

Staff Buying Shared Ownership Homes

Author: Paul Walsh
Tel: 01225 715 830
Email: p.walsh@selwoodhousing.com

All policies are the responsibility of the leadership team to own, deliver, disseminate, monitor and review

Purpose

This policy sets out Selwood Housing Group's approach to staff buying shared ownership homes that are developed and / or owned by the group.

Underpinning principles

The shared ownership tenure aims to assist people that are in housing need who are otherwise unable to purchase a property on the open market.

The profile of a number of Selwood Housing Group staff and other linked persons (see later for an explanation) covered by this policy, could place them in need of and eligible for the shared ownership tenure in line with government criteria.

The policy's principles are:

1. To ensure Selwood Housing Group employees and others are not disadvantaged in the local housing market through exclusion from this product.
2. To provide a fair, equal and transparent process that enables access for staff and others, whilst also ensuring no advantage or preferential treatment.
3. To protect staff buying homes and to protect the reputation of Selwood Housing Group.
4. Ensure we comply with Homes England (and successors) capital funding guide (and subsequent updates) and / or any S106 agreements.

The policy restricts the number of homes being allocated under this policy on any one scheme. This ensures that regardless of whether Selwood Housing Group staff and other linked persons meet the criteria, the external public image and perception of the allocation policy is protected.

Policy detail

The marketing and approval to sell process will generally follow four phases: general marketing, pre-sale, sale and approval. This section explains how the policy will apply at each stage.

General marketing

This covers any period where we market shared ownership homes areas but not specific identified schemes. This may be through any of our marketing and communication channels for example: social media, the group web site, sales events, targeting local employers, stakeholders and other general shared ownership marketing materials.

If a potential customer expresses an interest, we will keep their details and preferences (home type and location for example) on our data base.

Under this guidance all potential customers interested in accessing shared ownership are directed to the Help to Buy South agent, with whom the applicant must register. As part of their role the Help to Buy agent undertakes an initial eligibility assessment to ensure the applicant meets the minimum qualifying criteria. This process provides an assessment that is independent of Selwood Housing Group.

There will be no preferential marketing directed to staff. If as a result of talks by the development team (staff brief, lunch and learn etc...) members of staff express an interest in shared ownership they will be treated in the same way as any other potential customer. Scheme incentives are offered to all potential customers, there will be no specific incentives for staff or other linked persons.

Pre-sale

This covers the coming soon marketing stages that would be through our marketing and communication channels.

At this stage details are limited to the scheme and will include types of homes available e.g. xx two bed houses. This may be general or locally restricted, for example to a village if there is a local lettings policy to follow or an agreement made with the parish / town council.

Communications will be through our marketing channels or directed at potential customers on our database who have already expressed an interest.

Once contracts are signed the schemes details (type of homes and forecast delivery dates) will be placed on the shared ownership pages of the web site. **Until the schemes details are released (on the web site) we will not announce the signing of the scheme to staff through internal communication channels e.g. staff brief, email, the blog or at any training events.**

All potential customers interested in accessing shared ownership are directed to the Help to Buy South agent, with whom the applicant must register.

Sale

This is the stage when prices on individual properties are released and the application process to buy the home is opened.

At this stage we send a targeted email to potential customers on our data base who expressed an interest in the scheme or the area. Details are also placed on the group web site and on the help to buy web site.

An offer of a shared ownership property is permitted to staff and other linked persons who are board or committee members or closely connected persons of the same (as defined in the declarations of interest guidance), subject to applicants meeting qualifying criteria (which is the same for any potential customer) and adherence with this procedural guidance:

- Be registered with and assessed by Help to Buy South agent as eligible.
- Go through the exact same process of application as any other applicant.
- Be assessed against the exact same criteria as any other applicant.
- Make a declaration of interest as part of the application process.
- Meet all the criteria required to qualify for a shared ownership purchase.
- Not be given any preferential treatment within the application process or have access to information in advance of any other applicant.

Staff, board or committee members or closely connected persons must:

- Fill out a 'non-contractual benefits disclosure' form which is to be held on file.

The application process and documentation are to be transparent, fully recorded and held on file.

No related staff or board/committee members must have any involvement in the application process or decision making.

The home ownership team are to include applications on the register of interested parties. The application date and any prioritisation is to be recorded in order that the local authority or any other party can clearly see how the allocation has been made.

The home ownership team are responsible for investigating applications, confirming if the policy applies and flagging such to the head of new business and home Ownership.

Approval process

Where the policy applies the process will be overseen by the group chief executive.

The head of new business and home ownership must; sign off to confirm that an application meets the criteria and has followed the correct procedure. The head of new business and home ownership may choose to use an external consultant to carry out the assessment if the applicant is a member of the development team.

The final decision to allocate housing must be made by the group chief executive on advice from the head of new business and home ownership.

The final decision must be reported to the board as a declaration of interest by the interested member of staff.

Restriction of home numbers for staff buying shared ownership

Allocations under this policy are to be limited to 15% of the homes on any one scheme (or phase* of a scheme) (rounded down to the nearest home). On schemes (or phase of a scheme) of fewer than six homes a maximum of one home is to be allocated to a member of staff, board or committee member or linked persons of the same. If we cannot sell all of the homes this restriction can be reviewed and lifted by the board of management.

* phases in a scheme (if applicable) will be determined by the development contract for the scheme.

Signpost

Selwood Housing Groups processes all shared ownership purchase applications in line with:

