

## Allocations and Lettings

### 1. Statement

- 1.1. Hilddale provides high quality housing for people with complex needs, including learning disabilities and mental health. We only provide homes for people who need help to live more independently in their own home, within their own community and who would otherwise have difficulty finding a home elsewhere.
- 1.2. This policy sets out Hilddale's approach to the allocation and letting of specialised supported housing solutions.
- 1.3. Hilddale is committed to letting homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way, considering the specific needs of tenants and we are committed to working with all local and health authority partners to help them meet their strategic needs to assist those with complex needs.
- 1.4. Hilddale will:
  - Make the best use of its available housing to meet the needs of those that need it.
  - Ensure allocations are compatible with the purpose of housing provision and company objectives.
  - Contribute to local and health authority partners, strategic social and housing functions and ensure sustainable communities.
- 1.5. Applicants for our homes will be referred to us by a Local Authority or Health Authority in accordance with any local nomination agreements in place. Applications may also come as a general referral from statutory agencies or a support provider where the local or health authority has agreed a funded package of support.
- 1.6. When a referral for housing is received, Hilddale will check that the individual is eligible to hold a tenancy as per the requirements detailed in Hilddale's Allocation Procedure.
- 1.7. In instances where we are unable to offer a tenancy and we are required to reject an application, the final decision on refusing the offer of a tenancy will be taken by the Head of Housing. Hilddale will explain the reasons for rejecting the application in writing and provide details of Hilddale's allocation appeals process.
- 1.8. This policy complies with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) consumer standards: the Safety and Quality Standard, Neighbourhood and Community Standard, Tenancy Standard, and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standards.

### 2. Purpose

- 2.1. Key objectives:
  - Ensure compliance with Hilddale's statutory and regulatory obligations.
  - Ensure we work with local and health authority partners to enable them to meet their duty to assist people with complex needs.
  - Ensure our homes are let in a fair and transparent way, which is not discriminatory to any person or group.
  - Ensure our homes are let in an efficient and timely manner and to the required lettable standard in line with existing internal policies and procedures.

- Ensure we make the best use of our housing stock to build strong, sustainable communities.
- Ensure we work with applicants and local and health authority partners to minimise potential financial hardship from under-occupation.

### **3. Scope**

- 3.1. This policy applies to Hilldale Housing Association.

### **4. Policy Details**

#### **4.1. Eligibility Criteria and Risk Assessing**

- 4.1.1. To access accommodation with Hilldale, applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- The applicant needs support to help them maintain a tenancy.
- The applicant has appropriate funding and personal support provision for a set number of hours per week and can provide the relevant Right to Rent information.
- The applicant is not suitable for alternative housing i.e. general needs or temporary housing.
- The applicant is over 18 years of age.

- 4.1.2. We will request relevant information for all applicants to enable a risk assessment to be undertaken as part of an application assessment and prior to offering any tenancy. The information requested will include personal information such as name, age and nationality, through to care and support needs and capacity to sign a tenancy.

- 4.1.3. Applications may be rejected by Hilldale should the required information not be received that allows us to fully risk assess an applicant. However, a refusal based on lack of information or non-disclosure does not discount the applicant from applying again in the future.

- 4.1.4. In exceptional circumstances we may reject an application for housing. In doing so, we will be fair and transparent, and we will undertake a risk assessment as part of our decision-making process. We will clearly demonstrate our reasons for rejecting an applicant. Grounds for rejection include (but are not limited to):

- Convicted Arsonist
- Sectioned under the mental capacity act (at the time of application submitted)
- Significant high risk to self or others (not manageable under Hilldale's support provision)
- Registered Sex Offenders (Risk not manageable or not part of MAPPA)
- Is not eligible to claim Housing Benefit and has no other means to pay rent
- Does not have a legal right to reside in the UK
- If the applicant or a member of their household poses a threat to the property or community (Hilldale may take advice from other agencies, such as the Police, probation or social services).

#### **4.2. Hard to Let Properties**

- 4.2.1. Hilldale will consider properties as hard to let in the following circumstances:

- The care provider has confirmed that they have not been able to let the room/property for a specific reason i.e. accessibility or room size.

- A void has been offered to the commissioning team, and they confirm in written form they have no identified need for such property or tenancy now or in the future.
  - A whole empty property has been empty and available for 12 weeks and there have been no referrals or expressions of interest.
  - An empty bed space that has been available, and referrals have been sought for 26 weeks and there have been no referrals or expressions of interest.
- 4.2.2. Where the layout or location of a property makes it hard to let, we will consider options such as:
- Improving the condition of the property by e.g. providing a full redecoration of the property.
  - Relaxing occupation restrictions with approval from the Head of Housing / Head of Operations.
  - In the case of a hard to let bedspace within a shared property, reconfiguring the rents charged to current occupants to allow a reduction in lettable bedspaces and ensure long term viability for the current occupants.
  - Disposal of the property.
- 4.3. **Terminating a Tenancy**
- 4.3.1. A tenant must submit their intention to terminate their tenancy in writing either by post or email. The notice period is 4 weeks, which will start on receipt of the termination notice. Customers are required to return the keys for their property on the final day of their tenancy. If for any reason the notice period is reduced, this must be agreed by the Head of Housing and Income Manager.
- 4.4. **Appeal and Complaints**
- 4.4.1. If Hilldale refuse an application, the applicant or referring agency has the right to ask for a review of that decision. This request must be received in writing within 21 days of the decision being made. The written request must detail why the decision is being appealed and state on what grounds, you would like the decision to be reviewed.
- 4.4.2. The review will then be dealt with by a manager within Hilldale and the decision will be reviewed by the Head of Operations. The outcome of that review will be confirmed in writing within 28 days and is not eligible for further review.
- 4.4.3. Any complaints that an applicant, or their representative have about the service that they have received from Hilldale will be dealt with through our internal Complaints Policy. This will include complaints about the implementation of this policy and any associated procedures.
- 4.5. **Performance**
- 4.5.1. Hilldale will seek to process applications within 10 working days. Under no circumstances should a tenant move into their accommodation prior to Hilldale reviewing an application and all supporting evidence. The Housing Officer will then confirm a tenancy start date and arrange a sign-up to ensure the relevant paperwork is signed and given to the tenant or their appointee.
- 4.5.2. Key performance measures which are tracked monthly include:
- Terminations
  - New tenants
  - Total number of voids

- Voids as a percentage of bedspaces
- Average re-let days.

## 5. Responsibilities

| Name / Group                    | Responsibilities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Board                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversight</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Hilldale Senior Leadership Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversight of the performance measures to identify any areas of concern and identify potential remedial actions</li> </ul>                                                                                                                           |
| Head of Housing                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and updating of this policy. Responsible for the effective implementation of this Policy. This Policy is applicable to all Housing and Income colleagues, Care Providers and any other teams involved in the allocations process.</li> </ul> |
| Housing Officer                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is responsible for ensuring the relevant documentation is collected as required when letting a property and is saved as per the associated allocations and lettings procedure.</li> </ul>                                                           |

## 6. Compliance

- 6.1. It is essential that for all new tenants, this policy must be adhered to, to ensure compliance with the RSH and to evidence our approach as a Specialised Provider.

## 7. Legal / Regulatory Framework

- 7.1. This policy has been developed with reference to:
- Housing Acts 1988, 1996, 2004
  - Housing and Planning Act 2016
  - Regulatory Framework for Safeguarding
  - Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016

## 8. Related Policies and Procedures

- Allocations and Lettings Procedure
- Income Policies and Procedures
- Equality and Diversity Strategy
- Data Protection policy and procedures
- Terminations and Voids Policy and Procedure
- Complaints policy and procedure
- Safeguarding policy
- ASB policy

## **9. Communication**

- 9.1. Policy will be shared on the website, with Board and the Customer Committee.
- 9.2. The Housing and Income Team have been involved in the review of this policy and the associated procedures. Once approved, the policy will be circulated alongside some in depth training on Hilldale's requirements as a Specialised Provider.
- 9.3. The Allocations and Lettings Procedure will also be shared with Care Providers, Commissioners and other partners, to ensure compliance with Allocations and Lettings requirements.

## **10. Consultation**

- 10.1. The following people and/or groups have been consulted when drafting this policy:

| Name / Group                               |
|--------------------------------------------|
| Housing Officers / Income Team             |
| Tenant Voices Panel and Customer Committee |

## **11. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 11.1. Hilldale will be mindful of the Equality Act 2010 in all its actions and will consider all the protected characteristics of the Act which are: Race, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Religion or Belief, Age, Marriage/Civil Partnership and Pregnancy and Maternity explicitly. Further to the protected characteristics, Hilldale will be mindful of socio-economic disadvantages and will do everything in its power to minimise this and other forms of disadvantage.
- 11.2. When applying this policy, we will seek to make appropriate adjustments throughout the process to meet an applicant's needs.

## **12. Data Protection Impact Assessment**

- 12.1. Under the General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018, organisations must process personal information 'lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner.' Hilldale are committed to respecting the privacy of our tenants and we will protect their personal data.
- 12.2. In certain circumstances, Hilldale may be required to share personal data with other statutory agencies. Where practical, consent from the Data Subject will be obtained prior to the information being shared, however there may be instances where Hilldale Housing have a statutory duty to share information without the individuals consent e.g. if there is any reason to suspect children are at risk, if the individual does not have capacity or if an individual is in immediate risk of abuse or for the prevention and detection of crime. An assessment will be

made in each case to decide which information is necessary to be shared, referring to the Data Protection Officer for further guidance as required.

- 12.3. Tenants also have the right to know what Information Hilldale Housing hold about them. Hilldale has a separate Data Protection Policy which should be adhered to when considering data protection.

### 13. Review Schedule

- 14.1 This policy will be reviewed in accordance with applicable legislative and/or regulatory requirements, or as scheduled by internal requirements as noted below, but may be reviewed earlier in the event of changes to legislation, regulation, or internal requirements.

| # Years between reviews | Date of Next Review |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 3                       | 31/01/2028          |
|                         |                     |

### 14. Terminology

| Term     | Definition                    |
|----------|-------------------------------|
| Hilldale | Hilldale Housing Association  |
| SSH      | Specialised Supported Housing |
| RSH      | Regulator of Social Housing   |

### 15. Change Log

| Version | Changes Made                                    | Date       | Name               |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|
| 1.2     | Hilldale specific to comply with SSH guidelines | 28/10/2024 | Anne-Marie Holyoak |

### 16. Approval Log

| Version | Date Approved by PAG |
|---------|----------------------|
|---------|----------------------|

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| 1 | 26/09/2023 |
|---|------------|