

ROCHDALE BOROUGH COUNCIL AND PARTNERS

HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY



ROCHDALE
BOROUGH COUNCIL



OWNERSHIP OF POLICY

This is Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council's housing allocation policy.

The Council and its partner registered housing providers share this policy to ensure the best use of socially rented housing stock within the borough, to offer customers ease of access and a common approach to the housing application process.

This document was developed by the Council and its partners in consultation with elected members, tenants, applicants and other stakeholders.

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing is responsible for the implementation of the policy.

References within the policy include those functions carried out by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing on behalf of the Council and member registered providers.

CONTENTS

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ALLOCATION POLICY AND THE REHOUSING SYSTEM**
- 3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**
- 4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT**
- 5. DATA PROTECTION**
- 6. APPLICATION PROCESS**
- 7. APPLICANT CRITERIA**
- 8. APPLICANTS WHO DO NOT HAVE A RECOGNISED HOUSING NEED**
- 9. APPLICANTS WHO MAY BE REMOVED FROM THE HOUSING REGISTER**
- 10. PRIORITY AND HOUSING NEED**
- 11. OFFERS AND EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**
- 12. REVIEWING APPLICANTS**
- 13. LETTINGS CRITERIA AND OFFERED PROPERTIES**
- 14. PROPERTY QUOTAS**
- 15. LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY**

16. JOINT APPLICANTS

17. MONITORING AND REVIEWING OF THE POLICY

18. OTHER HOUSING OPTIONS

19. HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council and partner registered housing providers within the borough operate a common housing register and allocate housing through a choice based lettings scheme (HomeChoice).
- 1.2 Rochdale Boroughwide Housing will allocate all of its available accommodation to the criteria set out within this housing allocations policy.
- 1.3 Other partners, under a partnership agreement, commit to provide a minimum of fifty percent of available lettings, compliant with the housing allocations policy, through the common register and the HomeChoice scheme.
- 1.4 In developing this policy the Council and its partners have taken due regard for legislation, government guidance and responses from extensive consultation.
- 1.5 Government guidance promotes the view that those decisions on the allocation of social housing, which have a profound impact at national and at local level, should be taken in a framework which balances both national and local interests.
- 1.6 This policy takes into account the changing local housing market whereby, whilst some social housing remains a scarce resource in high demand, there are an increasing proportion of properties that are harder to let. This is in the context of the economic climate, welfare reforms and the increasing competition for new tenants from an expanding private sector housing market.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ALLOCATIONS POLICY

- 2.1 The key aims and objectives of this policy are to continue to allocate housing in demand, to applicants in housing need, within a fair and transparent housing allocations policy. At the same time the policy aims to ensure that properties in low demand are marketed effectively and let quickly.
- 2.2 In particular the policy is committed to meeting the following comprehensive aims and objectives:
 - contribute to the development of sustainable communities
 - maximise the use of housing stock within the borough
 - assist the Council and its partners in meeting statutory duties and corporate aims
 - prevent people becoming statutory homeless
 - meet national, regional, sub regional and local priorities
 - provide flexible and affordable accommodation options which meet needs and expectations
 - maximise choice for applicants
 - make the housing process and its policies more accessible to customers
 - let Council and other registered provider's accommodation fairly and in an open and transparent way

- meet responsibilities towards the borough's residents
- minimise property void periods
- seek to promote social inclusion
- promote and achieve equality of opportunity

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 The Allocations Policy complies with the following legislation and key recent statutory guidance. This is together with any relevant regulations or orders made under that legislation.

- The Housing Act 1985
- The Housing Act 1996
- The Homelessness Act 2002
- The Housing Act 2004
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Gender Recognition Act 2004
- The Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004
- The Equality Act 2010
- Children's (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- The Localism Act 2011
- Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England June 2012
- Providing Social Housing for Local People: Statutory Guidance on Social Housing Allocations December 2013

3.2 Local authorities retain the statutory duty to develop and publish an allocations policy. Recent guidance issued following the Localism Act 2011 has allowed local authorities more freedom to determine policies that best meet the local circumstances and priorities (within the criteria set out in the substantive legislative of the Housing Act 1996 as amended) ("the 1996 Act").

3.3 Rochdale, in common with many authorities, no longer owns any housing stock. Therefore its statutory duties are delivered through arrangements with both its own stock transfer organisation and other registered providers in the borough

3.4 This policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of both the local authority and registered providers and the legal responsibilities of each for delivering the local authorities statutory responsibilities

3.5 This Allocations Policy is based on housing need as defined in the 1996 Act.

Reasonable Preference

3.6 Reasonable preference is given to the following categories of people (s.166A(3):

- (a) People who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the 1996 Act (Including those who are intentionally homeless and those not in priority need)
- (b) People who are owed a duty by any housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under s.192(3);
- (c) People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- (d) People who need to move on medical 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 to others).

3.7 This Allocations Policy has been written to meet the duties of Part 6 of the 1996 Act, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011.

3.8 Part 6 of the 1996 Act covers:

- allocating local authority properties to new tenants
- priority transfers that are requested by local authority tenants
- exclusions and suspensions from the housing register
- the right to information about certain decisions taken in respect of an application and the requirement to notify in writing anybody who is ineligible for accommodation or is not a qualifying person with the reasons why
- information that is held on the housing register
- allocating local authority properties to current tenants of registered social landlords
- nominations that the Council makes to registered social landlords

Legal responsibility

3.9 The Council and/or Rochdale Boroughwide Housing will be responsible for the conduct and costs of any legal challenge relating to the Council's housing allocation policy.

3.10 A partner registered provider will be responsible for the conduct and costs of any legal challenge relating to the individual partner registered provider. This includes where an applicant has been refused a property because they do not meet the local lettings criteria, the applicant failed the financial assessment and could not demonstrate that they had the resources to sustain a tenancy, had housing related debt or cannot provide the required rent in advance.

4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

- 4.1 This policy recognises respects and responds to the different and diverse housing needs of the Borough. It offers equality of opportunity for everyone regardless of race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, cultural background, gender, sexual orientation, domestic circumstances, age, disability or illness.
- 4.2 This policy complies with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy, aims to support Rochdale Borough's Local Strategic Partnerships' vision and complies with the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice in Rented Housing.
- 4.3 This policy enables all eligible applicants to access the Housing Register. It ensures that we assess each applicant for housing on the basis of individual need. In addition, our assessment will seek to identify and meet any special requirements. For example, if a language barrier exists or if an applicant has a certain disability or learning difficulties which requires them to need the services of other agencies or support from families.

5. DATA PROTECTION

- 5.1 The Data Protection Act 1998 governs the way RMBC and its partners use personal information in relation to housing services. It covers all personal data that is processed, whether recorded in a manual or computerised form.
- 5.2 Personal data is held securely and only those staff authorised, including authorised staff employed by the partners who have adopted this policy, will have access to relevant information.
- 5.3 Information will only be held as long as necessary and in accordance with the appropriate retention policies in place.
- 5.4 Information will not be disclosed to third parties unless a legal basis is satisfied.
- 5.5 Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that applicants are able to exercise their right to access any information held about themselves. See Disclosure Section (5.8)
- 5.6 It is the responsibility of both staff and applicants to ensure that all information that is held within the information systems is accurate and up to date.

Keeping information

- 5.7 The type of information kept by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, and partner registered providers, about each eligible applicant includes but is not limited to:
- Full details of the applicant and moving family including for example, name, date of birth, address, ethnicity, immigration status, employment status, welfare and medical conditions

- Information relevant to the housing application including details of existing and previous accommodation and previous tenancy conduct

Disclosure

5.8 An individual (the data subject) is entitled to be informed by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing and partner registered providers whether it holds any personal data on a data subject, and is allowed to see any personal data. To prevent unauthorised disclosure the following steps are taken:

- All requests are made in writing.
- Where the request is made by the tenant/applicant, they will be asked to provide written confirmation of ID;
- Where a request for disclosure is received from someone acting on behalf of a tenant/applicant, such requests must be made in writing. The person concerned will be asked to provide proof of identity and confirmation from the data subject i.e. Power of Attorney or similar, that he/she is acting on behalf of the subject.

5.9 Where information has been provided by a third party and a disclosure requested, the third party must consent to the disclosure or direct requests to the third party will also be accepted.

5.10 Only authorised staff will be permitted to access personal information.

6. APPLICATION PROCESS

6.1 All applicants must complete the application process; only completed applications, with relevant supporting evidence will be considered.

6.2 Once an application is completed, all applicants are assessed for any factors that determine housing need and to establish if the Council has any legal duty to assist in securing suitable housing. For priority homeless applicants, where there is a legal duty, this can be discharged by the provision of one reasonable offer of either social housing or good quality private rented housing.

6.3 If an applicant's circumstances change after submitting their rehousing application, it is the responsibility of the applicant to advise Rochdale Boroughwide Housing of the change, or to complete a change of circumstances form. The application date will remain that of the original application but the level of housing need and the band assigned may change.

6.4 If the applicant qualifies for rehousing, the application will be made 'live' on the Housing Register and priority awarded if necessary.

6.5 Once an application is live, the applicant can express an interest in available accommodation.

6.6 An applicant may not qualify for rehousing for a number of reasons, please see Section 8.

6.7 Applicants will be informed of the reasons they do not qualify for rehousing. An applicant can request an appeal of this decision, which must be made within 21 days.

6.8 Under section 171 of the Housing Act 1996, a person who provides false statements or withholds information could be liable on summary conviction to a fine. They will also be deemed ineligible for rehousing. If the person has already been rehoused when the offence is discovered, steps may be taken to regain possession of the property.

6.9 A summary of the allocations policy is available on request and the full allocation policy is available on both the Council and HomeChoice website.

7. APPLICANT CRITERIA AND QUALIFYING PERSONS

7.1 Housing Authorities may only allocate accommodation to those people who are defined as “qualifying persons”. Subject to the requirement not to allocate to persons who are ineligible and subject to the special requirements for members of the Armed and Reserved Forces, a Housing Authority may decide the classes of people who are or are not Qualifying Persons.

7.2 Those specifically stated as ineligible by law are:

- Applicants subject to immigration control as defined by Section 13(2) of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 and prescribed by the Secretary of State as ineligible;
- Applicants who are not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area (i.e. the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man);
- Applicants whose right to reside in the UK is from a status as a ‘jobseeker’ within the meaning of Regulation 6(1)(a) of the Immigration (European Economic Area) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006/1003) (“the EEA Regulations”);
- Applicants whose right to reside in the Common Travel Area is an initial right to reside for a period not exceeding 3 months under Regulation 13 of the EEA Regulations.

Those who are considered not to be Qualifying Persons include:

- Cases where the applicant, or any member of his/her household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him/her unsuitable to be a tenant. This includes, but is not limited to, those owing housing related debt (rent arrears, court costs and/or costs involved in repairing residential property) and those involved in anti-social behaviour/nuisance/harassment.
- Applicants guilty of unacceptable behaviour which have been serious enough

to lead to the granting of an outright possession order (or equivalent serious legal action such as an injunction for anti-social behaviour or the service of a notice seeking possession); the behaviour is the fault of the applicant or members of the household applying for rehousing and is/was not caused by factors outside his/her control; and the circumstances and behaviour have not changed and improved since the unacceptable behaviour occurred.

However, under some special circumstances, such as where there may be an overriding housing need to be met or a duty to a statutory homeless person, then these eligibility rules may be waived.

7.3 For applicants owing housing related debt(s) the following applies:

- In all cases of housing related debt, account will be taken of all relevant factors including record of repayment and willingness by the applicant to clear and reduce outstanding debt, improve behaviour and provide assurances about future performance;
- Any offer of accommodation may be withdrawn if the level of arrears means that the applicant is ineligible for housing under the housing related debt policy of the provider who made the offer

7.4 Financial assessment of applicant's ability to sustain a tenancy

- After an offer is made, but before a tenancy is granted, applicants will be subject to a financial assessment. The type and criteria used for this assessment may vary by provider
- The assessment will ensure that an applicant is maximising the income available to them and that their income is sufficient to manage and sustain the tenancy.
- Where a tenancy is not assessed as sustainable, based on the criteria adopted by the individual provider, an offer of tenancy may be withdrawn

7.5 Rent payment / deposit in advance of the tenancy start date

- Partner providers may require rent payments in advance of the tenancy start date; the amount may vary with each housing provider, but the amount will be included in each property advert.
- Where such payments are not made, or a payment arrangement has not been adhered to, the offer of housing may in some circumstances be withdrawn.

Immigration and habitual residence

7.6 Where relevant, applicants will be invited to an interview to establish immigration status before their application can be processed. Passports, immigration papers and other relevant documentation must be produced at the interview to assess immigration status. A decision will be based on these documents in accordance with the legal requirements. All evidence produced in support of the application must be original.

16/17 year olds

7.7 The Council and its partners will only offer housing to an applicant who is aged 16 or 17 if he/she is:

- Classed as homeless or threatened with homelessness, eligible for homeless assistance, in priority need and not intentionally homeless under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002);
- Owed a duty to provide accommodation under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000; or
- Has a form of income sufficient to meet their housing costs and their everyday living needs. Applicants will be required to provide proof, which can mean evidence of wages, receipt of benefits, an employer's letter, etc.

7.8 If accepted for housing, a support package/network must be identified to assist the applicant in managing accommodation.

Applicants from outside of the Rochdale borough

7.9 Applicants from outside the borough who have a strong local connection with the borough will be assessed for reasonable preference.

7.10 A strong local connection can be demonstrated by evidence of social and/or immediate family ties; or employment that is more than temporary/casual; or a past term of residence (of not less than 6 months in the past 12, or not less than 3 years in the past 5); or support needs affecting the applicant or a resident/s of the borough.

7.11 Out of borough applicants who have been identified as having a strong local connection, may be asked to attend a housing options meeting.

7.12 If an applicant does not live in the borough and does not have a strong local connection with the Rochdale borough, then he/she will be awarded Band D priority (no housing need) with the exception of Armed Forces applicants; see 7.13 and Section 9 for more details.

Applicants leaving the Armed Forces

7.13 The local connection criteria (7.10) will not be applied to the following applicants:

- (a) members of the Armed Forces and former Service personnel, where the application is made within five years of discharge
- (b) bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner

(c) serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service

These provisions recognise the special position of members of the Armed Forces (and their families) whose employment requires them to be mobile and who are likely therefore to be particularly disadvantaged by local connection requirements; as well as those injured reservists who may need to move to another local authority district to access treatment, care or support.

Applicants leaving prison

7.14 All applicants leaving prison must have a strong local connection to the Rochdale borough, as defined in 7.10. When an application is received, enquiries will be made of the Probation Services and once Probation Services confirm they do not object to the applicant being rehoused in the Rochdale borough, their application will be made live and the applicant can begin to express an interest immediately.

All applicants

7.15 All applicants are expected to indicate their willingness to comply with tenancy conditions, and to understand that the Council and its partners expect all tenants to respect the rights of their neighbours to a peaceful and quiet enjoyment of their homes and environment.

8. APPLICANTS WHO DO NOT HAVE A RECOGNISED HOUSING NEED

8.1 Applicants without a housing need are still eligible to register for housing, but will be placed in a low band to reflect their lack of priority.

8.2 The following applicant group will **not** qualify for housing:

- applicants without a recognised housing need, who are accommodated in a social housing accommodation, and are within the first 2 years of their current tenancy

8.3 Applications received from applicants without a recognised housing need, who are accommodated in social housing and are within the first 2 years of their current tenancy, will not be accepted and the applicant will be advised of other housing options.

8.4 Should their circumstances change within the first two years, such that a member of the household has a recognised housing need under this allocations policy, then this restriction will not apply.

9. APPLICANTS WHO MAY BE REMOVED FROM THE HOUSING REGISTER

9.1 Applicants may be removed from the Housing Register for the following reasons:

- At the applicant's request
- If the applicant is no longer contactable and has moved from the address given on their application form
- If an applicant no longer/has never qualified for rehousing

9.2 An applicant has the right to request a review of any decision as to his/her qualifying for assistance.

9.3 Any legal challenge to a decision is by way of a judicial review of that decision.

9.4 For further details, please see relevant literature available.

10. PRIORITY BANDS AND HOUSING NEED

10.1 Once an applicant's level of housing need has been assessed, they will be placed in one of five bands; Band A to Band E, ranging from applicants who are in urgent housing need in Band A, to applicants in Band E who do not have a recognised housing need.

10.2 The following table lists the categories of housing need and clearly sets out which priorities fall within the 5 bands.

<p>Band A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious medical – life at risk • Serious risk of harm - domestic violence, racial and hate crime, severe harassment • Anyone facing imminent discharge from hospital or a specialist provision • Clearance (property is subject to CPO)
<p>Band B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants threatened with homelessness where the Council would have a statutory duty to rehouse • Homeless applicants where there is a statutory duty to provide housing • 16/17yrs old owed duty and/or leaving care • 16/17 years old homeless and vulnerable • 18-21 year old homeless (other than a 'relevant student') who is a 'former relevant child' • Unsuitable condition of privately rented property with a vulnerable age group present • Under occupation by two or more bedrooms • Applicants living in an adapted property which is no longer required • Leaving the armed forces • Move On • Care management • Learning Disability • Severe & Enduring Mental Health • Physical Disability

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with HIV & Aids
<p>Band C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants that are homeless or threatened with homelessness but not in a priority group • Under occupation by one bedroom • Learning Difficulty • Carers, registered foster workers and key support workers • Medical condition • Overcrowded – lacking one bedroom + another hazard • Overcrowded – lacking 2 bedrooms or more Unsuitable condition of privately rented property without a vulnerable age group present • Moving for work • Mental illness • Parents under 18 years old requiring support Leaving prison • Hardship, as defined in s.167 of the 1996 Housing Act • Applicants that are homeless or threatened with homelessness but are deemed to be intentionally homeless
<p>Band D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants without a recognised housing need, except for those applicants who qualify for Band E
<p>Band E</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants without a housing need, who own a residential property/properties in which they could reside • Applicants without a recognised housing need, who are adequately accommodated in significantly adapted accommodation • Applicants who are considered to have deliberately worsened their circumstances to gain priority for housing

10.3 Applicants across Bands A-E who express an interest in a property will be short listed according to, and with this preference:

1. Priority need
2. If they currently live within the borough/have a strong local connection
3. If they are in employment or volunteering
4. Time in need/length of waiting time on the Housing Register
5. Applicants with no housing debt will be given priority, if when shortlisted they are equal to another applicant who has a housing related debt. This is with the exception of those applicants outlined in section 7.13.

10.4 If an applicant has been awarded priority for a recognised housing need, when shortlisting the time in that need will be considered and not the time when the application was accepted, unless the applicant was awarded that priority immediately.

10.5 Applicants who own a residential property, in which they could reside, will

initially be placed in Band E whilst an individual assessment is completed; this assessment will establish if the applicant has a recognised housing need.

- 10.6 Once the Band E assessment is complete, an applicant may be awarded a higher priority.
- 10.7 If an applicant remains in Band E, they will be considered for accommodation along with applicants in Band A-D. If they express an interest; they will be short listed according to, and with this preference:
1. Priority need
 2. If they currently live within the borough/have a strong local connection
 3. If they are in employment or volunteering
 4. Time in need/length of waiting time on the Housing Register
 5. Applicants with no housing debt will be given priority, if when shortlisted they are equal to another applicant who has a housing related debt.
- 10.8 Whilst the Council and its partners aim to achieve clarity and transparency in setting the bands, there will be a discretion to provide a degree of flexibility in the implementation of the policy in considering the merit of individual cases.
- 10.9 The Council has the discretion to decide what constitutes a “Qualifying Person” and in so deciding will take into account all reasonable circumstances whilst having regard to its duty under the equalities legislation and those in the reasonable preference categories. It will consider, for example a tenant’s previous exemplary behaviour as well as an applicant’s previous anti-social behaviour.

11. OFFERS OF ACCOMMODATION AND EXPRESSING INTEREST IN A PROPERTY

- 11.1 Once an application becomes live, applicants can start to place expressions of interest on properties advertised on the HomeChoice website.
- 11.2 Properties will be advertised on a weekly cycle, with all expressions of interest taken in this time being treated equally, regardless of when placed.
- 11.3 All applicants can express an interest for properties of their choice but priority will be given to applicants who meet the letting criteria for the type or size of property being let (see section 13 for more details).
- 11.4 No direct offers will be made, except in a very limited set of circumstances which will be closely monitored (see section 14 for more details).
- 11.5 An agreed percentage of properties (a minimum of 10%) will be let to applicants who qualify under the Working Xtra scheme (applicable to working applicants who have been in employment for at least 3 months and those who volunteer for 16 hours or more per month and have done so for 6 of the past 9 months).
- Government urges local authorities to consider priority for housing applicants who are in employment or volunteering.

- The Working Xtra scheme introduced by the Council sees 10% of all available accommodation, and up to 50% in agreed areas advertised on the HomeChoice website giving priority to those in employment or volunteering.
 - The proposal is to continue with the Working Xtra scheme and award priority to applicants in employment/volunteering across bands A to E when short listing for accommodation.
- 11.6 Each applicant can place up to 3 expressions of interest at any one time within a weekly advertising cycle.
- 11.7 Due to the high priority awarded and the emergency need of this applicant group, Band A applicants and statutory homeless applicants in Band B will have the opportunity to be awarded one reasonable offer only, except for in extenuating circumstances.
- 11.8 It is expected that if an applicant has made the choice to express an interest on a property then they are actually interested in that accommodation.
- 11.9 Where applicants in Bands B – E, (excluding statutory homeless band B), refuse three reasonable offers within a 12 month period then their application will be demoted to the bottom of their band for a period of six months
- 11.10 At the end of the weekly cycle, all expressions of interests from applicants who qualify for housing will be short listed by applicants needs. Local connection, whether an applicant is in employment or volunteering and how long they have been waiting to be rehoused will all be deciding factors. For family housing, priority will be given to families with children
- 11.11 When offering accommodation to any applicant, all support needs, health assessments and community safety advice will be considered.
- 11.12 All applications will be subject to any last minute checks affecting their application, a financial assessment of their ability to sustain a tenancy before the final offer is made and the payment of an agreed sum of rent in advance of the tenancy. An offer of rehousing is not binding until the tenancy agreement is signed and completed, and can be withdrawn at any time before that event.

12. REVIEW OF APPLICANTS

- 12.1 All applicants' expression of interest activity will be reviewed regularly to identify any need for support in the process.
- 12.2 All medical applications must be supported by a reference from a professional who is familiar with the circumstances and needs of the individual/family. The application will then be assessed by a Panel. The panel will take account of each individual's circumstances. All decisions are subject to review.

- 12.3 Special needs cases will be assessed in conjunction with other relevant agencies. All decisions are subject to review.
- 12.4 Band E applicants will be assessed by a panel. This panel will take in to consideration each individual's circumstances. All decisions are subject to review.
- 12.5 All applicants will be assessed regularly to ensure they are still relevant. Applicants may be deemed not to qualify for housing, or have a reduced priority for reasons including but not limited to, if there has been a change in their housing circumstance, if they have been identified as not actively expressing an interest in appropriate properties or refusing properties on which they have actively expressed an interest.
- 12.6 All decisions to remove priority status, or when an applicant does not qualify for housing are subject to review.

13. LETTINGS CRITERIA AND TYPES OF PROPERTIES OFFERED

- 13.1 All offers of accommodation will attempt to make maximum use of the stock, by ensuring wherever possible that applicants' household details configure as closely to the attributes of the property. E.g. three-bedroom house would be offered to an applicant whose details indicate that a three-bedroom house is the most effective means of making best use of the property and satisfying the requirements of the applicant.
- 13.2 Families with children of the same sex who are sharing a bedroom, where at least one is aged over 16 years old, will be considered as needing a further bedroom.
- 13.3 Families with children of different sexes who are sharing a bedroom, where one child is aged 10 years old or above, will be considered as needing a further bedroom.
- 13.4 Accommodation within a scheme where there are 3 or more floors, and where there is no lift, will not be considered suitable for offer to families with children under the age of 10, unless it is under a local lettings policy and a full health and safety assessment is in place. Where the applicant or another agency indicates that they be considered for accommodation above the first floor and the children are aged 11 years and over, they may be offered such accommodation.
- 13.5 Disabled applicants who accept an adapted property will do so on the understanding that the property meets their needs and they may not request further adaptations during the first two years of their tenancy. This does not apply where further adaptations have been agreed prior to the letting. If their circumstances significantly worsened during this period they would become eligible to either reapply for rehousing or have their application for further adaptations reassessed.

13.6 The type and size of property offered to applicants will depend on the size, age and household make-up of the family. The following table shows how properties are offered to a range of household types, though individual circumstances of the applicant may be taken into account for a different property.

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION	PROPERTY TYPE
Single person	1 Bed Flat/Bed-sit 1 Bed house
Single person of 60+ years of age/disabled person	1 Bed Flat 1 Bed Bungalow 1 Bed Sheltered Flat 1 Bed Sheltered Bungalow Sheltered Bed-sit 1 Bed house
Couple without children	1 Bed Flat 1 Bed house
Couples of 60+ years of age/disabled people	1 or occasionally 2 Bedroom Bungalow/Flat Sheltered Accommodation Flat / Bungalow 1 Bed house
Families with a child expected, 1 child or 2 children of the same sex under the age of 16 years Joint applicants of either 2 couples or 2 individual adults	2 Bedroom House 2 Bedroom Maisonette 2 Bedroom Flat with entrance at ground floor
Families with 2, 3 or 4 children; dependent on the sex and age of the children. Please refer to 12.2 and 12.3	3 Bedroom House 3 Bedroom Maisonette 3 Bedroom Flat
Families with 3, 4 and 5 children; dependent on the sex and age of the children. Please refer to 12.2 and 12.3	4 Bedroom House
Families with 4 and 5+ children dependent on the sex and age of the children. Please refer to 12.2 and 12.3	5 Bedroom House

13.7 Exceptions to this table, and only in some circumstances, may include:

- where a local lettings scheme is in operation, there maybe some changes to the above framework; please refer to section 14;
- where a carer, who does not normally live at the property, is needed to provide over night care;
- where a separate bedroom is needed for foster caring;
- where a separate bedroom is needed for a disabled child;
- where the property is hard to let, the applicant is working and not in receipt of housing benefit (and therefore not affected by the spare room subsidy).

Sheltered accommodation

13.8 Allocation of sheltered accommodation will also be based on the support needs of the applicant.

Extra Care

13.9 The allocation of Extra Care housing falls outside this policy.

14. PROPERTY QUOTAS

14.1 All Council and registered providers housing stock will be available through the choice-based lettings system, HomeChoice, unless specifically excluded for the following situations; (however, there may be other circumstances from time to time, in which stock is not available)

- Required for decant purposes associated with major works of repair and refurbishment;
- Rehousing required for specific management reasons;
- Emergencies;
- Temporary accommodation for the homeless; and
- Properties required for strategic development (e.g. conversions into special needs units);
- Outside of the partnership agreement where an agreed percentage of stock can be let according to criteria decided by that provider;
- Where a small number of properties are very hard to let and, to avoid significant rent loss, the properties are directly let though a marketing initiative.

15. LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY

15.1 At times there may be a need to introduce a local lettings policy to meet particular local needs. Such initiatives must consider legal and equality requirements and the wider Council rehousing policy.

15.2 Examples of local lettings schemes are:

- Reserving certain property types, numbers of properties or parts of a housing area for a particular age group, family size or economically active applicants
- Relaxing property size requirements to allow, for instance, a household with a two bedroom need to be considered for a three bedroom house
- Introducing a community agreement for all tenants to sign
- Positive local lettings schemes, aimed at encouraging certain groups of people to move into housing areas

15.3 Any restriction to property lettings will be advertised when each individual property becomes available.

15.4 The Council's local letting schemes will be subject to formal approval.

15.5 Local lettings schemes implemented by the Council's partners will be subject to approval within each relevant organisation and in consultation with the Council. The responsibility to ensure that a local letting policies meet all legal and health and safety requirements remains with the partner provider.

16. JOINT APPLICANTS

16.1 Where a joint tenant serves a Notice to Quit for their part of the tenancy, RBH and partners will use its discretion in deciding whether to grant a sole tenancy to the remaining tenant. In exercising discretion, RBH and other registered providers will ensure that there are no adverse implications for the use of the housing stock and its ability to meet other housing needs by applying the lettings criteria.

17. MONITORING AND REVIEWING OF THE POLICY

17.1 The policy and implementation will be monitored by Rochdale Council to ensure:

- it is meeting the stated aims
- it is meeting its targets
- it is collecting and submitting the required information for the government and other statutory bodies
- it is being reviewed regularly
- it is meeting its equality and diversity obligations

17.2 The monitoring covers a wide range of subjects, including:
Qualifying person criteria

- priority
- offers
- refusals
- number of applicants
- vulnerability of applicants
- ethnicity of applicants
- use of adapted properties
- local lettings policies

- numbers of properties allocated via direct lets

17.3 Customers and stakeholders will be consulted on proposed changes to the policy.

18. OTHER HOUSING OPTIONS

18.1 There are many other housing options within the borough. Please refer to the relevant literature available.

19. HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

19.1 The Council and its partners are committed to delivering the best possible service. If an applicant is unhappy with the service provided they can make a complaint via the usual methods.