

Allocations Policy

Introduction

An effective and fair nominations and allocation policy is essential to the creation of a stable, sustainable community; Moseley and District Churches Housing Association (M&D) is committed to this ideal.

By allocating housing that is appropriate and fit for the needs of residents, people will be encouraged to stay in their homes and a sustainable community will develop.

The Association's Aims

The principal purpose of M&D is to provide housing for people in need of housing but do not have the means to other housing e.g owner occupation.

M&D aims to:

- Provide existing tenants with the opportunity to transfer to other suitable accommodation.
- Provide existing tenants with suitable alternative accommodation if it is not reasonably possible for them to remain in occupation.
- Assist tenants who wish to exchange their property with other tenants of M&D or from another registered Housing Association or a local authority.
- Provide a housing service for others in need by means of an applicant waiting list.
- Work in conjunction with other local Housing Associations who are members of the Domestic Violence Protocol, in order to give priority to re-housing victims of domestic violence.
- To work with the Local Authority and support local housing strategies

Confidentiality

All information provided to M&D in connection with an application or transfer will remain confidential between the applicant / transferee and M&D, as regulated by the Data Protection Act.

Source of applicants

- Applicants will be considered for housing based on priorities formulated within a: points, bedroom queue and date order system.

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- Whilst applications from people aged between 16 and 18 years will be considered in exceptional circumstances, normally allocations will only be made to applicants 18 years of age and over.
- Applicants who are not eligible for housing will be given advice and assistance in order to help them obtain housing from other sources.
- M&D recognises the importance of providing accommodation which meets the needs of people who are seeking to live more independently having spent some time in supported accommodation. Consequently, M&D will seek to make it a priority where possible to rehouse those people who need to move out of its directly managed supported accommodation. We will also seek to prioritise those who wish to access move-on accommodation from other support providers.
- Outside agencies may be contacted, with the applicant's permission, in order to obtain help to provide housing or temporary shelter if they are not eligible to be housed by M&D.
- If an applicant is not eligible for housing and the officer dealing with the case believes there is an adequate cause for concern for the applicants, or their families health or welfare, s/he may, without the applicant's permission, contact any appropriate agency. The agency concerned will be advised of the applicant's circumstances and advice will be sought in order to safeguard the applicant's welfare and health.
- M&D will accept direct referrals from other local Housing Associations who are members of the Domestic Violence Protocol, in order to re-house victims of domestic violence.
- M&D will honour its commitment to the local authority by offering a minimum of 50% of its general needs vacant properties (not including transfer cases) for nominations.

Nominations (referrals)

Section 170 of the Housing Act 1996 requires Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to co-operate to such an extent as is reasonable in the circumstances, in offering accommodation to people with priority on the local authority's housing register.

The Housing Corporation requires Housing Associations to make available at least 50% of their general needs tenancies of publicly funded stock to nominees of the local authority.

Nomination arrangements have been agreed with the local authority in line with the above requirements, which M&D considers to be appropriate, having regard to the housing situation in its locality.

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M&D will also accept referrals from voluntary organisations working with special needs groups. Applications will be through either the waiting list or direct referral to the schemes.

M&D will, when dealing with nominations, work within the Data Protection Act and will follow legislation laid down regarding statutory homeless cases. M&D will consider each nomination individually. The decision whether or not to house a nominee will be a decision for M&D alone.

M&D will liaise and work with the Local Authority and other housing organisations and will, as far as it is consistent with the charitable objectives of M&D, assist the Local Authority in meeting local housing needs.

Procedures will be implemented to ensure the validity of an application, any past history/previous tenancies with M&D, family composition, housing need and that other details regarding the application are correct.

Transfers

All residents of M&D will be considered for transfer based on priorities within the banding system and housing availability.

All tenants will be accepted onto the waiting list, however, will not be offered a transfer if they:

- Owe any monies to M&D and preferably have had a clear rent account for a minimum period of 3 months (excluding residents who have fallen into arrears due to delays in payment of Housing Benefit).
- Tenants who have been engaged in serious anti social behaviour over the previous 2 years, which has warranted legal action, will not normally be transferred.
- Exceptions may be made for the priority groups where the Allocations Panel sanctions a transfer.

Supported Housing and Care Schemes

To ensure that residents receive the support they need to live independent lives, M&D has procedures in place to carry out 'Needs Assessments' and to produce 'Support Plans'.

By carrying out needs assessments for both existing residents and potential residents, M&D will be able to identify both the level of support needed and support/care packages already in place. The details of needs assessments will be recorded in writing.

The purpose of carrying out the assessments is to ensure appropriate support is put in place and not to exclude potential residents from allocation. However, it may not be possible to assist some people where:

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- Specialist care/support is needed
- Other agencies (Social Services, Health Authority) are involved and recommend alternative support/care
- It may cause harm or danger to the resident and/or other residents and staff

There is a right of appeal against any decision made in relation to allocations and the appeals process is detailed in this policy.

Allocations to properties

M&D will try to ensure that the size of property allocated is suitable for the household size concerned and that, as far as possible, children of different sexes over the age of 8 do not have to share a room.

When medical circumstances dictate, larger properties than those that would normally be allocated may be provided, dependent on property availability.

Where a transfer or application has been made by:

- Board members of M&D, co-opted members or anyone who has been a member within the last 12 months.
- Staff of M&D, any managing agents employed or their close relatives.

Special authority is required for both accepting onto the list and any subsequent allocations made to these groups from M&D's Senior Management Team and Operations Committee.

Allocating properties will be made in order of: priority, points and date on the list (Appendix 1).

Exclusions

Certain applicants may be excluded from the waiting list, in accordance with Housing Corporation Regulatory Code and subsequent circulars:

- Home owners with capital to allow them to meet their housing need
- Anyone who owes a debt to M&D (former tenants), other Housing Associations, Local Authorities or other landlords where there is no agreement in place to pay the debt.
- Anyone who has been evicted from their home by a Housing Association, Local Authority or other landlords, or who has a history of serious anti social behaviour, which would have

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been likely to have warranted legal proceedings, where the anti social behaviour has taken place during the last 2 years

- Anyone who has unspent convictions for relevant offences such as drug dealing, prostitution
- Fails to provide the necessary documents required to verify their identification and/or other circumstances
- Applicants who have been evicted because of harassment during the previous 2 years, former tenants who have been evicted, and who are deemed to have made themselves intentionally homeless

There is a right of appeal to the Allocations Panel for any person excluded from the waiting list.

When excluding people from the list, the Association will fully explain the reason and give appropriate advice to assist them finding alternative accommodation or re-applying to M&D at a later date.

Asylum seekers, refugees and foreign students

People who have been granted leave to remain without recourse to public funds are eligible to join the Housing Register but need to be questioned as to their ability to pay rent if they are offered a tenancy. These people are classed as 'persons subject to immigration control' rather than asylum seekers or refugees.

Size and Category of Accommodation offered

M&D wishes to optimise the use of its stock and offer homes of a suitable size to meet housing need and the needs of individual applicants.

The following table is guidance on how M&D will normally allocate empty properties, any exception outside these parameters are to be agreed by the Operations Director:

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Property Type	Qualifiers
Adapted Property for Disabled	People with specific needs supported by Social Services or Medical Priority
Supported Housing Schemes	Single People requiring the relevant support

Property Type	Minimum Level of Occupancy	Maximum Level of Occupancy
Bedsit	1 adult	1 adult
1 bed 2 person flat	1 adult	2 adults
2 bed 3 person flat	Single adult and one child or 2 adults	2 adults 1 child
2 bed 4 person house	1 adult & 1 child any age	2 adults - spouse or partner & 2 children same sex
3 bed 4 person house	1 adult & 2 children - any age or sex	2 adults - spouse or partner & 2 children any age, any sex
3 bed 5 person house	1 adult & 3 children any age, any sex	2 adults - spouse or partner & 3 adult relations
3 bed 6 person house	1 adult & 4 children	2 adults - spouse or partner & 4 adult relations
4 bed 5 person house	1 adult and 4 children	2 adults – spouse or partner & 3 adults relations
4 bed 6 person house	1 adult and 5 children	2 adults – spouse or partner & 2 adults 4 adult relations
4 bed 7 person house	1 adult and 5 children	2 adults - spouse or partner & 5 adult relations
4 bed 8 person house	1 adult and 6 children	2 adults – spouse or partner & 6 adult relations
5 bed 8 person house	1 adult and 6 children	2 adults – spouse or partner & 6 adult relations

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5 bed 9 person house	1 adult and 7 children	2 adults – spouse or partner & 7 adult relations
5 bed 10 person house	1 adult and 8 children	2 adults – spouse or partner & 8 adult relations
6 bed 10 person house	1 adult and 8 children	2 adults – spouse or partner & 8 adult relations
6 bed 11 person house	1 adult and 9 children	2 adults – spouse or partner & 9 adult relations
6 bed 12 person house	1 adult and 10 children	2 adults – spouse or partner & 10 adult relations

If there is surplus housing stock, the occupancy levels will be reconsidered and where possible extended, to allow allocations to households, other than those listed above. Where it is considered appropriate under occupation of properties will be permitted

Where there are two children of the same sex, one of whom is 11 years old or older and there is an age gap of five years or more, accommodation with separate bedrooms will be offered, if possible.

Carers of disabled people will be considered as a member of the family or household if they are registered as carers with the Council's Social Services, and they are required to live in. In such cases, the carers will be allocated a single room.

(This list is not definitive).

Under Occupation

Throughout the course of a tenancy there are likely to be changes in the household's composition, e.g. children grow up and leave home, or elderly relatives may move in due to dependency on the family. These changes are expected and recognised and will be taken into account on the tenant transfer request details.

M&D will make best use of its stock by:

- Where appropriate, monitoring changes in household composition leading to under occupation.
- Providing alternative suitable accommodation where under occupation occurs.
- Discussing the need to move property with the tenant concerned where there is under occupation and particular demand for this type of property.

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- Listening to the needs of and being sensitive to the tenants' situation, taking into account how under occupation has occurred.
- Taking into account the circumstances that caused and for how long a period of under occupancy may occur, e.g., where a family member/s is/are imprisoned, where family members are away for periods of time in the Armed Forces but the tenancy is the main or permanent address.

Where an M&D tenant wishes to move from a house to a flat due to under occupation M&D will pay for the cost of the removal and to disconnect/re-connect cookers and washing machines in order to provide an incentive for the resident to free up family accommodation. Any payments will be at the discretion of the Operations Director.

Direct Exchanges

- M&D will assist tenants who wish to move by encouraging the use of the Direct Exchange system. M&D will also link with other housing associations where possible to allow our residents access to those from other associations wishing to exchange properties.
- Details of direct exchanges may be advertised in M&D's office
- A system for exchanging with local authority tenants will be implemented
- Consent will be given to exchanges at the discretion of M&D and will not be unreasonably withheld
- All direct exchanges will be dealt with in accordance with M&D's Equal Opportunities Policy.

General

- Any transfers or applications that have been made 3 offers in the previous 12 months will be put on hold pending a review of their requirements and M&D's ability to achieve this. All withdrawals from the list without the persons consent will be authorised by the Housing Services Manager.
- Applicants who are not awarded any points will not be accepted onto the waiting list but will be given appropriate advice on other options.
- Transfers will be accepted onto the list without any points, however, will not be eligible for a move if they owe money to M&D and/or not maintaining regular repayments.

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- All transfer and applicant requests will be processed within 28 days (depending on receipt of all information).
- Single people should be added to both the bedsit and one bedroom queue
- A schedule to indicate thresholds for the bedroom queues has been developed (appendix 2) to enable the opening and closing of the waiting list at the discretion of the Operations Director.
- There will be an annual review of all transfer and applicants.
- M&D will give due consideration to the adoption of local or sensitive letting approaches/policies

Appeals Process

M&D will ensure that housing and transfer applicants have the right to appeal against decisions at every stage of the procedure. Appeals relating to the banding that the application has been awarded or other aspects of the Allocations Policy will be dealt with through the Allocations Panel. Appeals should be made in writing within 14 calendar days of receiving M&D's decision.

Housing and transfer applicants also have recourse to the Complaints Procedure if they are dissatisfied with services they have received or have failed to receive from the staff of M&D.

The Appeals Procedure will have three stages:

- 1) The applicant has the right to take up their case with the Housing Services Manager. Appeals will be acknowledged within two working days, and investigated and replied to within 10 working days.
- 2) If the applicant is still not satisfied and believes their application has been dealt with incorrectly, an appeals panel made up of senior management will meet. The panel will sit and provide a written reply within 10 working days.
- 3) If the applicant is still not satisfied, they may take their case to the Independent Housing Ombudsman.

This process applies to both transfer and applicant cases

Review

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The allocations process will be audited on a regular basis in order to ensure that it is providing the necessary service for residents and applicants and that the allocation process continues to be done in a fair way that complies with M&D's Equal Opportunities Policy. A record of all applicant and transfer requests will be kept.

Tenants and applicants may view M&D's policy and procedure guide at M&D's office and copies can be made available if requested.

This policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years.

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