

REPORT TO COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 5 NOVEMBER 2020

HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY REVIEW

1 Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 The housing allocation policy is currently being reviewed. Following the review, Communities Committee are being asked to consider the service report and agree the appended draft housing allocation policy. The result of agreement would be the introduction of a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) approach to housing allocations.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 **Consider comments provided by area committees in respect of the report and draft housing allocation policy.**
- 2.2 **Agree the implementation of a Choice Based Lettings approach for the new housing allocation policy.**

3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 A report was taken to Communities Committee on 21 December 2017 asking for approval to undertake an allocation policy review. The review was due to take place in October 2018, however this was delayed due to the introduction of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans (RRTP) and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.
- 3.2 The consultation started in August 2019 with a survey questionnaire and mini public events. Following these events, a report was presented to each Area Committee for comment before being submitted to Communities Committee in February 2020 where approval was granted to investigate a CBL approach.
- 3.3 A further round of consultation was undertaken on the draft policy in July 2020 with the final draft being presented to area committees in September for comment.

4 Discussion

- 4.1 A copy of the proposed draft Housing Allocation Policy can be found at Appendix A.
- 4.2 **Choice Based Letting (CBL)** is an alternative method of allocating housing, often used by social housing providers. It is an Internet based system where applicants can view property features including rents and additional costs. Having registered with the provider the applicant may be given a priority banding

dependent on needs. Some providers also have separate priority for those moving from social housing (mover) and coming in new (starter). Available properties are listed on a website and on a hard copy list which may be published in the press. Applicants can see property details and choose to apply or 'bid' for a property via the website. There are different models of CBL however the main feature is that applicants have a choice to bid for a property that they want. However, if there are multiple applicants for one property the allocation reverts to a points or banding system where the tenant is prioritised on their need. Examples of CBL: - Homehunt; Highland Council; and Key to Choice in Edinburgh.

- 4.3 Following approval at Communities Committee in February 2020, the service carried out further investigations into the CBL approach. This included reference to the Scottish Government's Social Housing Allocations Scotland Practice Guide and all relevant legislation. This combined with the information gathered during site visits to other organisations operating CBL, comments from service users and elected members during the first round of consultation and published good practice led to the development of the attached policy.
- 4.4 CBL's have been the centre of much discussion and research by the Chartered Institute of Housing, Shelter, and the Scottish Government. They have explored the idea that traditional allocation processes do not allow for applicants to feel empowered to make their own choices and are often penalised for refusing an offer of housing.
- 4.5 The allocation of housing is now more than just somewhere to live but has a wider impact on the community and sustainability. Through research, choice is key to making this work. It is key to any allocation policy that housing need is at the core, however choice should be part of this process. The revised policy therefore ensures housing need is the key aspect to housing allocations but allowing applicants to feel empowered by providing some choice. This policy has been shared below with all Elected Members.
- 4.6 The key changes of the proposed policy are detailed below:

Policy – general	The policy details how applicants make an application for housing, how it will be assessed and banded, how adverts will be shown along with information on how to register an interest. It then details the allocation and offer stages. All areas have been updated to reflect the new process (Appendix B).
Housing Need	The policy will still be based on housing need which will continue to be assessed as it is at present. The banding matrix (see p16 of the policy) sets out how each application is assessed, and which banding is awarded. This will determine the priority of the applicant.

<p>Choice Based Lettings</p>	<p>Applicants currently choose which area they wish to live in, but no other choice is given. The proposed policy uses a CBL approach to allow applicants to register an interest on specific properties which they wish to be considered for. This will reduce refusal rates as applicants have actively chosen to be considered for this property.</p> <p>CBL also allows the Council to be transparent about the numbers of properties it has available to let, where these properties are and the size. This will allow those on the waiting list to see this information and allow them to manage their choices and expectations.</p>
<p>Auto-Register</p>	<p>During the first round of consultation, concerns were raised about how homeless and vulnerable households would be supported to use CBLs.</p> <p>An assistance tool called Auto-Register will be set up for applicants who do not have regular access to the internet. Applicants can tell the service which areas they wish to be considered for and a register of interest can be placed on their behalf for any suitable properties.</p> <p>Auto-register may be used where an applicant has not been actively bidding but who has an urgent need for housing. This will be applied after 3 months if they have not secured accommodation.</p> <p>As part of this process, the service has also reviewed the areas of choice. This change has led to areas being grouped together to include surrounding settlements. These areas have also been consulted on and feedback shows that people agree with the approach.</p>
<p>Local Lettings Initiatives (LLI)</p>	<p>Local Lettings Initiatives (LLIs) may be used for new build schemes to create sustainable communities. Any allocations made must still comply with legislation. Conditions for LLIs have been set out in the policy and must be reviewed regularly.</p> <p>LLIs have been trialed for new build properties to provide data on whether they should be included within the policy. Following discussions with Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners, they confirmed that when LLIs have been used this has reduced tenancy management issues and improved communities.</p>
<p>Access to children</p>	<p>The current policy requires applicants with access to children to have them at least 50% of the year to be considered for an additional bedroom. This has been</p>

	reviewed and changed to remove this percentage requirement for those with established access to promote more equality within this group.
Family Household composition	Removal of condition that those serving in Her Majesty's Forces and will not be discharged within the next 6 months will not be considered in the family's household composition.
Homeownership	The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 allows for landlords to take into consideration when an applicant owns a property or land where they might otherwise reside. There are some circumstances where this cannot be considered, and these are detailed within the policy. During the first round of consultation, it was agreed that this should be introduced to the new policy.
Armed Forces/Veterans	The housing application form will include questions to identify whether the applicant is a serving member/ veteran or spouse of the Armed Forces. This will allow the service to carry out more thorough investigations on the requirements of this group in Aberdeenshire to find the appropriate solutions in a further policy review. The comments received from Veterans Aberdeenshire have been taken on board and the banding matrix sets out the priority for the group.

4.7 In July 2020, this policy was released for a further round of consultation. To ensure that a wide range of service users and partners had the opportunity to comment, the documentation was issued to:

- All housing users
- All registered interested tenants
- Those involved in the last consultation events
- Social Work
- Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners
- Local Authorities
- Community Groups
- Tenant groups
- Health and Social Care Partnership
- Third sector partners
- Armed forces charities
- Press release and social media promotion
- Veterans Aberdeenshire

Staff were also asked to share it with any relevant organisations or service users that they work with.

- 4.8 A dedicated webpage was set up for the consultation which contained the draft policy, consultation questions, short videos explaining the new system and links to Teams events.
- 4.9 The service had planned to carry out more mini public events across Aberdeenshire to complement this part of the consultation however, due to Covid-19 these were unable to take place. To ensure comments and discussion could still be undertaken, three Microsoft Team events were set up.
- 4.10 The events and consultation ran through July and closed on 9 August. While the number of respondents were limited, the feedback received was positive and in agreement with the proposed policy. Feedback has been reviewed and the policy updated where appropriate.
- 4.11 The draft policy was then presented to each area committee to allow further consultation and discussion. A summary of the discussion and outcomes from these meetings can be found at Appendix C along with a service response.
- 4.12 Following comments from area committees, the final report is now being presented to Communities Committee for approval. The service will look to ensure systems are changed, procedures are in place and staff are trained. The anticipated implementation date for the policy, subject to these tasks being completed is April 2021. This will replace the Apply4Homes system. The current webpage details will be retained, and this will be used as a housing options landing page making it easy for applicants to access housing application forms for social housing providers in the area. Every effort is being made to meet these timescales however, it should be noted that due to Covid-19, delivery may be delayed.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 5.1 This Report helps to deliver the Council Priority “Health and Wellbeing” within the pillar “Our People” and the principles which underpin this priority of “Right people, Right places, Right time” and “tackling poverty and inequalities”.
- 5.2 This report helps deliver against Aberdeenshire’s Local Housing Strategy and Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.
- 5.3 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial	X		
Staffing	X		
Equalities	EIA attached as Appendix D		
Fairer Scotland Duty	EIA attached as Appendix D		
Town Centre First	TCF impact assessment attached as Appendix E		
Sustainability	X		
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing	X		

5.4 An equality impact assessment has been carried out as part of the development of the proposals set out above. It is included as Appendix D and there are no negative impacts identified.

5.5 Financial and Staffing Implications

Financial

There are financial implications in this report. A new online application system is required as part of the development of this policy. The contract for the current Apply4Homes application system is due to end on 31 March 2021 so cannot be used for this purpose.

The new module required to implement this policy is part of a wider project being undertaken by the housing service. This will be funded by Housing Revenue Account. The ongoing maintenance costs of this contract will be less than the costs of the current Apply4Homes system. This will lead to a saving within the service budget.

Set up costs are required for all new systems and as Apply4Homes is no longer fit for purpose the service requires to procure a new online application system. Set up costs for the proposed solution have been estimated at £45,000. This includes the modules required for the housing application and CBL and is a one-off charge.

Annual support and maintenance costs have been estimated at £9,000. On average over the past 5 years, the cost to the Council for the current system has been £15,672. This is an achievable annual saving of £6,672.

Staffing costs will be met within existing resources.

Staffing

There are staffing implications because of this report. Staff will require to build, test, and implement the new system and provide training to teams. This will all be carried out within existing resources. Staff have been consulted about the changes proposed in this report.

- 5.6 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level; ACORP006 - reputation management (including social media), if the system is unsuccessful or doesn't embed well and ACORP007 - social risk (e.g. population changes, poverty & social inequality, demographic changes, crime, antisocial behaviour) if the communities created are unsustainable.

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level; ISSR005 - Affordable Housing

6 Scheme of Governance

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Sections B1.2 and B11.1 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to the Committee's powers to consider, comment on and make recommendations to Services and any other appropriate Committee on any matter or policy which impacts its area; and consider and comment on proposals to amend Council policy and/or develop policy in line with the Policy Development and Review Framework and make recommendations to the relevant Policy Committee.

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Date 23 September 2020

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Housing Allocation Policy
Appendix B - Amended Areas
Appendix C – Area Committee Feedback
Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix E – Town Centre First Impact Assessment

HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

April 2021

The Allocation Policy sets out how Aberdeenshire Council (herein referred to as the Council) carries out its statutory duty of allocating houses based on an assessment of the housing need of applicants. The Allocation Policy operates a Choice Based Lettings approach allowing applications to register an interest on properties which match their needs in areas they wish to live. This Policy details how this process works, how housing need is assessed and how allocations are made.

In order to comply with its statutory duties, the Housing Allocation Policy refers to and considers the following legislation:

- Housing (Scotland) Act 1987
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014
- Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003
- Code of Guidance on Homelessness (2019)
- Equality Act 2010
- Humans Rights Act 1998
- General Data Protection Regulations 2018

In the development of this policy, the following guidance was also incorporated:

- Social Housing Allocations Practice Guide (2019)
- Legal Framework for Social Housing Allocations – Statutory Guidance for Social Landlords
- Statutory Guidance on Suspensions
- Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans
- Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Local Housing Strategy

With due regard to performance, the Council applies the following standards: -

1. Access to Housing

We ensure that people have fair and open access to our housing list and assessment process. We work with others to maximise and simplify routes into housing.

2. Lettings

We let houses in a way that gives reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need; makes best use of available stock; maximises choice; and helps to sustain communities while positively impacting on homelessness in Aberdeenshire.

3. Quality of Accommodation

When we arrange temporary or permanent accommodation, we treat all applicants fairly and appropriately in terms of tenancy provision, quality, re-lettable standards and location.

4. Equal Opportunities

In the operation of this policy the Council will not discriminate against any person because of age, religion and belief, sexual orientation, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership.

The Allocation Policy is underpinned by general conditions (Appendix 1) and procedures to ensure its consistent application across Aberdeenshire.

Consultation

Consultation for this review has included online questionnaires and mini public events. Current applicants, former applicants and tenants were consulted alongside other stake holders and elected members. A second wave of consultation took place in July 2020 on the proposed policy before being presented to elected members for comment and approval.

The Council have agreed that the next full review of this policy will be in April 2024 unless any changes in legislation are enacted before then.

Access and Eligibility

The Council's Allocation Policy is written in accordance with Sections 19-21 of The Housing (Scotland) Act 1987: as amended by The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014.

Applicants for the provision of housing held by the Council will be admitted to the housing list provided they are 16 years of age or older.

With regard to houses in Council ownership, or through nomination agreements with Registered Social Landlords (RSL) who provide housing in Aberdeenshire, the selection of tenants or nominees ensures that reasonable preference will be given to those who can demonstrate a housing need including: -

- homeless persons and persons threatened with homelessness and who have unmet housing needs;
- people who are living under unsatisfactory housing conditions and who have unmet housing needs; and
- tenants of houses which are held by a social landlord, which the social landlord selecting its tenants considers to be under occupied.

Applications may be accepted from persons from countries within and out with the EU provided there are no immigration restrictions and the applicant has recourse to public funds.

The Council's Banding Scheme

An applicant will be placed into a banding based on their housing need. Applicants will be assessed against a standard matrix (Appendix 2) to decide what band they will be placed in. An applicant can be awarded a number of need factors appropriate to their housing need. The greater the 'need' a housing applicant has, the more likelihood they have of being allocated housing.

Applicants can also apply for Sheltered Housing or Very Sheltered Housing subject to eligibility criteria. (Appendix 3)

Applications where Aberdeenshire Council have accepted a duty to rehouse as defined in Part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Homelessness etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 will be placed in Band A.

The allocation of a vacant property will be based on housing need and the choices of the applicant, such as letting area/s, and property size communicated through a Choice Based Lettings approach.

The components of the policy are: -

- a) General Conditions (appendix 1)
- b) Banding Scheme (appendix 2)
- c) Sheltered Housing and Very Sheltered Housing Allocation Criteria (appendix 3)
- d) Exemptions to adding additional areas for applicants in Band A (appendix 4)
- e) Mutual Exchange Procedure (appendix 5)

APPLICATION, SELECTION AND NOMINATION PROCEDURE

Applicants will be required to apply for housing online. Where they are unable to do so, assistance will be provided. Following completion of the application form, the application will be verified. This will be done within 5 days. Verification must be completed before an applicant can actively register an interest on vacant properties.

As part of the application process, applicants will be required to select areas in which they wish to be considered for housing. This will not prevent the applicant registering an interest on properties out with these areas, but the information will be used in the following circumstances:

For strategic purposes and to inform housing need and demand.

To provide nominations to RSL partners where the applicant had stated they wish to be considered.

To allow Officers to manage the Auto-Register process (see below) for those who require rapid rehousing.

Applicants in the highest priority banding 'A', who may have exceptional circumstances which require them to be housed in one particular settlement, will have the right to request an exemption from the requirement to add additional settlements. (Appendix 4).

When a council property becomes available for let, the property will be advertised online. The advert will hold details of the property including:

- Address
- Size and Type
- Rental Costs
- Council Tax band
- Photos/floor plans (where available)
- Local Facilities
- Any other relevant information (i.e. adaptations, lettings initiatives)

Each advert will be open for viewing online for one week. Applicants should register their interest before the closing date displayed on the advert. Where an applicant doesn't have access to the online system, lists of properties will be emailed. Details will also be available on the app. The applicant will also be able to Auto-Register (see below) to ensure that they are able to register for vacancies.

REGISTERING AN INTEREST PROCEDURE

Registering an interest should be done online by the applicant. Where the applicant doesn't have access to the online system, assistance can be given by housing options staff.

Alternatives to registering an interest online are

- Contact dedicated telephone line
- Get help from friends/family
- Use app to register interest

- Email request for interest to registered
- Auto-register

Applicants will be allowed to register an interest on as many properties as they wish provided, they match their requirements. Applicants should register interests in order of preference.

Adverts will specify which applicants can apply for the vacancy i.e. where the property is adapted to suit particular needs clients, the advert will only allow those with this need apply. Applicants will only be able to register an interest in properties that relate to the size of their household.

When selecting applicants for specially adapted properties, consideration will be given to the recommendations of the Housing Occupational Therapist or other health professional.

Choice Based Lettings only work where applicants actively register for suitable properties. Housing Officers will actively monitor applicants who are not registering to assess the reasons why. Where a Band A applicant is not registering an interest, actions will be taken to ensure a rapid rehousing approach (see Auto-Register).

Where all other options are exhausted, a direct allocation may be made to resolve an applicant's housing situation.

The Council reserves the right to withdraw any property from an advert in cases where the property is required for an urgent housing case.

AUTO-REGISTER

Auto-Register is a method to enable a register of interest to be placed for an applicant without the need for them to physically do it themselves.

Applicants can opt into this service when they apply. This means that any property that matches the selected areas and property size will be bid against.

Where an applicant has been awarded a Band A, auto-register will be placed against their application where they have failed to actively register an interest in suitable properties. These applicants will be allowed 3 months to manage their own interests but failure to secure accommodation within that time, may lead to the Housing Officer placing the application on Auto-Register. In these cases, the applicant's areas of choice and property size will still be used in order to register an interest on suitable vacancies. Applicants will also be able to bid for any other properties they deem suitable. This will ensure that applicants still have a choice in their allocation.

Placing an applicant on auto-register will be assessed by the Housing Officer and in conjunction with the applicant's needs while taking a person-centered approach.

Offers made by auto-register will be deemed as suitable unless evidence can be provided to support otherwise (see reasonable offer section 8.6)

Allocation

After the advert has closed, the waiting list will be assessed and the applicant with the highest need will be offered the property. Where two applicants have the same priority, the applicant who applied first will be offered the property. Where the applicant at the top of the list has not been made the offer, clear reasons for bypassing will be documented. Allocations will be made in line with allocation quotas and targets.

Applicants will be advised after they register and interest, that if they do not hear back from the housing service within 5 working days, their application has been unsuccessful.

Nominations to other Housing Providers

The Council has nomination rights to a percentage of vacancies which arise in Registered Social Landlord (RSL) stock. When a request for a nomination is received the council will nominate a number of applicants in accordance with the selection procedure outlined above and the specific requirements of the RSL.

The Council will also make nominations for mid-market rental properties in accordance with agreed selection criteria set out for each development.

Transfers

Transfers provide current tenants the opportunity to move to alternative accommodation where they have the need to do so. Allocations will be made to this group proportionally.

Mutual Exchanges

Tenants are encouraged to consider an exchange of housing with other tenants as a means of meeting their housing needs. There is a procedure that details how this scheme is operated (Appendix 5). In principle, the council will agree to an exchange taking place if specific criteria are met and the exchange does not result in the housing circumstances of either party becoming worse.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

APPENDIX 1

1 Records

Data will be processed in line with the Data Protection legislation including General Data Protection Regulations and Data Protection Act 2018. Information on how this is carried out and applicant's right will be provided at point of application in a Privacy Statement.

2 Equality

Where a cohabiting, engaged or married couple apply, any eligibility requirements may be satisfied by either partner. Same sex couples will be treated in the same way as couples of the opposite sex.

3 Equal Opportunities

In the operation of this policy the Council will not discriminate against any person because of age, religion and belief, sexual orientation, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership.

4 Change in Circumstances

Applicants are required to give notification immediately of any change in family circumstances, change of address or any other change, which may affect their housing application. This should be done by updating the housing application or by contacting the local Housing Office.

5 Review of Applications

All applications for housing will be reviewed annually in the month of the original application unless the application has been accessed in which case the review date will be moved to the anniversary date of when it was last accessed. The applicant will be invited to confirm the relevant details held about their application and to confirm their wish to remain on the waiting list. Failure to do so will result in the removal of the application from the waiting list. Applicants will be sent the review letter or email and those that do not respond will be issued with a reminder. Failure to respond to the review letter or email and the reminder, will result in the application being cancelled and they will be advised in the reminder that this is the last contact about the application. Applicants can reapply at any time.

6 Size of Accommodation

Single Person	1 bedroom
*Single Person or Couple where pregnancy confirmed	1 or 2 bedrooms
*Couple with no family resident	1 or 2 bedrooms
Family with one child	2 bedrooms
Family with two children of the same sex both under 10 years of age	2 bedrooms
*Family with two children of the same sex with either one or both aged 10 years or over	2 or 3 bedrooms
*Family with two children of the opposite sex both under 5 years of age	2 or 3 bedrooms
*Family with two children of the opposite sex with either one or both aged 5 years or over	2 or 3 bedrooms
*Family with three or more children dependent on ages or sex	3 or 4 bedrooms

Note 1: It should be noted that the categories of size of accommodation as indicated by an asterisk * above, provide applicants with a choice of property size. However, if applicant chooses the larger property, they may only be entitled to a banding for the smaller property. In these cases, applicants may bid for properties in either or both size categories.

Due to changes in housing benefit and universal credit entitlement the number of bedrooms an applicant has in their property will affect the amount of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit housing element they are entitled to if they are of working age.

This equates to a 14% reduction in Housing Benefit or Housing element if the applicant has one bedroom too many, and 25% if they have two or more bedrooms too many.

Therefore, although there are some exemptions, generally all of the categories marked with an asterisk above provide the option of a property larger than what has been determined by the government as an adequate size.

Applicants can request more information on this at time of application as this situation is being regularly reviewed and changed.

Note 2: A relative or friend intending to reside with the applicant's household will require a separate bedroom.

Note 3: The Occupational Therapist or other health professional may direct that a person is to have a separate bedroom on medical grounds.

Note 4: Couples will include those living together as co-habitees and will include couples of the same or opposite sex.

Note 5: Applicants with residential contact with a dependent child or children may be considered for larger accommodation but will only be entitled to one additional bedroom irrespective to the number of children covered by the access agreement. Due to the shortage of housing stock and to ensure the best use of the property, the priority for the authority is to provide suitable sized accommodation for households where the child or children lives with the applicant on a permanent basis.

In areas where low demand exists applicants may be offered accommodation larger than the sizes indicated above.

7 Amendments to the Policy

The Policy may only be amended by resolution of the Aberdeenshire Council's Communities Committee.

8 Suspension from Offer of Housing

In some cases, an applicant may be suspended from receiving an offer of housing. The Council will ensure that suspensions from the waiting list are kept to a minimum, however the list below covers circumstances when this would be considered, how long the suspension period would be for and action applicants can take for the suspension to be removed.

Evidence must be obtained and recorded to support the decision to suspend an application. This can only be used to suspend the application once and cannot be used to add additional time to the suspension period without new evidence being provided.

In all of the cases below, the Housing Manager has discretion to waive or vary any condition where the circumstances of the case justify it and are exceptional.

8.1 False Information

Where an applicant deliberately gives false information, or knowingly withholds relevant information in relation to an application it shall be suspended from receiving offers for a period of up to 12 months.

If an allocation has been made prior to the discovery of false information that allocation shall be considered to be null and void. Where a tenancy has been created, prior to the discovery of false information, the Council shall take such steps as considered necessary to repossess the house. Any new application will be suspended from the waiting list for a period of 12 months.

8.2 Outstanding Debts

Any applicant who owes rent, rechargeable repairs, or any housing debt to a local authority, a Registered Social Landlord or to a private landlord, may not be considered for a tenancy.

In cases where the amount outstanding is not more than 1/12th of the annual amount payable (or which was payable) by the applicant to the landlord in respect of the tenancy consideration will be given for the allocation of housing.

Consideration will be given to applicants with housing debt where the Applicant has an agreed arrangement with the landlord for paying the outstanding liability; is continuing to make such payments in accordance with that arrangement for at least 3 months; and the repayment agreement reflects that the total debt will be cleared within a reasonable period. Please refer to the Council's Re-housing with Debt policy for further details.

Applicants will remain suspended until they meet one of the criteria above. The application will be reviewed and reinstated once this has been met.

8.3 Unsatisfactory Tenancy

Any applicant whose present house is in a neglected, unclean or damaged condition or garden is in an unkempt condition will not be considered for a tenancy until the situation is rectified and monitored over a reasonable period. The monitoring period will normally be for 3 months but may be longer depending on the circumstances of the individual case.

8.4 Anti-Social Behaviour

An applicant may be suspended due to antisocial behaviour for 12 months. Antisocial behaviour is defined as an action or course of conduct causing or likely to cause alarm, distress, nuisance or annoyance. Conduct in this context includes things which a person has said as well as physical

actions. A course of conduct must involve antisocial behaviour on at least two occasions.

This could include being antisocial in the locality of the house they live in, pursued a course of action such as harassment or acted in an antisocial manner to staff of the Council.

Applicants who have been evicted for anti-social behaviour may be suspended from receiving an offer of accommodation for 12 months from the date of eviction. An individual's circumstances will be taken into account before suspending an application.

Applicants who have been evicted for anti-social behaviour in the preceding three years, or where a member of the applicant's household is subject to an Anti-Social Behaviour Order, may be considered for the allocation of a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy for a period up to 18 months. This may lead to a secure tenancy where the Housing Manager is satisfied that the tenancy has been conducted in a satisfactory manner.

In order for an applicant to be suspended on the grounds of Anti-Social Behaviour, robust evidence must be provided to support the suspension.

8.5 Previous Convictions

An applicant may also be suspended from receiving offers if they have been convicted of using a house or allowing its use for immoral or illegal purposes or where the offence, punishable by imprisonment, was committed in or in the locality of a house they have occupied.

The Council will consider the nature of the crime and whether this had an impact on people living in, or in the locality of the house prior to placing the applicant on suspension.

8.6 Evictions and Abandonments

An applicant may be suspended where they have been evicted from a previous tenancy or have abandoned a previous tenancy in the last three years.

Where an eviction has taken place for rent arrears, the suspension time will be as detailed at 8.2. If the eviction was for Anti-social behavior, the suspension time will be as detailed at 8.4 or 8.5.

Suspension periods for those who have abandoned a previous tenancy could be up to 6 months, however the circumstances will be taken into account.

8.7 Worsening of Housing Conditions

If it is found that an applicant purposely changed address or acted otherwise to fraudulently worsen their housing circumstances in an endeavour to obtain an increase in priority, such additional priority will not be awarded for a period of 6 months from the date of which the change was reported.

8.8 Reasonable Offer

If an applicant on the waiting list is to be considered for housing the Council will make one reasonable offer of accommodation (this will include an offer received from another RSL as a result of a nomination by the Council) taking into account what the applicant has applied for, the size of the property required and the availability of property in the applicants area/s of choice and any medical need. This will also apply if an applicant has bid and has subsequently been offered a property via *Homehunt* and then chooses to refuse it.

If an applicant decides not to accept a nomination to a mid market rent property this will not be taken as a refusal.

8.9 Refusal of an Offer

If an applicant refuses one offer of a property which they have registered an interest on, the application will be suspended for 6 months. The Council will determine what is a reasonable offer taking into account the criteria detailed in paragraph 8.7 above and the reasons for refusal. Following the completion of the suspension period, the applicant will be reinstated and able to register and receive offers.

9 Household Composition

In order to determine the composition of an applicant's household, for the purpose of assessing the priority in relation to any application the following shall be disregarded: -

Any member of the household:

Who is a hospital patient and who is unlikely in the opinion of NHS or Health Professional to be discharged; or

Who is serving a prison sentence longer than 13 weeks; or

Who is a child under the care of a Local Authority and who is unlikely to return to live with the applicant.

10 Homeownership

Where an applicant currently owns a property, housing need will not be taken into consideration unless:

- the owner cannot secure entry
- where occupying the property will lead to abuse from someone living in
- the property
- where it is probable that occupying the property will lead to abuse from
- someone who previously resided with the applicant whether in that
- property or elsewhere
- where occupation of the property may endanger the health of the
- occupants and there are no reasonable steps that can be taken by the
- applicant to prevent that danger

Where the applicant cannot secure entry to a property, requires to carry out work to ensure the property is at a tolerable standard or requires major works to be carried out, the Council will consider offering a SSST on a temporary basis until the housing need can be met by re-occupation.

11 Reviews

Any applicant who is not satisfied that his/her application is being dealt with in accordance with the Council's Allocation policy may request a review of any decision taken by a delegated officer regarding his/her application. Requests should be made in writing within 21 days to the Housing Manager. Similarly, a request for review may be made against any decision taken by the delegated officer using discretionary powers.

12 Joint Tenancies

Married couples, co-habitees and single persons sharing accommodation will normally be granted a joint tenancy. A joint tenancy ensures that all parties are jointly and severally responsible for all tenant obligations including the payment of rent.

13 Management Transfer

The Housing Manager will have the discretion to transfer a Council tenant on management grounds, following Housing Managers approval and only in situations where it is in the best interests of all concerned that a tenant is transferred with minimum delay. This discretion is only to be exercised in exceptional circumstances and where it promotes the best use of the housing stock. Please see Aberdeenshire Council's Management Transfer Procedure.

14 Transfers to Smaller Property

Tenants be allowed to partially downsize to a property that they will still under-occupy but to a lesser extent e.g. from a 3 bedroom to a 2 bedroom in order to free up family sized accommodation and to provide for best use of housing stock. The transfer will be through the award of under-occupation priority and will be at the discretion of the Housing Manager who will require to be satisfied that the resultant vacant property can readily be re-let to a household that will fully occupy the accommodation.

15 Local Lettings Initiatives (LLIs)

Local Lettings Initiatives may be used for new build schemes to create sustainable communities. Allocations made, must still comply with legislation. Agreed criteria for LLIs is detailed below and will be kept under review to ensure best use of housing stock:

- Allocations will continue to be based on housing need.
- Allocations will ensure best use of stock with specific emphasis on Particular Needs clients. Those suitable for specially adapted properties will be given priority.
- A higher quota of internal transfers will be considered. This would allow resulting vacancies to be relet (using existing quotas), meeting the needs of 2 households through the letting of one new development.
- Allocations will be made to applicants who have indicated the area as their first area of choice as stated in their housing application form. Their banding level would then be considered with the aim of supporting sustainability of mixed communities and to prevent high number of refusals.
- If all above principles have been exhausted, the remaining vacancies will be allocated as per quotas.
- The LLI will only apply to the initial let for new build properties. Subsequent vacancies will be allocated as per defined targets.

16 Complaints

Where an applicant wishes to make a complaint about any aspect within the Allocation Policy, they should be informed on how to do so.

Initial complaints can be made to the local Team Leader or by using the formal Council complaints procedure.

17 Quotas and Targets

Allocation quotas and targets will be set to ensure all applicants can be made an offer of housing, where they have the need for it. Quotas will be set and continually reviewed and will include those assessed as statutory homeless, those on the general needs waiting list and transfer applicants. Targets will be based on housing need and demand information.

Information will be reported annually to the Scottish Housing Regulator and reported through the Annual Report on the Charter.

18 Monitoring

In order to monitor and evaluate the standard of this service, key performance indicators have been identified. Regular monitoring reports are produced which inform the ongoing assessment of the service and the Council's drive for continuous improvement in services.

This will ensure:

- the proportion of applicants bidding at any one time compared with the whole list.
- the proportion of applicants in various categories (for example homeless) who are not bidding and reasons for not bidding.
- whether those with protected characteristics are joining the list, are placing bids, and are having success in finding a home;
- the effectiveness of the support that is available for those who need it;
- the proportion of properties going to applicants who are homeless and in the other reasonable legal preference;
- whether tenancies are lasting longer through CBL than they did under a previous system; and
- satisfaction levels of those who are successful through a CBL system and those who been unsuccessful so far.

**Housing Allocations Policy
Mainstream Priority Banding Matrix**

Need Factor	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Evidence
<p>Housing Needs Assessment</p>	<p>Extreme need for accommodation to enable discharge from hospital where previous accommodation is unsuitable or unavailable to return to.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Due to functional ability, it is no longer possible for the individual to remain in their current accommodation</p>	<p>Able to access facilities in the current accommodation but with considerable difficulty and this is likely to get worse in the short term due to their impaired functional ability.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Current accommodation is a substantial risk to the health and safety of the applicant or others and rehousing would be of benefit.</p>	<p>Able to access facilities with some difficulty but this is not having a major or adverse impact on the health and safety of the applicant or others.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Current accommodation is a potential risk to the health and safety of the applicant or others and rehousing would be of benefit</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Some difficulty with access to the property but it is suitable inside.</p>	<p>Functional ability may moderately improve with a change of property.</p>	<p>Assessment by Council's in house staff assisted by housing OT, Social Work and other professionals using housing needs assessment procedure.</p>

Need Factor	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Evidence
Unsuitable Accommodation (includes Overcrowded and Under-Occupied Accommodation)	Social housing tenants from Aberdeenshire who are under-occupying by 2 bedrooms or more.	Social housing tenants from Aberdeenshire who are under-occupying by one bedroom			Northgate database along with tenancy reports for RSL tenants
	Overcrowded as lacking two or more bedrooms		Overcrowded as lacking one bedroom		House visit, confirmation from landlord or other agency
	A social housing tenant in Aberdeenshire releasing adapted accommodation where adaptations no longer required and demand exists or where property can be adapted to meet a specific need and existing tenant wishes to move				Northgate database along with tenancy reports for RSL tenants. If appropriate, advice will be sought from the Council's OT service and/or NHS
	A sheltered or very sheltered housing tenant in Aberdeenshire who no longer requires that type of accommodation due to a change in their household support needs.				Communication with the local area co-ordinator and other social work staff Through communication with housing.
			Applicant is sharing facilities with someone they do not want to move with		Housing application
	Applicant is overcrowded and has 4 or more family members excluding applicant and spouse/partner	Applicant is overcrowded and has 3 family members excluding applicant and spouse/partner	Applicant is overcrowded and has 2 family members excluding applicant and spouse/partner		
				Children of the opposite sex who are sharing a bedroom	Housing application

Need Factor	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Evidence
<p>Lack Of</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Insecure Housing</p>	<p>Is homeless or threatened with homelessness and owed a duty under the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987.</p>	<p>Have no settled accommodation and/or is living at a “care of address”</p>	<p>Living with friends and relatives or in Aberdeenshire Council temporary accommodation and asked to leave within 6 months.</p>		<p>Applicants assessed against the legislation</p> <p>Visit by housing team or environmental health</p> <p>Letter from friend or relative</p>
	<p>Homeless applicant who has been in Aberdeenshire Council placed temporary accommodation for more than 6 months or is no longer occupying Aberdeenshire Council temporary accommodation due to temp duty being fulfilled.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>An applicant who is currently occupying supported accommodation provided by Aberdeenshire Council Throughcare and Aftercare Team for more than 6 months and confirmation has been received through the Youth Housing Forum that the applicant no longer needs this accommodation and is ready to move to</p>	<p>Homeless applicant who has been in council placed temporary accommodation between 3 and 6 months or is no longer occupying Aberdeenshire Council temporary accommodation due to temp duty being fulfilled.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>An applicant who is currently occupying supported accommodation provided by Aberdeenshire Council Throughcare and Aftercare Team between 3-6 months and confirmation has been received through the Youth Housing Forum that the applicant no</p>	<p>Homeless applicant who has been in council placed temporary accommodation between 0 and 3 months or is no longer occupying Aberdeenshire Council temporary accommodation due to temp duty being fulfilled.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>An applicant who is currently occupying supported accommodation provided by Aberdeenshire Council Throughcare and Aftercare Team between 0-3 months and confirmation has been received through the Youth</p>		

	independent accommodation.	longer needs this accommodation and is ready to move to independent accommodation.	Housing Forum that the applicant no longer needs this accommodation and is ready to move to independent accommodation.		
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