



**HOUSING DEPARTMENT**

**ALLOCATION POLICY**

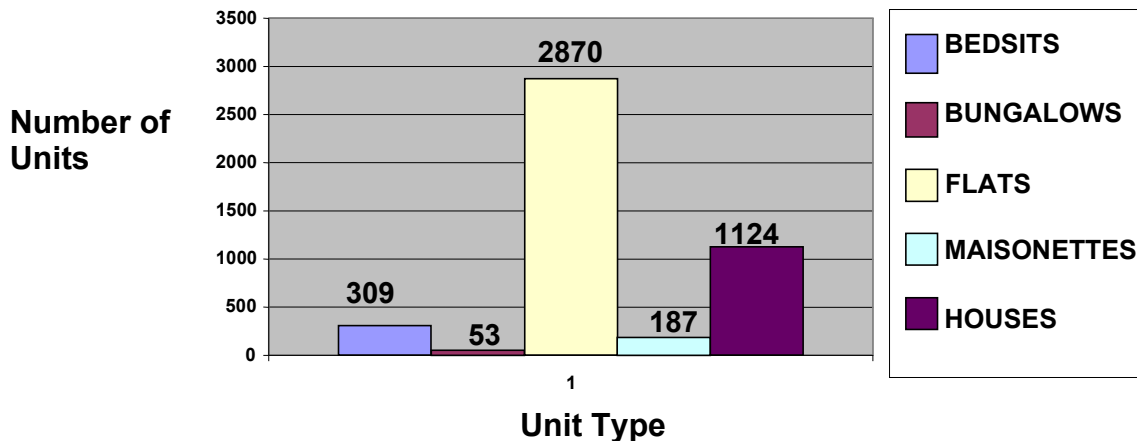
**D Counce**  
**Director of Tenant Services**  
**September 2005**

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The Housing Committee administers 4,543 flats and houses which are rented to residentially qualified persons who would otherwise find it difficult finding suitable, affordable accommodation in the private sector, in which to house them and their families. The housing stock is broken down as follows:-

### Breakdown of Housing Committee Stock 2005



Demand far exceeds supply for most size properties and it essential that a strict Allocation Policy is adhered to.

The Allocations Team, based within the Estates Section, is responsible for the letting of all void properties administered by the Housing Committee, ensuring the most efficient and effective utilisation of the housing stock. The Allocations Team is also responsible for providing nominations for other social landlords.

A points and grouping system is used in order to prioritise applications, the greater the need the higher number of points are given.

This document explains the Allocation Policy in detail but if you have any queries or concerns then please contact us on the numbers below, or visit our **Support Services Team** on the ground floor of the **Housing Department, Jubilee Wharf, 24 The Esplanade, St Helier, Jersey JE4 8XT.**

#### Allocations Team

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## **Section 2**      **General Principles and Objectives of the Allocation Policy**

The Allocation Policy is influenced by the following general principles, which underpin our approach to the allocation of all void properties:-

### **Consistency**

The Department will apply the Allocations Policy in a consistent manner so that all applicants

with similar characteristics are treated in a similar manner to achieve similar outcomes;

### **Openness**

By adhering to the Allocations Policy, the Department will be open and honest and be able to justify all allocations made (whilst maintaining individual confidentiality);

### **Responsiveness**

The Department seeks to have a policy which is capable of responding to a wide range of complex individual needs;

### **Local co-operation**

The Department seeks to work with other social rented housing providers in order to best meet the housing need of the Island;

### **Discretion**

The strength of this policy is the absolute discretion that rests with the Housing Committee in deciding the eligibility of persons who should be housed in States Rental accommodation. The Committee may also use it's discretion in deciding applicant priority.

The Committee is not subject to any specific legislation on this matter, apart from the normal conditions of the Housing Law. There is no legal obligation for the Committee to house anyone that it does not consider to be eligible.

The Housing Committee sets the general principles of the policy, but it is left to the Department to implement that policy in respect of each application received. The flexibility of the present system, which is not highly bound by strict rules and regulations, ensures that the many nuances that distinguish one application from the next are taken into account. The eligibility criteria and allocation procedure are transparent and any applicant dissatisfied with the decision of the Department can, having exhausted the Departmental appeals procedure, appeal to the Housing Committee for their case to be reviewed.

The Allocation Policy is used in order to meet the following objectives:-

- To address housing needs in the Island and where possible take into account applicants' housing aspirations;
- To make the best use of the housing stock available;
- To sustain and promote local communities;
- To monitor performance and respond to changing patterns of need as they may arise, by reviewing the Policy on an annual basis;

## **Section 3                      Acceptance of applications on the Waiting List and Transfer List**

### **Application Procedure**

**Prospective Tenants:** Applicants for States rental accommodation are required to complete an application form that asks them a series of questions on their current housing situation and their personal circumstances.

As part of the assessment procedure, the Tenant Services Officer may visit applicants at home to discuss in detail the applicant's housing needs. The home visit, apart from giving the applicant an opportunity to discuss their housing problems in greater detail, also gives the Tenant Services Officer an invaluable insight into the family's home circumstances. If there are medical problems that may influence the type of accommodation required, more information on the applicant's needs may be requested from doctors, specialists or an objective assessment carried out by staff at Health & Social Services.

Those accepted as being eligible are registered on the Housing Waiting List, allocated points and assigned to a group in order to reflect their priority in relation to others waiting for accommodation. The points and grouping system is explained later in this policy. The Tenant Services Manager will review each application before the applicant is notified of the Department's decision. Once an application is accepted and made active, the Allocations Team will send out periodic update forms, although the onus is on the applicant to inform the Department of any change in circumstance that may affect priority or eligibility.

**Current Tenants:** Persons wishing to transfer to alternative States Rental accommodation are required to fill in and submit a 'transfer form'. As part of the assessment procedure, an applicant may sometimes be visited at home, in order to discuss in detail the applicant's housing needs, or in order to ascertain whether the applicant has looked after their current home. Those who are accepted as being eligible are registered on the Transfer List and are allocated points and assigned to a group in order to reflect their priority in relation to others waiting for accommodation. The points and grouping system is explained later in this report. The Tenant Services Officer assesses each application before the applicant is notified of the Department's decision.

### Eligibility criteria

Over the last twenty years or so, demand for States Rental accommodation has far exceeded supply and the Committee has been obliged to pursue a strict allocations policy to ensure that the available accommodation is let to those in greatest need.

**Prospective Tenants:** in the main, only three categories of applicant are considered eligible for Committee accommodation -

- Persons aged 50 years or over who have an income of no more than £450.00 per week. Savings are considered but unless there are sufficient monies to significantly alter their ability to find a home, the Department adopts a reasonably relaxed position.
- Young families, with children, on relatively low incomes who are unable to find suitable accommodation in the private sector notwithstanding assistance available under the Private Rent Rebate Scheme.

Current accepted maximum levels of income are:-

Family with one child.....	£575 per week	(£29,900 pa)
Family with two children.....	£650 per week	(£33,800 pa)
Family with two children..... (opposite sex)	£725 per week	(£37,700 pa)
Family with three children +.....	£725 per week	(£37,700 pa)
Single Persons & Couples..... (50 + years of age, no children)	£450 per week	(23,400 pa)

In respect of joint incomes that exceed the current limits, the Department takes into consideration the split in the income - the likelihood of one partner giving up work to have further children, the type of work undertaken in terms of career prospects and future earning power. In addition, the Department also takes into account the high cost of child care, should both partners be working.

- Those with medical disabilities who require special types of housing but who cannot afford such accommodation in the private sector. This will include persons with mental and physical difficulties.

**Current Tenants:** The Department tries to minimise the number of tenants on the transfer list by limiting eligibility to those who really need to move -

- Families in accommodation that is now too large for their needs (For explanation, see Full Occupancy Policy in this document).
- Families or individuals with medical problems, in cases where their present accommodation cannot be adapted to suit.
- Anti Social Behaviour Unit requests for individuals/families to be transferred.
- Families with opposite sex children, where the children are sharing a bedroom.
- Families that are overcrowded in their current accommodation.
- Individuals/families that need to move on social or good management grounds.

Rent account status, rental payment history and condition of current home is also taken into account when considering eligibility to transfer.

### **Lower age limit- Individuals with dependant children**

Any applicant must have reached 18 years of age. Young mothers under this age who cannot stay with their families are housed in accommodation under the administration of the **Children's Service** or by organisations such as the **Causeway Association**. These Services provide the support and assistance, such as the teaching of parenting skills, which are often required by such young mothers. On reaching their eighteenth birthday, they become eligible to be housed in States rental accommodation. The various agencies work closely together to ensure that the appropriate accommodation is provided every time. Many of these young families need close supervision well beyond their eighteenth birthday and will therefore stay in this 'supervised accommodation' until they are ready to move out and live on their own.

### **Lower age limit - Single people under 50 with no dependants**

Individuals may sometimes be housed in States rental accommodation, provided they can show that they have a special need e.g. physical or mental disability. Some of these applicants may need particular support and this is explained in greater detail later on in this report under 'Supported Housing'.

### **Couples awaiting their first child**

The Department usually waits until the first child is born and a copy of the baby's birth certificate has been submitted before making an offer of accommodation. However, if there are specific reasons why the individual may not be able to remain in their current accommodation, or if the current accommodation is unsuitable for newly born babies, an application can be accepted at 7 months pregnancy. The Department would require medical confirmation of the expected date of confinement in these cases. This rule only applies to Waiting List applicants.

### **Families joining together**

Due to the extreme shortage of large family accommodation, we are not able to assist either current tenants, or waiting list applicants, where two families are joining together and in need of large family accommodation (i.e. 4 + bedrooms).

### **Male applicants with non-residentially qualified female partners with dependent children**

In addition to meeting the standard criteria for acceptance on the waiting list, applications from the above must demonstrate the following:-

- The qualified male applicant is father to at least one of the children and the birth certificates have been verified.
- The family has been resident in the Island for an appreciable length of time.
- The unqualified female partner may need to vacate the accommodation if the relationship breaks down and she remains unqualified.

Prior to this, applications from individuals in this category would not have been accepted.

### **Residency requirements ('Six Month Rule')**

The Department currently requires all residentially qualified persons returning to the Island seeking to be housed in States Rental accommodation, to be resident in the Island for a period of six months before they are considered eligible to be placed on the waiting list. This policy exists to deter applicants arriving in the Island, declaring themselves homeless and expecting to be housed immediately. This action would be unfair to those families patiently sitting on the waiting list to be housed.

### **Homelessness**

The Department does not have emergency accommodation in its stock, although it prioritises applicants who are actually or imminently homeless. However, this does not apply to those who intentionally declare themselves homeless and seek to jump the queue ahead of those on the waiting list. Fortunately, these types of cases are very rare.

### **Property Ownership**

The Department is not able to consider a property owner for States Rental accommodation.

### **Children's (Jersey) Law 2002**

This new Law effectively means that, where there is a relationship breakdown, both parents can apply for "Residence Orders" and essentially share the care of any children of the relationship. However, the Department is not able to house both parents, in separate family sized accommodation, for the same child/children. The couple must decide which party will apply for States Rental accommodation, with the other being eligible gain accommodation in the private sector with the aid if Private Sector Rent Rebate.

### **The Full Occupancy Policy**

Due to the demand far exceeding supply for large family homes the Housing Committee has had to implement a full occupancy policy. Generally, where families reduce in size they will be requested to move to smaller accommodation with the help of the Department. However, it is the long term aim for tenants who have looked after their homes and paid their rent to be permitted to remain in that home regardless of whether or not they are fully occupying all the rooms. It is also a long term aim to allow all children to have the benefit of their own bedroom.

### **Exceptions to the Full Occupancy Policy:**

- Authorised Under-Occupancy: See Section 7 "Rewards and Incentives Scheme"
- Disabled or Adapted Units: Families with a member who is physically disabled are able to occupy accommodation larger than their circumstances would usually dictate because it is acknowledged that greater mobility and space is required. In addition, if significant adaptations have been carried out on a property to meet a special need, the family will not be moved unless that special need is no longer required.
- Areas of High Density Housing: From time to time, the Department may allow accommodation in certain high density areas to be under-occupied. This has the effect of lowering the density and reducing the social problems that can be associated with particularly crowded areas.

### **Pets**

All tenants are permitted one caged bird and/or one pet cat. A pet permit, which is issued at the Department's discretion, is necessary for any other animal. The Housing Committee's policy on dogs is as follows: "The Committee decided that no large dogs, including Rottweilers and Dobermans, should be kept in flats. It was agreed that permits for tenants of flats would only be issued at the Department's discretion, providing there had been a satisfactory inspection by

the Animal Shelter to ascertain the property's suitability and to ensure an appropriate standard of care".

### **Mutual Exchange**

The Tenant Participation Team operates a Mutual Exchange Scheme. The Mutual Exchange Scheme allows tenants who would not normally be accepted on the transfer list the opportunity of exchanging their property with someone else. Certain restrictions apply, namely; neither party can be in arrears of rent, the property must be accepted as it is (i.e. no maintenance expenditure required by the Department) and the accommodation must be of a suitable size for each transferee.

## **Section 4 Application priority and the allocation of vacant units.**

The Housing Department manages two lists, a Waiting List for tenants needing to be housed from the private sector and a Transfer List for current tenants requiring a move to alternative accommodation due to a change in their circumstances.

The ratio of allocations made to each group will be determined by the Allocations Team on an annual basis, a strong factor in this decision is the number of void properties created by transfer applicants and the budgetary constraints surrounding that.

The Housing Department currently operates a points and grouping system in order to objectively classify an applicants needs, and prioritise their case. Certain circumstances lead to automatic assignment of a number of points (i.e. Overcrowding = 40). Where necessary, the Department also has the facility to assign discretionary points for unusual circumstances. The Points and Grouping System for applicants on both the Waiting List and Transfer List is as follows:

### **Group 1 (60 – 100 Points)**

Homeless applicants - 100  
Eviction (with court date) - 100  
Tied Accommodation (with date) - 100  
Decant/Refurbishment – between 75 and 100  
Families in a 3 bed or 4 bed unit waiting to transfer to a smaller unit - 80  
Individuals/families with an 'immediate' medical priority - 60  
Urgent Management Decision - 60  
ASBU/Rent Arrears Relocation - 60

### **Group 2 (40 – 59 Points)**

Families with opposite sex children – 40  
Families overcrowded in their current accommodation - 40  
Individuals/Families with a 'moderate' medical priority - 40  
Financial – Urgent - 40

### **Group 3 (20 – 39 Points)**

Eviction – no date - 30  
Financial - 30  
Individuals/Couples in a 2 bed unit wanting to transfer to a one bedroom unit - 20

### **Group 4**

Good Management - 15  
Trust Tenant wanting to be housed by the Housing Committee - 15  
Over 50 (Not Financial) - 15



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### **Assessing an application on medical and social grounds – allied professional support**

The task of assessing a housing application on ill health or social grounds can be quite complex. In some cases, a medical need may be obvious, and confirmation from a doctor that an applicant has a particular medical issue and corresponding housing need may be sufficient. However, Housing Department staff are not medically trained, and it is therefore sometimes necessary to obtain an objective, expert assessment of a particular case from the Health and Social Services Department, particularly where there are multiple or complex needs. The Department relies very heavily upon this service to assess the numerous and varied medical requests that come into the Department from applicants, tenants, relatives, doctors, health visitors, social workers, teachers, politicians etc... Forms for this assessment - 'Housing Application Form on Health Grounds' - are held by the Housing Department and sent to the applicant as necessary. The applicant fills it in and sends it direct to the Health Protection Nurse at Public Health Services, Le Bas Centre in the envelope provided. Staff from Public Health then gather any relevant medical information from involved healthcare professionals, and may visit the applicant where necessary. A full report is then produced and is forwarded to the Housing Department, advising of the details and priority of medical need. Need can be classified as either 'Immediate' or 'Moderate', or in some cases there is no recommendation. This assessment gives an invaluable guide to the Allocations Officers when they are deciding who should be allocated a particular unit of accommodation.

The Department also receives invaluable support and advice from the **Occupational Therapists, the Children's Service, Community Police** and **Family Nursing Services** when assessing the merits of any particular application.

### **Offers of accommodation**

The Department always goes to great lengths to ensure that it is as fair as possible in assessing an applicants needs and in the subsequent allocation of any void unit. As well as the points/group assigned to an applicant, the subsequent allocation process also takes into account other factors such as:-

- Present accommodation being sub-standard.
- Length of wait.
- Size of current accommodation.
- The location of other members of the family in the area (taking into account both the positive and negative effects).
- The ability of the applicant to drive, if applicable.
- The applicants rent record.
- The ages and sexes of any children sharing a room.
- Where the children are schooled.
- The age of children when considering the allocation of a property with a garden.
- Whether any previous offers have been made (see number of offers, below).
- Where possible, requests for a particular area.

Accordingly, the Allocations Officers decision to allocate a particular void to a particular applicant is dependent upon many factors. Unfortunately, those disappointed by that decision do not always understand this reasoning.

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### **Number of Offers**

Each applicant is made two offers of accommodation. If those offers are refused, without good reason, applicants may be advised that their names will be removed from the list. The Department does use its discretion in the exercise of this policy where it is merited. When an applicant is granted Residential Qualifications under Regulation 1 (1) (g), (hardship grounds), and is in sub-standard accommodation requiring immediate rehousing, then only one offer of accommodation is made. If however the applicant is able to join the waiting list and wait the normal period of time for alternative accommodation, up to two offers of accommodation will be made. Any applicant, who joins the waiting list due to eviction proceedings by a private landlord, and therefore goes to the top of the list, is only entitled to one offer of accommodation.

### **Average Waiting Times**

An applicant in Group 1 or 2 can expect to have to wait an *average* of a year for a one-bedroom unit and an *average* of six months to one year before receiving an offer of two bedroom accommodation. For Group 1 and 2 applicants requiring a three bedroom unit, the wait can be an *average* of eighteen months to two years. These waiting times are dependent on the applicant not having any special housing requirements, and the wait for can be significantly longer for ground floor or adapted units than for a standard flat on another floor of a building. Those in Groups 3 & 4 have a very low priority and no time scale can be attached to their application.

Those on the transfer list are competing with those on the waiting list. It is for the Allocations Officers, having taken all the factors in to account, to decide which applicant has the greatest housing need for a particular property, and to make the most efficient use of the housing stock. Whilst the Department endeavours to house applicants as speedily as possible, the actual time any applicant has to wait on the list is dictated by supply and demand, both of which are difficult to predict with accuracy. Also, other events, such as the need to relocate existing tenants from accommodation due for refurbishment, will override the normal allocation criteria (except for the most severe cases) and have a pronounced effect on the provision accommodation to those on both the waiting and transfer lists.

## **Section 5 Working with other social rented housing providers**

The Housing Committee is committed to a policy of encouraging Housing Associations or Trusts to provide private accommodation to those considered to be in housing "need".

All applicants who apply for States rental accommodation, and some transfers, are currently asked to indicate either on their application form or by signing a separate declaration whether they would be prepared to be nominated for Housing Association or Trust accommodation. (some 95% of waiting list applicants respond positively to this question.) The Committee takes this preference into account at the time of nomination to vacant housing association accommodation. The Housing Department is entitled to nominate 80% of tenants for any new Housing Association/Trust accommodation it supports financially, and 50% of vacant units arising in existing Association/Trust accommodation. However, in all cases the Association/Trust has the final decision as to whom to let the accommodation.

Association/Trust tenants are eligible to apply for a Private Sector Rent Rebate in order to assist them with their rent. All rents are in line with the Housing Committee's maximum rent levels and generally tenants will be no better or worse off financially regardless of whether they are a States tenant or Association/Trust tenant.

Housing Trusts we currently work closely with are:-

F.B Cottages Housing Trust  
Clos De Paradis Housing Trust  
Haig Homes  
Les Vaux Housing Trust  
Christians Together in Jersey (CTJ) Housing Trust  
The Jersey Homes Trust

## **Section 6 Supported Housing**

### **Supported Housing**

This group consists of any adult between the ages of 18-65 who can only live independently by being supported by one or more agency, either voluntary or statutory. It represents the most vulnerable adults in society who do not meet the criteria of the general Allocation Policy. A support package/care plan is provided by a referring agency. All applications are discussed at a Supported Housing Group meeting which is held once a month. The Supported Housing Group is

made up of a number of senior professionals from across the Services/agencies.

Only those client's considered most vulnerable are offered States rental accommodation on a one year temporary tenancy. The tenancy is reviewed annually by the client, referring agency and the Assisted Living Manager. Any tenancy can be extended or terminated. A tenancy review spreadsheet is maintained.

### **Victoria Cottage Homes and George VI Cottage Homes – independent housing for retired people**

The Housing Department is now responsible for the allocation of vacant units at both the Victoria Cottage Homes & George V Homes. However, at both homes each resident does not pay rent but pays a contribution. The Assisted Living Manager is responsible for the overall management of the Homes including the allocation of vacant units. There is an Assisted Living Officer based on each site who oversees the day to day operation of each complex.

Applicants for the above homes must be over 60 years of age, no longer working and have only limited income i.e. pension. There is also a restriction on the level of savings any applicant may have, a couple must have savings of less than £14,000 and single applicants must have savings of less than £10,000.

**All property allocations to applicants through the Supported Housing Group are made by the Assisted Living Team. In addition, the Assisted Living Team takes full responsibility for the allocation of any void property at the Cottage Homes.**

## **Section 7 Rewards and Incentives schemes**

For some time now the Housing Committee has been looking to relax the Full Occupancy Policy on its Estates. Unfortunately, demand for the larger properties has made this impossible. However, in 2003, as part of a rewards and incentives scheme, the Housing Committee agreed to relax the policy for two-bedroom units at Convent Court and Le Marais. The initial idea was to reward "good" tenants by permitting them to remain in their two-bedroom flat. This was subsequently extended and the policy agreed by the Housing Committee was, over time and by natural turnover of units, to reserve E Block at Le Marais solely for the over 50's age group and tenants regarded as worthy of reward. In some cases, good tenants who are waiting for one bedroom accommodation may be allocated a two bedroom property on one of these estates. This policy has been very successful so far and is proving to be very popular.

## **Section 8 Performance Targets & Conclusion**

### **Performance Targets**

The Housing Department strictly monitors performance in relation the allocation of void properties, below are the key performance indicators measured:-

- Total Number of Void Properties;
- Average Cost per Void;
- Average Re-Let time;
- Number of applicants housed from the Waiting List;
- Number of applicants housed from the Transfer List;
- Number of nominations made to Housing Trust;

Reports are collated on a weekly basis and are benchmarked on an annual basis. The Allocation Team is monitored using these performance targets and are continually encouraged to improve timescales at all times by improving their processes.

This Allocations Policy is also reviewed on an annual basis.

<u>2004 PERFORMANCE STATISTICS</u>		
Total Number of Void Properties		522
Average Cost per Void		£3,058.39
Average Re-Let time		23 days
Number of Applicants housed from the Waiting List		307
Number of Applicants housed from the Transfer List		206
Total Number of Nominations to Housing Trust		109
Of those nominated:-	No. successful	47
	No. of applicants refused	41
	No. unsuccessful	21

## Conclusion

This Allocations Policy is designed to ensure that those in greatest need in our society are helped first. However, successive Housing Committees over the years have introduced, where possible, a number of moderate changes, in order to ensure that the Policy remains flexible. The help given under the Supported Housing Group and the relaxation of the Full Occupancy Policy in some areas are good examples of that flexibility. Unhindered by strict regulations, the Committee permits the Department to exercise discretion on its behalf. This can only be to the

benefit of those in need of social housing. Many of the cases dealt with by the Department are unique. It is important that matters are dealt with speedily, without the need for constant referral to the Committee. The present policy allows this, notwithstanding the fact that any person unhappy with a decision can have their case referred to the Committee for review.