



# Housing Allocations Policy

(Revised August 2013)





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# Service Standards

## What you can expect from us:

- commitment to provide accredited advice to the National Advice Standards;
- a fair assessment;
- good quality housing;
- high quality, accessible and responsive local services.

## What we can expect from you:

- inform us of changes in your circumstances;
- that you respond to letters or other forms of communication about your application;
- that you provide honest and accurate information at all times.

## 1 Background

The policy is part of a range of statements that set out Fife Council's arrangements for access to, and management of Council housing. Together these detail the Council's arrangements for:

- assessing housing and wider needs through Fife Housing Register;
- overall management of Council housing including arrangements for promoting mobility within Council housing;
- the prevention of homelessness;
- responding to those with special or particular housing needs.

## 2 Aims and Objectives

This policy sets out how the Council aims to respond to the needs, demands and aspirations of Fife's households who have expressed an interest in moving home, who have a need to move home for different reasons, are looking for housing for the first time or who are homeless.

### Aims:

- to meet legal requirements and comply with standards set out within the regulatory framework and other sources of best practice;
- to ensure the principles of equal opportunities are incorporated and decisions are transparent and accountable;
- to make best use of available Council housing in a way that is responsive to the needs and demands of Fife's population and links with Community Planning objectives;
- to allocate properties in a way that is consistent with the Allocation Policies of other housing providers in Fife.

### Objectives:

- promote sustainable communities by balancing individual housing and wider community needs through local lettings plans
- promote sustainable tenancies with opportunities for applicants to exercise control over their housing options on the basis of high quality housing information and advice
- address housing need and demand within local planning arrangements which are responsive to local population and housing stock profiles
- bring together choice with more effective assessment services to respond to the needs and aspirations of individual households
- provide opportunities for individuals and wider stakeholders to challenge decisions in respect of the management of Council homes and provide an effective appeals process

### 3 Applying for a Home

Fife Housing Register (FHR) provides a single point of access to housing in Fife, therefore applicants express an interest in Council housing by ticking the relevant box on the form.

To get access to FHR, applicants must complete an application form explaining their housing circumstances and provide all relevant confirmation which is marked on the application form. The information will be confirmed when applicants are being considered for an offer of housing.

Applicants who do not provide all essential information will not be placed on the housing list. Where relevant, further information will also be sought from relevant third parties (for example landlords) as part of the assessment process.

Any applicant providing false or deliberately misleading information to influence their application assessment will be suspended from the housing list until this is corrected.

Once the application is assessed the household will be placed on the housing list.

### 4 What is the Housing List?

Every year more people apply for housing than become available to rent therefore Council's and housing associations are legally required to maintain a housing register. Locally, Fife Council and the Fife based housing associations have come together to provide the Fife Housing Register as a single common housing list and route of access to all of the partners homes.

#### 4.1 Eligibility

By law, anyone can apply for a home and all applications must be accepted onto the housing list provided the applicant is aged 16 or over.

Fife Council also:

- require applicants from outwith Fife to provide a link to the area to get points;
- have a duty to assess people who have lived outside the UK in the last 5 years to determine eligibility for Council homes as a form of public assistance.

In both circumstances applicants will be advised about the information required to complete the assessment and will be notified of the assessment outcome.

The Council is committed to ensuring that people remain active on the housing list but in some circumstances applications may be temporarily suspended where:

- there has been damage or neglect to the property;
- there are rent arrears or other liable debts on a current or previous tenancy;
- there is anti social or criminal behaviour;
- applicants have refused 2 fair offers of housing;
- Applicants have been found to have supplied deliberately false/misleading information.

Where there is urgent housing need, the Suspensions Policy is set aside. In situations of actue housing need (for example abuse / harassment or severe overcrowding) consideration may be given to setting aside the Suspensions Policy. Information about the Suspensions Policy is available on-line from Fife Direct or from Local Council offices.

#### 4.2 Assessing an Application

All applications are assessed in the same way through the FHR arrangements and should be assessed within a maximum of 20 days. In every circumstance applicants will be contacted in writing to confirm:

- how the application has been assessed and the points that have been awarded;
- the category which the application is held within;
- any information that is outstanding and will affect the application assessment;
- how to enquire or appeal against an application assessment decision;

When assessing applications, the Council cannot take account of:

- the income of the household;
- whether the applicant or his/her family own or have owned property;
- whether the applicant and his/her spouse currently live together;
- marital status or any civil proceedings affecting a relationship breakdown;
- the length of time the applicant has lived in Fife;
- the age of the applicant (provided they are 16 or above);
- tenancy related debts where:
  - the applicant is / was not the tenant;
  - debt has been cleared;
  - less than one months rent is due;
- a repayment arrangement is in place and is paid for 12 consecutive weeks. Payments must continue to be made.

In accordance with legal requirements, the application assessment gives reasonable preference to those who:

- live in poor quality / below standard properties;
- are overcrowded;
- live in unsuitable properties;
- are homeless or potentially homeless.

In line with guidance and good practice, the assessment also takes account of people;

- experiencing abuse or harassment within or around their home;
- who have housing difficulties because of health, disability, social, support, educational or employment reasons;
- who live in insecure accommodation or at risk of losing their home;
- those leaving the armed forces or other forms of tied tenancy;
- non-householders and those with no settled accommodation;
- who need to move to support children's educational and social development;
- who need alternative housing to provide caring roles to children or relatives.

All applications are assessed according to the Common Assessment of Need agreed by the Fife Housing Register partners and are subject to the same levels of verification and confirmation.

Applicants who have expressed a housing issue caused by illness / disability or require specialised forms of housing will be assessed by a specialist team of Housing Occupational Therapists. This assessment may restrict the size or type of properties applicants are eligible for. The applicant may refuse this recommendation but will also lose any points that are attached to the assessment.

Depending on the housing circumstances, applicants are placed in a category to reflect the reasonable preference groups.

- Urgent Housing Needs
- Poor Housing Circumstances
- Lack of Security
- Social and Medical Needs
- Management Needs
- No Immediate Needs

More information about the circumstances which are included in the categories is contained on the last 2 pages and separately within Fife's Common Assessment of Need Statement

Applicants may get points for different circumstances but will be placed on the needs group where they have the highest points. The application assessment will reflect the individual circumstances of each applicant and it is the applicants' responsibility to keep the application up-to-date.

Time on the list is an important aspect and can be an important tie-breaker when allocating officers are considering possible offers of housing therefore it is important applicants keep their circumstances up to date and respond to regular review letters.

## 5 Welfare Reform (to be implemented 2014)

Changes in Welfare Benefit Reform may affect you when applying for a house through the Fife Housing Register. From April 2013 the UK Government has changed the rules on the number of bedrooms housing benefit will pay for.

The Fife Housing Register policy on standards of occupancy has not changed. Applications will continue to be assessed and pointed through the Common Assessment of Need.

When applying to FHR you can choose to either be assessed through the FHR Common Assessment of Need or under the Welfare Benefit Reform rules.

## 6 Managing Allocations

The Fife 'Scheme of Allocations' recognises pressures on Council housing and, through the Scheme, the Council aims to meet the needs of those in acute housing need and other forms of need. The following annual targets have been set to make sure the Council achieves this aim:

Applicant group	Target
Transfers	30%
Homelessness	45%
First-time	15%
Prevention first	10%

Having met the 2012 Homeless Target, it is essential that the main focus is now on the prevention of homelessness, reducing the dependence on the homelessness service and reducing the time to discharge the statutory homelessness duty to existing homeless applicants. Therefore a dedicated quota for annual allocations to Prevention First applicants has been agreed.

The target for homelessness will gradually decrease to 40% while the prevention first target will increase in line with this to 10% by 2015.



For every vacancy, allocating officers will prepare a shortlist of applicants with circumstances and needs that match the characteristics of the property and in accordance with the quotas and targets set out above.

Local circumstances are reflected in Area Lettings Plans (ALPs) and Community Lettings Initiatives (CLIs) which are reviewed annually. ALPs and CLIs provide the facility to make the best use of stock through planned action taking account of the availability of certain size / types of properties available, local demand and other relevant factors. Information on Area Lettings Plans is available in all Local Offices and on our website at [www.fifedirect.org.uk](http://www.fifedirect.org.uk).

6.1 Council New Builds

To promote turnover of properties available to let and achieve permanent outcomes for more applicants on the housing list the allocation of new-build Council properties will be “Transfer-Led”. In the first instance, new-build properties will be offered to Fife Council tenants on the transfer list. However, when the transfer list is exhausted, lets will be in accordance with the Common Assessment of Need. Each new development will include properties designed and adapted for those with specific needs. Allocations to these properties will not be “Transfer-Led”.

7 Choices and Property Types

The Council is committed to providing high quality housing advice to help and support people applying for housing. Applicants can request a Housing Options Interview at all Local Council offices or alternatively ask local advisors for assistance with any aspect of their application.

In most circumstances it will not be possible to say when an offer of housing will become available but in all circumstances the intention is to give a realistic indication of housing prospects and options.

7.1 Choice of Areas

Through the application form, applicants can chose up to three Main Lettings Areas where they would prefer to be housed, but may also add any number of additional areas that they would accept an offer of housing in, if it became available. It is also possible to state areas that would not be acceptable. Applicants also have the choice of property and heating types.

7.2 Allocations to Statutory Homeless Households

All statutory unintentionally homeless households will be given a single statutory offer of housing in the shortest possible timescale to minimise the time spent in unsuitable or temporary accommodation and to allow the Council to discharge its statutory duty. Where this is refused, the Council will have discharged all elements of its statutory duty and the household will be entitled to one further single offer of housing based upon normal housing list assessment. However if a fair offer of housing was made prior to the statutory offer the application will be suspended for 6 months for the refusal of two fair offers.

To minimise the time spent in unsuitable or temporary accommodation the following applies:

- In towns/areas/streets where housing or certain housing types are in short supply offers may not meet the preferences selected by households and is likely to mean for many households that the Council will offer housing which is immediately available and Homeless Households will not receive offers in areas which they had hoped for, or that instead of a house they are offered a flat.

- Exclusions of streets or areas can only be considered in relation to assessed need, support or significant risk
- This is not a diminution of choice or service to homeless households but an approach which will ensure that homeless households are provided with a secure housing solution, aligned to what is immediately available within a short timescale and which reflects the urgent nature of their housing circumstances. There will be an emphasis on “what the council can provide” and the limitations of this explained to each household for all applicant types
- The policy on refusals applies to all Housing Applicants

7.3 Different Housing Providers and Housing Options

Applicants can select from a range of housing providers which have appropriate properties in their areas of choice. Fife Housing Register will provide access to the Fife based housing associations but the Council can nominate applicants to the other housing associations if they are suitably placed on Fife Housing Register. The Council cannot guarantee that any nominated applicant will be successful in getting an offer under the Nomination Agreement.

7.4 House Sizes

The size of property allocated will depend on the household composition and will generally operate within the following rules:

Household	Apartment Size
Single Person	2 or 1
Single pregnant woman	3 or 2
Couple	3 or 2
Family with one child	3 or 4
Family, two children of same sex under 13 years old	3 or 4
Family, two children of same sex over 13 years old	4 or 5
Family, two children not of same sex (irrespective of childrens age)	4 or 5
Family, three or more children	4 or 5

There may be some exceptions where:

- There needs to be consideration of the culture / tradition of the household and this imposes a specific housing requirement;
- Households who have access or other residential caring responsibilities will receive one additional bedroom above the requirements of their permanent household;
- Where there is a need for flexibility in the use of properties due to imbalances in the nature of demand and housing mix or where there is a need to maximise the use of more readily available property.

If you choose to be assessed in line with Welfare Benefit Reform you will be provided with a bedroom for:  
(Due to be implemented during 2014)

Household	Apartment Size
Single Person	1 or 2
Single pregnant woman	3
Couple	2
Family with one child	3
Family, two children of same sex under 16 years	3
Family, two children of same sex one or more aged over 16 years	4
Family, two children not of same sex under 10 years	3
Family, two children not of same sex over 10 years	4

## 7.5 Particular Types of Housing

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to target certain groups of applicants for offers of housing (for example; supported housing for older people or specially adapted housing). In these circumstances, applicants will have completed a specialist assessment and allocating officers will work with specialist Housing Occupational Therapists and other relevant professionals to meet the needs of the individual households and make the best use of housing stock.

## 7.6 Allocations outwith the Allocations Policy - Specific Housing Approaches

In certain circumstances the Council will pro-actively identify an allocation for a particular household where:

- the needs presented will not be met through mainstream turnover due to health or disability conditions, household composition or other acute housing needs linked to Fife's Specific Housing Needs Approach;
- there is a need to take direct action to deal with housing issues within Fife's communities and to protect community safety – linked to Fife's Community Safety Strategy;
- this is necessary to support housing investment and improvement programmes – linked to Fife's Housing and Regeneration investment programmes.

# 8 Offers of Housing

## 8.1 Making an Offer

In certain circumstances the Council may invite expressions of interest in a property in writing or verbally but this does not constitute an offer of housing and there is no legal obligation to follow this with a full offer of housing.

Offers of housing are made in writing to the applicants preferred contact address. The offer of housing will give full information about the potential allocation and should be responded to within the time-scale specified.

## 8.2 Refusing an Offer

The Council is committed to making sure that all offers of housing are fair and based on the best knowledge of the needs, circumstances and preferences contained within the application.

Applicants may refuse a first fair offer of housing without penalty but on refusing a second fair offer of housing the application will be suspended for 6 months. If applicants refuse an offer a refusal reason must be stated.

If you are offered a house by any of the Fife Housing Register partners, and the number of bedrooms exceeds your needs according to the Department of Work and Pensions criteria, you can refuse the offer and you will not be penalised in terms of suspensions from the Fife Housing Register. Offers will not be treated as fair offers in circumstances where a refusal is given solely due to the DWP under occupancy.



## 9 Complaints and Appeals

If an applicant is unhappy with any aspect of their application assessment or offer they may appeal the decision and this is highlighted in all communications. This should be submitted in the first instance to the relevant Local Council Office. Appeals may be escalated if applicants are not satisfied with the response. Further information is available in the leaflet "Fife Housing Register - Enquiry, Complaints and Appeals".

At any time applicants may make a complaint using the Councils Corporate Complaints Procedures. For further information see the Corporate Complaint Leaflet.

## 10 Making sure we meet our objectives – monitoring the Scheme of Allocations

FHR partners are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and treatment for all people, and that their practices allow equal access to services. The FHR aims to ensure that everyone who applies for housing is treated fairly, irrespective of gender, race, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, age and physical disability. To ensure the allocations system operates fairly and achieves the objectives that have been set, performance is monitored:

- at a Fife Wide level through the Council's Executive Committee;
- at Area Level by the 7 Area Committees;
- through the on-going monitoring and review of Area Lettings Plan;
- quality assurance and performance monitoring is managed through close working between Housing and Neighbourhood Services, Allocations Support and the 7 Area Housing Teams.

## The Pointing Scheme

Urgent Housing Needs	Points
Statutory Homelessness	100
Severe Harassment	100
Closure Order / Closure for re-development	100

Poor Housing Circumstances	Points
Lacking Amenities	12
Unsafe Water Supply, Inadequate Drainage, Rising & Penetrating Dampness	12
Lacking Central Heating	5
Overcrowding	25 p/room short
Severe Overcrowding (2+ overcrowding factors)	10
Under-occupation	5
Sharing Facilities	6
Childrens Social Needs	10/20

Lack of Security	Points
<b>Tenancy:</b>	
Time Limited Tenancy (no NTQ)	5
Notice to Quit -	
Tied Accommodation	75
Short Assured Accommodation	75
HM Forces Discharge	75
Tenants without a lease	25

### Owner Occupation:

Process of Re-possession / Advised to Sell	25
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Non Householder (single people or families living 'care of')	Points
Not sharing a bedroom	25
Sharing a bedroom with sibling	25
Sharing a bedroom with someone other than sibling	25
No bedroom	25
No fixed abode	25
Families with children overcrowded	25 extra

Management Needs	Points
Awarded by housing managers for best use of stock/exceptional circumstances	120

Social and Medical Needs	Points
Illness and Disability	20/40/60
Sheltered Housing	15/30/50
Special Needs Accommodation	20/60
Harassment	10/30
Independent Living	60
Social / Personal Needs	10/25/40
Travel to Work / Education	5

### Care Arrangements:

Respite Care	10
Access to Children	20
Foster Care	20
Childrens Educational Needs	5/20



You can seek independent housing advice by contacting Frontline Fife at any Home4Good Centre:

34 Commercial Road  
Leven  
KY8 4LD  
Tel: 01334 659391  
Email:  
Leven.Home4Good@fife.gov.uk

16 East Burnside  
Cupar  
KY15 4BH  
Tel: 01334 659390  
Email:  
Cupar.Home4Good@fife.gov.uk

Segal House  
1-2 Segal Place  
Pittencreeff Street  
Dunfermline  
KY12 8AZ  
Tel: 01383 602388  
Email:  
Dunfermline.Home4Good@fife.gov.uk

Marwood House  
34 St Clair Street  
Kirkcaldy  
KY1 2QE  
Tel: 01592 583394  
Email:  
Kirkcaldy.Home4Good@fife.gov.uk

The information included in this publication can be made available in any language, large print, Braille, audio CD/tape and British Sign Language interpretation on request by calling 03451 55 55 00.

Calls cost 3 to 7p per minute from a UK landline, mobile rates may vary.

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這些訊息說明快富市議會的房屋服務。如欲索取中文翻譯，請致電 03451 55 55 88 提出要求。以英國固定座機打這個號碼的收費為每分鐘3至7便士，以手機打則收費不等。

Są to informacje na temat działu usług mieszkaniowych przy władzach lokalnych Fife. Aby zamówić tłumaczenie tych informacji, prosimy zadzwonić pod numer 03451 55 55 44. Koszt połączenia wynosi 3-7p za minutę z brytyjskich telefonów stacjonarnych, koszty połączeń z telefonów komórkowych mogą być różne.

یہ تحریر فائف کونسل ہاؤسنگ سروس کے متعلق ہے۔ اس تحریر کے ترجمے کی درخواست کرنے کے لیے براہ کرم 03451 55 55 66 پر فون کریں۔ برطانوی لینڈ لائن سے کال کے نرخ 3 تا 7 پیس ہیں، موبائل کے نرخ مختلف ہو سکتے ہیں۔