

Vine Housing Co-operative

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March 2003/ March 2007

Introduction

The Co-operative recognises that as a Registered Social Landlord, it has obligations to house people from outside the Co-operative in housing need as well as its own members who are seeking a transfer to alternative accommodation.

The Co-operative aims to offer 50% of all true voids to nominations from the London Borough of Lambeth, or to referrals from advice agencies or short-life housing Co-operatives.

All people housed through referrals must be on the London Borough of Lambeth housing list.

The Co-operative may also open its own waiting list from time to time to offer housing opportunities to people with a local connection through residence or work. People who apply to be on the Co-operative's waiting list must also be on the London Borough of Lambeth's housing list (See the Community lettings policy, Agreed June 2002).

The Co-operative recognises that it has a limited stock, and will also advise members of alternative housing options when it is unable to provide suitable housing itself.

N.B. In these documents, Co-operative members wishing to move to another property are considered to be "transfers". People applying from outside the Co-operative are considered to be "applicants".

Allocations, Transfer and Appeals Procedure

1. How the allocation or transfer procedure starts

1.1 The Allocation or transfer procedure starts when

- a. the tenants of a shared unit write to Membership, telling them in advance of a vacancy;
- b. Housing Management subgroup write to Membership, telling them of a 'Notice to Quit';
- c. Development subgroup write to Membership, telling them that work is due to start on a house in 7 months time;
- d. When Housing Management inform Membership of a vacancy;
- e. When Membership recommend reallocation of a unit as a result of a Co-op member losing/not taking up their allocation or transfer;

The Membership sub-group shall then convene a meeting within 7 days of being notified of the pending vacant property to consider the position of the empty property. This is referred to as the '**initial meeting**'. The property shall be advertised to all members as outlined below.

1.2 At the initial Membership meeting, 2 members of Membership subgroup are chosen to organise an Allocation or transfer, and to recruit an **Allocations Committee** of at least three Co-op members who are not members of Membership, from a panel who have undergone Allocations Training. (In an emergency any Co-op member (preferably with previous Allocations experience) may be drafted on to the Committee). A schedule is then agreed for advertising the allocation or transfer, a date set for handing in new transfer forms and for members already on the transfer list to amend their forms. If necessary, a special Membership meeting can be held to do this.

One of the 2 members of Membership organising the allocation must be an experienced member of the Co-op who is familiar with Co-op policy. Their role is to ensure that procedure is properly carried out. They are known as the **Designated Members**.

2. How Membership advertise allocations

2.1 The 2 **designated members** of Membership send every member of the Co-op a separate Notice advertising the vacancy. Co-op members will be kept informed of possible vacancies/transfers via the MC minutes. All vacancies and allocations will be advertised in the MC minutes.

The Allocation Notice contains:

- a) details of the houses or flats that are to be allocated, the size of the property and the recommended number of occupants, as described on the Co-op's agreed list of properties, and the date they could be occupied.
- b) the names and addresses of the two Membership members organising the transfer, who will interview members and offer support in completing and submitting new transfer forms or updating their transfer forms.
- c) the closing date for completed transfer forms and amendments to transfer forms to be handed in. This should be 14 days from the time the Notices are sent out.

Before the Allocation meeting:

- a) Members of the Membership group interview applicants and offer assistance in filling in the forms. They also point out the "Obligations of the Tenant" in the Tenancy agreement, especially Clause 5.18 which requires tenants to seek the permission of 'all other tenants of the Co-operative affected' if they want to keep a pet.

- b) If there is only one applicant for a property, and Membership are satisfied that the conditions are fulfilled, the applicant may be allocated without an Allocations Committee meeting.
- c) If no Co-op members apply a notice is then sent to all those on the waiting list (i.e. adult children of Co-op members and those people with close links to the community who have been accepted on to the list).
- d) If there is no suitable applicant Membership inform Lambeth Housing and the usual referral agencies. (membership holds a list of these).
- e) The Allocation Panel will meet within 7 days of the deadline for handing in of transfer or allocation forms (as appropriate) and amended transfer forms.

3. **How Membership organise an Allocation/Transfer Meeting**

3.1 Membership sets up an **Allocations Committee** of at least three Co-op members, selected from a panel who are not members of Membership, and who have undergone Allocations Training. (In an emergency any Co-op member (preferably with previous Allocations experience) may be drafted on to the Committee). One of these is nominated as **Convenor**.

The Convenor of this Allocation Committee contacts:

- a) a member of Housing Management and/or Finance subgroup who sends up-to-date information relating to arrears of rent and any other payments due to the Co-operative, and bills (in the case of shared houses) to the Allocation Meeting;
- b) a member of Membership subgroup who sends up-to-date information relating to memberships under review to the Allocation Meeting. This is usually the Membership Secretary or the Attendance Monitor. If any applicants are under review the Convenor of the Allocations Committee is informed immediately.
- c) a Feedback Person, who is not a member of Vine HC but is an experienced member of another housing Co-op, or an independent housing consultant. (Membership keep a list of suitable people on file.) The Feedback Person is sent a copy of the Allocations and Appeals Policy and Procedure and a fee for their expenses is agreed. They do not vote at the Allocation Meeting, and their role is to check calculations of points etc and ensure that these are consistent, and that the Co-operative's policies have been followed
- d) Applicants are informed of the names of those invited to be on the Allocation Committee and have the right to appeal against any invited member. This right shall be exercised no more than three times.

4. **The Allocation Committee**

4.1 For self-contained units and unoccupied shared units.

The Allocation Committee includes:

- a) a minimum of 3 Co-op members

b) a non-voting Feedback Person

4.2 The 2 **designated members** from Membership interview the applicants and offer support to Co-op members to complete their transfer forms or update their transfer forms.

It is the **applicant's** responsibility:

- a) to complete a transfer form at any time when they want a transfer to another Co-op property. This form shall indicate the type of property that they wish to be considered for (i.e. one bedroom, two bedroom) and any special requirements - i.e. ground floor. This form shall be given to the Membership Group and a receipt shall be given to the applicant. The applicant's name is then put on the **Transfer List**. It will be the job of the **transfer co-ordinator** of the Membership group to keep the transfer list up-dated and be responsible for the forms.
- b) When a vacancy is advertised, those on the transfer list may update their application form. Other applicants should contact the designated Membership members to get an application form and ethnic monitoring form.
- c) to arrange a meeting with designated Membership members to fill in the application form;
- d) to hand in the completed application form and ethnic monitoring form, or amendments to their existing transfer form, by the closing date given on the Allocation Notice;

4.3 If the Allocation/Transfer is for an occupied shared unit:

It is the Co-operative's policy to take account of the needs and situation in an occupied shared unit. Therefore a person/s applying to join a household will not have to undergo the standard allocation procedure, but will be interviewed and chosen by the household with the assistance of Membership. Allocation will be subject to rent/membership reports.

It is the applicant's responsibility to arrange to visit the flat/house and meet the tenants within the specified 28 day period.

5. What happens at the Allocation/Transfer Meeting: Self-contained units and unoccupied shared units

5.1 Responsibilities of members of the Allocation Committee.

5.1.1 The **Convenor** is responsible for appointing a chair and minute taker. The **Chair** is responsible for:

- a) chairing the meeting;
- b) ensuring that the policy and procedures are followed;
- c) ensuring that no anecdotal evidence is heard;
- d) promoting thorough discussion;
- e) ensuring that all points of view are heard.

5.1.2 The **minute taker** is responsible for:

- a) keeping a written record of the procedure of the meeting;
- b) keeping a written record of any decisions taken by the meeting.

- c) ensuring that the record is typed and signed by the panel members, and a copy put into a folder which should contain all the documents relevant to the allocation (see Membership Handbook for a list of these documents).

5.2 Procedure

5.2.1 Before the Allocation meeting

The **Designated Member** of Membership:

- a) is sent the ethnic monitoring forms of the members seeking transfers and keeps them separately; The forms are not seen by the Allocation Committee;
- b) sends a written report to the Allocation meeting on whether any of the members seeking transfers' memberships are under review.

If a membership is under review, and the applicant has not satisfied the **designated member** that mitigating circumstances exist, the applicant will not be considered for allocation and they will be notified in writing of this decision.

5.2.2 The member/s of **Housing Management** and/or **Finance**:

- a) send a written report/s to the meeting about whether any of the members seeking a transfer have arrears of household bills (for shared housing), rent or other payments due to the Co-operative.

If a member seeking a transfer has had more than 35 consecutive days arrears within the last six months and has not satisfied the Housing Management/Finance member that mitigating circumstances exist, the applicant will not be considered for allocation and they will be notified in writing of this decision. If the arrears are due to Housing Benefit then the tenant has to provide proof that the arrears have been chased.

For an allocation to applicants from outside the Co-operative, only applicants with an up-to-date rent payment record shall be accepted, unless any arrears can be clearly shown to be caused by a housing benefit claim awaiting processing.

5.2.3 At the Allocation meeting

The Chair of the Allocation Panel:

- a) reads out the Statement of Objectives and the Equal Opportunities Policy;
- b) reminds the Allocation Panel that they must not speculate beyond the information given by the applicants on the allocation or transfer forms (as appropriate);
- c) gets everyone present to sign a Statement of Confidentiality, and reminds them that the names of the applicants and the result of the Meeting are confidential until the whole allocation process is complete;
- d) opens the envelopes containing the transfer forms, reads out the names of the applicants and asks the members of the Allocation Committee to declare any interests.

5.2.4 The **Convenor** of the Allocation Committee then hands out interview sheets to each member of the **Committee**.

The 7 categories in which their decisions must be made are:

1. **Stress relating to present accommodation**
2. **Overcrowding**
3. **Security of tenure/Alternative housing prospects (for outside applicants)**
4. **Particular Needs relating to housing**
5. **Time spent waiting**
6. **Participation**
7. **Discretionary**

5.2.6 The Chair of the committee then explains that each applicant/ member seeking a transfer must be marked according to the information given on their allocation/transfer form. There is one score sheet per applicant/member seeking transfer which the chair will fill in after discussion with the panel.

Members who are already on the transfer list and have had their points allocated will only have them changed if they have supplied new information to support their transfer. However, the form should be checked to ensure that any time-related points are correct.

The allocation is given to the applicant/ member seeking a transfer with the highest score at the end of the meeting.

5.2.7 If members of the Allocation committee are satisfied that the information given on the application / transfer form is genuine, the members then read out their scores. Where an agreement cannot be reached a final decision shall be made by the Feedback Person

5.2.8 The Committee must also decide on a runner-up in case the person allocated decides not to take up the allocation.

5.2.9 The points scoring shall decide the allocation or transfer. If there is a tie, the applicant who has been waiting longest shall be given the property.

5.2.10 The meeting may be adjourned if it is felt necessary to get further information to clarify the points for a new transfer.

6. What happens after an Allocation meeting

6.1 The Convenor of the Allocation Committee writes to the **Designated Member** of Membership within 24 hours of the meeting informing them of the decision of the Committee.

6.2 The Designated Member writes to the applicants and informs them whether they have been successful or not. If they are successful, this is subject to appeal. The Designated Member points out that any unsuccessful candidate who wishes to appeal must do so within five days. (see Section 7 'How membership deals with appeals'). The allocation is also subject to the allocatee agreeing to fulfil all clauses of the Tenancy Agreement.

No reasons are given nor reference made to other applicants or members seeking a transfer.

The successful member must accept or turn down the allocation in writing within 5 days.

6.3 If the successful applicant is from outside the Co-op, they must accept or turn down the allocation in writing, within 5 days (by recorded delivery) of receiving the result of the Allocation Meeting.

6.4 If the person offered the property turns down the allocation, then the runner-up is allocated and notified in writing.

6.5 **In either case**, the Allocation Application and transfer forms and all other papers from the meeting are collected and kept in a safe place by Membership. All papers are destroyed by Membership, two years after the Allocation Meeting, except for transfer applications still registered with the Co-operative, which shall be returned to the transfer register.

6.6 The Convenor of the Allocation Committee informs Housing Management of the decision. The successful applicant is given the contact details of the relevant Housing Management member. Once the appeal period is up, Housing Management liaise with the successful candidate to arrange the date when the new tenancy will start and to go through the Tenancy Agreement. If the person allocated is from outside the Co-op, Membership must arrange a new members' meeting so that the allocatee has started the process of becoming a Co-op member before taking up their tenancy.

6.7 Membership report the final result of an allocation **for information** at the following Membership meeting, Management Committee meeting and General Meeting of the Co-op. Housing Management report the start of a new tenancy to the Housing Management meeting Management Committee Meeting and General Meeting.

7. **How Membership deal with Appeals**

All appeals will be heard by an Appeals co-ordinator and the feedback person from allocation meeting.

7.1 If an unsuccessful applicant or member seeking a transfer wishes to appeal against the decision of the Allocation Committee, they must write to the **designated membership member**, stating their reasons, within 5 days.

- The open right of appeal is only available to the original applicants/members seeking a transfer in an allocation.
- Information obtained in breach of confidentiality may not be used when making an appeal.
- An appeal will only be granted if errors were made in the allocation procedure which affected the outcome of the allocation decision.

7.2 The **designated member** then contacts an **appeals co-ordinator** and a panel of two other members from a panel who have undergone Allocations Training. (In an emergency any Co-op member (preferably with previous Allocations experience) may be drafted on to the Appeals panel).

7.3 **The Appeals Co-ordinator:**

- a) sets a date for the Appeal Meeting, within five days of the Appeal deadline;
- b) contacts the feedback person;
- c) tells all applicants there has been an appeal and informs them of the date of the meeting.

7.4 At the **Appeal Meeting** the members of the panel and the Feedback person sign a statement of confidentiality.

The Appeals Panel is then given all the relevant information: minutes of the Allocation Meeting; Allocation and transfer forms (as appropriate); the appeal and the report from the Feedback Person. The Appeals Panel decides either to leave the result as it stands or repeat the allocation meeting as soon as possible which is only open to the original applicants.

The **Appeals Co-ordinator** writes a report giving reasons for their decision to the **designated Membership person**.

7.5 The day after the **Appeal Meeting**, the **Appeals Co-ordinator** informs all applicants of the result of the meeting.

7.6 If the Appeals Panel finds no grounds for appeal, the allocation process is then complete. The successful applicant must accept or turn down the allocation in writing, within 5 days of receiving the result of the Appeal Meeting.

7.7 If the Appeal is successful another allocation meeting is held. The decision of this meeting is final.

8. Procedure for allocating outside applicants to occupied Shared Units

8.1 Membership screen all application forms before passing them to the relevant household.

8.2 The household discusses the application forms and informs Membership if any of the applicants are suitable.

8.3 Membership then contact suitable applicants, (visiting them at their homes if necessary) and:

- a) explain the allocation procedure;
- b) explain how the Co-op works, conditions of membership, etc;
- c) assess the housing needs of the applicant;
- d) check the applicant's rent record;
- e) arrange a date for a meeting between the applicant and the household.

8.4 A meeting takes place between the household and the applicant, who is accompanied by the Membership member.

8.5 The household informs Membership of its decision in writing, within 5 days of the meeting.

8.6 Membership then write to the applicant.

If the applicant is accepted for allocation by the household, this is reported to the next Membership meeting. Membership then recommend that the applicant goes through the membership procedure and becomes a member of the Co-op. This must be agreed at a Management Committee meeting and a General Meeting of the Co-op.

Membership will arrange twins for accepted applicants, to help their participation in the Co-op.

9. Procedure for Allocating Outside applicants (referrals) to self-contained Units

9.1 Referrals should exceed one applicant/set of applicants per unit. Membership then contact suitable applicants, (visiting them at their homes if necessary) and:

- a) explain the allocation procedure;
- b) explain how the Co-op works, conditions of membership, etc;
- c) assess the housing needs of the applicant.

9.2 Membership complete the allocation form and recruit an Allocation Committee to hold a meeting to allocate an applicant (referral) to the unit using the standard allocation procedure.

9.3 Membership then write to the applicants informing them of the result of the Allocation Meeting.

When an applicant (referral) is accepted for allocation this is reported to the next Membership meeting. Membership then recommend that the applicant goes through the membership procedure and becomes a member of the Co-op, and this must be agreed at a Management Committee meeting and a General meeting of the Co-op.

Membership will arrange twins for accepted applicants (referrals), to help their participation in the Co-op.

The Points System for internal applicants

1. Stress Relating to your Present Accommodation:

(Proof is required. The proof should be evidence that the offence has been reported to the police or similar)

Domestic Violence
Sexual, racial and other harassment

If these are sufficiently serious to have been reported to the police or similar **50 points**

If they are not reported to the police but the Co-op's Complaints Policy has been activated

20 points

Note: In both cases the Allocation Panel will need to be assured that a move will alleviate the situation (e.g. a move two doors away may not change the circumstances.)

It should be clear that whenever a tenant suffers harassment or violence a report should be made to the police and the Co-op's Complaints Policy should be activated. There are other ways of dealing with such a situation apart from a move within the Co-op

2. Physical condition of your present accommodation

Bad state of repair –*for example* leaking roof, dry rot, damp **8 points**

Poor state of repair - *for example* inadequate heating, condensation **5 points**

Note: all Co-op properties are in roughly the same condition. Tenants are expected to report any problems, major or minor to Maintenance. If a tenant claims points for a 'bad' or 'poor' state of repair, Membership should verify this with Maintenance.

3. Overcrowding

Each bedroom required above present accommodation **25 points**

Each bedroom occupied above present needs **25 points**

Note: *the phrase 'bedroom required' refers to the Co-op's own guidelines*

People are given points according to whether they share amenities with people not included on the allocation form:

Share kitchen, toilet and/or bathroom with 4 or more people (who are not on the allocation form):

10 points

Share kitchen, toilet and/or and bathroom with 1-3 people (who are not on the allocation form):

5 points

If the household applying for transfer has children: **5 more points**

Note: The group of people on the allocation form, applying as a single household, score only once. If two or more people from different properties are applying together in order to become a single household, the points are granted for the individual who scores highest

4. Particular Needs relating to Housing

(Proof is required for all three categories. *This should take the form of a doctor's letter*)

These circumstances include not only health problems, but also mental or physical disabilities or frailties suffered by you or members of your family who live with you:

Do you or a dependant, have a serious illness or disability made significantly worse by current living conditions and requiring rehousing as part of the medical treatment? If yes: **50 points**

(This claim must be accompanied by a doctor's letter stating that the condition is specifically made worse by current housing)

Do you or a dependant have an illness or disability which could be improved by a move e.g. Asthma or angina whereby you can manage in your present accommodation but the quality of life could be improved by a move. If yes: **20 points**

(This claim must be accompanied by a doctor's letter describing the condition)

Breakdown of relationship where children are involved, and the transfer applicant will have 50% custody of the children **15 points**

Breakdown of relationship where children are involved, and the transfer applicant will have less than 50% custody of the children **10 points**

5. Participation

If the applicant or one of the group of applicants (i.e. an adult member of the household or couple) is not in a subgroup (and has not been granted leave of absence or is doing a job in lieu) or has attended for less than 50% of subgroup meetings during the previous 12 months

minus 10 points

If a member is exempt, but has from time to time helped out when it is possible for them,

5 points at the panel's discretion

50 - 60% attendance at subgroup **5 points**

60 - 80% attendance at subgroups **10 points**

60% plus MC or other responsible task **20 points**

Each adult applying for a property should be awarded points for participation individually, and the points should be totalled. If a single parent is in direct competition with two adults (with or without children), the single parent should be awarded points for participation, then these should be doubled.

Note: Membership keep a record of subgroup attendance. MC and GM attendance can be ascertained from the minutes. The Convenor of the subgroup to which the applicant belongs should always be consulted, as they should be aware of the degree of participation of the applicant (i.e. possibly work between meetings make up for having missed meetings).

6. Time spent waiting for transfer

No points are awarded for this. It is used as a tie-breaker, and should take into account time spent waiting (for example in overcrowded circumstances) even if not on a formal transfer list.

7. Points that can be awarded at the panel's discretion

Extreme urgency of need relates to tenants whose ability to continue living in their accommodation is possible in the short term but who need to be rehoused as their housing circumstances are resulting in severe difficulties in day to day life. These may be circumstances that have not been specifically mentioned on this form.

Up to 10 points.

Social recommendation related to those tenants who would benefit from a move but who can manage in the existing accommodation. These may be social circumstances not mentioned on this form.

Up to 10 points

Points for external applicants

1. Stress Relating to your Present Accommodation:

(Proof is required. The proof should be evidence that the offence has been reported to the police or similar)

Domestic Violence

Sexual, racial and other harassment

If these are sufficiently serious to have been reported to the police or similar **50 points**

Otherwise **20 points**

2. Physical condition of your present accommodation

Severe state of repair - Closing Order **16 points**

Bad state of repair -leaking roof, dry rot, damp **8 points**

Poor state of repair - inadequate heating, condensation **3 points**

3. Overcrowding

Each bedroom required above present accommodation **15 points**

People are given points according to whether they share amenities with people not included on the allocation form

	Lack	Share with 4 or more people	Share with 1 to 3 people
Sink	5	3	2
Separate kitchen	2	2	1
Bath or shower	2	2	1
Inside WC	2	2	1
Outside WC		2	1

4. Security of tenure

Insecurity points are awarded if probable homelessness is through no fault of the person concerned. (e.g. points would not be awarded if insecurity is caused by rent arrears or anti-social behaviour). Only one category is allowed. (PROOF IS REQUIRED)

Where an Eviction Warrant has been served from the applicant's current address or the applicant is roofless **30 points**

Where a Court Order for possession has been granted against the person's present address **20 points**

Where an effective Notice to quit has been served on the person's present address **15 points**

Squat **10 points**

Lodging / living with friends / sleeping on friend's floors **10 points**

Short life licence **10 points**

4. Particular Needs relating to Housing

(Proof is required for all three categories. This should take the form of a doctor's letter)

These circumstances include not only health problems, but also mental or physical disabilities or frailties suffered by you or members of your family who live with you.

Do you or a dependant, have a serious illness or disability **made significantly worse** by current living conditions and **requiring rehousing** as part of the medical treatment? If yes **50 points**

(This claim must be accompanied by a doctor's letter stating that the condition is specifically made worse by current housing)

Do you or a dependant have an illness or disability which could be improved by a move e.g. Asthma or angina whereby you can manage in your present accommodation but the quality of life could be improved by a move. If yes: **20 points**

(This claim must be accompanied by a doctor's letter describing the condition)

Breakdown of relationship where children are involved, and the transfer applicant will have 50% custody of the children **15 points**

Breakdown of relationship where children are involved, and the transfer applicant will have less than 50% custody of the children **10 points**

less than 50% custody of the children **10 points**

7. Time

For every year spent on London Borough of Lambeth's Housing List **1 point**

8.. Points that can be awarded at the panel's discretion

Extreme urgency of need relates to tenants whose ability to continue living in their accommodation is possible in the short term but who need to be rehoused as their housing circumstances are resulting In severe difficulties in day to day life. These may be circumstances that have not been specifically mentioned on this form. **Up to 10 points.**

Social recommendation related to those tenants who would benefit from a move but who can manage in the existing accommodation . These may be social circumstances not mentioned on this form. **Up to10 points**

Transfer Policy and Procedure

Statement of Objectives

The word 'transfer' is used to refer to members moving to different accommodation within the Co-op, whether through an allocation meeting or by other means, outlined below.

There are three distinct situations where tenants may be transferred within the Co-op:

The first is mutual exchange where two tenants or groups of tenants agree to exchange units. However, a mutual exchange shall not create under-occupation of a Co-operative property. The Co-operative may also refuse a mutual exchange if either party has rent arrears or has had a notice ending their tenancy served on them within the last year.

The second is transfer where a tenant/s require(s) a transfer to a different location, type or size of unit. This will usually happen at an Allocation Meeting. A transfer shall not create under-occupation of a Co-operative property.

The third is a Management Transfer requested by the Co-op

Transfers of Vine Co-op tenants take priority over the allocation of non-members, except where a property must be allocated to an outside nomination as a condition of funding or as part of a Housing Corporation funded scheme.

All vacancies are advertised in the MC minutes.

The three main objectives of the Transfer Policy are:

1. Meeting tenants' wishes to move

As a good landlord the Co-op is obliged to do everything it can to facilitate transfers to meet the needs, wishes and aspirations of its tenants.

2. Maximising the use of the Co-op's housing stock

The Co-op has a legal obligation to require tenants to transfer (and to provide suitable alternative accommodation) when:

- a) there is statutory overcrowding;
- b) major works are needed;
- c) continued occupation by the tenant conflicts with the charitable objectives of the Co-op;
- d) the unit is specifically designed for people with special needs which the tenant does not require;

Circumstances in which the Co-op would wish to encourage tenants to transfer include:

- e) where tenants under-occupy the dwelling and they could move to smaller accommodation;
- f) if a transfer would facilitate resolving other members' housing needs.

If a transfer is caused through relationship breakdown, the partner who does not have the major part of the custody of the children must move to the smaller housing unit (i.e. the partner with the major part of the custody stays in the existing family home).

Fulfilling the Co-op's general aims

In accordance with its Equal Opportunities Policy, the Co-op must ensure there is equal access to mutual exchanges, transfers and equal treatment of all Co-op members under the Transfer Policy. The Co-op must show a commitment to cater for everyone's changing needs.

Transfers of existing tenants should not result in inferior or less desirable housing becoming the only units available for new members.

Amendments to the Policy

Amendments to the Transfer Policy and Procedure should be **agreed** at a Management Committee Meeting, and also **agreed** at a General Meeting.

Review of the Policy and Procedure

This policy replaces all previous versions of the Transfer Policy and Procedure.

- 1 General Guidelines and Responsibilities
- 2 Procedure for Mutual Exchanges
- 3 Procedure for Transfers requested by Tenants
- 4 Procedure for Transfers requested by the Co-op

1. General Guidelines and Responsibilities

1.1 Confidentiality and appeals

The rules regarding confidentiality and appeals are outlined in the Co-op's Allocations, transfers and Appeals Procedure.

1.2 When can Co-op members apply for a transfer?

Co-op members may request a transfer or mutual exchange at any time, including when allocations are announced.

When a Co-op member has applied for a transfer, and submitted a form to the office, they shall be given the opportunity to update their circumstances once a year.

1.3 Who can apply for a transfer?

Any full Co-op member may apply for a transfer apart from tenants living in shared houses, who may not apply for a transfer until they have lived in the house for a year. The only exception to this time limit is in the case of domestic violence or harassment which has been reported to the Co-op and dealt with through the Co-op's Harassment Policy.

1.4 Sub-groups responsible for transfers

The subgroups with main responsibility for transfers should be Membership Subgroup and Housing Management

Transfers requested by the tenant should be decided by the two **Transfer Co-ordinators** who should liaise between Housing Management and Membership Subgroup.

The **Transfer Co-ordinators** are responsible for:

- a) keeping applicants informed of the progress of their request;
- b) keeping registers of all requests for transfer and mutual exchange;
- c) wherever possible, matching the wishes of those requesting transfers, including making suggestions for multiple and chain exchanges;
- d) wherever appropriate, acting as intermediaries between members, for example to preserve confidentiality or prevent undue pressure being placed on any member;
- e) co-ordinating with Housing Management subgroup for information and advice.
- f) ensuring that applicants provide a positive rent/membership report before putting them on the transfer register.
- g) bringing recommendations for transfers which will not go through the Allocations Procedure to the Management Committee.

1.5 Subgroups responsible for monitoring transfers

Transfer applications should be monitored jointly by Membership subgroup and Housing Management.

Housing Management should review the use of housing stock at least once a year to ensure it is being fully utilised in line with Co-op policies, and this review should be presented to the Management Committee.

1.6 **Transfers outside the Co-op**

The Co-op may join schemes for external transfers between Co-ops, both in London and nationally.

P&PR has details of how to join such schemes and make arrangements for the Co-op to do so.

2. **Procedure for Mutual Exchanges**

2.1 Households may request a mutual exchange at any time, and for any reason. They should contact the **Transfer Co-ordinator** of Membership sub-group and fill in and return a Mutual Exchange Form.

2.2 Membership will set up a register for households seeking mutual exchanges and ensure that the register is complete and accurate. This register shall remain confidential unless households give permission for their details to be passed on to other households. The register should contain names, addresses, details of unit presently allocated, details of unit sought, date of request and eventual outcome.

2.3 Once the details of a proposed mutual exchange are known, the **two Transfer Co-ordinators** pass the details of the request to Housing Management

2.3.1 Housing Management then report to the Management Committee and to Membership Subgroup. In cases of dispute, the MC has final say.

It is Membership Subgroup's duty to inform the tenants. At the next General Meeting of the Co-op the exchange should be reported for information.

3. Procedure for Transfers requested by Tenants

3.1 Tenants may request a transfer at any time and for any reason apart from tenants living in shared houses, who may not apply for a transfer until they have lived in the house for a year. The only exception to this time limit is in the case of domestic violence or harassment which has been reported to the Co-op and dealt with through the Co-op's Harassment Policy.

The tenant must contact the **Transfer Co-ordinator** of Membership Subgroup and obtain a Transfer Form.

If the tenant needs help with filling in the form, a member of Membership Subgroup will help them and answer any questions they may have. It is the tenant's responsibility to arrange a meeting to do this.

3.2 The tenant returns the completed form to the **Transfer Co-ordinator** of Membership Subgroup , who files the form in the Transfer Register, and places the name on the transfer list. If the Transfer Co-ordinator finds the applicant is not eligible for transfer (i.e. rent arrears, membership under review) they should notify the applicant that his or her name cannot be put on the list giving relevant reasons.

3.3 When a vacancy arises the Transfer Co-ordinators will consult the register to see if any applicants match the vacancy. The Transfer Co-ordinators notify the **designated members organising the allocation** and the normal allocation procedure is carried out.

3.4 The member seeking a transfer will be informed of their points and how they have been calculated. They have 28 days in which to appeal if they are not satisfied, but must give the reason for their appeal.

4. Procedure for Transfers requested by the Co-op

(This section of the policy amended March 2007)

4. 1. Housing Management may propose to the Management Committee that tenants should transfer under the following circumstances:

a. Overcrowding and under occupation

Where there may be too few or too many occupants in a unit (according to minimum and maximum occupation levels established and included in tenancy agreements), Housing Management may investigate who is living in the unit and make a report available to both the Management Committee and the tenants of the unit.

If overcrowding or under occupation is established, the Management Committee may recommend a transfer to the tenant/s in writing in liaison with the Transfer Co-ordinator of Membership.

If tenant/s are requested to transfer and refuse, the Management Committee should consider legal action to regain possession of the unit.

b. Major Repairs are needed

Where the co-op plans major repairs on any unit which cannot be done while tenants are still living in the unit, a transfer will become necessary. Tenants must be informed in writing by Housing Management, following confirmation by the Management Committee. Tenants will have the right to return to their original unit when works are complete.

If tenant/s are requested to transfer and refuse, the Management Committee should consider legal action to regain possession of the unit.

c. Complaints

Where there is a long standing complaint that the Co-op has attempted to resolve through the normal mechanisms of the Complaints Policy without success, Housing Management should investigate whether a transfer will resolve the complaint.

If such a benefit is established, Housing Management, in liaison with the Transfer Co-ordinator of Membership, may recommend to the Management Committee that there should be a transfer.

d. A unit is specifically adapted for people with additional needs which the tenant does not require

Housing Management and Membership should ensure that all units adapted for people with special needs are occupied by appropriate tenants. If the tenants no longer require the adaptations then Housing Management may ask the MC to recommend a transfer to the tenants in writing, in liaison with the Transfer Co-ordinator of Membership.

If tenant/s are requested to transfer and refuse, the Management Committee should consider legal action to regain possession of the unit.

e. Housing stock could be used better

Where Housing Management becomes aware that one or more transfers would resolve other members' housing needs, they may investigate the possibilities of a transfer/s, in conjunction with the tenant/s and the Transfer Co-ordinator of Membership. All tenants who are involved must agree in writing before this proposal is put to the Management Committee for decision.

f. To allow opportunities for Development to take place.

Where Housing Management becomes aware that one or two transfers could result in an opportunity to develop existing units to make better use of housing stock, they may investigate the possibility of a transfer or transfers in liaison with the Transfer Co-ordinator of Membership. All tenants who are involved must agree in writing before this proposal is put to the Management Committee for decision.

4.2 Implementing transfers requested by the Co-op

The tenants involved must agree in writing to a proposed transfer. Housing Management should then bring a recommendation to the next Management Committee.

Management Committee Guidance on transfers

In making its decision the MC must:

1. take into account all the different interests involved
2. bear in mind the importance of transparency
3. ensure that the Co-op is fair to all its members