

LETTINGS POLICY

GENERAL NEEDS HOUSING

POLICY OVERVIEW

- Impact provides housing for rent and some low cost homes for sale in Cumbria, in the districts of Carlisle, Allerdale, Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland.

The Association works closely with the local authorities in these districts, and develops and improves housing to meet needs agreed and identified with the authorities and other agencies.

- Most general needs housing is let through a Choice Based Lettings scheme 'Impact Homefinder', which operates as a single scheme across Cumbria. Some housing is also let to people nominated from the local authority waiting lists or the Homeless Persons Sections in the Eden and South Lakeland district areas. A small number of properties are let outside the Choice Based scheme and nomination arrangements, either in emergency circumstances (eg: serious harassment, domestic violence, demolition etc), or in order to meet minimum annual lettings targets set for statutory homeless people, people moving on from supported housing and transfers which are not being achieved through the Choice Based Scheme.
- Under the 'Homefinder' scheme a Housing Register is operated. To take part in the scheme people must join this Register. Any person aged 16 or over can apply to join although young people aged 16 or 17 will only be housed if an appropriate support package is in place.
- Housing need is the main factor considered when prioritising/selecting people for rehousing. Within the Homefinder scheme a banding system comprising three 'needs' bands is used to determine greatest need. Other factors considered after banding are local connection, length of time on the Housing Register and number of needs. For some properties in rural areas priority is given to people with a local connection as specified by scheme Section 106 agreements or other local agreement (eg: with Parish Councils).
- To make best use of the housing stock, criteria are set to match household type and size with appropriate properties.
- Some people may be excluded from joining the Housing Register, or refused housing, if they are assessed as presenting a high risk of causing serious anti-social behaviour, have significant levels of housing related debt, have been involved in a serious breach of

tenancy conditions or require support which cannot be provided. To reduce the risk of anti-social behaviour problems, the Association uses Starter Tenancies (twelve month Assured Shorthold tenancies), for all new tenants. Where serious problems have occurred exclusion is not automatic and the individual circumstances of each case are considered before a final decision is made.

- The Association is a member of the national 'Homeswapper' mobility scheme and will take referrals from other areas of the country through this scheme.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

Through this policy and linked procedures the Association seeks to:

- House people with serious housing need. We generally aim to let accommodation to those people identified as having the greatest housing need.
- Give people as much choice and control as possible over where they live.
- Contribute to sustainability, neighbourhood regeneration and social inclusion.
- Ensure that properties are let fairly and that legal and regulatory obligations are fulfilled.
- Ensure that properties are let quickly and efficiently and that the lettings service provides value for money.
- Be non-discriminatory and promote equality of opportunity and diversity in housing services.
- Contribute to the provision of sufficient levels of independent housing for people who are homeless and people who are moving on from temporary supported accommodation.
- Provide reasonable opportunity for existing tenants to transfer to other Impact properties.
- Enhance mobility between different areas.
- Take account of local needs and local resident aspirations.

HOW THE POLICY WILL BE IMPLEMENTED

A lettings procedure provides full and clear guidance to staff. The procedure provides full details of the Homefinder scheme including need assessment, advertising of properties, bidding processes, reviews and appeals and monitoring and reviews of the scheme. Local lettings agreements (eg: for the Salterbeck Estate) and nomination agreements are appended to the procedure.

The effectiveness of the procedure in achieving policy objectives is monitored through regular reporting and review. Reviews include discussion with Resident Groups and service users (including the Associations Customer Panel and Residents Committee) and local authorities and other agencies working with people in housing need.