



City of London Corporation
Department of Community & Children's Services
Housing Service

Lettings and Transfers Policy

Approved by:	Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee
Approval Date:	
Review Date:	

1. Introduction

This policy covers various aspects of:

- the letting of our rented homes
- property viewings by applicants
- tenancy sign-ups
- transfers by existing tenants

This policy refers to what happens once a housing applicant (who may already be a tenant of the City of London) is invited to view a property. This may be following a successful bid on the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system, or pursuant to a direct offer.

Detailed information about how we allocate our homes and administer the social housing register is contained in the City's Allocations Scheme, which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

2. Aims of this Policy

In this policy, we aim to provide a general overview of how we will manage the letting of our vacant properties, with focus on:

- How we conduct viewings
- The tenancy signing process
- Transfer applications from current residents

3. Scope

This policy applies to general needs and sheltered housing forming part of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) estates or managed as part of the HRA.

Some special considerations apply to the City of London Almshouses and Gresham Almshouses. Please see section 12 for details.

4. Lettings

i. Letting standards

We are committed to letting homes which are in a safe, secure and clean condition. We do not redecorate general needs properties in between tenancies as standard. Some properties may be eligible for a 'decorations allowance' and this will be confirmed at the point of viewing.

Sheltered housing properties are normally redecorated between changes in occupation. The decorations allowance does not apply to sheltered housing.

We will develop a public Minimum Lettings Standard document to give clear information on the standard of accommodation that residents can expect when moving into one of our properties.

ii. Furnishing and appliances

Our homes are let on an unfurnished basis. It is the tenant's responsibility to furnish the property and provide carpets, curtains and items such as white goods.

Some applicants may be eligible for assistance if they are allocated a home as part of a special scheme (for example, care leavers). We will discuss available support with these applicants at the point of offer.

We will also provide information on potential sources of support and advice for tenants on low incomes, for example furniture projects.

iii. Repairs

Any essential repairs (such as those required for health and safety reasons) will be carried out while the property is empty, along with other major repairs.

In the interests of letting our properties as quickly as possible, some minor repairs may be deferred until after the property has been re-let. We will inform the new tenant of any outstanding repairs at the viewing.

If a property is due to have 'Decent Homes' works, it may still be let, and the works carried out with the tenant in occupation.

5. Viewings

Empty properties will be made available for viewing by successful applicants who have placed bids via Choice Based Lettings, or those to be made a direct offer of accommodation outside this scheme.

Viewings will be conducted one applicant at a time. If the property is managed by another landlord, the viewing arrangements will be decided by them and may be different (for example group viewings).

At the viewing, the applicant will be asked to indicate whether they wish to accept the property. Their decision will be recorded in writing and, if they wish to refuse the property, brief reasons will be taken from them.

If the offer is accepted, a formal offer letter will be issued to the applicant giving full details of the property and the intended tenancy start date, which will normally be within two weeks of the viewing.

6. Signing the Tenancy

The new tenancy will begin on a Monday. A sign-up appointment will be arranged, and this will normally take place on the Friday before the tenancy is due to start.

If the housing application was made in joint names, a joint tenancy will be granted and both applicants must attend the sign-up appointment.

At the appointment, we will explain or provide the following, among other things:

- Tenants' Agreement & Handbook
- Introductory tenancy regime (if applicable)
- Our Pets Policy
- Decorations allowance (if applicable)
- Rent payment terms

Once the tenancy or licence is signed, arrangements will be made for the keys to be collected, which will normally be on the first day of the tenancy (a Monday).

Rent is payable from the first day of the tenancy regardless of when occupation is assumed. We expect the tenant to start living in the property as soon as possible after signing their tenancy and collecting the keys.

We require rent to be paid in advance. Please see section 9 for more details.

7. Documents Required at Tenancy Sign-Up

We are committed to ensuring that only those people who meet the eligibility criteria set out in our Allocations Scheme are provided with accommodation. We have a robust system of checks in place to identify fraudulent applications.

All applicants are therefore required to provide proof of eligibility for housing at the point of signing the tenancy, regardless of any proof they have provided to us previously. Failure to provide the relevant documentation may result in the offer being withdrawn, or the tenancy signing being delayed.

Applicants are required to provide the following prior to the tenancy being signed:

- Passport or birth certificate for each applicant
- Birth certificates for each child on the application
- Photographs of each adult applicant

For new applicants claiming a local connection to the City via work, we will require a letter from the applicant's employer confirming that this connection still exists at the point of offer. This is not required for existing tenants.

At the point of sign-up, applicants will also be required to sign a declaration relating to ownership of residential property. Refusal to do so will result in the offer being withdrawn.

8. Internal Transfers

The Allocations Scheme gives details about how we handle applications from current tenants for transfer to another City of London property ("internal transfer").

Applicants for internal transfer are required to follow the same viewing, offer and tenancy sign-up process as any other applicant, with some minor exceptions.

We will visit the tenant's current home prior to transfer to ensure there are no existing breaches of tenancy. Failure to allow access, or rectify any identified breaches, may result in the offer of an alternative property being withdrawn.

Following the transfer, an inspection will be carried out at the vacated property as part of the re-letting process. The cost of any rechargeable repairs, or tasks such as rubbish clearance, will be passed on to the outgoing tenant.

9. Advance Rent Payments

Rent is payable in advance. For new tenants, we normally require four weeks' rent in advance at the point of tenancy sign-up. Those on income-contingent benefits such as Universal Credit may pay two weeks' rent in advance instead. We will take account of extreme financial hardship and may consider making an exception in accordance with paragraph 11.

Current tenants who are transferring to another City of London property do not need to pay rent in advance for the new property, as their current rent account will be maintained, though their rent account must be free of arrears.

10. Applications from City Employees

Applications from current or former City of London employees, including transfer applications from employees who are Secure tenants of the City, or living in tied accommodation, will be assessed in accordance with our Allocations Scheme. No special consideration will be given to these applicants outside the Allocations Scheme.

11. Policy Exceptions

In exceptional circumstances, we may consider a variation to this policy. This will depend on the individual circumstances of the case. The decision and its reasoning can be provided in writing to the relevant parties.

12. Almshouses

The City's Housing & Neighbourhoods Service manages the City of London Almshouses and Gresham Almshouses on behalf of the respective trusts. The

nomination processes for these schemes are distinct from the City's Allocations Scheme. Some other considerations also apply, such as nominees requiring approval by the trustees. Occupants of these properties receive a licence, not a tenancy. For the purposes of this policy, the City of London and Gresham Almshouses are treated as sheltered housing. Viewings and sign-ups for these properties will be managed in accordance with this policy.

13. Monitoring and Performance

We will monitor our use of this policy and the way in which it is implemented, ensuring that any relevant information is reported at appropriate intervals.

14. Training

We will provide all staff responsible for implementing this policy with comprehensive training as required.

15. Equality and Diversity

This Policy has been subject to a full Equalities Analysis and will be implemented in accordance with our responsibilities and duties under relevant legislation, including the Equalities Act 2010.

16. Accessibility

We will ensure that tenants' needs are considered when implementing this Policy to ensure that they are treated fairly. We will make appropriate arrangements to ensure that customers with distinct communication needs are not unreasonably and disproportionately affected. This could involve providing communications in alternative languages or formats or providing interpretation or transcription as appropriate.

17. Data Protection and Information Exchange

We will comply with our obligations under relevant data protection legislation and regulations. We will process and store personal information securely.

18. Policy Review

We will review this policy at least every three years, or following relevant changes to legislation, regulation or policy.

19. Legislation

- Data Protection Act 2018
- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1996
- Equalities Act 2010

20. Related documents

- City of London Housing Allocations Scheme
- Tenancy Policy

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