

Statement of Flexibility March 2016

The statement of flexibility is intended to support the Lettings Policy and identify those areas of the lettings policy which are subject to regular review. The relevant sections of the lettings policy are specified to help you to cross reference.

People who own their own homes (Section 2, page 3)

If you own your own home you will be asked to provide financial information to tell us how much equity you have in your property. If this amount is over the agreed “trigger” level, an individual assessment will be made to identify whether or not you are in a financial position to address your own housing need. If the assessment shows that you are able to do this, you will be placed in the General Needs Category.

The table below indicates the amount of equity an applicant may receive from the sale of their current home before the council consider they have sufficient funds to meet their own housing need.

Single person/Couple	£100,000
Small Family requiring 2 bed houses	£100,000
Large family requiring 3 bed houses	£120,000
Very large family requiring 4 bed + houses	£140,000
Bungalows	£150,000

These trigger levels are based on research into what was available on the market within Gateshead in January 2010.

Property prices throughout all areas of the borough were considered. It was recognised that larger homes were more expensive to buy, and that a bungalow would cost more than buying a flat in most areas. Therefore levels (just above the average costs) were set for different sizes and types of homes, to ensure that everyone with sufficient equity would be able to purchase a property that would meet their need.

Age Requirements (Section 3, page 7)

Due to changes in demand for property types throughout the borough of Gateshead there is the opportunity to consider changes to the age limits set for some property types.

The table below lists those properties where age requirements have been reduced

LANCET COURT	Bungalow	1BED	No Age Restriction
PENSHER STREET	Bungalow	1BED	No Age Restriction
ELLISON MAIN GARDENS	Bungalow	1BED	No Age Restriction

DENESIDE	Bungalow	1BED	40
WEST ACRES	Bungalow	1BED	40

CHESHIRE AVENUE	Flat	1BED	50
EMMAVILLE	Flat	1BED	50
LEYBURN PLACE	Flat	1BED	50

The table below lists those properties where age requirements have been increased.

ESLINGTON COURT	Flat	1BED	30
REDHEUGH COURT	Flat	2BED	30
BENSHAM COURT	Flat	2BED	40
REGENT COURT	Flat	3BED	40

The table below lists those one bed bungalows where age requirements have remained at 60.

CROCUS CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
DAFFODIL CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
LILY CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
MOSSPOOL	Bungalow	1BED	60
BOLTONS BUNGALOWS	Bungalow	1BED	60
SIMPSON MEMORIAL HOMES	Bungalow	1BED	60
DENTON VIEW	Bungalow	1BED	60
A J COOKS COTTAGES	Bungalow	1BED	60
WILLIAM MORRIS AVENUE	Bungalow	1BED	60
SOUTH LEA	Bungalow	1BED	60
SPRINGWELL CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
HAWESDALE CRESCENT	Bungalow	1BED	60
RYDAL CRESCENT	Bungalow	1BED	60
BURNSIDE ROAD	Bungalow	1BED	60
LEAZES VIEW	Bungalow	1BED	60
WOODLANDS ROAD	Bungalow	1BED	60
BROOM CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
CONIFER CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
WHINNEY CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
KELLS WAY	Bungalow	1BED	60
SOUTH SHERBURN	Bungalow	1BED	60
GARESFIELD GARDENS	Bungalow	1BED	60
LILLEYCROFT	Bungalow	1BED	60
NORWOOD CRESCENT	Bungalow	1BED	60
SOUTHWOOD CRESCENT	Bungalow	1BED	60
THISTLEY GREEN	Bungalow	1BED	60
WOOD GREEN	Bungalow	1BED	60
HALL GARDENS	Bungalow	1BED	60
RECTORY ROAD EAST	Bungalow	1BED	60
SQUIRES GARDENS	Bungalow	1BED	60
GARVEY VILLAS	Bungalow	1BED	60
KAYS COTTAGES	Bungalow	1BED	60
SQUARE HOUSES	Bungalow	1BED	60
JOYCE CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
YETHOLM ROAD	Bungalow	1BED	60

ALLERDENE WALK	Bungalow	1BED	60
LOWFIELD WALK	Bungalow	1BED	60
ALBERT PLACE	Bungalow	1BED	60
BOLDON GARDENS	Bungalow	1BED	60
EASINGTON AVENUE	Bungalow	1BED	60
EBCHESTER AVENUE	Bungalow	1BED	60
HEDWORTH PLACE	Bungalow	1BED	60
SIMONSDALE PLACE	Bungalow	1BED	60
WASHINGTON GARDENS	Bungalow	1BED	60
GREENFIELDS	Flat	1BED	60
MILVAIN CLOSE	Flat	1BED	60

All other one bed bungalows are available to anyone over the age of 50

All other flats will be advertised to anyone over the age of 18

Advertising (Section 5, page10)

In order to meet the council's statutory duty, a proportion of properties will be advertised indicating that preference will be given to those applicants with a recognised housing need

The table below indicates how many properties are advertised with preference to those who have a recognised housing need. The remaining properties are advertised and let on the basis of longest waiting time (regardless of category of housing need).

The first figure in the ratio refers to the number to be advertised with preference to those with a recognised housing need. E.g. for every 5 two bed bungalows available to let, four will be advertised with preference to those in the highest category (4 in 5)

Type	Size	Ratio
Houses	4 Beds	100%
Houses	3 Beds	3 in 4
Houses	2 Beds	7 in 10
Bungalow	2 Beds	4 in 5
Bungalow	1 Beds	3 in 10
Flats	3 Beds	1 in 2
Flats	2 Beds	1 in 2
Flats	1 Beds	1 in 2
Bedsit Flat	0 Bed	1 in 4
Maisonettes	All	1 in 2
Sheltered	All	1 in 10
Mulgrave Villas	2 beds	1 in 2
Mulgrave Villas	1 beds	4 in 10

Ratios will change in order to meet statutory obligations and demand.

Demotion (Section 8, page 14)

Tenancy Related Debt

The Lettings Policy describes how your application for housing may be demoted if you have tenancy related debt. The trigger for this action is reviewed periodically. The current amount of money that will result in demotion of an application is:

£250 rent arrears or an outstanding balance of 10 weeks payable rent, whichever is the lower.

Exclusion (Section 8, page 14)

Tenancy Related Debt

An unacceptable behaviour test will be applied to anyone who is to be considered for exclusion from the housing register for a tenancy related debt.

The trigger will be an amount of housing debt where there is evidence that a possession order would be granted by the court. This is currently set at:

- Single people £3,000
- Households with dependent children £5,500

Clarification of Tenancy Related debt

In accordance with s160A(7)(a) of the Housing Act 1996 you will be considered to be “guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make you unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority” if you owe tenancy related debt over the trigger level set out above.

Tenancy related debt includes current and former tenant rent arrears, rechargeable repairs, court costs, housing and council tax benefit overpayments and any other debt related to any current or former tenancy.

Please Note tenancy debts included in a Debt Relief Order or Bankruptcy order will still be taken into consideration when assessing an applicant’s suitability to be a tenant of Gateshead Council.

Criminal or Anti Social behaviour

An unacceptable behaviour test will be applied to anyone who is to be considered for exclusion from the housing register for criminal or anti social behaviour for

- Serious damage to a former or current property
- Criminal or anti social behaviour.

Housing Need Criteria, (Section 12, page 29)

Best Use of Stock

Substantial Housing Need will be awarded where a council tenancy has become unaffordable due to under occupation, which has reduced the element of housing related benefit that the household is entitled to. In order to qualify for this category the applicant must be applying to move to a smaller property that will address this situation and must not have created this situation knowingly e.g. accepted a property that was larger than Local Housing Allowance size criteria defines.

The current size allowance allows one bedroom for:

- A couple
- Adult aged 16+
- Two children aged 0-16 of the same sex
- Any two children under 10
- Any other child

Local Lettings Plans (Section 14, page 34)

Local Lettings Plans (LLP) are additional policies that complement Gateshead's Lettings Policy by addressing barriers to accessing housing and delivering better outcomes to improve life chances for current tenants and future residents in particular localities.

The following LLPs are currently in existence and being used to let the specified properties described:

Angel Court

To be considered for Angel Court applicants must:

- Be aged 60 or over.
- Have a need for supported housing.
- Have a daily need for assistance with personal care.

Applicants will receive written confirmation from the Council's Social Care Assessment Team stating if they meet this criterion or not.

Stage 2

Each customer will be assessed based on the information they provide and on the level of care required with the following award levels:

High need:	Requiring support three or more times a day.
Medium need:	Requiring support twice a day.
Low need:	Requiring support once a day.

Allocation of individual apartments

Vacancies will be allocated based on a quota to all three levels of need. Most vacancies will be advertised but there will be discretion to allocate some as a direct let where appropriate to meet urgent and/or exceptional circumstances where care is needed.

Deneside / Westacres

8 x 2 bed bungalows at 31-33 Dene Side, 9-11 West Acres and 14-15 East Acres to be advertised and let to people over 60s or in medical need.

19 x 1 bed bungalows on the flatter part of the site at 5-11 Dene side, 34-37 Dene side, 10-13 East Acres and 12-15 West Acres to be advertised and let to people over the age of 50.

22 x 1 bed bungalows on the steeper part of the site at 16- 20 West Acres, 1-7 West Acres, 38-43 Dene Side and 1-4 Dene Side to be advertised and let to people aged over 40

Within the scheme residents over the age of 50 in the one-bedroom bungalows in Area 3 will be given preference for the bungalows on the flatter parts of the site in Area 2 over applicants who live outside the current scheme. Transfers would be allocated through ranked order of length of tenancy.

Emmaville

The Local Lettings Plan was implemented to increase the demand for the 20 flats at the scheme by reducing the eligibility criteria and making them available to applicants over the age of 50. The blocks of flats affected by the proposal were as follows: 17 - 20, 21 - 24, 25 - 28, 29 – 32 and 33 - 36.

The 20 bungalows are still let to applicants over 60 years of age, as currently there are no demand issues for these properties.

All tenants living in the first floor flats will be given preference to move to the ground floor flats provided they have registered a transfer and the flats have been advertised in band 2.

Redheugh and Eslington Courts

New tenancies will be restricted to applicants over the age of 30.

Existing council tenants aged less than 30 will have the ability to transfer both within and to the blocks subject to compliance with their existing tenancy.

Regent Court

Properties within Regent Court are actively marketed and let to new tenants aged 40 or over.

Existing tenants within Regent Court aged less than 40 have the ability if they wish, to respond to HomeChoice adverts and transfer within the block subject to compliance with their existing tenancy.

In addition, properties in the block that have had the benefit of disabled adaptations will be advertised to applicants with medical need and will not be subject to an age restriction.