

Enfield Single Housing Allocation Policy/Procedure

October 2016 / Care & Support

Effective date:
October 2017

Next Review Date:
October 2017

1. Scope and Purpose

This policy is for all Origin housing staff who works in the Enfield Single Housing service (ESH).

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for Origin Housing to allocate shared and self-contained accommodation in Enfield Single Housing and to sustain the best possible level of independent living.

2. Policy Objectives

The ESH Allocation Policy seeks to ensure that:

- Housing is allocated to those in need, and the process is fair and transparent
- Voids are turned around quickly and in good condition
- Waiting list is reviewed and monitored weekly
- Support needs of applicants are identified at an early stage
- Service delivery is tailored to resident need wherever possible
- Staff are aware of vulnerability definitions and how to refer residents to the Assessment & Support service or other specialist agencies
- Origin is compliant with all relevant legislation
- Origin promotes support and advice available to residents

3. Policy

3.1 Allocation principles

Enfield Single Housing (ESH) aims to provide a high quality and accessible service to single people in LB Enfield. Housing is provided to

- i) Single people either living or working in the borough of Enfield
- ii) Students attending an education establishment in Enfield

3.1 ESH has properties in London Borough of Enfield. Full details are issued with the application form.

3.2 The shared housing stock consists of two, three, four or five (one six) bedroomed properties, and are fully furnished. Most are currently shared by both men and women, but we are working towards more single gender properties.

- 3.3 Only 36 homes are self-contained and these are reserved for move-on from the shared accommodation.
- 3.4 All shared properties are let on Excluded Licences.
- 3.5 Lettings of self-contained properties are by way of 5-years Assured Shorthold tenancies.
- 3.6 Some shared properties remain on assured / assured shorthold tenancies but revert to Licences on re-letting.

4. Procedure

- 4.1 New applicants may apply in the following ways:
 - i) By referral by LB Enfield John Wilkes House or Housing Options for shared accommodation
 - ii) By a direct application at Ponders End office. Applicants will also be asked to complete LB Enfield on-line housing application registration
 - iii) By a direct application as a student for shared accommodation
- 4.2 ESH may be unable to accept all those in housing need who apply. The aim is to select those in greatest need in accordance with the selection policy.

Waiting list

- 4.3 If the demand is outstripping supply, the accepted applicant will be placed on a waiting list, and informed of the likely waiting time.

All applicants are informed whether or not they are considered for housing not later than 5 working days from receipt of the application, and are advised about alternative housing options.

Assessment

- 4.4 To assess an applicant's housing needs and their suitability for shared accommodation, an assessment will be made at the time of the application or soon after. Applicants will be informed at the assessment

interview whether an offer will be made, and will be asked to sign the assessment/interview form. If the Housing Officer does not consider that the applicant is suitable, he/she may discuss the matter with the Housing Services Manager. Criteria used in assessing suitability include:

- If the applicant is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- The applicant's willingness and ability to live in shared housing in respect of cleaning and sharing communal areas
- The applicant's financial circumstances – in particular his/her ability to pay the rent
- Any history of or convictions for violence or drug use (probation reports will be requested if available)
- Whether the applicant has leave to remain in the country
- The financial ability of applicants to secure accommodation in the private sector
- The ability of the applicant to cope with his / her current housing situation
- The length of time that the current housing situation has been endured
- Other housing options realistically available
- Any debt owed to a former landlord. The size of the debt is taken into account, and an agreement to repay must be in place
- Any outstanding Housing Benefit overpayment in respect of a previous tenancy. The size of the overpayment debt is taken into account, and an agreement to repay must be in place

4.5 Applications from Former Residents

Former residents are accepted for housing and priority decided if:

- The former stay was conducted satisfactorily
- Any former rent arrears were cleared
- They had no ASB or breaches of tenancy
- They are able to live independently in shared housing

5. Priority and selection criteria

5.1 The priority is given by the following factors:

1. Homeless applicants in fulltime or part-time employment or apprenticeship, training or voluntary work
2. Applicants put forward by LB Enfield as homeless. Direct homeless applicants
3. Applicants at risk of becoming homeless

4. Full-time students studying in LB Enfield (minimum 21 hrs per week)
5. Harassment or violence to the applicant in his/her current accommodation
6. Financial difficulties that require a less expensive accommodation
7. Applicants who wish to move out of preference rather than need

Any medical issues or a disability will give the applicant additional points.

5.2 When a room becomes available, applicants are contacted via their mobile phones in the first instance. Further contact is made by calls to landline, email and by letter as appropriate. If a response is not received within 5 hours, the next applicant on the list is contacted, and we will attempt to contact those who did not respond when further vacancies arise. Applicants are informed of this during the assessment, and are advised to either keep their mobile phones on or check progress by visiting or contacting the office regularly.

Selection decisions are documented by Housing Officers and signed off by the Housing Services Manager.

- 5.3 To provide choice to applicants, up to two reasonable offers will be made. An offer will be considered reasonable if it is appropriate to the applicant's needs in terms of size, facilities and location. An offer may be considered unreasonable if it is in a location that may present a proven risk to the applicant.
- 5.4 If the applicant does not respond to an offer within two working days, it is treated a refusal, and the next person with the highest priority is contacted.
- 5.5 Applicants will be shown the property by the Housing Officer prior to acceptance.
- 5.6 If two reasonable offers are refused, the application may be removed from the waiting list unless there are exceptional and unavoidable circumstances at the time of offer.

6. TRANSFERS

Within shared accommodation

- 6.1 Residents may need to or can be required to move within and between shared accommodation, and ESH operates a priority system to enable this to happen.
- 6.2 A resident may be permitted a move to a different room within the same house. This will normally occur when a particularly desirable room becomes available – usually one that is significantly larger than the rest. The Housing Officer will canvass residents in the house for interest in the room, and will offer it to the longest-standing interested resident provided that his/her stay has been satisfactory, they keep their room and common areas clean, and there are no rent arrears.
- 6.3 If a room change is agreed, then the room will be cleaned, but no further work aside from necessary repairs, will be undertaken. The resident will need to move their belongings and existing furniture to their new room within a day (help with moving furniture will be provided). No void works will be undertaken to the room. Void works will be carried out to the vacated room following the room change.
- 6.4 A resident in shared accommodation may apply for a transfer to a different shared unit after six months of stay. The resident is given a Transfer Request Application to complete and return. A visit will be arranged to discuss his/her needs and to assist in completing the application. Transfer requests will be considered if:
 - The resident works, does voluntary work, training, apprenticeship or study and finds it difficult to share in current accommodation
 - To reward a resident for particular care and upkeep taken with their room and communal areas
 - Management transfer where particular, on-going problems are better managed by separating the individuals (as a last resort), with the understanding that the resident makes every effort to share peacefully with other residents once moved
- 6.5 Residents should aim to move on from shared accommodation, and make plans to do so, as this type of housing is intended for a short period. The Assessment & Support Officer will assist residents in discussing other options, e.g. private rented or council / housing association accommodation (where eligible), and support the resident in making arrangements.
- 6.6 LB Enfield and Origin have a small number of move-on flats every year for ESH residents. Resident in shared accommodation may apply for a move-on to self-contained housing after 2 years. The resident should have no rent arrears and ASB or Licence breaches. The resident is sent a Move On Application to complete and return. A visit will be arranged

to discuss his/her needs and to assist in completing the application. Priority for self-contained accommodation is given to:

1. Residents in full or part time employment
2. Residents in full time or part time training or apprenticeship
3. Residents in voluntary work
4. Resident who has stayed the longest in shared accommodation
5. Residents who wish to move to another area

A points system determines the residents being offered self contained accommodation, based on criteria as above, so that the first person likely to be offered a self-contained flat is a resident in full or part time employment, or in apprenticeship or training with the longest stay and clear rent account and no ASB. A resident with medical issues or a disability will be awarded additional points.

- 6.7 Residents who have become pregnant will be served with a 7-day notice of terminating the Licence, or Section 21 Notice (where the resident has an AST), and assisted in registering in the LB Enfield Homeless Register. LB Enfield will give priority to re-house these residents in self-contained accommodation; this is most likely to be private rented.

7. Offers of Move On

Before an offer can be made the following conditions must be met:

- i) There must not be a court order or NTQ / notice seeking possession outstanding.
- i) The resident's rent account must not be in arrears, and there must have been no other serious breach of the terms of the Licence or tenancy. Consideration will be given:
 - (a) in cases of violence or serious racial or sexual harassment, providing the resident has made an agreement to clear the arrears by regular instalments.
 - (b) in cases where housing benefit paid direct to Origin has been delayed.
 - (c) in other exceptional cases (such as health problems) and where the rent account has been reduced consistently for a minimum of 3 months.

7.1 Self-contained accommodation

Residents of self-contained units may apply for a transfer to another self-contained unit after one year. See Origin policy on transfers and mutual exchanges.

8. Appeals

Unsuccessful applicants have a right to appeal against the decision for transfer or move-on. This should be made in writing within 10 days of the decision to reject the applicant. The applicant can ask for assistance from their advocate or other agency when writing their appeal. The appeal should be sent to the Housing & Contracts Manager. The Housing & Contracts Manager will reply within 10 working days. The decision is final.

9. Referrals to other agencies

The Assessment & Support Officer should be involved in the initial assessment process, where the applicant has vulnerability, a language difficulty or disability. The Assessment & Support Officer will complete an assessment of need and offer support and referrals to other agencies as required.

10. Service Standards

Applicants to ESH that fall within the Priority 1 and Priority 2 categories will be assessed within 5 working days of the receipt of the application. All other applicants will be assessed within 15 working days. See section 5.1 Priority categories.

They will be informed of the outcome, and if accepted for housing immediately in most cases, but at least within 2 working days following the assessments.

Origin aims to provide direct support or referrals to other agencies to 100% of vulnerable residents requiring assistance.

The Assessment & Support Officer will visit all vulnerable residents who request support during their initial assessment with their Housing Officer. The Assessment & Support Officer will either identify suitable support agencies for the resident, or draw up a low level support plan with the resident who needs this to sustain their stay at ESH.

Origin staff will use the customer profile information to target services to residents, and tailor communication appropriately.

Internal transfers and move on will be allocated according to the set criteria.

11. Monitoring

The number, type and customer profile of applicants, allocations and transfers will be monitored on a monthly basis. Any interventions and outcomes by the Assessment & Support Officer will be monitored quarterly.

Completion rates for customer profiles, which identify resident disabilities and communication needs, are reported quarterly to SMT. We will consider measures to monitor how the needs of these residents are supported.

The success of this policy will be measured by an annual satisfaction survey to residents, as well as exit interview questionnaire to those departing from the service.

Further measures of success are a reduction in the number of evictions, a reduction in the incidents of ASB, reduction in repeat homelessness and those requiring supported housing due to lack of community support. We will consider how to monitor this on an annual basis.

Annual review of this policy and its effectiveness will take place between Housing Services Manager, Head of Housing Care & Support and AD Care & Support. Suggestions for improvement and amendments to this policy will be considered at these reviews.

12. Equality and Diversity

This policy aims to ensure that when selecting residents and allocating properties no discrimination takes place.

No applicant being considered for housing or re-housing by ESH should receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, religion, colour, gender, age, sexual orientation or disability.

To ensure that this policy is carried out ESH monitors all applications for housing and allocations of properties.

13. Publicising the Policy

Origin will publicise this policy via website, leaflets, residents' Newsletters, O-Net and staff training events.

14. Appendices

None