

ALLOCATION POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2016



LANARKSHIRE HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD



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(*Note Lanarkshire Housing Association hereinafter referred to as LHA)

1.0 Allocation Policy

Our Allocation Policy sets out how we allocate housing and is designed to ensure that people have fair and open access to our housing list and assessment process.

We will ensure that applicants have their *individual needs recognised, are treated fairly and with respect, and receive equal access to housing services and advice.*

1.1 Policy Aims

Our policy aims to ensure that we allocate houses in a way that:

- gives preference to applicants in greatest housing need
- makes best use of available stock
- maximises access and choice in housing
- creates balanced and sustainable communities
- is fair and transparent

1.2 Policy Objectives

Our objectives include addressing local and national housing needs through detailed housing and market analysis within Lanarkshire, addressing market context and demographic trends.

Our objectives include:-

- Ensuring our allocation policy, procedures and practices comply with legislative requirements.
- Allocation of housing that is appropriate to applicant's needs, whilst maintaining balanced and sustainable communities.
- Ensuring our Allocation policy positively contributes to the prevention and resolution of homelessness
- Ensuring equal and fair access to our housing and assessment process
- Working with partner local authorities to maximise and simplify access to housing through a Common Housing Register system.
- Ensuring our policy accommodates mobility issues for tenants to address their changing support needs.
- Providing guidance to applicants on the application and allocation process.

We will provide an Information leaflet summarising our allocation policy for applicants, providing details of housing options including transfers and mutual exchanges.

1.3 Legal framework

The Association's allocation policy meets best practice expectations and operates within the legal framework affecting Housing Associations in Scotland including:

- The Housing (Scotland) Acts of 1987 and 2001
- The Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981
- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Civil Partnership Act 2005
- The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

- The Equality Act 2010

1.4 The Scottish Social Housing Charter (the Charter)

The Charter was introduced in April 2012, setting outcomes and standards social landlords should achieve. The purpose of the Charter is to help improve the quality and value of services which social landlords provide, whilst supporting Scottish Government's aims of creating a 'Safer and Stronger' Scotland.

We will take full cognisance of the Charter in our policy development.

In particular we will address:

Charter Outcome 1 Equalities:

"Social Landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- *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".*

Charter outcome 2: Communication:

"Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- *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".*

Charter outcome 3 – Participation:

"Social Landlords manage their businesses so that:

- *tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with".*

Charter Outcomes 7, 8 and 9 - Housing Options:

"Social Landlords work together to ensure that:

- *people looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them.*
- *tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options."*

"Social landlords ensure that:

- *people at risk of losing their home get advice on preventing homelessness".*

Charter Outcome 10 - Access to Social Housing:

"Social landlords ensure that:

- *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".*

We will *monitor, assess, compare with other similar landlords and report on our performance in achieving Charter outcomes, through an annual performance report provided for tenant and customers.*

1.5 Common Housing Register (CHR)

A CHR system is operated within both North and South Lanarkshire Council letting areas, which makes it easier for applicants to apply for housing.

A single application form is available for each local authority area, allowing applicants to apply for LHA, local authority and other RSL properties.

- Anyone over the age of 16 can apply for housing and have their housing needs assessed.

All applications received are placed on the CHR. Where applicants have indicated that they wish considered for LHA property, the application will be assessed in accordance with our points system, based on the circumstances detailed on the application.

We will allocate properties to those in greatest need, based on applicants housing need relative to others. Assessment of housing need will determine applicant's priority; with points awarded in accordance with 'The Points System' as per **Section 2** of this policy.

1.6 Housing Information and Advice – Housing Options

Housing applicants can choose the type of property and area they wish to be considered for. Housing staff will assist applicants with their application and provide advice on social housing available in their chosen areas, with information also provided on relet turnover rates in order to help applicants broaden the range of options available to them.

1.7 Housing Need Categories

Our Allocation Policy complies with legislation, including, Section 20 (1) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (as amended), which confirms that all RSLs must give reasonable preference to persons who:

- (a) occupy houses that do not meet the tolerable standard:
- (b) are overcrowded - occupying overcrowded houses, or where practical, persons who have large families*
- (c) are living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- (d) Homelessness - people, who are homeless, threatened with homelessness or have a priority need which makes it unreasonable for the person to occupy their accommodation

In addition the aforementioned Act, the Association provides housing need points for the undernoted categories.

- (e) Social Priority - experiencing harassment or abuse in their current environment
- (f) Under occupation - occupying houses larger than required
- (g) Health and Housing Needs - medical condition made worse by current living circumstances
- (h) Environmental Factors – require to move for support or employment reasons
- (i) Height of Accommodation - applicants with young children living above second floor

- (j) Insecure Tenancy - housing of a temporary nature
- (k) Sharing Amenities - shared amenities with another household
- (l) Independent Housing - leaving home to set up first tenancy
- (m) Transfers – existing tenants seeking a move

* the Associations ability to house large families is restricted in view of only a small number of large properties available.

** (Note the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 is changing the reasonable preference categories, but a commencement order is awaited to bring it into place).

Full details of the points system adopted to prioritise needs are provided within **Section 2** of this policy.

1.8 Nomination Arrangements

A nomination arrangement is in place with local authorities, which allows a percentage of lets to be nominations from the local authority.

The nomination arrangement in place with North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) offers 50% of available lets for nomination from their waiting list.

The nomination arrangement in place with South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) is for 100% of available properties, with this based on the very low stock level we have within the South Lanarkshire area, therefore we do not participate in the SLC Home finder CHR system.

Within areas of low demand a separate local arrangement may be agreed with the local authority to exclude properties from the nomination process.

1.9 Area, House type and Size

We will take account of applicants' housing preferences and ask applicants to choose as many areas and house types as possible.

We will allocate the appropriate house size, based on family compositions.

Where an applicant wishes to move owing to health problems, we may limit the types of housing that is offered, i.e., where an applicant is awarded high medical points for mobility reasons, we would not consider the applicant for a house with stairs or an upper flat. If an applicant wishes to apply for this type of housing they would lose high medical points.

Housing designed for particular groups of people e.g. amenity, wheelchair or adapted housing will be allocated to the highest pointed applicant requiring this type of housing; this may not be the applicant at the top of the housing list.

Applicants with disabilities, who have a non-resident carer providing overnight care, may be considered for an additional bedroom to meet their needs.

Specific flatted developments are designated as 'no pets allowed'. Where an applicant is being considered for these developments, they will be advised of this condition of tenancy.

1.10 Health and Housing Needs

A separate Health and Housing Needs assessment will be undertaken for applicants who have indicated that there is a health issue made worse by their current living circumstances. If there is more than one person in the household applying for housing owing to health circumstances, a separate form must be completed for each member of the household.

In assessing the applicants' medical circumstances we will address:

- The extent to which re-housing will benefit the person concerned
- The severity of the person's condition or the degree of incapacity

Where an applicant or member of the household requires special medical equipment at home and it is considered unreasonable to share a room while using the equipment, we may consider an extra bedroom; however applicants will be advised of any Housing Benefit implications in relation to under occupancy charge.

If we do not have a house that suits the applicant's needs, we will provide housing options advice to direct the applicant to other landlords.

1.11 Homelessness

We will target our resources to prevent homelessness through our allocations policy and tenancy sustainment, working in partnership with local authorities alongside wider strategies to improve employability, education, health and access to housing.

Homeless prevention includes advice and support to a range of applicants, including:-

- Owner occupiers facing repossession by their lenders
- Applicants in arrears of rent
- Applicants facing difficulty owing to anti-social behaviour, neighbour nuisance or harassment
- Applicants subject to domestic abuse or harassment
- Personnel leaving HM Forces

We will provide applicants with advice on their housing options, signposting them to available support to assist them to sustain their tenancy and alleviating homelessness.

In addition to assisting in the achievement of objectives of The Homeless (Scotland) Act 2003, we will assist homeless or potentially homeless applicants through the needs assessment of our allocation policy. Applicants who present as homeless or potentially homeless will be advised to make a homeless application to the local authority to maximise their housing options.

Compliant with the provisions of Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, we will assist the local authority when a request is made to assist in providing accommodation for statutory homeless applicants.

Owner occupiers facing repossession owing to financial difficulties will also be advised to seek independent advice to assess if the Scottish Government's Mortgage to rent scheme is a viable option; with advice available through the Citizen's Advice Bureau or Money Advice Service.

Applications received as a result of a relationship breakdown will be assessed compliant with our policy. Applicants will be advised to seek legal advice in respect of any other marital issues including occupancy rights.

We aim to assist people to live free from violence and abuse, adopting a sympathetic approach to the needs of victims. We will take reasonable steps to obtain information to support the applicant's case, with evidence of abuse or threats of violence accepted from the applicant, though expressed fears with an appropriate assessment of points awarded. Victims will be advised to seek advice and support from appropriate agencies.

We will adhere to the provision of HAR Circular HAR1/2009 in relation to housing for people leaving the armed forces. Information and advice will be provided, with points awarded compliant with our policy under Section 2.3 (e) Homelessness points. Applicants will be advised to submit a homeless application to the local authority.

1.12 Information Required from Applicants

We will require applicants to provide supporting information on their current housing circumstances to allow us to assess their application form. Applicants must also keep us informed of changes in circumstances which may affect their housing need or size of housing required.

In order to verify applications, applicants must provide two forms of identity e.g. driving licence, a passport, an ID card or National Insurance card.

If we believe an applicant has intentionally changed their housing circumstances in order to improve their chances of being offered housing, we will assess the application as if this change did not happen.

1.13 Sustaining Tenancies and Balanced Communities

We aim to achieve well balanced communities to support social and economic regeneration, making good use of our properties to address housing needs and taking cognisance of demographics.

Where applicants or tenants have identified support needs and may require assistance through adaptations, support or care; we will liaise with support agencies, local authority or health services to assist in securing support.

1.14 New Developments

In assessing housing mix for new developments, account will be taken of housing needs and demands for the specific area, assessing both LHA and CHR waiting lists, in addition to data available from social work departments to assess the demand for specialist/wheelchair housing.

1.15 Equality

We recognise that Equality and Diversity are not standalone issues and seek to embed these concepts into all of our policies and procedures. In this respect we aim to positively promote equal opportunities for all our customers. We will embrace diversity and eliminate any direct or indirect discrimination.

We will make information available on our allocation policy to individuals in accessible formats, with translation and interpreting services available on request, through our Happy to Translate service.

Additionally we endorse the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes in relation to Equalities.

1.16 Accommodation designed for People with Particular Needs

We will work in partnership with local authorities and partner agencies to ensure suitable housing is available for people with particular/special needs.

Where a property is designed or adapted for a specific client group, we will make every effort, to match the property to a suitable applicant, consulting where required with relevant partners.

1.17 Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST)

Tenancies offered will be Scottish Secure Tenancies. Where specific housing requirements are identified by local authorities or partner agencies, we will consider offering a lease agreement to that agency in appropriate circumstances.

1.18 Protocol Arrangements

Protocol arrangements are in place with local authorities to address specific rehousing arrangements for a number of groups, including young people leaving care, offenders, people leaving hospital after a long stay and refugees. These protocols ensure that tenancies are effectively managed with the required support in place. Applicants subject to protocol arrangement will be assessed by the local authority and referred through the nomination process.

1.19 Mobility

If a tenant or applicant considers their current home is no longer suitable, we will provide advice on alternative options including:-

- Adaptations
- Mutual exchange
- New Housing Application

1.20 Local Letting Initiative

In areas where there is a recognised low demand, high turnover and high refusal levels - local letting initiatives will be considered to increase demand and assist in the allocation of properties.

Allocation initiatives will take account of housing and community needs inclusive of community need indicators (area profile, stock profile, tenant and market needs) with the aim to provide a balanced community.

Subject to assessment we will consider initiatives which include under-occupation and letting to lower point levels. Additionally, in areas where no demand is identified, we will consider adopting appropriate marketing techniques, including: advertising via posters, on line, local shops and local media.

1.21 Refusals

Where an applicant refuses two reasonable offers of housing, their application will be suspended from receiving offers for a period of time (3 months). The applicant will be advised in writing of the reason and duration of the suspension and advised of their right to appeal this decision.

1.22 Suspending Applications from the Housing List

We will suspend applicants from receiving offers of housing in accordance with legislative guidance, where:

- An applicant has in excess of one month's rent outstanding from a tenancy related debt, with no arrangement made and adhered to for at least 3 months.
- there is an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) currently in force, or there is a court action pending regarding an ASBO

(We will consider each case of antisocial behaviour on an individual basis. We will be fair when we look at whether or not we will suspend an application. If we do suspend, this will usually be for six months. After this time, we will review the suspension and consider whether there have been any further complaints of this nature.)

We may also suspend applicants from receiving offers of housing where applicants:-

- are violent or aggressive towards our staff.(This type of suspension will last for at least six months)
- Are in prison. (We will suspend the application for the duration of the prison sentence, with the suspension removed in line with the Prison Discharge Protocol, with the application considered nearer the time of release).
- Has provided false or misleading information in respect of their application. (The application may be suspended for a maximum period of 12 month).
- Cannot prove residency. (Application will be suspended until residency is verified)
- Is found guilty of theft or vandalism against LHA property. (application will be suspended for a maximum period of 12 months from latest incident)
- has been found guilty of harassment against another person (application suspended for a period up to 12 months from latest incident)
- Declares (or faces allegations) that they are a high risk offender. (Application will be suspended until a risk assessment is carried out by the local authority, in accordance with MAPPA guidance);
- are Asylum Seeker or is subject to immigration control (Application will be suspended until their leave to remain in the UK is granted);

Suspensions are balanced against the housing need of the applicant.

Applicants will be advised in writing of the suspension and reason for this, and advised of the appeals process. Appeals against suspension will be treated in accordance with the Allocations Appeals Procedure.

We will monitor the number of suspensions we make from our housing lists and consider how these affect our allocation process. We will use this information to review the effectiveness of our suspension policy.

1.23 Cancelling Applications

Applicants will only be removed from the waiting list for the undernoted reasons:

- The applicant is allocated a tenancy and their application is completed
- The death of an applicant;
- The applicant has requested removal from the housing list;

Additionally, applicants may be removed from the waiting list if they fail to engage with our staff regarding their application. Applicants failing to respond to two separate pieces of correspondence or where this is returned marked 'gone away' will be cancelled due to lost contact. These applicants will have the opportunity for reinstatement if contact is re-established within a three months, the application will be reassessed from their original date.

Appeals relating to cancellation of applications will be considered on a case by case basis.

1.24 Transfers

We recognise that housing need may arise from both new applicants and current tenants. We will assess housing applications from tenants based on their housing need to allow them to be considered for a transfer of home.

1.25 Emergencies

We recognise that emergencies may arise, particularly in circumstances including fire or flood, and in such cases we will not use our normal housing need assessment.

On rare occasions there may be circumstances where we require to rehouse someone who may not normally be seen as a priority (which will only be considered in extenuating circumstances) where our points system does not address the specific priority identified. Approval of any such allocation will be subject to a report to the Housing Services Sub Committee.

1.26 Reviewing Housing Lists

We will review our housing lists regularly to ensure that these remain up to date. We will contact applicants to make sure they wish to remain on our housing list and confirm that their circumstances remain the same.

1.27 Delegation

The Housing Manager is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Allocation Policy with procedures in place to address the day-to-day management. Reports are provided to the Housing Services Sub Committee on the operation of the policy, including Suspensions and Allocation performance.

1.28 Register of Benefits

Applicants eligible for housing will be asked to confirm in their CHR application form if they are related to a member of staff or governing body member. This will not affect their right to be considered for housing; however we will maintain a register of benefits relating to any tenancy granted to an employee, committee member, or a close relative of either. Allocations will be subject to a senior manager's approval and recorded in our register.

1.29 Monitoring of Performance

Allocation performance will be measured against targets in relation to the following areas:

- Nomination agreements
- Relet timescales (for new lets and first lets)
- Void periods/ Void loss
- Analysis of applicants housed
- Ethnic monitoring
- Market analysis

1.30 Customer Service - Managing expectations

We are committed to providing excellent Customer Service Standards, to ensure that applicants receive a positive experience when applying for housing. We offer advice and assistance to applicants, regarding housing applications and housing options. Additionally, a prospect interview is offered to help manage rehousing expectations.

Our Happy to Translate Service provides access to Interpreting services for applicants who are not fluent English speakers.

1.31 Appeals

We aim to ensure all housing applicants receive an excellent service. Where applicants are unhappy about a decision relating to their housing application, they have an opportunity to request a review of their application. Applicants should discuss this with a member of the housing team in the first instance and if necessary complete a review request.

Allocation appeals may be considered in the following circumstances:

- Decisions on whether an applicant should be admitted to the housing list
- Objections over the points allocated following assessment
- Appeal over a suspension or removal from the waiting list

An allocation appeal will be passed to a senior member of the housing team, who was not involved in the original assessment, to carry out a review. The Housing Services Director will oversee the process, with the outcome notified to applicants within 28 days of the request.

If an applicant is dissatisfied about how we applied the policy or administered the points: they have the right to utilise the Association's Complaints Handling Procedure.

1.32 Complaints

Applicants have access to our Complaints Handling Procedure, which reflects our commitment to resolve customer dissatisfaction with any service provided, including the allocation process.

An information leaflet on our complaints handling procedure will be provided to applicants on request. If an applicant remains dissatisfied with the findings of our complaints process; they have the right to submit a complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

1.33 Operational guidance

This Allocations policy and points system is supplemented by detailed operational guidance for staff to ensure accountability in practices. A housing options guide and an information leaflets on the Allocation Policy, Points system and Selection process will be made available to applicants.

1.34 Sharing Information – Data Protection

When an applicant signs a CHR form, they agree to the sharing of information within data protection legislation. To assess housing need, this often requires us to work with other organisations and services, including social work, health services and other housing providers. We will only share information where it helps us assess housing need.

1.35 Consultation on Policy

LHA will consult with local authority partners, applicants and tenants and other wider groups, including our Tenant Focus Group, on any proposed significant changes to our Allocation policy.

1.36 Monitoring and Review of Policy

We will monitor the effectiveness of the Allocation policy in addressing identified housing need within the areas we operate. We will provide reports to the Housing Services Sub-Committee on the management of housing lists, allocation timescales and analysis of housing need linked to market trends.

In reviewing our policy, we will take account of legislative changes and good practice. We will consult tenants, applicants and appropriate protected characteristic groups, in addition to other housing providers and independent advisors when reviewing our policy. We will also take account of the analysis of housing needs and demand within the local authority areas in which we operate.

We will have regard to legislative changes; in particular, we will take account of aspects of The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, once implementation guidance is published by the Scottish Government.

Generally the policy will be reviewed every three years.

1.37 Referrals

We will work with local authority housing and social work services and health services to address housing needs. A number of protocols are in place to address particular client groups where urgent rehousing is required; this will include hospital discharge programmes or referrals for specific property types including wheelchair housing; with other referrals considered for identified applicants in particular circumstances.

2.0 THE POINTS SYSTEM

2.1 Basis of Selection and Allocation

We will allocate our houses in a way that gives reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need, makes best use of available stock, maximises choice and helps to sustain communities. Our points system is designed to give priority to those in most housing need and eligible for housing. The selection and allocation of a property will be based upon applicant's housing need relative to others; therefore the applicants with the highest point level for a house size, area and house type, following assessment, will be considered for allocation.

Normally houses will be allocated on the basis of accommodation required as follows:

1 Living room for each household

- + 1 bedroom for each couple (or persons living as a couple)
- + 1 bedroom for first child
- + 1 bedroom for each child over 8 years of different gender
- + 1 bedroom for each pair of children up to 14 years of same gender
- + 1 bedroom for each remaining member of the household

Subject to availability, in cases where there is an identified community need or acute housing need; LHA will consider allocating a property with one more or less bedroom than required.

2.2 Assessing housing need for existing Tenants

Applicants who are currently LHA tenants are defined as transfer applicants within this policy.

In contributing to creating balanced sustainable communities, we recognise that existing tenants may wish to move to a more suitable property and we will evaluate housing need and aspirations in relation to a transfer.

In providing tenants with the opportunity to move house, this allows a further property to be allocated to a household on the housing list.

2.3 Points System

(A) LACKING AMENITIES

We will assess facilities available against tolerable standard	Points
Points will be awarded for each amenity lacking or tolerable standard failure where a property is <u>NOT</u> :-	
Structurally stable	40
Substantially free from rising or penetrating damp	40
Satisfactorily provided with natural and artificial lighting, ventilation and heating	40
Adequately piped with a supply of wholesome water	40
Provided with a satisfactory supply of both hot and cold water within a sink	40
Provided with toilet facilities for exclusive use of occupants of the house and suitably located within the house	40
Provided with a fixed bath or shower and wash hand basin, each with	40

satisfactory supply of hot and cold water, located within house	
Provided with effective drainage and disposal of foul and surface water	40
Satisfactorily provided with facilities for cooking of food within the house	40
Provided with satisfactory access to external doors and outbuildings	40
(Further assessment of property linked to condition or amenity will include properties identified as subject to disrepair or fail energy efficient factors).	40
Compliant with relevant regulations in relation to the electrical installation.	40

(40 Points are awarded for amenity lacking or tolerable standard failure)

(B) URGENT REHOUSING

(i)	Houses purchased for clearance/demolition under Statutory Housing Action Area procedure OR dangerous property.	150
(ii)	Houses within declared Housing Action Areas for Improvement where works are programmed to commence within an agreed timescale.	40

(C) OVERCROWDING

Where the number of people in a property breaches the room or space standards; a house may be considered as overcrowded and points awarded to the applicant accordingly.

If the number of people sleeping in the house means that two people of the opposite sex have to sleep in the same room; then overcrowding points will be award.

Family unit(s) living in proven overcrowding circumstances will have the number of bedrooms required compared with the number presently available to them.

Points may be awarded to one applicant only as follows: -

FIRST additional bedroom required.	40
EACH additional bedroom required thereafter.	60
On the basis of agreed bedroom requirements -	
1 bedroom for each couple (or persons living as such)	
+ 1 bedroom for first child	
+ 1 bedroom for each child over 8 years of different gender	
+ 1 bedroom for each pair of children up to 14 years of same gender	
+ 1 bedroom for each remaining member of the household.	

Where an allocation is granted on the basis of overcrowding and another member of the household has an application on the waiting list, that application will be reviewed accordingly.

(D) PROPERTY CONDITION

Property condition will be assessed in identified areas of severe disrepair (not assessed under 'lacking amenity' category) adversely affecting applicants living conditions.

Points will be awarded where the physical condition of the property adversely affects applicants' living conditions.

Statutory repairs notice	40
Sub-standard electrical wiring	20
Severe condensation/dampness	20
Infestation	20
Severe water penetration	20
Inadequate heating and ventilation	20

*Points will be awarded subject to evidence available or inspection of property.

No maximum property condition points will apply

(E) HOMELESSNESS

LHA has a duty to give reasonable preference to applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and we will take account of legislative requirement. We will make every effort to assist local authorities achieve their statutory duties, with a section 5 referral protocol in place.

We will provide homelessness points to applicants identified in priority need through Homelessness (Scotland) etc. Act 2003 on confirmation of their assessment from the local authority.

We will assist applicants through our housing need assessment, a range of circumstances; particularly those with no tenancy, in insecure tenancies and those threatened with homelessness. Homeless applicants may qualify for points under different categories of our housing need assessment and points system. We will take account of circumstances where an applicant has no accommodation, or where it is unreasonable for the applicant to occupy the property, or they cannot secure entry to it.

Situations of homelessness will be addressed in the following circumstances:

(i) Relationship breakdown

We will award points to applicants who are experiencing abuse or harassment from someone within their home, including victims of domestic abuse.

In assessing the risk of domestic abuse, account will be taken of the circumstances where (but for the risk of abuse) the applicant might reasonable be able to remain in the property. Abuse will include violence, harassment, threatening conduct and any other conduct likely to give rise to physical or mental injury.

Persons at risk of domestic abuse	100
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We will award points to applicants who have lost or are at risk of losing their accommodation due to a relationship breakdown

Irretrievable relationship breakdown	40
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(ii) Homeless Priority Assessment

Homelessness will be assessed where applicants have no accommodation or where it is impossible or unreasonable for the applicant to live in that accommodation and:

An applicant assessed as having a priority need as determined by the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 amended by Homelessness (Scotland) Act on award of priority need determined by the local authority	40
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(iii) Harassment

Harassment deriving from unfair discrimination against any individual, household or group on the grounds of race, colour, culture, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, family circumstances or marital status.	80
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(iv) Financial difficulties

Homeless points will be awarded under financial difficulties, where an applicant's house is likely to be sold or repossessed owing to the applicant (s) genuine financial difficulties.	80
A decision as to whether someone is in financial difficulties will be based on whether, if he or she continue to pay housing costs, the amount of disposal income left would be equal to or less than the amount which someone would be entitled to receive on income support (based on current benefit quick guide on applicable amounts).	

(v) Housing for personnel leaving the Armed Forces:

Applicants applying for housing because they are leaving armed forces and losing accommodation will be assessed as facing homelessness; accordingly, we will assess applicants from ex-service personnel within our homeless category, with points awarded as follows:

Where applicant has sustained injuries, they may also qualify for health points.

Homeless as a result discharge from HM Forces	80
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(F) SOCIAL PRIORITY

Where an applicant indicates there is an environmental or serious social problem which is made worse by current living conditions and rehousing would enable a solution to the problem. It must be confirmed by both the Association and other appropriate agencies that the problem cannot be adequately dealt with under present housing conditions.

We will assess incidents of harassment and abuse; taking account of verbal or physical abuse which is acute or life threatening. Applicants who are subjected to harassment or abuse may qualify for homeless assessment through the local authority.

We will assess different types of abuse or harassment, including, domestic abuse, racial harassment, sexual abuse, religious or sectarian harassment, homophobic harassment, transphobic harassment and harassment of disabled people, including those with learning difficulties.

Social conditions will be assessed under the circumstances and severity of each case. Points will be awarded as follows: -

(i) Serious Harassment

Serious harassment or abuse experienced through Antisocial behaviour, (where applicant is confirmed as not causing problem). High award will be considered subject to confirmation from existing landlord and approved by Housing Manager	80
Cases of serious abuse or harassment within the undernoted categories: We will assess different types of abuse or harassment, including, domestic abuse, racial harassment, sexual abuse, religious or sectarian harassment, homophobic harassment, transphobic harassment and harassment of disabled people, including those with learning difficulties.	80

(ii) Differences in lifestyle

Differences in Lifestyle	40
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Applicants reporting incidents of harassment may also be advised to submit a homeless application to the local authority.

(G) UNDER OCCUPATION

- (i)** Persons under-occupying houses will have the number of apartments they need compared with the number of apartments presently available.

Points awarded as follows: -

For EVERY apartment more than needed	20
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**N.B the number of apartments needed is calculated as for overcrowding (see (C) above).

(iii) LHA tenants

LHA tenants wishing to move to smaller accommodation because of the financial implications of the welfare reform bedroom tax will be assessed separately to other applicants and points awarded as follows:-

For FIRST apartment more that needed	60
For EACH additional apartment thereafter	20

(H) HEALTH AND HOUSING NEED - MEDICAL FACTORS

Where health is affecting an applicant's current housing circumstances, we will assess the severity of the health condition, degree of incapacity and the extent to which rehousing will benefit the applicant. Health factors will be assessed using a **Health and Housing Needs Assessment**. The information contained in this assessment will allow us to consider how moving could help or ease health circumstances.

We will award points based on the priority assessed, considering the medical or health circumstances for each member of the household and evaluating whether rehousing may ease or alleviate problems experienced. Evaluation of the severity of the problem will be assessed using a ranking High, Medium or Low.

(i)	High	100
	Hospital discharge prevented due to current housing conditions	
	Housebound	
	Denied use of essential toilet or kitchen facilities due to physical mobility problems	
(ii)	Medium	60
	Severe mobility problems	
	Severe psychological problems	
	Severe medical problems	
(iii)	Low	30
	Medical condition is made worse by current housing circumstances	

Where an applicant requires to move house as a result of health reasons, we may limit the types of housing offered, to ensure the property meets health needs. e.g. if we assess needs and find an applicant's health may improve by moving to a ground floor property; the applicant would only receive points for this house type.

Health assessment will be undertaken for all applicants and members of the household who are to be rehoused.

We will undertake an assessment of the health and housing needs assessment, looking at the characteristic of the house, medication requirements, social problems and impact on health, disability benefits and other relevant information.

(I) ENVIRONMENTAL & SOCIAL FACTORS

Consideration will be given to environmental and social reasons for rehousing, taking account of the undernoted circumstances:

- Applicant wishes to move to seek employment/travel to work in the Lanarkshire Area; where transport difficulties are experienced, with this relating to finances, distance or difficulty with transport.
- Support requirements, i.e. Relative or friend in need of care or support, or nearer support networks.
- Access to facilities: persons require to be nearer to essential services.
- Has special social or medical reasons which require them to be rehoused in the area.

An Assessment will be made on the priority and proximity of the above:

Totally Unsuitable	45
Unsuitable	25
Moderately Unsuitable	10

(Factors such as age and disability will be taken into account when awarding points).

(J) HEIGHT OF ACCOMMODATION

Families with a child or children under 15 years of age living above the second floor.

Award of points:-	
For EACH Child over 10 but under 15	10
For EACH Child over 5 but under 10	20
For EACH child under 5	30

(K) INSECURE TENANCIES

Insecurity of Tenure will be assessed in **proven** circumstances such as:

(i) Tied Houses:	80
Applicants occupying tied accommodation which must be vacated, owing to death, retiral, termination, or removal from employment (including HM Forces) Points will be awarded for one applicant only:	
(ii) Caravans/Lodger/Sub-Tenant	40
Persons in short term accommodation (up to 12 months lease) only where no security of tenure is applied.	
(iii) Temporary Accommodation	40
Applicants whose present accommodation is of a temporary nature; hostel dwellers, long term hospital patients, temporary lets, short tenancies, homeless accommodation.	

Documentary evidence will be required.

(L) SHARING AMENITIES

Where an applicant shares standard amenities with household members, other than immediate family

Where an applicant has to return to the family home (after setting up a home elsewhere, following a minimum period of SIX months or more) owing to no other choice being available - proven merit by lease or rent paid elsewhere.

Following confirmation of a marital breakdown situation where both parties still require to share the marital home

Points awarded are as follows: -	
Sharing – living room	20
kitchen	20
bathroom/w.c.	20

(M) INDEPENDENT HOUSING

Applicants making an application to establish independence or applying for their first home will be eligible for:

Each year of continuous occupation in their present home (from the date of application for housing)	10 points per annum
(Single applicants/couples having lived continuously in the family home)	
(Students who fulfil (i) above with the exception of term time)	
(Individuals whose continuous residence was broken due to hospitalisation)	

Where continuous residence is broken for a temporary period points will be awarded if the absence was:

13 weeks or less and points will be awarded up to 52 weeks where:

- a person has been detained in custody on remand pending trial
- stay in a hostel is required as a condition of bail or
- detained pending sentence upon conviction

Where qualifying individuals are sharing amenities; points will be awarded in respect of the highest point level applicable i.e. sharing amenities or independent housing

(N) TRANSFERS

Housing demand comes from both applicants and current tenants. Tenants who present at least one form of housing need will be considered for transfer of home:

Each year of continuous occupation from the date of application for rehousing	10 points per annum

to a maximum of 120 points

2.4 Time in need

Where applicants share an equal number of points, the applicant suffering identified housing need for the longest period would be given priority and offered the tenancy. In the case of transfer applications the date effective will be the date of tenancy.

ALLOCATION POLICY SECTION 3 OPERATIONAL NOTES

(*Note Lanarkshire Housing Association hereinafter referred to as LHA)

3 OPERATIONAL NOTES

3.1 Home visit

As part of the assessment of an application a home visit will be carried out by housing staff at the applicant(s) current house, in order to verify information provided on the application form. If this is not possible due to location or personal circumstances (for example, a relationship breakdown, that places the applicant in danger from their partner) verification may be sought from other agencies.

We may ask other housing providers to visit applicants who live outwith North or South Lanarkshire

3.2 Tenancy references

Any applicant with a current or former tenancy will be requested to sign a mandate authorising the Association to seek a reference from their current or previous landlord.

3.3 Tenancies

There are currently two types of tenancy available from this Association as prescribed in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001:

- Scottish Secure Tenancy
- Short Scottish Secure Tenancy

The majority of tenancies offered by the Association will be Scottish Secure Tenancies, however, where any of the undernoted circumstances exist; the Association may offer a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy. Applicants will be made aware of the type of tenancy available, when a tenancy is offered.

Short Scottish Secure Tenancies may be offered in the following circumstances:

- an applicant has previously been evicted for anti-social behaviour in the last 3 years;
- the offer is in respect of temporary accommodation (employment, homeless, support needs or to allow work to be carried out to existing house);
- the property is subject to a lease agreement;
- when a court has granted an anti-social behaviour order against an applicant or a member of the applicant's household.

When a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy is offered due to anti-social behaviour, North Lanarkshire Council's resettlement services will be sought to assist in the tenant progressing to a full Scottish Secure Tenancy at the end of 12 months.

3.4 Mutual exchanges

An Association tenant may make an application to carry out a mutual exchange (swap) with a tenant of the Association or any other registered social landlord.

3.5 Offers

Applicants must advise the Association within three working days if they wish to view and accept the property, with failure to contact resulting in the offer of housing being withdrawn.

3.6 Accepting an offer of housing

After viewing a property, applicants will be given 24 hours to advise if they are going to accept the offer and sign the tenancy agreement. If a joint application is made, then a joint tenancy agreement will be entered into.

3.7 Refusing an offer of housing

If an applicant refuses one housing offer, we will discuss with them their reasons for refusing this offer and review their housing choices. However, if two offers are refused, we will suspend the applicant from our housing list for three months from the date of refusal of our second offer. We will use this time to discuss housing options with the applicant. We will not suspend the applicant from our housing list for refusing offers if:

- the applicant cannot accept the offer because of their health:
- a close relative or someone the applicant is particularly close to has recently died;
or
- the property we offered does not match the needs detailed in the application form.