

Allocations Policy

What you need to know about how we let our homes.

Create trust, Be Curious, Make it Happen, Achieve Impact, Have Fun

At Yorkshire Housing we try to provide customers with a home that meets their needs. We will also work with new customers to give them the best start to manage their tenancy successfully.

Our Allocations Policy sets out how we let all our homes and who they will be let to.

1. Policy Aim

This policy sets out how Yorkshire Housing will let our empty homes to customers whilst making the best use of our homes in places customers want to live and be proud of. This policy is aligned with the Regulatory Standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing. The aims of this policy are:

- To deliver a fair, transparent lettings service that's accessible for all our customers.
- To make the best use of our homes and create balanced and sustainable communities.
- To comply with the regulatory framework and other relevant legislation including the Equality Act 2010.
- Assist all our Local Authority providers to meet their statutory duty in relation to the allocation of homes.
- To get people into their new homes as quickly as possible.

2. Policy Details

How we allocate our homes

We will be fair in our approach and let our homes responsibly. We don't hold our own Housing Register – we think the fairest way to decide who can rent a Yorkshire Housing home is to offer most of our homes to people on Local Authority Housing Registers.

All Yorkshire Housing social and affordable newbuild homes for rent and most of our homes that become available for relet including accommodation for older people are offered to applicants registered for housing with the Local Authority.

We will work our Local Authority partners to allocate out homes using their Allocations Policies to determine eligibility and priority.

Yorkshire Housing has entered into Nomination Agreements with each of our Local Authority partners. These agreements set out how Yorkshire Housing and the Local Authority will work together to help people on Local Authority Housing registers to access suitable accommodation that meets their needs.

There are occasions when Yorkshire Housing will advertise homes outside of our local agreements either to attract new customers from different markets or to address a specific need in an area. These homes are let on a first come first served basis by advertising them on social media, the internet and UK property websites such as Rightmove. The decision to let a home this way will be made by the New Customer team in collaboration with Place teams. Consideration will be given to any issues with the previous tenancy, any known local issues, demand for the homes and arrangements with the Local Authority. We'll check that customers applying for a home this way are eligible to rent a property from Yorkshire Housing, and the homes will not be let solely on housing need.

Starter Tenancies

All new Social and Affordable rent customers will be offered a 12-month starter tenancy unless their current tenancy is an assured, periodic or secure tenancy with a Local Authority or registered provider of social housing.

Offers are based on the housing application and will be either a sole or joint tenancy depending on the application. Joint tenancies will only be offered to cohabiting couples i.e., partners/spouses.

We will contact the customer within the first four weeks to check they are settling into their new home, resolve any issues they may have and signpost to them to get extra help and support if needed.

Starter tenancies are for a minimum of 12 months with the ability to extend this if there have been tenancy breaches, including rent arrears and anti-social behaviour. This would be for a further period of 6 months only. If no action is taken to extend the starter tenancy it will automatically convert into an assured periodic tenancy, after 12 months.

Market rent and shared ownership homes

Market rent homes are advertised on Rightmove and let on a first come first served basis. These homes are let by the Yorkshire Housing commercial assets team and customers must be able to pass a credit reference check and pay a deposit.

Yorkshire Housing offers homes on a part buy part rent scheme called Shared Ownership. To be able to buy a shared ownership home customers must be able to meet the criteria set for shared ownership. The properties are advertised by the Yorkshire Housing sales team, known as Space Homes on both the Space Homes website and on the Rightmove property portal. More information on shared ownership can be found here [Shared ownership homes: buying, improving and selling: How shared ownership works - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/shared-ownership-homes-buying-improving-and-selling-how-shared-ownership-works)

Rent to Buy

Rent to buy is a scheme for customers who want to buy a home but are struggling to save for a deposit. The rent of these homes is set at 80% of the market rent to help customers save towards a deposit to get a mortgage. Customers can buy the home outright either after 5 years of their tenancy or once the property is five years old, whichever is sooner. However, the property can be sold on a shared ownership basis at any time of the tenancy. Customers must meet the following criteria to have a rent to buy home:

- You must be aged 18 or over.
- Not own a property.
- Have no rent arrears or in breach of their tenancy agreement.
- Have a household income of less than £80,000.
- Must not have been declared bankrupt, have any County Court Judgements or have defaulted on a loan.
- Must be in permanent employment or on a fixed term contract of more than six months.

An Affordability Assessment (including credit and referencing checks) will be completed to make sure the customers income is enough to meet the monthly rent and customers are required to pay a deposit.

Rent to buy homes are allocated on a first-come first-served basis and let by the Yorkshire Housing commercial assets team.

Intermediate Rent

Intermediate Rent is a scheme for customers to rent a home at 80% of market value. It is aimed at customers who can't afford to rent on the open market but wouldn't be eligible for social housing or customers who want to save a deposit to buy a home outright. Intermediate rented homes are not able to be bought but can be used as a stepping stone for customers to access the housing market.

Properties are advertised on the open market (Rightmove or similar) and are allocated based on individual customer circumstances including the number of bedrooms needed and their current housing situation. The Yorkshire Housing commercial assets team lets these properties.

Some Intermediate Rent properties will be subject to nominations from Local Authorities or require customers to have a connection to the local area. Where this is a requirement, it will be made clear in the property advert.

An Affordability Assessment (including credit and referencing checks) will be completed by the commercial assets team to make sure the customers income is enough to meet the monthly rent. Customers will need to pay a deposit.

Supported Housing

Yorkshire Housing has a range of accommodation for people who need extra help and support. This includes shared accommodation, specifically designed schemes (for example, extra care accommodation) and individual homes.

Yorkshire Housing works in partnership with locally based support providers and Local Authority's across Yorkshire to provide this type of accommodation. Support arrangements will differ depending on the type of project and location.

Customers who want supported accommodation must have a specific need for the type of support available. They can apply via the support provider or Local Authority. Each applicant will have their need for this type of accommodation assessed along with their readiness to take up the tenancy.

Adapted Homes

We have several specially adapted homes, with through floor lifts or level access showers. We will work with our Local Authority partners to ensure that these homes are let to people who need these adaptations. If we are unable to find a suitable applicant in need of an adapted home these would be removed, except level access showers, and relet in the normal way.

Sensitive Lettings

A sensitive let is when special consideration is given so that the letting doesn't lead to management issues and supports the best outcome for a customer. We may identify a home or number of homes as requiring a sensitive let if we need to balance the lettings within a specific group of homes for example, following an eviction, ongoing anti-social behaviour or where it's inappropriate to home a customer at a specific location.

Local Lettings Plans and Section 106's

Local letting plans are agreed plans for allocating and letting homes within an agreed community, location or for a type of home. Yorkshire Housing may introduce local lettings arrangements in certain areas or for types of accommodation to ensure community sustainability or to deal with a specific housing issue. The housing issue may include managing a health and safety risk or to manage a specific business risk. These may also be developed as part of the planning consent for new developments.

Neighbourhood Sustainability – Local Lettings Policies

Where we have issues relating to the sustainability of a neighbourhood, we will develop a Local Lettings Policy to address these issues. Local Lettings Policies will be a time-limited intervention to adjust the standard allocations criteria in a specified neighbourhood or scheme or for a specified housing type to achieve specific outcomes. Full details of how allocations will be made will be set out in the specific Local Lettings Policy.

3. Eligibility

Yorkshire Housing will rent our homes to people aged 16 and over. If a customer is aged 16 and 17 an offer of accommodation will only be made where there is a Trustee in place.

We need to check that anyone applying is eligible to rent one of our homes. If a customer has been nominated by the Local Authority, this has already been checked and approved. Sometimes Yorkshire Housing may make further checks before letting a home to ensure a customer is eligible to rent it.

Customers applying for homes that are allocated outside of Local Authority Scheme will be subject to a 'Right to Rent' check to ensure that they are eligible to rent a home.

If an adult household member doesn't have the Right to Rent in the UK, they will not be offered a home with Yorkshire Housing. More information about Right to Rent is available from the Government website www.gov.uk.

Property Eligibility

The size of the home offered will depend on the number of family members living at your new home.

Single person or couple	1 bedroom
Single person or couple expecting or with one child	2 bedrooms
Single person or couple with two children	2 or 3 bedrooms
Single person or couple with 3 children	3 or 4 bedrooms
Single person or couple with 4 children	3 or 4 bedrooms
Single person or couple with 5 or more children	5 or 6 bedrooms

To ensure we make the best use of our homes, are fair and transparent Yorkshire Housing will allocate its homes in line with property size criteria used to assess housing cost support from the Local Authority or Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This means that a separate bedroom is required for:

- A couple (aged 16 or over) who live together as partners.
- A single adult aged 16 and over.
- Children who are ten years and older and are different sexes.

Children under the age of ten, irrespective of sex, will be expected to share a bedroom.

Yorkshire Housing will also consider customers as needing an extra room if they:

- Are parent/s or adoptees that are expecting their first child.
- Have an adult child or stepchild who is in the Armed Forces who lives with you but who is serving away from home.
- Are approved foster carers, current or approved in the last 12 months.
- Have formal shared parenting arrangements in place.
- Have medical reasons or are getting support from carers who do not live with them but need to stay overnight.

However, on some occasions we may let our homes to under occupying customers. This decision will be made by the New Customer Team Manager ensuring the customer is able to pay the rent.

Older people's accommodation and sheltered housing must be allocated to a household that meets the age criteria of the scheme and / or have a need for support.

Yorkshire Housing employees, Board and Committee members, families of colleagues

Yorkshire Housing will not normally accept direct applications from its employees, Board and committee members and their relatives or any individual with a significant personal relationship with an employee or Board member. All employees, Board, committee members and relatives must apply for a home with Yorkshire Housing through a Local Authority nomination scheme.

We may make an exception where a direct application is made for a low demand home via an external letting agent or internet-based lettings service. The application will be subject to a greater degree of scrutiny and approval and assessed in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Board and committee members and Code of Conduct for Staff. A low demand home will not be let to an employee at a discounted rent.

4. Offering our homes

Regardless of the process used to find an applicant we will assess all applications and make checks to verify their personal circumstances are in line with our charitable objectives and to ensure the property is suited to their needs. If the checks confirm the applicant is eligible, an offer will be made. If the offer is refused or there is no reply from the customer within the timescales advised, their record is updated and the next applicant on the shortlist will be contacted. This will continue until we have a successful applicant.

We will take up references when making an offer of a home to a customer. In some cases, we will accept personal declarations where referees are not possible.

Where an offer has been made an appointment will be arranged to view the home with a Yorkshire Housing colleague who will explain the key features. Colleagues will consider any accessibility needs of applicants when conducting the viewing. Following the viewing you will then sign up and get the keys for your new home.

All applicants for Shared Ownership homes, whether new sales or resales, must complete a Shared Ownership application form found on the Yorkshire Housing or Space Homes website and meet the criteria for the scheme of being a first-time buyer purchasing their only and principal home and meet the financial affordability criteria for the scheme.

5. Affordability

Yorkshire Housing will let most of its new build rented homes at 'Affordable Rent' levels in line with Government guidelines. There are some properties where we do not charge Affordable Rents. These are listed below:

- Housing for Older People.
- Supported Housing.
- Housing sites with specific planning restrictions.

- Market Rent.
- Rent to Buy.
- Intermediate Rent.

We will consider customers' individual circumstances to ensure they have the best possible start to their new tenancy and thrive in our homes. We will undertake an affordability check and references for all new customers offered a home with Yorkshire Housing.

We will provide information, support and guidance to help new customers sustain their tenancy either through our own teams or with partners. We will offer appropriate assistance and signpost applicants to agencies that can help with their individual circumstances. We may decide not to allocate a home where a customer is unable to demonstrate they can sustain the tenancy and afford to live in the home.

6. Refusals

Whilst Yorkshire Housing takes a customer-focused approach to allocating homes there may be some occasions when we may refuse to offer a home to a customer, this will apply to all lets including mutual exchanges and transfers. Reasons for refusal will include:

Debt

If an applicant has former housing related debt either owed to Yorkshire Housing or another landlord. Points for consideration will be:

- Length of debt.
- Payment behaviour / history.
- Ability to pay.
- Repayment plans agreed.
- Possession order and compliance.
- Change of circumstances for household and individual.

Each case will be considered individually, and applicants will be refused an offer of accommodation where the risk of non-payment of rent is high and could not easily be addressed through low level support.

Anti-Social Behaviour

If a customer or member of the applying household has a history of ASB and there is supporting evidence to demonstrate this. This will only be in circumstances where the nature and severity of the ASB is a serious threat to Yorkshire Housing colleagues, our customers, or the community. This could include eviction, convictions, injunctions, any other enforcement action, or continued complaints against them. Points for consideration will be:

- how long ago the incidents occurred.
- factors involved which were related to the previous address.
- How the individual has conducted themselves since.

- Change in circumstances of household / individual.

Tenancy Breaches

If there is evidence that the applicant or member of the household has seriously breached a tenancy agreement or has behaved in a way that would constitute a breach of tenancy conditions.

The breach will be considered if it would be reasonable for a court to grant a possession order, or if it renders the applicant unsuitable to be a Yorkshire Housing customer. Points for consideration would be:

- Not ending a tenancy in accordance with the terms of the tenancy agreement.
- Malicious damage to previous accommodation.
- Unwilling to comply with any imposed conditions of tenancy, for example, floating support.

Criminal Behaviour

Yorkshire Housing do not automatically refuse applicants for housing if they have criminal convictions. We will ask applicants to disclose any unspent convictions when applying for a home with Yorkshire Housing.

A risk assessment will be made for all cases where an unspent conviction is declared. Applicants may be refused if there is reason to suppose that they are likely to pose a risk to their household, neighbours and/or the wider community. The risk assessment will also consider the type of property and suitability of the area to ensure that this does not pose a risk to the ex-offender.

Where a Schedule 1 (those who pose a threat to children) is disclosed or we are become aware that the applicant is subject to multi agency public protection arrangements; imposed on registered sexual, violent and / or dangerous offenders) we will work with those supporting the multi-agency public protection arrangements to ensure that the proposed property is suitable. Applicants may be refused where the risk is deemed high or difficult to manage.

Unmet Support Needs

We want customers to have a successful tenancy with Yorkshire Housing so if we identify any risk to this, we will work with partners or our own Enhanced Tenancy Services Team to provide additional support.

If these support needs are not able to be met a tenancy with Yorkshire Housing may be refused. However, the aim will always be to find appropriate support to enable an allocation to be made.

Fraud

Housing fraud is a criminal offence, and anyone found to have deliberately provided false information, or withheld information as part of an application may be prosecuted.

A home obtained by deception will be repossessed. If we discover this type of irregularity at the offer stage, we will withdraw the offer.

Other Reasons for Refusal

An applicant may also be refused an offer of accommodation if:

- The home applied for is unsuitable to the applicant's needs and by offering the property would cause overcrowding.
- The applicant is a person prescribed as ineligible by the Secretary of State.

7. Mutual exchanges

Yorkshire Housing supports our customers to exchange homes through mutual exchange in accordance with the Tenancy Standard via an internet based mutual exchange service. This is the quickest way for Yorkshire Housing customers to access opportunities to exchange their home with other Housing Association or Local Authority tenants.

There will be criteria on how mutual exchanges are processed together with some grounds for refusal. These are few and relate to the size and type of homes a household is planning to move into including under and over occupation.

Customers who have an Intermediate Rent, Rent to Buy or Market Rent tenancy are not able to carry out a mutual exchange.

8. Transfers and Managed Moves

We do not keep waiting lists as we encourage existing customers who wish to move to join their local housing register and or seek a mutual exchange should they wish to move home. We will, however, look to support our existing customers by offering a transfer or managed move to help us make the best use of our homes and schemes or in emergency situations.

Existing customers can apply for a transfer by applying to their Local Authority via the housing need register. Applications will be assessed in accordance with the Local Authority criteria. Customers looking for a transfer should look each week at the properties available in their Local Authority area and express an interest by bidding or directly applying according to the local processes.

A home visit would be carried out to inspect our homes to ensure it has been maintained in good order with the customer asked to bring the home up to a good standard before moving. If the home is not in a good standard, including the garden areas, then the offer of a transfer could be revoked and/or repairs required to the property recharged. Customers will also need to have a clear rent account before a mutual exchange or transfer is approved.

Managed Moves will be considered where there are circumstances that threaten life or would seriously affect the safety of a Yorkshire Housing customer. In these circumstances we will seek supporting information from our partner agencies for example, police, social services, and any other agencies as required.

These include:

1. Exceptional cases of anti-social behaviour and harassment, including serious or targeted hate crimes.

2. Domestic abuse or high-level safeguarding concerns.
3. Emergency Health and Safety Issues I.e., fire / flood.
4. Where a customer agrees to downsize from a larger family home.
5. When a home is overcrowded by at least one bedroom, and this is seriously affecting the customers living conditions.

The decision to make an offer of a managed move will be made jointly by a Place Team Manager and the New Customer Service Manager. Whilst we wouldn't normally consider transferring customers with arrears or tenancy breaches, in these instances a decision will be made considering the individual circumstances. Should we have a suitable home available **one** direct offer will be made.

If we don't have a suitable home available, we would support the customer to apply to their Local Authority to access all housing stock in that area.

9. Appeals

Appeals relating to how Local Authorities award priority on their register will be managed by the Local Authority housing register appeals process.

Appeals relating to our decisions (for example, direct lets, exclusions, vulnerable applicants above) will be managed internally using our lettings appeals process.

10. Rent on time

New customers will be expected to pay a month's rent in advance from the start of their tenancy in accordance with the terms of the tenancy agreement. In exceptional circumstances we may reduce this after considering an individual or household's circumstances.

11. Customer and stakeholder involvement

We recognise the importance of working closely with new and existing customers and Local Authority stakeholders to ensure our services are responsive, efficient, and sympathetic to local needs:

- When a customer terminates their tenancy, we ask the reason for leaving.
- Each time we sign up a new customer we will send out a short questionnaire to determine the clarity and responsiveness of the allocation process including the tenancy sign up, the standard of the new home in line with the Yorkshire Housing lettable standard and about the affordability of the rent.
- Local Authority partners are important to us. We have and will continue to build ongoing relationships with our Local Authority partners to assist them with their Housing Strategies and Homelessness prevention to help and support, where possible with local needs and issues.

12. The values of Yorkshire Housing

Our values underpin the way we work as a business and how we will treat our customers and colleagues. These are:

- **Create trust** – We are committed to doing the right thing and not the easy thing, we will be open and honest and do what we say, being fair and transparent in how we let our homes.
- **Be curious** – We will ask questions, think differently, keep learning so where possible, we meet the needs of our customers to offer the right person, the right home at the right time.
- **Make it happen** – We will own it, do it and be empowered to ensure we have a customer obsessed approach that is seamless and accessible for all.
- **Achieve impact** – We will do things that matter, deliver results, show pride and passion, we know how exciting it is to get a new home and we will get you moved into a good quality home as quickly as possible.
- **Have fun** - Enjoy work, Be yourself, Stay connected. We will treat you how we would like to be treated ourselves! Happy colleagues, happy customers.

13. Reporting and monitoring

This policy will be reviewed regularly to reflect current legislation and good practice.

Performance in relation to allocations will be monitored through customer feedback in line with the Yorkshire Housing lettable standard and through key performance indicators specifically void loss, number of empty homes and average relet times. These indicators will be reported at all levels within Yorkshire Housing including Homes and Places Committee and YHL Board.

Date approved:	15 April 2024
Approved by:	Home and Place Committee
Recommended / scrutinised by:	Heads of Service Directors Customer Voice and Review Committee Homes and Place Committee
Summary of changes:	Minor wording changes and insertion of information on Intermediate rented homes. Shared ownership information has been updated.
Frequency of review	Annually
Next review date:	April 2025
Policy owner:	Angela Havens Head of Customer Service Delivery

Associated policies or guidelines	Tenancy Policy Social Tenure Rent Collection Policy Chargeable Repairs Policy Lettable Standard
Associated procedure	Decanting procedure Sign Up Procedure Allocation Procedure Appeals Procedure Vetting Procedure