



pierhead housing

Lettings Policy & Information

Pierhead Housing Association

9th Floor, Wellington Buildings, The Strand, Liverpool, L2 0PP

Tel: 0151 227 1001 Fax: 0151 258 1303

Contents

	Page
Introduction	3
Who do we help?	3
How it is decided who to rehouse	5
Points system	5
What happens once the points total has been calculated	7
How long will you have to wait?	8
How many offers can you have?	8
How to appeal against Pierhead's decision?	8
Transfers	9
How to pay rent	10
Conviction sheet	11
Rights and duties as a Pierhead tenant	12

Introduction

Pierhead Housing Association Ltd is registered with the Housing Corporation under the Housing Act 1974 and is a member of the National Federation of Housing Associations.

It has a Committee of Management whose members meet regularly and serve in an entirely voluntary capacity.

Our accommodation is obtained by either buying land and building new homes or by buying and converting older properties to a high standard.

Who do we help?

It is our aim to provide good quality housing to those with the greatest housing need who are unable to obtain suitable accommodation through alternative housing options.

It is also our policy to deal fairly with all applicants regardless of race, creed, age, colour or religion.

We provide accommodation for single people, the elderly, the disabled, couples and families & they are allocated from the following sources:

Choice Based Lettings

The Association is a member of Choice Based lettings schemes within the local Authorities we work in. A percentage of our properties are allocated in this way and you may wish to register with the relevant choice based lettings schemes in order to give you a wider choice.

Waiting List

The Association holds a waiting list for all the areas we work in. Some waiting list areas may be closed due to high demand. We usually advise applicants beforehand of waiting lists that are open.

Transfers

Tenants who have held their current tenancy for 12 months may apply for a transfer provided they are not in rent arrears and their present accommodations is in good order.

Improvement Program Rehousing

We buy older properties which are unimproved and sometime occupied by a sitting tenant. Priority for rehousing is given to those tenants to enable modernization works to commence. All such tenants are given the option to return to their homes once the work is completed.

Mutual Exchanges

Tenants can exchange their homes with either our tenants or tenants of another housing association or local authority. We usually agree to these requests (which should be made in writing) provided that there is no under occupancy or overcrowding, the other landlord is in agreement, there are no rent arrears and the property is in good condition.

Other Agencies

We have arrangements with particular organizations to rehouse some of their clients. We also reserve a small quota of our lettings for tenants of other landlords who are nominated to us.

We are prevented by law from accepting applications from members of staff, committee members or any of their relatives. All other applications from are treated equally regardless of their sex, ethnic or racial group or origin, or their religious or political views.

How it is decided who to re-house

The number of applicants we receive always exceeds the number of properties available to let. It is therefore essential to examine each application carefully to determine who is the most housing need. To enable this to be done all questions on the application form must be answered.

Any person of 18 years and over may apply for accommodation by completing the appropriate form. Applicants under this age will only be considered if there are exceptional circumstances and only if a guarantor is available.

Points System:

We use a points system to assess who is in the most need of housing. This is used for all applications to the waiting list, tenants applying for a transfer and for tenants of other housing associations or council tenants. Every waiting list application is given points for housing need in the following areas:

1. Present Housing Circumstances

Points are given to people who are homeless or imminently homeless.

2. Present Housing Conditions

Points are given to people in the following categories

- (i) Overcrowding
- (ii) Under occupation
- (iii) Lacking or having to share amenities
- (iv) Present property condition

3. Medical Reasons

Points are given according to the degree to which the medical condition will be alleviated or improved by rehousing.

4. Social Reasons

Points are given for other housing related problems such as:

- (i) Families Living apart
- (ii) Harassment
- (iii) Moving closer to work or to give/receive support from family
- (iv) Moving to more affordable accommodation
- (v) Relationship breakdown/domestic friction
- (vi) Environmental factors
- (vii) People who experience violence in own home
- (viii) Independence

5. Time in Need

Points are given to people who have been in desperate need for over a year when they apply to us. We also give points to people on the waiting list for every six months they have waited to be housed.

6. Other Factors

Points are deducted from people for the following reasons:

- (i) Priority housing by other housing agency
- (ii) Own secure/assured tenancy
- (iii) High capital income
- (iv) Unsatisfactory previous Pierhead tenancy
- (v) No proof of residence

7. Unrecognized Need – Special Circumstances

Points may be awarded if it is found that a need exists which cannot sufficiently be recognized under the above categories

What happens once the points total has been calculated?

All applications are given points and put into categories based on the area of housing chosen and the type and size of home needed. Each category has a “points threshold” which is the number of points needed in order to be housed in that category of housing. The points threshold is based on the availability of the category of housing. So, for example, if you chose an area where we have a lot of houses and a large number of vacancies, then the points threshold is likely to be lower than for areas where we have a few vacancies.

At least two members of staff decide which points are awarded.

If you do not get enough points to be considered for housing, then we will write and tell you this. We may also give you advice about your other options for housing.

If you have enough points to be considered for housing, we will write and let you know and a housing officer will arrange to visit you at home. The housing officer will check that you have been awarded the correct number of points and advise you further about your housing options. Once you have been visited, we will write confirming whether or not you have been accepted on the waiting list.

Every 12 months, a review form is sent to people on the waiting list to check whether they still require accommodation. If no reply is received within 14 days then it is assumed that accommodation is no longer required and the applicant is removed from the list.

How long will you have to wait?

We aim to make you an offer of housing within 12 months.

But if you are waiting for a bungalow or for larger housing or for an area where there are few vacancies in a year, then you may have a longer wait. We are happy to advise you on approximately how long you are likely to wait for an offer of housing.

How many offers can you have?

If you refuse an offer of housing, you need to let us know that you are refusing and the reason why. You will be allowed 3 offers of housing and if you refuse the final offer of housing, you will be taken off the waiting list.

When letting our properties, we take into account the area(s) you wish to be housed in, the size of your household and any special needs any housing member may have.

How to appeal against Pierhead's decision

If you wish to appeal against our decision, please write to us stating why you think we have made a wrong decision.

We will reply to you within 5 working days of receiving your letter, giving you a full explanation of how we reached our decision and telling you how to appeal further if you are still not satisfied.

If you are appealing because your circumstances have changed or because we have not fully considered your situation, we may decide to alter your points if we are satisfied with the evidence.

If you still disagree with our decision, you have the right to appeal to our committee of management to reconsider your case. An anonymous report is presented to committee and you will be given their decision in writing. Their decision is final.

If you are dissatisfied with the result of you appeal or the way in which it is being handled you have the right to make representations to:

Ombudsman Service, Norman House, 105 - 109 Strand, London, WC2R 0AA.

Transfers

Tenants who have held their current tenancy for 12 months or more may apply for a transfer provided they are not in rent arrears and their present accommodation is in good order.

It is the Association's policy to assist those tenants who wish to transfer from one of the Association's properties to another.

Tenants wishing to move are invited to complete a transfer application form and the case will be assessed under our points system and given priority in accordance with their points score.

As our existing tenants, who wish to transfer tend to score lower points than direct applicants, all transfer applications will therefore automatically be awarded additional points. Should you still fail to reach the "points threshold" your application will be rejected.

In exceptional circumstances the following transfer applications will take priority over all other groups:

- They simultaneously enable an applicant in another priority group to be suitably rehoused
- They are likely to assist the development programme.
- They enable the suitable rehousing of a decanted tenant.
- They will result in better management arrangements

How to pay your rent

There are three main ways you can pay your rent. Unless you are paying by Rent Direct (Housing Benefit) you must pay your rent in advance.

a) Direct Debit

If you pay by Direct Debit we can arrange for your rent to be paid weekly, fortnightly, 4 weekly or monthly in advance.

b) Rent Card

With your rent card you can make cash or cheque payments at any of the following places: The Post Office, any newsagent/convenience store who accept E-pay or Payzone payments. If you choose to pay this way rent is due either weekly, fortnightly, 4 weekly or monthly in advance.

c) Rent Direct (Housing Benefit)

You can choose to pay rent by applying for Housing Benefit to be paid direct to Pierhead Housing Association. Fill in a Housing Benefit form (available from the Local Council or Pierhead Housing) and hand in with the relevant information required by the council. For more information ask for a separate leaflet on Housing Benefit. Rent paid directly by Housing Benefit is always paid 4 weeks in arrears.

If you qualify for part Housing Benefit then you will need to also complete either section 1 or 2 to tell us how you will pay the shortfall.

* This information refers to question 13 on the application form.

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 criminal convictions can become spent or ignored after a rehabilitation period, although they remain on the Police National Computer. The rehabilitation period varies depending on the sentence or order imposed by the court - not the offence. Custodial sentences of more than two and half years can never become spent. The following sentences become spent after fixed periods from the date of conviction:

Sentence	Rehabilitation period Age 18 or over when convicted	Rehabilitation period Age 17 or under when convicted
Prison sentences of 6 months or less, including suspended sentences, youth custody (abolished in 1988) and detention in a young offender institution	7 years	3 and half years
Prison sentences of more than 6 months to 2 and half years, including suspended sentences, youth custody (abolished in 1988) and detention in a young offender institution	10 years	5 years
Borstal (abolished in 1983)	7 years	7 years
Detention Centres (abolished in 1988)	3 years	3 years
Fines (even if subsequently imprisoned for fine default), compensation, probation (for convictions on or after 3 February 1995), community service, combination, action plan, curfew, drug treatment and testing and reparation orders	5 years	2 and half years
Absolute discharge	6 months	6 months

With some sentences, the rehabilitation period varies:

Sentence	Rehabilitation Period
Conditional discharge or bind-over, probation (for convictions before 3 February 1995), supervision, care-orders	1 year or until the order expires (whichever is longer)
Attendance centre orders	1 year after the order expires
Hospital orders (with or without a restriction order)	5 years or 2 years after the order expires (whichever is longer)
Referral Order	Once the order expires

Rights and duties of being a Pierhead Housing tenant

You Must Not:

- Harass other people
- Use your home for illegal purposes
- Be convicted of any drug offences
- Make a false statement to get your tenancy
- Damage or neglect your home
- Sublet your home

You will have the following rights:

- We cannot evict you or move you from your home without good reason
- We will provide a maintenance repair service
- We will ask you about decisions which will effect your home
- We will consult you about management decisions which will affect you or change your tenancy agreement
- You can take in lodgers if you have our written permission

The full details will be in your Tenancy Agreement if you become a tenant.

Pierhead Housing Association (PHA) may make use of the information you provide on this application form to prevent people obtaining a tenancy by withholding relevant information or giving false information.

PHA is under a duty to protect the public funds and other resources it manages.

PHA may also share this information with others for the purpose of such protection.



