

North Warwickshire Borough Council

Lettings Scheme

If you would like this document in another language or format, or if you require the services of an interpreter, please contact us.

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Section One

Background

All of North Warwickshire's properties are let in accordance with this published Lettings Scheme.

Housing Associations (Private Registered Providers) that have stock in the area are encouraged to use this Scheme for their lettings and have a legal requirement to do so for some estates. In certain circumstances they will use their own policies and procedures. Housing Associations with properties to rent in North Warwickshire include:

- Platform Housing Group
- Midland Heart
- Stonewater
- Citizen Housing
- Orbit Housing
- Derwent Living
- Trent & Dove Housing
- ASRA Housing
- SAGE Housing
- Optivo Housing
- Legal & General (affordable homes)

Regulatory Framework

The Council and the Housing Associations must adhere to the Tenancy Standard set by the Housing Regulator. This insists that landlords let their homes "in a fair, transparent and efficient way" and that they shall take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants and be able to demonstrate how their lettings make the best use of available housing. There must be a clear application, decision making and appeals process in place.

Registered providers are expected to co-operate with local authorities strategic housing function and their duties to meet local housing needs. This includes assistance with local authorities' homelessness duties and through meeting obligations in nomination agreements.

Key Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of the Lettings Scheme is to ensure that the Council's vacancies and those of Housing Associations are allocated fairly and objectively to those in the greatest housing need. In doing so the Council has regard to legislative requirements, codes of guidance and the Housing Regulator's standards.

This Scheme has been developed with a view to meeting the following principles and key objectives:

- To offer an advice service which helps applicants understand what housing options may be available for them and assist with access where appropriate
- To operate a Scheme that offers realistic, informed choice.
- To promote the best use of the Council's own stock of properties and provide access to Housing Association properties

- To ensure that every application is dealt with fairly and consistently irrespective of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief and age.
- To operate a lettings procedure that is easy to understand, transparent, fair and can assist with exceptional circumstances
- To give appropriate priority to customers who fall within the legislation's "Reasonable Preference" categories.
- To give customers the opportunity to express choice and preferences about where they want to live whilst being informed by the availability of vacancies by type and area.
- To tailor our services to customers requirements and ensure they can access the Scheme.

Service Standards

Our customer service promises include:

- ✓ Treating you with courtesy and respect
- ✓ Listening
- ✓ Being helpful and polite
- ✓ Assisting on the first point of contact
- ✓ Making things as easy as possible
- ✓ Dealing with any concern or complaint promptly

Equality and Fairness

North Warwickshire Borough Council will ensure its policies and practices are non-discriminatory and will promote equal opportunity by preventing and eliminating discrimination on the grounds of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief and age. The Scheme will be accessible, responsive and sensitive to the diverse needs of individuals. Our aim is to create an environment where equality and diversity is at the heart of everything we do.

The impact of the Scheme will be monitored, to ensure that it promotes equality of opportunity to individuals and minority groups. In order to achieve this, all customers will be asked to provide details of their ethnic origin and any other demographic information when they apply to join the Register.

We will ensure customers have accessible information about the service and equal opportunity to apply, express an interest in and receive offers of accommodation. We will do this by acting to provide a tailored service for all customers so that they can choose how they express interest in properties this will include expressing interest on their behalf if they wish and monitoring the profile of those who are applying and expressing an interest in properties to ensure that minority and hard to reach groups are actively engaged in the service.

Housing Associations

This Lettings Scheme will apply to some of the vacancies which are let by Housing Associations (Private Registered Providers) who have properties in the North Warwickshire area. It will apply to the percentage of properties which the Council has nomination rights to and some others by agreement. All other properties will be let in accordance with the relevant Registered Providers own policies and procedures.

Applicants can contact them directly for more information using the contact details set out at the end of this policy.

Charitable Status

Platform Housing Group, Derwent Living, Stonewater and Midland Heart are charitable organisations. This means that before they grant a tenancy to an applicant they ensure the applicant meets the criteria set out as part of their charitable status. If the property you are expressing an interest in is owned by a Housing Association with charitable status it means that before an applicant is offered a home they may be asked for further information about their circumstances. An applicant may also be refused a tenancy by a charitable landlord if they do not meet the criterion which applies to their charitable status.

Deliberately Withholding Information or Providing False Information

Fraudulent behaviour is taken very seriously by the Council and all appropriate action will be taken to address it. It is a criminal offence (punishable by a fine of up to £5,000) if an applicant gives false information or withholds information related to their housing application.

The Council may decide to take legal action to repossess a tenancy it was obtained by giving false information. If the applicant has previously obtained a tenancy by deception, for example by giving false information, consideration will be given to excluding them from the list.

Section Two The Housing Register & Transfer Register

Introduction

It is not possible for North Warwickshire Borough Council to re-house every potential applicant who may wish to rent one of its properties. This is because the demand for most vacancies outstrips supply. For this reason the lettings scheme prioritises those applicants who are assessed as meeting certain qualifying criteria. This includes being in housing need.

There are two registers. One is for applicants who can demonstrate that they are in housing need. The other is for applicants who are already Council tenants but need to move to alternative accommodation.

The Housing Register is a list of all the applicants who meet the qualifying criteria and have been accepted onto the Housing Register. It includes new customers and existing social housing tenants who are assessed as having a housing need.

The Transfer Register is a list of applicants who live in a North Warwickshire Borough Council owned property, have expressed a need to move to a property which better meets their circumstances or assist them to receive support and to do so will enable the Council to make the best use of its stock

Applications to join the Housing Register

Immigration Status

The Government has stated that certain applicants cannot be placed on the housing register because they are ineligible due to immigration status. Some applicants for whom the immigration status test does apply may be assessed against the Habitual Residence test set out in the allocation of accommodation regulations.

Some people travelling to the United Kingdom from abroad are not entitled to social housing on the basis of their status as detailed in Section 160A of the Housing Act 1996. Some applicants may not meet the habitual residence test. Where a registration form indicates that this may be an issue, checks will be made to confirm the eligibility status of an applicant.

If you are not sure if this section applies to you please contact us and we will advise you.

If you are subject to this section we have no duty to offer you a home but we will offer you advice on your other housing options. Such customers should provide their passports and/or other relevant information to confirm immigration status.

Qualifying Criteria

The Council applies qualifying criteria in order to decide who can join its Housing Register. It does this because there are insufficient vacancies to meet the wishes of all potential applicants. In summary applicants will only be registered where the applicant(s):

- Is aged 16 or over
- Has a local connection to the area.
- Have a housing need assessed in accordance with the Lettings Scheme
- Do not have current rent arrears, or a history of serious rent arrears, owed to social or private landlord where the Council is not satisfied about the reasons why the arrears have accrued or by the actions taken by the applicant to resolve the debt.
- Has not perpetrated unacceptable or anti social behaviour in their accommodation which has led to legal action and where the Council is satisfied that the behaviour has been addressed.
- Is not a home owner (unless there are exceptional circumstances)
- Cannot afford to source alternative accommodation. An applicant will not qualify if their gross income is £30,000 for a single applicant without children or £45,000 for a couple or single person with children or they have savings (including shares or investments) of more than £18,000. Income assessments take account of welfare benefits.

All applicants who are advised that they do not qualify to join the Housing Register will be provided with written notification of the decision and the reasons for it. They also have a right to request a review of that decision and will be encouraged to submit any new information about their application.

Local Connection

Applicants or persons in their household who might reasonably be expected to reside with the applicant who fulfils any the following will be classed as having a local connection:

- If they are normally resident in the Borough which means that they currently live, or have lived, within North Warwickshire and have done for at least 6 out of the last 12 months or for not less than 3 years out of the last 5 years.
- Have close family associations in the Borough with the family members concerned currently living in the North Warwickshire area and have done for at least five years or more. This would normally be parents (including adoptive parents), adult children, brothers or sisters provided there are sufficiently close links in the form of frequent contact, commitment or dependency. Other family associations such as grandparents would also be considered if sufficiently close links are shown.
- If they are working in the Borough and have a permanent contract of employment or self employment. In assessing whether an applicant meets this criteria they:
 - Must satisfy the Council that they need to move rather than wish to move for work related reasons.
 - Must provide documentary evidence that their contract of employment is for more than 12 months, that it for more than 16 hours a week, that it is not occasional work in the Borough and that it is not voluntary work.
 - Must be able to demonstrate that they have an offer of employment that the intend to take up or a permanent contract of employment or are self employed
- If they have special circumstances which might include the need to be near special medical or support services which are available only in a North Warwickshire.
- In exceptional circumstances applications may be accepted from people who do not have a local connection to North Warwickshire if their situation means they meet one of the statutory Reasonable Preference categories **and** they have a need to move to North Warwickshire. Their application will be given a lower priority than those applicants in the same category who have a local connection to North Warwickshire.
- Exceptions are made for applicants fleeing domestic abuse and military personnel. Particular consideration will be given to victims of domestic abuse who have been accommodated in a refuge or other safe temporary accommodation and need to move to an area in which they may not have a local connection to ensure the safety of their household.

Local Connection criteria do not apply to the following applicants:

- Military personnel who meet a Reasonable Preference category. In accordance with the Armed Forces Covenant this also includes the spouses and partners of military personnel.
- Existing social housing tenants living in another local authority district in England who have a reasonable preference because of a need to move to North Warwickshire to avoid hardship and need to move because the tenant works in the area or take up an offer of work

Please refer to Section 3 'Assessing Housing Need' for more detail.'

Rent Arrears & Property Debts

To pay for the services, it provides the Council must collect rent from its tenants. Applicants with a poor rent payment history could pose a risk to the Council's income due to non-payment of rent. For this reason, an applicant who has current rent arrears over £400 and/or a history of rent arrears and there is no evidence of willingness to reduce/ repay the debt, may be excluded from the register or have a reduced preference. Other property debts such as court costs or charges for damage to a premises will be taken into account. Applicants will need to provide clear information about why the property debt accrued and be prepared to explain the steps they have taken to address the issue. The Council will consider all of the facts, including documentary information, before deciding whether to place the applicant on the housing register. If the information indicates that the income of the applicant was sufficient to cover rent payments (as a priority debt) but rent arrears still accrued, with occupancy of the property put at risk, a decision may be made to exclude the applicant from the Register. In some circumstances an applicant will be expected to accept appropriate support to assist them if they are included on the housing register.

Unacceptable Behaviour

The Council provides tenancy management services to ensure that its estates are nice places to live. As part of its Lettings Scheme it will act to ensure it is able to sustain the standards its tenants expect. For this reason applications may not be accepted from persons guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant, or where a member of the applicant's household is guilty of such behaviour. Examples of such behaviour are:

- Behaviour that has caused or is likely to cause significant nuisance or annoyance in a neighbourhood or to neighbours.
- Using a property for illegal or immoral purposes.
- Violence or threatening behaviour towards employees of the Council

The Council will consider the facts, including documentary information, before deciding whether to place the applicant on the housing register. If an applicant has recently been evicted from or had to leave a property because of nuisance behaviour or is not able to show a change in behaviour since they left the property,

and there is an indication that this behaviour would continue if they were the tenant of a Council property it may be decided to exclude the applicant from the Housing Register. In some circumstances an applicant will be expected to accept appropriate support to assist them if they are included on the housing register.

Further information about how behaviour will be assessed is set out at the end of this leaflet.

Home Owners

In most circumstances home owners will not be placed on the Housing Register unless they have exceptional circumstances. This could be because of significant financial hardship or serious medical circumstances. For example owner occupiers may have a serious medical condition which will be resolved by moving home, an applicant may need level access accommodation or an owner may be facing homelessness or hardship because of financial difficulties and no alternative to social housing accommodation is available to them. Home owners who require adaptations to meet their needs will be referred to the Home Environment Assessment and Response Team (HEART) to seek advice and assistance. If their home cannot be adapted and they cannot afford to source alternative accommodation consideration will be given to their application if they need to move for medical or welfare reasons.

Financial Resources

If an applicant has the financial resources to resolve their own housing needs they will not be placed on the Housing Register. Consideration will be given to buying or renting in the private housing market. Local property values and private accommodation rent levels will be considered in order to make this assessment.

Based on the average wage levels for North Warwickshire the following thresholds will be used to assess whether a household has sufficient means to meet their needs in the private sector. An applicant will not qualify if their gross income is £30,000 for a single applicant without children or £45,000 for a couple or single person with children. Other resources, such as capital assets, equity and savings, will be considered. Applicants will not qualify if they have savings (including shares or investments) of more than £18,000. Income assessments will take account of welfare benefits.

Applicants with sufficient levels of property equity that would enable them to access market housing within the Borough will not qualify for the Housing Register.

Joint Applications

Joint applications will be accepted, provided both customers are eligible, meet the qualifying criteria and aged 16 or over and intend to occupy the property together as their only or main home.

Multiple Applications

Multiple applications will not be allowed. If multiple applications do exist, the application which is a true reflection of the customers' circumstances will be kept open. Any other applications will be cancelled.

Applications to Join the Transfer Register

Where moving to another property will assist a tenant with their housing needs and enable the Council to make the best use of their stock the transfer list will be used. Other tenants can apply to join the housing register if they have a housing need.

This Register will act to assist the Council to make the best use of its stock and promote mobility for tenants. Tenants will only be registered if two conditions are met:

- Their tenancy must be assessed as in good condition in accordance with their tenancy agreement
- They must have a clear rent account for at least 6 months

A home visit will be undertaken to assess the condition of the property.

In exceptional circumstances the Council may decide that to make best use of its housing stock or to support the needs of the tenant a management move is required. An example would be because of the need for a tenant to move from a larger property to a smaller one to avoid the increase of rent debt or deterioration of the condition of the property or extensive repairs are required to the property and they cannot be undertaken in occupation. We may approach a tenant to initiate a move to a different property. This could be to meet an urgent housing need or to release a property to meet a particular housing need and therefore make better use of the stock. The Housing Services Manager will assess and approve these cases.

Mutual Exchange Register

Mutual exchanges are promoted and encouraged in order to assist tenants to be mobile. The Housing Options Team is available to provide advice and assistance to tenants to make best use of the Register.

Mutual exchanges are advertised through 'Homeswapper'. A link to this website will be provided on the Council's homepage.

If you are a social housing tenant, you may find another tenant who would like to exchange/swap homes with you. The Council is part of the HomeSwapper scheme, as a Council tenant you can register free of charge and seek suitable tenants to exchange with. To register with this please visit the Council's website and follow the HomeSwapper link or log on at www.homeswapper.co.uk. If you are a tenant of another Council you can also use the HomeSwapper scheme.

Before the exchange can take place both parties must apply to their landlord for written permission to move. You must not exchange until you have received permission in writing.

Whilst Council tenants have a legal right to exchange there are some conditions which are taken into account. Some of these conditions are:

- Ensuring neither property will be overcrowded or extensively under occupied
- There is no legal proceedings on either property
- If the property has been specially designed or adapted for a disabled person and no person requiring an adaptation would be living there if the exchange takes place

- The property is part of a sheltered housing scheme and no person qualifying for sheltered housing will be living there

Applications from Elected Members and Employees

Applications can be accepted from employees or elected members and their close relatives, provided they are eligible to apply and subject to the rules in Schedule 1 of Housing Act 1996. Customers must disclose any such relationship at the time of application.

Advice, Support and Information

Not everyone who contacts us will be able to join the Housing Register. However we will be able to provide advice which will enable customers to understand what housing options are available to them and in some circumstances we may be able to help find an alternative solution to joining the Register.

How to apply

An enquiry to seek advice or an application can be made by contacting the Council. A short housing enquiry form can be completed on our website which will be followed up by a telephone call from an officer from the Team.

If you think your circumstances meet the criteria set out in the Lettings Scheme you can complete an application form on our website without the need for an initial enquiry.

The purpose of the application is to correctly identify the housing circumstances for each customer. This process may start with a telephone call. Proof of circumstances documentation will be required for all applications to be processed. The information provided will enable the Council to decide whether the applicant meets the necessary qualifying criteria and, where relevant, once an applicant's circumstances are understood which list they will be placed on and what their priority banding is assessed as.

Decisions on applications are made by officers in the Housing Options Team. For most new applicants the Housing Options Officer who undertook the assessment will make the decision. Sometimes this will be in liaison with the Housing Options and Lettings Team Leader. When registered applications are reviewed this will be by a Lettings Officer for most cases.

It is usual for a home visit be made to applicants to be registered to confirm circumstances and confirm identity documentation.

The Council is committed to giving all applicants choice over their housing options. However it also, at a time of high demand, needs to make the best use of its stock. This means that usually the main choice for applicants will be the area in which they want to live. An applicant's circumstances will usually dictate the type of property they will be offered.

Once an application has been registered customers will be advised what type of property they will be considered for and asked how they want to express interest in properties. They can either express interest themselves directly on the website as

properties are advertised or the Lettings Team can express for them in accordance with their area preference.

Notification to confirm the application will be given in writing stating:

- The date of registration (date the application is received).
- The priority banding awarded and applicable date
- The type of property they will be considered for
- Application reference (for expressing an interest in properties).
- The right to have a review of the decision on their priority banding.

Home Visits

Applications may be subject to a home visit to validate their circumstances. If this is not possible or they live some distance from the Borough references which indicate their current housing circumstances will be requested. A property may not be offered unless a visit has taken place. A visiting officer will usually contact you to make a convenient appointment. They will ask questions about your housing circumstances and complete a home visit report. Applicants will be able to read and sign the report. If there have been any changes in circumstances the banding assessment may be re-assessed. This will be approved and confirmation will be given in writing.

Applicants who have no fixed abode and therefore do not have any settled accommodation are usually seen at the Council Offices although all addresses on the application may be visited for verification.

Changes in Circumstances

Applicants who move to a new address or whose circumstances change after they have been accepted onto the housing register, (e.g. someone joining or leaving their household) should contact the Lettings Team promptly to notify them of the change.

If the change of circumstances affects the customer's priority banding they will be informed in writing of the outcome of the reassessment.

Annual Renewal

Every year, on the anniversary of a customer's registration date, an annual renewal letter will be sent to the customer asking if they wish to stay on the housing register and if there has been any change in their circumstances. Applicants will be asked to provide up to date documentation such as details of any rent arrears or child access arrangements where these have changed. Whether the applicant has been actively considering vacancies will also be considered. If no reply is received within 28 days the application will be cancelled. If a customer is known to be vulnerable every effort will be made to contact them, either by telephone, visiting them at home or contacting a relevant support agency to confirm whether they wish to remain on the register. The Lettings Officers will lead on this review.

Cancelling Applications

Applications could be cancelled in the following circumstances:

- A request has been received from the customer (or their advocate) in writing.

- There is no reply to the annual review
- The customer has been re-housed by the Council or another Registered Provider
- Notification has been received from an executor or personal representative that the customer is deceased and s/he was the sole applicant.
- It is discovered that the customer has given false or misleading information in their application.
- Evidence is obtained that the applicant is no longer eligible or does not meet the qualification criteria
- If information requested remains outstanding after timescales given have elapsed
- The applicant has not expressed interest in any properties for 12 months and/ or are assessed as being no longer in housing need

Applicants will be informed of the reason(s) why their application has been cancelled and informed of their right to request a review of the decision (see section on Reviews below). Lettings Officers, in liaison with the Housing Options and Lettings Team Leader will decide whether applications are cancelled.

Reviews

Decisions about housing applications are made following an assessment of the applicant's circumstances in accordance with this written Lettings Scheme. It is the Housing Options Team officers' assessment against this agreed Scheme which directs the decision. All vacancies are let in accordance with this policy scheme.

It is our intention to be fair and factual in all of our decisions. However we realise that some applicants may be concerned that all of the facts regarding their application have not been taken into account or have not been assessed fairly against the Lettings Scheme. They may be concerned that the Lettings Scheme has not been followed with regard to a particular vacancy.

Applicants can ask for a review against decisions made in the lettings policy scheme process.

We request that the applicant formally states that they want a review of the decision within 21 working days of it being made. The customer should provide supporting information, including additional facts where appropriate, and explain why they require a review of the original decision.

A senior officer not involved in the original decision will conduct the review. This will usually be the Housing Services Manager. The officer will consider the evidence provided and decide whether to overturn or support the original decision. The customer will be informed within 21 working days of receipt of the request for a review. If necessary an extension of this time period will be notified to the applicant. The reply will contain the decision made, the reasons for the decision and the facts taken into account when making the decision.

Making a Complaint

All customers who make a complaint will be treated fairly and objectively. A written reply to any complaint received will be sent out within the timescales set out in our complaints policy which is available on request or accessible on our website.

If the customer has gone through the complaints procedure and remains dissatisfied, they can write to the Housing Ombudsman or apply for a judicial review.

Section Three Assessing Housing Need

The Council has framed its Lettings Scheme to determine allocation priorities by giving reasonable preference to certain categories of people identified in the Housing Act 1996. It has also had regard to its Tenancy and Homelessness Strategies as well as Government guidance.

The reasonable preference which must be given to customers is set out in s166A of the Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Act 2002. These are:

- People who are homeless as defined by Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act
- People who are owed a homelessness duty by any housing authority under specific sections of the Act or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority because they are homeless
- Applicants occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- Applicants who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to disability
- Applicants 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)

The Council's scheme places applicants meeting these criteria in Band 1 or Band 2.

The Housing Act 1996 also allows for the Council to give additional preference to those applicants who fall within the reasonable preference categories who also have urgent housing needs. This includes:

- Those who need to move urgently because of a life threatening illness or sudden disability
- Families in severe overcrowding which poses a serious health hazard

- Those who are homeless and require urgent re-housing as a result of violence or threats of violence, including intimidated witnesses and those escaping serious anti social behaviour
- Additional preference will be given to people who are homeless and require urgent rehousing as a result of domestic abuse. Consideration will be given to apply the medical or welfare reasonable preference category to victims and their families who have escaped abuse and are being accommodated in a refuge or other temporary accommodation.

The Council is required to give additional preference to the following military personnel if they fall within one or more of the reasonable preference categories and who have urgent housing needs:

- Are serving members of the regular forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service
- Are former members of the regular forces
- Are 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
- Are 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

The local connection criteria linked to residence is not applicable to these applicants.

Additional preference can be given to people who are homeless and require urgent rehousing as a result of domestic abuse because they are living in a refuge or other form of safe temporary accommodation. Applicants may be given priority within medical and welfare reasonable preference categories to reflect the circumstances of the household.

Where an applicant is an existing social housing tenant living in another local authority area and is seeking to transfer to North Warwickshire we will consider whether:

- They have a reasonable preference because they need to move to North Warwickshire to avoid hardship and;
- They need to move because the tenant works in the district or;
- They need to move to take up an offer of work

In assessing these matters the Council

- Must be satisfied that the need to move to a particular locality and if they were unable to do so it would cause them hardship
- Must be satisfied that the tenant needs to move rather than wishes to move for work related reasons.

The Council will only consider contracts of employment which are not short term (more than 12 months.) and the work should be more than 16 hours a week. The term work includes an apprenticeship (this is because it normally involves an employment contract).

The Council expects a tenant to be able to demonstrate that they have been offered a job and intend to take up the offer.

Documentary evidence will be requested to confirm the employment or employment offer and if it is not provided the Council will not be able to complete its assessment.

The Council will have a quota of 1% of its lettings to offer to applicants who meet these criteria.

The local connection criteria linked to residence is not applicable to these applicants.

Local Priorities

The intention of the Council's Lettings Scheme is to meet local housing needs. In order to do so certain factors will be taken into account when prioritising applications. In addition the behaviour of applicants will also be taken into consideration.

The financial circumstances of applicants will be considered when giving priority. This will include how much of a household's income is required to pay for housing costs.

Applicants with a local connection will be given priority over those who do not meet the criteria except in circumstances where they meet the Armed Forces criteria or they are victim of domestic abuse and the risk to their household means that they must move to another area. Consideration will be given to applying the medical or welfare reasonable preference category to households that have escaped from an abusive relationship and are being accommodated in a refuge or other temporary safe accommodation.

In some circumstances applicants may be assessed as having deliberately worsened their housing circumstances in order to improve their housing priority. These cases will be investigated and some may have their priority banding reduced. For example, if a household were in accommodation that they could afford and had no overcrowding issues and then gave that tenancy up to move in with relatives where they are overcrowded, their band priority will be assessed as though they were still occupying the privately rented accommodation. Applicants will be notified of this decision and advised of the right to request a review of this decision.

In assessing an applicant's priority at the time of their application we will take into account behaviour that relates to their suitability to be a tenant. This could be because of past or current behaviour and may include rent or mortgage debt or evidence of anti social behaviour. In certain circumstances an applicant may not be considered for an allocation of accommodation until the behaviour is improved however it may be that they are accepted on to the Register but are given less priority than is reflected in their circumstances. An applicant will be told what the behaviour is that is a cause for concern and how it should be remedied as well as a timescale for a review.

The Banding System

Housing Register

Priority banding is based on housing need. The Scheme will be used to assess the housing need of housing applicants and they will be advised which band reflects their need most appropriately.

There will also be prioritisation of applicants within specific bands. All applications will be given an application date. Within each band there will be prioritisation using the date that the applicant is placed within the band awarded to their application. In addition applicants will be prioritised if they have a local connection to North Warwickshire as defined in the Scheme.

Band 1+

Applicants in the following circumstances will be placed in the highest priority band (Band 1+):

Applicants assessed as having a priority because their circumstances meet one of the criteria set out for Band 1 but who also need to move very urgently. For example this could be because they cannot be discharged from hospital until they have alternative accommodation or who also need to move very urgently for reasons such as life threatening illness, domestic abuse or threat of violence.

Band 1

Applicants in the following circumstances are deemed to have an **urgent need** for re-housing:

Applicants assessed as statutorily homeless who are owed a full housing duty. (Please see page 22)

Applicants in properties that are assessed as having a lack of facilities or that are subject to statutory Prohibition or Demolition Orders in accordance with legislation and statutory regulations. This would also include situations where the condition of property occupied is seriously detrimental to the health of any of the household and the defects to the property cannot be readily remedied. (Please see page 26)

Applicants who are overcrowded because their present home is short of at least 3 bedrooms. (Please see page 26)

Where applicants are unable to continue to occupy their current accommodation due to a urgent medical need or disability. (Please see page 23)

Applicants with an urgent need for alternative accommodation on the grounds of significant welfare need because they need to receive or provide care or support (Please see page 24)

Applicants who cannot continue to live in their current home because of serious harassment or violence. (Please see page 26)

Applicants with a need to move to a particular locality where significant hardship would be caused if they did not move. (Please see page 25)

Applicants who are residing in private rented accommodation who have an urgent need to move because the cost is assessed as causing significant financial hardship.

Armed forces personnel who fall into a statutory reasonable preference category and are in urgent housing need will be given additional preference and placed in this category if they:

- Are serving members of the regular forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service
- Are former members of the regular forces
- Are 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
- Are 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

Band 2

Applicants in the following circumstances are deemed to have a **high need** for re-housing:

Applicants who are assessed as threatened with homelessness in 56 days. (Please see page 22)

Applicants who are overcrowded because their present home is short of at least 2 bedrooms. (Please see page 26)

Applicants who are in short term supported housing and are required to move on to alternative accommodation when they are able to live independently. Confirmation about these circumstances will be required from the organisation providing the supported accommodation. (See page 23)

Tenants of Private Registered Providers (housing associations) living in the Borough who are under occupying their current accommodation. (For example they have a high need to move because of their own circumstances or because their transfer will help to make better use of their landlord's stock)

Applicants with a high housing need who have been assessed as requiring suitable alternative accommodation because their medical condition and/ or disability is having a significant detrimental effect on their ability to live independently at home. (Please see page 24)

Applicants with a high need for alternative accommodation on the grounds of serious welfare need including issues of vulnerability because they need to receive or provide support. (Please see page 24)

Applicants with a high need to move to a particular locality where serious hardship would be caused if they did not move. (Please see page 24)

Applicants who are residing in private rented accommodation who have a high need to move because the cost is assessed as causing financial hardship or because an improvement notice has been served and been in place for 3 months and the landlord has not acted in accordance with it .

Applicants who live in the Borough with children under 5 in flats above ground floor.

Applicants who are sharing facilities with more than one household, this could include sharing the bathroom or kitchen. (A household is defined at page 23below.)

Applicants who are in Armed Forces accommodation who have a need for re-housing will be placed in this category six months before discharge and vacation of service accommodation is required.

Band 3

Applicants in the following circumstances are deemed to have **a medium need** for re-housing:

Applicants living in a property that has minor disrepair and/or in poor condition but is not a risk to health or safety.

Applicants with a medium medical need or disability where a move to more suitable alternative accommodation would improve their health (Please see page 24)

Applicants with a medium welfare need where moving to more suitable accommodation would meet their care and support needs.

Applicants who are overcrowded because their present home is short of 1 bedroom.

Band 4

Applicants in the following circumstances are deemed to have **a low need** for re-housing:

Applicants who are privately renting or are Housing Association tenants and at risk of losing their home, or need to move for financial reasons or to gain employment. Private tenants or Housing Association Tenants who need to move to be nearer to family to give or receive support, or to be nearer to their place of work.

Applicants living at home with parents and/or family and seeking independence.

Owner occupiers who live in properties that cannot be adapted to meet their needs and who do not have the financial resources to source alternative accommodation

that would benefit from ground floor, rented accommodation to sustain their independence.

Transfer Register

Applicants who are tenants of North Warwickshire Borough Council who wish to move, have a housing need and to do so would assist the Council to make better use of its stock will be placed on a Transfer Register.

To be able to register tenants must have a clear rent account. Their tenancy must be being conducted in accordance with their tenancy conditions. Applications will be assessed to understand the household's circumstances and the reason why they need to move.

In some exceptional circumstances the Housing Services Manager may support a tenant to transfer if these conditions are not met to best meet the needs of the tenant and the management of the Council's stock.

Tenancy Services Officers will gather information about and visit tenants who state that they wish to move to alternative accommodation. Once the information has been collated the Housing Options Team will decide whether the application can be registered and will contact the tenant.

A tenant who has an Introductory Tenancy will not be eligible to register on the Housing Register until the tenancy has been converted into a secure or affordable rent type of tenancy. Special circumstances will be considered by the Housing Services Manager.

Applicants in the following circumstances will be placed in date order priority on the transfer list:

Transfer Priority List - A

Applicants who are under-occupying their tenancy and whose circumstances require priority to be given to move them to alternative, smaller accommodation. (For example they have a high need to move because of their own circumstances or because their transfer will help to make better use of the Council's stock)

Applicants whose home does not have sufficient space for their family needs or who have young children in an upstairs flat and whose circumstances require priority to be given to move them to alternative accommodation. (For example they have a high need to move because of their own circumstances or because their transfer will help to make better use of the Council's stock)

Transfer Priority List - B

Applicants who need to move to sustain or gain employment.

Applicants who would benefit from a move to give or receive support.

Applicants who have a need to move to be closer to facilities such as shops, medical practices and/ or transport links.

Applications will not be taken from tenants who have accepted a tenancy transfer within the last 12 months. Tenants will only be registered if two conditions are met:

- Their tenancy must be assessed as in good condition in accordance with their tenancy agreement
- They must have a clear rent account for at least 6 months

A home visit will be required to assess the condition of the property.

Further Information about Categories

Homeless Applicants

We will work with all applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to provide them with assistance and options appropriate to their circumstances. We will always act to prevent homelessness in the first instance.

Homeless applicants who have been notified by the Council that a full housing duty is owed will be placed in Band 1.

As Band 1 is effectively the highest priority band for most customers and all those within it are considered to be in high levels of relative need, it is not considered possible or necessary to accord any further priority to such homeless customers. Such customers are, by virtue of the s193 (2) duty, provided with accommodation suitable to their needs. However where a homeless customer exhibits an urgent need to move they may be placed in Band 1+.

Homeless applicants are awarded priority within the allocations scheme because of their urgent need to be re-housed. For this reason homeless applicants will be placed in Band 1+ or Band 1 for a period of 2 months from the date of the decision on their application after which there will be a review of the priority awarded to their application which could result in their application being placed in a lower band.

Applicants who are assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in 56 days in accordance with the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) will be placed in Band 2. Applicants will have had a needs assessment and been given a Personal Housing Plan.

Applicants assessed as homeless but not in priority need or who are intentionally homeless will be given a Band 2 priority.

Any applicant given a priority because they are homeless is deemed to be in urgent housing need. This means they are expected to be re-housed within a short time period. They will be able to express an interest in properties of their choice for a period of 2 months from the date of the letter advising them of their priority. If a customer, during that 2 month period, isn't expressing an interest in available properties, or express an interest on unsuitable properties, or unreasonably

restricts their choice during this period, we will express an interest on their behalf. If the customer is subsequently offered this accommodation and refuses it the homelessness priority will be reviewed and their priority on the Housing Register could be removed. If customers are expressing an interest in suitable properties but have been unsuccessful the 2 months will be extended.

Applicants in Supported Accommodation

Applicants in supported accommodation are awarded priority within the lettings scheme because they are ready to move on and to free up supported accommodation. Normally these applicants will be placed in Band 2 so that a move can be managed however if their circumstances mean that they need to move urgently Band 1 will be awarded.

Shared Facilities

Priority is given when an applicant is in circumstances where they have to share facilities with more than one household. This could be in a circumstance where the applicant is sharing facilities with people who are not members of their family. Sharing facilities would include sharing a bathroom and/or kitchen. A household is defined as an applicant or somebody who normally resides with them and it is deemed reasonable that they would continue to live with them. However in some circumstances, where for example an applicant has lived independently and then had to move back to live with family, additional priority may be given following an assessment of the circumstances.

Medical Grounds

In these circumstances a housing needs assessment form will be completed. The information will be used to understand how a move from the applicants' current accommodation will assist with their housing need. In most cases the medical condition will be evident from the information provided by the applicant on the assessment form. A visit may be required in order to clarify circumstances. In some cases the Housing Division may seek advice from an appropriate health professional about addressing an applicant's housing need if they have a medical issue or disability.

Priority may be awarded on medical grounds if information received indicates a move to alternative accommodation will directly benefit the health of the customer or their household. This includes circumstances of domestic abuse.

When the level of medical need a customer has is being determined consideration will be given to whether the provision of adaptations will assist with improving their housing circumstances.

Urgent

Where applicants are unable to continue to occupy their current accommodation due to an urgent medical need or disability. These customers will be placed in Band 1.

Examples would include:

- A wheelchair user occupies a home where facilities are upstairs and therefore inaccessible

- An applicant is due to be discharged from hospital and their current accommodation is totally unsuitable
- A referral has been received from a mental health professional stating that the current housing is having a severe effect on an applicant's mental well being
- Any applicant who needs to move to suitable adapted accommodation because of serious injury, medical condition or disability which they, or a member of their household, have sustained as a result of service in the Armed Forces.

High

Applicants with a high medical need who have been assessed as requiring suitable alternative accommodation because their medical condition and/ or disability is having a significant detrimental affect on their ability to live independently at home will be placed in Band 2.

Medium

Applicants who have been assessed as having a medium medical need or a disability where a move to suitable alternative accommodation would improve their health will be placed in Band 3.

Welfare Grounds

Applicants with care or support needs who need to move to alternative accommodation on welfare grounds. In these circumstances evidence would be required to support the case. Usually this would be from a professional supporting the applicant. This includes circumstances of domestic abuse.

Urgent

Those applicants needing to move urgently on welfare grounds will be placed in Band 1. Priority of this level will only be awarded if the current situation is so significant it will have a serious impact on the well being of the applicants.

Examples would include:

- A young person leaving care or a vulnerable person needing stable accommodation
- Parents forced to live apart (where they have previously lived together) except where it could reasonably be expected for both parents to live in either of the homes that they occupy.
- Child separated from parents (where they have previously lived together) where the child cannot occupy the current home of the parent, and that they will live as a family unit if suitable accommodation is allocated.
- Applicants with a high degree of vulnerability and their housing situation is having a detrimental effect on their quality of life.

High

Applicants who have a high housing need on welfare grounds will be placed in Band 2.

Examples would include:

- Applicants who need to move to receive care or support. In these circumstances consideration will be given to the proximity of the support being provided.
- Applicants who need to move as part of an agreed support plan to re-integrate them into the community

Medium

Applicants who have been assessed as having a medium welfare need, including a care or support need, where a move to suitable alternative accommodation would improve their health and ability to live independently will be placed in Band 3.

Hardship Grounds

Applicants who need to move to a particular locality in North Warwickshire district where hardship would be caused if they did not. In these circumstances evidence would be required to support the case. Usually this would be from a professional supporting the applicant.

Examples could be where an applicant needs to move to a specific locality in order to give or receive care, to be able to access specialised medical treatment or to take up particular education, employment or training opportunities in a particular local authority district. Their need to move could be because of financial hardship.

Urgent

Those applicants needing to move urgently on hardship grounds will be placed in Band 1. Priority at this level will only be awarded if the current situation is so significant that it will cause significant hardship to the applicant or to others.

Examples would include:

- An applicant needing to move to a particular area to take up employment and if they did not significant financial hardship would be caused.
- An applicant needing to move to be closer to a vulnerable relative where there is no alternative solution and not to do so would cause significant hardship.

High

Applicants with a high housing need to move to a specific locality on hardship grounds will be placed in Band 2.

Examples would include:

- Applicants who need to move and if they did not do so they would not be able to take up an educational opportunity
- Applicants who need to move to a particular area provide support and not to do so would cause personal hardship.

Private Tenants in Financial Hardship

In these circumstances an income and expenditure assessment will be undertaken.

Urgent Need

Applicants may be placed in Band 1 following an assessment of financial circumstances undertaken by an independent agency, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, has indicated

that their current financial circumstances are impacting on their ability to pay for the costs of their accommodation and that this is causing significant financial hardship.

High Need

Applicants may be placed in Band 2 when an assessment has indicated that they cannot afford their housing costs and therefore cannot continue living in their current accommodation without facing hardship

Overcrowding

Only children permanently residing with the main applicant are included in the assessment. (Living permanently would mean that children must spend at least 50% of the time with the main applicant) In these circumstances evidence would be required to support the case and this may include a home visit in order to make an assessment. The type of information we would require would be proof of child benefit or tax credit award, a court order if one is in place or a residency order.

The main applicant and a household member living permanently with the main applicant will be considered as couple if the latter has a relationship of – Husband or Wife or Partner. A separate bedroom will be allowed for each person or couple living as part of the household. For the purpose of assessing overcrowding the following criteria will be used:

- A separate bedroom will be allotted to each couple
- A separate bedroom will be allotted to two children of the same sex up to the age of 16
- A separate bedroom will be allotted to two children under 10 years regardless of sex
- A couple may be allotted a bedroom each where medical reasons are evidenced.

We reserve for ourselves the discretion to modify the above criteria and not apply them rigidly particularly where that would result in unfairness to the particular applicant or other applicants generally. In particular in certain circumstances the size of the bedrooms in a property and the relationship between those sharing a bedroom will be taken into account.

Serious Harassment or Violence

In these circumstances supporting information will be required to confirm the circumstances of the case and enquiries will be carried out in conjunction with other agencies as appropriate. An example would be an applicant suffering serious harassment and legal remedies are not working or are inappropriate. Harassment implies a degree of deliberate intent with some underlying motive and can be distinguished from neighbour disputes or nuisance.

Disrepair

Applicants who are required to leave their homes as a result of an emergency Prohibition Order served in relation to the premises under the Housing Act 2004 will be placed in Band 1

Customers living in unsafe or unsanitary housing conditions (as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)) and there is a high risk of harm will be placed in Band 1.

Succession

For new tenancies from 1st April 2012 the succession rights for tenants are that only a spouse or partner can succeed to a tenancy after the death of a tenant. For all other tenancies which started before 1st April 2012 succession rights remain the same.

When a tenant has succeeded to a tenancy but the property is more extensive than they need they may be asked to move to more suitable accommodation. These transfer applicants will be placed in priority Transfer Band A because they are under occupying their current accommodation.

The applicants requirements will be assessed and considered. Three reasonable offers may be made. If they are not accepted possession may be sought through the County Court

Left in Occupation

When an applicant does not have a right to succeed to a tenancy but is left in occupation on the death of the tenant or the tenant has moved out of the property permanently we will assess their circumstances and consider whether the applicant:

- Has been living with the tenant for a year before the tenants' death;
- Has been looking after the tenant for a substantial period of time (for example 12 months or more);
- Has accepted responsibility for the tenants' dependants

Depending on the applicant's circumstances the Council may consider granting a tenancy to the remaining person or persons. This could be either in the same home or in suitable alternative accommodation. We will have to be satisfied that this is a priority when viewed in the context of other demands on the housing stock and the housing needs in the area and the banding allocated gives sufficient priority within the allocation scheme. The banding would be in accordance with the applicant's circumstances.

In these circumstances a report about the occupants' circumstances will be prepared by a Tenancy Services Officer who will visit the tenant and discuss their circumstances. Relevant documentation will also be collected to validate those circumstances. A letter will be sent to the occupant setting out the report findings and how the Council will act. A Notice to Quit will be served to confirm the Council's position whilst the assessment is made with regard to the Lettings Scheme.

If the applicant's housing needs and circumstances mean that they can be offered the tenancy in which they are residing, within the terms of this lettings scheme, the property will not be advertised but will be offered to the occupant in accordance with the priority that they have been given within the Lettings Scheme.

If the applicant is to be allocated another property two reasonable offers may only be made. The applicant's requirements will be assessed and considered. If an offer is refused we will talk to the applicant to understand their needs. If two reasonable offers are refused possession may be sought through the County Court.

Section Four Selection of Applicants & Allocation of Accommodation

Introduction

It is our intention to publicise all vacancies on the Council's website. However sometimes a decision may be made not to advertise a property because of a special circumstance such as an emergency housing requirement, someone being left in occupation of a property or there is a need for a management move within the stock.

Properties will not generally be advertised more than twice. Each property will be clearly labelled to show the property features, local neighbourhood information and the types of household that the Council would expect to show an interest in the property. An indication will also be given as to whether applications will be invited from the Housing Register or Transfer Register.

The Council will endeavour to enable all applicants to exercise choice. It will do so by advertising properties and giving an indication about vacancy rates to allow applicants to use information to decide on the type of property they wish to live in and the area. Family and educational circumstances will be taken into account. However, at a time of high demand for properties, it must also make the best use of its stock. This means that sometimes there will be restrictions in the advert. Advice will be available for applicants in receipt of Housing Benefit with regard to what size of property will be paid for by welfare benefits. Expressions of interest from customers will only count if they can match the requirements in the advert.

Type of Tenancy Offered

All new tenants will be offered an Introductory Tenancy. An Introductory Tenancy is a trial tenancy that usually lasts for 12 months but can be extended for a further 6 months.

At the end of the 12 months if the tenancy is going to continue the tenant will be offered a secure tenancy unless they are residing in a general purpose property which has been built from 2015.

Exceptions to this are where the tenant, or in the case of joint tenants, at least one of them meets one of the following criteria:

- An existing secure tenant
- Someone succeeding to a previously secure tenancy
- An assured tenant of another social landlord (i.e. housing association or registered housing provider) transferring or exchanging to a NWBC tenancy

Making the Best Use of Stock

Properties will be allocated in a way that makes the best use of a stock.

Properties will be offered according to an applicant's needs and labels will be used for the properties advertised to clearly show the types of applicants the Council expects to apply for the property being let – for example by indicating family size or age of applicant.

If a property has been adapted to meet the needs of a person with disabilities (for example it may have been extended to provide an additional room(s) priority will be given to applicants who could make full use of that adaptation to meet their needs.

The table in this section provides a guide which will be used in order to make the best use of the Council's stock. Applicants who are in receipt of welfare benefits should take into account the size of accommodation their payments cover. Advice will be given to all applicants with regard to the rent payment they will be expected to pay and support provided as appropriate.

ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLDS	
Applicants with particular housing needs (For example households who have a requirement for ground floor accommodation or applicants whose disability means they have particular requirements)	Adapted properties or level access general purpose ground floor flats and bungalows
Applicants aged 60 or over	Sheltered and non-sheltered bungalows and sheltered and non-sheltered ground floor flats
Families with one or two children	Two bedroom house
Families with two or more children	Three or four bedroom house
Families with older children (aged over 5)	Flats, maisonettes and appropriate sized houses
Single person	Bedsit, one or two bedroom flat
Couple	One or two bedroom flat

Homes for Older People

Sheltered housing is housing for people who are aged 60 years. The Council has sheltered schemes for older people located across the Borough. All of the sheltered schemes have a communal room that is open for use by any scheme tenant. The

sheltered schemes do not have a designated warden, however, the schemes are supported by the Neighbourhood Warden Service.

Access to Children

For those customers who require an additional bedroom for access purposes appropriate information to verify circumstances will be required. Examples could be a copy of the child's birth certificate, court order if one is in place or a residency order. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis.

If an applicant has regular access to their children but there is an arrangement for them to live mainly elsewhere they will be able to express an interest in properties that are advertised but preference will be given to applicants with children who are permanently with an applicant. It should be noted that Housing Associations who provide nomination rights to the Council may not allow applicants with access to children an extra bedroom. Advice with regard to welfare benefits entitlements will be given before applicants are selected for properties where they may be deemed to have a spare bedroom.

Local Lettings Policies

From time to time we may instigate a local lettings procedure for specific areas or new developments to reflect local circumstances. Any such procedure will be stated as part of the advert and may have regard to considerations such as the social mix, strong local demand, density, age and community stability. Any such procedure will be time limited but during that time properties may be let to applicants outside the normal rules for priority and banding included in this policy.

Adapted Properties for Customers with Disabilities

Accessible properties are homes which have been designed for or adapted to meet the needs of customers with physical or sensory disabilities.

Applicants with an assessed need for accessible accommodation will be given priority for that type of accommodation over others in the same band rating without that need and the property advert will make that clear. The advert will also describe the accessible features together with local neighbourhood information to help customers choose whether to express an interest in that property or not.

In selecting an applicant for an accessible property from the short-list of qualifying applicants, the full circumstances of each case will be considered when deciding who will be offered the property. In some circumstances priority may be given outside of date order, if the vacancy is particularly suitable for the needs of an applicant.

Applicants in this category can also express an interest in properties, which do not have accessible features. However if they are short listed during the selection stage the Council will assess whether it is reasonable and practicable for the property to be adapted, the customer will be considered for the property on the same basis as the other customers who have submitted an expression of interest.

Affordable Housing Developments

New affordable housing will be advertised through the scheme. When new housing developments are built within rural areas planning restrictions may state that those customers wishing to apply must have a direct local connection to that specific rural area (local lettings policies). When publicised, properties will be clearly labelled with the eligibility criteria. It is also possible that the new tenancies will be let as Affordable Rent Tenancies and not secure or assured tenancies.

Expressing an Interest in a Property

Available properties will be advertised weekly.

Customers who have asked the Options Team to express for them do not need to take any action. The Team will act for them.

Other applicants can express an interest directly on the website if their circumstances meet the criteria set out in the advert.

Support for Customers

We will ensure all customers are able to access the scheme and let us know their choice of property and area.

A number of measures will be put in place to ensure that customers are not disadvantaged for example through:

- Providing appropriate advice and assistance
- Providing information in other formats
- Partnership working with support agencies
- Translating key documents
- Ensuring appropriate support is available for customers using the system

Where appropriate the Housing Division will act to help applicants access support to ensure they are able to sustain their tenancy when offered. This may be with additional support from Housing Management staff or by referral to another organisation which can provide tailored support services.

Short Listing

Expressions of interest will be placed in the order of priority e.g. Band 1+, then Band 1, then Band 2, then Band 3. The date that an application was placed in their most current category (the 'effective' date) will also be used to prioritise applications. In Bands 1+, 1 and 2 applicants with a local connection will be considered above those who do not have a local connection.

The Council retains the ability to decide, in order to use its stock effectively or move a tenant for housing management purposes, to re-house applicants on its Transfer Priority list ahead of applicants on the Housing Register.

If two or more customers within the same band have expressed an interest in the same property for which they qualify, their application date or the date they entered their current band will be used to determine the higher priority. In the unlikely event of the band date being the same, a management decision will be taken based on the applicants housing circumstances and making best use of the housing stock.

Where properties are targeted at specific customers, they will be given priority for that type of accommodation e.g. accessible accommodation for customers with disabilities or new build properties where certain eligibility rules apply under special Planning requirements. (Section 106 agreements)

If a customer is ranked first for more than one property and provided the eligibility criteria are met, they will be contacted to make a decision about which property they wish to accept.

Viewing Properties and Receiving Offers

If you are offered a property you will be contacted directly to invite you to view the property and arrange for you to sign for the tenancy if you decide to accept it.

Properties are let to the Council's published vacant property standard. When you view a property we are happy for you to share with us any concerns or queries that you have about the premises. We prefer you to share any issues or comments you have at an early stage so that we can resolve them. Officers are happy to assist.

Refusals

It is important that applicants are given choice over where they wish to live. This includes deciding not to take a property if it is offered if it is not suitable. However it is the Council's intention to only register those applicants who it views it can assist with re-housing. Once an applicant's circumstances and choices are understood assistance will be given to finding an appropriate property. If an applicant decides to refuse 3 reasonable offers of accommodation that are suitable for their needs their application will be removed from the Housing Register or Transfer Register.

Feedback on Results

Information will be available on the website following the allocation of a property and will include the following information:

- The total number of expressions of interest made for the property
- The successful customer's band effective date.
- Properties where a direct offer was made.

Nominations

The Council is able to nominate applicants on its housing register to Registered Providers (Housing Associations) who have vacancies in the North Warwickshire area. Any housing association vacancies will be advertised on the Council's website in the usual way and the Council will nominate the person with the highest need, ranked as first on the property shortlist.

When allocating a property advertised by a Housing Association they may apply their own eligibility criteria. Please note this may not be the same as North Warwickshire Borough Council's.

Housing Associations help with the Borough's waiting list with around 40 to 50 lettings per year. If they have new build properties in the area the Council's waiting list will normally be used to let the properties in the first instance.

Appendix 1

Contacts

North Warwickshire Borough Council

The Council House
South Street
Atherstone
Warwickshire
CV9 1DE

Telephone:

One Stop Shop: 01827 715341

The Housing Options Team: 01827 719214

Email: housingservices@northwarks.gov.uk

Website: www.northwarks.gov.uk

Platform Housing Group

1700 Solihull Park Way
Birmingham Business Park
Solihull
West Midlands
B37 7YD

Pride Park,

Telephone: 0333 200 7304

Website: www.platformhg.com

Midland Heart

20 Bath Row
Birmingham
B15 1LZ

Telephone: 0345 60 20 540

Website: www.midlandheart.org.uk

Stonewater

Suite C, Lancaster House
Lancaster House
Grange Business Park
Enderby Road,
Leicester
LE8 6EP

Telephone: 01202 319119

Website: www.stonewater.org.uk

PA Housing

3 Bede Island Road
Leicester
LE2 7EA

Telephone: 0300 123 2221

Website: www.pahousing.co.uk

Sage Housing

5th Floor Orion House
5 Upper St Martins Lane
London WC2 H9EA

Telephone: 02081680500

Website: www.sagehousing.co.uk

Southern Housing

Building 800, Guillat Avenue
Kent Science Park
Sittingbourne
ME9 8GU

Telephone: 0800 121 6060

Website: www.shgroup.org.uk

Legal & General Affordable Homes

12 Cock Lane
London
EC1 A9BU

Website: www.legalandgeneral.com-affordable-homes

Appendix 2

Assessment Criteria for Unacceptable Behaviour

Introduction

An applicant may be advised they do not qualify to join the Housing or Transfer Register because of their unacceptable behaviour. The Council will consider whether the applicant or a member of his/her household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour that is serious enough to make him/her unsuitable to be a tenant at the time the application is being considered.

Each case of unacceptable behaviour will be assessed individually taking into account all relevant information. This applies to existing tenants applying to transfer and to new customers joining Register.

Examples of Unacceptable Behaviour

Examples of the types of behaviour that will be considered include domestic abuse, racial harassment, drug dealing, noise nuisance, and intimidation. Where an applicant (or a member of the household) has a history of anti-social behaviour or has breached their tenancy conditions (such as non payment of rent, damage to a tenancy), all relevant facts will be considered before a decision is made. Where anti-social behaviour has been committed by a person who was, but is no longer, a member of the customer's household, the behaviour will be disregarded provided that the customer is not guilty themselves of unacceptable behaviour. In some circumstances applicants who have relevant unspent convictions for serious criminal offences which caused issues with their previous accommodation and neighbourhood may be ineligible for an allocation following thorough investigation.

Exclusions

At the time of their application an applicant's behaviour could be deemed serious enough to disqualify them from the Housing or Transfer Register. The period of disqualification will depend on what action the customer takes to demonstrate a change in behaviour. Customers may initially be kept from registering for a 12-month period after which the onus will be on them to provide evidence that their behaviour has improved. If a customer can demonstrate a change in behaviour before the 12-month period has expired they may be allowed to join the Register sooner. A new application will need to be made by the customer at this point.

Reduced Priority Preference Category

In some cases an applicant's circumstances may be such that they need to be able to join the Housing or Transfer Register. However, it would not be fair to other applicants, to allow them to have the same level of priority because of concerns about their behaviour. In these circumstances their application will be given a reduced priority preference (not placed in Bands 1+, 1 or 2) even though their housing need would normally mean they would be. Customers may initially be given no priority to their application for a 12-month period, after which their application will be reviewed and the onus will be on them to provide evidence that their behaviour has improved. If a customer can demonstrate a change in behaviour before the 12-month period has expired their application can be re-assessed.