

# Public Document Pack

Your ref  
Our ref  
Ask for Mark Hooper  
Email mark.hooper@lichfielddc.gov.uk



District Council House, Frog Lane  
Lichfield, Staffordshire WS136YU

Customer Services 01543 308000  
Direct Line 01543 308064

Monday, 2 November 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

## **CABINET**

A meeting of the Cabinet has been arranged to take place on **Tuesday, 10th November, 2020 at 6.00 pm** to consider the following business.

In light of the current Covid-19 pandemic and government advice on social distancing, the meeting will be held online and streamed live on the Council's [YouTube channel](#).

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christie Tims', is written over a light grey circular stamp.

Christie Tims  
**Head of Governance and Performance**

**To: Members of Cabinet**

Councillors Pullen (Chairman), Eadie (Vice-Chair), Cox, Lax, E Little, Smith, Strachan and A Yeates



[www.lichfielddc.gov.uk](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk)



[/lichfielddc](https://www.facebook.com/lichfielddc)



[lichfield\\_dc](https://twitter.com/lichfield_dc)



[MyStaffs App](#)

## AGENDA

1. Declarations of Interest
2. Apologies for Absence
3. Changes to the Housing Options Service 3 - 34
4. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

RESOLVED: "That as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972"

5. Confidential Appendix to Item 4 (Appendix D) 35 - 38

This Appendix is to be considered in private since it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information (as defined by Paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to the financial and business affairs of the council.

6. Disposal of Land Fronting St John Street, Lichfield 39 - 48

This report is to be considered in private since it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information (as defined by Paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to the financial and business affairs of the council.



## Changes to the Housing Options Service

Report of Councillor Angela Lax, Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Housing and Health



Date:	10th November 2020
Agenda Item:	4
Contact Officer:	Gareth Davies/Lucy Robinson
Tel Number:	01543 308741/308710
Email:	gareth.davies@lichfielddc.gov.uk lucy.robinson@lichfielddc.gov.uk
Key Decision?	YES
Local Ward Members	All, as applies to the whole of Lichfield district.

**CABINET**

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out proposals to change the way in which the housing register and allocations scheme are administered following Bromford's reversal of its decision to manage these on our behalf. The long standing agreement for this is contained in the 2010 Deed of Covenant and Variation to the 1997 housing stock transfer agreement, the proposed variation of which is set out in confidential **Appendix D**.
- 1.2 Due to this change, after a careful consideration of our options we are proposing to operate the allocations scheme in-house and run our own CBL system after the current one Homes Direct<sup>1</sup> closes on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. Several changes will therefore be needed to how the housing options team work and new staff will be needed to deal with the additional workload this will bring; this report outlines these changes and seeks support for the new arrangements. The report also outlines minor changes needed to the new allocation scheme for social housing that was previously agreed by Cabinet in 2018.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the new arrangements for the administration of the housing register and allocations scheme.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approves the revised allocation scheme at **Appendix B** for final consultation with registered providers, and delegates authority to the Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Housing and Health and the Head of Regulatory Services, Housing and Wellbeing to make further amendments if required after consideration of the RP responses and in the future if minor amendments are needed.
- 2.3 See confidential **Appendix D**

### 3. Background

- 3.1 At the meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2018<sup>2</sup> Cabinet approved a revised allocation scheme<sup>3</sup> and a proposal to move away from the CBL system Homes Direct to a new housing register and allocations system which would continue to be run on the council's behalf by Bromford.
- 3.2 Last year Bromford advised us that they no longer wished to manage the housing register and operate a choice based lettings scheme on our behalf and therefore wanted to vary the terms of their agreement with

<sup>1</sup> The Homes Direct partnership Board consists of several RP's and councils in the West Midlands. Bromford sit on the Board and we are part of the scheme through our SLA with them. It is managed by Midland Heart housing association.

<sup>2</sup> <https://democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/mgChooseDocPack.aspx?ID=234>

<sup>3</sup> Delegated authority for minor changes to the scheme was given to the Cabinet Member for Housing.

us once Homes Direct ends. We are currently the only local authority out of 50 in which Bromford operate where they manage a housing register and this would mean consistency across their whole operational area. We had previously been advised that Homes Direct would most likely continue until July 2021, however in September, Midland Heart who manage the scheme advised the Homes Direct Partnership Board that they would no longer manage the system after 31st March 2021 and so it would now close to all partners on this date.

3.3 We have a Nominations Agreement with Bromford which entitles the council to nominate applicants to 75% of their lettings. Bromford have confirmed that they are still committed to working with us in the new CBL system to be able allocate these, but will have their own system to allocate the remaining 25% of their lettings. Although we do not yet have final details as it has not yet been fully developed, we have been advised that it will not be a choice based, but will instead be a waiting list that they will open periodically depending on the number of void properties and applicants on their list. This move away from a choice based system is in line with many other Registered Providers (RPs) that are considering, or have already taken the decision, to break away from CBL partnerships that cover wide geographical areas such as Homes Direct. A survey of the sector in 2019<sup>4</sup> suggested that there is a trend to be moving away from CBL to RPs operating their own waiting lists and it was reported by one RP that 'having their own waiting lists has proven to be much easier to manage and provides sufficient demand to meet our needs'.

3.4 Following Bromford's decision, we have fully explored our options for providing nominations to Bromford and the other RPs. From a legal perspective, the Housing Act 1996 requires local housing authorities (regardless of owning housing stock) to have an allocation scheme in place that determines who is eligible and qualifies for social housing in its area, and how priority is determined between applicants.

3.5 In exploring our options we have looked at what other councils do and two options exist, firstly to hold a list of applicants from which we send direct nominations to RPs or secondly to operate and manage our own CBL scheme. In order to fully consider these two approaches we have taken time to consider the advantages and disadvantages of CBL schemes versus providing nominations and a summary of these is set out in **Appendix A**. Although there are several advantages and disadvantages to each, after considering them and consulting members of the overview and scrutiny committee, it is considered more advantageous to maintain a CBL approach at the present time. The main reasons for this are:

- There would be transparency over homes available to rent by the main RPs as they would be advertised in one location. It would also promote tenant mobility with the ability to advertise mutual exchanges
- It will provide us with intelligence on the demand for social rented housing e.g. bidding history showing the popularity of areas and we will be able to obtain reports for all RP's in one place
- It will promote customer choice and encourage the creation of sustainable tenancies and communities as the initiative to apply for a property has to be taken by the customer (or via a housing options officer for those that require support) rather than being the passive recipient of the offer of a property under a nominations only system
- We will have the ability to advertise private rented sector properties in the future if there was demand and also advertise our own properties.

3.6 In order to evaluate systems we contacted all housing register software providers and had presentations from key providers in 2019. Average annual costs for a system vary considerably up to £50,000. Fortunately, we can use the governments G-Cloud system to check current prices without needing to run a full tender or competition procurement process as all the software providers that provide the systems we need are registered on the G-cloud portal known as the Digital Marketplace.

---

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cih.org/resources/Rethinking%20allocations.pdf>

3.7 We have a homelessness database called Prevention Relief Accommodation and Homelessness (PRAH), which was developed by a software company called Housing Partners (now part of MRI<sup>5</sup>). It is one of a suite of modules called Housing Jigsaw that now includes housing register software called Enhanced Housing Register (EHR), which sits alongside PRAH and can share the same data. Housing Jigsaw also has a property advertising portal called Advertise to Let Allocation service (ATLAS) that runs on a CBL basis. We have looked at G-Cloud and MRIs cost for acquiring EHR and ATLAS, is the cheapest of similar systems advertised by other providers. So as well as being the cheapest, the additional 2 Housing Jigsaw modules is also our preferred option as they would integrate with PRAH, our system for managing homelessness that we have a statutory responsibility for. This software would give us the option to operate our own CBL scheme via ATLAS or just provide nominations through EHR if we chose to in the future.

3.8 In addition to the cost of purchasing the system, managing the housing register and a CBL system in-house will incur several additional costs, predominantly for additional staff. In estimating costs we have considered the likely number of applicants we would have on the register under the new allocations scheme, and the additional staff time needed to verify the additional applicants that we would not have seen through the homelessness route and don't have a statutory responsibility for. We have also reviewed staffing in similar local authorities, particularly East Lindsey that took the housing register back in house last year and is using the same MRI software that we propose to.

3.9 We estimate that we will need an additional officer and an assistant to do the additional work. Additional management time will also be needed for dealing with appeals to applicants banding and asking for reviews etc, which will need to be factored in to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to cope with the extra work. We will however review the impact and success of operating a CBL scheme after a maximum of two years to assess whether it would be preferable to change from CBL to another system.

3.10 Bromford's long standing management of the housing register is set out in the Deed of Covenant and Variation to the housing transfer agreement signed in 2010 when HomeZone<sup>6</sup> joined the Bromford group. Of particular importance is the clause on Choice and Mobility:

*'To maintain involvement in the UChoose Lettings Partnership (and any successor choice based lettings scheme) including managing the Joint Housing Register for Lichfield and to enter into national arrangements for housing mobility or home-swapping.'*

3.11 Bromford have offered financial compensation to end their contractual obligation for this, and since October 2019<sup>7</sup> officers have held extensive negotiations to secure the best outcome possible for the council. Details of these negotiations and the estimated annual costs of us managing the housing register and allocations scheme in-house is set out in the confidential section **Appendix D**.

### **Allocations scheme**

3.12 As outlined in the previous report to Cabinet, the new allocation scheme was developed in response to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 that placed a greater emphasis on the local authority to prevent and relieve homelessness. The current allocation scheme<sup>8</sup> needed updating to allow us to discharge our duties under the new legislation and better reflect local priorities. Key changes were made as a result of a review to the priority bands to make them more reflective and realistic about the local housing picture and by adding, removing, moving and amalgamating some of the existing priority categories.

3.13 The new scheme was developed jointly with Bromford, in consultation with the other RPs on the understanding that Bromford would be continuing to administer the scheme on our behalf. However as the

---

<sup>5</sup> MRI are a well-established company that started in 1971. They now own Orchard as well as Housing Partners and provide real estate and asset management tools too.

<sup>6</sup> Lichfield District Council transferred its housing stock to Lichfield District housing Association on 24.3.97 following which it changed its name to HomeZone.

<sup>7</sup> Following a report to Community Housing and Health over view and scrutiny committee on 17.10.19 - <https://democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=1523&Ver=4>

<sup>8</sup> Lichfield Lettings Scheme (2013): <https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/Residents/Housing/Housing-advice/Downloads/Lichfield-lettings-scheme.pdf>

council will now be managing it in-house and it has been two years since it was first approved, some minor changes are needed. To make best use of the limited social housing stock in the district and manage expectations of those on the register, we have made some minor amendments to ensure that people with a genuine housing need are prioritised for rehousing. Although the Cabinet Member has delegated responsibility to agree these changes<sup>9</sup>, for transparency and completeness the proposed new scheme is in **Appendix B**. The main changes to the 2018 version agreed by Cabinet are:

- The addition of a category in Band 1 where applicants previously in the emergency band have been downgraded having refused a suitable offer of accommodation
- A condensing of the priority bandings to Emergency, 1 and 2
- Included that where we can we will provide tenancy support to mitigate the risk of tenancy failures and prevent repeat homelessness, instead of providing a programme of tenancy readiness
- Applicants in bands 1 and 2 who have either failed to respond to three offers, failed to respond to three invitations to view, refused three offers of accommodation or a combination of all three will be removed from the register rather than being downgraded. However with a choice based system it is unusual for bids to be made on properties that are later refused.

3.14 Section 170 of the Housing Act 1996 places a duty on RPs to cooperate with the local housing authority to offer accommodation to people with a priority under its allocation scheme. For Bromford, a Deed of Variation to the transfer agreement grants the Council 75% nominations rights over the transferred stock in perpetuity. We also have nominations agreements with the other RPs, that are predominantly 100% nomination rights for new build homes and 50% for relets, however the majority provide more than this as they do not have their own waiting lists. Discussions with all to date indicate that they would be willing to work with us if we operated a scheme ourselves and we will arrange for the large RPs to have their own licence to enable them to use the new system to advertise their own properties and run their own short list of applicants that bid for each vacancy. Given the move away from Homes Direct, we were already in the process of reviewing the nomination agreements with the RPs with stock to outline the percentage of vacant homes to be nominated to by the council, and this will be completed before the new system is launched.

3.15 The effect of applying the new allocation scheme will reduce the number on the register to between approximately 867 and 961; this is an increase from our previous estimation of between 701 and 853 using the number on the register at year end 2019- see **Appendix C**. Using the 961 upper figure, we estimate that of these 329 applicants (34%) would be our usual customers that would go through the homelessness assessment route, leaving 632 additional applicants (66%) that we would need to manage. However, this is only an estimate as all applicants would need to reregister and some may not do this or may not be able to provide sufficient evidence to complete the verification process stage.

3.16 Discussions have taken place with Bromford to agree what should happen to those households who are on the current Housing Register. We have agreed with Bromford that we will work together on the transition to the new scheme as we will need to contact applicants on the register that have expressed a preference to live in the district (c 1540) to make them aware of the change, deal with enquiries and assist eligible applicants to reregister on the new system.

3.17 Legally we have a duty to consult RPs about the new allocations scheme, which we did in 2018. We will however consult them again on the slightly amended version once Cabinet approval is given. In addition to this, we will contact applicants on the current housing register that have expressed a preference to live in Lichfield District to inform them of the changes. We will do this in conjunction with Bromford to tie in with the demobilisation plans for Homes Direct.

---

<sup>9</sup> <https://democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/mgChooseDocPack.aspx?ID=234>

3.18 MRI have advised us that implementation of EHR and ATLAS will take approximately 16 weeks. A detailed timeline to achieve a 'go live' date of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 has been provisionally agreed with MRI; implementation can commence as soon as Cabinet approval is given.

<p>Alternative Options</p>	<p>To do nothing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This isn't an option as Homes Direct is now closing on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. We therefore need a new system to allocate social rented homes to those that we have a statutory responsibility for and others that are eligible under our allocations scheme.</li> <li>• It is a legal requirement for the local authority to have an allocation scheme in place as a way of prioritising applicants to vacancies in social housing; we could not continue with the existing allocation scheme as this is outdated and does not reflect the council's new duties under the Homeless Reduction Act or emerging local priorities.</li> </ul> <p>To not have our own CBL scheme and provide direct nominations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It would not promote customer choice or encourage the creation of sustainable tenancies and communities</li> <li>• We would not have the intelligence that we need on the demand and need for social rented housing that is used to develop and inform our housing strategy, Local Plan policies or use as evidence when consulted on new planning applications</li> <li>• This option may potentially need less staff, however monitoring nomination agreements with RPs and dealing with bandings and refusals of offers would also be time consuming and so it is unlikely that less staff would actually be needed. An IT system would also need to be purchased; the MRI software we propose to purchase to operate a CBL includes 2 modules- Enhanced Housing Register (EHR) and ATLAS and the cost of EHR alone that we would need to provide nominations in accordance with our allocations scheme is the same.</li> </ul> <p>To join another scheme rather than having our own:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are unaware of another suitable scheme that we could join. Homes Direct was the CBL scheme that was used by the majority of RPs in this area. As the largest stock holder, most lettings are done by Bromford who have made the decision to withdraw from it and operate their own waiting list so our options are very limited. Bromford's decision is in line with a trend for RP's to develop their own systems and move away from CBL partnerships that cover wide geographical areas. We have explored a shared service arrangement and there are not adequate synergies with another local authority to make this a viable option.</li> </ul>
<p>Consultation</p>	<p>On 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019, the Community Housing and Health Overview and Scrutiny committee considered a report on Bromford's changed position and proposal for operating an in-house housing register. This along with slight amendments to the approved allocations scheme was endorsed by members of the committee and recommended to Cabinet for approval. Councillors had been previously consulted in 2018 when we held two briefing sessions in July followed by a key changes documentation sent to all councillors for comment.</p> <p>We consulted widely with RPs during the development of the new</p>



	<p>allocation scheme during 2018. We are discussing the current position with our approved RPs during our annual review meetings this year and so far all continue to be supportive of our proposed approach.</p> <p>Once approved we will conduct final consultation with RPs on the changes to the allocations scheme and closure of Homes Direct. Applicants on the current register that have indicated a preference to live in the district will be contacted directly to notify them of the changes.</p>
--	--

Financial Implications	<b>See Appendix D</b>
------------------------	-----------------------

Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	The Strategic Plan 2020-2024 has four corporate priorities; the one that the allocations scheme mostly contributes to is 'Enable people' to help themselves and others, and 'Be a good council' that is transparent and accountable and responsive and customer focussed.
--	---

Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) and wider impact assessment have been completed on the allocations scheme to ensure we have met our legal obligations under the Equality Act and actions have been identified to reduce any negative impact where possible. The EIA has assessed how the changes are likely to affect applicants and will shape how we consult with them to minimise and mitigate any negative effect as a consequence of the changes.
---	--

Crime & Safety Issues	Choice based lettings creates choice about where people live and contributes to sustainable communities.
-----------------------	--

Environmental Impact	None identified.
----------------------	------------------

GDPR/Privacy Impact Assessment	A GDPR/Privacy Impact Assessment has been completed.
--------------------------------	--

RISK	Risk Description	How We Manage It	Severity of Risk (RAG)
A	The contract with Homes Direct ends before the new software solution is deployed.	<p>We are in active discussions with Midland Heart and Bromford over the demobilisation of Homes Direct that will close on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. The last advertising cycle will be mid-March. A quote for a download of applicant's data has been requested from Civica, the software provider that runs Homes Direct, that could be used to allocate homes as a temporary measure in the event of any delays with the implementation of the new software.</p> <p>A project group has been established to manage the transition that is meeting weekly. Regular meetings are being held with MRI and a provisional timeline for implementation of the new system has been developed.</p>	<p>Likelihood: Red Impact: Amber Severity of risk: Red</p>
B	The volume of additional work from managing the scheme and register in-house is much higher than anticipated and we	<p>We are in continuing dialogue with Bromford over the new burden on the district council. Although we hope that we will have enough staff resources from the start, we need to continue to monitor this and be flexible where needed. Bromford have committed staff resources to assist with the initial transition and deal with reregistration's and enquiries. Support from our customer services (Connects) team is</p>	<p>Likelihood: Amber Impact: Amber Severity of risk: Amber</p>



	need to employ additional staff to cope	essential to the new system working and discussions with the customer services manager will continue to facilitate the transition.	
C	Reputational risk to the council if the communication to applicants is not well managed and timed.	We will contact applicants on the register that have expressed a preference to live in Lichfield district about the changes, especially to the priority bands and the need for reapplication. We will offer support to transfer to the new system to those who require it. We will look at incentives for the move, e.g. continue with original application date for those who remain in a similar priority. Wider impact assessment done to consider those negatively impacted by the changes, with early dialogue with these applicants to minimise impact.	Likelihood: Amber Impact: Amber Severity of risk: Amber
D	Statutory obligations not met in relation to discharging homeless, prevention and relief duties.	Legal advice has been sought to ensure that the new allocation scheme reflects statutory requirements. There is internal expertise within the group on the allocation of accommodation and homelessness. Completed document to be monitored on an ongoing basis.	Likelihood: Green Impact: Amber Severity of risk: Green
E	Lack of choice exercised by applicants' leads to an increase in reviews of the suitability of accommodation or refusals.	Only applicable if we moved away from a CBL scheme - need to ensure areas of preference selected by the applicant if looking at direct matching, and a statement on choice/preference is to be included in the final scheme documentation.	Likelihood: Green Impact: Green Severity of risk: Green

### Background documents:

Lichfield District Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024:

<https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/housing-strategy/download-housing-strategies?documentId=211&categoryId=20015>

Lichfield Lettings Scheme (2013): <https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/Residents/Housing/Housing-advice/Downloads/Lichfield-lettings-scheme.pdf>

Report to Cabinet 9<sup>th</sup> October 2018:

<https://democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/mgChooseDocPack.aspx?ID=234>

Report on changes to the housing options service Community Housing and Health O&S Committee 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019: <https://democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=1523&Ver=4>

### Relevant web links

Homelessness Reduction Act: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents/enacted>

This page is intentionally left blank

**Table illustrating the advantages and disadvantages of choice based lettings vs direct nominations to RPs**

CBL - Advantages	CBL – Disadvantages	Nominations - Advantages	Nominations - Disadvantages
<b>Transparency</b>			
Status quo – no change management required	Additional software costs and costs for other means of advertising where customers do not have internet access	Minimal software costs No advertising costs	Change management costs: advertisement of new scheme, consultation with customers etc.
All available properties in the district with the main RP’s are advertised in one location and includes mutual exchange as well as new applicants. Promoting tenant mobility via mutual exchanges	Reliant on RP’s to provide information and/or update the system on outcomes of properties let.	Direct offer to applicant without advertising reduces officer administration time/costs. Ability for LDC to prioritise applicants in temporary accommodation for nominations. Reducing length of stay in unsuitable accommodation for customers and temporary accommodation costs for LDC	<p>Customers will need to register on multiple RP websites in order to access 100% of the social housing stock in Lichfield district – would incur additional support costs.</p> <p>Customers will have to register on national schemes for mutual exchanges –would incur associated support costs</p> <p>Customers may also miss opportunities and need more support from officers; it could even lead to longer stays in temp accommodation.</p>

<b>CBL - Advantages</b>	<b>CBL – Disadvantages</b>	<b>Nominations - Advantages</b>	<b>Nominations - Disadvantages</b>
<p>Properties advertised on a cycle gives routine to customers and they have a longer period to express an interest.</p> <p>Auto bidding could save officer time and support for vulnerable applicants.</p>	<p>Auto bidding can be unreliable resulting in erroneous bids, potential for increased officer involvement and associated costs.</p> <p>Properties advertised on a cycle - slower turnaround.</p> <p>Can highlight undesirable areas by low number of expressions of interest, may result in applicants withdrawing expressions of interest. Empty shortlists increase void time and void loss.</p>	<p>Direct matching removes possibility of erroneous expressions of interest, reducing officer costs.</p> <p>Able to immediately allocate when fit for let. No delay in waiting for an advertising cycle reducing void time and loss.</p>	<p>More complicated agreements with RP's. May need to revise allocations scheme with additional consultation. Increased interaction between LDC and RP's impact on administration and officer time</p>
<p>Can express interest on three properties a week.</p>	<p>Verification of all applicants, monitoring of shortlists impact on administration time, officer numbers and costs.</p>		
	<p>Difficulty to clearly define an offer of accommodation and discharge statutory duty. Can also result in applicants receiving multiple offers of accommodation or refusing properties in the belief they will be offered an alternative more attractive property. Resulting in additional void times, officer involvement and costs.</p>	<p>Ability to clearly define an offer of accommodation and discharge statutory duty thus reducing officer time, possibly reduce temporary accommodation costs and length of stay and reducing administration time/costs.</p>	
		<p>Ability to restrict access to register could lead to fewer customers on register. Reducing administration time and officer requirement.</p>	<p>Fewer customers may mean we are unable to supply a nominee to an RP</p>
	<p>Increased customer enquiries</p>	<p>Increased homeless applications mean potentially more preventions and reliefs, which may equate to more funding</p>	<p>Increased customer enquiries and homeless applications potential for higher staff levels due to increased administration and applicants</p>

CBL - Advantages	CBL – Disadvantages	Nominations - Advantages	Nominations - Disadvantages
Ability to advertise private rented sector properties, potential to generate future income.		Can direct match private rented sector properties ensuring only suitable applicants are put forward thus creating successful tenancies and increasing access to PRS	
<b>Intelligence – reporting functionality</b>			
<p>Reports for all providers in one place e.g. bidding history, shortlists, popularity of areas. We will obtain valuable information on need and demand for housing across the district, including property types, size, location. Information is used to develop the housing strategy and include in the local authority housing statistics (LAHS) government return. Also use it for planning consultations responses and in developing local planning policies.</p>	<p>Reliant on RP’s to update the system in timely manner, so some data will be unreliable.</p>	<p>Data for nominations held in house and is immediately accessible.</p>	<p>Only able to access data on properties we have nominated to. Reliant on RP’s to provide data on the percentage of properties not under the nominations agreement. No data available on need and demand that we would have with CBL.</p>

CBL - Advantages	CBL – Disadvantages	Nominations - Advantages	Nominations - Disadvantages
<b>Customer Choice/Sustainable tenancies</b>			
The initiative to apply for a property is taken by the customer rather than being the passive recipient of the offer of a property	Reliant on customers to express interest.	Not reliant on customers to express interest to be matched to a home as the council carries out the matching process.	Customer choice is removed.
Transparent shortlist highlights popularity of areas and likelihood of receiving an offer. The outcome of the process is published to show the level of demand for the property and the priority of the successful applicant. Encouraging applicants to widen area of choice & property type.	Encourages applicants to be selective, raises unrealistic expectations in high demand areas & introduce inefficiencies in low demand areas. Applicants may be encouraged to wait longer for an ideal property as opposed to expressing interest on a property they have a high likelihood of being awarded. Results in extended void times and increased void loss and increases officer work load, monitoring expressions of interest, placing expressions of interest on behalf of customers.	Properties are allocated directly to applicants who are best matched alleviating these issues and reducing officer involvement and administration time monitoring expressions of interest.	

<b>CBL - Advantages</b>	<b>CBL – Disadvantages</b>	<b>Nominations - Advantages</b>	<b>Nominations - Disadvantages</b>
<p>The information provided gives more detail about property features such as central heating, energy efficiency, location, schools, garden etc and offers 'real choice' as in the private sector. Puts the onus on customers to seek out suitable properties – rather than the landlord targeting potential tenants – and in doing so encourages and rewards pro-active engagement; creating sustainable communities by letting housing to people who have chosen and want to live in them.</p>		<p>Manages customer expectations by highlighting lack of social accommodation available. One offer only of a suitable property. Reduces officer administration and involvement and associated costs.</p>	<p>Neither customer nor LDC aware of what the property looks like: minimal information provided by RP, no advert, no customer involvement/choice. Properties chosen for nominations by RP, could result in properties in less desirable areas always being offered for nomination. Could contribute to social, economic and demographic imbalances that affect levels of demand. Likely rise in request for reviews of suitability of offer of accommodation and customer dissatisfaction as their needs are not being met.</p>







# Lichfield District Council - Allocation Scheme 2020

---

In Partnership with: (Add logos)

DRAFT

## Contents

---

1. Introduction
2. Aims & Objectives
3. Data Protection Statement
4. Equal Opportunities Statement
5. Statement on Choice
6. Registration
  - 6.1. Applications from Employees, Elected Members and Board Members
7. Providing False, Misleading or Withholding Information
8. Eligibility
  - 8.1. immigration Status
  - 8.2. Age
9. Qualifying & Non-Qualifying Applicants
  - 9.1. Local Connection & Residency
  - 9.2. Unacceptable Behaviour
  - 9.3. Housing Related Debt
  - 9.4. Sustainability
  - 9.5. Financial Resources
  - 9.6. Home Owners
10. Priority
  - 10.1. Emergency Band
  - 10.2. Band 1
  - 10.3. Band 2
11. Additional Preference
  - 11.1. Armed Forces Personnel
12. Bedroom Entitlement
  - 12.1. Exception Cases
13. Offers of Accommodation
  - 13.1 Statement on Registered Providers
14. Adapted or Specialist Properties
15. Local Lettings Plans
16. Change of Circumstances
17. Annual Reviews
18. Cancelling Applications
19. Appeals
  - 19.1. Stage 1
  - 19.2. Stage 2
  - 19.3. Stage 3
20. Review & Monitoring

## 1. Introduction

---

Every local housing authority in England is required by law to have an allocation scheme in place which determines who is eligible and qualifies to join the scheme, how priority is determined between applicants in housing need when applying for social housing<sup>1</sup> and the procedure to be followed when allocating homes.

The Council has a duty to provide housing advice and assistance and to prevent and relieve homelessness. In order to meet housing needs within the district and enable us to discharge our duties, we work in close partnership with Registered Providers who own and manage all social housing.

Registered Providers have a duty to cooperate with the Council in offering accommodation to people in housing need under the Council's allocation scheme. We do this by entering into a nomination agreement with the Registered Provider that outlines the percentage of properties that will be made available to the Council through the scheme. A nomination to the Registered Provider will then be made in accordance with this allocation scheme and Registered Providers will consider the nomination against their own allocation criteria.

Registered Providers who own and manage social homes within Lichfield District are:

- Advance
- Bromford
- Clarion
- Family Optima
- Housing 21
- Metropolitan
- Midland Heart
- Orbit
- Platform Housing
- Riverside
- Sanctuary
- Stonewater
- Trent & Dove
- WHG
- Wrekin Housing Trust

We acknowledge that there is a shortage of social homes to rent within the district, therefore our allocation scheme has been framed to give priority to those applicants in the greatest level of housing need and reflect our local priorities to make the best use of the social homes available.

## 2. Aims & Objectives

---

The scheme has been developed with a view to meeting the following principles and key objectives:

- To have a clear, transparent and accountable system for assessing applicants and to allocate homes in a way that is easy to understand and administer.
- To award preference to those in greatest housing need to make the best use of limited number of social homes available.
- To take into account local priorities and support our Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- To maximise opportunities for applicants to make informed choice by providing good information on rehousing prospects including alternative housing options.
- To develop positive working relationships with other agencies to identify and meet housing need to create sustainable tenancies.

---

<sup>1</sup> Social housing/homes in this context refers to both social rented and affordable rented homes.

- Where we can, provide tenancy support to mitigate the risk of tenancy failures and prevent repeat homelessness.
- To support the development and sustainability of thriving communities.
- To meet the requirements set out in law, regulation and guidance and promote best practice.

### 3. Data Protection Statement

---

We will only ask applicants to supply information that is required as part of the application process to determine eligibility, qualification and assess housing need. We will only record and store information that is necessary for the assessment and allocation of social housing.

As part of the housing need assessment process we will make enquiries into an applicant's housing history; by applying to be entered onto the housing register an applicant is agreeing to us making these enquiries. If an applicant does not agree to us making these enquiries, we are unable to accept their application

We will ensure that all information held on the housing register remains confidential. This will not be disclosed to a third party without prior consent from the applicant.

To enable us to share information and nominate applicants to our partner Registered Providers with homes in the district, we have developed an information sharing protocol. This protocol establishes the procedural arrangements for the secure exchange of information for the purpose of nominations to the Registered Providers. By applying to be entered onto the housing register, an applicant is agreeing to this information being shared with our partner Registered Providers. We will make this clear at the point of application and review.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, applicants have the right to request a copy of all the information held about them.

### 4. Equal Opportunities Statement

---

We are committed to promoting equal opportunities, embracing diversity and preventing and eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

We recognise that our customers are individuals; we will focus on their particular circumstances to assess their specific housing needs in line with the allocation scheme framework. We commit that the scheme will be accessible, responsive and sensitive to the diverse needs of our customers, ensuring that equality and diversity is at the heart of everything we do.

We will ensure that all potential applicants will have accessible information on how to access the scheme and how to express an interest in the homes available. We acknowledge that some people may require assistance in accessing the housing register and participating in the allocations scheme. For those people that do not have a trusted person, such as a family member or advocate upon whom they can rely, we will ensure that these individuals receive the help and assistance they require.

The impact of the changes to the scheme has been monitored throughout the process and an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) is published alongside the document to ensure we continue to be clear, transparent and accountable for our actions.

In order for us to continue to monitor the impact of the scheme, all applicants will be asked to provide demographic information when they apply to join the housing register. This information will be regularly reviewed to ensure we meet our legal obligations in regards to the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.

## 5. Statement on Choice

---

We seek to give every eligible and qualifying applicant choice in relation to the location of their accommodation by advertising vacancies and inviting expressions of interest (bids) on these vacancies. Restrictions will apply in terms of the bedroom size and type of property allocated in accordance with the allocation scheme to ensure we make the best use of the homes available.

For those placed into the Emergency Band, which reflects their critical need to be rehoused, we need to balance the level of choice with the urgent need to rehouse the applicant. Applicants within this Band will be given dedicated advice and support from a Housing Options Officer at the Council who will ensure they are bidding on suitable properties when they become available. The Council will review applicants placed in the Emergency Band after 4 weeks to decide whether they can remain within the band. This review will include whether the applicant has been bidding on properties that were suitable and available during this time and where appropriate a direct offer of accommodation may be made.

We acknowledge that due to high demand for certain types of properties in the district it is not possible to re-house every potential applicant through the scheme. We will therefore publish available information to allow applicants to make informed choices about their housing options

## 6. Registration

---

Applicants wishing to join the scheme will need to complete an online application form at xxx (web address to be added). Should an applicant require assistance with registration, this will be provided on request.

Once an application has been submitted, an applicant will be prompted to supply proof of eligibility, qualification and any other relevant documents to support the information given in the application. This will need to be provided within 28 calendar days of registration; should this not be received the application will be automatically cancelled.

Information required will be:

- Identification for the main and any joint applicant (Passport, driving licence, birth certificate).
- Identification for any household member aged 18 or over (Passport, driving licence, birth certificate).
- Proof of immigration status if classed as a person from abroad.
- Proof of current address for the main and any joint applicant (utility bill, bank statement).
- 5 year address history including, if relevant, any landlord contact details.
- Proof of residency of any children who require rehousing with the main or joint applicant (Birth certificate and child benefit award, child tax credit, court order, residency order).
- Landlord reference from current or last settled address, where applicable.
- Proof of income, savings and equity.
- Proof of repayment plans for any housing related debt, where applicable.
- Proof of any pre-tenancy training qualifications where successfully completed.

- Any evidence requested to support the application and assessment of housing need. (List not exhaustive).

Following the receipt of all supporting documentation, we will assess an applicant's eligibility and qualification to join the housing register and which priority status they have been awarded. The applicant will be notified in writing of this decision within 28 calendar days from receipt of all proofs and supporting evidence being submitted.

Once registered and the details on the application form have been verified, an applicant will then be allowed to express interest (bid) for homes available through the scheme. Applicants will only be able to bid for properties that meet their needs in accordance with the criteria set out within this allocation scheme, e.g. a single person will only be allowed to bid on studio or one bedroomed apartments. Should an applicant require assistance with understanding the system and how to place bids on properties, they should request assistance from the Council.

### **6.1. Applications from Employees or Elected Members**

Applications can be made by employees or elected members but applicants must declare this at the time of application. Applications will be assessed in accordance with this scheme for eligibility, qualification and housing need. Any priority awarded and any subsequent offer of accommodation will be authorised by a senior officer.

## **7. Deliberately Providing False or Misleading Information or Withholding Information**

---

Fraudulent behaviour is taken very seriously and all appropriate action will be taken to address this.

It is a criminal offence for an applicant or person on the applicant's behalf to knowingly or recklessly give false or deliberately misleading information or withhold information which is reasonably required. A person found guilty of such an offence will be removed from the scheme for a period of at least 6 months.

Offences under these provisions are prosecuted in the magistrates' court and carry a maximum fine of level 5 on the standard scale. Failure to inform of changes to an application, or deliberately withholding information relevant to, or misrepresenting housing circumstances, may result in criminal prosecution. A Registered Provider may seek possession of a tenancy that was granted as a result of a false statement and may also attempt to recover any costs incurred.

## **8. Eligibility**

---

We are only able to allocate social homes to applicants who are eligible in accordance with the Housing Act 1996, section 160ZA.

### **8.1. Immigration Status**

Those who are not eligible for social housing or homelessness assistance are applicants from abroad prescribed by legislation to be ineligible, or applicants subject to immigration control, unless exempted from



these rules by the Secretary of State<sup>2</sup>. Please note we will apply the most up to date legislation at the time of application when making our assessments.

If there is any uncertainty over an applicant's immigration status, advice will be sought from the Home Office.

An applicant who is already in a secure or introductory tenancy or an assured tenancy allocated by the local housing authority is not subject to these eligibility requirements.

## 8.2. Age

Any person aged 18 or over can apply to join the housing register; applicants under the age of 18 will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances where:

- Lichfield District Council has accepted a statutory homeless duty to the applicant and the applicant is ready for independent living OR
- A young person who has been looked after, fostered or accommodated, has a duty of care accepted under the Children's Act 1989, and is ready for independent living.

Any applicant under 18 cannot by law be granted a tenancy, however this can be held in trust until they reach the age of 18 by a trustee. A trustee will be required to sign a tenancy on the applicant's behalf, be deemed as an appropriate person and have the financial resources to afford the costs of the home.

It is at the discretion of the individual Registered Provider to accept applicants under the age of 18 for a tenancy, regardless of having a trustee.

## 9. Qualifying & Non Qualifying Persons

---

### 9.1. Local Connection and Residency

In order to qualify for the housing register, an applicant or joint applicant must satisfy at least **one** of the following criteria:

- Has lived in the District for at least the last 2 years at the point of application.
- Has lived in the District for 3 out of the last 5 years.
- Is homeless or threatened with homelessness, is engaging with Lichfield District Council to resolve their homelessness, is owed a prevention, relief or full statutory homeless duty and meet the local connection criteria contained within the homelessness legislation.
- A young person owed a leaving care duty under section 23C of the Children Act 1989 by Staffordshire County Council will have a local connection to the District.
- A care leaver under the age of 21 who has lived in Lichfield District for at least two years, including some time before they turned 16, and the local authority which owes them the leaving care duty is not Staffordshire County Council.
- Has close adult relatives (mother, father, adult children, brothers or sisters) where a meaningful relationship exists and those relatives currently live in the District and can evidence they have done so for the last 5 years. Consideration will be given to other relatives where a meaningful relationship can be evidenced by the applicant.

---

<sup>2</sup> The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006

- Is currently employed in the District, either on a permanent or temporary contract running for a minimum of 6 months, usually those working less than 16 hours per week will be treated as non-qualifying.
- Any other special circumstances (these will be exceptional).

Those applicants without a local connection will be treated as non-qualifying and will be unable to join the housing register, unless the following exemptions apply:

- Applicants fleeing domestic abuse or harassment where we accept that they cannot return to any area where they have a local connection because of the violence/threat of violence, following an application on the grounds of homelessness,
- Applicants wishing to move to the District as a result of witness protection, where this can be evidenced by a relevant professional, following an application on the grounds of homelessness.
- Applications from armed forces personnel currently or having previously served in the regular or reserve forces within the last 5 years will have the right to a local connection.
- Applicants that wish to move into the District as they are in paid employment or have accepted an offer of paid employment within the District, and failure to do so would cause them hardship will have the right to a local connection. The distance travelled, the availability and affordability of transport, the nature of the work and whether similar opportunities are available locally, as well as the length of employment will be taken into consideration when assessing whether an applicant qualifies to join the housing register.

Please note, some homes in the District have restrictions placed on who qualifies to live there by planning regulations. In these instances the planning related restrictions will always take priority over any qualifying criteria in this allocation scheme.<sup>3</sup>

## 9.2. Unacceptable Behaviour

Applicants, or members of their household, that engage in or have been found responsible for unacceptable behaviour within the last 12 months will not qualify to join the housing register for a minimum of six months from the date of application.

Unacceptable behaviour is defined as behaviour which, should they have been a tenant of a Registered Provider at the time, would have been serious enough to have resulted in an order for possession being granted by a Court, in accordance with Part VI Housing Act 1996. This includes:

- anti-social behaviour or noise nuisance
- perpetrators of domestic abuse
- harassment or intimidation
- violent or aggressive behaviour, including physical, verbal or intimidating behaviour resulting in a referral to the police
- offending behaviour that would impact on the community, such as drug dealing, racially motivated attacks or hate crime

(This list is not exhaustive)

After six months the applicant may reapply where they can evidence a demonstrable change in this behaviour.

<sup>3</sup> S106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990

### 9.3. Housing Related Debt

Applicants who have a housing related debt over £200 and cannot evidence regular payments being made over the last 6 months to remedy the debt will be unable to join the housing register. Housing related debt is defined as:

- rent arrears
- service charges
- housing related court costs
- rechargeable repairs
- loans arranged by a local authority **to an applicant** to cover any housing related costs. Each case will be considered on its own merits, any exceptional circumstances will be considered where evidence exists to support the case and should be submitted with the request for supporting information to join the register.

Acceptance onto the housing register is on the condition that regular repayments are maintained, which will be checked prior to any offer being made.

Applicants should note that Registered Providers will apply their own lettings criteria when deciding whether to offer a home; some will expect the arrears to be paid in full at this time.

### 9.4. Sustainability

Applicants who are deemed not to be able to sustain a tenancy without support, and this support has been refused by the applicant will be unable to join the housing register.

### 9.5. Financial Resources

Any applicant who has the financial means to resolve their own housing circumstances will not be able to join the housing register. For clarity, this means either:

- Households with a gross income (excluding non-dependants income) of over £60,000.
- Savings and/or assets totalling over £16,000.

Monies that can be evidenced as received as a compensation payment as a result of serving in the regular or reserve armed forces will be disregarded.

We acknowledge that the majority of specialist homes for the over 50's are in the social housing sector, therefore discretion will be applied to this ruling for those applicants over the age of 50 that have expressed a desire for this type of housing, to allow them to access these schemes only.

### 9.6. Home Owners

Applicants that own or part own a freehold or leasehold property in the UK or abroad will be unable to join the housing register. Discretion to this ruling will be applied where exceptional circumstances apply, these may include:

- Evidence supplied that the property is having a significant detrimental impact on the health of the applicant, it has been verified by a professional that the property cannot be adapted to meet their needs and they have limited financial resources to meet their own housing needs elsewhere.

- The current property is unaffordable and the applicant does not have the financial resources to meet their rehousing needs. This will be assessed through an application on the grounds of homelessness
- Cases where the applicant or a member of their household is suffering from domestic abuse or harassment, and there is evidence to suggest emergency rehousing is required. This will be assessed through an application on the grounds of homelessness

If home owners are accepted onto the housing register, they will need to evidence they are in the process of selling their home prior to any offer being made.

## 10. Priority

Applicants will be prioritised according to the assessment of their housing need based on the priority banding criteria set out in this allocation scheme. Where applicants have the same priority award, the length of time they have been waiting within the band will be taken in to account.

### 10.1. Emergency Band

Applicants will be placed into the Emergency Band if their need for housing is assessed as being so exceptional that they take priority over all other applicants in the scheme.

Statutory homeless	Assessed by the Council as statutorily homeless and are owed a full housing duty under part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
Statutory overcrowded	Assessed by the Council as statutorily overcrowded under the Part I of the Housing Act 2004 or resulted in the Council serving a Prohibition Order or Suspended Prohibition Order. This assessment will include rooms that could reasonably be expected to be used as bedrooms, such as a dining room. Priority will only be awarded where it can be evidenced that the applicant themselves hasn't deliberately caused the overcrowding.
Housing that poses a serious risk to health, safety or welfare.	Assessed by the Council as having serious health and safety hazards, which have resulted in the Council serving a Prohibition Order, a Suspended Prohibition Order or a Suspended Improvement Notice, the conditions of which cannot be remedied by the owner and it can be established that the hazards are not an act of wilful damage or neglect by the occupant.
Care leavers	A young person who has been looked after, fostered or accommodated and has a duty of care accepted under the Children's Act 1989 who is ready for independent living, and is engaging with appropriate support if identified as required.
Supported accommodation move on	A person living in supported accommodation and the Council has a formal move-on agreement with the housing provider, and is ready for independent living and is engaging with appropriate support if identified as required.
Emergency medical	Applicants where their current accommodation is having a significant negative impact on their physical or mental health and rehousing is required immediately to resolve or alleviate the issue. Where a medical priority is awarded for a specific property type, for example for ground floor accommodation, the applicant will only be eligible for that specified type of accommodation with the medical priority award.
Domestic abuse, harassment	Applicants where there is evidence of significant serious violence, domestic abuse and/or harassment and an ongoing risk to the applicant or a member of their household exists and they cannot return to their home.

Armed forces	The spouse or partner of armed or reserve forces personnel that are required to leave their current armed forces accommodation following the death of a spouse or partner, and their death is as a result of their service.
Under occupying	Transfer applicants residing in social housing within the District who are under occupying their home and subject to the under occupancy charge which is having a significant financial impact and are accruing rent arrears as a result.
Regeneration	Applicants who are living in social housing which has been identified for redevelopment or regeneration and need to move to allow the redevelopment programme to proceed.

All applicants within the Emergency Band will be offered advice and support with their rehousing by the Council’s Housing Options team.

**10.2. Band 1**

Applicants will be placed into Band 1 where there is an urgent rehousing need identified, or there is an identified need for the property they are releasing to make the best use of housing stock.

Releasing an adapted property	Transfer applicants residing in social housing that are releasing a property with major adaptations where the adaptations are no longer required and there is an identified housing need for the property. This excludes adaptations that do not alter the physical fabric of the building, e.g. stair lifts, temporary ramping, ceiling track hoists etc.
Under occupation	Transfer applicants residing in social housing within the District who have more bedrooms than their household requires, and there is an evidenced demand for their property.
Non-priority homeless	Assessed by the Council under part VII of the Housing Act 1996 as no priority need homeless applicants and not owed a full homeless duty.
Homeless relief duty	Assessed by the Council under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 as being owed a homeless relief duty.
Overcrowded	Applicants who are living in overcrowded accommodation and are short of one or more bedrooms. This assessment will include rooms that could reasonably be expected to be used as bedroom, such as a dining room. Priority will only be awarded where it can be evidenced that the applicant themselves hasn’t deliberately caused the overcrowding.
Medical	Applicants whose current accommodation is having a negative impact on their physical or mental health and rehousing is required to resolve or alleviate the issue. Where a medical priority is awarded for a specific property type, for example for ground floor accommodation, the applicant will only be eligible for that specified type of accommodation with the medical priority award.
Emergency downgrade	Applicants who were originally placed within the Emergency Band and have refused a suitable offer of accommodation.

### 10.3. Band 2

Band 2 will be awarded where there is a housing need identified.

Hardship	Applicants that need to move into the District to access specialist facilities or employment located in the District, or to give or receive care that cannot be provided in the area where they currently live or would cause hardship to the applicant.
Homeless prevention	Applicants who have been assessed by the Council under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 as having a homeless prevention duty owed.
Relationship breakdown	Relationship breakdown (where still resident together in the family home and no alternative accommodation available). Satisfactory evidence will need to be supplied that the relationship existed, with proof of residence at the address for the last 12 months. This band will only be awarded where it allows the best use of stock, i.e. allows the family to remain in the family home.
Intentionally homeless	Assessed by the Council under part VII of the Housing Act 1996 as intentionally homeless applicants and not owed a full homeless duty and meet the eligibility and qualification criteria.

### 11. Additional Preference

Additional preference will be given to the following by awarding an additional priority within the band.

#### Armed Forces Personnel

Applicants that have served in the regular or reserve forces within the last 5 years from the date of application will be awarded additional preference within the band awarded that reflects their housing circumstances.

### 12. Bedroom Eligibility

Applicants will be assessed to determine the size of property that their household requires. A household is defined as any other person who normally resides with the applicant as a member of his/her family or any other person who might reasonably be expected to reside with the applicant.

Only children permanently residing with the main applicant will be included on the application for rehousing and be awarded a bedroom entitlement. Proof of residency includes, child benefit, child tax credit, a court order or residency order.

Bedroom entitlement will be assessed as followed:

- One bedroom for each person or couple aged 16 or over.
- One bedroom for two children of the same gender aged 15 or under.
- One bedroom for two children aged 9 or under, regardless of gender.

#### 12.1 Exceptions

Due to a shortage of larger properties, there will be occasions where larger families are offered properties that are smaller than their bedroom eligibility.

Exceptions may apply and additional bedrooms may be granted where:

- An applicant is pregnant and reached 24 weeks into this pregnancy, as long as they can evidence they can afford the rent up until the birth of the child.
- A couple who cannot share because of a disability, evidence of qualifying benefits and supporting documentation will be required to support this entitlement.
- A person who requires an overnight carer who regularly sleeps at the property, evidence of qualifying benefits and supporting documentation will be required to support this entitlement.
- Two children who cannot share because of a disability, evidence of qualifying benefits and supporting documentation will be required to support this entitlement.
- A foster parent(s) or a parent(s) approved to adopt and awaiting placement of a child, evidence of supporting documentation will be required to support this entitlement.
- An applicant who has access to or shared custody of a child, evidence of this arrangement and proof of affordability for the additional room will be required. Restrictions will be placed on the application to allow for bidding on flatted accommodation only.

A Registered Provider may refuse a nomination if the nominated household is too large or too small for the vacant property according to their own lettings policies.

### 13. Offers of Accommodation

---

Applicants will be able to express interest (bid) on **up to three eligible properties per advertising cycle**. In the event that the applicant is in bid position one for more than one property, the applicant must choose the home they want to be considered for. **Applicants cannot be considered for more than one property at a time.**

Applicants will be placed in order of priority band, including any additional priority awarded, followed by the date they were placed into the band. Exceptions to this will occur when a local letting plan (LLP) exists or the property has adaptations that will meet the specific needs of someone on the waiting list who requires these adaptations.

Any planning law that restricts who qualifies for a nomination to a property will be made clear in the advertisement, as will any other restrictions arising from a LLP or a Registered Provider policy to restrict access to certain categories or band of applicants.

The Council may make directly matched nominations without advertising properties. Such nominations will not normally make up more than 10% of all lettings, unless there are exceptional circumstances determined by the Council. Direct nominations will be monitored quarterly.

Applicants placed into the Emergency Band will be entitled to one offer of accommodation only. Should the applicant not respond to requests to contact staff or refuse this offer, if following investigation this offer is deemed suitable, their qualification and their priority on the housing register will be reviewed, which may result in an applicant's banding being lowered.

Applicants placed in the Emergency Band as a result of the Council owing them a full homeless duty who fail to respond to requests to contact a Registered Provider or the Council in response to a bid placed or a direct match or who refuse an offer of suitable accommodation will be notified that the Council's homeless duty has been discharged and will be given notice to vacate any temporary accommodation offered.



Applicants in bands 1 and 2 will be entitled to three offers of accommodation. Applicants in bands 1 and 2 who have either failed to respond to three offers, failed to respond to three invitations to view, refused three offers of accommodation or a combination of all three will be removed from the register, however with a choice based system it is unusual for bids to be made on properties that are later refused.

### **13.1. Registered Provider Statement**

The Registered Provider will be supplied with all relevant information on the household being nominated to the vacancy. The Registered Provider may complete their own assessment checks in line with their own lettings policies.

**The final decision on whether to offer a tenancy rests with the Registered Provider.**

### **14. Adapted or Specialist Properties**

---

Due to the scarcity of specialist and adapted properties, preference for such vacancies will sit outside of the normal nomination process. We will clearly note the additional criteria when the properties are advertised.

The Council will make the best use of the resource by carefully matching the adaptations to the applicant who would make best use of the adaptations. Expert opinions may be sought from medical professions such as consultants or Occupational Therapists to assist in the decision making. Should there be more than one household this would benefit, we will then take into account priority banding and the length of time an applicant has been waiting.

### **15. Local Lettings Policy**

---

On occasions LLPs will be agreed between the Council and the Registered Provider to set out criteria for the allocation of properties in certain areas, in addition to the rules set in this allocation scheme. These could be as a result of a planning condition on a site to ensure the homes developed are allocated to local people within the village or parish, or an area is prone to anti-social behaviour with the LLP in place to try and create a balanced and sustainable community. We will clearly note the additional criteria when the properties are advertised.

All LLPs will be published alongside this scheme on our website and will be regularly reviewed to ensure they are still in line with current legislation and local policies.

### **16. Change of Circumstances**

---

It is the applicant's responsibility to inform us of any change of circumstance that would mean a review to their eligibility, qualification or priority on the housing register. Failure to do so in a timely manner may mean any offer of accommodation is withdrawn and the application is cancelled.

**Applicants should not wait until the annual review to advise of any change in circumstances.**

## 17. Annual Reviews

---

A review of an applicant's circumstances will be undertaken every year on the anniversary date of their application by email. Applicants are required to log into their account and confirm their circumstances have not changed and that they still wish to remain on the housing register.

It is important that an applicant informs us whether there has been any change in circumstance that could affect their eligibility or qualification to be included on the register, or their housing priority. If no response is received within 28 calendar days of this request, the application will be closed.

If an applicant is known to be vulnerable, every effort will be made to contact them, either by telephone or by contacting their relevant support agency.

## 18. Cancelling Applications

---

If an applicant no longer wishes to remain on the housing register, they can cancel their application at any time by logging on to their account.

We will only cancel the application when:

- the applicant has been rehoused,
- we have received notification from an executor or next of kin that the applicant is deceased and they were the sole applicant,
- it is discovered that the applicant or a person on the applicant's behalf has given false or deliberately misleading information or withheld information that is relevant to their housing application,
- evidence is obtained that the applicant is no longer eligible or qualifies for rehousing
- the applicant does not respond to a request for information or evidence within 28 calendar days from the date of request, including responding to reviews
- Applicants in bands 1 and 2 who have either failed to respond to three offers, failed to respond to three invitation to view, refused three offers of accommodation or a combination of all three.

## 19. Reviews

---

An applicant has the right to request a review of any adverse decision made about their housing application. This must be made within 28 calendar days from the date of being notified of the decision if it is felt that we have not taken into account all of the relevant information or if we have made a decision unfairly.

Reviews may be requested for decisions on:

- Eligibility
- Qualification
- The housing needs assessment (priority)
- Cancellation or closure of the application

**Where a Registered Provider makes a decision not to offer a particular home to an applicant, the applicant should follow the Registered Provider's appeals or complaints procedure if they are unhappy with the decision made by the Registered Provider.**

### 19.1. Stage 1

Applicants should submit their request for review in writing or via a third party (with the applicant's express consent), stating the reasons why they feel the decision is incorrect or has been judged unfairly, and should provide any supplementary evidence to support their case along with this request.

Reviews will be considered by an officer who had no involvement in the original decision and is in a position senior to the original decision maker. The applicant will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review within 28 calendar days. We may agree a longer timescale if required.

### 19.2. Stage 2

If following this review, an applicant still feels that the decision is incorrect or has been judged unfairly, they must advise us in writing that they wish for their complaint to be reviewed. Within this they must state the reasons why they feel the decision is incorrect or has been judged unfairly, and provide supplementary evidence to support their case along with this request. This review will be undertaken by a senior officer or Manager who has had no involvement in the original or Stage 1 appeal process. Applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their appeal within 28 calendar days. We may agree a longer timescale if required.

**Registered Providers will not hold any vacant properties pending the outcome of a review. If a decision is overturned on review, appropriate action will be taken to reinstate or re-assess the application.**

## 20. Review & Monitoring

---

Review and Monitoring of the allocations scheme will take place 12 months after the allocation scheme start date to ensure that it is working effectively and to review its impact.

A full review will take place after 3 years, or sooner should a change in legislation or other change dictate that a review is required.

Any minor changes to the scheme within this timeframe will be approved by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for housing and homelessness, currently the Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services, Housing and Health.

Current allocation scheme with Homes Direct – Band B	New allocation scheme– Band 1	Change	Impact considered based on the register at 01.04.2019	Revised impact based on the register at 01.04.20
1. Children under 10 in upper floor flat	-	Removed	85 households in this category 6.2% of the housing register.	85 households in this category 5.5% of the housing register. Within this 5.5% 62 household have children aged 3 or under 4% of the housing register.
2. Under occupancy of PRS/ LA/HA	Under occupancy of LA/HA	Removed for private sector tenants only	Unable to quantify numbers in PRS thus unable to quantify how many will be taken off the register however 137 households in this category 10% of the housing register.	Unable to quantify numbers in PRS thus unable to quantify how many will be taken off the register, however 87 households in this category 5.7% of the housing register.
Current - Band B	New scheme – Band 2	Change	Impact considered based on the register at 01.04.2019	Revised impact based on the register at 01.04.20
3. Move closer to employment	Now included in the hardship category	Wording change	Unable to quantify length of employment or income thus unable to quantify how many will be taken off the register. However 15 households in this category 1.1% of the housing register.	Unable to quantify length of employment or income thus unable to quantify how many will be taken off the register. However 7 households in this category 0.5% of the housing register.
Current – Band C	New scheme – Band 2	Change	Impact	
4. Sharing facilities	-	Removed	23 households in this category 1.678% of the housing register.	19 households in this category 1.2% of the housing register.
5. Minor disrepair/poor property condition	-	Removed	Currently no households on the housing register in this category.	Currently no households on the housing register in this category.
6. Lower levels of hardship, medical or social and welfare needs	-	Removed	Currently no households on the housing register in this category	Currently no households on the housing register in this category

Current – Band D		Change	Impact	
7. No identified housing need	-	Removed	379 households in this category 27.7% of the housing register	413 households in this category 26.8% of the housing register
8. Worsened circumstances	-	Removed	7 households in this category 0.5% of the waiting list.	Currently no households on the housing register in this category
9. Previous or current housing debt	-	Removed	23 households in this category 1.7 of the waiting list.	21 households in this category 1.4% of the waiting list. Applicants will be allowed to reapply once they are able to demonstrate a payment plan has been arranged and adhered to.
10. Unacceptable behaviour	-	Removed	None in this category	5 households in this category 0.3% of the waiting list. Applicants will be allowed to reapply after six months should they be able to demonstrate a marked change in behaviour.
11. Owner Occupier	-	Removed	None in this category	34 households in this category 2.2% of the waiting list. Applicants in this category will be eligible for a homelessness application dependent on their circumstances.
<b>Total Impact</b>			Total potential reduction of <b>669</b> from <b>1370</b> on the register leaving <b>701</b> applicants, or reduction of <b>517</b> if category 1 and 3 remained on the new register after verification that would mean approximately <b>853 applicants</b> on the new register.	Total potential reduction of <b>671</b> from <b>1538</b> on the register that would leave <b>867 applicants on the new register</b> , or a reduction of <b>577</b> if category 1 and 3 remained on the new register after verification, leaving approximately <b>961 applicants</b> on the new register.

01.04.19 there were 1370 applicants on the housing register minus the above potentially reducing the housing register to between 853 and 701 applicants.

01.04.20 there were 1538 applicants on the housing register minus the above potentially reducing the housing register to between 961 and 867 applicants.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted



This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank