

HomeChoice North Somerset

Lettings and Assessment Policy

How the North Somerset Choice-Based
Lettings system works



Version 5
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HomeChoice North Somerset - Lettings and Assessment Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document describes the HomeChoice North Somerset Choice-based Lettings Scheme (CBL) to be run by the council in partnership with the majority of housing associations operating within North Somerset
- 1.2 The Government's policy objective is for choice-based lettings schemes to develop on a sub-regional and/or regional basis. The Secretary of State believes that such schemes involving partnership of housing authorities and registered social landlords and working together with private landlords wherever possible is the best way to achieve the greatest choice and flexibility meeting applicant's needs.

The scheme's key objectives are:

- To create a customer-led choice-based lettings system
- To ensure the scheme is open, fair and accountable to applicants and staff
- To increase understanding and satisfaction in the lettings system
- To give new tenants a feeling of ownership of where they want to live
- To help create 'sustainable' communities
- To make more efficient use of the available housing stock
- To help tackle low demand
- To help towards 'void' turnaround times
- To reduce the number of refusals on 'hard to let' properties
- To create a single point of access to all social housing in the district
- To bring together a larger pool of available housing, giving applicants more choice and helping to ease localised problems of high demand
- To enable greater regional mobility
- To meet the legal requirements for the allocation of social housing as set out in the Housing Act (1996) as amended by the Homelessness Act (2002).

2. The scheme in brief

- 2.1. All applicants for social housing across North Somerset will complete the same application form and will be assessed against the same clear set of criteria laid out in the 'Banding' structure (see sections 7-12). Depending on their circumstances, applicants will be placed into one of five bands, A, B, C, D or in a very small number of cases, in the Emergency Priority Band.
- 2.2. Once the application has been registered, applicants will be advised of their banding, application date, the size of property they are eligible for, together with a personal reference number which will enable them to bid for social housing vacancies and affordable housing including shared ownership being advertised across the whole of North Somerset. At a later stage, private sector vacancies may also be advertised using this same process.
- 2.3. Bids for properties can be made for example, by using an automated phone line, the HomeChoice North Somerset website (via the Internet), or in person by visiting an office of one of the partner landlords. Applicants will be able to monitor the success of their bids and their bidding history via the website.
- 2.4. Once the bidding deadline has passed, the successful applicant will be the person in the highest band, with the highest multiple amount of housing need and with the earliest application date. An offer will then be made subject to a visit and subsequent acceptance by the potential landlord to confirm the details on the original application form. Incorrect information may result in the offer being withdrawn and the band re-assessed.
- 2.5. The banding and application date of the top bid together with the total number of bids made for each property will be published in the following week's advertisement. This enables applicants to develop realistic expectations regarding their chances of success and likely waiting period. Feedback on the allocation of properties will be made publicly available (i.e. length of duration on waiting list before being rehoused), so that people can make an informed decision on whether to bid or accept a property.

3. Application procedure – Who can apply?

- 3.1. The HomeChoice North Somerset Register is open to almost any one. It may include existing tenants of housing authorities and registered social landlords looking to transfer to another property, homeless families looking for a permanent home and other applicants who either rent in the private sector or are lodging with family and friends. Civil partners will have equal treatment with married couples in the Lettings and Assessment Policy.

- 3.2. An applicant may include anyone that may reasonably be expected to live with them as part of their application. However, a joint tenancy will not be granted if one or more of the joint applicants is a person from abroad who is ineligible or if their behaviour is unacceptable.
- 3.3. Where more than one eligible applicant wishes to have a shared application they will be known as joint applicants.
- 3.4. Partner organisations may have different policies in dealing with persons under the age of 18 and for more details please contact the individual landlord.
- 3.5. Application forms are available from the offices of all the partners within the scheme and include details of how the scheme works and how to find and 'bid' for a home. To apply for a property, applicants must be registered on the HomeChoice North Somerset Register.

3.6 **Who cannot apply?**

- 3.6.1. The HomeChoice North Somerset Register is open to all applicants except the following:
 - 3.6.2. Persons from abroad whose status specifically excludes them from public housing assistance. Persons who are not habitually resident in England, Scotland, Wales, the Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man. Habitual Residency provides us with details about an applicants' right to stay in the UK and any eligibility for public housing.
 - 3.6.3. There are certain regulations laid out by statute that govern the allocation of properties to persons from abroad and these should be referred to when assessing all applications.
 - 3.6.4. Persons under 16 years of age.

3.7. **What other factors are taken into account?**

- 3.7.1. An application can be affected where there is evidence that an applicant or where relevant, a member of the applicant's household has broken their existing or previous tenancy conditions including the following:
 - Rent arrears
 - Anti social behaviour
 - Physical violence against staff or other residents
 - Other ground for statutory possession.

Grounds will not be used as a 'blanket ban' against all such people, but will be considered alongside each applicant's relative housing need.
(See 27.3)

Where an applicant has demonstrated a commitment to pay outstanding housing debts, and depending on the level of debt, they may be accepted as a suitable tenant by an RSL.

- 3.7.2. Where possible, such grounds will be identified at the initial application stage of the HomeChoice North Somerset process and the applicant will be informed in writing that any bid may be unsuccessful.

All partners of HomeChoice North Somerset will also be notified of this decision.

Applicants will be informed, on request, of decisions about the facts of the case that may affect whether they are eligible to bid for housing.

- 3.7.3. Any applicant has the right for a review of the following decisions:

- a) That they are ineligible
- b) That all priority will be suspended because of unacceptable behaviour
- c) An applicant or a household member who has a court order served against them such as an Injunction, an Anti Social Behaviour Order or a suspended or postponed possession order will be ineligible to bid whilst the order is active and for 6 months after the order has expired
- d) About the facts of their case: e.g. banding or eligibility for a property.

A Senior Housing Officer who has not been involved in the original decision will carry out such reviews.

4. Protocol for housing dangerous offenders and potentially dangerous offenders

- 4.1. There is a multi-agency protocol in dealing with dangerous offenders that allows the exchange information on any applicant who has been convicted of a serious offence. Any applicant who confirms on their application form, or who is suspected, or accused, of being a dangerous offender, will be subjected to the provisions set out in the information exchange protocol.
- 4.2. There is not a 'blanket ban' preventing dangerous offenders from being included on the housing register. However, before any known offender is offered housing, full consultation will be undertaken with the relevant agencies to assess the risks involved. Some dangerous offenders will be given a high priority so that the relevant agencies can continue to monitor them. The North Somerset Multi-Agency Protocol is only for a

specific offenders group and only covers referrals from the Public Protection Team and Avon and North Somerset Constabulary and does not guarantee the provision of a tenancy.

- 4.3. Re-housing of dangerous offenders will be carried out in consultation with the relevant agencies to minimise the risk to the public and with the long term aim of influencing the successful accommodation and resettlement of the offender, thus minimising the risk of re-offending and protecting the public and victims of offenders. The local authorities or Probation Service will bid on behalf of any applicant who falls within this category.
- 4.4. In the interests of public protection, it is essential that the Police and Probation Service are able to control and monitor the behaviour and activities of dangerous offenders. This task is made more difficult if such offenders do not have a fixed address or are housed in circumstances that make it difficult for the agencies to monitor them appropriately.

5. Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Transfer Policy

- 5.1. All existing RSL tenants have the right to apply for a transfer, subject to any restrictions that apply to their tenancy. Tenants' housing needs will be assessed and placed in the relevant band on the register together with all other applicants.
- 5.2. Some advertised properties will be labelled giving preference to transfer applicants to ensure that each landlord makes the best use of their housing stock.

6. Assessment of applications

- 6.1. The council will investigate the applicant's circumstances and assess the applicant's housing needs to decide whether or not the applicant has a "reasonable preference" for the allocation of housing. s167 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) requires housing authorities to ensure that reasonable preference is given to people who fall within any of the following categories:
 - a) who are homeless (as defined by the homelessness legislation);
 - b) who are homeless and owed certain duties by any housing authority;
 - c) living in unsanitary or overcrowded housing or living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
 - d) need to move to a particular area in the district to avoid hardship to themselves or others

Based on housing need, all applications will be placed into one of four bands – A, B, C or D or in exceptional circumstances placed into Emergency Priority Band (Section 12 refers).

Multiple Needs

- a) Where an application has more than one housing need (**HN**) which appear in different bands, it will always be placed in the higher band.
- b) If an application attracts more than one housing need within a band, the applicant with the greatest number of housing needs, (indicated by **HN**), will have greater priority than those with less numbers of housing need (**HN**)
- c) If an application has the same number of housing needs (**HN**) as another, priority will be given to the application who has been waiting in that band for the longest period of time
- d) If an applicant has more than one housing need (HN), they will be shortlisted according to their next highest housing need. If there is another applicant with the same number and levels of housing need, the date of application will be used to decide the order of the short list.

6.3 s167 of the Housing Act 1996 also gives housing authorities the power to give additional preference if the applicant falls within the reasonable preference category and have an urgent housing need. Examples of people who have any urgent housing need include people who are:

- owed a homelessness duty as a result of being victims of domestic violence, victims of racial or sexual harassment, witnesses of crime or victims of crime who would be at risk of intimidation amounting to violence or threats of violence if they remained in their current homes.
- In need of moving because of urgent medical reasons.

7. Band A

7.1 Approved Homeless (HN)

Applicants accepted as homeless by a council within the HomeChoice North Somerset area under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 including Rent (Agricultural) Act cases, and who have been resident in designated temporary accommodation for 3 months or more from the date of the acceptance of the duty.

The Director of Adult Social Services and Housing has the authority to amend this section of the policy as and when required.

7.2 **Lack of bedrooms (HN)**

Applicants who lack three or more bedrooms, (Section 16 refers) UNLESS evidence exists that proves the overcrowding is deliberate.

7.3 **Under-occupation**

The applicant is a tenant of a HomeChoice North Somerset RSL partner who resides within the HomeChoice North Somerset area and under-occupies their existing property and is looking to move to a smaller, more suitable property, freeing up a family designated property.

Note: Where a tenant lives in specialist two-bedroom property this may not apply.

7.4 **High medical need (HN)**

(see appendix 1).

7.5 **High welfare needs (HN)**

(see appendix 2)

7.6 **RSL improvement works**

The applicant needs to be moved by the RSL for improvement works. This is a move by the authorised occupier of an RSL property whom the RSL needs to re-house in order to redevelop, rehabilitate, refurbish, repair or demolish the property. This also applies to approved disposals.

7.7 **Serious disrepair**

The applicant's home is dangerous and that a Housing Act 2004 category 1 hazard exists and it is confirmed by any council's Private Rented Housing Team that it would be more appropriate to be re-housed.

7.8 **Supported Housing 'Move on'.**

The applicant lives within a Supported Housing project and is seeking to 'move-on' into independent accommodation. This only applies to applicants who were an established resident in North Somerset at the time of the original referral and acceptance into the supported housing project.

The Project Manager must confirm in writing that the applicant is ready for such a move and has acquired reasonable skills to sustain a tenancy or has the necessary support in place to do so. The case will then be considered by the HomeChoice Team Leader as to whether the applicant meets all the criteria to move into Band A.

7.9 **Careleavers**

Where North Somerset Council is the corporate parent and the careleavers is ready to live independently, or with support. The Social Worker and Housing Advice Officer for careleavers must confirm in writing that the applicant is ready for such a move and has acquired reasonable skills to sustain a tenancy.

7.10 **Foster carers**

S/he needs to be rehoused or housed by an RSL because s/he is:

- a) A foster carer who needs larger accommodation to foster more children, or
- b) Intends promptly to become a foster carer, and requires larger accommodation in order to perform this role.

Applicants must have approved Foster Carer status as approved by NSC Foster Team.

8. **Band B**

8.1 **Homeless (HN)**

Applicants accepted as homeless by the Council within the North Somerset area under part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).

8.2 **Applicant awarded 'Significant' medical priority (HN)** see Appendix 1

8.3 **Applicant awarded 'Significant' welfare priority (HN)** see Appendix 2

8.4 **Lack of bedrooms (HN)**

Applicants who lack two bedrooms in their current home.

8.5 **Applicant threatened with homelessness or rough sleepers (HN)**

An applicant who is homeless/threatened with homelessness and not accepted by HomeChoice North Somerset Council under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (but would have been if a homelessness application had been determined) and those who have no where to live (e.g. No Fixed Abode 'NFA'). The council is committed to the prevention of homelessness and may need to prioritise those cases where a prevention solution is necessary. This will apply to those cases where a statutory duty could apply, and the solution may be bidding for a

social housing tenancy. Where a statutory duty may apply, these cases will be given preference over other homeless groups.

8.6 Split families (HN)

Applicants whose children are living in separate households due to the lack of suitable accommodation available cannot live together, and not by choice, and wish to be re-housed and have not been accepted by HomeChoice North Somerset Partners under part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).

9. Band C

9.1 Applicant awarded Minor medical priority (HN) (see appendix 1)

9.2 Applicant awarded Minor welfare priority (HN) (see appendix 1)

9.3 Applicant on low income (as defined by eligibility for housing benefit.

9.4 Supported Housing

Applicants living in Supported Housing prior to confirmation by the Project Manager that the applicant is ready to move on (at which point they will be placed into the 'A' Band whilst maintaining their original registration date).

9.5 Children in flats

Applicant who is pregnant or has a child/children under 10 years of age and lives in a flat / maisonette above or below ground floor. Proof of pregnancy must be provided.

9.6 Sharing basic facilities such as toilets, bathrooms and kitchens with people who are not related (HN)

9.7 Lack of bedrooms (HN)

Applicants who lack 1 bedroom in their current home. This will **not** apply to applicants who have non dependant visiting children and require a second bedroom.

- 9.8 Applicants who are resident in North Somerset who are employed or have been offered full time permanent employment and have a need to move and that need to move is related to their employment.

10. Band D

10.1 Owner occupiers

Applicants who are owner-occupiers, whose home is suitable for their needs and who have sufficient equity within the property to obtain suitable alternative accommodation. The council will consider each application on an individual basis.

(*Note:* 'high' medical needs or disrepair problems may over-ride this rule and place the applicant in a higher band).

10.2 Sufficient financial resources

Note: this section overrides all others except in the case of statutorily homeless households.

- a) Applicants with a combined income or savings above £30,000, or has no dependents and a combined income or savings above £25,000;
- b) Applicant is a home owner with equity above £30,000 for families or over £25,000 with no dependents;
- c) Applicant is able to purchase a property sufficiently suitable enough to accommodate the applicants household.

10.3 Suitable accommodation

Applicants who at the time of their application, live in a property which is adequate for their needs in terms of size and facilities. This applies to applicants who live in social housing, are owner-occupiers and tenants of private landlords.

10.4 Those whose circumstances do not appear in bands A to C.

11. Local connection

An application will be assessed on housing need, however, where an applicant does not fulfil the local connection criteria, their application will be placed one band lower than an applicant who does have a local connection.

Applicants do not need to have a local connection with North Somerset to join the Housing Register. However, given the high housing

pressure in the district, priority will be given to applicants with a local connection with the district.

North Somerset provides an attractive residential environment and is generally regarded as an aspirational area that many applicants want to move to. At the same time, North Somerset has a marked shortage of social rented accommodation and is constantly faced with the challenge of meeting local housing need. The council would not want to exclude those without a local connection but it does need to be able to effectively meet its local housing needs.

An applicant will be considered to have a local connection with North Somerset if:

- a) Either the applicant or partner has, by choice, lived in North Somerset for at least three out of the last five years immediately preceding the date the application is made or reviewed;
- b) Either the applicant or partner has, by choice, lived in North Somerset continuously for at least five years at any time in the past;
- c) Either the applicant or partner is employed in the district
 - a. For at least 12 months and
 - b. Remains in employment in the area continuously from the date of their application and
 - c. The employment is not purely of a casual nature

Note: Residency in a property where treatment or rehabilitation of any kind whilst working will not count towards establishing a local connection.

- d) Either the applicant or partner has a close relative that lives in the district and has done so for at least five years immediately preceding the date the application is made or reviewed. For the purposes of this paragraph a close relative means mother, father, adult son or daughter, brother or sister or grandparents;
- e) Either the applicant or partner has demonstrated to the council's satisfaction that a local connection applies to the district through special circumstances.

For the purposes of this section, residence in the district is not of a person's choice if it is a consequence of serving in the Armed Forces or being detained under the authority of Act of Parliament or by being placed in the area to receive treatment or rehabilitation of any kind for any kind of dependency.

Applicants will initially be placed in the relevant band according to whether or not they have established a local connection. If, when their

application is re-newed they then meet the criteria for local connection, they will be moved to the appropriate band from the time they acquire that local connection.

12. Emergency Priority Band

12.1 *Note:* Awarding of 'Emergency Priority Band' can only be made by the Assessment Panel. Where an immediate decision is required, the Senior Manager within the council will consult with two other members of the Assessment Panel. The case, and subsequent decision, will be reported to the next Assessment Panel meeting.

12.2. An 'Emergency Priority Band' will only be issued to any applicant who requires an 'urgent' move to ensure the applicants safety and welfare for whatever reason. Substantial evidence must exist before such a priority is awarded. This priority may be awarded where circumstances could include:

- a) Where the Police recommend an urgent move to escape violence or threats of violence, or
- b) Where the applicant, or a member of their household, has suffered a sudden 'traumatic event' and living within their home will cause considerable distress (e.g. serious sexual assault etc), or
- c) Where there are extreme cases of multiple amount of need and where it is unacceptable for the applicant to remain in the current banding (subject to the discretion of the Assessment Panel).

12.3. Emergency Priority Band is time limited and will last for 28 days. If the applicant has not applied for a property suitable for their needs (size, type, adaptations etc.) within that time their Emergency Priority Band will be reviewed by the Assessment Panel and if not renewed the applicant will be placed in the appropriate band for their needs. If no suitable vacancy has arisen within this time then the Emergency Priority Band will be renewed automatically.

13. Application date

13.1. All applications will be given an 'Application date'. This will be used when allocating properties to determine how long an applicant has been entered on the HomeChoice North Somerset Register. When an applicant's circumstances change sufficiently to put them into a higher band, the date of application will change to the date the change occurred.

14. Change of circumstances

- 14.1. Applicants whose circumstances change once they have applied for housing must complete a 'Change of circumstances' form (also available on line) before their application can be reassessed by an appropriate officer. A change of circumstances could include the birth of a child, change in medical condition, threat of homelessness or change of address.
- 14.2 In circumstances where registered 'Joint' applicants subsequently separate, the HomeChoice North Somerset scheme reserves the right, to apply the original registration date to the household affected.
- 14.3 If an applicant's circumstances improve to such an extent that their application will drop into a lower band, their original date of application will be applied..

15. Reviewing applications

15.1 Annual Renewal

Within 12 months from the re-registration date, all applicants will be sent a renewal letter. If the renewal is not returned within a specified time (i.e. 28 days) a cancellation letter will be sent. If the person has been identified as potentially disadvantaged through the initial application process, including prison leavers, a letter will also be sent to the carer/agency specified. Failure to respond may result in a cancellation of application. Applications that are cancelled are subject to the review process.

15.2 No Bid Renewals

Where an applicant has not expressed an interest in any available properties for one year, from their application date, they will be contacted to see if they still wish to remain on the HomeChoice North Somerset Register. If there is no response within the required time limit, i.e. 28 days from the letter being sent, the application may be cancelled. The applicant will be notified of the cancellation in writing. If the applicant contacts the council within 28 days of their application being cancelled and indicates that they still wish to be considered for housing the application will be reinstated from their last applicable date in band.

- 15.3 Where the Council provides financial assistance to an applicant to secure accommodation in the private rented sector in order to prevent or overcome homelessness, the applicant will be expected to repay such reasonable amount and in such reasonable manner as shall be determined by the Council.

Any lapse in payment will result in the applicant's HomeChoice application being suspended until such time as the payments are brought up to date (save where the Council is satisfied that the

applicant is owed a duty under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 although such applicant will still be expected to repay the reasonable amount as determined by the Council).

Any suspension will not affect the application/effective date of the application. In exceptional circumstances, a suspension of the application may be waived subject to the approval in writing of the Council's HomeChoice and Housing Advice Manager.

16. Cancelling applications

16.1 An application will be cancelled from the HomeChoice North Somerset Register in the following circumstances:

- At the request of an applicant
- Where an applicant does not respond to an application review, within the specified time limit
- Where a council or a Registered Social Landlord has housed the applicant
- When a tenant completes a mutual exchange
- Where an applicant does not maintain their application through the review process, or where the applicant moves and does not provide a contact address
- Where the applicant has died.

16.2. When an application has been cancelled, the applicant or their representative will be notified in writing. Where an applicant has been highlighted as potentially disadvantaged, the Council will contact the applicant to check their circumstances before cancelling the application.

16.3. Any applicant whose application has been cancelled has the right to ask for a review of the decision.

17. Rejoining the HomeChoice North Somerset Housing Register.

17.1. Where an applicant wishes to re-join the housing register at a later date their new date of registration will be the date they re-apply.

18. Size of property

Applicants will be able to bid for selected properties, which match the needs of their household. Below are some typical examples of family types together with the size of accommodation they would generally be eligible for. There may be discretion over the size of some properties where a live in carer requires a separate bedroom.

18.1 Household composition

Assessed Property Size & Type

Household composition	Assessed property size and type						
	Min Beds	Max Beds	Bedsit	Flat	Maisonette	Bungalow	House
Single applicant (restrictions may apply)	1	1	✓	✓		✓	
Childless couple (restrictions may apply).	1	2	✓	✓		✓	
Childless siblings or friends	2	2		✓	✓		
Single person or childless couple over 60 years (requiring sheltered accommodation)	1	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Household with 1 child (under 16 years of age)	2	2		✓	✓	✓	✓
Household with one child 16 years of age or over.	2	2		✓	✓		
Household with 2 children (16 years of age or over)	2	3		✓	✓		
Household with 2 children (one or more child of the same sex under the age of 16).	2	3		✓	✓		✓
Household with 2 children (one or more child, different sexes under the age of 16)	3	3		✓	✓		✓
Household with 3 children (one child aged 16 or under)	3	4		✓	✓		✓
Household with 3 children (16 or over)	3	3		✓	✓		
Household with non dependant visiting child/ren.	2	2		✓	✓		

Household with 4 children (with one of more child under the age of 16).	3	4			✓		✓
Household with 5 or more children (with one or more child under the age of 16)	4	5					✓

18.2 For any current tenant of an RSL partner landlord downsizing to smaller accommodation, there are no restrictions on the size of property they can move to providing no overcrowding will occur. The new property has to have at least one bedroom less than their current home. However in certain circumstances, where an applicant for example is moving from a house to a flat with the same number of bedrooms, then the number of bedrooms maybe disregarded.

18.3 Applicants who are overcrowded by three bedroom spaces or more should be ‘Band A’. Consideration for an extra bedroom will also be given where the applicant has a live-in carer.

18.4 Where applicants have access to children, and where those children stay overnight with the applicant for more than four nights per week, or seven nights each fortnight, they may be eligible for additional bed spaces or bedrooms. This is subject to satisfactory evidence being submitted to support access/residency rights.

18.5 Applicants expecting a baby will be entitled to an additional bedroom.

19. Medical assessments

19.1. An applicant’s (or member of the household included within the application) medical condition can be assessed in one of two ways:

Physical condition/illness:

Applicants complete a self assessment of housing needs on medical grounds which asks for details of the applicant’s medical condition, the reasons why their current property affects that condition and the reason why they wish to move.

The self assessment form also assesses an applicant’s mental health condition. Applicants may wish this form to be supported by a professional worker (e.g. CPN, Social Services, Doctor etc.) who has knowledge of the applicant and their condition. Initially staff will assess the self assessment medical form and then write to the relevant GP for further information if necessary.

- 19.2. All medical applications will initially be assessed by a member of the HomeChoice Team and then by an Occupational Therapist appointed by the Primary Care Trust if further information required. High Medical Priority will only be awarded by the Occupational therapist.
- 19.3. The occupational therapist's assessment will be based on the applicant's (or member of the household included in the application) medical condition, the affect their property has on that condition and how moving to an alternative property can help that condition (See Appendix 1 for Medical Assessment Notes)
- 19.4. Following the medical assessment, the applicant will be informed in writing of the outcome and any change to their banding. If the applicant disagrees with this assessment they may appeal the decision. The review will be looked at by the occupational therapist where further medical evidence is supplied by the applicant to substantiate their application. Any requests for a review of the decision should be made within 14 days of the decision and the decision will be reviewed within 28 days of the date of the decision.
- 19.5. Where applicant's (or member of the household included in the application) medical circumstances change substantially, a new medical application should be submitted along with any supporting evidence.
- 19.6 Welfare assessments:
- Applicants can apply for an assessment on welfare grounds if their current living situation is affecting their welfare. Assessments will be looked at by a member of the HomeChoice Team. Evidence must be submitted from a professional supporting agency or equivalent. eg support worker, social worker, health visitor, education staff. Applicants may appeal against a decision if they are unhappy, a review of the assessment will be carried out by a senior member of staff.
- 19.7 With either medical or welfare assessments, if an award is made, the date the medical/welfare application was received will be used as the effective date on the housing application.

20. Disrepair assessments

- 20.1. The application form asks applicants about the condition of their current home. Where an applicant indicates the property is in a bad state of repair they will be referred to the Private Rented Housing team who will arrange to inspect the property. If the applicant resides outside of the HomeChoice North Somerset area, then HomeChoice North Somerset Partnership will contact the respective council to arrange an inspection, if required.

- 20.2. Following the inspection, if the property contains one or more Category 1 Hazards and the Housing Department feel that rehousing is more appropriate then the applicant will be placed in Band A. If the applicant is an existing social housing tenant the relevant landlord will be notified of the problem.

21. Notification

- 21.1. Once an application has been assessed and entered onto the HomeChoice North Somerset Register, the applicant will receive a letter within 21 days confirming their application details. This notification will include;
- a) The band in which the applicant has been placed (A, B, C or D)
 - b) The size property the applicant is eligible for
 - c) The application date
 - d) A reminder about informing us of any change in circumstances
 - e) The HomeChoice North Somerset review procedure - see section 20
 - f) A personal reference number to allow bidding
- 21.2. Applicants will also receive notification of their application details within 21 days if they have submitted a 'Change of circumstances' form.

22. Review procedure

- 22.1. Once an applicant has been notified in writing of the band in which they have been placed or their ineligibility, they will have a right to request a review against the assessment. The request must be submitted made in writing and sent to the council within 21 days of the date on the notification letter and include the reason why the applicant believes their banding or ineligibility is wrong together with any additional information that the applicant believes is relevant.
- 22.2. The request for a review will be acknowledged by the council within seven days. A Senior Officer who played no part in the original assessment will carry out the review and respond in writing, to the applicant within 28 days of the receipt of the review letter. Following the review, the applicant will be informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons for it.

23. Finding a home

- 23.1. Once applicants have been entered on the HomeChoice North Somerset Register and notified of banding and reference number, they can start to look for a property of their choice.

24. Advertising

24.1. All partner landlords are committed to advertising their available properties as widely as possible. Properties can be advertised on a weekly basis and could be advertised in the following ways:

a) Newsletters

Advertisements may also be placed into free HomeChoice North Somerset newsletters, which will be available in a number of localities across the district.

b) Website

A dedicated HomeChoice North Somerset website is available (www.HomeChoicensomerset.org.uk) and is accessible to anyone with Internet access. The website will allow applicants to view all available properties across the whole of North Somerset and to bid 'on-line' for properties of their choice. Access to the internet is available through a number of the council's Gateway sites as well as all of its libraries.

c) Partner agencies' offices and other service outlets

25. Advertisement deadlines

25.1. All advertisements will carry a deadline by which time applications for particular properties must be received. This will normally be one week from the date of the advertisement. Any applications received after the deadline has been reached will not be considered for the property.

26. Property descriptions

26.1. Properties advertised will carry (where possible) a photograph of the property and a full description. As a minimum the description will include:

- a) Type of property
- b) Number of bedrooms (i.e. bed-spaces)
- c) Location of property
- d) Any adaptations (e.g. disabled facilities etc.)
- e) Services provided (e.g. support, caretaker, cleaning etc.)
- f) Heating type
- g) Rent charged/service charges
- h) Pet Restrictions
- i) Access and availability of any garden

27. Labelling properties

27.1 Labelling caution

The general effect of labelling can be seen to compromise the extent to which vacancies will be let to the highest priority applicant as described

under the banding system. It is therefore important for each landlord to minimise such labelling in order to maintain transparency to the allocation system.

27.2 Advertisements will also give information on who will be eligible to apply for the property. An adapted property suitable for someone in a wheelchair may be labelled to say that applicants must require such a property.

27.3 Properties will not be limited to applicants in specified bands. As long as people meet the requirements for that property they will be able to place a bid (e.g. household size/bedroom fit).

27.4 Sheltered accommodation

RSLs may impose restrictions on the allocation of sheltered accommodation. Details can be obtained directly from the RSL. Advertised properties will also be labelled with information regarding the age/disability of an applicant who will be permitted to bid.

27.5 Transfer applications/special circumstances

All the partner landlords are keen to ensure that they make the best use of their own stock. To achieve this, it is likely that a certain proportion of properties advertised will be labelled giving preference to transfer applicants and in some cases preference will also be given to existing tenants of that landlord. The number of properties labelled as such will be monitored on a regular basis.

27.6 Fully accepted homeless cases

In order to fulfil its statutory duties towards the homeless and to create a through flow of temporary accommodation the council may label properties allowing only households who have been accepted by the council as unintentionally homeless and in priority need, to bid or give preference to this group.

27.7 Local lettings policies

A property may be labelled in accordance with an agreed local lettings policy which may include rural exception sites and some new build sites which may be restricted to local residents through section 106 planning agreements.

27.8 There may be occasions when an RSL may label according to its own priorities other than for internal transfers. An RSL may want to advertise in a way that meets their own lettings policy, eg, to under occupy on schemes with high child densities or to achieve their own targets for move on lettings.

27.9 Complaints

Any complaints about the applicants banding should be directed to the council. Complaints regarding the labelling of the property e.g. size, amenities etc should be referred to the individual landlord of the property. If a successful applicant is not offered the accommodation for any reason then any complaints regarding this should be directed to the landlord making this decision.

28. Bidding for a property

28.1. Where an applicant meets the eligibility criteria, they may bid for that property within the deadline given.

28.2. Applicants will be able to make three bids per weekly cycle however, this will be monitored by the HomeChoice North Somerset Scheme on each weekly advertisement. Where an applicant bids successfully they will be given a time period (normally 48hours) in which to decide which property they will accept.

28.3.1 Applicants may bid for properties using a variety of methods:-

- Online at www.homechoicensomerset.org.uk
- Automated telephone bidding
- By Text
- At the Housing Options and Advice Reception, Somerset House, Weston-super-Mare

28.3.2 Applicants will not be permitted to bid for other properties if they have an outstanding offer in place.

28.3.3 At the close of the bidding cycle and where an applicant appears at the top of more than one shortlist, the applicant will be contacted by the Council and will be expected to select their preferred property and their details will be made available to the appropriate landlord. The other properties will be offered to the next suitable applicant on that shortlist.

29. Selection procedure

29.1 Once the advertisement deadline has passed, a report will be run from the computer system. This will list all the advertised properties and all the applicants who have applied for each of them. For each property advertised the successful applicant will be the one(s) who is in the highest band, with the most multiple amount of housing need. To determine between those with an equal band / multiple amount of need the applicant with the earliest effective date will be used.

29.2 The length of time on the housing register is indicated by using

the individual 'Application dates' given to each applicant. The application date will be determined depending on the type of application, as described in the section 'Application date' above. In the situation where there are two households with the same banding, the same multiple amounts of need, and the same waiting time, the landlord will visit both households to assess who is in the greatest housing need.

- 29.3 Prior to any offer, each successful applicant's details will be checked to ensure they are eligible for the property. In addition, the RSL may carry out an individual risk assessment which may affect an offer being made. Only those applicants who meet the stated criteria and have a satisfactory risk assessment will be offered the property.
- 29.4 The name of the successful applicant will be forwarded to the agreed officer within each landlord (some landlords will be able to access directly the computer system bids for their respective properties). Each individual landlord is responsible for the verification of the successful applicant (ID and other relevant documentation). The council will be responsible for checking that the applicant is in the right band. Each applicant will be given the opportunity to view the property before making a final decision on whether to accept or refuse. Assistance with viewing will be available if required.
- 29.5 If an applicant has been identified as being unsuitable to be a tenant due to the grounds described in 3.7, and has made no attempt to rectify the situation then the applicant may not be allocated the property despite a successful bid. Again the applicant will be informed in writing of this decision. The applicant can make an application if s/he considers that s/he should no longer be treated as ineligible for an allocation of social housing, e.g. because the person who had been guilty of anti-social behaviour is no longer part of his/her household.
- 29.6 If a property is subsequently withdrawn after an applicant has successfully bid, because for example the tenant of that particular property has failed to vacate the property or the property has been incorrectly labelled, the landlord will inform the successful applicant that the property is no longer available. If the property is not ready for occupation following a successful bid and the applicant is likely to wait some considerable time before moving in, the landlord will inform the applicant and give them the option to bid for any other suitable properties.

30 Direct offers

In the circumstances listed below, allocations are not made on the basis of bids. In these circumstances the RSL offers a vacant property to the applicant. Offers will be made on a district-wide basis with regard to suitability. Applicants will have the right to a review.

30.1 Offers to homeless households

If the council is discharging its statutory homelessness duty under s193(2) of the Housing Act 1996 and if s/he has not secured accommodation under Part 6 of the Act within three months of the date of being placed in Band A, the council may seek to discharge its duty under s193 by making a direct offer. The period of time may be extended where no suitable properties have become available or bids have been made but higher band cases have been successful.

30.2 Referrals made by the Police, Probation Service or Home Office.

31. Feedback

31.1. An important part of the scheme is giving applicants feedback on who has recently been allocated properties. Accompanying each advertisement will be a feedback section giving details of the properties allocated.

31.3. Applicant's personal details will, of course, not be included. However, it is envisaged that the feedback form will include:

- a) Property size and type
- b) Property location
- c) Number of applicants who applied for each property
- d) Band of successful applicant

31.4. An overview of this information will be regularly monitored.

31.5. Using this information, applicants will be able to see where properties are more likely to become available and where they may have the best chances of making a successful 'bid'. It is essential that with any choice-based lettings scheme, applicants have as much information as possible in order to help them make an informed evaluation of their housing options.

32. Refusals

32.1. If an applicant decides to refuse an offer of accommodation, either at the accompanied viewing, or when an initial verbal offer is made, the property will be offered to the next eligible applicant.

32.2 Applicants who persistently refuse suitable offers of accommodation (ie more than 3 refusals) may have their housing application reviewed and potentially cancelled

32.3 If a homeless applicant refuses an offer of suitable accommodation, the council may decide to discharge its duty under the Homeless Legislation.

- 32.4 Homeless applicants have the right to request a review of certain decisions made by the council in respect of their homeless application. Within the HomeChoice North Somerset Lettings Policy this includes the decision to discharge the main homeless duty to secure accommodation by providing suitable accommodation for the applicant.
- 32.5 If a homeless applicant wishes to request a review of the suitability of accommodation offered, this should be requested before the end of the period of 21 days beginning with the day on which he/she is notified of the council's decision to discharge its main homeless duty.
- 32.6 A homeless applicant who is requesting a review about the suitability of accommodation will be advised to accept and move into the accommodation pending the outcome of their review request. The council's Homeless section will inform the appropriate officer as soon as a decision has been made, normally within seven days as to whether or not the property will remain available through the review process.

It should be noted the property will only be held open in exceptional circumstances. If a non statutory review is conducted and the offer withdrawn by the appropriate officer on grounds of suitability then the second placed applicant will be made an offer of the property. If the outcome of a review is overturned in favour of the homeless applicant, the alternative accommodation will be provided as quickly as possible.

However if the review of suitability of the offer is upheld the applicant will still have accommodation to live in whilst they consider their further options.

- 32.7 The council will normally expect a household to whom it has accepted a main homeless duty to bid for a wide range of suitable properties.

Due to the demand for social housing, homeless households will be expected to bid on suitable properties in neighbouring parishes/towns to their preferred choice. Applicants living in Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead (or other areas in the north of the district will be expected to bid for any suitable properties in the north. Likewise, applicants living in Weston-super-Mare will be expected to bid on any suitable property within the town.

If a homeless applicant has not been actively bidding for suitable properties, the council may automatically bid on their behalf for properties it considers suitable for the applicant. If the homeless applicant refuses such a property, the council will consider its duty towards them as a homeless household discharged, subject of course to the statutory review process.

32.8 Records will be maintained on the number of refusals for each property and the reason why the applicant decided to refuse.

33. Difficult to let

33.1 If a vacancy cannot be filled via the HomeChoice scheme, the property can be re-advertised on a wider basis in conjunction with the council.

34. Excluded properties

34.1 All the partner landlords are committed to advertising as many of their vacant properties as possible through the HomeChoice system. There will be occasions when certain properties will not be advertised and the reasons for these exclusions will be monitored. Some examples are:

- Properties required for existing tenants whose properties are subject to major works requiring them to vacate
- Extra care vacancies which are allocated jointly with the council's Adult Social Services directorate
- Applicants who have succeeded to a tenancy who need to move to alternative accommodation.

However, even if the property has been excluded from the scheme, the outcome of the letting will still be advertised.

35. False information

35.1. Applicants who are found to have deliberately given false information on their HomeChoice North Somerset Register application form will have their application reviewed immediately. This may result in the 'Band' awarded being changed as a result.

35.2. An immediate review of an application may also be undertaken if an applicant is found to have deliberately changed or worsened their housing situation in order to be placed into a band higher than they would normally have been awarded. If an applicant is rehoused through false information, steps may be taken to end the tenancy and court action may be taken which could result in the applicant receiving a fine up to a maximum of £5,000.

35.3. All landlords in this agreement are committed to taking legal action to evict any applicant found to have gained a tenancy based on false information in their application form. (Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996).

36. Access to personal information

36.1. Individuals are entitled under the Data Protection Act (1998) to request

details of their personal data held by North Somerset Council. A charge may be made for providing this information.

- 36.2. The information received, in conjunction with housing applications, may be disclosed to other housing providers/RSLs but will only be retained if accommodation is to be provided. Any additional personal information obtained may also be provided to RSLs if they provide accommodation.

37. Monitoring

- 37.1. A number of areas within the HomeChoice North Somerset system will be monitored on a regular basis to ensure that the system is operating in the most effective way. Areas to be monitored may include:

- Number of registrations received
- Percentage of applicants registered and notified within 21 days
- Number and percentage of applicants registered within each band
- Number of properties advertised by type, area, landlord
- Number of properties advertised with local connection label
- Number of properties with reasons excluded from the HomeChoice system, by landlord (i.e. decants)
- Number of bids and method of bidding
- Number of bids for each property by band
- Profile of those bidding (i.e. waiting list, transfer, homeless, disabled, ethnic background)
- Number of applicants bypassed for breach of tenancy conditions
- Number of accepted offers by band
- Number of tenancies refused at sign up
- Number of properties re-advertised due to difficulty in letting
- Number of review requests
- Number of applicants in short term supported housing awaiting active rehousing (following confirmation by scheme of readiness to move)
- Number of homeless applicants in Band A awaiting rehousing/(not bidding)
- Number of Band A applicants who have not bid for more than six months
- Number of Emergency Priority applicants awaiting rehousing
- Number of applicants from outside the HomeChoice North Somerset area being rehoused
- Banding the property is advertised in
- The use of labelling
- Number of people housed by band

38. Equal opportunities

- 38.1. All partners of HomeChoice North Somerset are committed to a fair and equitable housing policy and to providing equal opportunities for all when allocating available properties. All housing applicants will be

assessed according to their housing need and in accordance with the published lettings policy.

- 38.2. All partners of HomeChoice North Somerset are opposed to direct or indirect discrimination and recognise the need for appropriate systems to actively prevent discrimination on the basis of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, gender, sexuality, marital status, religion, physical disability or mental health. Any allegations or concerns that an organisation has not acted appropriately have to be made directly to that organisation. All partner landlords are publicly accountable and have to have a complaints policy and an independent ombudsman.
- 38.3 Regular monitoring will also be carried out to ensure that the council complies with the Commission for Racial Equality's code of practice for rented housing.

39. Social inclusion

- 39.1 All partners of HomeChoice North Somerset believe that applicants should be given every assistance to access the housing register and search for suitable properties. For example, the provision of the HomeChoice North Somerset 'Hotline' number will assist those applicants who experience literacy problems or who are either blind or partially sighted and unable to read the advertisements.
- 39.2 The Mental Capacity Act 2005 came into effect, in England, in April 2007 introducing a major overhaul of the law relating to individuals who lack capacity in decision making, particularly around changes in accommodation. The Act introduces a legal obligation on health and social care commissioners to jointly commission advocacy services and will also have significant implications for the provision of supported housing, care and support services.

To assist further, all statutory and voluntary agencies who work within the community either helping or advising applicants will be given information and training in order to fully understand the HomeChoice North Somerset scheme and thereby assist at first hand their clients to search and apply for suitable housing.

- 39.3 To further assist applicants the following methods may be used:
- Applicants potentially disadvantaged by the scheme will initially be identified from the application form. Staff will contact these applicants and offer them a home visit or interview. Staff will seek to establish what the support needs are and identify ways of enabling the applicants to participate in the HomeChoice North Somerset system. This may include sending copies of the advertisements in large print to an applicant or simply providing advice.

- If the applicant agrees, staff may contact any professional or voluntary workers from health or Social Services with whom the applicant is involved to ensure they understand the procedures and that necessary support is provided. All agencies funded through Supporting People should be in a position to provide their clients with help on housing issues.
- Disadvantaged applicants are able to nominate a person (including family members, friends or professional worker) to bid on their behalf or to help them bid for suitable properties.
- An alternative is for HomeChoice North Somerset staff to automatically put the applicants forward for vacancies that would be suitable, in the small number of cases where the applicant has no support.

40. Policy review

- 40.1. The HomeChoice North Somerset Scheme is regularly reviewed to ensure that the policy meets its stated objectives and complies with legislative changes. Any minor changes to the Lettings and Assessment Policy are implemented only after delegated authority has been received from the Executive Member and the majority agreement amongst the partner landlords.

41. Complaints

- 41.1. Any complaints regarding the scheme should be directed initially to the organisation processing an applicant's claim.
- 41.2 The Housing Ombudsman.

If an applicant is not satisfied with the action taken by either the council or a Registered Social Landlord and has exhausted the complaints procedure available, they can send a written complaint to the ombudsman.

The Housing Ombudsman Service can be contacted at:

Housing Ombudsman Service
81 Aldwych
London
WC2B 4HN

Tel: 020 7421 3800
Lo-Call 0845 7125973

Minicom 020 7404 7092
Fax 020 7831 1942

Emailinfo@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Web address www.ihos.org.uk

APPENDIX 1 - MEDICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When ill health, disability or old age is aggravated by housing conditions and would improve if other accommodation were offered, the award for medical consideration is a range from Band A to Band C.

High / Life threatening Problems – Band A

Significant Problems – Band B

Minor Problems – Band C

In the case of stress this will be reflected when deciding on banding.

The two crucial factors that are looked for in any awards of medical conditions are:

1. The physical link between the identified medical complaint and the current housing accommodation/situation.
2. That there is a realistic expectation that the identified medical condition would improve if alternative, more suitable accommodation was made available.

The Housing Team will carefully consider any representation received and check the circumstances outlined with any banding award that may have previously been made. Where there is a need, a change to banding will be made. The Housing Team does not usually request an applicant or tenant to submit medical certificates or to obtain letters from their GP. The belief is held that this is a purely voluntary matter for the GP and patient. The Housing Team has no wish to create further work for doctors by insisting that medical certificates are produced before any application or transfer request is considered.

When determining what banding to award, staff should approach the matter from the standpoint of assessing what degree of need exists and, secondly, what adverse effect this has on the lifestyle of the household as a whole?

To achieve this consistency in the allocation of banding under this heading a descending schedule is detailed below.

High / life threatening problems – Band A.

This top category will be reserved for those exceptional cases where an applicant's or tenant's life can in some way be said to be at risk because of

associated medical and housing difficulties which are inherent in the existing accommodation.

Significant problems – Band B.

This again is a high banding category and should only be used to reflect urgent medical difficulties that have a clear relationship to existing housing circumstances. It is distinguished from the previous banding (i.e. high / life threatening problems) because in this instance the person's life cannot be considered to be at risk.

Minor problems – Band C.

The degree of the problem is clearly less severe but must still have a clear relationship to existing housing conditions.

CONCLUSION

The Housing Team will carry out the majority of assessments under the Medical Consideration element. However, there will be occasions when the advice of North Somerset Primary Care Trust will need to be sought. For example, where an applicant's housing circumstances are affecting their mental health, or where a GP considers a patient requires High Priority as a result of a medical problem.

The important aspect is to make a decision on what banding should be awarded and then within the Visiting Officer's report, set out the rationale as to why bandings have been pitched at that particular level.

The following list covers some of the main factors, which can be reflected in a banding award under Medical Considerations.

1. Mobility – Inability to manage stairs/control-heating (i.e. put on extra clothing or adjust fire etc.) size of accommodation, garden etc.
2. Applicants or tenants who are more or less confined to their existing accommodation, or where they depend on others to enable them to leave the dwelling.
3. Where present accommodation is causing the applicant's mental or physical disability, which could be overcome by a move to more suitable accommodation. The approach in this instance is to focus on how the applicant or tenant's circumstances could be IMPROVED by a move to alternative accommodation – banding will be awarded accordingly.

The possible link between applicants or tenants who are assessed to have High Medical Problems (Band A) and recognising the scope to regard the application as an 'Emergency Band'.

Medical factors can constitute one of the most urgent forms of housing need. The Housing Manager should scrutinise, with extreme care, applications, which attract Band A for Medical Consideration. It may be appropriate to consider the application as an Emergency Band

APPENDIX 2 – WELFARE CONSIDERATIONS

When an applicant's welfare is aggravated by housing conditions and would improve if other accommodation were offered, the award for welfare consideration is a range from Band A to Band C. Please also note that welfare priority will only be awarded to a household, not to individual members of the family/household.

High / Life threatening problems – Band A

Significant problems – Band B

Minor problems – Band C

Any professional, for example a Social Worker, Support Worker or Housing Advice/Options Officer working with a person or their household can ask for a welfare award to be considered for a client. The representative will complete the application for welfare priority which will then be carefully considered by the Housing Options Team Leader.

Some of the areas that can be considered for a welfare award are as follows:

- The need to give or receive support;
- The need to recover from the physical effects of violence, threats, physical, emotional, sexual abuse etc;
- An applicant's restricted ability to fend for him/herself
- The need for adapted housing and/or extra facilities
- Young people at risk
- The need for sheltered or supported housing
- The for housing as part of a care plan
- People who have suffered instability due to frequent changes of accommodation.

High problems – Band A

This top award will be reserved for those exceptional cases where an applicant's life can in some way be said to be at risk because of associated welfare and housing difficulties which are inherent in the existing accommodation.

Significant problems – Band B

This again is a high banding award and should only be used to reflect urgent welfare difficulties that have a clear relationship to existing housing

circumstances. It is distinguished from the previous sub-division (high) because in this instance, the person's life cannot be considered to be at risk.

Minor problems – Band C

The degree of the problem is clearly less severe.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS ABOUT CHOICE-BASED LETTINGS

Assessment Panel

A panel consisting of a senior housing manager within the council, a senior manager from a partner organisation and one other.

Bid or Bidding

To be considered for an available home, applicants are required to contact us to 'make a bid' or 'express an interest' in a property. No money is involved in 'making a bid' or 'expressing an interest' in a property.

Bidding period

The number of days in which an applicant has the opportunity to 'place a bid' or 'express an interest' in a home once it is advertised.

Choice-based Lettings (CBL)

A new system being introduced for the allocation of social housing. CBL is designed to offer more choice and involvement for applicants in selecting a new home. It is a much more open, transparent and customer-based approach in the allocation of properties.

Consultation period

A period of three months in which North Somerset Council will consult with all interested parties and stakeholders about its plans to introduce Choice-based Lettings.

Dry House

Accommodation where alcohol is not permitted

Express an interest – See Bid or Bidding

Extra care housing

Extra care housing is accommodation specially designed to meet the needs which some older people may have, or develop in later life. Very sheltered developments promote independent living allowing frail older people to live in

their own homes but at the same time providing peace of mind with the knowledge that personal care as well as housing support is available if required.

Housing Register - A list of applicants for housing accommodation.

Banding scheme

The system currently used by the HomeChoice North Somerset Scheme to determine the priority of an applicants housing need. Banding is allocated to the applicant to reflect their current circumstances and future housing need. The banding allocated determines the applicant's position in the waiting list for a particular type/size/location of a home.

Property label

A description of the property being advertised as available to let. The label will generally include a photograph, location, type of property, number of bedrooms, type of heating, any disabled adaptations, whether there is a garden or not, if pets are accepted and other features etc. The label will indicate who may be eligible to bid for the property. This could include, for example, where a local connection may be required, if there is an age restriction or the property has adaptations.

Registered Social Landlord (RSL)

Term introduced by the 1996 Housing Act applying to housing associations registered with the Housing Corporation. Registered Social Landlords have access to Social Housing Grant public funding for the capital costs of providing housing.

Sheltered housing for rent

Social housing with support for the elderly for rent.

Sheltered leasehold housing for sale

Supported accommodation for the elderly for sale

Shortlist

Once the deadline has passed for registering a 'bid' or 'interest', a list of bidders who have met the advertising criteria for each individual property is taken from the computer system. Generally, the applicant offered the property will be the person who has been in the highest housing needs band, with the most multiple amount of need, for the longest period of time.

Social Rented Housing

Housing of a high standard, which is provided at below market cost for households in housing need by local authorities and Registered Social Landlords. It operates on a basis of accepted and regulated standards of good practice in relation to physical conditions, management, allocation, equal opportunities and accountability. The Housing Corporation sets the maximum rent levels.

Supported Housing

Supported Housing is accommodation where receipt of housing support services is a condition of residence. Accommodation can be grouped individual self contained flats, or may be shared housing with or without shared communal facilities. Support staff may be based on site or be visiting staff. This type of housing is usually provided for groups of people with similar needs, e.g. older people, homeless people, people with mental health problems. People can live in supported housing for varying lengths of time dependant on their individual needs and the type of service.

Void

An empty RSL property

