

WESLO HOUSING MANAGEMENT Allocation Policy

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Weslo Housing Management

Allocation Policy



Information is available in Braille, on tape, in large print and community languages.

Please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service on 0131 242 8181.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The aim of our Allocation policy is:

- To provide a fair and accessible system of allocating our properties to those in housing need.
- To contribute to providing balanced and sustainable communities and make the best use of our housing stock.

1.2. Common Housing Register

In partnership with Almond Housing Association and West Lothian Council we operate a Common Housing Register (CHR) of applicants, known as the West Lothian Housing Register (WLHR). This simplifies the application process for those wishing to access social rental housing in West Lothian with the three partner landlords.

2. PROMOTING EQUALITY

- 2.1. We will accept applications from anyone age 16 years or over regardless of gender, marital status, age, ethnic origin, nationality, colour, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability or health problem, financial circumstances or any local connections.
- 2.2. At all stages of the application and allocation process we will ensure that we comply with our Equal Opportunities Policy, which meets all current statutory requirements.
- 2.3. We will provide this policy in other languages, large print, Braille or in audio format, and will also arrange for interpretation services when necessary.

3. INFORMATION AND ADVICE

- 3.1. We will ensure that all information and advice about our letting arrangements, whether given verbally or in writing, is in a plain, and easily understood language.
- 3.2. When requested we will provide information on the number, type and general location of vacancies during the previous year to give applicants the opportunity of assessing the likelihood of being allocated the type of property they are looking for.
- 3.3. We will provide information on alternative sources of housing or advice through West Lothian Council, Housing Associations and Citizens Advice Bureau.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 4.1. We will ensure that all information provided by an applicant is treated confidentially and in accordance with our current procedures relating to the processing of personal and sensitive data under the Data Protection Act.
- 4.2. We will obtain the applicant's permission in writing (normally as part of their signing the application form) to us obtaining any information about them from third parties, e.g. references from current or former landlords.

5. ADMISSION TO THE WEST LOTHIAN HOUSING REGISTER

- 5.1. The WLHR is an open housing list where applicants can apply at any time.
- 5.2. Requests for an application form will be accepted by telephone, e-mail, letter or personal visit to our office.
- 5.3. Current or former members of Weslo's Board and current or former members of staff, or their close relatives, may apply to the WLHR for housing. Apart from the requirement to include information on their link to Weslo, the application will be assessed in exactly the same way as all other applications. We will comply with the requirements to record any resulting allocation of housing to someone in these categories according to Schedule 7 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and current guidance from the Scottish Housing Regulator.

6. EFFECTIVE DATE OF APPLICATION

- 6.1. The effective date of the application is the date and time it is received, by any of the partner landlords.

Where an applicant's circumstances change and their points have increased as a result, their effective date of application will be amended to reflect the date of change. This will ensure that priority is given to those who have had the greatest housing need for the longest period of time.

7. APPLICATION FORM

- 7.1. The application form is clear, 'jargon free' and straightforward to complete and we aim to only ask for information in order to assess housing need.
- 7.2. We will provide advice on:
 - How to complete the application form.
 - Any additional information applicants are expected to provide.
 - What will happen following receipt of the application?
 - How and when the WLHR will respond to an application.

8. ASSESSING THE APPLICATION

- 8.1. The WLHR will aim to assess every application within the current 5 working day timescale.
- 8.2. The WLHR will assess every application from the information provided using a group and points system. Details of the group and points available can be found on page 15.
- 8.3. The group and points system will be reviewed annually.
- 8.4. Each application will be allocated to the group that represents their greatest housing need, according to the information that they have supplied.
- 8.5. The application will be categorised as one of:
 - homeless
 - transfer
 - applicant.

The applicant's housing need will be assessed and points awarded. Homeless points are fixed, general needs are a total of all points awarded.

These categories take into account the reasonable preference criteria set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (as amended by the 2001 Act).

- 8.6. In accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 the group and points system has been introduced to give reasonable preference to applicants who:
 - are homeless, or are threatened with homelessness, or
 - are living in overcrowded conditions (including large families), or
 - are occupying a property that does not meet the tolerable standard, or
 - are living in unsatisfactory housing conditions (including suffering from serious harassment or abuse), or
 - have a medical condition that would benefit from re-housing.
- 8.7. Where required references or verification of the applicant's circumstances will be sought.
- 8.8. Following the initial assessment of an application the WLHR will write to the applicant to confirm that their application has been added to the housing register. The letter will include a summary of their details and the group they have been placed in and points awarded.
- 8.9. While every application will be assessed and added to the housing register, the WLHR recognise that where there is a high demand for a type of property or a particular area, the WLHR will seek to give such applicants appropriate information from time to time to enable them to consider their situation and other housing options.

9. HOMELESS

- 9.1. Homeless points may be awarded if applicants are statutorily homeless and/or threatened with homelessness. Points awarded within the homeless category are non-cumulative.

Homeless applicants will be allowed two (2) offers of housing of any type with any type of heating and in any community.

The two (2) offers will be per application: When the applicant is accepted as homeless, this will be the application that will be considered through the homeless process. This means that where an applicant already has an active application at the time of their homeless presentation and they have already had one offer of accommodation, they will have one offer remaining. Where the applicant is applying for the first time their application will have two (2) offers.

10. WESLO TENANT TRANSFERS

- 10.1. Weslo tenants who wish to transfer to another Weslo property will require to make an application to the WLHR.

11. NOMINATIONS

- 11.1. We accept nominations from West Lothian Council for 50% of our vacant properties, including referrals of homeless persons in accordance with Section 5 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

We will assist West Lothian Council and other appropriate organisations in achieving their community care objectives.

12. EX-SERVICE VETERANS

- 12.1. Ex-Service Veterans who have been seriously injured in action are given a high priority for adapted homes.

Employment/residence connected to service will be considered in the same way as civilian employment/residence. This ensures service leavers can choose to apply as homeless in the area in which they have been based, and where their families may have become settled.

Forces applicants may choose to advise when they are available to accept a housing officer. This will prevent offers of housing being made before they have received notice of their discharge date.

13. TENANT MOBILITY

13.1. We will assist tenants who wish to move home by:

- Accepting applications for a mutual exchange between our tenants and tenants of another registered social landlord or local authority.

14. SIZE OF HOUSE

14.1. Applicants may choose a maximum of two house sizes to suit their family circumstances. If more than one house size is chosen the applicant may be offered housing of either size, whichever becomes available first and meets their need.

15. ROOM ALLOCATION

15.1. A bedroom can be allocated to each person in the permanent household aged eight (8) years or over, with the exception of couples who are living together and who wish to share a bedroom.

Two children under eight (8) years of age will normally be expected to share a bedroom but can be listed for an additional bedroom if the applicant wishes. Two children under the age of eight (8) sharing a bedroom will not be considered overcrowded.

Where the applicant is the parent of a child and is separated/divorced, and has shared residency or parental responsibilities for the child the property allocated will meet the needs of the household.

Where the applicant is a parent and shares the care and upbringing of a child, has parental responsibilities and rights, the applicant will be entitled to be considered for a house with sufficient bedrooms to accommodate them and the child/children.

Note: Where the applicant is a parent who has obtained parental responsibilities and rights for a child by virtue of having:-

- been married to the mother of the child, provided the child is a child of the relationship
- obtained a court order for parental responsibilities and rights relating to the child
- acquired parental responsibilities and rights with the agreement of the child's mother under section 4 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- adopted the child.

The applicant retains full responsibilities and rights even if separated from the mother of that Child. (Only a court may remove such responsibilities and rights).

16. OVERCROWDING

16.1. Applicants will receive points if their present accommodation does not meet the living standard which is one bedroom for either:

- a couple/single person
- up to two children under eight (8) years
- anyone over eight (8) years of age and who does not choose to share a bedroom.

Overcrowding points in the low needs category will be awarded when an applicant demonstrates that one additional bedroom is required,

Overcrowding points in the medium needs category will be awarded when an applicant demonstrates that two additional bedrooms are required.

Overcrowding points in the high needs category will be awarded when an applicant demonstrates that three or more additional bedrooms are required.

Points will be awarded based on the actual number of additional bedrooms required.

17. SHARING

17.1. Sharing points will be awarded based on the applicant's household and the number of people who share facilities. Applicants will receive points where they share one or more of the following facilities with anyone other than those included in their application:

- living room
- kitchen
- toilet
- bathroom.

Sharing points in the low needs category will be awarded when an applicant demonstrates that one bedroom is required.

Sharing points in the medium needs category will be awarded when an applicant demonstrates that two bedrooms are required.

Sharing points in the high needs category will be awarded when the applicant demonstrates that three bedrooms are required.

18. FAMILY LIVING APART / NEW FORMING FAMILIES

18.1. Households with dependent children, who are forced to live apart, and want to live together, will be regarded as one household. In these cases the children must live with the parents on a permanent basis.

19. UNDER OCCUPATION

- 19.1. Applicants will be awarded points for accommodation that is under-occupied. The same bedroom requirement assumptions are made for under-occupation as over-crowding. This will ensure that best use of resources is made while still meeting housing need.

For example where an applicant lives in a three bedroom property and requests a two bedroom property they will be awarded points based on two bedrooms of under occupation.

A minimum living standard is one bedroom for either:

- a couple/single person
- up to two children under eight (8) years
- no person over eight (8) years of age should be expected to share a bedroom, unless they choose to.

These non-need points will be awarded based on the degree of under occupation i.e. the number of bedrooms not used.

20. UNSUITABLE ACCOMMODATION

- 20.1. Applicants who live in upper flats, maisonette-flats and 4-in-a-block type properties, with a common stairwell, are living in unsuitable accommodation if:

- The person or partner has reached pensionable age (60 years).
- Another member of the household has reached pensionable age (60 years).
- There is at least one child, under eight (8) years old, in the household.

Points will be awarded to applicants who are prepared to accept an offer of the same type of accommodation.

- 20.2. Families living in common access flats, first floor and above, who wish to move to different type of accommodation will be awarded points for every child aged eight (8) years or over.

21. COMMUNITY SELECTION

- 21.1. There is no limit on the number of communities that can be selected. However, estate level selection may be considered only where an applicant's particular circumstances justify. If there are no reasons to apply a restriction to a particular estate the applicant will be listed for the whole community.

22. SOCIAL SUPPORT

- 22.1. Applicants will be awarded points, in the high or medium needs category, if they claim that they are suffering from harassment. Investigations will be carried out and if these prove that the claim is unfounded the points will be removed.

Points in the medium needs category will be awarded if the harassment is on the grounds of extreme behaviour including drug-dealing, threatening and abusive behaviour, frequent serious disturbances and vandalism.

Points in the high needs category will be awarded if the harassment is on the grounds of race, gender, sexuality, age, disability or beliefs, violence and unprovoked assault.

- 22.2. An applicant will be awarded points, in the medium needs category, for domestic abuse.

A Definition of Domestic abuse (as gender-based abuse) can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will, including rape) and mental and emotional abuse (such as, threat, verbal abuse, racial abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family and friends). Domestic abuse is most commonly perpetrated by men against women.

Points in the medium needs category will be awarded where the applicant claims they have been forced to move because of violence and further claim that they continue to be pursued.

Points in the high needs category will be awarded where the applicant claims they are living with a violent partner.

- 22.3. Points in the low needs category will be awarded to applicants leaving care, joint applicants forced to live apart and applicants who require to give or receive support.

The WLHR will arrange for an assessment to establish the applicants' needs and support. The assistance will be tailored to the individual's needs to help sustainability.

- 22.4. Where the applicants existing tenure is insecure they will be awarded insecurity points.

The definition of insecurity of tenure is:

- Private let applicant been given notice to quit.
- Owner forced to sell property e.g. (property re-possessed/marital breakdown).
- Tied Tenant (forced to leave).
- Leaving HM Forces.

These points will only be awarded upon receipt of written evidence from employer, solicitor, landlord or mortgage lender.

23. EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- 23.1. We recognise that there will be cases that are of exceptional circumstances and fall out with the scope of this allocation policy.
- 23.2. The Housing Manager will consider such cases and discuss and agree on an appropriate course of action with the Operations Director.

24. CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES

- 24.1. Applicants must let the WLHR know of any change to their circumstances that may affect the assessment of their application and their priority. Failure to do so could affect their opportunity to be housed.
- 24.2. Where, as the result of notifying a change of circumstances an application is awarded additional points, the date that the points total is changed will become the new 'effective date' for that applicant, i.e. the date from which the assessment of their need was determined.

25. EXCLUSION FROM THE WEST LOTHIAN HOUSING REGISTER

- 25.1. In accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 the WLHR will only remove an applicant from the register in the following circumstances:
 - Where the applicant has requested in writing that they be removed.
 - Where the applicant fails to respond to a review of their application.
 - Following the death of the applicant.

26. SUSPENSION OF APPLICANTS

- 26.1. The WLHR may suspend applicants on the register for specified periods of time. Suspension will mean that they do not receive an offer of housing during that time. The main reasons for suspension will be:
 - Where the applicant has debts relating to a current or previous tenancy which are greater than one month's rent and/or service charge, and where any arrangement to clear the debt has not been kept to for at least 3 months.
 - Where false or misleading information has been provided in support of the application.
 - Where there is clear evidence of serious anti-social behaviour relating to a current or former tenancy which has taken place within two years prior to the date of application.

27. ALLOCATING HOUSING

- 27.1. When it is Weslo's turn to allocate under the 50/50 nomination arrangement with West Lothian Council we will determine which group the next allocation should be made to by referring to the quotas allocated to each of the groups.

The groups and quotas are as follows:

GROUP	QUOTA (% of annual lets)
Homeless or threatened with homelessness	15%
Medical (anyone with an urgent or high priority)	5%
Harassment	5%
General (including Overcrowding, Under Occupation, Sharing, Unsuitable Accommodation, Social Support, Living Apart, Families in Flats, Insecurity, Housing below Tolerable Standard)	15%
Existing Tenants	10%
West Lothian Council Nominations	50%

- 27.2. New build properties will initially be offered to existing Weslo tenants who are on the WLHR.
- 27.3. We will also take into account the need to maintain balanced and sustainable communities, which we have defined as:
- “A mix of individuals and family groups of all ages with a range of different life experiences including employment, unemployment, good health or disability, who will together form a wide and balance community living in properties of different types and tenure, and representative of society in general”.
- 27.4. We will consider special letting initiatives, or local letting plans, where we consider this will help to:
- achieve a balanced and sustainable community
 - relet properties that have become difficult to let.
- 27.5. A lettings initiative or lettings plan:
- will normally be for a specified period, or
 - will be used in cases of difficult to let properties.
- 27.6. Where a property has been refused on several occasions, the Housing Manager will consider alternative letting arrangements.
- 27.7. We will not restrict the number of offers made to an applicant. Should an applicant refuse an offer, we will discuss and where necessary clarify the applicant's housing requirements with them.

27.8. The type and size of property that will be offered, subject to availability, are as follows:

Households	No of Bedrooms
1 and persons	1 & 2 bedroom
With 1 child	2 bedroom
With 2 children	3 bedroom
With more than 3 children	3 & 4 bedroom (subject to availability)

The points framework

The table below shows the points awarded in each category.

Category	Description	Group	Points
Homeless	Homeless	Homeless	400
Transitional	Previously looked after by a Local Authority and as part of planned transition into own tenancy	Homeless	400
HOUSING NEEDS			
HIGH	Medical grade A	Medical	200
	Overcrowding 3+	General	
	Sharing 3+	General	
	Housing below tolerable standard	General	
	Social Support (Harassment and Victims of domestic abuse) 1	Harassment	
MEDIUM	Medical grade B	Medical	150
	Overcrowding 2	General	
	Sharing 2	General	
	Social Support (Harassment and Victims of domestic abuse) 2	Harassment	
LOW	Overcrowding 1	General	100
	Unsuitable accommodation	General	
	Sharing 1	General	
	Insecurity	General	
	Social Support (applicants leaving care and to give or receive support)	General	
	Family living apart	General	
	Families in flats (per child under 8 years)	General	
Non-Needs			
Attained points	The use of waiting time points has been removed In line with legislative requirements. These points have been re-defined for existing applicants and will be treated as a protected points award effective from the introduction of the Allocation Policy	General	Varied
Under-occupation	Points awarded per room under-occupied i.e. If under-occupied by * 1 room	General	100

		ADDIBROMHILL	ADDIEWELL	ARMADALE	BATHGATE	BLACKBURN	BLACKRIDGE	BROOKBURN	EAST CALDER	FALDHOUSE	KIRKENTON	LINTHICOW	LIVINGSTON	LONGRIDGE	MD CALDER	POLBETH	PUMPHERSTON	STONEBURN	UPHALL	WEST CALDER	WHTBURN	WINCHBURGH	TOTAL	
2 Apt	1st Floor Flat				1	1				1							1		1		1		6	
3 Apt	1st Floor Flat				1						1								1	2		5	10	
4 Apt	1st Floor Flat								1													1	2	
2 Apt	2nd Floor Flat																						0	
3 Apt	2nd Floor Flat																						0	
3 Apt	1st Floor Maisonette				1		2																3	
4 Apt	2nd Floor Flat																						0	
2 Apt	End Terrace Bungalow													1	1								2	
2 Apt	End Terrace Cottage																						0	
3 Apt	End Terrace Cottage															1				1			2	
4 Apt	End Terrace Cottage					2	1													2			5	
5 Apt	End Terrace Cottage																						0	
2 Apt	Ground Floor Flat				1				1													3	5	
3 Apt	Ground Floor Flat																			4		5	1	10
4 Apt	Ground Floor Flat																					1	1	
1 Apt	Ground Floor Studio Flat																						0	
2 Apt	Mid Terrace Cottage								2					2			1						5	
3 Apt	Mid Terrace Cottage				1	10			5		1		1	2								1	21	
4 Apt	Mid Terrace Cottage				1	3	2										1		1	1		3	12	
5 Apt	Mid Terrace Cottage																				1		1	
2 Apt	Semi Detached Bungalow										1			1	1		1						4	
2 Apt	Semi Detached Cottage																1						1	
3 Apt	Semi Detached Bungalow																						0	
3 Apt	Semi Detached Cottage																2						2	
4 Apt	Semi Detached Cottage			1		1											1						3	
5 Apt	Semi Detached Cottage										1								1				2	
			0	1	5	18	5	0	9	1	4	0	1	6	2	1	8	0	3	11	1	20	1	97

28. STOCK AVAILABILITY

Armadale Area Armadale Blackridge Westfield	Bathgate Area Belvedere Boghall/Kirkton Falside Race Road Whiteside/Birniehill	Livingston North Area Livingston Station
Broxburn Area Careldubs Crossgreen Fivestanks Loaninghill Kirkhill Uphall Wyndford	Linlithgow Area East Calder Linlithgow	Livingston East Area Kirknewton Winchburgh Mid Calder Pumpherston
Breich Valley Addiewell Abbiebrownhill Fauldhouse Longridge Polbeth Stoneyburn West Calder	Whitburn Area Blackburn Blaeberryhill Manse Avenue Murraysgate Whitedalehead	Livingston South Area Dedridge Ladywell

29. REVIEW OF THE WEST LOTHIAN HOUSING REGISTER

- 29.1. Each year, around the date of application, the WLHR will send each applicant a questionnaire asking if their circumstances are the same as stated on their application, and if they wish to remain on the register.
- 29.2. If an applicant who has been excluded applies for re-instatement within 3 months of the notification, they will normally be added back onto the list without any further action being taken. If an applicant applies for re-instatement after 3 months the WLHR will re-assess their housing need and only re-instate the applicant if the reason for non-response was clearly out of their control.
- 29.3. The WLHR will carry out other reviews from time to time, for example when an applicant does not respond to a letter regarding a pre-arranged visit or interview.

30. APPEALS

- 30.1. The nature of any appeal will determine who it should be addressed to; General complaints about the way in which the application has been assessed should be directed to the Manager of the WLHR. If the applicant is dissatisfied with their application as it relates to Weslo the appeal should be addressed to the Housing Manager.
- 30.2. An applicant who is dissatisfied with the way their application has been, reviewed or suspended, or with any other decision taken in relation to their application as it relates to Weslo should appeal in writing to the Housing Manager.