

IronOak



IRON OAK

ALLOCATION & LETTINGS POLICY

Excellence ➤ Safety ➤ Sustainability ➤ Integrity

Control Sheet

Version number	01
Date approved by Board	October 2023
Date of next review	September 2026
Status	Published
Policy owner	Head of Operations
Policy location	IronOak Shared Drive/BrightHR
Target group	Employees

Document History:			
Version	Date of review	Author	Note of revisions
01	October 2023	Head of Operations	New Policy

Excellence ➤ Safety ➤ Sustainability ➤ Integrity

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Allocations and Lettings Policy outlines the approach to letting homes owned or managed by IronOak Homes (IronOak).
- 1.2. It states how units are allocated and let to make the best use of our properties and minimise void periods.
- 1.3. When allocating properties, we will:
 - Allocate our properties in a fair and transparent process that does not put any Applicant at a disadvantage.
 - Include affordability and reference checks, to create sustainable tenancies.
 - Work with the relevant local authorities' departments to support their strategic direction and enable them to fulfil their statutory duties under the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002, as amended.
 - Take into consideration the conditions contained within the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, together with all other relevant legislation and statutory guidance, to ensure sustainable tenancies.
 - Be accountable by providing clear information about our decisions and have in place, and provide information regarding our appeals process, where we have declined an applicant.
 - Comply with the terms of the General Data Protection Regulation and hold all information regarding our customers and applicants for housing in a secure manner.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. IronOak Homes offer two different types of tenancy – Licence Agreement and Assured Shorthold Tenancy. We will explain the details of the tenancy as part of our onboarding process.
- 2.2. When we let our homes, we will consider each case on its own merits and we will not refuse to allocate a home to you without good reason; however, there are some circumstances in which we cannot offer a home. We will update the relevant Agency if we reject a 'nomination', giving the reasons for this rejection. Possible reasons for declining an application may include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Immigration control – people who are subject to immigration control and who are not eligible for housing under the Allocation of Housing Regulations 2002, cannot be housed. The Immigration Act 2014 requires landlords to only allocate a property to those that have a 'right to rent'. Any applicant that does not meet these requirements will not be housed and have their application refused.
 - Anti-Social Behaviour – if the applicant has been evicted for anti-social behaviour or a serious breach of tenancy, has a current Harassment or Non-molestation Order, Injunction, Anti-Social Behaviour Order, Notice of Seeking

Excellence ➤ Safety ➤ Sustainability ➤ Integrity

Possession or any other related Court Order against them, this may make them ineligible for housing with IronOak Homes.

- Rent Arrears – any applicant who owes money to a former landlord may not be eligible to be allocated housing. If there is an existing prepayment plan to clear any debts to the landlord, which is being fully maintained, consideration may be given to such Applicant. Consideration will be given to the circumstances under which the arrears were accrued, for example, where the applicant may not have had control of their finances.
- If a current tenant is rehoused with a former tenancy debt this will be carried over to the new tenancy and included in the tenancy agreement to ensure that the monies are recovered.
- Criminal Convictions – all applicants will be asked to disclose any history of criminal convictions. This does not apply to any convictions that are legally spent or are covered by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. We will seek advice from the Police and Probation Service in respect of any applicant who has been convicted of serious criminal offences, in order to assess whether it is safe to house them in a property. There may be occasions, due to the nature of the offence and any risk assessment, where housing cannot be offered to the applicant.
- Damage to Property and Violent and Aggressive Behaviour – any applicant who has caused damage to a property from a former tenancy will have their application declined. Only in exceptional circumstances would we rehouse such a tenant. In this circumstance we would, prior to any offer, agree with the applicant to put in place arrangements to clear any outstanding monies owed in relation to repairs required to rectify the damage.
- Any Applicant who has been violent or aggressive to members of staff may have their application rejected depending on individual circumstances. This includes actual physical attack, serious verbal abuse or intimidating behaviour which has warranted a referral to the Police and/or has required an incident report to be completed.

2.3. If the care and support provided by the service provider is not suitable or appropriate for an Applicant's needs, the referral may be refused.

3. Appeals

3.1. An Applicant may appeal if IronOak Homes refuses to allocate them a home. They or their Appointees must write to us, as detailed in our Complaints Policy, with their appeal within 14 days from the date that they were refused. They will need to provide all relevant and supporting information, we will make reasonable adjustments for Applicants that are unable to put in a written appeal. Any appeal will

Excellence ➤ Safety ➤ Sustainability ➤ Integrity

be considered by members of staff who were not involved in the original decision, and we will respond within 14 days of it being submitted.

4. Succession

- 4.1. Due to the nature of IronOak Homes' properties (matched to the individual needs of each Applicant) no statutory right of succession can be granted.

5. Equality and Diversity

- 5.1. IronOak Homes is committed to fairness and equality for all, regardless of their colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion or belief, family circumstances or offending history, as referred to in our relevant policies. Our aim is to ensure that our policies and procedures do not create an unfair disadvantage for anyone, either directly or indirectly.

- 5.2. There are no negative impacts on any person/group with a protected characteristic because of this policy.

6. Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England

- 6.1. The Tenancy Standard contains specific requirements around allocations. The Standard states that 'Registered providers shall let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. They shall take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants.'
- 6.2. We will consider the sustainability of applicants and their ability to engage with any support services required to ensure that they successfully maintain their tenancy.
- 6.3. Where a tenant's current home is no longer suitable for their needs due to illness, escalation of mental health issues or new disability, we will work with them to identify the best long-term solution. Where it is identified that a move to another IronOak Homes' Property is the best solution, we will, wherever possible and subject to availability effect the transfer. Where this is not possible, we will work with the tenant to move to another provider's property.
- 6.4. It is expected that payments of ineligible service charges, where due, are made via direct debit. Arrangements will be discussed at the offer and sign up stage.
- 6.5. All applicants will be required to provide two forms of identification, one of which must include a photograph. Further information may be required depending on the type of accommodation and route of nomination. Failure of an Applicant to provide all the required information and documentation or providing false information may have their application rejected.

Excellence ➤ Safety ➤ Sustainability ➤ Integrity

7. How the policy will be delivered

7.1. The care and support element of the services offered to tenants of IronOak Homes is contracted to and supplied by third party providers. According to the terms of the Service Level Agreement signed by these Providers, it is their responsibility to nominate tenants whose needs they can meet.

7.2. The Care and Support providers we partner with are either contacted by a referral agency regarding a potential new tenant, or they are on relevant frameworks that provide suitable referrals through their links and relationship built with the appropriate referral agencies. The Applicant in company of their Appointees, Social Worker or the representative of the referral agency would visit the scheme. After the decision is made that it would be a suitable placement for the Applicant, the following is done:

- The care provider reviews the Applicant's circumstances, conducts care and support assessments and confirms compatibility with scheme.
- The Housing Officer and Care provider would discuss the needs of the Applicant and confirm that this can be met.
- Tenant referral form (the risk assessment is within this form) is completed and forwarded to the Housing Officer for review.
- Relevant documents are forwarded to the Housing Officer - evidence of identification, one of which should be photographic, proof of National Insurance number, proof of benefits or recourse to public funds.
- A sign up and move in date is agreed and communicated to the Applicant.

7.3. The tenant onboarding process is important as this sets the expectations for the rest of the relationship between IronOak Homes and the tenant. It provides the opportunity for IronOak Homes to inform the Applicant of the responsibilities and obligations of both parties. It is envisaged that this will support the tenant to have a smooth transition and create a positive relationship between IronOak Homes and the incoming tenant that will last throughout the tenancy.

7.4. The following should be completed or issued at sign up depending on personal circumstances:

- Signed Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement or License Agreement.
- Direct debit mandate for Ineligible Service Charge payment.
- Data disclosure form
- Property rent and service charge breakdown.
- IronOak's Tenant Handbook (Tenant information guide)
- Pay to landlord form.
- Gas, electric and EPC certificates
- How To Rent guide – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent>
- Tenant Document checklist

Excellence ➤ Safety ➤ Sustainability ➤ Integrity

8. Onboarding stage.

- IronOak Homes meets with the tenant.
- All key stakeholders are introduced to the tenant.
- The tenancy agreement is explained fully to the tenant, and they are given the opportunity to ask for further clarification if needed.
- Rent and service charge breakdown is issued and explained. Mode of payment is agreed.
- The Housing Officer applies for Housing Benefit for the tenant.
- The tenant should be set up on the Housing Management System
- Utility accounts would be transferred into the tenant's name if they have exclusive use of their property. This includes electricity, gas, water, internet, TV licence, Council tax.
- The tenant should be advised to take content insurance for their personal effects as IronOak Homes' insurance would not cover this.

8.1. Move in Day:

- Keys to the property handed over.
- Electric and gas meter reading to be taken and recorded where applicable.
- The Housing officer will agree on a day for a settling in visit with the tenant. This should be within one month of moving in.

8.2. Settling in visit

8.2.1. This should be conducted not more than four weeks after sign up. IronOak Homes provides accommodation for very vulnerable people with various needs. Some have been street homeless for a long time, some have never held a tenancy, and some may be going through unstable mental health conditions. It is therefore important that we support them to sustain their tenancies by providing intensive housing management services.

8.2.2. At this visit, the Housing Officer will check that the tenant is settling down well in their new accommodation, is aware of local/community services, know how to report repairs, and meet regularly with the Care Providers.

8.2.3. Sometimes Housing Benefit may write to the tenant to request further information regarding their claims, the Housing Officer should ask if they've received any letter from Housing Benefit and assist them to respond promptly. Payment of Ineligible Service Charge should be confirmed. Notes of this meeting should be logged on Arthur Online

9. Offboarding process.

9.1. Sometimes a property may not be suitable any more for a tenant, due to a change in their circumstances or for various other reasons. IronOak Homes require a minimum of 4 weeks' Notice from a tenant who wants to vacate a property.

Excellence ➤ Safety ➤ Sustainability ➤ Integrity

- 9.2. After the Housing Officer is notified of the intention of a tenant to move out of the property, they complete the offboarding process. The Housing Officer will liaise with all stakeholders including the tenant to ensure a smooth transition, they will inspect the property and report any repairs/vandalism issues to the Repairs team, who may decide to carry out their own inspection, based on the severity of the case. The tenant should be informed at this stage if they will be recharged for any repairs.
- 9.3. The Housing Officer should ensure that the tenant completes the End of Tenancy form.

10. Related documents

- Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016
- Localism Act 2011
- Immigration Act 2014
- Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England
- Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England
- Tenancy Management Policy
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Complaints & Compliments Policy

11. Monitoring arrangements

- 11.1. We will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through relevant performance information which will be reported through the Executive Leadership Team. We will use this data to monitor and analyse performance to identify trends and any continuous improvement opportunities.
- 11.2. This policy will be reviewed every three years or on the introduction of new legislation or best practice guidelines, whichever is the sooner.

Excellence ➤ Safety ➤ Sustainability ➤ Integrity