




# Allocations and Lettings Policy

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<b>Separate procedures are available to implement this policy</b>	

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Allocating and letting homes is a core landlord function. It is important that we let empty homes as efficiently as possible, so as to minimise rent loss and to support Kildare County Council in its duties and responsibilities to rehouse people from the waiting list.
- 1.2 We recognise that social housing is a public resource and that we have responsibilities in managing it fairly, efficiently and with transparency.
- 1.3 Ensuring that our empty homes are allocated and let efficiently and appropriately is an important contribution to creating sustainable tenancies and communities.
- 1.4 We have developed this policy to direct and support service delivery in line with our vision and mission:

*Cill Dara's vision is to provide the people of Kildare with a safe and supported home environment.*

*Our mission is to identify and meet the housing and associated support needs of members of the Kildare community who are eligible for social and affordable housing.*

## **2.0 Scope of Policy**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all CDHA empty homes.

## **3.0 Aims and Objectives**

- 3.1 The aims and objectives of this policy are to:
  - a) Maximise our rental income by minimising the length of time our homes are empty
  - b) Contribute effectively to national and local objectives to make the best use of social homes to reduce housing waiting lists
  - c) Minimise security costs/risk of damage to empty homes
  - d) Ensure that new tenants understand their rights and responsibilities.

## **4.0 Policy Statement**

### **4.1 Nominations**

All of our empty homes are let by local authority nomination.

We will:

- Request nominations in good time so as to minimise rent loss as well as trying to avoid applicants having to wait an excessive length of time before the property is ready to let
- Provide complete and useful property details to the local authority to assist in them making an appropriate allocation

### **4.2 Determining housing need**

Housing need and prioritisation of applicants is usually determined by the local authority. Where this is not the case, we will prioritise using the following criteria:

- Suitability of the home to meet the applicants housing need
- Security of tenure of the applicants current housing
- Length of time on waiting list.

### **4.3 Transfers**

Cill Dara HA does not maintain its own transfer list. CDHA tenants requesting a transfer will need to make a housing application to the local authority.

### **4.4 Mutual exchanges**

Although a mutual exchange is not technically an allocation, it is, effectively, a letting, hence it is being covered by this policy.

We will:

- Promote mutual exchanges as a means for tenants with lower housing need to be able to move
- Promote mutual exchanges as an additional method of moving home for our tenants with greater housing need
- In considering mutual exchange requests, we will withhold our consent where there are tenancy breaches by either the outgoing or the incoming tenant
- Withhold our consent where the mutual exchange would lead to overcrowding or under occupancy
- Usually not give approval for a mutual exchange where there is domestic abuse (as the incoming tenant may be at risk from the person abusing the outgoing tenant)
- Provide a tenancy reference to the requesting landlord, detailing any tenancy breaches
- Carry out a property inspection before giving consent and will require the tenant to make good any damage caused before we give consent
- We will carry out all required gas and electrical safety checks before the new tenant moves in.

#### 4.5 Lettings

The lettings process is a key time for us to establish a good relationship with a prospective new tenant. It is an opportunity to talk about the services that CDHA offers and the way in which we operate.

It is also an opportunity to be clear about tenant rights and responsibilities as well as our landlord obligations.

We will:

- Carry out an accompanied viewing to show the applicant around the home
- We may carry out lettings visits with both one applicant or, on occasion, multiple applicants
- Give clear messages about what the applicant will need to do if they accept the offer
- Give information relating to the rent assessment process and the need to pay rent in advance at the sign up

- Require the applicant to make a decision on whether or not to accept the offer within 24 hours.
- In the case of a letting in a leased house, the new tenants will be advised of the length of the lease remaining and that the maximum tenancy length is for that period. Any other legal tenancy restrictions (eg Part 4 Tenancy etc) will still apply.

#### 4.6 Pre-tenancy training

We provide pre-tenancy training for new tenants to CDHA. This usually takes place between letting and signup, or , very shortly after a tenancy started.

Our pre-tenancy training is intended to give key information to new tenants regarding their tenancy and their home with CDHA. This includes information on some of the practical aspects of their new home, for example, location of stopcock and how to work the heating, as well as to spend some time explaining responsibilities of both landlord and tenant.

We also make sure that tenants know who to contact for a range of enquiries and how to make contact with us when they need to.

#### 4.7 Sign up

The sign up is the legal part of the process, where landlord and tenant enters into a contract.

We require tenants to pay either a weeks or a month's rent in advance. This depends whether they are choosing to pay their rent weekly or monthly. We only accept monthly payments where they are made fully in advance. We will not sign up the tenant where payment is not made.

We will explain to tenants about the initial six-month probationary period and subsequent Part 4 tenancy cycles.

## 5.0 Equality and Diversity

- 5.1 We will apply this policy consistently, fairly and with professionalism. We do not discriminate against any person on grounds of their age, gender, disability, gender reassignment/transgender, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or any other matter that may cause a person to be treated with injustice.

5.2 We will use plain language and make information available in different formats and languages on request.

## **6.0 Data protection and Confidentiality**

6.1 This policy will be operated in line with our Data Protection Policy.

## **7.0 Complaints**

7.1 We aim to provide excellent services but recognise that we do not always get things right. We have a Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy which we use actively to address service failures and to inform service improvements.

## **8.0 Compliance**

8.1 We have developed this policy and associated procedures with due regard to Regulatory requirements.

8.2 As a registered Tier 2 Approved Housing Body, we work hard to ensure that we are fully compliant with the requirements of the Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority.

8.3 Specifically in relation to the Regulatory Performance Standard, AHBs are required:

- To have an allocations policy and procedure which is fair and transparent and provides a consistent approach to letting properties
- To register all tenancy agreements with the Residential Tenancies Board
- To proactively engage with Local Authorities to ensure a collaborative approach to housing people in need and creating sustainable communities
- To have procedures for communicating current and potential vacant properties with Local Authorities
- To provide pre-tenancy training, sign up procedures and a tenant handbook outlining key policies and procedures relating to the tenancy agreement

- To provide comprehensive information about the tenant's new home, rent, service charges, and the services to be provided by the AHB
- To have information available regarding vacant properties and the breakdown of accommodation available in each area
- To have information for the tenants regarding transfer options, if applicable.

## **9.0 Linked Policies, Procedures and Guidance**

9.1 The following CDHA strategies, policies, procedures and guidance that relate to this policy are as follows:

- a) Tenancy management (policy and procedures)
- b) Empty homes (policy and procedure)

## **10.0 Responsibilities**

10.1 All relevant employees have a responsibility to ensure that this policy is applied as intended. Including, but not exclusively:

- a) Reporting any areas of concern or non-compliance to their manager.
- b) Keeping accurate records.
- c) Attend training to ensure they have the required knowledge and skills to deliver the service.

10.2 Board will ensure that:

- a) CDHA has an overview of this policy and reviews it in a timely manner to assess its effectiveness and appropriateness.
- b) CDHA has the necessary arrangements and resources to implement and monitor operational effectiveness.

10.3 Managers will ensure that:

- a) This policy is implemented through agreed operational procedures, monitored and reported.
- b) Resources are deployed and monitored effectively.



## 11.0 Definitions

**Allocating** - the process by which an individual is nominated for an empty home.

**Letting** - the process by which we let an empty home to the nominated individual.

**Nomination** - the person nominated by the local authority for an empty home.

**Ready to let** - indicates that all maintenance works have been completed and that the empty home meets our lettable standard.

**Transfer** - where a current CDHA tenant seeks to move (transfer) to another CDHA home.

**Mutual exchange** - where two (or more) tenants of social housing swap homes with each other. This could be within CDHA or between CDHA and another AHB or with a local authority. Tenants must request and obtain permission from their landlord before completing mutual exchange.

## 12.0 Key Performance Indicators

We will monitor and report on the following key performance indicators to check that our services are delivering the intended outcomes.

Performance Indicator	Performance Target (where applicable)	Measure reported to Board?
Homes let within agreed target (at reporting period end) - new lets	tbc	Yes
Homes let within agreed target (at reporting period end) - re-lets	tbc	Yes
Median no. of weeks to receive Council nominations	n/a	Yes
Median no. of weeks home was lettable and not let: new lets (at reporting period end, applies to lettings completed in the reporting period)	n/a	Yes
Median no. of weeks home was lettable and not let: re-lets (at reporting period end, applies to lettings completed in the reporting period)	n/a	Yes
No. of new tenancies in arrears at end of probationary tenancy	n/a	yes

## 13.0 Policy Review

13.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every three years or earlier to take into account changes in legislation, regulation, service improvements and related initiatives.