



## Allocation and Lettings Policy

### 1. General

1.1 Valleys to Coast's aim is to house people in housing need facilitating choice to secure balanced and sustainable communities. In order to do this we will assess need by a using a points system.

### 2. Access to Housing

#### 2.1 Equal opportunities

V2C homes will be made available to people in accordance with V2C's equal opportunities policy. Access to housing will be free from discrimination on grounds of race, sex, sexual orientation, colour, age, nationality, ethnic origin, marital status, religious belief, physical or mental disability.

#### 2.2 Eligibility

2.2.1 Any person over the age of sixteen may apply for accommodation

2.2.2 The following households will be considered for properties as set out:

<b>Property size</b>	<b>Eligible household</b>
Studio apartment	Single adult
One single bedroom	Single adult
One double bedroom	Single adult or childless couple
One single bedroom and one double bedroom	One or two adults and one child (including overnight access)
Two double bedrooms	One or two adults and one child One or two adults and two children of the same sex
Two single bedrooms and one double bedroom	One or two adults and two children
One single bedroom and two double bedrooms	One or two adults and two children

	One or two adults and three children
Four bedrooms	One or two adults and three or four children
Sheltered accommodation	Adults over the age of 60 (55 if disabled)
One or two bed bungalows or OAP / Disability adapted flats	At least one applicant over age 60 or at least one applicant with medical condition requiring ground floor accommodation

- 2.2.3 A pregnant woman will be considered for accommodation appropriate to include the expected child.
- 2.2.4 Where an applicant has overnight access to children but they do not live with them on a full time basis they will usually be offered two bedroom accommodation other than a house except in areas where the only housing stock is houses. If no legal agreement exists, access will be confirmed with ex-partner before accommodation offered.
- 2.2.5 If a family has custody of 1 child and overnight access to another child of a different sex then they will be entitled to 3 bedroom accommodation.
- 2.2.6 V2C may chose to under occupy accommodation where there are no appropriate households requiring that accommodation or where an extra bedroom is required for medical reasons.
- 2.2.7 Where an application is in joint names any tenancy must be taken up as a joint tenancy unless one of the applicants is ineligible due to former tenancy arrears in which case the tenancy will be placed in sole name of other applicant.
- 2.2.8 V2C may operate age restrictions or other criteria in certain areas in accordance with its local lettings policy.

### **3. Local Authority Nominations**

- 3.1 V2C will offer 75% of available allocations net of transfers and mutual exchanges to nominees of the local authority in accordance with the Nomination deed and protocol agreed with the Local Authority.
- 3.2 Valleys to Coast's allocation scheme is not designed to give high priority to those who are homeless or threatened with

homelessness as this group are catered for by the local authority who have the statutory duty toward this category of applicant. V2C will, in the first instance, refer all homeless or potentially homeless applicants to the local authority. V2C will ensure that it fulfils its obligations to assist the local authority in housing homeless households and that homeless households have access to V2C homes through the nominations arrangements with B.C.B.C.

#### **4. Choice**

4.1 V2C aims to provide applicants with the maximum amount of choice regarding the area in which they wish to be housed. However, our ability to meet applicant's requirements is limited by availability. Consequently, we may not be able to meet the requirements of applicants who only wish to be housed in areas of high demand and low turnover.

4.2 In order to allow applicants to make an informed choice regarding where they wish to live V2C will:

- Provide details of the number of lettings in all areas of the County Borough during the past year.
- Provide details of the number of persons applying for each area in the past year

#### **5. Restrictions on access to housing**

5.1 V2C may, in exceptional circumstances propose suspending from the housing register, applicants for its general needs or sheltered housing whose previous history, based on evidence provided by a former social landlord, the police or a member of the Community Safety Partnership, indicates that the applicant has been guilty of behaviour 'serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant', at this time.

5.2 V2C is a member of the Bridgend County Borough Inclusions Partnership which has been set up by the local authority and other RSL's operating in the County Borough to ensure that all suspensions are dealt with fairly and objectively. In accordance with the partnership agreement all proposed suspensions, whether of direct applicants or nominations, will be referred to the Bridgend County Borough Common Inclusions Panel for the final decision.

5.3 The decision to refer an applicant to the Common Inclusions Panel will be made by an area manager.

- 5.4 All appeals against the above suspensions will be dealt with by the appeals procedure of the Common Inclusions Partnership.
- 5.5 Suspensions will be time limited and will be reviewed by V2C at the end of the suspension period upon the request of the applicant. If V2C is not content that the applicant has then demonstrated that they can be considered suitable as a tenant an area manager may request that the case be referred to the Common Inclusions Panel for a further period of suspension.
- 5.6 V2C may suspend from allocation any applicant who has left any RSL or local authority's property owing rent or other sundry debt such as rechargeable repairs, unless the debt has been subsequently repaid or adequate repayment arrangements are in place and have been maintained. The suspension must be authorised by an area manager in accordance with the procedure guidelines for suspensions due to former tenant debts (see appendix 2).
- 5.7 V2C may suspend an applicant from the housing register if it is clear that they would be unable to manage a tenancy without adequate support, where V2C has sought and failed to secure this support from relevant agencies. The decision would be made by an area manager.
- 5.8 Bespoke tenancy conditions may be offered as a condition of rehousing in cases where it is deemed appropriate in order to minimise the risk posed by a potential tenant.
- 5.9 V2C may also suspend from allocations any further categories of applicant who would be suspended from allocation by the local authority by virtue of the authority's published policy.
- 5.10 All suspensions will be reported to the V2C Board
- 5.11 V2C has local lettings criteria for some of its properties which may restrict access. V2C inherited age restriction criteria for a number of schemes. Any new local lettings criteria will be considered in accordance with the Local Lettings Policy at Appendix 1
- 5.12 With the exception of the provisions of points 5.1, 5.6 and 5.9 and 5.11 above, V2C will not impose unnecessary restrictions on access to its housing. Specifically, V2C will not: -

- Impose any financial or other requirements which those in need of publicly funded housing are likely to have difficulty meeting;
- Impose any residency qualifications or any qualifications based on local connections.

5.13 V2C will not be able to offer accommodation to its employees, Board Members or their close relatives except within the terms of Schedule 1 of the Housing Act 1996. In these circumstances V2C will apply to the Welsh Assembly Government for the necessary consents.

## **6. Mobility**

6.1 V2C tenants will be provided with maximum opportunities for mobility. This assistance may be in a direct form, such as a transfer, or in the offering of information and advice.

6.2 V2C will participate actively in mobility schemes ensuring that accessible information is available to tenants and that staff are adequately trained to advise tenants on available schemes.

6.3 Tenants wishing to move will be given assistance to:

### 6.3.1 Exchange

- V2C will maintain an Exchange Register which will be available at the public office and by post on request. V2C tenants, tenants of other RSL's and local authority tenants will all be eligible to join the Exchange Register
- V2C will attempt to match transfer applicants who may be able to meet their needs through a mutual exchange.
- V2C will facilitate mutual exchanges by way of assignment. The conditions under which mutual exchanges may take place are contained within the V2C Mutual Exchange policy.

### 6.3.2 Transfer

Any of V2C'S full assured tenants can apply for a transfer. There is no minimum period of tenancy required. All applications will normally be assessed against the standard points schedule and only those awarded points will be considered for a transfer (except in areas of low demand). An

exception will be made where the request to transfer is to a property or an area which is in low demand. In such cases, all transfer applications will be considered, regardless of points.

In addition, transfer applications will only be accepted if the following conditions are also met:

- Where tenancies are held in joint names both tenants must apply to transfer
- No member of the household should be made homeless as a result of the transfer
- The present accommodation must be in reasonable condition. A tenant will not be transferred if V2C must incur expenditure to make good the property where deficiencies have been caused by the tenant's negligence
- In exceptional cases (including where a member of the household is subject to or under threat of violence) a transfer application may be accepted where the above conditions have not been met. Such cases will be subject to the approval of the Head of Neighbourhoods
- Tenants will not be offered alternative accommodation if:
  - There are outstanding debts to V2C
  - The current property has not been maintained to an acceptable standard
  - A NOSP has been served, and is currently in force, for breach of the conditions of tenancy

### 6.3.3 Move on from Supported Housing Schemes

- V2C will work with other agencies to make sufficient accommodation available to people needing to move on from supported housing schemes.

## **7. Offers of accommodation in supported housing**

Priority between applicants for supported housing will be determined by ensuring that:

- Where means of access is via nominations, priority is determined by the local authority;
- A priority assessment is carried out for all other supported housing, based on a clear and objective comparative assessment of support needs, and an assessment of housing needs based on the points schedule and as detailed in the

policy and procedures in respect of 'support for tenants in general needs housing'.

## **8. Refusals of accommodation**

- 8.1 In areas of strong demand where V2C has a waiting list only two offers of accommodation will normally be made. The reasonableness of each refusal will be considered by officers who will authorise the removal of an applicant from the housing register if appropriate and notify that applicant, advising them of their right to appeal and providing details of the V2C Complaints policy.
- 8.2 If a V2C housing register applicant refuses a property in an area with no demand this will not be classed as a reasonable offer.

## **9. Appeals against allocations decisions**

- 9.1 Applicants whether direct or nominees have a right of appeal if they are dissatisfied with either a points award or an allocations decision made by V2C.
- 9.2 An appeal will be considered by two area managers not including the area manager whose team will have dealt with the application. Should an applicant remain dissatisfied following an appeal the applicant may invoke the Complaints procedure. The Complaints Policy gives further details.

## **10. Fairness of allocations**

V2C will, at all times, be able to demonstrate the fair selection of those housed in accordance with the terms of this policy by:

- Adhering to V2C's Equal Opportunities policy when making allocations and lettings.
- Giving applicants the right to see and check all information which they have given in connection with their application. Refer to the Confidentiality and Access to Personal Information policy for further details.
- Giving applicants clear information on the effects of refusals of offers
- Giving applicants the right to appeal against decisions
- Having systems of internal control and audit which ensure that each stage of the allocations process is carried out

according to policy, and decisions taken under proper delegated authority

- Maintaining proper records at all stages of the allocations process
- Reporting to the Board regularly on the allocations and lettings processes, including equal opportunities and any discretionary allocations decisions made.

## **11. Lettings**

V2C's aims when letting properties is:

- To let properties as quickly and efficiently as possible in order to make the best use of our housing, create sustainable communities and to minimise rent loss. V2C will set target relet times for properties based on the cost of any repair works
- To ensure that tenants are provided with full, clear, accurate information about their tenancy and V2C's services at the beginning of their tenancy. A full list of information to be provided and details of the lettings procedures are set out in the V2C allocations procedure.

## **12. Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO)**

- 12.1 LCHO is a scheme whereby residents own a proportion of the property (typically 70%) on which they pay a mortgage. The remaining equity is held by V2C.
- 12.2 V2C will work with the local authority to provide suitable applicants with opportunities for LCHO. Schemes will be advertised as and when they become available.



## **POLICY ON THE USE OF LOCAL LETTINGS POLICIES**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Local Lettings Policies (LLP'S) may be developed in a range of different forms to meet the needs of individual communities. V2C aims to use Local Lettings Policies to help tackle the problem of low demand, difficult to let areas, sustainability and to create more balanced communities that residents would choose to live in. They may also be used to maintain the stability of established areas.

### **2.0 Regulatory Requirements**

Regulatory Requirements state that Housing Associations can develop special allocation policies. However, they must focus on protecting the interests of existing tenants and residents and seek to prevent or reverse social decline. Where such a policy is adopted:

- It should be for a defined geographical area or category of properties;
- It must have clear aims and objectives which have been agreed in advance by the Board;
- It must be for a limited time period;
- There must be monitoring, review and reporting systems in place.

### **3.0 Clear Objectives**

Clear objectives for individual schemes/estates must be set so that an open transparent process can be devised. Each Officer involved in this will need to be able to demonstrate the rationale and reasoning behind the LLP being required. Therefore, a procedure with accompanying proformas has been devised to make this process more straightforward and ensure a consistent approach is demonstrated. It asks a series of questions designed to demonstrate the reasons for requiring a Local Lettings Policy, together with supporting evidence to justify the individual case.

#### **4.0 Measures**

In order to establish the need for a Local Lettings Policy there must be evidence of the need to protect the interest of existing residents, or help prevent social decline. This will involve evidence of management problems (e.g. no waiting list for a period, high levels of refusals, inability or difficulty for the local authority to nominate, high tenancy turnover rates, incidents of Anti-social behaviour), which may be supported, by evidence derived from further investigations e.g. questionnaires. These will be dependent upon the nature and scope of each individual Local Lettings Policy.

#### **5.0 Consultation**

This will need to take place in a range of forms dependent upon the nature of the individual Local Lettings Policy. The Local Authority must always be consulted with particular regard to nomination rights. As local lettings policies are designed to support and improve existing communities it is important that any proposed LLP is supported by the community. Local tenant's and residents associations, community groups and other agencies should be consulted as appropriate.

#### **6.0 Approval**

Local Lettings Policies should be approved by the Executive Management Team or Board.

#### **7.0 Equality/ Diversity Implications**

The objective process for the development of Local Lettings Policies and the formal monitoring process once they are in place will allow V2C to assess any equality issues relating to individual Local Lettings Policies.

#### **8.0 Financial Implications**

It is recognised that the effective and efficient letting of properties and sustaining of tenancies is essential to the financial integrity of V2C.

#### **9.0 Monitoring and Review**

A time period should normally be agreed for each Local Lettings Policy, however in some cases such as with age restriction schemes these may not be time limited as once approved would be difficult to remove without the consent of tenants and couldn't be reversed easily. Each Local Lettings Policy will need to be reviewed annually.

### Procedure guidelines for suspensions due to former tenancy debts

1. V2C's allocation policy states that:-

'V2C may suspend from allocation any applicant who has left any RSL or local authority's property owing rent or any other sundry debt such as rechargeable repairs, unless the debt has subsequently been repaid or adequate repayment arrangements are in place and have been maintained. The suspension must be authorised by an area manager in accordance with the guidelines in the V2C allocation procedure.'

2. **Procedure**

- 2.1 This procedure applies to all applicants whether applying directly to V2C or being nominated by the local authority.
- 2.2 Where applicants have disclosed a former tenancy the allocations and letting coordinator / CSA must check that there are no outstanding debts.
- 2.3 If there are outstanding debts then the applicant can be added to the housing register and advised of what they will need to do before being offered accommodation
- 2.4 Where there are outstanding debts to V2C and these are not to be repaid in full the Area Manager may agree to house the applicant subject to all of the following conditions
  - At commencement of tenancy an agreement to repay is in place, at least four payments have been made (over a period of at least 4 weeks) or half the debt cleared.
  - The agreement to repay must be such that the debt is repaid within twelve months
  - An addendum will be attached to the starter tenancy requiring that the debt be cleared at an agreed rate.
  - The starter tenancy will not be converted to full assured until the debt has been repaid in full. If the debt is outstanding at the end of the starter tenancy then the tenancy may be terminated by serving a section 21 notice.

- Where there are extenuating circumstances these will be considered on their merit. Any exceptions to the policy must be authorised by the Area Team Manager.
- 2.5 The applicant will be expected to advise V2C when they believe that they have met the above conditions. BCBC will be advised not to re nominate until V2C have confirmed that conditions have been met.
- 2.3.1 Where there are outstanding debts to another RSL / local authority the applicant will have to enter into an agreement with the former landlord which is acceptable to them.
- 2.5 All appeals will be dealt with under the appeals procedure detailed in the allocations and lettings policy.