

## Allocations Policy

### 1. Purpose

This policy sets out the objectives of Stoll in the allocation of its housing and defines the criteria under which applicants can apply for housing and by which the allocation of vacant properties will be decided.

### 2. Background

Stoll is a Registered Provider of Social Housing and a Registered Charity whose mission is to house and support vulnerable Veterans to live as independently as possible.

### 3. Legal and Good Practice Context

Stoll will ensure that this policy reflects best practice and complies with relevant legislation and the Regulator of Social Housing's Regulatory Framework. Stoll attaches significant importance to building and maintaining good working relationships with the local authorities in whose areas it operates in order to identify and address the housing needs of Veterans.

### 4. Housing Context

Stoll currently owns and manages 287 properties in the London Boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham, Hounslow and in Aldershot. These properties are predominantly one bedroom flats, with a small number of two and three bedroom properties. Stoll offer an initial twelve month probationary tenancy, followed by a four year fixed term tenancy if the probationary tenancy has been satisfactorily conducted. It is anticipated that the majority of tenants will be supported to move on into fully independent living during this five year period, subject to an assessment of their support needs.

### 5. Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

- To maximise the opportunities for Veterans to access Stoll's housing
- To allocate vacant properties to those Veterans who meet Stoll's applications criteria
- To allocate properties in accordance with an agreed quota for each points banding in order to ensure that Stoll has the capacity to provide the necessary support to tenants and that Stoll communities are sustainable.

- To be fair, transparent, efficient and equitable in the allocation of Stoll's properties
- To assist the local authorities in which Stoll works to meet the local housing needs of Veterans
- To give consideration for housing to remaining family members of a deceased Stoll tenant where the family member is vulnerable and has support needs
- To assist providers of temporary accommodation for Veterans by providing move-on accommodation for their referrals
- To enable applicants to make informed choices through the provision of clear information and advice
- To empower applicants by offering a degree of preference regarding where they live
- To work towards move on into fully independent living for those Veterans who can achieve this
- To promote sustainable communities, where people want to live, by making best use of Stoll's housing stock.

## **6. Eligibility Criteria**

To be eligible to apply for housing with Stoll an applicant must:

- Have served (completed basic training) in the British Armed Forces or Reserve Forces or the Merchant Navy under Arms and;
- Have support needs due to physical disability, mental health issues, substance misuse issues, homelessness or have some other vulnerability and;
- Be in need of social housing or alternative social housing

Or must be the widow/widower (or equivalent at Stoll's discretion) of such a person and meet the second and third criteria above.

Or must be the remaining family member of a deceased Stoll tenant and meet the second and third criteria above.

The application can include members of the Veterans' household.

Whilst Stoll does not have an income restriction on applicants, we may refuse an application if we believe that the applicant has the means to achieve suitable housing elsewhere.

## **7. Equality and Diversity**

In the implementation of this policy, Stoll is committed to promoting equality and ensuring that discrimination or less favourable treatment does not occur on the grounds of age, disability, economic status, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender or gender reassignment or sexual orientation or any other protected characteristic as defined by legislation.

We ensure this by using an Applications Assessment Panel who discuss, allocate points and make decisions on every application to Stoll.

## **8. Assessment Criteria**

Each application will be assessed to ensure that the eligibility criteria are met. The application will then be discussed at an Applications Assessment Panel and if accepted will be allocated points which take into account the following factors:

- Sharing facilities (with an unrelated person or family)
- Overcrowding
- Serious disrepair of the property (where there is no reasonable prospect of the disrepair being dealt with)
- Staying with family or friends
- Hostel, B&B or other form of temporary accommodation
- How the applicant's health is affected by their current housing conditions.
- If the applicant is Wounded, Injured or Sick (W.I.S.) as a result of their military service
- The Support Needs of the Applicant

Once points have been awarded the applicant will be placed in a relevant Band on the waiting list.

If, once points are awarded it is considered that an offer of accommodation is not likely to be made within two years, the application may be refused. In these cases the applicant will be advised that they may re-apply in two years' time or if there is any significant change in their circumstances.

A minimum points level may be introduced at any time either for all applicants or for applicants to certain Stoll housing developments.

The waiting list may be closed at any time, either for all housing schemes or for individual schemes depending on demand.

If, following assessment it is decided that an applicant is unsuitable for housing, the application will be refused. The applicant will be given the reason for the refusal and the opportunity to ask for a review of this decision if they wish to do so.

Where more than one applicant is awarded the same number of points, priority will be given in date order of application.

## **9. Allocations Criteria**

Properties will be let in line with the following commitments:

- Stoll can offer an agreed percentage of vacancies, usually at least 50%, to each Local Authority where it has housing stock. On new developments, nomination agreements may be up to 100% of first lets in accordance with funding arrangements.
- Stoll reserves the right to allocate a percentage of properties to transfer cases based on their level of urgency
- All remaining vacancies will be allocated via the pointed waiting list as follows:

- 50% to Priority Band 1
- 30% to Priority Band 2
- 20% to Priority Band 3

Within each Banding, priority will be given to the applicant with the highest number of points at that time.

## **10. Transfers**

Applications for a transfer from existing tenants will not normally be accepted less than 2 years from the start of the tenancy or where there are arrears of rent or other breaches of tenancy. Where this is the case but exceptional circumstances apply then this will be taken into consideration and an application may be accepted. Any transfer to an alternative Stoll property will be on the same tenancy type as the current tenancy held.

Applications for a transfer will be categorised as follows:

- High priority – a need to move on urgent medical grounds as confirmed by a Medical Professional and the Support Officer or in cases of serious harassment or violence where it is agreed by Stoll that an urgent move is necessary to ensure the safety of the tenant.
- Medium priority – a need to move because of overcrowding, under-occupation or on less urgent medical grounds
- Low priority – a need to move for any other reason.

## **11. Housing Mobility**

Stoll will encourage tenant mobility by working with other Registered Providers of Social Housing should a specific need arise and also by subscribing to a national home swap scheme to enable tenants to find suitable exchanges.

## **12. Size and type of property offered**

The size of the property offered will depend on the number of people in the household of the applicant/s. The majority of Stoll's properties are one bedroom flats and these will be allocated to either single people or two people living together as a couple.

Larger properties will only be allocated to:

- Households including children (If the household includes 2 same sex children, they will be expected to share a double bedroom up to the age of 16).
- Two adults not living together as a couple (e.g. brother and sister)
- Single people or couples who require an extra bedroom for medical reasons

Stoll have a number of fully and partially adapted properties for those with mobility needs. These properties will be allocated based on the assessment of an applicant's mobility needs during the application process.

## **13. Offers of Accommodation**

Stoll will normally make only one offer of accommodation to an applicant and if this offer is refused the applicant will be removed from the waiting list. However, if there are exceptional reasons why an applicant has refused an offer of accommodation they may be kept on the waiting list if it is decided that a further offer can be made to them within 12 months.

#### **14. Appeals**

If an applicant is unhappy with a decision made regarding their application or allocation they may appeal by using Stoll's Complaints Policy. All complaints relating to dissatisfaction with a decision made under this policy will be initially dealt with under "Stage 2" of our Complaints Policy.

#### **15. Policy Review**

In addition to ongoing monitoring of all allocations and lettings, Stoll will undertake a thorough review of the Allocations Policy at least every three years unless legislation requires that it is reviewed earlier.

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