

Local Lettings Policy

Originator:	Policy and Strategy Team
Executive Management Team Approval Date:	July 2019
Review date:	July 2020

1	Introduction
1.1	As a responsible landlord One Vision Housing (OVH) seeks to allocate the properties it has available to rent in a fair and equitable manner. This is largely achieved by the majority (up to 75% for Sefton and up to 50% for other areas) of available to let properties being advertised and allocated via the sub-regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme (CBL).
1.2	Within the CBL scheme, applicants for housing are banded according to the Government’s ‘reasonable preference categories, which ensure priority is given to those in the greatest housing need.
1.3	In order to address specific local housing issues, OVH is permitted, however, to develop ‘Local Lettings Policies’ where additional application and allocation criteria may be applied.
1.4	This Policy sets out the provisions OVH has in place for the development and implementation of Local Lettings Policies.
1.5	<p>The application of this Policy also ensures compliance with the outcomes of the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, responsibility of the Regulator for Social Housing as outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered providers shall let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. They shall take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants. They shall demonstrate how their lettings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) make the best use of available housing and are compatible with the purpose of the housing (b) contribute to local authorities’ strategic housing function and sustainable communities
1.6	Access and Communication
1.6.1	OVH is committed to ensuring that our services are accessible to everyone. OVH will seek alternative methods of access and service delivery where barriers, perceived or real may exist, that may make it difficult for people to work for us or use our services.

<p>1.7</p> <p>1.7.1</p> <p>1.7.2</p> <p>1.7.3</p> <p>1.8</p>	<p>Equality, Diversity and Human Rights</p> <p>OVH is committed to ensuring that no person or group of persons will be treated less favourably than another person or group of persons and will carry out our duty with positive regard for the following core strands of equality; Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Transgender , Sexual Orientation, Maternity and Pregnancy, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Religion and/or Belief.</p> <p>OVH also recognise that some people experience disadvantage due to their socio economic circumstances, employment status, class, appearance, responsibility for dependants, unrelated criminal activities, being HIV positive or with AIDS, or any other matter which causes a person to be treated with injustice.</p> <p>OVH will also ensure that all services and actions are delivered within the context of current Human Rights legislation. Staff and others with whom OVH works, will adhere to the central principles of the Human Rights Act (1998).</p> <p>This Policy should be read in conjunction with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVH Allocations Policy • Complaints, Appeals and Feedback Policy
2	Statement of Intent
<p>2.1</p> <p>2.2</p> <p>2.3</p> <p>2.4</p>	<p>OVH will use Local Lettings Policies to address specific housing issues that may occur within its stock as and when required under the powers afford to it in the 1996 Housing Act.</p> <p>Where OVH is considering to introduce Local Lettings Policies it will consult with existing tenants in the specific type of accommodation, block or area where the Policy will apply, outlining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reason why the Policy is being considered • The additional criteria on application / allocation that will apply if the Policy is introduced • Any exemptions that will apply and in what circumstances • The period for which the Policy will apply and when it will be reviewed <p>OVH will also consult with Sefton MBC or any other local authority in an area where a Local Lettings Policy is proposed, to ensure it is in line with the Local Authority’s Tenancy Strategy objectives.</p> <p>OVH will limit the introduction of Local Lettings Policies or any other alternative means of allocating social rented properties to 25% of its stock in Sefton to ensure the majority are let according to the Government’s reasonable preference categories. For other areas, OVH will allocate up to 50 % of its stock through Local lettings Policies or as per the agreement with the Local Authority of that area.</p>

- 3.1 OVH may choose to apply a Local Lettings Policy within a specific geographical region, estate, block or across a specific housing type e.g. sheltered housing, with the objective of:
- Creating balanced and mixed communities, including tackling areas of high unemployment, and developing a community of mixed tenure, where possible
 - Protecting existing stable communities
 - Reducing void rates and tenancy turnovers
 - Manage cost of void property and high turnover
 - Improving community stability and cohesion
 - Tackling low-demand areas and difficult-to-let estates
 - Reducing incidents of ASB
 - Preventing future problems occurring on newly developed estates or in relation to recently modernised properties
- 3.2 Additional lettings criteria, which may be applied to members of the applicant's household include:
- Priority given to households who can demonstrate community contribution e.g. volunteering, active resident involvement
 - Age related criteria e.g. priority given to applicants ages 55+
 - Applicants must complete pre tenancy training
 - Allowing households to under-occupy where affordability has been evidenced
 - Restricting families to flats below the third floor
 - Priority given to applicants with no previous record of ASB/ Gun crime etc.
 - Limiting lets to families with/ without children
- 3.3 Additional criteria may be applied as either essential or desirable criterion. Where an applicant does not meet the essential criteria they will be by-passed for a property on the first round of bidding. If no applicant meeting the required criteria can be found on the first bidding round, OVH reserve the right to allocate the property to others from the waiting list or via direct lets as is appropriate for the accommodation type.
- 3.4 Local lettings criteria will be applied prior to homes being advertised through the sub-regional Choice Based Letting system (or any other mechanism used e.g. through web-based property vendors services). Property adverts will clearly display that Local lettings criteria apply and will specify what these are.
- 3.5 The introduction of Local Lettings Policies will be based upon an evidenced need and following consultation with tenants and the Local Authority. Policies will be subject to the Local Authority's approval.
- 3.6 Applicants have the right to appeal against a decision to allocate a property. Appeals will follow the Choice Based Lettings Appeal process. The request for a review can be made in person, by telephone or in writing within twenty one days from the date of publication of the outcome of the property vacancy on the website.

4	Implementation
4.1	Local lettings criteria will be applied to property advertisements by Neighbourhood Service Officers at the first round of CBL bidding.
4.2	OVH will produce a shortlist for each property based on the relevant CBL Policy, taking into account reasonable preference groups and with additional local lettings criteria applied.
4.3	<p>Neighbourhood Service Officers will be responsible for verifying the top bidder and will check:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants identity • Applicants eligibility for property • Verification checks • Additional evidence required to ensure local lettings criteria are met • Any referrals arising from local lettings criteria are set up, including to Employment Skills, Debt Advice and Welfare Benefit Team
5	Performance
5.1	An annual review of the effectiveness of each Local Lettings Policy will be carried out and any extension of the Policy for a further 12 months will require agreement from Executive Management Team (EMT) and the Local Authority.
5.2	<p>In general, the success of the Local Lettings Policy may be monitored across the following Key Performance Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of turnover • Average number of bids/ void homes in the area • Number of ASB related cases in the area • Average Length of tenancy
5.2	Performance will be reported every 12 months to the Customer Representative Group and the EMT.
6	Consultation
6.1	<p>Prior to the introduction of any Local Letting's Policies, the following Key Stakeholders should be consulted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant Policy Review Group was consulted in the development of this Policy on 31 May 2019 • Current tenants in the areas where the Local Lettings Policy is being considered (if it's an area based Local Lettings Policy) • One Vision Housing Staff • Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council or any other Local Authority where OVH owns and manages properties and intends to introduce local lettings schemes

7	Review	
7.1	This Policy will be reviewed annually from the date of the Executive Management Team (EMT) approval or sooner if required by the changes to OVH working practices, changes in relevant legislation or as a result of system audits.	
8	Equality Impact Assessment	
8.1	Was a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) required?	Yes
8.2	When was EIA conducted and by who?	An EIA conducted by the Policy, Planning and Improvement Manager, and the Neighbourhood Housing Manager in January 2012 still applies and does not require review.
8.3	Results of EIA	<p>This Policy has direct impact on residents and may have a differential impact across protected characteristics e.g. where lettings criteria are based on age. There is also a potential impact where lettings criteria support those in employment or those who have an offending history.</p> <p>The key recommendation from the Impact Assessment is that each Local Lettings Plan is based on clear evidence supporting the implementation of a Policy that alternative accommodation is available for those who may be excluded by the Local Lettings Policy e.g. under 55+, and that the Policy is reviewed annually for success and effectiveness.</p>
9	Scheme of Delegation	
9.1	Responsible committee for approving and monitoring implementation of the policy and any amendments to it	Executive Management Team
9.2	Responsible officer for formulating policy and reporting to committee on its effective implementation	Operations Director- Housing Services
9.3	Responsible officer for formulating, reviewing and monitoring implementation of procedures	Operations Director- Housing Services

Date of revision:	Reason for revision:	Consultation record:	Record of amendments:
15 th May 2018	Policy reviewed to include an additional Local Lettings Policy	See Section 6 above	There are no significant changes to the Policy in this review.
2 nd July 2019	Policy reviewed to include an additional Local Lettings Policy	See Section 6 above	There are no significant changes to the Policy in this review.

Letting Policy – Oxford House

Area	Oxford House																								
Rationale	<p>Tenant Profile</p> <p>There are 106 flats in Oxford House.</p> <p>The average age of tenants is 72years.</p> <p>Approximately 45% of tenants have a known vulnerability or disability including visual impairments, hearing impairment and physical disability.</p> <p>Oxford house is a very settled and elderly community and as such One Vision wish to ensure the peaceful sustainability of this community.</p> <p>Demand:</p> <p>Oxford House – 83 properties</p> <p>Oxford House – 83 properties</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Oxford House</th> <th>2012/13 Prior to LLP</th> <th>2015/16</th> <th>2016/17</th> <th>2017/18</th> <th>2018/19 YTD</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Turnover</td> <td>8.50%</td> <td>16%</td> <td>8.4%</td> <td>10.8%</td> <td>7.32%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No of Voids</td> <td>7</td> <td>14</td> <td>7</td> <td>9</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Relet Times (days)</td> <td>30</td> <td>26</td> <td>21</td> <td>22.56</td> <td>15.56</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Age Demographic – 88% of tenants are over 55</p>	Oxford House	2012/13 Prior to LLP	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19 YTD	Turnover	8.50%	16%	8.4%	10.8%	7.32%	No of Voids	7	14	7	9	9	Relet Times (days)	30	26	21	22.56	15.56
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Lettings Criteria	<p>Essential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oxford House will let to applicants aged 55 and over 																								

Performance and monitoring	<p>The impact of this Local Lettings Policy will be measured across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of Stock Turnover • Demand / vacant property through Choice Based Lettings <p>Performance will be monitored monthly and feedback provided to the Tenants' Representative Group and EMT every six months.</p>
Consultation	<p>Current Residents:</p> <p>Sefton Council: Sefton Council were consulted between 31 May 2019 and approval date 13 June 2019. This included a period when the papers were made available online for potential call-in by Scrutiny.</p>
Approval	<p>EMT Date of Approval: 2nd July 2019.</p> <p>Sefton Council: Approval gained from Sefton Council on 13 June 2019 dependent on satisfactory consultation with residents.</p>

Letting Policy – Strand House

Area	Strand House																								
Rationale	<p>Tenant Profile</p> <p>There are 137 flats in Strand House.</p> <p>The average age of tenants is 65years.</p> <p>Approximately 48% of tenants have a known vulnerability or disability including visual impairments, hearing impairment and physical disability.</p> <p>A significant proportion of Strand House, approximately 70%, is Supporting People funded Category 1 support available to tenants aged 55 and over.</p> <p>Demand:</p> <p>Strand House Void performance has been analysed to review the effectiveness of the LLP in the three schemes.</p> <p>Strand House – 123 properties</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Strand House</th> <th>2012/13 Prior to LLP</th> <th>2015/16</th> <th>2016/17</th> <th>2017/18</th> <th>2018/19 YTD</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Turnover</td> <td>13%</td> <td>10.5%</td> <td>12%</td> <td>10.5%</td> <td>12.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No of Voids</td> <td>16</td> <td>13</td> <td>15</td> <td>13</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Relet Times (days)</td> <td>31</td> <td>27.5</td> <td>22.1</td> <td>35.5</td> <td>19.6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Strand House	2012/13 Prior to LLP	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19 YTD	Turnover	13%	10.5%	12%	10.5%	12.2%	No of Voids	16	13	15	13	15	Relet Times (days)	31	27.5	22.1	35.5	19.6
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	Age Demographic – 81% of tenants are over 55
Lettings Criteria	Essential: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strand House will let to applicants aged 55 and over
Performance and monitoring	The impact of this Local Lettings Policy will be measured across: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of Stock Turnover • Demand / vacant property through Choice Based Lettings <p>Performance will be monitored monthly and feedback provided to the Tenants Representative Group and EMT every six months.</p>
Consultation	Current Residents: <p>Sefton Council: Sefton Council were consulted between 31 May 2019 and approval date 13 June 2019. This included a period when the papers were made available online for potential call-in by Scrutiny.</p>
Approval	EMT Date of Approval: 2nd July 2019. <p>Sefton Council: Approval gained from Sefton Council on 13 June 2019 dependent on satisfactory consultation with residents.</p>

Letting Policy – Smithy Green

Area	Smithy Green
Rationale	<p>Tenant Profile</p> <p>The average age of tenants is 77years.</p> <p>Approximately 90% of tenants have a known vulnerability or disability including visual impairments, hearing impairment and physical disability.</p> <p>A significant proportion of Smithy Green, approximately 85%, access Independent living funded Category 1 support available to tenants aged 55 and over.</p> <p>Anti-Social Behaviour</p> <p>Lettings within Smithy Green have traditionally been in the Independent Living category and the vast majority of longer term tenants are of an elderly profile. There have been a number of reported cases of anti-social behaviour associated with the clash of lifestyles of a generally older tenant profile and younger tenants. that have moved in over recent years. Whilst OVH will take tenancy enforcement action against any tenant that after investigation is found to have been responsible for anti-social behaviour against their neighbours, the intention of this local lettings Policy to prevent the likelihood of anti-</p>

social behaviour occurring in the first place by maintaining the existing character of the blocks.

Demand

Smithy Green – 73 properties

Smithy Green	Prior to LLP 2013/14	2015 /16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19 TYD
Turnover	14.1%	15%	12%	4%	5%
No of Voids	11	11	9	3	4
Relet Times (days)	32	22.7	24.1	28	26.25

Age Demographic – 85% of tenants are over 55

Lettings Criteria

Essential:

- Independent Living Service
 - Smithy Green will let to applicants aged 55 and over who meet criteria for the service
- General needs
 - 55+ no medical needs
 - If there are no applicants or the shortlist is exhausted then the available properties will be re-advertised and open to all applicants

Performance and monitoring

The impact of this Local Lettings Policy will be measured across:

- Level of Stock Turnover
- Demand / vacant property through Choice Based Lettings

Performance will be monitored monthly and feedback provided to the Tenants' Representative Group and EMT every 12 months.

Consultation

Current Residents:

Sefton Council: Sefton Council were consulted between 31 May 2019 and approval date 13 June 2019. This included a period when the papers were made available online for potential call-in by Scrutiny.

Approval

EMT Date of Approval: 2nd July 2019.

Sefton Council: Approval gained from Sefton Council on 13 July 2019 dependent on satisfactory consultation with residents.