

Policy Title: Allocations and Lettings Policy	
Author (Owner): Operations Director	Version: 1.2
Approved by: Executive Team	Date: February 2025
Date for Review: February 2028	

1. Aims and Scope of the policy

This policy is consistent with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Regulatory Framework's Tenancy Standard which requires that Soho Housing will let their properties in a fair and transparent way.

The fundamental principles of this policy are:

- Adherence to Soho Housing's Vision and Values
- Adherence to equality principles
- Working in partnership with local authorities within our area of operation
- Adherence to the RSH Regulatory Framework

2. Policy statement

This policy ultimately aims to outline clear and consistent rules for allocation and letting homes, to ensure all decisions are open and transparent. Soho Housing allows discretion where needed to best meet resident needs and therefore this policy may be applied differently in exceptional circumstances. The general principles will always remain the same, we will:

- Combine our social purpose with the need to manage the business efficiently and effectively.
- Assist low to middle income earners to obtain affordable rental accommodation within our core areas in central London.
- Support diverse communities and seek to actively manage the income mix in our neighbourhoods.
- Minimise void periods to ensure maximisation of the rental income.
- Ensure the customer experience of the lettings process is positive.
- Support sustainable tenancies by ensuring that people occupy the best suited property for their needs.

3. Policy approach

1. General information for all lettings

Soho Housing's homes are let either on handover from development or once all void works have been completed according to our lettable standard. There may be circumstances where additional works are required including but not limited to adaptations and additional decoration. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and approval will be granted by the Operations Director. An example of when this might be applied is a property that has been hard to let and the value of decorating will be lower than continued void loss.

1.1. How our empty homes are allocated

Social Rents

Where Soho Housing has nomination agreements with the local boroughs in which we work we offer most of our vacant properties to applicants they nominate. Other empty properties may be used for decants or management transfers.

Intermediate Rents

Our intermediate (sub-market) rents will be offered at a range of levels to ensure there is a product available for applicants with different levels of household income. We will not hold waiting lists for intermediate rent applicants who are advised to contact the local authority for inclusion on their intermediate rent lists. All applicants on these lists must prove a connection to the local area to be accepted.

1.2. Transfers

Soho Housing does not operate an internal transfer list. Residents that wish to move to an alternative property will be advised to seek either a mutual exchange or apply directly to their local authority. We will actively signpost such routes and will provide support to residents wishing to take up these opportunities. In exceptional circumstances, we may move a resident to another Soho Housing property. This will either be via a management transfer or a temporary decant.

1.3. Management Transfers

Management transfers are generally only for situations where a resident is at serious risk by remaining in their current home and needs an immediate move. Examples of this include domestic abuse, serious anti-social behaviour, gang violence and serious medical circumstances. Appropriate documentation will be provided to the Operations Director for consideration and a management transfer granted, where a suitable property is available, if it is demonstrated that remaining in the current property places the resident(s) at genuine risk.

A management transfer can also be used to help a resident move when their current tenancy has become unsustainable for them eg they are subject to a benefit cap and can no longer afford to live in the property.

Our aim is to offer a 'like-for-like' home in terms of the same number of bedrooms, unless the current property is under-occupied when a smaller property may be offered.

Where there is a real and immediate threat to a resident's safety and we do not have a suitable property available, we will work with the local authority, the Pan-London Housing Reciprocal and other housing providers to re-house the resident.

Residents who have an active management transfer case will be reviewed every six months to see if their housing need has remained the same. If the circumstances have changed and a move is no longer required, the household will be removed from the management transfer list and this will be communicated directly to the lead tenant.

1.4. Decants

On occasions it may be necessary to temporarily move a household from their existing property to another property; this will usually be for major repair works to be carried out. Where this is necessary, the decision will be made by the Operations Director. The aim will be to use one of Soho Housing's own properties to accommodate this temporary move to reduce the cost of securing alternative accommodation. Any of Soho Housing's void properties may be considered for such use as required.

The priority is to minimise the period that the resident is moved out of their property whilst ensuring that their home is safe for them to move back into.

1.5. Tenancy Types

Tenancy type	When to use
Secure Tenancies	Secure tenancies mainly exist for tenancies granted before 15 January 1989. Should a current tenant holding a secure tenancy be moved to another property via a management transfer, they will maintain their secure tenancy.
Assured Tenancies	To be issued on the expiry of fixed term tenancies where Soho Housing is the freeholder.
Assured Shorthold 5-year Fixed Term	Social Rents and Affordable Rents since 2015. To be issued where Soho Housing is the leaseholder.
Assured Shorthold 2-Year Fixed Term	For Rough Sleepers Initiative on Social Rents.
Starter Tenancies (12 month probationary)	To be issued to residents new to Soho Housing for all Social and Affordable rent tenancies. On the successful completion of a 12 month starter tenancy an assured tenancy (either 5 year or lifetime) will be issued.
Assured Shorthold 1-5 Year Fixed Term tenancy	Intermediate Market Rent or Discounted Rent.
Licence to Occupy	To be used for temporary decants.

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Soho Housing uses a full range of tenancies, available to all Registered Providers. The type of tenancy issued may vary depending on whether we are the freeholder of the property or we hold a lease interest.

To streamline our processes and provide stability for our residents, where we are the freeholder of the property and there have been no breaches of tenancy, assured tenancies will be granted on the expiry of fixed term tenancies.

The tenancies issued include:

1.6. Rent and Rent Payment

We will ensure that all social rents, including the service charge, are within the rent limits set out by the RSH.

As set out in their tenancy agreement, all residents will be expected to pay rent as it falls due at the start of the tenancy, and to maintain advance payments. Our preferred payment method is direct debit and all new residents are expected to set up a direct debit to pay their rent.

1.7. Applications for Housing

We want our residents to be able to sustain their tenancies with us, and so all applicants will complete a pre-tenancy assessment which includes an affordability assessment. They must be able to demonstrate that they can maintain the tenancy.

All applicants for housing with Soho Housing stock, including those nominated by the Local Authority, must complete our housing application form.

1.8. Housing for Staff Members and their Families

Preferential treatment in the letting of property to people who are connected to a Registered Provider is not allowed. This applies to:

- Board Members.
- Employees – people who are employed on a contract and receiving wages or salary. People working freelance may also be classified as employees.
- People who have been Board Members or employees during the previous five years.
- Close relatives of Board Members or employees.

Staff members cannot directly apply for social housing within Soho Housing stock. If a staff member should be nominated via a local authority, approval of the Operations Director must be obtained prior to granting a tenancy.

1.9. Housing minors

Contracts with people under the age of 18 are not always enforceable. For this reason, Soho Housing will not normally allocate self-contained properties to people under 18 years of age.

Exceptions to this rule are made in the following circumstances:

- Where the case involves the death of a resident and the successor is under 18 years old (See Succession Policy).
- Where the housing scheme is developed and/or managed in partnership with other reputable organisations which specifically target the 16-17-year age group.
- Where the minor is leaving care and will be supported by Social Services or a recognised voluntary organisation.

2. How we allocate our properties

2.1. Minimum housing standards

These guidelines indicate the minimum size property that will be offered to new residents. Not all household types can be illustrated. Soho Housing's minimum housing standards are as follows:

Room standard:

The room standard looks at the number and sex of people who sleep in the same room. Living rooms, dining rooms and studies count as rooms you can sleep in.

A room is not counted if it is:

- under 50 square feet or 4.6 square metres
- a kitchen or bathroom.

A home is overcrowded by law if 2 people of a different sex, aged 10+ have to sleep in the same room. This rule does not apply to couples who share a room. Children under 10 are not counted.

Number of rooms	Maximum number of people allowed
1	2
2	3
3	5
4	7.5
5	10

Space standard:

- anyone aged 10 or over counts as 1 person.
- children aged 1 to 9 count as 0.5.
- children under 1 year old do not count.

Room's floor space in square feet	Room's floor space in square metres	Maximum number of people allowed
50 - 69	4.6 - 6.4	0.5
70 - 89	6.5 - 8.3	1
90 - 109	8.4 - 10.1	1.5
110	10.2	2

Soho Housing will consider requests by households to offer a property below the matching standards in the following circumstances:

- The level of overcrowding will be reduced.
- The living conditions of the household members will be significantly improved.
- Where a management transfer has been awarded and the resident needs to move urgently.
- Where the resident needs to be decanted due to an emergency e.g. fire or flood.

A property below the matching standards will only be offered with the agreement of the household concerned. Properties with two reception rooms will be considered where one room could reasonably be used as a bedroom.

2.2. Provision for Children of Separated Parents

Soho Housing will not normally consider children of residents who are part of another household living somewhere else. In exceptional cases Soho Housing, will consider children who are living elsewhere as part of the household if both parents have shared parental rights and evidence is provided, and the child stays at the Soho Housing property at least three nights a week.

2.3. Provision for residents accepted as Adoptive Parents

Residents who have been accepted as adoptive parents will not be entitled to additional bedroom/bedspaces until the adoption is complete. This includes written confirmation by the Family Placement Officer that the child/children have been permanently placed with the Resident. Residents will need to apply for rehousing via their local authority. Soho Housing will support this process.

2.4. Provision for Carers

Where a resident needs an additional bedroom because they have live-in carer, Soho Housing will support them in applying for rehousing via their local authority.

Soho Housing defines a carer as someone who fulfils the following criteria:

- They are in receipt of Carer's Allowance for the resident they are looking after.

- b. They are not already a household member and are the principal carer. Confirmation that they need to be a permanent resident must be received from a medical professional.
- c. The resident they care for is in receipt of higher rate Disability Living Allowance

2.5. Number of offers

The number of reasonable offers to be made to an applicant are as follows:

Source of Application	Number of Offers
Decants	2
Management Transfers	1
Local Authority Nominations	Determined by the local authority's allocations policy and timescales agreed by Soho Housing with the local authority
Contractual Referrals (Rough Sleepers Initiative)	Determined by the local authority's allocations policy and timescales agreed by Soho Housing with the local authority

Soho Housing defines a reasonable offer as one that meets statutory requirements under the Housing Act 1988, as well as Soho Housing's defined standards, and where the property meets the physical requirements of the household in accordance with our minimum housing standards, considering any special requirements, including but not limited to mobility issues.

3. Appeals and complaints

An applicant can appeal a decision if they are dissatisfied with the way their application, selection, offer or allocation has been handled. Appeals are considered by the Housing Operations Manager.

An applicant can make a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the service received or a service failure by us.

4. Monitoring and evaluation

This policy is reviewed at least every three years or in response to a change in regulatory guidance, best practice, or legal precedent.

5. Equality and diversity impact

Soho Housing will ensure that this policy is applied fairly and consistently. We will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people in line with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. We will act sensitively towards the diverse needs of individuals and communities and will take positive action or make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

Related Documents/policies

Lettings and Allocations Procedure
 Lettable standard
 Options to move
 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Policy Review

Version Control

Document Owner: Head of Housing
 Update Approved: Feb 2025
 Review Date: Jan 2028

Version	Type of change	Date	Revisions from previous issue	Approved By
1.1	Update to tenancy length for assured shorthold fixed term tenancy for private rented units.	9/3/22	Amended the section on tenancy types from 1-2 year tenancies to 1-5 year tenancies for Market and IMR properties	Executive
1.2	Minor updates to branding; nominations clarification	Feb 2025	Minor updates to branding; nominations clarification Clarification regarding paying rent 'in advance' - under terms of tenancy	Executive