

Allocations Policy

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1. Policy information

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Drafted by	Neighbourhood & Community Safety Manager
Contributors	Colleagues, Customers and Applicants
Responsible Director	Executive Director of Operations
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2. Policy Statement

This policy details South Liverpool Homes (SLH) approach to the effective allocation of its homes from the application process through to the tenancy offered to new tenants and should be read and applied with SLH's objectives as a charitable organisation.

The policy is designed to comply with our legal and regulatory responsibilities and to contribute to the delivery of our strategic approach to providing decent homes, supporting vulnerable households, promoting balanced communities and having a firm approach to those tenants who do not embrace the responsibilities in their tenancy agreement.

The policy details how we will respond to local and community needs by making best use of our homes. SLH allocate all homes solely through its own waiting list using a priority system which was developed using current and potential tenants' feedback (Appendix B). The SLH priority system is simple and is designed to offer choice and to help those in most housing need. This approach is ensuring the right tenant is matched to the right home in the right neighbourhood in the most efficient way.

Through this policy SLH will also support the local economy and community by providing housing priority for those on low incomes and those contributing to the area through volunteering work.

In 2014 following consultation with our customers SLH Board decided to leave Property Pool Plus (PPP) and operate our own allocation policy and waiting list. This decision was made after considering feedback from customers that PPP created confusion with applicants regarding the operation of two housing allocation schemes along with the length of time it took for properties to be allocated via PPP compared to SLH's own housing allocation scheme. In September 2023 Board reviewed the decision to remain independent to PPP and agreed to continue to remain independent subject to board review.

3. Policy Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Deal with all applicants fairly by complying with this policy
- Respond to local housing and community needs by making best use of homes, reducing the number that become empty by ensuring lettings support the sustainability of communities
- Make effective use of local lettings plans to ensure we respond effectively in neighbourhood issues such as anti-social behaviour (ASB)
- Reduce overcrowding conditions for SLH tenants and support tenants under occupying their homes
- Support the development of new homes through the use of affordable rents
- Offer the most appropriate form of tenure in compliance with the tenancy standard
- Comply with our legal and regulatory responsibilities
- Support the Local Authorities Strategic Homeless Reduction Strategy and Housing First project.
- Provide internal transfer applicants with no housing priority suitable alternatives such as mutual exchange or home ownership opportunities

- Support disabled tenants whose homes cannot be adapted with aids and adaptations

4. Allocations Policy

4.1 Applying for an SLH home

Applications can be made online, in person and over the telephone.

Applications are welcomed from those who are over 16 years old. Whilst SLH will not normally offer a tenancy to those under 18 years old, there are circumstances where applicants under 18 may be offered a home if we are satisfied that the necessary support mechanisms are in place to sustain the tenancy. A person cannot legally hold a tenancy until they are 18 years old. Any tenancy granted to a 16 or 17 year olds will be an equitable tenancy held in trust. This means that a Guardian or Guarantor will need to sign for the tenancy and hold that tenancy on behalf of the young person until they reach 18 years of age.

All applicants will be eligible to apply for a home if they **normally live in the UK** and:

- Are a UK citizen
- Are a citizen of an EEA member state living in the UK
- They have applied to join the EEA settlement scheme.
- Have leave to remain in the UK and currently live in the UK
- Have the right to rent under the Immigration Act 2014

As a charity, SLH is only able to grant a tenancy to applicants who fulfil necessary charitable criteria. This means, in general terms, that SLH will grant a tenancy only to those whose need cannot be met by the local housing market. SLH will assess an applicant's status for this purpose on the basis of the information provided on the application form. Applicants or joint applicants who own a property will be required to provide evidence that their current home is for sale without remaining occupants. Home owners cannot secure a tenancy with SLH and sublet their existing home, SLH will avoid allocating social housing to people who already own their own homes unless there are extenuating circumstances; examples include:

- Survivors of domestic abuse
- Where the home is worth less than the value of the mortgage – negative equity
- Where a disabled person cannot adapt their home to meet their needs; and is unable to purchase a suitable property from the local housing market

Applicants with an ownership stake in a property will be expected to actively market their property for sale once they are offered a tenancy with us with an expectation that the owned property would be sold within 12 months of accepting the tenancy.

If an applicant has savings in excess of £16000 they will generally not be considered for an SLH home.

Applicants who are offenders or ex-offenders are required to declare convictions which are not spent. A spent conviction is when the rehabilitation period has expired.

The existence of criminal convictions will not automatically lead to a disqualification unless the conviction is because of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant. It may however prevent offers being made in certain areas subject to local lettings.

The meaning of unacceptable behaviour for the purpose of this Policy will encompass a past action or activity on the part of a person, but will also include an omission, failure to act, passivity or inactivity. A person will be considered unsuitable to be a tenant if there has been no improvement in their behaviour since the unsuitable behaviour occurred, to the date when a decision is made about their application and/or when an allocation of social rented housing is due to be made. Therefore, no minimum or maximum timescales will be applicable, rather the former and current behaviour of the applicant will be considered.

Unacceptable behaviour includes :

- Causing nuisance or annoyance to other persons in the locality of their property
- Causing nuisance or annoyance to SLH or agents acting on its behalf to carry out housing management functions
- Perpetrators of domestic abuse who are subject to a non-molestation order, an injunction order, an occupation order or a restraining order, which is in force at the date an application is being determined
- Perpetrators of hate related behaviour
- Having an unspent conviction at the date an application for a serious offence as defined by the Serious Crime Act 2007, Part 1, Schedule 1, committed in the locality of a property against another person or SLH
- Breaching a provision of an injunction under section 1, conviction under section 30, or an order made under section 80 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, which occurred in the locality of a specified property or elsewhere which caused nuisance, annoyance, harassment, alarm or distress to a person in the locality or SLH, or resulted in access to property that has been prohibited under section 76 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, for a continuous period of more than 48 hours
- Having an unspent conviction for an offence under section 80(4) or 82(8) Environmental Protection Act 1990, concerning noise from a property which was a statutory nuisance as per section 79(1), Part 3 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Having committed an act of fraud to which the circumstances remain relevant at the date an application is being determined, involving withholding, falsifying or misrepresenting any information to access to SLH funds and/or services
- Having committed any other behaviour that would give grounds for possession under Housing Act 1985, section 84, Schedule 2, Part 1, Grounds 1-7 and section 84A. This includes an applicant being responsible for:
 - Non-payment of rent or other breach of tenancy conditions as outlined within the tenancy agreement
 - Causing nuisance or annoyance to other; people living, visiting or carrying out lawful activities in the locality of their home, and/or employees of SLH , or people employed by other organisations, to carry out housing management functions for the Housing Association
 - Causing an offence, or another adult residing with them, for which they were convicted for, which took place during and at the scene of a riot

- Causing violence or threats of violence towards another person or their family members, who were living at the same property as the applicant, which resulted in them leaving and being unlikely to return the property
- Allowing acts of waste or neglect of their property or common parts of a building in which their property is situated, or failing take reasonable steps to stop any person residing with them to cause acts of waste or neglect to the property
- Allowing furniture, provided by SLH for use as part of their tenancy, or for use in common parts, to deteriorate due to ill-treatment, and in a circumstance where a lodger has caused the ill-treatment, not taking reasonable steps to evict that lodger
- Being granted a tenancy as a result of deliberately and rashly making a false statement, made by themselves or another person at their prompting

Applicants are required to provide current information to confirm their circumstances and those of all members named on the application who are proposing to move with the applicant. Failure to do so will lead to the application being rejected and therefore preventing the applicant from being allocated an SLH home. Examples of information an applicant needs to provide are :

- Passport, to help determine right to rent social housing in England
- A utility or Council Tax bill from the past three months, to help determine right to rent social housing in England
- Birth certificate, to help with age specific criteria
- National Insurance number
- Details of any relevant unspent convictions
- All financial records from the past three months relating to income and savings, to help determine whether an applicant's savings and assets would allow them to secure accommodation from the commercial housing market at or above market rates
- All legal records relating to property ownership to help determine to help determine whether an applicant's savings and assets would allow them to secure accommodation from the commercial housing market at or above market rates

Applicants are asked to declare that all the information they have provided is correct as it is a criminal offence to provide false information or deliberately withhold information to support an application. Where false information has been supplied, SLH may suspend or reject the application for misrepresentation, or if the misrepresentation comes to light once a tenancy has begun, steps may be taken to end the tenancy. Instances of misrepresentation may be reported to the Police.

SLH may ask an applicant to provide written consent to share information with credit reference agencies, the Police, or other agencies, in order to confirm an applicant's previous addresses or confirm their financial situation so it can be understood as to whether the applicant is likely to be able to sustain their tenancy. Should the applicant choose to withhold permission, it might not be possible to progress with their application. If an applicant believes SLH has failed to fulfil its obligations and responsibilities as set out in the Data Protection Act 2018 the contact details for the Information Commissioners Officer will be provided. An applicant also has the right to obtain a copy of SLH's Data Protection Policy.

When an application is made, all circumstances will be checked to ensure that a home with SLH is a realistic option in the applicant's circumstances. Applicants who are able to choose alternatives will have their options discussed with them. SLH may be able to support with both shared and outright ownership, and Rent to Buy options in SLH neighbourhoods as part of the ongoing development programme.

4.2 Allocation priorities

SLH adopt a priority assessment of applications which is detailed in Appendix B. This assessment is designed to ensure that SLH meet the aims of this policy whilst providing flexibility and discretion to respond to corporate and local needs. This system is supported by the number of reasonable offers that the applicant can expect to be made before their application has the priority status reduced or cancelled.

Assessment is made on the information and supporting evidence provided in the application process. It is recognised that during the life of an application, circumstances of the applicant may change. The applicant must advise SLH of the change so that the application can be reviewed. The date SLH is informed is the date which the change of circumstances will become effective.

Applicants who have been waiting more than 12 months will be subject to an annual review. SLH will contact the applicant to check up to date information and assess any changes to the application. Failure to renew an application within four weeks of the renewal, will lead to the application being cancelled. Discretion to reinstate an application will be applied where extenuating circumstances show the applicant was unable to renew their application within the four-week period. Where this is not evident, and the applicant still requires rehousing, a new application will be required.

4.3 Disqualification

SLH is committed to ensuring that responsible tenants move into its homes. To achieve this, SLH operates criteria which can disqualify, or give reduced preference to, all applicants from the waiting list for a fixed period of time as outlined in Appendix C. Thereafter the disqualification will be reviewed and potentially reinstated or removed. The purpose of this approach is to protect both SLH and others living in SLH neighbourhoods from those who we reasonably believe cannot fulfil the terms of the tenancy agreement. Appendix C details how this is managed.

Whilst current or former rent arrears have previously been seen as a reason for suspension from housing with SLH, it is accepted that there are now circumstances, due to welfare reform and the economic downturn, where applicants find themselves falling into arrears for reasons beyond their control. SLH will consider lifting a disqualification where evidence shows that circumstances beyond the applicant's reasonable control brought about the arrears. Or where there is clear evidence that the applicant has been unable to pay rather than wilfully not paying.

When a decision is taken to disqualify an applicant, they will be informed of the decision along with the reason why. SLH will also advise of any action that can be taken in order for the disqualification to be lifted. A disqualification can be appealed through SLH's Customer Feedback Policy.

Disqualifications usually apply at the point of application however should information come to light during an applicant's time on the waiting list or during the sign-up process that falls into the suspension criteria; SLH can exercise the right to disqualify the application.

4.4 Rehousing People with a Connection to Colleagues, Board Members and their Families

Through SLH's approach to employing local people and having customers on the Board, SLH receive applications from individuals and their families who are known to someone connected with SLH. SLH will accept these applications, but care will be taken that their existing connection with SLH do not unduly affect their access to housing. All connections to SLH colleagues, board members or their families **must** be declared at the point of application.

The permanent letting of accommodation to colleagues, Board Members and their close connections/ relatives (close relative definition is in line SLH Code of Conduct) will only be made in line with the SLH prioritisation system. All such applications will be admitted to SLH housing register and at the time of an offer being identified the offer will be approved by the Chair of the Board who has delegated authority, however the next Board meeting will note that the authority was exercised.

Colleagues moving into the area to take up a job with SLH or existing colleagues with an acute housing problem may be offered temporary accommodation by SLH for a limited period of up to 6 months. All temporary lettings will be approved by the SLH Executive Leadership Team. Support will be offered through the period of the temporary accommodation so that the colleague develops a long-term plan to address their housing need, this may include applying for a lifetime home with SLH.

Colleagues, who secure a home with SLH, as a condition of their tenancy, will be required to pay their rent direct from their salary.

4.5 Transfer applications

All SLH tenants have the right to apply to transfer to another home after living in their current home for 12 months or more. Only in exceptional circumstances where the move is required for new or emerging medical conditions for safety or safeguarding reasons or where emerging over occupation has occurred, (this is not a definitive list) will SLH consider accepting an application from tenancies under a year old, the remaining length of any starter period would be transferred to any new home offered.

All transfer applications will be subject to a transfer visit from SLH before being prioritised in line with this policy. During the transfer visit, SLH will discuss any breaches of tenancy that may result in the transfer being suspended or given reduced preference status with no priority assessment. We reserve the right to prevent a transfer if the property requires alterations or chargeable repairs to be put right. The criteria for this is detailed in Appendix C.

Whilst applying for a transfer remains a right for a tenant, for those that want to move, alternative options will be discussed, especially for tenants not in a housing priority. For those whose circumstances have changed and no longer have to rely on socially rented accommodation, aspirations and options will be discussed to see if home ownership could be pursued, these options do not prevent a transfer application. Mutual exchange will also be discussed as a viable option to move for transfer applicants.

Transfer cases who are at the top of the priority assessment list who are in suitable accommodation, maybe bypassed for cases where there is someone with a lesser application date but who has a greater housing need such as an underoccupancy case incurring additional costs or where there is a disability and /or medical condition. The definition of suitable accommodation would be an applicant requiring the same size property in a different area with no obvious housing need to move.

4.6 Mutual Exchange

SLH encourages mutual exchanges as this offers an alternative to traditional rehousing applications. It also reduces costs associated with empty home management and maintenance. SLH is a member of Homeswapper to assist tenants to move to other areas.

SLH's Tenancy Management Policy details the approach to mutual exchanges.

4.7 Offers of a New Home

SLH will use the priority assessment criteria to make an offer of a home to the person on the waiting list most in need, this will normally be the applicant interested in the area with the longest waiting date. Applicants, who are not SLH tenants, who are eligible to receive an offer will have a rent ready contact completed before they receive the offer. The rent ready visit ensures the applicant is ready to move, confirms the application details remain the same and ensure the applicant is aware they need to pay their rent in advance of their payment cycle. Through this policy, SLH reserve the right to apply discretion to allocate outside of the assessment priority for example to meet nomination requirements with the local authority, homeless charities or from Housing First nominations and to respond to emergencies.

All applicants could have three offers made to them. Those with the highest priority assessment (3 years added) will only receive one offer with that application date. Should that offer be refused, their application date will be reduced by one year and only two subsequent offers will be made.

SLH will define a reasonable offer as a home that will meets the housing need of an applicant, having had regard to the following matters:

- Whether the applicant and their household would be overcrowded or under-occupying. As a general rule, allocations will be made so that a property is fully occupied. If this is not possible, under-occupation will be considered, subject to an affordability assessment
- Affordability of the property when compared to the applicants' income and expenditure
- Location of the property in regard to essential journeys the applicants needs to make
- Public sector equality duty in Equality Act 2010, section 149
- When there is a child or children in the applicant's household, the ability to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- In respect of school-age children, the duty in the Human Rights Act 1989, that no person should be denied the right to an education (Notwithstanding this, an offer of accommodation might necessitate a child having to move school)
- Space and arrangement of the property
- The standard of property
- The specific health needs of the applicant their usual household members
- The proximity and accessibility of necessary family support
- The proximity and accessibility of medical facilities and other support services which are currently used by or provided to the applicant or the usual family members that are essential to that persons' wellbeing
- The proximity of alleged perpetrators and/or victims of domestic abuse

If an applicant requires adaptations and is offered a home that is subsequently deemed to be unable to be adapted to meet the applicants needs this will not be deemed as a refusal.

SLH will normally cancel the application of any applicant who has refused three offers, exceptions being if SLH is clear there have been exceptional circumstances which led to the refusal of the three offers.

The applicant has the right to seek a review whether an offer they refused was a reasonable offer, or whether the final offer refused was a suitable offer. If the applicant still remains unhappy with the decision they have the right to seek a judicial review of the decision.

Where an application is cancelled, the applicant will be able to re-apply for a home, but their new application date will be used and no link to their previous application date will be honoured.

If an applicant considers there has been unlawful discrimination or infringement of a human rights by SLH when making the decision to allocate a home the applicant has the right to seek assistance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

5. Management Lets

In certain circumstances SLH may allocate directly to applicants outside of the current waiting list in accordance with this policy.

Through exceptional circumstances or management let, SLH may deem it necessary to act outside of this policy to assist Liverpool City Council LCC in dealing with these events, for example; a fire, flood or any other major disaster incident.

Management lets are also referred to as exceptional circumstances requests.

Examples of management lets / exceptional circumstances are as follows but the list is not exhaustive:

- Where an allocation is required following a multi-agency meeting which has identified a need for urgent rehousing
- Where a customer has been referred as part of the Witness Protection Scheme
- Where a sensitive let is required for a particular home due to issues such as drug dealing, violence, public protection or anti-social behaviour
- Request from another landlord to support rehousing where a tenant needs to be moved temporary due to repairs, fire or flood.
- Where a targeted offer is made to an application for an adapted property following an assessment by Social Services and Occupational Therapy
- If an SLH home has been repaired and ready to let and refused three times a direct match can be made outside of the normal waiting list
- In extreme cases of vulnerability where a sensitive let is required i.e. homelessness, severe mental health or in serious safeguarding cases
- In cases of safety where there has been serious anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, hate crime and are receiving support by Police or alternative professional agencies would warrant an immediate move due to exceptional circumstances

- In cases of high medical need where their current property is putting the tenant at risk of illness or serious injury or the property is unsuitable to be adapted

All requests of this nature are approved by the Head of Neighbourhood Services or a member of the Executive Leadership Team and records kept as to why this decision was made.

Customers to be rehoused due to exceptional circumstances will be given priority over all other applicants. Priority will be given for 12 weeks, and a review will be carried out at the end of the 12-week period.

6. Local Lettings

SLH will use local lettings schemes to achieve a wide variety of housing management and policy objectives. The following list is intended to be illustrative and is not prescribed or definitive:

Creating more mixed and/or sustainable communities

- Dealing with a concentration of deprivation
- Ensuring properties that are particularly suited to being made accessible (e.g. ground floor flats) are prioritised for those with access needs
- Relocating essential workers such as teachers, nurses and police officers within a reasonable travelling distance from their work
- Supporting people in work/volunteering or who are seeking work or seeking volunteering opportunities
- Where a child to adult ratio could be lowered on an estate where there is high child density or, conversely, young single people could integrate into an estate where there is high ratio of older persons
- Where there are reasons to positively discriminate due to age, for example accommodation is only suitable for applicants under the age of 25 years, or over the age of state pension entitlement
- Where there is an on-going issues with anti-social behaviour and there is clear rationale to positively discriminate applicants for the purposes of preventing anti-social behaviour

7. Independent Living Schemes & Supported Homes

Independent living schemes are those designed specifically for customers over the age of 55 years. SLH manage the allocation of these schemes in line with this policy.

Homes that are classified as supported housing are not covered by this policy and SLH appoint managing agents to provide allocation, management and support services. For these homes assured shorthold tenancy agreements are used.

7.1 Supporting Home Ownership

To support diversification of both the product SLH offer and the tenure offer within its neighbourhoods, rent to buy and shared ownership opportunities are actively pursued by SLH. These options provide realistic alternatives/paths to home ownership for those on low incomes or those that cannot seek an outright purchase. A shared ownership lease will be used to set out the conditions under the rented element of a shared ownership home.

Further information is contained in our Home Ownership Policy.

8. Appeals Process

Applicants unhappy with the handling of their application, the type of tenancy offered, suspension or reduced preference status decisions or the rent charged for their new home will have the right to review a decision with the relevant service area Manager. If they remain dissatisfied with the outcome they can use SLH's Customer Feedback Policy to make a complaint.

If an applicant remains unhappy with the decision made in relation to their application they have the right to pursue a judicial review.

9. Customer Standards & Performance Monitoring

The following customer standards apply:

- Process applications within 5 working days
- Visit or contact SLH tenants whichever most appropriate for those who wish to move within 10 working days of their request.
- Information to be made available to customers on the expected waiting time for their area of choice.
- Conduct suspension or right to review hearings within 7 working days

The following measures will be used to monitor performance against the policy:

- Tenancies let by status.
- Tenancy turnover
- Breakdown of homes let against customer groups.
- Applicants on the waiting and transfer list asking for SLH homes, by property type and area.
- Applications processed in target.
- Homes let at first offer.
- Re-let time.
- Homes let more than once per financial year.
- Reasons for refusal
- New tenant satisfaction
- % Applicants who are rent ready
- % New tenancies sustained.

10. Policy Review Considerations

SLH will undertake a review of this policy every three years or whenever there are any relevant changes to legislation, case law or good practice that would impact on this Policy, or in response to any required service improvements identified through our Customer Feedback Policy that need to be urgently addressed.

10.1 Equality Analysis (EA)

An EA screening form was completed for this policy with issues identified, address through the policy and procedure.

10.2 Policy Assessment

An assessment of risk and value for money has been completed during the development of this policy.

10.3 Tenant Influence

During creation of the policy tenants' views on the waiting list and those received through complaints have been used to influence the policy. The Policy has also been influenced by SLH's Customer Services Committee.

10.4 Legal and Regulatory Framework

The responsible Director will ensure this Policy has regard to all legislation, regulation and best practice, including but not limited to:

- Housing Act 1985 & 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Immigration Act 2014 & 2016
- Equality Act 2010
- Localism Act 2011
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2020
- DCLG's Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England
- Children's Act 1989
- The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England April 2012
- NHF Code of Conduct 2012
- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Anti-social behaviour Act 2014
- Charities Acts 2006 & 2011
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Housing and Regeneration Act 2008

SLH will ensure that any information collected about applicants complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), as detailed within the Data Protection Policy.

10.5 Related Policy and Procedure

The following are applicable to this policy:

- Customer Feedback Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Starter Tenancy Policy
- Rent Policy
- Liverpool City Region Tenancy Strategy 2016-19
- Probity Framework
- Chargeable repairs policy
- Property Pool Plus Allocations Scheme 2023
- Allocations Procedure
- Decant Policy
- Home Ownership Policy
- Repairs & Maintenance Policy
- Adaptations Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- SLH Code of Conduct
- ASB Policy

Appendix A Nominations with Liverpool City Council

Whilst not participating in the local authority's choice-based lettings scheme, SLH will continue to support Liverpool City Council (LCC) to fulfil its housing obligation. No nomination agreement is currently in place, this is to be reviewed and agreed with LCC.

Historically, SLH has agreed a 50% nomination agreement with LCC through Property Pool Plus (PPP) however this target had never been reached as applicants tended to apply to SLH direct as the recognised lead landlord in the area. SLH have not participated in PPP since January 2014. SLH will therefore continue to administer all applications for SLH homes in Speke, Garston and Woolton (Independent Schemes).

SLH will also accept direct nominations from LCC for the following PPP priority housing band.

BAND	REASON FOR HOUSING NEED
Band A	Health/Welfare (urgent)
Urgent priority	Statutory homeless or at risk of homelessness within 56 days
(3 years added in	(unintentionally with priority need)
SLH's priority	Regeneration
assessment)	Overcrowded (two or more bedrooms)

SLH will take the direct nominations but will continue dialogue with other associations too.

Existing tenants

SLH will process the application of any existing housing association tenant who wishes to apply for a home with SLH reducing the need for the existing association to process the form on PPP (unless the tenant has areas of choice outside of South Liverpool).

As SLH is not a participating PPP landlord, SLH existing tenants wishing to move outside of South Liverpool will require their applications to be processed by a participating PPP landlord of their choice.

Homeless reduction

As previously stated SLH will support LCC in fulfilling their statutory housing duties, including those relating to homelessness and homelessness prevention. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has increased the requirements for Councils to help all eligible applicants – rather than just those with a 'priority need'.

The new duties it adds are:

Duty to take steps to prevent homelessness: the Council will have to help people at risk of losing suitable accommodation as soon as they are threatened with homelessness within 56 days. This means people should get help on receiving a valid notice from their landlord if they are threatened with homelessness rather than being told to come back when they have a bailiff's date.

Duty to take steps to relieve homelessness: the Council will have to help all those who are homeless to secure suitable accommodation, regardless of whether they are 'intentionally homeless' or in priority need. This should mean that all eligible households are offered help to find a home, rather than some people being turned away.

SLH will support LCC by adding a 'Statutory Homeless Status in our 3 years added band for 56 days for applicants who are imminently homeless and deemed to be in priority need by the Council.

Applicant's given Band A by the Local Authority for being homeless or potentially homeless will be prioritised by the date they were awarded statutory homeless status, and not their priority assessment date. Adopting this approach will mean those who have been homeless the longest will secure accommodation first. Exceptions may be made when applicants can no longer sustain temporary accommodation or are rough sleeping whilst waiting for an offer.

Appendix B Priority Assessment

Applications will be assessed by date of application through the priority assessment matrix below, in line with the priority assessment key. Only one additional date enhancement will be awarded which will be based on the applicants' highest level of need.

Priority Assessment Key

- 1 - This includes life threatening illness or sudden disability. Also includes discharge from hospital or temporary care facility (whilst undertaking return to home medical assessment).
- 2 - Priority given where application is made within five years of discharge from Armed Forces. Priority also extended to spouses and civil partners of armed forces personnel leaving Services Family Accommodation. Also includes serving or former Armed Forces Members or reservists moving because of a serious injury, (mental or physical) medical condition sustained through service.
- 3 - Examples include lacking bathroom, kitchen or inside toilet facilities, lack of adequate heating, hot water, electricity, shared facilities, disrepair, children living in flats above ground floor.
- 4 -Welfare includes care leavers requiring a secure base, those that require care or support. This would include foster carers; those approved to adopt or being assessed for adoption. It also includes those that have taken on care of a child where evidence shows the child is with the applicant on a full-time basis. Hardship includes those that need to move to receive care, to access specialised medical treatment or to take up employment, education, or training opportunity. Hardship also includes owner occupiers who are subject to pending repossession (proof of sale will be required, and equity levels reviewed).
- 5 – In case of a relationship breakdown where legal evidence has been provided to end joint tenancy, then an offer will be made to one party.
- 6 - Employment related training must be for a period of 6 months or longer. Voluntary work does not include those that are volunteering for involvement or Board Membership with SLH.
- 7 - Includes people who need to move because of their disability or access needs supported by an Occupational Therapist or Doctor through a written recommendation (physical and learning disability).
- 8 – Anti-social behaviour includes those wanting to move due to being a victim of nuisance or anti-social behaviour which is not an immediate safety issue and is supported by evidence from other agencies or SLH's Community Safety Team .

3 years added

Statutory homeless (including care leavers in temporary accommodation with LCC)

Homeless prevention status (56 days)

Under occupation

Overcrowding (2+bedrooms)

Regeneration

Safety – serious anti-social behaviour, serious domestic abuse supported through MARAC or supporting evidence from support agency, hate crime (supported by Police)

High medical

Armed Forces

1 reasonable offer before having one year removed, then two offers remain

6 months added

Local connection within L19, L24, L25

Good previous tenancy behaviour.

1 year added

Unsatisfactory housing conditions

Welfare / hardship

Overcrowding (1 bedroom);

Relationship breakdown

Low paid work / voluntary work / higher education / employment related training within L19, L24, L25

Medical

Anti Social Behaviour

Date of application

No assessed need.

Refer to above priority assessment key

Bedroom standard

The bedroom standards are in line with Government rules when determining welfare benefit claims for help with housing payments

- Couples who are married, have a civil partnership or who are cohabiting
- Adults aged 21 years or more
- Single or a pair of adolescents aged 11-20 years of the same gender
- Single or a pair of children aged 1-10 years regardless of gender
- An adult or child who cannot share due to a disability or medical condition, or due to fostering arrangements being facilitated by the Local Authority
- An overnight carer for any usual household member, if the carer isn't a usual household member and can provide evidence of regular overnight care
- Approved foster carer who is between placements, but only for up to 52 weeks from the end of the last placement
- A new approved foster carer for up to 52 weeks of approval if no child has been placed with the applicant's household during that time

Applicants will not be offered a property that would result in them being statutorily overcrowded. Applicants who receive support from a carer, who does not live with them and who is required to stay overnight, will have their need for a spare room taken account whenever possible. Properties on the ground floor, with an accessible bathroom or an additional bathroom or toilet will be offered to applicants who have an assessed need for such a dwelling over an applicant who has no need for such accommodation. Any particular needs of elderly applicants will be taken account of with under-occupation accepted for accessible homes. The needs of applicants who have been approved by a local authority to adopt or foster and require a larger property will be taken account of. Bedrooms will be allocated to students and members of the armed forces or reserve forces, if they're away and intend to return home.

When considering child access arrangements bedrooms are usually allocated to those with primary care of the child. This will be based on court order, child benefit payments and time spent with the child. Where an applicant does not have primary care of a child we will consider their size and type of accommodation offered on a case by case basis.

Usually, where we assess there is child access arrangements in place we will normally offer one additional bedroom. The allocation of a bedroom for child access will also be dependent on these two main factors:

- affordability and if the applicant needs benefit support to pay their rent.
- The demand for family homes in the area of choice with preference on the waiting list given to families who can fully occupy the property on a permanent basis. Flexibility can be applied to two or three bedroom flats which are in low demand from applicants on our waiting list.

Appendix C Disqualification and Reduced Preference

Applicants with a history of unacceptable behaviour

Applicants with a history of unacceptable behaviour, by either themselves, a member of their household or any other person who would reasonably be expected to live and be re-housed with them, or be a frequent visitor, may be given reduced opportunity to be considered for a home with SLH if it is considered proportionate and reasonable to do so.

Depending upon the seriousness of the unacceptable behaviour, including rent arrears, the application may be;

- Assessed as unable to be rehoused due to unacceptable behaviour (*suspended or disqualified*); or
- Given an actual application date with no eligibility for enhanced assessment (*reduced preference*).

Applications that are disqualified

The criteria for being suspended due to unacceptable behaviour have been developed on specific grounds as outlined earlier in the policy and are structured to facilitate a reasonable period where the applicant will be given an opportunity to demonstrate that they are committed to addressing any previous or current unacceptable behaviour.

Unacceptable behaviour	Minimum/Maximum disqualification time	Review Period
Applicants will be disqualified if they have outstanding rent or service charge arrears, or re-charges (or any other tenancy related liability), above 1 month rent unless: • They have agreed a realistic repayment plan, based on an applicant's unique financial circumstances, rather than the overall level of debt • They have made three consecutive payments and payments are no more than one month behind the agreed schedule Any rent arrears accrued more than six years ago that have now been declared unenforceable or statute barred, will be ignored, unless the applicant agrees to pay the debt voluntarily .	No specific time limit – the lifting of the disqualification will depend on the reasons for the debt and whether the debt is reducing in line with an acceptable payment plan	6 monthly Maximum 2 reviews
Conduct likely to cause nuisance and annoyance within the locality (anti-social behaviour)	Minimum of 12 months – to be followed by a review	12 months Maximum 1 review

	which may lead either to the lifting or the continuation of the suspension	
Any conviction relating to allowing a home to be used for immoral purposes, or an indictable offence committed within the locality of the home	Minimum of 12 months – to be followed by a review which may lead either to the lifting or the continuation of the suspension	12 months Maximum 1 Review
Domestic abuse	Minimum of 12 months – to be followed by a review which may lead either to the lifting or the continuation of the suspension	12 months Maximum 1 Review
Condition of a home, garden or communal areas due to neglect or ill treatment	6 months or until the specific problem is resolved (whichever is the earlier) followed by a review	6 monthly Maximum 2 Reviews
Grant of a tenancy by misrepresentation	From 6 to 12 months depending on the seriousness of the falsification, followed by a review	6 monthly Maximum 2 Reviews

When making the decision to disqualify an application due to unacceptable behaviour, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- When the unacceptable behaviour took place and the seriousness of the behaviour.
- The length of time that has elapsed.
 - What subsequent steps the applicant has taken to address the unacceptable behaviour.
 - Whether there has been any change in circumstances including health, dependents, and the individual's circumstances.

Each application will be considered on its individual merit and any previous or current extenuating circumstances will be taken into account. The individual's housing needs will be balanced with the unacceptable behaviour that warrants consideration for classifying the application as disqualified. When SLH decides to disqualify or re-admit an applicant this will be confirmed in writing to them within 5 working days of the decision with full details of:

- The reasons for the suspension and the length of time it will last until it is reviewed again.
- What they need to do to demonstrate the suspension can be lifted; and how they may appeal against the decision.

If after the review period there has been no satisfactory attempt to address the unacceptable behaviour; or there has been a repetition of this behaviour; or another ground has been breached, then the application may be disqualified for a

further period, see table above. If the applicant can provide satisfactory evidence of mitigation or modification of their unacceptable behaviour, they can request a review. Disqualified applications do not accrue waiting time.

Applications that are given Reduced Preference Status

Applicants whose current or previous behaviour is unacceptable, but which is not deemed serious enough to justify a decision to treat the applicant as disqualified will be given no priority assessment date.

This less serious unacceptable behaviour relates to the same grounds set out in 12.2 above but where a possession order would not reasonably be sought or granted. It will also include other forms of unacceptable behaviour such as previous or current poor tenancy conduct, threatening behaviour towards colleagues, other residents, or evidence of previous abandonment.

However, each application will be considered on its individual merit and any extenuating circumstances will be considered. SLH will balance an applicant's individual housing needs and the unacceptable behaviour or level of rent arrears.

An applicant will be given reduced preference status until they have demonstrated that they have taken the steps necessary to remedy the breach or to modify their behaviour. If the breach has been remedied within 12 months the applicant will be allowed to keep the original date of the application. If the breach is not remedied within 12 months the application will be suspended until the applicant has remedied the breach. Once the breach has been remedied the applicant will need to request that their application be made active again. They will then be given a new effective date from the date of the request.

When SLH decides to give a reduced preference status to an applicant this will be confirmed in writing to them within 5 working days of the decision with full details of:

The reasons and the length of time it will last until it is reviewed again;
What they need to do to demonstrate the reduced preference status can be lifted; and

How they may appeal against the decision.

Modifying Unacceptable Behaviour including rent arrears

In all instances, applicants will be required to demonstrate they are able to satisfactorily maintain a tenancy. The following indicative criteria may apply:

In the case of outstanding debts owed:

- Debt is cleared, or;
- Debt is reduced to an agreed level, or;
- Regular periodic payments are maintained to reduce the debt over an agreed period of time, and;
- Applicants able to demonstrate they have been able to satisfactorily maintain a tenancy since (where applicable).

In the case of anti-social behaviour:

- Signed authority under the Data Protection Act to allow supporting information to be gathered;
- Evidence of satisfactory non-offending history, (where applicable);
Evidence of co-operation with professional support agencies, (where applicable);

- Evidence of treatment for any substance dependency issues (where applicable);
- Co-operation in any multi-agency risk assessment process (where applicable);
- Applicant can demonstrate they have been able to satisfactorily maintain a tenancy (where applicable);
- Where the anti-social behaviour is caused by a member of the tenant's family, or household or visitor, evidence that the person responsible will not move in with the tenant and the tenants written undertaking and / or tenancy term that they would not allow that person to reside at or visit the property.