



EASTHALL PARK

EASTHALL PARK ALLOCATIONS POLICY

**Approved
August 2004**

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1. OBJECTIVES

Easthall Park Housing Co-operative is a community based housing co-operative, which aims to contribute to the regeneration of the Easthall area through the provision of good quality housing for people in high levels of need and who wish to live in Easthall.

The principle aim of the policy is to allocate available properties to those in highest need, not only the traditional image of meeting needs such as (overcrowding, unsanitary conditions etc) but also to contribute to much broader issues such as health and social care.

Allocation Policies are not just about matching applicants to properties. It is also about the successful integration of households into the local community. This means greater attention must be paid to a wide range of complex needs at the same time ensuring the long-term sustainability of the community.

Where the Co-ops areas of operation are under clearance orders from Glasgow City Council, the Co-operative will award priority to displaced residents in order that they be rehoused.

Additionally Easthall Park recognises that it has a moral responsibility as a social landlord, to provide information and advice to applicants about the different opportunities for housing with our area of operation, particularly for applicants who we are unable to accept onto the list or make an offer housing in the short or medium term.

2. PRINCIPLES

The under noted are the principles by which the Co-operative will administer the policy and meet it's stated objectives in addition to the objectives and preferences highlighted in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 which are:

- **Occupying houses which do not meet the tolerable standard**
- **Occupying overcrowded houses.**
- **Have large families.**
- **Are living under unsatisfactory housing conditions.**
- **To homeless and those threatened with homelessness.**

The Co-operatives principles are:

- To be fair, efficient and consistent in allocating tenancies, this means treating applicants with similar characteristics in a similar manner to achieve similar outcomes.
- The Co-operative will endeavour to enter meaningful dialogue and provide information on the allocation process, priorities and the type of household being allocated properties, (whilst maintaining individual confidentiality).
- The Co-operative will strive to provide potential applicants with a complete picture of their rehousing opportunities with the Co-operative and other agencies.
- The objectives, priorities and processes of the allocation policy will reflect the local context of supply and demand and will be reflected in the Annual Letting Plan (appendix 1).
- The Co-operative will operate an open access allocation policy, which provides the opportunity for anyone to apply and have their housing needs assessed at any time. Easthall Park Housing Co-operative, wishes to promote equal opportunities for all, and will abide by the Race Relations Act 1976, the co-operative is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and treatment of all persons.
 - a) in the provision of all housing services
 - b) employment of staff to provide these services

No person or group of persons applying for housing, will be treated less favourably on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, or because of religion, sex, physical disability, appearance, marital status or sexual preference. In order to monitor the effectiveness of this policy, the Co-operative will collect details of ethnic/racial origin and disability from all those who apply for housing.

- Wherever possible, information provided by an applicant or requested by the Co-operative to assess the housing need of that applicant, will be treated in strictest confidence.
- The Co-operative will at all times aim to ensure that its policies and objectives reflect best practice as set out by Communities Scotland/SFHA.

3. ELIGIBILITY

The Co-operative welcomes applications for housing from any person or persons, over 16 years of age.

Applicants are expected to provide a true and honest disclosure of their circumstances. Where an applicant has knowingly given false information, or has withheld information, the applicant will be disqualified for a period of 6 months.

Apartment Size Eligibility

In order to ensure effective use of Co-operative stock, applicants will be placed on the appropriate apartment size waiting list, on the basis of a calculation of the number of rooms required, using the following guide:

- ◆ one double bedroom per couple
- ◆ one single bedroom for each single person over 16 years of age
one single bedroom for an only child.
- ◆ one double bedroom for two children under 10 years of age
- ◆ one double bedroom for two children of the same sex between 10 and 16 years of age
- ◆ one single room each for two children of different sex, where one is between 10 and 16 years of age

3. ACCESS TO LIST

When making an application directly with the Co-operative, an applicant will be eligible for one of five lists.

3.1 THE GENERAL WAITING LIST

A general waiting list applicant will have to satisfy the eligibility criteria mentioned in the previous section

3.2 THE INTERNAL TRANSFER LIST

Applications from existing Co-operative residents for a transfer to another Co-operative property will be accepted at anytime. Section 4 on suspending applicants will apply.

Priority

All other transfer applicants will be awarded points based on their housing need. Where two applicants have the same points totals, the length of time the applicants have been in housing need will be the deciding factor. If this is the same then the length of time that the applicants have been on the Co-operative waiting list will be the deciding factor.

3.3 NOMINATIONS

This route is open all applicants who have applied via Glasgow Housing Services, eligibility will require some form of housing need, as determined by the Co-operative's Allocation Policy, or the applicant will be classified as statutory homeless.

Easthall Park Housing Co-operative takes a sympathetic view of the problem of homelessness. However due to limited resources and the time consuming aspect of investigating such cases the Co-operative will not carry out such investigations.

The Co-operative will accept nominations in accordance with our formal agreement with Glasgow City Council and will also take Homeless nominations through the normal channels.

3.4 REFERRALS FROM OTHER AGENCIES

This route is open to applicants who have been referred by another agency, with which the Co-operative has an agreed referral arrangement.

3.5 H.O.M.E.S. SCHEME

The Co-operative will accept nominations from H.O.M.E.S., which is a government-funded agency, dedicated to helping tenants move home, where the following circumstances apply:

- to take up employment, beyond a reasonable travelling distance.
- to receive support from relatives or friends.

3.6 MUTUAL EXCHANGES

An alternative route to housing with the Co-operative is through a Mutual Exchange. The Co-operative will allow Mutual Exchanges with another member, (internal exchange) or a tenant in the public or private sector, (external exchange). Internal exchanges will normally be approved, provided both parties will be suitably housed by this arrangement.

External exchanges will be considered on a case-by-case basis, all incoming tenants must demonstrate a willingness to accept the obligations of membership of a fully mutual Co-operative and have a satisfactory tenancy record with their existing landlord.

Any incoming tenant via the Mutual Exchange process, would automatically become a contractual tenant in accordance with the legislation governing the granting of Housing Co-operatives tenancies under the terms of the Housing Association Act 1988, despite the fact they may have held a secure tenancy with their previous landlord.

4. SUSPENDING APPLICANTS

In certain circumstances it may be necessary to suspend applicants to the waiting lists.

Applicants will only be suspended when other options have been explored and have proved to be unsuccessful or are undertaken as a last resort.

Applications can be suspended for a number of reasons :

Tenancy related debt – covers areas such as rent arrears, rechargeable repairs, costs of clearing an abandoned house, storing furniture. Arrangements would be made with applicants and if arrangements to repay debt had been kept for 3 months then the suspension would be removed.

Anti – Social Behaviour – can cover a variety of areas such as criminal conviction specific to tenancy or community, drug dealing from tenancy, fire raising, damage to landlords property , harassment / threats / violence to neighbours or staff. In general can be seen to cover issues that can be interpreted as serious breaches of tenancy. Only temporary suspensions would be put in place and applicants situation would be monitored closely.

Condition of Property – relates to tenancy matters and include : state of garden and common areas, control over pets, rubbish or vandalism. Any suspension on this basis would be monitored for an improvement within timescales.

False Information – where an applicant provides false information a time limited suspension would apply – 6 month suspension is maximum in guidance.

Giving up secure accommodation – a suspension may be put in place where an applicant gives up a tenancy elsewhere where they are adequately housed and puts themselves in a situation where there housing need is worsened.

In each of the above as proposed in the SFHA guidance issued in July 2004 the following is essential :

- Consideration and evaluation of robust evidence must be undertaken.
- Decisions subjected to a test of reasonableness.
- Regular review on an individual basis.
- Clear and accountable appeal mechanisms in place.

Appeals to suspensions would follow the procedure laid out in section 10 of this policy.

5. ALLOCATIONS SYSTEM

The allocation system is the way in which individual households applying for housing are formed into a set of queues which reflect the Co-operative's, principles and stated objectives.

With the exception of mutual exchanges the Co-operative operates a system of targets for each of the five waiting list categories mentioned above. The actual proportions will be determined annually, to take account of the demand and supply of houses forecast in the Annual Letting Plan. (Appendix 1)

5.1 ASSESSMENT OF APPLICANTS

To ensure that the policy is administered effectively and is fair and consistent to all applicants, the Co-operative will make use of a points system to measure the relative need of each applicant and to decide the relevant category of need.

POINTS SYSTEM

1. House Condition

1.1 Lacking Amenities

Lack of Inside Toilet	30
Lack of Kitchen Facility	30
Lack of Bathroom/Shower	20
Lack of Adequate hot water supply	15
Lack of separate kitchen	12
Rising/Penetrating Damp	10

1.2 Sharing Amenities

Applicants who share cooking or washing facilities with another household.

where an application is for one adult	10
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for each additional child	5
for each additional adult	2

2. Household Circumstances

2.1 Overcrowding

The criteria by which overcrowding points will be awarded are detailed on the section on apartment size eligibility.

Points will be awarded as follows:

for each additional bedroom required	25
for each additional bedspace	15

(single bedroom is a bedroom less than 10m²)

2.2 Under occupation

for each bedroom surplus to requirements, where the applicant is the tenant of any;

social landlord	15
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for existing co-op members (to ensure efficient use of existing stock)	30
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2.3 Insecurity of Tenure

Applicants that are threatened with homelessness will be awarded points to reflect the insecurity of their existing accommodation.

Insecure tenancy, e.g.-hostel applicant, private renting	20
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No tenancy, lodging with another Household.	10
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(Can be increased to 20 if the applicant provides documentary evidence of a requirement to leave the property in the near future)

3. MEDICAL

Where the applicant, or a member of their household, suffers from any medical condition where rehousing would alleviate the medical problem, points may be awarded in recognition of this situation.

The applicant will be required to complete a Medical Self Assessment Form, which will enable a decision to be made on suitability for rehousing.

Self-Assessment removes the need to rely on information from General Practitioners. In many cases, the applicant or the Co-operative would be charged for this service.

In certain circumstances we may seek information directly from medical professionals, however this would only be with the signed consent of the applicant.

Although an applicant is not required to provide a medical certificate, an applicant does have the right to do so, if they feel it will benefit their application, or in the case of an appeal.

Applicant housebound and would be able to get out, if moved to suitable accommodation	50
Applicant has severe difficulty getting to and from accommodation or internal layout is totally unsuitable	40
Applicant has some difficulty getting to and from accommodation	20
A move would help applicant but situation is not serious or urgent	10

NB With regard to Stress/Anxiety/Depression. it must be established that it is a clinical illness and corroboration from a relevant health professional will be required, before points will be awarded.

4. CARE/ SUPPORT

Points will be awarded where an elderly or otherwise vulnerable person requires support from a friend or relative and the applicant is either the carer or the person requiring support.

Because of the individual nature of this type of application, each application will be assessed on its merits. A number of factors will be taken into account.

- the current distance between the two individuals involved
- whether there are other carers
- the dependency of one person on the other
- any associated health/emotional problems
- the type and frequency of care being provided
- the recommendations of health/social work professionals in relation to care and support.

Once the information has been gathered an assessment will be made and the application will receive one of the following priorities.

Priority A	40
Priority B	30
Priority C	20
Priority D	10

5. SOCIAL PRIORITY

Points in this category will only be awarded to reflect exceptional circumstances, that are not covered within other areas of the policy.

PRIORITY A

100 Points

Will be awarded to applicants when there is an immediate need for rehousing, such as persistent racial, social or religious harassment, or where serious criminal offences have occurred and that rehousing would assist in terms of victim support. Or where some form of

personal tragedy has occurred within the property and the applicant would benefit emotionally from a transfer.

PRIORITY B
PRIORITY C

40 Points
20 Points

The Co-operative also recognises there are a range of social problems and circumstances, experienced by applicants, where rehousing would be a benefit, but where the need is not immediate.

A number of factors will determine the priority, the applicant will be asked to provide:

- full and comprehensive details of the nature of the problem
dates of incidents
- details of other agencies involved, Police, Social Work and or any other voluntary agencies, which can corroborate the incidents.
- explain the implications of remaining at present address

The Co-operative reserves the right to review an award of discretionary points and can withdraw an award if circumstances change or if a suitable offers of rehousing are continually refused

6. SELECTION

The matching of an applicant to a property is the single most important task in the letting process.

The first step is an assessment of the main characteristics of the property, not only the size and type, but to identify if the property has been adapted in some way. Properties which have been specifically adapted to meet the needs of a particular client group, will only be allocated to applicants who would significantly benefit from living in such a property. This can cover a number of client groups such as the needs of the elderly, or mobility issues with respect to physical disability. If no suitable applicant is present on the Co-operative's lists, the Co-operative will accept nominations from relevant agencies.

Additionally, cognisance will be taken of the immediate neighbours, to ensure that we avoid high levels of child density or lifestyle clashes.

Secondly, the co-operative will identify the applicants who have priority on each list and examine the targets set for particular lists and groups within those lists and to examine the degree of 'match' which exists between the applicant and the property.

At this point the use of discretion can be essential to ensure a good and lasting match. Allocations will in normal circumstances be made to the applicant with the highest points level, however the Co-operative reserves the right to allocate to a lower priority case, if by letting to the high priority case would exacerbate a specific problem. Where an applicant is bypassed the Co-operative will endeavour to ensure that an alternative offer is made as soon as possible.

7. ADDITIONAL ADVICE

The Co-operative recognises that with such a large demand and limited supply of houses, that a large majority of applicants needs will not be met. Therefore Housing Management staff will provide information and advice to applicants about the various other providers and different opportunities for housing within the local area.

8. APPLICANTS OBLIGATIONS

Applicants are asked to take care to submit to the Co-operative accurate information, regarding their circumstances.

In the event of an applicant having knowingly submitted false or misleading information in support of their application, the application will be cancelled. Where an allocation has been granted, the Co-operative may seek to recover the property

If an applicant's circumstances or address change, they should notify the Co-operative immediately in writing. The Co-operative will contact all applicants on the transfer and waiting lists every 12 months, to ensure their applications are still valid.

If an applicant fails to respond to the Co-operative within four weeks of any communication, it will be assumed that there is no longer a need for accommodation and the application will be withdrawn and the applicant informed accordingly.

9. MONITORING

The Co-operative recognises the need to monitor the effectiveness and the outcomes of the policy, to ensure that the stated objectives are being achieved.

The Full Management Committee will receive quarterly reports in respect of:

- time taken to process applications
- number of applicants not admitted to list
- number of current applicants on each list
- number of voids
- number of new lets and relets
- ratio of direct lets/ nominations / transfers
- ratio of lets to direct lets and nominations in respect of housing need categories
- breakdown of applications in respect of ethnic origin, gender, age, family composition, disability
- number of offers refused, reasons for refusal

The findings of these reports will be measured against the forecast Annual Letting Plan to enable adjustment of the policy and procedures to meet the changing needs or policy objectives.

10. APPEALS

A situation may occur where an applicant is unhappy with a decision made in respect of their application. If an applicant feels they have been unfairly treated, the following steps may be taken to air such a grievance.

It should be noted that appeals can only be heard if they relate to the applicant, the Co-operative will not accept queries in relation to other allocations.

- The aggrieved party should submit details of the complaint in writing to the Director of the Co-operative.

After investigating the complaint, the Director will inform the applicant of his findings.

- If the applicant does not accept the findings, they should then submit details to the Secretary of the Co-operative and the matter would be discussed at the next Management & Maintenance Sub-Committee.
- Any subsequent appeal would be considered by the Full Management Committee, however any member of the Sub-Committee that considered the original appeal would not take part in this decision.
- If the applicant is still dissatisfied with the handling of the complaint, the matter should be raised with The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (Prof. Alice Brown) 4 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS (0870 0115378) (email : enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk).

There is also an important distinction between appeals and complaints.

Appeals refer to a request to review a decision relating to an application.

A complaint would refer to dissatisfaction with the service provided, the Co-operative has a formal Complaints Policy, copies are available at our offices.

11. GRANTING OF TENANCIES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERS, MEMBERS OF STAFF OR THEIR CLOSE RELATIONS.

The Co-operative may grant a tenancy to Employees, Committee Members, former Employee's former Committee Members (and those in the above categories in the preceding 12 months) and close relations of the above.

To ensure the Co-operative is acting in accordance with it's policy and the legislation governing the granting of such tenancies. The Co-operative will grant tenancies to those persons only where the

application has been processed and meets the following requirements.

- a) The allocation is in accordance with the Allocation Policy of Easthall Park Housing Co-operative.
- b) The allocation has been specifically agreed at a full meeting of the Co-operative's Management Committee.
- c) The details of such allocations are duly recorded in a Schedule 7 Register.

This Allocation Policy should not be seen as a fixed document, the objective of this Co-operative is to provide homes for those in the highest levels of need, to ensure we are achieving this goal the policy will be under review and may be subject to change.

Appendix 1 – Annual Lettings Plan 2004 /05

Targets provide a framework within which the Co-operative can exert more control over the allocation of houses, they are not rigid, but they represent the Co-operatives best indication how they envisage allocations will be made over the coming year.

Agreements with other agencies can be reflected in the Annual Lettings Plan.

The targets for the current year 2004/05 are :

General Waiting List	40%
Transfer List	20%
Nominations – Kildermorie	15%
REFERRALS	10%
H.O.M.E.S.	5%
Homeless	10%

Within the General Waiting / Nominations Lists, the Co-operative will allocate proportionately from a number of categories of need. Applicants are put into the most appropriate category, if the applicant has a number of needs, they will be placed in the category of the predominant need.

The process of selection is explained in more detail, later in the policy. The categories and proportions are as follows:

- Medical
- Elderly
- Social
- Care
- Overcrowding/ Under Occupation / Condition of property
- Aspirational moves

**Appendix 2 -
Performance Standard Self Assessment Questions**

Appendix 2.

Communities Scotland – self-assessment questions

Performance Standard: AS1.1 Access to housing

Self Assessment

You may wish to ask the following self-assessment questions about access to your housing list:

- Do we promote fair and equal access to our housing list and can people apply and be assessed at any time?
- Do we actively and widely publicise the means by which people can apply to our housing list?

We reviewed the Performance Standards self-assessment questions on Communities Scotland's Inspection Guidance website in the light of the review of good practice carried out for this study.

As well as AS1.5 (Void Management) other relevant Performance Standards include GS2.3 (Sustainability), AS1.1 (Access), AS1.2 (Lettings), AS1.3 (Tenancies), AS1.5 AS1.9 (Anti-social behaviour) and AS2.1 (Repairs).

Three new questions have been added to the existing questions, and these are highlighted bold in the list below.

Appendix 2. Communities Scotland – self-assessment questions 17

Performance Standard: AS1.1 Access to housing (continued)

Self Assessment (continued)

- Do we provide information and assistance on accessing housing for those who do not have English as a first language or who might have other difficulties in applying?
- Do we admit all applicants who are aged sixteen or over to our housing list?
- Do we minimise suspensions from our housing list?
- Do we ensure that we do not unreasonably suspend from our housing list on grounds of:
 - rent arrears?
 - anti-social behaviour?
 - property ownership?
 - local connection?
 - age?
 - immigration status?
- Where we operate suspensions, do we make them explicit and monitor their impact?
- Have we eliminated restrictive practices, such as screening of application enquiries, limiting distribution of applications forms, etc?
- Do we test our policies, procedures and actual practices against legislative requirements and good practice across the range of access issues?
- Have we reviewed our access policies and procedures to ensure that they contribute to the prevention, and resolution, of homelessness?
- Do our operational practices reflect our policies and procedures and are we consistent in applying these?
- Do we actively manage our housing list to ensure that it is accurate and up-to-date?
- Do we monitor and report outcomes to ensure our objectives on access are being achieved?
- What are our service-users' views on access? What are satisfaction levels?
- What are our partners' views on access?

You may wish to ask the following self-assessment questions about the service user focus of your access arrangements:

- Do we provide applicants with accurate and timely information to allow them to make informed judgements about their housing options?
- Do we regularly inform those on our housing list of their current position and their housing prospects?
- Do we provide an accessible and fair appeals process?
- Do we publish outcome information, including equalities information, to demonstrate transparency and accountability in our decision-making and to help inform choice?
- Do we involve tenants, applicants and potential applicants in the development and review of our policies and procedures on access?

18 Performance Standard: AS1.1 Access to housing (continued)

Self Assessment (continued)

You may wish to ask the following self-assessment questions about your partnership work to maximize access:

- Do we work with other landlords/partners to maximise access to housing in our area?
- Have we engaged with our partners on the development of a common housing register?
- Do we work with our partners to ensure statutory requirements relating to the needs of people who are homeless are met?
- Have we agreed a protocol with our partners for dealing with referrals under section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, and do we monitor its effectiveness?
- Are our nomination arrangements effective, do they cater for local circumstances, and do we operate them efficiently?
- Are our partners satisfied with the operation of our nomination agreements?
- Do we have appropriate arrangements with care and support agencies to improve access to housing for those with support needs?
- Do we participate in appropriate mobility schemes?

Guiding Standards may contain self-assessment questions that are relevant to this activity.

Performance Standard: AS1.2 Lettings

Self Assessment

You may wish to ask the following self-assessment questions about your allocation policy and practices:

- Do our allocation policies, procedures and practices comply fully with legislative requirements?
- Do we give priority to applicants in housing need?
- Have we clearly defined housing need in our allocation policy?
- Is our definition of housing need supported by a robust analysis of the needs of our tenants, applicants and potential applicants?
- Does our definition of housing need fully accommodate statutory definitions?
- Do our allocation policies and practices positively contribute to the prevention, and resolution, of homelessness?
- Does our policy accommodate mobility issues, including national and local mobility, exchange schemes, transfers and 'move-on' for tenants with changing support needs?
- Do we ensure equality of access for all applicants to our full range of housing stock?
- Do we promote choice throughout our allocation policy and processes?
- Do we empower applicants to make decisions about where and in what type of accommodation they wish to live?

Appendix 2. Communities Scotland – self-assessment questions 19

Performance Standard: AS1.2 Lettings (continued)

Self Assessment (continued)

You may wish to ask the following self-assessment questions about your allocation policy and practices:

- Do we consider the needs of the community when making allocation decisions? Is our approach to this clearly set out in our policy?

- Do we consider the sustainability of individual tenancies and the stability of the community when making allocation decisions? Is our approach to this clearly set out in our policy?
- Is our use of lettings plans and local lettings initiatives provided for in our allocations policy?
- Is our use of special lettings plans and local lettings initiatives based on a robust analysis of local need and demand?
- Do our special lettings plans and local lettings initiatives support the objectives of our allocation policy?

Performance Standard: AS1.2 Lettings

You may wish to ask the following self-assessment questions about the service user focus of your approach to letting houses:

- Do we provide clear and accessible information on our allocation policy to tenants, applicants and potential applicants, and other stakeholders?
- Do we have an accessible and fair appeals process?
- Do we publish outcome information, including equalities information, to demonstrate transparency and accountability in our decision-making in allocations?
- Do we involve tenants, applicants and potential applicants, and our partners in the development and review of our allocation policies and procedures?

You may wish to ask the following self-assessment questions about the quality of management systems supporting the letting of your houses:

- Do our systems provide us with full information about applicants' needs and preferences, and property information to allow appropriate matching and the best use of our stock?
- Do we have quality assurance systems that:
 - allow us to demonstrate that decision-making and practice is fair and consistently in line with our policy?
 - allow us to demonstrate that allocation outcomes match our policy intentions?
 - allow us to demonstrate accountability in exercising any discretionary elements in the policy?
- Have we set challenging targets/timescales for each stage of the allocation process?
- Do we publicise these targets/timescales, and monitor and report our performance against them?

Guiding Standards may contain self-assessment questions that are relevant to this activity.