



ORKNEY
Housing
Association

Building **homes**, building **communities**

**Consultation on
Changes to our
Rented Allocations
Policy**



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Introduction

The Association introduced a Choice Based Lettings system in 2013 and the Rented Allocations Policy details how we allocate our rented properties.

The last review of this policy took place in 2019 to reflect changes to legislation at that time. However, a further review is now necessary to ensure that it continues to meet legislative requirements and that it also reflects local needs. A copy of the existing Rented Allocations Policy can be found [here](#).

This review will focus on how we prioritise applicants, bedroom size eligibility criteria and how we allocate properties to homeless households.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 placed a duty on social landlords to consult with service users on proposed amendments to allocation policies. Therefore this consultation will be available to Orkney Housing Association (OHA) residents, applicants, stakeholders and any other interested parties.

The consultation will be open from 17th November to 17th December 2025. We will be holding an open event on 25th November at The Old Library, Laing Street, Kirkwall from 3.30pm - 7pm to give interested parties an opportunity to speak to staff in person.



Policy Priority Groups

When considering how to prioritise applicants on the waiting list we must give reasonable preference to certain groups in accordance with legislation. These are:

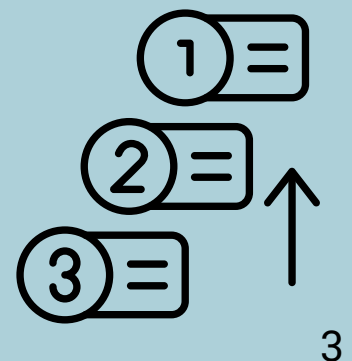
- People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- People in unsatisfactory housing
- Tenants of social landlords who under-occupy their home

It is then at the discretion of the Association what other groups we would like to prioritise.

The current policy includes the following priority groups:

- 1 Unsatisfactory Housing Conditions**
- 2 Unsatisfactory Living Arrangements**
- 3 Overcrowding and Under-Occupancy**
- 4 Insecure Tenancies**
- 5 Medical**
- 6 Need to Live in the Area**

Whilst we propose to retain these group headings, we are looking to amend some of the categories within them and their associated priority points to ensure they are balanced and prioritise those in greatest housing need.



1

Unsatisfactory Housing Conditions

There are no significant changes to group 1.

2

Unsatisfactory Living Arrangements

We are proposing to extend this category to include applicants who have long term responsibilities under kinship, permanent fostering and adoption arrangements, where they occupy properties that are not of sufficient size or standard to adequately accommodate the children.

We are also looking to introduce a new category of priority for applicants leaving care, where they have an assessed need to move to independent living from a residential health and social care setting.

3

Overcrowding and Under-Occupancy

As one of the reasonable preference categories, as set out in legislation, we award priority to applicants who are considered overcrowded based on the property size eligibility criteria detailed on page 7, and also to tenants of social landlords, regardless of location, who are under-occupying their property (have one or more surplus bedrooms).

Currently, applicants under-occupying a rented social housing property have a higher priority than applicants living in overcrowded accommodation. There is also a difference in priority award for those who are overcrowded living within their own household compared to being overcrowded whilst living with others who are not members of their household.

We are proposing to make two changes to this group; firstly, we propose to align the points awarded for over-crowding regardless of who the applicant lives with. Secondly, we will continue to award priority for any social housing tenant under-occupying their property; however, we propose to award an OHA or Orkney Islands Council (OIC) tenant a higher priority than social housing tenants living out with Orkney.



4

Insecure Tenancies

With changes to legislation and the introduction of Private Residential Tenancies, private sector tenants have enhanced rights and security of tenure compared to previous tenancy agreements, and they can no longer be evicted without specific grounds to do so.

Our current Policy reflects a period where there were a large number of holiday lets and 6 month tenancies and with the changes noted above, we believe these are less relevant.

Therefore, the proposals are to focus on those applicants with least security of tenure, for example anyone living in a private tenancy with a notice to leave would attract a priority. We are also proposing to remove priorities for those residing in halls of residence or tied accommodation as these are secure during periods of education and employment, and if/when those are coming to an end, applicants would fall under one of the higher need categories.

5

Medical

Where applicants have a medical condition/disability that is adversely affected by their current accommodation they may be eligible for points under this group.

An applicant completes a medical assessment form and this is assessed on a monthly basis by a medical panel including an Occupational Therapist along with OHA/OIC staff.

We intend to review the form and the overall process for how medical priority is awarded as there is currently no provision to assess applicants affected by mental health issues.

We are seeking views on bringing this process 'in house' whereby assessments are carried out by OHA senior staff using clear assessment guidelines in addition to supporting information from health care professionals.

We believe this will provide greater consistency and ensure applicants with mental health conditions are not disadvantaged in comparison to applicants with physical difficulties.



6

Need to Live in the Area

Whilst we want to continue to recognise people who provide support to friends or family, we would like to make it clearer that the need to remain in the area to provide support is applicable on receipt of supporting information, and only where the applicant can demonstrate and evidence their accommodation is otherwise unsuitable or they are at threat of losing their current home.

We also want to amend the need to move into the area for employment to award priority to key workers. We will ensure there is clear criteria of what a key worker is and obtain sufficient evidence that key worker status has been met.

We will also continue to award priority to those already living in Orkney who cannot reasonably travel to their place of work where distance, transport arrangements or financial difficulties prevent ease of access.

Homelessness

Traditionally we have managed allocations for homeless households through an agreement with the OIC who refer a suitable applicant for relevant vacant properties. Those properties are not advertised, as we do with all other properties, therefore we believe this does not allow homeless households the same choice as other applicants on the waiting list for where they want to live.

Since April 2025, we have trialled a new allocation process for homeless applicants where we advertise all of our vacant properties and they are able to bid on advertised properties they feel would best meet their housing needs. Along with this consultation we are also seeking feedback from homeless applicants on this trial process to determine whether it should be permanently adopted.



Size Eligibility

The Association’s current Policy uses the following criteria when determining the size of property that applicants are eligible for:

Single applicants	1 bedroom
Couples	1 bedroom
Families or single parents with one child	2 bedrooms
Families or single parents with 2 same sex children under the age of 16	2 bedrooms
Families or single parents with 2 opposite sex children, where the eldest child is under 8 years old	2 bedrooms
Families or single parents with 2 same sex children, where the age difference of the children is greater than 5 years	3 bedrooms
Families or single parents with 2 opposite sex children, where the eldest child is over 8 years old	3 bedrooms
Families or single parents with 3 children, depending on ages and sex of children	3-4 bedrooms
Families or single parents with 4 children or more	3-4 bedrooms (or larger if available)

Single Parents with Overnight Access

If a single parent has overnight access to a dependent child that does not live with them permanently, that parent is only eligible for an additional bedroom for the child if they stay, on average, 3 or more nights per week.

We are looking to amend this to allow ‘regular frequent contact’ to include parents whose children stay overnight 2 nights per week, on average. It should be noted that only having a child to stay on school holidays alone would not qualify under the regular frequent contact rules.

A parent with an access arrangement that meets this criteria will be eligible for a maximum of one additional bedroom, regardless of the number of children.

A parent who has access to a dependent child or children for 3 or more nights per week on average will be eligible for the same number of bedrooms as if the child(ren) was a permanent member of the household.

Any award of an additional bedroom(s) will be subject to acceptable evidence of the access arrangements that may include written confirmation from the other parent, solicitor, court decision etc.

Couples

We are proposing to amend the size criteria for childless couples so they can apply for a 1 or a 2 bedroom property. We recognise the already significant demand on our one bedroom properties and by amending the size criteria for couples this may help alleviate this.

Children Sharing

Whilst the current Policy states that 2 children of the same sex can share a bedroom up to the age of 16 if there is less than 5 years difference between them, we are proposing to reduce this age to 10 regardless of the age difference. This means that when the eldest child reaches the age of 10, they will be entitled to a bedroom of their own regardless of the sex of the children.

In certain circumstances, a household may be considered for accommodation outwith the normal eligibility criteria where the move would reduce overcrowding but would not result in statutory overcrowding.

We feel that the proposed changes to the size eligibility criteria will allow us to make best use of our housing stock and provide greater choice to applicants.

Collection of Responses

There is a link to our digital consultation form that can be accessed [here](#).

Alternatively, if you would like a paper copy, this is available on request by contacting our office as detailed below.

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this consultation.

