

Title: Under Occupation policy

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Service area applies to: Operations, General Needs

Link to the Vision: Yes

Approved by: Operations Committee

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8.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Appendix 1 – Single Equality Impact Assessment	

1.	Purpose
	<p>St Vincent's Housing Association recognises that by managing under occupation in our properties it encourages best use of the stock.</p> <p>St Vincent's acknowledges that in order to facilitate greater number of moves from properties that are under occupied tenants require suitable accommodation and support to achieve this.</p> <p>This policy sets out St Vincent's position on how they can help tenants to move into a smaller size property, if they want to.</p>
2.	Scope
	This policy applies to all general needs properties that are under occupied within St Vincent's Housing Association Ltd.
3.	References
	<p>Allocation Policy</p> <p>Transfer Procedure</p> <p>Move in Service</p> <p>Bolton Downsizing initiative</p> <p>Rochdale under occupation moves.</p>
4.	Key Objectives
	<p>To inform tenants of options available to them if they are under occupying properties.</p> <p>To encourage best use of the Association stock</p> <p>To work in partnership with Local Authorities to make best use of stock.</p>
5.	Customer Involvement
	A discussion on under-occupation has been discussed at the customer panel meeting in June and September 2011.
6.	Monitoring against the Customer Top 10
7.	The Policy

7.1 Definitions

- 7.1.1 Under occupation is where a tenant is occupying a property with 1 or more bedrooms above their statutory requirement.
- 7.1.2 St Vincent's has adopted the size criteria used for the size of accommodation needed under the local housing allowance. The size criteria allows one bedroom for each of the following:
- A couple

- A single adult or young person aged 16 or over
- Any two children of the same sex aged under 16
- Any two children of different sexes aged under 10
- Any other child
- A non-resident overnight carer.

7.2 Background

7.2.1 St Vincent's has carried out an assessment of under occupied properties and currently a 37% under occupancy across its general needs stock. However this drops to 26% when looking at tenants who are working age. Majority of the under occupation occurs within the 2 bedroom properties followed by 3 and 4 bedroom properties.

Bedroom Size	% under occupying (% is against the total general needs stock = 2438)	% under occupying working age tenants only (% is against the total general needs stock = 2438)	% under occupying (% is against the total stock of actual bedroom size)	% under occupying for working age tenant only	Actual number of tenants under occupying	Actual number working age tenants under occupying
2 bedroom	26%	17%	56% (1122 total 2 bedroom stock)	40% (1122 total 2 bedroom stock)	633	455
3 bedroom	9%	7%	41% (546 total 3 bedroom stock)	31% (546 total 3 bedroom stock)	224	170
4 and 5 bedroom	2%	2%	41% (126 total 4 and 5 bedroom stock)	34% (126 total 4 and 5 bedroom stock)	52	43
Total	37%	26%			909	668

Figures as of October 2011.

7.3 Under Occupation policy

- 7.3.1 Offer in our main areas of operations (Rochdale, Bolton, Manchester, East Lancashire, Salford and Calderdale) 100% of its stock to the relevant Choice Based Lettings scheme, thereby enabling tenants to transfer with a wider pool of properties.
- 7.3.2 Wherever possible we will agree with the Local Authority that a percentage of new developments are used for downsizing to free up larger properties.
- 7.3.3 St Vincent's has provided access to a HomeSwapper for all its tenants free of charge and will continue to provide access. This will encourage tenants to move freely within areas of their choice.
- 7.3.4 St Vincent's has changed its allocation policy to allow for an under occupation priority to be awarded if tenants are under occupying larger properties.

- 7.3.5 St Vincent's is supporting initiatives by working with Bolton and Rochdale local authorities to help move tenants into smaller properties. We will support where possible, any other initiatives set up by other local authorities.
- 7.3.6 St Vincent's will offer support which includes financial aid of £250 but can be increased to a maximum of £500¹ for the purpose of moving.
- 7.3.7 St Vincent's will monitor the tenants who are under occupying and overcrowding annually to ensure this information can be used to review this policy.
- 7.3.8 St Vincent's will offer where necessary the "Move in Service"² to tenants moving due to under occupation. This move in service provides services such as, minor decoration, putting up shelves, curtain rails etc.
- 7.3.9 St Vincent's will promote the use of HomeSwapper and downsizing initiatives through articles in the newsletter.

7.4 Responsibility

- 7.4.1 The Housing Services Manager is responsible for the over implementation of the policy.
- 7.4.2 The Lettings / Neighbourhood Manager is responsible for the overall authorisation for a under occupation move which includes the authorisation of any payments and liaising with the local authorities on any initiatives being set up or being monitored.
- 7.4.3 Neighbourhood Officer will provide assistant to tenants who do not have access to the internet by helping tenants to register online for HomeSwapper.
- 7.4.4 The Officer responsible for the letting will arrange access to the move in scheme if required.
- 7.4.5 Neighbourhood Officer is responsible for the assessment of the application which will include a home visit to assess the tenant's circumstances. Officer should follow the process used within the Transfer Procedure.

7.6 Eligibility

- 7.6.1 In all cases under occupation applications will not be considered where:
 - The tenant has rent arrears.
 - The tenant owes the Association any other debt, i.e. a recharge/ court costs
 - The tenant has not complied with the Tenancy Agreement in respect of maintaining the property internally, including decoration.
 - The tenant has caused nuisance within the previous 2 years.
 - The tenant has made any other significant breaches of tenancy.
 - The tenant has been in their current property less than 12 months, except in exceptional circumstances, as agreed with the Neighbourhood Manager.

8.	Appendices
8.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix 1 Equality Impact Assessment

Policy/Procedure being assessed:	Under Occupation policy
Section:	Operations General Needs

¹ Subject to budget availability

² This service is only available to under occupation tenants moving to a St Vincent's Home.

Date of assessment:	October 2011
Person (S) Responsible for assessment:	Asif Iqbal
Is this a new or existing policy?	New

1. Briefly describe the function being assessed	Policy addressing under occupation moves.		
2. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the function?	Staff, tenants		
3. Who will be consulted as part of this EIA? What types of consultation will be carried out?	Staff. customer panels		
4. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact on <u>racial groups</u> ?	Y	No	What evidence exists to support your analysis?
	e	√	Lettings made under this rule are not in any way restricted to any groups.
5. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact due to <u>gender in gender reassignment</u> ?	s	No	What evidence exists to support your analysis?
		√	Lettings made under this rule are not in any way restricted to any groups.
6. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact on <u>disabled people</u> ?	Y	No	What evidence exists to support your analysis?
	e	√	Lettings made under this rule are not in any way restricted to any groups.
7. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact due to <u>age</u> ?	s	No	What evidence exists to support your analysis?
	√		Certain lettings maybe restricted due to local lettings policies.
8. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact due to <u>sexuality</u> ?	Y	No	What evidence exists to support your analysis?
	e	√	Lettings made under this rule are not in any way restricted to any groups.
9. <u>Could</u> the function have a differential impact due to <u>religion or belief</u> ?	s	No	What evidence exists to support your analysis?

		√	Lettings made under this rule are not in any way restricted to any groups.				
10. <u>Could the function have a differential impact due to any other protected or vulnerable characteristics including marriage or civil partnerships, pregnancy or maternity?</u>	Y e s	No	What evidence exists to support your analysis?				
	√		Lettings on certain schemes maybe restricted due to children not being allowed under 10.				
<p>If the answer is NO to <u>all</u> questions 4-10 and no differential treatment has been found there is no requirement for a full Equality Impact Assessment. Please go back regularly and review the cycle.</p> <p>If the answer is YES to any of the questions 4-10 please continue to question 11</p>							
11. In what areas could the differential impact identified in 4-9 be considered to be an adverse impact in this function? (Please tick if yes)	Other protected characteristics X (pregnancy)	Race	Gender	Disability	Age x	Sexuality	Religion /belief
12. What solutions will be introduced to overcome these adverse impacts?	<p>Pregnancy – We have properties that maybe more suited to people with younger children. We can also look at relaxing some of the criteria for young children in apartment. Trail being carried out on Rochdale Road properties.</p> <p>Age: offer accommodation which available to people outside the local lettings policy restrictions. Ensure local lettings policy are documented and reasons given for relevant policy.</p>						
13. In what areas could the differential impact identified in 4-9 be considered to be a positive impact in this function? (please tick if yes)	Other protected characteristics	Race	Gender	Disability	Age	Sexuality	Religion /belief
14. What strategies will be introduced to safeguard and spread these positive impacts?							
15. Which Action Plans have these solutions/strategies been transferred into?	Allocations Policy Local Lettings Policy						

Signed off by (Director):

Date:.....