



Enabling churches to house the homeless

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# Accommodation & Allocation Policy

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**Date Approved: 05/07/2016**

**Review before: 05/07/2018**

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## 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 our houses. It also describes the appeals process and waiting list system.

Hope into Action 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 us to be fair and effective. It also helps us to communicate clearly to prospective licencees, 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

The project 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

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
- their financial circumstances.

### 3.2. When we do not offer accommodation

HIA has only limited staff resources to support and assist residents 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 (eg 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 history of sexual offence
- have a history 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\**

### 3.3. People who have been evicted or banned

As a rule we tend to require a minimum of a 3 month period before rehousing someone who has been evicted or is banned from our properties. It is vital to communicate 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 support group before entering the accommodation.

### 3.4. 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. HiA will need to see a minimum of 6 weeks regular

payment or half of their total debt to us before they can be allocated accommodation.

### **3.5. Selection Procedure**

#### **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 Hope into Action. Members of staff will assist with the completion of the form if necessary. The applicant and, if applicable, the agency making the referral, will receive a response within 5 working days.

#### **b. Interview**

Applicants will be interviewed by Project 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**

After the interview and after receiving appropriate references the applicant will be informed within 3 working days (usually by phone) whether s/he meets the selection criteria for a second, more thorough, assessment. This will be a needs, strengths assessment.

#### **d. Communication of the decision**

If the applicant does not meet the selection criteria, project staff will inform the unsuccessful applicant clearly specifying reasons for rejection. Any referral 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 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.)

### **3.6. 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.

The selection criteria will be reviewed annually in order to achieve a waiting list with a maximum of three months.

### **3.7. Appeals and Complaints**

If you have applied for, and been refused, accommodation with Hope into Action, you have the right to appeal if you disagree with our decision.

You may

- think that we have assessed your application incorrectly or
- disagree with the reasons we have given.

If you wish to appeal against a decision Hope into Action has made, please follow the procedure in the Complaints policy. HIA members of staff can help you to make this complaint. Alternatively you may ask someone else you trust.

## **4. Appendix**

### **4.1. Background**

#### **a. Organisational Objectives**

The Hope into Action (HIA) Housing Project for adults with housing need 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.

Hope into Action 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.