



Hampshire Home Choice



Hampshire Home Choice

Allocations Framework

This document sets out a framework for the allocation of social housing in the East Hampshire, Havant, Test Valley, Winchester Council areas. East Hampshire District Council, Havant Borough Council, Test Valley Borough Council and Winchester City Council have agreed to adopt a joint approach to allocating social housing: these principles are set out in the Allocations Framework.

The Allocations Framework explains how the Hampshire Home Choice scheme operates. The Framework enables all customers applying for social housing to be prioritised by the four authorities in a similar way and to be registered onto the single Hampshire Home Choice Housing Register. Customers who are registered are eligible to bid for homes across the four Council areas. The Allocations Framework is a joint policy agreed by the four Councils. Each Council may continue to maintain separate policies with regard to local issues. The Choice Based Lettings Scheme will operate under the name of Hampshire Home Choice.

Hampshire Home Choice Allocations Framework			
East Hampshire District Council Allocations Policy	Havant Borough Council Allocations Policy	Test Valley Borough Council Allocation Policy	Winchester City Council Scheme of Allocations
Hampshire Home Choice Housing Register			
East Hampshire Housing Register	Havant Housing Register	Test Valley Housing Register	Winchester Housing Register

1.1. Statement of the Hampshire Home Choice Scheme Principles

Choice Based Lettings provides an alternative to traditional systems for the allocation of social rented housing. In traditional allocations schemes, vacant social housing is allocated to applicants by local authorities. In Choice Based Lettings Schemes, vacant social housing is advertised and customers are required to bid for properties. Customers choose where they would prefer to live. Where more than one customer applies for a vacancy the Council's Allocations Policy decides which customer has priority i.e. the customer assessed as having the highest degree of housing need for the property advertised. The Hampshire Choice Based Lettings Scheme is considered an important element in the wider strategy to manage housing need in the sub-region. Within this sub-region it is recognised that market housing has become increasingly unaffordable and also that meeting the needs of homelessness households represents a significant problem to the Councils. Choice Based Lettings will help create a more effective market for social housing in which customers can make decisions about social housing based on clear information of all of the available options.

Increasing choice for households in housing need in this way will:

- Enable customers to make informed decisions about their social housing choices in the light of varying levels of supply and demand.
- Encourage customers to take a wider look at all of the alternative housing options that may be available to them including Low Cost Home Ownership and private renting.
- Result in an increase in the proportion of satisfied tenants and help develop more sustainable communities.

The Hampshire Choice Based Lettings Scheme includes the allocation of all social housing across the four Councils within the sub region, with the exception of the Portsmouth City Council housing stock in the Havant area. Each Council retains strategic control of the way in which social housing in its area is allocated. A fundamental principle of the scheme is that each Council continues to influence the allocation of scarce social housing to households in need of affordable housing and to other customers with support needs. The Hampshire Choice Based Lettings Scheme incorporates an Annual Review to ensure that each authority is not disproportionately affected as a result of cross boundary migration between Council areas.

1.2. The Structure of the Hampshire Home Choice Scheme

The Hampshire Home Choice scheme is managed by four local authorities: East Hampshire District Council, Havant Borough Council, Test Valley Borough Council and Winchester City Council. All Housing Associations operating in the Council districts and Winchester City Council Housing Services are participating in the



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scheme. East Hampshire, Havant, Test Valley and Winchester have agreed that each of their allocations policies will conform to the following general principles:

- to give customers as much choice as possible.
- 100% of social lettings to which the Councils have nomination rights to be made through the scheme. Each Council may agree some specific exceptions.
- to enable customers to make bids for properties across the Council areas.
- to increase understanding and satisfaction with the letting scheme.
- to give new and existing tenants a stake in sustainable communities.
- to meet housing need.
- to make the best use of social housing.
- to improve the time it takes to let properties for landlords.
- to reduce the number of properties refused by customers.
- to allocate scarce social housing resources in a fair way.
- to let social housing in an equitable, open, accountable and transparent manner.
- to meet the legal requirements for the allocation of social housing.

1.3. Fair Allocations

The Councils are committed to providing equality of opportunity to all customers who apply for housing. The monitoring of allocations under the scheme will take place to ensure that everyone is treated fairly. All customers applying for social housing across the four authorities will be assessed by way of a uniform assessment of housing need.

A housing need assessment will be completed by the Council where the customer either first makes an application or where the customer is resident. The date of registration, health and welfare needs and multiple housing needs are taken into account in the assessment. If eligible the application will be placed on the East Hampshire, Havant, Test Valley or Winchester Councils' Housing Register. As a result of the partnership between the four Councils, the four registers are effectively merged into the Hampshire Home Choice Register and operate under the Allocations Framework. Through the assessment process each customer's housing needs will be considered and a level of priority awarded by placing the application in one of five bands. The band and position within a band will determine which bid for a property has been successful.

1.4. Eligibility

The Register is open to all customers with a housing need subject to statutory eligibility criteria.

Households maybe ineligible to join the HHC register:

- If they are subject to immigration control unless they have refugee status or exceptional leave to remain or indefinite leave to remain.
- Where they, or a member of their household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour, which if the customer was a secure tenant of the Council would entitle the Council to a possession order (Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985).

The Secretary of State may, by regulations, prescribe other classes of persons who are, or are not eligible.

Customers who are under the age of 16 are not eligible to join the Register and should be referred to Children's Services.

A Customer's eligibility will be assessed according to the Hampshire Home Choice Allocations Framework. All decisions relating to the application will be made by the relevant Council. This will include assessing priority for bands and reviews.

1.5. Reasonable Preference

The Allocations Framework ensures that customers are given "reasonable preference" under the allocations scheme as required by the legislation. This includes the following customers:



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- those who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the 1996 Act; this includes people who are intentionally homeless, and those who are not in priority need;
- those who are owed a duty by any housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2), or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under section 192(3);
- those occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- those who need to move on medical or welfare grounds including grounds relating to a disability; and
- those who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others.

1.6 local Connection

The local connection criteria will be met by a customer if they:

- are currently living in the area and have done so for more than 6 months
- have lived in the area for 3 out of the previous 5 years
- have employment in the area
- have close family in the area
- if the customer, or a member of their household, needs to receive long term or life-long medical and / or welfare treatment in the area

Once a local connection is established in one Council area it will apply across all four Councils. The definitions of the local connection criteria are the same as those included in the Homelessness Code of Guidance.

1.7 Eligibility for the size of accommodation.

Customers may bid for social housing appropriate to the size of their household. The general principal of the Allocations Framework is that adults or couples and each child over the age of 10 ideally should have a bedroom of their own.

The policy is to offer suitably sized accommodation for all customers. Good practice would indicate that providing homes which are too small upon occupation or that would become too small once a child is born should be discouraged. The customer is offered choice as to whether they believe a home is suitable for their needs based on an informed choice.

Customers need to be aware of the following: -

- Customers who are pregnant are eligible to bid for 1 or 2 bedroom properties. All pregnancies will be verified by checking the health records. The general rule is that the entitlement to an additional bedroom is only taken into account after 3 months of pregnancy.
- There are very few properties larger than three bedroom houses and customers with a need for more than three bedrooms should be advised that their children will have to share rooms. Customers may exercise choice in deciding whether to bid for homes where children share bedrooms provided the overcrowding rules are not breached.
- The size of the household may be subject to the landlord's policies on the permitted occupation numbers for each property advertised. For example some properties have small bedrooms only suitable for one person. The size of the property or any other special requirements will be fully explained in the property advert. The number of occupiers for a particular property is determined by the landlord's own policies regarding the maximum occupancy.
- In some circumstances a landlord may, for good management reasons, wish to impose different occupation levels e.g. to limit the number of children of a particular age for a property or development.
- Where there is an overriding health or welfare need the Councils will agree to an additional bedroom.
- Customers are not permitted to bid for vacancies which would result in overcrowding or to under-occupy accommodation unless the Council has agreed this exception.



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The table below explains the eligibility of each size of household for accommodation

Table Household size and accommodation eligibility	
Household	Size
Single person	Studio or bedsit
Single Person or couple	1 bed
Two single people Single person or couple + 1 child or pregnant Single person or couple + 2 children under age of 10	2 bedrooms
Single person or couple + 2 children under age of 10	2 or 3 bedrooms
Single person or couple +2 children one over age of 10 Single person or couple +3 children	3 bedrooms
Single person or couple + 3 children one over age of 10 Single person or couple + 4 children or more	3 / 4 bedrooms

Prioritising households with children - The scheme gives priority to households with children over those customers who are expecting a child. This is determined by setting the priority date. For households with a child the earliest priority date is awarded usually the registration date. For customers who are pregnant and have no other children the priority date is the date when the pregnancy is confirmed (normally 3 months). Once the child is born the priority date reverts to the registration date.

1.8 Policies applying to individual Councils only

Some properties, usually in rural locations, can only be let subject to additional occupation criteria as they are subject to a Planning Obligation under s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. As these rural housing schemes must take into account the future needs of the village as well as the current need, under-occupation may be allowed.

Each of the Councils may include policies which apply only to that particular Council. These variations include rural exception sites (East Hampshire and Winchester) and policies relating to service personnel (Winchester). Any landlord which does not participate in the scheme will result in their own tenants being excluded from the scheme.

All decisions made by each of the Councils apply equally to the Hampshire Home Choice Scheme. These policies will continue to meet the overall policy requirements of the Allocations Framework.

The Councils will monitor, annually, all lettings to ensure best use of social housing to meet the Councils' strategic priorities of creating balanced and sustainable communities. Housing demand and cross border migration within the 4 areas will be continuously reviewed. Should a high degree of migration be identified some restrictions on areas of choice may be imposed by the three Councils.

1.9 Local or community letting plans

All lettings to new housing association or City Council developments in regeneration schemes, significant new developments and new schemes in rural settlements will be made on the basis of Local Letting Plans. In some circumstances these will be referred to community Letting Plans. The Letting Plans will take into account the particular characteristics of the development site and the needs of the community, key workers and vulnerable members of the community, as well as meeting the requirements of the Allocations Framework. This may mean that these developments will result in restrictions placed on the properties which are advertised in order to meet the requirements of the Letting Plans. Each development will have a plan jointly agreed by the housing association and the Council. The short listing of the bids made for the development may be decided by a Letting Panel made up of representatives from the Council and the housing association developing the scheme.

2. The Housing Bands

The five bands are:-

- Band 1: Urgent Priority
- Band 2: High Priority
- Band 3: Medium Priority
- Band 4: Low Priority
- Band 5: No Priority



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New customer's applications will be registered from the date they contact the Council or apply directly. This date is known as the registration date.

Under the Allocations Framework all applications for housing are assessed and placed in one of five bands depending on their housing need and also their local connection. Priority is awarded within each band by date the application was placed in the band. This date is known as the priority date. Applications in band two are prioritised by priority date and also by multiple housing need. If a customer is moved up a band the application will be given a date when the increased priority is awarded. This becomes the new priority date.

Each of the partner Councils reserves the right to reassess an application. If necessary the decision may be to increase the priority awarded or reduce the priority and to move the application down a band or bands. These decisions will be verified by a Service Manager and will be confirmed in writing.

Band 1 - Urgent Priority

- Customers assessed by the Council to have life-threatening health conditions (urgent health priority level) that are directly linked to unsuitable housing conditions and have been given an urgent medical or welfare assessment.
- Customers needing accessible or sheltered housing so that they can be discharged from hospital, subject to suitable assessment and taking into account supporting information from other relevant agencies.
- Any customer with an exceptional need to move approved by the Council. For example this can include life threatening situations and exceptional cases referred to the Council under Child Protection, Public Protection (MAPPA and MARAC) and National Witness Protection Scheme duties or other cases where there are exceptional and urgent social or welfare problems.
- In the case of social housing tenants this priority is conditional on both the Council and the landlord approving the exceptional housing need of the case on the basis of the landlord's own policies and procedures and the approval being signed off by the organisation's Housing Director or other Senior Manager.

The priority in Band 1 may be time limited and in some circumstances will be restricted to certain property types and areas. Each Council will decide on the application of the time limit and will review each case regularly.

Band 2 - High Priority

Customers assessed as having a Band 2 priority can be moved to Band 1 if there are both urgent and exceptional circumstances. The assessment will be carried out by the Council taking into account supporting information from other agencies.

Summary of the Reasonable Preference Criteria			
Homeless Households	Statutory Overcrowding and or statutory unsatisfactory housing	High award health or welfare grounds assessed by the Council	A need to move to the locality to prevent hardship

Customers with two or more reasonable preferences will be considered for a higher degree of priority. All customers in Band 2 will be prioritised by date of registration in the band. In addition where the customer has two or more reasonable preference criteria the date of registration and the reasonable preferences are both taken into account in the assessment

All decisions regarding reasonable preferences multiple needs will be made by the Councils with supporting information provided by Environmental Health Officers, Homelessness Officers, and statutory or voluntary sector agencies.



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Homeless Households

- Customers who have been accepted by one of the Councils with a full duty to house under the homelessness legislation and who are placed in accommodation that is not suitable for their long-term needs, or where the lease for the accommodation is ending through no fault of their own. This priority may restrict customers to bid only for properties in the Council area where the homelessness duty is owed.
- Customers accepted as statutorily homeless and have spent nine months in a short- stay flat/hostel i.e. have been moved up from Band 3 to Band 2 by the relevant local authority. This priority will restrict customers to bid only for properties in the council areas where the homelessness duty is owed.

Overcrowding

Customers living in overcrowded circumstances where they are lacking in two or more bedrooms. Customers reporting overcrowding should be visited at home to assess the severity of the problems and whether housing options advice to secure more suitable accommodation or Environmental Health enforcement is necessary. The band 2 priority for lacking two or more bedrooms applies only to customers where there has been a natural increase in the household as opposed to customers who have deliberately secured accommodation which is not of an appropriate size. In order to be considered for this priority within band 2 customers must fail the overcrowding standard.

Please note the distinction between the accommodation size eligibility which is the customer's own aspiration to live in a home with a particular number of bedrooms and the housing need assessment which will calculate overcrowding and award the banding priority.

Overcrowding Standard

The overcrowding standard is based on how many people live together in a property. Under this standard, children less than a year old are not counted, and children under ten are counted as half a person. A room is counted as available for sleeping accommodation if it is the type that can be used in the locality for either a living room or a bedroom. The table below shows the maximum number of people who can live in a property before the standard is contravened.

Overcrowding standard	
Number of rooms	Permitted number of occupants
1	2 eg 2 adults of the same sex, 1 adult one child over 10, 1 adult two children under ten
2	3
3	5
4	7 and a half
5	2 for each room

The issue of children of opposite sex sharing a room arises from the Housing Act 1985. The act explains that a dwelling is overcrowded if two people of opposite sex must share a room - unless they are living together as husband and wife. However, if the occupiers of the room are children are under the age of ten they are exempted from this regulation. Supporting information from Environmental Health Officers and a home visit will help determine the severity of the problem.

Statutory Unsatisfactory Housing - Customers who need to move because their home is unsuitable on the basis of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System or other statutory duty e.g. demolition, redevelopment or subject to major works, a Closing Order or Compulsory Purchase Order.

The severity of the unsuitability of the home can be assessed under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System and cases where there are category 1 hazards which cannot be rectified by the landlord or by enforcement action should be prioritised.

In the case of social housing tenants this priority is conditional on both the Council and the landlord approving the urgent (management transfers) housing need of the case on the basis of the landlord's own policies and procedures and the approval being signed off by the organisation's Housing Director or other Senior Manager.



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High award health or welfare grounds assessed by the Council - Customers with health conditions which are directly linked to unsuitable housing conditions and who have been given high health or welfare priority or customers assessed by an occupational therapist as having an urgent need to move to an accessible property.

- **Existing Social Housing tenants** living in East Hampshire, Havant, Test Valley or Winchester who will release a property required by the Council's to meet housing need. This can for example include social tenants living in Disabled Person Units or Mobility Units who no longer require the adaptations, tenants who are living in larger properties and who wish to move to a smaller home and customers who have succeeded to a tenancy and who only require a smaller home.
- **Vulnerable Customers** given priority by a Supported Housing Panel and approved by the Council. Each Council has a Supported Housing Panel. The Supported Housing Panels are multi agency panels designed to assess the needs of vulnerable customers, to prioritise access to supported housing and to facilitate the move of these customers to independent living. Further details of the supported housing panels are available on the Council's websites.

Band 3 - Medium Priority

- Customers living in overcrowded circumstances where they are lacking in one bedroom.
- Customers who have been accepted as statutorily homeless by one of the Councils and have been placed in suitable accommodation.
- Customers who have been accepted as statutorily homeless by one of the Councils and have been placed into insecure temporary accommodation. Those placed into a "short-stay" flat or "hostel" accommodation under an assured shorthold tenancy or licence will be moved into Band 2 after having spent nine months in this type of insecure accommodation. Anyone accepted as statutorily homeless can only bid for properties in the Council area where they are accepted. This move to Band 2 does not apply to those customers who have been placed into a leased property or other private rented accommodation let on an assured shorthold tenancy.
- Customers who have been accepted as homeless under the homeless legislation by one of the three Councils and have accepted a qualifying offer of private rented accommodation and the homelessness duty is discharged.
- Customers living in inadequate housing.
 - who are considered to be homeless regardless of the acceptance of a homelessness duty or who are without accommodation such as those who are no fixed abode.
 - households lacking in one bedroom or children sharing a bedroom where one child is over 10,
 - accommodation lacking in facilities, or sharing accommodation with another person or household that is not part of their application. For example a studio flat with its own bathroom and a kitchen/diner may be adequate based on a single customer's needs whilst a customer sharing any facilities with other households is considered to be inadequate. Inadequate accommodation is assessed as a result of a home visit and options obtained from Environmental Health and Development Control and other agencies working with the customer.
- Customers with a health condition which is directly linked to unsuitable housing conditions and which has been given a medium health or welfare priority.
- Customers who need to move to a particular locality where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others.
- Customers living in private rented accommodation and who are subject to a fixed term assured shorthold tenancy at a high rent.



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There are two tests to be applied in this assessment, firstly based on the costs of the accommodation and secondly on the security of tenure. In terms of costs, most assured shorthold tenancies are let at rents which are substantially above those considered to be affordable. Affordable rents are housing association target rents and Winchester City Council Landlord Services rents. e.g. a typical private sector rent for a two bedroom flat is £175 per week and can be compared to a comparable housing association rent of £75 per week. This private sector rent is substantially above that of a housing association rent and is therefore considered to be high. The insecurity of the tenancy can be assessed by officers. Most tenancies are let on fixed terms of six months and are therefore short term. In some limited cases assured shorthold tenancies can be considered to be long term i.e. a contract for more than 24 months. The two part test may determine a rent which is affordable and a tenancy of more than two years and these cases may be placed in band 4. Further advice on the housing market can be obtained from the Councils Housing Strategy Officer.

- Social housing tenants living in the East Hampshire, Havant, Test Valley or Winchester council areas who are living in two bedroom flats and who have two children.

Band 4 - Low Priority

- Private tenants and social tenants who have a low housing need or have been awarded a low health or welfare priority and have a local connection. Social housing tenants will be offered advice on arranging mutual exchanges.
- Customers who are serving prison sentences and who on release will have a housing need or who will be homeless and who have a local connection. These customers will be reassessed when they are released and placed in an appropriate band. .
- Customers who have a housing need but do not have a local connection. Where the housing need assessment results in a high health or welfare assessment or some other issue which makes their housing need more urgent the Councils may award a higher priority to be determined on a case by case basis.

Band 5 - No Priority

- Customers who have no housing need.
- Customers who have no local connection.
- Private tenants and social tenants who have no housing need and do have a local connection and who simply have a desire or wish to move.
- Customers who are serving prison sentences and who on release will have a housing need or who will be homeless and who have no local connection. These customers will be reassessed when they are released and placed in an appropriate band.
- Owner-occupiers with no housing need and those customers with substantial savings, substantial equity in a property or other financial resources. Owner occupiers with a housing need and a local connection i.e. faced with repossession, or with a health need or whose property is considered to be unsuitable will be assessed for a higher band.

Test of Financial Resources -The Council will complete a test of financial resources based on the total household income and savings and, if appropriate, will provide the customer with advice and guidance on other housing options. The test of financial resources is based on the ability of the combined household income and savings to purchase a property in the housing market. This is calculated as the household income multiplied by 3 and compared to the average lower quartile house price plus 20% to cover the deposit, fees and other purchase costs. Consideration should be given to shared ownership options. It should also be noted that a different approach may be taken with older owner occupiers who are eligible for sheltered accommodation. In these cases the test of financial resources is different in that mortgages are not available for older people and the test is based on savings and assets only and whether they are able to purchase on the open market without a mortgage. Further advice on the housing market should be obtained from the Council's Strategic Housing Officer.



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Outstanding debts to Registered Providers (housing associations) and local authorities - Customers with outstanding tenant debts owed to a housing association or local authority will remain in Band 5. Cases of financial hardship and clear evidence that a payment plan has been drawn up and adhered to over a sustained period will be taken into account in periodic reviews of these cases. Once a review agrees to waive outstanding tenancy debts this will result in the placement of the customer in an appropriate band.

Unacceptable Behaviour - Customers where they, or a member of their household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour, which if the customer was a secure tenant of the Council would entitle the Council to a possession order (Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985). The unacceptable behaviour must be serious enough to make the customer unsuitable to be a tenant at the time the application is considered. All cases will be reviewed periodically and if the customer, or member of the household, can demonstrate good behaviour for at least 12 months this will result in the placement of the customer in an appropriate band.

3. Health and Welfare Assessment

The health of a customer or a member of their household will be assessed on the basis of the effect of the property on their condition and how a different property would improve the customer's health. A health issue in this context means a physical or mental illness, disability or incapacity, including behavioural syndromes, problems of physical or mental development and disorders related to drugs and / or alcohol. The assessment is based on a holistic approach to health, which takes account of psychological and social factors alongside physical issues.

Table: Health

Health priority level	Definition	Priority Band
Urgent	There is a critical need to move. The current housing situation is seriously detrimental to health and interferes with quality of life to an intolerable degree.	Band 1
High	There is a high medical need to move. The current housing situation is detrimental to health and interferes with the quality of life to a high degree.	Band 2
Medium	There is a moderate medical need to move. The current housing situation is detrimental to health and interferes with the quality of life to a moderate degree.	Band 3
Low	There is a slight medical need to move. The current housing situation is detrimental to health and interferes with the quality of life to a low degree.	Band 4
None	There is no medical need to move or a move would offer no improvement. The current housing situation is not detrimental to health and does not interfere with the quality of life.	No Priority

4. Advertising Vacancies and the Bidding Process

4.1 Advertising Vacancies

Vacant Social Housing to which the Councils have nomination rights will be advertised through the Choice Based Lettings scheme. A newsletter or adverts will be available at locations throughout the East Hampshire, Havant, Test Valley and Winchester regions including the Council offices and public libraries. Details of available properties will also be updated on the Hampshire Home Choice internet web site.

The Councils will arrange for each vacancy to be advertised and will specify the requirements for each property. Some properties may be labelled by the Councils to enable the development of sustainable communities. For new developments this may include Community Letting Plans. Depending on the Councils' strategic needs, the labelling of properties may include certain restrictions, e.g. some social housing may only be offered to people who have an assessed support need or for transferring tenants.

The advertisement will include details such as the following:

- the landlord.
- the weekly rent, including all other service charges.



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- the anticipated date the property will be ready for occupation.
- the recommended number of permitted occupants.
- any age limits e.g. for households with children, for sheltered accommodation for older/disabled persons or any landlord specific requirement.
- whether the property is restricted by a Planning Obligation under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 where offers of tenancies can only be made to customers with a strong local connection to a rural exception site.
- accessible housing e.g. wheelchair adapted.
- whether pets are allowed.

4.2 Making bids for properties

All eligible customers can make bids for properties advertised by telephone or online via the website. Full details of how to bid are set out in the Hampshire Home Choice User Guide. The user guide is issued to all new customers. All customers are expected to make bids themselves but in limited circumstances those who do not bid for properties may receive a direct bid. Since customer participation is a critical part of Choice Based Lettings the Councils recognise that some vulnerable customers may require assistance in making bids. To ensure that vulnerable households have fair access to the scheme a Vulnerable Households policy has been developed. Customers with support needs and those who have language difficulties will be supported by the Council, or an appointed support provider which may include assisted bidding.

All bids for a property are checked against the eligibility rules. Ineligible bids are excluded from consideration. Customers who regularly bid for properties for which they are not eligible will be contacted and offered advice and support if necessary.

Customers can only bid for up to three properties for which they are eligible per bidding cycle. The period of each bidding cycle will be determined by the three Councils.

4.3 Successful Bids

All eligible bids for each property are placed in priority order by band. Priority is decided by band, number of reasonable preferences (where applicable) and priority date within the band. If customers have identical priority, consideration will be given to the customer who has been waiting the longest. Landlords taking part in the scheme will have access to the shortlist of candidates who have made a bid for the property. The customer with the highest priority and who is therefore at the top of the shortlist will be selected by the landlord. If for any reason the landlord wishes to bypass this candidate the landlord is required to notify the Council and seek approval before selecting the next customer on the shortlist.

If there are no eligible bids for a property it will be re-advertised by the landlord. Once a bid is accepted the letting of property will be organised by the social landlord.

4.4 Feedback on let properties

All successful lettings will be reported in editions of the Hampshire Home Choice newsletter and on the website. The reports show the number of bidders for each property, the band and the application date of the successful customer.

5 Suspension Policy

A customer, who successfully bids, is nominated and is offered suitable accommodation by a Registered Provider but subsequently refuses an offer on three occasions within a six months period will not be able to bid for further properties for three months from the date of refusal of the third property. All three properties offered and refused by the customer must fully comply with the customer's preferences and these preferences match with the criteria of the advertised property.

6 Remaining on the Housing Register

Customers will be required to renew their housing application on an annual basis, on the anniversary of their relevant application date – known as the “renewal” date.

If customers fail to voluntarily renew their application they will be sent a written reminder to do so within 21 days of the renewal date. Failure to respond or renew will result in customer's applications being cancelled.



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Applications will be reinstated at a previous relevant date if further contact is made, if within 6 months from the date of cancellation. If contact is not made within 6 months and satisfactory evidence is provided of an incapacity causing the failure to renew, the application can be reinstated from the date of cancellation.

Where joint applicants subsequently decide to pursue individual applications for housing they can individually retain the application date their names first appeared on the housing register (whether jointly or as individuals).

7 False statements

If a customer, or any other person, who provides information relating to an application which is false or fraudulent, or knowingly withholds information which is reasonably required, an offence is committed. In all such cases the relevant Council will consider a prosecution for the offence. If a customer has accepted a tenancy using false information they may be liable to eviction.

8 Reviews

6.1 Review Process

All decisions with regard to the Allocations Framework are subject to Review should the customer be dissatisfied with a decision. This right to a Review includes decisions regarding eligibility, housing need assessments and the suitability of offers of accommodation. A request for a Review should be made to the Council dealing with an application. An officer senior to the person making the original decision and who was not involved in making the decision will carry out the Review. A request for a Review must be made within 21 days of the decision providing the reasons for the Review. The Council has discretion to extend the time limit if it considers this would be reasonable. If further information is needed, the customer will be invited to write or, if unable to do this, make oral representation. The customer may also appoint someone on his or her behalf to do this. If the reviewing officer finds that the original decision did not take relevant information into account they will refer the case back for re-consideration. The customer will be notified of the Review decision within eight weeks of the request for a Review.

8.2 The Local Government / Housing Ombudsman.

If a customer is not satisfied with the action taken by the Council and has exhausted the complaints procedure available, they can send a written complaint to the Ombudsman. The Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Local Government Ombudsman
POBOX 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH
Phone: 03000610614 or 08456021983 Fax: 024 7682 0001

If a customer is not satisfied with the action taken by the Council or a Housing Association and has exhausted the complaints procedure available they can send a written complaint to the Ombudsman. The Housing Ombudsman Service can be contacted at:

Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych, London WC2B 4HN
Telephone: 03001113000
Fax: 020 7831 1942
Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
Website: www.ihos.org.uk

9 Updating the Framework

The Allocations Framework will be reviewed annually by the four Councils and updated where necessary. This will help to ensure that the policy meets legislative and best practice requirements.

Keith Sutcliffe
Housing Manager HHC Allocations Framework V18h

23rd January 2012