

Housing Allocations Policy

Contents

	Page
1. Introduction	4
▪ Why do we have this policy and what is it for?	4
▪ Definition of an allocation	4
▪ What types of properties are allocated under this policy?	5
▪ When are properties not allocated under this policy?	5
▪ Who must comply with this policy?	5
2. The Housing Waiting List and 'LetSelect'	6
▪ What is the Housing Waiting List?	6
▪ What is LetSelect?	6
3. The Application Process	7
▪ How to apply	7
▪ Eligibility	8
▪ Qualification criteria	8
▪ Local connection	8
▪ Exclusions	9
▪ Keeping applications up to date	9
4. How Applicants are Prioritised	11
▪ Reasonable preference groups	11
▪ Local priorities	11
▪ Banding	11
▪ Effective date of application	12
5. Making a Positive Contribution to the Community	13
▪ Working households	13
▪ Other forms of positive contribution	13
▪ Positive contribution and disability	13
▪ Other exceptions	14
▪ Providing Evidence	14
6. Property Adverts and Registering an Interest	15
▪ Labelling properties	15
▪ Advertising properties	15
▪ Registering an interest	15
7. Identifying the Successful Applicant	16
8. Verification and Allocation	17

▪ Specific to positive contribution status	17
▪ Ability to afford accommodation offered	17
▪ Allocation	18
9. About Tenancies	19
▪ The types of tenancy available	19
▪ Flexible tenancies and 'affordable rent'	19
10. Consequence of Refusing an Offer	20
11. Equal Opportunities and Support for Vulnerable Applicants	21
▪ Equal opportunities	21
▪ Supporting vulnerable applicants	21
▪ Information in different languages and formats	22
12. Statements About Choice	23
▪ General statement on choice	23
▪ Choice for applicants occupying either temporary accommodation or accommodation secured to prevent homelessness	23
▪ Restrictions on choice when responding to urgent housing situations	24
13. Reviews and Complaints	25
▪ Reviews	25
▪ Complaints	26
14. Knowingly Giving False or Misleading Information	27
15. Keeping People Informed	28
▪ About LetSelect and the Allocations Policy	28
▪ About your application	28
▪ About successful lettings	28
16. Reviewing this Policy and Consultation	30
APPENDIX 1 - Potential Barriers to Participate in LetSelect and Solutions Available	31
APPENDIX 2 - Exclusions	32
APPENDIX 3 - Banding Criteria	33
APPENDIX 4 - Ability to Meet Own Needs	41
APPENDIX 5 - Overcrowding	42
APPENDIX 6 - Medical & Welfare Priority	44
APPENDIX 7 - Size and Type of Home	45
APPENDIX 8 - Management of the Allocations Scheme	47
APPENDIX 9 - Glossary of Terms	49

1. Introduction

Why do we have this policy, and what is it for?

- 1.1 The Council is required by law to allocate social housing according to a published Allocations Policy which has to comply with the Housing Act 1996 (Part 6) and the Homelessness Act 2002
- 1.2 This policy explains how local authority accommodation and accommodation in the Borough owned by Registered Providers will be allocated. It sets out:
 - Who is eligible for housing
 - How to apply for housing
 - How applicants will be assessed and prioritised
 - How the policy is administered
- 1.3 When forming this policy the Council has had due regard to:
 - The Council's Homelessness Strategy
 - The Council's Tenancy Strategy
 - The Council's Housing Strategy
- 1.4 Prevailing local conditions have also been taken into account - these are; a shortage of available social rented properties to satisfy demand for all sizes and types of accommodation.
- 1.5 The Housing Waiting List and Allocation Scheme is run on behalf of all Registered Providers (often referred to as Housing Associations) that have nomination agreements with the Council. It is therefore the primary route for securing social rented housing in the Borough.
- 1.6 A glossary of terms used in this policy can be found at Appendix 9 page 50.

Definition of an 'allocation'

- 1.7 The Council allocates accommodation when it:
 - Selects a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by the Council or;
 - Nominates a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by another authority or;
 - Nominates a person to be an assured or introductory tenant of accommodation held by a Registered Provider
- 1.8 This will include instances where a person is offered an assured shorthold tenancy (including an Affordable Rent property) and flexible tenancies granted under S107A of the Housing Act 1985.

What types of properties are allocated under this policy?

1.9 Most Council and Registered Provider accommodation will be allocated through LetSelect and in accordance with this policy. This will include:

- General needs housing (such as houses and flats)
- Sheltered homes (properties for older people who need support)
- Properties specifically adapted for people with disabilities

1.10 Applicants applying for sheltered housing must have a need for the level of support linked with the scheme they apply for.

When are properties not allocated under this policy?

1.11 The Council will use selected units of accommodation as temporary accommodation to fulfil statutory duties owed to homeless households and when necessary to prevent homelessness from occurring. In these circumstances tenancies will be offered as either an assured shorthold tenancy by a Registered Provider or on a non-secure basis in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Housing Act 1985 and shall not constitute an allocation of accommodation defined by either this policy or Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.

1.12 The Council may also allocate adapted homes directly to a household with matching needs in order to make best use of the housing available.

1.13 In some instances such as where a managed move is necessary or where a new housing development is subject to a 'Local Lettings Plan' the Council and local Registered Providers may nominate to housing accommodation outside of the terms of this policy.

1.14 The Council will take referrals from Hampshire County Council Adult Services Department for older people who qualify for extra care housing.

Who must comply with this policy?

1.15 The Council and all officers employed by the Council must comply with this policy when processing applications for social housing and allocating accommodation that becomes available.

1.16 In addition all officers of Registered Providers that have signed the Council's Nomination Agreement shall comply with this nomination policy for 100% of new properties that become available for rent, and for a minimum of 75% of properties that become available for re-let.

2. The Housing Waiting List & LetSelect

What is the Housing Waiting List?

- 2.1 The Housing Waiting List is a live record of all households that have registered with the Council to be considered for vacancies that arise in social rented housing.
- 2.2 The Council maintains the list in accordance with the terms set out in this policy.
- 2.3 Not everyone who applies will be able to join the Housing Waiting List. There are criteria governing who can join and this is set out in more detail in the section entitled 'The Allocation Process'.

What is 'LetSelect'?

- 2.4 LetSelect is the name given to Fareham's Choice Based Lettings scheme. This is a way of allocating housing that allows applicants to exercise greater choice with regards to the properties for which they can be considered. LetSelect has been designed so that applicants can view the details of any properties which become available and bid on those for which they are eligible and think will be suitable to meet their housing needs.
- 2.5 The successful applicant will be the one who has registered an interest in an available property and is in the highest position on the Housing Waiting List. An applicant's position on the Housing Waiting List is determined by their current housing situation and how long they have been waiting to be housed (for more information see section 6 'How Applications are Prioritised').
- 2.6 All social housing vacancies will be let via LetSelect and in accordance with the processes set out in this policy unless they are excluded for a specific reason as set out in this policy.

3. The Application Process

How to apply

- 3.1 Anyone wishing to obtain accommodation via LetSelect must apply to join the Housing Waiting List. Applications can be made via the following methods:
- Online via our website at www.fareham.gov.uk
 - By completing an application form and returning it to the Council
- 3.2 An advocate (for example; a friend, family worker, or support agency) can complete the application form if necessary, but the applicant's permission will always be needed.
- 3.3 Assistance to help complete forms can be provided at the Council's main offices. Advice and information on the process, including how to use LetSelect is also available. Upon request officers can visit people at home who wish to join the Housing Waiting List to help complete an application form.
- 3.4 Applicants have the right to request a review of any decision made under the terms of this policy, for details of the review process please refer to Chapter 13 Reviews and complaints page 25.

Eligibility

- 3.5 The Council will consider all applications for social housing which are made in accordance with the procedural requirements of the Allocations Scheme. However, to be able to join the Housing Waiting List an applicant will need to be eligible for assistance.
- 3.6 In assessing eligibility the Council shall refer to regulations set out by statute and national guidance.
- 3.7 Applicants will be **ineligible** to join the Housing Waiting List if:
- They are a person subject to immigration control who does not fall into a class prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State as being eligible for assistance
 - They are not a person subject to immigration control but fall within a class of person from abroad prescribed by the Secretary of State as being ineligible for assistance
 - They are under 16 years old (NB: applicants will need to be over 18 to be able to hold a tenancy without a guarantor).
 - They are not resident in the United Kingdom or have been assessed as not being Habitually Resident in the Common Travel Area (CTA)

3.8 Applicants who are ineligible to join the Housing Waiting List will be notified in writing of the Council's decision and the reasons behind it.

Qualification criteria

3.9 With the acute shortage of social rented housing in the Borough the Council has restricted access to the Housing Waiting List to include only those eligible applicants that meet certain qualification criteria. Applicants who do not meet the criteria will not be able to join the Housing Waiting List.

3.10 The following groups of people shall be able to join the Housing Waiting List:

- Those with an established local connection to the Borough of Fareham (see 3.11)
- Those who are currently serving in the regular forces or who were serving in the regular forces at any time in the five years preceding their application
- Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service
- Existing or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service
- Households occupying temporary accommodation provided by Fareham Borough Council under S193 or S195 of the Housing Act 1996
- Applicants who wish to apply exclusively for warden assisted (sheltered) housing and meet the specific eligibility criteria for this type of housing

3.11 Applicants who do not qualify to join the Housing Waiting List may make a fresh application if they consider they should now be treated as qualifying, but it will be for the applicant to show that his or her circumstances have changed.

Local connection

3.12 An applicant shall only be assessed as having a local connection if:

- They live in the Borough in settled housing arrangements and have done so continuously for at least 18 months immediately prior to applying to join the Housing Waiting List or
- They have lived in the Borough in settled housing arrangements for at least 3 consecutive years out of the last 5 or

- They are employed in the Borough. Employment must be permanent in nature and for a minimum of 16 hours per week or
- They need to move to the area to be near to a close member of their family to give or receive essential care and support. The family member must live in the Borough and have been resident continuously for 5 years or more. A close family member is defined as being a parent, sibling, or other relative who has previously acted as a guardian or
- They need to move to receive specialist care and support, which can only be accessed within the Borough of Fareham

Exclusions

3.13 Applicants will be excluded from joining the Housing Waiting List if it is established that:

- They have deliberately worsened their circumstances in order to gain an advantage on the Housing Waiting List
- They or a member of their household have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour
- They have debts with the Council or a Registered Provider in excess of £500
- They are assessed as being unable to sustain a tenancy, or otherwise unsuitable to be considered as a prospective tenant

3.14 Applicants excluded from the Housing Waiting List will be notified of the grounds of this in writing and have the right to seek a review. For more information on exclusions refer to Appendix 2.

Keeping applications up to date

3.15 It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the Housing Options Team is kept informed of any relevant information which may affect their application for housing (for example; change of address, change in household make up, or a significant change in income).

3.16 To try and ensure the Housing Waiting List remains up to date the Council will contact each registered applicant on the anniversary of their application to request confirmation that they wish to remain on the Waiting List. Contact will normally be attempted by email in the first instance, but if this is unsuccessful contact will be made by letter.

3.17 Applicants will be removed from the Housing Waiting List for the following reasons:

- Failure to reply to the annual request to remain on the Waiting List

- Not responding to correspondence from the Council where information is being sought from the applicant
- The applicant is no longer eligible to join the Housing Waiting List;
- The applicant no longer wishes to be re-housed
- The applicant is excluded from the Housing Waiting List for a specific reason

3.18 The applicant will be notified of any decision to remove their application from the Housing Waiting List by writing to them at their last known address.

4. How Applicants are Prioritised

Reasonable preference groups

4.1 In establishing priorities for housing the Council has a legal responsibility to give reasonable preference to the following groups of people as defined by S167 of the Housing Act 1996:

- All categories of homeless people, whether or not the applicant is owed a duty under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1996 or the Homelessness Act 2002
- People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability
- People who need to move to a particular locality within the Borough where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others)

Local priorities

4.2 To help meet local housing needs the Council will also give preference to the following groups:

- Members of the Armed Forces in certain circumstances see Appendix 3
- People needing to move on from supported housing in the Borough in certain circumstances
- Current Fareham Borough Council tenants or Registered Provider tenants resident in the Borough wishing to downsize
- People that have been approved to be foster carers, but require larger accommodation to accommodate foster children
- Current Fareham Borough Council tenants or Registered Provider tenants resident in the Borough where dependent children under the age of 16 live above the first floor and don't have access to outside space

Banding

4.3 The Housing Waiting List is divided into five separate bands. The bands group together applicants with similar levels of housing need. Within each band applications are prioritised in date order.

4.4 The bands are as follows:

- URGENT NEED
- HIGH NEED
- MEDIUM NEED
- LOW NEED
- NO NEED

4.5 Applicants assessed as able to join the Housing Waiting List will be prioritised in accordance with the band criteria (see Appendix 3) and subject to the exceptions set out below.

4.6 All applications will be tested against the Council's income and savings criteria (see Appendix 4). An application where the household income or savings exceeds the defined limits will be assessed as having sufficient means to resolve their own housing need and as such will be placed in the No Housing Need Band.

4.7 Applicants who own property (either in the UK or abroad) or who have other significant assets will also be assessed as having the means to resolve their own housing need and in all but exceptional circumstances (for example; where someone needs to access specific supported housing due to medical needs) will be placed in the No Housing Need band.

Effective date of application

4.8 New applicants shall be placed into the band which corresponds with their need. The date which determines their position within that band will be the date that their completed application was received by the Council.

4.9 Once registered an applicant will be informed in writing of the band their application has been placed in, the reasons for this, and the date their application was registered.

4.10 Applicants already on the Housing Waiting List who are moving between bands due to a change in their circumstances will enter the new band from the date on which the changes are notified to the Council. Applicants who improve their housing situation and consequently move to a lower band will retain their original application date.

4.11 Subject to any specific criteria listed when a property is advertised, the successful applicant will be the one who places a bid on a property, is in the highest band, and has been waiting in that band for the longest time. In the event of 2 applicants having exactly the same band and application date, issues such as original application dates will be taken into account, the age and makeup of the household to determine the best use of the property (e.g. if the property is a 2 bedroom 4 person house then it would be offered to the MW + 2 children household over the W + 1 child)

5. Making a Positive Contribution to the Community

- 5.1 The Government encourages local authorities to consider how their allocations policies can support those in paid employment or who otherwise make positive contributions to their local community in other ways.
- 5.2 Accordingly 25% of all properties advertised through LetSelect will be advertised with a priority being given to those who can show that they are working or otherwise making a positive contribution to the Borough.

Working households

- 5.3 For the purpose of this policy employment is defined as where the applicant or their partner has a formal contract of employment, is working as a temporary member of staff, or is self employed. Applicants will only qualify if they can supply evidence that they have been employed for 9 out of the last 12 months, are in current employment, and are working for a minimum of 16 hours per week.

Other forms of positive contribution

- 5.4 In addition to paid employment, applicants can be assessed as making a positive contribution where they can demonstrate that they are undertaking voluntary work, are active foster carers, or are full time carers and so unable to undertake paid work.
- 5.5 Those doing volunteer work will need to have been volunteering for a continuous period of at least six months up to the point of application and the same at point of offer. Volunteering must be for a not for profit organisation or charity and must be for a minimum of 7 hours per week.
- 5.6 Carers and Foster carers will need to have been providing care for a minimum period of six months up to point of application and the same at point of offer.
- 5.7 In all instances the onus shall remain on applicants to supply sufficient evidence to support their claim for making a positive contribution.

Positive contribution and disability

- 5.8 The Council recognises that not all members of the community are able to undertake paid employment or voluntary work. Therefore anyone who is proven to have a chronic disability, or who is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (or equivalent such as Personal Independence Payment) will be awarded this priority so that they stand an equal chance of securing accommodation as those in paid employment/undertaking voluntary work.

Other exceptions

- 5.9 Vacancies in sheltered / warden assisted accommodation will not be subject to 'positive contribution' criteria, as this form of accommodation shall be allocated solely upon assessed housing need.
- 5.10 There may be instances where someone is serving a 'Community Order' or 'Community Service Order' which requires them to undertake unpaid work. Such circumstances do not constitute either paid employment or volunteering and so are not included in the definitions set out above.

Providing evidence

- 5.11 To be awarded 'positive contribution' status applicants will need to supply sufficient evidence when applying to the Housing Waiting List. The sort of information required will be:
- Proof of employment (e.g. contract or letter from employer)
 - Proof of volunteering (e.g. letter from employer)
 - Proof of being a full time carer/foster caring (e.g. carers allowance, confirmation from social services of foster-care arrangements)
 - Proof of exemption (e.g. evidence of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment)

6. Property Adverts and Registering an Interest

- 6.1 Properties are advertised on a weekly cycle. Adverts are available to view on the LetSelect website, and at the Civic Offices. Details on available properties can also be obtained by telephone via recorded message, or via text message upon request.

Labelling properties

- 6.2 When each property is advertised it will be labelled to indicate which groups of applicants can be considered for it, and any special requirements. The labelling of properties is a key element of the lettings process as legislation allows the Council to set parameters on which types of households can apply for some vacancies and whether any particular types of household will be given preference when being considered for individual vacancies. This includes the ability to implement local lettings policies when required. Where such policies are required a document will be published setting out the terms and evidence base for the implementation of each policy.
- 6.3 When labelling properties, there will be a balance between the need to make the best use of stock, the requirement to house those in the greatest need and the aim of giving applicants as much choice as possible.

Advertising properties

- 6.4 Adverts will include details such as street location, property photograph, rent, council tax band, landlord, property dimensions, heating types, decent homes standard compliance, occupancy levels, and whether pets are allowed.
- 6.5 Properties will generally be advertised for one week, with an extension over bank holiday periods. Large new developments may be advertised for a longer period of time.

Registering an interest

- 6.6 Interested applicants can respond to adverts via the website and telephone. Applicants can register their interest for as many properties as they are eligible for during any one advertising cycle.
- 6.7 Applicants registered for automatic bidding will have bids placed on their behalf in line with their stated preferences about property type and location.

7. Identifying the Successful Applicant

7.1 Once an advert has closed, all applicants that have either registered an interest themselves, or have been put forward via the automatic bidding process, will be sorted in the following order:

- Applicants in the Urgent Need Band, by date order
- Applicants in the High Need Band, by date order
- Applicants in the Medium Need Band, by date order
- Applicants in the Low Need Band, by date order
- Applicants in the No Need Band, by date order

7.2 For properties where preference has been given to households making a positive contribution, bids will be sorted in the following order

- Applicants in the Urgent Need Band making a positive contribution, by date order
- Applicants in the High Need Band making a positive contribution, by date order
- Applicants in the Medium Need Band making a positive contribution, by date order
- Applicants in the Low Need Band making a positive contribution, by date order
- All other applicants in the Urgent Need Band, by date order
- All other applicants in the High Need Band, by date order
- All other applicants in the Medium Need Band, by date order
- All other applicants in the Low Need Band, by date order
- Applicants in the No Need Band, by date order

7.3 Once a successful applicant has been identified they will have their application verified.

8. Verification & Allocation

- 8.1 Before any offer of accommodation is made, the applicant who is first in line for the vacancy will be contacted for verification of all relevant information on their Housing Waiting List application.
- 8.2 The Council has to meet strict deadlines when allocating to accommodation and so it is necessary to verify applications as quickly as possible. Successful applicants who fail to supply the information requested of them within 5 days of it being requested will be overlooked and the applicant next in line will be contacted.
- 8.3 The information required shall include:
- Proof of identity
 - Proof of recourse to public funds
 - Proof of address
 - Proof of residency of any dependent children (e.g. child benefit, tax credits, contact with child's school or GP)
 - Proof of income and savings (e.g. bank statements, wage slips, DWP documentation)
 - For owner-occupiers, proof of ownership and equity (e.g. mortgage statement)
 - Evidence of local connection (e.g. household bills)
 - Evidence to verify housing need (e.g. home visit, proof of tenancy)

Specific to 'positive contribution' status

- 8.4 To be awarded 'positive contribution' status an applicant will have needed to supply sufficient evidence when applying to the Housing Waiting List. Before an offer of accommodation can be formalised this information will also need to be re-verified to ensure that the status still applies.

Ability to afford accommodation offered

- 8.5 It remains the applicant's responsibility to ensure that they will be able to afford the rental charge for any property they apply for. Anyone needing help or advice on the affordability of the accommodation should speak to a Housing Options Officer and may be signposted to the appropriate support agency.
- 8.6 If an applicant or a member of their household are found to have any debt with the Council or Registered Provider they will not normally be offered housing until a suitable arrangement is made to clear the debt and has been adhered to for at least six months. Debts that remain unaddressed and are in excess of £500 are likely to result in an

applicant being excluded from the Housing Waiting List. However, each case will be assessed on its individual merits.

- 8.7 If an applicant is found to owe rent on their private sector tenancy, then the landlord or letting agent will be contacted to establish the level of debt and whether any repayment plan has been made and adhered to. If it is evident that there is a high level of arrears (equivalent to one month's rent or more) and no repayment plan is in place, then the applicant will not normally be offered re-housing.

Allocation

- 8.8 Once the application has been successfully verified the applicant will be nominated for the property they have applied for.
- 8.9 In making an allocation the Council will pass over all relevant information about the successful applicant to the landlord of the available property. The landlord may be the Council or another Registered Provider that takes part in LetSelect.
- 8.10 Once notified, the landlord will make an offer of the vacancy to the successful applicant, and in most circumstances arrange to meet the successful applicant so that they can view the property.
- 8.11 In most instances, once the property has been viewed the successful applicant will then continue to liaise with the landlord and take on the tenancy as/when the property becomes available. If for whatever reason the applicant decides to decline the property offered, the Council will refer back to the list of applicants who originally registered an interest to identify the next suitable candidate. This will be the applicant with the next highest priority who is able to pass the verification process.

9. About Tenancies

- 9.1 When a property is offered, only the parties listed on the application form as being an 'applicant' are normally put forward to be the tenants. Tenancies signed by more than one person are commonly referred to as 'joint tenancies' and the tenants become jointly and severally liable.
- 9.2 The Council will not grant a joint tenancy to two or more people if any one of them is a person from abroad who is ineligible, or is a person who has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour which makes them unsuitable to be a tenant.

The types of tenancy available

- 9.3 The Council shall endeavour to include details on the type of tenancy being offered for each property advertised on LetSelect.
- 9.4 Up until recently, subject to successful completion of an introductory period, the tenancies offered via LetSelect would become either 'Secure' or 'Assured' tenancies depending on whether the landlord was the Council or another Registered Provider. However amendments to the Housing Act 1985 have introduced greater flexibility to the types of tenancies that can be made available.

Flexible tenancies and 'affordable rent'

- 9.5 The most significant change is the introduction of flexible tenancies. This has removed the expectation that a social housing tenancy provides a home for life by enabling landlords to undertake periodic reviews of their tenant's circumstances and to bring tenancies to an end when it is established that the property is no longer needed.
- 9.6 The Localism Act 2011 has also introduced new rules that enable Registered Providers to charge rents up to 80% of the market average. These are commonly referred to as 'affordable rents'.

Successful applicants should make sure they are clear about the terms of any tenancy agreement they enter into, are confident that they can afford the rent being charged, and understand in what circumstances the tenancy may be brought to an end.

10. Consequences of Refusing an Offer

- 10.1 Applicants who unreasonably refuse an offer of a property will be removed from the Housing Waiting List. Applicants may apply to rejoin the Waiting List, but previous waiting time will not be taken into account.
- 10.2 Homeless applicants who unreasonably refuse an offer of a property will also be advised that the Council will discharge its homelessness duty towards them and that they may be evicted from their temporary accommodation.

11. Equal Opportunities & Support for Vulnerable Applicants

Equal opportunities

11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment of this policy was carried out in February 2013. The findings have been considered and an action plan put in place. This will be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that no specific groups are disadvantaged by this policy.

Supporting vulnerable applicants

11.2 LetSelect requires people seeking accommodation to be proactive and to engage with the process through the following activities:

- Find information on available properties via the website, telephone or text message
- Identify properties that may be suitable for their circumstances
- Register an interest in any homes that they think may be suitable
- Keep the Council informed of any changes to their circumstances

11.3 Without sufficient safeguards this could mean that some more vulnerable applicants may lose out. People can be vulnerable for a whole range of reasons. In addition vulnerability can be a variable state; it can be temporary or ongoing and could increase over time. For this reason every applicant will be considered as an individual and their needs must be assessed so as to identify any barriers they may face in participating in the LetSelect process. Once any barriers have been identified appropriate solutions will be put in place. For more information on the potential barriers to participation, and the solutions available, refer to Appendix 1.

11.4 One way to ensure vulnerable people are not disadvantaged by the LetSelect process is for their application to be registered for 'automatic bidding'. This is where the Council will identify properties that match with the size, location, and type of home an applicant is looking for, and place bids on their behalf. This ensures that the applicant will not miss out on any properties that may be suitable.

11.5 Some applicants may need assistance in responding to advertised vacancies and will be asked when they apply what assistance they will need. A member of the Housing Options Team will contact the applicant or their appointed support worker, carer, or advocate to confirm the type and location of the accommodation they are seeking. Once confirmed, bids on behalf of these applicants will be submitted automatically.

11.6 The Housing Options Team will review the needs of these applicants every six months to ensure that they are able to exercise choice in accordance with any changes in their circumstances.

Information in different languages and formats

11.7 Upon request information relating to the Allocations Policy or LetSelect can be provided in alternative languages or different formats such as large print or Braille. This includes application forms and correspondence about decisions on individual applications.

12. Statements About Choice

General statement on choice

- 12.1 Whilst LetSelect is intended to give applicants as much choice as possible there is a very high demand for social housing in the area and so any choices have to be balanced with the need to ensure housing goes to those in greatest need.
- 12.2 By advertising the properties available, LetSelect places the onus on applicants to identify the properties they wish to be considered for. This provides applicants with greater freedom to make informed decisions about the type and location of the properties they wish to apply for. They will not however be considered for accommodation that is determined by the Council as being either too large or too small to meet their housing need.
- 12.3 Applicants using the 'automatic bidding' process can state their preferences on their application form. Any offers of accommodation will be made in accordance with these stated wishes.
- 12.4 Applicants are expected to take suitable offers of accommodation for which they have bid for. If an applicant refuses a suitable offer of accommodation their application will be removed from the Housing Waiting List.

Choice for applicants occupying either temporary accommodation or housing secured to prevent homelessness

- 12.5 People accepted as homeless and placed into temporary accommodation by a local authority will not be able to exercise the same level of choice as other applicants in all instances. This is because the Council must ensure that the limited temporary accommodation available in the Borough is managed effectively to be able to meet future housing need.
- 12.6 Households placed into temporary accommodation will be obliged to go onto the Housing Waiting List to ensure that they can be considered for settled accommodation. Applicants who fail to submit an application form will be notified that they are being added to the Housing Waiting List in order to be considered for future vacancies.
- 12.7 Wherever possible the Council aims to either prevent homelessness from occurring, or to bring its homeless duties to an end by securing suitable, settled housing in the private rented sector. Where this is not possible, households accepted as homeless by the Council will be placed into temporary accommodation until its duties can be brought to an end by securing more settled housing. In most instances before they can be moved on from temporary accommodation, households will need to complete a programme of

support and/or demonstrate that they are able to sustain a tenancy independently or with limited support.

- 12.8 The Council believes that 6 months is a reasonable period of time for a household to demonstrate that they can sustain a tenancy with minimal support. Households placed into temporary accommodation will be overlooked for any properties they bid for via LetSelect until they have occupied their accommodation for at least 6 months and demonstrated that they can sustain a tenancy with minimal support. In such instances the Council will also look to secure suitable housing in the private rented sector to enable households to move into more settled housing as swiftly as possible.
- 12.9 The Council will monitor applications from homeless households to ensure they are active on LetSelect. In instances where a household is not actively bidding for potentially suitable accommodation, or is otherwise assessed as being too restrictive in their choices, the Council will notify them that bids will start to be placed on their behalf. Homeless households who have had bids submitted on their behalf (as described above) will be informed that should they unreasonably refuse an offer of accommodation; the Council will end its homelessness duty towards them and they will need to make alternative housing arrangements.
- 12.10 With the exception of occupying privately rented accommodation, households occupying accommodation secured by the Council to prevent homelessness will also be expected to actively bid for accommodation advertised on LetSelect. In instances where a household is not actively bidding for potentially suitable accommodation, the Council will notify the household that bids will start to be placed on their behalf for all properties that are considered suitable.

Restrictions on choice when responding to urgent housing situations

- 12.11 Applications assessed as being in 'Urgent Housing Need' will be placed into the highest band on the Housing Waiting List. Such a high level of priority is awarded to respond to the most serious of housing situations and to enable an appropriate solution to be found in the shortest time frame possible. For this reason applicants placed into this band will not be able to bid for properties via LetSelect and will instead have bids placed on their behalf in line with their housing preferences. Any preferences made about location and property type will need to provide a realistic chance of securing housing within a short space of time (within 6 months). In instances where applicants are making unrealistic requirements about their options, the Council will consider removing the 'Urgent Housing Need' status. Further if a suitable offer of accommodation is declined the Council will consider removing the 'Urgent Housing Need' status, and in some instances may delete the application from the Housing Waiting List.

13. Reviews and Complaints

Reviews

- 13.1 Applicants have the right to ask for a review of any decision made under the terms of this policy.
- 13.2 Requests for a review should be made:
- a. In writing (a request over the phone or made verbally will need to be confirmed in writing to ensure points are correctly recorded). Assistance can be provided upon request
 - b. within 21 days of the date of the decision being made and
 - c. addressed to the Housing Options Manager
- 13.3 The Council will carry out any review and notify the applicant of the decision within eight weeks of the request being made.
- 13.4 Reviews will normally be carried out by an officer who is senior to the officer who originally took the decision and who was not involved in the original decision. However, the officer who took part in the original decision will be able to assist the reviewing officer with routine matters in carrying out the review and this may include providing them with a written report on the case.
- 13.5 When a request for a review is received, the Council will notify the applicant of the procedure to be followed in connection to the review and advise that he or she or someone acting on their behalf may make written representations to the Council in connection with the review.
- 13.6 The applicant or their representative should provide grounds for challenging the decision and supply any new information that they feel should be considered in reviewing the decision that has been made.
- 13.7 The review will normally be a desktop exercise not an oral hearing and will be carried out on the basis of the facts known to the Council at the time of the review. Any representations made by the applicant or on the applicant's behalf will be considered along with information supplied from the officer who took part in the original decision. It may be necessary to make further enquiries with the applicant about the information they have provided. Such enquiries may be made either in writing or by personal interview at the discretion of the reviewing officer.
- 13.8 The Council will be flexible about allowing further exchanges, having regard to the eight week time limit for a review. In such circumstances and where necessary, the reviewing officer may approach the applicant to agree an extension to the time limit.

- 13.9 The Council will notify the applicant in writing of the outcome of the review and set out the reasons for any decisions made. If the reviewing officer finds any deficiencies or irregularities in the way in which the Council has dealt with a case these will be notified to the applicant as part of the decision. The outcome of any review is final.
- 13.10 In respect of decisions concerning the suitability of final offers of accommodation for homeless people, should the applicant still dispute the decision that has been made they may appeal to the county court within 21 days of the reviewing officer's decision.

Complaints

- 13.11 Where an applicant considers that they have been treated unfairly or believes that there has been maladministration of the scheme, they should initially contact the Housing Options Manager. This process is separate from the procedure to request a review of a decision that has been made in accordance with this Allocations Policy
- 13.12 If the matter is not resolved the Housing Options Manager will refer the applicant to the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.

14. Knowingly Giving False or Misleading Information

14.1 It is an offence for anyone seeking help from the Council to:

- Knowingly or recklessly give false information
- Knowingly withhold information which the Council has reasonably required the applicant to give

14.2 A person guilty of such an offence is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level five on the standard scale.

14.3 The Council will consider any such case carefully and will take into account all relevant statutory and / or practice guidance in deciding whether or not criminal proceedings should be commenced. Examples of circumstances in which the Council would consider an offence has been committed are as follows:

- Any false information given on an application form for social housing
- Any false information given in response to subsequent review letters or other updating mechanisms
- Any false information given or submitted by applicants during the proceedings of a review

14.4 The Council may seek possession of a tenancy it has granted as a result of a false statement by the tenant or a person acting at the tenant's instigation. If the tenancy is with another body, for example a Registered Provider, it may advise that organisation to seek possession.

15. Keeping People Informed

About LetSelect and the Allocations Policy

- 15.1 The Council will publish and provide a summary of its Allocations Policy free of charge. This document will be available to view at Fareham Borough Council Civic Offices, at Hampshire County Council libraries in the Borough, and can also be downloaded from the Council's website.
- 15.2 The full Allocations Policy can be downloaded from the Council's website and a hard copy can also be provided upon request. The Allocations Policy is available to view at the Civic Offices during office opening times.
- 15.3 Anyone wishing to discuss their application in person with an officer of the Housing Options Service can do so by visiting the Civic Office during office opening times. If you are unable to visit the Civic Offices a home visit can be arranged.
- 15.4 Any written advice and information can be made available in a range of formats and languages as appropriate.

About your application

- 15.5 Applicants have the right to certain information. This includes:-
- Information that will enable them to assess how their application is likely to be treated under the Allocations Policy, in particular, whether they are accepted onto the Housing Waiting List, which reasonable preference categories they have been awarded, and which band they have been placed in. Applicants will be provided with this information in writing once their application has been assessed
 - Information about previous lettings and therefore an indication as to how long they can expect to wait for a home
 - Information about any decisions on the facts of the case that may affect a decision about whether an applicant is able to join the list, or whether they can be nominated for housing

About successful lettings

- 15.6 LetSelect is intended to provide applicants with realistic expectations on their chances of being housed. Not everyone who applies for housing will be successful as the Council must ensure that those in greatest need for accommodation are prioritised.

- 15.7 By publishing details about the allocations that have taken place, the Council provides applicants with the information they need to make realistic and informed choices about which properties to bid for, and indeed whether to pursue their application for social rented housing. It also helps in part to fulfil the statutory requirement to advise applicants on whether or not they are likely to be housed.
- 15.8 Details of successful lettings are published on the LetSelect website and a summary of the allocations made are published in annual newsletters. Whilst the successful applicant's name will not be published, their banding and length of waiting time will be, along with the number of applicants who expressed an interest in the property.

16. Reviewing this Policy and Consultation

16.1 The Council will keep its Allocations Policy under review but before adopting a new Policy or significantly amending any existing arrangements, the Council will:

- Send a copy of the draft scheme, or proposed alteration, to every Registered Provider with which the Council has nomination arrangements
- Ensure that those Registered Providers have a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposals
- Notify existing applicants of the intended amendments and invite them to comment on proposals
- Make use of social media to raise awareness of proposals and invite comment from members of the public

16.2 Although it is not a statutory requirement, the Council will also consult with the Adult Services, Children Services and Supporting People Team of Hampshire County Council, NHS Hampshire, relevant voluntary organisations and other appropriate and relevant referral agencies. This will ensure that the Allocations Policy reflects the particular requirements of the Borough.

16.3 The Council will aim to allow 12 weeks as the standard minimum time for written consultation but may determine such other period of time as it considers appropriate.

APPENDIX 1 - POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATING IN LETSELECT AND THE SOLUTIONS AVAILABLE
--

Some people may have difficulty participating in LetSelect. To take part people will need to be able to access information, complete forms, bid for homes, make decisions, and if necessary appeal against decisions made by the Council.

This table lists some of the reasons people may struggle to engage with these processes, and the solutions that are in place to ensure no-one is disadvantaged.

Reason	Possible Solution
Literacy problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interview to register • 'Autobid' used once registered for potentially suitable properties
English is not first language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications available in different languages upon request • Telephone translation available during face to face interviews
Chaotic lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floating support / supported housing schemes assist in application process • 'Autobid' used to identify potentially suitable properties • Text messages on suitable properties
Visual Impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interview to register • Automatic re-register option • Answerphone recording on available properties • 'Autobid' used to identify potentially suitable properties
Hearing Impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text talk • Text messages on suitable properties
Learning difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floating support • Face to face interviews • 'Autobid' to identify potentially suitable properties
Have mental health issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floating support • Face to face interviews • 'Autobid' to identify potentially suitable properties
Mobility issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home visits
Lack general life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews • Floating support • Autobid
Geographically isolated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home visits
Don't have access to the internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answerphone • Text messaging • 'Autobid'

APPENDIX 2 - EXCLUSIONS

The Council will exclude applicants from the Housing Waiting List in certain circumstances.

Exclusions will normally be for a minimum period of six months, and applications will be reviewed upon request after this time has elapsed.

Condition 1

The Council will exclude an applicant from the Housing Waiting List where the applicant or a member of their household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant.

Unacceptable behaviour can include:

- Breaches of tenancy including causing nuisance or annoyance to neighbours and / or engaging in antisocial behaviour
- A conviction for using accommodation or allowing its use for immoral or illegal purposes
- Damaging or allowing property to be seriously damaged
- Allowing a property to deteriorate
- A conviction for an offence relating to violence or threats of violence
- Evidence of causing nuisance or harassment
- Owing arrears of rent or debts to the Council and / or Registered Providers (£500+)
- Owing arrears of rent to a Private Landlord / Letting Agent (2 months+)
- Obtaining a tenancy by deception

Condition 2

The Council will exclude an applicant from the Housing Waiting List where there is evidence that they have either knowingly or recklessly worsened their housing situation in order to either take advantage of the Council's statutory homelessness duties, or to gain an advantage on the Housing Waiting List. Households who have been assessed as being 'intentionally homeless' are likely to be excluded from the Housing Waiting List for this reason.

Condition 3

The Council will exclude an applicant from the Housing Waiting List where the applicant is assessed as being unsuitable to be a tenant or otherwise unable to sustain a tenancy. Examples will include where a tenant has persistently breached the terms of their existing tenancy, or where a person suffers from acute alcohol/substance misuse issues and is not engaging with the appropriate services to help get their issues addressed.

APPENDIX 3 - BANDING CRITERIA

Reason for Priority	URGENT HOUSING NEED
Welfare	A person requiring either specially adapted, accessible, or sheltered housing so that they can be discharged from hospital, where no other suitable options are available.
Welfare	An existing Council or Housing Association tenant resident in the borough of Fareham where moving shall release an adapted property no longer required by the tenant.
Medical	A person who has a life threatening medical condition which is directly affected by their housing arrangements, where a failure to re-house is essential to address significant hardship or a risk to life.
Social tenant	A permanent Council or Housing Association tenant living in the borough where the property is about to be demolished, redeveloped, or is subject to major works where it will not be possible for them to remain.

<p>Armed Forces</p>	<p>Members of the Armed and Reserve Forces who are in urgent housing need.</p> <p>Urgent housing need is defined as being an imminent threat of homelessness, or housing conditions that comply with reasonable preference criteria are considered by the local authority to constitute a 'High Housing Need'. Applicants must have an established local connection to the Borough, fall within income thresholds, and not have the means to resolve their own housing need.</p> <p>Applicants will need to be either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A former member of the armed forces (discharged within 5 years) • Serving members of the armed forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service • A bereaved spouse or civil partner of members of the armed forces leaving services family accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner • Serving or former members of the reserved forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition, or disability sustained as a result of their service
<p>Social tenant - priority transfer</p>	<p>A permanent Council or Housing Association tenant living in the borough of Fareham who needs to move due to exceptional circumstances such as harassment or threats of violence. Circumstances will need to be of a significant and insurmountable nature associated with their occupation where there is imminent personal risk to the household if they remain.</p>

Reason for priority	HIGH HOUSING NEED
Welfare	<p>To facilitate move on from Supported Housing.</p> <p>Where a support plan has been completed and the Council has accepted that the applicant has a specific need to access social housing.</p> <p>This criterion is intended to facilitate move on from specific supporting people funded accommodation in Fareham & Gosport as determined by the local authority. Priority shall only be awarded where it has been evidenced that there is a clear need for social housing and that alternative housing options are unlikely to be successful.</p>
Medical	<p>A person who has a serious medical condition which is affected by their present housing arrangements, where a failure to re-house would lead to a rapid decline in health.</p>
Social Tenant	<p>A permanent Council or Housing Association tenant living in the borough wishing to downsize by 2 bedrooms or more</p>
Social Tenant	<p>A permanent Council or Housing Association tenant living in the borough requiring sheltered housing due to support needs</p>
Social Tenant	<p>A permanent Council or Housing Association tenant resident in the borough of Fareham where the household is lacking 2 bedrooms or more and where the Council is satisfied that alternative options cannot be pursued</p>

Overcrowding	<p>A household living in accommodation lacking 2 bedrooms or more, where the Council is satisfied that this is the most viable housing option available and has not been contrived. The Council reserves the right to offer alternative options to alleviate overcrowding as appropriate.</p> <p>Owner occupiers will normally be assessed as being in a position to be able to resolve their own housing issues and will only be awarded this priority in exceptional circumstances.</p>
Agricultural Workers	<p>The 1976 Act requires housing authorities to use their best endeavours to provide accommodation for displaced agricultural workers.</p> <p>Cases arising under the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976 will be subject to approval by the Housing Options Manager. Based on the individual circumstances of the case, the competing demands on accommodation and the authorities' resources, a decision will be taken on whether to award this level of priority. The Council reserves the right to pursue alternative options where these are assessed as a viable option to help re-accommodate the household seeking assistance</p>
Foster Carers	<p>To enable fostering where an agreement has been reached with social services and the Housing Options Manager to provide permanent accommodation prior to any placement taking place</p>
Insanitary or unsatisfactory housing conditions	<p>A household living in a property that is in significant disrepair or where a prohibition order has been served and the Council's Environmental Health Department have confirmed that there is an imminent risk to the tenant, or it is otherwise unreasonable for them to remain whilst remedial works are carried out.</p> <p>Applicant must have a legal right to occupy the accommodation in question. It must be located within the borough of Fareham and the repair issues must have occurred after the date of occupancy.</p>

Reason for priority	MEDIUM HOUSING NEED
Medical	A person who has a medical condition that is affected by current housing arrangements, where alternative accommodation could remedy this issue, but where the condition is assessed as not being so significant as to be causing a rapid decline to health or welfare.
Social Tenant	A permanent Council or Housing Association tenant living in the borough wishing to downsize by 1 bedroom.
Social Tenant	A permanent Council or Housing Association tenant living in the borough where the household is lacking 1 bedroom and where the Council is satisfied that alternative options cannot be pursued.
Social Tenant	<p>A permanent Council or Housing Association tenant living in the borough with dependent children living above the ground floor and without garden space.</p> <p>Children must be under the age of 16 unless there are extenuating circumstances.</p>
Homelessness	<p>Accepted homeless household owed the main duty by FBC placed into Bed & Breakfast or any other form of temporary accommodation (excluding private rented accommodation).</p> <p>Applicants will only be able to actively take part in LetSelect after 6 months, subject to recommendation by their Housing Options Officer and/or Floating Support Worker.</p>

<p>Living in Council defined 'temporary housing'</p>	<p>From time to time the Council prevents homelessness by placing families into units of accommodation primarily reserved for homeless households.</p> <p>To ensure all households are moved on in a timely fashion households living in this accommodation will be awarded with a medium housing need but are also expected to co-operate with the Council to pursue all reasonable options to secure alternative housing. This includes private rented housing.</p>
<p>Homelessness</p>	<p>Any other household occupying supporting people funded accommodation.</p>
<p>Overcrowding</p>	<p>A household living in accommodation lacking 1 bedroom, where the Council is satisfied that this is the most viable housing option available and is not contrived. The Council reserves the right to offer alternative options to alleviate overcrowding as appropriate.</p> <p>Owner occupiers will normally be assessed as being in a position to be able to resolve their own housing issues and will only be awarded this priority in exceptional circumstances.</p>
<p>Insanitary or unsatisfactory housing conditions</p>	<p>Any other insanitary or unsatisfactory housing conditions where the Council's Environmental Health department have confirmed that Category 1 hazards exist, and that remedial action is not able to be pursued.</p> <p>This will include households where accommodation lacks facilities such as cooking facilities, bathing facilities, or utility supplies. It does not include households claiming to be without accommodation. Applicant must have a legal right to occupy the accommodation in question. It must be located within the borough of Fareham and the repair issues must have occurred after the date of occupancy.</p>
<p>Insanitary or unsatisfactory housing conditions</p>	<p>A household with a dependent child renting accommodation where facilities such as the bathroom or kitchen are shared with other households.</p> <p>This does not include households accommodated by a local authority under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (homeless households).</p>

Reason for priority	LOW HOUSING NEED
Tenure	A household renting privately (either self contained or shared) or other settled housing arrangements.
Tenure	A household living with either friends or relatives on an informal basis.
Tenure	A household living in accommodation that is tied to their employment, including armed forces accommodation.
Tenure	A household living in any moveable structure with or without formal tenancy arrangements.
Tenure	<p>A person or household with no fixed address or otherwise living in unsettled housing arrangements.</p> <p>This will include households having to stay at various addresses, sleeping rough, in care, or any other accommodation that is regarded as unsettled.</p>

Reason	NO HOUSING NEED
Social tenant	A permanent Council or Housing Association tenant seeking to move but assessed as either adequately housed or failing to meet other criteria for priority to be awarded.
Tenure	Owner occupiers.
Income & savings	Applications from households that do not meet the Council's maximum income thresholds or who have savings/assets in excess of £16,000 are considered to have sufficient means to resolve their own housing concerns and will be assessed as having no housing need regardless of other housing circumstances.
Social tenant	A permanent Council or Housing Association tenant living in the borough in bedsit accommodation and wanting to upsize to a 1 bedroom property.

APPENDIX 4 - ABILITY TO MEET OWN NEEDS

Social housing should be prioritised for people who have insufficient resources to meet their own housing need. As such, the resources available to each household that applies to the Housing Waiting List will be assessed, to ensure that only those that really need social rented housing will be prioritised.

Applicants who have sufficient income, savings, or assets to access and maintain suitable housing in the private sector will be assessed as having No Housing Need and are unlikely to stand any realistic chance of being offered accommodation in all but the most exceptional circumstances.

The following criteria will be applied.

Income

Applicants with a household income in excess of the thresholds set out here will normally be considered to be able to meet their housing need through; renting privately, shared-ownership, or owner-occupation.

Thresholds are calculated as 5 times the relevant Local Housing Allowance level for the SO post code area and shall be set at the beginning of each financial year.

The current income thresholds are:

Household Property Need	Income Threshold (Gross per annum)
1 Bedroom	£30,000
2 Bedrooms	£39,000
3 Bedrooms or more	£46,500

The following types of income are fully disregarded:

- Attendance Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance

Savings & Assets

Households with savings or assets in excess of £16,000 will normally be considered to be able to meet their housing need through renting privately, but each case will be assessed on its individual merits.

APPENDIX 5 - OVERCROWDING

The Secretary of State takes the view that the bedroom standard is an appropriate measure of overcrowding for allocation purposes.

In light of this the Council will measure overcrowding levels for the purpose of awarding "Reasonable Preference".

The bedroom standard allocates a separate bedroom to the following groups of persons:

- A married or cohabiting couple
- A person aged 21 or more
- Two persons of the same sex aged between 0 and 20
- Two persons aged less than 10 years (regardless of sex)
- Any person aged under 21 years in any case where he or she cannot be paired with another occupier of the dwelling as set out above

For the purposes of this Policy the Council recognises that persons considered for sharing a room must be family members. Therefore two young adults who are not in the same family and are not in a relationship should be considered as requiring their own bedroom.

For the purpose of this measure; a living room, bathrooms, and kitchens shall not be classed as usable bedroom spaces. However, additional rooms such as separate dining rooms may be assessed as being usable as a bedroom space.

Statutory Overcrowding

The bedroom standard as set out above offers a more generous assessment of overcrowding than current statutory instruments set out in Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985. However, should an applicant disagree with the Council's assessment of the level of overcrowding in their accommodation, upon request an assessment can be arranged to measure whether they are 'statutorily overcrowded'.

All cases confirmed to be 'statutorily overcrowded' by our Environmental Health Department and shall be banded to reflect the level of overcrowding present.

Statutory overcrowding can be caused by having too many people in a room or by having too many people for the size of the room.

If two people of the opposite sex have to sleep in the same room the accommodation will be overcrowded unless the two people are:

- a married or cohabiting couple, or
- at least one occupant is under ten years old

The number of people of the same sex (unless they are a same sex couple) who can sleep in one room is restricted by the size of the room.

Rooms that are counted include all living rooms (this excludes bathrooms and kitchens). For the space and floor area calculations:

- children under one year old are ignored
- children under ten years old and over one count as a half

The floor area of a room also determines how many people can sleep in it:

- rooms under 50 square feet are ignored
- floor area 110 sq feet (10.2 sq metres approx) = 2 people
- floor area 90 - 109 sq ft (8.4 - 10.2 sq m approx) = 1.5 people
- floor area 70 - 89 sq ft (6.5 - 8.4 sq m approx) = 1 person
- floor area 50 - 69 sq ft (4.6 - 6.5 sq m approx) = 0.5 people

APPENDIX 6 - MEDICAL & WELFARE PRIORITY

Medical and Welfare priorities will be determined by a Housing Options Officer and agreed by a Senior Housing Officer upon sufficient evidence submitted by the applicant. Evidence could include relevant information supplied by an applicant's GP, Consultant, other Health Professional or Support Worker.

There can only be one medical and welfare priority awarded for each household. The banding will be determined by the worst medical or welfare factor awarded to a member of the household.

Awards of Urgent Medical or Urgent Welfare will be given initially for 3 months and reviewed every 3 months thereafter.

Awards of High Medical or High Welfare will be given initially for 6 months and reviewed every 6 months thereafter.

The Allocations Officer will check that the factor still applies before making a nomination.

Applicants will be informed in writing of the outcome of their medical and welfare assessment; brief reasons explaining why the decision has been made will be given. If the applicant disagrees with the assessment there is a right to review, applicants must state the reasons for requesting a review and provide additional medical and welfare evidence so that the case can be reconsidered.

APPENDIX 7 - SIZE AND TYPE OF HOME

Generally homes are offered in line with the following table:

Household Size	Size and Type of Home
Single person	Studio apartment or one bedroom flat, maisonette, house or bungalow
Couple	One bedroom flat, maisonette, house or bungalow
Single person or couple eligible for sheltered housing	One or two bedroom flat or bungalow
Two adults of the same sex - living as a couple	One bedroom flat, maisonette, house or bungalow
Two adults of the same sex - not living as a couple e.g. two brothers or two sisters	One or two bedroom flat, maisonette, house or bungalow
Two adults of the opposite sex who do not live as a couple e.g. a brother and a sister	Two bedroom flat, maisonette, house or bungalow
Adult or couple with one child under the age of 1	One or two bedroom flat, maisonette, house or bungalow
Adult or couple with two children of the same sex	Two bedroom flat, maisonette, house or bungalow
Adult or couple with two children of the same sex - where the age gap between the children is 10 years or more and where the eldest child is aged 16 or over	Two or three bedroom flat, maisonette, house or bungalow
Adult or couple with two children of the opposite sex	Two or three bedroom flat, maisonette, house or bungalow
Adult or couple with three children	Three bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Adult or couple with four or more children	Three or four bedroom flat, maisonette or house

Applicants who have shared responsibility for a child or children, will only have them considered as part of their household if it is determined that the child or children are their dependents and reside with them as their only or main home.

In determining household size a child will not be considered as part of a household until it is born.

Housing Associations are able to stipulate a maximum household size for their properties, if it is felt that allowing 'over occupation' would be detrimental to the household or have a negative impact on the scheme.

The following are examples of some exceptions that may be made to this guide:-

- existing tenants being re-housed due to a serious threat of violence or harassment may be considered for a property with the same number of bedrooms as their current home
- under-occupying tenants eligible for the transfer grant scheme may on request be offered a home one bedroom larger than their assessed need. For example to downsize by one bedroom rather than two;

APPENDIX 8 - MANAGEMENT OF THE ALLOCATIONS SCHEME

Who makes the decisions?

The Head of Strategic Housing has delegated powers to make decisions under the Allocations Policy. Officers of the Council who have been given appropriate delegated authority by the Head of Strategic Housing are:

Officer	Delegated powers
Housing Options Officer	Registration of applications and maintenance of the Housing Waiting List
Allocations Officer	All of the above plus reviews of decisions other than removal of preference or final offers to homeless applicants
Senior Housing Officer	All of the above plus reviews of all decisions
Housing Options Manager	All of the above

The involvement of elected members in nomination decisions

Government regulations restrict the involvement of elected members of the Council in allocation decisions in certain specified circumstances. Normally, under this Policy, allocation decisions are made by Officers of the Council.

A Councillor is prevented from being part of a decision making body at the time an allocation decision is made when either the home to be allocated is situated in the Councillor's electoral ward or the person subject to the decision has his or her sole or main residence in the Councillor's electoral ward.

Councillors may be involved in allocation decisions where the above circumstances do not apply. For example Councillors are not prevented from:

- seeking or providing information on behalf of their constituents, or from participating in the decision-making body's deliberations prior to its decision, or
- participating in policy decisions that affect the generality of a particular ward's housing accommodation e.g. that flats in certain blocks should not be allocated to older people or to households with young children.

Councillors remain responsible for determining the Allocations Policy and monitoring its implementation. The Executive is responsible for determining the Council's Allocations Policy and the Housing Policy Development and Review Panel is responsible for monitoring the implementation.

Employees and Members of the Council and their relatives

The Council will ask all housing applicants to declare whether they or any of their relatives work for the Council, or are elected members of the Council.

For this purpose the term "relative" includes:

- anyone living with the applicant as a partner, or as a member of his or her household
- a natural, adoptive or step parent;
- a child
- a sister or brother
- a daughter-in-law or son-in-law
- a grandparent
- an aunt or uncle
- an estranged spouse or partner, regardless of whether he or she lives as part of the applicant's household

In relevant cases the Council will subject applications to special authorisation procedures to ensure that the Allocations Policy criteria have been properly applied.

APPENDIX 9 - GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Additional preference	The phrase used in the Housing Act to allow local authorities to prioritise applicants with the greatest need in the reasonable preference categories
Advert cycle	The number of days in which an applicant has the opportunity to register an interest in a property advertised via LetSelect
Advocate	A responsible person who has been given approval to act on behalf of an applicant e.g. a support worker or family member
Applicant	A person who applies to register on the Housing Waiting List
Application date	The date an application is assessed having received all relevant information from the applicant
Bands	A term used to describe groups of applicants with similar level of need for accommodation. Bands are used to set out a hierarchy of housing need of all applicants able to join the list.
Bedroom Entitlement	The number of bedrooms that an applicant can apply for
Bidding	A term used to describe the process whereby an applicant registers an interest in a property advertised via LetSelect
Choice Based Lettings	Describes a system of allocating social housing whereby the onus is upon applicants to select properties they wish to be considered for as and when they become available
Code of Guidance	Government guidance for local authorities to refer to when framing and implementing their policies
Decant	The need to move an existing tenant to another property to enable building works to be done
Homeless Household	A household who are owed a 'homeless' duty by a local authority under section 190(2), 193(2), 195(2) under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985)
Housing Need	A term used to describe an applicant's relative requirement for accommodation
Registered Provider	A Housing Association, arms length management organisation or local authority stock holding landlord
Local connection	A defined connection to a settlement or area
Local lettings policies	Policies that allow certain properties or developments to be let against specific criteria
Offer	An offer of accommodation that an applicant has bid for
PIN number	Each applicant has a Personal Identification Number which is used to log in to the LetSelect system

Reasonable Preference	The phrase used in the Housing Act to describe those types of housing need that should be considered in a local authorities Allocations Policy
Settled Housing Arrangements	For the purpose of this policy a 'settled housing arrangement' is when an applicant's accommodation has been adopted voluntarily and has not been arranged to contrive a stronger position on the Housing Waiting List.
Shortlist	A final list of applicants that have registered an interest in an available property
Temporary Accommodation	Accommodation secured by a local authority as part of its homeless duties under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 that does not bring those duties to an end.
Under Occupying	A property is under-occupied when the number of bedrooms available exceeds the number required by the household who live there
Unsettled Housing Arrangements	Any housing situation that does not meet the definition of a 'settled housing arrangement'