

Draft Consultation Plan
Name: Allocations Policy Review
December 2024



1. Background/Context

Sheffield City Council is reviewing its Allocations Policy, which determines how social housing in Sheffield is allocated and what type of accommodation people are eligible for. The current Policy was agreed in 2013 and implemented in 2016, since then the policy has been amended on two previous occasions and is now at version 3.

Social Housing, both our own and the stock of Registered Providers is there to:

- Help create successful communities on ours and Registered Provider estates.
- Gives people neighbourhoods that are great and safe places to live in which they are happy to call home.
- Provides children a good start in life by ensuring safe and affordable homes.
- Provides affordable, decent homes to those who need it most.
- Supports the most vulnerable in society gain access to a home.
- Prevention and reduce homelessness.
- Ensures affordable housing for those of our residents who are unable to buy or rent a home on the open market.

2. What is the purpose of this Consultation Plan?

This plan outlines the channels we can use to effectively promote the consultation around the Allocations Policy review to our tenants, the wider public, stakeholders, Registered Providers, Housing and Neighbourhood services and other internal Council services.

As the Allocations Policy is a sensitive issue, we feel that it will generate significant interest. To ensure a comprehensive review this consultation plan is vital to set out key messages and strategy for communication throughout the consultation period.

The aim of this plan to ensure a pro-active approach to our residents/services and we support people to get involved. This plan will also help identify the different channels to:

- Consult on the issues and potential proposals for change.
- Consult on a draft policy following approval by Committee

3. Consultation Plan Service Objectives

The aim of the review is to develop options for change to the Council's Allocations Policy, ensuring best practice, understanding the needs and view of our residents to ensure the Council makes best use of social housing stock in the city. In particular:

- To implement changes to the Allocations Policy following the Council's procedures on consultation and executive decision-making process.
- To ensure the policy is fit for purpose and legally compliant.
- To ensure the policy is worded so that it is clear and easy to understand.
- To ensure that our tenants feel secure in their homes and wish to stay long term.
- To better consider the needs of our communities through the allocation of properties within their neighbourhood.
- To consider any discretionary local lettings policies the Council may seek to adopt.
- To ensure the administration of the scheme including the management and accompanying procedures are at optimal efficiency and effectiveness and are customer focussed on both experience and outcomes (minimising bureaucracy, streamlined and timely).

4. Council Outcomes:

The consultation plan will look at having a particular focus on the following outcomes in line with the Allocations Policy review:

- [A place where all children belong, and all young people can build a successful future](#)
- [Great neighbourhoods that people are happy to call home](#)
- [People live in caring, engaged communities that value diversity and support wellbeing](#)

The Allocations Policy is a critical enabler to delivery of the Housing Strategy 2024-34 and the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2023-28 which both support the Council Plan's commitments to ensure everyone has a home and to prevent homelessness. To do this we need to make sure social housing is used effectively for those in greatest housing need.

We will address the equalities considerations, and the points raised by the Race Equality Commission report regarding concerns about access to social housing. These will include ensuring fair access to and those that fall under each protected characteristics including those with mental, physical health issues and disabilities who need to move.

This consultation will take into consideration the Council's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act and protected characteristics

- Age.
- Disability.

- Gender reassignment.
- Marriage or civil partnership (in employment only)
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Race.
- Religion or belief.
- Sex.

5. The two stage Consultation outcomes and Objectives are:

- To ensure our customer satisfaction remains stable during the period of the consultation.
- To ensure our consultation reaches all our vulnerable residents, targeted community groups and those hard-to-reach services, where it may not be easy to consult on potential changes.
- To ensure that as many services/residents are engaged in the consultation including all households currently on the housing register.
- To gain the views and ensure comprehensive analysis once the consultation process has ended.
- Gather feedback that enables the Council to develop a draft Allocations Policy that is fit for purpose.
- Communications are clear and concise.

Below is a summarised timeline to show the Allocations Policy review next steps:

December 2024 – March 2025	Consultation is undertaken on the key areas to gather views and a draft policy written based on feedback.
June 2025	Attend HPC to seek agreement on the draft policy and a second round of consultation.
June- August 2025	Undertake second round of consultation on the draft policy and amend based on feedback
October 2025	Final draft policy is brought to Committee for a decision.

6. The first stage Consultation:

The consultation will be conducted in two stages and focus on the overarching proposals of the Allocations Policy review. The **first stage consultation** from December 2024 to March 2025 will explore public views.

It will also provide a focus on the challenges facing residents in housing need accessing social housing, identifying if there any equality issues, seek the views of all stakeholders and focus on how we can achieve the best outcomes for our residents. This includes, exploring views and gaining an understanding on the overall objectives and vision of the Allocations Policy.

As this is a comprehensive review, any consultation questions will be clear and concise and will take into consideration needs and accessibility requirements of all residents.

As part of this review there is a commitment to engage with those residents that are often underrepresented and / or experiencing the most disadvantage in terms of social housing in Sheffield. This is also including vulnerable groups such as; those that are rough sleeping. The data will be used to identify these groups and prioritise our resources and efforts to seek their views and ideas.

6.1 The Second stage Consultation:

The **second stage** taking place from June to August 2025 will explain how feedback has been used to shape the draft Allocations Policy review and provide an opportunity for comments on the following:

- Objectives
- Priorities
- The wording of the draft policy.

We will also ask external partners and internal services about the role they will play in contributing to the implementation of the new policy.

As the policy has not been reviewed since 2013, this is likely to have significant interest. This is the **last stage** of consultation before the final draft of the policy is submitted to the Housing Policy committee in October 2025.

7. Stakeholders & Target Audience(s)

The following have been identified as our stakeholders and target audiences that we need to keep in mind.

Interest	Keep Involved A stakeholder group might be useful	Keep Close Need to be closely aligned with the project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SCC Housing and Neighbourhood Services - Health and Housing - Other SCC commissioning (Domestic Abuse; Substance Misuse; People Keeping Well etc) - SCC Adult Social Care - SCC Early help and prevention services (Community Support Workers, MAST etc) - South Yorkshire Police - Probation services - Communication Services - Housing Related Support Services - commissioned and not commissioned. - All elected members - MPs - Local Area Committees - Housing, Health and Care Reference Group - Current SCC tenants or residents. - Tenants in SCC Supported housing Schemes (Housing First, OPIL, floating Support, Temporary Accommodation, Rough sleepers' initiative - Residents living in other tenures including private rented, owner occupation, leaseholders, and registered providers in Sheffield. - Leaving care services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individual customers, current and potential - Current and future tenants of SCC - SCC Rehousing Team - SCC Housing Solutions Team - SCC Commissioning and Partnerships Team - OPIL - Community groups- TARA's/ Community Refuges - SCC Finance Services - SCC Legal Services - Registered providers / partners of SCC - Charities i.e. Shelter/ Citizen's advice - SCC Corporate Comms - Chief Executive and SLB - DLT and HLT - HPC members and Leader of Council
	Keep in Mind These stakeholders will benefit from any generic messages	Keep Sweet Important people, keep informed but not overburdened
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trade Unions - SCC HR Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not identified.
Low	Influence	High

8. Key messages

Below are the key messages we would like to portray as part of the Allocations Policy review.

Key Messages at both Consultation stages:	Feedback and Views on:
<p>Vision/Working together- We want current and potential future tenants to be involved and engaged with the consultation in a meaningful way.</p>	<p>The purpose of this consultation is to gather a range of views from the public.</p> <p>We want to obtain feedback on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do residents feel social housing should be allocated in Sheffield? • Should we revise qualification criteria? • Should more homes be given to those with a housing need? • How could we improve tenancy sustainment?
<p>You said we did? / Accessibility - This is a clear and transparent process that everyone can influence.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Why is it important for me to have my say? What does this mean for me?</p>	
<p>Priorities/Policies- We want the new policy to be fair and ensure our limited housing stock goes to the people who need it most.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What is changing? What is the Allocations Policy review and why do we need one?</p>	
<p>Ambition- We recognise change can be difficult for people. We will ensure a holistic approach to improve people's quality of life. Sheffield's residents with housing, health, education, and wellbeing needs will be at the forefront of everything we do.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How will we make these changes happen?</p>	

9. Methods of Consultation

Social & Digital
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social media posts, to include Facebook (SCC and H&NS pages), Twitter and Instagram, LinkedIn.• Gov Delivery email bulletins targeting housing groups and relevant local areas. The housing service pays the annual subscription for unlimited bulletins.• Emailing households who are currently registered with Sheffield city council whom we have an email address.• HYSS site has a section around surveys so can create a consultation page- focuses on equalities and easy to read/understand.• Local area committees have their own social media pages a way to focus on local area of topics that cover different wards of the city.• Use of the Property Shop's home page- to promote consultation• Articles in newsletters- Rehousing, IMFIT, corporate Neighbourhood services Bulletins.• Make use of the locality area team's social media and blogs• Articles in the digital newsletter to TARAs• Instruct Viewpoint to conduct telephone surveys for those clients that are digitally isolated.• Attend online community meeting- networks.• Using the Abritas messaging system- once the new policy is implemented to navigate and sign post for further advice and support.
Printed Materials/Posters/ resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LACS have a public display board across Sheffield could we display posters A5?• Posters around TARA's and accessible points were community groups attend? Such as Roundabout, drop-in services.
Advertising
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using our own access point i.e. Neighbourhood offices, Homeless/First point, and Property Shop access points- to conduct in person surveys.• Information event at Howden House, leaflets on reception.• Reaching out to LAC'S• Attending other meetings such as the strategic housing forum, meetings with RPs in person.
Media
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A press release promoting the consultation provided to all local news outlets and associated news distribution channels.• Reactive statement- for any criticism of the changes
Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual residents conference/open days• TARA events• Open afternoon / morning within the Town Hall and other public offices.• Stall within Moor Market• LAC public events• Attending community groups/ events

The methods outlined in the above table will be used to communicate and consult with people to enable the production of the allocations policy.

As there is target audience which is city wide there will be an emphasis on online participation through a survey. This will allow our residents/services user to quickly and conveniently engage at time that is best for them.

However, as outlined in the table above there are several methods of consultation, we will also provide other ways for people to engage including paper-based surveys, pop up consultation stalls in easily accessible locations, focus groups, attendance at established community groups, partnership meetings, local activity groups and through community representatives.

To ensure maximum engagement for our audience. we will also work with our existing group partner services to help understand customer journey who have already accessed our services.

We will use data to identify groups where we have underrepresentation particularly those from a BAME, disability background etc, to prioritise our resources and ensure targeted consultation. We will draw on the expertise of partners and services working with these groups to understand the most effective way to engage.

Communication materials and surveys will be jargon free and in plain English; available in accessible formats (including easy read information) and provided in alternative language(s) as appropriate. All information/ engagement will be accessible to all.

10. Potential Risks or Issues

Potential Risks:	Mitigations
Timeline: tight deadlines mean delays in signing off approach and materials risks delivery date	Ensure services/audience are clear that the consultation is taking place- being clear on timeline and deadlines for survey's/ information events etc.

<p>Residents do not fully understand the scope of the policy /legal requirements and/or there is low support or strongly divided opinion on proposed policy changes.</p>	<p>As part of the consultation, we will provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of what an Allocations Policy is and what it is intended to do including legal requirements. • Pen portraits • Information and data relating to the current challenges. <p>This will ensure residents are aware of policy and legal requirements alongside the challenges.</p>
<p>Engagement: lack of engagement and buy in from stakeholders</p>	<p>Work with comms, equalities, and wider stakeholder groups to ensure most effective methods of consultation are used. Using Community groups who will help feed into understanding the needs of our audiences.</p>
<p>Engagement: Any ongoing consultations (e.g. local plan/city goals) may lead residents being confused.</p>	<p>Speak to other services around any ongoing consultation and ensure shared understanding of the consultation timeline. Having a pro-active approach with internal or external services.</p>
<p>Potential delay to the implementation of the consultation plan.</p>	<p>Building key links before implementing the consultation to plan so services are aware that allocations policy review is being undertaken.</p>