

Allocations policy consultation report

Date: 30th March 2022

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1. Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of our Allocations policy review and the consultation that was undertaken as part of this process.

2. Background

As a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) we are regulated by the Scottish Housing Regulator and we must abide by legislation including the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014. As part of the 2014 Act, landlords are required to prepare and publish a report on the consultation and review of the policy and this report explains how we did this.

3. Review of the policy

The policy was developed in accordance with our policy development governing framework. A team of subject matter experts from the organisation and stakeholders were involved in the review and key decisions were approved by the policy owner.

An equality analysis was undertaken to assess the impact that our policy has on different groups of people in relation to characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010.

4. Consultation process

Consultation was an integral part of the policy review process and a range of platforms were used to engage with colleagues, applicants, existing customers, local authorities and other stakeholders including using our internal communication platform, website, surveys and customer forums. A total of 208 responses were received and consultation was carried out during the month of September 2021.

The consultation focussed on 4 main areas:

1. Providing clear and accessible information
2. Priority banding
3. Property ownership
4. Equality and diversity

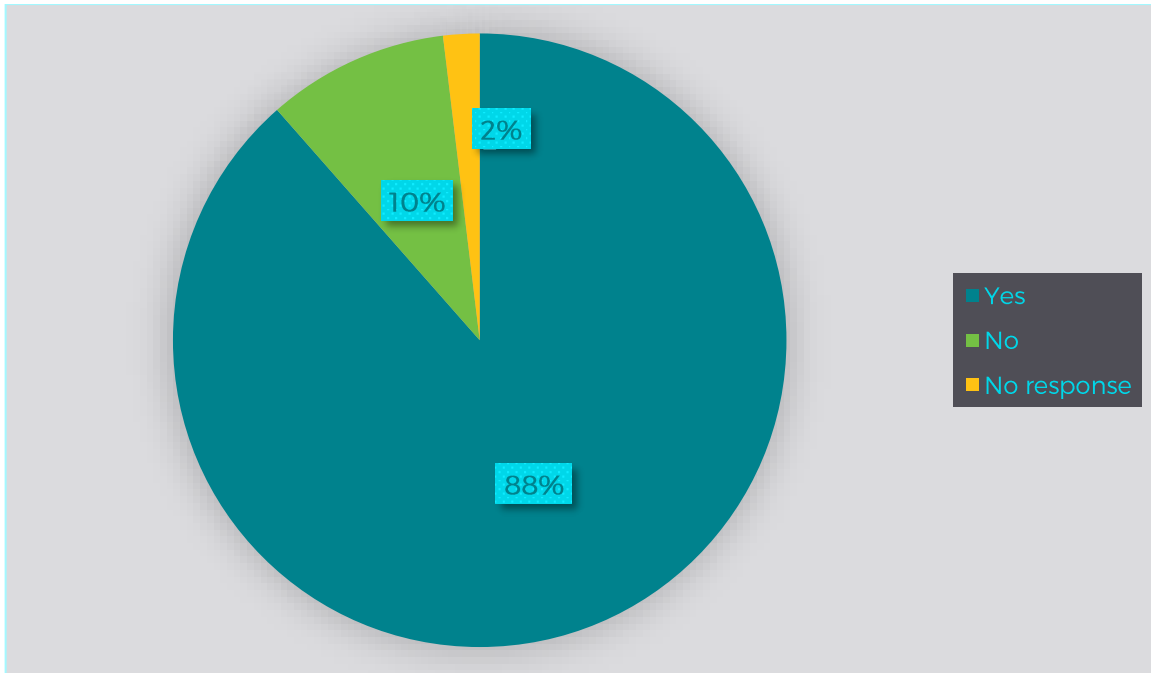
The next section shows the response rate for each of the questions asked:

Providing clear and accessible information to applicants

Applicants looking for a home with us can find information on how to apply; the assessment process and the criteria we use to assess eligibility and priority. Information is available on our website, by contacting our Customer Service Centre by telephone, Live Chat, or email. We can also communicate in formats and languages our customers prefer.

Q. Considering the above, do you think our information is accessible? Yes / No

Response rate:



How we used this feedback

We used the feedback we received to create a policy standard on 'applying for housing'. This includes information on making information accessible for the types of allocation schemes we have in place, providing assistance where required, and making every effort to communicate in formats and languages our customers prefer to make sure access is not impaired.

Priority banding

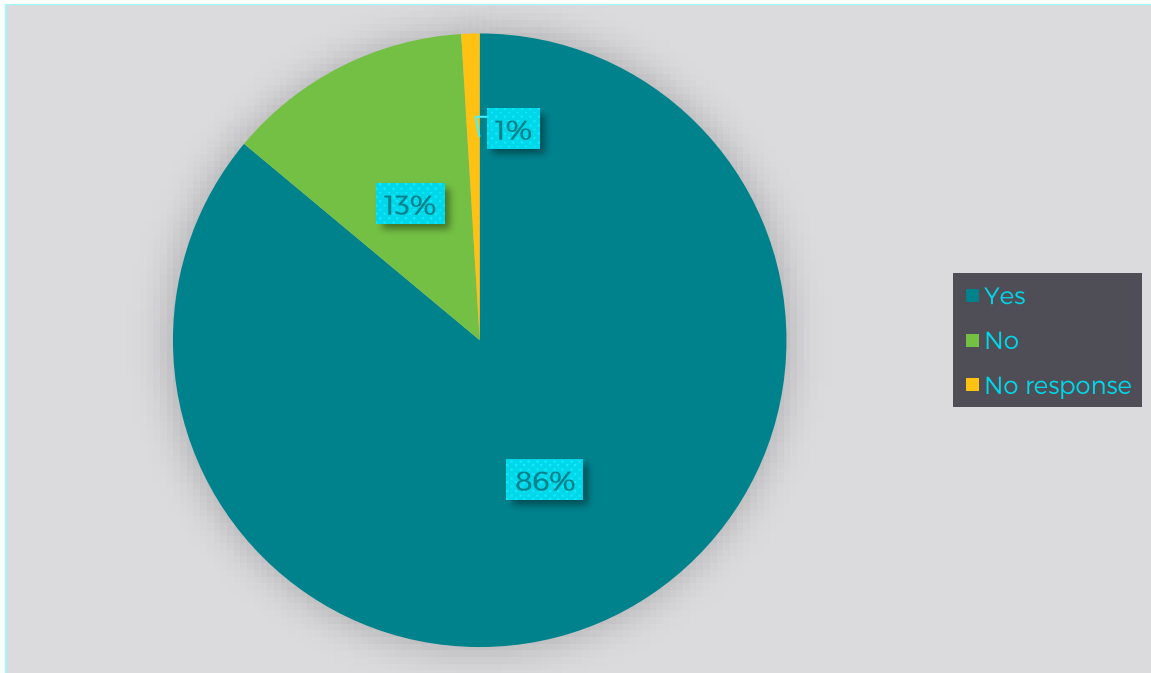
We assess housing applications using a 'banding' system to determine housing need. These are:

- Band 1 (Urgent need to move)
- Band 2 (Need to move)
- Band 3 (Community and Employment)
- Band 4: (Aspirational)

Within our Band 3 category we currently have criteria to support key workers; to help those who need access to family or friends or to assist an unemployed person to take up an offer of employment. We are proposing to remove the key workers category but expand the employment opportunity category further. This will enable a person to take up an offer of employment (regardless of their occupation), training, volunteering, or education in the area. This will mean more applicants who are eligible and meet the criteria may be awarded band 3 priority and key workers will also fit into this category.

Q. Do you agree with the proposed change outlined above? Yes / No

Response rate:



How we used this feedback

We created a new priority banding for our direct allocations which will enable a person to take up an offer of employment, training, volunteering, or education in the area.

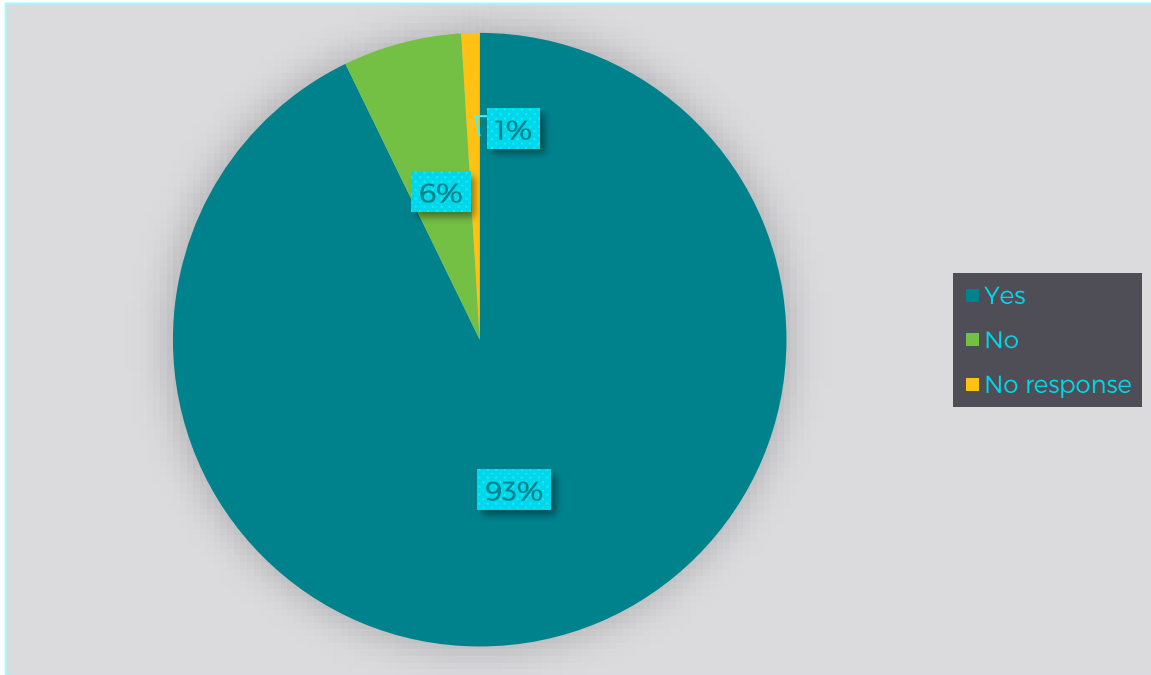
Property ownership

The last time we conducted a full review of this policy one of the key changes we made was to our approach regarding home ownership in England. Home owners are not eligible for housing unless there are exceptional circumstances such as occupying their home could lead to abuse or endanger the health of the occupant including the applicant having a serious medical condition. Previously legislation in Scotland prevented us from adopting a similar approach in Scotland. Since then, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 removed the prohibition on taking ownership of a property into account in allocating social housing. Social landlords can now consider property ownership as part of assessing an applicant's housing need and their circumstances. This means that if the applicant, or a current or future member of the household, currently owns land or property or previously owned land or property, this can be considered when deciding on an applicant's priority for the allocation of social housing. Wherever possible we would prefer to adopt a consistent and fair approach across England and Scotland.

Q. Our proposed approach is to assess applicants who own property on a case by case basis to determine their housing need and unless their property is unsafe for them to occupy (i.e. a threat of abuse or it's structurally unsafe), they are in extreme financial difficulty (i.e. mortgage repossession) or does not meet their needs (i.e. they have a disability or medical need and their needs cannot be met from that property) they won't be considered a priority. Eligible applicants with no housing need in Scotland will be added to the general waiting list.

Do you agree with the approach outlined above? Yes / No

Response rate:



How we used this feedback

We created a policy standard called 'assessment and award of priority' and included information on how we will assess applicants who own property on a case by case basis to determine housing need. Applicants are unlikely to be considered a priority for housing unless their property is unsafe for them to occupy (i.e. a threat of abuse or it's structurally unsafe), they are in extreme financial difficulty (i.e. mortgage repossession) or their property does not meet their needs (i.e. they have a medical need or disability and their needs cannot be met from that property). Those applicants not considered to be in priority need will be placed into our aspirational band.

Equality and Diversity

Q How do you think we can be proactive in ensuring our policy promotes equality and diversity?

Summary of responses:

Open lines of communication

Equality impact assessments

Talk to your customers

Treat everyone equally

Produce regular reports on trends and who we are allocating to

Complete equality analysis on all policies

Transparency

Use inclusive language

Have information in different languages/formats

How we used this feedback

An equality analysis was carried out as part of our policy development governing framework. The policy refers to the Equality Act 2010 and information on protecting the human rights of everyone who receives a service from us and that decisions on allocations are made in line with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

5. Policy approval and implementation

The policy was approved by our Board on 23rd November 2021 and was implemented on 30th March 2022. You can find a copy of our updated Allocations policy on our website.

Applicants applying directly to us will be informed of any change to their housing application.

6. Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who took part in the review of our Allocations policy. Your views really helped shape our policy and reassure us that we were on the right track.