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TRANSFER POLICY

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Summary

This Policy details our approach to transfers in line with existing nomination agreements and within service level agreements to reduce re-let times and minimise rental loss through voids/empty homes across a range of tenures.

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Introduction

Purpose

To ensure there is consistency across the Group when assessing transfer applications, whilst recognising local variations (Appendix C)

To reflect the communities we work in and ensure that these communities and our lettings are sustainable.

To minimise the time that properties are left unoccupied and keep rent loss to a minimum.

To ensure that no individual or group is discriminated against or treated differently as a direct or indirect result of our transfer policy.

PART TWO

Policy

Intent

This Policy sets out how we will manage internal transfers across the Group.

Principles

The Group will provide an effective allocations service that meets the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Tenancy Standard.

We will:

- use HomeSwapper and highlight this service as an option for existing tenants wishing to move from their existing home;
- transfer tenants in a fair, transparent and efficient way;
- ensure there is consistency across the Group when assessing transfer applications, whilst recognising local variations;
- reflect the communities we work in and ensure that these communities and our lettings are sustainable;
- minimise the time that properties are left unoccupied and keep rent loss to a minimum; and
- ensure that no individual or group is discriminated against or treated differently as a direct or indirect result of our transfer policy.

Scope

This Policy applies to all parts of the Longhurst Group.

This Policy applies to all tenants who apply for a transfer with us.

Definitions

Letting's definitions applicable to this Policy are listed at Appendix B.

Policy Details

Managing transfers

Eligibility

We may not accept direct transfer applicants where common housing registers/choice-based lettings schemes operate.

We will normally only accept transfer applications, and subsequently make an offer of re-housing, where all accounts are free of debt; all terms and conditions of the tenancy have been met; and a satisfactory tenancy inspection has been completed.

We will not accept applicants for transfer from tenants with Starter Tenancies until their tenancy has converted to an Assured Tenancy or unless authorised by the Director of Housing Services.

Affordability

If we are able to transfer within our housing stock, we will use our Sustainability Matrix to assess whether an applicant can afford to live in one of our homes. The financial metrics used are in line with the Consumer Price Index and are updated yearly.

We will not transfer a tenant who clearly cannot afford to sustain a tenancy, identified by pre-tenancy checks.

Transfer Within Longhurst Group

Any transfer must be authorised by the Head of Housing Services or Director of Housing and Customer Services.

We will normally only accept a transfer application if a tenant is subject to one or more of the following:

- race and hate crime;
- domestic abuse; and/or
- critical medical need – we will require relevant and up to date medical evidence to support a transfer move. Where relevant we will ask the applicant to provide a report from an Occupational Therapist.

We will consider any cases of under-occupancy on a case-by-case basis where the customer is able to demonstrate a clear case of financial hardship linked to any deductions of benefits as a result of the under-occupation size criteria (bedroom tax) applied. For any cases of overcrowding, we will signpost to the Local Authority Housing Options Team and encourage the use of Homeswapper for a mutual exchange. Should we be aware of any severe cases of overcrowding, we will assess using the HHSRS rating system and where it is determined that this is causing a Category 1 hazard, we will work with the customer to resolve the situation.

We will only make one reasonable offer to customers who have been approved for a transfer. If this is rejected by the customer, Longhurst Group may cancel the transfer application and reject any future requests for a period of two years. Should the customer experience a change of circumstances within this period, we may review and reactivate the transfer application.

Transferring Employees

Transfer applications can be accepted from employees, elected members, board members and their close relatives, provided they are eligible to apply. Applications will be reviewed and accepted/refused by the Executive Director of Housing Services.

Best Use of Stock

We will work with applicants using our Sustainability Matrix to ensure they are applying for housing that is affordable.

Accessible properties for people with a disability – in the first instance we will work with the local authority to allocate the property. If no suitable applicants can be found, we will contact social services and other relevant agencies before making an allocation to someone who does not need an adapted property.

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) Level 3 Offender – where we know

we are housing a MAPPA Level 3 offender, we will seek appropriate advice and information from the Police, Social Services and Probation. A MAPPA Level 3 offender is as defined in the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and subsequent relevant legislation.

Children in flats – we will not let flats above the ground floor to families with children aged under seven years. We will let ground floor flats to families with children of any age.

Survivors Fleeing Domestic Abuse

For all survivors fleeing domestic abuse, we will offer an assured tenancy as standard when moving into their new home, providing security of tenure.

Transferring Minors

Applicants aged 16 and 17 will be given a tenancy in trust until they are 18. A starter tenancy will be issued at 18 provided there are no tenancy breaches.

Debt

If a transfer applicant owes rent or debt for rechargeable repairs, we will only progress their application if they have made continuous payments to clear the debt for a minimum of 16 weeks before authorising a transfer request. There must be no missed payments in breach of their agreement to pay.

For Longhurst Group tenants that are seeking to transfer and have only accrued arrears on their rent account from 01 March 2020 at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic we will review each case individually taking into account each circumstance. We will not reasonably refuse a transfer for any tenant that has been adversely impacted by Covid-19 and demonstrated that they have been unable to meet their rent commitment in full but have made contributions towards payment of rent.

Where a transfer application is rejected, the applicant will be informed in writing of the reasons for our decision.

The reasons for refusal above are not exhaustive and we will consider each case individually. There is no right of appeal.

Roles and Responsibilities

Legal responsibility for the Transfer Policy is held jointly by:

- Longhurst Group Chief Executive; and
- Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer

Operational responsibility for the Transfer Policy is held by the Director of Housing and Customer Services and Head of Housing Services.

Procedural responsibility for the Transfer Policy is held by Housing Managers/Team Leaders.

Day-to-day responsibility for the Transfers Policy is held by Team Leaders, Lettings Advisors and Housing Officers.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Performance data for transfers will be produced by the Lettings Team on request.

Information on re-lets against local authority nomination agreement service level agreements will be provided, as applicable, at a local level through the Lettings team.

Lettings Team Leaders will carry out monthly audits to monitor compliance. Compliance checks will also be completed by our external auditors.

This Policy will be reviewed every three years. In addition, it will be reviewed:

- following information suggesting that the policy is not effective;
- to reflect any service enhancements; and/or

- following the introduction of relevant new legislation, regulations or guidance.

Equality and Diversity

The Group is committed to E,D&I and such will make reasonable adjustments to the policy to recognise, accommodate and support individual needs, where needed.

This Policy adheres to the Group's approach to Equality and Diversity.

Group members will take a proactive approach to ensure that no individual or group is discriminated against or treated differently as a direct or indirect result of this Policy.

Summary of Local Variations

Local Authority letting arrangements are listed at Appendix C.

PART THREE

Appendices

- A. Policy Approval Control
- B. Definitions
- C. Local arrangements
- D. Policy Development Plan