

# **Allocations and Nominations Policy and Procedure for Mendell Court and Willow Bank Extra Care Housing Scheme in Wirral**

## **1. Purpose of Procedure**

This document details the policy and procedure by which people applying for extra care accommodation at Mendell Court and Willow Bank Extra Care Housing Scheme in Wirral are assessed and, if eligible, allocated appropriate available accommodation, care and support. These two schemes are owned by Housing 21.

The process is managed by the Allocations Panel consisting of key partners in the scheme who all have an important role in ensuring that both initial and subsequent lettings and ongoing voids are managed efficiently and effectively. Key partners represented at the Allocations Panel include Housing 21, Department of Adult Social Services (DASS), Wirralhomes, NHS Wirral and the care provider for each scheme.

The Panel will meet monthly or more frequently if required; however provision is made within the procedure to “fast track” the process for applicants who might otherwise be referred to residential care or whose discharge from hospital is delayed because of accommodation, care and support issues.

## **2. Extra Care Housing**

Extra Care Housing offers residents the security and privacy of their own home, a range of facilities on the premises and 24 hour care services. In order to maintain a balanced community, residents will have a range of dependency levels which are reflected in the care and support service specification and are as follows;

- 30% of residents who require low levels of care and support
- 30% of residents who require medium levels of care and support
- 40 % of residents who require high levels of care and support (i.e. alternative to residential care)

## **3. The Schemes**

**Mendell Court** is an extra care housing scheme located at:

New Chester Road,  
Bromborough  
Wirral  
CH 62 7JL

The scheme consists of a range of communal facilities and the following accommodation:

16 x 1 bedroom flats  
33 x 2 bedroom flats.

Of which 37 are for rent and 12 are for shared ownership / Homebuy.

**Willow Bank** is an extra care housing scheme located at:

Willow Mews  
Gorsey Lane  
Wallasey  
Wirral  
CH44 4EZ

The scheme consists of bungalows and flats with a range of communal facilities and the following mix of accommodation:

For rent:

12 x 2 bed bungalows

23 x 2 bed flats

8 x 1 bed flats

For shared ownership / Homebuy:

7 x 2 bed bungalows

20 x 2 bed flats

#### **4. Nominations Agreement**

There is a nomination agreement in place between Wirral Council and Housing 21 for the accommodation available for social rent and those for shared ownership / Homebuy. A nomination agreement is where the housing provider, in this case Housing 21, has entered into a contract to allocate a certain number of properties to applicants whose details are supplied by another organisation, in this case Wirral Council.

For these two schemes, the Council, via the Allocations Panel will be entitled to 100% nomination rights on the first let of a property and 100% nomination rights for subsequent reletting of void properties. Should the Allocations Panel not confirm nominations to Housing 21 with x weeks/days from a vacancy occurring, then Housing 21 may exercise its right to make an allocation,

however the suitability of the applicant must be agreed with the Allocations Panel.

Housing 21 will make offers of a tenancy within two weeks of a nomination being made by the Panel.

## **5. Eligibility Criteria**

The extra care scheme is designed to accommodate people who need to be able to access care and support over a 24 hour period based upon assessed individual need and therefore not all interested applicants will qualify for housing at these two schemes.

Couples are eligible for Extra care where one or both meet the criteria outlined below (If only one of the couple meet the criteria the spouse or partner of the applicant would normally be aged 50 or over and will be considered on a case by case basis).

To be eligible for Extra Care housing, applicants;

- Must have a have a local connection with Wirral through residence, family or employment and will need to be aged 55 years or over (however, someone below this age with a long term disability, for example a stroke will also be considered for the rented units on a case by case basis) and
- Will have a combination of housing, support or care needs, which could include requiring assistance with daily living tasks. This could include meeting the eligibility criteria for the Department of Adult Social Services (DASS) "Fair Access to Care Services " or
- Be a carer aged 55 years or over with a son, daughter or dependant with a learning/physical disability who requires care and support

The criteria will be applied flexibly and will be person-centred (i.e. focusing on the individual and the principles of respect, dignity and choice). It is anticipated that the scheme will suit people who:

- Have a positive attitude towards retaining or regaining their independence
- Are awaiting discharge from residential/nursing/hospital or other care setting.
- Have care and support needs due to a range of difficulties or disabilities as identified by a DASS or community nurse assessment (Mendell Court only) or
- Require assistance with their daily living tasks and/or personal care as identified by a DASS assessment, and /or
- Meet qualifying extra care criteria or have caring/support responsibilities to an adult son/daughter/dependant with a learning/ physical/sensory disability and
- Are ordinarily resident within Wirral. Under some circumstances, applications from outside the area may be considered. This may be, for example because the applicant has existing connections within Wirral

which may assist their future care needs. However preference will normally be given to applicants within Wirral.

Examples of potential applicants:

- Those with Parkinson's Disease.
- Those with conditions making them prone to falls.
- Those who would benefit from additional support and monitoring of a long term condition, such as diabetes.
- People with mental health problems, such as anxiety or depression who would benefit from the consistent support of and access to staff throughout the day and night.
- Those who have diagnosed dementia or undiagnosed symptoms such as confusion and memory impairments.
- Highly vulnerable people for whom the access to support and care would benefit their personal safety and security although their actual care package may not be large.
- People for whom the only alternative would be long term or residential care.

The Panel will endeavour to ensure that, whenever possible, applicants enter extra care housing at an optimum time for them, for example in the early stages of dementia, during recovery from an episode of depression or when coming out of hospital after an illness.

## **6. Who will not be eligible for Extra Care Accommodation**

Applicants for extra care housing may not be eligible for accommodation if one or more of the following applies;

- They do not meet the eligibility criteria specified in the Housing Act 1996 which states that local authorities must consider whether applicants are eligible for housing assistance. An applicant may be ineligible due to their immigration status or on the basis of unacceptable behaviour making them unsuitable to be a tenant.
- Appropriate care or support to meet the needs of the applicant can not be provided (see Point 14, Maximum Dependency).
- They will not benefit from the extra care environment.

## **7. Applications for Extra Care housing**

There are 2 processes depending on the tenure of the property required;

- Shared ownership / Homebuy. Applicants (or their representative) should contact Housing 21 (see Point 18) who will be responsible for recording their interest and ensuring completion of the Wirral Council Extra Care application form. Applications will then be submitted to the next monthly meeting of the Allocations panel for assessment.

- Rented. Applicants (or their representative) should contact Wirralhomes who will ensure they are registered on the Wirralhomes database, record their interest and ensure completion of the Wirral Council Extra Care application form. Wirralhomes will also give advice about other housing options.

For applicants who are interested in both shared ownership and rented accommodation, information will be shared between both Housing 21 and Wirralhomes.

In addition, referrals for extra care accommodation may be made by professionals involved in an applicant's care as follows;

- From DASS. In this instance a full assessment of the applicant's health and social care needs through the Adult Common Assessment Framework (ACAF) / Self Directed Assessment (SDA) will have been carried out. The applicant will be registered on the Wirralhomes database (if requesting rented accommodation).
- Via a referral from a health professional, such as a Community Matron (Mendell Court only). The applicant will be registered on the Wirralhomes database (if requesting rented accommodation).

## **8. Progress List**

The list of applicants accepted for extra care housing is called the 'Progress List'. Extra care vacancies are offered on the basis of need, urgency and availability rather than length of time waiting. It is important that the expectations of applicants are not raised unrealistically. The Progress List will be kept and updated by Wirralhomes.

## **9. The Allocations Panel**

A panel consisting of representatives from the partner agencies will meet on a monthly basis (and more frequently if required) and will be responsible for assessing applicants in two stages. Applicants who are assessed as eligible for Extra Care housing will be placed on a Progress List according to the level of their care needs (high, medium or low) and the urgency of their situation. The Panel will also monitor the number and progress of voids and lettings.

Although the Panel will be scheduled to meet monthly, in the event of an emergency, (e.g. when, following assessment, extra care is deemed an alternative to residential care and a vacancy is available) any member can fast track applications and convene a meeting by giving the other members 48 hours' notice. Should this not be possible, they can if necessary gain their agreement to a nomination via email, or by telephone, however, the same conditions apply in that all members must be in agreement with their proposal.

In the interests of clarity and transparency, all Panel meetings will be recorded, with a copy being held on file within the local authority.

## **10. Panel Membership**

The Allocations Panel will consist of representatives from each partner agency, and will be jointly chaired by a representative from the Department of Adult Social Services and Housing 21.

The Panel will consist of:

- The Council Principal Manager for Access and Assessment DASS
- Housing 21 Court Manager and a development representative (on first lets)
- A Council Wirralhomes Officer
- A representative of NHS Wirral
- The Care Provider

### **The Roles within the Panel**

The roles will include responsibility for;

- arranging monthly meetings, producing and circulating agenda and minutes of the meetings to all members of the Panel (Housing 21)
- Co-ordinate/manage the assessment and nominations process (Joint chairs)
- Collation of all applications and supporting information for each application and ensure it is available for the next meeting of the Panel (Wirralhomes / DASS / NHS Wirral)
- Letters to successful applicants – Housing 21
- Letters and advice to unsuccessful applicants – Wirralhomes.

## **11. The work/responsibilities of the Allocations Panel**

This can be divided into 4 main categories as follows;

- First stage assessments
- Second stage assessments
- Management of the Progress List and nominations
- Dealing with other issues.

At each monthly Panel meeting both first stage and second stage applications will be considered.

### **First Stage Assessment**

This will be as follows;

- Assessment of all new applicants using the information on the Wirral Council Extra Care Housing application form submitted by Wirralhomes (for rented) or Housing 21 (for shared ownership).
- The Panel will consider whether or not the basic qualifying criteria have been met, i.e. age, local connection and the need for alternative accommodation with housing support, health and/or social care.
- Applicants who do not qualify at this stage will be informed by Wirralhomes in writing within 10 working days and advised of

alternative provision. Unsuccessful applicants will be advised by Wirralhomes of their housing options.

- Those applicants who meet the initial qualifying criteria will then be referred by the Panel to DASS for a full assessment under the Adult Common Assessment Framework (ACAF) or Self Directed assessment (SDA). DASS should ensure assessments are completed with results back to the Panel within 21 days of the referral for discussion at the next scheduled meeting. These applicants will then be considered again at Stage 2 of the assessment process.

### **Second Stage Assessment**

This will be as follows;

- Assessment of applications using the information from the ACAF/ SDA either as requested following the first stage assessment or as a direct referral from DASS or from NHS Wirral (Mendell Court only) which will include;
  - Confirmation of the housing, support, health and social care needs of applicants, the suitability and sustainability of current care arrangements and/or current accommodation
  - Assessment of the ability of the applicant to sustain independent living in extra care housing
  - Confirmation, where appropriate, of the care package/individual budget required
  - Confirmation of the dependency level
  - Consideration of any other alternatives to Extra Care housing
  - Individual housing preferences
  - Consideration of any other issues related to health and wellbeing
- Those applicants who meet the second stage qualifying criteria will then be placed on the Progress List in the High, Medium or Low band according to their assessed level of need and also advised of any potential alternatives. Successful applicants will be informed of the decision and “next steps” in writing by Housing 21
- The evidence for these decisions will be recorded at the Allocations Panel meeting.
- Individuals’ preferences will be noted on the Progress List which is produced and updated by Wirralhomes and jointly viewed by partners.
- Applicants who do not qualify at this stage will be informed by the Wirralhomes in writing within 10 working days and will be advised by Wirralhomes of their alternative housing options.

### **Management of the Progress List and Nominations**

The Allocations Panel will;

- Prioritise applicants on the Progress List, for properties for both sale and rent, according to their dependency levels, their need for specific property types and the urgency of their situation taking into

consideration the information provided on the Extra Care application form, the ACAF / SDA and any other supporting information

- Review any existing applications previously accepted on the Progress List to ensure that Extra Care housing is still appropriate. If an applicant is removed from the Progress List and their circumstances subsequently change, they may re-apply.
- If a vacancy occurs, the appropriate applicant will be taken from the list as the nomination from the Council and a tenancy offer will be made by Housing 21.
- Ensure appropriate care and support is still available at time of nomination.
- Decide whether an offer of accommodation has been unreasonably refused.

### **Dealing with other issues**

- Monitor the care and support availability at the Schemes
- Decide whether to suspend or exclude an applicant from the list (See Point 17)
- Respond to any appeals made by applicants about the assessment or nomination procedure made by the Allocations Panel (see Point 21 Review of decisions)
- Investigate and, where appropriate, resolve or make recommendations to resolve any lettings/ void issues
- Review the membership of the panel and its role and the allocations process.

### **12. Prioritisation of Applicants for Properties**

Applicants' needs and preferences for specific property types will be recorded on the Progress List. During the assessment procedure the following will be assessed:

- Whether a particular floor is required
- Whether a particular property is required
- Whether a property with full disability provision is required

Preference for ground floor vacancies will be given to applicants with poor mobility to enable them to visit the laundry, dining room, Court Manager's office and other amenities on the ground floor.

Preference for flats nearest to the amenities to be awarded to the following applicants;

- Applicants with phobias to lifts or heights
- Applicants requiring quick access for Court Manager / Social and Health Care Staff
- Applicants who are visually impaired.

Preference for first / second floor accommodation will be given to applicants who would feel vulnerable on the ground floor.

If a flat has been specifically adapted / converted, preference will be given to re-letting the property to an applicant demonstrating the need for these aids and adaptations.

### **13. Dependency Levels**

The Panel will endeavour to maintain a balanced community within the scheme which reflects the needs and aspirations of all its members. The Panel will therefore consider the needs of each applicant along side the needs of existing tenants before deciding if the needs of the applicant can be met within the scheme.

The dependency levels have been divided as explained in Point 2 and will be used as a guideline for the make-up of residents within the scheme.

### **14. Maximum Dependency**

As a general rule, extra care housing applicants whose needs exceed those which can be met in the extra care scheme will not usually be eligible (See Point 6). On the basis of medical and/or other professional opinion, at the time of entering the scheme or shortly after entering, an applicant will not usually have:

- A level of physical or mental frailty exceeding that which can reasonably be met within the community
- A level of physical or mental frailty which is likely to cause serious disruption or risk to other residents. This might include people whose behaviour adversely affects the rights of other residents to have "quiet enjoyment" of their home
- Behaviour which is severely challenging or which presents risks to others in terms of violence or aggression
- A need for frequent/consistent nursing care throughout the 24 hour period, beyond the level available from the Community Nursing Service.

However it is recognised that residents' care needs will change over time and that they may need flexibility in the provision of care and support services. It is not therefore envisaged by any party to this agreement that the above criteria would be used as grounds for seeking to end any tenancy.

In the event of a tenant's needs changing or increasing, a new assessment will be carried out and a new care plan, which takes account of risk, will be compiled to reflect ways of meeting their needs in the scheme, in order to manage any risk, provide maximum independence, autonomy, dignity and choice for the individual and other residents.

If the resident's medical condition or behaviour means that their needs can not be adequately met in extra care accommodation, then all agencies would

work to find suitable alternative accommodation and care for the resident, if such a course of action was in accord with his/her wishes.

### **15. Offers of Accommodation**

An offer of accommodation will be made by Housing 21 from the nomination provided by the Allocations Panel and following Housing 21 confirming that the applicant wishes to be rehoused in that particular scheme.

### **16. Refusal Policy and Procedure**

In principle, the lettings policy will promote choice to applicants by enabling them to choose the scheme, the type of property and express preference for the floor and location of their property. Housing 21 has developed publicity material which enables applicants to see what facilities a particular scheme has to offer. Housing 21 also encourages applicants to visit the schemes to enable them to check that the scheme meets their aspirations.

There is an expectation therefore, that applicants will only apply for those schemes they are genuinely interested in.

Applicants who refuse offers of accommodation for reasons not related to their housing, support and care need may lose their position on the Progress List. All refusals will be considered by the Allocations Panel on an individual basis.

**Reasonable Grounds for Refusal:** Reasonable refusals are those where although the offer meets the applicant's requirements as detailed in the application form, the applicant's circumstances have changed. This may include the following:

- Applicant is in hospital or awaiting hospital treatment
- Applicant has recently suffered bereavement
- Change to applicant's current health and care needs
- Other reasons which will be considered on a case-by-case basis

**Unreasonable Grounds for Refusal:** Unreasonable refusals are those where the offer meets the applicant's requirements as detailed in their application and their circumstances have not changed.

**First Refusal:** All applicants who refuse an offer will be asked to explain the reason and this will be noted on their application.

**Second Refusal:** The applicant will be asked to give their reason. If there have been two unreasonable refusals the matter will be considered the Panel. The Panel will confirm whether the applicant remains on the Progress List.

This will ensure an objective and consistent approach and will also apply to applicants granted transfer status. Applicants will be advised in writing of the Panel's decision.

## **17. Suspensions and Exclusions**

The following circumstances may result in individuals being suspended from receiving an offer;

- If due to mental or physical incapacity a vacant property is not suitable for an applicant's needs and cannot be made so within a reasonable timescale, an offer will not be made to that applicant.
- Where an applicant has unreasonably refused offers of accommodation (See Point 16, Refusal Policy and Procedure)

There may be exceptional circumstances where it is appropriate to exclude an applicant altogether. Reasons for exclusion might include:

- Someone with a history of anti-social behaviour, serious rent arrears, neighbour nuisance, or threatening behaviour where they are considered unsuitable to be a tenant
- Where it is apparent that applicants are not intending to use the accommodation as their only or main home
- Where the applicant may have a detrimental effect on the harmony of the scheme or on the peaceful enjoyment of other residents on the scheme.

However before a decision to exclude is taken, consideration must be given to the possibility that past "behaviour" may be a result of a mental health or incapacity problem and/or an unmet care/support need. Panel members should consider if, following a full risk assessment, the provision of appropriate care and support would address any potential problems with a particular applicant.

## **18. Procedure for Sales Shared Ownership / Homebuy Apartments**

Housing 21 will advertise and market the dwellings and maintain a register/list of interested applicants. Wirralhomes will also promote and raise awareness of shared ownership / Homebuy apartments in their literature and adverts.

A marketing pack containing all relevant information including sales prices, service charge schedule and an Extra Care application form will be sent by Housing 21 to all registered applicants.

Housing 21 will collect and collate all information returned to them and check that applicants meet the initial criteria in terms of:

- Aged 55 or over
- Local connection through residence, family or employment
- Affordability

Housing 21 will share all the information with Wirralhomes ensuring comprehensive information is sent to the Allocations Panel members so the assessment process can take place.

The Allocations Panel should report back the outcome of an application to Housing 21's sales and marketing department within 21 days. Housing 21 will make a formal offer to the approved applicant and inform the Panel within two days of the acceptance by the applicant.

The nomination process will last for eight weeks from the start of the sales and marketing process (date will be advised) which after Housing 21 reserves the right to offer shared ownership units to applicants on its own waiting list if no suitable applicants have been identified within the period.

### **19. Re-sale of Shared Ownership Apartments**

Housing 21 will advise the Council when a property is available for resale. The Allocations Panel will then advise Housing 21 within 7 days of receipt of notification whether or not they wish to nominate someone to purchase that apartment. In the event of the Council having no suitable nominee, Housing 21 will be free to offer the property to a person on its own waiting list. Where no nomination can be made, the vendor will be free to place the property on the market sale with an estate agent of their own choice. Any applicant must meet Housing 21's primary criteria in terms of age, preferably with a local connection and affordability.

### **20. Transfers within Housing 21**

Existing tenants may apply for a transfer to alternative accommodation if:

- Any current rent arrears do not exceed one month's rent debit
- There are no management concerns with the applicant which need resolving
- The transfer will not result in additional costs to Housing 21. For example where the resident has carried out unauthorised alterations to the flat
- Following the death of a spouse, it may be appropriate, after a period, for Housing 21 (in conjunction with the Council) to offer other accommodation more appropriate to the current need of the surviving partner for housing and care. However the decision to move or not ultimately remains with the resident.

Should the tenant wish to move to another Extra Care Scheme property the eligibility criteria outlined in Point 6 must also be met. The decision to accept or reject a transfer application will be made by the appropriate allocations panel.

### **21. Review of decisions**

Applicants have the right to request a review of a decision as to how their application has been dealt with. Reviews are likely to centre around 5 main areas of the process which are;

- Issues connected with their registration on the Wirralhomes database and recording their interest in rented Extra Care housing. These will be dealt with by Wirralhomes according to the Wirralhomes review procedure.
- Issues connected with recording their interest in buying Extra Care housing. These will be dealt with by Housing 21 according to their review procedure.
- Issues connected with the care needs assessment of their application for Extra Care Housing. These will be dealt with by DASS through their review procedure.
- Issues connected with the way a health needs assessment has been carried out. These will be dealt with by the NHS Wirral using their Complaints Procedure
- Issues connected with decisions made by the Allocations Panel e.g. prioritisation on the Progress list. These will be dealt with by Allocations Panel.
- Issues connected with the lettings process for a particular property following nomination by the Allocations Panel. These will be dealt with by Housing 21.

## **22. Equal Opportunities**

The Allocations Panel is committed to providing housing services to the whole community and will not discriminate against any applicant on the basis of their ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, disability or race.

## **23. Data Protection**

All parties who have access to data must ensure that the Data Protection Act is adhered to.

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