



ALLOCATIONS & LETTINGS POLICY

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING



Allocations and Lettings Policy			
Last Reviewed	June 2025	Next Review	June 2026
Responsible Officer	Director of Operations		

Policy Statement: Freebridge shall provide fair and transparent allocations and lettings while adhering to legislation and regulatory requirements, meeting housing need within the local area.

Freebridge shall seek to provide general needs accommodation for families, couples and single people and sheltered housing for older residents under a variety of tenures. We aim to make our allocation and lettings process accessible, understandable and successful. We wish to be fair, meet housing need, allow choice and facilitate mobility wherever possible, whilst being mindful of the need to minimise rent loss. We shall be mindful of the principles of balanced and sustainable communities.

This policy shall only apply to the letting of general needs and sheltered accommodation properties, and not low-cost home ownership units.

Our [Tenancy Policy](#) outlines our commitment to creating sustainable communities and tenancies, whilst also making best use of our housing stock by offering a range of tenures. Our [Rent Setting and Service Charges Policy](#) outlines our position in respect of the rents we charge.

Policy Detail:

General Responsibilities

We shall:

- Regularly review arrangements with partners to ensure that allocation processes are working effectively and agree changes as appropriate.
- Let the majority of General Needs and Sheltered Housing properties via Local Choice Based Letting schemes.
- Hold back a proportion of our stock from choice-based lettings to use for direct transfers and temporary moves - see **Transfers** and **Temporary Moves** (below).
- Cooperate with our partner Local Authorities to assist in the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless individuals or households.
- Work with other Registered Providers and local charities to provide more supported accommodation in shared houses with scheme specific letting criteria and arrangements.
- Work with the National Probation Service to provide direct let accommodation for ex-offenders through Integrated Offender Manager Schemes and Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements.

- Support witness relocation via the National Witness Mobility Service by making direct offers of accommodation.
- Provide existing tenants with information and support relating to mutual exchanges through the House Exchange scheme and process mutual exchange requests in line with statutory requirements.
- Refuse tenancies to applicants who present a substantial risk to colleagues, the local community and our tenants.
- Confirm all our decisions, whether to proceed with an offer of a tenancy, or to refuse a nomination, clearly, in writing in a timely way.
- Provide a method of appeal (see [Appeals Policy](#)) where we have refused an allocation following a nomination.
- Remove 'hard to let' stock from choice-based lettings for direct offers, following three unsuccessful advert cycles.

Support Needs

In assessing housing applications, we will take into consideration individual and household situations, circumstances, the impacts of the current accommodation, and support needs. This will include considering:

- Anticipated level of support and/or health care needed to live independently in the accommodation.
- Suitability of the accommodation compared to the household needs including existing or potential adaptation needs.

Accessibility

We are committed to ensuring that all our current and potential customers can access our services. Whether you need to access our services in alternative ways, want to update your details to reflect a change in circumstances or need additional support, we want to help as best we can.

Examples of support we provide throughout the lettings process are:

- Supplying auxiliary aids to assist in communication (such as sign language, interpreters and Induction Loops).
- Providing information in alternative formats (e.g. large print, Braille, coloured paper, audio etc.)
- Giving extra time for you to provide information, take decisions or make arrangements.
- Sending emails or communicating via telephone in preference to hard copy letters.
- Communicating with a nominated family member or third party such as support agencies or advocates.
- Providing a named contact to work alongside you throughout the process.

We will always:

- Carry out accompanied viewings.
- Provide all new tenants with a comprehensive sign-up pack.

- Carry out post lettings visits and satisfaction surveys to monitor our service.

Customers can let us know about any additional support needed at any point during the process. We will always try and meet the needs of our customers. There may be instances where this isn't possible. When this happens, we will do our best to work with you to find another solution.

Applications for Housing

- We do not accept direct applications for housing.
- Local Choice Based Lettings Schemes advertise properties on behalf of Freebridge and administers the initial allocation of these units.
- We may complement the advertising these schemes provide through our own website, social or other appropriate media in respect of new development sites or hard to let properties.
- Prospective tenants should complete an application form for the relevant local choice-based lettings scheme, copies of which are available from our offices. These can be completed with our assistance.
- Any existing tenant wishing to move to another Freebridge property must also apply to the choice-based lettings scheme relevant to the area they live in or wish to live in.

Reviewing Nominations

Successful applicants for a Freebridge property shall be invited for a face-to-face interview to determine whether a tenancy will be granted. A successful bid does not automatically guarantee the offer of a tenancy.

Prior to an offer being made, **we shall assess** the:

- Accuracy of information received regarding the applicant(s) circumstances & household need.
- Anticipated level of support and/or health care needed to live independently in the accommodation.
- Suitability of the accommodation compared to the household needs including existing or potential adaptation needs.
- Anticipated sustainability of the tenancy.
- Potential impact on existing tenants and residents within the locality.
- Compliance with current Tenancy Agreement whether this be with Freebridge or another Private or Social Landlord i.e. breaches in relation to non-payment of rent, anti-social behaviour etc. will each be considered independent of any action the current landlord is or may be considering pursuing.

An assessment for a Freebridge property will only proceed where the applicant(s) are able to provide photographic or other government approved identification documents, and a full and evidenced declaration of their household income, benefit entitlement and expenditure.

All nominations will be dealt with in accordance with the National Housing Federation's Code of Conduct 2022, that ensures Board members, staff, involved customers and those with whom they are closely connected receive no preferential consideration for housing, over and above the housing priority determined by the relevant Local Authority.

Refusing a Nomination

We shall give consideration to refusing a nomination for an applicant from a Freebridge property in the following circumstances:

- The applicant or a member of their household are guilty of current or previous unacceptable behaviour that is likely to make them an unsuitable tenant, and where evidence cannot be provided to support that the behaviour has been corrected. Where applicants have not previously been a tenant of Freebridge unacceptable behaviour is any behaviour that Freebridge would have taken legal action against the applicant(s) or household member for, should they have occupied a Freebridge property at the time.
- If we have previously taken legal action against the applicant(s) or a member of their household for:
 - Rent arrears or another debt against the Association.
 - Damage or neglect to a property.
 - Used their home for immoral or illegal purposes or caused anti-social, and/or threatening behaviour towards neighbours, staff or contractors.
 - If they were evicted previously from a Freebridge property for any form of breach or abandoned a property after we started legal proceedings.

Where there is clear evidence that applicants have sustained a successful tenancy following a previous tenancy breach, or we are satisfied that they are taking all reasonable steps to address a former debt, we will not unduly refuse a nomination.

- If we consider that the nature and/or size of the accommodation is not suitable for the needs of the applicant(s) and/or their household (see also 'Suitability of Accommodation' and 'Ground Floor, Adapted and Sheltered Properties')
- Where we consider that the applicant(s) have unmet support needs which will likely impact on their ability to sustain the tenancy, and we are unable to secure the required support to meet these needs.
- Following a financial assessment, we have substantial concerns that the accommodation is not affordable for the applicant(s), and reasonable steps (such as but not limited to support to maximise an applicant's income) will not remedy this (see also 'Suitability of Accommodation').

If, following our assessment, the decision is not to continue with an allocation then the applicant(s) will be informed in writing of our reasons, and the right of appeal, within two working days.

Suitability of Accommodation

Each choice-based lettings scheme shall normally determine the appropriate size accommodation for each applicant(s) and their family at the point that an application is registered.

We shall:

- Assess nomination suitability (see above) and be guided by the following criteria for determining household/property size:

Property Size	Max	Household Size
Studio/1 bedroom	2	single person or couple
2 bedrooms	4	minimum 2 person or 3 if household includes a couple
3 bedrooms	5	minimum 3 person or 4 if household includes a couple
4 bedrooms	6	minimum 4 persons or 5 if household includes a couple, (with preference given to families with 5 or more children) – in which case max not applicable
5 bedrooms	10	minimum 5 persons or 6 if household includes a couple with preference given to those with more than 6 children

- Determine under occupation, which reflects the individual & specific needs of households and property types and sizes, as well as having regard to the Department for Work & Pensions Social Sector Size Criteria. We will consider any household who have one or bedrooms not regularly in use as a bedroom as being under occupied.
- Determine statutory overcrowding in accordance with Section 10 of The Housing Act 1985.
- Undertake a financial assessment with all applicants, for the purpose of determining whether the proposed accommodation is affordable, both in terms of meeting the cost of the rent, as well as longer term sustainability through consideration for all reasonable living costs and expenses necessary to maintain a property to an acceptable standard.

Provided that the financial assessment clearly demonstrates affordability, through earned income, benefit assistance, or a combination, then a tenancy shall be granted.

If the assessment clearly states that the proposed tenancy cannot be afforded, or sustained, and there is no evidence to suggest that any further income maximisation is possible, then this shall be grounds for refusal.

The existence of priority or credit debt will not prevent an offer; however, we will expect the applicant(s) to work with us in order to access budgeting and debt advice, to ensure the future sustainability of the tenancy.

When an applicant has a housing debt with another landlord, we will require evidence of a reasonable and regular repayment history in order to proceed with the nomination.

Where an applicant is unwilling or unable to provide a full and substantiated financial statement, we will not proceed to make an offer of a Tenancy.

Ground floor, Adapted and Sheltered properties

We shall:

- Review applicant(s) circumstances thoroughly at the point of nomination to ensure that a medical or social need for this type of accommodation exists and can be reasonably expected to remain so in the future.

Where an applicant(s) cannot demonstrate a current and on-going need for the accommodation, a tenancy will not be offered. We recognise that our colleagues do not have medical training, and decisions will be made subject to evidence provided exclusively by the relevant choice-based lettings scheme and/or recognised medical professionals.

Sheltered Housing Applicants

To be eligible for our sheltered accommodation, all applicants (and members of their household) will need to meet the following criteria:

- 55 years old or more with a proven medical need for sheltered accommodation.
- 60 years or more.

Where there is a proven medical or social need for sheltered accommodation but the age criteria is not met, we will take a flexible approach to determine whether an application may be permitted.

Appeals

Each application will be considered individually, and in accordance with the criteria outlined. Provided that the applicant(s) has been correctly permitted to join the local housing register and nominated in accordance with the Local Authority's Allocations Policy, Freebridge will consider any application in more detail, including any further supporting evidence the applicant(s) may have, at that time.

All applicants refused an offer of a tenancy following a correct nomination from a choice-based lettings scheme may appeal the decision via our Appeals process.

Local Lettings Plans

From time to time, such as with new developments or in areas with specific challenges such as anti-social behaviour etc., we may find it necessary to restrict the criteria for applicants for certain accommodation to support our aim to build balanced and sustainable communities.

When considering a Local Lettings Plan, we will work with the choice-based lettings scheme to ensure that applicants are not unreasonably & disproportionately (in relation to the purpose or need for the restriction), disadvantaged.

Transfers

We do not hold a separate transfer list. All of our existing tenants may only apply to transfer to another Freebridge property through the relevant local choice-based lettings scheme.

As with prospective new tenants, if a nomination is received then an interview will be carried out to determine whether an allocation will be made.

A move from one Freebridge home to another, will usually only be permitted if there is:

- No current breach of the existing tenancy agreement; or
- Outstanding housing related debt on any current or previous tenancy; and
- Subject to the condition of the existing property being inspected prior to the transfer being agreed.

However, where the health or wellbeing of an applicant(s) or their family, or their ability to maintain their current tenancy is being jeopardised by their current housing, additional consideration will be given as to whether it is reasonable to refuse a transfer because of existing tenancy breaches including, but not limited to, where rent arrears accrue as a result of the existing accommodation being demonstrably too expensive for the tenant(s).

Where a transfer is permitted with arrears outstanding, the arrears shall form part of the new tenancy agreement.

Direct Transfer:

In a limited number of extreme circumstances, to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of a tenant(s) and/or their household, we may be required to make a direct transfer offer. The circumstances in which this might be considered typically include where there are substantial repairs required to a property which can not be carried out with the household in situ, or where severe hazards exist in the home that cannot be immediately remedied or mitigated in some way.

We will also work closely with the relevant choice-based lettings scheme to ensure that those requiring an urgent, but not immediate move, be supported to access this via the Emergency priority provision within the scheme.

All other customers wishing to move to another Freebridge property must access the relevant choice-based lettings scheme.

Temporary Moves

If it is necessary to carry out improvements or repairs, including in respect of structural defects, or adaptation works to a property that cannot be safely completed with the tenant in occupation, we will also make available stock to offer as a temporary relocation in accordance with our Moving Out Policy.

Temporary Accommodation

We will cooperate with the Local Authority to assist them with fulfilling their statutory duties in relation to homelessness, by providing temporary accommodation subject to our own assessment of those nominated.

We may not accept nominations for temporary accommodation for those evicted from a Freebridge property in the last 12 months, or those proven to have perpetrated anti-social behaviour at a previous address which caused the loss of a tenancy, and are unable to provide evidence of having successfully maintained a tenancy since this time.

Shared Houses

We will work with the Local Authority and other charitable organisations to provide and manage shared houses to target specific housing needs in the area.

Criteria for eligibility for shared accommodation will be defined within scheme specific service level agreements.

Succession & Assignment

In the event of the death of a tenant, we will work closely with the Local Authority to ensure the housing needs of the remaining household are met as far as possible.

For tenancies commencing prior to 1 April 2012, **regardless of the wording of the tenancy agreement**, a Statutory (or automatic) Successor can only be a Spouse, Partner, Civil Partner or adult living with the tenant as such prior to their death.

For tenancies commencing after 1 April 2012, anyone listed in the tenancy agreement as a Successor will have the automatic right to succeed provided that they meet the criteria as set out exactly.

There will only be one succession to each tenancy.

For all joint tenancies, when one tenant dies the tenancy automatically passes to the living tenant by a process called Survivorship, which also counts as the one and only Statutory Succession.

If a succession ('passing on') of the tenancy has already occurred, or that someone other than a Statutory Successor wishes to remain in the property, the granting of a new tenancy will be considered at our discretion. Depending on the makeup of the remaining household and their specific housing needs, we may also instead offer a tenancy at an alternative property.

All of our Assured & Assured shorthold (except from Starter) Tenants can also choose to assign or 'pass on' their Tenancy at any time to a member of their household who would have qualified as a Statutory Successor in the event of their death, and provided that certain conditions are met including:

- No current breach of the Tenancy Agreement which has resulted in legal action i.e. Notice of Seeking Possession or subsequent Possession Proceedings.
- It would not result in over or under occupation.
- The Accommodation is not adapted or provided for a specific group of people (i.e. sheltered housing etc.).

An assignment will be considered as a 'Living Succession' meaning that no further Statutory Succession can happen. This includes where one joint tenant assigns the tenancy to the remaining tenant, such as in the event of a relationship breakdown etc.

In situations where a joint tenant gives notice to end a tenancy against the will of the remaining tenant, we may use our discretion to offer a new tenancy to the remaining tenant.

When we use our discretion to refuse to grant a new tenancy then the decision can be appealed via our Appeals process.

Tenancy Amendments

We recognise that our tenants' circumstances change, and that during a tenancy some tenants may wish to reflect this by making changes to their tenancy agreement.

For 'lifetime' (assured periodic) tenants, a joint tenant can be removed, on agreement of both tenants, through the assignment of the tenancy – however this will mean that no further assignment or succession will be allowed.

Alternatively, a partner or civil partner can be added to the tenancy as a joint tenant, provided that no previous assignment or succession has occurred.

For Fixed Term (Assured shorthold non-periodic) tenants, a joint tenant can be removed, on agreement of both tenants, through the assignment of the remainder of the fixed term. This will also mean that no further assignment or succession will be allowed.

A partner or civil partner will only be added to a fixed term tenancy on the granting of a further fixed term.

Mutual Exchange

Most of our tenants have the right to 'mutually exchange' or swap their tenancy with another assured or secure tenant. The method by which the exchange will occur will depend on the nature of the tenancy agreements either party holds, in accordance with the relevant legislation.

As with new tenancies, we will carry out an assessment of each exchange application.

Where a financial statement supports affordability, we will allow an exchange to occur where a household would be moving into a property with a maximum of one more bedroom than the property they currently occupy and/or is required by the household.

For an exchange to be permitted, the following conditions must be met:

- No current breach of the Tenancy Agreement which has resulted in legal action i.e. Notice of Seeking Possession or subsequent Possession Proceedings.
- The exchange would not result in over or under occupation.
- The Accommodation is not adapted or provided for a specific group of people.

There should normally be no current breaches of tenancy. However, where rent arrears have accrued because of the existing accommodation being demonstrably too expensive for the tenant(s) then further consideration will be given and a decision made on the balance of information provided. Where an exchange is permitted in these circumstances, an agreement will be entered into with regards to any arrears outstanding that are owed to Freebridge.

An inspection of the condition of the current property will also be required prior to an exchange being permitted.

All tenants exchanging properties will be expected to bear the full associated costs, including any statutory inspections that Freebridge are required to make, and will accept the property 'as seen', except for any necessary priority repairs.

Tenancy Fraud

We are committed to ensuring that our properties are available to those who are eligible and in housing need.

We will be vigilant to indications of tenancy fraud and provide our staff with training and robust procedures to tackle concerns. We will also work closely with the Local Authority to use the provisions of the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 to take appropriate and robust action against those believed to be committing the criminal offence of subletting.

We will provide clear information regarding the requirements of the tenancy agreement to all new tenants, and no Tenancy will be offered to a nominee unless photographic or other government approved form of identification can be produced.