



Priority Moves Policy

Reference	OP010	Version	2
Issue date	May 2014	Renewal date	May 2016
Review date	May 2019		

The Policy

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This policy sets out our approach to managing emergency situations where tenants are unable to remain living in their homes for a period of time or who may require urgent permanent re-housing in specific circumstances.
- 1.2 This policy and procedure replace any existing processes in relation to 'management moves' or temporary/permanent 'decants', but does not include 'decants' for development or regeneration.

2 Policy statement

- 2.1 When letting our homes, we aim to house those in greatest need of housing. We recognise that there will be exceptional situations where our tenants may require urgent re-housing in specific circumstances. Agreeing to a direct let or priority move is exceptional as the need for accommodation far outweighs the supply and also such a decision overrides the Choice Based Lettings process and thus other applicants on the transfer list and housing register who may also have high needs. There is also a considerable cost to our business, as each transfer will result in void charges, staff time and administrative costs. A priority move will also be counted as part of the 25% of voids that we are allowed to allocate to directly according to the terms of the Transfer Agreement. This is a limited proportion that we cannot increase. The circumstances of the applicant will therefore need to be extremely serious to justify such a decision.
- 2.2 We will consider every case on its individual merits, and ensure our approach is transparent, fair, non-discriminatory and effectively controlled and monitored.
- 2.3 If a permanent priority move is agreed, only one reasonable offer will be made, and usually the same type and size of accommodation, although the bedroom size criteria will apply to ensure compliance with Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy and our Allocations Policy. Any offer we make will be within the Wycombe district.

3 References

- 3.1 The Homes and Communities Agency's Regulatory Code sets out its expectations of registered providers. The standards relate to providers being viable, properly governed and properly managed.

4 Responsibilities

4.1 The Head of Experience is responsible for the policy.

5 Legal framework

5.1 The main pieces of legislation are as follows:

- Housing Act 1985
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1985/68/contents>
- Housing Act 1998 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002)
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/contents>
- Localism Act 2011
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/part/7/chapter/1/enacted>

6 Definitions

6.1 *Priority Moves*: we may consider a 'priority move' for our tenant(s) when at least one of the following three criteria have been met:

- 6.1.1 ***Property is unsuitable or uninhabitable*** – This could be due to a major repair issue or a major adaptation, property defect or when a succession is agreed but the successor is in unsuitable accommodation.
- 6.1.2 ***Serious Risk of physical harm*** – This can often be determined via information sharing with other agencies such as Thames Valley Police.
- 6.1.3 ***Serious Risk of mental harm*** – this can often be determined via information sharing with other agencies such as the Community Mental Health Team and Social Care or the applicant's GP.

6.2 Each case should be considered / investigated on its individual merits.

6.3 The following criteria will not be considered as part of a priority move:

- medical issues which are already taken account of as part of choice based lettings,
- overcrowding,
- under occupancy,
- transfer to another property or landlord, and
- a like for like swap.

6.4 For 6.1.2 and 6.1.3 above, we may consider the following if it relates to ASB:

- how often the incidents happen;

- if the incidents are happening more often or getting worse;
- if there is a perpetrator (and/or associates) who are actively intimidating the victim;
- if the incidents are specifically targeted at the victim;
- if the crime or ASB is linked to the victims' faith, age, sexuality, ethnic, origin, gender, mental or physical disability.

For all types of applications, we will consider:

- If the applicant is at risk or vulnerable;
- What impact the situation is having upon the applicant and their household;
- What support the applicant and applicant's household has or could be signposted to;
- If there are any safeguarding concerns;
- The conduct of the tenancy up to this point including any arrears or other breaches;
- If a permanent move would completely resolve the issue for the long-term;
- Whether the applicant's circumstances mean another tenancy would be sustainable;
- If they or their household or visitors have in any way contributed to the circumstances that have led to the reason why they wish for a move;
- What is the likelihood that we can offer the type of property that is required e.g. if the requirements are very specialised, we may not have the resources to assist in a reasonable period of time, in which case the applicant will have to consider alternative remedies to their situation;
- Any issues that may mean a move would be a significant cost or risk to the business;
- If there is a more economical way of resolving the issue;
- What action we have taken previously in such type of cases to ensure consistency;
- If a move would be in line with our other policies;
- The reasonableness of the costs i.e. does it offer value for money, would it solve a problem which couldn't be solved any other way;
- Whether there are other sources of funding;
- Whether the move and associated costs would discriminate against someone else.

All information used is validated with the appropriate partner agencies. The final decision on a priority move in the above context is made by us (Red Kite Community Housing).

7 Equality and Diversity

- 7.1 We are committed to equality and diversity when delivering our services. We aim to ensure that all of our customers are dealt with fairly and equitably and where possible we take into account the diverse nature of their cultures and backgrounds.

8 Related policies or procedures or guidelines

- Customer Care Policy
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Allocations Policy
- Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy
- Decant Policy (and procedure)
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy (and procedure)
- Left in Possession procedure
- Relationship Breakdown Procedure
- Tenancy Policy (and procedures/guidance)
- Tenancy Changes Policy (and procedure)
- Housing Adaptations and Lettings Panel (HALP) Terms of Reference and Guiding Principles
- Fire, flood and emergency moves guidelines

9 Expected legislative/environmental changes

- 9.1 This policy and procedure will be reviewed should there be any legislative changes that could impact upon it.