

# **Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee**

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**Thursday 8 November 2012 at 2.00 pm**

**To be held at the Town Hall, Pinstone  
Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH**

**The Press and Public are Welcome to Attend**

## **Membership**

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Councillors Chris Weldon (Chair), Penny Baker (Deputy Chair), David Barker, Nikki Bond, Simon Clement-Jones, Shelia Constance, Richard Crowther, Jayne Dunn, Denise Fox, Martin Lawton, Shaffaq Mohammed, Peter Rippon and Chris Rosling-Josephs

## **Substitute Members**

In accordance with the Constitution, Substitute Members may be provided for the above Committee Members as and when required.

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## **PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE MEETING**

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The Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee exercises an overview and scrutiny function in respect of the planning, development and monitoring of performance and delivery of services which aim to make Sheffield a safer, stronger and more sustainable city for all of its residents.

A copy of the agenda and reports is available on the Council's website at [www.sheffield.gov.uk](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk). You can also see the reports to be discussed at the meeting if you call at the First Point Reception, Town Hall, Pinstone Street entrance. The Reception is open between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm, Monday to Thursday and between 9.00 am and 4.45 pm. on Friday, or you can ring on telephone no. 2734552. You may not be allowed to see some reports because they contain confidential information. These items are usually marked \* on the agenda.

Members of the public have the right to ask questions or submit petitions to Scrutiny Committee meetings. Please see the website or contact Democratic Services for further information.

Scrutiny Committee meetings are normally open to the public but sometimes the Committee may have to discuss an item in private. If this happens, you will be asked to leave. Any private items are normally left until last. If you would like to attend the meeting please report to the First Point Reception desk where you will be directed to the meeting room.

If you require any further information about this Scrutiny Committee, please contact David Molloy, Scrutiny Policy Officer on 0114 2735065 or email [david.molloy@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:david.molloy@sheffield.gov.uk).

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## **FACILITIES**

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There are public toilets available, with wheelchair access, on the ground floor of the Town Hall. Induction loop facilities are available in meeting rooms.

Access for people with mobility difficulties can be obtained through the ramp on the side to the main Town Hall entrance.

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**SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY AND POLICY  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AGENDA  
8 NOVEMBER 2012**

**Order of Business**

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- 1. Welcome and Housekeeping Arrangements**
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
- 3. Exclusion of Public and Press**  
To identify items where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press
- 4. Declarations of Interest**  
Members to declare any interests they have in the business to be considered at the meeting
- 5. Minutes of Previous Meeting**  
To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2012
- 6. Public Questions and Petitions**  
To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public
- 7. Draft Lettings Policy Review**  
Report of the Executive Director, Communities
- 8. Homelessness Performance Update**  
Report of the Executive Director, Communities
- 9. Policy Update**  
Report of the Scrutiny Policy Officer
- 10. Date of Next Meeting**  
The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2013, at 2.00 p.m. in the Town Hall

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## ADVICE TO MEMBERS ON DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

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New standards arrangements were introduced by the Localism Act 2011. The new regime made changes to the way that members' interests are registered and declared.

If you are present at a meeting of the Council, of its executive or any committee of the executive, or of any committee, sub-committee, joint committee, or joint sub-committee of the authority, and you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** (DPI) relating to any business that will be considered at the meeting, you must not:

- participate in any discussion of the business at the meeting, or if you become aware of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the meeting, participate further in any discussion of the business, or
- participate in any vote or further vote taken on the matter at the meeting.

These prohibitions apply to any form of participation, including speaking as a member of the public.

You **must**:

- leave the room (in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct)
- make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any DPI at any meeting at which you are present at which an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.
- declare it to the meeting and notify the Council's Monitoring Officer within 28 days, if the DPI is not already registered.

If you have any of the following pecuniary interests, they are your **disclosable pecuniary interests** under the new national rules. You have a pecuniary interest if you, or your spouse or civil partner, have a pecuniary interest.

- Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain, which you, or your spouse or civil partner, undertakes.
- Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from your council or authority) made or provided within the relevant period\* in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

\*The relevant period is the 12 months ending on the day when you tell the Monitoring Officer about your disclosable pecuniary interests.

- Any contract which is made between you, or your spouse or your civil partner (or a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest) and your council or authority -
  - under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
  - which has not been fully discharged.
- Any beneficial interest in land which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, have and which is within the area of your council or authority.
- Any licence (alone or jointly with others) which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, holds to occupy land in the area of your council or authority for a month or longer.
- Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) -
  - the landlord is your council or authority; and
  - the tenant is a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest.
- Any beneficial interest which you, or your spouse or your civil partner has in securities of a body where -
  - (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of your council or authority; and
  - (b) either
    - the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or
    - if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

Under the Council's Code of Conduct, members must act in accordance with the Seven Principles of Public Life (selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership), including the principle of honesty, which says that 'holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest'.

If you attend a meeting at which any item of business is to be considered and you are aware that you have a **personal interest** in the matter which does not amount to a DPI, you must make verbal declaration of the existence and nature of that interest at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent. You should leave the room if your continued presence is incompatible with the 7 Principles of Public Life.

You have a personal interest where –

- a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing (including interests in land and easements over land) of you or a member of your family or a person or an organisation with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the Council Tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the Authority's administrative area, or
- it relates to or is likely to affect any of the interests that are defined as DPs but are in respect of a member of your family (other than a partner) or a person with whom you have a close association.

Guidance on declarations of interest, incorporating regulations published by the Government in relation to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, has been circulated to you previously, and has been published on the Council's website as a downloadable document at [-http://councillors.sheffield.gov.uk/councillors/register-of-councillors-interests](http://councillors.sheffield.gov.uk/councillors/register-of-councillors-interests)

You should identify any potential interest you may have relating to business to be considered at the meeting. This will help you and anyone that you ask for advice to fully consider all the circumstances before deciding what action you should take.

In certain circumstances the Council may grant a **dispensation** to permit a Member to take part in the business of the Authority even if the member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest relating to that business.

To obtain a dispensation, you must write to the Monitoring Officer at least 48 hours before the meeting in question, explaining why a dispensation is sought and desirable, and specifying the period of time for which it is sought. The Monitoring Officer may consult with the Independent Person or the Council's Standards Committee in relation to a request for dispensation.

Further advice can be obtained from Lynne Bird, Director of Legal Services on 0114 2734018 or email [lynne.bird@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:lynne.bird@sheffield.gov.uk)

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## **SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**Meeting held 11<sup>th</sup> September 2012**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Chris Weldon (Chair), Penny Baker, Nikki Bond, Simon Clement-Jones, Richard Crowther, Jayne Dunn, Denise Fox, Martin Lawton, Shaffaq Mohammed and Chris Rosling-Josephs

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### **1. WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING ARRANGEMENTS**

1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and outlined basic housekeeping and fire safety arrangements.

### **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Barker, Sheila Constance and Peter Rippon.

### **3. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

3.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

### **4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

4.1 Members declared the following personal interests in Item 7 on the agenda – Lettings Policy Review:-

- Councillor Denise Fox – Member of the Sheffield Homes South East Area Board;
- Councillor Chris Rosling-Josephs – Member of the Sheffield Homes South East Area Board;
- Councillor Richard Crowther – Member of the Sheffield Homes North West Area Board; and
- Councillor Jayne Dunn – Member of the Sheffield Homes North West Area Board.

### **5. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

5.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2012, were approved as a correct record.

## 6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

6.1 Martin Brighton raised the following questions and responses were provided as follows:-

- (a) Could the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee arrange for the answers to all the questions he raised at the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2012, to be included in the minutes?

The Chair apologised that Mr Brighton had not received answers to all the four questions raised at the last meeting, and requested that relevant officers respond to Mr Brighton at the earliest possible opportunity. The Committee Secretary added that responses to questions raised by members of the public, which were not answered at meetings, would, at the questioner's request, be incorporated on the Council website with the agenda papers for the Committee's next meeting.

- (b) Further to the submission of source discs for the Multiple Indexes of Deprivation at the Committee's last meeting, and the consequent responses provided at Council and Cabinet meetings, which indicated that such information was opinion and not fact, why was the Council allowed to dispute such facts and what could this Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee suggest in terms of action to put right what was done wrong and to prevent a repeat of this happening again?

The Chair stated that justification of the responses provided at the Council and Cabinet meetings were not a matter for this Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee to deal with, but he would ensure that relevant officers were made aware of his comments.

- (c) Could the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee please take note that, in his opinion, a two-tier rent system was not acceptable to tenants, following the issue of early introduction of rent conversions?

The Chair stated that the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee would bear this in mind.

6.2 Mick Watts referred to the monitoring report on the Housing Revenue Account, which was considered by the Cabinet at its last meeting, indicating that there was reference to a £1 million underspend, and questioned why this was the case as he believed that the Council should be allocating as much as possible from its budget?

Richard Palmer stated that he would provide a written response on this issue to Mr Watts.

## 7. LETTINGS POLICY REVIEW

### 7.1 Choice Based Lettings

7.1.1 Sharon Schonborn, Allocation Policy Review Manager, Communities Portfolio, gave a presentation on the subject of Choice Based Lettings.

7.1.2 Members of the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee raised a number of questions and the following responses were provided:-

- The new ICT system would not only produce cost savings and efficiencies, but would also provide other benefits, such as full-site language conversion, an amended website which would be easier to navigate and for customers to manage their own applications. The new system, which was currently used by a number of other local authorities, had proved to be very beneficial.
- Support would be put in place for those people who either struggled with, or had no access to ICT facilities. They would still be able to submit bids for properties using the phone, mobile, digital TV or internet. In addition to this, the new ICT system included a facility for building up a profile in terms of tenants' needs, and would be able to submit a bid automatically, on their behalf, when a suitable property became available. It was envisaged that due to the improvements the new ICT system would bring, this would free up resources for officers to provide assistance for those tenants who struggled with, or did not have access to ICT facilities.
- As part of the Communications Strategy, every tenant would receive details of the new system in writing. Information would also be available electronically.

7.1.3 RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee:-

- (a) notes the information contained in the paper now submitted, together with information reported as part of the presentation and the responses provided to the questions raised; and
- (b) Requests officers to (i) pursue Option 1 – Keep Choice Based Lettings as the advertising and matching mechanism, using the new ICT system to manage the process more effectively, and for officers to commence working on developing this option with immediate effect and (ii) attend a future meeting of the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee to report in more detail on the Communications Strategy.

### 7.2 Bidding

7.2.1 Sharon Schonborn gave a presentation on the subject of Bidding.

7.2.2 Members of the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee raised a number of questions and the following responses were provided:-

- At the present time, there was nothing in the Lettings Policy to say that those tenants who had refused a large number of offers should be penalised. Tenants were able to bid based on their waiting time, therefore there were no limits in terms of the number of bids they could make.
- Findings from other local authorities had indicated that limiting the number of bids had not brought any major problems. It had made tenants more focused in terms of their bids.
- Offers had not included details of penalties in this paper, but would bring other suggestions to the Committee's Policy Development meeting to be held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2012, which will be included in Banding and Registration documents for this Committee's consideration at a future meeting.
- In terms of penalties for tenants who refuse a number of properties under the new Policy, whilst there were to be further discussions on this issue, one possibility would be to reduce their priority.

7.2.3 RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee:-

- (a) notes the information contained in the paper now submitted, and the information as part of the presentation and the responses provided to the questions raised; and
- (b) requests officers to pursue Option 3 – Extend the restriction to apply to all applicants, therefore restricting all applicants to three bids per cycle; retain the facility for staff to place additional bids, where necessary, for priority applicants in order to fulfil the Council's duty to applicants with urgent housing needs.

### 7.3 **Adaptations**

7.3.1 Sharon Schonborn gave a presentation on the subject of Adaptations.

7.3.2 Members of the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee raised a number of questions and the following responses were provided:-

- When tenants were bidding for properties that had been adapted, consideration would be given to the needs of all the applicant's family members.
- There were approximately 5,000 properties in the City which had been the subject of some level of adaptations, with the vast majority being at such a level that could easily be amended or removed. There were no

records to indicate where all these properties were. Approximately 200 of these properties had received major adaptations and the location of such properties was known to Sheffield Homes. The introduction of the new ICT system should provide an improved level of detail in terms of advertising the location/features of properties which had been adapted.

- Under the new proposed Policy, heavily adapted properties could be taken out of the Choice Based Lettings system, with that flexibility worked into the wording.
- The newly improved website would not only be easier to navigate, but would contain more details to enable tenants to make more informed choices.
- Properties that had been adapted would be let in their present condition, but arrangements may have to be made to amend or remove any adaptations if they were proving difficult to let. Such properties would be dealt with on a case by case basis.
- Any adaptations undertaken to properties have to be agreed by the landlord.

7.3.3 RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee:-

- (a) notes the information contained in the paper now submitted, together with information reported as part of the presentation and the responses provided to the questions raised; and
- (b) requests officers to (i) pursue Option 2 – Retain and develop the adapted features already in the Policy, building in the additional flexibility to take highly adapted properties out of Choice Based Lettings and match manually, and (ii) (A) include reference in the Policy to the needs of tenants with children in the household who have disabilities, and (B) develop the register by taking steps to identify the locations of those properties which had received adaptations, including the nature of such adaptations, and to report back on both these issues at the Committee's Policy Development meeting to be held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

**8. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR REVIEW**

- 8.1 Simon Mitchell, Safer Neighbourhood Manager, gave a presentation on the Anti-Social Behaviour Review, focussing on the establishment of the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting (PRAM) which, it was hoped, would provide a more co-ordinated way of dealing with ASB.
- 8.2 Mr Mitchell referred to the present levels, and the public perceptions, of anti-social behaviour (ASB) together with the good examples of partnership working, but reported on a number of important gaps in terms of how

vulnerable people were dealt with, how intelligence was dealt with, issues regarding leadership and accountability, and the gaps in terms of strategy and delivery. He reported on the aims and objectives of the PRAM, together with the potential impact it would have in terms of how the relevant partners dealt with ASB in the City.

8.3 Members of the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee raised a number of questions and the following responses were provided:-

- Whilst it was accepted that the Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) operated differently, with some being more effective than others, it was not the intention that the PRAM would replace the NAGs. It would be the responsibility of each Safer Neighbourhood Officer to devise a procedure for dealing with the priorities as identified by the PRAM.
- It was expected that the PRAM would identify any priorities that had not been picked up by the NAGs. One of the failures of the NAGs was that there was no formal record of any minutes/actions following meetings, therefore it had been identified that there was a need for a system to identify where there were collective risks. It was hoped that the PRAM would be the relevant body to identify such risks and request the relevant bodies to resolve such problems.
- Elected Members were requested to get involved in the PRAM process through their local Safer Neighbourhood Officer. The PRAM would task such Officers and it was expected that the Officers would devise the most effective way of keeping any relevant partners together and sharing information.
- Elected Members would still be encouraged to contact their local Safer Neighbourhood Officer or Area Inspector to report problems of ASB under the PRAM process.
- The NAGs would continue to deal with issues in their respective Community Assembly areas, whereas the PRAM would be looking at City-wide issues. Agencies would still be expected to deal with issues first, but if they were not able to for any reason, they would refer them to the relevant NAG.
- Issues relating to noise nuisance were part of the Integrated Services and there was a need for a clear steer as to how the Police could use its resources in terms of dealing with noise nuisance and other forms of ASB. Plans were being made to equip front-line officers in the City to be able to deal with issues such as noise nuisance, but there was a need to ensure that the PRAM was established first. A pilot scheme had been planned in terms of how the Police and other agencies would deal with noise nuisance and dog fouling.
- As part of the PRAM process, there would be efforts to strengthen links

with the Multi Agency Support Teams (MASTs). It was hoped that the PRAM would be able to identify specific problems in terms of ASB in schools.

- It was planned that reports of anti-social behaviour would be sent to relevant Ward Councillors.
- Whilst it had been a slow process in terms of engaging the Registered Social Landlords due to the high numbers, the South Yorkshire Housing Association had expressed an interest to become part of the PRAM process and it was hoped that other such landlords would also engage in the process within time.

8.4 RESOLVED: That the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee:-

- (a) notes the information reported as part of the presentation, together with the responses provided to the questions raised;
- (b) expresses its thanks to Simon Mitchell and Inspector Paul McCurry for the presentation now made; and
- (c) requests that a report on the progress of the Partner Resource Allocation Meeting be submitted to a meeting of the Committee in six months' time.

## 9. **POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER/POLICE AND CRIME PANEL**

9.1 The Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee received and noted a report of the Executive Director, Communities Portfolio, containing details of the forthcoming changes to the policing governance landscape through the Police and Crime Commissioner and Police and Crime Panel, together with details of Sheffield's response to the reforms.

## 10. **POLICY UPDATE**

10.1 The Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee received and noted a report of the Scrutiny Policy Officer providing an update on policy changes introduced by the Government during July and August 2012.

## 11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

11.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee would be held on Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> November 2012, at 2.00 pm in the Town Hall.

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## Report to Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

**Report of:** Executive Director, Communities

**Subject:** Draft Lettings Policy Review

**Author of Report:** Sharon Schonborn, Allocations Policy Review Project Manager

**Summary:**

This report details the draft revised Lettings Policy for the attention of the Members of the Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee. The Scrutiny Committee have been heavily involved in the development of the draft revised policy and this report provides the Committee with an opportunity to consider the draft policy in its entirety.

**Type of item:** The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	x
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	
Other	

**The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:**

Consider the policy in its entirety and provide views and comments as required

**Background Papers:**

None

**Category of Report:** OPEN

## **Report to Scrutiny – 8<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

### **Draft Housing Allocations Policy**

#### **1 Why have we fully reviewed the Allocations Policy?**

Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 states that Local Authorities are required to have an Allocations Policy. Our current Allocations Policy (also known as the Lettings Policy) was implemented in 2004, having been agreed in 2002. We need to update our Policy to reflect both national and local changes that have taken place since this time. These changes include increased demand for Council housing, a reduction in housing stock, and legislative change, particularly the Localism Act 2011, which gives local authorities more flexibility to manage their Housing Registers.

The principles of the draft new policy are established but the document is still undergoing some minor redrafting. The latest version is attached but this is likely to undergo minor drafting changes prior to being issued for consultation.

#### **2 An overview of how the current system works.**

The Housing Register is open to people who do or do not live in Sheffield aged 16 years or over.

Applications to join the Housing Register require only minimal supporting documents and there is encouragement to join the Housing Register. There is no requirement to be in housing need at the time of registration. For many people who are not in housing need, registering is seen as an 'insurance policy'.

Allocations are made based either on peoples waiting time or on the level of priority they have been awarded. There is no requirement to be actively looking for housing, so some people have very long waiting times.

Applicants who need to move quickly can be assessed for priority. There are 23 different types of priority for re-housing. Priorities have different time limits within which the priority must be used. All priority types are treated on an equal basis and applicants who have bid for a property are considered in order of the length of time the applicant has had the priority.

To ensure that waiting time has relevance and remains a route into accessing housing there is a quota that a minimum of 25% of vacant homes must be allocated to people with waiting time. In practice, because of refusals by priority applicants between 30% and 40% are actually allocated to people with waiting time.

We use a Choice Based Lettings system whereby vacant properties are advertised and applicants bid for them.

Unlike most other local authorities our policy allows unlimited bidding for all applicants and unlimited refusals for waiting time applicants. This maximises choice but means some people bid for homes that they are not seriously interested in and cause unnecessary delays and expense.

Owner occupiers are eligible to be allocated a home if they confirm they intend to sell their current home.

### **3 What works well in the current Allocations Policy?**

Applicants find it very easy to register and a lot of support is given to all applicants. The Policy was very successful in attracting a lot of people to register when supply outstripped demand for certain property types.

The waiting time quota is very popular. Council Housing is a tenure of choice in Sheffield. In many other authorities, waiting time applicants can only have properties that were rejected by priority applicants.

The generosity of the eligibility criteria has been effective in making sure some properties that would have otherwise been vacant are occupied. This includes the flexibility to relax the criteria if no-one meets the criteria.

Choice Based Lettings enables customers to see which properties are available and make informed choices (the information available to people will be improved by a new IT system). It is a transparent way of allocating properties. The system is customer led rather than officer led with applicants choosing to bid for homes they want rather than waiting for officers to allocate them one. Aside from the wider benefits of customer choice, this is a lot less labour intensive in terms of managing shortlists and making offers.

### **4 What doesn't work well in the current system?**

Demand for Council Housing now far outstrips supply and our open Housing Register has resulted in Sheffield having the largest Housing Register in the country. New tenants can rejoin the register as soon as they are re-housed, which again adds to the size of the register and also encourages churn within Council housing. This is too costly to review each year, and means the register is out of date. It may also send an inaccurate message that there is a greater affordable housing shortage in Sheffield than in the rest of the country.

- There are approximately 87,500 households on the housing register in Sheffield.
- This equates to 40% of households.
- This compares with between 5-11% in other core cities.
- 18,500 people are actively seeking housing by bidding.
- We let around 4000 properties a year.

As applications to the housing register are only required to provide minimal supporting information and little advice is routinely given about housing options, some applicants have raised expectations of what the sector can provide.

The Allocations Policy was developed with the aim of being simple, clear and transparent. Customer and stakeholder feedback does not always reflect this. For example, it is often perceived that almost all properties go to priority applicants, even though the actual figure is around 63%.

Sheffield's refusal rate is very high compared to other authorities causing rent loss.

Welfare reform will affect our tenants and applicants. The under occupiers' penalty (or bedroom tax) will be introduced in April 2013, and brings size criteria into the calculation of Housing Benefit for people of working age. This means that they will only receive Housing

Benefit for the amount of bedrooms they are deemed to require. Around 65% of tenants receive some level of Housing Benefit and it is calculated that a maximum of 7,000 of our current tenants are under occupying. It is important we do not allocate properties that prospective tenants are unable to afford and we enable tenants who can no longer afford their property to downsize.

The Localism Act brought in the self financing HRA. It is now even more important the Allocations Policy contributes to effective stock management, minimising the costs of allocations and void periods and promoting sustainable communities.

As there is only one level of priority we are not able to meet the most urgent housing need transparently. The most urgent cases are dealt with via the use of discretion and special cases.

There are a lot of priority types (23 in all), some of which are very specific.

The time limits on using priorities are confusing and are frequently renewed because applicants have not been able to find a suitable property in the original allocated timescale.

One fifth of properties have age restrictions applied so only people aged either over 40 or over 60 are eligible but often people of those ages are not interested in those properties. People under 40 can find it difficult to get re-housed and as age restrictions are not evenly spread throughout the city, there are concentrations of particular age groups in particular areas which does not contribute positively towards sustainable communities.

The IT system has become outdated and is being replaced. It does not encourage customer engagement. Applicants cannot see where they rank following the placement of a bid.

## **5 How will the new draft Allocations Policy improve things?**

The new Policy aims to manage expectations by providing information on the scarcity of social housing. It also seeks to provide holistic housing options advice up front and signpost applicants for help to prevent homelessness at the earliest possible time.

The emphasis is upon self service and active engagement with the system including a requirement to re-register annually with additional support for the vulnerable or those with literacy/language/access issues.

An 'inactive' register for those who wish to register and accumulate waiting time will separate out those actively seeking housing and those adequately housed. It will also negate the need to carry out a full assessment on all 87,500 applicants.

Applicants who are re-housed will be excluded from rejoining the Housing Register for two years unless their circumstances change to the extent that alternative accommodation is needed.

A requirement to provide more information, original documents and references means we will have more insight into our applicants and their support needs. This in turn means more appropriate lets as we have better information to aide sustainable lets.

Instead of just one level of priority there will be three levels to ensure those in most urgent need can be housed in a more timely manner therefore reducing human suffering and costs to the local authority of those bed blocking or in expensive temporary accommodation.

The grounds for awarding priorities have been reduced from 23 to 8 and incorporate broader headings to enable more transparency, less confusion and easier assessments for applicants and staff alike.

Local priorities have been recognised, such as giving more priority to applicants that have a local connection to Sheffield, those honourably discharged from the Armed Forces, approved Foster Carers and Adoptive Parents, prisoners who have given up a Council property on being served a sentence. There is capacity within policy to address other local priorities through Local Lettings Policies and deal with estate management issues such as deprivation in an area, high child density, anti-social behaviour.

Bedroom eligibility criteria have been tightened to provide a system which better reflects the demand/supply issues and rations a scarce resource fairly and transparently. The criteria is in line with Welfare Reform in order to future proof against the effects of reduced benefit incomes that will make larger properties unaffordable to some applicants.

The new policy builds on the downsizing principles already established by extending priority to applicants needing to downsize from two bedroomed properties, rather than just from three bedrooms and above.

The ability to deal with adapted properties in a more efficient manner and enable disabled applicants to access the accommodation they need more easily by taking some properties out of the CBL process, better definitions and information provided on properties.

All 40+ age designations will be removed and all 60+ age designations will be reviewed.

Applicants will be restricted to three bids per advertising cycle (approx 6 days) but staff will be authorised to place additional bids where necessary for priority applicants in order to fulfil the Council's duty to applicants with urgent housing needs.

Diminished Band applicants who refuse three reasonable offers of accommodation within a 12 month period will have their application cancelled.

People from out of the city without any local connection will still be able to join the Housing Register but will be ranked below everyone else in priority or general needs bands and so will only be able to access housing not sought by people in priority or general needs bands.

## **6 How it will look in the future**

The expectation is the new policy will reduce the Housing Register in size by better managing expectations and encouraging applicants to consider if social housing is the right option for them. Some people without housing need who currently register only as an 'insurance policy' will choose not to undertake annual re-registration.

The decision was taken not to adopt all the flexibilities local authorities have been empowered with that would be likely to further shrink the register, such as the ability to

exclude categories of applicants or a requirement to be active on the register. However, there is the option of re-visiting these powers at a later date when the impact of the new policy can be measured in terms of how effective it has been in addressing the issue of the size of the register and managing expectations.

The removal of age designations will improve housing opportunities for younger people across the city and reduce the high concentrations of younger people in some areas. Tenancies will become more sustainable as young people are more able to access areas nearer to their support networks.

Costs will be reduced by limiting bids and refusals and ensuring that applicants are fully informed regarding properties/areas/information to enable them to place their bids more strategically and successfully.

## **7 How it will help sustainable tenancies**

Reviewing age banding across the city means younger people will be able to access accommodation nearer to support networks therefore making their tenancies more sustainable.

Holding more information about applicants will better ensure that lets are appropriate and that applicants with support needs are placed more appropriately.

Restricting bids and refusals together with a better IT system that provides applicants with up-to-date information such as where their bid ranks will empower applicants to manage their bidding in terms of being able to remove bids and place them more effectively and by focussing applicants on bidding for properties that they really want to live in.

The flexibility to introduce Local Lettings Policies will allow a response to issues that affect specific communities rather than applying blanket policies across the whole city that don't necessarily meet the needs of individual communities with unique issues.

## **8 How does the new Policy contribute to the clear outcomes of the city?**

- Better Health and Wellbeing – by ensuring the most critical cases are dealt with as quickly as possible and by enabling people with disabilities to be able to access the types of accommodation they need to live as independently as possible
- Successful Children and Young People – by providing routes into council housing for families in crisis, care leavers, responding to Safeguarding issues requiring alternative housing, giving priority to foster carers and adoptive parents.
- Safe and Secure Communities – by ensuring we understand our prospective tenants and their support needs, by making appropriate informed allocations.
- A Great Place to Live – by ensuring council housing continues to be a tenure of choice and that communities are mixed and sustainable.

## **9 How the Policy has been developed**

The Project Team formed in March 2011 and proceeded to carry out a scoping exercise, visiting 43 teams within Sheffield Homes and SCC, looking at complaints, Councillor and MP enquiries, customer feedback, results of previous consultation and bench marking against other authorities. Out of this the key challenge areas were identified, which helped frame the questions and focus the consultation.

A period of open consultation commenced between September 2011 and February 2012 whereby the project team set up and attended over 90 events to carry out face to face consultation, focusing on harder to reach groups. There was also a questionnaire produced which could be completed online or via hard copy which was mailed out to over 4,000 people. This received 519 responses and sought to gain feedback around the Key Challenge areas noted above.

Once the consultation was completed, the team analysed all consultation responses and put together Policy options for Members to consider and steer on. The team worked closely with the Safer and Stronger Scrutiny Committee to formulate the draft Policy.

## **10 Outcomes from Safer and Stronger Scrutiny Committee**

Scrutiny provided a total of seven steers as follows:

### **1. Banding – 12.04.12**

Options:

1. Keep the system as it currently is.
2. Adopt a banding system that recognises levels of priority, reduces the number of priorities, introduces other local agreed priorities and considers priorities first for all properties.
3. Adopt a banding system that recognises levels of priority, reduces the number of priorities, introduces other local agreed priorities, reviews time restrictions on priorities and retains a quota for applicant's in general housing need with waiting time only.

Scrutiny's preferred option - Option 3 - but flesh out local connection and priority, with clearer definitions and detail about how it would work.

### **2. Housing Register – 12.04.12**

Options:

1. Keep the system as it currently is.
2. More proactive management to maintain up-to-date register e.g., annual registration requirement, identification checks and references – more time is needed to work up details.
3. Run two registers – one for active bidders and one for those only expressing interest.

Scrutiny's preferred option - Options 2 and 3.

### **3. Bedroom eligibility criteria – 19.07.12**

Options:

1. Keep the system as it currently is.
2. Allocation in line with Welfare Reforms i.e., 'need' only.
3. Allocation in line with Welfare Reforms with relaxed criteria for specified groups.

Scrutiny's preferred option - Option 3. Agreed to bring forward to introduce in line with welfare reform.

#### **4. Age designation – 19.07.12**

Options:

1. Keep the system as it currently is and pursue reviews more rigorously.
2. Remove all age designations.
3. Remove all 40+ age designations and reduce 60+ age designations to only specified properties, identified through comprehensive review.

Scrutiny's preferred option - Option 3

#### **5. Choice Based Lettings – 11.09.12**

Options:

1. Keep CBL as the advertising and matching mechanism using the new ICT to manage more effectively.
2. Officer allocations of each property.

Scrutiny's preferred option – Option 1.

#### **6. Bidding – 11.09.12**

Options

1. Keep the system as it currently is and reverse the previous Cabinet decision, therefore keeping unlimited bids for all applicants
2. Implement the formerly agreed Policy change to restrict the bids of Waiting Time applicants only
3. Extend the restriction to apply to all applicants, therefore restricting all applicants to 3 bids per cycle. Retain the facility for staff to place additional bids, where necessary, for priority applicants in order to fulfil Council's duty to applicants with urgent housing needs.

Scrutiny's preferred option - Option 3.

#### **7. Adaptations – 11.09.12**

Options

1. Keep the system as it currently is noting that the acquisition of a new CBL system is going to provide enhanced functionality
2. Retain and develop the adapted features already in the Policy, building in the additional flexibility to take highly adapted properties out of CBL and match manually.
3. Take all adapted properties out of CBL

Scrutiny's preferred option - Option 2, with caveats around families with children needing adaptations and developing an adapted property list.

Following the Scrutiny Committee recommendations detailed above the Project Team put together a draft Allocations Policy. The team have worked with The Project Board and various teams of operational staff with differing expertise to develop this into the attached



draft. Some of the teams contributing to the policy development have been Lettings Policy Unit, Homefinders, Housing Solutions, Health and Housing, Housing Advice, The Property Shop, Antisocial Behaviour Team, Equipment and Adaptations Team, Vacants Management Service, Legal Services, Private Sector Housing, Income Management Team, staff from the areas.

## 12 Further Consultation

There is a statutory requirement to consult with our partner RPs - Registered Private Providers of Social Housing (formerly known as Housing Associations) for a reasonable period. We also want to consult with groups that the EIA have identified will be adversely affected by changes and groups that have asked us to return following the previous consultation. The consultation will not be as extensive as the previous public consultation and will be for an eight week period. Targeted consultation will be carried out with the following groups:

- RPs (statutory)
- People with access to children (EIA)
- People with disabilities (EIA)
- Interested groups (requested return)

## 13 Implementation Timetable

Statutory consultation will conclude in early January and it is proposed, having taken account of the feedback received, to submit the new policy for the approval of the Scrutiny Committee on the 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2013. The plan is to then proceed onto Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2013. Once Cabinet has approved the new policy it is estimated it will take up to 12 months to complete full implementation. A key factor in this timetable is the IT systems changes. The draft timetable is set out below.

<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>Specification Configuration</b> Consultancy and Policy familiarisation Specification development Cost and timescale quotes Quotes from Capita/Northgate Approval by SCC and Capita (12 weeks Capita)	16 weeks
<b>Build phase</b> Customer front end Back office Interface amendments Northgate amendments	16 weeks
<b>Delivery and test phase</b>	4 weeks
<b>Final set up</b> Including re-writing of all web pages	6 weeks
<b>Training development</b>	(during testing and final set up- 8 weeks estimated)
<b>Training delivery</b>	(during testing and final set up and post go-live- 12 weeks estimated)

Go Live for A Britas/ Letters sent to applicants	
Policy changeover for applicants Re-banding and notification 2 letters min, with subsequent queries/complaints Time to allow applicants to use current priority/waiting time Annual review of registration	8 weeks
Go-live for advertising	1 week
Go-live for bidding	
<b>Total time</b>	<b>51 weeks</b>

## 14 Financial Implications

Estimates broadly show net savings of £240,000 per annum with set-up costs recouped within the first six months. Some savings are fairly intangible such as prioritising housing to reduce costs associated with those bed blocking/use of expensive temporary accommodation and out of borough placements, reducing churn and the associated costs, better information on applicants in order to create more sustainable lets, providing applicants affected by welfare reforms with the opportunity to move rather than get into rent arrears, enabling foster carers and adoptive parents to access appropriate housing etc.

Members have agreed that some of the changes will be implemented before the new Policy is fully adopted. This will be made possible by the new IT system that is scheduled to be in place by August 2013 and will mean that savings can be realised ahead of the full Policy implementation. For example there are estimated savings of £170,000 per annum to be realised by restricting bids and refusals which will improve relet times and reduce vacant rent loss. It is envisaged that tightened bedroom eligibility criteria will produce further costs savings by ensuring applicants can afford the properties they are bidding for and extension of the down sizing priority will enable those that cannot afford larger properties to move quickly.

The main risks are in managing the transition, which includes ensuring that staff are adequately trained, resources are placed appropriately and communication with applicants is managed carefully – the size of the register being a principle concern in the transitional arrangements. There are areas of the new policy that will be less resource intensive for staff but the new draft policy increases the administrative burden in terms of additional information and documents required to register.

## 15 Legal Implications

Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 states that Local Authorities are required to have an Allocations Policy. When framing their policies authorities must have regard to statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The Guidance provides:

“An allocation scheme may provide for other factors than those set out in s.167(2) to be taken into account in determining which applicants are to be given preference under a scheme, provided they do not dominate the scheme and that overall the scheme operates

to give reasonable preference to people in the reasonable preference categories. This means that an allocation scheme may include other policy priorities, such as promoting job related mobility, prioritising under occupiers, or providing move-on accommodation for people leaving supported housing, provided that:

- They do not dominate the scheme and
- Overall, the scheme operates to give reasonable preference to those in the statutory reasonable preference categories over those who are not. “

Reasonable preference does not mean absolute preference and authorities may take wider management considerations into account when framing their scheme and determining the level of preference granted to applicants in the specified categories and the revised guidance encourages them to do so.

In recent years there have been many challenges to local housing authorities' lettings schemes and it was becoming increasingly difficult to frame a policy which complied with the legislation, the case law and the statutory guidance. A recent decision of the House of Lords has clarified and simplified authorities' legal obligations. Revisions to the statutory guidance reflect that simplification.

Part VI Housing Act 1996 requires local authorities to consult registered social landlords with which they have nomination rights and there is a duty under the Housing Act 1985 to maintain arrangements for consulting tenants about changes in housing management including changes in practices and policies. Statutory guidance issued in July 2008 also draws attention to local authorities duties under the “duty to involve” in Section 3A Local Government Act 1999.

## **16 Equality of Opportunity Implications**

In depth EIAs have been completed for the identified key challenge areas of the policy such as age banding, bedroom eligibility, adaptations, bidding restrictions and registration requirements. In addition a 'light touch' EIA has been completed for the full range of draft Allocations Policy proposals/issues, along with a full EIA on:

1. A move to online applications rather than paper.
2. Requirement to update application annually.
3. Demotion or cancellation for three refusals.

Targeted consultation is proposed with groups identified as adversely affected by tightened bedroom criteria, which includes people with access to children and people with disabilities.

## **17 Recommendations**

That the Safer and Stronger Scrutiny Committee:

1. Approve the draft Allocations Policy.
2. Approve the eight week consultation period planned.

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# Sheffield City Council

## Draft Allocations Policy

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DRAFT

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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There are a lot more people wanting to live in **social housing** in Sheffield than there are properties available. However, we are committed to giving you as much choice as possible about where you want to live. This Allocations Policy sets out to ensure that the scarce resource of social housing is allocated fairly, transparently and legally, balancing all the complex and competing issues. It covers:

- How you can find out about different **housing options** and schemes seeking to make **buying a property or a share in a property more affordable**.
- How the **Housing Register** will operate.
- How you will be assessed.
- How we will allocate properties that become vacant.
- How we will work with **social landlords** in the city.

## 1.1 Statement on choice

Whilst meeting our legal and strategic obligations we aim to:

- Give you as much choice as possible within the rules of this Allocations Policy, which will be consistent and transparent.
- Have a Choice Based Lettings system of choosing that is easy to understand, fair and open.
- Make it clear within the Policy that choice is constrained by the lack of available supply of council housing.
- Make it clear within the Policy that choice may be limited where there are specific needs for re-housing.
- Make it clear within the policy that choice will be limited by current and future welfare reforms which affect tenant's ability to pay their rent.

## 1.2 Aims and objectives

This Allocations Policy aims to support the values set out in our **vision** and relates these to the values as follows:

### **Fairness**

- By ensuring the system is accessible.
- That equalities are promoted in everything we do.
- That none of our practices are discriminatory.
- That we manage expectations to reflect supply and demand.

### **Spending public money wisely**

- By ensuring that this Allocations Policy and accompanying procedures make the most efficient use of available stock.

### **Long term view**

- By securing the future of council housing for the people of Sheffield ensuring council housing is sustainable and financially viable.



- By planning for the future as much as possible taking into consideration issues such as demand, changes in legislation and the state of the economy.

### **Prevention**

- By ensuring you can afford the properties you choose.
- By ensuring that we know what your support needs are in order to prevent issues such as rent arrears, homelessness, anti-social behaviour and disruption to communities as much as possible.

### **Enable individuals and communities**

- By enabling you to live, wherever possible, in the area of your choice to promote vibrant and thriving communities.

### **Aspirational**

- By ensuring that council housing is a tenure of choice, providing a springboard for aspirations, encouraging attainment and financial inclusion.

### **Working better together**

- By listening to your comments, views, suggestions and learning from complaints.

## **1.3 Information and ensuring we meet our aims and objectives**

We will regularly publish results of completed allocations providing information on the following:

- Types of property let during the period.
- The number of bids received for each property.
- The successful applicant's effective date and band.

We will monitor this allocations scheme to ensure it is meeting its aims and objectives including:

- Allocation outcomes.
- Bidding behaviour.
- Equality and diversity data.
- Housing management performance such as relet and void times.
- Nomination agreements.
- Tenancy sustainment.

## 2. HOUSING OPTIONS

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We want to give you all the information you need to make the best decisions for you and your household. When you apply to join the Sheffield City Council housing Register we will ask you to provide information about your circumstances. This is to enable us to give you the best possible advice about housing options that may be open to you to help meet your housing need.

Some of the options could be:

- **Swap your home (Mutual Exchange)** - if you are already a council or **social landlord** tenant you can consider registering to swap your home. This could give you the flexibility to move locally, regionally or nationally through Mutual Exchange.
- **Homes for sale or shared ownership schemes** - if you have the finance you could be nominated for new builds that are for sale or for a shared ownership scheme.
- **Rent from a private landlord** – if you need more choice in terms of size and location, furnished or unfurnished, this option can provide a greater choice of properties which are often immediately available.
- **Help to stay where you are** – **housing advice** could help you solve your housing difficulties by organising some **money advice** for you, advice and assistance we may be able to give you if you are in difficulties with your **mortgage** or negotiating between you and your landlord.
- **Social landlords** – in addition to joining our Housing Register, some social landlords in Sheffield have their own Housing Registers you can also apply to join. This means you will be able to access properties they don't advertise through our Choice Based Lettings scheme as well as the properties they do advertise through our Choice Based Lettings scheme.

## 3. JOINING THE HOUSING REGISTER

---

To join the Housing Register you will need to:

- **Register** and provide information about yourself and any others you wish to include on your application.
- Advise us of anyone you want to be a **joint applicant** with.
- Confirm that you and any joint applicant are **eligible**.
- Confirm that you and anyone included on your application **qualify** to join the Housing Register.
- Confirm that you are not someone that should have their **preference reduced** because of any unacceptable behaviour not serious enough to totally exclude you.
- Tell us whether you want to be **active or inactive** on the Housing Register.
- Provide us with all the **information, documents** and signatures we require to verify the information you've given us.

More information on these processes are contained in the following sections.

### 3.1 How to apply to join the Housing Register

You can **register online**, but if this is difficult for you we can **help you to register** in other ways, such as via telephone if you don't have internet access and are unable to get out. In some circumstances, we can give you **extra support** to join the Housing Register.

### 3.2 Who can apply to join the Housing Register?

You can apply to join the Housing Register if:

- You are **16** or over can apply to join the Housing Register.
- You have not applied and been **re-housed via the Housing Register** within the last two years.

You can only be registered on one application unless:

- You are 16 -17 in which case you can be registered on two Housing Register applications as:
  - A household member on an active application.
  - The main applicant accruing waiting time on the inactive register until you are 18 years old.

If you are 18 years or over you can be on one Housing Register application as either the main applicant or a household member.

### 3.3 Joint applicants

Married, civil partners, cohabiting couples, same sex couples, brothers and sisters and friends who wish to live together will normally be registered as joint applicants, providing that each partner is **eligible** and **qualifying** in their own right. Two or more adults who wish

to form a household together will normally be registered as joint applicants. Joint applications may be made by:

- Husband and wife.
- Civil partnership couples.
- Partners.
- 2 or more friends.
- Siblings.

### **3.4 People that are not eligible to join the Housing Register because of their immigration status**

Some people will not be allowed to join the Housing Register because of their immigration status and these are:

- People subject to immigration control unless they are exempt because they are already a **secure tenant** and unless they come within a class prescribed in **regulations made by the Secretary of State**.
- **Other people from abroad** who are ineligible, unless they are exempt because they are already a secure tenant. Regulations may provide for other descriptions of persons from abroad who, although not subject to immigration control, are to be treated as ineligible for an allocation of accommodation.

If you aren't eligible to join our Housing Register you will be notified of that decision in writing and we will explain the reasons why you are ineligible. If think our decision is wrong, you have the right to request **a review** of that decision in writing. If you are refused then you will not be registered and will not be given a **registration date**.

If you are told that you are not eligible to join the Housing Register, but you think that your immigration status has changed, you can make a fresh application. It will be your responsibility to show us that your immigration status has changed.

### **3.5 People that do not qualify to join the Housing Register because of their behaviour**

Some people do not qualify to join the Housing Register because of their unacceptable behaviour. This can include you, a joint applicant or a member of your household, if they were living with you at the time of the unacceptable behaviour or if they have been guilty of any unacceptable behaviour in their own right.

Classes of people who do not qualify to be on our Housing Register include:

- People with persistent arrears.
- People who have done severe and costly damage to property.
- People who have caused or been responsible for anti social behaviour
- Perpetrators of domestic violence
- People who have exhibited some types of criminal behaviour including unlawfully subletting.

- People who have given false information.

More detailed examples of behaviour that might disqualify you, a joint applicant or a member of your household from our Housing Register could include those who:

### **Persistent arrears**

- Have failed to comply with a current or past tenancy agreement to such an extent that a court granted a possession order.
- Have debt relating to a previous tenancy such as sundry debts, damage or any other identified costs and there is no repayment agreement in place.
- Have avoided repayment of and debts outstanding by failing to supply a forwarding address or contact details.
- Have failed to take steps to reduce the volume of debt outstanding when asked to do so.
- Have previously abandoned a tenancy, not due to any reasons of harassment, domestic violence or racial harassment. Have not cleared any arrears or costs resulting from the abandonment, which may include costs of lock changes, forced entry, clearance of possessions, debt recovery costs.

### **Damage to property**

- Have allowed their property condition to deteriorate significantly.
- Have allowed furniture provided by the landlord to deteriorate due to ill treatment.
- Have been guilty of causing severe and costly damage to property.
- Have carried out alterations to their property which make it structurally unsafe.

### **Anti social behaviour**

- Have been evicted for anti social behaviour, nuisance or harassment.
- Are or have been subject to a court order for anti social behaviour, nuisance or harassment; for example have a Possession Order, Injunction, Undertaking, ASBO.
- Have been prosecuted for breaching a noise abatement notice or had noise making equipment seized.
- Have lost accommodation provided through employment due to conduct making it inappropriate for them to reside there.
- Have shown violence towards council or social landlord staff, contractors, former or potential landlords including any physical, written or verbal threats or abuse and property damage or threats of property damage.
- Are in breach of another condition of their Tenancy Agreement and it is clear that possession will be awarded or has been awarded.

### **Some types of criminal behaviour**

- Have a conviction relating to use of their property for illegal or immoral purposes.
- Have convictions for arrestable offences (Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) which affect the well being of the neighbourhood in the locality of their present or previous home, or in the locality for which they are applying.
- Have been found guilty of committing certain criminal offences in or near their property and have unspent convictions where they still pose a threat to neighbours or the community.
- Have paid money to illegally obtain a tenancy.

## Giving false information

- Have obtained a tenancy by deception, for example by giving false information.
- Have knowingly or recklessly misrepresented their circumstances on a former tenancy.
- Have been convicted of housing or welfare benefits related fraud and the conviction is unspent.

When making this decision we will ensure that:

- Each application is assessed on an individual basis and any exceptional circumstances will be taken into account. You will need to make clear what your exceptional circumstances are and if you have arrears, what efforts you have made to re-pay the debt.
- Anyone who doesn't qualify to be on our Housing Register will be notified of that decision in writing. We will explain the reasons for the disqualification and what action could result in the disqualification being lifted. You have the right to request a [review](#) of that decision in writing.

If you don't qualify to join the Housing Register you can make a new application if you believe your behaviour has improved. It will be your responsibility to show that your behaviour has improved and to provide information to support this. This will not usually be considered within twelve months of being disqualified, unless you have cleared arrears in full, in which case consideration will be given to allowing you to join the Housing Register.

You can provide evidence of improvement by producing:

- A satisfactory reference from your landlord or mortgage company.
- Proof that you have been keeping to a payment agreement.
- Proof that you have cleared all your arrears and satisfied any orders.
- Confirmation from the police that they have not been called out to any further incidents.
- Confirmation that you have not been subject to further court action taken against you, such as injunctions.

If you owe any money to the Housing Service and believe you may want to apply for council or social landlord housing now or in the future, you should [contact us](#) to discuss the debt and make a repayment agreement.

## 3.6 Reduced preference due to unacceptable behaviour

Any [unacceptable behaviour](#) you, a joint applicant or any of your household members have shown will be taken into account when making offers of accommodation through this Allocations Policy. If the unacceptable behaviour is not thought serious enough to disqualify you, we will give you less preference than other households who do not have any unacceptable behaviour. This means you will be placed into the [Diminished Band](#) and/or we may by-pass you for an offer. This can happen at any point during the life of your Housing Register application. Examples of when we could do this are:

- Where you have any property related debts to the council or any other landlord/establishment, either relating to your existing property or a former property.

- You are subject to a Notice Seeking Possession or similar notice due to anti social behaviour, nuisance or harassment.
- You have had a noise abatement notice served.
- You are in more than four weeks rent arrears.
- Your behaviour has not improved – for instance if you are not adhering to a repayment agreement or there are continuing reports of anti-social behaviour. If you have rent arrears you will be given the opportunity to clear those arrears within a 24 hour period after which we will offer the property to another household.
- Another person has bid for the same property who has not exhibited any unacceptable behaviour but they have a later effective date.
- If we feel the offer will not be appropriate from a housing management point of view. This could be because there has been previous unacceptable behaviour at that particular property and we want to ensure neighbours in the area are not subjected to any further disruption or if you may pose a risk or be at risk if the offer goes ahead.

You will not have your preference reduced on the basis of rent arrears alone where we:

- Have assessed you as fleeing domestic abuse.
- Have assessed you as needing to move urgently due to suffering severe harassment (including racial, sexual or homophobic harassment, or because of your disability or age).
- Have accepted you for re-housing under the [Witness Protection Scheme](#).

Examples of how improvements in behaviour could be evidenced are:

- That you have entered into an agreement with us, are regularly repaying a debt and have been for a period of at least 13 weeks.
- That you have cleared a debt in full.
- That there have been no further reported incidents of anti-social behaviour within a twelve month period.

This is not a blanket Policy and each case will be considered on its merits. We will notify you if you have been given reduced preference and inform you in writing if there is any [action you can take to improve your position](#).

### 3.7 Qualifying applicants not able to participate in CBL

You may [qualify](#) to be on our Housing Register but not be allowed to bid (or any bid you make may be disregarded). This is because:

- You are under 18 and you will not be offered a tenancy unless:
  - You are in one of our [priority groups](#).
  - [You have a trustee](#).
  - [You have a suitable guarantor](#).
- You need [specialist support](#) and are not yet ready to sustain a tenancy. This may happen if you have been assessed as not yet being able to live independently or of sustaining a tenancy, or where you are only able to sustain a tenancy if you are provided with support but that support is not being received. The decision regarding whether or not you are ready for independent living and able to sustain a tenancy, including whether appropriate support is in place, will be assessed at the time of application and re-checked if you are offered a property.



- Your eligibility or level of priority is being re-assessed, perhaps because of a **change of circumstances**.
- We have concerns about possible **fraud** or the accuracy of the information that has been supplied in relation to your application for housing.
- You have already accepted an offer of another property or have been formally offered another property and have not yet confirmed whether or not you will accept that offer.
- You have accepted an offer of housing but the property is not yet ready for occupation.
- It has been agreed that you will receive a **'direct offer'** of accommodation.
- You will not be offered a property if you still **own your own residential property** or are buying a residential property (this includes properties that you may rent out to tenants). Proof of sale by way of exchange of contracts will be required before any offer can be made. An exception may be considered if you are an owner-occupier who has a significant health condition and your housing situation presents a significant risk to your health and/or safety or is unaffordable. In this case, proof of sale will need to be produced at a later date. If you have previously owned a property and sold it you will be asked to provide proof of the sale.

Decisions about whether or not you should be temporarily prevented from participating in this allocations scheme will be made by us. We will tell you the reasons why you are no longer able to take part, any conditions you will need to meet before you will be entitled to bid again and the date that you may request a **review** of the decision to prevent you bidding.

### 3.8 Registering interest in council housing for a later date

If you don't need council housing at the moment but want to register to build up waiting time, subject to meeting the **qualification** and **eligibility** requirements, you can choose to be 'inactive' on the Housing Register. This will mean:

- There is no requirement on you to bid for properties.
- You will still need to meet all the **registration requirements**.
- You will need to update your application on an annual basis.

If you decide to be inactive, you will not be placed into a band at the time of registration but will be placed into a band when you become active and decide to start bidding for housing. If you are subsequently awarded a priority then your **effective date** will be the date that you received that priority award.

### 3.9 Checking of housing applications

We will only accept your application once you have provided all the **original documentation** we have requested. You will also be asked to produce original documentation at the point of registration and then again at the point of offer. We will need this to verify your housing requirements and circumstances, and those of your household. You will also need to provide this if you have a change in circumstances.



For everyone included on your housing application we will need proof to substantiate the following (wherever applicable):

- Ability to manage a tenancy (landlord reference)
- Identity
- Immigration status
- Health conditions that affect the type of housing required
- Payment history
- Residency for all the addresses used during the past five years
- Any other information required to substantiate what you have told us in your application

Your **registration date** will be the date that the completed application was received with all the supporting documents and authorising signatures that we ask for.

### 3.10 Registration and effective dates

If you are **eligible** and **qualifying**, you will be accepted on to the Housing Register once the completed application form is received with all the **required information, supporting documentation** and authorising signatures. The date that this occurs is known as the 'registration date'.

If you wish to actively bid for properties straight away, you will be **assessed** and your application will be placed into a band. The date that you are placed into a band is called the 'effective date'. The effective date is important as it is the date which you will be ranked by within your band. The registration date will be used to decide between any **tied positions** (with an exception for **demolition** cases which follow different rules).

The registration and effective dates can be the same (usually when you first apply to join the Housing Register) but the effective date may change if your **circumstances change** and you move bands.

If you opt to be on the inactive register your effective date will be the same as your registration date. Upon becoming active on the Housing Register you will automatically be placed into the General Needs Band and your effective date will be the same as your registration date. If, upon activation of your registration you need to request a priority assessment and are awarded a priority, your effective date will be the date on which you were awarded the priority.

### 3.11 Local connection to Sheffield

If you don't have a local connection to Sheffield you can still apply to join the Housing Register but you will automatically be placed into the **Diminished Band**. There is an exception to this where we have accepted a full homeless duty and you are not safe anywhere else.

To demonstrate a **local connection to Sheffield** you will have to show proof that you meet at least one of the following criteria:

- **Normally resident**
- Employment

- Family association
- Special circumstances

### 3.12 Declaration and consent required

When you apply to join the Housing Register you will be asked to sign a declaration to confirm that:

- The information you have provided is complete, **true** and accurate.
- You will inform us immediately of any **change in your circumstances**.
- You understand that the information you have provided will be **shared** with partner organisations (such as **social landlords**) and other relevant organisations, in order to complete or verify your application, or **prevent fraud or protect public funds**.
- You consent to us making enquiries of any relevant persons (including credit checking/referencing companies) to confirm that the information on your application form is correct. Or to add to the information given, where this is necessary, to complete an **assessment of need** or to consider **suitability for housing**.

### 3.13 Confidentiality and sharing information

We will treat the information you provide as confidential. It will only be available to those directly involved in re-housing processes. This includes council and social landlord staff participating in our Choice Based Lettings scheme. Your details are also subject to the controls of the Data Protection Act regarding unauthorised disclosure.

In exceptional circumstances information may be shared about you and your history even if your consent has not been obtained. These circumstances include:

- Where there is a serious threat to other members of the public, staff or contractors.
- Where information is relevant to the management or support duties of the proposed landlord or support organisation, to ensure your health and safety, or that of a member of your household, or a member of staff.
- Where there are Safeguarding issues.

### 3.14 Fraud and withholding information

It is an offence for you to knowingly or recklessly make a statement that is false **in** a material particular, or to deliberately withhold information which the council reasonably requires you to give.

The Council may prosecute anyone who deliberately misrepresents their circumstances or attempts to deceive or defraud the council in order to secure the tenancy of a council or **social landlord** property to which they are not entitled. If you are found guilty of this offence you may be fined.

Whether or not we prosecute you, your Housing Register application may be immediately cancelled and you may be deemed to be a **non-qualifying person**. If we have given you a tenancy because of false information provided on your application we can take legal action

to recover possession of the property. Where there are less serious omissions, alternative penalties may be applied such as placing you into the **Diminished Band** or loss of priority.

### 3.15 Members of the council, staff and relatives

If you are a Member of the council, Sheffield City Council staff or one of their relatives you must make this clear on your application. You must also complete and return a **declaration of interest**. Any offer of accommodation must be approved by a senior manager who has no interest in your case.

### 3.16 Councillors

Elected Councillors cannot be involved in assessing housing applications or the allocation of housing. However, this does not prevent them from seeking or providing information on behalf of their constituents, or from being involved in developing and approving future Policy.

### 3.17 Social landlords

We work in partnership with social landlords in the city. When you join our register you will be able to bid and be nominated for some social landlord properties in the city.

Social landlords' allocations policies may differ from this Allocations Policy so if you are nominated by us, the social landlord will make the final decision about whom they offer their properties to. In addition to this, many **social landlords** keep their own registers and you can **apply to join** these individually.

### 3.18 Keeping the Housing Register up to date

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This section gives information on what you need to do to keep your application up to date and remain registered.

### 3.19 Changes in your circumstances

You must let us know if your circumstances change (or those of any of your household members). This could include:

- A change in the health of a household member that affects their housing need.
- A change of address.
- Any acquisition or inheritance of property.
- Arrears.
- Convictions.
- Someone joining or leaving your household.
- The birth of a child.
- Or anything else relevant to your housing situation.

Following a **change of circumstances**, your application will be re-assessed, which will not change the original **registration date** but might change the **effective date**, if you are moved into a different band.

Following re-assessment one of the following may happen:

- You may gain greater priority and be placed into a higher band.
- You may lose priority or have your priority reduced and be placed into a lower band.
- You may remain in the same band.
- You may no longer qualify for our Housing Register.

If you provide information which places you in a higher band your **'effective date'** in the new band will be the date on which you were assessed and placed in that band. If you provide information which places you in a lower priority band you will retain your effective date. If the information provided places you from a priority band into the General Needs Band, your original effective date can be re-instated if that is more advantageous for you.  
 If you stay in the same band your effective date will not change even if new information has been assessed.

## 3.20 Renewing your housing application

Whether you are an active or inactive applicant you will be responsible for updating your registration online annually. This is to confirm that you still want to be registered and what your current circumstances are. You will need to do this on or around the anniversary date that your housing application was registered whether or not we have reminded you to do so. If you don't do this your application will be removed from the Housing Register.

If we are aware that you have any vulnerabilities, extra effort will be made to contact you and assist you to update your application. However, if you fail to respond your application will be cancelled.

## 3.21 Cancelling housing applications

A housing application will be cancelled and removed from the register when:

- You request it.
- You become ineligible or do not qualify for housing.
- You have been re-housed into a council or social landlord property.
- You are a council tenant who completes the purchase of your property through the **Right To Buy**.
- You fail to update your application annually.
- You have given false information on your application or withheld relevant information.
- You are in the Diminished Band and refuse three reasonable offers of accommodation.
- You move home and fail to provide us with a contact address.
- You fail to respond to a request for further information.
- You are registered on more than one application (exceptions apply).

If your registration has been cancelled and you want to re-join the Housing Register, you will receive a new **effective date**. If you are re-housed via the Housing Register into a

council or **social landlord** tenancy you will not be able to re-register for two years unless there has been a fundamental change in your circumstances that means your current housing is unsuitable for your needs.

In exceptional circumstances we may reinstate a cancelled application if you request it within three months of the cancellation.

If we cancel your Housing Register application we will contact you to tell you why and inform you of conditions that you need to meet before you will be entitled to bid again. You have a right to request a **review** of this decision and if upheld this decision will not normally be reviewed within the first 12 months of being made.

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## 4. HOW WE DECIDE BETWEEN HOUSING NEEDS

If you have submitted a **completed application**, which fulfils all the **registration requirements**, we will check if you are **eligible** and **qualify** to be on the Housing Register. Following acceptance that you are eligible and qualifying, if you wish to actively participate in looking for a home, we will place you into the **General Needs Band** unless:

- You have requested an **assessment for priority** and provide information to support a priority award.
- You don't fit the criteria to be placed into the General Needs Band and are placed into the **Diminished Band**.

### 4.1 Overview of the bands

The table below gives an overview of the bands showing what is included at each level. These are divided into two sections to show the three priority bands on one side and the General Needs Band on the other. Some properties are **set aside** for the priority bands and some solely for the General Needs Band. After **properties have been offered** to either the priority bands and/or the General Needs Band they will go on to be offered to the Diminished Band, which sits below all the bands and so for that reason goes right across both sections.

<b>Critical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Welfare/hardship/support needs</li> <li>• Statutory and legal duties</li> <li>• Demolition</li> </ul>	<b>General Needs</b>
<b>Urgent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Welfare/hardship/support needs</li> <li>• Statutory homelessness</li> <li>• Demolition</li> <li>• Armed Forces</li> <li>• Under occupation and release of an adapted property</li> <li>• Foster carers and adoptive parents</li> </ul>	
<b>Moderate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welfare/hardship/support needs</li> <li>• Non statutory homelessness</li> <li>• Demolition</li> <li>• Prisoners who gave up tenancies by agreement with us</li> </ul>	
<b>General Needs</b>		
<b>Diminished</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No local connection</li> <li>• Residential property owners</li> <li>• Refusal of offers</li> <li>• Unacceptable behaviour (not serious enough to disqualify you)</li> </ul>	

### 4.2 The bands described



The sections below are a summary of how your circumstances will place you into a band. As mentioned previously, our Allocations Policy needs to be legally compliant and therefore we recognise the priority groups that must be afforded 'reasonable preference' as set out in legislation, which are:

- (a) People who are **homeless**.
- (b) People who are owed a **full housing duty** by any local authority.
- (c) People living in **insanitary** or **overcrowded** housing or otherwise living in **unsatisfactory** housing conditions.
- (d) People who need to move on **health** or **welfare grounds**, including grounds **relating to a disability**.
- (e) People who need to move to a **particular locality** in the district of the local authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others.

We also have the power to include additional priorities, which are:

- People who need to move because their council property is being **demolished**.
- People in the **forces** who need housing upon being honourably discharged or their spouses and partners, on death of their spouse or partner, need housing.
- People **under occupying** social housing accommodation and wishing to move to a smaller property.
- People who are **approved foster carers or adoptive parents** who Social Services have confirmed need larger accommodation.
- People who were council tenants that **served a prison sentence** and by agreement, handed back their property whilst they served that sentence to avoid accruing arrears.

If you have a priority, your case will be graded according to how critical your situation is. There are three priority bands Critical, Urgent and Moderate. Those without a priority will go into the General Needs Band, unless there is no local connection, they are owner occupiers who have not yet sold their property, have refused offers of accommodation or there is unacceptable behaviour, which will place them into the **Diminished Band**. The Diminished Band is for people we have accepted onto our Housing Register, but who have the lowest likelihood of being re-housed. This is because they will only be considered for housing after people in the other bands have been considered first. The sections below explain in more detail what might affect the priority your case is given.

## 4.3 Critical - Band A

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This band gives priority to the most critical cases, examples of which are below:

### 4.4 Health

Critical health need includes the following emergencies:

- You are in hospital, have no suitable housing to be discharged to, and as a result cannot be discharged without a high risk to your health and/or safety.
- You are, or were previously, in the Armed or Reserve Forces and are a person who has sustained serious injury, health condition or disability during service. Your current property doesn't meet your needs so returning home would pose a high risk.

This list is not exhaustive. This priority will only be awarded where any accommodation you would usually return or be discharged to would be highly unsuitable to your health

needs and would seriously compromise your health and wellbeing. An offer of accommodation will not be made if it does not meet the specific housing needs identified. You may be offered accommodation that can be adapted to meet your health needs.

## 4.5 Welfare, hardship and support needs

Welfare, hardship and support needs include the following examples of if you are:

- A council tenant who we have agreed can have an emergency transfer because you are at a high risk to your life and limb. This includes an emergency such as fire, flood etc., where you would not be able to return home at a later date because your home is uninhabitable.
- Living in a private sector property where there is one or more **category one hazard** or the equivalent in a combination of other hazards (not including overcrowding), and/or where we have served an **Emergency Prohibition Order**. This would affect the occupation of the whole house. Alternatively where one could notionally be served because the conditions present a risk of serious harm to the health and safety of anyone living in that property.
- A household who need to move immediately because there are critical Safeguarding circumstances involving children or vulnerable adults. The Safeguarding Case Conference has identified an urgent move is required and included this in the Safeguarding Plan.

## 4.6 Statutory, legal or urgent duties not covered by any other priority

If you are in a situation where we need to prioritise housing for your particular household and it is necessary to fulfil a critical statutory or legal duty not covered by any other priority within this Allocations Policy.

## 4.7 Demolition

If you have a critical need to be moved because you are amongst the last still in occupation of a property in a Sheffield City Council demolition programme phase. Your property is going to be demolished imminently and is dangerous.

## 4.8 Urgent - Band B

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This band gives priority to the most urgent cases, examples of which are shown below:

## 4.9 Health

If you have a significant health condition and your housing situation presents a significant risk to your health and/or safety. Examples may include:

- You require extensive disabled facilities that can be provided more appropriately in **alternative accommodation**.



- The design of your current home means you cannot reach essential facilities within your property without significant difficulty or help and a move to a different type of property would resolve these difficulties or alleviate them significantly.
- The design of your current home means you cannot get into or out of your home without significant difficulty or help and a move to a different type of property would resolve these difficulties or alleviate them significantly.
- You have been discharged into the care of your family but this accommodation is unsuitable for your needs.
- You have significant mental health or other health problems that are being caused or made worse by your housing situation and this could be resolved by urgent re-housing.
- You have a significant learning disability and your housing situation is unsuitable for your needs.

This priority will only be awarded where your health condition is being made worse by your housing situation. An offer of accommodation will not be made if it does not meet the specific housing needs identified. Priority will not be awarded where health problems are expected to be short-term.

## 4.10 Welfare, hardship and support needs

If you meet any of the following:

- You or any member of your household need to move due to domestic abuse, violence or harassment, including children at risk, or other high risk to health and safety. This could include circumstances where:
  - You have been treated violently or threatened with violence by your partner or someone else who lives with you and those threats are likely to be carried out.
  - You have been treated violently or threatened with violence at or near your property by a former partner who does not live with you at the property and those threats are likely to be carried out.
  - There is a threat of actual bodily harm or a threat to your physical safety which is likely to be carried out. Other measures such as provision of CCTV, use of professional witnesses or emergency injunctions have failed and it is no longer an option to support you in your home.
  - You have suffered severe mental trauma resulting from extreme harassment because of your race, sex, sexuality, mental health, physical disability, learning disability, religion, and health such as HIV or Aids (this list is not exhaustive). Other measures such as provision of CCTV, use of professional witnesses or emergency injunctions have failed and it is no longer an option to support you in your home.
  - We are pursuing court action to evict a perpetrator of anti-social behaviour and it is no longer reasonable for you to remain in your home. Measures to support you to remain in your home have been or are likely to prove ineffective. If court action is taken to evict the perpetrator, this will be a temporary move as you must return to your permanent home once the court action is complete. If you refuse to do so we can take legal action to repossess the temporary home.

- You live in unsatisfactory housing conditions in the private sector where there is one or more **category one hazard** or the equivalent in a combination of other hazards (excluding overcrowding), which cannot be easily remedied or made suitable for you.
- You have been placed by Social Services outside the city of Sheffield and need to return to Sheffield urgently.
- You are **statutorily overcrowded**. When assessing overcrowding we will only take into account those people who are part of your permanent household. Priority will not be given for overcrowding if the overcrowding is the result of someone moving into your household. The overcrowding assessment is in line with statutory overcrowding legislation.

Where you are not the main person **with parental responsibility** for the children named in your housing application, the children will not be taken into account in the assessment of overcrowding. Only in exceptional circumstances would it be reasonable to expect children who had a home with one parent to be provided with another.

If you are statutorily overcrowded but the overcrowding can be resolved by your household, or a household within your household moving out to form a separate household. We may award a priority for a move to the household within the household who are not the tenants. If you are the tenant you are expected to resolve your housing need by bidding for properties from the General Needs Band.

- You are ready to move on from **supported accommodation** to **independent settled accommodation** on the recommendation of your support worker. Ongoing support needs have been assessed and where appropriate a support plan is in place.
- You are a care leaver who is ready to move on from care, are ready for independent living, are capable of holding a tenancy and if under 18 have a rent guarantee from Social Services which lasts until you are 18. This is awarded in accordance with **protocols** between Housing and Social Services.

## 4.11 Statutory homeless

You are statutorily homeless and following a full assessment we have accepted a full duty to house you because you are a person who is:

- Homeless.
- Eligible.
- Has a priority need.
- Not intentionally homeless.
- Has a local connection to Sheffield (**exceptions apply**).

## 4.12 Demolition

You are resident in a property in Sheffield City Council demolition programme phase. Your property is scheduled for demolition and demolition is being delayed by re-housing or where the household is especially vulnerable.

## 4.13 Armed forces

If you have served in the British Armed Forces and:

- You have been honourably discharged.
- Your discharge date is within 6 months.
- You would have no suitable accommodation upon discharge.

Alternatively, if you are the bereaved spouse or civil partner of a member of the Armed Forces, leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of your spouse or partner and you have no suitable accommodation to move to.

## 4.14 Under occupation and release of an adapted property

If you would like to down-size it must be to a property you are eligible for and this is set out in the **bedroom eligibility** criteria section of this Allocations Policy. Any offer via this priority will usually only be for the same property type you are giving up, unless you are giving up a house, in which case you can choose from any available property type you qualify for.

This priority will be awarded in the following circumstances:

- You are a Sheffield City Council or social landlord tenant who:
  - Is under occupying a property.
  - Is willing to downsize to a property with fewer bedrooms.
  - Has the agreement of your landlord (where the property is not owned by the council) that the property will be released to re-house a household from the Housing Register.
- You are a Sheffield City Council or **social landlord** tenant who:
  - Is occupying a specially adapted property.
  - Does not require these adaptations.
  - Is willing to transfer to a property that is more appropriate for your needs.
  - Has the agreement of your landlord (where the property is not owned by the council) that the property will be released to re-house a household from the Housing Register.
- You have **succeeded** to a council property but are under occupying.
- You are not entitled to succeed but where we would agree to grant you the tenancy but you are under occupying your present accommodation or occupying a specially-adapted property, in which case we may exercise our discretion to move you to somewhere smaller and/or more appropriate for your needs.
- You applied and met the criteria to be **assigned** a council tenancy that you are under occupying or you are occupying a specially adapted property and we require you to move to somewhere smaller and/or more appropriate to your needs.

## 4.15 Foster carers and adoptive parents

If you are a council approved **foster carer** or **adoptive parent** and Social Services have confirmed that larger or more appropriate accommodation is required to enable you to

either foster or adopt. This may be larger accommodation than would normally be allowed.

## 4.16 Moderate - Band C

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This band gives priority to cases that merit some extra consideration but your need to move is not as great as those in the Critical or Urgent Band. Examples of cases of concern are as follows below:

### 4.17 Welfare, hardship and support needs

You need to move to a particular area within the Sheffield City Council boundary, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to you or others. This might be the case where:

- You or someone in your household is studying at a **specialist school** in the area.
- You need to be able to access support networks in the area because it is important to be close to people who can support you. This could be for example if you are leaving care or have learning disabilities and need to live independently.
- You need to move to be nearer to family or friends in order to give or receive a significant level of practical and/or emotional support to meet a physical or mental health need. There must be evidence that a high level of support is needed and that without that support, you or the person you are supporting, would have significant problems in their daily lives. If you are the person giving the support you will need to provide evidence that you are providing a significant level of support or will give a significant level of support if one of the parties moved nearer. You will also need to show how a move will greatly cut or ease the travelling time needed to give or receive support. Priority will be awarded to the person who is most easily able to move.
- Following an affordability assessment by our officers it has been identified that, through no fault of your own, your property is no longer affordable.
- You are a council tenant aged 60 or over who currently live in a block of properties designated for people over 60 and the block is re-designated with no age restriction. The priority can only be used to access a property that is designated for people who are over 60 and **bedroom eligibility** will be in line with that set out in this Allocations Policy.

### 4.18 Non statutory homeless

Following a homeless assessment you will be awarded this priority if you are found to be:

- Homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Eligible.
- Have no priority need.
- Or are in priority need but intentionally homeless and the reasons are not property related debt or anti-social behaviour.

### 4.19 Demolition

If you have been notified that your property comes within a Sheffield City Council demolition programme that has been initiated and your phase has been declared.

## 4.20 Prisoners

If you are in prison, due to be released within six months and:

- By agreement with us, you gave up a property rather than built up rent arrears when you went into prison and
- You do not have any property related convictions or anti-social behaviour which is property related.

## 4.21 General Needs - Band D

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This band is for people that would like to move but who don't have an identified **priority**. In this band the time you have been waiting is important. Properties advertised to this band will usually be allocated to the person with the longest waiting time that expresses an interest by placing a bid. You can be in this band if:

- You have registered and been accepted as a General Needs Band applicant.
- You are not subject to **criteria** that would place you in the **Diminished Band**.
- You do not have an identified **priority**.
- You had a priority but refused an offer and the priority was removed.
- You had a priority but failed to actively bid for properties.
- You are a residential property owner who has produced proof that you have sold your property and can now move from the Diminished Band into the General Needs Band.

## 4.22 Diminished - Band E

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You will be in this band if you have been accepted onto the Housing Register, assessed and given **reduced preference** as a result of one of the following reasons:

- You come from outside the city of Sheffield and have no local connection.
- You are a residential property owner who has not yet sold your property and you do not have any mobility, support, suitability or affordability issues.
- You have exhibited unacceptable behaviour, such as rent arrears or anti-social behaviour but this is not serious enough to **disqualify** you totally from our Housing Register.
- You have been assessed as intentionally homeless and the reasons are property related debt or anti-social behaviour.

You **can improve your opportunity** of being re-housed in the following ways:

- By proving a **local connection** to Sheffield.
- By **producing proof** that you have sold your property.
- By **providing** proof that your behaviour has changed for the better.

Please be aware that if your behaviour deteriorates following assessment you can still be placed into the Diminished Band at any point.

## 4.23 Other considerations and decisions

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### 4.24 Local Lettings Policies

In certain circumstances we may develop a **Local Lettings Policy**. These can help us to address any issues or challenges within a neighbourhood and help to ensure that communities are mixed and sustainable. Local Lettings Policies can be used to help achieve a variety of housing management or Policy objectives.

In any area where a Local Lettings Policy is in place, offer preference may be given to particular groups who may be outside of the priority categories. Examples of these could include allocating to the following groups:

- Tenants in sheltered accommodation wishing to transfer within a scheme.
- Applicants with a demolition priority wishing to remain in the same area.
- Properties which are age restricted to people over 60.

Local Lettings Policies will be evidence-based and be approved at the appropriate level for particular property descriptions in defined geographic areas. They will be formulated following consultation and will be reviewed annually. All properties that are subject to a Local Lettings Policy will be clearly labelled as such when they are advertised through the Choice Based Lettings scheme. This process would be agreed by a Cabinet Member Decision.

### 4.25 How we decide which band a property will be advertised to

A proportion of the properties advertised will give preference to households with **priority** and a proportion will give preference to households with general needs. Properties selected for the quota will be taken from each type and size of property on each estate, as and when they become available. To enable us to meet our statutory duties and balance priorities this quota may vary over time. Four bedroom, adapted and other properties set aside for people with disabilities are not included in this quota.

The director responsible for housing within the council will determine the exact proportions and any changes to the quota will be openly advertised on our website. The quota will be reviewed on at least an annual basis.

### 4.26 Deliberately worsening your circumstances

We will consider whether you have deliberately made your housing situation worse, either by your own action or inaction, to increase your housing need and consequently improve your chances of re-housing through the Housing Register.

If we decide that you have made your housing situation worse, you will remain in the band that reflected your housing need before the deliberate action (or inaction) that made your situation worse.

You have the right to request a **review** of this decision and if upheld this decision will not normally be reviewed within the first 12 months of being made. If for any reason the



restriction is removed, you will be placed in the band that reflects your current circumstances and your 'effective date' will be the date that the application was moved to the new band.

## 4.27 Discretionary Decisions

If an exceptional case arises that is not covered by the sections contained within this Allocations Policy, we may use our discretion to waive the Allocations Policy. Decisions will be taken by managers within Sheffield City Council and these are the definitions:

- To make an offer to an applicant other than the one whose bid is first.
- Not to make an offer to you if there are special circumstances.
- To make decisions on re-housing and registrations if your circumstances are not covered by this Allocations Policy.
- To waive the Allocations Policy in exceptional circumstances.
- To refuse or restrict a registration because of anti-social behaviour or the condition of the tenancy.
- To waive debt requirements in exceptional circumstances.

## 4.28 Review of discretionary decisions

There are two types of discretionary decisions:

- Priority awards.
- Discretion to waive the Allocations Policy.

If you are not satisfied with a discretionary decision you have the right to request a review of this decision. You must request a review within 21 days of notification of the original decision. A manager will then review the decision and will write to you with the review decision. Where the review concerns mobility, support or other health priority the manager will consult a health professional. There is no further right to an internal review.

## 4.29 The statutory right of review

You have a statutory right to request a review of a decision:

- That you are not eligible to join the Housing Register.
- That you do not qualify to join the Housing Register.
- About the facts of your case which are, or have been, taken into account in considering whether to make you an offer of accommodation.

You must request a review within 21 days of notification of the original decision. A senior officer will then review the decision and will write to you with the review decision. There is no further right to an internal review.

## 4.30 How we monitor applicants in each band

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### 4.31 Critical - Band A

If you are awarded a priority within the **Critical Band** your bidding will be monitored, at least on a weekly basis, to ensure that you are bidding consistently and realistically. This is because the urgency of your need is such that you must be re-housed as quickly as possible. We may place bids on your behalf at any point.

You will receive one offer of suitable accommodation to satisfy your housing need and that can be via a bid placed by you or us manually or via the system. If you refuse this offer of accommodation you will be placed into the Urgent Band. No re-assessment of your case will be carried out within 12 months of any offer being made, unless there is a significant change in your circumstances, in which case your application will be re-assessed, based on the fresh information provided.

### **4.32 Urgent - Band B**

If you are awarded priority within the Urgent Band, your bidding will be monitored and reviewed, at least on a monthly basis, with the exception of **under-occupiers**, who will be reviewed at least on a quarterly basis. This is to check whether you are bidding consistently and realistically and we may place bids on your behalf at any point.

You will receive one offer of suitable accommodation to satisfy your housing need or in discharge of our duty and that can be via a bid placed by you or us manually or via the system. Any offer of suitable accommodation made may mean that, if you are homeless, our homelessness duty comes to an end. Following a suitable offer being made your priority will be removed. This will result in you being placed in the General Needs Band whereby you may retain your original effective date, issued to you before you were given a priority, if this date would be more advantageous for you. No re-assessment of your case will be carried out within 12 months of any offer being made, unless there is a significant change in your circumstances, in which case your application will be re-assessed based on the fresh information provided.

### **4.33 Moderate Band C**

Your bidding will be monitored and reviewed, at least on a quarterly basis, to check whether you are bidding consistently and realistically and we may place bids on your behalf at any point.

You will receive one offer to satisfy your housing need and that could be via a bid placed by you or us manually or via the system. If you refuse this offer of suitable accommodation your priority will be removed. You will then be placed into the General Needs Band whereby you may retain your original effective date, issued to you before you were given a priority, if this date would be more advantageous for you. No re-assessment of your case will be carried out within 12 months of any offer being made, unless there is a significant change in your circumstances, in which case your application will be re-assessed based on the fresh information provided.

### **4.34 General Needs Band D**

If you are in the General Needs Band and have not placed a bid within a six month period you will automatically be moved into the inactive register.

### **4.35 Diminished Band**



If you are in the Diminished Band and have not placed a bid within a six month period you will automatically be moved into the inactive section.

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## 5. LOOKING FOR A PROPERTY

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This section explains:

- How you can find out about **available properties**.
- **How bids** can be placed to register interest in available properties.
- How many **bedrooms** you are likely to be able to bid for.
- How the **amount of bedrooms** you can bid for might be affected.

### 5.1 Advertising available properties

This Allocations Policy offers properties through a **Choice Based Lettings** system. Properties offered through our Choice Based Lettings scheme will be advertised on the **Sheffield Property Shop website**. For those that don't have internet access or find it difficult to use the internet we can provide the information in other forms or offer support. In exceptional cases a property may be **excluded from the Choice Based Lettings scheme**. This could be where it is withdrawn after being advertised for use as emergency re-housing or because it is being let on a first come first served basis.

Properties that are more suitable for people with disabilities will be advertised to make that clear and we will make every effort to let those properties to people that need those specific adaptations.

**Social landlords** may advertise some or all of their properties through our Choice Based Lettings scheme and may use their own allocations policy to decide which applicant to offer the property to. They may decide that a property will be prioritised for their own existing tenants or for other specified criteria. This information will be included on the property advertisement.

Advertisements will include:

- A description of the property.
- Any group it will be prioritised for.
- Any special facilities or adaptations that we are aware of.
- Any properties advertised to people of a **minimum age**.
- Any properties subject to a **Local Lettings Policy**.
- **Eligibility for the property**.
- **Landlord details**.
- Number of bedrooms
- The rental amount.

Where there are no bids from eligible applicants a property could be:

- Re-advertised.
- Let on a first come first served basis.
- Used as a direct let.
- Given as a final offer in discharge of our housing duty.

In these instances the criteria may be revised or relaxed. Properties let on a first come first served basis will not necessarily be advertised for a full cycle or advertised at all. **If**

we know from experience that a property is a low demand type because a similar property has been advertised recently, we may relax the criteria or advertise on a first come first served basis with immediate effect.

## 5.2 Bidding for a property

To be offered an available property you will need to place your bid by the publicised deadline and meet the criteria specified on the advert. You will be able to make up to three bids during each advertising cycle. The cycle is most likely to be weekly. These may be subject to change and will be publicised. Some immediately available properties, such as **first come first served** properties, will be advertised more frequently.

Bids can be made:

- By telephone.
- Through the website.
- In person at designated local offices.
- By mobile phone.
- Through DigiTV.
- By an advocate who can place a bid for you using any of these methods.
- By council staff, support agencies and others who may also offer guidance and support.

If you place more than one bid within the cycle you will be required to list the properties in order of preference. This means if you rank top for more than one of the properties you have bid for we will know which property you prefer to be offered.

## 5.3 Assisted and auto-bidding

We will arrange for bids to be placed on your behalf in the following circumstances:

- You are in housing need and not bidding.
- You are in housing need and not bidding realistically.
- You are vulnerable and may need support with bidding.

Unrealistic bidding is where you bid for properties you have little or no chance of being offered. Wherever possible, staff will discuss the issue with you and give advice about what types of property would be realistic. Staff will also explain what the consequences of continuing to bid unrealistically are, or of failing to bid at all and if this behaviour continues will place bids on your behalf.

If you are a priority applicant any successful bid placed by staff or via the system is valid and will result in you being offered the tenancy of that accommodation. Any offer in these circumstances will be your one and only offer of suitable accommodation and will result in the **loss of your priority**.

If we are bidding on your behalf and you are not subject to one offer of suitable accommodation you may remove a staff or auto-bid **before the close of the cycle** with no consequences.

## 5.4 Bedroom eligibility

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### 5.5 Guidance on bedroom entitlement

The size of property you will be eligible for depends upon the size and makeup of your household. We allow a bedroom for each of the following occupants:

- Each married, co-habiting couple or single parent.
- For each pair of children who are under 10 years of age.
- For each pair of children aged 10 to 15 years of age of the same sex.
- For any other child under 16 years of age.
- For any other person aged 16 or over.

We may relax the criteria taking into consideration **individual needs**, availability of housing stock and **hard to let properties**. This could be by way of **first come first served** or by allowing an extra room for a **registered carer**.

You can't bid for properties that are larger than you need. If you need three bedrooms or more, you may bid for properties that have one bedroom less than you need.

In exceptional circumstances (if you have a very large family that may have little or no prospect of finding a property that is large enough for your needs), we may permit bids for properties that are smaller than you need. Before this can happen you must obtain our permission and any allocation must not make you statutorily overcrowded.

If you choose to accept an offer of accommodation that has fewer bedrooms than you need and then re-apply to join our Housing Register, you will not be awarded any priority for overcrowding, unless your circumstances have changed significantly since you accepted the tenancy of that existing property.

Please note that **social landlords** have their own criteria for occupancy.

### 5.6 Shared parental responsibility

If you have a shared residence order or staying access for children, you are not automatically entitled to bedrooms for your children. As long as a child has one home of an adequate size, we will not provide a second home for children.

In determining the size of accommodation required for a household, children from current or former relationships will only be counted as part of the household where we determine you have the main responsibility for the children and where the children will have their main home. In determining this we will take into consideration which parent has adequate housing where your child/children can reside.

### 5.7 Children who are looked after or in foster care

This applies if your children are in foster care or looked after. When assessing bedroom entitlement we will only take into account children who are currently in foster care or being looked after by the council if Social Services confirm that the children will be returned to you when you are re-housed in accommodation of a suitable size.

## 5.8 Applicants who are fostering or adopting

When assessing bedroom entitlement we will take into account the Social Services assessment of the requirements of approved foster carers and adopters. This will not however result in any priority being given for overcrowding.

## 5.9 Additional bedrooms for health and/or social care needs

In exceptional circumstances you can apply for an extra bedroom due to your health and/or social care needs. Your circumstances will be considered and evidence supporting the need for an extra room will be required in the following circumstances:

- Where a substantial amount of specialist medical equipment has been installed in the property.
- You state that you need an extra room for a carer.

We will carry out an assessment of your needs and decide whether or not an extra room is required. Due to the high demand for housing, such requests are only likely to be agreed in exceptional circumstances.

We will need to be satisfied that there is a need for a live-in carer who is not cohabiting with another member of the household. To qualify for an additional bedroom for a carer, you must demonstrate that this care is provided by someone who would not otherwise live with you and that if they are a relative or friend, they are in receipt of a Carer's Allowance.

## 6. OFFERS OF ACCOMMODATION

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### 6.1 How bids are ranked

#### Priority

Properties advertised giving preference to **households with priority** will rank bids in the following order:

- **Critical Band** applicants first
- **Urgent Band** applicants second
- **Moderate Band** applicants third
- **General Needs Band** applicants fourth
- **Diminished Band** applicants fifth

Applicants within each of these bands will be ranked according to their **effective date**, which means the person with the earliest date will be ranked first within each band. The registration date will be used to decide between any **tied positions** except where demolition rules apply. Please note that an applicant's effective date can be disregarded for reasons of **unacceptable behaviour** not serious enough to totally exclude them.

#### General Needs

Properties advertised giving preference to General Needs Band applicants will rank in **effective date** order. This includes priority applicants. The registration date will be used to decide between any tied positions. Please note that an applicant's effective date can be disregarded for reasons of unacceptable behaviour not serious enough to totally exclude them.

#### Diminished

Applicants in the Diminished Band will be ranked according to their effect date as follows:

- No local connection.
- Owner occupiers.
- Refusals.
- Unacceptable behaviour.

The registration date will be used to decide between any tied positions. Please note that an applicant's effective date can be disregarded for reasons of unacceptable behaviour not serious enough to totally exclude them.

### 6.2 Offers

Following the close of the bidding cycle the property will **usually be offered** to the qualifying applicant who is ranked highest. They will be contacted by the relevant landlord to receive the offer of the property. This will be subject to checks and viewing the property, either individually or collectively. The applicant will have to make up their mind, within a reasonable period of time, as to whether or not to accept the offer. When an applicant

refuses a property after viewing it, the applicant who is ranked next will be offered the tenancy.

## 6.3 Offer bypass reasons

In certain circumstances the applicant ranked first will not be offered the property. The kind of circumstances where this might happen are:

- Where you are a **residential property owner** that has not yet sold your property.
- Where you are **under 18 years of age** are not in one of our **priority groups**, do not have a **trustee and guarantor**.
- Where you have any **unacceptable behaviour** not serious enough to have excluded you totally from our Housing Register.
- Where an adapted property will be used to enable an applicant who needs those adaptations to receive the offer.
- If there are concerns about the risks you pose or which are posed to you in a specific location or property type.

This list is not exhaustive.

## 6.4 Direct lets

In exceptional circumstances we may make you a direct offer of accommodation. These include:

- Where a property is specially adapted, or can be adapted for you or a family member requiring adaptations.
- Where delay in providing you with suitable accommodation is likely to prove costly.
- Where critical re-housing in a specific location is required.
- Where a specific property would meet your very specific needs.

To ensure transparency we will report that the property has been used as a 'direct let'.

## 6.5 Offers subject to final checks

Before offering you a tenancy we will verify the information you supplied on your housing application. This will involve checking that you are in the appropriate band, have the correct effective date, are eligible for the size and type of property available and meet any other specified criteria.

If you fail checks, you will not be offered the tenancy of the accommodation. If successful, you will receive a formal offer.

## 6.6 Accepting an offer of accommodation



We will explain the action you must take to accept the offer of accommodation, including signing the tenancy agreement and collecting the keys. Once you have signed a tenancy agreement you become the tenant of that property. If you sign the tenancy agreement and then reject the property this does not count as a refusal of an offer because at this stage you are the tenant. Once you have signed the tenancy agreement your registration will be cancelled and you will not be entitled to reapply to re-join the Housing Register for a period of two years, unless there has been a significant change in your circumstances which means your housing is no longer suitable for you.

## 6.7 Refusing an offer of accommodation

When you are offered a property (are not subject to **bids made on your behalf**) and refuse the offer, the next ranking applicant will be offered the property.

If you are in the **Critical Band** you will have one suitable offer of accommodation, which if refused will place you into the **Urgent Band**. If you are in the **Urgent or Moderate Bands** you will have one suitable offer of accommodation, which if refused will place you into the **General Needs Band** for 12 months, after which time you can apply to be re-assessed (any change of circumstance during that period will be considered afresh). This is also the case if you fail to attend a viewing or to respond to an offer of accommodation within the timescales specified and do not have a good reason for this failure. You will be considered to have refused that offer of accommodation. In these circumstances, if you are a priority applicant, no further offers of accommodation will be made.

If you are offered a '**direct let**' (based on an individual assessment of your needs) we will consider any reasons for refusing the offer and decide whether or not it was reasonable for you to refuse the offer. If we decide that it was reasonable for you to refuse, another property will be offered. If it was unreasonable for you to refuse the offer, we will not make any further 'direct let' offers and any priority will be reduced as **explained previously**.

If you are in the **General Needs Band** and you refuse three reasonable offers of accommodation within a 12 month period, you may be placed in the **Diminished Band** for 12 months (any change of circumstance during that period will be considered). After this period you can request to be returned to the General Needs Band with a revised effective date, unless there has been a change in circumstances that will place you into an alternative band with a revised effective date.

If you are in the **Diminished Band** and refuse three reasonable offers of accommodation within a 12 month period you may have your application cancelled and will not be able to re-apply for a period of 12 months unless there has been a significant change in your circumstances.

You could be moved to a lower band or your application may be cancelled for any combination of the following:

- You fail to respond to an offer of a property made to you.
- You fail to attend a viewing of a property offered to you.
- You refuse a property offered to you.



## 6.8 Withdrawing an offer of accommodation

These are the only circumstances in which we can withdraw an offer of accommodation from you before the tenancy agreement is signed:

- Where you have made a **false** declaration.
- Where you have failed to provide us with up-to-date information.
- Where we determine that you are not **eligible** or do not **qualify** for the property.
- Where the property details available at the time the offer was made were incorrect and the size and/or type of the property is not suitable for your needs.

This list is not exhaustive.

## 6.9 Joint tenants

If you are married, civil partners, cohabiting couples, same sex couples, brothers and sisters and friends who have joined the Housing Register together, or a person who has originally made their own application but now wants a joint tenancy with someone else who has made an application, we will consider offering you a joint tenancy. **Social Landlords** may apply their own criteria for deciding whether to grant joint tenancies. If you do have your own application but now want a joint tenancy with someone else, your original application will be cancelled once you become a joint tenant. Should a joint tenancy be refused we will inform you in writing of the reasons for refusal.

## 7. OTHER HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

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### 7.1 Swap your home (Mutual Exchange)

If you are a secure council or **social landlord** tenant you may be able to exchange properties with another secure or assured tenant as long as the landlord(s) agree and in writing. Mutual Exchanges can be arranged locally, regionally or nationally.

An exchange will normally be allowed but can be refused if any of the following reasons apply to the tenant or proposed assignee:

- The tenancy is subject to a court order for possession.
- The tenancy is subject to a **notice seeking possession** or possession proceedings are pending.
- The tenant or a household member is subject to any court order or any proceedings are pending in respect of anti-social behaviour.
- The property is larger than you and your family need.
- The property is too small for you and your family and would result in overcrowding or would break the normal letting criteria in relation to the size of the property and the number of occupants.
- The property has been let as a **service tenancy**.
- The property has been adapted for a person with a physical disability and is very different from other properties and if the exchange were to go ahead, a disabled person would no longer live in the property.
- The property is one of a group let to people with special needs near to Social Services or a special facility and if the exchange was to go ahead someone needing those services or facilities would no longer be living in the property. This includes sheltered or supported housing schemes and properties normally offered to people with mobility needs.
- The property is the subject of a management agreement with a housing association and at least half the tenants of the properties within the agreement are members and the tenant is not willing to become a member.

If the exchange is refused we must tell you the reason in writing within 42 days of your application. We may grant conditional consent to the exchange if you are breaking the tenancy conditions but are willing to put the matter right, for example clear any rent arrears. The property must be in a satisfactory condition before the exchange will be allowed.

If you are a tenant on our Housing Register who has moved by an exchange you can remain on our Housing Register.

### 7.2 Homes for sale and shared ownership schemes

The council sometimes has **nomination rights** to properties that are for sale. These schemes have their own allocation criteria, although ground floor flats and bungalows are usually set aside for people over 60 or with mobility needs. Nominations to these schemes are made through the Allocations Policy.

If you owe any money to us you may not be nominated to a scheme. Your Housing Register application will be cancelled if you purchase a property as a result of a nomination under these schemes.

## 7.3 Succession

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a) This section provides a summary of the relevant parts of the law. For secure council tenancies created after April 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 there does not have to be a right of a family member to succeed only the spouse or civil partner have the automatic right to succeed. (Our criteria will be dependant on a cabinet decision about succession yet to be made).

b) For tenancies created before April 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 as long as the tenant has not succeeded to the tenancy themselves, on their death the tenancy will pass to the person eligible to succeed. A person is eligible to succeed if they lived in the home as their principle home at the time of the tenant's death throughout the period of 12 months preceding the tenant's death. The person must be:

- The joint tenant - the surviving joint tenant will become the sole tenant by survivorship and will be treated as a successor although this is not a succession.
- The tenant's spouse or civil partner or if there is no spouse or civil partner;
- A member of the tenant's family.

c) The tenant's husband, wife or civil partner will be chosen over any other member of the tenant's family. If there is no agreement on which member of the family should succeed, we will choose the person who has lived with the tenant as husband, wife or civil partner throughout the 12 months before the tenant's death. If no one meeting that criteria exists another member of the tenant's family, who has lived with the tenant throughout the 12 months before the tenant's death will be chosen. The member of the family who has lived in the home the longest will succeed to the tenancy. Joint tenancies will not be granted on succession.

d) Relatives who may succeed to the property are the tenant's husband, wife or civil partner, a partner who has lived with the tenant as husband or wife, parent, grandparents, child, grandchild, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew or niece. A marriage relationship is to be treated as one by blood and one of half-blood is to be treated as one of full blood. A stepchild will be treated as a child and an illegitimate child will be treated as the legitimate child of the mother and the man accepted as being the father.

e) If the tenant succeeds to a property built or adapted for a person with special needs and they do not need that property, they can be given priority for a move. Or if the property is too large for them then they can be given priority to down-size to a smaller property. The law entitles us to apply for possession of the property if the property is too large or specially adapted and no one needing those adaptations lives there any longer.

f) By law there can only be one succession. If the deceased tenant succeeded to the tenancy following the death of a previous tenant, or through assignment, there can be no further succession.

## 7.4 New secure tenancy when no-one is eligible to succeed

Where no one qualifies to succeed we may grant a new tenancy to a person who lived with the tenant, but there is no automatic right to remain in the property and these provision cannot override the legal rights summarised at 7.3. We will make the decision on whether to grant a new tenancy taking into account all the relevant circumstances. These will include things like the Allocations Policy criteria, the behaviour of the person and that of any household members, the length of time they have lived at the property and the demand from other applicants on the Housing Register for the type of property.

Where we decide not to offer a new tenancy at the property, the person will be given information about the housing options available to them. Their application will be dealt with in line with the Allocations Policy. If they do not leave the property we may take legal action to recover possession of the property.

## 7.5 New secure tenancy on the death of a successor

In certain circumstances a new secure tenancy can be granted on the death of a successor. We will make the decision on whether to grant a new tenancy taking into account all the relevant circumstances. These will include things like the Allocations Policy criteria, the behaviour of the person and that of any household members, the length of time they have lived at the property and the demand from other applicants on the Housing Register for the type of property.

Where we decide not to offer a new tenancy at the property, they will be given information about the housing options available to them. Their application will be dealt with in line with the Allocations Policy. If they do not leave the property we may take legal action to recover possession of the property.

The following people may be granted a new secure tenancy of that property:

- A partner or relative as explained at 7.3d who lived in that property with the tenant for the last two years of the tenant's life; or
- A person who had been looking after the tenant and lived with them in that property for the last year of the tenant's life.
- A person who has accepted responsibility for the tenant's dependants.
- A person who lived with the tenant for the last ten years of the tenant's life. This does not apply if the person has been paying money to the tenant as rent.

## 7.6 Assignment

Assignment is the process by which a secure tenancy can be passed on to another person whilst the tenant is still alive. The tenancy is given by one person to another. Under Sheffield City Council's tenancy conditions a tenant must not sub-let all of the property or part with possession of all of the property.

If a tenant is leaving their tenancy permanently and they have not succeeded to that tenancy they may apply to assign it to a member of their as set out at section 7.3d. That person must have lived with them for the past 12 months. A senior officer in the council must give agreement in writing before someone can assign their tenancy.

Consent will only be given for the following reasons:

- A tenant is wishing to transfer for health or disability reasons and the new home is not large enough.
- A tenant is moving to somewhere they will be cared for, such as a residential home.
- A tenant is going to live with a new partner and neither the tenant's home nor their partner's is large enough for the potential assignee to live with them.
- A tenant is moving to a different part of the country and the potential assignee has strong links with Sheffield, for example they work or study here.

Assignment can also be made by mutual exchange and in pursuance of a court order in certain matrimonial, civil partnership or Children's Act proceedings.

We may refuse permission to assign in certain circumstances. For example you will not be allowed to assign to the tenancy if it means it would be under occupied, or if it has adaptations you don't need, or if the tenant or you have any housing related debts or any anti-social behaviour or if the property is set aside for people of a specific age.

Where permission to assign would otherwise be granted, an assignee may, for example, be given priority to move for under occupation, or for not needing the adaptations in the property.

We recommend that tenants seek independent legal advice before assigning their tenancy to another person.

## **7.7 Allocations to Extra Care and Supported Accommodation**

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### **7.8 Introduction**

This section applies to nominations to properties identified as supported accommodation for people with learning disabilities by the council's Joint Learning Disability Service. If the council is the landlord of accommodation listed then these criteria will be used for allocations.

Supported Accommodation schemes are provided by a number of housing providers. Adults in these schemes have care or support needs for reasons such as age, learning disability, physical disability, sensory impairment or mental health. They receive an appropriate level of care and support to enable them to live independently. Some accommodation is self-contained, some is for small groups of people sharing, so offering a choice of where, how and with whom the service user may live.

Not all schemes are suitable for everyone. We will not nominate you to a scheme if we consider you are unsuitable for the scheme. The factors to which we will have regard are care, support and housing needs, age, preferences of potential sharers in shared accommodation, Safeguarding Adults issues, the type of accommodation available and any agreement we have made with the housing provider.

We will make nominations to a scheme. The decision to grant a tenancy will be made by the housing provider.

The following organisations provide the identified supported accommodation referred to:

- South Yorkshire Housing Association
- Progress Care Housing Association
- Guinness Northern Counties Housing Association
- Dimensions
- Places for People

In addition there is the following specialist supported accommodation provision within the city:

- Care in the Community schemes:
  - Holgate Rd scheme (Places for People)
  - Joseph Rd scheme (SYHA)
  - Hanover scheme (SYHA)
- Hostel provision:
  - Sheltered ex-warden properties (Sheffield City Council)

There are also five extra care schemes within the city for elderly tenants and these include a scheme at Brunswick Gardens, which only accepts nominations for people that have a housing need.

## 7.9 Aims of the allocations criteria

The aim of these allocations criteria is to ensure that properties in the Supported Accommodation schemes are let fairly to people in eligible need and if you are in eligible need, to give you as much choice and control as possible about the place you live.

In shared and cluster accommodation this includes ensuring the compatibility of tenants as far as possible, including taking the age, needs and wishes of existing residents into consideration, so that the letting is sustainable. Safeguarding Adults issues will also be considered as part of the process.

You must normally have a care and/or support need but housing need will also be taken into account. The balance of needs within a scheme is referred to below as the scheme “profile”.

Your care needs will be assessed in accordance with guidance on adult social care eligibility criteria as amended from time to time, and may include consideration of whether a nomination may end or prevent a residential or nursing placement; support needs will be assessed with reference to our [Supporting People Programme](#).

## 7.10 Variations to the Allocations Policy

Vacancies will not be offered through [CBL](#).

Nominations will be made taking into account the following factors in order of priority:

- (a) The profile of the particular scheme established by the housing provider as agreed with us.
- (b) The allocations criteria and priorities elsewhere in this Policy.



## 7.11 Allocations to Park Hill

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The Park Hill estate is undergoing a regeneration programme that will last for a number of years. All existing tenants will have to move from their current properties, using a **demolition priority**. Once the regeneration is complete there will be at least 200 properties for rent.

### 7.12 First lets

100% of first lets will be ring fenced for nominations if you are an existing or former tenant displaced by the clearance of Park Hill (including if you were a tenant granted early priority to move because of the closure of Park Hill School).

You will be eligible to move if you are:

- A tenant who has not yet moved from Park Hill, you will be eligible to move into a refurbished flat using your existing demolition priority;
- A tenant who has already moved away as a result of the redevelopment and wish to move back to one of the refurbished flats, you will be awarded a priority to return.

Park Hill allocations will be designated within a demolition band until all ex-residents who wish to exercise their right to return have been exhausted. This will be stated in the advert. If the property is advertised and no-one meets these criteria, the nomination will be made in accordance with normal nomination procedures.

Great Places will make allocations to council nominees according to the following principles in order of priority:

1. Demolition Priority date;
2. Eligibility criteria in relation to household size;
3. Start date of the tenant's first consecutive tenancy on Park Hill;
4. All other conditions set out in the Allocations Policy.

### 7.13 Re-lets for the next 2 years in a phase

Any re-lets within a phase for 2 years from the first let of a dwelling in that phase will be ring fenced for nominations from us to existing or former tenants displaced by the clearance of Park Hill (including if you are a tenant who was granted early priority to move because of the closure of Park Hill School). If no former or existing tenants of Park Hill bid for a dwelling during the 2 year period it will be let in accordance with the Allocations Policy.

### 7.14 Subsequent lettings

After the 2 year period has expired 50% of the dwellings which become available for letting will be let to council nominees in accordance with our Allocations Policy. The remaining 50% will be let in accordance with the Park Hill Local Allocations Policy of Great Places.

## 7.15 Allocations to Scowerdons, Weakland, Newstead (SWaN) and related peripheral sites

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### 7.16 Nominations to rented properties until the Residents' Charter is fulfilled

- a) The three estates at SWaN are undergoing a rolling programme of demolition and redevelopment. Home Group Limited (**social landlord**) will manage all the new rented properties and properties will initially be let in accordance with the priorities set out below. The allocations criteria in this section will also apply to sites at Alport Drive and Birley Moor Crescent developed by Home Group.
- b) Until the commitments made in the Residents' Charter have been fulfilled, all properties will be ring fenced for former or existing SWaN residents who expressed a desire to return to the estates when they left their original property and have a current demolition priority in accordance with our Allocations Policy first. If no such residents want the property then it would be nominated in accordance with the rules within this Allocations Policy.
- c) This ring fence does not apply if you were a resident who did not express a desire to return, moved permanently from the former Scowerdons, Weakland or Newstead estates but later decide to return. If you are such a resident you may register again and apply later under normal rules once the commitment made by the Residents' Charter has been fulfilled.
- d) Properties will initially be offered to residents who originally lived on the particular estate within SWaN. If none of them accept the offer, properties will be offered to an applicant who lived on a different estate within SWaN. For example, if you are a resident from demolition Phase One Scowerdons you may prefer a property on Phase Two Newstead. You would only be offered the property on redevelopment Phase Two Newstead if that property has been refused by all other existing Phase One and Phase Two Newstead residents. This paragraph does not apply to nominations made to properties at Alport Drive and Birley Moor Crescent developed by Home Group – in such cases, paragraphs e) and g) will apply in the first instance.
- e) If you have a priority, other than demolition, for a particular property type you can be offered it regardless of which estate it is on.
- f) We will consider nominating you to properties which are near other applicants, when both have expressed in writing a preference to be re-housed near to each other.
- g) You will be nominated according to your earliest demolition priority. For example, if you are in demolition Phase One you will be nominated before applicants in demolition Phase Two. The exception to this is if you have a priority other than for clearance for a particular type of property.
- h) If two or more applicants with the same demolition priority date bid for the same property, the property will be allocated to the applicant who has the earliest start date as defined at paragraph j).



i) If the tenancies of two or more applicants have the same start date then preference will be given to the applicant who has been in temporary accommodation for the longest period.

j) Start dates are determined as follows:

- If you are a tenant (council or private), the start date is the date on which the tenancy from which you were first displaced by demolition on SWaN began;
- If you are a tenant who has succeeded to a council dwelling from which you were first displaced by demolition on SWaN, the start date shall be the date on which you succeeded to the dwelling. If you can prove to our satisfaction that you have lived there continuously from an earlier date we will amend the date;
- If you are an owner-occupier, the start date will be the date on which you completed the purchase of the dwelling from which you were displaced by demolition on SWaN. If you can prove to our satisfaction that you have lived there continuously from an earlier date we will amend the date;
- If you are 'households within a household', the start date will be the date of your Housing Registration. If you can prove to our satisfaction that you have lived there continuously from an earlier date we will amend the date;
- If you are a former or existing SWaN resident you may be eligible for less or more bedrooms in your new property than you had in the property you were first displaced from. You will be eligible according to the bedroom eligibility criteria specified in this Allocations Policy.

## 7.17 Nominations to shared equity/ownership properties until the Residents' Charter is fulfilled

If you are a shared equity/ownership applicant you will be nominated by earliest demolition priority. Within that demolition priority, nominations will be made in the following status order:

- Applicants who are or were formerly owner-occupiers of dwellings on the estates and who were displaced by demolition;
- Tenants;
- "Households within a household".

If two or more applicants with the same status above (for example two owner occupiers) choose the same property, the property will be allocated to the applicant who has the earliest start date as explained at 7.14 j).

You will not be constrained by the eligibility criteria in our Allocations Policy in terms of property type/size. However, a financial qualification made by Home Group will determine the property type/size available to you in line with the amount you can afford to pay.

Affordable for sale properties made available on peripheral sites may be provided on a shared ownership basis with rent payable on the proportion retained by Home Group Limited in accordance with terms and conditions at that time.

## **7.18 Nominations to both shared equity/ownership and rented properties once the Residents' Charter is fulfilled**

After satisfaction of the Residents' Charter, nominations to properties will be carried out in accordance with our Allocations Policy in force from time to time.

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# APPENDIX 1

## Social landlords

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### Acis Housing Association

Acis Group  
Acis House  
Bridge Street  
Gainsborough  
Lincolnshire  
DN21 1GG  
Tel: 0800 027 2057  
Email: [info@acisgroup.co.uk](mailto:info@acisgroup.co.uk)  
[www.acisgroup.co.uk](http://www.acisgroup.co.uk)

### Affinity Sutton

Holme House  
Manor Lane  
Holmes Chapel  
CW4 8AF  
Tel: 0300 100 0303  
[www.affinitysutton.com](http://www.affinitysutton.com)

### Anchor Housing Trust

Milestone Place  
100 Bolton Road  
Bradford  
BD1 4HD  
Tel: 0845 140 2020  
[www.anchor.org.uk](http://www.anchor.org.uk)

### Arches Housing Ltd

122 Burngreave Road  
Sheffield  
S3 9DE  
Tel: 0114 228 8100  
<http://www.archeshousing.org.uk>

### Chevin Housing Association

2 Carbrook Street, Sheffield, S9 2JE  
(visits by appointment only)  
Tel: 0845 270 1088  
<http://www.chevinha.co.uk/>

### Equity Housing

Armitt House  
Monmouth Road  
Cheadle Hulme  
Cheadle  
Cheshire  
SK8 7EF  
Tel: 0800 733 233  
<http://www.equityhousing.co.uk>

### Great Places Housing Group

The Quadrant  
99 Parkway Avenue, Sheffield S9 4WG  
Tel: 0300 123 1966  
[www.greatplaces.org.uk](http://www.greatplaces.org.uk)

### Guinness Northern Counties

20 Westfield Terrace  
Sheffield  
S1 4GH  
Tel: 0845 605 9000  
[www.guinnesspartnership.com/](http://www.guinnesspartnership.com/)

### Home Group

2nd Floor, 20 Westfield Terrace, Sheffield  
S1 4GH (postal only)  
Tel: 0345 141 4663 or 0114 275 5637  
<http://www.homegroup.org.uk>

### Housing 21

Head Office, The Triangle, Baring Road,  
Beaconsfield HP9 2NA  
Tel: 0345 606 6363  
<http://www.housing21.co.uk>

### Johnnie Johnson Housing Trust

Astra House  
Spinners Lane,  
Poynton  
Cheshire SK12 1GA  
Tel: 0845 604 1095  
<http://www.jjhousing.co.uk>

**Padley Housing Association**

Narrow Estates Ltd  
5 Paradise Square  
Sheffield S1 2DE  
Tel: 0114 272 0218

**Yorkshire Metropolitan Housing Association**

24 Cumberland Street,  
Sheffield S1 4PT  
Tel: 0114 276 503

**Pennine Housing**

2 Carbrook Street  
Sheffield S9 2JE  
Tel: 0300 555 5558  
<http://www.tph.org.uk>

**Places for People**

The Old County Court House, Bank  
Street, Sheffield S1 2DS  
Tel: 0114 252 5900  
<http://www.placesforpeople.co.uk>

**Sanctuary Housing Association**

36a Beck Road  
Shiregreen  
Sheffield  
S5 0GB  
Tel: 0800 781 0401  
<http://www.sanctuary-group.co.uk>

**Sheffield Jewish Housing Association**

22 Kingfield Road  
Sheffield S11 9AS  
Tel: 0114 255 4318

**South Yorkshire Housing Association**

43-47 Wellington Street, Sheffield S1 4HF  
Tel: 0114 290 0200  
<http://www.syha.co.uk/>

**Yorkshire Housing**

Sovereign Court, 300 Barrow Road,  
Sheffield S9 1JQ  
Tel: 0114 256 4200  
<http://www.yorkshirehousing.co.uk>

**William Sutton Housing Association**

Holme House,  
Manor Lane  
Holmes Chapel  
CW4 8AF  
Tel: 01477 539250

## APPENDIX 2

### Local Housing Offices

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#### **Burngreave**

177 Spital Hill

S4 7LF

Tel: 0114 293 0000

Open Mon to Fri 9.00 am – 4.00 pm Mon, Tues, Thursday

Open Wed 9.00 - 1.00 pm

#### **Central**

Howden House

1 Union St

S1 2SH

Tel: 0114 205 3333

Open Mon to Thurs 8.45 am - 5.15 pm

Open Friday 8.45 pm - 4.45 pm

#### **First Point at Crystal Peaks**

1-3 Peaks Square

S20 7PH

Tel: 0114 205 3333

Open Mon to Fri 8.00 am - 5.30 pm

#### **Darnall**

Station Rd

S9 4JT

Tel: 0114 293 0000

Open Mon to Thurs 9.00 am – 4.00 pm

Open 9.00 am – 1.00 pm Thurs

#### **Enquiry Point at Firth Park**

443 Firth Park Road

Sheffield

S5 6QQ

Mon 10.00am - 5.15pm

Tues 9.30am - 5.15pm

Wed 9.30am - 5.15pm

Thurs Closed

Fri 9.30am - 5.00pm

### **First Point at Chapeltown**

Chambers Court  
1b Station Road  
Chapeltown  
S35 2XE  
Tel: 0114 293 0000  
Open Mon to Fri 9.00 am – 5.00 pm

### **First Point at Hillsborough**

Unit 7  
Hillsborough Barracks  
Shopping Mall  
Langsett Road  
S6 2LR  
Tel: 0114 293 0000  
Open Mon to Fri 9.00 am – 5.00 pm

### **First Point a Manor Library**

Ridgeway Road  
Sheffield  
S12 2SS  
Tel: 0114 205 3333  
Open 9.40 am - 4.00 pm, Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri)  
Open 9.30 - 4.00 pm Monday

### **Jordanthorpe**

17 Jordanthorpe Centre  
S8 8DX  
Tel: 0114 205 3333  
Open Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 9.00 am – 4.00 pm)  
Open Wed 9.00 am – 1.00 pm

### **Low Edges**

88 Gervase Rd,  
S8 7PS  
Tel: 0114 205 3333  
Open Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 9.00 am – 4.00 pm  
Open Wed 9.00 am – 1.00 pm

### **Newfield Green**

607 Gleadless Rd  
S2 2BT  
Tel: 0114 205 3333  
Open Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 9.00 am – 4.00 pm  
Open Wed 9.00 am – 1.00 pm

### **Sheltered Housing Team**

Staniforth Road Depot,  
Sheffield  
S9 3GZ  
Tel: 0114 293 0000

### **The Sheffield Property Shop**

36-42 Union Street  
Sheffield  
S1 2JP

Tel: 0114 293 0000 - North, East and North West Sheffield

Tel: 0114 205 3333 - Central, South East and South West Sheffield

(Phone lines are open Mon-Fri 8.00am-5.30pm. Reception is open 9am-5pm  
Monday,

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and 9.00 am – 4.00pm on Tuesdays)

### **Stocksbridge**

The Arc  
Manchester Road,  
Stocksbridge  
S36 2DU

Tel: 0114 293 0000

Open Mon to Fri 9.00 am – 4.00 pm

### **Woodhouse**

5 Chapel St  
Woodhouse  
S13 7JL

Tel: 0114 205 3333

Open Mon 9.00 am – 1.00 pm, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm

Tues and Thurs – closed

Wed 9.00 am – 1.00 pm

Fri 9.00 am – 1.00 pm, 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm

### **Wordsworth Avenue**

320 Wordsworth Avenue  
S5 8NL

Tel: 0114 293 0000

Open Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 9.00am – 4.00 pm

Open Wed 9.00 am – 1.00 pm

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## Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee

**Report of:** Executive Director of Communities

**Subject:** Homelessness Performance Update

**Author of Report:** Zoe Young Head of Care and Support Housing

### Summary:

This report outlines homelessness key performance issues. The information contained in this report has been requested by the committee to enable it to have an up to date picture of what's happening in the city and to enable it to scrutinise performance. It outlines some of the key challenges for the city.

**Type of item:** The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	√
Other	

### The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

The committee is asked to consider the report and provide views, comments and recommendations.

### Background Papers:

**Homeless Strategy 2010-2013**

**Category of Report:** OPEN

## **1. Introduction/Context**

- 1.1 Becoming homeless has a huge impact on people which can include damaging their mental health and physical health, chances of finding work or attending training or education and disrupt their family life. For many people they are able to find suitable alternative accommodation and move on to a more settled life quickly for others homelessness can go on for some time or recur and they may need more help and support to find a settled home.
- 1.2 In 2010 SCC agreed a 3 year Homeless Strategy at a time when homelessness was decreasing. The Strategy sets out key areas for action which are improving homeless prevention and housing options, increasing access to affordable / suitable housing including Supported Housing, targets for work specific customer groups including young people and better multi-agency responses for those with complex needs.
- 1.3 Sheffield historically has had a relatively high level of homeless presentations and acceptances compared to other cities. This is linked to encouraging people to register for housing when the city had more stock than demand. There has been a relatively generous approach to undertaking investigations and accepting duties. SCC has mainly used its own stock to meet the homeless duty and hasn't developed other options to the extent that other councils have. Other councils have been more stringent in their assessment of duties owed and developing other options driven by need.
- 1.4 Targets for the use of Temporary Accommodation were set in 2004 by Government. The targets were set to half the use over a 5 year period up to 2010. The Target for Sheffield was 121. Sheffield did not meet this target and for the first 4 years increased use rather than decreased it. Current use should be understood in the context of previous performance. In 2008/09 at the height of use 400 households in Temporary Accommodation 160 of these were in Bed and Breakfast.
- 1.5 Costs of B&B spiralled and this had adverse budget impacts. Not all of the costs are covered by Housing Benefit.
- 1.6 The majority of Temporary Accommodation in Sheffield is self contained, provided by Registered Providers and Sheffield Homes and provides some support funded by the Supporting People programme
- 1.7 Service Improvements led to a reduction of acceptances in 2009/10 and significant reduction in the use of Temporary Accommodation including Bed and Breakfast.
- 1.8 Homelessness is now increasing nationally and locally. Due to the current economic climate and the Welfare Reform Act the number of presentations is likely to further increase

- 1.9 Despite this, Sheffield has managed to further reduce the use of Temporary Accommodation including B&B and reduce the B&B budget but usage of this is now beginning to grow again.
- 1.10 Being able to contain or further reduce the use of Temporary Accommodation is extremely challenging in the current environment and essentially dependent on reducing demand and having access to alternative accommodation for those people owed a duty.
- 1.11 Homelessness has a disproportionate impact on young people (half of our applicants are under 25) – they are generally more financially vulnerable and are less likely to have secure accommodation available to them.
- 1.12 Accepting someone as homeless and having a duty to rehouse them is only a route that benefits families or vulnerable homeless people. Other homeless people (e.g. single people without a priority) are not owed a duty and only benefit from prevention and advice.
- 1.13 The main reasons for homelessness have continued to be being asked to leave by parents, friends and family and relationship breakdown. This can mask underlying reasons such as economic factors that can make it more difficult for people to sustain existing living arrangements.
- 1.14 We risk not meeting our statutory requirements to only use B+B for a maximum of 6 weeks for families if homelessness continues to increase and we do not have alternatives in place.
- 1.15 The government has allocated £680,000 to SCC by way of Homelessness Grant. This is not ring fenced, and due to the budget pressures, of these monies only £380,000 has been allocated to the Housing Solutions service. This is used to pay for some staff costs, Private Rented Solutions and the Sanctuary Scheme.
- 1.16 The budget for Housing Solutions has been reduced by 15% in this year but we have achieved this by reducing B+B costs and reducing management posts – so we have a small increase in some front line posts. The teams are finding it difficult to keep pace with the number of presentations and there is a risk that quick acceptance decisions are made rather than more intensive case work that may prevent homelessness or result in a negative decision.
- 1.17 The Government have recently announced a Department for Communities and Local Government's homelessness strategy, calling on authorities to work with the voluntary sector to provide services to anyone who needs them. *Making every contact count: a joint approach to preventing homelessness* also wants town halls to adopt, and annually review, a 'proactive' approach to reducing homelessness. They should also help prevent mortgage repossessions by liaising with central government support services, such as the Mortgage Rescue Scheme, which gives people financial help to keep their home. It will be difficult to respond to this if the resources necessary are not available.

## **Homelessness Key Performance Issues**

### **2. Bed and Breakfast Use**

- 2.1 The numbers in Bed and Breakfast is going up. It is the highest it has been since December 2012. At the end of September 2012 it was 13 and this is increasing. It has been less than 6 most quarters.
- 2.2 Government targets did not differentiate between Bed and Breakfast and other Temporary Target but Sheffield has set its own target for B+B because this is the worst kind of temporary accommodation and there are specific requirements about using this for families and young people aged under 18.
- 2.3 Sheffield has been ambitious in setting a Bed and Breakfast target of 0 but thought this was achievable due to the plans to introduce a Supported Accommodation Pathway to give customers immediate access to supported housing if they didn't have anywhere else to stay.
- 2.4 The reduction of B&B use has been particularly successful as we have managed to reduce the number from 70 to just 1 over the same period from March 2010 to March 2012. This has bucked the national trend as B&B use has nearly doubled nationally during the last 2 years.
- 2.5 Majority of people in B+B are single and the average length of stay is five days.
- 2.6 We have increased some access to Supported Housing by negotiating assessment beds for example with St Anne's and 4 young people projects. This has helped to keep the use of B+B relatively low. However, the target of 0 is not attainable without implementing the Supported Accommodation Pathway. In fact use of B&B is realistically likely to increase to some degree as demand for service increases. The trend is upward...
- 2.7 The budget for B&B was reduced by 15% this year and there is a risk that if the trend of increased use continues the budget will be overspent at the year end. This has a knock on impact for the hostel subsidy loss which is the amount the authority has to pay for B+B that cannot be claimed as housing benefit. We got this down to c£200,000 last year but risk increasing (was c £1.2 m 3 years ago).

### **3. Temporary Accommodation Use**

- 3.1 The number of Households in Temporary Accommodation is still below target but is moving in the right direction. In June 2012 there were 158 households the target being 121.

- 3.2 In Sheffield we now compare well to other local authorities on minimising the use of temporary accommodation. As at 31st March 2012 Sheffield had 0.7 families in temporary accommodation per 1000 households compared to the national average of 2.3.
- 3.3 We have also managed to successfully reduce the use of temporary accommodation over the last couple of years from 277 as at 31st March 2010 to 168 as at 31st March 2012, whereas nationally (and for most other core cities) there has been no change.
- 3.4 We wanted to have a more aspiration target and reduce Temporary Accommodation by a further 60 units when the Supported Accommodation Pathway is in place. This would enable us to reduce the number of Commissioned TA units and help with the required Supporting People budget savings.
- 3.5 There is a risk that the use of Temporary Accommodation may increase if we cannot implement the Supported Accommodation Pathway.

#### 4. Homelessness preventions

- 4.1 The number of homeless preventions has reduced
- 4.2 Increasing the numbers of preventions achieved is critical if a reduction in the number of acceptances is to be achieved and therefore use of TA/B+B.

#### 5. Projections

Whilst Quarter 1 of 2012/13 has seen a fall in acceptances, we have started to do some modelling and projections to help us prepare for what the impacts would be if homeless continues to increase. We will continue to develop this to inform service planning, and prioritisation of resources going forward

##### Projected Increases in Acceptances - 10% Increases in Acceptances

Year	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Acceptances	1383	1521	1673	1841
Temporary Accom	168	200	230	260
B+B	1	30	50	70

##### Projected Increases in Acceptances - 20% Increases in Acceptances

Year	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15
Acceptances	1383	1660	1992	2390
Temporary	168	202	242	290

Accom				
B+B	1	50	75	100

## 6. Challenges

The Homeless strategy and accompanying action plans need to be reviewed because the national landscape has changed with increase in homelessness, economic environment and welfare reforms. Key areas we need to address are:

### 6.1 Prevention of Homelessness

- There is a statutory requirement to prevent homelessness and this is a better outcome for customers, has fewer costs to the council and partners. We have some prevention measures in place and have been at the forefront of developing these e.g. high support, prison release service, sanctuary scheme, housing aid and housing options, mortgage rescue, homeless prevention funds, private rented solutions young peoples joint service but there is not yet a coherent strategy to develop these underpinned by an investment plan and they do not yet form a significant enough element of our offer.
- To effectively prevent homelessness and minimise the impacts when a housing crisis does occur, we need to further develop approaches that differentiate between different customer groups and different reasons for a housing problem arising for example our work with 16/17 year olds with CYPF which supports the young person to remain at home, is very different to our Repossession Prevention Fund to help with housing debt and lift the threat of eviction by a landlord or mortgage lender for the whole household.
- We need to develop strategic and policy approaches which are coherent in supporting independent living and don't inadvertently "shift" the challenges from one service to another e.g. evicting people for arrears from our own properties who then present as homeless and may be re-housed by us or require support from Social Services.
- We need the right tool kit for officers e.g. more affordable private rented accommodation, discretionary funds, access to supported housing, advice and advocacy services including negotiation and representation, money advice, specialist support worker and key workers to help sustain current housing or move in a planned way.
- Need to offer Private Rented Accommodation at first housing options interview as a discharge of homelessness duty to get customer quickly to settled accommodation and reduce pressure on social housing
- Need to provide help at the earliest possible point – we are stream lining access to a combined Housing Aid/Housing Options function to enable people to be quickly assessed at whatever point they contact us and be offered good quality information, support and advice with specialist casework if needed. Essential to this is the telephone advice service –

have asked for this to be prioritised in Customer First Programme but do not have a time line agreed.

- Reviewing approach to “homeless at home” (duty accepted and customer stays in current temporary accommodation usually with a friend or relative) – high rate of refusals of offers of accommodation compared to those who go in to temporary accommodation so we feel there may be an issue of is there a genuine homelessness, do people collude to get a homeless priority and when they realise what the Council offer is decide to stay at current home anyway?

## **6.2 Supported Accommodation Pathway**

- This is the next major initiative that has been agreed to significantly reduce the use of both B+B and TA for those who do need emergency housing. This will make sure the available Supported Housing is used as a City wide resource to best match customer need to available support. We know from research carried out for us by Homeless Link that we are exercising little control over the support we are commissioning and that some of this resource is being used by customers with low support needs who could more appropriately live in non supported settings thus freeing up resource for those in Temporary Accommodation/B+B.
- Due to the budget pressures, the Supporting People programme is being reduced by 30 % over a three year period - if homelessness continues to grow there is a risk that the available schemes to support homeless customers will be outstripped which will cause more use of TA/B+B therefore it is crucial to make sure available resources are effectively used.
- The Pathway hasn't been implemented because the funding needed for the necessary ICT solution (c £300k) was contained in the requested carry forward from 2012/13. This was not approved and therefore alternative funding is being pursued through capital programme.

## **6.3 Private Rented Solutions**

- Business case for further development of Private Rented Service has just been finalised within existing resources (£318,463 - funded by homeless grant, general fund and supporting people). However, to make this a viable alternative to social housing for our customers more investment is likely to be needed.
- Our current planned level of investment only allows for the creation of approximately 350 new tenancies a year across both priority and non priority groups – so there is a limited impact on acceptances unless we can expand the numbers who can use this option.
- Demand for private rented accommodation is growing amongst other customer groups and this makes it challenging to find Landlords who will work with us unless we are able to offer attractive packages to them e.g. making good, minor repairs, tenancy support etc. (similar to the current Asylum Team offer).

- Rent levels are increasing, and restrictions on housing benefit mean it is harder to find affordable properties – working with landlords who will set rent levels that our customers can afford is a challenge that will also possibly require further investment to make this attractive e.g guaranteed occupancy/underwriting rent.
- We have been able to use Private Rented accommodation particularly for larger families where we have no suitable Council accommodation. Because of the benefit caps this is increasingly difficult unless landlords will reduce their rents.
- The single room rent restriction being expanded to single people under the age of 35 means we will need to be able to offer shared accommodation – this may take more resources to support tenancies as vulnerable people sharing accommodation are likely to need a higher level of intervention.

#### **6.4 Homelessness Prevention/Repossession Prevention/Mortgage Rescue**

- The Council has discretionary funds aimed at either dealing with housing debt or any associated costs that could prevent homelessness. We are the regional top performer for the Mortgage Rescue Scheme. Our prevention (payments up to a £1000) and repossession funds (payments over £1000) have provided a relatively low cost way of preventing homelessness and were funded by DCLG. Payments are usually a few hundred pounds from the homeless prevention fund and a couple of £1000 on average from the repossession fund (max payment is £1500. The fund also paid for money advice and additional housing advice (2 FTEs).
- This is not ring-fenced grant monies and the award of £250k for 2012/13 was paid to the Council in March 2012. None of this money has been allocated to the funds in this year as a decision was made not to prioritise this from the reduced amount of carry forward the Portfolio had available to it.
- Each case is evaluated on value for money basis – the majority of all cases helped would have been owed a full homeless/re-housing duty. Whilst precise cost benefit analysis has not been undertaken, research in 2008 by the New Economics Foundation indicated that there was a cost of homelessness of £26 k per household to the public purse on average.
- With no identified budget in this year, we cannot recruit to the posts for money advice and housing advice previously funded by additional CLG monies.
- We are using some under spend on the B+B budget (£30,000) to keep the funds going for now but this will not sustain fund going forward.



- We are considering scope to combine these funds with other discretionary funds to support people in crisis e.g. Social Fund and Children's Act section 17.

## **6 .What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?**

- Vulnerable people in Sheffield will not get the Supported Accommodation according to their needs if the Supported Accommodation Pathway is not implemented.
- If vulnerable homeless people are seen earlier, homelessness may be prevented and they will be able to stay in their own home.
- Resources are not being targeted at those who need it most
- Housing benefit reforms will impact on the people of Sheffield. It has been estimated by Sheffield Homes that the benefit reforms due to bedroom numbers in social housing will affect 6,000 households in Sheffield.

## **7. Recommendation**

The Committee is being asked to consider the report and provide views and comments.

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## Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny

### Policy Update

SEPT/OCT 2012

#### **1. Plans for thousands of homes unlocked by historic deal**

- a) New agreement will get work started on thousands of new properties
- b) Plans for thousands of new homes that have been stuck on the drawing board for a decade are to finally get the go-ahead thanks to an historic deal reached between ministers, councillors and developers
- c) The deal will unlock around 22,600 much needed homes over the next 20 years – delivering as many as 60,000 jobs – and brings a brownfield site back into use. The first phase at Eastern Quarry, Ebbsfleet, in Kent will deliver 1,500 homes as part of wider plans for Kent Thameside
- d) Developers Land Securities have invested over £100 million in developing the site. However, plans have been delayed amid concerns over the cost and the need for further investment in transport improvements
- e) But now, after work by Housing Minister Grant Shapps and Transport Minister Mike Penning with Kent councils and the developers, builders could be on site as early as next summer with the first homes set to be completed by December 2013
- f) Kent County Council and Dartford and Gravesham Borough Councils worked closely with the Department for Transport and the Highways Agency to reduce costs of the transport programme and to agree how funding could be unlocked. Under the arrangements agreed, the Department for Transport and Highways Agency will begin development work on 2 major junction improvements and will work with Kent County Council and the Kent Thameside partners in managing the transport investment programme necessary to deliver the new developments
- g) Dartford and Gravesham Borough Councils will ensure that contributions from Land Securities and other sites are provided to support the transport improvement programme, and that they and Kent County Council use a proportion of their New Homes Bonus payments to contribute to the programme
- h) The deal reached between these 3 councils and land Securities on the specific planning obligations – known as a Section 106 agreement – will enable work to start. Land Securities will contribute nearly £25 million towards the Homes and Roads Programme, through to completion of 4,500 homes on the site by 2020
- i) Mr Shapps said that this illustrated the benefits of Government, local authorities and developers working together to unlock progress on stalled larger sites and signalled that he was keen to build on this approach in the future
- j) The first phase of 1,500 homes at Eastern Quarry are expected to be completed by 2020, with a further 3,000 homes expected to be completed by 2030-31. Eastern Quarry forms part of longer term plans which are expected to unlock the development of 22,600 homes and around 1 million m<sup>2</sup> of commercial development across the Kent Thameside region over the next 20 years

- k) The Homes and Communities Agency has already invested £13 million in the supporting transport investment (the Homes and Roads Programme), and is committed to working with all parties to identify other future funding sources as work progresses on the development
- l) The Kent Thameside Strategic Transport (Homes and Roads) Programme is a £116 million investment in transport improvements covering both the Strategic and Local Road Network aim at enabling the planned level of development to be realised
- m) The Homes and Roads Programme is a package of the following 7 schemes:
  - A2 Ebbsfleet Junction
  - A2 Bean Junction
  - A226 London Road/St Clements Way Junction
  - Dartford Town Centre Improvements
  - Rathmore Road Link, Gravesend
  - A226 Thames Way Dualling, Ebbsfleet
  - Urban Traffic Management and Control Measures
- n) Key partners involved in the development, management and delivery of the Homes and Roads Programme include:
  - Dartford Borough Council
  - Department for Transport
  - Gravesend Borough Council
  - Highways Agency
  - Homes and Communities Agency
  - Kent County Council
- o) Land Securities is the UK's largest commercial property company and a member of the FTSE 100. The company owns and manages more than 29 million sq ft of property, from shopping centres to offices

## **2. Safety net against homelessness continues to 2015**

- a) Funding to help those facing the real and frightening prospect of homelessness will continue to the end of this Parliament, Housing Minister Grant Shapps has recently said
- b) Councils across the country are set to receive a share of £160 million over the next 2 years
- c) The Minister also confirmed that a new website and telephone line, where anyone looking to get help for someone sleeping on the streets can go to, is on track to be available by Christmas
- d) He also offered a first-look at a new campaign aimed at encouraging people to seek help for rough sleepers in their area
- e) Mr Shapps announced that councils across the country would receive £160 million over the next 2 years in Homelessness Prevention Grants – offering certainty that homelessness services will be funded to the end of this Parliament
- f) This is on top of the £160 million that has been allocated to councils over this and last year, which has been used to offer support to those facing the threat of homelessness, including:
  - Providing rent deposit schemes to enable homeless people to get accommodation in the private rented sector

- Mediation services to help prevent relationship breakdown leading to homelessness
  - Outreach services to help get rough sleepers off the streets and into accommodation
- g) Latest figures show that 199,000 households were last year given help to stay in their homes or find new places to live – stopping them from facing losing their home and, potentially, a life on the streets
  - h) Mr Shapps also confirmed that plans for a new website and national phone line are on track to be available by Christmas, so that anyone will be able to ring if they are looking for help for someone sleeping rough
  - i) StreetLink, to be run by charities Homeless Link and Broadway, will include a national telephone line, and website accessible via smart phone, so anyone anywhere can provide details of someone sleeping rough in their neighbourhood so they can be found and connected to local services
  - j) A series of posters will be released in December alongside these new tools, so residents, charities and councils can all work together to ensure as few people as possible face spending this Christmas on the streets
  - k) The Minister released the first images from a campaign due to start in the run-up to Christmas to encourage members of the public to come forward and seek help for local rough sleepers

### **3. Cash for communities supporting neighbourhood planning**

- a) New funding to help communities bring jobs and homes to their neighbourhood using improved planning powers has been announced by Planning Minister Greg Clark
- b) Neighbourhood planning gives people a major say in shaping development in their area. It gives communities the power to help decide where development should go and the type and design of development that can be granted automatic planning permission
- c) A £10 million fund is now available to help councils ensure their communities are able to finalise people's plans for homes, businesses and facilities in their neighbourhood
- d) More than 200 communities are already using the new planning powers introduced in the Localism Act to work up plans that can, for example, decide the location of new homes and decide the green spaces communities are keen to protect
- e) Councils are invited to apply for grants of up to £30,000 for each scheme to help pay for the costs of getting plans in place. Payments will be paid to councils to help them support and advise groups taking forward neighbourhood plans and to pay towards the examination of plans and a local referendum
- f) Payments will be made in 2 payments. The first, of £5,000 will be made once a neighbourhood area has been designated. The second payment of £25,000 will be made on successful completion of the neighbourhood planning independent examination

### **4. Statutory homelessness: April to June Quarter 2012, England**

- a) The latest National Statistics on Statutory Homelessness, for April to June 2012, were released on 6 September 2012, under arrangements approved by the UK Statistics Authority

b) The key points from the latest release are:

*Household acceptances*

- 12,860 applicants were accepted as owed a main homelessness duty between 1 April and 30 June 2012 – **9% higher than during the same quarter of 2011**
- On a seasonally-adjusted basis, there were 12,960 acceptances - a **decrease of 2% from 13,230 in the previous quarter**

*Households in temporary accommodation*

- 51,640 households were in temporary accommodation on 30 June 2012 – **7% higher than at the same date in 2011**
- On a seasonally-adjusted basis 51,540 households were in temporary accommodation on 30 June – a **2% increase from 50,480 in the previous quarter**

**5. Plan to boost British house building, jobs and the economy**

a) The Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, alongside the Communities Secretary Eric Pickles, have set out a major housing and planning package that will help deliver:

- Up to 70,000 new homes, including affordable housing and opportunities for first-time buyers to get onto the housing ladder
- 140,000 jobs and a boost to the construction sector
- £40 billion guarantee for major infrastructure projects and £10 billion for new homes

b) This includes a series of measures aimed at supporting businesses, developers and first-time buyers, while slashing unnecessary red tape across the planning system

c) The measures include:

- Removing restrictions on house builders to help unlock 75,000 homes currently stalled due to sites being commercially unviable. Developers who can prove that council's costly affordable housing requirements make the project unviable will see them removed
- New legislation for Government guarantees of up to £40 billion worth of major infrastructure projects and up to £10 billion of new homes. The Infrastructure (Financial Assistance) Bill will include guaranteeing the debt of Housing Associations and private sector developers
- Up to 15,000 affordable homes and bring 5,000 empty homes back into use using new capital funding of £300 million and the infrastructure guarantee
- An additional 5,000 homes built for rent at market rates in line with proposals outlined in Sir Adrian Montague's report to Government on boosting the private rented sector
- Thousands of big commercial and residential applications to be directed to a major infrastructure fast track and where councils are poor at processing decisions developers can opt to have their decisions taken by the Planning Inspectorate. More applications will also go into a fast track appeal process

- 16,500 first-time buyers helped with a £280m extension of the successful 'FirstBuy' scheme, which offers aspiring homeowners a much-needed deposit and a crucial first step on the housing ladder
- For a time limited period, slashing planning red tape, including sweeping away the rules and bureaucracy that prevent families and businesses from making improvements to their properties, helping tens of thousands of home owners and companies

## **6. Public and the police will benefit from reforms**

- a) The public and the police will benefit from a reformed police service which places greater emphasis on trust and accountability, the Home Secretary has said
- b) Addressing the annual Police Superintendents' Association conference, Home Secretary Theresa May said radical changes, including the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners and the new College of Policing, will empower the public and reward talented officers

### *Vision of the future*

- Addressing officers at the conference in Kenilworth, Warwickshire, the Home Secretary said, 'Our reforms are not complete, but with your help and your leadership we are moving closer to realising a vision of the future with greater trust and accountability, where both the police and the public are winners'
- The college, to be established before the end of the year, will recognise talent and experience already in policing and ensure forces have the right tools to protect the public. The Home Secretary said the college will provide greater transparency to the public about what they can expect from their force and the standards that it should meet

### *Cutting crime*

- Speaking at the conference, the Home Secretary praised the leadership and self-sacrifice shown by officers during the Olympic and Paralympic Games and welcomed a call from Derek Barnett, the outgoing President of the Association, for closer links between officers and the Government
- She reiterated her call for the police to focus on cutting crime but said it was down to individual officers to decide how best to do it
- Newly appointed Police and Criminal Justice Minister Damian Green also addressed the conference

## **7. £1 billion to improve council homes set to boost economy**

- a) Housing Minister Mark Prisk recently confirmed nearly £1 billion to bring sub-standard council homes up to scratch – while at the same time offering a boost to local businesses up and down the country
- b) The Minister said that the funding, to be allocated to 41 councils over the next 2 years – would bring over 86,000 homes up to a decent living standard
- c) And with reports in some areas that every pound spent on Decent Homes improvements creates £1.46 in local spend through orders to tradesmen

and suppliers in the area, he said the cash would also help kickstart the economy, supporting local tradesmen and creating new jobs

- d) The recent investment secures the future until the end of this Parliament of the Decent Homes Programme, confirming the indicative allocations made in 2011. The cash will help councils bring their homes up to a decent standard, from fitting new roofs and windows to updating kitchens or heating systems
- e) Mr Prisk said that this new construction and skilled work would provide a shot in the arm for thousands of local businesses and tradesmen, supporting the Government's measures to boost British jobs and the economy
- f) He is also keen to explore bringing forward some of this funding to councils to help boost their economies through local investment in decent homes. Officials will shortly be in touch with councils to see what may be done to achieve this
- g) The Minister said that spending money earlier would help boost local employment as early as possible, as well as delivering home improvements for tenants ahead of schedule
- h) The Government is keen to ensure that councils do everything they can to boost their economies through local investment with Decent Homes funding
- i) Almost £1.6 billion was allocated in this Spending Review to deal with Decent Homes backlog. Councils were allocated £612 million for years 2011/12 and 12/13, and this announcement confirms the £982.7 million indicative allocations for years 2013/14 and 2014/15

#### **8. Mark Prisk: Multi-million pound boost will help buyers onto the housing ladder**

- a) First time buyers have benefited from a multi-million pound boost to help them onto the housing ladder, Housing Minister Mark Prisk has announced
- b) The Minister announced the first allocations from a £280 million pot to help a further 16,500 first time buyers benefit from the FirstBuy scheme
- c) Mr Prisk confirmed that £40 million will go to 41 developers to help 2,500 first-time buyers this year, and called on them to go further, and bid for a share of £240 million to help deliver thousands more new homes under the scheme next year
- d) The hugely popular FirstBuy scheme reduces the amount of deposit first-time buyers have to find by offering an equity loan of up to 20% provided by the Government and developers
- e) The Minister said that the extension of FirstBuy would provide help to thousands more first time buyers across the country, offering an alternative to the Bank of Mum and Dad
- f) The scheme has already helped thousands of buyers across the country, with 3,000 sales made by March this year and developers reporting more than 8,000 FirstBuy reservations by the end of August
- g) The £280 million boost to FirstBuy forms part of the Housing and Growth Package announced by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister in September, one of a range of measures designed to get Britain building and kickstart the economy



- h) This package builds on the suite of options available for aspiring homeowners who want to get onto and up the housing ladder. This includes the NewBuy guarantee and the reinvigorated Right to Buy, which will give thousands of council tenants the opportunity to buy their home
- i) FirstBuy provides first time buyers with an equity loan of up to 20% of a new build property from a participating developer. The loan, which is jointly funded by Government and housebuilder, can reduce the deposit requirement to just 5%
- j) In Budget 2011 the Chancellor announced the FirstBuy scheme which will see Government and housebuilders providing £400 million to help around 10,500 first time buyers purchase a home
- k) The Homes & Communities Agency published official statistics on 12 June that showed there had been 2,994 sales by the end of March 2012-10-15 on 6 September the Prime Minister announced a further £280 million for the scheme
- l) The Homes & Communities Agency has announced initial allocations of £40 million and published a prospectus inviting housebuilders to submit proposals for the remaining £240 million

#### **9. Mark Prisk: First self-build projects to benefit from multi-million fund**

- a) Housing Minister Mark Prisk said he was delighted that the first applications for a slice of a new £30 million self-build investment fund have been earmarked for approval
- b) Speaking at a special self-build workshop for local authority leaders in London, Mr Prisk said that the first projects would benefit from over £1.1 million to start work on up to 20 self-build plots
- c) Following final checks and approvals, the applications in North East Derbyshire and Peterborough will be the first to receive the funding, which provides short-term finance to help unlock projects where groups of self-build homes are built at the same time
- d) The Minister, along with self-build industry champion, architecture specialist and presenter of Channel 4's Grand Designs Kevin McCloud, hosted the workshop for local authority leaders in association with the Local Government Association, to discuss how they could support prospective self builders in their area
- e) A specialist team from Almere in the Netherlands also attended to share their expertise. Almere, near Amsterdam, is the largest low-cost self-build experiment in Europe, which has grown rapidly in recent years
- f) Earlier this year the former Housing Minister travelled to Almere with a delegation from the UK self-build industry, and hosted an event with Dutch Government officials and business leaders at the British Embassy to boost trade and links between Dutch and British businesses
- g) Mr Prisk said that there has been a great surge of interest in recent years for self-build, and it was now important that local authorities learnt from abroad and local projects to identify opportunities for self-build development in their plans, and to give people in their area the opportunity to build their own home
- h) Approval for the first custom build homes funding application with a value of £450,000 has been given to a developer in North East Derbyshire on a site at Morton for 9 self-build plots. A second application for 11 self-build

plots with a loan value of approximately £725,000 for a site in Peterborough has also been approved. Both approvals are subject to final due diligence and contract. Details will be available once final due diligence checks have been finalised and contracts agreed

- i) A further application for funding has been received for a multi-unit self-build development on a site in Derbyshire and the Homes & Communities Agency is in discussion with several other project promoters who are seeking to apply for funding with more applications expected before the end of the year
- j) The £30 million fund will be available over the next 3 years (2012-15). Funding is available to cover the cost of building, land acquisition or other costs associated with a proposed development of 5 or more custom build homes with planning permission. The funding is available to eligible applicants bringing forward projects in England with the exception of London
- k) Separate funding arrangements are available for London
- l) *Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England* sets out the Government's plans to support social mobility and get the housing market – and in particular new house building – moving again, including a Custom Build Homes programme to support and encourage more individuals and communities to build their own homes