

Renting Homes Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL	
(Policy) author:	Emma Bailey, Housing Services Lead
(Policy) owner:	Emma Bailey, Housing Services Lead
Effective date from:	25.02.2025
Approved by:	Daniel Baker, Director
Date approved:	25.02.2025
Review cycle:	2 yearly
Next review start date:	25.12.2027
This policy applies to:	All Staff involved in the allocation or management of available homes
Method of delivery:	Electronic and face to face training

Version Control

Date	Author	Version	Reason for Change
	Emma Bailey	V1	Introduction of a clear and concise Allocations policy and associated documentation for the delivery of a lettings service across Brighter Future stock

Summary of Changes

Section	Change
All	This Document and this folder and its contents replaces anything in previous existence

Consultations

Consulted with	Version	Date
Board		
Senior/ Executive Leadership Teams		
Customer and tenant engagement		
Staff		
Volunteers		

1. Purpose

Brighter Futures core purpose is to provide quality housing related services to vulnerable people including those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and who need and are willing to accept support in their transition into independent living.

2. Scope

The aim of this policy is to clearly outline our allocations process and decision making to ensure that our process remains auditable and transparent to our customers and partners.

3. Policy owner

This Policy and related documents are owned by the Housing Services Team.

4. Context

Brighter Futures believe that people can be successful if they have **Housing, Health** and **Hope**. As part of our offer to our current and future customers we provide and maintain good quality **Housing** throughout their journey through our Housing Pathway (see [Appendix 1](#) for visual).

Alongside the basic provision of **Housing** we also provide a sustainment service which focuses on working with the customers we house to provide advice/signposting and referrals to explore prioritising and improving **Health** and giving them/ supporting them to have **Hope** for their future.

More details are available in our [Housing Sustainment Strategy](#).

This Policy also takes into account the standards set out by the Social Housing Regulator; specifically the Tenancy Standard.

So Brighter Futures will:

- Let our homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way
- Be clear what agreement they are signing to and what that means
- Consider the housing needs and aspirations of customers and potential customers.
- Make best use of available housing stock.
- Contribute to local authorities' strategic housing function and sustainable communities
- Have a clear application, decision-making and appeals process
- Provide services to help our customers to be successful in their tenancy and help them maintain their occupation agreements
- Assist our customer to find alternative accommodation should their current property no longer meet their needs
- Provide clear advice and sign posting should customer wish to move on to other providers or other local authority areas
- Assist with move on applications as and when a customer no longer requires our sustainment services

5. Where are our homes?

Our stock of homes is mainly in the Stoke-on-Trent area although we do have properties in Newcastle-under-Lyme and Walsall.

6. Who are our customers?

Brighter Futures provides a sustainment service to those who require extra help to live independent and fulfilled lives. Brighter Futures customers have more complex support needs for example this could be a combination of the following:

- Homelessness (*or risk of*)
- Mental health problems
- Learning disability/ difficulty
- Physical disability
- Substance misuse
- Offending history
- History of rough sleeping

8. Applying for our homes:

Applications can be made directly to Brighter Futures by requesting an application form from Referrals@brighter-futures.org.uk.

We will encourage all applicants to go through the agency who is currently responsible for processing Homeless applications for the city as this will maximise the applicant's exposure to viable housing opportunities and contribute to wider data collection by the city.

Some of our schemes have a specific referral method; **see Appendix 2.**

9. Ensuring Equality:

In line with the Equality Act 2010 Brighter Futures welcomes applications from the whole community and will not discriminate against any of the protected characteristics however any applicant must have an ongoing support need.

Please note that as applicants under 18 cannot hold a legal tenancy of their own we cannot accept referrals until 3months prior to the 18th birthday. We would recommend those under 18 receive specialist housing advice through Social Services.

Reasonable aid and adaptations requests will be considered in line with our Aids and Adaptations Policy.

10. Allocating our homes:

Our application process is made of 6 steps

- Receive of application and identification if there is a 'support need'
- Identify appropriate scheme(s) and add to waiting list for those schemes
- Request applicants 'proofs' and request additional answers for filtering questions
- Complete interview and needs assessment
- Property matching
- Sign up and begin your housing journey

11. Matching applicants to properties

As of the 1st August 2024 the information we collect at the point of application/referral and during interview and assessment will be used to populate a risk assessment – this risk assessment is then used to assess;

1. What the applicants support needs are
2. Which scheme an applicant is most suited to

3. What frequency of visits are required past the first 5 days following move in and beyond to deliver our Housing Sustainment Service

We are committed to making best use of our limited available stock, so we will find the best place to meet the applicant's needs. Our Risk assessment's identity if a customer is High, Medium or Low risk in terms of their support needs. (See [Appendix 3](#) for maximum High-risk customers per scheme)

There may be occasions where a customer is accepted for a scheme but not offered an available room/flat immediately – the reasons another applicant may be maybe prioritised for example:

- If a ground floor property becomes available and there is an identified need for ground floor accommodation due to physical impairment or disability
- If a two-bedroom property becomes available and there is a documented need for a live in or overnight carer or would be better utilised by a family in need
- If the risk level has reached the maximum for that scheme

In these cases, non-successful applicants will remain on the waiting list until a suitable vacancy is identified/ we are advised the customer has been housed or if the customer is non-responsive to contact.

12. Transfers

Transfers between schemes:

Brighter Futures recognise that as our customers continue their journey, they may need to move to get more appropriate support from any one of our schemes.

If any of the Housing Sustainment Workers become aware of a customer that would benefit from the support of another Scheme within Brighter Futures, then with the customers consent they can share an updated Risk Assessment and submit to the relevant Service Manager or Team Leader for review. An open discussion is encouraged between teams, and a decision made on the transfer request within 10 working days.

If the request is approved, then notification can be issued to Housing Services who will make record of the approved request and priority will be given to that customer for any suitable alternative properties.

If the application is refused the scheme/team making the referral can request the decision be formally reviewed by the Managers involved via the Housing Needs Case Review.

Transfers between Housing Associations

Whilst we do not undertake 'Mutual Exchanges' in the typical sense; if a current tenant identifies a customer of another Housing Provider who has a documented support need and who meets all the criteria set above then considerations will be made to allow the transfer with the incoming tenant receiving a new tenancy and new Hope plan tailored to their specific needs.

13. Housing application refusals:

Whilst we aim to support all applicants and customers with rehousing needs there are occasions when we are unable to offer a home; this could be because either the property is not suitable or because the applicant is not suitable at that time.

If we assess an applicant as being unsuitable, we will let either the applicant or the referrer know (depending on the application route), we will be transparent with our reasoning and offer any advice, if possible, on how issues could be resolved.

Examples of applicant refusal reasons could include (but may not be limited to):

- a) Support needs being too high
- b) Refusal of housing sustainment support
- c) No demonstration of a support need
- d) Unaffordability
- e) Unspent Convictions – based on risk
- f) Spent Convictions – indicating risk
- g) History of Anti-Social Behaviour or failure to engage with sustainment service
- h) Immigration status
- i) Home Ownership
- j) Provision of false data
- k) Inability to contact the applicant

Clear definitions of the above can be found in **Appendix 4**.

14. Appeals:

Appeals can be made if the applicant or customer feels a decision has been made unfairly or requires review. This could be for several reasons including;

- Refusing an application on initial review
- Refusing an application due to none engagement
- Refusing an application during assessment
- Refusing a specific property or scheme due to ineligibility

Appeals should be made within 10 working days of notification.

An appeal can be made by:

Writing to:

Housing Services Lead
Three Counties House,
Festival Way,
Festival Park,
Stoke-On-Trent
ST1 5PX

Calling: 01782 406000

Or emailing customer.services@brighter-futures.org.uk and putting 'Appeal – Request' into the subject header

All appeals will be heard by the Housing Services Lead within Brighter Futures, please note that during the appeal process we will not keep properties on hold.

If the appeal is successful, then we will update our records and work with existing waiting lists utilising original application date and upcoming properties.

15. Exceptions/Exclusions

There are no exceptions other than identified above

16. Definitions

None

17. Legislative and Regulatory Requirements

[Social housing lettings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Rents, lettings and tenancies data: notes and definitions for local authorities and data analysts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Consumer standards Code of Practice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Moving to a new property | Residents | Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](http://housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

18. Related policies, procedures and documents

Policies	Transfer Policy Inventory Policy Housing Sustainment Strategy
Procedures	Renting Homes Procedure Transfer Procedure Terminations Procedure Inventory Procedure Appeals Procedure (flow chart)
Forms / Guidelines	Renting Homes Toolkit

19. Other useful documents/websites

www.england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice

[Housing and living in the UK - Unlock](#)

20. Monitoring and review

This document will be reviewed;

- every 2 years or;
- on significant regulatory or legislative change or;
- if there is suggestion or direction from any of the usual regulatory bodies
- or when schemes are added/removed to our portfolio

Appendix 1: Housing Pathway

Appendix 2a: How referrals are received/prioritised per scheme

Scheme	Referrals received from
90 Hope Street –	Referrals are received via Rough Sleepers Team or via the R.A.S.A.G forum –

Assertive Casework (ACT) Beds	'ACT'beds are only allocated to entrenched rough sleepers who meet criteria
90 Hope Street – new rough sleeper beds	First referral route is through Rough Sleepers Team (this includes urgent moves from our community properties) Second referral route is via R.A.S.A.G Third referral route is via our referral list (this includes non urgent moves from our community properties) Lastly if no applicants can be identified from the routes above we may approach our partners to identify if there are working with anyone that would match our criteria
Hillcrest	Move on pathway for ACT customers ready to move on from 90 Hope Street
New Hope	Move on pathway for ACT customers ready to move on from 90 Hope Street or Hillcrest
Orchid House	Referrals are received via Orchid Women's Project
Flat 14 and 12 Furlong Court	First referral route is as a move on option for our 90 Hope Street – general beds Second referral route is as a move on option for our ACT beds Third referral route is via our referral list Lastly if no applicants can be identified from the routes above we may approach our partners to identify if there are working with anyone that would match our criteria for service and scheme
Walsall Almshouses	Referrals usually from Adult Social Care – customers with mental health and or learning disabilities prioritised

Appendix 2b: Definition New and Entrenched Rough Sleepers

New to Rough Sleeping;

- A person is considered '**new**' if they have not been seen sleeping rough in the Local Authority in the 5 calendar years (60 months) preceding the date they were identified.
- If a person was seen more than 5 years previously, they are to be counted as 'New'.
- Someone is seen sleeping rough again after no contact for 2 or more quarters (180 days), whichever is shorter, measured from the last date the person was seen

Individuals sleeping rough long term (**Entrenched**);

- Long-term rough sleeper status is applied when the person is seen within the reporting month who has been seen sleeping out in 3 or more months out of the last 12 months.
Individuals on the Top Priority Group 'Entrenched Rough Sleepers' (50 individuals) are allocated entrenched rough sleeper status and recommended for accommodation via ACT.

Appendix 3: High Risk customer numbers to scheme

Scheme	Services on offer	Move on requirement?	Max number of high -risk customers
90 Hope Street	Homeless Hostel Door Management Staff on site 24/7 On site kitchen supplying: breakfast and tea	NO	8 Out of 26

	Dedicated Housing Sustainment Worker and Assertive Casework Team		
Hillcrest	Door Management Shared kitchen facilities Staff on site 24/7 Dedicated Assertive Caseworker	Move on pathway for ACT customers	3 Out of 13
New Hope	Door Management Shared kitchen and bathroom facilities Staff on site 24/7 Dedicated Assertive Caseworker	Move on pathway for ACT customers	0 Out of 6
Orchid House – women's only	Door Management Staff on site 24/7 Shared kitchen and bathroom facilities Support offered by Orchid Womens Services Dedicated Housing Sustainment Worker	No but must engage with Orchid Womens	2 Out of 5
Baden Road	Shared kitchen and bathroom facilities Dedicated Housing Sustainment Worker	Move on from none ACT at 90 Hope St/ Furlong (license)	0 Out of 5
Flat 12 and 14 Furlong Court (License)	Door Management Staff on site 24/7 Shared kitchen and bathroom facilities Dedicated Housing Sustainment Worker	Move on from none ACT at 90 Hope St initially	0 Out of 2
Furlong Court (Tenancy)	Door Management Staff on site 24/7 Dedicated Housing Sustainment Worker	Referrals from all locations indicating a need for door management	4 Out of 20
Community Housing (Tenancy)	Dedicated Housing Sustainment Worker Weekly or fortnightly visits	Referrals from all locations	Dependent on case officer workload

Appendix 4: Refusal reasons explained

i. Support needs are too high

Our tenancy sustainment offers focuses on utilising our core values and tailoring our offer to the individuals need however we cannot provide a 'Support' service. We cannot provide personal or physical care to any of our customers.

If support or care needs are identified, then we would require support to care arrangements to be in place at the point of application or a robust commitment to ensure these needs can be met from the point of tenancy commencement. If this is not secured, then needs will be identified as too high for our services and the application refused.

ii. Refusal housing sustainment support

If a sustainment/support need is identified and the applicant refuses the offer of sustainment

package by refusing to sign the Sustainment agreement, a home will not be offered, and the applicant will be refused our service entirely.

A refusal to engage in this service will result in immediate application refusal.

iii. No need for sustainment service or needs could be adequately met within general needs housing stock

On occasion multi-agency referrals are received indicating a requirement for 'Supported Accommodation', however this need may be solely homelessness or 'translation services'.

If this is the case, then an offer of a tenancy within our community housing will not be offered as needs could be met via other means such as general needs providers. However, this does not necessarily make the applicant ineligible for temporary housing via the homeless pathway. If eligible then this will be made clear at the point of referral.

iv. Affordability

Before offering a home, we will complete an income and expenditure assessment with the applicant to ensure that based on their income or expected income they would be able to sustain rent and charges and still have enough money to live on.

We will utilise benefit calculators such as Turn2us or entitled2 to get a suggestion on what benefits the applicant may be entitled to if not already in receipt however we can only use this as a guide – we are not able to confirm the decision of any benefit agency in advance.

We may refuse an applicant if this exercise would suggest they did not have enough money to live in one of our homes after essential costs e.g.: rent etc. are paid. This would include those not having recourse to public funds.

We may also refuse an application if the customer has outstanding monies owed to Brighter Futures – these circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

v. Unspent Convictions¹

Any unspent convictions must be declared at the earliest opportunity. This does not mean an automatic refusal; we will work with the probation worker and any other involved party to obtain relevant information to make a decision.

Whilst all applications are treated on a case-by-case basis a refusal decision based on unspent convictions may be influenced by;

- Information contained in the risk assessment indicating a High Risk to either property or person
- Our stock being in an area being of geographical concern
- Convictions being related to the production or supply of illegal drugs
- Convictions being related to hate crime where vulnerable people have been targeted
- Offences were committed in the locality of our stock and the victim(s) could still be at risk

¹ Advise for staff on spent/unspent convictions and timescales is given in Procedure appendices

As part of our statutory duty to assist local authorities we may consider housing sex offenders.

We will carefully consider all risks highlighted as part of our information gathering and may seek further support or guidance from the Public Protection Unit (PPU) or Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).

vi. Spent convictions and High-Risk applicants

Brighter Futures acknowledge that some applicants will have been offended during difficult periods in their lives and that their lives or circumstances may have changed considerably since the offence. So as above we will review as above and, on a case, -by-case basis.

We will make decisions incorporating guidance shared via <https://unlock.org.uk/>

If the risk assessment suggests the applicant may be a high risk to visiting staff or lone workers, then we reserve the right to refuse the application on that basis that we are unable to fulfil our obligations under tenancy sustainment service offer/ protect our staff/ or protect other residents then the applicant may be refused.

vii. Anti-Social Behaviour or failure to engage with support with Brighter Futures

If Brighter Futures have previously housed the applicant and they have either been responsible for Anti-Social Behaviour/ criminality in the property or immediate locality or have failed to engage with our sustainment services previously then this will be identified at the initial referral.

If this is the case, then the case history (including enforcement action taken/ impact on community etc.) will be fully reviewed alongside any demonstrated changes or supporting documentation supplied that may indicate that the applicant is in a different position than when they left us previously.

However, we reserve the right to refuse future applications from this applicant until such time as we feel it appropriate to consider them eligible for our service.

viii. Immigration Status

If an applicant has no recourse to public funds and cannot evidence their access to them, they will not be eligible for social housing. And therefore, the application will be refused.

If an applicant does have access to public funds but does not have an indefinite right to remain, then an offer of a tenancy will not be made (as we do not operate fixed term tenancies). However, this does not make the applicant ineligible for temporary housing via the homeless pathway if eligible as accommodation offers here are on licenses.

ix. Home Ownership

We will not normally accept an applicant if they own their own home either in the UK or abroad. However, if the applicant can evidence that they are in the process of selling the home (offer accepted and confirmed by a solicitor) and the proceeds would be insufficient to purchase another property for example a mortgage repossession or divorce settlement then an application may not be automatically refused.

x. Provision of false/incomplete information

If the applicant provided false information directly or via the referrer, the application will be refused.

If the application is submitted incomplete and the applicant or referrer cannot be contacted to complete the application then it cannot be assessed, and the application will be refused.

xi. The applicant cannot be contacted

Whilst we try to contact applicants to progress their application, if the applicant is not responsive or fails to attend the agreed interviews on at least three occasions, we will be unable to progress their application further. If this is the case, then the application will be marked as a refusal of service, and the reason stated as 'failed to engage'