

Finsbury Park Housing Co-operative

ALLOCATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Aim of the Policy

To provide permanent housing to FPHC members, and on some occasions to allocate shortlife property as appropriate.

General Principles

To allocate housing promptly and fairly, and in the context of FPHC's policies on equality and diversity. Please see attached appendix 1.

Procedure

The procedure must be open, transparent, and accountable.

Advertising the Allocation Meeting & Information for Applicants

Advertising of allocation meetings will take place to give at least 28 days notice of the meetings. See attached master notice, appendix 2.

The advertisement must state:-

1. Who is eligible to apply
2. What the criteria will be
3. Address and description of property
4. Arrangements for viewing the property
5. Procedure at the allocation meeting, and subsequent to that meeting
6. Rent arrears verification

Applicants must attend the meeting, unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so, and these reasons must be submitted to the meeting in writing. Applicants may send a representative in their place if they are unable to attend the meeting. Applicants may be accompanied by a friend, a representative or an interpreter at the meeting.

Appeals

Appeals against the decisions of allocation meetings can only be made on the following grounds:

1. That new information has come to light
2. That the allocation meeting was misinformed on a significant matter
3. That members of the panel were not eligible for this role
4. That the distribution of notices of the meeting was not carried out properly. (N.B. the registered rules of the Co-op state that the failure of an individual to receive a notice shall not invalidate the meeting)
5. That the interpretation by the allocation meeting of the applicants' housing need was open to question

The Panel

Ideally, the members of the allocation panel should be agreed at the meeting which calls the allocation meeting. The final allocation panel should be nominated no later than at the Management Committee meeting which immediately precedes the allocation meeting.

A new allocation panel will be convened for each allocation meeting, consisting of members who must, at the beginning of the meeting, each declare that they are disinterested and willing to operate the procedure fairly and impartially. There will be no standing allocation panel with the same people

on it all the time. The panel must contain at least three MC members. There will be a minimum number of five and an upper limit of ten panel members. Chair and minute taker at the meeting can both take part in scoring, discussion, and decision-making. Co-op members can attend the meeting as observers even if they are not on the panel, but they are not allowed to make comments or try to influence the meeting.

Once the allocation meeting has begun, no further panel members or observers may attend the meeting.

The panel will ensure that each applicant or group of applicants is eligible to apply (applicants must be members, or at least have a member in their group). Allocations can be made to people already living in permanent housing, but it is acknowledged that their housing need may be less than that of some other applicants (eg those in shortlife). Applicants who are not currently living in Co-op housing must provide contact details for their landlord so that a rent reference can be obtained.

Allocation criteria will include applicants' record of participation, and it is vital that this is considered in an organisation run by voluntary input. However, the main criterion will be housing need.

The allocation panel will also take account of the suitability or "match" of the applicant/group with the property, as well as any other unspecified but relevant criteria such as medical problems, mobility, etc.

Each applicant or group will address the panel (with no other applicants present) and inform the panel of their circumstances. The panel will ask questions about the allocation criteria. If applicants want to raise medical issues, they should produce documentation (e.g. from a doctor) to show a connection between the medical issue and the property applied for.

Points will be allocated for each of the four criteria, which are:-

1. Housing need (up to 5 points)
2. Suitability of dwelling (up to 5 points)
3. Involvement in the Co-op (up to 5 points)
4. Special or other needs (up to 5 points)

There will be two parts to the allocation meeting. The first part will be to allocate points on each of the criteria for an application, while the allocation interview is taking place or before the next applicant or group is interviewed. The maximum total is 20 points. Please see points sheet - appendix 3. And the second part, after all the allocation interviews have taken place, will be to discuss the points allocated and ensure a fair and consistent scoring by all panel members. Records of scores will be kept, and minutes taken at the meeting. In the case of a tie, the successful applicant will be the one with the greatest housing need.

However, members who are in rent arrears of 4 weeks or more are not eligible for allocation of property. To ensure fairness, a rent reference will be sought for any member who is not currently housed by the Co-op, and any decision to allocate property to them will only be ratified by MC upon receipt of a satisfactory rent reference.

The panel will endeavour to make the decision on the same evening as the meeting, and will communicate the decision to the applicants on that same evening; where that is not possible, this will be done the following day by a panel member or members agreed by the allocation meeting. The decision of the panel will be ratified at the following MC meeting, and scoring sheets and minutes will be presented on that occasion. The MC will only ratify the decision of the allocation

meeting upon ascertaining that any allocated member or members already housed by the Co-op is/are in less than 4 weeks rent arrears..

In the case of a member or members who are not currently housed by the Co-op, ratification of a decision to allocate property to them cannot take place until satisfactory rent reference(s) have been obtained.

Unsuccessful applicants have the right of appeal at this MC meeting. In the case of a successful appeal to the MC, the allocation must be held again with **only the applicants who originally applied**, so the notice period for the new allocation meeting need only be 7-14 days.

In all other cases where the MC is unable to ratify the panel's decision (due to new information coming to light, or ineligibility of the members who have been allocated the property, etc) a new allocation meeting must be called with the usual 28 days notice period, etc.

If the MC is unable to ratify the decision while awaiting a rent reference, the ratification may be delayed for up to 14 days. After this period, a new allocation meeting must be called with the usual 28 days notice period, etc.

Confidentiality must be observed throughout the allocation procedure. The panel must be careful not to discuss any of the applicants' circumstances outside of the allocation meeting, and the allocation meeting minutes must be kept in the confidential minutes' book, separately from the MC minutes book.

This policy and all appendices agreed by S.G.M. of 18th September 2007

APPENDIX 1

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Context of The Policy – Equality and Diversity Issues

FPHC recognises a moral obligation to respond to wide social diversity in contemporary society, and this should be reflected in our policies and procedures. We are committed to ways of working which will welcome people from all sections of the community, and the contribution each individual can make to the organisation. We will offer training and support in order to facilitate people's contributions.

We seek to operate a framework of continuous improvement to support these commitments to equality and diversity, for example in our repairs service, rent accounting services, consultation, representation on decision-making bodies (especially the management committee), social participation, personal and corporate behaviour, etc. We will adapt our services to meet the needs of different groups and individuals. The aim is to integrate fully the principles of equality and diversity in all these activities, and we will monitor progress via quarterly review reports at MC.

Responsibility for the above is shared among all FPHC members, as both providers and consumers of the co-op's services, bearing in mind that the organisation is run entirely by voluntary effort without paid staff.

Definitions – Equality and Diversity

Equality – this involves removing prejudice or bias from organisational policies and procedures, and recognising past imbalances, while taking steps to reduce the effects of past discrimination in order to allow people equal access to opportunities in employment (not relevant to FPHC, with no paid staff) and services in all walks of life.

Diversity – this means taking account of visible and non-visible differences between people, and using those differences (plus everyone’s talents) to create a valid workforce (of volunteers, in FPHC’s case) and a productive environment in which people can operate in a constructive way.

Diversity seeks to be inclusive of everyone, including those who may normally feel excluded by traditional approaches to equality.

It acknowledges, values, and celebrates difference. It creates a cultural environment in which people of different backgrounds can work together harmoniously. Diversity is a “mainstream” issue, which influences all activities of the organisation, and counteracts prejudice on a range of personal differences.

APPENDIX 2

NOTICE OF ALLOCATION MEETING

7.00PM [DATE] AT 12 PINE GROVE N4 3LL

There are **XX[number]** of units available: **ADDRESS (XX[number]-bed)** and **ADDRESS (XX[number]-bed)**. Viewing can be arranged by phoning **XX[name]** on **PHONE NUMBER**

Only Co-op members, who are not in 4 weeks or more rent arrears, are eligible to apply. For members who are not currently housed by the Co-op, the MC will only ratify any allocation decision upon obtaining a satisfactory rent reference; such applicants must provide contact details for their landlord so that a rent reference can be obtained.

Applicants must attend the meeting, unless there are exceptional reasons for not doing so, and these reasons must be submitted to the meeting in writing. Applicants may send a representative in their place if they are unable to attend the meeting. Applicants may be accompanied by a friend, a representative or an interpreter at the meeting.

Each applicant (individual or group) will have a separate opportunity to make their case to the allocation panel. The panel will consider the applications (without any of the applicants present) and make a decision by a points system. The panel will endeavour to make their decision and announce it to the applicants that same evening; where this is not possible, applicants will be notified the following day.

The decision needs to be ratified by the MC meeting a week later, at which unsuccessful applicants have the right of appeal. If the panel’s decision is not ratified, the whole allocation process has to begin again, with another allocation meeting.

The panel will consist of a minimum of three disinterested MC members, plus other disinterested co-op members who want to join the panel; there will be a minimum number of 5 and an upper limit of 10 panel members. The criteria for allocation are: (1) housing need, (2) suitability of group/individual for the relevant unit (numbers of people, etc), (3) participation in the co-op, and (4) any special needs.

Please do arrive at the meeting promptly, and good luck!

XXXXX[name]

for FPHC

APPENDIX 3

ALLOCATION MEETINGS POINTS SHEET

PANEL MEMBER NUMBER

MARKS OUT OF 5 FOR EACH CRITERION

Applicant	Housing Need	Suitability for unit	Participation	Special Needs	Totals

This policy and all appendices agreed by SGM September 18 2007