

## CAUSEWAY IRISH HOUSING ASSOCIATION SELECTIONS & ALLOCATIONS POLICY

**Approved by Management Committee:** January 2020

**Responsible for Implementation:** Administration & Housing Managers

**Date of Review:** January 2023

### 1. *Policy Statement*

Causeway seeks to meet the needs of people who are homeless or in housing need. The organisation was formed particularly to help young Irish people newly arrived in London. We now accept all members of the wider community who are in housing need. We recognise that young people under 35 have the least access to housing in London therefore we will prioritise them for shared housing.

As an organisation committed to equality and diversity it is important that we allow the widest access to our services by all members of the community in housing need. We will act sensitively towards the diverse needs of individuals and will take positive action where appropriate to ensure we are not creating an unfair disadvantage to any particular group of people. We will continue to monitor and review our procedures to ensure this.

#### **We accept people who are:**

- Single without dependent children
- Between the ages of 18 and 55
- Homeless or in housing need
- Willing to share with others
- Able to live independently

### 2. *Procedure*

#### **2.1 Applications**

Causeway's application procedure is split into two routes, one for self-referral applicants and one for agency-referral applicants. Applicants must declare if they are related to a staff or Committee member. All applications must be made by completing an online application form and providing the following:

| Self-Referral Applicants   | Agency-Referral Applicants  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A housing reference if you have been renting (previous landlords will be contacted);</li> <li>• If applicants cannot provide a landlords reference we will accept an employer/character reference and two weeks rent in advance;</li> <li>• For applicants in employment we require 4 weeks rent in advance;</li> <li>• NASS applicants need to provide a character/employer reference and 2 weeks rent in advance;</li> <li>• Proof of address;</li> <li>• Proof of ID;</li> <li>• Proof of income.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A housing reference if you have been renting (previous landlords will be contacted);</li> <li>• If applicants cannot provide a landlords reference we will accept a reference from the agency;</li> <li>• For applicants in employment we require 4 weeks rent in advance;</li> <li>• Proof of address;</li> <li>• Proof of ID;</li> <li>• Proof of income.</li> </ul> |

Other documents may be required to support information provided on the application form. We use our application form and references to assess whether applicants meet our criteria for housing. Once an applicant has been assessed as having met our criteria he or she will be invited to an interview which will assess their ability to sustain a tenancy in general needs shared housing. All tenants are expected to have a level of English which enables them to live in shared housing and converse with housemates. Those applicants who do not meet this criterion are signposted accordingly.

## **2.2 Consideration Factors**

### *2.2.1 Criminal Convictions*

As the majority of our accommodation is shared housing we will assess an application with previous convictions on a case by case basis. We have a duty of care to our current tenants and will not put them at risk as it is Causeway's aim to provide a safe and secure home. These convictions can include assault, selling/possession of drugs, carrying offensive weapons, keeping dangerous dogs, damage to property, sexual offences, arson and burglary. All convictions and cautions must be declared on the application form as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

### *2.2.2 Court Proceedings*

We are likely to reject an application if:

- The applicant has been evicted or had a possession order against them in the last five years for serious anti-social behaviour including harassment, domestic violence and criminal behaviour.
- Causeway or another landlord has commenced court proceedings for breach of tenancy in the last five years.

### *2.2.3 Rent Arrears*

The applicant has current or former arrears owed to Causeway or another landlord. Applicants are expected to clear any arrears at the date of application or provide proof that regular repayments have been made for a period of no less than six months.

### *2.2.4 References*

Causeway values tenants who pay their rent on time, take care of their home and don't cause any anti-social behaviour. We require a housing reference from your current/previous landlord. If an applicant has not held a tenancy before we will accept a character reference from an employer or another suitable entity. If a suitable reference is not provided the application will be rejected.

### *2.2.5 Social Housing Eligibility*

If we believe an applicant is eligible for social housing we will ask them to apply to the Local Authority in the first instance.

## **2.3 Interviews**

Interviews for the waiting list are held weekly with up to five interviews being carried out. Applicants who fail to attend or who arrive late without notice and/or good reason are likely to have their applications rejected.

Applicants will be interviewed by one member of staff, who will explain more about the nature of the accommodation Causeway provides including location, rent levels and availability of vacancies at that time. This can help to clarify whether shared short life housing is appropriate for an applicant, whether they are willing to share and what level of support they require.

The Selection and Allocations panel will decide whether an applicant is accepted onto the waiting list. Applicants who are accepted and rejected are informed in writing within seven days of the interview with the reason(s) clearly stated (see appendices 1 & 2, respectively).

The decision of the Selections and Allocations Panel is final. There is no appeals procedure.

## **2.4 Allocation of property**

Allocations decisions are made by the Selection and Allocations panel. The Selection and Allocation panel will consist of a minimum of three staff members. Selection and Allocation meetings will take place weekly and take into account both current and expected vacancies and properties in development. Current tenants needing to be transferred are also included in this meeting.

A credit check will be carried before an applicant can become a tenant.

## **2.5 Priority for allocation**

**Causeways main purpose it to help people with the greatest housing need.**

1. Current tenants in properties being handed back.
2. Priority 1 Agents – Contracted Agents
3. Priority 2 Agents – Agents selected to increase diversity
4. Irish Self-Referral Applicants
5. Self-Referral Applicants

In all categories we will prioritise applicants under 35. From time to time Causeway procures properties that are higher than the Local Housing Allowance, for this reason we will advertise outside of this policy and prioritise workers for these properties.

Factors such as suitability of property (including the mix of existing tenants in shared property) are also taken into account. We do not have the resources to carry out investigations into housing need and therefore cannot always prioritise people on this basis but we do try to take this into account. We do, however, have three Rapid Resettlement rooms. These are smaller than average rooms for those in urgent need, who we guarantee to rehouse in standard accommodation within six months. Allocations will also be prioritised by affordability e.g. more affordable accommodation will be allocated to workers on low incomes. Applications may be rejected due to lack of appropriate housing available.

## **2.6 Referral Agents**

We have selected particular referral agents in order to maximise the diversity of applicants and address the needs of all members of the community. We review our referral agents annually.

## **2.7 Viewings & Offers**

Causeway will arrange viewings at the earliest opportunity. Where a property is not ready, we will explain the remaining works. Applicants are required to make their decision at the time of the viewing. From time to time we carry out multiple viewings; priority will be given based on the priority for allocation.

Applications will be rejected if an applicant fails to turn up to a viewing with no prior notice. Causeway operates a one offer only policy. If any applicant refuses an offer they will be removed from our waiting list.

## **2.8 Tenancy Fraud**

Causeway can recover possession of a property where the tenant has obtained a tenancy by deception. A tenancy obtained by deception will be repossessed.

We will investigate where we suspect tenancy fraud and will take appropriate action. It is a criminal offence and we refer all tenancy fraud to the relevant authorities for a criminal prosecution for fraud or attempted fraud.

## **2.9 Local Authority Supported Schemes**

Causeway have several schemes delivered in conjunction with Local Authorities. These schemes provide floating support to care leavers and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Each scheme has a distinct remit and operates in accordance with its contract. Placements will be allocated to eligible applicants nominated by the relevant Local Authority.

## **3.0 Monitoring**

The Selection & Allocation Review Group meets quarterly and Selection & Allocation outcomes are reported to the Management Committee six monthly. To ensure we are meeting the greatest housing need we monitor all applications for age, gender, ethnicity, nationality and sexuality. Monitoring and review of the selection and allocation process will be implemented to assess changing patterns of need and to ensure a fair and diverse balance across the community.

## **Implementation and Review**

Causeway will monitor implementation of this policy as appropriate and provide relevant training to staff as required. We will review this policy every three years or sooner if needed due to changes in the law, regulation or practice.

## **Legislation**

This policy is regulated by the following legislation

Tenancy Standard

Housing Act 1980, 1985, 1988, 1996

Children Leaving Care Act 2000

Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2000

Homelessness Act 2002

Localism Act 2011

Immigration Act 2014, 2016

Data Protection Act 2018

## **Associated Policies**

Tenure Policy

Safeguarding Policy

ASB Policy

Complaints Policy

*Appendix 1 – Accepted onto Waiting List Letter*

24 January, 2020

Dear,

We are pleased to inform you that following the Selections and Allocations meeting you have been accepted onto the waiting list for housing by Causeway Irish Housing Association.

Please note, Causeway Irish Housing Association provides short life housing, the majority of which is in shared housing, which means that you have your own bedroom and share communal facilities, i.e. lounge, kitchen, and bathroom. **However, please note that all rooms are let unfurnished.**

In the meantime, you must ensure that you keep in contact with us and inform us of any changes in your circumstances.

Please remember that Causeway Irish Housing Association has a **one offer only** policy.

Yours sincerely,

Selections and Allocations Panel

*Appendix 2 – Rejection from Waiting List Letter*

24 January, 2020

Dear,

Following an interview for housing, we regret to inform you that your application has been unsuccessful. Your application was rejected for the following reasons:

[Insert reason]

Please be aware that the Selections and Allocations Panel's decision is final and that there is no appeal process. We would like to wish you all the best in your search for housing.

Yours sincerely,

Selections and Allocations Panel