

Quartz Housing Limited: Allocation Policy - Rental Accommodation

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1 | Introduction

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to outline the approach that Quartz Housing Limited (Quartz) will take to manage lettings for low-cost rental properties.
- 1.2. Quartz is committed to providing a range of quality affordable properties that will assist Local Authorities in the delivery of their housing strategies and to promote and enable choice of accommodation for people in housing need with limited housing options.
- 1.3. Quartz will ensure that access into the housing is on a fair and equitable basis while ensuring that allocations are made in line with sustainable lettings plans which optimise the best use of the assets. Properties are let in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements and with the intention of incurring minimal rent loss.

2 | Objectives

- 1.1 Quartz's objectives in the allocation of its homes are to:
 - 1.1.1 meet housing need and prevent homelessness by working in association with local authorities and other agencies;
 - 1.1.2 comply with current legislation and regulatory guidance;
 - 1.1.3 create stable tenancies and sustainable communities;
 - 1.1.4 make best use of Quartz's stock in meeting the needs of potential and existing tenants and minimise void periods;
 - 1.1.5 ensure that the selection of applicants and the allocation of homes is transparent, fair and accountable;
 - 1.1.6 offer choice to tenants over where they live while giving preference to those in priority need; and
 - 1.1.7 promote equal opportunities and value diversity.

3 | Policy Commitment

3.1. Who we house

- 3.1.1. Our primary purpose as a Registered Provider is to provide accommodation for people in housing need who are unable to afford to buy or rent housing on the open market. It is expected that all applicants will meet the eligibility criteria. All applications for housing will be considered carefully before an offer of accommodation is made and, in some cases, we may request additional information.
- 3.1.2. Where prospective residents require support to enable them to access or maintain a tenancy Quartz will take those needs into account and aim to provide the support required through our own services or through other agencies. Support needs will not be a bar to applicants providing that the necessary support can be provided.

3.2. Who we cannot house

- 3.2.1. By law, certain households (provided that they are not existing residents) are not eligible, including:
- households subject to immigration control, including asylum seekers (although there are exceptions to this rule, each will be treated on its merit by the Local Authority responsible);
 - households who have come from abroad and do not qualify for public funds (e.g. social security benefits).
- 3.2.2. Local Authorities also have powers to treat as ineligible any applicant who has behaved badly enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant. This may have happened in an existing or a previous tenancy. Examples of such behaviour include:
- repeated or significant non-payment of rent;
 - certain breaches of tenancy conditions;
 - behaviour (either that of the applicant(s) or of someone living with or visiting them) that is likely to cause nuisance or annoyance to others;
 - using the home for immoral or illegal purposes;
 - committing an arrestable offence in or near the home;
 - serious neglect of the condition of the home; and
 - getting a tenancy by providing false information or paying someone for it.
- 3.2.3. An applicant who has behaved in such a way may be ineligible for allocation to a Quartz property. Applicants have the right to request a review of any decision on eligibility and a right to be informed in writing of the decision on review and clear grounds for that decision.

3.3. Choice Based Lettings

- 3.3.1. We will participate in local and regional choice-based lettings schemes to give applicants greater choice in meeting their housing needs, within the context of any Local Lettings Plans adopted.
- 3.3.2. Applicants are expected to actively look for and express their interest in advertised vacant properties that they want to live in. This expression of interest is known as a 'bid'. Bidding will occur for all vacant properties advertised through a Choice Based Lettings scheme. The rules for bidding will be those that are set by the local Choice Based Lettings scheme.
- 3.3.3. Quartz, working with the Local Authority and other partner agencies, will assist applicants to express interest where they:
- do not have access to the internet;
 - have a disability or health condition that would prevent them from accessing the web site;
 - are absent due to illness;
 - require additional assistance.
- 3.3.4. Where an applicant is put forward for accommodation through the Choice Based Letting scheme their individual circumstances will be considered prior to allocation in every case using the information provided by the applicant on their application form and any information provided subsequently.

3.4. Waiting List

- 3.4.1. Generally, it is not the intention of Quartz to hold a waiting list. The majority of properties will be let through Local Authority nominations and Choice Based Letting schemes. In exceptions where this is not possible then approved local referral agencies will be used.

3.5. Housing need and priority

- 3.5.1. As, demand for affordable housing to rent is greater than the number of properties available, Quartz prioritises allocations of vacant properties to applicants in the greatest need. This system of prioritisation will be linked to Local Lettings plans where appropriate.
- 3.5.2. Generally vacant housing will be offered to the top applicant identified through choice based lettings at the time of the vacancy, whose housing needs and requirements best match the property type available. However, in certain circumstances this may not be the case, for example, where a property has been adapted and that adaptation may be more suitable to an applicant with fewer points, or if the lifestyle of the applicant with the highest number of points is considered to be unsuitable for that property.

- 3.5.3. Where an offer to the top applicant is not made, this will be recorded together with the reason for the decision.
- 3.5.4. Where an offer of housing has been made and accepted and it transpires that the applicant has given false information, we may commence legal action for repossession to end the tenancy.

3.6. References

- 3.6.1. Potential residents nominated through Choice Based Lettings schemes will normally need to provide a satisfactory reference that demonstrates their ability to pay their rent and, where appropriate, how well they have conducted any previous tenancy held by them. The reference must be from a current landlord or where there is no current landlord, former landlord.
- 3.6.2. Applicants (including homeless persons) may not have to provide references. References will not normally be accepted from friends or family members except where there has been no other housing history. Applicants will be asked to consent to information being shared with other housing providers and housing service providers.

3.7. Identification and reference verification

- 3.7.1. Before an offer of accommodation is made, Quartz will need to be satisfied that information provided by the applicant at registration accurately reflects their housing circumstances. In most cases, this second verification process will be carried out shortly before an offer of accommodation is made.

3.8. Transfers

- 3.8.1. Existing Quartz tenants wishing to move to another Quartz property are subject to the same needs criteria as other applicants. However, where they live in a home that is in high demand, or they are seriously under occupying a property and are prepared to move to properties in lesser demand or of a more appropriate size, then they may be given additional priority.

3.9. Decants

- 3.9.1. Where existing Quartz residents are required to move because essential works are to be carried out that cannot be undertaken with the residents in occupation, an offer of accommodation within permanent stock, in an area of choice for the resident, will be provided where possible. However, this will not always be possible due to lack of supply.

3.10. Mutual Exchange

- 3.10.1. Quartz will subscribe to online services which will enable its residents to seek a mutual exchange with another social housing tenant.

- 3.10.2. Where a tenant wishes to exchange their home the applicant tenant with whom they wish to swap will be subject to the exclusion criteria set out in section 3.16. Tenants with outstanding rent arrears will not be eligible for mutual exchange until the arrears are resolved.

3.11. Number of offers

- 3.11.1. Quartz will not normally restrict the number of offers made. However, where an offer is unreasonably refused by the applicant, further offers of the same type of property in the same area may not be made.
- 3.11.2. Residents transferring and those being decanted will normally receive two reasonable offers of accommodation. For transfers, if offers are rejected tenants will be removed from the list and can only re-apply 12 months later unless there is a substantial change of circumstances. In the case of decants, Quartz would consider its legal position with regards to gaining possession.
- 3.11.3. A reasonable offer should meet the essential needs of the household e.g. in terms of size or level of accommodation. Quartz will note preferences for area and attempt to take this into account when offering property, but this may not always be possible.

3.12. Trade down incentives

- 3.12.1. Quartz recognises that for a variety of reasons, residents may wish to “downsize”. Where residents express interest in moving to a smaller property, incentives will be offered to make the transition smooth. “Downsizing” requests will not be approved where the move to a smaller property would result in statutory overcrowding.
- 3.12.2. When an offer of accommodation is made; Quartz will need to be satisfied that information provided by the applicant at registration accurately reflects their housing circumstances. In most cases, this second verification process will be carried out shortly before an offer of accommodation is made.

3.13. Homes for people with a disability

- 3.13.1. These properties are usually purpose built or specially adapted for use by disabled people. When these properties become vacant, they are reserved for households needing the specialised facilities offered by the property, regardless of the priority of other applicants. However, where there is little interest, Quartz may choose to make these properties available for general purpose lets.

3.14. Pets

- 3.14.1. Except in the case of assistance dogs, applicants who own a dog will only be considered for properties that have their own ground level private entrance. Applicants for all properties should seek the written permission of Quartz if they wish to keep any other pet in their home.

3.15. Registered sex offenders

- 3.15.1. Registered sex offenders are required to inform Quartz when they apply for housing that they are a registered sex offender as it is a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 for offenders to withhold this information. The risk posed by Sex Offenders cannot be assessed by Quartz who will be guided on this by agencies charged with the management and monitoring of sex offenders including the police and social workers.

3.16. When we may not offer accommodation

- 3.16.1. There are a small number of people that Quartz will not allow to live in our homes. This helps Quartz to provide a better quality of life for all of its customers and the wider community. Quartz may not re-house people in the following circumstances, if the applicant, the applicant's spouse, partner or someone who lives with the applicant:
- has been evicted from a social letting in the past;
 - owe Quartz or another Registered Provider money and has not made and kept to an agreement to pay this debt;
 - have been subject to an Anti-Social Behaviour Order or ASB injunction;
 - pose a threat to the community;
 - has previously failed to maintain a probationary tenancy;
 - has given false information on the application form or during an interview to obtain one of our homes;
 - has been evicted from interim housing and has made themselves homeless;
 - has sensory or physical impairments and need help from external agencies to help them sustain a tenancy but have refused such help;
 - has serious mental health problems that result in them being unable to sustain a tenancy even with assistance from specialist support agencies.

3.17. Appeal against ineligibility

- 3.17.1. Quartz will act transparently in applying this policy. Where applicants do not feel we have complied with our allocations policy, they have a right to appeal our decision. Appeals should be made in writing and their complaint will be dealt with in line with the Complaints Policy.

3.18. Lettings

3.18.1. All new residents will be provided with a copy of:

- the tenancy agreement;
- the support agreement (if relevant);
- the tenants handbook;
- relevant fire safety information;
- property information such as user manuals, any relevant warranty period for fixtures;
- contact details for Quartz's management provider relevant to the property.

3.19. Tenure

3.19.1. Existing periodic secure tenants of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea will be offered assured non-shorthold tenancies (ANSTs). Other new tenants will be offered fixed term assured shorthold tenancies (ASTs) with a minimum term of 6 and 12 months (where a probationary tenancy is issued) and a maximum term of 5 years.

3.20. Joint Tenancies

3.20.1. Quartz will grant joint-named tenancies on all occasions when individuals seek housing as a couple, unless any one of the joint tenants are ineligible for accommodation in which case a joint tenancy will not be granted.

3.21. Confidentiality

3.21.1. The privacy of applicants will be respected, and care will be taken to maintain confidentiality in line with confidentiality and data protection laws. However, responsible information sharing can play a key role in the letting of our homes. Information sharing protocols with local authorities and partners will be followed where they are in place.

4 | Scope

4.1. This policy applies to all Quartz's low-cost rental properties. All staff and subcontractors are expected to work in line with this policy.

5 | Monitoring and Performance

5.1. The board have overall responsibility for this policy, which will be implemented by Quartz's staff and/or sub-contractors.

5.2. The policy will be reviewed annually by the board, and the board will approve any changes.

- 5.3. The board will receive assurance that the policy is being complied with through reports on the allocations process and internal audit activity.

6 | Background Documents

- 6.1. This policy should be read in conjunction with the legal and regulatory documents listed below:

- The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England (as amended from time to time)
- The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Rent Standard 2020
- Housing and Regeneration Act 2008
- Government's Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing

and the following strategies and policies:

- Complaints Policy
 - Rent and Service Charge Policy
 - Equality and Diversity Policy
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