

	<h2>Lettings Policy</h2>
<p>Policy statement</p>	<p>Paradigm Housing Group ('Paradigm') supports Local Authorities (LAs) with their strategic housing functions and their duties to meet identified local housing needs.</p> <p>Paradigm does not manage its own housing waiting list and allocates its general needs homes (new build and re-let), some supported housing schemes and temporary accommodation owned or managed by Paradigm through Choice-based lettings and direct nominations in line with Local Authority agreements.</p>
<p>Objective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure lettings are fair and run in a transparent and efficient manner • To minimise the period properties are empty • To make the most effective use of our stock.
<p>Policy statement</p>	<p>Local Authority Nominations (Tenancy Offer)</p> <p>Paradigm works closely with local authorities in its areas of operation to meet local housing need.</p> <p>Paradigm will enter into a nomination agreement with each local authority in its areas of operation. These agreements will be reviewed every five years unless otherwise agreed with the local authority.</p> <p>Paradigm does not manage its own waiting list, letting most homes through providing nomination rights to local authorities.</p> <p>Paradigm's nomination agreements provide for 100% local authority nomination at first letting and generally 75% for all true voids thereafter. Any variations for these subsequent lettings will be set out in the nominations agreement which will have been agreed with each local authority.</p> <p>The majority of nominations will be made via Choice Based Lettings (CBL) and properties will be advertised using the local authorities CBL system.</p> <p>There is a very small minority of local authorities who nominate tenants to Paradigm directly without advertising the property through a CBL system.</p> <p>The nominating local authority sets the criteria for an applicant's eligibility for a Paradigm property.</p> <p>Local lettings</p> <p>In certain circumstances as listed below, Paradigm will operate a local lettings plan alongside the nominations process. This is to ensure that we create well balanced mixed communities.</p> <p>The following examples will be taken into account for any local lettings plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as part of the planning process for new builds e.g. If there's a high number of 1 or 2 bed properties which could lead to a higher concentration of vulnerable tenants in a small area which does not reflect the mixed communities Paradigm want to achieve • where there are restrictions, obligations or other requirements set out as conditions in planning permissions or associated agreements (e.g. section 106)

- where there are concerns about the density of development that impact demographics, socio-economic factors and residents right to quiet enjoyment of their home including and where there are concerns about anti-social behaviour,
- to maximise occupancy and make the best use of our stock where we may have under or over occupation.

Sensitive lets

The Local Authority will be asked if a property can be offered via a sensitive letting when it has become vacant following repossession of a property for severe breach of tenancy that has caused extreme disruption to the near neighbours and/or the surrounding community.

A sensitive letting approach is adopted at the discretion of the local authority and would mean that a household with significant vulnerabilities and/or a history of tenancy management difficulties may not be prioritised for the vacancy.

A sensitive let is designed to assist in creating sustainable and cohesive communities by letting a vacancy to a household to redress the balance of the community.

Neighbourhood Officers will recommend a sensitive letting for a vacant property, to the Lettings and Allocations Officer. They would seek approval from the Lettings and Allocations Manager who would approach the Local Authority for their agreement prior to advertising the vacancy.

Signing up or letting to a new tenant

Prior to signing up a new tenant, Lettings and Allocations Officers will carry out pre tenancy assessments and will check for previous anti- social behaviour (ASB), previous evictions of former tenants evicted by a possession order, or rent arrears owed to Paradigm.

A risk assessment will be obtained by Lettings and Allocations Officers from the local authority (and which has been provided to them by Public Protection England) to determine the suitability of the nomination for the property and taking into account the risk to the public of any nominees with unspent convictions. These risk assessments will be kept on the housing management system in line with data protection legislation.

Where a proposed tenant has not been previously nominated by the local authority or where this cannot be established and in cases such as mutual exchange or nomination from a charity, Lettings and Allocations Officers will undertake a Right to Rent check at sign up, which is verified by the Lettings and Allocations Manager and is recorded on the housing management system.

Refusing nominations

Paradigm reserves the right to decline nominations in accordance with the provisions in its nomination agreements and the circumstances below:

- The proposed tenant has been evicted from, or has abandoned a previous tenancy as a result of a tenancy breach and/or rent arrears
- The proposed tenant has an existing debt with Paradigm and will take over two years from the new tenancy start date to repay at any agreed rate
- If the proposed tenant has not maintained a repayment agreement for at least 6 months prior to nomination with any landlord (including Paradigm as a former tenant)

- The proposed tenant has an otherwise unsatisfactory tenancy history, for example, anti-social behaviour, failure to provide access or poor property condition
- The affordability assessment indicates the property rent and service charges are not affordable for the proposed applicant
- A risk assessment by Public Protection England identifies that housing the proposed tenant in the property poses a serious risk to the safety and well-being of themselves, staff and / or neighbours and that risk cannot be mitigated or managed
- The proposed tenant is a potentially dangerous offender and, following a risk assessment through an appropriate agency (for example, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements [MAPPA], Probation, Police, Social Services), Paradigm is not satisfied that an appropriate level of support and/or monitoring can be put in place to manage or mitigate the risk
- The property is too small for the household and will be statutorily overcrowded
- The identity, and/or the 'Right to Rent' status for proposed tenants and all adult occupiers who are not nominated by a local authority under nomination agreements, have not been verified prior to sign up
- The proposed tenant, local authority or support provider has failed to provide the required information in support of their application or upon providing this information demonstrating that support needs are not currently being met.

All refusals are assessed by the Lettings and Allocations Officers and referred to Lettings and Allocations Manager for approval and are recorded on the housing management system.

Internal tenancy offers

Paradigm retains nomination rights of up to 25% of relets, subject to the nominations agreement with the relevant local authority.

These direct lettings enable us to make the best use of our housing stock.

Circumstances in which we will use direct lettings will include the following:

- Moving a qualifying successor / an assignee to a more suitable accommodation upon the death of the tenancy holder.
- Lets in accordance with our Tenure Policy on issuing discretionary tenancies (e.g. allowing 'succession' to someone who does not have a statutory or contractual right to succeed).
- Internal Transfers (known operationally as Management Moves) as per Management Move guidance.

One offer will be made from across Paradigm's available stock which will reasonably and practically meet the needs of the applicant. The offer will take into account tenure, size, floor level requirements, disability requirements and affordability. The offer will also take into account the applicant's requirements in terms of location, where this is relevant to the reason for moving.

Void properties

Where a property becomes void, Lettings and Allocations Officers will check eligible tenants on the Management Move list to relet the property.

Where the Management Move criteria has not been met, the usual nomination process via the local authority will apply.

For any void properties which have been adapted (i.e. wetrooms, stairlifts) and have

not been let through the Management Move criteria, the Lettings and Allocations Officers will ensure that the local authority advertises the property as being adapted.

Tenancy type

The type of tenancy issued by Paradigm may be influenced by a number of factors including:

- the type / purpose of the property to be occupied
- the type of tenancy, if any, held immediately prior to the new tenancy being granted
- restrictions arising from existing nomination agreements, planning consents, deed title or funding arrangements used to provide the accommodation

The full range of tenancies granted is detailed in our [Tenure Policy](#). Each tenant is issued with their own tenancy agreement containing the terms and conditions associated with their tenancy.

Paradigm will offer a tenancy on the basis of who is nominated on the application, if this is checked and found to be incorrect we will refer back to the Local Authority. There are some specific schemes where sole occupancy is a condition of the tenancy i.e. Housing Interaction Trust (HIT) and One Recovery Bucks (ORB) properties

For incoming tenants who are under 18, Paradigm will grant a contractual tenancy which will convert to an Assured Shorthold Tenancy once the tenant is 18.

The tenancy will be held in trust by a guarantor e.g. the local authority, support agency or a family member who is next of kin with evidence of legal rights until they reach 18.

A licence agreement will be used where the tenant is not being given exclusive use of the premises.

Private Sector Leasing (PSL)

Paradigm will let PSL properties leased from private landlords for a period of between 2-5 years.

PSL applicants are nominated by the Local Authority and 100% of Nominations rights are with the Local Authority for the area the property is in. The PSL Team do not hold a waiting list.

Pre-tenancy checks and immigration status checks will be completed by the local authority and no rent in advance will be collected unless the incoming tenant is working.

The same refusals criteria for general needs is applicable to PSL lettings.

All properties are let on a 6 month Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST's), or non- secure tenancies granted by the nominating local authority.

Specialist Scheme Lettings

Paradigm has schemes designated for older people and hostel units providing specialist accommodation with bespoke lettings criteria. These schemes all sit within the policy provisions of our corporate lettings policy. The lettings terms i.e. age requirements particular to these schemes are identified in the relevant Lettings Statement.

Appeals

Where a Local Authority nomination of an applicant is refused by Paradigm we will

	<p>offer the applicant the opportunity to appeal in respect to that nomination and nominations to alternative Paradigm properties.</p> <p>Applicants must appeal within 7 working days of being notified of the decision to refuse their nomination. Appeals must be in writing or via email stating the specific reasons for appealing the refusal. Paradigm will not extend the 7 working day appeal deadline.</p> <p>All appeals will be acknowledged by the Area Neighbourhood Manager (ANM) within 5 working days of the appeal being received.</p> <p>The ANM for the regional area will decide on the appeal based on the information provided by the nominee when submitting the appeal and confirm in writing the outcome of their decision to the nominee within 10 working days of receiving the appeal.</p> <p>Paradigm will not hold any property vacant pending the outcome of an appeal, (unless the local authority is willing to cover the rent and other charges during the period the property is vacant)</p> <p>Unsuccessful applicants will be advised of the outcome of their appeal and whether they have the right to bid on a future Paradigm property.</p>
<p>Scope</p>	<p>This policy applies to the letting of Paradigm’s empty properties, both new build and relet, across general needs. It also applies to some supported housing schemes and temporary accommodation owned or managed by Paradigm.</p> <p>This policy does not apply to market rent or intermediate rent properties, key worker properties, other commercial lettings, leasehold and shared ownership properties or garages. Separate lettings policy statements are in place for the Lea Bridge Hostel and the Welwyn Hatfield Foyer.</p>
<p>Roles and Responsibility</p>	<p>The Executive Director - Customer is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overall responsibility for this policy. • Signing Nomination Agreements with local authorities <p>Assistant Director Customer and Neighbourhoods is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the operational implementation of this policy. • Acting as the service lead <p>Lettings and Allocations Manager is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the Lettings Team adhere to this policy. • Ensuring the Lettings and Allocation Officers receive training on which tenancies to issue • Reviewing any risk assessments where the proposed tenant may be a risk • Ensuring any refusals by the Lettings and Allocations Officers are recorded correctly and decisions applied consistently in line with the policy • Review all refusals from the Lettings and Allocations Officers • Authorising requests for sensitive lets via the local authority • Ensuring Nomination Agreements are in place with our local authorities and signed by the Executive Director – Customer and the local authority • Verifying Right to Rent checks where a proposed tenant has not been nominated by a local authority or via choice based lettings system <p>Area Neighbourhood Managers are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring their Area Housing Teams are fully trained on this policy. Acknowledge all appeals within 5 working days on refused nominees and Management Moves • Determine outcome of appeal and notify appellant within 5 working days • Notify the Lettings and Allocations Manager of the appeal and the determination

	<p>The Lettings and Allocations Officers are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring each let is carried out in accordance with this policy • Deciding if a nomination is refused based on this policy’s guidelines • Issuing the correct tenancy at sign up of a property and saving the tenancy agreement on our housing management system • Facilitating viewings of properties • Completing all pre tenancy checks including a Right to Rent check where necessary. These are all recorded on the housing management system. • Obtaining a Public Protection England risk assessment where applicable and recorded on the housing management system. • Ensuring the management move list is reviewed for any suitable moves before advertising the property with the local authority. • Preparing the advert and ensuring its accurate, and complies with the requirements of any nomination agreement • To liaise with the Tenancy Intervention and Enforcement team where a tenant’s support needs have been identified at sign up • Conducting and facilitating viewings either virtually or accompanied with the nominated tenants. • Completing the comprehensive sign up checklist • Requesting a sensitive let from the local authority once this has been approved the Lettings and Allocations Manager • Carrying out Affordability assessments as part of the pre tenancy checks • Ensuring planning restrictions on S106 lets are complied with prior to letting the property <p>Neighbourhood Managers are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifying customers’ applications and approving or declining their addition to the Management Move list <p>Neighbourhood Officers are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring they complete the pre lettings call prior to the property being let. • Completing the customer profile questionnaire and uploading to the housing management system prior to sign up • Completing CORE form after sign up • Identifying when a sensitive let may be needed and advising the Lettings and Allocations Officers • Reviewing the Management Move list quarterly
<p>Monitoring / Reporting and Assurance Controls</p>	<p>Nomination agreements are drafted by the local authority and are agreed in conjunction with the Lettings and Allocations Manager, have legal oversight and following consultation with The Executive Director Customer and The Policy Team.</p> <p>Once these nominations are agreed a copy of the agreement is kept on our systems. A spreadsheet is used to routinely update to show what agreements are in place, dates of agreements, when it was drafted and signed. This spreadsheet also indicates when a nominations agreement needs reviewing.</p> <p>The Lettings and Allocations Manager will review Power BI data which show all the lets on a daily basis.</p> <p>The Lettings and Allocations Manager will review and revise any nominations agreements where required.</p> <p>Shortlisting of the nominees is completed by the local authority. The Lettings and Allocation Officers are only given the details from the local authority of the highest priority nominee.</p>

	<p>In the majority of our local authorities the Lettings and Allocations Officers will use the local authority nominee system (e.g. Locata) which requires evidence that the highest priority nominee has been offered the property.</p> <p>Where a nominee is refused a property by Paradigm, Lettings and Allocations Officers will use the local authority nominee system (e.g. Locata) to record reasons for refusal for the property.</p> <p>Lettings and Allocations officers will carry out all pre tenancy checks using a pre tenancy checklist.</p> <p>Lettings and Allocations Officers will carry out Right to Rent checks where necessary.</p> <p>Neighbourhood Officers complete pre tenancy calls to ensure tenants understand their tenancy agreement responsibilities and answer any questions the tenant may have.</p> <p>All nomination refusals are audited by the Lettings and Allocations Manager.</p> <p>Rent in advance is collected at sign up to ensure income is collected from residents and they can sustain their tenancies.</p> <p>Payment plans are put into place following sign up by the Rent Recovery team to ensure residents are four weeks in advance.</p> <p>CORE forms are completed on all new lets by the Neighbourhood Officer pre tenancy sign up.</p> <p>CORE forms are input into the housing management system. A report is then produced quarterly which compares the number of lettings against the number of CORE forms completed.</p> <p>CORE forms are routinely monitored to ensure there is no missing data. NROSH+ will send emails if any data is missing.</p> <p>Tenancies will be issued in accordance with our Tenure Policy. Neighbourhood Officers and Lettings and Allocations Officers will receive training on the correct tenancies to issue.</p> <p>New Tenancies are checked weekly by the Lettings and Allocations Manager to ensure the correct Tenancy agreement has been issued and the rent amount on the Tenancy agreement is correct and all saved on the system.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Manager will review and verify all applications to agree or refuse acceptance to the Management Move list.</p> <p>The Management Move list is reviewed quarterly by the housing officers to ensure applications still meet criteria.</p> <p>The number of Management Moves is reported on by the Lettings and Allocations Manager and reported to Assistant Director Customer and Neighbourhoods quarterly.</p> <p>Mandatory annual rent and right to rent training is given to all Lettings and Allocations officers and records are kept on the learning management system.</p>
<p>Cross References</p>	<p>The Lettings Policy links to several other Paradigm policies and strategies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenure Policy • Rent Recovery Policy • Tenancy Management Policy • Void Standard

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PSL Lettings Statement
Policy Owner	Executive Director – Customer
Prepared by	Lettings and Allocations Manager
Approved by	Executive Board
Effective date	October 2022
Review date	March 2025
Version control	V3 supersedes v2 dated March 2022

Record of Amendments			
Date	Version	Approved By	Details of Amendments
March 2022	V2	Executive Board	Review of policy to take into account Customer restructure and rationalising scheme specific lettings statements
October 2022	V3	Executive Board	<p>The only change to the policy is the inclusion of the clause:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the proposed tenant has an otherwise unsatisfactory tenancy history, for example, anti-social behaviour, failure to provide access or poor property condition

