

Who this policy is for

This policy is for anyone thinking of applying for housing with Wyedean Housing Association.

Introduction

We aim to meet genuine housing need while building balanced and successful communities. To do this we:

- promote access to housing by helping people in need become housing ready
- let our properties promptly, taking care to match the right person to the right property
- let to people who can afford to sustain their tenancy and live successfully with us

Our regulatory requirements

Social landlords must:

- let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way
- have a clear application, decision-making and appeals process
- consider the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants.

They must also demonstrate how their lettings:

- make the best use of available housing
- are compatible with the purpose of the housing
- contribute to sustainable communities and local authorities' strategic housing function

Who we let homes to

WHA is a registered landlord with charitable objectives and a member of the Gloucestershire Homeseeker Plus Partnership (GHPP). When we consider applications for housing we follow the GHPP's principles and the county-wide choice-based lettings (CBL) scheme.

We let our homes to:

- single people, couples and families who may have trouble renting in the private sector or owning their own home
- people who are vulnerable or disabled
- individuals and families who need help to manage their tenancies due to their lifestyle, health and well-being
- people with indefinite leave to remain in the UK, who have the appropriate immigration checks and verification from the local authority

We let our homes according to household size in line with criteria set by the GHPP. However, in exceptional cases we will consider under-occupation, where the applicant passes our affordability checks.



People under 18 years of age

We'll consider applications for an equitable tenancy from people under 18 years of age who are unable to hold an interest in land or a tenancy.

Until they reach the age of 18 they will need to have:

- a named trustee
- a rent guarantor
- support from a parent, guardian, or social services.

People who need help or support

We'll consider applications from people over 55 years of age who need sheltered accommodation and support from our Independent Living Service.

For people under 55 years of age who have an assessed medical or mobility need, we'll consider whether sheltered accommodation would be suitable on a case-by-case basis. This will include an occupational therapy assessment and approval by the Independent Living Team Leader or Supported Housing Manager.

When we've received an application

We ask applicants for housing to respond to communication from us within 48 hours. This includes requests for information to verify their identity, to confirm their personal circumstances or to complete affordability checks. We may send these requests by telephone, email, SMS text message, voicemail or letter.

If we don't hear from an applicant within 48 hours, unless there are clear and reasonable grounds why they were unable to respond, we'll immediately move on to the next applicant.

If an applicant can't make an appointment they have with us for a pre-tenancy interview or to view a property, and they don't let us know beforehand, we'll immediately move on to the next applicant.

When a property is ready to be let, we'll let the applicant who's at the top of the list know. If they don't respond to us within 24 hours, we'll immediately move on to the next applicant. We'll take the original applicant's non-response to mean they don't want to be considered for that particular property, not as a formal refusal of any WHA property.

New tenancies

We offer all our new tenancies as a Starter Tenancy (Assured Shorthold) for the first 12 months.

We expect applicants to pay at least 1 week's rent before their tenancy starts. Residents pay their rent, support and service charges weekly.



Flexibility

Our lettings policy gives us flexibility to decide on the type of tenancy we'll offer. This is covered in more detail in our Tenancy Policy, including the option to offer lifetime tenancies. We use this flexibility to build strong, sustainable and cohesive communities.

Tenants who have a lifetime tenancy can keep it if they transfer, exchange or are moved to alternative accommodation. However, this protection does not cover the cost of the rent, which may change and will be set at a social or affordable price.

Housing ready

We want our residents to have a secure tenancy and enjoy living in a sustainable community.

To help this happen, we complete a confidential pre-tenancy report and affordability and financial assessment with all applicants. We do this so we can:

- confirm the applicant is who they say they are
- understand the financial situation of an applicant or an existing tenant who wants to move
- identify if an applicant needs support and what the most effective support may be
- understand any risk, such as previous non-payment of rent or service charges.

We may need a reference from a previous landlord before we can offer a home to applicants who are not existing WHA residents.

If the assessment identified a high level of risk, we may carry out a more indepth financial health check so we can get a better understanding of an applicants income and expenditure.

Where we know an applicant needs support, we'll complete a risk assessment to help us create a support plan. We expect residents who have a support plan in place to demonstrate on-going engagement with their support provider.

Priority and access to housing

We allow the council to make nominations into 75% of our homes which are available for letting. We allocate the remaining 25% of our homes via an internal management move or direct let.

We don't have an internal transfer register but do advise residents to register on the CBL scheme. We accept this means that sometimes existing residents will be given additional priority over new applicants.

In some circumstances, and in accordance with section 40 of the GHPP Policy 2022, we may exercise our right to allocate our homes outside of the GHPP policy. These circumstances include:

- local letting plans
- direct matches



- management moves.

We will do this to:

- tackle anti-social behaviour
- create sustainable communities
- reduce financial hardship
- help applicants access training and employment
- protect applicants who are at serious risk of injury
- make best use of our homes
- allow our homes to be refurbished or redeveloped, and
- help local authorities meet their legal obligations.

Local letting plans

A local letting plan is an agreement between the local authority and a housing provider. It decides how properties will be allocated or marketed in certain defined geographical areas.

Local lettings plans are commonly used to meet specific issues within an area or to create a balanced and flourishing community.

We may set up a local letting plan for:

- new developments
- existing areas where there are known problems such as anti-social behaviour or abandoned properties, or where it means we can make more effective use of homes in the area.

To ensure we make a responsible letting, the plan will consider the needs of the current and new residents and the make-up of either:

- the new development and the surrounding area, or
- the existing block, street, or cluster of streets.

We regularly review our local letting plans with the local authority.

Direct matches

Sometimes we won't make a property available through the GHPP. This is known as a direct match.

Direct matches include, for example:

- homeless allocations
- properties let to discharge the local authority's statutory duties
- moves under the Rent (Agriculture) Act
- extra-care vacancies and supported accommodation where an applicant needs a specific property
- targeted housing support as part of a multi-agency approach
- a property that has been adapted to meet an applicant's specific needs.

Management moves

Where there's an overriding reason to move a household for safety or welfare reasons as recommended by



the police, a partner organisation, or multi-agency panel, we'll let a property without advertising it with the GHPP.

As these cases are often complex and need an urgent response, we help the applicants present to the local authority. This means they get statutory housing advice, and options which could include a support package or immediate temporary accommodation.

We'll normally make one reasonable offer of alternative accommodation on management grounds. We prioritise these cases by the date when the management move report was approved.

Successions or left-in-occupation moves

These moves happen when applicants need alternative accommodation after they've succeeded to a tenancy or been left in occupation due to a relationship breakdown or death of a family member.

Major works

Major works moves happen when we need properties for existing tenants who have to leave their own property while major repair or regeneration works are carried out. (There's more information on this in our Decant Policy.)

Making best use of housing stock

These moves happen when, for example, a couple who were living in a 3-bedroom property move into a smaller property so we can accommodate a family in housing need.

Welfare reform

These moves happen when welfare reforms such as the removal of the spare room subsidy (referred to as the bedroom tax) mean residents can no longer afford their property and need to move to a smaller one they can afford.

We'll also consider welfare reform moves for residents whose income reduced after they were moved onto Universal Credit.

We won't normally consider welfare reform moves for existing residents who have outstanding rent arrears or owe us sundry debts (such as court costs or recharges), or who are in breach of their conditions of tenancy.

Hard to let properties

Given the high demand for social housing, there's generally enough interest in our properties to ensure we can let them quickly through choice-based lettings.

However, some properties, such as bedsit accommodation, can be hard to let.

We'll consider alternative approaches to try and let these properties if:

- the property is ready to let and has been empty for more than 3 weeks
- the property has been refused more than 3 times



- there are suitable applicants below 4th place on the shortlist (under Homeseeker Plus)
- there have been fewer than 3 bids on the shortlist (under Homeseeker Plus)
- vacancies have been through more than one bidding cycle (under Homeseeker Plus)
- a property of the same size, type and location has proved difficult to let.

How we deal with hard to let properties

To try and let hard to let properties we'll:

- allow a group viewing
- consider a management move
- ask the local authority to provide a direct match
- advertise the property on our website and social media to try and attract direct applicants
- advertise the property using Homeswapper and other social housing schemes that promote geographical mobility
- advertise the property on Rightmove or other property websites.

Group viewings

Group viewings provide flexibility and help us relet properties quickly. We'll only use them when we get down to the 5th applicant on the CBL shortlist or when we meet one of the other hard to let criteria.

We'll use SMS text message or email to invite applicants on the shortlist to attend a group viewing. This invitation is not a formal offer of rehousing.

If more than one applicant is interested in the property after the group viewing, we'll allocate it based on the Homeseeker Plus shortlist. We'll invite the highest-placed applicant for a pre-tenancy interview and will only make a formal offer of housing when they've passed the pre-tenancy diligence checks.

When and why we may refuse an application for housing

We may refuse an application for housing if:

- the applicant can afford to buy their own home
- the applicant is a homeowner and does not have a medical or support need that means they have to sell their home and move into affordable housing
- within the last 3 years, the applicant, or a member of their household, has been responsible for anti-social behaviour which led to a formal intervention by WHA, the police, or another organisation
- the applicant has caused anti-social behaviour during a previous tenancy with WHA or another provider
- within the last 5 years, the applicant, or a member of their household, has had a criminal conviction that resulted in a custodial sentence of more than 12 months and where the nature of the offence would create a risk
- the applicant is the subject of a multi-agency public protection arrangement (MAPPA) or is a high-risk prolific offender who has not been subject to an appropriate multi-agency referral and risk assessment
- the applicant is known to be a victim of domestic abuse or exploitation and would be at risk if they



- moved into the neighbourhood, unless partner agencies have assurances and safeguards in place and the applicant feels safe
- the applicant or a member of their household has abused, physically threatened, or used violence towards WHA staff, our contractors or representatives
 - the applicant is an existing WHA resident who has breached the terms of their tenancy due to willful damage, misuse or neglect of their current property
 - a reference from the applicant's previous landlord includes condition of property concerns or significant damage because of misuse, vandalism, or neglect
 - the applicant doesn't have the necessary support in place to meet their needs
 - welfare reforms such as the Local Housing Allowance Cap mean the applicant couldn't afford the rent
 - the applicant has more than £250 in debts or rent arrears with another landlord which they are not repaying
 - the applicant's income is not enough for them to be able to pay the rent or run a home
 - the applicant needs support to sustain their tenancy but is unwilling to engage with the support providers, unless following a review one of the support providers can confirm that that the applicant has routinely engaged with them for at least 2 months
 - the applicant has a medical need for adaptations which the occupational therapist says are not suitable for the property in question due to technical, spatial or construction constraints or because the benefits would be too low to justify the cost
 - the applicant gave a false statement or knowingly withheld information during the pre-tenancy sustainment interview or made a fraudulent application for housing
 - the applicant has been convicted of using a previous property for illegal purposes
 - the applicant has been unable to conduct a previous tenancy satisfactorily.

Applicants who owe money to WHA

If an applicant owes us money, we'll only consider them for rehousing when they've cleared their arrears in full, including all sundry debts such as recharges and court costs. This applies across all our housing stock.

When considering an application for rehousing, we'll take into account all debts owed or previously owed to us, including any that have been written off or incorporated into an insolvency order. We would only consider a discretionary move in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the housing services manager. Any arrears would be written into the tenancy agreement.

Applicants who have previously been evicted from WHA housing

If we've evicted one of our residents because of rent arrears or anti-social behaviour, they'll be excluded from applying for rehousing with us for 2 years. If they apply for rehousing after 2 years, we'll review their application based on risk.

At the review, all money due to us, including recharges, arrears, and court costs, will have to have been paid. We'll also need confirmation that the anti-social behaviour issues have been fully addressed. We'll refer these applicants to the local authority for housing options and advice.



Applicants who are refused housing

When we refuse an application for housing, we'll let the applicant know and clearly explain the reasons for our decision. Where appropriate, we'll also tell the applicant when they can reapply.

We'll tell the applicant what they need to do or have in place for us to consider an application for housing in the future.

Applicants who are not happy with our decision can appeal ([see the Appeals section below](#)).

Appeals

Any applicant who is not satisfied with our decision to refuse a tenancy can appeal. They must do this in writing and within 1 week of the decision being made. The appeal will be considered by a manager who wasn't involved in the original decision. We will not hold the vacant property empty while waiting for the outcome of the appeal.

If the appeal is not upheld and the applicant remains dissatisfied, we'll consider a further appeal under our complaints policy.

Appeals against decisions made through GHPP will be dealt with under their review and appeals process.

Find out more

For help applying for a home through GHPP and to see their policies, please go to www.gloshomeseeker.co.uk

