

Membership Policies

1 Membership of the Co-Op

1.1 In order to be eligible for membership, candidates:

- must not own residential property
- must have attended an induction session (unless they were previously a member)
- must have attended a minimum of three General Meetings (including the one where they are up for election)
- must meet the requirements for 'active membership'.

1.2 Active members are defined as those who have done 6 hours work in the last 3 months. This includes attendance at working group meetings. Attendance at General Meetings is not included unless they are working at those meetings.

2. Waiting List

2.1 Only members of the co-operative can apply to be on the waiting list.

2.2 Waiting list applicants must meet the requirements of active membership and have had a home visit

2.3 There are four waiting lists, one for each number of bedrooms in a property (one, two, three and four-bedrooms)

2.4 Applicants can apply to the waiting list/s for sufficient number of bedrooms for their moving group, plus one spare bedroom. Applicants can be on more than one waiting list.

2.5 Applicants who have registered for adoption or fostering can have an additional allowance of one more bedroom

2.6 Couples shall be considered to share one bedroom

2.7 Points for housing need are allocated by the membership group according to the waiting list points policy

2.8 Applicants can appeal to membership if they disagree with the points they have been allocated. If they still do not agree the points will be decided by a three person appeals tribunal appointed by the Committee. The tribunal's decision will be final.

2.9 When a property becomes vacant the allocations group (a sub-group of membership) will decide who the vacant property is offered to on the basis of the waiting list. This decision will go to the next General Meeting or committee meeting where it will be deemed to have been approved as an emergency decision. This can only be objected to at that meeting on the grounds of error or misconduct.

2.10 Only active members who are not in rent arrears to the Co-op will be offered properties.

2.11 Active members will be given 75 points on the waiting list for every six months they are active

3. Exchanges

3.1 Tenants wishing to exchange properties within the co-op must have been resident for at least a year and not be in rent arrears

3.2 People wishing to move into the co-operative as an exchange must be active members

3.3 Active members subject to the under-occupancy penalty (bedroom tax) can exchange with a tenant with a smaller property even if the other tenant is not an active member.

4. Transfers

4.1 Active members wishing to move within the co-operative can go on the relevant waiting list/s

4.2 Internal transfers shall be considered first when allocating vacant properties, but only if this does not adversely affect an external candidate who has more points

5. Notice to Quit (this is the first stage in the process of eviction)

5.1 When notice to quit (NTQ) is issued it must be agreed by the Co-op.

5.2 If the tenant is a mesne tenant (a non –member tenant) the committee can issue a notice to quit under the emergency procedure

5.3 If the emergency procedure is not used the property number will be published on the general meeting agenda and the NTQ will be voted on in the closed session. If the tenant informs the Secretary within 24 hours of the committee meeting the property number can be redacted from the agenda.

5.4 28 days after an NTQ is issued the tenant will lose their membership of the co-operative and will become a mesne tenant

6. Leave of absence

6.1 The Membership Group can agree a leave of absence for up to six months for reasons given in the Secondary Rules (standing orders)

6.2 Subsequent leaves of absence, or absence for more than six months (including indefinite), can only be issued if agreed by Membership, the committee and then a General Meeting. Members refused a leave of absence can appeal to a General Meeting.

7. Under Occupation

7.1 The Homes for Change tenancy agreement allows a tenancy to be ended where:

The premises remain under-occupied after consultation and after suitable alternative accommodation has been offered which has been refused or suitable alternative arrangements for the existing Premises have been refused (7.2.4).

7.2 The term under-occupation here follows the current definition in housing law, i.e. a tenant who has two bedrooms (or more) more than their household needs.

7.3 When Membership Group is made aware of a home which is under-occupied they will to seek to meet with tenant to discuss their situation and their options. These might include applying for an internal transfer.

7.4 If the situation is not temporary and the tenant is unwilling to apply for internal re-housing, or the tenant refuses two offers of suitable alternative accommodation, the Membership Group will refer the matter to the committee.

7.5 In these circumstances committee will have the option to issue a Notice to Quit and start possession proceedings.

8. Lodgers Policy

8.1 Consent for tenants to have paying lodgers will only be given if the tenant is active or has been given a leave of absence

8.2. Lodgers must not be charged more than 25% of the council Tax and 75% of the total rent and service charge. This is inclusive of all bills. A Returnable deposit of up to two weeks rent and service charge may be asked for

8.3 Tenants failing to comply with this policy will have their consent to have lodgers removed and if they continue to have unauthorised lodgers they risk losing their tenancy.