

111 Offering Social Housing Tenancies

1. Customer Statement

At Link Wentworth our customers and communities are at the centre of what we do. We are committed to:

- treating our customers with compassion and respect
- communicating clearly so our customers can make informed decisions
- providing fair service by following the right process
- working openly with customers to find shared solutions
- following all relevant laws and regulations

2. Purpose

This policy explains how Link Wentworth matches Housing Pathways applicants with vacant properties that meet their housing need, for offering as social housing tenancies. Link Wentworth aims to create successful social housing tenancies that respond to tenant needs, maximise tenant satisfaction, and make the best possible use of the features of individual properties.

3. Scope

This policy only applies to Housing Pathways applicants who are considered for an offer of social housing by Link Wentworth. It also applies to all Link Wentworth employees and contractors. This policy does not apply to other program types such as affordable housing, transitional, Specialist Disability Accommodation, etc.

4. Policy

Clients can expect Link Wentworth to apply the following principles when matching people to vacant properties. We:

- are fair, efficient, and consistent in our decisions
- make the best use of our properties by matching them to households who will use the number of bedrooms and living areas, and any special facilities or modifications to meet their housing needs
- balance the needs and preferences of highest priority applicants with the requirements of those who have needs that can only be met in a small number of our properties
- facilitate successful tenancies by balancing the needs of customers, Link Wentworth, and the community to minimise potential tenancy problems and maximise tenant satisfaction
- recognise that placing a customer in unsuitable housing can have long-standing impacts for the person, Link Wentworth, and the community.

Link Wentworth bases its decisions about matching and offering social housing properties on:

- information supplied by Housing Pathways applicants about their housing needs and preferences throughout the application and offer process
- Link Wentworth's knowledge of the property being offered and the local neighbourhood
- the criteria for matching customers to properties outlined in this policy.

Link Wentworth matches people to vacant social housing properties by identifying Housing Pathways customers whose household size, locational and other requirements best match the property. We match customers to a property by creating a shortlist from the NSW Housing Register to find the next appropriate customer on the NSW Housing Register. Generally, the property is offered to the customer in highest need who has been waiting the longest.

Properties with the following features are matched to the person with the highest need for that particular type of accommodation:

- property with modifications/adaptations to accommodate people with physical disability
- ground floor or level access accommodation
- access to a garden or yard
- properties located within complexes that are reserved for people over the age of 55 years (over 45 years of age for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people) or people with a disability as defined under the [State Environmental Planning Policy 2004](#), formerly known as State Environmental Planning Policy No. 5 (SEPP5).

In some situations, Link Wentworth may also consider the needs of the community when matching a customer to a property. We do this by making a sensitive allocation or applying a Local Allocation Strategy (LAS) – refer to the offer criteria section of this policy for more details.

When we match a customer to a property, we contact them, confirm they are still eligible for social housing, and invite them to consider starting a tenancy in the property. We expect customers to view the property and tell us if they wish to accept the offer of housing within 48 hours of receiving their offer.

If a customer is unable to view the property within 48 hours, we may agree to give extra time. The most extra time we will give is another 48 hours (96 hours in total).

We recognise that a customer may need extra time to view a property for a number of reasons, for example:

- if a customer must travel a long distance to view the property
- illness
- if a customer needs to be accompanied by a carer or support worker, or if a support worker needs to agree the property is suitable
- prior family commitments

We will make a maximum of two reasonable offers of housing. We also try to meet additional customer preferences where possible, such as wanting to be near a train rather than a bus route, or wanting a fully fenced yard for the dog, or wanting to be close to your children's current school if we can. We may make reasonable offers that do not address additional preferences of customers.

Properties

Link Wentworth has three types of social housing properties: capital properties owned by Link Wentworth, capital properties managed on behalf of the NSW Government, and properties rented through the private rental market. Customers are not able to specify their preferred type of property. Link Wentworth will offer customers the type of property that meets their specific housing needs.

Offers

Informal offers

Link Wentworth may make an informal offer if a customer has an urgent need for housing and no property that matches all their needs is expected to become vacant in the near future. An informal offer will usually meet some but not all of the person's expressed needs or preferences. Customers can reject an informal offer and it does not count towards their two reasonable offers.

Withdrawal of an offer

In exceptional circumstances Link Wentworth may withdraw an offer if, for example:

- there has been a change in a customer's circumstances and their household is no longer eligible for the type, style or size of accommodation being offered
- we discover that a customer is not eligible for the property and/ or social housing
- we made an error with the offer
- the property is no longer available for letting
- we realise that the property we are offering could put you at risk of harm
- you are not able to demonstrate that you have independent living skills with or without support. In this case, we will facilitate support where appropriate.

Offer Criteria

Bedroom entitlements

Link Wentworth applies the following criteria for bedroom entitlements.

Household Members	Property Type
Single person	Boarding housing, room, studio, one bedroom
Couples no children	One bedroom
Two adults (but not a couple)	Two bedrooms
Household with one child	Two bedrooms
Household with two children	Two bedrooms or three bedrooms
Household with three to four children	Three bedrooms or four bedrooms
Household with more than four children	Four bedrooms

Link Wentworth also considers family composition when matching a customer to a property. We may offer an extra bedroom or bedrooms in some circumstances such as:

- caring for a child or children part-time, who do not live there permanently.
- needing a carer to stay full time or part time.
- a member of the household is expecting a baby.
- a customer, or a member of their household, is in the process of regaining custody of a child or children and requires stable and appropriate housing for them before the request is approved.
- a member of the customer's household is temporarily absent (overseas, in prison, in hospital) for a maximum period of 3 to 6 months (depending on circumstances).
- children of the same sex over 18 years. We consider they are unable to share a bedroom.
- children of different sexes 11 years and over. We do not expect them to share a bedroom.

- a child or adult who would normally share a bedroom needs their own room for medical or other reason.
- a customer or a household member identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

Locational preference

Usually, a reasonable offer can be anywhere within a Housing Pathways allocation zone. We may consider a request for a specific location within a Housing Pathways allocation zone if you have a strong social or medical reason. You must provide evidence to support your request. We assess locational requests by general area, not specific suburbs, based the evidence you give to us.

Pets

If you have pets, Link Wentworth will offer you a property that allows pets, if it meets all other housing needs. See our Pets' Policy for further details.

Sensitive allocations

Link Wentworth may decide to categorise a vacant property as a sensitive allocation if the previous tenancy raised challenges for the local community. This means that Link Wentworth will offer the property to customers who are best suited to the property and also the local area dynamics. These customers may not have the highest needs. Approval for a property to be allocated as a sensitive allocation must be granted by the Head of Access and Customer Support.

Local Allocation Strategy

Link Wentworth may apply a local allocation strategy (LAS) approved by the Head of Access and Customer Support to address challenges linked to large public housing areas and/ or hard to let properties. When we apply a LAS, we will consider matching customers who have the ability to create a sustainable tenancy in the property, although they may not have the highest needs. We implement LASs inclusively by seeking to match customers with higher needs to alternative properties where they are more likely to establish a sustainable tenancy.

Link Wentworth staff are required to perform their duties in accordance with this policy and related procedures.

5. Definitions

Allocation Zone - An allocation zone is a group of suburbs where social housing is available. There are 246 Housing Pathways allocation zones across NSW.

Housing Pathways – refers to the process for managing applications for housing assistance in NSW. It is a partnership between the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) including the DCJ Housing Contact Centre, the Aboriginal Housing Office (AHO) and participating community housing providers such as Link Wentworth.

Local Allocation Strategy (LAS) – A localised approach to tenanting properties in areas with a history of unstable tenancies and community relations. A local allocation strategy aims to create stable, sustainable tenancies by carefully addressing customer and community needs when offering vacant properties to customers.

Reasonable offer – An offer of housing that meets all the essential needs of the customer’s household regarding the number of bedrooms, living areas, space required for medical equipment and the physical accessibility of the housing i.e., location, level, modifications etc.

6. Legislative or other applicable framework

- [State Environmental Planning Policy 2004](#), formerly known as State Environmental Planning Policy No. 5 (SEPP5).
- **NSW Community Housing Access Policy.** This policy sets out the NSW Government’s requirements for access to social housing managed by community housing providers in NSW.
- **Housing Pathways, Matching and Offering a Property to a Client Policy.** This policy explains how Housing Pathways providers match and offer a social housing property to a customer.

7. Complaints and Appeals

A customer who is not happy with a decision made by Link Wentworth or who believes that Link Wentworth has not followed this policy can complain or appeal using the complaints and appeals policies that are available on the Link Wentworth website www.linkwentworth.org.au or by phoning Link Wentworth on either 13 14 21.

8. References

- Pets’ policy.

9. Privacy and Confidentiality

Link Wentworth has obligations and responsibilities under its Privacy Policy. Please refer to the policy for further information.

Approval, Policy Owner and Review Frequency

Policy type:	Management Level
Executive Leadership Team owner:	Chief Customer Officer
Business owner:	Head of Tenancy
Ultimate Approval body:	ELT-Member
Review Frequency:	Every two years or more frequently if circumstances warrant.

Approved by – Chief Customer Officer