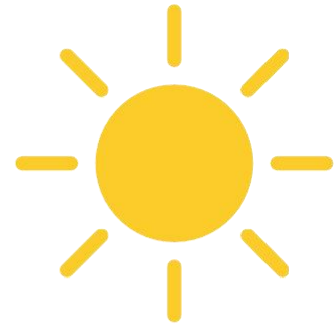


Plus Dane Housing

# Lettings Policy

June 2025

CEX-POL-01-01



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### 1 Policy Statement

We seek to make effective use of our homes, providing choice for applicants looking to rent our homes whilst also ensuring that we create sustainable communities through the use of local lettings plans and direct allocations alongside active participation in the local authority choice-based lettings schemes.

We will allocate our homes in line with requirements set by the Regulator of Social Housing, the local housing act and in support of the strategic housing functions of the Local Authorities within which we operate.

This policy applies to Social and Affordable rent homes across our general needs homes, supported and extra care schemes. It does not apply to garages, mortgage rescue homes or where another provider manages a scheme under a management agreement. In addition, homes let at an Intermediate Rent, Market Rent, or homes let for Shared Ownership are excluded from this policy and are covered by the Homeshub Lettings Policy.

### 2 Policy Aims

Our aim is to provide a flexible and effective approach to letting our homes that will:

- ensure our homes are let in a fair, transparent and equitable way.
- where we have homes, support the relevant local authority's strategic housing function.
- contribute to a reduction in homelessness in the areas that we have homes.
- give new applicants and existing customers choice through participation in choice based letting schemes.
- provide clear guidelines on the types of tenancies we will offer.
- make best use of available homes and create sustainable communities.
- minimise the time that homes are left unoccupied and at risk of vandalism or squatting.
- allow us the opportunity to market our homes in a diverse, accessible and innovative way.

### 3 Links to Corporate Plan

Demand for our homes remains high and this policy sets out how decisions are made when letting homes, providing transparency to applicants and customers, which supports the 'trusted' strand of our customer experience strategy. Making best use of our available homes supports the delivery of quality homes and vibrant communities.

#### 4 Roles and responsibilities

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Director of Customer Experience | Accountable for ensuring that the letting of our homes complies with this policy and the policy meets the requirements set by the Regulator of Social Housing.     |
| Head of Income & Lettings       | Accountable for relationships with local authority strategic partners and for ensuring effective use of our homes  |
| Lettings Manager                | Responsible for the letting of our homes in line with this policy  |
| Head of Communities & Support   | Responsible for the letting of extra care and supported schemes and for ensuring tenancy management processes meet the requirements of the lettings policy         |
| Lettings Team Leader            | Ensuring all lettings colleagues are trained in the application of this policy and other applicable policies and procedures, for example, those set by CBL schemes |

#### 5 Letting our homes

As a registered provider of social housing and a charitable organisation, we provide houses to let at below market level rents to those whose needs are not served by the commercial housing market. We aim to let our homes as quickly as possible to maximise income, which is reinvested in our homes and services, and to limit the opportunity for community disruption through vandalism or squatting in empty homes.

In the main, there are three different methods for applying for a Plus Dane home as a new applicant.

##### Choice Based Lettings (CBL)

Most of our homes will be allocated through local choice-based lettings schemes, fulfilling our obligation to assist our Local Authority partners in their statutory duty of meeting housing need, as set out within the Regulator's Consumer Standards. As a minimum, 50% of our homes will be allocated through CBL. This figure may differ depending on the current arrangement with the respective Local Authority.

Where we are not members of a local authority CBL scheme or no CBL scheme operates in the area, we will allocate 50% of our homes directly to the local authority for them to nominate applicant(s) for the home. Currently, Plus Dane participates in the following CBL schemes:

|                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Chester West & Chester | West Cheshire Homes  |
| Cheshire East          | Cheshire Home Choice |
| Merseyside             | Property Pool Plus   |

## Strategic Initiatives

At times we may enter into agreements with support agencies to allocate homes in a different way through defined strategic initiatives to address specific housing needs, such as homeless prevention initiatives and homes for care experienced young people.

## Alternative marketing

Homes may also be made available for new applicants through direct marketing using tools such as Rightmove.

In addition to making homes available for new applicants, our homes may also be let to existing customers wanting to, or needing to, move home on either a permanent or temporary basis.

Applicants can register to apply for a sole tenancy which will be issued to them individually, or a joint tenancy which will be a tenancy issued to two individuals who will both be assessed for eligibility and will become jointly and severally responsible for meeting the obligations of a tenancy.

## 5.1 Choice Based Lettings

Applicants looking to apply for a home through CBL will 'bid' for a home advertised by the relevant CBL scheme. Bids can be made online through the dedicated CBL scheme website. Support available for new applicants who are unable to access the internet is set by each CBL scheme and can include support offered directly by the local authority or by the participating landlords.

The relevant local authority is responsible for the CBL scheme, setting the policy for the scheme and deciding on the criteria for how homes will be awarded via the scheme. This typically consists of a priority banding system, with applicants to the scheme awarded a band depending on their individual circumstances.

The success of an applicant's bid will depend on their place within the shortlist after bidding has closed for a home. The shortlist will be managed in line with the requirements of the CBL scheme which typically prioritises applications according to the applicant's band and the length of time they have been registered. Sometimes the prioritisation will include other criteria, such as local connection, which will have been made clear on the advert for the home.

Applicants will be contacted in priority order as set out by the shortlist and a conditional offer will be made for the home, subject to successful eligibility checks in line with this policy, and the requirements of the CBL scheme. A pre-tenancy interview will take place to advise applicants of the obligations of a tenant, to consider the appropriateness of the home for the household and to complete an affordability assessment. The interview is designed to identify any relevant support needs, referrals or risk factors that we need to be aware of to provide the right support or referrals to support the applicant when entering into a sustainable tenancy.

If at any point during the lettings process the verification and eligibility checks highlight the applicant does not meet the required criteria, the conditional offer will be withdrawn, and the applicant will be informed of the reasons why, along with details of how to appeal the decision as set out in section 11. We will then

approach the next applicant listed on the shortlist to make a conditional offer and start the process again.

## 5.2 Alternative Marketing Routes

There may be times where we need to market some of our homes through other marketing routes, which may include such methods as advertising on Rightmove or Zoopla, our website, via a leaflet drop or on our social media pages. This may be where an eligible applicant has not been identified after advertising via CBL, or where a specific operational need has been identified.

Homes advertised this way will invite applicants to submit an expression of interest which will be prioritised in order of date received, with preference given to applicants with local connection who would fully occupy the home. Occasionally, when using these marketing routes, we may prioritise expressions of interest from working households to build or sustain the economic mix of a community. Where this is the case, we will state this on the advert.

A conditional offer will be made for the home, subject to successful verification of eligibility checks eligibility in line with this policy. A pre-tenancy interview will take place to advise applicants of the obligations of a tenant, to assess whether the applicant is likely to be able to sustain the tenancy via an affordability assessment and to consider the appropriateness of the home. Applications where the household will not fully occupy the home may be approved by exception if the affordability assessment suggests that the rent remains affordable.

If at any point during the lettings process the verification and eligibility checks highlight the applicant does not meet the required criteria, the conditional offer will be withdrawn, and the applicant will be informed of the reasons why, along with the details of the appeals process as set out in section 11. We will then approach the next applicant listed on the shortlist to make a conditional offer and start the process again.

## 5.3 Extra Care Housing

Applications for extra care housing are made directly to the Local Authority who will assess the eligibility of the applicant and put forward applicants to Plus Dane. Extra care applicants will need to demonstrate a need for care in accordance with the criteria agreed with the relevant Local Authority. On occasions where the local authority does not have sufficient demand to provide nominations for an extra care scheme, we will proactively seek applications directly by advertising the scheme directly ourselves and pass eligible applicants on to the local authority for review.

## 5.4 Sensitive Lets

Occasionally it may be necessary to undertake a sensitive let. This may be where there has been a housing management issue at a specific home or where we have been asked by statutory partners not to house certain groups at a specific location.



In these instances, rather than making an offer based on housing needs alone, we will consider other factors to ensure there is a wider benefit to the community or where the health and safety of an applicant, is, or could be, put at risk if they were to move to that home.

When determining whether a home is to be let as a sensitive let, a review will take place between the Lettings Manager and the Housing Manager to ensure it is necessary, equitable, proportionate and in line with the Equality Act 2010. Reviews take place on a case-by-case basis. If a home has previously been let as a sensitive let, it does not automatically mean it will be in the future.

## 5.5 Local Lettings Plan

We aim to let our homes in a way that creates tenancies that are sustainable and contribute to stable communities. To help us do this, we may apply a local lettings plan to a particular area for a set period. This allows us to vary the criteria applied for letting our homes in defined areas to take account of local circumstances and to shape vibrant communities. Details of areas that have a local lettings plan in place can be found on our website and the local lettings plan criteria will be included within adverts for homes in an area with a local lettings plan.

When first advertising homes within our new build schemes, we will always apply a local lettings plan to support the development of a new community. We will develop the local lettings plan in consultation and agreement with the respective local authority.

To ensure our local letting plans are necessary, equitable and proportionate, they will be proposed by the Lettings Manager and approved by the Head of Income & Lettings. Once approved, they will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain appropriate.

## 5.6 Rent

Rents for each home are set in line with our Rent policy. When homes are advertised, the type of rent applicable for the home will be listed within the advert to allow applicants to make an informed choice before applying.

## 6 Applicant eligibility checks

Regardless of which method is used to apply for a home with Plus Dane, the offer of a home will remain conditional until completion of eligibility checks. These checks will cover the applicant and anyone who will be living in the home with them. New verification checks need to be completed for each successful bid to verify circumstances at the time of letting the home, and applicants may need to resubmit information that has previously been reviewed.

The eligibility checks will include:

- a review of photographic identification to verify identity, residency and eligibility to rent a social home.
- a review of any relevant medical documents that are linked to the suitability of the home or an applicant's support needs.
- landlord references from current/most recent landlord (whether private or social landlords) for a period of two years.



- credit reference check by our approved external partner.
- an affordability assessment, including a welfare benefit review, known as an “Entitled too” to assess benefit eligibility support in maximising income to support the applicant in sustaining the tenancy.

We may need to seek further information, either from the applicant or third parties to assess suitability for a home if the documents provided, or applicant behaviour, indicates that the applicant may pose an unmanageable risk to colleagues, the community or themselves. Applicants will be asked for their consent before third parties are contacted, however we will not be able to proceed with the application if we are unable to complete the required checks without the additional information.

If an applicant does not pass the verification and eligibility checks, the conditional offer of a home will be withdrawn. We will always tell an applicant the reasons why we are unable to make an offer.

### 6.1 Age

Applicants aged 18 or over are eligible to apply for a home with Plus Dane. We will not usually enter into a tenancy agreement with individuals under the age of 18 as this age group cannot hold the legal interest in a tenancy under the Law and Property Act 1925.

We will consider applications from 16- or 17-year-olds with care experience or statutorily homeless and nominated by the Local Authority where a support package is in place.

If a home is let to an applicant aged under 18, it will be let on an agreement stating the terms on which they may occupy the home up until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday from which date we will issue an appropriate tenancy. We would offer a tenancy to an applicant aged under 18 in exceptional circumstances only and this would normally require a rent guarantor. The guarantor can be a responsible adult over 18 years of age, known to the applicant or an agency such as Children's Services.

### 6.2 Residency

By law, individuals who have no access to public funds, subject to immigration controls, or who do not have refugee status or indefinite leave to remain, cannot apply for social housing.

Applicants are ineligible for housing if they are:

- subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 (as amended)
- subject to immigration control, who needs leave to enter or remain in the UK and have no recourse to public funds are not eligible for accommodation.

If an applicant is unable to provide us with sufficient information to satisfy us of their identity or their right to rent, we may refuse to offer accommodation.

### 6.3 Criminal Convictions

All applicants and members of their prospective household are required to disclose any pending court cases or unspent criminal convictions. Convictions that have been 'spent' under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 do not need to be declared and will not have an impact on the outcome of the application.

The existence of criminal convictions will not automatically lead to the application being determined as ineligible, unless the conviction was because of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make the applicant or household member unsuitable to be a tenant. Consideration will be given to how long ago the incidents occurred, whether there were any mitigating factors involved, and how the individual has conducted themselves since the conviction. It may however prevent offers being made in certain areas subject to local letting plans.

In most instances, ineligibility for acts of criminal behaviour shall be 12 months from either (i) the date of offence; (ii) the date of conviction; or (iii) the date of release from prison, whichever is the later.

### 6.4 Local connection requirements

New applicants need to meet one of the local connection criteria to ensure that wherever possible our homes support the housing needs of local people. Specific groups, such as care experienced people aged under 25, households experiencing domestic abuse, and armed forces veterans are excluded from the need to have a local connection. Local connection is demonstrated by:

- Paid employment in the area.
- Immediate family member living in the area (parents / adult children, brother / sister).
- A need to live in the area to receive specific long-term health treatment or support from a medically qualified practitioner, which is not available elsewhere.
- Living in the area for at least 6 out of the last 12 months or 3 out of the last 5 years.

### 6.5 Individuals deemed high risk under multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA)

We acknowledge that it is in the interest of public protection that offenders who pose a risk to others have a fixed address and have accommodation that make it possible for the police and probation services to monitor and manage high risk offenders to protect the public from harm. Applicants declaring serious convictions including sex offence(s) convictions, in relation to themselves or any member of their household will be referred to the Lettings Manager for individual consideration before a conditional offer is made. This may include the consideration of MAPPA documentation as well as giving due regard to the restrictions and ineligibility criteria within this policy.

## 6.6 References and conduct

We promote good tenancy conduct to achieve stable and balanced communities. References will be sought from the applicant's current landlord, whether social or private. The reference will request information in relation to the management of the current tenancy, such as payment of rent, instances of anti-social behaviour or any actions the landlord may have had to take against the applicant or a member of the household.

If evidence is provided suggesting the current tenancy conduct of an applicant, or member of their household, is such that if they were a tenant, we would be granted a possession via a court order, the applicant will be considered as unsuitable to be a tenant and the conditional offer will be withdrawn. To support this decision, we would consider approaching previous landlords, for a period of up to 5 years prior to provide further information.

In making this decision we will be fair and transparent and will explain our reasons for withdrawing the offer.

If the applicant is not currently, and has not previously rented, we will consider tenancy conduct through the other information submitted, such as credit checks and criminal convictions.

## 6.7 Affordability

The outcome of the affordability check will provide an indication of the level of support that an applicant may need to sustain their tenancy. Where an applicant's affordability check, and pre-tenancy check overall, indicates there may be a high support need, this information will be stored on the housing management system. This will inform relevant colleagues who will follow the relevant tenancy management and income collection procedures to support the customer during the early stages of the tenancy and beyond.

A payment of the first week's rent is required in advance, no later than the date the tenancy is signed, irrespective of whether the applicant may be eligible for housing benefit or the housing element of universal credit. Inability to pay such advance rent would be taken as an indicator that the applicant is unable to afford the tenancy. We reserve the right to withdraw any offer of accommodation if the first week's rent cannot be paid.

Where an applicant has no income or savings, benefit eligibility, or support in place to pay their rent, the conditional offer will be withdrawn.

## 6.8 Homeowners

Social homes are let to be main and principal homes. We will not let our homes to an applicant who owns a home if this will lead to them having a second home. Applicants looking to move from their own home to a Plus Dane rented home are not permitted to hold a tenancy with us and sublet their original home. They must demonstrate their house is being actively marketed for sale, with an expectation that the home will be sold within a maximum of 12 months of the tenancy start date. Exceptions will be considered for applicants needing sheltered or adapted homes and applicants experiencing domestic abuse. All other cases will be considered on an individual basis. We will not let a home to

applicants who do not have a housing need or where they would be financially profiting from living in our home.

## 6.9 Colleague, Board & Committee Members and Close Relatives

To avoid any conflict of interest, we will ask all applicants, irrespective of the marketing route used, to declare whether they are employed by Plus Dane or are a relative or have a significant personal relationship with a colleague.

Colleague and Board member applications may be accepted in certain circumstances if all eligibility criteria and the requirements set out in this policy are met. No preferential treatment or advantage will be given.

Any offers made to applicants who work for or have a significant relationship with a colleague will be subject to approval by the Director of Customer Experience.

Applications from a close relative of a colleague are not managed or handled by the colleague with the declared interest. This is to ensure that the application and any offer is managed independently and transparently and is not influenced by the relationship.

## 7 Considerations

### 7.1 Medical Needs

We will ensure a home is suitable for an applicant's physical needs before making an offer. Should an applicant apply for a home that does not meet their physical health needs or where it is identified that major adaptations are required to make the home suitable, we reserve the right to withdraw any offer. It is important that needs are met at the time of allocating as, unless medical conditions change, no adaptations will be carried out in the first year of the tenancy in line with the Adaptations Policy.

### 7.2 Bedroom Standard

To enable us to make best use of our homes, preference will be given to applicants whose households fully meet the bedroom standard criteria. A room is considered a bedroom if it has been designated by us as a bedroom in line with the space standard, regardless of its use. We will not usually consider customers for homes that have more bedrooms than their assessed need.

In determining the number of bedrooms needed, a bedroom will be required for each of the following groups:

- A co-habiting couple, or a single parent
- A pair of children aged under 10 regardless of sex
- A pair of adolescents aged 10 to 20 years of the same sex
- Any single adult aged 21 years or more
- Any other person in the household who has a medical condition requiring a sole bedroom

The bedroom standard does not consider children who live at the address less than 50% of the time. A pregnant applicant will be considered as if the child was born.

An additional bedroom may be considered as being required where there is supporting evidence from a medical professional that the applicant has a medical need which specifically requires an additional bedroom. This is usually exempt from the under-occupancy charge, providing the relevant criteria set out by the Department of Work and Pensions is met. We will discuss any potential impact with applicants to allow them to make an informed decision.

We may choose to let a home that would be under occupied if there have been no bids from applicants who would fully occupy the home. In deciding to under occupy, we will consider affordability and ensure the applicant is aware of any financial impact of under occupancy before making any offer. Any under occupancy will be limited to a maximum of one bedroom.

### 7.3 Houses

As houses are in exceptionally short supply, houses shall be prioritised to families with dependent children under 18, or households with children who have learning or physical disabilities and who are over the age of 18, with bedrooms allocated in line with our bedroom standard. This is in recognition of the negative impact that living in unsuitable accommodation can have on children's well-being and cognitive, social and emotional development. Where there is no demand from families with dependent children, such as in the case of small two-bedroom houses, we may consider single applicants, couples or applicants who have children who do not live with them all the time.

### 7.4 Bungalows

Bungalows will generally be prioritised for those with limited mobility who would benefit on medical grounds from the layout of a bungalow or for people over fifty-five. Priority in the first instance will be given to applicants with a medical condition who require this type of accommodation.

### 7.5 Adapted homes

Adapted homes have been designed for, or significantly adapted to meet, the needs of people with physical or sensory disabilities. Adapting a home requires significant investment from Plus Dane and/or the local authority. If a home has adaptations, we will advertise the home in the same way that we advertise other non-adapted homes to ensure that applicants seeking adapted homes are given the widest possible choice. Once the bidding cycle closes for the home, we will allocate the home outside of priority order if there is an applicant who has a need for the adaptations.

### 7.6 Apartments

Ground floor - in the first instance will be offered to applicants who need ground floor accommodation for health reasons. Should there be no applicants with health/care/support needs, preference will be given to families with young children under five followed by all other applicants.

Above ground floor – due to the practicalities of living in apartments with young children, preference will be given to families with children above 5 years of age. We reserve the right to withdraw any offer where we are concerned an applicant's medical need would mean they are unable to safely evacuate an apartment above ground floor without assistance.

## 8 Application Outcomes

Each application for our homes will be reviewed on its own merits. We want to set individuals and communities up for success and avoid establishing tenancies that may fail. Applications are assessed in line with the criteria as set out in this policy. CBL schemes will have their own codes and descriptions for the outcomes of individual bids on homes that have been advertised however the outcome of all applications can be categorised into two distinct outcomes; ineligible/does not meet the criteria or conditional offer made.

### 8.1 Ineligible or does not meet the required criteria

An application will be considered ineligible if an applicant or, where applicable, a member of the household does not meet the standard eligibility criteria to apply for a home, whether due to age, a criminal conviction, or being a person from abroad prescribed as ineligible by the Secretary of State.

An application will be considered to have not met the criteria if details provided within the application do not meet the requirements set out within the policy or as specified in the advert for the home. Examples of this include, but are not limited to:

- Where the home applied for is unsuitable for the applicant's needs, for example by way of adaptations, or services, or size.
- Outstanding current or former tenant rent arrears or other tenancy related debts for either the applicant or members of their household.
- Where the applicant does not meet eligibility criteria for specific homes such as local letting plans or Section 106 eligibility criteria or other covenants, such as local parish restrictions, or legal restrictions specific to the home.
- Where there are unmet support needs and we are unable to identify suitable and sufficient support, either within our own service provision or working with external agencies.
- Perpetrating or engaging in anti-social or unacceptable behaviour which would make the applicant unsuitable to be a tenant for the home applied for. This would be where the nature of the anti-social behaviour is considered a serious enough risk to Plus Dane colleagues, customers or the community. Consideration will be given as to how long ago the incidents and behaviour occurred, whether there were extenuating factors involved and how the individual has conducted themselves since. Examples include:
  - Harassment and other hate related crimes
  - Domestic abuse
  - Damage to previous home or communal areas
  - Dealing, supplying or cultivating controlled drugs
  - Assaulting, abusing, accusing, threatening, or harassing colleagues or contactors engaged in Plus Dane business or activities



- Fraud relating to public funds
- Breaching the terms of a previous tenancy agreement
- A criminal offence deemed serious enough to pose a risk to neighbourhood stability (this is without prejudice to customer or members of the customer's household who are deemed high risk offenders)
- The applicant or a member of their household demonstrates a history of preventing Plus Dane from carrying out its housing management functions. In this regard, we will take in to account the nature of the actions; the impact on Plus Dane's housing management functions at the time and how long ago they occurred.
- Acts of criminal behaviour, by the applicant or a member of their household, including unspent criminal convictions serious enough to make the applicant unsuitable to be a tenant.

We will set out our reasons for assessing the application as ineligible or not meeting the required criteria in writing. An applicant can ask for a review of the decision under section 11 of this policy.

### 8.2 Conditional offer made

If an application meets the required criteria, a conditional offer will be made. The offer is conditional on successful completion of checks to verify that the details of the application are correct and that the characteristics of the home meet the needs of the applicant/s. The conditional offer will set out what type of tenancy will be offered. Once all checks have been successfully completed, a tenancy will be created.

We recognise the importance of tenure security in both developing and maintaining stable and viable communities. We intend to let most of our homes on Assured (lifetime) tenancies following successful completion of a probationary period under a Starter Tenancy. We shall continue to grant lifetime tenancies to reflect the stability that this can bring to customers, their families and the community.

Any discretionary tenancy we may offer will only be granted to an individual with whom we have an existing landlord relationship with either an existing tenant or household member.

Existing Plus Dane customers will usually have their tenancy and rent type preserved when moving from one of our homes to another. This excludes Plus Dane Secure Tenants who choose to move to an affordable rent home. In these circumstances, they will be granted an Assured non-shorthold Tenancy. Appendix 1 provides details of the tenancy types that we offer.

### 8.3 Withdrawal of conditional offer

If the verification checks identify that the application has not met the criteria set out within the policy or the local lettings plan, the conditional offer will be withdrawn. Examples of where the required criteria may be considered as not met are provided in point 8.1.

We will set out our reasons for withdrawing the conditional offer in writing. An applicant can ask for a review of the decision under section 11 of this policy.



## 8.4 Fraudulent Information

Applicants who withhold or give false information may have their application cancelled and any pending offer withdrawn.

Any applicant seeking to obtain a home by making a false statement whether knowingly or recklessly (either via themselves or someone on their behalf), withholding relevant information or by failing to tell us about any material change in circumstances will have their application cancelled and/or any offer of a home withdrawn.

If, after being issued a tenancy, it is found the applicant knowingly or recklessly gave false information (either via themselves or someone on their behalf) to secure the tenancy, we will apply for possession under Ground 17 of the Housing Act 1988, as amended by the Housing Act 1996.

We will take and keep a photograph of new customers. This will be used in line with our data protection policy to tackle tenancy fraud and make sure our homes continue to be lived in by the people named on the tenancy agreement. These will be stored on our housing management system.

## 9 Lettings for existing customers

Tenancies are issued after a fair and equitable lettings process, if during the lifetime of the tenancy a customer is looking to move, they can do so via a transfer request or a mutual exchange. At times they may need to temporarily relocate from their home, and this is managed under our Relocation Policy.

We may consider a permanent relocation for existing customers called a management move, to address serious health, safety and risk concerns where no other solution can be found. These will be approved in exceptional circumstances only to allow us to ensure fair access for all applicants and customers to our available homes.

### 9.1 Transfer Requests

Existing Plus Dane customers may apply for a transfer once they have lived in their home for 12 months. Requests for a transfer should be made directly to the relevant Choice Based Lettings scheme.

To manage turnover and demand for our homes, we reserve the right to not approve non-essential “like for like” transfers where there is no demonstrable housing need where customers are living in a home that meets their needs, however customers will remain able to apply for homes openly advertised via CBL. This includes transfer requests from customers who apply through alternative marketing routes. In these instances, we will encourage the customers looking for a like for like transfer to pursue a mutual exchange.

Transfers will not be approved if:

- There are rent arrears of more than 4 weeks rent.
- There are outstanding / unpaid rechargeable repairs
- There is an Anti-Social Behaviour and or Tenancy Breach Injunction in place.

- Notice to Seek Possession is in place for Anti-Social Behaviour or a tenancy breach.
- A possession order has been granted.

All transfers will be subject to an inspection before any offer is approved. The inspection will inform the customer of any repairs they need to complete in line with our repair's roles and responsibilities guidance, and any action required, such as full clearance of the home, before a transfer will be approved. We will consider individual circumstances and may apply discretion where appropriate. If customers are permitted to transfer with an outstanding debt, payment of the debt shall form a condition of the new tenancy agreement.

## 9.2 Management Moves

Management moves are entirely at our discretion and will meet housing needs rather than customer preferences. We will move customers to 'like for like' homes unless the customer is under-occupying, when a smaller home will be offered.

In instances where a management move is required, this will generally be where the customer or a member of their household's health and safety would face a serious and imminent risk if they were to remain in their own home. Requests by the police to rehouse witnesses of organised crime who have agreed to give evidence in court or where the customer is part of a witness protection programme. Examples of management moves may include:

- Where a child protection plan is in place.
- A major event such as a fire or flood or other major disaster has occurred, and the current home is not habitable and is unlikely to become so in a reasonable timeframe.
- Domestic abuse.
- Where other exceptional circumstances need to be addressed such as the home no longer being suitable due to changes in a customer's health meaning adaptations are now required which are not possible in their current home.

The Housing Manager will review management move requests in line with the Relocation Policy.

As management moves are intended to address an imminent and immediate need to move, any offer made will be suitable for the family's needs in relation to size of home and location but may not necessarily be the same type of home, or with all features the customer may want, such as a garden. It is anticipated that the first offer made will be accepted by the customer, and a maximum of three offers will be made in line with the Relocation Policy.

Where there is an immediate danger to safety and there is no suitable alternative home available, we will work with the Local Authority Housing Solutions teams and other Registered Providers to seek alternative accommodation outside of our own homes.

## 10 Urgent and challenging needs

It would be impossible to reflect the circumstances of every customer or applicant's need for a home. This Lettings Policy, therefore, includes a provision to approve offers to applicants and customers facing an urgent and challenging need for housing.

When considering requests of this nature, we will consider the impact any such offer will have on other customers and applicants within the existing shortlists for the home in question. All decisions and considerations will be documented within the lettings record.

The following are not 'allocations' under this Policy:

- Succession of a tenancy after a tenant's death.
- Assignment by way of mutual exchange.
- Assignment of a tenancy by a court under family law provisions.
- Assignment of a tenancy under the terms of the tenancy agreement.
- The conversion of a starter tenancy into an assured tenancy.

### 10.1 Mutual Exchange

We will encourage and support our existing customers requesting a move to consider a mutual exchange as a way of moving to more appropriate home.

Customers will be encouraged to register with the national Homeswapper scheme which facilitates countrywide matching. Our Mutual Exchange Policy sets this out in more detail.

### 10.2 Relocation

We will assist other registered providers and the Local Authority with relocations, but priority will always be given to our customers. A relocation may not always be on a like for like basis but will meet essential needs and be in line with our bedroom criteria. Our Relocation Policy sets this out in more detail.

## 11 Appeals and Review

As detailed in the Regulator of Social Housing's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, applicants and customers are invited to hold us to account for the decisions we make that impact upon them under this Policy. We recognise the impact of decisions made under this policy and seek to provide a review process for applicants and existing customers that allows for any concerns or issues to be identified and addressed in a timely way.

Applications made via Choice Based Lettings should refer to the appeals procedure of the relevant Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

Applications made directly to Plus Dane for a home, or made via CBL and under a local lettings plan can be made verbally or in writing. Requests must be made within 5 working days of the decision being shared. A manager not involved in the original decision and will review the request, and the outcome of the review will be shared within 5 working days of the request being received.

If an applicant or existing customer is dissatisfied with the service they have received under this Policy, a complaint can be raised through our customer complaint and feedback policy. A complaint can be raised at the same time as a review request, or within 12 months of the outcome being shared.

If a customer believes that they have not been offered or granted the correct type of tenancy as outlined in this policy, they can make an appeal to review the type of tenancy awarded which should be made within 3 months of the tenancy starting. The appeal should be submitted in writing, via email to [customer@plusdane.co.uk](mailto:customer@plusdane.co.uk) or by letter to our registered office and addressed to the Director of Customer Experience who will consider the appeal and respond with a decision within 21 calendar days.

## 12 Assurance

A series of data quality measures are in place to provide assurance of the quality and accuracy of data. These are managed by the Lettings Manager in line with the data governance framework.

The Lettings Team Leader will audit at least 10% of lettings to provide assurance that this policy is being followed.

The Empty Homes Group will have oversight of the performance of this policy, assessing the effective use of our homes.

Assurance will be provided to our Purpose Committee through a series of operational and strategic measures, such as our relet times, tenancy turnover and number of families experiencing homelessness who have been issued a tenancy.

## 13 Equality Impact Assessment

Eligibility to access social housing is determined by legislation. This policy sets out the steps we will take to let our homes in line with that legislation, and in accordance with any additional discretionary criteria set by the relevant CBL scheme of the local authorities we serve. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed to identify barriers or inequalities that may arise from the application of this policy and to consider ways to mitigate any potential negative impact.

The assessment concludes that to meet our regulatory and legislative requirements it is not possible to fully mitigate all potential barriers that people may face when applying for one of our homes. However, where barriers or inequalities remain after the application of this policy, we aim to have a neutral impact on potential applicants and to not contribute to worse outcome for individuals or groups. Where Plus Dane has applied discretion to meet a specific need, such as the prioritisation of house for families with children under the age of 18, the policy sets out the reason why. Where there is provision for discretion in applying the policy, there is a requirement for the rationale to be recorded and evidenced.

We will liaise with local government and statutory agencies to influence at a local and national level by sharing the insight we gather under this policy, and to share our assessment of housing needs within the communities we serve. Where

appropriate, we will signpost applicants to support agencies and advocate for groups facing barriers or inequality when looking to meet their individual housing needs.

### **14 Modern slavery & human trafficking**

We acknowledge some of the most vulnerable groups at risk of Modern Slavery include homeless people and people with learning disabilities.

As outlined in Plus Dane's Modern Slavery Statement, we are committed to preventing modern slavery and human trafficking in our corporate activities.

Under this Policy we will undertake status checks to confirm that a person is eligible to rent a home from us and will require that all potential tenants provide us with proof of identity, National Insurance number, address, and income prior to signing up for a home.

Where we have concerns, we will raise these concerns through our wider safeguarding approach.

### **15 Data Protection Impact Assessment**

Plus Dane collates data in relation to applicants in accordance relevant legislation and follows GDPR regulations. Personal data and sensitive information are processed to determine an applicant's eligibility to rent a home and to be issued with a tenancy. Information is stored and accessed on our own internal systems as well as via the local authority CBL systems and appropriate arrangements are in place in accordance with our privacy statement and obligations.

### **16 Legislative and regulatory considerations**

- Regulator for Social Housing Tenancy Standard
- The Housing Acts 1985, 1996 and 2004
- Immigration Act 2014 - Right to rent check
- Equality Act 2010
- Submission of social housing lettings and sales data (CORE)

### **17 Links to other Plus Dane policies**

- Homeshub lettings policy
- Income collection policy
- Relocation policy
- Tenancy Management policy and procedures
- Anti-social behaviour policy
- Complaints and Customer Feedback Policy
- Rent Policy
- Adaptations Policy
- Rechargeable Repairs Policy
- Empty Homes Policy

## 18 Appendix 1– Tenancy Types

| Type of Tenancy                   | Applicable policy             | Description   |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Starter tenancy                   | Lettings Policy               | These tenancies (sometimes referred to as starter or probationary tenancies) are granted to customers who are new to Plus Dane. Most new customers will be granted a Starter Tenancy, which will run for 12 months (or 18 months if extended). After which, subject to satisfactory tenancy conduct, the tenancy will automatically become an Assured (non-shorthold) Tenancy, provided the tenant has maintained the terms and conditions of their tenancy agreement.                            |
| Assured (non-shorthold) tenancies | Lettings Policy               | We will grant assured (non-shorthold) tenancies to existing Plus Dane customers who are transferring and already have an Assured (non-shorthold) Tenancy with us. New customers moving into our supported housing shall be granted Assured Non-Shorthold Tenancies. Often described as ‘lifetime tenancies’ as, providing there is no contractual breach, the tenancy will continue until either the customer ends the tenancy, or Plus Dane applies to court to end the tenancy due to a breach. |
| Secure Tenancies                  | Not offered to new applicants | Some long-standing Plus Dane tenants whose tenancies commenced prior to 15 January 1989 have a secure tenancy agreement. Whilst we no longer offer this type of tenancy, the right to remain a secure tenant remains as long as the tenant remains a Plus Dane tenant and does not move into an affordable rent home. If an existing secure tenant chooses to transfer to an affordable rent home, they will move on to an Assured non-shorthold tenancy. Also referred to as a lifetime tenancy. |
| Licence agreement                 | Lettings Policy               | <p>A small number of residents in our temporary supported accommodation shall be granted Licence Agreements. Licences grant permission for an individual to live in a home for a set period and do not include the same rights and responsibilities set out within a tenancy.</p> <p>We may also consider licences where appropriate when entering any lettings project to support specific strategic initiatives.</p>  |

| Type of Tenancy           | Applicable policy                               | Description  |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| Assured Shorthold tenancy | Lettings policy<br><br>Homeshub Lettings policy | <p>In certain circumstances, we may grant an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. This type of tenancy will be used in the specific instances such as:</p> <p>Rent to Homebuy and Rent to Buy homes<br/>For new applicants offered a Rent to Buy product as listed in the Homeshub Lettings policy we will grant an assured shorthold tenancy on a minimum 6 months' basis which will then continue on a rolling month by month basis. This will be for an initial period of five years. Tenants can buy the home through shared ownership at any time during the tenancy term. After the initial 5 years the tenant can buy the home outright or the tenancy can be terminated and the home sold or re let on a market rent.</p> <p>Intermediate &amp; Market rent homes<br/>For new applicants offered a Market Rent product we will grant an assured shorthold tenancy on a minimum 6 months' basis. At the end of the fixed term, unless terminated either party the tenancy will remain an assured shorthold tenancy on a rolling month-by-month basis until terminated by either party.</p> <p>Supported Housing, where the type of accommodation or client group makes this a necessity.<br/>For designated supported housing schemes, where the intended use is for a limited period while the customer has support needs, we will use a periodic assured short hold tenancy. For specialist supported accommodation such as homeless hostels, where it is intended for short term stays, we will use a licence agreement.</p> |
| Temporary tenancy/licence | Relocation policy                               | <p>If we are required to relocate a Plus Dane customer on a temporary basis to fulfil our landlord obligations, we will use a Temporary Tenancy or licence that does not provide any security of tenure. The customer will retain their main tenancy, and rent will be charged at their principal address. Any Plus Dane customer who moves during redevelopment work and their home is to be demolished and a new scheme built will be offered a new home on the same security of tenure as their previous tenancy.</p>   |