



Tell us what you think? Allocations Policy - Review 2019

The information below sets out why we have an Allocations Policy, why we have reviewed it and what we are proposing to change.

Link to survey on front page of RSHA's website.

Our Allocation Policy sets out the 'rules' to be applied when we let our properties. Our Allocation's Policy must comply with all relevant legislation and statutory guidance, whilst also reflecting housing need across the rural Stirling area.

Why are we Reviewing our Allocations Policy Now?

We are reviewing our Allocations Policy now for the following reasons:

1. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 has made some changes to the law which set out how we must prioritise applicants.
2. Our allocations policy must take account of a new Scottish Government directive to tackle homelessness called Rapid Rehousing.
3. We have reviewed the remaining aspects of our policy to ensure we continue to reflect the housing need of our applicants and local communities.

1. How has the law changed?

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 has introduced changes to the following:

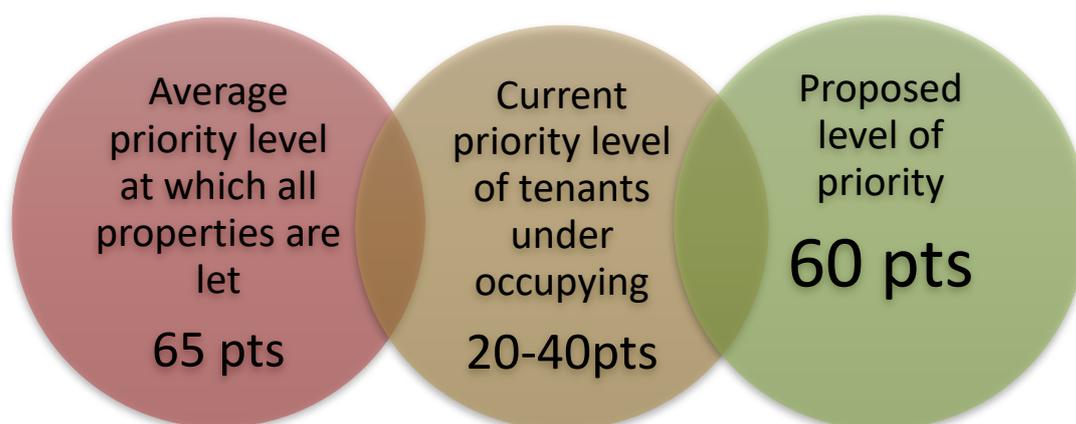
- The housing circumstances for which we must give reasonable preference;
- Taking property ownership into account;
- When & why we can suspend applications from an offer of housing.

➤ Housing circumstances for which we must give reasonable preference

Social housing tenants who are under occupying their home must now be given reasonable preference.

This means tenants who would like to move because they are living in a property that has more bedrooms than they need, must be given reasonably high priority so that they can move to a smaller property. Larger properties will then be made available for people who need them.

Currently we do not feel that we are giving reasonable preference to tenants who are under occupying their home and are proposing to increase the level of priority for this category as set out below:



➤ ***Taking property ownership into account***

Changes to the law will allow us to take property ownership into account when assessing the level of priority to be awarded. This means homeowners would not receive any level of priority unless their property is unsafe to occupy, or they are unable to secure entry to it. In these circumstances, homeowners will be awarded the appropriate level of priority, for example domestic abuse or property below tolerable standard priority points.

➤ **Short SST for homeowners**

Where a homeowner is unable to live in their property for a temporary period i.e. to carry out major repair work, we may be able to offer a temporary tenancy for a maximum of six months.

We think that we should take property ownership into account when prioritising housing applications. We also think we should be able to offer short term tenancies to homeowners where they are able to fix the problems they have with their own property. However, we think we should only do this where demand on the housing list for the property is low.

➤ **Application suspensions**

The 2014 Act has increased the circumstances for which applicants can be suspended from an offer of housing. It also enables social landlords to suspend applicants from the date of application for anything up to 3 years.

The circumstances for which applicants can be suspended are:

- **Anti-social behaviour (ASB)**
ASB that has taken place in the locality of the home within the last 3 years.
- **Previous Convictions**
Using the home for immoral or illegal purposes or an offence punishable by imprisonment & committed in the locality of the house within the last 3 years.
- **Rent arrears or other housing related debt**
This applies where the debt remains, and a payment arrangement has not been maintained.
- **An Order of Recovery of Possession has been made against the person.**
This means somebody who has been evicted from a previous tenancy for breaking the conditions of their tenancy agreement, and this occurred within the last 3 years.
- **Abandoning or neglecting a Property within the last 3 years.**
- **Applicants who have refused reasonable offers of housing within the last 3 years.**

We think we should suspend all applicants in the above circumstances at point of application. We think suspensions should remain in place for the following periods of time:

- 1 year – refusal of offers of housing
- 2 years – all other circumstances listed above

2. Rapid Rehousing

Rapid Rehousing is a policy directive adopted by the Scottish Government to tackle homelessness in Scotland.

The aim of Rapid Rehousing is to:

- prevent homelessness wherever possible;

and to ensure that people who are homeless:

- have access to settled, mainstream housing as quickly as possible
- spend as minimum amount of time as possible in temporary accommodation.
- have access to person centred, wrap around support where required (also known as Housing First)

What does this mean for Registered Social Landlords (RSL's)?

RSL's must review their allocations policies and make reference to Rapid Rehousing including arrangements to increase the number of lets to statutory homeless households in accordance with the local Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan).

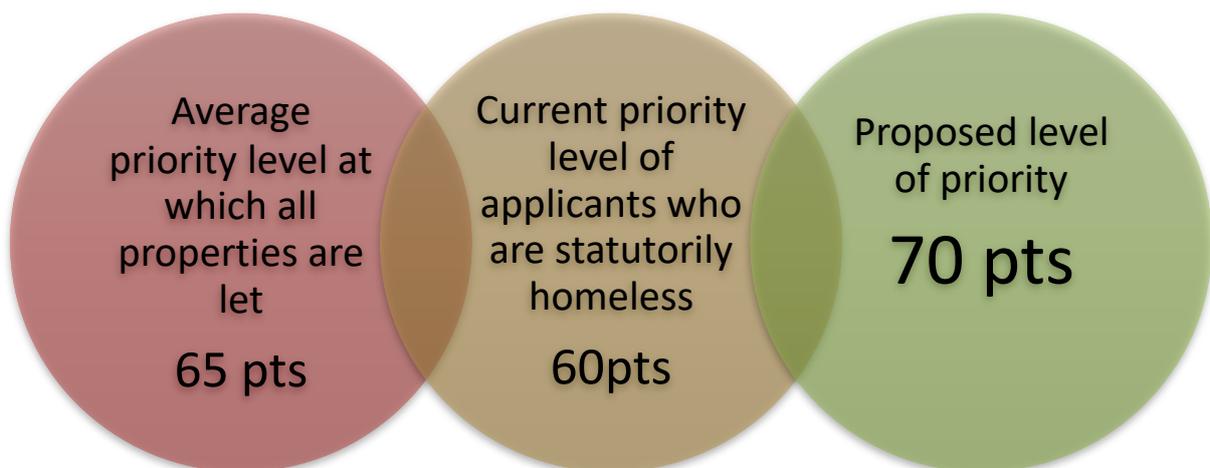
What is a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP)?

An RRTP is a local authority plan for tackling homelessness in the local area. All RRTP's had to be submitted to the Scottish Government in December 2018.

Stirling Council's RRTP requires RSL's in the Stirling area to allocate 56% of lets to statutory homeless people or households over the next 5 years.

What changes are we proposing to the Association's Allocations Policy?

We need to increase the priority level of statutory homeless applicants. We propose to do this as set out below.



3. Internal Review

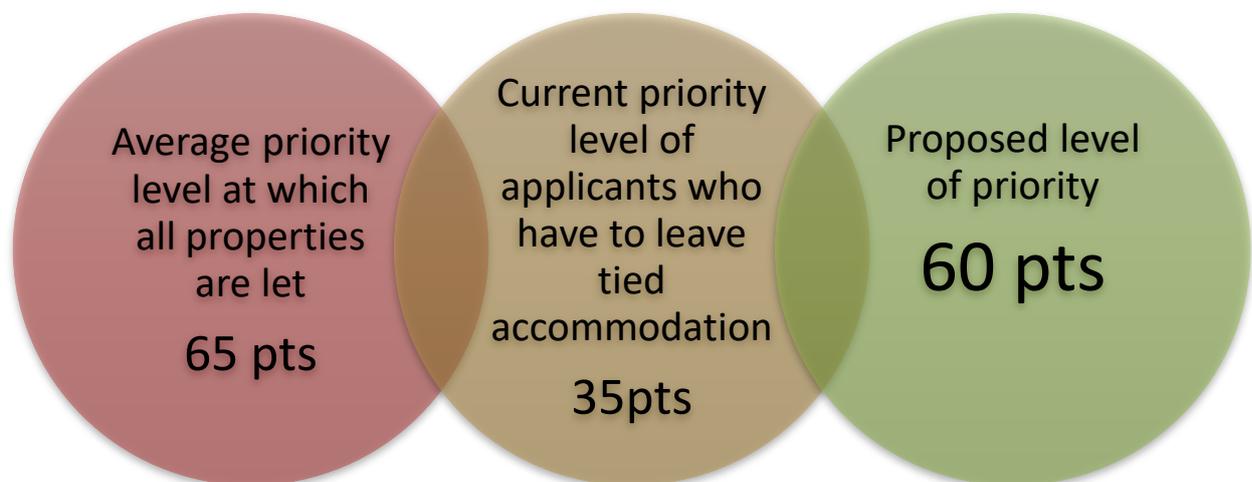
We have carried out an internal review on the remaining aspects of our Allocations Policy to assess whether it continues to meet our allocations objectives which are:

- give priority to people in housing need
- help prevent rural homelessness and deal with it when it arises
- make the best use of the houses available
- help sustain and support the rural communities we work in

What changes are we proposing as a result of the internal review?

We think we need to increase priority levels for applicants who live in tied accommodation (including HM Forces) who need to leave their accommodation within the next 6 months. We think the current priority level awarded to applicants in these circumstances is too low.

We propose to increase the priority level as set out below:



What else are we proposing to change as a result of the internal review?

- Remove the 'No Fixed Abode' priority category
 - it is difficult to verify
 - there are other insecurity of tenure and unsatisfactory housing condition priorities which cover all the circumstances of people with no fixed abode.
- Create one 'living with friends & family' priority category
 - Currently there are three categories for applicants 'living with friends and family' weighted on a sliding scale. One overall category, at the highest level of priority, is proposed. This is because applicants in this category can also accumulate additional points for overcrowding, sharing facilities etc depending on their circumstances.

Please let us know what you think about the proposed changes to our Allocations Policy by clicking the link provided on the front page of RSHA's website.