



LETTINGS POLICY PROCEDURES

■ POINT SYSTEM



LETTINGS POLICY

This Policy has been written to comply with the legal requirements of "The Housing Act 1996" and the "Homelessness Act 2002" together with the Welsh Assembly Government's "Regulatory Code for Housing Associations in Wales.

The Association aims to provide well managed rented accommodation to those who are most in need of housing. It will ensure that those who are housed are fairly selected, and will seek to achieve a balance between the needs and preferences of applicants and transferees and the need to maximise social inclusion and to promote stable communities, within the confines of current and future resources and legislation. The Association operates a points system to assess applicants housing need which is attached for information.

Mid Wales Housing aims to provide homes for those in greatest need.

1. Who can apply for housing?

- Residents of the United Kingdom aged 16 and over – including Mid Wales Housing tenants who wish to transfer to other MWH accommodation.
- British Nationals and European Economic Area Nationals (European Union countries plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein) aged 16 and over who have been habitually resident in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands, Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland (Common Travel Area). Any period of residence less than 2 years will have to be tested by the Association.
- Refugees or other persons granted permission to remain in the United Kingdom.



2. Who will not be eligible for housing?

- Persons subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 (c.49) unless they are of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Welsh Assembly Government.
- They fall within other classes of persons from abroad prescribed by Welsh Assembly Government regulation as being ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation.
- They or a member of their family have been guilty of *“unacceptable behaviour”* – that behaviour being serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant of the Association at the time of the application.

It should be noted that if an applicant’s passport is stamped *“No recourse to public funds,”* this applies only to the provision of Council accommodation, but may not necessarily debar the applicant from Housing Association accommodation.

*Unacceptable behaviour is defined as if the applicant was already a tenant of the Association and the behaviour would entitle the Association to an outright Possession Order under the Housing Act 1985 Schedule 2 Part 1 (except ground 8 – dwelling made available whilst repair work is undertaken). These are grounds for possession based upon the tenant’s failure to abide by his or her conditions of tenancy e.g. rent arrears or nuisance.

Applicants who are guilty of *“unacceptable behaviour”* will be suspended from the waiting list for a period of up to 6 months and will have the opportunity to have their application reviewed again after this period. It is up to the individual applicant to request a review after this period. At this time the applicant’s circumstances will be re-considered and any changes in circumstances that may have occurred e.g. the repayment of any rent arrears.

Under exceptional circumstances (e.g. a perpetrator of unacceptable behaviour has left the household) applicants who have been suspended for unacceptable behaviour can request that their application be reviewed within the period of suspension. Applicants must contact the Association directly stating the reasons why they consider the suspension should be reviewed.

Please note that any applicant that subsequently falls into the above categories after having made their application will cease to be eligible for housing.

The condition relating to *“unacceptable behaviour”* might be relaxed where, in the Association’s opinion, undue medical or social hardship is likely to occur as a result of an applicant’s suspension from the waiting list.

N.B. *The giving of false information may disqualify any applicant from further consideration, and any tenancy granted as a result of false information can be repossessed by legal action through the County Court.*

3. Local Lettings Agreements

In certain areas, affordable housing has been provided subject to certain planning restrictions i.e. Section 106 Agreements. In these circumstances, we are only able to house people with a local connection to the areas. In such cases, applicants who have a lower housing need but qualify with a local connection, may be offered a property. They will be considered primarily in order of housing need and by date order of the application.



4. Local Lettings Policies

Safeguarding communities

In order to safeguard certain communities, or to prevent or reverse social deprivation or anti-social behaviour, a Local Lettings Policy may be introduced. To establish a Local Lettings Policy the Housing Manager will provide a summary of the problems which need to be resolved, details of the specific area, length of time the policy will operate, advise the Local Authority to enable appropriate nominations and identify nomination arrangements.

Village Schemes

Special arrangements apply for properties in villages to ensure that, as far as possible, we accommodate local people, in accordance with the relevant Local Authority Unitary Development Planning Policy. An applicant currently or previously living or working in the village for which he/she is applying, will receive priority over an applicant living in the area or district, even if the former has a lower number of points.

5. What type of property will be offered?

This will depend on the size of a household. The Association owns properties of various sizes in Powys and Ceredigion to meet a range of needs. We will try to match a household size with the ideal property size and whenever possible try to assist with any preferences applicants have told us about on their application form.

6. Joint Tenancies

Joint tenancies will be granted to couples, unless both parties to the relationship specifically request that the tenancy is offered to one of the parties only. Joint tenancies will not be granted if one of the applicants was ineligible for housing due to unreasonable behaviour. (See 2. Who will not be eligible for housing?)

7. Existing Tenants of the Association

Points are available to reward existing tenants who wish to transfer to alternative accommodation. To be eligible for points, tenants must fulfil certain criteria:

- Maintain a clear rent account for 1 month or are reducing rent arrears at an agreed rate, and for a period of 6 months, and,
- Are not subject to a Court Order in relation to any breach of tenancy conditions or because of anti-social behaviour, and,
- Kept their home in good condition in accordance with their obligations under the Tenancy Agreement.

In addition, a tenant underoccupying their current home and wishing to move to smaller or more appropriate accommodation, may be entitled to additional points.



8. Sheltered Housing

Priority will be given to applicants aged 55 + in our sheltered housing schemes.

However, if there are support needs, applicants who are under the age threshold will be considered.

9. What about applicants with a disability?

On some developments we provide at least one dwelling suitable for a person with a physical disability. Such properties will be offered to those who could make best use of the facilities and not necessarily to applicants who receive the highest points. Applicants with a disability may apply for accommodation which is not specifically provided for disabled use. We may be able to obtain a grant towards making the accommodation more suitable for an applicant's needs.

10. What about applicants with support needs?

Applicants may already be receiving support or may need some support to help them keep to tenancy conditions. This may be because of mental illness, drug or alcohol dependency or other reasons.

The support needed could range from help with finances or learning life skills to help to live independently. We will look for assurances that support is available for an applicant and will help by putting an applicant in touch with other agencies.

Further information is given in our "Useful Information" booklet.

11. Homelessness

Nominations are accepted from the Local Authority of people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Applicants are referred by the Association to the Local Authority Homeless Services, for further advice.

The Association will endeavour to assist applicants who are homeless, but are not referred by the Local Authority. A confirmation letter confirming homeless status will be required from the Local Authority.

12. Home Ownership

The majority of tenants are unable to purchase their home as the terms of their tenancy will not allow them.

However, if a tenant is interested in buying their home, they are advised to contact the Association for further information to see if they qualify.



13. Right to see personal details

All applicants have the right to see the details which they have given and which the Association has kept on its computer records.

Applicants may write to the Association for a copy of the details kept on computer, or may call at the office, subject to notice, bringing proof of their identity.

14. Right to a Review

Applicants have a right to request a review of a decision regarding the following aspects of an application:

- Eligibility
- Unacceptable behaviour
- Any facts on which the Association has relied upon

The applicant's circumstances at the time of the review will be considered, particularly if they have changed from when the decision was first made.

Requests for review stating the reasons should be made within 28 days of an application being processed.

The Housing Manager will consider the review unless s/he was involved in the original decision.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome of the review within 14 days of receipt of the request.

15. Appealing against the outcome of a Review

If an applicant remains dissatisfied with the way in which the Association has followed the lettings policy, then a request can be made for the Director responsible for housing services, to consider the appeal.

The request must be made within 28 days of notification of the review decision. The applicant will be advised of the decision with 14 days of receipt.

Applicants who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeal can refer the matter to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ.



LETTINGS POLICY – PROCEDURES

1. How you can apply for housing

You need to complete an application form which is available on our website, or telephone/write to us. You can also call into our office to collect a form. It is important that you complete all sections of the form relevant to your circumstances. If you need advice and help to complete the form, please ask us.

2. What happens next?

We will let you know the outcome of your application within 7 days of receiving it. You will be awarded points according to your housing need. The way your application will be pointed is attached. If you do not receive any points we will not be able to accept you on to the waiting list. However, if your circumstances change in the future you are welcome to make another application.

3. What information will be provided?

We will send you the following:

- Confirmation on how many points your application receives
- The size and location of property for which you have been accepted.
- A list of vacancies which have occurred over the past 12 months.
- How to appeal against the assessment, if you disagree with it.

4. What type of property will be offered?

The chart below lists the ideal property size households we can consider:

Household size	Property size
Single person/couple	One bedroom flat Two bedroom flat Bungalow (where eligible)
Household with one child	Two bedroom house Two bedroom ground floor flat
Household with two children one of whom is under 8 years of age	Two bedroom house Three bedroom house
Household with two children over 8 years of age	Three bedroom house
Household with three children two of whom are under 8 years of age	Three bedroom house
Household with three children two of whom are over 8 years of age	Three bedroom house Four bedroom house
Larger family units	Four or Five bedroom house



5. How are allocations made?

When a vacancy arises, wherever possible, a Housing Co-ordinator visits at home those applicants with the highest number of points. This is to make sure that the information provided on the application form is correct, and that you have received the right number of points.

Applications of those visited at home are considered by the Housing Co-ordinator who visited and the applicant receiving the highest number of points is then normally offered the vacancy. In some areas there is very high demand, so there will be a lot of competition between people with high points, but in some areas of low demand you may be able to get a home with fewer points.

6. Will you let me know if I have been successful?

We shall let you know as soon as possible after we have visited you whether or not we are able to offer you the vacancy.

We will allow two offers of accommodation in your chosen area(s) and which we think are suitable for your needs unless you have very good reasons for turning down our offers - e.g. illness, hospitalisation, change in family circumstances. If you turn down our offers without good reasons then we will remove your application from the waiting list. You may re-apply after 12 months to go back onto the waiting list. However, if your circumstances change within the 12 month period then the Association may reconsider your application before then.

7. How long will I have to wait for accommodation?

This depends on the number of vacancies that arise and on the number of points that you are given. Unfortunately, we are unable to house a great many applicants because we simply do not have enough vacancies.

At least 50% of our vacancies go to local authority nominations and you may therefore wish to contact the local authority to see if you are able to apply for housing and be nominated to the Association.

A list of vacancies over the past 12 months is enclosed. This gives an indication of the number of points allocated in each area. You may reduce waiting times by widening your choice of areas and the type of property you would be willing to live in.

We contact applicants on our waiting list every 6 months to ensure our list is up to date and that applicants still wish to be considered for accommodation.



LETTINGS POLICY – POINTS SYSTEM

Points are given according to your circumstances and can change upon verification of evidence provided and /or by a home visit by the Housing Co-ordinator.

Applicants will be awarded all applicable point categories as follows.

40 points

Categories

Please note: In ALL cases of homelessness categories, the Local Authority's preventative and homeless service will assess eligibility. Please therefore contact the Local Authority Homeless Services for further advice.

Homeless - Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need

Applicants leaving hospital/other institution

- Where settled accommodation is agreed by the agencies involved to be a key element in community support and an appropriate care package is in place.

Medical – high priority

- Medical condition of applicant/member of applicant's household would significantly benefit from early rehousing in suitable alternative accommodation as a matter of priority.

Overcrowding

- Applicant's home is not large enough to meet the needs of the applicant/s and two or more bedspaces are required

Under-occupying

- By two or more bedspaces – (Mid Wales Housing tenants only)



Lack of 4 or more of following facilities:

- Inadequate/lack of water supply
- bath or shower
- Hot water supply
- electricity supply
- Inside toilet
- cooking facilities
- Sink or wash hand basin
- Heating
- lack of access to garden for children
(points only awarded where child is under 8)

Hazardous properties/major disrepair/unfit properties

- Properties which pose a risk of harm to the health and safety of an occupier.

Applicants are advised to contact the Local Authority's Housing Options Advisor/Environmental Health Officer.



20 points

Non priority homeless persons

Medical – medium priority

- Medical condition of applicant/member of applicant's household would significantly benefit from rehousing in suitable accommodation

Special accommodation

a) Required

- Where the applicant or a member of the household requires special accommodation, such as purpose built or specially adapted accommodation for the disabled.

b) No longer required

- Where special accommodation such as purpose built or specially adapted accommodation for the elderly or physically disabled is no longer occupied by persons requiring such facilities, or is no longer required by that person.

Overcrowding

- Applicant's home is not large enough to meet the needs of the applicants and one more bed space is required

Under-occupying

- Mid Wales Housing tenants by one bed space. Non Association tenants by any number of bed spaces

Lack of 2 or 3 of following facilities:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inadequate/lack of water supply | <input type="checkbox"/> bath or shower |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hot water supply | <input type="checkbox"/> electricity supply |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inside toilet | <input type="checkbox"/> cooking facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sink or wash hand basin | <input type="checkbox"/> Heating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lack of access to garden for children
(points only awarded where child is under 8) | |



Giving/receiving support

Where the applicant needs to move :

- In order to facilitate the giving or receiving of essential support
- To meet the needs of a disabled member of the applicant's household
- Where the applicant or a member of the applicant's household is registered to provide foster or respite care

Travel Difficulties

- Where essential journeys are impossible due to lack of suitable transport or can only be undertaken at considerable expense or at risk of the applicant's health.

(These points will only be awarded where applicants are faced with unavoidable and difficult journeys in respect of employment, the schooling of their children, medical or social reasons. Points will not be awarded where the difficulties arise as a result of the applicant's personal choice.)

Existing Tenants of Mid Wales Housing

Tenants must fulfil certain criteria:

- Maintain a clear rent account for 1 month or are reducing rent arrears at an agreed rate, and for a period of 6 months, and,
- Are not subject to a Court Order in relation to any breach of tenancy conditions or because of anti-social behaviour, and,
- Kept their home in good condition in accordance with their obligations under the Tenancy Agreement.

Once the above points have been awarded, tenants must continue to comply with the above conditions. Failure to do so will result in the points being deducted.



10 points

Medical – low priority

- Medical condition of applicant or a member of the applicant's household would benefit from rehousing in suitable accommodation.

Children above ground floor

- Households to include pregnant women and/or children under 8 years of age

Shared facilities

- Including applicants still living at home

Lack of one of these facilities:

- Inadequate/lack of water supply
- bath or shower
- Hot water supply
- electricity supply
- Inside toilet
- cooking facilities
- Sink or wash hand basin
- Heating
- lack of access to garden for children
(points only awarded where child is under 8)

Family separation due to lack of suitable accommodation

- Families who are unable to live together due to the size and type of accommodation available.

Local Connection - applicants

- Who have lived in or been principally employed in the community for a period of at least 12 months at the time of application OR
- Who have previously lived in the community for a period of at least 3 years and wish to live there

