



simply
affordable
homes

Lettings Policy

Company No: 11567414

Registered Provider No: 5094

Version 2.1 – February 2025

Simply Affordable Homes RP (SAH) Limited

LETTINGS POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Our primary purpose as a Registered Provider is to provide accommodation for people in housing need who are unable to afford to rent housing on the open market.
- 1.2. We are committed to providing a range of quality homes that will meet local housing requirements and therefore assist local authorities in the delivery of their housing strategies.
- 1.3. In doing this we will:
 - Promote and enable choice of accommodation for those people whose housing options are restricted by virtue of their income in relation to local house prices.
 - Encourage and promote social inclusion whilst creating sustainable communities.
 - Ensure that access to housing is on a fair, transparent, and equitable basis.
 - Let properties in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements and with the intention of incurring minimal loss of rent and service charge income.
 - Comply with financial and regulatory controls relating to the allocation of affordable housing properties.
- 1.4. Where possible, we will look to enter into nomination agreements with the relevant local authorities for our rented properties.
- 1.5. This policy covers our approach to lettings of rented accommodation in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements.

2. Our approach

Who we house

- 2.1. It is expected that all applicants will meet the eligibility criteria, which will be set by the relevant local authority. All applications for housing will be considered carefully before an offer of accommodation is made and, in some cases, we may request additional information.
- 2.2. Where prospective customers require support to enable them to access or maintain a tenancy, we 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.

Who we cannot house

- 2.3. By law, housing providers are unable to house the following:
- 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).
- 2.4. Housing providers also have powers to treat as ineligible any applicant, or member of their household, who has behaved badly enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant. This may have happened in an existing or a previous tenancy.
- 2.5. If an applicant is unhappy with the decision not to grant a tenancy, their complaint will be dealt with in line with our complaints policy.

Choice based lettings

- 2.6. All lettings will be made to people on the local authority housing register who bid through the choice-based lettings scheme, or who are directly nominated by the Council.
- 2.7. Working with the local authority, we 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 website.
 - Are absent due to illness.
 - Require additional assistance.
- 2.8. 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 local authority on their application form and any information provided subsequently.

Housing need and priority

- 2.9. As demand for affordable housing is greater than the number of properties available, we will prioritise allocations of vacant properties to applicants in the greatest need.

- 2.10. This system of prioritisation will be facilitated by our participation in nominations agreements and choice-based lettings schemes and will be linked to local lettings plans where appropriate.
- 2.11. 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.
- 2.12. 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.
- 2.13. Where an offer to the top applicant is not made, this will be recorded together with the reason for the decision.
- 2.14. There will be circumstances where we may let homes directly to residents outside of nomination agreements we have. These circumstances are outlined in our management transfer procedure.

Homes for people with a disability

- 2.15. These properties are usually specially adapted for use by disabled people. Refer to our property maintenance policy, for our approach to carrying out disabled adaptations.
- 2.16. When these properties become vacant, if these can be relet in a reasonable time, we will consider reserving these for households needing the specialised facilities offered by the property, regardless of the priority of other applicants.

Registered sex offenders

- 2.17. Registered sex offenders are required to inform us 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.
- 2.18. The risk posed by sex offenders cannot be assessed by us and we will be guided on this by agencies charged with the management and monitoring of sex offenders, including the police and social workers.

Tenancy checks

- 2.19. Potential customers nominated through choice-based lettings schemes will need to provide satisfactory checks that demonstrate their ability to pay their rent and, where

appropriate, how well they have conducted during any previous tenancy held by them.

2.20. Applicants may be asked to consent to information being shared with other housing providers and housing service providers.

2.21. 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.

Joint tenancies

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

Tenure

2.23. Starter tenancies will be offered to all new tenants on affordable rented or social rented properties as defined by the Rent Standard.

2.24. This means that for the first 12 months, the tenancy will be an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. If at the end of 12 months, we have not taken steps to end or extend the tenancy, it will automatically become an assured periodic tenancy. If we extend the first 12-month period, the tenancy will stay an assured shorthold tenancy for the period of the extension.

New tenants

2.25. All new tenants will be provided with a copy of:

- The tenancy agreement
- A welcome pack
- How to rent guide
- Valid gas safety, EICR and EPC certificates
- Notification of asbestos, if it has been identified in the property

Confidentiality

2.26. The privacy of applicants will be respected, and care will be taken to maintain confidentiality. Personal data will be collected and stored in line with our Data Protection Policy. Responsible information sharing can play a key role in the letting of our homes, and compliant information sharing protocols with local authorities will be followed where they are in place.

3. Review

Quality monitoring, feedback and reporting

- 3.1. We will make contact with the new customer within the first 14 days of them moving in, to check that all services have been properly reconnected and that they are familiar with the location and operation of key features (such as stop taps, heating controls and consumer units) and to give them an opportunity to discuss any issues.
- 3.2. We will gather feedback from our new customers about their satisfaction with the property, typically within the first 3 months of their tenancy and through settling in visits.
- 3.3. We will regularly seek and review feedback and engage/consult our customers about the services we offer via various other methods and forums – which will also be used to help us to improve our standards, services and general offering.
- 3.4. We will undertake an annual program of customer satisfaction surveys, in line with the regulator’s Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) and review all relevant customer complaints to identify any potential trends in service failures.
- 3.5. All of the above will help us continue to identify opportunities to improve the services we provide and to ensure we are getting value for money from our property managers and contractors.

4. Key Legislation (not limited to)

- Regulator of Social Housing Regulatory Framework and Standards
- Housing Act 1985
- Housing Act 1988
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Equality Act 2010
- Immigration Acts 2014 and 2016
- Localism Act 2011

5. Policy review

- 5.1. We will review this policy within 12 months (by the end of July 2025) to reflect any learning during our first year; and then generally every two years to address customer feedback, legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational issues, unless otherwise needed.

Appendix 1 – Revision History

Date	Version	Comments / Changes
16/04/2024	1.0	Initial version
7/05/2024	1.1	Minor amendments following board comments
29/05/2024	1.2	Minor amendments in Tenure section, as advised by Devonshires to align with our proposed tenancy agreement template. Updated version approved by Executive Board members
July 2024	2.0	CT Review
February 2025	2.1	New Template and review
July 2025		Year one review
July 2027		Review