



ALLOCATION AND VOIDS POLICY HANDBOOK

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17.04.2018

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Equality and Diversity

Scottish Social Housing Charter - SSHC 1: Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

We aim to encourage an environment of equality amongst our customers, employees, committee members and other individuals. Our policy on equality and diversity sets out the principles that Thenue will apply to all its work in governance, employment and service provision. We will ensure that all our processes comply with our policy and that those suppliers of goods, services and works have Equal Opportunity policies.

Our information will be clear, simple and consistent, and personal information gathered for the purposes of monitoring equal opportunities will be handled in accordance with the principles set out within the Data Protection Policy. Individual monitoring forms will be used for statistical purposes only and destroyed on completion of analysing.

We will seek to ensure that there are no barriers as a result of gender or marital status, race, colour, disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or other personal attributes, including beliefs, or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

Review

This policy and associated documentation will be reviewed every three years or earlier if statute and good practice dictates.

Amendment Register

Where any amendment or revision is made to the policies contained in this handbook, the appropriate section should be updated and the date amended accordingly. The former policy handbook should be kept in a separate file for reference purposes and to demonstrate an auditable trail of policy development.

Amendments of a more 'cosmetic' nature (e.g. changing Communities Scotland to The Scottish Housing Regulator) do not require Board approval, however will be entered into the amendment register (below).

All relevant personnel should be made aware of the amendments/revisions made

Section(s)	Amendment	Date approved by Housing Management Sub	Date approved by Management Committee	Next Review Date
14	Working household	13/11/12	n/a	2015
	SSHC outcomes / deletion of reference to Performance	N/A	N/A	2015

	Standards			
13	Suspending Applicants	26/8/14	N/A	
Section 7 vi),	Insertion of priority for care leavers	n/a	28/02/17	
Section 7 xxiii):	Insertion of clause regarding review of Urgent Priority applicants	n/a	28/02/17	
Voids 4.3	Inspection of voids longer than 20 weeks	no longer exists	14 June 2016	

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SUMMARY POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

The Allocation Policy sets out the way in which Thenue Housing operates a Housing List and lets its vacant accommodation for rent. This Policy was previously the subject of consultation with residents groups and was approved by the Board of Management.

2. ACCESS TO THE HOUSING LIST

Anyone aged 16 or over may apply and be admitted to the waiting list by completing Thenue's Housing Registration Form.

2.1 External Applicants

Applicants who are not tenants of Thenue Housing must complete the Housing Application Form.

2.2 Transfer Applicants

Applicants who are currently tenants of Thenue Housing must complete the Application Form and include details of the permanent members of their household. In the case of joint tenants, both must sign the form.

3. ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING NEED AND OPERATION OF THE HOUSING LIST

Applicants who have registered with Thenue will be placed in one of the **Priority Groups** below.

Priority Group	Some Examples of Housing Need Criteria
Urgent Priority Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Current Property scheduled for demolition/clearance• Applicant experiencing severe harassment or domestic abuse• Management Transfers• Special Cases approved by Committee (on an exceptional basis)
Homeless Referral Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Referrals from Local Authority in accordance with Section 5 of 2003 Homelessness Act
High Priority Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overcrowding by 2 or more bedrooms (owner occupiers in exceptional circumstances only)• Under-occupancy by at least 2 bedrooms (owner occupiers in exceptional circumstances only)• Health condition worsened by current property• Lacking essential amenities• Property in dangerous condition• Care leavers
Medium Priority Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overcrowding by 1 bedroom (owner occupiers by exception only)

Priority Group	Some Examples of Housing Need Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility significantly restricted by current property • No Security of Tenure • Living in caravan or hostel • Sharing amenities with non-family members • Under occupancy by 1 bedroom (owner occupiers by exception only) • Requiring to move to be nearer support • Property in unsatisfactory condition
Standard Priority Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other applicants who do not meet the above criteria

Applicants will be assessed based on their current housing circumstances. An applicant's position **within** each of the groups above will be based on the date they are placed in that group (earliest date within that group will have highest priority). This means that once you are placed in a Priority Group, normally no one will move ahead of you **within** that group list.

Where an applicant has more than one of the **Housing Need Criteria** as detailed above, their highest priority need will determine which Priority Group they will be placed in (e.g. where an applicant is overcrowded by 2 bedrooms, shares amenities and has insecurity of tenure they will be placed in the High Priority Group due to their overcrowding situation).

If an applicant's circumstances change they may be placed in a different Priority Group. Their position within this new group will be based on the date we confirm their change in circumstances.

Applicants on the Housing Lists who have not provided the necessary supporting information to enable a full assessment of housing need may be bypassed during the allocation process until the information is received and priority is confirmed.

Following completion of assessment you will receive a letter confirming your registration number and date, position within a specific Priority Group and the overall Housing List and choice of areas and house types and sizes.

4. **ALLOCATION OF VACANT ACCOMMODATION**

4.1 **Letting Plans and Allocation of Available Property**

Normally our Officers will offer the vacant accommodation to the applicant with the highest priority (appropriate to their needs and choice).

In addition to the Priority Group system however, Thenue will also operate **Letting Plans** to ensure that we not only give reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need but also ensure that we achieve mixed and sustainable communities. This might mean that for any allocation the successful applicant may be a household with a lesser priority from a specific targeted group. For example, an area with low numbers of working households may have a target set to ensure that a proportion of all lets in that area are made to working households (the specific targeted group in this case) irrespective of their priority in relation to others on the list.

Where a let is to be made from a specific targeted group it will normally be made to the applicant in the highest Priority Group with the earliest date of registration.

The group to be allocated the accommodation will be decided and recorded before the selection process starts (taking into account current performance against Letting Plan targets).

Our Board of Management, Registered Tenant Organisations and those Area Associations with a Minute of Agreement with Thenue, will review our Letting Plans as required. The Letting Plans may vary in different communities.

Thenue also aims to assist in rebuilding and sustaining communities by carrying out sensitive allocations. Thenue aims wherever possible to achieve, in areas and blocks of housing, a balance of household compositions; a balance of ages; an avoidance of a clash of lifestyles; a range of life and employment experiences and the support of family networks.

4.2 Choice

Applicants can specify their preferences for a choice of areas and dwelling types. The size of property offered however, will normally be based on the number of bedspaces required for that household. **It should be noted however that on average we are only able to house around 10% of applicants in any given year due to the limited number of properties that become available.**

Please see our detailed Allocation Policy if you require further information.

DETAILED ALLOCATION POLICY

NOTE: This should be read in conjunction with our Summary Allocation Policy.

5. POLICY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Thenue's Allocation Policy sets out how we will:

- Ensure fair and open access to applicants to our housing list;
- Give reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need;
- Make the best use of the housing stock,
- Balance community needs and individual needs to create and sustain strong communities.
- Maximise the opportunities for applicants to make informed choices by providing good information and advice about rehousing prospects; including alternative housing options.
- Reduce complexity and bureaucracy wherever possible by simplifying the application and allocation processes;
- Develop positive working relationships with other agencies such as local authorities and support agencies to identify and meet housing needs;
- Ensure that we keep appropriate records and maintain audit trails to ensure we are accountable for all our decisions
- Ensure the allocation process is transparent and can be easily understood by applicants and outside agencies.
- Regularly monitor who we let accommodation to and then review as appropriate our policy and letting targets.

6. POLICY BACKGROUND

This policy has been reviewed taking into account the Scottish Government's Practice Guide on Social Housing Allocations, current legislation and the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter most relevant to this policy are:

7, 8 and 9: Housing options

Social landlords work together to ensure that:

- *people looking for housing get information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about the range of housing options available to them*
- *tenants and people on housing lists can review their housing options.*

Social landlords ensure that:

- *people at risk of losing their homes get advice on preventing homelessness.*

10: Access to social housing

Social landlords ensure that:

- *people looking for housing find it easy to apply for the widest choice of social housing available and get the information they need on how the landlord allocates homes and their prospects of being housed.*

The relevant legislation includes the Equalities Act 2010, Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection)(Scotland) Act 1981, Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, Human Rights Act 1998, Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Housing (Scotland) Act 2010,

Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003, Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2004, Civil Partnership Act 2004. Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006, Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 and the GDPR.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 notes in particular:

- **Before making or altering its rules governing the priority of allocation of housing** a social landlord must consult with applicants, tenants and RTOs and prepare and publish a report on the consultation.

Minor changes to this policy not affecting the “**rules governing the priority of allocation of housing**” may be made without consultation.

7. ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING NEED

The table below outlines how an applicant’s housing need will be assessed and which **Priority Group** applicants will be placed in. “Reasonable preference” is given to those applicants as outlined in the Housing Scotland Act 2014

Housing Need Criteria	Priority Group
<p>i) Overcrowding</p> <p>Overcrowding calculation:</p> <p>The occupancy levels assumed by Thenue are based on the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normally there should be no more than two occupants in any bedroom. • Double bedroom for every adult couple/single person (main applicant) • Two children of the same sex under 13 years old may share a double bedroom. • Two children under 8 years old regardless of sex may share a double bedroom. • A child aged between 8 – 13 years old may not share a bedroom with a child of the opposite sex. • Any remaining members of the household over 13 years old require a separate bedroom. <p>For the purposes of assessment, if a child reaches either 8 years or 13 years within 6 months of the date of application, they are considered to have reached 8 years or 13 years respectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For all calculations, a household including an expectant mother will be considered as if it included the additional child from three months before the birth is due. <p>For households separated due to the lack of availability of suitable housing the assessment is based as if the person was living with the applicant’s household.</p> <p>Owners who apply for rehousing solely based on being</p>	

Housing Need Criteria	Priority Group
<p>overcrowded will only be awarded priority in exceptional circumstances. In other words the fact that the owner is currently living in overcrowded circumstances will not be enough to be awarded priority under this criteria.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Overcrowding by 2 bedrooms or more</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Overcrowding by 1 bedroom</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">High Priority</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Medium Priority</p>
<p>ii) Underoccupation</p> <p>Applicants who live in accommodation with more bedrooms than are required. The criteria to determine occupancy levels for a property will be similar to those used to determine over-crowding.</p> <p>Owners who apply for rehousing solely based on under-occupying their home will only be awarded priority in exceptional circumstances. In other words the fact that the owner is currently living in a property with more bedrooms than required, will not be enough to be awarded priority under this criteria</p> <p>Applicants who are underoccupying their home by more than 1 bedroom</p> <p>Applicants who are underoccupying their home by 1 bedroom</p> <p>Dining rooms and box rooms will not be included as excess to an applicant's requirements.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">High Priority</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Medium Priority</p>
<p>iii) Unsatisfactory Housing</p> <p>a) Where the property is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a dangerous condition, i.e. subject of a closing order or pending major repairs scheme, • Suffering from extensive water penetration or rising damp, rendering the property well below wind and water tight standard, or <p>Note: in the above cases Thenue would usually expect that a <i>Repairing Standard Enforcement Order has been issued under section 24 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006.</i></p> <p>b) Where the property is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requiring substantial repairs, • Experiencing dampness/water penetration in part of the property, or • Subject of a repairs order requiring works to the common areas and/or minor works <p>In order to be prioritised as a result of the above assessment, the applicant must establish that the defects in the building exist and are not being addressed by their landlord within a reasonable timescale.</p> <p>The scale and type of repairs required must adversely affect the</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">High Priority</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Medium Priority</p>

Housing Need Criteria	Priority Group
<p>other person within the locality is able to provide such support.</p> <p>Note: Priority will be given to those applicants who require to travel more than 30 minutes by public transport to give or receive support.</p>	
<p>viii) Employment/Child Care/Education Where an applicant has previously been unemployed and has obtained employment and wishes to move to be nearer that employment. Where an applicant has been transferred by his/her employer and wishes to move to be closer to that employment.</p> <p>ix) Childcare Where parents need daily childcare assistance from relatives or friends because of employment, transport problems, the child's educational needs, or where the child has severe physical disability or severe behavioural problems.</p> <p>x) Education When current housing circumstances affect access to appropriate educational facilities. These may include:</p> <p>Where a child has "severe low incidence disabilities" and their needs are being catered for within a Glasgow City Council school.</p> <p>Where severe disruption to the education of a child is threatened - such as where a family is forced to move out of accommodation and a child is due to sit certificate level examinations within the current school session.</p>	<p>Medium Priority</p> <p>Medium Priority</p> <p>Medium Priority</p>

Housing Need Criteria	Priority Group
<p>xi) Retirement Housing</p> <p>Thenue provides retirement housing to help vulnerable, older people maintain their independence in self-contained housing and out of residential or nursing home care for as long as possible.</p> <p>Retirement housing will normally be allocated to persons who are 60 years old or over whose support and housing assessments demonstrate that the accommodation and support service is appropriate to their needs. The criteria applied to the housing need element of the assessment process will comply with Section 8 of this policy and applicants will be placed within their appropriate Priority Group based on their date of registration.</p> <p>In joint applications only one applicant needs to fulfil the age criteria. Applications will be considered from persons under 60 years where acute medical and support needs can be met by the allocation of retirement housing.</p>	<p>Urgent, Homeless, High, Medium or Standard</p>
<p>xii) Supported Housing</p> <p>Thenue will consider referrals from appropriate agencies seeking to secure rehousing in our supported housing projects for applicants requiring a care and support package. Thenue will require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the applicant to qualify for housing in accordance with the Allocation Policy; • the applicant's needs to be able to be met by the care and support service available within the supported housing project; • the agency to be registered with the Care Inspectorate and be on the local authority's Restricted Standing List of Accredited Providers. <p>The criteria applied to the housing need element of the assessment process will comply with Section 7 of this policy and applicants will be placed within their appropriate Priority Group based on their date of registration.</p>	<p>Urgent, Homeless, High, Medium or Standard</p>
<p>xiii) Domestic Abuse and Harassment</p> <p>Where an applicant is vulnerable as a result of threatened or actual domestic abuse, racial, sectarian, homophobic, transphobic or other harassment Thenue will offer “Like-for Like” housing. This will normally be away from the tenant or applicant's local area. Thenue will seek to satisfy itself that the applicant's situation would be improved by alternative housing. A maximum of two offers of accommodation will be made for all applicant types.</p> <p>By taking a victim led approach, Thenue recognises that no one should live in fear of violence or abuse from a current or former partner. Thenue will provide information and advice on possible</p>	<p>Urgent Priority</p>

Housing Need Criteria	Priority Group
<p>courses of action to respond to the immediate situation and to deal with the longer term. An Information Sheet “Domestic Abuse – Rehousing Advice” will also be issued to applicants which provides a list of appropriate agencies and contact information.</p> <p>Priority will not normally be awarded when the applicant’s registered social landlord or referral agency is not actively pursuing other housing on their behalf.</p> <p>Note: if we have evidence that the harassment is at least partly the result of the victim's own anti-social behaviour we may not award urgent priority. This does not apply to domestic abuse cases.</p>	
<p>xiv) Medical Need</p> <p>Applicants whose ill health is caused or significantly worsened by their current housing conditions and whose condition is likely to be improved by living in other housing.</p> <p>Applicants whose ill health is significantly affected by their current housing conditions and whose condition is likely to be improved by living in other housing.</p> <p>An independent assessment may be requested by Thenue to verify an applicant’s medical circumstances.</p> <p>Note: there are a limited number of illnesses that can be alleviated by a move to a different house. These usually result in ongoing mobility difficulties, caused by the physical properties of the current house.</p> <p>The housing conditions above, will relate mostly to the physical properties of the house and will therefore not normally include conditions that relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness, • Relationship breakdowns, or • Financial difficulties. <p>Medical priority will not usually apply where current accommodation is at ground level, and the house is suitable for the person’s medical needs or has been prioritised for adaptation.</p> <p>In order to be assessed for medical priority, applicants must complete the medical section of the registration form. Other supporting evidence may be asked for and we may carry out a home visit.</p> <p>Applicants placed in medical priority group will normally be offered housing which matches their medical need.</p> <p>Where more than one person in the applicant’s household is placed</p>	<p>High Priority</p> <p>Medium Priority</p>

Housing Need Criteria	Priority Group
<p>in a medical category, only the highest or one (where equal priority has been awarded) medical category will be taken into account.</p> <p>Applicants with a medical priority who consider that their medical circumstances have changed, may submit additional supporting information to Thenue for review.</p>	
<p>xv) Homelessness Section 5 Referrals Group</p> <p>Thenue will deal with homeless applicants in accordance with its obligations under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and Section 5 of Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003.</p> <p>Thenue will co-operate and implement agreed protocols to help the local authority meet its obligations under the relevant Acts.</p>	<p>Homeless Referral Group</p>
<p>xvi) Special Cases</p> <p>The Head of Housing will submit cases to the Executive Team for its consideration.</p> <p>a) A special case is defined as being where an applicant's circumstances are not taken into account within the normal allocation policy or where a combination of factors occur creating a situation that merits special consideration.</p> <p>b) An individual granted priority by the Executive Team will be offered accommodation in accordance with the Board's decision.</p> <p>c) Applicants who refuse two offers of accommodation in accordance with the Executive Team's decision will lose the priority</p> <p>d) Where there is more than one applicant with the same priority qualifying for a specific allocation under this category, they will be considered in order of the date of the decision by the Executive Team.</p>	<p>Urgent Priority</p>
<p>xvii) Guaranteed Rehousing</p> <p>a) Where a Thenue tenant wishes to give up the tenancy in order to move to residential accommodation, hospital, a group tenancy, or to live with a close relative to receive or provide essential support, a guarantee of rehousing with Thenue may be given. Applications must be submitted in writing before the Thenue tenancy is terminated. In these circumstances, any accommodation offered will not normally be in higher demand than the house originally vacated.</p> <p>b) Where a Thenue tenant is residing in a wheelchair designed or wheelchair adapted property and there is no longer a</p>	<p>High Priority</p> <p>Urgent Priority</p>

Housing Need Criteria	Priority Group
<p>need for that type of property within the existing household, and the tenant is willing to accept an offer of a suitable alternative property, the Association will award Urgent Priority. This Priority will be awarded to the tenant for a property which meets their existing household need (unless approved by the Head of Housing).</p>	
<p>xviii) Relationship Breakdown (where still resident together in the family home)</p> <p>a) Thenue will try to respond sympathetically to requests for rehousing or for transfer of tenancy from parties who are the subject of any relationship breakdown.</p> <p>b) Due to restrictions imposed by the size and location of its stock, Thenue may not always be in a position to respond in respect of any application for rehousing in the manner sought by or acceptable to the applicant. In these cases, advice will be given to the applicant on rehousing opportunities via alternative agencies.</p> <p>c) Thenue seeks to provide information to applicants in relation to their status under the terms of the homeless legislation and Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981 and Civil Partnership Act 2004 to enable them to seek advice and assistance.</p> <p>d) Thenue will seek to satisfy itself that a partnership/relationship has existed and is one of marriage; civil partnership, common law, or cohabitation (including same sex relationships).</p> <p>e) Where Thenue is satisfied that a relationship did exist it will require the applicant to provide satisfactory evidence that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the parties have separated as a consequence of the marriage/relationship having irretrievably broken down • there is no alternative accommodation available to the applicant. <p>f) Before considering an offer of rehousing, Thenue will take into account any decisions regarding custody of dependants.</p>	<p>Medium Priority</p>
<p>xix) Applicants in Redevelopment Areas</p> <p>Thenue in helping to rebuild communities may be involved in redevelopment programmes requiring the demolition or improvement of housing.</p> <p>a) Applicants in this group have to be rehoused by Thenue to</p>	<p>Urgent Priority</p>

Housing Need Criteria	Priority Group
<p>enable the redevelopment programme to proceed.</p> <p>b) Applicants who refuse two offers of suitable accommodation will lose their priority under the Urgent Priority Group.</p> <p>c) Where a tenant of a Thenue house is being transferred on account of site development, the refusal of two offers of suitable accommodation (as laid down in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Schedule 2, Part 2) without a reason satisfactory to Thenue will result in Thenue raising proceedings for recovery of possession of the house. The second house which has been offered and refused will be held as alternative accommodation.</p> <p>d) Priority will be awarded to achieve the agreed redevelopment programme and be in the best interests of the Association. Usually the following priorities will apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants living in, or decanted from property in the current phase of demolition or redevelopment. • Tenants living in property in future phases of demolition or redevelopment who have a medical condition which could be alleviated by a move, or are overcrowded. • Tenants living in a close with no other residents. • All other tenants living in properties scheduled for demolition • Within the above categories, applicants will be further prioritised by date of entry to the property. <p>e) Priority may be given to applicants where Thenue has entered into a formal agreement with their landlord to assist with their development programme. The level of priority to be awarded will be approved by the Association's Housing Board of Management.</p>	
<p>xx) Special Cases - Two for One Where two or more tenants of Thenue wish to be rehoused together, and such a move would result in two or more properties becoming available for reletting.</p>	High Priority
<p>xxi) Management Transfers Thenue will temporarily house tenants to alternative accommodation in case of fire, flood, and major repairs.</p> <p>Thenue will consider a tenant's request to make the temporary allocation a permanent let where the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decant property is of similar type, similar or lower demand • Tenant is vulnerable and under occupying their tenancy • Decant is provided for more than 6 months. 	Urgent Priority

Housing Need Criteria	Priority Group
The Head of Housing may also consider a Management Transfer of a tenant where all other alternatives to resolving a serious neighbour dispute have failed.	High Priority
xxii) Referrals Thenue will consider referrals from partner organisations who are operating a supported housing project and whose residents are seeking rehousing to one of Thenue's areas. Referrals made will be considered by the Housing Support Manager on an individual basis and will normally require to satisfy the qualifying criteria set out in this policy. A Letting Plan target for such referrals will be agreed on an annual basis by the Association's Board of Management. The number of referrals rehoused in this category will be reported to the Board of Management.	High Priority
xxiii) Urgent Priority Where Urgent Priority is awarded on the basis of severe harassment or domestic abuse; management transfers or special cases, the applicant may retain the Urgent Priority for a period of up to 6 months. If the applicant has not been rehoused within that period, the Association will review the application and may remove the award of Urgent Priority.	

8 ASSESSMENT OF ACCOMMODATION REQUIRED

When deciding the number of bedrooms needed:

- two children of the same sex under 13 years old may share a double bedroom.
- two children under 8 years old regardless of sex may share a double bedroom.
- a child aged between 8 - 13 years old may not share a bedroom with a child of the opposite sex.
- any remaining members of the household over 13 years old require a separate bedroom.

Offers of large family housing may be made where it improves an applicant's current overcrowding but still leaves them overcrowded by **no more than** one bedroom (as long as it does not result in statutory overcrowding).

Single people or couples will not normally be considered for 3-apartment (2 bedrooms) properties unless

- there are no 2 or 3 person households eligible for consideration,
- there are no 2 apartment properties available in the requested area/s
- they are a Thenue tenant transferring from a larger house due to underoccupation of their existing house
- or Thenue's Board of Management has taken a decision to allow under occupation to minimise future turnover.

9. ALLOCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR THENUE TENANTS

9.1 Household Members

In considering whether or not someone is a member of the household, the following criteria will apply:

- permanent members of a tenant's household are those individuals who are formally registered on the household record form as household members or who have our written permission to live there and will include any dependants where shared access arrangements are in place;
- applicants who are approved by Social Work Services as suitable for fostering, adoption or kinship care, will be assessed as if the dependants are living with the applicant's household.
- lodgers are not considered permanent members of a tenant's household

9.2 Property Condition

Transfer applicants will be advised of any minor or rechargeable repairs, redecoration and required standards of cleanliness that must normally be carried out to bring their property up to a lettable standard before an offer of rehousing can proceed

9.3 Access to Allow Prospective Tenants to View

Thenue aims to pre-allocate as many properties as possible. In this case, therefore, access for prospective tenants will be requested of the outgoing tenant. Notification of the accompanied viewing at a mutually convenient date and time will normally be confirmed in writing to the outgoing tenant.

10. CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES

If an applicant moves from their current accommodation, a fresh application will require to be submitted and will be re-assessed. It is the applicant's responsibility to notify Thenue as soon as possible of any changes of circumstances in order that their application can be re-assessed.

11. ANNUAL REVIEW

Applicants will be asked to re-register for housing annually. Applicants who fail to re-register within four weeks of the date of the re-registration letter will be notified and their application will be cancelled. If the applicant contacts Thenue within 6 months following that cancellation, the application will be reinstated onto the list.

12. OWNERS

As per the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, in the assessment or allocation of housing, we can now take into account whether an applicant owns a property, although there are circumstances where we are required to assist an owner with rehousing. These are summarised below:

- owner cannot secure entry to the property
- where it is probable that occupying the property will lead to abuse
- where it will endanger the health of the occupant

Owners will only be awarded priority for rehousing specifically in relation to being overcrowded or under-occupying in exceptional circumstances. The Housing Support Manager or Area Services & Repairs Manager will be responsible for deciding if priority should be awarded, based on procedural guidance. In all other circumstances owners will be assessed no differently from tenants.

A short SST will be granted to all applicants who still own a property. This will be converted to a Secure Tenancy if the owner is not returning to their property and we have evidence that they have disposed of their interest in the property.

13. LOCAL LETTINGS PLANS

Thenue, with the involvement of Area Associations and Registered Tenant Organisations, will develop Local Lettings Plans to assist with our aim of achieving mixed and sustainable communities. Lettings Plans which are not related to one-off new build developments will have lettings targets agreed by Thenue's Board of Management on an annual basis.

Example of a Letting Plan Target Group: (note: other targets may be agreed from time to time by the Board of Management):

13.1 Working Households

To be included in this targeted group the applicant/s (transfer and waiting list applicants) will have to have been in employment for more than 9 months at the point of offer. If the applicant is a current Thenue tenant seeking a transfer within the same community then Thenue will only approve an allocation under this letting plan where the applicant's current property will be subsequently allocated to a working household applicant.

14. COMMUNITY LOCAL LETTINGS POLICIES

Thenue's Board of Management may approve local letting policies for specific areas.

The Board of Management will:

- Ensure that any local devised policies are consistent with the Association's main Allocations Policy and continue to give reasonable preference to those in the greatest housing need.
- Ensure the involvement of local tenants is in the development of policy objectives not the allocation of individual tenancies.

15. DIFFICULT TO LET AREAS & INDIVIDUAL DIFFICULT-TO-LET PROPERTIES

After 4 refusals, of an appropriate offer, the Area Services & Repairs Manager may authorise an allocation to any applicant who requires and has expressed a specific interest in that type of property in that area.

16. MUTUAL EXCHANGE

16.1 Right to Exchange

Thenue tenants have the right to exchange their tenancy with another tenant of Thenue, or another registered social landlord providing they obtain the written consent of their landlord. Applications should be made to the local Area Services Officer.

Consent to exchange will not be unreasonably withheld, and will normally only be withheld on one or more of the grounds listed in the paragraph below.

16.2 Grounds for Refusing an Exchange

- a) The tenant is under a Court Order giving possession of the property to the Association.
- b) Notice of Proceedings for Possession has been issued for any of the following reasons:
 - The rent is not paid or any other obligation set out in the tenancy agreement has been broken
 - A nuisance is being caused to neighbours by anyone living in the dwelling, or anyone concerned or using it for immoral or illegal purposes
 - Anyone living in the house has damaged it or has damaged communal areas.
 - Anyone living in the house has damaged the Association's furnishings.
- c) The accommodation is substantially larger than needed by the tenant's family.
- d) The accommodation is not suitable to the needs of the tenant and tenant's family.
- e) The accommodation was provided in consequence of the tenant's employment with the Association.
- f) The accommodation is designed to make it suitable for occupation by a physically disabled person, and if the exchange was allowed there would no longer be a disabled person in the house.

Where a tenant is in breach of the tenancy agreement but proceedings for possession have not been started, consent will be given subject to the breach being remedied.

Thenue publicises the Homeswapper Scheme – a national mutual exchange scheme for tenants who wish to exchange their homes.

17. SEX OFFENDERS

Thenue will respond to requests for rehousing by registered sex offenders in line with the Duty To Co-operate Protocol as agreed between Glasgow City Council and Registered Social Landlords.

Thenue will at all times refer to best practice including the Chartered Institute of Housing's Practice Guidance for Local Authority Housing Services and Registered Social Landlords, 2007.

18. SUSPENDING APPLICANTS ON THE HOUSING LISTS & PREVIOUS ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

As per the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 we may put in place a minimum period for a housing application to be in force before an applicant can be eligible for an offer of rehousing.

There are many circumstances eligible for suspensions now in the Act, for example if the applicant or a member of the household moving with them has been guilty of:

- anti-social behaviour,
- harassment,
- anti-social towards employee of social landlord,
- convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment,
- using a house for immoral or illegal purposes,
- an order for recovery of possession has been made,
- previously abandoned tenancy,
- outstanding liability,
- false statements,
- refused one or more offers of rehousing unreasonably.

The maximum period of suspension is set by Scottish Ministers.

This means that an applicant will not be considered for any offers of accommodation during the period of the suspension.

Thenue will not suspend any applicant on the housing lists without due consideration of all the circumstances. Suspensions can be applied in the following circumstances:

- a) *conduct* suspensions which are as a result of an action by the applicant or by a member of the applicant's household. This could include, for example, providing false or misleading information in the application for rehousing, previous anti social behaviour or threatening behaviour towards members of staff or a Thenue tenant's failure to allow access to the property for gas safety inspections or essential major repairs.
- b) *eligibility* suspensions which may, for example, relate to conditions placed on owner occupiers or those with support needs where certain criteria have to be fulfilled before an offer of rehousing proceeds.

Conduct suspensions may only be authorised by the Head of Housing who will have due regard to the Chartered Institute of Housing's Good Practice Document "Suspending Applicants on the Housing Register: A Guide for Housing Professionals" (2002). Suspensions will be kept to a minimum and care will be taken to ensure that all circumstances, including

the consequences of suspension, will be taken into account before a decision is reached. The Head of Housing will also consider:

- the extent to which the conduct is a consequence of acts of omission of people other than the applicant
- the nature, frequency and duration of the conduct
- the effect the conduct is having on other people
- the effect the conduct is having on Thenue's ability to properly maintain a tenant's property

Any applicant being suspended will receive a letter confirming the decision. The letter will detail:

- the reason(s) for the suspension;
- how long the suspension will last} or what action they need to take in order for the suspension to be lifted;
- what representation they can make to have their suspension reviewed; and
- their right of appeal against the decision.

An applicant who is suspended for anti-social behaviour reasons will, at the end of their suspension, be placed in the same priority groups as previously (unless their circumstances have changed) but with a Priority Group date corresponding to the date the suspension was lifted.

An applicant who was previously evicted from a property within a Thenue community for anti-social behaviour will, after a period of suspension only be offered rehousing in future outwith that same community.

As per the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 Thenue may only offer a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy (SSST) to an applicant who has been guilty of anti-social behaviour or harassment in the preceding 3 years.

19. RENT ARREARS OR OTHER TENANCY RELATED DEBT

Applicants who are or have been tenants must have a clear current or former rent account(s) or meet the conditions below:

The amount outstanding for rent is not more than 1/12th of the annual amount payable to the landlord in respect of the tenancy, or where the debt is greater than one month's, the applicant:

- a) Has agreed an arrangement with the landlord for paying the outstanding liability,
- b) Has made payments in accordance with that arrangement for at least three months, and
- c) Is continuing to make such payments.

Thenue may also apply these rules to other tenancy related outstanding debts such as:

- factoring charges
- service charges

- rechargeable repair charges
- court costs

20. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Applicants have the right to see any information which they have provided in connection with their application.

Applicants also have the right to see any information held by Thenue in respect of their housing application unless:

- a) It would disclose another individual who has not consented to disclosure, or
- b) In the opinion of a health professional or Thenue it would be likely to cause serious physical or mental harm to the tenant or any other person.

Thenue respects applicants' right to privacy and will:

- a) Require applicants only to supply information that is required in order to determine their eligibility and housing need in terms of this policy;
- b) Ensure all information held by Thenue in respect of the applicant's housing application will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to a third party without consent unless Thenue has a legal obligation so to do;
- c) Ask for the applicant's permission before making enquiries in relation to current and/or previous tenancies with another landlord, and
- d) Record on computer only information which is necessary for the allocation/assessment process.

21. COMPLAINTS

Thenue has a Complaints Policy which can be used by applicants who wish to complain about any aspect of the allocation process.

22. ROLE OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Thenue will ensure that the role of the Board of Management, in relation to allocations:

- relates to reviewing and altering policy, the monitoring and evaluation of performance and the setting of annual target quotas;
- avoids involvement in the assessment or selection of applicants or in making offers of rehousing;
- approves "special lets" to partner organisations subject to approval if required by the Scottish Housing Regulator; and

23. ALLOCATION OF PROPERTY TO BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF (OR NEAR RELATIVES)

An allocation of accommodation involving members and former members of the Board of Management and staff of Thenue or their "near relative" will be notified to the Management Committee for approval. "Near relatives" in the context means husband, wife, civil partner, father, mother, sister, brother, son, daughter, grandparent or grandchild. Any allocation

made will comply with the criteria set out in the Association's Policy on Control of Payments and Benefits to Committee Members and Staff).

24. PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Thenue will:

- undertake regular monitoring and evaluation of the operation of all aspects of its allocations process to ensure the effective implementation of policy.
- deliver its allocations service in line with its published Service Standards, and
- regularly review a selection of allocations made during the previous 12 months to test compliance with Thenue's Allocation Policy and procedures.

25. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

The Head of Housing will be responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented and that all staff are aware of this policy and briefed on its implementation. The Area & Repairs Services and Housing Support Managers are responsible for ensuring staff follow the policy in respect of lettings. The Housing Support Manager is responsible for the management of the Housing List.

26. INFORMATION & ADVICE FOR APPLICANTS

Thenue will:

- Provide advice and information on available housing options including information on other RSLs, home ownership, etc
- Advise applicants of their position within their Priority Group and overall position on the housing list (if this information is not available online for an applicant we will provide this at least every 3 months on request).
- Provide an annual breakdown of lets with the annual review letter and ensure this information is available on Thenue's website

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy outlines the way in which Thenue Housing will control and manage empty properties within its stock.
- 1.2 Thenue defines a void property as “a habitable dwelling which is on the rent account for which there is no current tenancy”. This means that a void property is created :
- Where a tenant has formally terminated the tenancy by written notice,
 - On the death of a tenant where there is no successor in accordance with our Policy on Succession,
 - By Abandonment of a Tenancy, where the appropriate legal notices have been served in accordance with our Abandonment Procedure,
 - By eviction where the Association has completed the relevant court action,
 - Following the hand over of a new scheme where the house has been completed but has not been allocated.
- 1.3 The Scottish Housing Regulator defines a low demand property (void or occupied) as a property where one or more of the following symptoms are exhibited:
- a small or non-existent waiting list for the property
 - tenancy offers on a dwelling are frequently refused for reasons other than personal reasons
 - higher than normal rates of tenancy turnover for a property in an area.

2. POLICY BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Scottish Social Housing Charter most relevant to this policy is:

4: Quality of housing

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- *tenants’ homes, as a minimum, meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) by April 2015 and continue to meet it thereafter, and when they are allocated, are always clean, tidy and in a good state of repair.*

13: Value for money

Social landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that:

- *tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.*

- 2.22 The following legislation applies to the management of void properties:

- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Gas Safety (Installation and use) Regulations 1994

3. POLICY OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 Thenue aims to minimise the number of empty properties in its stock, the length of time that they are empty and void cost repairs, and at the same time try to create and maintain sustainable communities.

4. EFFECTIVE VOID MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 We will ensure the effective management of void properties by:
- Involving tenants and other service users in setting standards (for example relet standards, number of offers).
 - Pre-allocating properties before properties become empty wherever possible.
 - Taking action to minimise the number of refusals.
 - Putting in place cost effective void security where necessary.
 - Minimising void repair expenditure whilst not deterring acceptances.
 - Achieving a balance between works which need to be carried out prior to letting a property and those which can be done once the tenant is living in the property.
 - Taking the opportunity during the void period to undertake where possible programmed major and cyclical repairs (including gas safety inspections) rather than wait until the property is next tenanted.
 - Setting targets and monitor performance for each aspect of dealing with empty properties.
 - Benchmarking performance against that achieved by other comparable landlords.
 - Seeking to continually improve the service.
- 4.2 **Termination of Tenancies**
- We will have in place effective processes so that we begin void property procedures as soon as the notice of tenancy termination is received, rather than acting only when the keys are received.
 - We will provide the outgoing tenant with information explaining the procedure for terminating the tenancy and their obligations.
 - We will be flexible with tenants transferring between Thenue properties to allow reasonable time to move between the 2 properties.
- 4.3 **Inspection and Repairs to Vacated Properties**
- We will:
- Inspect all properties before reletting and where possible make an initial inspection before the outgoing tenant vacates, so as to give time to organise any repairs and to advise the tenant of the need to leave the dwelling in a clean state and to discuss the payment of rent due.
 - Ensure that property inspections are undertaken promptly within target timescales.
 - Recharge former tenants for property not disposed of and for any remedial work resulting from tenant damage, in line with our rechargeable repair policy.
 - Expect our contractor/s to complete void repairs within the following periods (based on the volume of work required):
 - PPV1 safety checks/lock change/window catches (2 working days)

- PPV2 all other void works (maximum 8 working days, but with an average of 5 working days)

- Ensure that void property is regularly inspected and visited as part of our void maintenance and letting processes. Our average turnaround of void properties is around 18 days. Where a property is void for longer than 18 days (e.g. because it is more difficult to let, it is undergoing major works or is being held for change of use or demolition) we may undertake recorded visits every 7 days if required. we may where required also separately record our visit to tenants in adjacent properties as a duty of care to neighbouring residents; giving them an opportunity to feedback on issues of concern about the vacant property.

4.4 **Low Demand Properties**

We will minimise the incidence of “low demand properties” by

- Introducing where appropriate local lettings plans which consider the needs of individuals and the neighbourhood and which identify potential areas or properties of low demand in advance of their becoming vacant
- Where appropriate advertising to increase potential customers.
- Seeking, where appropriate, Board of Management approval for a change of use, redesign or demolition of the properties (the Head of Housing may suspend lettings to a particular or group of difficult to let properties for a period pending approval at the next Board meeting).
- Considering furnished lets for new tenants.
- Using incentives to attract prospective tenants e.g., decoration vouchers/rent free periods.

4.5 **Abandoned Properties**

We will have clear procedures for dealing with properties that appear, or are reported, to have been abandoned to ensure that contact is made with the tenant or next of kin wherever possible.

5. **LETTABLE STANDARD**

- 5.1 We have outlined at Appendix 1 our lettable standard for our properties. This will be reviewed on a regular basis and amended as required.
- 5.2 Unless agreed with the incoming tenant, relevant repairs to meet the lettable standard (shown at Appendix 1) will be attended to prior to date of entry. Some works to improve or upgrade kitchen units, windows etc may only have temporary repairs made as appropriate if a major replacement project for the component is due.-

6. **TRAINING**

- 6.1 Staff dealing with the management of void properties will be given training appropriate to their needs and to the needs of the Association to ensure void periods

are kept to a minimum and an acceptable lettable standard for our properties is achieved and maintained.

7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

We will:

- Set void management targets annually and provide quarterly reports on void management to the Board of Management

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 Area Associations and other tenant groups will be consulted on this Policy.

9. RESPONSIBILITY

9.1 The Head of Housing is responsible for the monitoring and review of this policy.

9.2 The Area Services & Repairs Manager is responsible for ensuring the implementation of this policy and supporting procedures by their staff, for the maintenance of all the necessary records on our IT system to enable the compilation of regular reports on performance and for the monitoring of performance within their own team.

9.3 Relevant Area Services Housing Officers are responsible for day-to-day management of voids including inspecting voids, instructing void repairs and allocating vacant properties.

Thenue Housing Association

Void Management Minimum

Lettable Standards

The following standards outline the minimum acceptable condition of voids at the point of reletting and prior to tenancy sign up.

Area	NEW Minimum Standard
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property to be in clean and tidy condition. Contractor will wipe down all hard surfaces. Floors to be swept and carpets hoovered if remaining. • Any furniture, white goods or other items belonging to the previous tenant to be removed • No mail/papers/leaflets behind the door • A copy of valid Energy Performance Certificate will be on display in property.
Gas and Electricity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meters read and recorded. • Gas: All houses with gas central heating will have an up to date gas safety certificate which will be issued to the new tenant and held o file. • Gas appliances which are integrated (fires, cookers, hobs etc) to have been safety checked and in working order. • Electrics: A satisfactory certificate for electrical inspection will be obtained (includes electric shower test if installed). • Smoke alarm and CO2 detector: will have been tested as part of the gas safety check • radiators to be securely attached to walls.
Electrical fittings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All electrical enhancements will be returned to standard (light fittings, sockets, switches, etc) and outgoing tenant recharged. • All non-integrated white goods (inc cookers) removed • All extractor fans to be operational.
Garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleared of rubbish prior to the new tenant moving in, or special uplift

	<p>organised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grass cut, shrubs and hedges trimmed.
Windows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully operational with safety catches in place. • All glass panes complete and crack free (replacements on order). • Curtains and blinds remaining in good condition.
Front Door	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully operational with no obvious signs of drafts/water ingress. • Minimum mortice and Yale locks which are secure • Minimum 2 sets of keys and fobs. • Letterbox and backflap on all front doors • minimum one new secure lock fitted to external doors. • Controlled door entry fully operational.
Back Door and Patio Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully operational with no obvious signs of drafts/water ingress. • Minimum secure lock • Minimum 2 sets of keys
Communal Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum 2 sets of keys and 2 fobs for main entry doors • Minimum of 1 key for other locks (bin store, cupboards etc)
Internal Doors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All doors should be intact, non- glazed (unless safety glass) and operating properly. • Door handles must be secure • Doorstops to be fitted as standard (wall mounted and may be post let.) • Bathroom doors have a locking device
Floors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loose/missing floorboards secured/replaced • Carpets uplifted unless otherwise agreed with in-coming tenant. • Laminate flooring uplifted only if in poor condition (becomes responsibility of incoming tenant for access for repairs and for maintenance) • Floor surface to be even to allow flooring to be laid
Skirtings and Facings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-secured and filled where necessary • Missing or badly damaged skirtings/facings replaced

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • surfaces washed down.
Kitchen Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damaged drawers/doors/units repaired or kitchen replaced (ONLY if property in kitchen replacement programme) • Hinges replaced/adjusted where necessary • Damaged worktops repaired or replaced • All shelving secure and intact (including inside units). • All surfaces washed down • Taps operational • Sealant replaced where required
Bathroom Suite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free from significant staining • No significant chips or cracks on sanitary ware • All surfaces washed down • Toilet seat in place and intact. • WC operational • Taps operational • Sealant replaced where required • In cases of extreme damage and UNLESS in bathroom re-placement programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Y Tiling and plasterwork: removed/replastered & replaced with one row of tiles. Y Bathroom suite: If one component of a coloured suite damaged this is replaced with same colour or with white if colour not available. Where two items damaged all items replaced with white.
Shower Unit (if in place)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shower screen or rail must be intact • Shower checked and must be fully functioning or removed. • All surfaces washed down
Decoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All rooms in non-damaged decorative order or prepared for decoration • Redecoration vouchers considered • Walls free from holes and cracks

Attic Space,
sheds, cellars
and
outbuildings

- Visual inspection carried out to ensure all spaces cleared of items.