

Allocations Policy – rented homes

Date approved	11/2018
Policy owner	Director of Customers and Partners
Approved by	Board
Review due	11/2021
Date of Consultation with Falcon	10/2018
Policy Reference	BRD14

1. PURPOSE/POLICY AIMS

- 1.1. This policy sets out Raven’s approach to letting homes and enabling residents to move home, ensuring compliance with regulation, tenancy terms and good practice.
- 1.2. This policy also sets out how Raven will work with local authority partners to achieve it’s aims regarding allocations

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This policy applies to applicants for rented housing and existing tenants of Raven Housing Trust

3. POLICY STATEMENT (INC KEY POLICY PRINCIPLES & COMPLIANCE WITH LEGISLATION)

- 3.1 Raven Housing Trust, in its role as a registered provider (“RP”) aims to ensure that all subsidised rented housing stock is used effectively to meet the housing needs and aspirations of applicants and tenants and to contribute to the building of sustainable communities. Raven will seek to prevent homelessness wherever possible and practicable.
- 3.2 This Allocations Policy is an overarching policy. Detailed procedures set out how this policy will be applied. Our primary aim is to provide affordable and well managed rented accommodation to those in housing need. Raven aims to create sustainable tenancies in light of Welfare Reform and Universal Credit having regard to the affordability of a property for the applicant, while giving reasonable preference to those most in need of them.
- 3.3 Raven is a member of the national ‘Homeswapper’ scheme. The option of moving home through a Mutual Exchange will be actively promoted to transferring residents wishing to move as a way to access a different home more quickly.
- 3.4 By use of this Policy, Raven will:
 - 3.4.1 Make best use of its stock.

3.4.2 In accordance with its Policy on Anti-Social Behaviour, consider the need for community cohesion when allocating applicants to voids properties.

3.4.3 Improve demand for our properties.

3.4.4 Create sustainable tenancies in light of Universal Credit and other aspects of Welfare Reform.

4 LEGISLATION

4.1 This policy operates using all relevant and appropriate legislation. This includes, but is not limited to the Housing Acts 1985 and 1988 (as amended), the Landlord and Tenant Acts 1985 and 1987, Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), The Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This includes future legislation that may be introduced.

POLICY DETAIL

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION:

Raven will work flexibly with local authorities, in a manner that is sensitive to local issues and demand, to assist them in offering accommodation to people with priority on the authority's register and in fulfilling their statutory duty to secure accommodation for homeless people.

5.1 Raven will participate in appropriate joint Housing Registers and choice based lettings schemes.

5.2 Raven will let property in a fair and non-discriminatory way and to avoid restrictions on access to housing, which are irrelevant to housing, affordability or support needs.

5.3 Raven will seek to enter into Nomination Agreements where reasonable and appropriate with the local councils in whose areas we operate, whereby the councils will be able to nominate applicants from their housing lists to an agreed proportion of our vacant properties.

5.4 Wherever possible, Raven will seek to assist local authorities to achieve their Community objectives under 'Local decisions: a fairer future for social housing' (November 2010) and the Localism Act 2011 by giving priority for social housing to those in greatest housing need and by providing appropriate housing for applicants with additional support needs, for instance temporary and sheltered accommodation.

5.5 Where Raven has the ability under local arrangements, we will give consideration to the use of part of our entitlement to offer nomination rights to local specialist organisations who provide a service.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY – SPECIFIC LETTINGS INITIATIVES

6.1 Local lettings Plans

In some instances, Raven may implement local lettings plans or 'sensitive lettings' for some properties, schemes or neighbourhoods. These are exceptional to the normal

policy and are introduced to meet specific scheme or neighbourhood objectives. Raven will consult with local authorities and any other appropriate agencies within the community regarding local lettings plans where possible. Information about local lettings plans for specific schemes will be provided to applicants for those homes.

- 6.2 In negotiating local lettings plans, we will aim to strike a balance between housing need and making the best use of housing stock in that area to benefit individuals, the community and create sustainable neighbourhoods.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 7.1 We will accept applications from any person over the age of 16 years regardless of the nine protected characteristics in the Equalities Act 2010 of age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. At all stages in the application and allocation process we will comply with the law and our equality and diversity policies. All applications and allocations will be monitored to ensure compliance with equal opportunities and diversity.
- 7.2 Applicants under the age of 18 may be required to sign an 'equitable tenancy' and will generally be required to have a rent guarantor. In consultation with other Raven staff, exceptions may be agreed on a case by case basis. Any exceptional circumstances will be evidenced and recorded as 'Exception to Policy'.
- 7.3 Our Allocations policy may be made available in an easy to understand format, in braille, and audio tape, or other languages, where needed.
- 7.4 Raven will monitor the ethnic origin, gender and disability of all applicants and tenants we house to check that different groups have equal access and treatment in the lettings process.

8.0 HOUSING NEED

- 8.1 Raven will continue to meet housing need through Choice-Based Lettings schemes operated by partner local authorities and through these, aims to give a reasonable preference to people in housing need as set out in the Housing Act 1996.
- 8.2 Allocations through Choice-Based lettings may be supplemented by other initiatives in line with agreed nomination agreements in order to meet specific needs either for particular client groups, or a particular area.

8.3 Eligibility for housing by Raven Housing Trust:

We will provide housing or offer moves to applicants meeting the following criteria:

- **Existing tenants who need to move for repairs or improvements to be carried out in their home (“decants”). In most cases, this will be a temporary decant whilst works are carried out, with the tenant returning to their home once completed.**
 - **New applicants referred by local authorities**
 - **Existing tenants who need to transfer to another property (“transfers”)**
-

- **Existing tenants who need to move under Raven's Under Occupation scheme** which helps residents to move to a new home which better meets their household circumstances and minimises the effect of the Welfare Reform Act.
- **Existing tenants currently living in supported housing** who have been allocated a permanent home and who have demonstrated that they no longer need support to manage their tenancy ("move on").
- **New applicants referred by other Social Landlords.** From time to time we may enter into schemes outside of local authority nomination schemes which assist tenants to move to a property offered by different social landlords, if they need to move to a different area. We will normally only accept suitable applicants from other social landlords whose housing need would be given the same high priority on our own lists. We may also agree reciprocal arrangements with other social landlords.
- **New applicants referred by agencies.** If we have a 'hard to let' property we may use referral agencies to identify someone in housing need. This method is only used when no other applicants are available.
- **Other applications.** The policy is not designed to create additional tenancies on demand for existing households, for example in the case of relationship breakdown, or for tenants' children who should be housed through the appropriate local authority Housing or Transfer Register.
 - Raven will accept applications directly and will maintain small direct waiting lists (DWL) of groups of applicants who need housing in areas where we have properties and who are in housing need, and may or may not be registered on local authorities' Housing Registers. Raven will consider the use of a direct let in the following circumstances:
 - a. Vacancies for schemes with specific admission criteria which make them unlikely to be filled via the Housing Register.
 - b. Vacancies with little or no demand from a Housing Register.
 - c. Vacancies that have not been filled on a timely basis through our Nominations Agreement with the relevant local authority and via the Housing Register route and remain unallocated to for longer than three weeks.
 - Application acceptance criteria will be the same as used for local authority nominations and will be prioritised according to the priority order agreed for each particular group. Applicants housed in this way may be:
 - a. People who meet Raven's Allocations eligibility criteria, but who may be unable to effectively access social housing in another way.
 - b. People affected by Welfare Reform.
 - c. People wishing to move to downsize to a smaller property
 - In addition, from time-to-time, there will be a need for a household to move outside of the normal allocation processes to provide a flexible solution to a

problem due to a crisis / emergency or because Raven requires a move for a specific reason. Such transfers are referred to as management moves.

- Raven is required to cooperate with the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) with regard to the assessment and management of risks created by certain offenders. As a housing provider this cooperation is likely to involve carrying out an assessment and making a decision regarding nominations for housing under the MAPPA protocol.
- Raven also from time-to-time will provide some 'key-worker' properties to people who have important jobs in the community, but who may otherwise find it hard to access private rented accommodation. This may be an exception to a local authority's policies and procedures and will be allocated out of Raven's nomination % for that council area. Raven intends that the charge for such properties is less than market rents, and generally this is calculated as 80% of market rent.
- Local connections will not generally be considered, unless it is relevant to the allocation of a property for which a local connection is required.
- Raven may introduce specific schemes or pilot new ways to move home, for example to support residents affected by Universal Credit. Eligibility for any additional moving schemes will be subject to criteria set out in the project. Residents involved in a specific project or pilot may have different criteria applied to their move. Any specific project criteria will not change the general eligibility criteria set out in this policy.

9.0 ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING NEED

- 9.1 An applicant's need for alternative accommodation will be risk assessed on the basis of the information contained in the application they have made, and additional information provided both at application and nomination stage. It is a breach of our tenancy agreements and conditions for an applicant to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement that induces us to enter into a tenancy agreement and repossession will be sought for any tenancy gained as a result.
- 9.2 Application forms for the local authorities' housing registers, which include transfers, are generally available through the website and office of the relevant local authority. Application forms for Raven's small Direct List for are available from the Housing Choice team on request.
- 9.3 All nominees' details will be verified on application and at nomination stage by the local authorities and Raven to check accuracy, assess need, suitability, and affordability and support needs.
- 9.4 A sample of allocations and decisions made will be regularly reviewed to ensure that decisions are objective, accurate, and consistent and ensure fairness.
- 9.5 Raven will carry out an independent risk assessment at nomination stage of nominees' financial circumstances to assess the affordability of the property for the household. Applicants will be advised in writing of their nomination to a Raven property.

- 9.6 Raven will ensure that applicants are offered a size of property that is considered suitable for their household and which is considered financially sustainable according to the criteria set out in section 8 of this policy.
- 9.7 In the event that an applicant is also an employee, Board member or a close relative of either, Raven will have regard to the Housing Accommodation provisions outlined in its Probity Policy. This includes those employees and Board Members who resigned or otherwise left the employment or engagement with Raven for a period of one year prior to any proposed allocation of property.
- 9.8 Applicants have the right to view personal information held by Raven in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018, by making a subject access request. Raven will publish a privacy policy setting out the data we hold about residents and applicants and how we process personal data.

9.9 Exclusions from offers of accommodation

- 9.9.1 When assessing nominations and direct applications, Raven will risk assess residents' ability to pay their rent and service charge and maintain a tenancy. Some nominations and applications will be refused if the property is deemed unaffordable or unsustainable.
- 9.9.2 If there is clear evidence (usually documentary) that within the last 3 years due to circumstances which the applicant could reasonably have prevented, there have been either previous tenancy or mortgage breaches, or an applicant has lost previous accommodation due to breaches. Regardless of a previous tenancy history, Temporary Accommodation applicants will be expected to have demonstrated a subsequent ability to sustain their tenancy.
- 9.9.3 If an applicant or spouse (or someone living as a spouse) has an outstanding debt with Raven and no payment plan is in place. Allocations may be considered if the debt is paid in full or a payment plan is agreed as a tenancy condition prior to a nomination from a local authority.
- 9.9.4 If the household has access to funds or has disposed of an asset that would render their application ineligible for the type of housing they have applied for.
- 9.9.5 Where a serious safeguarding concern can be evidenced that would create a significant risk to other residents in the area. For example, supported by the relevant enforcement agencies.
- 9.9.6 In accordance with its Policy on Anti-Social Behaviour, Raven will consider the need for community cohesion when allocating applicants to void properties.
- 9.9.7 Raven will be unable to house applicants or nominees who are subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, as amended by the Localism Act 2011, and are therefore be ineligible to join any part of a Housing Register.
- 9.9.8 Other specific exclusions will apply for example, where accommodation is specifically adapted and the applicant does not require the adaptations, or where provision of specialist support is required, which is unable to be provided.

10. ALLOCATION OF VACANT PROPERTY

- 10.1 When a property becomes available for letting, Raven will, at an early stage, seek a potential occupant. This could include local authority nomination, direct applications or allocations made through other appropriate sources.

10.2 All applicants will be expected to view the property before deciding whether to accept. Applicants will be required to sign up and move into their new home immediately it is ready to let and pay one week's full rent in advance at sign up as their rent is due weekly, in advance.

10.3 The size of property that will normally be allocated is as follows:

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>Accommodation Likely to be Offered</u>
<i>Applicant only</i>	<i>Bed-sit or studio / one bedroom flat, bungalow or house / maisonette</i>
<i>Applicant and partner</i>	<i>One bedroom flat / bungalow / house / maisonette</i>
<i>Applicant (and partner, if applicable) and one child **</i>	<i>Two bedroom flat / house / bungalow / maisonette</i>
<i>Applicant (and partner, if applicable) and more than one child **</i>	<i>A flat, house, maisonette or bungalow that meets the following criteria: One bedroom for the applicant and partner (if applicable); And one bedroom for each child or family member, except where there are: (i) 2 children of the same sex under the age of 18 or (ii) 2 children of opposite sex under the age of 10 shall be permitted to share a bedroom</i>

** ***The child's/children's main and principal home is that of the applicant's or nominees. A dependent child is classed as being under the age of 18 or in full time secondary education.***

*** ***Where a household consists of two adults over the age of 18 and who are not deemed to be applicant and partner, i.e. two siblings; Raven will require the tenancy to be in joint names.***

**** ***The above standards apply to all Raven General Needs accommodation only.***

10.4 In certain circumstances Raven will consider requests from applicants who wish to bid for properties which are smaller than the standards set out above. An example may be where a family living in cramped conditions are happy to move to a larger property, even if it does not meet their accommodation needs under Raven's bedroom standards.

10.5 In exceptional circumstances, where Raven are satisfied that there are no resulting benefit implications, a property may be let as "under-occupied".

11. APPEALS

11.1 If applicants or nominees are unhappy about the operation of this policy, they should first raise their concerns as a pre-appeal. Details of the procedure and who to contact will be provided to applicants on request.

11.2 If an applicant or nominee remains unhappy about the operation of this policy, they may appeal to the Housing Choice and Tenancy Enforcement Manager.

12. RESPONSIBILITY

12.1 The Director of customers and partners is responsible for implementation of the policy

13. PUBLICISING THE POLICY

- a. A copy of this policy will be available on Raven's website.
- b. This policy will also be available on the nest (intranet)
- c. Training will be provided for core staff who will apply this policy
- d. A copy of this policy will be made available to local authority partners

14 MONITORING, COMPLIANCE & REVIEW

14.1 This policy will be regularly reviewed by the Board with recognised tenants' groups, and in conjunction with relevant stakeholders to ensure that we are contributing to meeting housing need.

14.2 We will seek applicants' views on the lettings process and use this information to improve our procedures.

14.3 We report to our Board, Local Authorities, the Housing Regulator and tenants on the number of empty properties we have, the time it takes us to let them and which groups of people we let them to

15 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

All Board members, staff and involved residents should promote the association's policy on equality and diversity and avoid discriminatory action or expression.

16 VERSION CONTROL

Version no:	1.0 2018	
Previous policy review dates	Approved:	6 December 2005
	Revised:	6 May 2008
	Revised:	1 February 2011
	Revised:	17 November 2015
	Amended:	22nd May 2016