



alpha

shaped around you

Allocations & Lettings Policy

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A charitable community benefit society registered in England and Wales number 16317R.
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1. Introduction

Alpha Living is a specialist housing provider based in the North of England. We are committed to providing good quality and affordable housing for older people and those in need. How we manage allocations is fundamental to the service we provide.

We ensure a high quality and value for money service is delivered to our customers, whilst recognising our responsibilities and duties as a provider of social housing. Currently we manage approximately 960 apartments in 11 Local Authorities, and work closely with our local authority partners to meet housing need obligations and to use our housing effectively.

2. Policy Statement

Alpha Living is committed to ensuring that properties are allocated fairly, efficiently and without prejudice or discrimination.

This policy applies to Housing for Older People (formerly referred to as Sheltered/Retirement Housing) and Extra Care Developments, although there may be some procedural differences throughout. In some areas, from time to time we may have local lettings policies which help us to meet these needs.

3. Objectives

The key objectives of the policy are to:

- Ensure that those who have the greatest need for housing are prioritised appropriately
- Ensure properties are let with due regard to legal and regulatory obligations
- Ensure that properties are let quickly and efficiently, minimising void rent loss and maximising income to provide best value
- Create balanced and sustainable communities

4. Eligibility

People over the age of 55 (some developments are restricted to over 60 years) can apply to become an Alpha Living tenant.

Consideration will be given to people under these ages where a housing need means that Housing for Older People is the most suitable, offering appropriate support.

This only applies to individuals in exceptional circumstances who with an acceptable enhancement of support can still live independently with this age group.

5. Qualifying Criteria

We have 3 qualifying criteria which potential residents must meet. This criteria applies equally to Local Authority nominations and direct applicants, these are:

- **Age Criteria** - anyone over 55 years can apply for Alpha Living properties, except those properties with specific age restrictions.

- **Ability to live independently** - any potential resident should live independently, with any reasonable care and support as required.

If an applicant does not have full mental capacity, we will still offer suitable housing (where available) so long as they can be supported to maintain their tenancy. The tenancy would need to be signed on the resident's behalf by their attorney (under Power of Attorney) or deputy (under Court of Protection).

- **Satisfactory housing and behaviour history** - Alpha Living does not automatically exclude any applicant from access to housing and will review every application on its merits. Applicants who fit into one or more of the following categories may not be given access to a Alpha Living home.
 - applicants with debts to Alpha Living, however they arose
 - applicants with rent and property related debts to other landlords
 - applicants whose previous tenancy with any landlord was poorly conducted
 - applicants who have attempted to obtain or have obtained, a Alpha Living tenancy by providing false or inaccurate information or who have omitted relevant information from their application form
 - applicants who have previously been abusive or threatening to Alpha Living staff

Any rejected applicants will be provided with the reason or reasons why a judgement has been made to refuse their housing request.

Other factors which will be taken into consideration are:

- A history of anti-social behaviour.
- Unspent criminal convictions, reporting obligations, pending criminal action and risk prevention/harm orders.
- A history of possession proceedings against them.

The above is not exhaustive and all applicants and transfer applicants will have their applications reviewed and assessed before Alpha Living progresses or refuses an application.

6. Local Authority Nominations

Within the Local Authority of Wirral, specific agreements are in place:

- Housing for Older People - 50% nomination agreement in place
- Extra Care Development(s) - 100% nomination agreement in place

7. Local Authority and Partnership Agreements

Alpha Living has agreements with other local authorities and/or partnership agencies to let vacant properties to people nominated by them to ensure we meet our responsibilities as a social housing landlord.

8. Transfer List Applicants

Applicants wishing to transfer to either a different development or within their current one must be able to show good cause, examples of which include (but are not exhaustive):

- There is an immediate risk of serious injury in their current home
- There is a medical need which can only be improved by rehousing
- They have lost their homes either temporarily or permanently because of an incident such as a fire or flood

Transfer applicants must be able to provide supporting documentation to evidence the reason for requiring a transfer.

They must have held a tenancy for a minimum of 12 months and not be subject to any legal action for rent arrears or tenancy breaches (except in exceptional circumstances which must be agreed by the Senior Leadership Team).

A satisfactory property inspection will be undertaken and any repairs to the property must be completed before a transfer can go ahead. All costs relating to repairs are the responsibility of the outgoing resident (other than statutory requirements).

9. Mutual Exchanges

Alpha Living will facilitate mutual exchange of properties when requested, subject to the following conditions being met by both parties:

- Both tenants have the written consent of their respective landlords
- The tenants have either secure or assured periodic tenancies
- There are no breaches of tenancy conditions or rent arrears

Applicants who wish to undertake a Mutual Exchange should contact the Customer Experience Team for details.

10. Waiting List

Alpha Living maintains a waiting list for each individual development. This is reviewed regularly.

11. Verification

All applicants must provide the following to show that they are eligible for housing:

- Proof of National Insurance number
- 2 x Proof of ID (passport, picture driving licence, birth certificate, benefit award letter, picture ID)
- Proof of Income (wage slips or benefit entitlement details)
- 2 x References (including one reference from current or previous landlord)
- Proof of Right to Rent
 - (The Immigration Act 2014 (part 3, chapter 1) places a duty on a landlord (or a tenant taking in a lodger) to carry out a 'right to rent' check on each letting. Failure to comply can result in a civil penalty.

It is also an offence punishable with up to five years in prison if the landlord (including a director, manager or secretary) lets a property knowing or having reasonable cause to believe the applicant does not have the right to rent ([Immigration Act 2014, s.33A-33C](#)).

12. Assessment & Prioritisation

All applicants must meet the qualifying criteria set out in the policy and will be required to undertake affordability and risk assessments. These will include information on an applicant's medical and social needs. They will be used to help make an informed decision on their suitability for rehousing. They also provide assurance to both Alpha Living and the applicant that they are tenancy ready and allow for an informed decision on appropriate affordable accommodation.

Alpha Living operates a date order system; however, priority will be given to those who meet the qualifying criteria and are:

- At immediate risk of serious injury in their current accommodation
- Statutory homeless
- Victims of domestic abuse
- Experiencing overcrowding
- Under occupancy (and impacted by the Welfare Reform Act 2012)
- Disrepair

Owner occupiers are considered where applicants can evidence:

- They are unable to afford home repairs
- Their home is no longer suitable for their needs
- There is less than £60,000 equity in the home

13. Offers of Accommodation

Offers will be made using the criteria outlined within this policy. Applicants will be matched to properties which as closely as possible reflect the applicants wants and needs, for example existing suitable adapted properties. Occasionally Alpha Living may need to allocate properties 'out of turn' to meet local needs or to ensure a balance of a community or to make the best use of Alpha Living's housing. Any such letting must be authorised by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

All new tenants are expected to pay one month's rent in advance upon sign up.

14. Types of Property - Studios, one and two-bedroom accommodation

We will seek to maximise the occupancy of our properties by considering the household makeup and size of property.

If a two-bedroom property becomes vacant, those applicants with the greatest need for a second bedroom will be considered first, similarly, a two-person (one bedroom) property will be prioritised for couples.

15. Housing of Former Employees of Alpha Living

Alpha will not normally offer housing in its developments to retiring colleagues. We will provide support for any retiring colleague who requires housing, this will include supporting applications to other providers. In exceptional circumstances a retiring employee can be considered for priority housing by Alpha Living however this must be approved by two members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Ex colleagues seeking priority status must meet the qualifying criteria as with any applicant.

16. Right to Appeal

Applicants have the right to appeal any decision made by Alpha Living officers in relation to lettings and should in the first instance contact the Customer Experience Team.

17. Monitoring

A periodic review will be undertaken with monitoring and spot checks to ensure that Alpha Living's Allocations & Lettings policy and processes are in place and being followed.

The policy will be reviewed by the Resident Review Group at the earliest opportunity and a full review will be undertaken every two years.

18. Equality, diversity and inclusion

Alpha Living believes that all people should be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including, nationality, ethnic or national origins), religion, belief or non-belief, sex, or sexuality or by association with someone with any of these characteristics or perception of having any of these characteristics and welcomes applications from all sections of the community.

Alpha is committed to promoting diverse and happy neighbourhoods. All reasonable assistance and help will be given in completing an application e.g. application in a different language or font size, or where there are literacy issues.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken to ensure issues of diversity and inclusion have been taken into consideration when making decisions that could have disproportionate impacts on individuals or groups protected under the Equality Act 2010.

19. Review

The policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if deemed necessary resulting from the performance monitoring process. The next full review will be conducted in October 2023. However, continuous amendments will be made as necessary and recorded through the amendment log.

Amendments Log

Date	Details of Amendment	Approved