



Lettings Policy for Housing for Particular Needs

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1. Introduction

Effective letting practice is arguably one of the Council's most important services. Providing housing for those with particular needs is vital to allow people to enjoy full active lives for as long as possible and to enable them to remain independent throughout. This policy aligns closely with the Council's commitment to promote equality for all members of our community. The policy is integral to promoting the Council's corporate policy objective of achieving social inclusion.

This document details the policy and procedures for the letting of housing for particular needs. This policy is a subsidiary of our main Lettings Policy. Our main Lettings Policy includes sections on housing for particular needs which this policy provides detail on.

This policy covers the following property types:

- Sheltered Housing.
- Extra Care Housing.
- Supported Housing.

Although the Council holds various properties which have been substantially adapted to meet the needs of a tenant and the Council is prepared to adapt properties as required, it does not hold a stock of properties which are fully wheelchair accessible and therefore works closely with Orkney Housing Association Ltd to meet the needs of wheelchair users accordingly. As a result, this policy does not currently include the letting of housing for wheelchair users. The general Lettings Policy is sufficient for the letting of adapted properties.

In addition, the Council has a range of housing types available, and this is particularly true in respect of supported housing. Our [Local Housing Strategy](#) covers this issue in more depth and a range of protocols are in place covering different types of supported housing, many provided in partnership with another agency. In addition, supported housing is provided throughout the community in individual tenancies with a package of support. The supported housing referred to in the Housing for Particular Needs Policy is specifically supported housing for people who have a particular long-term need, predominantly people with learning disabilities.

The Lettings Policy for Housing for Particular Needs subscribes to the same values as our overall lettings system that is that it utilises the same system of priority passes. Issues such as suspensions, appeals and complaints are covered by the main policy. It is vital that lettings practices are efficient and effective to maximise the use of our limited accommodation resources. This policy endeavours to streamline this process.

Separate information leaflets exist for the housing types outlined above.

This document has been produced by Housing Services and is intended to ensure that we:

“Act in a manner which encourages equal opportunities and in particular the observance of the requirements of the law for the time being related to equal opportunities” (Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, Section 39).

In particular, we strive to comply with the Scottish Social Housing Charter’s Standard on Equalities in 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.

This outcome describes what social landlords, by complying with equalities legislation, should achieve for all tenants and other customers regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. It includes landlords’ responsibility for finding ways of understanding the rights and needs of different customers and delivering services that recognise and meet these.

In addition, we endeavour to comply with the Scottish Social Housing Charter’s Standard on Access to Social Housing in 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 on their prospects of being housed. This outcome covers what social landlords can do to make it easy for people to apply for the widest choice of social housing that is available and suitable and that meets their needs. It includes actions that social landlords can take on their own and in partnership with others, for example through Common Housing Registers or mutual exchange schemes, or through local information and advice schemes”.

In reviewing this policy, we have taken into account the Counter Terrorism Act 2015 and related guidance and procedures. No specific measures are required in respect of our suspension policy.

This document can be made available in various formats such as in larger print, audio-format and Braille. It can also be made available in other languages, as appropriate.

2. Types of Housing

Although a broad range of housing types are provided, this policy refers specifically to:

- Sheltered Housing.
- Extra Care Housing.
- Supported Housing.

2.1. Sheltered Housing

We provide sheltered housing at two separate locations in Orkney. These are as follows:

Lambaness, Kirkwall.	14 bungalows.
Rae's Close, Stromness.	15 properties (9 bungalows and 6 flats).

Our sheltered housing consists of a group of small (either 1 or 2 apartment), easy to manage properties, grouped together in a scheme with the services of a warden or housing support worker. All properties are provided with a community alarm system for use in emergencies.

Sheltered housing is supplied by a warden service which offers low level housing support including:

- Providing a range of housing management welfare services to tenants including a daily welfare check.
- Providing a care taking service within the sheltered housing scheme.
- Responding to a crisis or emergency outside normal working hours when available.
- Carrying out various administrative duties.
- Any other duties relevant to the provision of a housing support service as required.

2.2. Extra Care Housing

We provide extra care housing at one location in Orkney being St Margaret's Hope. This is as follows:

St Margaret's Hope.	13 bungalows.
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Extra care housing offers higher level support.

The level of care and support is broadly equivalent to that available in a residential care setting. In extra care housing, the difference is that tenants continue to enjoy the benefit of holding their own tenancy.

Tenants are actively supported to maintain links with friends and relatives and to pursue their own interests. A core house on site provides a 'hub' where individuals can meet to enjoy social activities and organised events. The core house also provides a staff base to which there will be direct links for tenants at all times.

Our extra care housing caters for a mix of needs based on the IoRN* scale as follows:

- Low dependency (IoRN A – C).
- Medium dependency (IoRN D – F).
- High dependency (IoRN G – I).

* The Indicator of Relative Need (IoRN) scale is a nationally recognised tool for assessing an individual's abilities in respect of independent living in relation to health, social, mental and physical needs.

A balance requires to be found to ensure the scheme is able to provide for service users with mainly high to medium dependency whilst ensuring people with progressive conditions can enter the scheme at an earlier stage. People's level of dependency may change throughout their tenancy and therefore over time, this may result in an imbalance.

In addition, extra care housing is provided by Orkney Islands Property Developments Ltd in Kirkwall and Westray and we operate a joint working arrangement accordingly.

2.3. Supported Housing

We provide supported housing for people with learning disabilities in various locations throughout Kirkwall.

This includes supported housing which is most commonly shared by up to 3 people and provides 24 hour care and housing provided to one individual with a personalised package of support to meet their needs.

In each of the above cases Orkney Islands Council's Housing Services provides the properties and makes arrangements in respect of lettings. Orkney Health and Care (OHAC) provide the care and support element, via a direct service or a service level agreement with an independent provider.

In addition, some supported housing for people with physical disabilities is provided by Orkney Housing Association Ltd through their project at Queen Sonja Kloss and also in dispersed locations throughout Orkney. We operate a joint working arrangement accordingly.

3. Staffing

There will be appropriately trained care staff on site at all times. This will be appropriate to the type of scheme.

As regards extra care housing or supported housing and where individual tenants require assistance with mobility and / or transfers, staff numbers will be adjusted to meet individual need, within resource allocations.

All care staff are subject to the Scottish Social Services Council's (SSSC) Codes of Practice and have had enhanced Disclosure/Protection of Vulnerable Groups checks. The service is regulated by Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS). Confidentiality is a key requirement on site and tenants are assured that they will be treated with utmost respect and dignity at all times.

4. Eligibility

4.1. Sheltered Housing

Sheltered housing is available to individuals who have been assessed as having low dependency.

The sheltered housing can provide support for individuals / couples who are aged 66 years or over (being the current retirement age), and:

- Have a housing need.
- Have a need for the community alarm service.
- Have an IoRN classification that indicates a low dependency (IoRN A – C).

In exceptional circumstances consideration will be given to housing someone below age 66 who otherwise meets the criteria.

Places will be determined by a panel who consider whether the individual's care and support needs can be met by a placing in sheltered housing or whether a more appropriate option is available.

4.2. Extra Care Housing

Extra care housing is available to individuals who have been assessed as having care and support needs that are equivalent to those whose needs are more commonly met in a formal residential care setting. The extra care housing can provide support for individuals / couples who:

- Are aged 16 years or over.
- Have a housing need.
- Experience a significant degree of challenge to living independently, that requires on-site support and care services throughout the day and night.
- Have a current single shared assessment that indicates that you have complex community care needs that can be met within the facility.

Places will be determined according to the level of care need and the fact that a balance requires to be found to ensure the scheme is able to provide for service users with mainly high to medium dependency whilst ensuring people with progressive conditions can enter the scheme at an earlier stage. This is outlined at page 6 above. Determination is on the basis of an IoRN scoring and an evidenced housing need.

We recognise that planning ahead for a timely move to Extra Care Housing means that people will be more likely to adjust to a new environment. The expectation is that Extra Care housing will enable people to cope better with ill health and conditions such as dementia and it should be a viable alternative to Residential Care for most people.

It is important to ensure that people with recognised long-term conditions that will result in a decline, will be placed within the extra care housing ideally when their dependency is at the lower end of the scale. This is intended to assist with the transition and ultimately the success of the placement.

4.3. Supported Housing

Supported housing is available to those who are assessed as having a particular long term need that requires on-site support to enable them to live independently

and maintain a tenancy. The particular need may be mild, moderate or severe and appropriate placing will be made accordingly. This may include placing within a staffed house shared with other tenants, or by providing an intensive on site care package to an individual tenancy.

Supported housing can provide for individuals who:

- Are 16 years of age or over.
- Have a housing need.
- Experience a significant degree of challenge to living independently, that requires on-site support and care services throughout the day and night.
- Have a current single shared assessment that indicates that you have complex community care needs that can be met in supported housing.

An IoRN assessment will be undertaken in order to determine the most appropriate placing. For instance, an IoRN classification of A – C that indicates a low level dependency may be readily managed within the community with a package of support. A high dependency of G – I may be better managed within a setting where 24 hour support is available.

4.4. Eligibility - Household Size

Our Lettings Policy covers the Council's rules governing the match between property and household size and these are as follows:

- Single person – bedsit or one bedroomed dwelling.
- Single persons wishing to share – 2 bedroom property.
- Couple – 1 to 2 bedroom property (not with boxroom as well).
- Applicant(s) with one child – 2 bedroom property.
- Applicant(s) with 2 children – 2 to 3 bedroom property.
- Applicant(s) with 3+ children – 3 to 4 bedroom property.

However, we recognise that as regards extra care housing, some properties have been made slightly larger in order to accommodate additional care needs or to assist with certain medical conditions etc.

Therefore, the above criteria will generally take precedence unless there is an evidenced care or medical need to support a need for a larger property.

Housing Services reserve the right to allocate larger housing where required in order to ensure properties are occupied.

5. Lettings Basis

In order to be considered for housing for particular needs, applicants must first register by completing the general housing application form. This application form includes tick boxes that allow relevant choices to be made, where the applicant believes they meet the relevant criteria.

Specific application forms exist for each type of specialist housing. The relevant application should be completed along with a medical assessment form (if relevant). In addition, a Single Shared Assessment should be completed by a relevant professional. This may include a Social Worker, Nurse, Occupational Therapist or Housing Officer. Relevant supporting information requires to be provided for the application to be assessed appropriately and to ensure the applicant's needs can be met.

After registration further assessment of the application will be carried out in line with the Lettings Policy and a priority pass awarded accordingly. This may include where the applicant has indicated a particular need (e.g. health problems, overcrowding, unfit housing, homelessness, harassment etc) and is able to establish a need to live in the area. If the applicant has applied for a medical priority their medical information requires to be considered by an independent medical advisor ahead of a decision being made in respect of any priority pass being awarded.

The applicant will be notified of the priority pass awarded accordingly.

The applicant is then placed on the list, according to their priority pass, for the type of housing and where relevant the area(s) they have chosen.

When a vacancy occurs, a multi-disciplinary lettings panel (Resource Management Meeting) will meet to decide who should be offered the tenancy. Using information from the housing application and the single shared assessment the panel will consider whether the services offered in respect of the housing concerned meet the individual's current and anticipated housing and care needs (with service adjustments if required).

Where there is more than one applicant for a vacancy, the priority pass and the single shared assessment are used to determine who has the greatest priority for housing whilst considering the required balance outlined on page 4. An individual's community care and support needs are however likely to be the deciding factor in each allocation decision. A flowchart is attached which details this process.

An allocation decision will be agreed by consensus between Housing and OHAC and an allocation made accordingly. Ultimately however, responsibility for the letting process rests with Housing Services.

The resource allocation process is simple and straightforward, and all decisions are made known as quickly as possible. The reasons for each decision are documented and recorded.

In addition, it provides a structure for ensuring transparency and covers processes such as suspensions, appeals and complaints.

6. Charges

A rental charge is levied for each property. Additional charges are also levied for extra care housing and support for people with learning disabilities. Separate

documents exist which provide details of the level of charges, and these are available on request.

7. Removal Grant Procedures

It is important that housing for particular needs is available to those in need. Therefore when a household's situation changes and the person with a care need is no longer part of the household, we will offer incentives to enable this household to move to more suitable accommodation and free up housing for particular needs for someone with a respective need. However, the household will have a Scottish Secure Tenancy and therefore has rights to occupy and consequently we cannot force them to move.

Our removal grant scheme has been reviewed to cover such situations.

8. Long Term Vacancies

Where there are long-term vacant sheltered or extra care properties within a scheme, and there is no demand for these properties, these may become available to let to applicants on the waiting list who would not normally be assessed as requiring sheltered or extra care housing.

In doing this consideration will be given to care provided on site and whether this could meet the needs of an applicant from a different needs group. This decision will be taken in consultation with OHAC. Ultimately however, the responsibility for undertaking such action will rest with Housing Services. Every effort will be made to ensure properties are used appropriately and that the same applies to staffing resources.

In allocating these properties the following priorities will be applied:

1. All applicants assessed as requiring sheltered or extra care housing will be given priority over all other categories of applicant.
2. Applicants assessed as having another form of care need, which could be met from the vacancy.
3. Applicants eligible to be on the Council's waiting list, living within the local community, or living outwith the area but have a local connection (family connection, or have previously lived in the area, or who work or have been offered employment in the local community).
4. All other applicants eligible to be on the Council's waiting list.

As these properties are within sheltered or extra care schemes a sensitive lettings policy will be followed, and an applicant will not be allocated a property where there is evidence of past antisocial behaviour in their existing or previous accommodation.

9. Monitoring

Performance management is central to organisational governance. The Council must, therefore, be able to assess and demonstrate how well the lettings policy is working, in particular if it is meeting Lettings Charter Standard.

We gather information as part of the Annual Return against the Charter (ARC) – the annual report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter) and general information. This is a requirement specified by the Scottish Housing Regulator and this information is published accordingly.

We evaluate statistical information relating to lettings and tenancy sustainment on a regular basis. This will enable recommendations to be made regarding areas of the lettings policy that need to be revised. The Voids Policy also contains detailed performance indicators to monitor service delivery.

Case Reviews are also undertaken on a quarterly basis to audit ten per cent of cases in line with Line Management and Supervision arrangements.

10. Consultation

Given that this policy is very much a subsidiary of our main Lettings Policy, the consultation processes of both have been aligned.

The consultation arrangements for this document have also been closely intertwined with that of the Local Housing Strategy, ongoing assessment of our services and our drive to improve our strategic documents to ensure openness and clarity.

The process of consultation has involved:

- A small working group of officers and representatives from Orkney Islands Council have met to discuss how the policy might be developed.
- Participative events were organised for officers from a range of Services and agencies to actively contribute to the development of the policy particularly in relation to housing needs of older people and housing needs of people with particular needs.
- Consultation with agencies which represented minority groups to consider participation and to ensure inclusion of all groups within society.
- An independent review of our existing lettings arrangements and their effectiveness.
- Customer satisfaction processes were used from our sheltered housing service.
- Use of a focus group for older people and those attending day care, drop-in sessions and a range of discussion groups with people with particular needs.
- A review of best practice.
- Consultation with staff.
- Consultation with relevant partner agencies.
- Various articles in our newsletter - "Housing News".