



Accommodation & Allocation Policy

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Table of Contents

[1. Introduction](#).....3

[2. Policy Summary / Objectives](#).....3

[3. Procedure](#).....3

[3.1. The people we house](#).....3

[3.2. High Risk Applicants](#)

[3.3 Relationships with external agencies](#).....4

[3.4. People who have been evicted or banned](#).....4

[3.5. People who have arrears with us](#).....4

[3.6. Selection Procedure](#).....5

[a. The application form](#).....5

[b. Interview](#).....5

[c. References](#).....5

[d. Communication of the decision](#).....5

[3.6. Waiting Lists](#).....6

[3.7. Appeals and Complaints](#).....6

[4. Appendix](#).....6

[4.1. Background](#).....6

[a. Organisational Objectives](#).....6

[b. General conditions upon which the tenancy / licence is granted](#).....7

1. Introduction

Hope into Action receives referrals for accommodation from a range of sources. This policy helps HiA staff to decide which referrals are most appropriate for HiA houses. It also describes the appeals process and waiting list system.

HiA will always try and provide suitable accommodation to those in need who fit with our criteria (see below).

2. Policy Summary / Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework for allocation decisions, helping HiA to be fair and effective. It also helps HiA to communicate clearly to prospective licensees, and partners such as referring agencies and supporting churches.

3. Procedure

3.1. The people we house

A person referred to the project is likely to be:

- Aged 18 – 65
- Require some support or training to live independently
- Be inappropriately housed, homeless, or in housing need
- Need assistance seeking work or training
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HiA aims to create a balanced community and applicants will be considered with this in mind. Within this community there *may be* people who are in need of a degree of support, help or supervision:

- Those with a mild learning difficulty
- Those with a history of non-violent mental ill-health
- Those who *have or had* drug or alcohol-related problems
- Ex-offenders including those on probation
- Those leaving local authority care
- Those with physical disabilities which do not preclude access to the facilities offered to them
- Debts and arrears

A person referred to the project might:

- Have limited qualifications
- Have difficulties making the transition from school to work
- Be lacking family support or unable to stay in an overcrowded home
- Have been, or are being, supported by the local authority

Priority is given to those in most housing need, however to ensure the success of a tenants stay with us HiA do have the power to house by suitability rather than need. Where ever possible HiA will endeavour to house by priority.

Priority, considering the balance in the house, will be given to those in most housing need based on an assessment of:

- The applicant's existing and prospective housing conditions;
- The applicant's ability to cope with those conditions;.
- the length of time the applicant has had to put up with those conditions (this is not the same as the length of time the applicant has been on the waiting list)
- other options which are realistically available to the applicant, considering

3.2. Financial circumstances. When we do not offer accommodation

HIA has only limited staff resources to support and assist tenants and this limits the range of people to whom we offer accommodation. Therefore applicants will not be offered accommodation if:

- Support needs are beyond the resources of the project (e.g. require 24 hour support, or need support for drug misuse or rehabilitation)
- Do not require the support provided by the project, because they are capable of living independently.
- are currently regularly using hard drugs
- Have challenging or anti-social behaviour, which the project is not equipped to deal with.
- Have a conviction of sexual offence
- Have a conviction of arson

please note when an individual has arrears we will consider their application, however, if they are successful we will assist them with making a repayment plan

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3.3. Higher Risk Applicants

Due to the nature of people that HiA are working with, HiA may receive referrals that are deemed to be higher risk. Whilst HiA aims to provide housing for low to medium need tenants, we understand that some higher risk tenants may work well in our properties. For this reason it is down to the City Coordinator and their team to make an informed decision as to whether they will house an individual that is deemed to be high risk. This must be done in discussion with the

supporting Church. If HiA is considering housing individuals that are high risk, it is crucial that we get the following information on them if they are on a MAPPA or a MARRAC:

- **MAPPA** (Multi Agency Protection Arrangement)

This is for individuals that are considered to be violent offenders or Sexual offenders (Please refer to section 3.2)

If HiA receive a referral for the first HiA will need to know what MAPPA level they are. Level 1 (Low/medium risk) Level 2 (High/Very high risk) Level 3 (highest risk of causing serious harm to others). HiA will also need to know what category they are. Cat 1 (all registered sex offenders) Cat 2 (Violent offender, sexual offender, not suitable notification requirements) And Cat 3 (Other dangerous offenders)

Empowerment Workers must get a copy of their OASYS report from probation prior to interviewing the applicant.

- **MARAC** (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Centre)

If HiA are considering housing an applicant who is on a MARAC, HiA must make contact with their IDVA (independent Domestic Violence Advisor) prior to their interview. The assigned IDVA will be able to help the Empowerment Worker assess any risks posing the applicant, our properties and our existing tenants.

By completing these check prior to assessing an applicant it will enable HiA staff to have a stronger guideline of the risks involved in supporting higher risk individuals.

3.4. Relationships with external agencies

Good relationships with external agencies is the key to good referrals. Examples of agencies that HiA can receive referrals include; Prisons, Probation, Churches, Local Councils, Night shelters, hostels, supporting agencies.

Building relationships with external agencies is key to getting the rest of the assessment process right, it will ensure that the process flows well and it will make things more efficient further down the line. Networking with other agencies will not only create an element of mutual respect it will also give them the opportunity to understand how HiA works and how our referral process works. HiA are to take the lead and be confident with the referral process, this will give HiA the flexibility to decline or send back incomplete/poor referrals. HiA are able to do this in relationship with the referring agency. It is also important to consider what the history is with the referring agency, if they are consistent in

sending poor referrals then this may highlight a relationship/training issue. At this stage HiA can offer to train the referring agency on what HiA referral requirements are.

3.5. People who have been evicted or banned

As a rule, we require a minimum of a 3 month period before rehousing someone who has been evicted or is banned from our properties, though in exceptional circumstances this maybe shorter or longer. For us to rehouse someone who has previously been evicted we will need to see evidence of willingness to engage with the support we offer and also a willingness to change. Some key indicators would be an understanding of what went wrong previously and their role in that; a plan to do something different; a willingness to engage with the 'friendship and support group' before entering the accommodation.

3.6. People who have arrears with us

Before we can accept tenants with previous arrears with us they will need to start a repayment plan with us. This will need to be negotiated through the agency supporting them. In line with our rent policy HiA will need to see payments being made for a minimum of 4-13 weeks before being reentering one of our properties.

a. The application form

An application for accommodation must be submitted on the referral form provided for the purpose. Copies of which are available from HiA Members of staff will assist with the completion of the form if necessary. The applicant and, if applicable, the agency making the referral, will strive to provide a response within 5 working days.

b. Interview

Prior to interviewing an applicant ensure that the permission to exchange information form has been signed and returned to us. This will enable HiAa staff to do the necessary background checks on the applicant. This will assist the Empowerment Worker in their decision making process. It will also give the Empowerment Worker the opportunity to discuss any areas of concern in the interview.

Applicants will be interviewed by HiA Staff and a member from the local church in the first instance. The purpose of this interview is to:

- a) determine the applicant meets the selection criteria;
- b) assess the extent of housing need and the likely degree of support required;

- c) Introduce the applicant to Hope into Action and allow them to find out about the accommodation, facilities and support offered.

c. References

HiA must obtain character references before offering a space in one of our houses to an applicant. If you are working with a referring agency getting a referral by phone is acceptable however where ever possible we must ensure that we have a reference in writing confirming the phone conversation. This will help us to keep other agencies accountable of being part of the process. This could be useful further down the line should there be any difficulties with the tenant.

If it is a self-referral/walk in a referral agency may not be involved, in this circumstance it would be acceptable to get a character reference from friend or family member; where possible always try to find an agency that may have come into contact with the applicant.

d. Communication of the decision

If the applicant does not meet the selection criteria, HiA staff will inform the unsuccessful applicant, clearly specifying reasons for rejection. Any referring agency will be informed as well.

Any applicant who meets the selection criteria will:

- a) Be made an offer of accommodation; or
- b) Be offered a place on the waiting list and informed of how long it is likely to be before accommodation is available.

Where an offer of accommodation (or waiting list place) is made but refused by the applicant, the HiA staff member will ask the applicant to give his/her reasons for refusal and these will be noted on the application form.

An applicant who refuses the offer of accommodation may re-apply for consideration again at any time.

i) Disability Issues

Wheelchair access will be provided where possible.

Every attempt will be made to make project literature in alternative formats if required (i.e. audio tape, Braille, large print, etc.)

3.7. Waiting Lists

The waiting list will be reviewed regularly. As part of the waiting list review HIA will contact applicants to confirm they still wish to remain on the list. Should HIA repeatedly fail to contact the applicant or referring agent then their application may be withdrawn with a letter explaining this.

It is the responsibility of each city to ensure that their electronic referral logs are up to date, this will in turn ensure that the waiting list is constantly being reviewed.

3.8. Appeals and Complaints

If an individual has applied for housing and has been refused, accommodation with HiA, the individual has the right to appeal if they disagree with HiA decision.

They may:

- Think that HiA have wrongly assessed their application
- Disagree with the reasons HiA has given.

If an individual wishes to make an appeal about their housing decision, HiA staff will need to make them aware of our complaints policy.

4. Appendix

4.1. Background

a. Organisational Objectives

The Hope into Action (HIA) Housing Project for adults with housing needs, aims to provide accommodation and support for clients (aged 18-65) who are least able to obtain suitable housing or support by other means.

We operate an equal opportunities policy in resident selection, providing for equal consideration regardless of faith, sex, race, ethnic origin, sexuality, disability or appearance.

HiA will develop close, co-operative working relationships with representatives of local statutory and voluntary agencies. In this way such agencies will understand the aims and philosophy of HIA Supported Housing Project for clients, and also the realistic constraints within which we operate. This should also ensure multi-agency support is well co-ordinated.

b. General conditions upon which the tenancy / licence is granted

This policy will apply to applications for, and the letting of, rooms owned by or managed by the organisation.

Any false statement will normally disqualify an applicant. If a licence is granted and it is subsequently proved that a false statement was made to obtain the licence, steps may be taken to obtain possession of the room.

Applications will not be accepted from members of our Board, our staff (unless accommodation is provided within the terms of employment) or their close relatives.

HIA considers that the accommodation it offers is unsuitable as a permanent home. It is expected that residents will generally move on from the accommodation. Assistance will be offered to residents wishing to move on to more permanent accommodation.

Staff support will be focused on clients gaining independent living skills and appropriate training or employment. The residents will be expected to participate in a personal development plan towards this end.

HIA will accept self-referrals and referrals from relevant Local Authority, other statutory and voluntary agencies.