

6 January 2009

Dear Councillor

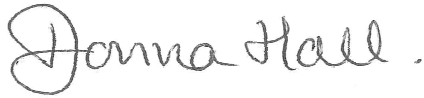
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - HOUSING ALLOCATIONS
POLICY - TUESDAY, 6TH JANUARY 2009**

The following report was tabled the above meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Housing Allocations Policy.

Agenda No	Item
3.	<u>Background information on the Allocations Policy</u> (Pages 63 - 78)

The Strategic Housing Manager gave a presentation outlining background information on the Allocations Policy, including a glossary of terms.

Yours sincerely



Donna Hall
Chief Executive

Ruth Hawes
Democratic and Member Services Officer
E-mail: ruth.hawes@chorley.gov.uk
Tel: (01257) 515118
Fax: (01257) 515150

**This information can be made available to you in larger print
or on audio tape, or translated into your own language.
Please telephone 01257 515118 to access this service.**

આ માહિતીનો અનુવાદ આપની પોતાની ભાષામાં કરી શકાય છે. આ સેવા સરળતાથી મેળવવા
માટે કૃપા કરી, આ નંબર પર ફોન કરો: 01257 515822 01257 515823

ان معلومات کا ترجمہ آپ کی اپنی زبان میں بھی کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ یہ خدمت استعمال کرنے کیلئے براہ مہربانی اس نمبر پر ٹیلیفون
کیجئے:

This page is intentionally left blank



Allocations Policy

Presentation by Zoë Whiteside
Strategic Housing Services Manager
6th January 2009

Introduction

- Why do we have an Allocation Policy
- Key Differences between ‘new and old’
- What the new policy will mean for customers
- Choice Based Lettings

Why do we have an Allocations Policy ?

Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) states that all Local Authorities are required to have a policy which gives clear guidelines and publicise on how they will prioritise allocations of social rented housing stock.

The policy covers either allocations within its own stock or through a nomination to a Housing Association.

Why do we have an Allocations Policy...

All Local Authorities must by law give 'reasonable preference' to the following category of applicants:

- People who are homeless**
- People owed a duty under the homelessness legislation**
- People living in unsanitary, overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing**
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability**
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship.**
- A Local Authority may be allowed to give additional priority to an applicant who are considered to have more urgent housing needs: e.g. financial and local connection.**

Key Proposed Changes ‘between old and new’

- The main difference between the two policies is the move away from the points system.
- Currently, people who apply for housing with the Council are assessed and given a point score of between 0 and 35.
- 0 being an applicant who is not threatened with homelessness, no medical, adequately housed and no local connection with 35 being statutorily homelessness.
- There are occasions where households may be scored as a minus. This is solely for current or former rent arrears either with a Housing Association or a Private Landlord.



Key Proposed Changes ‘between old and new’

Current Policy

Housing Circumstances	Maximum Number of Points
Statutory Homeless	35
Non-statutory homeless	12
Threatened with homeless / Living in Temporary	12
Insecure Tenancy	8
Housing Amenities	17
Overcrowding	4
Under occupancy	2
Housing Standards	30
Timepoints	5
Medical	10
Enhanced medical/social	5
Discretionary social points	5
Parish Connection	5
Borough Resident Connection	5
Age Points	1

Key Proposed Changes ‘between old and new’

- The proposed scheme will move away from the points system and replace with a transparent banding system.
- There will be four bands that replace the 35 points and the proposed policy accurately reflects to Housing Act and is believed to be easier to understand for customers.
- The four bands will consist of:
 - Band 1 - Urgent Need due to additional preference or cumulative need
 - Band 2 – Need to move – Reasonable preference
 - Band 3 – Recognisable Need
 - Band 4 – None of the above but would like to move

Key Proposed Changes ‘between old and new’

Housing Circumstances	Band
Emergency Medical (life threatening condition) Management Transfer (anti social, domestic abuse, racial) Release Adapted property Applicants who fall into 2 or more criteria in Band 2	<h1>1</h1>
Households who have been classed as statutory homeless Private Sector statutory duty (Closing order – Unfit) Households living in temporary accommodation Applicants leaving care Households who are overcrowded Households who are under occupying Households at risk of homeless who have accepted a prevention option Medical	<h1>2</h1>
Households who have not been classed as statutory homeless Employment Opportunity Applicant who has been awarded reasonable preference but has been downgraded due to rent, anti social behaviour or no local connection.	<h1>3</h1>
Households who do not qualify for Bands 1,2 or 3 and would like to move	<h1>4</h1>

What would the proposed policy mean to our customers?

- All customers who are the Councils Housing Register would be transferred to the new banding system.
- Letters would be sent advising of their new status on the list.
- A review is currently being undertaken to assess numbers of those losing priority as a result of the new policy.

What would the proposed policy mean for our customers?

- The Councils nomination rights to Housing Association properties would remain the same.
Increase of control from the Council to ensure that an appropriate mix of households who are in housing need are offered accommodation.

The policy is reflective of a potential Choice Based Lettings policy.

Choice Based Lettings

Choice Based Lettings is a fundamental change to the way rented accommodation is allocated.

Traditionally, an officer would 'offer' available accommodation and the client would not be involved in the process.

Properties in low demand areas would primarily be offered to homeless households and nationally it is believed that this type of working has contributed towards areas of high unemployment, high teenage pregnancy rates and high anti social behaviour.

Choice Based Lettings

Choice Based Lettings empowers applicants by allowing them to ‘bid’ or ‘express interest’ only in properties they wish to be considered for

It can work like an Estate Agent, where all available properties are advertised and applicants can view them.

Within the Corporate Strategy there is a task to establish a Choice Based Lettings scheme.

During the last 12 months, the Strategic Housing team have been liaising with our Housing Association partners to gauge interest in participating in such a scheme.

A Commissioning Group was established and consisted of the Council and 3 Housing Association partners which account for over 97% of social rented stock in the borough.

Choice Based Lettings

The group considered the options available to establish the project.

Following interviews with sub regional partners, Selectmove 'Preston and South Ribble CBL scheme' was chosen as a preferred partner.

Under Choice Based Lettings, Local Authorities still have nomination rights to Housing Association properties.

Each Local Authority partner is responsible for monitoring performance in their own area.

To ensure that households who are in housing need are allocated property, there would be a single allocation policy, agreed by all partners and the LA would monitor performance.

Since establishing Choice Based Lettings in Preston and South Ribble, they have reported a decrease in temporary accommodation use and also a decrease in waiting time for households who are in housing need.

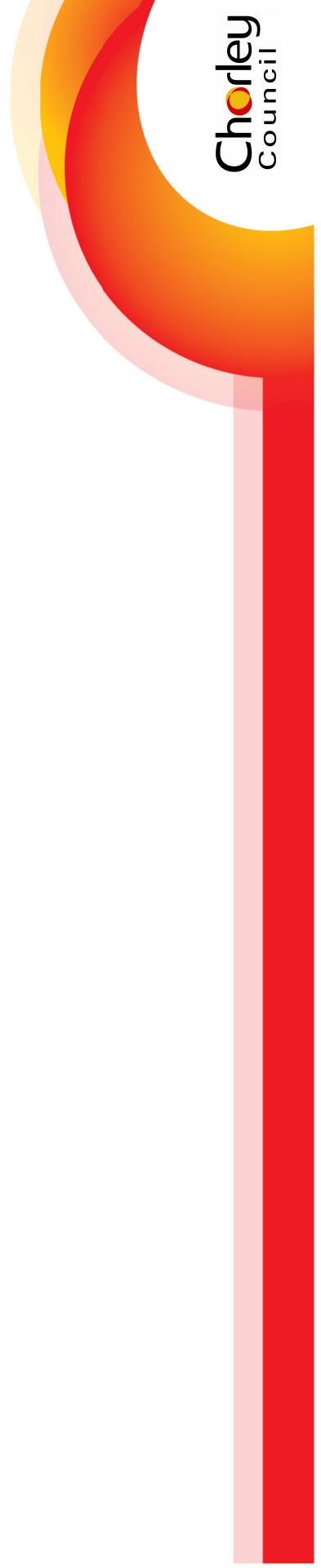
Any questions ?

Contact :

Zoë Whiteside
Strategic Housing Manager
Chorley Borough Council

Tel 01257 515711

Email: zoe.whiteside@chorley.gov.uk



Glossary of terms – Allocations Policy Scrutiny

Assured tenancy

This is a tenancy that gives security of tenure but at a market rent rate. Under this arrangement the (1) landlord cannot regain possession of the property except under certain statutory provisions, (2) may apply to raise the rent to current market level, within certain limitations, and (3) tenant cannot assign the tenancy to a third party without landlord's approval but (upon the tenants death) his or her spouse may continue the tenancy.

Starter Tenancy

This is a 'trial' tenancy offered by housing associations to new customers lasting for 12 months. During this time the tenant has less security, and can be evicted more easily should there be breaches of tenancy such as rent arrears and anti social behaviour.

Assured shorthold tenancy

Assured shorthold tenancies are periodic tenancies, usually of a six month period which afford tenants which do not give long-term security. They are not regulated by usual rent controls. This is the default tenancy for most dwellings in England. The landlord has the right to terminate the tenancy by using a "section 21 notice", resulting in a minimum notice period of 2 months.

Joint Tenancy

This is a tenancy shared by two or more persons of the same property. They share equal rights of the property, and are jointly responsible to abide by the tenancy conditions.

Full homeless duty

This duty is owed where the Authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified priority need group.

Intentionally homeless

The Authority can decide that an applicant is intentionally homeless following enquiries into the reasons why homelessness has occurred. This may be due to the following:

An applicant deliberately did (or didn't do) something, that caused them to leave accommodation, which they could otherwise have stayed in, and it would have been reasonable for them to stay there.

Leaving care protocol

This type of protocol is in response to the Children (leaving Care) Act 2000, which itself was designed to improve the life chances of children living in and who have left local authority care. The aim of the protocol is to offer guidance to ensure consistent arrangements and appropriate support for young people are in as they make their transition to adulthood.

Statutory overcrowding

The current definition of statutory overcrowding has been in place since 1935. It discounts children under the age of 12 months and counts those between one and ten as half a person. Unlike the bedroom standard, it also includes living rooms as acceptable places to sleep. This means that families with children must endure very high levels of overcrowding before the statutory threshold is breached.

Prevention option

This is where a customer accepts the offer of an range of 'tools' used by the Council to prevent their homelessness, and can include referral to mediation, a home visit to parents, a private sector bond, and a prevention fund payment.

Non priority homeless

A person may be deemed as homeless, but may not be eligible for assistance because they do not fall within a specified priority need group.

Suitable offer of accommodation

This is an offer of accommodation which in the opinion of the Council, fully meets the housing needs of an applicant.

Housing register

The Authority is not legally required but good practice dictates that Councils should maintain a register of applicants for social housing to ensure that those with 'reasonable preference' are afforded priority, as governed by Part 6 of The Housing Act 1996.

Local connection

A person must have a local connection to qualify for assistance under the Homelessness Act 2002 legislation. A connection is considered to be immediate family, employment or residence in an area for a set period of time.

Shared ownership

A purchase scheme allowing people to own equity share in a property, with the remaining share rented.

Homebuy

A scheme consisting of a range of low cost home ownership options funded by the government in England to help assist first time buyers and key workers access home ownership which is affordable.

Managed relocation pathway

Process to enable access to alternative social housing if current property has been deemed 'unfit' or due for demolition.

Re-let time

The length of time a property is empty, between the tenancy termination date, and the new tenancy commencement date.

Void rent loss

The amount of rent due which is lost whilst a property is empty, undergoing necessary repairs, between the tenancy termination date and the new tenancy commencement date.

Core data

Information submitted by each Housing Association to the University of St Andrews, who in turn publish performance tables for areas such as relet times, number of tenancies failing.