

Transfer & Decant Policy

| TRANSFER AND DECANT POLICY | |
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| Purpose | The Transfer & Decant Policy sets out Harrison Housing's approach to the allocation of housing to internal transfer applicants, and signposting to current residents who cannot be assisted through an internal transfer |
| Applies to | Current residents at Harrison Housing owned schemes, and taken into consideration at the managed schemes. |
| Date first implemented | March 2025 |
| Author | Housing Manager |
| Date first approved by Leadership Team | February 2025 |
| Date first approved by Board of Trustees | March 2025 |
| Review Frequency | Every 3 years or in event of legislative change |
| Service Area | Housing Management |
| Document Status: This is a controlled document. Any printed copies of this document are not controlled. As a controlled document, this document should not be saved onto local drives but always accessed from the Policy Library. | |

| CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS (made prior to full policy revision) | | |
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| Amendment Date | Nature of Amendment | Revised by |
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| VERSION HISTORY | | | |
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| Revision Date | Version No. | Revised by | Approved by |
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| CURRENT POLICY REVISION | |
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| Date revised | January 2025 |
| Revised by | Housing Manager |
| LT approval date | February 2025 |
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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Harrison Housing is an almshouse charity, providing accommodation for older people of limited financial means, who are in housing need and unable to secure accommodation from other sources.
- 1.2 This policy applies to internal transfer applicants seeking to move, permanently, to alternative accommodation within Harrison Housing's schemes, or those managed by Harrison Housing on behalf of other almshouse charities. New applicants seeking accommodation will be considered in accordance with the Allocations Policy.
- 1.3 A permanent decant is a specific type of transfer covered by this policy, which applies when existing accommodation has become (or is becoming) permanently unsuitable or unavailable for its current purpose. It does not refer to a temporary move within our housing stock, in order to carry out repairs. Such temporary moves are dealt with separately under our Compensation Policy as a temporary decant.
- 1.4 Harrison Housing strives to operate a fair and transparent transfer policy for all internal applicants. This policy will operate with full regard to the Equality Act 2010.

2. Policy Principles

- 2.1 As a Registered Provider of Social Housing, Harrison Housing will seek to allocate homes designed or adapted to meet a specific need in a way which is compatible with the purpose of that housing. This applies equally to internal transfers which, where offered, will continue to ensure that we make the best use of our available housing stock.
- 2.2 Harrison Housing manages fewer than 200 individual dwellings, and also operates a waiting list for external applicants. We offer housing to external applicants who are prioritised based on their level of housing need. Therefore, any internal transfers which are offered must also be for reasons of compelling housing and welfare needs, to be consistent with the aims of our Allocations Policy.
- 2.3 Transfer applications simply to move to a more desirable property will not be considered as this is not in keeping with our policy of allocating housing based on greatest current housing need. The workload necessary to manage regular moves by residents seeking a better-appointed property would not be a proportionate or efficient use of our resources. This policy is not intended for use by residents who are currently adequately housed.
- 2.4 Given the limited size of our housing stock, we will also support internal transfer applicants to identify alternative rehousing options outside our

limited stock. It is unlikely that Harrison Housing will be able to offer an emergency move at short notice, and in those circumstances, we will support residents to approach their local authority.

- 2.5 Internal transfers will not be used as an alternative, for example, to resolving nuisance behaviour, neighbourhood disputes, or underlying repair issues. In these situations, we will work to resolve the underlying problem which has given rise to a potential transfer application first. However, we recognize that in some cases the distress caused to the transfer applicant, and access to alternative support networks might still justify a move. (e.g. the perpetrator does not live in our property). A move to another area may be the preferred option in such cases to support the safety, well-being and dignity of the resident seeking a transfer.
- 2.6 In cases of domestic abuse, we will encourage the resident who is affected to consider all available options, including remaining safely in their own home or a direct approach to a local authority. Where a suitable property is currently available for an internal transfer **in a different location** this will also be discussed.

3. Implementation

- 3.1 All staff will be made aware of this policy through Harrison Housing's internal communication channels, including email.
- 3.2 Changes to this policy and its associated procedure, if applicable, will be communicated to all staff.
- 3.3 All housing management staff and members of the leadership team will be required to read this policy, and to confirm that they have read and understood it.
- 3.4 This policy will be published to residents through our website, and via internal communications.

4. Other Legislation and Policies

- 4.1 This policy should be used in conjunction with the following legislation, regulation, and Harrison Housing policies:
- Equality Act 2010
 - Landlord's Guide to right to rent checks (Home Office 8 February 2024).
 - [Tenancy Standard Consumer Standards](#) (April 2024) Allocations and Lettings
 - The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006.

- The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) and Persons subject to Immigration Control (Housing Authority Accommodation and Homelessness) (Amendment) Regulations 2021.
- Allocations Policy
- Compensation Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Vexatious Complaints Policy

5. Responsibility

- 5.1 The responsibility for processing transfer applications, including decisions on whether to accept a transfer application, and for allocating properties is primarily a Housing Management function. This process will be led by the Head of Operations, with support from scheme managers.
- 5.2 A resident who wishes to challenge a transfer application or allocation decision may do so via the Harrison Housing Complaints Procedure.
- 5.3 A summary report of any transfer decisions in the previous quarter will be made to the following Trustee meeting as a part of the Housing Management Report. It will be done on an anonymised basis by the Head of Operations.
- 5.4 There will be an annual review by the Leadership Team of the effectiveness of the Transfer Policy.

6. Eligibility and Transfer Criteria

- 6.1 A transfer application may be made by a current licensee, in a property owned or managed by Harrison Housing. We will usually only accept transfer applications from applicants who have been in residence for at least 12 months, although in particularly urgent circumstances may disregard this requirement.
- 6.2 A transfer application will not be accepted from a resident who is currently subject to a Notice to Quit, or legal proceedings for breach of licence conditions to recover possession of the property where they currently live.
- 6.3 Where an applicant is currently in arrears of their weekly/monthly maintenance charges, we will consider the transfer application. However, we will expect to see that an arrears agreement has been complied with for at least 6 months before any offer of alternative accommodation can be made (and subject to availability). We will take into account the affordability

an the available property for a resident who is seeking transfer whilst also paying off arrears on their current property.

- 6.4 When a transfer application is received, and (subject to availability) an offer of alternative accommodation is made, we will ask to see evidence of right to rent to ensure that this eligibility remains current. We will not rely on old copies of documents taken at initial sign up for the current accommodation.
- 6.5 We will make one reasonable offer of alternative accommodation to a resident who has been accepted onto the transfer list.
- 6.6 If, following a successful transfer, we receive evidence that the transfer application contained inaccurate or false information, this will be grounds for serving notice and terminating the new licence agreement.
- 6.7 A permanent decant may arise where a property is in disrepair and cannot be returned to a habitable condition for the current resident in the foreseeable future (e.g. due to subsidence or other structural faults), or the property is in a scheme which is being vacated. The status of “permanent decant” will be agreed by the Head of Operations with the CEO. In this situation the resident(s) affected will be assisted by the scheme manager to complete a transfer application form, to ensure we have up to date information about their needs, and this will be added to our waiting list by the Head of Operations.
- 6.8 Any resident(s) affected by a permanent decant will be prioritised on our transfer waiting list. They will also be prioritised ahead of external applicants for housing, except for those at immediate risk of homelessness or who are currently homeless.

7. Transfer Application Process

- 7.1 The first point of contact for a resident who is seeking a transfer is the scheme manager. This approach may also come from a family member or advocate.
- 7.2 We allocate properties based on their priority rating:
 - 7.2.1 **Decant** - The property is subject to serious structural faults, and this has been confirmed as requiring a permanent decant by the Head of Operations. **High priority.**
 - 7.2.2 **Decant** - The property is in a scheme which is being vacated. Due to health & safety reasons or disposal. **High priority.**
 - 7.2.3 **Personal safety** - The resident has experienced serious harassment or domestic abuse at their current address . **High priority.**

- 7.2.4 **Health** - The resident has a medical condition or disability which means that their home is no longer suitable for them, and it is not possible for their home to be adapted. **Medium Priority.**
- 7.2.5 **Support needs** - A resident in one of our general needs schemes would benefit from a move into sheltered housing, where there is a scheme manager and community alarm system, in order to receive support. **Medium Priority.**
- 7.2.6 **Separating couple** - If a couple living in one of our flats as joint-licencees decide to separate (not linked to domestic abuse), one of them can apply for a transfer to their own flat. They will only be considered for vacancies in a scheme other than the one in which they currently live. As there may be a long wait for a suitable vacancy, they will also be required to seek re-housing with other almshouses or social housing providers. **Medium Priority.**
- 7.3 If any of these circumstances applies, the scheme manager will provide a copy of the transfer application form and explain which supporting documents should also be provided:
- 7.3.1 Current proof of identity, including evidence of right to rent.
- 7.3.2 Supporting documents from social services, police or medical services to support a transfer application.
- 7.3.3 Current details of savings and income.
- 7.4 The completed application will be assessed by the Head of Operations usually within 10 working days.
- 7.5 Once a resident has been approved for a transfer this will be confirmed in writing and they will be placed on the transfer list to await a suitable vacancy.
- 7.6 Their housing needs will be prioritised on the same basis as those of external applicants. External applicants who are homeless or at immediate risk of homelessness will usually have the highest priority.
- 7.7 Applicants with a low need for transfer or no identifiable need for transfer will not be added to the transfer list, as this would unreasonably raise their expectation of a move which is not going to happen. An applicant for transfer who has not been accepted on the transfer waiting list will receive a written explanation for this decision and may appeal via the Appeals process below.
- 7.8 Residents will be removed from the transfer list if they are subsequently in breach of any of the terms of their license agreement.

- 7.9 If a reasonable offer of alternative accommodation has been made and refused, an applicant will be removed from the transfer list.
- 7.10 Applicants wishing to appeal against a decision to remove them from the transfer waiting list may do so via the Appeals process below.

8. Appeals Process

- 8.1 Stage 1 - Where an applicant is not accepted for the transfer list they may in the first instance appeal in writing to the Chief Executive of Harrison Housing, setting out their reasons for appeal. The Chief Executive, along with a member of the Leadership Team, but not the Housing Manager, will consider the available evidence. If it is considered that it is a particularly complex case further clarification may be sought from the Housing Manager and/or the Applicant. A written response will be sent to the applicant, usually within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal. This will include detail of how to take the appeal to stage 2.
- 8.2 Stage 2 – if the applicant remains dissatisfied with the outcome they may appeal to the Trustees of Harrison Housing. The Chair of the Board will nominate two Trustees to review the decision not to offer a potential transfer. A written response will usually be sent to the applicant within 20 working days of receipt of the stage 2 appeal.
- 8.3 potential outcome at either stage may include one or more of the following outcomes (list not-exhaustive):
- The decision is upheld in full.
 - The decision is partially upheld, e.g. correct decision but could have been better explained or not made in timely fashion.
 - The decision is not upheld, and the applicant is assured that the next available property at the same scheme will be offered if their circumstances are unchanged.
 - The applicant is advised that they are not eligible to be housed at one or more of Harrison Housing's owned or managed schemes.
 - The applicant is advised of suitable alternative housing options.
- 8.4 Should the applicant complete both stages and still be dissatisfied, they have the right to contact to the Housing Ombudsman. The Ombudsman would normally expect the applicant to have exhausted the Appeals Procedure before they start to investigate the case. Any stage 2 response which does not uphold the appeal will include the following contact details:

Housing Ombudsman Service
Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square
London E14 9GE
Tel: 0300 111 3000
E-mail: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

9. Alternative Housing Options

- 9.1 Harrison Housing manages fewer than 200 properties, including almshouses managed on behalf of other charities which may have additional eligibility criteria. Accepting a transfer application is no guarantee that a move will happen soon, and applicants are expected to accept one reasonable offer of alternative accommodation. For these reasons we will also sign post residents who enquire about transfers to alternative options. (Appendix 1)
- 9.2 A resident who enquires about transfer may also be referred to the local authority where they live, particularly if they believe their current accommodation no longer meets their needs (e.g. accessibility) or to move closer to support networks elsewhere in the local authority area.
- 9.3 The scheme manager, in liaison with the Head of Operations will support the resident with information about these alternative options. It is the responsibility of the resident, assisted if applicable by family members or advocates to make an application to any of the above organisations.

10. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

- 10.1 For Harrison Housing, diversity is about respecting people's individual differences and ensuring that all people that come into contact with us have access to the same high standards of behaviour and service.
- 10.2 We are committed to ensuring that no resident or team member will be treated less favourably because of their protected characteristics.

11. Monitoring and Review

- 11.1 The Head of Operations will report annually to the Trustee meetings (for both Harrison Housing and managed schemes). This will comprise of an anonymised report of:
- Transfer applications received (including permanent decant cases)
 - Applications accepted to the shortlist,
 - Transfers completed.
 - Including where possible, non-identifying equalities information.
- 11.2 The Trustees will monitor the effectiveness of this policy in light of the above information, on an annual basis and provide feedback to the Leadership Team.

The policy will be comprehensively reviewed on a 3 yearly basis by the Head of Operations and any updated version submitted to the Trustees for approval.

Appendix 1 - Alternative Housing Options

Contact points for sheltered housing in the relevant local authority areas are as follows:

- Barnet <https://www.barnet.gov.uk/adult-social-care/independence-your-home/find-right-housing-option-you>
- Camden <https://www.camden.gov.uk/sheltered-housing>
- Epping Forest [Apply for Independent Living - Epping Forest District Council](#)
- Hackney <https://hackney.gov.uk/sheltered-housing>
- Hammersmith & Fulham <https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/housing/finding-home/sheltered-housing>
- Kensington & Chelsea, and Westminster (shared resources) <https://www.peoplefirstinfo.org.uk/at-home/finding-somewhere-to-live/supported-and-sheltered-housing/>
- Lambeth <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/housing/sheltered-housing>
- Southwark <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/housing/find-home/sheltered-housing>

Additional Sheltered housing options can be searched via the following websites:

- Elderly Accommodation Council <https://housingcare.org/>.
- The Almshouse Association <https://www.almshouses.org/resident-vacancies/>

A non-exhaustive list of registered providers of social housing, which specialise in accommodation for older people or who offer this as one part of their services is below:

- Anchor <https://www.anchor.org.uk/>
- Central & Cecil <https://www.ccht.org.uk/>.
- Clarion <https://www.myclarionhousing.com/find-a-home/rent-a-home/livesmart-homes-for-older-people>
- Croydon Churches Housing Association <https://ccha.biz/we-offer/housing-older-people/>
- Eldon Housing <https://eldonhousing.org/>.
- Housing 21 <https://www.housing21.org.uk/>
- Octavia Support https://www.octaviasupport.org.uk/our_services/sheltered_housing
- Sanctuary <https://www.sanctuary.co.uk/housing-for-older-people>