

Allocations & Lettings Policy

Lead Officer: Emma Morgan, Head of Housing & Support

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| Policy Owner | Emma Morgan, Head of Housing & Support |
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| Approved by | Stephen Evans, Director for Customers and Communities (Deputy CEO) |

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| Changes Made | Section | Date |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| New overarching policy and procedure | all | October 2024 |
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Introduction

Caredig aims to provide good quality, affordable rented accommodation to those in greatest housing need. The aim of the policy is to ensure Caredig allocates homes to those who are eligible in line with its aims and objectives and will assist the Local Authority in discharging its statutory duties. The policy is designed on the following principles:

- To be fair and transparent
- Understanding what matters and meeting the housing needs of applicants
- Creating balanced and sustainable communities
- Making best use of Caredig's homes

In Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire, we are a partner of the Local Authority managed Common Housing Register and are committed to their letting policies and procedures. The aim of the partnership is to supply good quality, affordable accommodation to those in greatest need of housing and to reduce and prevent homelessness. As such, the allocation of Caredig's homes in these areas will be made in accordance with each respective Local Authority's operational guidance:

- www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales [Carmarthenshire County Council Housing Options](#)
- www.ceredigion.gov.uk [Ceredigion County Council Housing Options](#)
- www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk [Pembrokeshire County Council Housing Options](#)

There are some instances where Caredig will allocate homes outside of the Common Housing Register, these will include decants and management transfers for exceptional circumstances.

Our Values

In applying this policy, we will be guided by our values. Our values determine how we behave towards our customers, our colleagues, our partners and our work:

Kind - We recognise that relationships are at the heart of everything we do, at the heart of good relationships is kindness.

Innovative - We continuously strive to be the best we can whilst seeking creative ideas to improve and grow.

Trusting - We trust people to do the right thing, because good relationships are built on mutual trust and respect.

Accountable - We accept the responsibilities of our role and are accountable for our actions and for doing what is right.

Definitions

- **'Allocated Officer'** can be a Community Housing Officer, Extra Care Manager, Support Worker, Service Coordinator, Team Leader or Operational Manager.
- **'Tenant'** is used to describe the contract holder.
- **'Applicant'** can be a non-Caredig tenant applying for housing or a Caredig tenant applying for a new home with Caredig.
- **'Common Housing Register'** is a single list of applicants for all housing, managed by a Local Authority.

- **'Local Lettings Policy'** is an allocation policy that is scheme or estate specific and allows for different eligibility criteria for applicants
- **'Sensitive Lets'** is an allocation criteria that is property specific and allows for different eligibility criteria for applicants on a single let basis
- **'Housing Providers'** refers to other social and affordable housing providers including Housing Associations and Local Authorities
- **'Exceptional Circumstances'** is a descriptor used for applicants and their households that can evidence there is a serious risk of harm if they remain in their current home. Each case will be considered on its own merit. Examples can include;
 - The current property is seriously harming the physical health of the household
 - A member or members of the household are victims of serious harassment and intimidation

What is covered by the policy?

This policy will apply to allocations for general housing, 50+ schemes, affordable and extra care homes. This policy is informed by the following legislation and regulation;

- Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 (RHWA)
- Housing (Wales) Act 2014
- Housing Act 1985
- Renting Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) (Wales) Regulations 2022

Roles and Responsibilities

Community Housing Officers, Service Coordinators, Team Leaders and Extra Care Managers are responsible for the case management of all allocations and lettings. The Operational Managers for Housing Management, Supported Living and Extra Care are responsible for the overall performance management.

The Head of Housing & Support has overall responsibility for this area.

Allocations in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot

Applications can be received via the following routes:

- Caredig waiting lists
- A minimum of 50% of all empty homes are allocated via Local Authority nominations and Move On lists as per partnership agreements
- ADAPT register (applications specifically for adapted accommodation)

Applicants applying directly to Caredig will need to meet a minimum of two of the following criteria:

- Be over the age of 16 and have a right to live in the UK
- does not have a legal right to occupy their home
- is overcrowded or the current home is too big
- be sharing facilities with others who are not moving with the applicant
- cannot afford the current rent or mortgage

- current home is in disrepair
- Need to move for employment or education
- need to move for a medical or support needs
- current living situation means children cannot live with parents
- There is a serious risk of harm (physical or emotional) to the household or surrounding community if the persons remain in current home

Applicants for low demand areas and property types will need to meet one of the above criteria.

Applicants will be matched to homes considering the following:

- Allocations via Caredig Waiting Lists:
 - Meeting the number of bedroom criteria (see Appendix 1)
 - Time spent on the Caredig waiting list, allocations will be made in date order considering the date the application is received at Caredig unless an applicant presents with exceptional circumstances
 - Satisfying an affordability assessment prior to allocation
- Allocations via Local Authority:
 - Being nominated by the Local Authority or the Adapt partnership
 - Satisfying an affordability assessment prior to allocation

The Caredig 50+ schemes will normally be allocated to applicants aged 50 and over. The schemes are not appropriate for households with family members under the age of 35.

Affordable housing are homes that are rented above social housing rents but below the private rented market levels. As well as the above criteria, priority is given to households in employment.

If demand for homes exceeds the number of homes expected to become available for the foreseeable future, the Caredig waiting lists will be temporarily closed to new applicants and advice given of alternative housing providers in the local area.

Allocations in Extra Care schemes

Extra Care schemes are designed to promote the development of a sustainable mixed community of both residents with little or no care needs and people who need a higher level of care. The objective of Caredig Extra Care schemes is to offer safe, independent living for as long as possible.

Allocations are made in line with the Local Lettings Policy for each scheme. The schemes are not appropriate for households with family members under the age of 35.

Allocations of specialist and adapted homes

Some homes have been specially adapted to meet people's needs or have the potential to be adapted to meet people's needs. This includes homes for the disabled and for older people. Caredig reserves the right to allocate such homes via direct waiting lists or in

partnership with Housing Providers and the Local Authority to best match that property to an applicant who requires an adapted property.

Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances, homes may be offered to those who need to move as a matter of urgency and who, by remaining in their home, could be at serious risk of harm.

Evidence will be required to support an exceptional circumstances allocation and will be approved by a senior manager and allocations made outside the parameters of Appendix 1 when necessary.

Allocating homes in a fire safe way

In response to new legislation and guidance, we will consider the fire strategy of the building when allocating homes.

A list of buildings currently being let in a specific fire safe way can be found in Appendix 2. This means residents currently living on upper floors with high mobility needs will be offered priority transfers to the lower floors. Allocations to the upper floors will be restricted to people who have little to no mobility needs.

Letting low demand homes

Where we are unable to let a property due to a lack of interest or demand, we will adopt a practical approach to find an applicant and ensure the property is let and the loss of rent is minimised.

When we have a vacancy that we are unable to let, we will advertise the property across all media forms as immediately available. In these circumstances, Caredig will also consider allocating a larger property than the applicant qualifies for, if the applicant requests it and Caredig are satisfied that the applicant can afford the rent and service charges applicable.

Local Lettings Policy & Sensitive Lets

Local Lettings Policies and Sensitive Lets may be used to meet the needs of a local area or to address sustainability and community issues to ensure that the scheme is able to contribute to building sustainable communities.

They will be tailored to fit local situations in well-defined communities such as a particular block of flats, an individual street, or a new housing development.

Each Local Lettings Policy and request for a Sensitive Let will be based on a detailed analysis of relevant information gathered from a variety of sources and may include information from internal departments, partner Housing Associations, local Councillors, and the community itself.

Declining a reasonable offer of a home

Applicable for Caredig applicants in Swansea, Neath & Port Talbot

Criteria setting out what will be considered a reasonable offer is set out in Appendix 1.

Applicants offered a home via the Caredig Waiting Lists will receive a maximum of two offers. Should both offers be declined, applicants, including household members of the same application as the applicant in question will be removed from the Caredig waiting list after the second refusal with a 6 month period starting with the date of removal applying before a new application can be submitted.

Everyone will be given the opportunity to discuss their case before a decision to cancel the application is made and All applicants will have the opportunity to appeal either verbally or in written form including emails within 14 calendar days by requesting a review of the decision by a senior officer not involved with the original decision.

This is not applicable for applications received via Local Authorities. All applicants are recommended to seek advice from the relevant Housing Options department at the relevant Local Authority before declining an offer of a home.

Removal from Caredig waiting lists

Applicable for Caredig applicants in Swansea, Neath & Port Talbot

We do not seek to exclude anyone from applying for a home with us, but we recognise the need to ensure sustainable communities. We will therefore investigate whether it is appropriate to exclude an applicant from Caredig waiting lists for a period of 6 months who has:

- Knowingly provided false information on an application
- Failed to update a change of circumstances or respond to contact from Caredig
- Failed to maintain their current Caredig home to a minimum standard of cleanliness and or decoration as detailed in the void (empty homes) standards
- Has a recent history (12 months) of significant poor behavior, e.g., being evicted by a social landlord for serious Anti-Social Behaviour or high-level rent arrears.

After the 6 month period, the applicant will need to make a new application.

Everyone will be given the opportunity to discuss their case before a decision is made and all applicants will have the opportunity to appeal by requesting a review of the decision.

Equal Opportunities

Caredig is committed to ensuring that its policy and procedures are nondiscriminatory and that all applicants can access the service, especially taking account of any vulnerability or other specific needs, and also the needs of different groups protected by the Equality Act 2010. To identify the needs of applicants, the application stage will

have specific questions relating to vulnerability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disabilities and other relevant criteria. This information will be used to monitor the impact of the policy on minority and specific needs groups and to make such amendments, as may be required, to ensure no group is disadvantaged by the policy.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and as a result, we will ensure we take account of individual circumstances both in term of how we communicate and manage applications, allocations and lettings.

References to other relevant policies and procedures

- Voids procedures
- Death of a service user (Care & Support)
- Housing management procedures (Care & Support)
- Abandonment of properties
- Transfers (formerly mutual exchange)
- Possession & Eviction
- Ending occupation contracts
- Complaints, Concerns and Compliments
- Managing Unacceptable Behaviours
- Decants
- Anti-Social Behaviour & Community Safety
- Pet policy
- Hate & Mate Crime
- Compensation

Appendix 1 – Criteria of a reasonable offer

An offer of accommodation will be considered reasonable where:

- It meets the applicants requirements of property type, size and location applied for
- The property meets the requirements of the minimum void (empty home) standards
- In Caredig’s opinion (acting reasonably), there are no reasonable grounds for an applicant to decline the offer

The number of permitted occupiers and bedrooms are determined in order to comply with Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985

For the purposes of bedroom requirements children:

- Children for the purposes of this policy are dependent and non-dependent children(i.e. adult children)
- Under 10 years old, mixed sexes are expected to share a bedroom.
- Under 16 years old, same sexes are expected to share a bedroom.
- Over 16 years old, are entitled to their own bedroom.

| Household Size | Entitled to |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Single Adult | Bedsit/studio flat |
| Single Adult or Couple | 1 Bedroom flat |
| Two Adults Sharing or a Couple with a medical, care or cultural need for separate rooms. | 2 Bedroom Flat |
| 1 or 2 Adults with 1 or 2 Children (depending on sex and age) | 2 Bedroom House |
| 1 or 2 Adults with proof of pregnancy | 2 Bedroom House |
| 1 or 2 Adults with 2 or 3 Children (depending on sex and age) | 3 Bedroom house |
| 1 or 2 Adults with 3 or 4 or more Children (depending on sex and age) | 4 bedroom House |
| 1 or 2 Adults with 4 or more Children | 4+ Bedroom House |
| Allocated through ADAPT and Local Authority Accessible Housing Registers | Bungalows and adapted Homes |

When considering property size, the following is also taken into account:

- Applications from multi-adult households (not including adult non-dependent children) will be considered on a case by case basis. All circumstances are treated individually and will be discussed with the applicant at the point of application.
- Where an applicant is pregnant, they will be considered for accommodation that provides takes into account the needs of the expected child/ren
- We will not normally consider children who live with the applicants for less than 3 days a week towards the assessment of the suitable size of a property. Where the applicant can demonstrate a special requirement for larger accommodation, consideration may be given and approved by a senior officer

Appendix 2 – Buildings under the Fire Safe Lettings Policy

- Hazel Court, Sketty SA2 8BP