



Halton
Housing

Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy provides the framework to enable Halton Housing (HH) customers to move from one of its properties to another.
- 1.2 This HH policy will meet the statutory and regulatory requirements whilst recognising that enabling customers to move home within its own properties encourages mobility, helps create sustainable communities and makes best use of our housing stock.
- 1.3 However, it is also important to recognise that our existing customers also have a duty to take reasonable care of their property and vacate a HH property that is in good and lettable condition, in order to minimise the financial and other resource impact on HH.
- 1.4 Transfer requests are initially processed through the Property Pool Plus (PPP) Allocations Policy which Halton Housing initially adopted in March 2012. This complies with the legislation that governs movement of customers within the social rented sector and captures those with and without housing needs. For those who fall into the “housing need” category of what is termed “reasonable preference”, categories are assessed and placed into 2 main bands: A and B.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 HH aims to meet housing needs of current customers and will continue to process requests for transfers. Our approach will focus on existing customers with the greatest housing need for a transfer, ensuring there is a balance in the needs for housing of both existing customers and new applicants with a fair and consistent approach; whilst also identifying instances whereby it will bypass existing customers who have applied/bid on properties through the PPP allocations scheme.
- 2.2 The aim of this policy is to ensure consistency of approach to all customers transferring or exchanging from their existing homes.
- 2.3 Consideration needs to be given for increased costs in carrying out relevant gas and electric tests at the time a property becomes re-let. Again, costs associated with the legally required gas and electric tests also apply to Mutual Exchanges and a charge may be levied to the customer for this enforced requirement in the future.

Applying the Policy

- 2.4 HH customers can apply for a transfer through one of the routes listed below. However, most transfers will be accessed through the PPP process:

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- Property Pool Plus Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme
 - High Priority Panel Review – which is undertaken by Managers from the Homes, Finance and Customer Experience directorates where mitigating/extenuating circumstances are considered and require a management decision on whether an urgent move is required
- 2.5 Customers can apply for Mutual Exchanges, which are subject to a separate Policy, utilising HH's Mutual Exchange Application:
- HomeSwapper
- 2.6 HH recognises that customers' circumstances change over time, and this may result in a need to move home. This transfer policy is designed to allow flexibility, recognising that not all properties are high in demand and ensures that it maximises the efficient and effective use of stock.
- 2.7 Halton Housing strive to maximise the use of its properties and meet the housing needs of our customers. This will be done by:-
- Ensuring customers who have been transferred under the HH's PPP Policy have lived in their existing property for more than 12 months before they can be considered for any further transfers.
 - Ensuring that transferring customers have agreed and completed the actions required of them through the pre-transfer inspection process. This will include any defects that relate to minor outstanding day to day repairs being processed, and that any damage arising from customer abuse/neglect is completed or payment made and works agreed under the Charges to Customers Policy.
 - Ensuring that rent and housing related debts are not transferred and are fully paid in advance of any move.
 - Ensuring that affordability and past payment history is considered prior to any move being agreed.
 - Limit the number of transfers to those who fall into the top two priority bandings of A and B within the PPP Policy 2023, only.
 - No like-for-like transfers to take place unless there are extenuating circumstances which require review by the HH's High Priority Panel or through the review mechanism within the PPP Policy itself.
 - Reasonable consideration will be given to address affordability issues, arrears accrual and property turnover to ensure customers are in the best position to manage their rent account and to ensure we maximise our rental income.
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- When making a transfer assessment, confirmation will be required that the transferring customer(s) have conducted their current tenancy in an acceptable and appropriate manner. When deciding whether a customer will be offered an alternative tenancy HH will refer back 12 months to ascertain the tenancy conduct of our customer(s).
 - When deciding whether the customer(s) will be offered an alternative tenancy, a balanced view of the customer's tenancy conduct, and needs will be determined against the behaviours for the previous 12 months.
 - HH reserve the right to refuse a transfer if there is evidence that previous behaviours make a transfer unsuitable.

2.8 The Director of Customer Experience is primarily responsible for ensuring the implementation of this policy.

3. Regulatory and/or Legal Compliance

The Framework for Housing Associations

- 3.1 Housing Associations are not normally subject to the same statutory regulation as Local Housing authorities under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, in relation to the allocation of housing stock. The exceptions to this are where a housing association is operating an allocation scheme:
- In partnership with a local housing authority; or
 - On behalf of a local housing authority as Halton Housing does now

Regulatory Compliance

- 3.2 The application of this Policy ensures compliance with the outcomes of the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, responsibility of the Regulator of Social Housing which states that: '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:
- Make the best use of available housing
 - Are compatible with the purpose of the housing
 - Contribute to local authorities' strategic housing function and sustainable Communities
 - There should be clear application, decision-making and appeals process
 - Registered providers shall enable their tenants to gain access to opportunities to exchange their tenancy with that of another tenant, by way of internet-based mutual exchange services'

3.3 HH will look to meet these regulatory requirements by the effective implementation of this policy.

Legal Compliance

3.4 Currently HH operates under the PPP Allocations Policy, the scheme used for determining priority between applicants which includes the following clause which allows HH flexibility at point of allocation. This policy supports the procedures used by HH when making decisions at point of application for transfer, assessment and subsequent allocation.

3.5 This policy also ensures the HH complies with the following relevant legislation:

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Housing Acts 1995, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
- Localism Act 2011
- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- The General Data Protection Regulations 2018
- The Housing (Preservation of Right To Buy) Regulations 1993
- The Housing and Planning Act 2016
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Social Housing Act 2023

4. Diversity Considerations

4.1 Following completion of the Equality Impact Screening Checklist this confirms that an EIA Stage 2 assessment is not required.

5. Links to Strategies, Policies and Associated Documents

5.1 This policy supports the Customer Ambition in our Corporate Plan

5.2 Associated policy documents and procedures:

- Void Repairs Policy
- Void Optimisation Policy
- Property Pool Plus Allocations Policy & Procedure
- Tenancy Policy

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- Charges to Customers Policy
 - Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
 - Succession Policy
 - Property and Asset Appraisal Policy
 - Aids and Adaptations Policy
 - Assignment and Mutual Exchange Policy
 - Environmental Open Spaces Policy
 - Abandoned Property Procedure
 - Local Lettings Framework Procedure
 - Tenancy Sustainability Briefing Note
 - Affordability Policy
 - Assisted Furniture Scheme Policy
 - Lettings Policy



Translations available on request by phoning 0303 333 0101 or
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