

## Revised Housing Allocations Policy – Annex to Minutes

Changes to Scheme:

### (i) Bedroom entitlement

When we receive an application from a household we calculate the bedroom entitlement based on the number and ages of people in the household. Under the current scheme children and young people of like gender are expected to share a bedroom up to the age of 20 years. This could mean an older teenager sharing a bedroom with a much younger child.

It is therefore proposed that the definition is amended to allow a separate bedroom for each of the following:

- Adult couple
- Any other single adult aged 16 years or more
- Pair of children aged 0-15 years of like gender
- Pair of children aged under 10 years, different gender
- Carer

This change would also bring the bedroom requirement in line with Housing Benefit legislation making it easier to understand. We have identified 27 households that would be affected by this change and whose bedroom entitlement would increase (e.g. from 2 to 3 bedroom). We will contact these applicants to discuss this change and offer the choice of being able to bid or be matched to both sizes of property (as the waiting time for a larger property is likely to be longer).

### (ii) Move on from supported Accommodation

It is proposed that these applicants are moved from band 1 to band 2 and these applicants receive one nomination only.

Although this may seem a negative step it is important that band 1 is restricted to those who need to move for urgent medical or safety reasons or because of extremely poor living conditions. Band 2 is still a high priority band and for those in supported accommodation we work with the support provider to ensure timely access to the register as the person becomes tenancy ready. Band 2 priority also ensure parity with homeless households.

Whilst these applicants will be entitled to one nomination only the Housing Options Team will work with the applicant and any support provider to ensure that the nomination is suitable and that there is advance planning for move-on from supported accommodation.

This banding change will require close scrutiny to ensure there are no unintended consequences which might result in unnecessary delays to these applicants being allocated suitable alternative accommodation.

(iii) Health and disability matrix

It is proposed that the matrix be refreshed to make it clear that a medical assessment is primarily concerned with how an applicant's medical condition is either made worse by their current accommodation or how a move to more suitable accommodation would alleviate the impact of their condition. Categories of medical need have also been introduced, such as mental health and mobility, to enable officers to better carry out the assessment of medical needs.

The revised matrix will give greater clarity to applicants and officers regarding how medical conditions are assessed and banded i.e. the relevance of the medical condition to the actual housing need is what needs to be evidenced and assessed. It is envisaged that this will result in applicants being clearer about the information they need to submit as part of their application.

This revised format is also expected to reduce the number of medical appeals received.

(iv) Auto-bidding

Currently any applicant can request to be placed on auto-bidding. This means that the system itself (Abritas) places up to 3 bids automatically in each bidding cycle. The bids are based on bedroom entitlement alone and do not take into account property type, the location or whether the applicant requires an accessible property. This has resulted in an administrative burden, as often the accommodation is not suitable for the applicant and has to be retracted. It is also unpopular with social landlords because there can be a delay in nominating a suitable household.

It is proposed that auto-bidding is restricted to those the council has a legal duty to accommodate (i.e. homeless households that our Housing Options team is actively working with, particularly those in temporary accommodation) and vulnerable applicants who do not have an advocate to bid on their behalf. This will reduce the number of households that are matched to a property that they will not accept or that could be unsuitable.

(v) Intentionally homeless

Currently any applicant assessed as intentionally homeless is placed into band 3 indefinitely. It is proposed that applicants who have been assessed as intentionally homeless are reviewed after 12 months if they have not been rehoused during this time.

This gives clarity to the applicant about the timescale they will be penalised for and ensure that a timely re-assessment takes place. Household circumstances may change and a re-assessment would give the opportunity to increase the priority level (e.g. if the reasons for the original decision had been addressed such as failure to pay rent that is affordable or failure to address anti-social behaviour).

(vi) Rename the 'reserve' band

It is proposed that the 'reserve' band be renamed 'band 4'.

This is a more meaningful term which gives greater clarity to applicants that they are on the housing register and eligible to bid for suitable properties. 'Reserve' sometimes leads to the misconception that the household is not live on the register and cannot bid.