



LETTINGS AND ALLOCATIONS POLICY

APPROVED BY	Operations Committee
POLICY OWNER	Housing Services Manager
DATE REVIEWED	Oct 2025
DATE APPROVED	November 2025
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW	November 2028

1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1 This policy sets out Unity Housing Association's approach to letting and allocating homes in a fair, transparent, and consistent manner. It ensures compliance with relevant housing legislation and regulatory standards (Tenancy Standard) while supporting Unity's mission to provide housing choice, promote inclusion, and sustain vibrant communities. It applies to all general needs, supported housing owned or managed by Unity Housing Association (Unity).

This section outlines Unity's overall aim — to let homes fairly and in line with the law. It explains that the policy applies to all housing types we manage and ensures a transparent, consistent process for allocating homes.

2. Policy Objectives

- 2.2 Unity aims to:

- Allocate homes based on housing need, suitability, and sustainability.
- Let homes efficiently to minimise void periods and lost income.
- Support local authority housing strategies and nomination agreements.
- Ensure fair treatment in compliance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Promote tenancy sustainment and community stability.
- Operate transparently and accountably within all legal and regulatory frameworks.

Unity will take into account the individual housing needs and aspirations of each applicant and balance this against the need to make the best use of our homes. We aim to allocate our homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way, and promote access and choice for applicants by participating in local and regional choice-based lettings schemes (CBL).

We are committed to allocating our homes in ways that will enable neighbourhoods to flourish socially and economically. We want our homes to be places where people are proud to live. To achieve our aim of creating successful and sustainable communities Unity will adopt the following approach.

3. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

3.1 This policy is delivered in accordance with:

- Housing Act 1985 (secure tenancies and succession)
- Housing Act 1988 (assured and assured shorthold tenancies)
- Housing Act 1996 (Part 6 – allocations and homelessness)
- Homelessness Act 2002
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Localism Act 2011 (local allocations and flexible tenancies)
- Immigration Act 2014 (Right to Rent checks)
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Fraud Act 2006 and Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013
- Regulator of Social Housing Standards, specifically the:
 - Tenancy Standard
 - Home Standard
 - Value for Money Standard
- Relevant Local Authority Housing Strategies, including Leeds City Council and Kirklees Council frameworks.

This section lists the key laws and regulations that govern how Unity must let and allocate homes. It ensures that our approach is lawful, consistent, and aligned with both national and local housing requirements.

4. Lettings Principles

4.1 Unity will:

- Allocate homes based on need and suitability.
- Participate fully in Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) schemes:
 - Leeds Homes Register (Leeds City Council)
 - Choose 'n' Move (Kirklees Council)
- Operate in line with nomination agreements requiring Unity to advertise all available properties through the relevant local authority CBL system.
- Make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants and promote equal access.
- Prevent discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.
- Undertake thorough verification checks to prevent tenancy fraud.

This section confirms Unity's commitment to fairness and equality. It explains that we work with Leeds and Kirklees Councils through their lettings systems and that we will always act transparently and check applications carefully.

To ensure that the allocation of our homes makes the best use of our properties and supports a balanced and sustainable community we may not offer properties to the applicant with the highest priority. In addition, where an applicant successfully bids for a home, we may exclude the applicant where an affordability assessment reveals that they may not have the means to pay the rent, in accordance with income thresholds, use of benefit data, or a discretionary hardship process.

4.2 Service standards

We aim to provide a high-quality lettings and allocation service. To do this we will:

- Provide applicants with clear and concise information about our service
- Work with other agencies to identify and meet applicants support needs
- Let our homes through local authority choice based lettings schemes and other online letting services
- Ensure your home is safe, secure and clean and meet our Lettable Standards
- Keep you informed of any delays in getting your home ready
- Promote access to mutual exchange services and transfer opportunities
- Support customers to move to smaller/larger homes.
- Ensure you know how much rent and service charge you will have to pay each week
- Make contact within 6 weeks of moving in, to see whether you are settling into your new home
- Provide you with a copy of your tenancy agreement, Tenant Handbook and sign-up pack containing useful information to help you settle in
- Deal with complaints about our allocations service through our formal complaint's procedure

5. Nominations and Advertising

- All standard vacancies will be advertised via the appropriate local authority CBL system in accordance with the Nomination Agreement with Leeds City Council and Kirklees Council.
- Unity will provide full property details and relevant eligibility criteria.
- Direct lets outside the CBL system will only occur where justified under management move, decant, or safeguarding provisions.
- Monthly performance and nomination returns will be submitted to partner councils.

Unity will advertise properties and works with local councils through their choice-based lettings systems. It ensures applicants know where and how homes will be advertised.

In some areas and for some developments such as our new build homes, we may apply a local lettings policy. If we adopt a local lettings policy, specific rules will apply to those homes covered by the policy. We will provide applicants with information on the rules which apply and may consult with our partners before a local lettings policy is agreed. We will offer the most suitable form of tenancy compatible with the type of accommodation and the needs of the applicant. We will ensure that we make the best use of our properties. Our approach to security of tenure is set out in our Tenancy Management Policy.

In addition to advertising through local authority Choice-Based Lettings systems, Unity may also use external lettings websites such as Rightmove or Zoopla where these supports achieving the objectives of this policy. Although current subscriptions may vary, maintaining this provision in the policy allows flexibility to utilise such platforms in future if operationally beneficial.

6. Applicant Eligibility and Pre-Tenancy Checks

6.1 Before offering a tenancy, Unity will:

- Verify Right to Rent status.
- Conduct an affordability and income assessment.
- Complete reference and housing history checks.
- Identify support needs and signpost to relevant services.
- Offer the appropriate tenancy type (starter, assured, or licence).

Unity must check each applicant's right to rent, financial situation, and support needs before offering a home. This helps ensure tenancies are sustainable and suitable.

We will exclude applicants who do not respond to requests for further information or fail to provide the information that we have requested. In order to prevent tenancy fraud, we will exclude applicants where we believe that information supplied is false or misrepresents the applicants housing circumstances. Where we believe that an applicant has fraudulently secured a tenancy, we will take steps to recover possession of the tenant's home.

We will also exclude applicants who have deliberately altered their circumstances to improve their prospects of being allocated a home or applicants who we believe have access to secure and suitable accommodation elsewhere.

We will report all tenancy fraud to Leeds City Council. Unity staff must also report suspected or confirmed tenancy fraud internally in line with the organisation's Fraud Policy. This policy is referenced in Section 14 and sets out how cases are recorded, reported, and escalated.

In certain circumstances and where Unity believes that it would not be possible for a tenant to sustain their tenancy, we may exclude an applicant. Examples of the circumstances where this may occur include:

- Applicants unable to provide evidence of their immigration status
- Households who may not have the means to pay the rent
- Applicants with support needs who do not have a support plan or have refused such help
- Applicants with serious mental health problems that result in them being unable to sustain a tenancy even with assistance from specialist support agencies.

At sign-up, Unity will normally require rent in advance as outlined in the Tenancy Management Policy. Where an applicant cannot afford to pay this in full, Housing staff will assess affordability and may agree a payment plan or seek alternative arrangements to avoid tenancy failure. Each case will be considered on its merits, ensuring that affordability checks are completed and financial inclusion advice provided.

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation rests with the Housing Services Manager. The Housing Services Manager will ensure that staff receive the appropriate training and support to achieve the objectives of this policy. Where needed we may establish appropriate operational procedures.

The Housing Services Manager has discretion under this policy to authorise offers to applicants regardless of their priority, only in clearly defined circumstances.

These include emergency or safeguarding cases, decants, significant under-occupancy where a move releases larger family housing, or where doing so supports the overall objectives of this policy.

All such decisions must be fully documented, justified and subject to internal audit review.

7. Refusals, Withdrawals, and Rejections

7.1 Unity may refuse or withdraw an offer where:

- False or misleading information has been provided.
- The applicant fails to engage or respond.
- Pre-tenancy checks reveal affordability or conduct concerns.
- The applicant refuses reasonable offers without valid cause.
- The applicant or household member has a history of serious anti-social behaviour, rent arrears, or breach of tenancy.
- The applicant does not meet the legal right to rent or eligibility requirements.

7.2 Legal Basis:

Refusals and exclusions are made under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Localism Act 2011, which permits housing associations to determine eligibility and allocations criteria consistent with the local authority's housing strategy.

Applicants have the right to complain through Unity's Complaints Policy if they are not happy with the reason for refusal.

8. Management Lets, Internal Transfers and Rehousing of staff & Board members

8.1 Unity reserves the right to make Management Lets or Internal Transfers where required to:

- Address urgent safeguarding or safety concerns.
- Support victims or witnesses of crime under police advice.
- Manage or resolve serious anti-social behaviour.
- Facilitate major repair, decant, or redevelopment works.
- Prevent homelessness where an urgent move is necessary.

These moves are authorised under Unity's Management Move Policy and in compliance with our Tenancy Management Policy.

- All management moves require approval from the Housing Services Manager.
- Rationale must be documented and auditable.
- If a property is placed on hold for management use, it is temporarily withdrawn from CBL advertisement.
- If the internal applicant does not proceed, the property will be re-advertised in accordance with the local authority lettings criteria.

Legal Reference:

Permitted under Housing Act 1996 (s.166A(6)), which allows direct allocations outside the main allocations scheme where necessary to meet management or exceptional circumstances.

For a Unity tenant to be eligible for a transfer to another Unity property they need to:

- Register on an existing choice-based lettings scheme
- Have been a tenant for at least 12 months
- Have no rent arrears
- Have no outstanding repairs that they are responsible for
- Have no unresolved breaches of their tenancy
- Please see Appendix A

Notice period and rent overlap for internal management moves

Where an existing Unity tenant is approved for an internal management move or decant under this policy, Unity will normally allow a rent-free overlap of up to one week on the outgoing tenancy to enable the tenant to move and clear the previous property. During this agreed period the tenant will not be charged rent on the former home.

Any extension beyond one week will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances and is at the discretion of the Housing Services Manager, taking into account the tenant's individual circumstances, vulnerability, risk of homelessness and any safeguarding concerns.

Beyond the agreed overlap period, tenants will remain liable for rent and any other applicable charges on the outgoing property until the tenancy end date confirmed by Unity.

8.2 Unity may rehouse staff, Board members, their relatives, or contractors only in accordance with the Probity Legislation and guidance. Any such allocations require approval from the Chief Executive or Chair of the Board to ensure transparency and prevent conflicts of interest.

This section explains that Unity can sometimes allocate homes directly to existing tenants for safety, repairs, or urgent reasons. This ensures we can act quickly in exceptional situations while remaining accountable.

9. Exclusions and Suspensions

9.1 Unity may suspend or exclude applications in line with the Allocations Policy where applicants:

- Have housing-related debts.
- Under the age of 18
- Have been evicted or subject to a possession order for ASB or rent arrears.
- Have caused damage to a previous property.
- Have failed to provide required documentation.
- Have falsified information or deliberately worsened their housing circumstances.
- Are unable to sustain a tenancy due to unaddressed support needs.

Suspension decisions will be proportionate, time-limited, and communicated in writing.

Unity may suspend or exclude an application if there are serious concerns such as rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, or false information. All decisions will be clearly explained in writing.

Unity may exclude or suspend applicants from housing offers where there is evidence of previous tenancy breaches, rent arrears, or rechargeable repairs. However, we recognise that individual circumstances can vary, and every case will be assessed on its own merits.

Applicants will be asked to provide supporting evidence to demonstrate how any previous arrears or recharges are being managed. This may include proof of an

active repayment plan, details of advice or support received, or evidence of improved financial circumstances.

In the interests of fairness and transparency, Unity will discuss any such matters directly with the applicant before a decision is made. The aim is to ensure that all applicants are treated consistently and given a fair opportunity to access housing where a tenancy can be sustained. Applicants also retain the right to raise a formal complaint through Unity's Complaints Policy.

10. Affordability and Financial Assessment

10.1 Unity has a duty to ensure tenants can sustain their tenancy. Financial assessments will:

- Verify income and expenditure.
- Identify benefit shortfalls or under-occupation risks.
- Provide signposting for budgeting or welfare support.
- Prevent tenancy failure and financial hardship.

Unity staff will ensure that all affordability checks are completed before offering a tenancy to make sure residents can manage the rent and sustain their home without hardship.

11. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

11.1 Unity is committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity. We will:

- Treat all applicants fairly regardless of protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
- Make reasonable adjustments to ensure accessibility.
- Conduct an Equality Impact Assessments of the Lettings and Allocations Policy.

Unity will monitor and report allocations data by protected characteristic to ensure that no group is unfairly excluded or disadvantaged through its letting's practices. Findings will be reported annually to our Board members.

12. Data Protection and Confidentiality

12.1 Unity will protect applicants' and tenants' personal information and only share it with councils for lettings purposes under strict data protection rules.

- Unity will process all personal data in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Data will be shared with partner councils (Leeds and Kirklees) under agreed
- Information Sharing Protocols for lettings purposes only.

13. Monitoring, Reporting, and Review

Unity will regularly monitor and report on lettings performance and review this policy every three years to ensure continued compliance and effectiveness.

- Monthly monitoring of voids, allocations, and lettings performance.
- Quarterly reports to the Operations Committee.
- Annual publication of lettings performance in the Tenant Annual Report.
- Policy reviewed every three years or sooner if legislation or local authority agreements change.

14. Associated Documents

The following Unity policies are to be read and applied alongside this one to ensure a consistent and fair approach to lettings and tenancy management.

- Tenancy Management Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Fraud Policy
- Income Policy

15. Governance and Approval

Policy Owner: Housing Services Manager

Approved by: Operations Committee

Next Review: Nov 2028

Consultation and assessment	
Customer consultation	Scrutiny Panel consultation 4 th October 2025
Equality Impact Assessment	Completed Nov 2025
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Data sharing agreement is in place with Leeds City Council and Kirklees Council

Document review history			
Version	Date amended	Date approved	Amendments
1	April 2014	April 2014	Original document. Replaces and updates current allocations and lettings policy statements.
2	June 2015	June 2015	Strengthens commitment to prevent fraudulent allocations. Eligibility of staff and family members for housing.
3	November 2017	December 2017	Routine policy review. Change monitoring body to Board, exclude applicants without the appropriate immigration status and update Business Plan objective.
4	December 2020	February 2021	Routine policy review. Minor changes to text. Now includes reference to choice-based lettings scheme in Kirklees.
5	October 2025	Nov 2025	Policy reviewed to consider the new Regulatory Standards.

Appendix A

Allocations criteria for internal applications for housing (transfers)

At present Unity will only consider direct allocations to existing customers in the following circumstances.

Band A: This band consists of existing Unity customers whose homes require major repairs, to make best use of our stock or to protect a tenant's safety.	
A1	Decant - temporary
A2	Decant - permanent
A3	Best use of stock
A4	Management transfer

Band B: This band consists of existing Unity customers who may have need to downsize for financial or other reasons.	
B1	Under occupation by 2 bedrooms or more – financial hardship
B2	Under occupation by 1 bedrooms or more – financial hardship
B3	Under occupation – releasing a larger home

Band C: This band would consist of all other existing Unity customers who apply for a transfer and do not fall within either Band A or Band B.	
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Eligibility and bedroom size

Where a household is in receipt of welfare benefits, Unity will normally only make direct offers to existing tenants of properties that they will not under occupy based on the DWP property size guidance, unless they are able to demonstrate the means to pay any shortfall in housing benefit/universal credit. The DWP property size guidance is set out below:

Household	DWP property size criteria
Adult Couple (married or unmarried)	One bedroom to share.
Single person over 16	One bedroom per person.
Two children, of the same sex, aged under 16	One bedroom to share
Two children of different sexes, aged under 10	One bedroom to share.