

WATMOS COMMUNITY HOMES

HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME

1. Introduction

1.1 This document explains how the WATMOS Group (WATMOS Community Homes and eight Tenant Management Organisations) manages its Housing Register and how available homes are allocated from the Register.

2. Who can register for a home with WATMOS?

2.1 The following applicants are eligible to join the WATMOS Housing Register:

- Applicants over the age of 18 years living within the UK who are citizens of an EEA country or have indefinite leave to remain in the UK.

- Applicants who are 16-18 years of age if they are pregnant, have a dependant child, or are married. Applicants will need a guarantor; for example a Social Worker, friend or relative, who is over the age of 18 years. The guarantor will be required to complete a guarantee form prior to the applicant signing for a tenancy.

- Applicants in H.M. Forces.

- WATMOS tenants whose existing tenancy has been maintained for at least 12 months.

3. Who cannot register for a home with WATMOS?

3.1 The following are not eligible to join the WATMOS Housing Register:

- **Excluded Applicants** – Applicants excluded from the Housing Register based on the criteria set out in the Associations ‘Discretionary Housing Policy’ (attached at Appendix 5).

- **Applicants able to secure their own housing** – Applicants who are financial able to meet their own housing needs may not be eligible to register for a home with WATMOS. Applicants will not automatically be eligible to register if their circumstances include either of the following:

Singles/Childless Couples

- A. Total annual household income of over £27,039*
- B. Total household savings of over £10,815*

Families with Dependent Children

- A. Total annual household income of over £37,855*
- B. Total household savings of over £16,223*

Applicants Over 60 Years of Age

A. Total savings or equity of over £100,000*

*These financial limits apply from 1st April 2008 and are uplifted annually by the inflation rate used to determine Association's rent increases.

If an applicant breaches these limits, a detailed assessment will be undertaken to determine the applicant's ability to secure their own housing.

- **Owner Occupiers** - Owner occupiers are not eligible to register apart from applicants over the age of 60 who have total savings or equity of less than £100,000.
- **Asylum Seekers** - Section 161 of the Housing Act 1996 Part 6 specifies that people subject to immigration controls, within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, do not qualify for local authority housing unless regulations state to the contrary. There are current alternative arrangements regarding this group of people.
- **Non EEA nationals** - Applicants who are non EEA nationals* can only be accepted if they have leave to remain in the UK.

*EEA nationals are citizens of the following European Union states:

Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Eire, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the UK (England, Scotland, Wales, N. Ireland) with the addition of Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

4. Areas of choice

4.1 The WATMOS Group is made up of eight clearly defined estates in various part of Walsall each run by a Tenant Management Organisation (TMO). Housing applicants can choose to be considered for one or more of these areas.

4.2 The eight TMOs are as follows:

- Avenues TMO, Brownhills
- Burrowes Street TMO, Birchills
- Chuckery TMO, Paddock
- Delves East TMO, Delves
- Delves West TMO, Delves
- Leamore TMO, Leamore
- Sandbank TMO, Bloxwich

- Twin Crescents TMO, Pelsall

5. Property Types

- 5.1 Property eligibility is dependent on household size. The definition of property type eligibility based on household size is set out at Appendix 1.
- 5.2 Some TMOs operate local lettings rules regulating property type eligibility on their estates (e.g. age limits for particular blocks of flats or 'no-dogs' policies). Where a TMO operates local lettings rules these are published and made available in the TMO office.
- 5.3 All houses adapted for the needs of a person with disabilities will be allocated to applicants from the register of applicants requiring adapted properties maintained by Walsall Adapted Housing Service.
- 5.4 For the purposes of property eligibility a 'family' is defined as a household in which there is at least one dependent child under the age of 16 years.
- 5.5 For the purposes of eligibility for flats and maisonettes it will be assumed that a pregnant applicant's baby is born once medical confirmation has been received. For eligibility for houses a copy of the birth certificate of the baby once born will need to be provided.

6. The Housing Register 'banding' system

- 6.1 The Housing Register is divided into three bands:
- Band A – Housing applicants with multiple housing need factors.
 - Band B – Housing applicants with at least one housing need factor.
 - Band C – Housing applicants with no housing need factors.
- 6.2 In addition, any applicant can appear in a fourth band if they volunteer on a regular basis at one of the Group's TMOs:
- Band D – The active volunteer band.
- 6.3 The housing needs factors used to place a housing application into one of these bands are set out at Appendix 2.
- 6.4 The eligibility criteria for Band D are set out at Appendix 3.
- 6.5 All applicants are placed in a band in date order based on their date of registration.
- 6.6 If circumstances change applicants may move bands:

- If moving up a band, the applicant will be placed at the bottom of the higher band while retaining their old place in the lower band.
- If moving down a band, the applicant will be placed in the lower band in date order based on their registration date.

6.7 In exceptional circumstances, a vacant dwelling may be withdrawn from the Allocations Schedule where there is a need to house an emergency case (see section 9.3).

7. Local Authority Nominations

7.1 WATMOS has a formal agreement with the Local Authority to help it house people who are homeless or who have some other urgent need. This means that we offer one in every four available homes to a Council nomination (Primary Nominations). In addition, we try to ensure that at least another one in every four available homes is allocated to an applicant regarded as a priority by the Local Authority (Secondary Nominations).

8. How are available homes allocated from the Housing Register?

8.1 The Group's banding system enables the allocation of available homes in a fair and balanced way while giving overall priority to people with the greatest need. For twenty available homes, allocations are made as follows:

Council nominations -	5
Band A -	6
Band B -	5
Band C -	2
Band D -	2

8-2 The allocation of available homes is spread across the four bands in a structure way. A schedule of allocation for twenty available homes is set out at Appendix 4.

9. Special Cases

9.1 Where applicants believe that they have an urgent need for housing due to special circumstances these will be considered by the Housing Services Manager on their merits. Examples may include:

- Domestic violence
- Harassment/threats of violence
- Need to give or receive support
- Poor housing conditions

9.2 Reports will be prepared by TMO employees and presented to the Housing Services Manager for decision.

9.3 Where the grounds of a special case are agreed, the applicant will be placed in Band A or B depending on their other circumstances. In exceptional 'emergency' cases an applicant may be offered a home directly without the need to wait within the banding system.

10. Suspended applications

10.1 Housing applications may be suspended in the following circumstances:

- applicants who are currently unable to move at present or who do not wish to move for the time being but want their application registered for the future
- applicants who have not responded to written communication or have failed to attend an interview with that TMO committee or be in when a home visit was to be conducted. Applicants will be suspended from the relevant TMO list. Where applicants have been suspended from the lists of 3 TMOs they will be suspended from the entire housing register by WATMOS and their applications will be formally reviewed.
- applicants who have refused an offer of accommodation. Applicants will be suspended from the relevant TMO list. Where applicants have been suspended from the lists of 3 TMOs they will be suspended from the entire housing register by WATMOS and their applications will be formally reviewed.
- applicants with rent arrears from an existing or former WATMOS, Council or partner RSL tenancy.

An application will remain suspended for a 12 month period from the date of suspension (except where the applicant has requested the suspension). After the 12 months has expired the applicant can ask WATMOS to make the application live again. If there has been no such request from a suspended applicant, their application will be cancelled in the Review of the Housing Register taking place after the 12 month suspension period. Where a suspended applicant is made live, the live date will be from the date the suspension is lifted and not from the original application date (except where the applicant has requested the suspension)

11. Cancelled applications

11.1 Housing applicants will be cancelled in the following circumstances:

- If the applicant is re-housed by WATMOS Community Homes.

- If the applicant fails to respond to an application review letter (see section 13).
- If the applicant refuses three offers of suitable accommodation.
- If the applicant meets the criteria set out in the Association's Discretionary Housing Policy (see Appendix 5).
- If the applicant's circumstances change and no longer meets the eligibility criteria set out in section 2.
- If the applicant's circumstances change and now comes within one of the categories of person not eligible to register set out in section 3.

12. Excluding applications from the Housing Register

12.1 Housing applicants may be excluded from the WATMOS Housing Register in the following circumstances:

- Individuals or households who have been evicted by a previous landlord due to antisocial or antisocial related criminal behaviour in the 2 years prior to the application date.
- Individuals or households who have a current Anti Social Behaviour Order or Anti Social Behaviour Injunction, or have been the subject of one in the 2 years prior to the application date.
- Individuals who have unspent criminal convictions where the offence or behaviour is of an antisocial nature, unless they have been nominated by the Local Authority with an appropriate support package in place.
- Individuals with sufficient equity/income to purchase their own accommodation and maintain mortgage repayments, except to properties which are proving to be difficult to let.
- Individuals aged under 16 years.
- Individuals aged under 18 years unless there is a rent guarantor and a Rent Guarantee Form has been signed.
- The above is not an exhaustive list and other circumstances may result in an applicant being excluded from the waiting list where authorised by the Housing Services Manager.
- TMOs may also exclude applicants from the register in accordance with their local lettings policies, which at some TMOs place restrictions on

applicants below specified ages and may specify whether children or pets are allowed

- 12.2 The Group's policy on exclusions is set out in detail in the 'Discretionary Housing Policy' attached at Appendix 5.

13. The Review of the Register

- 13.1 A review of the Housing Register is undertaken twice a year. All applicants subject to review are asked, in writing, to confirm that their circumstances have not changed and that they still wish to remain on the Housing Register.
- 13.2 Applicants are advised that failure to respond within 28 days will result in their application being removed from the Housing Register.

14. Complaints and appeals

- 14.1 Applicants who are unhappy with the way their housing application has been dealt with or with any decision made relating to the application are able to take their complaint/appeal through the WATMOS Compliments, Comments and Complaints Process. Leaflets explaining the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy are available in all Group offices and on the WATMOS Website (www.watmos.org.uk).

Property Type Eligibility

	Single Person	Childless Couple	Family One Child	Family Two Children	Family 3+ Children
Bedsit	✓				
1 Bed Flat	✓	✓			
2 Bed Flat	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2 Bed Maisonette		✓	✓	✓	
3 Bed Maisonette			✓	✓	
2 Bed House			✓	✓	
3 Bed House			✓	✓	✓
3 Bed Parlour/ 4 Bed House				✓	✓
5 Bed House					✓

HOUSING NEED FACTORS

No.	Need factor
1.	Bedroom Deficiency -Applicants who are lacking a bedroom where they are requesting and are eligible for larger accommodation. This assumes that applicants need one bedroom for each person or couple. These points can also be awarded when an applicant provides proof that a child is expected. There is no difference between flats and houses for calculating bedroom deficiency. One need factor for each room deficient.
2.	Lacking Amenities - Applicants who lack a hot water supply, an inside toilet or a bathroom. Two needs factors.
3.	Sharing Amenities - Applicants who share a hot water supply, an inside toilet a kitchen or bathroom with another household. One need factor.
4.	Unavoidable Mixing of Sexes - Applicants where two children of opposite sexes who are both over 10 years old have to share a bedroom. One need factor.
5.	Families Living Apart - Joint applicants with dependent children living apart due to their housing situation. Two needs factors.
6.	Joint Applicants Living Apart - Joint applicants living apart due to their housing circumstances. One need factor.
7.	Temporary Accommodation - Applicants living in a hostel or some other form of temporary accommodation. Two needs factors.
8.	Urgent Medical Need - Applicant with an assessed urgent medical need. Two needs factors.
9.	Medical Need - Applicant with an assessed medical need. One need factor.
10.	Special Cases - Applicants will an assessed special need. Two needs factors.
10.	Clearance Cases - Applicants who have to be re-housed due to demolition or redevelopment. Two needs factors.

Where evidence exists proving that an applicant has done something deliberately to worsen their circumstances, the needs factor to which this relates will be disregarded for the purposes of band allocation.

ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ACTIVE VOLUNTEER BAND (BAND D)

What is it?

The Active Volunteer Band is an additional band on the WATMOS Housing Register specifically for applicants who demonstrate their willingness to be involved members of the WATMOS community. This provides an enhanced opportunity to be housed by WATMOS. We recognise that our future success will be dependent on new tenants playing an active role in their TMO. We wish to encourage this involvement through positive incentives.

How do I qualify?

In order to be included in the Active Volunteer Band you must participate in an activity at your nominated TMO for at least three consecutive months. This will mean that your application appears in two bands (the co-operator Band and the band determined by your housing needs).

In order to remain in the Active Volunteer Band you must maintain involvement of at least 2 hours per month on an on-going basis.

Activities can include

- ✓ Attending management committee meetings
- ✓ Attending sub committee meetings
- ✓ Helping to produce newsletters
- ✓ Helping deliver leaflets
- ✓ Gardening
- ✓ Fundraising
- ✓ Helping at events
- ✓ Reception duties

The possibilities are endless. All you need to do is agree the activities you wish to be involved in with the TMO Chair.

When you start to get involved you will be given a form to record your involvement. Each time you are involved in an agreed activity ask the TMO Chair or Manager to sign your form and update your application.

You can get involved in the TMO nearest to you, not just the area you would like to move to!

For more information please contact: (INSERT NAME)

Allocations Schedule

Allocation Number	Band/Nomination
1.	Nomination
2.	A
3.	A
4.	B
5.	Nomination
6.	A
7.	B
8.	C
9.	Nomination
10.	A
11.	B
12.	D
13.	Nomination
14.	A
15.	C
16.	D
17.	Nomination
18.	A
19.	B
20.	B

DISCRETIONARY HOUSING POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 WATMOS Community Homes aims to deliver good quality services to its tenants and other residents, working with the community and partner agencies to ensure the long term success and stability of its TMOs and estates.
- 1.2 WATMOS may exercise its right to exclude or suspend an applicant from its register or to refuse a nomination where there are concerns about the applicant's ability to conduct a tenancy in an appropriate manner.
- 1.3 Before making an offer of accommodation to applicants from our waiting list and Walsall Council nominations, WATMOS Community Homes will consider all available information and carry out any necessary checks regarding the applicant or nomination.
- 1.4 Each case will be judged on its own merits taking into account all information known about the applicant. Applicants will be notified in writing of the decision to exclude or suspend. All exclusions and suspensions will be authorised by the Housing Services Manager (Appendix 1).

2. Exclusions

- 2.1 The following may be excluded from the waiting list:
 - 2.1.1 Individuals or households who have been evicted by a previous landlord due to antisocial or antisocial related criminal behaviour in the 2 years prior to the application date.
 - 2.1.2 Individuals or households who have a current Anti Social Behaviour Order or Anti Social Behaviour Injunction, or have been the subject of one in the 2 years prior to the application date.
 - 2.1.3 Individuals who have unspent criminal convictions where the offence or behaviour is of an antisocial nature, unless they have been nominated by the Local Authority with an appropriate support package in place.
 - 2.1.4 Individuals with sufficient equity/income to purchase their own accommodation and maintain mortgage repayments, except to properties which are proving to be difficult to let.

2.1.5 Individuals aged under 16 years.

2.1.6 Individuals aged under 18 years unless there is a rent guarantor and a Rent Guarantee Form has been signed (Appendix 2).

2.2 The above is not an exhaustive list and other circumstances may result in an applicant being excluded from the waiting list where authorised by the Housing Services Manager.

2.3 TMOs may also exclude applicants from the register in accordance with their local lettings policies, which at some TMOs place restrictions on applicants below specified ages and may specify whether children or pets are allowed. For details see Appendix 3.

3. Suspensions

3.1 The following may be suspended from the waiting list:

3.1.1 Individuals with outstanding former tenancy arrears or outstanding housing debts with WATMOS Community Homes or another landlord, in excess of 4 week's rent, *except* where regular payments have been made for a continuous period of six months, and a written agreement has been signed to continue to make regular payments. WATMOS will suspend the housing application but actively encourage the applicant to make an agreement with the former landlord to clear the debt.

3.1.2 Existing tenants of WATMOS Community Homes who are requesting a transfer to another property will be suspended if they have current rent arrears. Except in cases where an emergency transfer is required and has been authorised by the Housing Services Manager, the application will remain suspended until the tenant has a clear rent account.

4. Information Sharing and Data Protection

4.1 In signing the application form for housing, the applicant gives WATMOS Community Homes permission to carry out background checks and to share personal information with relevant agencies and other social landlords in order to assist the applicant in the provision of suitable accommodation.

4.2 In carrying out background checks we may contact:

- Previous landlords for a reference

- The police or the Anti Social Behaviour Unit to carry out a check for unspent criminal convictions
- Probation Services
- Social Services
- Education Departments of local authorities

5 Criminal convictions

5.1 WATMOS Community Homes will only ask an applicant about unspent convictions (Appendix 4) in line with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. A previous conviction will not mean that the applicant is automatically excluded. An applicant will only be excluded where there is reason to believe that the applicant is likely to pose a risk to their household, neighbours or the wider community. The following are considered by WATMOS Community Homes to pose such a risk:

5.1.1 A record of repetitive car-crime, burglary or other criminal damage

5.1.2 Drug related offences

5.1.3 Offences against children

5.1.4 Offences of a violent nature including threats of violence and domestic abuse

5.1.5 Arson and other willful damage caused to property

5.1.6 Other criminal offences that may have a relation to community matters

6 Advice

6.1 Excluded applicants will be offered advice regarding their housing options.

7 Appeals

7.1 All applicants can appeal against the decision to exclude them from the waiting list. The appeal should be made in writing using WATMOS Community Homes' Complaints Procedure.