



Lettings Policy

1 Purpose

Metropolitan Thames Valley (MTVH) supports Local Authorities (LAs) with their strategic housing functions and their duties to meet identified local housing needs. We ensure wherever possible that our homes meet the needs of each household and are safe, secure and affordable.

We develop and build new homes in our area of operation and ensure these are built to meet the needs of the local community. This policy covers the allocation of social rented properties (social, affordable, intermediate, keyworker) and market rental housing.

2 Scope

The policy and accompanying procedures apply to:

- Customers
- All colleagues, including agency, bank workers, students, peer mentors and volunteers
- Consultants, contractors, suppliers
- All stakeholders/partners commissioned by us

Our Commitment

- To actively promote local choice-based lettings schemes and local authority housing lists in order to assist in meeting local housing needs
- To ensure access into housing is fair and impartial, and complies with relevant legal, regulatory and contractual requirements
- To ensure properties are affordable at the time of letting
- To agree local letting plans that are scheme specific and promote balanced and sustainable communities
- To promote tenant mobility and make best use of the housing stock
- To ensure lettings are undertaken as quickly and efficiently as possible in the interests of both the applicant and the use of our stock
- To ensure that regular performance monitoring is in place in order to demonstrate compliance with all statutory and regulatory requirements

3 Our Approach

3.1 Local Lettings Plans (LLPs)

We work in partnership with local authorities to develop Local Lettings Plans (LLPs) to promote, enhance, support and sustain balanced communities.

LLPs are particularly relevant for new and mixed tenure housing schemes and we encourage their use in areas we will consider the economic mix, vulnerability, affordability of incoming residents, and may include specific criteria in response to antisocial behaviour and/or other issues in a particular locality. We will also consider the strategic lettings priorities of the local authority when developing LLPs.

Where LLPs are in operation, they will take precedence over other eligibility criteria detailed in this policy. Local Lettings Plans will be publicised when a property is advertised.

3.2 Nominations and Choice Based Lettings Agreements



The allocation of general needs and age designated social housing (50+ / 55+) is subject to local authority nominations arrangements and choice-based lettings agreements.

New-build social rented housing is generally subject to 100% local authority nomination rights upon first let.

Nominations arrangements are generally set within local authority boundaries, unless MTVH has entered into a choice-based lettings agreement with a local authority or a sub-regional provider. This may dictate that a higher percentage of re-lets are allocated through local authority waiting lists.

3.3 Transfers and Direct Lets

MTVH seeks to achieve better management of its housing stock by promoting tenant mobility through internal transfers. Tenants can register for a transfer if they are able to demonstrate they have a need to move, in accordance with MTVH's **Transfer Policy**. In areas of low demand and high turnover, MTVH may advertise available homes directly, and will assess applications in accordance with its **Direct Lets Policy**.

3.4 Tenancy

A lifetime assured tenancy will be offered to the majority of new tenants following satisfactory completion of a starter tenancy. An assured tenancy will usually be offered to an existing MTVH assured tenant, or other qualifying social housing tenant, i.e. an existing assured or secure tenant with another social housing landlord, unless the property meets the criteria for a fixed term tenancy and is charged an affordable rent. Further details and exceptions are detailed in our Tenancy Policy and Procedure.

3.5 Right to Appeal

Applicants have the right to request a review of a decisions affecting their tenancy in accordance with the process outlined in the **Lettings Procedure**. The appeal may be referred to the Allocations Panel who will review the appeal and make a decision based on individual circumstances. An appeal does not interfere with the applicants right to make a complaint to the Independent Housing Ombudsman or to request an agency or organisation to make the appeal on their behalf.

3.6 Allocations Panel

A panel of senior officers will meet regularly to consider and make decisions on various allocations and tenancy matters which will include:

- An assessment of an applicant's individual re-housing priority on the grounds of safeguarding and welfare needs, based on supporting evidence
- A review of allocations decisions where appeals are made against direct matches
- Appeals where access to MTVH accommodation has been refused
- Appeals regarding an applicant's priority for re-housing
- Appeals against the type and length of tenancy offered

3.7 MTVH Employees, Board Members and Agency Staff

- MTVH has adopted the National Housing Federation (NHF) Governance Code 2010 and operates clear codes of guidance relating to the allocation of accommodation. This is to ensure transparency and fairness. As such, employees, Board members and/or their close relatives will not benefit from any advantage if securing accommodation managed by MTVH



- Friends and business associates of employees and/or Board members must disclose their relationship with any employee and/or Board member at the point of application or short listing following the bidding process
- Employees and Board members who know that their friends and/or business associates have applied to, or become a MTVH tenant, must disclose their relationship to their manager as soon as they become aware
- MTVH will only offer accommodation to employees, Board members and/or their close relatives if the person concerned:
 - has been referred by the local authority; or
 - has successfully bid for a direct let; or
 - requires tied accommodation to carry out their job effectively. However, it should be noted that MTVH is moving away from providing tied accommodation
- Where there is a contractual obligation, MTVH may rehouse a former employee who is in tied accommodation
- MTVH will not provide tied accommodation to agency and/or temporary staff
- Employees, Board members and/or their close relatives being considered for an offer of accommodation must have their application approved by a Director in the Customer Services Directorate.

3.8 Key Workers

Some properties are developed and designated for key workers. The definition of a key worker differs depending on the local authority or the funding body, but usually covers:

- Workers in jobs that are important to sustain the local economy;
- Employees in essential public services without whom those services would operate below optimal levels;
- Clinical staff needed to run National Health Service facilities at a particular point in time

Where there is evidence of a lack of demand for Keyworker homes, MTVH will allocate vacancies on an intermediate rental basis.

3.9 Reporting Requirements

MTVH participates in the national CORE system of recording lettings reported through to the Regulator of Social Housing. Regular reporting is provided to local authority partners upon request, to demonstrate compliance with nominations and choice-based lettings agreements. Regular performance monitoring is in place to ensure compliance with all legislative and regulatory requirements

3.10 Confidentiality and Information Sharing

This policy is written in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act. Personal information will not be divulged without permission and all information will be securely stored. It is recognised there may be occasions where appropriate information may be shared with the relevant authority, with or without the consent of the individual. The safety and interests of the individual we are supporting must come first, therefore the information we share will be relevant and proportionate.

3.11 Third Party Organisations

We have several third-party contract arrangements with landlords, support providers, contractors and suppliers. Our contract specifications will require our partners to comply with this policy and accompanying procedures and for this to be reflected in their own policies and procedures.



4 Background legislation

- Housing Act 1996 - places a duty on Registered Providers to co-operate with local authorities so far as is reasonable, to offer accommodation to households in priority need under local authority lettings schemes.
- Localism Act 2011
- Immigration Act 2016
- HCA tenancy standard 2012
- Home standard 2012
- DCLG and HCA Affordable Homes Programme Framework 2011
- DCLG Allocations of Accommodation Code of Guidance 2012
- Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013

5 Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In implementing this policy MTVH will not discriminate against any colleague, customer or stakeholder on the grounds of their race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment status, ethnic origin, age, religion/beliefs, disability, marital status, class, socioeconomic status, and pregnancy/maternity.

6 Key Policy Information

Procedure Owner	Head of Customer Services
Author	Policy Team
Approved by	Tim Millns; Director of Central Customer Services, Customer Service SLT
Effective from	June 2020
Approach to review	This Policy & associated Procedures will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if legislation, regulatory changes or operational need require an earlier review. Any amendments will be appropriately consulted on and signed off before being clearly communicated to customers and colleagues.
Latest next review date	June 2023

7 Relevant forms and appendices

- Tenancy Policy and Procedure
- Lettings Procedure
- Bedroom Standard Guidance
- Housing Serious Offenders Guidance
- Under 18s Policy
- Direct Lets Policy and Procedure
- Succession Policy
- Mutual Exchange Policy
- Transfer Policy and Procedure
- Assignment & Other Tenancy Changes Policy
- Decant Policy
- Provision of Housing to Staff Procedure