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Section 1 - General Information

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 We (The Association) are a Registered Social Landlord (RSL). This Policy details how we will allocate our rented properties. In line with good practice, the underlying principle is to allocate our rented housing stock to those households displaying the highest level of housing need, taking account of accommodation size and type.

1.1.2 We are committed to creating a system which makes finding a home as simple, straightforward and fair as possible. We will do this by:

- Providing applicants with a housing application form which is available online and paper based on request.
- Providing an effective and accessible Housing Information & Advice Service to ensure the best possible advice and assistance on housing options;
- Operating a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme for the allocation of our rented housing stock.

1.1.3 This policy does not cover the allocation of:

- Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO)
These housing options are offered by the Association and are covered by the LCHO Policy. Further details of this can be obtained by contacting the Association or can be downloaded from the website at www.ohal.org.uk.
- Supported Housing
Where properties have been designated for a particular client group a separate allocation process will be agreed with the partner organisation providing the support.
- Mid-Market Rents
Our subsidiary, Orkney Housing Enterprises (OHE), deals with the management and allocation of our mid-market rented properties.

1.1.4 The Scottish Social Housing Charter states that social landlords must ensure that:

- people looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them;
- tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options;
- people at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness; and
- 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 their prospects of being housed.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

1.2.1 The aim and objective of this Policy is to:

- Ensure that people have fair and open access to our housing register and assessment process;
- Allocate properties in a way which gives reasonable preference to those in housing need, makes best use of the available stock and helps to sustain communities;
- Maximise access and choice available to applicants to ensure we offer people accommodation that meets their needs;
- Ensure that allocations comply with relevant legal and good practice guidelines;
- Collect and analyse housing needs information that helps inform our future development programme;
- Ensure that allocations procedures are carried out effectively and efficiently to minimise void periods;
- Develop close inter-agency links to meet housing need, to tackle homelessness and meet other housing needs;
- Process applications to ensure confidentiality and access to information in line with legal requirements;
- Monitor performance in allocations and report to relevant stakeholders.

1.3 Law and Good Practice

1.3.1 This Policy complies with current legislation, good practice and performance standards issued by the Scottish Government, the Chartered Institute of Housing, the Scottish Housing Regulator and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations.

1.4 Equal Opportunities

1.4.1 This Policy will be delivered in a way which recognises and respects diversity and in accordance with the Association's Equality, Diversity & Human Rights Policy.

1.5 Complaints & Appeals

1.5.1 Anyone who feels that we have not complied with this Policy can use the Association's Complaints Procedure. Details of how to do this can be found in the Complaints Policy which is available on our website at www.ohal.org.uk or on request from the office.

1.6 The Tenancy Agreement

1.6.1 The tenure type offered will normally be a Scottish Secure Tenancy. However, in certain circumstances we may decide to let the property on a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy in compliance with the Housing (Scotland) 2014 Act.

1.7 Local Lettings Initiative

- 1.7.1 We will develop, in consultation with local communities when required, Local Lettings Initiatives (LLIs) for specific areas. Such LLIs will meet both legislative and equalities requirements.
- 1.7.2 LLIs will have the effect of suspending the usual allocations criteria, as set out in this document, and will be designed to address specific local issues.
- 1.7.3 LLIs will be used for the initial allocation of new property developments, new build properties and preference will be given to our existing tenants in the first instance.
- 1.7.4 The purpose of such an LLI is to maximise the opportunity for meeting housing needs that the additional supply of new build Association properties offers. For example, rehousing existing tenants in this way results in more Association properties becoming available for letting to other housing applicants. In effect two households can benefit from each new build property.
- 1.7.5 Our existing tenants that bid for new build housing will be prioritised according to their housing need, defined by the points awarded on their housing application.
- 1.7.6 In the event that there are no suitable bids for these properties from our existing tenants then other applicants will be considered.
- 1.7.7 Any initiatives will be carefully monitored and changed in line with changing local circumstances and LLIs, once developed, will be available from the our office and published on the website.

1.8 Lets to Staff, Management Committee or Close Relatives

- 1.8.1 Any applicant who is defined as being a 'Connected Person' must complete full details in the declaration at the end of the housing application form and includes a relationship with any of the following:
- a) a committee member **or** a former committee member (in the previous 12 months); **or**
 - b) a staff member **or** a former staff member (in the previous 12 months).
- 1.8.2 Connected people are defined as those in groups 1 and 2 below:

Group 1 <i>Members of your household</i>	• Anyone who normally lives as part of your household, whether they are related to you or not, including partners (and spouses) who work away from home; and children (regardless of their age) who are studying away from home.
Group 2 <i>People closely associated with you</i>	• Parents, parents in law and their partners. • Sons, daughters, stepsons and stepdaughters. • Brothers, sisters and their partners. • A partner's parent, child or sibling. • Grandparents, grandchildren and their partners. • Someone who is dependent on you, or whom you are

	dependent upon. • Close friends.
Group 3 <i>Others you need to consider</i>	• Other relatives (e.g. uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews & their partners). • Other friends (e.g. someone you are acquainted with socially, neighbours, business contacts and associates).

1.8.3 Our approach to managing lets to 'connected people' is detailed in our Entitlement, Payments and Benefits Policy. A copy is available on request.

1.8.4 This does not mean they cannot be considered for an allocation but ensures that the necessary procedures are followed in accordance with the Scottish Housing Regulator's good practice and guidance.

1.9 Policy Review

1.9.1 This policy will be reviewed every 5 years or sooner if required due to legislative changes or updated good practice.

1.10 Consultation

1.10.1 Customer engagement has always been one of the key aspects of the way in which we operate. We encourage and welcome the view of our tenants and other relevant groups when formulating service delivery policies.

1.10.2 Prior to making any amendments to this policy we will consult with applicants, tenants, stakeholders and the wider community.

1.10.3 Anyone wishing to make a comment on this policy should do so in writing, to the Director of Housing and Operations, Orkney Housing Association Ltd, 39a Victoria Street, Kirkwall, KW15 1DN. Or via email to allocations@ohal.org.uk

Section 2 – Applying for Housing

2.1 Registration

- 2.1.1 Anyone interested in being registered on our rented housing list must first complete an application form detailing their present housing circumstances.
- 2.1.2 Applications will be accepted from anyone aged 16 years and over. An applicant cannot be a sole or joint applicant on more than one application form. However, they can simultaneously be a named applicant on one application whilst a household member on another application.
- 2.1.3 We have 2 housing lists; the waiting list and the homeless list. The homeless list includes only those applicants who have been assessed by Orkney Islands Council (OIC) as being statutory homeless. All other applicants will be placed on the waiting list, including current tenants of Orkney Housing Association.
- 2.1.4 Priority points will be awarded based on the information provided in the application form. The applicant will receive written confirmation that they have been accepted on to the rented housing list and this letter will detail their total priority points and the groups under which they qualify (unless they are on the homeless list).
- 2.1.5 Prior to the offer of accommodation, applicants will be required to provide supporting evidence, regarding their circumstances, to verify their priority award.
- 2.1.6 Applicants will be encouraged to consider their housing options and staff will offer housing information and advice to guide applicants in their choices.

2.2 Taking Property Ownership Into Account

- 2.2.1 The ownership and/or value of heritable property can be taken into account when allocating social housing (Housing Act 1987 and Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014). Heritable property includes land, as well as anything built on land, and can be property currently owned, or that has been previously owned, in Scotland, the rest of the UK or abroad.

This means that if the applicant, or a current or future member of the household, currently owns land or property or previously owned land or property, this can be taken into account when deciding on an applicant's priority for the allocation of social housing. This applies to existing tenants as well as new tenants.
- 2.2.2 We will, therefore, consider property ownership when assessing an applicant's housing needs and their circumstances and the applicant may be awarded a lower level of priority points if an applicant either owns their own current home or could reasonably occupy one that they own.
- 2.2.3 Property ownership will **not** be taken into account in the following circumstances:

- In cases where the property has not been let, but the owner cannot secure entry to the property. This could, for example, be where it is not safe to enter the property due to severe structural faults or where there are squatters living in the property;
- Where it is probable that occupying the property will lead to abuse from someone currently living in the property;
- Where it is probable that occupying the property will lead to abuse from someone who previously resided with the applicant whether in that property or elsewhere;
- Where occupation of the property may endanger the health of the occupants and there are no reasonable steps that can be taken by the applicant to prevent that danger.

2.2.4 The circumstances of each case will be considered and we may decide to allocate a property to an applicant who owns property.

For example, where the applicant owns property but it does not meet their needs and they required to be rehoused urgently. In these circumstances the property to be allocated will be offered under a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy which will allow the person to make arrangements for the sale or installation of adaptations, that will allow the person's housing need to be met. **Any decision to do so must be approved by the Director of Housing and Operations.**

2.3 Factors Not Taken Into Consideration

2.3.1 The factors which landlords must not take into consideration when allocating properties are set out in Section 20(2) of the 1987 Housing (Scotland) Act (as amended by Section 10(3) of the 2001 Act). These are noted below.

2.3.2 Residency

We cannot consider the length of time for which an applicant has lived in the area. The legislation prevents us from taking into account whether an applicant lives in the area if they:

- Are employed, or been offered employment in the area;
- Wishes to move into the area to seek employment and we are satisfied this is the applicant's intention;
- Wishes to move into the area to be near a relative or carer;
- Have special social or medical reasons for requiring to be housed in the area;
- Wishes to move into the area because of harassment;
- Wishes to move into the area because they run the risk of domestic abuse.

2.3.3 Outstanding Liabilities

- Any outstanding liability (such as tenancy related debts) for which the applicant has no legal responsibility;
- Which no longer exists as full payment has been made
- Where the amount outstanding is less than one month's rent
- Where a repayment arrangement has been agreed and adhered to for a minimum period of 3 months.

- 2.3.4 Age
- Provided the applicant is over 16 years old

- 2.3.5 Income
- Income of the applicant or their family

2.4 Joint Applications

- 2.4.1 Where a joint application is made by applicants currently living in separate accommodation, assessment will be based on the applicant with the greatest housing need.

2.5 Transfers

- 2.5.1 The following conditions will apply to existing tenants wishing to transfer to another Association property:
- The outgoing property must meet our Relet Standards.
 - The transfer must not result in overcrowding or under-occupancy of the new accommodation.
 - The tenant must not be in breach of their tenancy conditions except in cases where the breach is the reason or part of the reason for transfer.
 - The tenant must normally have a clear rent account or arrears of not more than one twelfth of the annual amount payable and have agreed and adhered to a repayment schedule for at least 3 consecutive months. (In cases where a tenant is under-occupying and eligible to apply for a removal grant, we may consider this to clear any debt.)

2.6 Mutual Exchange

- 2.6.1 We will not unreasonably refuse permission for a mutual exchange between tenants provided that both parties are tenants of an RSL or local authority and that all landlords have given their consent. The landlord does not need to be us but the other landlord must also agree to the exchange.
- 2.6.2 Reasonable grounds for refusing permission include the following:
- We have served a Notice of Proceedings on the tenant or any joint tenant warning that we may seek eviction on certain grounds because of conduct;
 - We have obtained an order for eviction;
 - The property was designed or adapted for persons with special needs and if the exchange was allowed, there would be no person living in the house who required those designs or adaptations;
 - The other house is larger or smaller than the transferring tenant or their household need in accordance with our size eligibility criteria, or it is not suitable for the needs of the transferring tenant and their household;
 - Any of the applicants have outstanding debt with their landlord exceeding one months' rent and have not adhered to an arrangement to repay this for a minimum of 3 months.

These examples do not in any way alter the Association's general right to refuse permission on reasonable grounds.

- 2.6.3 We are members of Homeswapper, which is free to register for our tenants. This scheme allows tenants to register for a mutual exchange and seek other interested parties who are either our tenants, tenants of OIC, other RSL's and/or local authorities out with Orkney.
- 2.6.4 We hold a separate internal procedure on handling mutual exchange applications, and there is a separate application form that should be completed by applicants who wish to apply for a mutual exchange.

2.7 Armed Forces Personnel & Veterans

- 2.7.1 We commit to uphold the Armed Forces Covenant and support the Armed Forces Community. We recognise the contribution that Service personnel, both regular and reservist, veterans and military families make to our organisation, our communities and to the country.
- 2.7.2 The Scottish Government is committed to helping ex-service personnel and has encouraged landlords to consider their needs and to respond appropriately. We therefore have a specified level of priority for applications from ex-service personnel, ensuring they are not disadvantaged compared to other applicants.
- 2.7.3 Priority will be awarded to ex-service personnel who have left the Armed Forces within the last 2 years or expect to leave within 6 months of submitting a housing application form. This applies to service personnel who leave under honourable discharge or medical discharge and who have completed at least 3 years' service.

2.8 Applicants from Outwith the United Kingdom

- 2.8.1 All non-UK applicants subject to immigration control must declare this on their housing application form and will require to be assessed in terms of the legislation and the Right to Remain.
- 2.8.2 Such applicants will be permitted onto the waiting list but will be required to provide evidence of status before eligibility for accommodation can be confirmed.

2.9 Applications from Sex Offenders & Potentially Dangerous Offenders

- 2.9.1 Prisoners
We are entitled to and may ask OIC's Criminal Justice Service if a prisoner due for release will be under a Supervision Order and if so what the Order relates to. If there is any potential sensitivity, the matter will be referred to the Director of Housing and Operations.
- 2.9.2 Sex Offenders & Potentially Dangerous Offenders
The Association has a 'duty to co-operate' with the local authority and Police Scotland where applications are received from Registered Sex Offenders, violent

offenders or from other potentially dangerous offenders. The Association will collaborate with other partners and statutory bodies on any risk assessment and action plan for such offenders looking for housing. Any allocation would only be made in accordance with agreed Policy and Protocols.

2.10 Change of Circumstances

- 2.10.1 Applicants must keep us informed of any changes to their circumstances. This can be done by email, letter or by completing our standard change of circumstances form.
- 2.10.2 Any applicant who moves address is required to complete a new housing application form.

2.11 Annual Review of Application

- 2.11.1 We will contact applicants annually on the anniversary of their original application being received. This is to ensure that they want to remain on the waiting list and the information we hold on our records is accurate and up to date.
- 2.11.2 If the applicant does not respond within the specified timescale on their review correspondence their application will be closed. Any closed applications are retained in accordance with our internal document retention procedure.

2.12 Suspensions

- 2.12.1 A suspension happens when someone has been accepted onto the housing list, but is told they will not be eligible for an offer of accommodation until:
 - A certain period has elapsed
 - Their conduct has changed; or
 - A change in circumstances has occurred.
- 2.12.2 We will keep the use of suspensions to a minimum and in line with legal requirements and good practice guidelines.
- 2.12.3 We may in special circumstances decide not to suspend an application where the assessed needs of the household outweigh any other concerns.
- 2.12.4 In cases where we decide not to suspend an applicant, we may withhold priority points for a period of 12 months
- 2.12.5 We may suspend applicants from receiving an offer on the following grounds:
 - Deliberate worsening of circumstances
 - Breach of tenancy conditions
 - Arrears of rent or other tenancy related debt
 - Anti-social behaviour
 - False, misleading or withheld information
 - Abandoning or neglecting a property

- Previous convictions
- Violent or threatening behaviour towards staff
- Have refused 2 reasonable offers of housing without good reason

2.12.6 Deliberate Worsening of Circumstances

Reasons for this decision may include but are not limited to:

- Giving up secure accommodation to move into insecure accommodation;
- Moving to a property which is unsuitable for social or medical reasons;
- Moving to a property which is in serious disrepair or below the tolerable standard.
- Moving to a property that is unsuitable for needs to obtain additional priority points.

The suspension applies for 12 months from the date the applicant worsened their circumstances.

2.12.7 Breach of Tenancy Conditions

We always seek tenancy references for addresses over the last 5 years. Where the applicant receives an unsatisfactory reference on breach of tenancy conditions, the application will be suspended from receiving an offer. This is for a maximum period of 12 months and can be lifted at any time if the applicant provides evidence that the issues have been addressed. An updated tenancy reference from the landlord will have to be provided.

2.12.8 Arrears of Rent or Other Tenancy Related Debt

Where applicants have arrears of rent, service charges or other rechargeable debt, they will be suspended from receiving an offer until:

- The debt has been repaid in full;
- The debt is less than one twelfth of the annual rent; or
- A satisfactory arrangement has been made to repay the debt and has been adhered to for at least 3 months and continues to be paid.

2.12.9 Anti-Social Behaviour

An applicant will be suspended from receiving an offer where:

- They have been evicted for anti-social behaviour in the last 3 years;
- They have had an ASBO granted against them in the last 3 years;
- They have been evicted for causing substantial damage to the landlord's property in the last 3 years; or
- Where a relevant authority has taken successful legal action on the grounds of conduct in a previous home within the last 3 years, and where there is a reason to believe that the behaviour will reoccur.

2.12.10 False, Misleading or Withheld Information

Where it is confirmed that an applicant has withheld or has provided false or

misleading information which is relevant to their housing need, their application will be suspended from receiving an offer for a period of 12 months.

2.12.11 Abandoning or Neglecting a Property

- A suspension will be imposed where the applicant has previously had a property repossessed by a social landlord through the abandonment process. This applies where the applicant was an individual or joint tenant.
- A suspension will be imposed where a court has ordered recovery of possession due to the deterioration of the condition of the property or furniture provided for the tenants use.

These circumstances will only apply to repossessions (abandonments) or orders for repossession made in Scotland under the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. We will still impose a suspension even if the repossession or court order listed relates to properties owned by a different Scottish social landlord.

2.12.12 Previous Convictions

We will impose a suspension where:

The person has been, or has resided with a person who has been, convicted of –

- Using a house or allowing it to be used for immoral or illegal purposes; or
- An offence punishable by imprisonment which was committed in, or in the locality of, a house occupied by the person”.

In the above circumstances we will suspend an applicant (including a tenant applying for a transfer) from receiving an offer of housing for a period where they, or someone they live or have lived with, have been convicted of a crime that has been committed in or near the property where they were a tenant. We shall consider carefully the nature of the crime and whether the behaviour that led to the conviction has had an impact on the people living in, or in the locality of, the house before suspending an applicant on this basis.

Punishable by imprisonment means that the offence carried imprisonment as a possible penalty. A prison sentence does not need to have been imposed. For example, a community payback order may be given by the criminal court as an alternative to a prison sentence.

2.12.13 Violent or Threatening Behaviour

We operate a zero-tolerance approach towards violence or threatening behaviour towards staff. Evidence of this behaviour by any applicant or member of the applicant’s family will result in immediate suspension from receiving an offer for a period of 12 months.

2.12.14 Refused a Reasonable Offer

If an applicant refuses a reasonable offer of accommodation without good reason, we will apply a 12 month suspension to their application.

- 2.12.15 Applicants who are suspended from receiving an offer will be notified of this in writing with an explanation on the reasons. However, should the applicant's circumstances change during the period of suspension, their application will be reassessed and the suspension may be lifted.
- 2.12.16 Applicants have the right to appeal any decision to apply a suspension to their application through our Complaints Procedure.

2.13 Removing Applications

- 2.13.1 It will not be usual practice for us to remove applicants from the rented housing list and, where this does occur, it will be confined to the following circumstances:
- the applicant has been offered a tenancy by us or another social housing landlord, and this offer has been accepted;
 - the applicant has requested to be removed from the list;
 - the applicant has not returned a new application form following a change of address;
 - the applicant has not responded to the annual review process;
 - the applicant has not responded to offers of housing; or
 - the applicant is deceased.

Section 3 – Choice Based Lettings

- 3.1 We operate a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme. This means that we advertise available properties to let on our website at www.ohal.org.uk and on our Facebook page. Circumstances in which available properties would not be advertised would be those considered for a Management Allocation, supported housing, Section 5 Referral from OIC or Mid-Market Rent allocations.
- 3.2 Properties advertised will detail:
- The street/area of the property;
 - Property size and type e.g. 2 storey, 3 bedroomed semi-detached house;
 - The rent including any service charge;
 - The Energy Performance Rating;
 - Heating type
 - Any level entry specifications such as shower
 - If the property has an exclusive or shared garden
 - The target quota group for the allocation
 - The closing date for registering an interest
 - A photograph of the area
 - Internal plans of the property
- 3.3 Applicants who are interested in an advertised property must register their interest prior to the stated deadline. Bids can be made by either emailing allocations@ohal.org.uk, by phoning our office on 01856 875253 or through Facebook Messenger. Any bids received after the deadline will only be considered at the discretion of the Director of Housing & Operations.
- 3.4 It is the applicant's responsibility to put their name forward for an advertised property. Another person can register an interest on behalf of an applicant, if the applicant has given them permission to do so e.g. household member, friend or carer etc.
- Applicants who are unable to monitor our platforms for available adverts can request to be added to our support list. Applicants on this list will be contacted when a potential property that meets their needs is advertised.
- 3.5 Where we have been unable to identify a suitable applicant for a property following a 2nd advert, we will consider all available options for the occupancy of the property to minimise the period of time the property is empty. Any decision will be at the discretion of the Director of Housing & Operations.

Section 4 – Assessment & Eligibility

4.1 Groups Plus Points Scheme

- 4.1.1 In the assessment of applications, we operate a groups plus points scheme, which gives priority to those in greatest housing need.
- 4.1.2 Applicants are eligible to be awarded points from the following groups, if they meet the relevant criteria:
- Group 1 - Unsatisfactory Housing Conditions
 - Group 2 - Unsatisfactory Living Arrangements
 - Group 3 - Overcrowding or Under-occupying
 - Group 4 - Insecure Tenancies
 - Group 5 - Medical
 - Group 6 - Need to Live in the Area

4.2 Lettings Plan

- 4.2.1 A lettings plan will be developed on an annual basis as part of our overall Business Plan for the upcoming year.
- 4.2.2 The aim of the plan is to ensure we maximise our housing stock to meet a range of housing needs and to detail the quota of properties allocated to each of the following groups on the waiting list:-
- Transfer Applicants
 - General Applicants
 - OIC Priority Group (Homeless applicants)

4.3 Reasonable Preference

- 4.3.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, amended by Section 20 of the 1987 Act, requires landlords to give 'Reasonable Preference' to certain categories of applicants.
- Homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness who have unmet housing needs
 - People who are living in unsatisfactory housing conditions and who have unmet housing needs
 - Tenants of social landlords who are deemed to be under-occupied.

4.4 Homelessness

- 4.4.1 We are committed to assisting OIC in fulfilling their statutory duty to rehouse homeless households.
- 4.4.2 We maintain a separate list of applicants assessed as unintentionally homeless by the OIC. Those applicants will be prioritised, in order, by the date of their homelessness assessment.

- 4.4.3 Homeless applicants can apply for advertised properties the same as all other applicants, and their quota group is OIC Priority Applicants.
- 4.4.4 Where an allocation is made to this group, the applicant who best meets the Allocation Criteria at Section 5 will be contacted to carry out a pre-tenancy check. We will also request a Homeless Assessment Report from the OIC.
- 4.4.5 In order to create sustainable tenancies through our allocation process, we will ensure there are adequate measures in place to support new tenancies. Where there is doubt about the applicants ability to sustain a tenancy, and the level of support needed is not available, we may choose to withhold an offer until we are confident that an adequate support package is in place to reduce the risk of the tenancy failing.
- 4.4.6 OIC can also submit Section 5 Referrals to us. In these circumstances we may allocate a property to a homeless applicant out with the normal allocation process and the property would not be advertised.

4.5 Size of Accommodation Offered

- 4.5.1 We will aim to make best use of our available housing stock, and to do this, applicants will normally be considered for a property size appropriate to their household's needs and our size eligibility criteria.
- 4.5.2 Where an applicant requires an additional bedroom for medical or support reasons, we require clear supporting information from a relevant professional to verify the need for an additional bedroom, and this will be considered by a Housing Manager.
- 4.5.3 Applicants may bid for properties that do not match their assessed household size needs. In these circumstances an allocation will only be considered for properties deemed to be in low demand and where the allocation would not cause overcrowding or otherwise be unsuitable.
- 4.5.4 In most circumstances, the following property sizes are considered appropriate for the household's needs:

Household Size	Number of Bedrooms
Single person	1
Couple with no children	1-2
Couple or single person with 1 child	2
Couple or single person with 2 children of the same sex, until the elder reaches aged 10	2
Couple of single person with 2 children of opposite sex, until the elder reaches aged 8	2
Couple of single person with 2 children of the same sex where one is over the age of 10	3
Couple or single person with 2 children of the opposite sex,	3

where one is over the age of 8	
Couple or single person with 3 children (depending on ages and sex of children)	3-4
Couple of single person with 4 or more children	3-4 (or larger if available)

- 4.5.5 Where a household qualifies for a larger house based on the ages of the children, but wishes to be considered for a smaller property, this would not be refused as long as it does not constitute statutory overcrowding e.g. a household with 2 children of the same sex, aged 12 & 10, can still be considered to share a double bedroom.

4.6 Child Access Arrangements

- 4.6.1 Where there are access arrangement in place, we will take account of bedroom eligibility to include parents who have regular frequent contact with a dependent child(ren). Clear evidence is required to confirm all arrangements of child access.
- 4.6.2 Where access arrangements are equivalent to an average of 3 nights per week or more, across the year, the children will be considered as permanent members of the household and the size of accommodation will be calculated in accordance with the table above (at 4.5.4)
- 4.6.3 Where the average access arrangements falls below 3 nights per week, a maximum of one additional bedroom will be awarded, regardless of the number of children.
- 4.6.4 The exceptions to the general rules set out in Para 4.5.4 above are:
- Where there is a medical reason – confirmation will be required from a health or social care professional with qualifications and experience appropriate to the areas of risk/need identified in the assessment;
 - In non-pressured areas the Association reserves the right to allocate a property to those in greatest housing need without reference to the size of the household, provided the property is not then overcrowded; or
 - The ages of the children are such that an extra bedroom will be required in the next 12 months;
 - Where an extra bedroom is required for a carer where there is an assessed need for 24/7 ongoing sleepover care. Where overnight care is less frequent, this will be considered on a case by case basis.

4.7 Applicants Living Out With Orkney

- 4.7.1 Applicants living out with Orkney who are not able to demonstrate a need to live in the area will only be eligible for points from the following Groups:
- Unsatisfactory Housing Conditions
 - Overcrowding & Under-Occupying (under-occupying refers to social rented properties only)

4.7.2 Applicants living out with Orkney will be eligible for points from the remaining priority groups if they meet one or more of the following criteria.

- Is employed, or has been offered employment in Orkney (clear evidence required);
- Is seeking employment – the applicant will be asked to provide copies of correspondence relating to any job applications they have made;
- Has special social or medical reasons for requiring to be housed in Orkney – consideration will be given to the nature of the social or medical need and contact will be made with relevant agencies or persons in coming to a judgement about whether a move to Orkney is appropriate;
- Is subject to harassment and wishes to move to Orkney – confirmation of the harassment will be sought from appropriate agencies e.g. Police Scotland, existing landlord;
- Fleeing domestic abuse – It is recognised through partnership working that not all victims of domestic abuse will disclose this to other agencies, therefore, further investigations will be undertaken with the applicant and agencies, where appropriate.
- Are in the Armed Forces or veterans who have left the forces in the last 2 years;
- Widows, widowers and other partners of service personnel killed in action for up to 2 years after their partner has been killed whilst serving.
- Has immediate family in Orkney i.e. parents, son, daughter, brother or sister.

The Director of Housing and Operations has delegated authority to exercise discretion in the relation to the above criteria in exceptional circumstances.

4.8 Essential Worker

4.8.1 Priority will be given to applicants who have a need to move into the area for employment, where they are unable to meet their own housing need.

4.8.2 Applicants will qualify as essential workers when either or both of the following criteria is met.

- Local recruitment has not been possible for a post or where the local recruitment is not likely in view of the skills required; and
- Where failure to recruit will have a serious impact on the local economy or individual business or where failure to recruit will have a detrimental impact on health and wellbeing of local business.

4.8.2 We will require evidence from employers to support an applicant's claim for priority as an essential worker.

Section 5 – Allocation Process

5.1 Allocation of Properties

- 5.1.1 In reaching a decision on the allocation of Association property the following approach will be taken:
- a) Target quota group – applicants within the target group advertised
 - b) Best fit – all applicants who have applied for the property whose household composition require the size and type of the property advertised will be identified according to the criteria as at 4.4; then
 - c) Total points will be considered - the applicant with the highest overall points will normally be allocated the property.
- Any decision to allocate to an applicant who does not meet any of the above criteria will be made by the Director of Housing & Operations.**
- 5.1.2 Where applicants have the same points level the allocation of the property will normally be based on the date order of their application with the applicant who registered their application earliest being preferred.
- 5.1.3 OIC Priority Applicant allocations are determined by the date of the homeless assessment decision by the local authority, and if more than one applicant has the same date, the applicant who registered their application earliest will be preferred.
- 5.1.4 Where properties are designed or adapted for special needs, including ground floor and level access showers, priority consideration will be given to applicants where they or a household member has a mobility or medical requirement for the adaptation.

5.2 Shortlisting

- 5.2.1 When the closing date has been reached, applicants with the highest priority within the target quota group and who best fit the property criteria, will be shortlisted. The number of applicants shortlisted for each property will vary and will depend on the number of points separating those at the top of the list.
- 5.2.2 Applicants who have been shortlisted will be contacted within one working day following the closing date to complete a Pre-Tenancy Check. This is usually conducted over the telephone, however it can also be done in person if required.
- 5.2.3 We have an established framework to verify applications, including seeking evidence to corroborate the applicant's age and identity. To comply, each applicant will be required to submit evidence confirming their identify and address.
- 5.2.4 During the pre-tenancy check, the existing points are required to be checked and verified, with appropriate evidence of all applicable points required. Evidence requested must be submitted by the applicant within 3 working days of the request. In certain circumstances, a home visit may be necessary to verify the

information e.g. if it is relating to property conditions or overcrowding.

- 5.2.5 The onus is on the applicant to provide the necessary information, and failure to provide it within the prescribed timescales will result in them being bypassed for the allocation.

5.3 Offer of a Property

- 5.3.1 Following the shortlisting process and verification of points, an offer letter will be issued to the applicant with the highest points. This letter will provide details of the property and allow 2 working days for the applicant to contact us to confirm if they wish to accept or refuse the offer. Offers are issued via the applicants preferred method of contact, and this is usually by email. ***If the applicant fails to contact the Association within 2 working days the offer will be formally withdrawn.***

- 5.3.2 There are a number of options for viewing the property, and an inperson viewing will always take place before the signing of the tenancy agreement. Where an applicant requires to see a property before formally accepting the property, we offer digital viewings and provide internal and external photographs of the property,

In certain circumstances, we may offer an in person viewing at an earlier stage if this is required, taking account of health and safety requirements, if there are contractors carrying out work in the empty property.

- 5.3.3 Formal acceptance or refusal must be received in writing, and there is a standard pro-forma that should be completed, however we will also accept this by email or letter.

5.4 Refusal of an Offer

- 5.4.1 Applicants who refuse an offer of a property, without reasonable grounds after having expressed an interest in an advertised property will be suspended from receiving a further offer for a period of 12 months. Full reasons for the refusal should be submitted to allow this to be considered.

If an applicant is dissatisfied with the decision to suspend their application, they can appeal the decision through our Complaints Procedure.

5.5 Bypassing Applicants for Offers of Housing

- 5.5.1 We will normally offer the tenancy of a property to the applicant with the highest number of points and fits the criteria for that particular size and type of house. However, there may be some circumstances where applicants will be bypassed for an offer of accommodation such as:

- 5.5.2
- There is evidence that the allocation would place the community, or an individual at risk;

- Enquiries into the household's circumstances provide clear evidence that a particular allocation is unsuitable or inappropriate;
- The applicant or a family member has a condition which makes the property unsuitable;
- The applicant requires support and assistance to sustain a tenancy and the support is not available or in place;
- The applicant is in supported accommodation and we are satisfied they are not ready to move to independent living;
- The applicants circumstances have changed and information is required to enable their application to be re-assessed;
- The applicant has failed to provide evidence to verify their housing points in required timescales;
- The allocation is being treated as a sensitive let.

5.6 With-holding an Offer of Accommodation

5.6.1 An offer of accommodation may be with-held as a result of the following:

- If the applicant(s) have housing debt of more than one twelfth of the annual rent receivable outstanding in respect of a former or existing tenancy and a satisfactory repayment arrangement* is not in place. This applies to all applicants. ***This rule may be relaxed at the discretion of the Director of Housing & Operations where the tenant wishes to move under the Removal Grant Scheme (see Compensation & Other Payments Policy) as this would allow the arrear to be reduced substantially.***

* A satisfactory repayment arrangement is defined as being where the applicant has come to an arrangement for paying the arrear and has kept to the arrangement for a minimum of 3 consecutive months and is continuing to make payments.

- If the applicant has no means of paying the rent and is not eligible for Housing Benefit or Housing Costs through Universal Credit.
- If the applicant has misrepresented information or circumstances at the registration.
- If there are issues associated with their current tenancy which must be resolved.
- If the applicant's housing need situation requires to be clarified
- If the applicant or any member of their household has been:
 - evicted within the previous 3 years for anti-social behaviour from any Local Authority or Registered Social Landlord (RSL) within the United Kingdom.
 - taken to court and a Decree for possession of their house has been granted, within the previous 3 years, on the grounds of anti-social behaviour but the applicant left prior to eviction taking place.
 - the subject of an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) within the past 3 years.

If the above applies the Association may choose to offer housing under a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy (SSST) with a tailored package of support.

5.7 Management Allocation – Exceptional Circumstances

5.7.1 A Management Allocation may be approved in exceptional circumstances with the agreement of the Director of Housing and Operations and the Chief

Executive. This is an emergency housing measure that allows an applicant to move to alternative housing elsewhere within our stock. The grounds under which a Management Allocation may be considered include, but not limited to are:

- Immediate threats of physical or mental abuse to the applicant or a member of the household.
- Racial or other physical or mental or emotional harassment of the applicant or a member of the household.

5.7.2 A Management Allocation is a preventative measure to avoid homelessness. We will not consider a Management Allocation where effective action under existing policies and procedures can be taken, or other enforcement routes are available. We will investigate each case considered for a Management Allocation and obtain supporting evidence from external agencies such as Police Scotland, where necessary.

6. Schedule of Points

6.1 Group 1 - Unsatisfactory Housing Conditions

Category	Description	Points
1	- Not structurally stable - No mains electricity/electrically unsafe - Inadequate piped supply of wholesale water - Inadequate drainage system for waste and surface water - Significant rising or penetrating damp	50
2	- No fixed sink/wash hand basin/bath or shower - No inside WC/toilet - No satisfactory heating	25
3	Applicants living in a property or mobile home which has physical shortcomings such as single glazing, draughts, difficult to heat.	15
Guidance notes <i>Clear supporting evidence is required from a qualified professional for all awards in Categories 1 & 2. A qualified professional could be an Environmental Health Officer, a Building Surveyor or other relevant professional.</i> <i>Evidence is also required for Category 3, but this can be assessed by a member of OHA staff. Where staff cannot assess due to the location of the property, evidence must be provided by a qualified professional.</i> <i>The categories are mutually exclusive and applicants will not be awarded points from more than one category.</i>		

6.2 Group 2 - Unsatisfactory Living Arrangements

Category	Description	Points
1	- Fleeing domestic abuse where this is not covered by homelessness - Leaving care where there is an assessed need to move to independent living from a residential health and social care setting	50
2	- Armed Forces personnel or a veteran who has left within the last 2 years, under honourable discharge or medical discharge and who have completed at least 3 years service. - Widow, widower or other partner of Service Personnel killed in action for up to 2 years after their death. - Relationship Breakdown where still residing in same property, or have moved to unsuitable accommodation as a result. - A family unit forced to live apart due to	25

	- unsatisfactory housing. - Visiting dependent children and lives in a property that is not suitable to allow overnight access. - Kinship carers whose current property is unsuitable for reasons relating to their caring responsibilities. - Approved permanent Foster Carer or Adoptive Parent who cannot have the child(ren) in their care until a property with required number of bedrooms is obtained.	
3	- Suffering from harassment or is the victim of anti-social behaviour from neighbours. - Shared facilities with a household who is not to be rehoused with the applicant. - Living in family home and seeking independent living.	15
Guidance Notes <i>Clear supporting evidence is required in all cases.</i> <i>The categories are mutually exclusive and applicants will not be awarded points from more than one category.</i>		

6.3 Group 3 - Overcrowding / Under-Occupying

Category	Description	Points
1	- Overcrowded by 3+ bedrooms - OHA/OIC tenant with 3+ surplus bedrooms	50
2	- Overcrowded by 2 bedrooms - OHA/OIC tenant with 2 surplus bedrooms	25
3	- Overcrowded by 1 bedroom - OHA/OIC tenant with 1 surplus bedroom	15
4	Tenant of any other social landlord under-occupying by 1 or more bedrooms	5
Guidance Notes <i>Points will be awarded according to the size of the accommodation and the composition of the household, and not according to the household's use of the existing space.</i> <i>Underoccupancy points will only be awarded where rehousing the applicant would free their current accommodation into the social rented sector.</i>		

6.4 Group 4 - Insecure Tenancies

Category	Description	Points
1	Private rented with valid Notice to Leave (not on conduct grounds)	50

	• Tied Accommodation with valid Notice to Quit • Owner occupier obliged to sell and would be unable to buy alternative accommodation with proceeds and existing income	
2	• Lodger asked to leave • Living with family and friends and asked to leave • No fixed abode	25
3	• Living with family or friends • Lodger and sublet • Living in a supported care facility	15
Guidance Notes <i>Clear supporting evidence is required in all cases.</i> <i>The categories are mutually exclusive and applicants will not be awarded points from more than one category.</i>		

6.5 Group 5 - Medical

Category	Description	Points
1	• The present accommodation is completely unsuitable for the applicant's medical condition. The quality of the applicant's life is seriously limited and would be greatly improved by moving to more suitable accommodation. Urgent action is recommended.	50
2	• The applicant has a serious medical condition which would be improved by moving to more suitable accommodation.	25
3	• The applicant has a medical condition which would be improved by moving to more suitable accommodation, but rehousing is not urgently required.	15
Guidance Notes <i>A separate medical assessment form must be completed by applicants who wish to be considered for medical priority. This is then assessed by a Housing Manager against the Association's criteria to determine if medical priority will be awarded.</i>		

Group 6 - Need to Live in the Area

Category	Description	Points
1	• Essential workers required to move into the local area to take up permanent employment, and unable to meet their own housing needs.	25
2	• Difficulty traveling to work where distance, transport arrangement or financial difficulties	15

	prevent ease of access. • Require to move into the area to provide or receive support to/from a friend or family member to enable independent living. • Require to remain in that area for employment or support reasons where present accommodation is deemed otherwise unsuitable.	
<i>Guidance Notes</i> <i>Clear supporting evidence required in all cases.</i>		