Southampton City Council
Allocations Policy
2016
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<td><strong>Version</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
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<td><strong>Approved by</strong></td>
<td>SCC Cabinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date last amended</strong></td>
<td>6th October 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approval date</strong></td>
<td>March 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Review date</strong></td>
<td>October 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Effective date</strong></td>
<td>1st October 2016</td>
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Purpose

1. This policy sets out our approach to allocating social housing homes in Southampton. It sets out our response to statutory requirements (national rules set by the Government) along with our local policy (rules set by the City Council). The policy will be reviewed regularly to reflect any Government or local policy changes.

2. There is a huge demand for affordable rented homes in Southampton. The purpose of the Allocations Policy is to define a consistent framework, which can be used to allocate the limited number of vacancies that are available. In reality, Southampton City Council (SCC) can offer a housing solution to only a very small proportion of those who would like to be re-housed. Therefore, we aim to avoid accepting applications from those who have little or no chance of being rehoused. It should be noted that, even where applicants are accepted onto the Housing Register, there is no guarantee that an offer of accommodation will be made.

SCC aims to:

- provide affordable housing for rent for local residents in housing need
- ensure homes are allocated fairly and efficiently, taking into account applicant’s individual needs
- make best use of all the available social housing homes
- process applications fairly and confidentially, avoiding discriminating on grounds of ethnicity, disability, religion, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or age.

Legal context

What the law says (including codes of guidance)

3. In drawing up this policy the relevant legislation and codes of guidance have been considered. In particular:

- The 1996 Housing Act (Part VI) as amended by the Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to have an Allocations Policy for determining priorities and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating social housing. The Council must allocate in accordance with that Policy.

- The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Housing Act 2004, require that the Council ensures that priority for social housing goes to those in greatest need. This includes homeless people, those who need to move on welfare, hardship or medical grounds, or people living in unsatisfactory housing (‘reasonable preference’ categories).

- The policy must give additional preference to serving or former members of the Armed forces (who meet the specified criteria) who have an urgent housing need. In some cases family members are included.

- Amendments within the Localism Act 2011 enable Councils to determine which applicants do or do not qualify for social housing, to reflect local circumstances
This Allocations Policy complies with the requirements of Statutory Instrument 2015/967, and takes into account the Allocation of Accommodation; Guidance for Councils, issued in June 2012 and March 2015.

Preventing Fraud

The Council takes its responsibility to make proper use of public resources very seriously. Applications for the Housing Register are investigated to ensure assessments and decisions are accurate. We will require proof of information you have provided in your application, such as Council Tax and Housing Benefit details. We are required to participate with other Local Authorities as part of the National Fraud Initiative. We also verify information by office interviews, home visits, statements from previous social landlords, and verification of documents.

Other council policies and strategies

4. The policy takes account of and reflects the Council’s other key policies and strategies including the Southampton Homelessness Strategy, Southampton Tenancy Strategy, the Housing Strategy and the Strategic Plan.

Working with other social housing providers in the city

5. The Allocations Policy also applies to the allocation of properties by SCC on behalf of other social housing providers (Housing Associations, also known as Registered Providers) in the city. SCC uses a combined waiting list called the Housing Register.

6. Because SCC and other local providers use this joint waiting list, applicants to the Housing Register will be considered for housing owned by SCC and also other social housing providers. Details of the landlord and tenancy type available will be made clear at the time of advertising and sign-up so that applicants can exercise choice in this matter.

7. The law relating to Local Authorities and other social housing providers varies slightly so, on occasion, there may be some additions or variations to the main policy where specific landlords are concerned. Where this is the case we will do our best to alert applicants to this at the bidding stage.

Annual lettings plan

8. To assist the Council in making best use of resources and meeting statutory requirements an annual lettings plan is compiled and published on SCC’s website. This identifies the different categories of applicants we are required to assist and sets out how we intend to do this. It will identify the proportion of vacancies likely to be made available to each of the categories of applicant identified in the Allocation Policy.

9. The plan will consider any special circumstances anticipated over the coming year and set out how these will be addressed. It will also take account of relevant local priorities.

Scope

10. Not all of the allocations made by SCC are covered by the Allocations Policy. The Council has a duty to respond to urgent and exceptional situations so this means a small number of allocations are made outside of this policy.
11. This policy does not include lettings of temporary accommodation, changes to existing tenancies, mutual exchanges or applications in respect of homelessness. Information is provided on SCC’s website setting out the arrangements for applying for assistance for people who are homeless.

Definitions
Types of application

We identify applications in the following ways:

- ‘R’ – applicants who need rehousing
- ‘T’ – applicants who need to transfer from their current Council or partner Housing Association property (currently this only applies to Council tenants. An amendment is planned to include Housing Association tenants in the future)
- ‘H’ – applicants who are homeseekers due to being homeless or at risk of homelessness

Policy statement
Eligibility and qualifying for the Housing Register

12. In order to join the Housing Register applicants must be both eligible and qualifying and meet the requirements for either “reasonable” or “additional” preference as laid out in the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Localism Act 2011.

Eligible/ineligible applicants:

13. Certain categories of people are identified by the law as not being eligible to be social housing tenants. This includes people who have restricted rights to reside in the United Kingdom or have no access to public funding. It is not practical in this policy to define all the circumstances in which the restrictions apply so any applicants unsure of their eligibility should visit the Councils’ website or seek advice.

Qualifying applicants:

14. In addition to being “eligible”, applicants must also “qualify” through meeting SCC’s policy requirements. SCC requires that applicants are:

- 18 years of age or older, and;
- Not owners of residential property in the UK or abroad, and;
- Living within the Southampton City Council boundary and have been doing so continuously for at least three years prior to and throughout the time of application and waiting, and;
- In housing need, and;
- Able to manage a tenancy and suitable to be a tenant (see below).

Unsuitability to be a tenant
15. You will not qualify if the Council considers you are unable to properly manage a tenancy. This may be because you need a more supported environment than we can provide or you, or a member of your family, are considered to be unsuitable to be a tenant. The Council may reach the view that you are unsuitable to be a tenant through considering factors such as your previous management of a tenancy, housing debts owed, a history of non-payment of rent, a history of arrestable offences committed in the vicinity of your current or previous home or involvement in anti-social behaviour.

16. In making this, and any other decision the council will take into account all of the relevant factors. These may include your housing need (including your family members), any mitigation presented by you to SCC (e.g. attempts to put right the problems), any changes in your circumstances or behaviour since the relevant events occurred and the extent to which the issues identified are considered to be still current and likely to recur.

Housing need

17. Applicants must remain in housing need throughout the time spent waiting on the Housing Register. They must notify the council within one month of any change in their address or circumstances (see below).

18. The Council uses a ‘points’ scheme to prioritise applicants on the Housing Register. The scheme awards points to reflect applicants’ circumstances and is based on housing need. Points are awarded to reflect the degree and/or urgency of applicants’ housing need.

19. In addition, applicants will be awarded one point per month waiting time.

Our policy and how we make decisions

20. We make decisions about housing applications by considering four key questions whenever an application for housing is received:

   1. Is the applicant “eligible” because they meet statutory criteria? (see points 12 and 13)
   2. Does the applicant “qualify” under SCC’s Allocations Policy? (see point 14)
   3. What size and type of property (mostly based on number of bedrooms, but can include other factors such as property condition and facilities) does the applicant need?
   4. What degree of priority is required relative to other applicants?

Type of property required

We have to make best use of the resources available to us in order to be able to house the maximum number of people from our housing register. This means that we have strict rules about the type of property that applicants can apply for. In deciding on the type of property and degree of priority required the council has to bear in mind the type of housing available to it and the high demand for that housing. For example, there are far more flats than houses, and larger homes are scarce.

We classify properties according to a number of different factors. These are:

- the number of bedrooms
- the type of access inside and outside the property (e.g. steps, stairs, lift, level access)
• adaptations which have been carried out in order to meet particular needs
• whether pets can be permitted
• age requirements (if any) of the block or scheme
• the provision of support services

20. If you are accepted onto the Housing Register we will assess your needs to decide what sort of property you can apply for. We will tell you what this is when we have completed our assessment and you will be able to bid for this sort of property only.

21. We do not make any distinction between houses and flats when deciding what type and size of property applicants are eligible for. However, houses can enable us to satisfy a greater range of needs than flats so we have to make best use of them. Therefore, when we advertise houses we will usually say that we will give priority to particular types of applicants. This is usually families with children.

Size of property required

22. We have to make best use of the stock we have so we expect some people in a household to share a bedroom. Our rules generally match those in the housing benefit regulations.

23. We consider that the following people need a bedroom of their own:

• someone with an assessed medical need for their own bedroom
• couples
• single parents.

24. We expect the following people to share a bedroom:

• two children of the same sex (includes step and half siblings, cousins et cetera, age is not relevant )
• two children of different sex aged under 10 (including step and half siblings, cousins etc).

25. Here are some examples of how these rules apply:

• Single parent and 1 child – this family need a two-bedroom property
• Couple and two daughters aged 2 and 14 – this family need a two-bedroom property
• Couple and four daughters aged 3, 8, 12 and 14 – this family need a three-bedroom property
• Single parent with two sons aged 4 and 12 and three daughters aged 14, 16 and 22 – this family need a four-bedroom property.

26. Households without any other qualifying factors and who have the ‘correct’ number of bedrooms will be treated as adequately housed so will not be eligible to join the housing register.

27. However, applicants living in a social housing property which is too large for them will be treated as if they have reasonable preference and will be permitted to join the Housing
Register in order to wait for a property of the appropriate size (this includes allowing downsizers to bid for properties with one-bedroom more than they need). This enables us to meet the needs of more applicants overall through releasing the larger, under-occupied property so households in this situation are treated as an exception to the general rule. From time to time, as demand changes, the policy will be amended to help us meet need and make best use of stock.

**Points Scheme**

28. In framing this policy we have had regard to the Communities and Local Government Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England document published in 2012. This sets out the requirements in respect of reasonable preference and additional preference as follows:

"In framing their allocation scheme to determine allocation priorities, housing authorities must ensure that reasonable preference is given to the following categories of people (s.166A(3):

(a) people who are homeless within the meaning of part seven of the 1996 Act (including those who are intentionally homeless and 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 (two) or 68 (two) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under s.192(3)

(c) people occupying in sanitary 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, and

(e) people who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).

29. In addition Local Authorities are required to consider giving additional preference to:

- those who need to move urgently because of a life-threatening illness or sudden disability
- families in severe overcrowding which poses a serious health hazard
- those who are homeless and require urgent re-housing as a result of violence or threats of violence, including intimidated witnesses, and those escaping serious antisocial behaviour or domestic violence.

30. We manage priority between applicants by using a ‘points’ scheme. We have based this on the requirements of the Housing Act 1996 (amended by the Homelessness Act 2002), the Housing Act 2004 and the relevant codes of guidance.

31. We award most points to applicants who meet the various criteria listed in the legislation. In this way applicants in the worst housing conditions will receive more points than other applicants.
32. We also recognise the amount of time that people have waited for an offer of housing from us. This is done by adding one point per month for each month applicants have been on the Housing Register.

33. For applicants in housing need (reasonable preference) the following points are awarded in addition to one point per month waiting time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applicants identified as having a housing need (reasonable preference)</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants identified as meeting a second housing need (reasonable preference) category</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants with an assessed medical/welfare need to move, this includes grounds related to disability</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant households with a second household member with an assessed medical/welfare need to move</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants who are considered homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 but are intentionally homeless or not in priority need</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing tenants of Council or partner Housing Associations in the city are awarded 25 points to create movement within the housing stock (this is currently only used for Council tenants but a new amendment will be implemented in the future)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southampton City Council tenants, and tenants of Partner Housing Associations who live in the city, who are giving up at least 1 bedroom in order to move to smaller accommodation. This excludes anyone moving from a one-bedroom to a studio flat or a two-bedroom flat (first floor or above) or maisonette to a one-bedroom general needs property</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants who need to move to a particular locality in Southampton where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others). This is primarily aimed at those with an assessed social need to move to a particular area of the city. These points are not generally available to applicants who have a need common to many others, such as wanting to be near to a particular estate / school unless there are exceptional distinguishing factors.</td>
<td>30</td>
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**Armed Forces**

The law requires Local Authorities to give extra help to certain categories of armed forces personnel. We meet this requirement through allowing relevant applicants to join the Housing Register and to be treated as if they were ‘qualifying’ applicants under our scheme.
Applicants meeting one or more of the following criteria will be admitted to the Housing Register and awarded the 90 housing need (reasonable preference) points to bring them in line with other qualifying applicants.

Criteria
- serving members of the regular forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service
- former members of the regular forces
- bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in ministry of defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service
- existing or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service
- merchant seamen/women who served during the 2nd World War.

In addition, if you are in urgent housing need (as assessed by specialist homelessness officers) you will also be awarded an additional 30 points.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Short term points</th>
<th>Awarded for four months. If, at the end of the four months, the move has not been completed then the additional points will usually be removed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urgent management move</td>
<td>It may sometimes be necessary to arrange an urgent move. This is most usually done where a management transfer has been agreed for social housing tenants or in cases of urgent reciprocal applications (including witness protection). If this is necessary additional points will be awarded for a period of four months to enable the urgent move to take place.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Urgent Medical/Welfare Need to Move</th>
<th>We have specialist officers that assess whether applicants require urgent re-housing on disability, medical or welfare grounds. They will also assess the type of housing needed and the urgency of any need. A very small proportion of applicants are assessed as having an urgent need to move because of disability, medical or welfare grounds.</th>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>Urgent unintentionally homeless applicants in priority need</th>
<th>We have specialist homelessness officers who can award these points if the usual re-housing options are unavailable.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Urgent disrepair | |
Applicants occupying property in Southampton that has had a notice served under parts 8, 9, and 10 of the housing Act 1985, or an order or declaration has been served or action taken under section 5(2) (b), (e), (f) or (g) of the Housing Act 2004.  

Left in Occupation
Applicants left in occupation of SCC property where a notice to quit has been served and there has been an agreement to rehouse.

Decants
Applicants being decanted, for instance due to decommissioning of SCC housing stock, where time allows for bidding within Homebid rather than a direct let outside of Homebid.

Change in applicant’s circumstances and keeping us up-to-date

34. We must make sure that we do not offer properties which do not match the needs of an applicant’s household. Therefore, it is important that we are kept up-to-date with details of applicant’s housing situation. We will do this by writing to applicants at intervals during the time they are waiting on the Housing Register to check that their circumstances have remained the same. Applicants must supply all the information to us within 30 days of our letter. Applicants who do not supply the information within this time will be removed from the Housing Register.

35. Where an applicant’s circumstances have changed (for example they have bought a property, moved home or their family size has increased or decreased) they must also notify the Council within one month so that their application can be reassessed. Again, not doing this will result in the applicant’s application being removed from the Housing Register.

Deliberately worsening housing situation/fraud

36. If an applicant moves out of, or alters, suitable accommodation to accommodation that is unsuitable for their needs we will investigate to find out why this has been done. If we are satisfied that this was done in order to improve the applicant’s position on the Housing Register we will continue to treat the application as if the move has not taken place.

37. We will also carry out investigations where we believe that incorrect information has been provided to us in order to improve an applicant’s rehousing prospects. Where this is the case we will include cancel or amend an application.

Choice

38. Within the constraints of our stock and the need to manage the allocations process as efficiently as possible, we seek to provide the maximum amount of choice possible to applicants. We do this through our Homebid scheme. This allows applicants to choose the area in which they wish to live and, within their eligibility criteria, the type of property.
39. We publish information about the letting of properties previously advertised and re-let through Homebid so that applicants can find out the number of points usually required. Whilst this varies from time to time, in general, this will enable applicants to work out how long they will have to wait for a particular type of vacancy and to tailor their ‘bidding’ to either shorten their waiting time or to target a particular area or property type.

40. Applicants are also able to choose their landlord through looking at the advertisements in Homebid and to identify whether the rent payable is appropriate for their income. Other information such as heating type, availability of lifts, service charges and support service information is also available in the advertisement.

41. Applicants can choose to bid on up to 3 properties per bidding cycle. The deadline for bids is indicated on the Homebid website. There is no maximum number of times that bids can be made other than this. Once a property has been advertised we try to complete the lettings process within the quickest time possible and will notify the selected applicants of the various deadlines involved. It is important that we do let properties promptly because this affects the amount of income through rent and other charges that we have and also means that we can re-house applicants in housing need more quickly.

How to apply

42. In order to apply for re-housing applicants must supply the council with appropriate, relevant information. We collect this information through the use of an online application process. In addition, applicants must provide proof of certain criteria such as identification, National Insurance number, address, household composition, responsibility for children etcetera. The Council also reserves the right to request any other additional information required to make sure that any application for re-housing is accurate and is dealt with properly.

43. Applicants must provide all information within 30 days of submitting their application to the Council. If they fail to do this the application will be cancelled. Applicants must also, from time to time, provide information to the Council to confirm their current circumstances. Again, applicants who fail to do this within the set period will be removed from the Housing Register.

Other information

Age designated property and housing with care

44. Some of our properties have minimum age requirements (for example, applicants must be 50 or over). Some more specialist schemes require an applicant to have a care assessment carried out and minimum/maximum levels of care required (for example 5 hours of care a week), and in some cases particular diagnoses (for example a dementia diagnosis). Full details of these are available on our website.

Other landlord’s requirements

45. We work with other social landlords in the City so some of the properties we advertise have particular requirements based on the rules adopted by that particular landlord.
Where this is the case we will show the qualifying criteria in our advertisement. Each landlord has their own Lettings Policy so you can ask to see this if you need further detail.

**Applicants who are unable to use Homebid**

46. Most applicants bidding for properties are required to use the Homebid system. However, for a very few applicants it is not practical for them to ‘bid’ themselves. Where this is the case the Council may be able to ‘bid’ on behalf of those applicants.

47. Instances where this might be the case include elderly applicants who need to downsize but who are unable to manage the administrative process themselves and have no friends or relatives who can assist. The Council will decide if an assisted bid is required and, if this is the case, the applicant will not be able to bid themselves. If the Council believes that the applicant or their friends and family are able to make bids themselves then the Council will provide advice on how to use Homebid and, where necessary, how to obtain assistance from other agencies to do so.

48. A very small number of applicants require a property with substantial adaptations. In these cases bidding in the normal way is not appropriate. If this is the case then the Council will seek to make a ‘direct letting’ of a property. Where possible we will seek to match an applicant’s needs against a property in their chosen area which has already been adapted. This is so as not to disadvantage the applicant, but also to use properties to best effect. We are currently reviewing the direct let policy and any change will be available on our website.

**Who can be included in an application for rehousing?**

49. We require that anybody included in a re-housing application is eligible to access public funds and services, has a long-term commitment to the household and will live in that household once re-housed. This requirement applies to all members of the household including parents, siblings, partners and children. We will assess commitment to the household in the following ways:

- people included in the application must prove that they have lived in the household for a minimum period of one year at the time of application and continue to do so throughout the period of the application
- children included in the application must genuinely live in the household as their only or principal home (applicants unsure whether or not to include children on their application must seek advice from SCC)
- where care of children is shared we will allow them to be listed in only one re-housing application.

50. There are only a few limited exceptions to these requirements. These are children newly born into the household and children leaving care or being fostered. Special arrangements (below) apply in the case of applicants who are foster-carers.
51. Applications which include children who have previously been rehoused by the authority in the care of someone else will be refused unless the authority is satisfied that it is necessary for them to live in the new household and that they meet the requirements of long term commitment to the household set out above. If the authority considers that children have been included on the application in order to gain greater priority or access a larger or different type of housing the application will be treated as fraudulent and appropriate measures taken.

Debts to SCC or other social landlords

52. Applicants who owe money in respect of housing debts to the Council or another social housing provider will not usually be made an offer of a property. ‘Housing debts’ include:

- current rent
- rent from a former tenancy
- heating and service charges
- charges for support services
- maintenance repair charges
- ‘mesne profits’ charges levied in lieu of rent where there is no formal tenancy.

53. Where the debt remains unpaid but cannot be subject to further enforcement action because of a relevant court order the council will decide whether this has an impact on the applicant’s suitability to be a tenant.

Exceptions to policy

54. From time to time cases will arise which cannot be dealt with appropriately within the normal policy criteria. The senior housing manager has delegated authority to amend eligibility criteria, to give additional priority or to take other action necessary in these cases. It is not intended that this delegated authority be used other than in very exceptional cases since this would undermine the authority’s ability to be equitable in its treatment of applications for re-housing. The Council will take into account all relevant circumstances when making this decision including:

- the applicant’s degree of housing need
- significant events in the applicant’s tenancy history
- the current position in respect of the applicant’s ability to manage a tenancy successfully.

55. Where circumstances arise which require an ongoing amendment to the Allocations Policy the housing manager has delegated authority to do this so long as the amendment does not fundamentally alter the overall direction or intentions of the policy.

Prisoners

56. Prisoners who have lived in Southampton for at least three years immediately prior to starting their prison sentence may join the Housing Register six months prior to their expected release date. The maximum amount of points which will be awarded in respect of this waiting period prior to release is six. Prisoners whose release date is later than expected will not continue to accrue further points throughout this period.
57. On release from prison, prisoners must secure their own accommodation while they wait for rehousing.

Risk to applicant or other residents

58. When deciding whether to accept an application, or to make an offer of housing, the Council will take into account any known risk factors. This will include the risk to other residents and to the applicant. The issues which will be taken into account include those which might render the applicant vulnerable if re-housed and those which may affect other residents (for example, a known history of violent or anti-social behavior). If the Council considers the risk to be too great then it will not accept the applicant onto the Housing Register or may not make an offer of accommodation.

59. In considering these factors the Council recognises the role that settled accommodation can play in enabling offenders to become rehabilitated. However, the Council also exercises a duty as landlord to thousands of tenants across the city therefore it is necessary to balance the needs of individual applicants against the needs of the wider tenant population.

60. In reaching a decision on these matters the Council will consider all the relevant factors including seeking the view of Health, Police, National Probation Service and other relevant statutory agencies. Examples of issues which will be taken into account include:

- the applicant’s degree of housing need
- the nature of the applicant’s behaviour/convictions/bail or licence conditions
- any mitigating circumstances that applied at the time or to current circumstances
- the result of any trial period in accommodation
- whether there are any areas of the city or property types which would be unsuitable

Data protection

61. The Council will keep all information supplied by applicants in secure and confidential storage. Information will be held and destroyed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and used only for the purpose of assessing housing applications or for exercising other duties compatible with the council’s status as a strategic authority.

Right to review following exclusion from the Housing Register

62. Applicants will be notified in writing if they are excluded from the Housing Register on the grounds that the applicant or a member of the household is unsuitable to be a tenant.

63. Applicants have a right to request a review of this decision and a right to request a review of the facts of the case which were taken into account in making the decision. Details of how to do this will be given in the letter sent to them notifying them of the decision. The review will be carried out by an officer who has not been involved in the case and is more senior than the original decision maker.
64. If the applicant wishes to apply again to the authority following exclusion from the Housing Register then they must provide information demonstrating that their situation has changed and that they are now suitable to be a tenant.

**Right to move**

65. The law requires Local Authorities to set aside a proportion of their lettings for social tenants from other parts of the country needing to move to the area to take up work. In line with national guidance the City Council will make available up to 1% of its annual lettings for this purpose.

66. In order to qualify to be considered for the “right to move” applicants must:

- be an existing social housing tenant, and
- have reasonable preference under s. 166 (3) (e) because of the need to move to the local authority’s district to avoid hardship, and
- need to move because the tenant works in the district, or
- need to move to take up an offer of work.

67. In deciding whether applications will be accepted under these arrangements the City Council will take into account:

- the distance and/or time taken to travel between work and home
- the availability and affordability of transport, taking into account level of earnings
- the nature of the work and whether similar opportunities are available closer to home
- other personal factors, such as medical conditions and childcare, which would be affected if the tenant could not move
- the length of the work contract
- whether failure to move would result in the loss of an opportunity to improve their employment circumstances or prospects, for example, by taking up a better job, a promotion, or an apprenticeship.

68. Voluntary work is excluded from these arrangements as is work which is only short-term, marginal in nature or ancillary to work in another district. Applicants who are admitted to the Housing Register under these arrangements will be treated as if they have reasonable preference.

**Fostering and care leavers**

69. The Council recognises that supporting care leavers and fostering contributes to good care of looked after children. A small number of properties will be identified each year to be used to help families start fostering or to increase the number of children who can be looked after and to offer additional assistance to care leavers.

70. The Council will identify in the annual lettings plan the percentage of its properties which will be made available for this purpose. This percentage will be identified in the context of the need to achieve the overall objectives of the Allocations Policy and to satisfy statutory requirements. The Council’s Children’s Services team will identify families and young people
who would benefit from moving to alternative accommodation through this arrangement. The final decision on the allocation of properties will be made by the senior housing manager.

71. Properties let to foster-carers will be subject to a “flexible tenancy” and will not be eligible for a “secure tenancy”. The tenancy awarded will generally be for two years and the criteria for renewing the tenancy will include a requirement that the accommodation is still needed in order to provide fostering services.

72. Foster-carers who no longer provide fostering services will be considered for re-housing when their fostering arrangements come to an end. Any accommodation offered will generally be suitable for their current needs at the time.

Special letting schemes

73. From time to time the council or one of its social housing partners may decide to implement a “special lettings scheme”. This is most frequently done when a newly-built or refurbished scheme is being let but can happen at any time if the landlord deems it necessary in order to make sure that the scheme operates effectively as a good place to live.

74. This principle may also apply to individual properties where there have been significant management problems previously. In this case the landlord may choose to make a “sensitive letting” by imposing additional qualifying criteria for applicants to make sure that similar problems do not arise through the re-letting of the property.

75. Special lettings schemes and sensitive lettings will only be made where they do not compromise the Council’s ability to achieve its overall policy aims. Where they are deemed necessary the additional eligibility criteria will be listed in the Homebid property advertisement.

Right to buy

76. The Council will not offer alternative accommodation to applicants who have an active right to buy application or who are subject to a court order suspending a right to buy application.

Further Information

Further information about housing options as well as information about benefits and managing debt is available on the city council’s website.