write to you to tell you how to appeal. You can get details of the appeals procedure from the Housing

Advice and Homeless Services Team (please see the contact details at the end of this document).

4.12 Further information on Mobility Group

Your application will be placed in this group if you, or a member of the household you are applying with, requires a home which is suitable for someone needing an adapted or accessible property. You may be an existing tenant of the landlord you are applying to.

We aim to make best use of the properties which become available for let and when certain types of property become available we will aim to offer them to households who need a property of that particular type. This will apply to all properties which were built for or have already been adapted to meet the needs of someone with mobility problems or a disability.

We will normally only offer adapted properties and properties with wheelchair access to applicants who need the facilities they contain. If an empty property has been 'substantially adapted' to meet the needs of a person with certain disabilities, we will try to match this property to an applicant within the mobility group with similar needs.

By 'substantially adapted', we mean it has the following adaptations such as:

- Doorways widened for wheelchairs to fit through
- Internal vertical lift
- Ramp (inside or outside, or both)
- Wet floor area
- Changed heights and positions of kitchen units.

If you live in a mobility property which meets your needs, your application would also be placed in this group. However, you would not receive priority based on needing a mobility property.

4.13 Young people with experience of the care system

Renfrewshire Council has corporate parent responsibilities for young people who have experience of the care system. The Council will work closely with any care experienced young person looking for housing. We will support them to complete

a housing application and will work with them to find them a home which meets their needs.

4.14 Exceptions to the policy, including special lets & management transfers

There may be exceptional cases where one of the landlords considers it appropriate to make an allocation outwith the terms of this policy. It is not possible to predict all the exceptional circumstances that may arise but these could include:

- Where new build properties will help meet housing needs that we have otherwise been unable to address.
- Where you are living in a property which has been specially adapted, no-one currently living in the house needs the adaptations but someone else on the housing list does.
- Where a landlord needs to make a management transfer in the event of an emergency.
- To free up a property of a type that is in very short supply and which is needed to meet an urgent housing need.
- Where a landlord makes an exceptional allocation to someone who does not qualify to succeed to a tenancy.
- Where two households both of which live in a social rented property wish to move together into a new home and both of their current properties would be available to be relet.
- Where the landlord and tenant agree that due to exceptional circumstances the tenant has to terminate their tenancy, but they will be looking to be rehoused within 2 years.
- If another agency, such as Police Scotland, asks for assistance.
- As part of a regeneration or similar programme or if a tenant's current home is subject to a closing order or is to be demolished, or part of a Housing Renewal Area, for example.

Due to the exceptional nature of these lets, the numbers involved will be very low and will be clearly documented for audit purposes. A senior officer must authorise any special lets or management transfers.

4.15 Mutual exchange

If you rent your home from another local authority or housing association and you would like to swap homes with another tenant from any of these landlords, you can apply in writing to exchange your home. Anyone who has a Secure Tenancy can apply. Your landlord can only refuse permission if it is reasonable to do so. You must not exchange homes until you have written permission from your landlord and the landlord of the tenant you want to exchange with.

Each of the landlords has a separate policy that sets out the rules that apply if one of their tenants wants to take part in a mutual exchange. These rules are available on request.

4.16 Sheltered housing

In addition to our general needs housing, three of us (Bridgewater Housing Association, Linstone Housing Association and Renfrewshire Council) also provide sheltered housing.

In general, sheltered housing is open to applicants aged 60 or over. If you are interested in applying for sheltered housing, you should complete the relevant section on the housing application form for the landlord(s) to which you are applying.

When assessing your application, we will consider whether you would benefit from the particular services available within our sheltered housing and award priority accordingly. The services available may vary between landlords and further information on their sheltered housing policies and assessment process can be obtained from each of the landlords concerned. Please see Appendix 10 for further information on Sheltered Housing.

5. How we allocate housing

5.1 Allocation targets

We will allocate housing according to targets for the proportion of lets to each group. Allocation targets are set to ensure that those in housing need receive an equitable share of allocations. Each of the landlords will set and publish their own annual allocation targets.

Renfrewshire Council will set a target for the proportion of their lets which will be made to those in the Homeless Group. However, the lets made by the housing association partners to this group are covered by a separate agreement with Renfrewshire Council.

Landlords may choose to set a target for lets to the Transfer Applicants with no housing need group, but are not required to do so.

In addition to setting an overall target for the Mobility Group, landlords may choose, but would not be required, to consider the proportion of Mobility Group lets going to transfer or general needs applicants.

The targets will be reviewed each year and each of the landlords will report on the percentage of lets made to each group and on any changes to the targets for the next year.

5.2 Nominations and referrals

The Council has nomination agreements with other social housing landlords which have housing in Renfrewshire. This includes the four housing association landlords that will be using this policy. If you have joined the Council's housing list, and have agreed to be nominated to a housing association, you may be referred to a housing association landlord for an offer of housing.

The Council and the housing associations also have an agreement covering offers of housing to households who are statutorily homeless. These arrangements are in line with Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. The Council and housing association landlords agree on an annual percentage of empty properties that will receive Section 5 referrals. These lets are those made to applicants in the Homeless Group.

5.3 How we allocate our properties

When a property becomes available for re-let, we will check if it is suitable for someone with mobility needs. If so, it will normally be offered to Mobility Group applicants first.

With all other lets, we will decide to which of the remaining groups we will allocate to. This decision will take account of our letting targets along with the number and profile of applicants in each group and the types and level of housing need they have.

We will always aim to make an offer to applicants looking for a property of that type and in that location. We will then take account of overall level of priority. If more than one applicant has the same priority, the first offer will be made to the applicant who has held that level of priority the longest. The date on which the level of priority is awarded is known as the eligible date. If you have no assessed housing need, the eligible date will be the date on which that assessment was made.

If your circumstances change and your level of priority increases, the eligible date for your application will change to the date on which the new, higher level priority is awarded. However, if your level of priority decreases, we will continue to use the eligible date of application, from before the change of circumstances.

If we are making an offer to applicants with no level of priority under this policy, including to Transfer Applicants with no housing need, we will make allocations based on your eligible date.

5.4 Number of offers

We aim to work with applicants to help them make the best choices. We make offers based on your housing needs and preferences after contacting you to confirm that the details we hold on your application form are accurate. This is good practice as it allows us to reduce inappropriate offers and ensures that your application details are as up-to-date and accurate as they can be. We may make up to two offers of housing.

Offers will be made on the basis of what is considered to be reasonable for your household to occupy. In deciding what is reasonable, we will take account of your choices and preferences, balanced against the supply of suitable properties and

the urgency of your need for housing. If you have been placed in priority band A or A+ you will have a very urgent need to be housed. In order to make you an offer as quickly as possible, we may need to make you an offer of housing in an adjoining area or of another property type to those you have chosen. We will consider such an offer to be a reasonable offer of housing.

If you refuse a first reasonable offer of housing from one of us, that landlord may invite you to a housing information and advice interview to discuss your choices. We would not normally make any further offers until that interview has taken place. After receiving this housing advice, if you refuse a further reasonable offer from that landlord within the next 12 months they may suspend you from their list for up to 6 months.

Statutory homeless applicants may also receive up to two reasonable offers from Renfrewshire Council. If the applicant declines a second reasonable offer, their application will be removed from the Homeless Group and cancelled. If the applicant still wishes to be considered for housing and they had a previous housing application registered they will be required to update it to allow reassessment. Where no previous application exists, the applicant can complete a new application for housing. They will then be placed into whichever of the Mobility or General Housing Needs Groups is appropriate. Their level of priority will be assessed based on their current housing circumstances. They will then be entitled to receive up to a further two reasonable offers from Renfrewshire Council or the landlord they apply to, based on the process for all other applicants explained in the paragraph above.

If you are suspended from one of our lists, the landlord concerned will not make you any more offers until that suspension is removed. Further information on suspensions is provided in Section 6 of this policy.

5.5 Tenancy agreements

If you accept an offer of housing, you will generally be offered a Scottish Secure Tenancy.

In some cases, under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy will be offered. We can only use a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy in very specific circumstances. These include if:

- You, a household member, or a visitor, has been involved in antisocial behaviour in or near your house within the last three years. In this case, we will give you a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy for a minimum period of 12 months to allow sufficient time for any support services offered to help address the antisocial behaviour. We may extend the Short Scottish Secure Tenancy by an additional six months if required.
- Your current home with us is scheduled for development and we need you to move to allow us to get the work done.
- You are a homeowner who cannot occupy their home on a short-term basis. For example, if you need to move out while repairs are carried out to make the home safe.

If we offer you a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy, we will serve you with a notice which will set out why you are being offered a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy and the period for which the tenancy is being offered.

If you would like further information on the use of Short Scottish Secure Tenancies, please contact the landlord to whom you are applying.

5.6 Joint tenancies

You can make a joint application with someone who is staying with you or someone you intend to stay with you.

If you are offered housing, you can choose to have a joint tenancy. This will mean that both of you have similar legal rights.

5.7 Specially designed or adapted properties

There may be exceptional circumstances where a property designed for someone with special needs, or which has undergone major adaptations, becomes available but there is no-one on our housing list who needs a property of that size and design or who can make good use of the adaptations that have been carried out.

Rather than leaving the property empty, we reserve the right to offer the property on a Scottish Secure Tenancy to an applicant who does not need a property with the special features available. However, we would expect them to agree to move to another suitable property provided by us, if someone requires the specially designed or adapted property at a later time.

If we were offering someone a property on this basis, we would make this arrangement clear to the applicant at the offer stage. If the applicant preferred not to accept the offer, the offer would not count against their entitlement to two reasonable offers.

6. Application status

6.1 Reviewing applications

It is important for us to have up-to-date and accurate information about those looking for housing and you should tell us about any relevant changes to your circumstances.

We will review all applications at least a once a year. The date of this review is based on the date you registered your housing application with the landlord(s).

As part of this review, we will ask you to advise us within 10 working days if you wish to remain on the housing list. If no response is received, we will send a further letter. If we still receive no response your application may be removed from the housing list. If you contact us within a further 6 weeks of your application being removed, your application can be reinstated.

Applicants who have had their application cancelled have the right to appeal against this decision. We will reinstate a cancelled application up to 6 months after the date we cancelled it, if the applicant can give good reasons for not replying to the review. However, applicants who contact us more than 6 months after the date of cancellation will need to fill in a new form and will not be entitled to have their application backdated to the date of the original application.

You will be able to make a new application to any of the landlords at any time and join one or more of the housing lists. If you join one of our lists, your application date will be the date on which you joined the list again.

6.2 Deferring your application

You may wish to apply for housing but not be considered for offers in the immediate future. We appreciate that there may be times when a move is not right for you, for example, because you are not well or cannot afford to move at this time. If this is the case, you can ask to have your application placed on hold until a future date. This means that we will not make offers of housing until you ask us to.

We will check whether you wish your application to stay on hold, when we review your housing application. Alternatively, you can contact us at any time to tell us that you want to be actively considered for offers of housing.

We will accept housing applications from asylum seekers and others subject to immigration control. However, we will defer these applications until the applicant has received a positive decision about the applicant's leave to remain from UK Visas and Immigration.

6.3 Suspension from housing lists –

A suspension is a period of time during which an applicant for housing or an existing tenant applying to move to another property will not be considered for an offer of housing.

Although we will aim to suspend as few applicants as possible, there may be occasions when suspending an application is necessary. Before suspending your application, we will consider:

- Whether there are other options available to us, such as offering further information and advice or proactively managing the problem that makes suspension a possibility?
- Whether suspending your application would be proportionate and if so for how long?
- Whether we have sufficient, robust evidence to justify our decision to suspend your application?
- The consequences of suspending your application for you and other members of your household?

If your application is suspended, you will receive a letter detailing why we have taken that decision, the length of the suspension and the date(s) on which the suspension will be reviewed. The letter will also tell you if the suspension is under the statutory powers to suspend set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.

The letter will set out any action you can take to have the suspension removed before the review date. Although we may reduce the length of the suspension, we will never increase the length of the suspension.

You are entitled to appeal our decision and further information on how to make an appeal will be set out in the letter sent to you. The appeals process will be in line with that set out in Section 8 of this policy.

If you make a new application, including a new transfer application, and we decide to suspend your application at the application stage, we would do so under the statutory powers to suspend set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014. These new powers allow us to suspend an application for a period from the date of application. If you are eligible to join our housing list, your application will still be placed on the housing list, but you will not receive any offers of housing while the suspension remains in place.

Renfrewshire Council will not use the statutory powers set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 to suspend any new applicant who has been found to be statutorily homeless. However, once two reasonable offers of housing have been made to the statutory homeless applicant, the applicant will no longer have a statutory homeless priority and may be suspended under the circumstances set out below.

The circumstances which may result in an application being suspended are the same for new applicants and those already on the housing list. They are:

Rent arrears and other tenancy related debt

- Where there are significant, outstanding and unresolved social rented sector tenancy-related debts and until such debts are either cleared, fall below 1/12th of the annual rent charge, or an agreement has been set up and adhered to for a period of at least 3 months. The suspension would be removed as soon as the necessary conditions have been met.

Antisocial Behaviour

- The applicant has:
 - acted in an antisocial manner in relation to another person residing in, visiting or otherwise engaged in lawful activity in the locality of a house occupied by the person, or
 - pursued a course of conduct amounting to harassment of such other person, or a course of conduct which is otherwise antisocial conduct in relation to such other person, or
 - acted in an antisocial manner, or pursued a course of conduct which is antisocial conduct, in relation to an employee of the social landlord in the course of making the application.

- We may consider antisocial behaviour from up to 3 years previously, or longer in exceptional circumstances. Suspension under this category will be to a maximum of 6 months but there will not be a set time limit and applicants will be notified individually of timescales. Timescales will be reviewed in the event of a change of the applicant's circumstances.

Previous Convictions

- The applicant has been, or has resided with a person who has been, convicted of:
 - using a house or allowing it to be used for immoral or illegal purposes, or
 - an offence punishable by imprisonment which was committed in, or in the locality of, a house occupied by the person.
- We may consider convictions from up to 3 years previously. Suspension under this category will be to a maximum of 6 months but there will not be a set time limit and applicants will be notified individually of timescales. Timescales will be reviewed in the event of a change of the applicant's circumstances.

Order for Recovery of Possession

- An order for recovery of possession has been made against the applicant. This could apply to orders within the previous 3 years and made under Scottish housing legislation and housing legislation for other parts of the UK. Suspension will be to a maximum of 6 months.

Abandoning a tenancy or neglecting a let property

- Where the applicant has previously had a property repossessed by a social landlord because the property had been abandoned, or where a court has ordered recovery of possession due to the deterioration of the condition of the property or furniture provided for the tenant's use.
- We may consider repossessions from up to 3 years previously. Suspension under this category will be to a maximum of 6 months but there will not be a set time limit and applicants will be notified individually of timescales. Timescales will be reviewed in the event of a change of the applicant's circumstances.

Making a false statement in an application for housing

- Where deliberately false or misleading information has been provided by the applicant, suspension will be for 6 months.

Applicants who have refused two offers of housing

- When an applicant refuses two reasonable offers of housing. In this case, the applicant will be suspended for up to 6 months, unless the applicant's housing circumstances worsen during the suspension period, in which case the application will be reassessed.

7. Other Information

7.1 Local Lettings Initiatives

A Local Lettings Initiative can be a useful way of helping to create sustainable communities and there may be occasions when one or more of the landlords will develop and implement such an Initiative. An Initiative might be designed to boost demand in a particular area or to help us make lets which promote a balanced community.

Any Initiative will apply only to a geographically defined area and any changes made to this policy will be designed to meet specific local aims. Any Initiative will have clear outcomes and will be supported by evidence as to why it is required.

As part of the development process, we will consult with the local community and key external partners. The Initiative will be compliant with all the relevant legislation, will be published in the same way as this policy and will include:

- An explanation of why the Initiative is needed and the evidence that has been used to inform the decision to introduce it.
- Clear and specific aims and objectives.
- The time period for which the Initiative is expected to remain in place.
- An effective monitoring framework to make sure the aim of the Initiative is being met and there are no unforeseen consequences. This will include criteria that will be used for deciding whether to curtail or extend the time period for which the Initiative will run. The Initiative will be reviewed regularly to ensure it is still required.

7.2 Other lettings approaches

We are committed to continually improving access to housing for people who apply to us. In the future, one or more of the landlords may wish to consider taking an alternative approach to letting some of their properties. An example might be piloting a Choice Based lettings approach.

If any landlord is considering using an alternative approach (outwith that set out in this policy) they will consult with their tenants, applicants and other key stakeholders as part of the development process. Any plans will be published and the landlord will also monitor and report on their performance.

8. Appeals and complaints

8.1 Appeals

We will always aim to give you an excellent service, but we recognise that you may disagree with some of our decisions and may wish to make an appeal. Each of the landlords operates its own appeals policy. Information on this will be available on their website or from their office(s).

You can get information from your landlord or the landlord you have applied to about making an appeal. We also offer interpreting and translation services if English is not your first language. We can also provide a British Sign Language interpreter if required.

When you make an application for housing, you have the right to appeal against:

- The priority we have awarded to your application.
- Whether an offer we have made you is reasonable.
- A decision to suspend you from receiving offers.
- A decision to cancel your application.
- Any other decision we make which you believe has not been dealt with in accordance with this policy.

The arrangements for statutory homeless applicants are set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended. Further information on appealing a statutory homelessness decision can be found in the Scottish Government's Code of Guidance on Homelessness which can be found at:

<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/code-guidance-homelessness/>

If you are appealing a suspension which has been made using the statutory powers to suspend set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 you have a right of appeal to the sheriff, by summary application. Further information on the summary applications rules can be found on the Scottish Court Services website at: <https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/taking-action/summary-applications>

8.2 Making a complaint

If you are not satisfied with the service you have received from us, you can make a complaint. Each landlord has its own complaints policy and process. If you wish to make a complaint you should contact the landlord involved. They will also publish information on their website about their complaints process. Contact details are provided at Appendix 1.

If you make a complaint to a landlord but are not satisfied with the outcome, you can refer your case to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Each of our complaints policies will explain each step of the process, including how you can appeal to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is a government-based organisation which can review your case, if you have already been through a landlord's complaints procedures and you feel they have not dealt with your complaint fairly.

If you feel that your landlord has done, or failed to do something that puts the interests of its tenants at risk, you can also refer your case to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The Scottish Housing Regulator's website provides information about significant performance failures and what you should do and how to raise your concerns with them. You can find this information at:

www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk

9. Assessing our performance

9.1 Reporting on our performance

We will monitor the implementation of this policy to make sure it is meeting our aims, is effective, non-discriminatory and promotes equal opportunities.

Each of us will collect information and report every year on:

- The number of new applicants added to our housing list.
- The number of applicants on our housing list by group.
- The number of offers made to each group.
- The housing needs of applicants and of those to whom we have offered housing.
- The average time to re-let a property.
- The percentage of tenancy offers refused.
- The number of suspensions from the housing list.
- The number of appeals or complaints we receive and how these have been dealt with.

Some of the partners monitor and report their performance against their equal opportunities commitments. The information these partners use to monitor equal opportunities will include: details of the background, age, sex and disability of the people applying to us for housing, compared to the ethnic background, age, sex, and disability of the people we offered housing to, and the ethnic background, age, sex and disability of the general population within Renfrewshire.

We will report on our performance to the Scottish Housing Regulator and to our elected members or management committee.

9.2 Reviewing this policy

We will keep this policy under review. If the monitoring of our performance suggests areas in which the policy needs to be improved, we may amend the policy if required. If any changes to be made are substantive, we will consult with tenants, applicants and other key stakeholders before making these changes.

We will undertake a full review of this policy every three years, or earlier if required by changes to legislation or guidance.

APPENDIX 1 - Common Allocation Policy Partners

Renfrewshire Council, Communities, Housing and Planning Services www.renfrewshire.gov.uk

Paisley:

Customer Service Centre, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN.

Opening hours: Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 4.45pm and Friday 8.45am to 3.55pm.

Telephone: 0300 300 0222

Johnstone:

Customer Service Centre, Johnstone Town Hall, 25 Church Street, Johnstone, PA5 8FA.

Opening hours: Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 4.45pm, Friday 8.45am to 3.55pm.

Telephone: 0300 300 0222

Renfrew:

Customer Service Centre, 14 Renfield Street, Renfrew, PA4 8RN.

Opening hours: Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 4.45pm, Friday 8.45am to 3.55pm.

Telephone: 0300 300 0222

Housing Advice & Homeless service:

15 Abercorn Street, Paisley, PA3 4AA.

Telephone during office hours 03003000222

Telephone outwith office hours 08001214466

Bridgewater Housing Association www.bridgewaterha.org.uk

Head office: 1st Floor Bridgewater Shopping Centre, Erskine, PA8 7AA.

Opening hours: Monday to Friday – 9.00am – 12.00pm and 1.00pm – 4.00pm.

Telephone: 0141 812 2237

Linstone Housing Association www.linstone.co.uk

Head office: 17 Bridge Street, Linwood, PA3 3DB.

Opening hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9.00am – 4.30pm, Wednesday 1.30pm – 6.00pm.

Telephone: 01505 382383

Paisley Housing Association www.paisleyha.org.uk

Head office: 64 Espedair Street, Paisley, PA2 6RW.

Opening hours: Monday to Thursday 9.00am – 5.00pm and Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm.

Telephone: 0141 889 7105

Williamsburgh Housing Association www.williamsburghha.co.uk

Head office: Ralston House, Cyril Street, Paisley, PA1 1RW.

Opening hours: Monday to Friday 9.00am – 12.30pm and 1.30pm – 5.00pm.

Telephone: 0141 887 8613

Other social landlords providing housing in Renfrewshire:

Cairn Housing Association - housing for older people.

www.cairnha.com

Head office: Bellevue House, 22 Hopetoun Street, Edinburgh, EH7 4GH.

Telephone: 0800 990 3405

Ferguslie Park Housing Association - housing for general need and also older and disabled people.

www.fpha.co.uk

Head Office: The Tannahill Centre, 76 Blackstoun Rd, Paisley PA3 1NT.

Telephone: 0141 887 4053

Hanover Housing Association - housing for older people. www.hanover.scot

Head office: Western Area Office, 345 Govan Road, Glasgow, G51 2SE.

Telephone: 0141 553 6300

Horizon Housing Association - housing for general needs and also older and disabled people.

www.horizonhousing.org

Head office: Leving House, Fairburn Place, Livingston, EH54 6TN.

Telephone: 01506 424140

Lorretto Housing Association - housing for general need and also older and disabled people.

www.lorettoha.co.uk

Head office: 2nd Floor Lipton House, 170 Crown Street, Glasgow, G5 9XD.

Telephone: 0141 420 7950

Blackwood Housing Association - housing for general need and also older and disabled people.

www.blackwoodgroup.org.uk

Head office: Suite 102 Pentagon Business Centre, 36 Washington Street, Glasgow, G3 8AZ.

Telephone: 0141 221 1606

Sanctuary Housing Association - housing for general need and supported accommodation.

www.sanctuary-group.co.uk

Head office: 7 Freelands Drive, Priesthill, Glasgow, G53 6PG.

Telephone: 0141 876 4900

APPENDIX 2 - Complying with legislation and good practice

This policy has been developed to meet the legal requirements set out in the following legislation:

- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2006
- Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Legislation
- The Civil Partnership Act 2005
- Housing (Scotland) Act 1987
- Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981

This policy has been developed in line with good practice from the Scottish Government, the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and the Chartered Institute of Housing.

Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) is the independent regulator for landlord services provided by local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and statutory homelessness services provided by local authorities. All the partners are required to provide information to, and are regulated by, the SHR. The SHR uses the outcomes and standards in the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) to assess the performance of social landlords.

The particular SSHC outcomes that have been considered in the development of this policy are:

Outcome 1: Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

Outcome 2: Tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides

Outcome 7: People looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them.

Outcome 8: Tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options.

Outcome 9: People at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness.

Outcome 10: People looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and their prospects of being housed.

APPENDIX 3 - Below tolerable standard

The tolerable standard is set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

A house will, for the purposes of the Act, meet the tolerable standard if the house:

- a) is structurally stable
- b) is substantially free from rising or penetrating damp
- c) has satisfactory provision for natural and artificial lighting, for ventilation and for heating
- d) has an adequate piped supply of wholesome water available within the house
- e) has a sink provided with an adequate supply of both hot and cold water within the house
- f) has a water closet or waterless closet available for the exclusive use of the occupants of the house and suitably located within the house
- g) has a fixed bath or shower and a wash-hand basin, all with a satisfactory supply of hot and cold water suitably located within the house
- h) has an effective system for the drainage and disposal of foul and surface water
- i) has satisfactory facilities for the cooking of food within the house
- j) has satisfactory access to all external doors and outbuildings

APPENDIX 4 - Succeeding to a tenancy

The legal provisions relating to succession of a Scottish Secure Tenancy are contained within the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.

Succession can arise only on the death of the tenant and where there is a relevant qualifying person. Only two rounds of succession to a tenancy are allowed in law. After a second succession, the tenancy will terminate.

If a tenant dies, the tenancy will pass to a qualified person in order of priority, as follows.

- *First priority:* the first priority goes to a tenant's surviving husband, wife or civil partner (living in the property as their only or principal home at the time of the tenant's death), or partner (as long as the house has been their only or principal home for the twelve months before the tenant died and we have been notified of this), or a joint tenant. (a civil partnership is a formal arrangement that gives same-sex partners the same legal status as a married couple).
- *Second priority:* if no-one in the above category qualifies or chooses to succeed, the second priority goes to a member of the tenant's family aged 16 or over, as long as the home was their only or principal home for the 12 months prior to the death of the tenant.
- *Third priority:* if no-one in the above categories qualify or choose not to succeed, the third priority goes to a carer who is providing, or who has provided care for the tenant or a member of the tenant's family. The carer must be aged 16 or over and have given up his or her previous only or principal home for the 12 months prior to the death of the tenant (and we have been notified of this), to be qualified to succeed.
- **In all cases**, the house of the tenant who has died must have been the only or principal home for the qualifying person, (with the exception of the person's spouse, civil partner or joint tenant). This is subject to meeting the 12 month prior notification of residency and notification requirements. If there is no qualified person, the tenancy terminates, unless there are exceptional circumstances to consider.

Where there is more than one qualifying person within the levels of priority, for example family members, it is for them to decide who will succeed, failing which the landlord will make the decision.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 stipulates that the qualifying person or the tenant must have notified the landlord that the person wishing to succeed the tenancy is living in the house and that it is their only or principal home. The 12 month notice period does not start until that notice of residency has been given.

In all cases, the house of the tenant who has died must have been the only or main home for the qualifying person and they must have notified the landlord that they reside there at least 12 months before the tenant's death.

If a house has been designed or substantially adapted for the use of a person with special needs to use, only their husband, wife or civil partner (living in the property as their only or main home at the time of the tenant's death), or partner (as long as the house has been the partner's only or main home for the twelve months before the tenant died), joint tenant or a person with special needs can succeed to the tenancy.

Other people who would otherwise be qualified to succeed have a right to alternative suitable accommodation. When deciding whether accommodation is reasonably suitable to the needs of the applicant and the applicant's family, we will take into account the following:

- a. How close it is to the place of work (including a school or college) of the applicant and of members of the applicant's family, compared with the existing house.
- b. What accommodation the applicant and the applicant's family requires.
- c. The character (property type) of the accommodation offered, compared to the existing house.
- d. The conditions on which the accommodation is offered to the applicant, compared with the conditions of the existing tenancy.
- e. If the landlord provided any furniture to use under the exiting tenancy, whether furniture will be provided under the new tenancy.
- f. Any special needs of the applicant or the applicant's family.

APPENDIX 5 - Assigning a Tenancy

The legal provisions relating to assignation of a Scottish Secure Tenancy are contained within the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.

A tenant may assign (transfer) their tenancy to another person as long as they get their landlord's permission in writing. Applications should be made in writing to your local housing office.

In terms of the residency, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 stipulates that:

- The house must have been the tenant's only or principal home during the 12 months immediately before the tenant applies for written permission to pass their tenancy to someone else; and
- The person the tenant wishes to pass their tenancy to must have lived at the property as their only or principal home for the 12 months before they apply; and
- The tenant, joint tenant or person they wish to assign their tenancy to must have notified the landlord that the person they wish to assign the tenancy to is living in the house. The 12-month period does not start unless the landlord has notified that the person is living in the property as their only or principal home.

We will not unreasonably withhold permission, unless there are justified reasons for this. We will deal with all applications individually.

Examples for refusing an application are listed below

- Where the landlord would not give the person the tenant wishes to pass the tenancy to reasonable preference under their allocations policy.
- Where, in the landlord's opinion, the assignation would result in their home being under occupied.
- A Notice of Proceedings for Possession has been served on the tenant warning that we may evict them.

- We have a court order to evict the tenant.
- The tenant still needs to carry out some repairs which they are responsible for.
- It appears to the landlord that the tenant is to receive a payment for the assignation
- The planned move would result in overcrowding.
- The property is much larger than the person who wants to take over the tenancy needs (up to one bedroom more than would be offered under the allocation policy).
- There are plans to carry out work on the house or building.
- The accommodation is designed or significantly adapted for a person with special needs, and the person who the property is to be transferred to, including family members, does not have any special needs.

APPENDIX 6 - Joint tenancy

A council tenant can apply for a joint tenancy with one or more other people.

Applications for a joint tenancy should be made in writing to your local housing office.

Joint tenants will be jointly and severally liable for their responsibilities under the tenancy, including paying rent. All joint tenants must live in the property as their only or main home.

In terms of the residency of the prospective joint tenant, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 stipulates that:

- The proposed joint tenant must have lived at the property as their only or principal home for the 12 months before the tenant applied for them to become a joint tenant; and
- The tenant, joint tenant or proposed joint tenant must have notified the landlord that the person they wish to become a joint tenant with is living in the house. The 12-month period does not start unless the landlord has been told that the person is living in the property as their only or principal home.

The 12-month period applies to anyone wanting to be a joint tenant including the tenant's spouse, civil partner or co-habiting partner.

We will not unreasonably withhold permission for a joint tenancy, unless there are justified reasons for this.

We will deal with all applications individually.

Examples for refusing a joint tenancy are listed below:

- Where one of the future tenants owes a lot of rent or has any other tenancy-related debt.
- Where one of the future tenants has been evicted for antisocial behaviour or an interim or full antisocial behaviour order has been made against them.

- Where one of the future tenants refuses to give up their interest in another tenancy.
- Where a notice of proceedings for recovery of possession has been issued.
- Where the 12 month residency and notification period has not been met.
- Where the application may result in overcrowding.

APPENDIX 7 - Mutual Exchange

Council tenants have the right to exchange their tenancy with another secure tenant, as long as they get their landlord's permission in writing. Applications should be made to your local housing office.

We will not unreasonably withhold permission, unless there are justified reasons for this. We will deal with all applications individually.

Examples for refusing an exchange are listed below:

- The tenant is under a court order giving us possession of the property.
- Notice of proceedings for possession have been issued for any of the following reasons:
 - The rent has not been paid or the conditions set out in the lease have been broken.
 - A nuisance is being caused to neighbours by anyone living in the property, or anyone concerned is using it for immoral or illegal purposes.
 - Anyone living in the house has damaged it or has damaged shared areas.
 - Anyone living in the house has damaged our furnishings.
- The accommodation is larger than the tenant's family need.
- The accommodation is not suitable to the needs of the tenant's family.
- The accommodation was provided as a result of the tenant's employment with the council.
- The accommodation was designed or significantly adapted for a physically disabled person or someone with particular housing needs, and if the exchange was allowed there would no longer be a disabled person or someone who needed this type of property living in the property.
- We consider that the exchange could result in overcrowding or under-occupation.

If we do not let the applicant know the outcome of the request within one month, they can assume we have agreed to their request.

If we refuse a request for a mutual exchange, the applicant has the right to appeal against our decision.

APPENDIX 8 - Recovery of Adapted Properties

Schedule 2, paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, outlines that where social landlords let an adapted or property designed for special needs and the person who required the adaptations moves out or dies, landlords have the right to seek recovery of this property where we subsequently require it for an applicant who needs the adaptations.

The remaining tenant or household member would, where appropriate, be offered alternative suitable housing. In accordance with existing practice, the tenant(s) is advised of this in advance of accepting the property. The decision to recover a property under these circumstances, is made on a case by case basis by the landlord.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 amends paragraphs 11 and 12 of schedule 2 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, which only allowed recovery of possession of an adapted property where there was no longer an occupier who required the adaptation. The 2014 Act has amended the 2001 Act, removing the words “no longer’. This means that landlords can seek to recover a property where no occupier required the adaptation in the first place and where the property is subsequently required for a person who needs the adaptation.

This is noted in our Common Allocation Policy at Section 5.7.

Application

The 2014 Act provides landlords with the flexibility to make better use of adapted properties as short-term temporary accommodation, where at the point of adaptation there is nobody requiring the adapted property.

Renfrewshire Council and our partner landlords will always seek to make the best match to available properties and will endeavour to re-let properties to applicants who require the adaptations offered by available properties. We recognise that some properties will be more challenging to let and that there may be circumstances where we cannot match an applicant to adapted properties and therefore we may require to let to someone requiring mainstream accommodation.

Under these circumstances, we reserve the right to decide at the point of allocation, if we would choose to let this property as a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy; where there are grounds to do so, or as a Scottish Secure Tenancy and retaining the right to recover the property at a later date where required.

The prospective tenant would be advised that we may seek to re-house them in suitable alternative accommodation, at a future date should another applicant later require their adapted home, to allow them to fully consider their position prior to accepting the tenancy. The tenant would also be advised that this may restrict any future mutual exchange application they may make, where the person they wish to exchange with does not have a requirement for an adapted home.

This will be decided on a case by case basis by the landlord.

Suitability of alternative accommodation is determined according to the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. Where the tenant does not accept the offer of alternative accommodation, the offer will still be deemed to be suitable unless the tenant can satisfy the court that it was reasonable to refuse it. We will make up to two reasonable offers of alternative accommodation, in accordance with our Common Allocation Policy.

Where the existing tenant refuses to move voluntarily after receiving up to two reasonable offers of suitable accommodation, the landlord can seek repossession of the property.

Where a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy is applied, we have no requirement to provide alternative accommodation at the end of the tenancy term.

We recognise the importance of tenancy sustainment and provision of settled accommodation and would therefore not seek to recover an adapted property after a period of 12 months has elapsed from the tenant's date of entry.

Date in force

The changes introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 in relation to the Recovery of Properties Designed or Adapted for Special Needs, comes into force on 1st May 2019 and this policy assumes the same date.

In accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, only properties let on or after this date to applicants who do not require the adaptations in the first place, will be subject to this policy. It cannot be applied retrospectively. However the terms of schedule 2, paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 continue to remain in force from their original date and does not change the approach to tenancies that pre-existed this date.

APPENDIX 9 - Statutory Definition of Overcrowding (section 136 and 137 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987)

A house is overcrowded when the number of persons sleeping in the house is such as to contravene:-

- (a) the room standard
- (b) the space standard

Section 136 the room standard:

(1) The room standard is contravened when the number of persons sleeping in a house and the number of rooms available as sleeping accommodation is such that two persons of opposite sexes who are not living together as husband and wife must sleep in the same room.

(2) For this purpose:

- (a) children under the age of 10 shall be left out of account, and
- (b) a room is available as sleeping accommodation if it is of a type normally used in the locality either as a bedroom or as a living room.

Section 137 the space standard:

(1) The space standard is contravened when the number of persons sleeping in a house is in excess of the permitted number, having regard to the number and floor area of the rooms of the house available as sleeping accommodation.

(2) For this purpose:

- (a) no account shall be taken of a child under the age of one and a child aged one or over but under 10 shall be reckoned as one-half of a unit, and
- (b) a room is available as sleeping accommodation if it is of a type normally used in the locality either as a living room or as a bedroom.

(3) The permitted number of persons in relation to a house is whichever is the less of:

- (a) the number specified in Table 1 in relation to the number of rooms in the house available as sleeping accommodation, and

(b) the aggregate for all such rooms in the house of the numbers specified in column 2 of Table 2 in relation to each room of the floor area specified in column 1.

No account shall be taken for the purposes of either table of a room having a floor area of less than 50 square feet.

(4) The Secretary of State may prescribe the manner in which the floor area of a room is to be ascertained for the purposes of this section; and the regulations may provide for the exclusion from computation, or the bringing into computation at a reduced figure, of floor space in a part of the room which is of less than a specified height.

(5) Regulations under subsection (4) shall be made by statutory instrument, which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(6) A certificate of the local authority stating the number and floor areas of the rooms in a house, and that the floor areas have been ascertained in the prescribed manner, is evidence for the purposes of legal proceedings of the facts stated in it.

Table 1

Number of rooms	Number of persons
1	2
2	3
3	5
4	7.5
5+	2 for each room

Table 2

Floor area of room	Number of persons
110 sq. ft. or more	2
90 sq. ft. or more but less than 110 sq. ft.	1½
70 sq. ft. or more but less than 90 sq. ft.	1
50 sq. ft. or more but less than 70 sq. ft.	½

Appendix 10 – Common Sheltered Allocation Policy

**Renfrewshire Council
Linstone Housing Association
Bridgewater Housing Association**

Renfrewshire Common Sheltered Housing Allocation Policy



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 What is sheltered housing?

Sheltered housing aims to meet the needs of people generally aged 60 years and over, who wish to live independently in their own homes with support and who would benefit from this type of housing. These self-contained properties offer tenants the safety of living in a secure environment, whilst also enabling people to retain their independent lifestyle.

Sheltered housing tenants benefit from a housing support service which is delivered by sheltered housing officers/housing support officers who are based in the developments at certain times or days during the week. The level of service varies amongst the partner landlords, from some complexes having staff based there 7 days a week to less intensive staffing arrangements. You can find out more about this by contacting the landlord for the development(s) you are interested in. Our housing staff will complete a personal support plan with you which will help identify the level of support you need to live at home. This may require support from other agencies or voluntary organisations.

Our staff understand people's individual needs and work to enable older people to live independently and be actively engaged within the wider community. Many of our sheltered complexes have a communal lounge where social activities take place and tenants are able to participate if they wish to do so.

This is a common sheltered allocation policy and as such there may be some differences in the sheltered accommodation provided by each of the partner landlords. It is recommended that you view the website of the landlord you wish to be housed by, or visit their office, to access further information about their sheltered housing provision. Both Linstone and Bridgewater Housing Associations provide very sheltered housing and/or extra care housing, which is dealt with separately from this policy and any enquiries about this should be directed to them.

1.2 About this policy

The Renfrewshire Common Sheltered Allocation Policy is underpinned by Renfrewshire's Common Housing Allocation Policy, specifying the common approach to allocating the properties of the participating landlords in Renfrewshire. You should refer to this policy for additional detail about how we allocate our housing, including sheltered housing.

With this as its foundations, the Renfrewshire Sheltered Allocation Policy was developed in partnership with Renfrewshire Council, Linstone Housing Association and Bridgewater Housing Association. In developing this policy we have consulted with applicants, tenants, Registered Tenant Organisations, residents, representatives of community groups and other key stakeholders.

This policy is a public document and is available on each of our websites. Copies are also available from our offices. If you require this document in large print, audio or Braille, or in another language, please contact the landlord that you are applying to for sheltered housing.

The policy sets out an agreed, common approach that partner landlords will use as their framework to assess and allocate sheltered homes that become available for let. By allocating, we mean the process of selecting people from our housing list, offering them a house and if they accept, signing a tenancy agreement with them.

This policy is based on a priority approach and has a clear focus on meeting the need for sheltered housing. It replaces all previous sheltered housing allocation policies of partner landlords. We will review this policy every 3 years, or sooner where changes to legislation, regulation or the results of our performance monitoring require otherwise.

1.3 The partner landlords

Summary information on each of the partner landlords that operate this policy is set out later in this document. Further information about each landlord, including where they have sheltered housing properties and how many properties usually become available for let, can be accessed on each landlord's own website or by visiting one of their offices.

Renfrewshire Council is the largest social rented sector landlord in the area with around 12,500 properties across Renfrewshire. Of this, over 300 are sheltered properties based in Paisley, Renfrew, Johnstone and Elderslie. Most flats are located on the ground floor, though sheltered housing is also provided on the first and second floors at some complexes – with lifts available in most cases. In addition, some of our sheltered flats are suitable for wheelchair users and all are accessible for people with mobility problems. All our sheltered complexes have a communal lounge where social activities take place.

Linstone Housing Association has around 1600 properties located mainly in Linwood and Johnstone, with a small number in Paisley and Renfrew. Of this, 48 are sheltered properties, with 17 based in Paisley and 31 in Johnstone.

Bridgewater Housing Association is the largest provider of social housing in Erskine, with around 850 properties. Of these, 95 are sheltered, comprising 70 one bedroom flats, 17 two bedroom flats and 8 two bedroom bungalows which are suitable for wheelchair users. The flats are mostly located on the ground and first floor. Social activities are held in Community Houses.

Please refer to the final page of this document for contact details for each of the partner landlords.

1.4 Our policy aims

We are committed to the provision of high quality, affordable sheltered housing that meets both people's housing needs and housing support needs. When allocating sheltered properties we will aim to:

- have consistency of approach across Renfrewshire Council, Bridgewater Housing Association and Linstone Housing Association in how we deal with sheltered housing applications.
- work in partnership to provide excellent customer service to those seeking sheltered housing in Renfrewshire.
- make sure we offer people accommodation that meets their needs.
- make best use of the properties that are available to let.
- give people as much choice as possible.
- help people live independently
- offer a safe, secure environment.
- offer support and social activities.

- reduce isolation.
- meet all our legal obligations and operate under the principles set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

We will do this by taking an approach to allocating homes that:

- is fair, open and transparent.
- takes a consistent approach to decision-making.
- promotes equality.
- treats all applicants with respect, including respecting the confidentiality of information given to us.

1.5 Customer service standards

We want to ensure that you are satisfied with the quality of service you receive throughout the housing application and allocation process. We will aim to:

- Deliver services in a professional and welcoming manner and treat all applicants equally and with courtesy and respect.
- Deal efficiently with all housing applications and process them in a timely manner.
- Provide high quality information and advice.
- Handle all information provided to us with due care and in line with the requirements of Data Protection legislation.
- Assist with any particular requirements you may have, including by communicating and providing information in ways that meet your needs.

1.6 Equality and diversity

We are committed to preventing discrimination and providing equal opportunities for everyone who applies to us for housing. In applying this policy, we will not discriminate against any individual, household or group on grounds of race, gender, sex, marital status/civil partnership, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, language, social origin, disability, age or other personal attribute.

We will aim to make this policy available in alternative formats such as large print or Braille on request. Translation services for other languages can also be made available. Where practical, we will arrange for an interpreter if you speak a language other than English, or a British Sign Language interpreter.

1.7 Confidentiality and data protection

Any information given to us as part of the application process will be processed in compliance with Data Protection legislation. You can ask to look at the information held on your record. If you wish to do this, you should make a written request to the relevant landlord. We will respond within one calendar month. We will not keep your personal information longer than is needed.

1.8 Law, good practice and the Scottish Housing Charter

This policy has been developed to be compliant with housing and other relevant legislation. A list of the laws which have been taken into account are set out in Appendix 2. The policy also takes account of good practice guidance from the Scottish Government and the Scottish Housing Regulator. This includes the standards set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Further information is included within the Common Allocation Policy appendices, or can be found on the Scottish Government's website at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2012/03/2602>

2.0 Making an application

2.1 Who can apply?

Each of the partners operates a separate housing list. You can get information on how to join each landlord's list by contacting them directly. Contact information for each landlord is included in Section 8 of this document.

Sheltered housing is designed for older people and therefore we hold a separate waiting list for applicants seeking this type of housing. To apply for sheltered housing, applicants must generally be 60 years of age or over and be able to live independently with support and/or personal care. If you apply as a couple or with another household member, both applicants will usually be aged 60 years or over.

2.2 Information and advice for applicants

When applying to Renfrewshire Council for sheltered housing, you must also have a general housing application form registered with them to allow your sheltered housing application to be processed. However, this is not the case for Linstone Housing Association and Bridgewater Housing Association.

We recognise the importance of offering high quality information and advice to those applying for housing in Renfrewshire. Anyone making a new application for housing may be invited to attend an interview with the landlord they are applying to.

At your interview, we will provide information which may include:

- How we will process your application
- How long it will take to process and decide on your application
- Affordability, including the average cost of renting a property and any service charge you may be liable to pay.
- Housing options available to you, that takes into account the information you provided to us.

We will ask you to complete a short questionnaire that asks questions about your personal, social and support needs as well as other supporting information, to allow us to determine if sheltered housing would meet your housing needs.

In many areas of Renfrewshire the demand for housing is considerably higher than the supply. This means that you may have a long wait for housing depending on the areas you choose. This is most likely to be the case if you have no or lower-level need for sheltered housing. However there are other areas in which demand is lower and you may have a greater chance of being made an offer. We will give you realistic advice about the likelihood of being re-housed based on the choices you have made. We will also provide information on opportunities to find housing with other local providers.

2.2.1 Additional assistance

If you cannot call into the office of one of the landlords to which you have applied because you have health or mobility problems, a member of staff will visit you at home or arrange a telephone interview. Please let us know if you require this service.

If you live outwith our boundaries, or we are not able to visit for some other reason, we will send you an application through the post.

2.3 Information provided by applicants

It is important for us to have accurate and up-to-date information on your circumstances. If you fail to provide the necessary information to support your application, this may mean that your application cannot be fully assessed. We will ask you to provide any required information and will re-assess your application once that information has been received. If we do not receive the information we have asked for within 30 days of us asking for it, your application may be cancelled.

If you deliberately provide false or misleading information, or withhold information, your application may be suspended. Any offer of housing that has been made may be withdrawn and if a tenancy has been granted on the basis of false information, your landlord could take action to end the tenancy.

You must tell us if your circumstances change as this could affect your housing application. Changes of circumstances might include you moving to a new house, someone moving into or out of your current home or a change to your health and social care needs. Changes such as these could affect the size of property you require and how your housing need is assessed. It is important to contact each of the landlords you have applied to and tell them about the changes.

2.4 Persons who are subject to Immigration Control

The law covering asylum and immigration is complex and applies differently to the Council and the housing association partners. If you could be affected by the legislation, you must tell us. We may be unable to assist but may be able to provide details to you of agencies who can help you.

2.5 Applications from staff, elected members or committee members

Applications made by staff, elected members or management committee members will be accepted onto the housing list in the same way as other applicants. We will comply with all relevant legislation, regulatory guidance and best practice in dealing with any of these applications.

To make sure that no-one benefits from a personal connection, applicants will be asked and will be required to declare whether they are related to a member of staff, management committee or elected member for the landlord to which they are applying. Further information will be set out in each landlord's housing application form.

3.0 Assessing the size of house you need

3.1 Number of bedrooms

Sheltered housing sizes can range from 0 bedroom (bedsit), to 1 and 2 bedroom properties. We will work out the number of bedrooms that you require based on who will be living with you, taking account of any health, care or mobility reason for needing an additional bedroom.

Further information on bedroom size requirements can be found in Section 3 of our Common Allocation Policy.

4.0 The sheltered housing list and how we prioritise applications

This policy has been developed to give priority to those in greatest need for sheltered housing and we aim to make best use of the properties that become available for let given the nature of this type of housing and particular type of services on offer.

In addition to any priority awarded for sheltered housing, Renfrewshire Council will also give you a priority on their general housing waiting list which will be

different from this. This means that with Renfrewshire Council you may also receive an offer of general, non-sheltered housing unless you tell them that you only wish sheltered housing.

Applications received from a landlord's own tenants, will be treated in the same way as all other applications. This ensures that those in most need of sheltered housing receive an offer first in most instances. However, where there are particular circumstances that require a person to move to another sheltered property, we will consider these on a case by case basis. To meet local needs, some partners to this policy may operate a separate sheltered transfer list for existing sheltered tenants who wish to transfer to another sheltered property owned by their current landlord. Please contact the landlord you are applying to for further information about their list.

4.1 Factors we must take into account

There are certain factors which the law states we must consider when deciding to whom we offer any homes that become available. Housing legislation states that we must give reasonable preference to:

- People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and who have unmet housing needs.
- People living under unsatisfactory housing conditions and who have unmet housing needs.
- Social housing tenants who the landlord allocating a property considers are under-occupying their current home.

These reasonable preference categories have been considered in the development of this policy.

4.2 Unmet housing needs

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 sets out the categories of applicant to whom social landlords must give reasonable preference if they have unmet housing needs. This means that landlords should consider whether applicants have housing needs which cannot be met through other housing options which are available. Landlords should consider what those other options might be and whether they are accessible to the applicant.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 removes the prohibition on taking ownership of property into account in allocating social housing. This means that if you or someone else on your application owns land or property, or previously owned land or property, we may take this into account when deciding on your priority for social housing. This applies to existing tenants as well as new applicants.

4.3 Factors we cannot consider

There are also certain factors which the law states we cannot consider when allocating housing. These are:

- How long an applicant has lived in the area.
- Any debt relating to a house which the applicant was not a tenant of.
- Any rent or other debt the applicant built up on a previous tenancy which has now been paid.
- Any amount which still needs to be paid where:
 - The amount owed is not more than 1/12th of the yearly amount due (or which was paid) by the applicant to the landlord for the tenancy; or
 - The applicant has an agreement in place with the landlord to repay the money, has made payments in line with the arrangement for at least three months, and is continuing to make these payments.
- Any outstanding debts (including missed Council Tax payments) which do not relate to the tenancy of a house.
- The age of the applicant, as long as he or she is 16 or over except when allocating:
 - Houses which have been designed or substantially adapted for a particular age group; or
 - Houses for people who are, or will be, receiving housing support services for people of a particular age group.
- The income of the applicant and his or her family.

4.4 Our sheltered housing priorities

Sheltered housing is generally for applicants who are over 60 years of age and we award a sheltered housing priority to those who it is felt would benefit from a move to a sheltered housing environment and whose needs would be best met in this setting. In instances where an applicant is outwith this age criteria but through exceptional circumstances would benefit from a move to sheltered housing, we may award a priority for sheltered housing. This would be done on a case by case basis making best use of our stock.

However, there may be instances where it is concluded that an applicant's needs are too great to be met in sheltered housing and that alternative, more intensive housing and support is required. In these cases we would recommend alternative routes to settled accommodation and support offered by other organisations, or adaptations to your current home.

Where a joint application for housing is made we will assess both parties and their award will be based on the applicant with the highest assessed need for sheltered housing.

Our sheltered housing policy recognises those in greatest need for sheltered housing who would benefit from a move to this type of setting.

For sheltered housing we focus on your level of social contact, any health issues you may have, or any difficulties you may have in getting out and about and using local facilities and how this affects your wellbeing, which is different from how we consider an application for mainstream housing. This ensures that we cover the aspects of your life that would benefit from a move to sheltered housing. As such, priority is given as follows:

Category A – Critical

The applicant is experiencing one or more of the following:

- Experiencing acute social isolation with little or no contact with family/friends. This could include:
 - Someone with very little or no contact with family/friends.

- Someone who is unable to access social activities within the community or they cannot be accessed by the applicant because of their circumstances i.e. too far away or require support to access which is not available.
- Applicant is housebound and unable to leave property due to mobility issues and/or cannot access upper floors of their home.
- Applicant is in hospital and cannot return home because their current home is unsuitable to meet their needs and cannot be reasonably adapted.
- There has been a history of falls which may or may not have resulted in hospitalisation.

Category B – Urgent

The Applicant is experiencing one or more of the following:

- Experiencing significant social isolation with only some contact with family/friends. This could include:
 - Someone with limited contact with family or friends.
 - Someone who is able to access social activities within the community, but requires support to do so and this is not always available
- Applicant requires support to get in and out of property but has restricted access within the property due to mobility issues i.e. unable to access upper floors of their home, without support/stair lift
- Applicant is in hospital and will be discharged; however there is a risk to them due to location/accessibility and it cannot be reasonably adapted to meet their long term needs.
- The applicant's circumstances puts them in a high risk category for falls

Category C – Moderate

The applicant is experiencing one or more of the following:

- Experiencing minor social isolation, but has sufficient contact with family/friends, however would benefit from a move to sheltered housing.

- Applicant does not require support to get in/out and around property but circumstances indicate that they may experience difficulties within the next 12 months.
- Applicant could be at risk due to location/accessibility of their current property and it cannot be reasonably adapted to meet their long term needs.

4.4.1 No assessed sheltered housing needs (Priority D)

If you are awarded sheltered priority D, this means that you do not have an assessed need for sheltered housing but are within the sheltered housing age-range and are looking to move to a sheltered property.

4.5 Additional housing need

In addition to the assessment of need for sheltered housing, we will also assess any additional housing needs you may have. If you have another housing need you will be awarded an additional level of priority. This combined with your sheltered priority is referred to as a 'plus' award.

This will only be given to applicants with an assessed need for sheltered housing with an A, B or C sheltered priority. Full details of what may be additional housing need is set out at 4.6 – 4.8.

Level of Priority	Overall Need
<p>Priority A: Critical Need</p> <p>Priority A +: Critical Need and one or more other need (Priority A to C)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires a sheltered property and: • Critical health and social care, domestic abuse, harassment, insecure accommodation, leaving institutions or specialist accommodation, or below tolerable standard. • + award: another of the above or one or more of the B or C awards below.
<p>Priority B: Urgent need</p> <p>Priority B +: Urgent Need and one or more other need (Priority B or C)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires a sheltered property and: • Urgent health and social care, social, community or family support, harassment, overcrowding, under-occupying or relationship breakdown. • + award: another of the above or one or more of the C awards below.
<p>Priority C: Moderate need</p> <p>Priority C+: Two or more moderate housing needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires a sheltered property and: • Moderate health and social care, social, community or family support, insecure accommodation, leaving institutions or specialist accommodation, overcrowding, under-occupying, take up or stay in employment. • + award: another of the above.

4.6 Critical housing needs

The following housing needs attract an A priority. If you have one of these housing needs, this will be considered in deciding your final priority for sheltered housing and may result in a 'plus' award:

Health and social care needs A:

To be granted an A award by the Health and Social Care Panel, you will have critical health or social care needs, other than mobility needs, which are not met by your current housing situation and which impact on your well-being. Please see the Common Allocation Policy for a full description for this award.

Domestic abuse A: We use the Scottish Government's definition of domestic abuse as gender-based abuse which can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse, sexual abuse and mental and emotional abuse. If you give domestic abuse as the reason for applying for a house, we may seek information to support your case, including from Police Scotland, but will not contact the person that is responsible for the abuse.

Harassment A: You are experiencing harassment that is specifically targeted at you, in or around your current accommodation and you are not safe in your current accommodation. Harassment can take many forms including intimidating, threatening or aggressive behaviour, both verbal and physical, and can involve attacks on property as well as people. Harassment is often premeditated and reoccurring. The A level priority will usually require a recommendation from Police Scotland that a move is required to ensure your safety.

Insecure accommodation A: If you have a definite date, within two months, when you will lose your accommodation through no fault of your own. For example, you are losing accommodation which is linked to your employment or have been issued with legal documents to leave your private rented or owned accommodation within two months (such as a Notice to Leave or Mortgage Repossession papers).

Leaving institutions or specialist accommodation A: You are leaving the armed forces, hospital or long-term residential care and have a date to leave but have nowhere to live when you leave.

Property below tolerable standard A: You are living in a property which is below tolerable standard according to the definition is set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001). Being below tolerable standard will include things such as not having a sink with a supply of both hot and cold water or not having an effective system for getting rid of waste water. The full definition is contained in Appendix 3 of the Common Allocation Policy. The local authority must confirm in writing that a house is below the tolerable standard for this to be applied.

4.7 Urgent housing needs (Priority B)

The following housing needs attract a B priority. If you have one of these housing needs, this will be considered in your final priority for sheltered housing and may result in a 'plus' award:

Health and social care needs B: To be granted a B award by the Health and Social Care Panel, you will have urgent health or social care needs, other than mobility needs, which are not met by your current housing and which are impacting on your well-being.

Social, community or family support B: You need to move to be closer to a family member to give or receive essential support to carry out day-to-day tasks and the support you give or receive is necessary to allow you or your family member to live independently. You would receive this award if it is not possible or reasonable for you to give or receive the support where you currently live and you are looking to move to within a reasonable distance of the person giving or needing the support.

Harassment B: You are experiencing harassment that is specifically targeted at you, in or around your current accommodation, but you are safe in your current accommodation. Or you fear violence, and this fear is justified. Harassment can take many forms including intimidating, threatening or aggressive behaviour, both verbal and physical, and can involve attacks on property as well as people. Harassment is often premeditated and reoccurring. The B level priority will usually require a recommendation from Police Scotland that a move is required to ensure your safety.

Overcrowding B: Your current home has two bedrooms fewer than the number you need. We will calculate the number of bedrooms you are short by comparing

the number you have and the number we have assessed you as needing. If members of the household applying to live together are currently living in different properties, we will assess overcrowding against the home which comes closest to meeting the combined household's needs.

Under-occupying B: You live in a social rented property and your current home has two or more bedrooms more than you need. We will calculate how many extra bedrooms you have by comparing the number in your current home and the number we have assessed you as needing. You will only receive this level of priority if you are looking to move to a property that has two or more fewer bedrooms than you currently have.

Relationship breakdown B: If the relationship between you and a partner with whom you live has broken down, you are still living together and you wish to move to another property. The priority will only be awarded to the household wishing to move out of the current home.

4.8 Moderate housing needs (Priority C)

The following housing needs attract a C priority. If you have one of these housing needs, this will be considered in your final priority for sheltered housing and may result in a 'plus' award:

Health and Social Care needs C: To be granted a C award by the Health and Social Care Panel, you will have health or social care needs, other than mobility needs, which are not met by your current housing and are impacting on your well-being.

Social, community or family support C: You need to move to be closer to a family member to give or receive support to carry out day-to-day tasks and the support you give or receive is necessary to allow you or your family member to live independently. You would receive this award if it is difficult for you to give or receive the support where you currently live and you are looking to move to within a reasonable distance of the person giving or needing the support.

Overcrowding C: Your current home has one bedroom fewer than the number you need. We will calculate the number of bedrooms you are short by comparing the number you have and the number we have assessed you as needing. If members of the household applying to live together are currently living in different properties, we will assess overcrowding against the home which comes closest to meeting the combined household's needs.

Under-occupying C: You live in a social rented property and your current home has one bedroom more than you need. We will calculate how many extra bedrooms you have by comparing the number in your current home and the number we have assessed you as needing. You will only receive under occupation priority if you are looking to move to a smaller property.

Take up or stay in employment C: If you need to move so you can keep your job or you have an offer of employment and need to move to take up the offer. We will only make this award if the move you are looking for will mean you live closer to your place of employment and/or to suitable public transport links.

Insecure accommodation C: You have no safe and permanent home of your own and are living in accommodation you have no right to occupy.

Leaving institutions or specialist accommodation C: You will be leaving the armed forces, hospital, long-term residential care or prison and will have nowhere to live when you leave.

5.0 How we allocate housing

5.1 How we allocate our properties

When a sheltered property becomes available for re-let, it will normally be offered to applicants on the sheltered housing list.

We will always aim to make an offer to applicants who are looking for a property of that type and in that location. We will then take account of the overall level of priority. Where more than one applicant has the same priority, the first offer will be made to the applicant who has held that level of priority longest.

There may also be instances where we will allocate a property out-with our sheltered housing waiting list, as stated in section 4.12 of our Common Allocation Policy. This may be because we are unable to let a property adapted for wheelchair use from our sheltered waiting list, where an applicant's particular need will be best met by sheltered housing, or in an emergency housing situation. In these cases, the allocation will be dealt with sensitively and we will ensure that the applicant would be best suited to a sheltered environment.

5.2 Nominations and referrals

The council has nomination agreements with other social housing landlords which have housing in Renfrewshire, which includes sheltered housing. If you have joined the Council's housing list and have agreed to be nominated to a housing association, you may be referred to a housing association landlord for an offer of housing.

The Council and housing associations also have an agreement covering offers of housing to people who are statutorily homeless. These arrangements are in line with Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. This means that an applicant that is statutorily homeless whom it is felt that would benefit from sheltered housing, may receive an offer of this type of housing.

5.3 Number of offers

We aim to work with applicants to help them make the best choices. We make offers based on your housing needs and preferences after contacting you to confirm that the details we hold on your application form are accurate. This is

good practice as it allows us to reduce inappropriate offers and ensures that your application details are as up-to-date and accurate as they can be. We may make up to two offers of housing.

Offers will be made on the basis of what is considered to be reasonable for your household to occupy. In deciding what is reasonable, we will take account of your choices and preferences, balanced against the supply of suitable properties and the urgency of your need for housing. If you have been placed in priority band A or A+ you will have a very urgent need to be housed. In order to make you an offer as quickly as possible, we may need to make you an offer of housing in an adjoining area or of another property type to those you have chosen. We will consider such an offer to be a reasonable offer of housing.

If you refuse a first reasonable offer of housing from one of us, that landlord may invite you to a housing information and advice interview to discuss your choices. We would not normally make any further offers until that interview has taken place. After receiving this housing advice, if you refuse a further reasonable offer from that landlord within the next 12 months they may suspend you from their list for up to 6 months.

If you are suspended from one of our lists, the landlord concerned will not make you any more offers until that suspension is removed. Further information on suspensions is provided in Section 6 of the Common Allocation Policy.

6.0 Appeals and complaints

6.1 Appeals

We will always aim to give you an excellent service, but we recognise that you may disagree with some of our decisions and may wish to make an appeal. Each of the landlords operates its own appeals policy which is available on their website or from their office upon request.

You can get information from your landlord on how to make an appeal. We may also offer interpreting and translation services if English is not your first language. We can also provide a British Sign Language interpreter if required.

6.2 Making a complaint

If you are not satisfied with the service you have received from us, you can make a complaint. Each landlord has its own complaints policy and process. If you wish to make a complaint you should contact the landlord involved. They will also publish information on their website about their complaints process. Contact details are provided later in this document.

If you make a complaint to a landlord but are not satisfied with the outcome, you can refer your case to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Each of our complaints policies will explain each step of the process, including how you can appeal to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is a government-based organisation which can review your case if you have already been through a landlord's complaints procedures and you feel they have not dealt with your complaint fairly.

If you feel that your landlord has done, or failed to do something that puts the interests of its tenants at risk, you can also refer your case to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The Scottish Housing Regulator's website provides information about significant performance failures and what you should do and how to raise your concerns with them. You can find this information at:

www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk

7.0 Reviewing this policy

We will keep this policy under review. If the monitoring of our performance suggests areas in which the policy needs to be improved, we may amend the policy if required. If any changes to be made are substantive, we will consult with tenants, applicants and other key stakeholders before making these changes.

We will undertake a full review this policy every three years, or earlier where required.

8.0 Partner Contact Details

If you would like to contact Renfrewshire Council, Linstone Housing Association or Bridgewater Housing Association about any aspect of this policy, their details are provided below.

Renfrewshire Council, Communities, Housing and Planning Service -

Paisley:

Customer Service Centre, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN.
Opening hours: Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 4.45pm and Friday 8.45am to 3.55pm.
Telephone: 0300 300 0222 Email: Paisley.hps@renfrewshire.gov.uk
Web: www.renfrewshire.gov.uk

Johnstone:

Customer Service Centre, Johnstone Town Hall, 25 Church Street, Johnstone, PA5 8FA.
Opening hours: Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 4.45pm, Friday 8.45am to 3.55pm.
Telephone: 0300 300 0222 Email: Johnstone.hps@renfrewshire.gov.uk
Web: www.renfrewshire.gov.uk

Renfrew:

Customer Service Centre, 14 Renfield Street, Renfrew, PA4 8RN.
Opening hours: Monday to Thursday 9.00am to 12.00pm and 2.00pm to 3.45pm,
Friday 9.00am – 12.00pm and 2.00pm to 2.45pm.
Telephone: 0300 300 0222 Email: Renfrew.hps@renfrewshire.gov.uk
Web: www.renfrewshire.gov.uk

Linstone Housing Association –

Head office: 17 Bridge Street, Linwood, PA3 3DB.
Opening hours: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9.00am – 4.30pm,
Wednesday 1.30pm – 6.00pm.
Telephone: 01505 382383 Email: general@linstone.co.uk
Web: www.linstone.co.uk

Bridgewater Housing Association –

Head office: 1st Floor Bridgewater Shopping Centre, Erskine, PA8 7AA.
Opening hours: Monday to Friday – 9.00am – 12.00pm and 1.00pm – 4.00pm.
Telephone: 0141 812 2237 Email: admin@bridgewaterha.org.uk
Web: www.bridgewaterha.org.uk