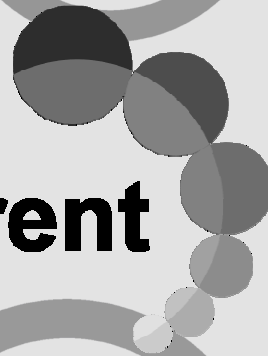


# HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY



city of  
**stoke-on-trent**



# Stoke on Trent City Council

## Housing Allocation Policy

### Section 1: Introduction

#### 1.1 The Lettings Framework

- 1.1.1 Stoke on Trent City Council is committed to providing housing at affordable levels for local people. As affordable housing is highly sought after, the Council's allocations scheme prioritises local people who are in greatest need.
- 1.1.2 The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, requires all councils to give reasonable preference in their allocations schemes for groups in high housing need. This includes such groups as the homeless, those who need to move on welfare or medical grounds, people living in unsatisfactory housing and those who would face hardship unless they move to a particular locality within the City.
- 1.1.3 Stoke on Trent has become an area of high housing demand. Property prices are rising and are resulting in additional pressures on affordable housing. The Housing Allocations Policy aims to give clear criteria setting out who is eligible to apply for social rented housing in the City and how applicant's priorities are assessed. This latest policy was written in 2007 and is kept under review by the Council's Lettings Manager.
- 1.1.4 The Allocation Scheme is based on banding. Available accommodation is advertised and made available to those in the highest bands. Applicants are prioritised within bands according to date of registration.
- 1.1.5 Affordable housing in Stoke on Trent is owned and managed by the City Council and by Housing Associations. The Council works closely with the following Housing Associations:
- Staffordshire Housing Association
  - Beth Johnson Housing Association
  - Touchstone Housing Association
  - William Sutton Housing Association
  - Riverside Housing Association
  - Bromford Corinthia Housing Association
  - E.P.I.C Housing Association
- 1.1.6 This detailed Allocation Scheme complies with the requirements of the Housing Act 1996 as amended, and takes into account the Code of Guidance issued by the Communities and Local Government department (CLG). A summary of this policy is available in a leaflet format, and will be sent to everyone applying for housing. This more detailed document will be made available upon request and can be accessed via the Council's website, at [www.stoke.gov.uk](http://www.stoke.gov.uk).

#### 1.2 The scope of the Housing Allocations Policy

- 1.2.1 The Housing Allocations Policy covers eligibility for the Housing Register and nominations for eligible applicants from the Housing Register to Council and Housing Association

accommodation. The majority of lettings are for rented homes, but low cost home ownership housing is also included.

- 1.2.2 The Allocation Policy does not cover lettings made as a result of succession or assignment or tenancies transfer under matrimonial proceedings.
- 1.2.3 The Policy does not cover lettings made by Housing Associations from their own waiting lists or their urgent management transfers.
- 1.2.4 Additionally, properties let in order to meet the local authority's wider objectives and therefore not let on an introductory or secure tenancy basis are not covered by this policy. Any changes to this category must first be approved in accordance with the councils Officer Delegation scheme for decisions.

### **1.3 Aim of the Allocations Policy**

- 1.3.1 The overall aim of the Allocations Policy is to provide a framework for the equitable, effective and accountable allocation of affordable housing in Stoke on Trent. The policy gives priority to those in greatest housing need, but also reflects the wider objectives of increasing choice, promoting stable and sustainable communities and making the most effective use of the housing stock.

### **1.4 Statement of choice**

- 1.4.1 The Council operates a Choice Based Lettings scheme where applicants bid for properties that are advertised. Applicants can bid for properties in any area of the City, unless a property is labelled specifically for a particular group, for example where a local lettings policy is in place.
- 1.4.2 Applicants may choose as many areas as they wish in which to seek housing. The Council will provide information about the number and types of homes, and current vacancy rates, to help inform applicant's choices. The more flexible applicants are in their housing choices, the sooner they are likely to be successful in bidding for rehousing.
- 1.4.3 Applicants can place up to 3 bids per bidding cycle, and will not be penalised for refusing an offer of accommodation. Where applicants are owed a duty under the homelessness legislation, they are able to bid for a reasonable period, before being made an offer of suitable accommodation. This is covered in more detail in Section 2.6 of this policy.

### **1.5 Objectives of the Allocations Policy**

- 1.5.1 This Policy is intended to reflect the City Councils' commitment to the vision and priorities that are described in the Corporate Plan and relate specifically to its value of making Stoke on Trent '**a vibrant city with thriving communities**'.
- 1.5.2 The City Council's objective is to provide a service that;
  - Enables people to exercise choice in respect of the property in which they live and the area in which it is located by operating a Choice Based Lettings scheme
  - Ensures efficiency, accountability and equality in the allocation of council and housing association housing by:
    - providing information to customers which is easy to understand
    - operating a transparent decision making process
    - ensuring that vulnerable customers are provided with the assistance they need

- Meets housing need within the City by giving priority to those people who are in the greatest need.
- Makes the most effective use of the housing stock within the City by giving sufficient priority to tenants who are under occupying their current tenancy.
- Achieves a high level of customer satisfaction with the allocations process by delivering the service standards requested by our customers.
- Contributes to the creation of balanced communities by ensuring equal access to all areas of the City for all customers, and by ensuring that our diverse customer base is equally represented in the allocations that are made.
- Contributes to the sustainability of communities by providing increased support for new and vulnerable customers and by enabling the use of local lettings policies
- Contributes to partnership working with local stakeholders

## **1.6 Equal Opportunities and monitoring**

- 1.6.1 The Council is committed to equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice in service provision and seeks to promote social inclusion.
- 1.6.2 Every effort will be made to ensure that housing applicants are treated fairly and sensitively. Applicants who are eligible to join the Housing Register will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, disability, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation or marital status.
- 1.6.3 For monitoring purposes, all applicants will be asked to provide details of their ethnic origin. This is not a requirement for acceptance onto the Housing Register.
- 1.6.4 Records will be kept of ethnic origin, profiles of age, gender, and household type and monitored on a regular and systematic basis to ensure that properties are being offered and allocated fairly. This data will be reported annually to the Council's Neighbourhood Management Commission. This is to ensure compliance with the Council's obligations to monitor its practices in carrying out its functions and to have due regard for the need to eliminate racial discrimination and to promote equal opportunity and good race relations under the Race Relations Act and other Acts relating to discrimination and equality.
- 1.6.5 The Allocations Policy will be amended and updated as necessary in order to conform to new housing and other relevant legislation and case law and to ensure that it does not operate in a way that discriminates against or disadvantages any particular group.

## **1.7 Advice, assistance and information**

- 1.7.1 The Council will provide advice and information to people about applying for a home and give assistance to people who have difficulty in making an application.
- 1.7.2 Applicants on the Housing Register are entitled to know likely waiting times for accommodation. Applicants are also entitled to information about any decision on the facts of their application. The Council will therefore advise applicants approximately how long they will have to wait and provide information as and when requested by applicants.
- 1.7.3 The Council will use a variety of methods to provide information to applicants, including newsletters, the internet and local centres.
- 1.7.4 The Council will also provide advice and information about housing options and issues relating to the City free of charge. This advice and information may cover issues relating to

homelessness and the prevention of homelessness, owner occupation, shared ownership, private sector tenancies, housing association tenancies and mutual exchanges.

- 1.7.5 Where specialist advice is necessary, for example, if there are complex legal or financial problems, applicants will be referred to specialist agencies that can help them. Where appropriate, referrals will be made to agencies providing support for vulnerable people.
- 1.7.6 For those people who have difficulty in completing forms or participating in the councils allocation scheme generally due to a medical condition or vulnerability, a Housing Options Officer will arrange an appointment at the Council Offices or, if necessary, a home visit to help complete the form.
- 1.7.7 The council operates a procedure, called the Vulnerability Protocol, which helps vulnerable people plan and prepare for social housing. This includes people vulnerable because they are excluded from social housing or able to maintain a tenancy in the longer term. The protocol details how the council, through the Housing Options team, supports and works with vulnerable applicants in a multi agency setting, to remove barriers that are excluding them. Risk assessments will be prepared for receiving landlords to make sure that any risks are managed and controlled. In this respect, the protocol represents an early warning system and links into the RESPECT agenda.
- 1.7.8 Some vulnerable applicants will need assistance in responding to advertised vacancies. The Lettings Team will seek to identify vulnerable home seekers at application stage and help them to manage their application for housing by identifying possible vacancies, assisting with placing a bid, making referrals to other agencies as appropriate and considering other housing options.
- 1.7.9 Procedures are available separately that guide council staff in ensuring that all of the assistance available is offered to each housing applicant.

## **1.8 Publicity**

- 1.8.1 The Council will make every effort to ensure that stakeholders, partner agencies and applicants can access information about the Council's Allocation Policy. Information about the Policy will be provided to every applicant.

## **Section 2: The Housing Register and Banding Scheme**

### **2.1 Definition of terms**

- 2.1.1 The term “applicant” will include single people and the term “joint applicants” will include couples where spouses or partners could be joint tenants.
- 2.1.2 The term “household” includes all individuals included in the applicant’s application. A household may therefore be an individual, a couple, a family or two or more individuals who wish, or need, to live together in the long term. Short term sharing arrangements or temporary part time arrangements will not normally qualify as a household for general needs lettings.

### **2.2 How to apply for housing**

- 2.2.1 Customers can apply for accommodation in any of the following ways:
- By telephone to the Housing Solutions Team or Stoke on Call, where application details will be taken over the telephone. The service is provided between the hours of 9am and 8pm.
  - In person at a Local Centre where applicants will be given an application form and a copy of the Allocations Policy leaflet
  - Via the Council website ([www.stoke.gov.uk/Homeline](http://www.stoke.gov.uk/Homeline))
  - By e-mail at [hcp.homeline@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:hcp.homeline@stoke.gov.uk)
  - By text – 07786 200700
  - In writing to the Housing Solutions Team
- 2.2.2 We will offer an interpretation service and Mincom and make sure that all our publications are available in a range of formats and languages.

### **2.3 People who are eligible to join the Housing Register**

- 2.3.1 Normally, anyone aged 16 or above can apply for housing by completing an application form. A home visit may be arranged to verify the information contained in the application form, and to provide an opportunity to discuss housing options.
- 2.3.2 For anyone with a medical or welfare problem, the council will request more information about these difficulties and how they are affected by the accommodation in which they live.
- 2.3.3 Anyone under the age of 18 years of age who is offered a tenancy will need to have an adult to act as a trustee and guarantor to hold the legal tenancy and guarantee rental payments until the applicant reaches 18.

### **2.4 People who are not eligible to join the Housing Register**

- 2.4.1 The Housing Act 1996, as amended, requires Councils to consider applications for housing from anyone unless they are ineligible for housing because they have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour, or by virtue of their immigration status.
- 2.4.2 Eligibility will be assessed by the Council at the time that the person applies for housing.

- 2.4.3 'Unacceptable behaviour' is behaviour that would be likely to result in the Council gaining a possession order against the household, even if they are not actually Stoke on Trent City Council tenants. This is covered by law (Schedule 2, part 1 of the Housing Act 1995). Unacceptable behaviour includes:
- owing serious rent arrears and failing to comply with your tenancy agreement
  - conviction for illegal or immoral purpose
  - causing nuisance and annoyance to neighbours or visitors
  - committing an arrestable offence in or near the home and still posing a threat to neighbours or the community
  - being violent towards a partner or family
  - allowing the condition of the property to deteriorate
  - allowing furniture provided by the landlord to deteriorate due to ill treatment
  - obtaining the tenancy by deception (for example, by giving untrue information)
  - paying money to illegally obtain a Council or housing association tenancy
  - having been provided with a home because of employment and bad behaviour means it is not possible to remain.
- 2.4.4 The Council will make the final decision after carefully considering the individual circumstances of an application. The Council must satisfy itself that they would have been able to obtain an outright order in the particular circumstances of the applicant.
- 2.4.5 The rules regarding eligibility are complex and officers within the Lettings Team are trained to give advice to applicants concerning eligibility under this scheme. In determining eligibility the local authority will apply the following test:
- Has the applicant or a member of the applicant's household been guilty of unacceptable behaviour?
  - Was the unacceptable behaviour serious enough to have entitled a Council to have obtained a possession order which would not have been suspended by the court?
  - At the time of the application, is the applicant still unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council by reason of his behaviour, or the behaviour of a member of his household?
- 2.4.6 Applicants must be able to demonstrate that where previous unacceptable behaviour applies, that they are no longer deemed as unsuitable tenants. Applicants can re-apply when they believe this is the case and the Council will consider a fresh application.
- 2.4.7 In addition, the Council will also consider ineligible those households that are covered by immigration rules that state that they cannot get housing assistance by reason of immigration status as set out by the statutory regulations. The Council will have due regard to the latest statutory regulations in reaching a decision on eligibility. Households that are ineligible for allocation of social housing fall into two broad categories as follows:
- Those subject to immigration control (and without recourse to public funds) unless they fall within a group of persons stated to be eligible for social housing by the Secretary of State in regulations;
  - Those not subject to immigration control (and with a right to reside) but deemed by the Secretary of State to be treated as persons from abroad and therefore not eligible for social housing"
- 2.4.8 This above section relates only to ineligible applicants. Other groups of applicants may have reduced preference because of previous behaviour. This is covered in detail in Section 3.6.

## **2.5 Reasonable preference groups**

- 2.5.1 In framing this Allocations Policy, the Council has ensured that the banding system complies with the reasonable preference groups set out in s.167(2) of the 1996 Housing Act. The reasonable preference groups are:
- People who are homeless, including non priority and intentionally homeless people
  - People who are owed a duty under the homelessness legislation
  - People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise unsatisfactory housing conditions
  - People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to disability
  - People who need to move to a particular locality in the City and failure to meet that need would cause hardship
- 2.5.2 The Council also recognises that it should take into account applicants who fall within 2 or more reasonable preference groups (known as cumulative need), and the Banding Scheme reflects this.

## **2.6 Applicants owed the main homelessness duty**

- 2.6.1 If someone is threatened with homelessness, then they will be required to attend a housing options interview to discuss their rehousing choices. The Council works to prevent homelessness at all times.
- 2.6.2 The Council believes that people owed the main homelessness duty (under s.193(2)) should, wherever possible, be offered a choice of accommodation where they are allocated accommodation under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.
- 2.6.3 Some urgent homelessness applicants will be placed in Band 1. This will normally be those needing to be moved on from the council's emergency homeless accommodation and other people whose homelessness is imminent and are at risk of becoming roofless.
- 2.6.4 When they are placed in Band 1, the council will aim to give them a reasonable time (3 months) to bid for accommodation but the Council reserves the right to give a direct offer to this group of applicants at any time. The Housing Solutions Team will monitor their bidding and will expect homeless people who do need urgent rehousing to be flexible about their area choices. If they are not applying for suitable properties for which they would have a reasonable chance of success, then they will be contacted with a view to placing a proxy bid. The reasonable period will be determined by the Lettings Manager and will take into account the accommodation that has become available during that time.
- 2.6.5 If an applicant who is owed the main homelessness duty fails to secure an offer of a suitable home during this reasonable period, they will be made a direct offer of accommodation, which will be suitable for their needs as determined by the Homelessness Manager.
- 2.6.6 Where a direct offer is made at any stage this will be a final offer of accommodation under Part 6 in accordance with Section 193(7) of the Housing Act 1996. The final offer will be made in writing. If the applicant accepts the offer, the main homelessness duty comes to an end.
- 2.6.7 Where the applicant refuses the offer, he will be advised of the possible consequences of refusal and of the right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation, whether or not the offer of accommodation is accepted. If after review, the offer was deemed to be

suitable, no further duty will be owed under Part 7. Suitability of an offer will be determined by the Council. Where the applicant is living in temporary accommodation, a Notice to Quit will be issued.

- 2.6.8 Other statutorily homeless applicants who are not at risk of losing their home imminently will normally be placed in Band 2 if a planned move can be negotiated by the homelessness team. They will then have the benefit of exercising choice over a longer period. Should the intended move be prevented however the applicant will be considered for inclusion in Band 1. This decision must be authorised by the Homelessness Team Manager or member of the Housing Solutions Management Team as appropriate.
- 2.6.9 The Council is keen to ensure Homelessness is dealt with according to legislation and best practice. We are determined to ensure families under threat of homelessness have available a package of preventative measures. We will therefore use the Allocations Policy to the greatest effect and provide opportunities for families to access housing as Band 2 cases, exercising choice to prevent homelessness occurring.
- 2.6.10 Applicants who are no longer owed a duty under Part 7 will be reassessed under the Banding Scheme and will continue to be able to participate under choice based lettings, with their newly assessed priority.

## **2.7 Intentionally Homeless Applicants**

- 2.7.1 Where a homelessness applicant is deemed to be intentionally homeless, they will be placed within Band 3.

## **2.8 Information about new vacancies**

- 2.8.1 The Council will provide weekly information on Council forthcoming vacancies, and some properties owned by housing associations and private landlords. This information will be widely available in a variety of formats and at locations across the City including the Local Centres and other community based services.
- 2.8.2 Health, Social Care Services and Voluntary Sector professionals will also receive information. The Council will work with these partners to ensure that their client group has full access to the system and that they can contact the Council on behalf of their clients to apply for vacancies.
- 2.8.3 Information will usually only be posted out to applicants who tell have informed the council that they cannot access the information in any other way; such as applicants who have particular needs or are vulnerable.
- 2.8.3 Customers can use the information to bid for properties. A bidding deadline date will be published along with the vacancies. The Council will then put all bids in an order based on the customer's housing need, (band) and registration date. This list will then be used to determine who will be made the offer of accommodation. The decision is made by the Lettings Manager.

## **2.9 Nomination to housing associations, (RSLs)**

- 2.9.1 The Council recognises the important role RSLs play in the City, providing affordable homes to families in need. The Council has negotiated nomination arrangements with most RSLs who have properties in the City. We can therefore nominate applicants from our housing register to properties made available to the Council.

2.9.2 Properties will be advertised in the same way as the Council's properties. RSLs may apply particular criteria in letting these homes, which will be indicated on the property details. The Council will however apply the same bidding and selection rules as for council properties, although the decision to offer a property will ultimately rest with the RSL.

## **2.10 Properties not included in the scheme**

2.10.1 Some properties will not be included within the Choice Based Lettings scheme. The Council aims to keep this figure below 10% and it will be kept under monthly review by the Lettings Manager. These properties are "direct lets" and will be let to customers in very urgent need where the Council has an obligation to find a property for them quickly.

2.10.2 A direct let will occur where the Council needs to make an allocation of a specific property, usually to a Band 1 applicant, where the property is particularly suitable for that applicant or where there is a particular urgency for the applicant to move. Examples of such direct lets include dealing with a request from the National Witness Protection Scheme, urgently moving a client who is a victim of ASB or domestic violence, or families who have been subject to a fire or flood and need rehousing. Homeless customers in Band 1 could receive a direct offer (see section 2.6).

2.10.3 Even where properties are in a good condition and ready to let, these will be advertised through CBL, rather than through any quick lets scheme.

## **2.11 Determining the number of bedrooms for a household**

2.11.1 Applicants will be advised what size of accommodation they can bid for. Children will be expected to share a room in the circumstances outlined below. The bedroom standards, which will apply in most circumstances, are as follows:

- Single people will be considered for bedsits or 1 bedroom flats or houses
- Couples will be considered for one bedroom flats and houses
- Families with one child will be considered for two bedroom ground and first floor flats and two bedroom houses
- Families with two children of the same sex will be considered for two bedroom ground and first floor flats and two bedroom houses, unless the age gap between the children is 7 years or more
- Families with two children of opposite sexes will be considered for three bedroom flats or houses, if the older child is over 7
- Larger families will be considered for three bedroom ground and first floor flats or three or four bedroom houses according to the numbers, ages and sex of the children, using the criteria specified above.
- Families are able to apply for ground and first floor flats
- Separate bedrooms are required for children of different sexes where they are over the age of 7

2.11.2 Applications from divorced / separated parents who want to provide accommodation for children will be considered on a case by case basis. As a general rule, when determining the size of accommodation suitable for the family, children from former relationships will be counted only if they spend more than half their time resident with the applicant. Access arrangements for weekend / holidays do not qualify for the additional bedrooms.

2.11.3 Parents may be asked for evidence of residence orders or access arrangements and supporting evidence from other agencies may be required where conflicting information is

given. In most cases, the parent receiving Child Benefit will be considered as the principal carer and the person with care and control of the children.

2.11.4 Applicants should provide medical evidence of the need for separate bedrooms. In cases where children are in the care of Social Services, no bedrooms will be set aside for the child until a decision has been reached as to the long term future of the child as determined by the courts.

2.11.4 Pregnant women with no children will be considered for 2 bedroom properties when they produce their MATb1 Form at 25 weeks. Pregnant women with children, upon receipt of the MATb1 Form will have their bed space entitlement recalculated depending on the age and sex of the children within the family as described above. It may be necessary to defer this decision until the sex of the new child is known.

## **2.12 Applicants living in Renew clearance areas.**

2.12.1 Officers working with residents in proposed and confirmed clearance areas will assist customers to access housing advice from the Housing Solutions Service.

2.12.2 Customers can request advice and assistance to help them remain in a private sector tenancy, or to consider homeownership schemes such as Homebuy and discounted market housing schemes. Financial assistance may be available via the Council's Rent Deposit Scheme and the Discretionary Assistance scheme operated by Renew.

2.12.3 If a private rented sector tenant wishes to apply for social housing at a stage before their landlord enters into any agreement with the city council, their housing need will be assessed within the terms of the current allocation policy (i.e. whether they are a qualifying person, overcrowding issues, medical need to move, etc). The customer's application will be placed in the relevant Band, and they will be eligible for a property type which meets their household's needs.

2.12.4 When the purchase is confirmed by the City Council's Legal Division, and terms agreed are on the basis of a resident tenant, the customer's application will into Band 1. This approach will ensure that the private tenancy is maintained for as long as possible, and to minimise the incidence of the private landlord re-letting. The Housing Solutions Service will ensure that the private landlord is aware of this service. In these cases the customer may be eligible for Home Loss compensation payments.

2.12.5 Where a private landlord requires vacant possession and takes action to end the tenancy before the property is sold to the Council, the Housing Solutions Team will provide a full housing options service and where necessary, take a homelessness application from the applicant.

2.12.6 Applicants affected by clearance will be able to bid in the same way as other applicants; direct lets will only be considered as a last resort. In normal circumstances, applicants who need to move because of clearance will receive a maximum of three reasonable offers of accommodation. This offer entitlement applies to both owner occupiers and private sector tenants. A reasonable offer is determined by the Council after consideration of the needs of the applicant.

2.12.7 If an applicant refuses the third offer, a case conference will be held between the RENEW team and the Lettings Manager together with any other involved parties to assess the appropriate rehousing option. Each case will be decided on its own merit.

2.12.8 Where the main household contains another household who wish to apply for accommodation in their own right (e.g. son or daughter's family), the Housing Solutions

Manager will consider whether a second offer is justifiable, based on criteria around length of residency and any existing application for separate rehousing.

**2.13 The banding scheme**

2.13.1 The Allocations Policy uses a banding scheme to determine priority between applicants. Bids will be organised and prioritised according to the banding placement of the bidder, and within bands the priority will be determined by the date of the application.

2.13.2 Where two or more eligible applicants apply for a property, are within the same band and have the same date on the Housing Register, the Council will consider which household has the best “fit” for the property with regard to household size. If a decision still cannot be made, then the length of residential connection with the City shall be considered, with the household with the longest residential connection getting priority.

2.13.3 The Banding Scheme is set out below.

<b>Band 1</b>	<b>MUST FIND A HOME</b> <i>(Additional Preference)</i>
	Urgent statutorily homeless cases and those with an urgent need to move (assessed on a case by case basis by the Homelessness Manager or member of the Housing Solutions Management team as appropriate.).  Urgent racial harassment, harassment, and domestic violence cases where personal safety is seriously threatened (in cases where the applicant is an existing tenant, their cases will be investigated and supported by the Local Centre Manager)  Applicants affected by closing orders, clearance areas, CPOs, major repairs and those exceeding published space standards  Child Protection – where serious concerns have been raised by Children and Families Team  Where the applicant or a member of their household is affected by a serious medical condition and remaining in their current accommodation would have a severely detrimental effect of the health of the person concerned.  Applicants who demonstrate cumulative need by meeting 3 or more of the reasonable preference criteria.
<b>Band 2</b>	<b>MUST MOVE SOON</b>
	<b><i>Cumulative Need</i></b>  Applicants who meet two reasonable preference criteria will be placed in this band, and considered before other applicants falling in this band
	<b><i>Housing Solutions System</i></b>  Housing Solutions System cases would then be the next group to be considered
	<b><i>Reasonable Preference Groups</i></b>  Other groups in this band subsequently considered would be reasonable preference groups, including:  Statutorily homeless people who can remain in their home in the short term

	<p>and for whom the council is negotiating a planned move.</p> <p>Customers who are threatened with homelessness within the meaning of Part VII who the council would be likely to accept as statutory homeless if they were to proceed to pursue an application but following a housing options interview, casework intervention has prevented their homelessness for a medium term.</p> <p>Applicants where move on accommodation is required from supported housing accommodation and this is backed by a clear plan from the support provider and there is an agreed protocol in place</p> <p>Those living in overcrowded conditions (who need 2 extra bedrooms)</p> <p>Care leavers needing to move under the agreed protocol</p> <p>Stoke on Trent council tenants who are under-occupying their accommodation by 1 or more bedrooms or who have adapted property that they no longer need</p> <p>Households living in flats above the first floor level with children under 16 years old</p> <p>Medical priority where current housing is having a seriously adverse affect on the health of the applicant or another household member</p>
<b>Band 3</b>	<b>NEED TO MOVE</b>
BAND 3	<p>Those applicants in this band who will be considered first include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carers needing to move closer to a friend or relative in poor health</li> <li>• Applicants who need to move on medical or social grounds</li> <li>• Households are overcrowded and who need one more bedroom</li> <li>• People moving from supported housing accommodation (without a move on date)</li> <li>• Non priority homeless people</li> <li>• Intentionally homeless people with a priority need</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Reduced Priority</b></p> <p>Other applicants in this band include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People who have reasonable preference but a reduced priority under the allocations scheme (see scheme) for whatever reason including their behaviour in their current or previous homes</li> <li>• It also includes those people who have a reasonable preference but no local connection with Stoke on Trent (and who therefore have reduced priority)</li> </ul>
<b>Band 4</b>	<b>WANT TO MOVE</b>
BAND 4	<p>Customers with no housing need but a desire to move to alternative accommodation.</p> <p>Customers in this band have no housing priority but still will be given advice and assistance in seeking alternative rehousing.</p>

**Applicants in Band 1**

## Final Version of Policy – December 2007

- 2.13.4 The council will aim to give all Band 1 applicants a reasonable period (normally 3 months) to bid for a property. After this reasonable period, a direct offer will be made by the Lettings Manager. If the applicant is unwilling to accept an offer of accommodation the Lettings Manager has the discretion to either extend the bidding period or remove the Band 1 status, whichever is appropriate.
- 2.13.5 It should be noted that in order to balance choice with the urgent need to move, the council reserves the right to make a direct let to Band 1 applicants at any time if deemed necessary.
- 2.13.5 Each case will be considered on its own merits, looking at what property has become available during the time of the Band 1 status. Detailed procedures cover this area and the decision rests with the Lettings Manager or another member of the Housing Solutions Management team as appropriate.
- 2.13.6 For more detailed information concerning Statutorily Homeless applicants in this Band please see Section 2.6, and for customers affected by clearance please see Band 2.12.

### **Applicants in Band 2**

- 2.13.7 Normally priorities within Bands between applicants with similar levels of need are determined in this policy by length of waiting time on the Housing Register.
- 2.13.8 In exceptional cases however, a Solutions System will be used to prioritise people in Band 2 who fall within a single reasonable preference category and who need rehousing soon but do not have enough waiting time to secure a move within a reasonable period.
- 2.13.9 These exceptional cases therefore would not be applicants in Band 2 who qualified for additional preference nor did they have priority for cumulative housing need.
- 2.13.10 The Solutions System would apply to:
- New customers who would have been accepted as statutorily homeless within the meaning of Part 7 if they proceeded to pursue a homeless application but, following a housing options interview, have elected to utilise the councils CBL scheme – this would assist the council and customer to prevent homelessness.
  - Existing tenants who are willing to move to allow the council to take advantage of a particular type of property which is scarce and in high demand such as a larger council home or an adapted home.
  - People who need to move on from supported housing hostels/projects where a customer has been assessed as capable of independent living and no longer in need of a Supporting People grant- this would assist the council in freeing up blockages in supported homes which is an identified need in the city.
- 2.13.11 Solutions System cases would be considered before other Band 2 cases but cumulative need applicants would retain a higher priority above this group.
- 2.13.12 Solutions System priority would expire after 3 months. This date however would be reviewable and the Solution System priority could be reapplied where suitable accommodation had not become available for the customer within the time period. This decision to extend the priority would be made by the Lettings Manager.
- 2.13.13 This Solution System will only be applied to exceptional cases. Use of the scheme would be strictly limited and only involve a small percentage of lettings. The percentage will be determined on an annual basis and set out clearly in the annual Lettings Plan. The target figure is a maximum of 5% lettings to go through this system. The Lettings Manager will monitor performance against the target. Close monitoring will ensure that the Solutions

System does not militate against the policy awarding additional, cumulative or single preference when due.

2.13.14 Where an applicant is placed in Band 2 because they are threatened with homelessness within the meaning of Part VII, and casework intervention can prevent their homelessness, they may, in exceptional circumstances be moved into Band 1 if this prevents actual homelessness occurring.

## **2.14 Definition of local connection**

2.14.1 A person may apply for social housing in any area in the country where they might wish to live. This means that the Housing Register is not restricted to people who come from the Stoke on Trent area. However, in order to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the local community, Stoke on Trent City Council gives reduced priority to people in housing need without a local connection to the area.

2.14.2 The following persons shall normally be considered to have a local connection with Stoke on Trent if they or anyone who is moving with them:

- has lived in Stoke on Trent by choice for a certain time (usually for 6 months out of the last 12 months or for 3 years out of the last 5 years)
- has close family living in Stoke on Trent and who have lived in Stoke on Trent for at least the previous 5 years
- has settled employment (paid or unpaid) or education in Stoke on Trent
- has special circumstances that gives rise to a local connection

2.14.3 Special circumstances may include but is not limited to:

- persons to whom the Council has accepted a duty to secure accommodation because they are homeless
- persons who are not currently resident in the district but who have a need to be near close relatives to give or to receive their support (see carer policy)

2.14.4 For the purposes of the above, living in the district means living in permanent accommodation of an applicants own choice and will not include either:

- occupation of a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan which is not placed on a residential site; or
- occupation of a holiday letting, which includes a permanent building, hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation for the purposes of a holiday.

2.14.5 In all cases, applicants will be asked to provide documentary evidence as proof of their local connection.

2.14.6 Applicants without a local connection but with housing need will be placed in Band 3 with reduced preference.

## **2.15 Medical assessments**

2.15.1 Where an applicant requests priority based on a medical condition, this will only be taken into account where the medical condition is being made worse by the particular accommodation that the applicant resides in. The Council will, where necessary, seek the opinion of a medical expert in determining whether priority will be awarded. The final decision rests with the Lettings Manager.

- 2.15.2 Where the applicant or a member of their household is affected by a serious medical condition and remaining in their current accommodation would have a severely detrimental effect on the health of the person concerned, they will be placed in Band 1. This will also include customers who cannot return to their home following an admission into Hospital.
- 2.15.3 Where there is a need to move on medical grounds, but this need is not urgent, applicants will be placed in Band 2. This will apply to customers who have very limited mobility and are unable to move around their home, or to access the facilities in their home (e.g. for bathing, toileting) without great difficulty. Their health problem is likely to be a significant or chronic condition.
- 2.15.4 Applicants who have a longer term need to move on medical grounds, will be placed in Band 3. This will apply to customers, who are more mobile and can move in and out and around their home, but their health is unlikely to improve and they will need alternative accommodation in the longer term.

## **2.16 Including carers on a housing application.**

- 2.16.1 A carer is someone, who, with or without payment, provides help and support to a partner, relative, friend or neighbour, who could not manage without their help. This could be due to age, physical or mental illness, addiction or disability. In many cases a carer may not reside with the person receiving care.
- 2.16.2 In all cases the carer must have been identified by the applicant as the person who is primarily responsible for providing them with care and needing to live with them or near them.
- 2.16.3 The council recognises that even if a carer is in receipt of Carer's Allowance this does not mean that it is necessary for them to reside with the person who is being cared for. Many carers provide over 35 hours a week support whilst living in their own home. An application for inclusion on the application however will be considered if the carer has been assessed by Social Care and Health as needing to provide overnight support. In these circumstances, the applicant must produce supporting evidence from other agencies e.g. Social Services, GPs, Health Visitors other health professionals.
- 2.16.4 Under some circumstances it may be appropriate to consider cases where the carer is not in receipt of Carer's Allowance. Under these circumstances it will still be necessary for the applicant to demonstrate that:
- The person looked after is in receipt of one of the following benefits:
    - Carers Allowance
    - Disability living allowance - paid at either the middle or higher rate for personal care
    - Attendance allowance
    - Constant attendance Allowance
    - Disablement benefit
  - The person looked after requires 24 hour support and that the carer is available to give that support, i.e. they are not in full time education or employment. This will have to be supported by medical assessment or by other agencies and health professionals.
- 2.16.5 In some circumstances a carer or potential carer may request a move to property nearer a person requiring care in order to provide support. Such cases will only be considered if the medical assessment indicates that help may be required on a 24 hour basis and that it would be impractical for the carer to respond adequately given their geographical location.

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Under these circumstances the allocations officers will seek an independent assessment and if supported a carer may be placed in Band 3.

## **Section 3: Administering the Housing Register**

### **3.1 Renewing and updating applications**

- 3.1.1 Applicants who have not actively bid for properties for 12 months will be asked to renew their housing application on the anniversary of their original application date. Applicants who fail to do so will have their application removed from the Housing Register. A letter will be sent to the applicant informing them that their application has been cancelled.
- 3.1.2 If an applicant's circumstances change, they must advise the Council of any changes.

### **3.2 Confidentiality**

- 3.2.1 Details relating to each housing applicant, including the fact of their registration will be kept confidential. Information about a housing applicant and / or members of their household, or the progress of their application, may not be passed to anyone who is not part of the applicant's household, without their permission. This permission should preferably be in writing. The Data Protection Act and Section 166 of the 1996 Housing Act (and superseding legislation) will be observed.
- 3.2.2 Applicants will be asked to authorise information sharing with relevant agencies, for example, housing benefits, Social Services, Probation and a range of voluntary and statutory agencies where this is necessary.
- 3.2.3 Issues relating to child protection or community safety must, however, always take precedence over confidentiality. Similarly if there is evidence to suggest that the applicant is involved in criminal activity and /or fraudulently claiming of welfare benefits, this information will normally be disclosed to the relevant agency.
- 3.2.4 Applicants are entitled to see their files if they wish to do so. If the file contains information from third parties, for example letters from doctors, other agencies or individuals, each third party must be contacted for their consent before these documents are made available to the applicant.

### **3.3 Verification of details**

- 3.3.1 Before any offer of accommodation is made, the applicant or tenant who is first in line for the vacancy will be contacted for verification of all relevant information on their housing application. Information we obtain will be used to assess eligibility and is not exhaustive. Applicants will be expected to provide this information on request and must do so before an offer can be made. Home visits will, wherever possible, be carried out to verify applications.
- 3.3.2 Procedures will be developed to ensure that robust checks are in place to ensure applications contain correct information. Where necessary, the Council will conduct CRB checks.
- 3.3.3 If the tenant (or former tenant) of the Council or RSL is found to be in rent arrears or to owe former tenant arrears, repair costs, damage deposit or rent in advance costs, then the tenant or applicant will not normally be offered rehousing but will be placed in a lower priority band, unless a suitable arrangement is made to clear the debt.

- 3.3.4 For sheltered housing vacancies, a meeting with the Sheltered Housing Manager will be arranged to ensure the applicant is suitable for sheltered accommodation.

### **3.4 False information**

- 3.4.1 Under Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996, it is a criminal offence for applicants to knowingly give false information or to withhold information relevant to their application. The courts may impose a fine of up to level 5 on the standard scale if the applicant is found guilty.
- 3.4.2 An offence may be committed if an applicant knowingly gives false information or knowingly withholds information which has reasonably been requested on the housing application form, in response to correspondence with the Council at the annual update of the application, or relating to a review. An offence is also committed if the applicant allows a third party to provide false information on their behalf, or at their instigation.
- 3.4.3 The Council reserves the right to remove an applicant from the Housing Register if there is evidence that the applicant or a person acting on his behalf, has given false information or withheld information. If evidence is obtained that an applicant has gained a tenancy through providing false information, the Council will take possession proceedings. Where the landlord is a Housing Association, the Council will notify the housing association and supply appropriate evidence.

### **3.5 Removal of applications from the Housing Register**

- 3.5.1 Applications may be removed from the Council's Housing Register in certain circumstances such as:
- Where removal from the Housing Register is requested by the applicant, provided that the Council does not owe the applicant a duty under the homelessness legislation
  - Where the applicant or a member of the household has been guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour
  - Failure to return an application form where an annual review is taking place.
- 3.5.2 The applicant will be notified of any proposal to remove the application from the Housing Register and will be given the opportunity to provide further information to the Council to enable it to decide whether removal is appropriate. Any subsequent removal from the Register will be notified to the applicant in writing. The applicant will have a right to request a review of the Council's decision in this respect. The review will be undertaken by an officer of the council in the Housing Solutions Management Team who is senior to the officer who made the original decision and who was not involved in the original decision making process.

### **3.6 Reduced priority**

- 3.6.1 People who are ineligible for rehousing due to unacceptable behaviour will not be included on the Housing Register – please see Section 2.4
- 3.6.2 Where an applicant has a history of bad behaviour, but the Council has determined that the applicant is eligible for housing, legislation gives the council the power to consider other factors that can help to decide priority between housing applicants. This means that in some instances, such as the existence of rent arrears or anti-social behaviour, the applicant's behaviour will be used to determine priority between applicants. The Council considers each of these cases on its own merits.

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- 3.6.3 Reduced priority will normally be given when an applicant, or any member of their household:
- Is under NSP from the Council or a housing association, for breach of tenancy conditions
  - Has a history of unacceptable behaviour
- 3.6.4 The Council will request information to ensure that it is able to fairly determine the circumstances of an applicant and to assess need. Decisions on whether to make an offer of accommodation in these circumstances will be made on a case by case basis and will be made by the Lettings Manager or other member of the Housing Solutions Management Team, as appropriate.
- 3.6.5 Applicants awarded reduced priority will be placed in Band 3 and will be considered for properties after other applicants in Band 3 with housing need.

### **3.7 Deferral of applications**

- 3.7.1 Applications may be deferred or offers of accommodation withheld in certain circumstances, pending a decision on eligibility or assessment of need. Such circumstances include:
- Providing false information in relation to the application
  - Withholding of information that is reasonably required in order to process the application, such as a landlord's reference.

### **3.8 Serious offenders**

- 3.8.1 It is sometimes necessary to provide housing which will minimise the risk to the community and where supervision of the individual can be maintained. This may also apply to individuals currently living in the community who are considered to pose risk to themselves and / or others, who have not been convicted of an offence.
- 3.8.2 The Council will work with the Police and Probation Services to assess and manage risk and will apply special arrangements where cases are referred through either the Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel (MAPPP) or the Probation Protocol. Officers will attend case conferences with the Police, adult social care and health professionals. A planned and managed relocation pathway will be agreed, including a full discussion of a range of housing options which is most appropriate to the customer's circumstances and supervision needs.

### **3.9 Rights of review**

- 3.9.1 Applicants who want to request a review of a decision that has been made about their housing application or allocation decision should ask for this to be done by writing to the Lettings Manager. The Lettings Manager will consider the appeal and will respond in writing within 28 days of the date of the request for review.
- 3.9.2 Request for review relating to ineligibility will be considered by a member of the Housing Solutions Management Team.
- 3.9.3 Applicants can make a complaint or express dissatisfaction with the service to any member of staff who will ensure that this is recorded and investigated and that they are advised of the action taken. The City Council also operates a formal Complaints Procedure. Applicants who want to make a complaint or comment about Council services can use this

procedure. Details are available from the Housing Solutions Team or any of the Local Offices.

## **Section 4: General information about our properties**

### **4.1 Supported Housing**

- 4.1.1 The Council has a number of sheltered housing schemes that are suitable for older people. In order for applicants to be considered for this housing, they must be of pensionable age (age 60 for a female, aged 65 for a male). If there is no demand from those over pensionable age, people over the age of 55 may be considered.
- 4.1.2 Before an offer is made to these schemes, applicants will be invited to an assessment with a Sheltered Housing Officer, who will determine suitability for this type of housing.

### **4.2 Bungalows**

- 4.2.1 Bungalows will only normally be allocated to;
- those over the age of 60 years old unless the application is supported by an independent medical advisory board
  - applicants with a medical requirement or disability where an occupational therapist or GP recommends a bungalow as the only type of accommodation that will meet the applicant's mobility needs
- 4.2.2 Only where there is absolutely no demand from these groups will allocations be made to younger households, subject to consultation with local centres.

### **4.3 Multi-storey accommodation**

- 4.3.1 The Council owns and manages multi-storey, flat blocks across the City. These blocks will be allocated to applicants according to need and eligibility.
- 4.3.2 We recognise that families with children under the age of 16 who may occupy these blocks should live in accommodation on a lower level. We therefore will allocate these properties to singles or couples with no children living with them as part of their household, except for the ground and first floor units, which will be available for families with children.
- 4.3.3 We also recognise the difficulties of multi storey living, particularly accessing flats via lifts, the age of tenants and make up of the tenants within a block and will be mindful when selecting criteria for allocating these types of properties.

### **4.4 Special labelling of properties**

- 4.4.1 Properties will be labelled in general terms, for example setting out occupancy levels, age groups. In some circumstances special labelling of properties may be required. The examples shown below are for illustrative purposes and are not exhaustive.
- 4.4.2 Where the Council is able to create vacancies within the affordable stock in the City which could increase the number of available homes, then properties may be labelled so that preference is given to transfer applicants to meet an agreed lettings target
- Particular types of property, for example multi storey flats and bungalows
  - Where a property is adapted for disabled use or where it has been provided for a specific purpose, such as supported accommodation, it will be labelled to give

preference to the appropriate client group, and for individual customers will take into account any assessment of needs made by an Occupational Therapist working closely with the lettings team.

- If there is a Section 106 agreement for a property and particular criteria is applied to the letting of the property, for example families with special needs.

#### **4.5 Under-occupation and making best use of our properties**

4.5.1 The Council will seek to reduce under-occupation in affordable rented housing by encouraging tenants in this situation to transfer to smaller accommodation. Housing staff will also promote opportunities for tenants to receive assistance and incentives for under occupation transfers.

#### **4.6 Local Sensitive Lettings Policies**

4.6.1 In some circumstances, particular estates will be subject to a formally agreed local sensitive lettings policy. A local sensitive lettings policy would be in place to ensure that homes on that estate are allocated in a way that helps to address particular issues or problems that exist. For example, an estate may have a predominance of children, and the local sensitive lettings policy facilitates the Council in under-occupying homes to help redress this balance. A list of up to date local lettings policies is available on the Council's website.

4.6.2 Properties subject to local letting policies will be advertised as normal, but there will be specific criteria applied to them and will not be available generally to all applicants.

4.6.3 Local sensitive lettings policies will be developed in line with the agreed toolkit and a customer leaflet on how they operate is available from the Housing Advice Centre. The policies will be supported by proactive tenancy enforcement procedures including the use of demoted tenancies which will be delivered by Local Service Centres.

4.6.4 When a local lettings policy is adopted, guidance on how it affects local people will be made available. Additionally, a panel of elected members will be included in the consultation process, subject to compliance with Section 167 of the Housing Act 1996 and associated Regulations (SI 1997 No 483) and policies will be reviewed 6 months after implementation to ensure it is operating effectively.

#### **4.7 Quotas**

4.7.1 The Council recognise that in order to ensure fair access to housing for all applicants it may be necessary to introduce a quota system to control the percentage of lettings made to each band.

4.7.2 There will be a target to agree the percentage for each band at the start of each financial year and actual allocations from the previous year will inform this process. This will be developed as part of the Annual Lettings Plan and will be closely monitored by the Housing Solutions Service Manager. The Council will ensure that any use of quotas does not impact on its ability to give reasonable preference to persons entitled to it.

4.7.2 The Council will closely monitor the numbers of lettings going to transfer applicants and will set a quota for this through the Annual Lettings Plan, as appropriate. Outcomes will be reported to the Neighbourhood Management Overview and Scrutiny Commission annually.

#### **4.8 Members Panel**

- 4.8.1 A Members Panel will exist to consider any exceptional cases where circumstances are not covered by the policy, subject to compliance with Section 167 of the Housing Act 1996 and the Allocation of Housing Procedure Regulations 1997 (SI 1997 No 483)

#### **4.9 Ongoing review**

- 4.9.1 The Allocations Policy will be kept under review by the Lettings Manager. Progress against targets set in the Annual Lettings Plan will be monitored by the Lettings Manager and the Housing Solutions Manager on a monthly basis and reported annually to the Neighbourhood Management Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

#### **5.0 Conclusion**

- 5.0.1 The full Allocations Policy document will be published in a range of appropriate formats and be available to download from Stoke on Trent City Council's Website [www.stoke.gov.uk/homeline](http://www.stoke.gov.uk/homeline)
- 5.0.2 Translated versions of the policy will be available in a range of languages on request. A summary will be sent to tenants and will also be available to service users and members of the public free of charge. Any member of the public may inspect this full document free of charge together with a summary by contacting The Housing Advice Centre, South Wolfe Street, Stoke on Trent ST4 4AB or emailing [housingadvice@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:housingadvice@stoke.gov.uk)

## APPENDIX 1A

### Sustainability Model for Social Housing Lettings

#### 1.0 Aim

- 1.1 The overall aim of this model is to determine whether a local amendment to the overall Allocations Policy is required to any particular area. Known as a Local Lettings Policy, an agreed amendment to the overall policy is sometimes the solution in determining the impact of the Social Housing on a particular area. This model has been designed to assist Local Centre Managers and Solutions Managers in determining and documenting whether this is a required outcome for an area.

#### 2.0 Objectives

- 2.1 For each Neighbourhood the model will use a predefined set of statistical information to determine the sustainability of an area.
- 2.2 The use of information contained in the relevant Ward Plan will ensure the review is clearly linked to the pillars contained within the Corporate Strategy
- 2.3 Area Implementation Teams will be involved throughout the process in order to agree the outcomes required.

#### 3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 The model will contain pre determined stages. They will briefly consist of the following, with roles clearly assigned for each stage.
- **Statistical data collection** – The Local Services Manager will be responsible for the collation of appropriate data from those individuals already involved in the collection of the data.
  - **Analysis of key data** – The Local Services Manager will be responsible for analysing the available information to determine whether a Local Lettings Policy would provide the resolution to the identified problem in the area. They will be responsible for putting forward suitable local lettings proposals or for recommended that the solutions is not a Local Lettings Policy. Where this is the case the Local Services Manager will be responsible for taking this matter to the Area Implementation Team for wider discussion and resolution by other means. A local Lettings Toolkit is provided (see below) to assist managers to highlight the issues within their neighbourhood.
  - **Consideration to proceed with Local Lettings Policy** – The Allocations Services Manager will be provided with a proposal in the format of a formal report from the Local Services Manager. The report will outline the background to the area, the statistical data analysed and a summary of the proposed Local Lettings Policy. The Allocations Manager will consider the proposal in line with the overall policy to determine whether this is the best solution to the problem. The Allocations Services Manager will undertake this independent review, as well as a full Equality Impact Assessment to ensure a Local Lettings Policy, as proposed by the Local Services Manager is not discriminatory in any way. The Allocations Manager will either recommend that the

Local Lettings Policy proposal proceeds or recommend that alternative solutions are found through the Area Implementation Team.

- **Implementation** – once formally agreed using the Toolkit, the Allocations Manager will then be responsible for implementation of the actual policy, including consultation and the advertising of the amended policy.
- **Monitoring** – the Local Services Manager will be responsible for implementing the monitoring systems as agreed at the toolkit stage.
- **Impact Review** – once the agreed period has expired the Allocations Manager will be responsible for reviewing the data collected by the Local Services Manager to determine the overall impact of the policy on the area. This independent review and recommendation to either continue for another agreed period or to revert to the overall City Allocations Policy will be fed back to the Local Centre Manager. They in turn will feed this back to all necessary parties including the Area Implementation Team.

## LOCAL LETTING TOOLKIT

### 5 STEP PLAN

#### 1 Initial Assessment

- Define the geographical area.
- Think about what you and stakeholders perceive as the problem within the area.
- Consider your objectives – how would things change as a result of allocating properties in a different way.
- Short term fix? Longer term intervention?
- Who are your stakeholders?
- Have RENEW designated your area as a peripheral estate – what sustainability factors have been highlighted?

#### 2 Test your theory

Key data should be gathered to identify the critical issues within your area. You may find the following risk assessment and “traffic light system” helpful in clarifying your thoughts and helping to present the information later. Assess risk on a scale of 1-5, where 1 equals no risk, 5 equals high risk. Calculate your mark as a percentage of the total possible mark (i.e. 5) for each indicator.

- **Demand and mobility with the neighbourhood**

Indicator	Risk	Mark	Traffic L i g h t
Applicants per vacancy		%	
Stock turnover, voids as a percentage of total stock		%	
Tenancy turnover, particularly the percentage of tenants resident for under 2 years		%	
	Total	? % of possible total	

Other sub-questions might be around trends for a particular property type and related to particular household types. Data may be missing – e.g. termination reasons. You may also want to compare to City averages for similar areas.

- **Social conditions**

Indicator	Risk	Mark	Traffic L i g h t
Unbalanced customer base in terms of age, gender, ethnicity		%	
Benefit dependency/unemployment		%	
Incidence of long-term limiting illness		%	
Levels of ASB, levels of crime or equally important, the perception of these issues is a major factor			
The housing history of new customers – i.e. consider the percentage of rehouseings where the customer had urgent need, leaving care, institution etc			
	Total	% of possible mark	

The scores for each indicator are added to produce a total score that provides an indication of the relative popularity or health of the neighbourhood. The higher the score, the more unpopular or unsustainable an area is. Cumulative scores for the indicators may be compiled. Then the neighbourhood can be classified as follows. The traffic light system can make this easier.

**Significant decline – 75% or more of the available score. Traffic light: red**

Characteristics: high turnover, low demand, high benefits dependency, high crime/asb, poor health. The Ward Plans probably reflect these themes, including factors specific to young people, e.g. educational attainment.

**Borderline – 50% - 75% of the score: amber**

Characteristics: as above but not so pronounced.

**Sustainable areas, but specific problems – 25% - 50% of the score: green traffic light**

Characteristics: low turnover, high demand, low benefit dependency, low crime etc. Characteristics: the traffic light and risk marks will help to highlight the areas of concern for individual indicators in the neighbourhood.

**3 Assessment**

- What are your key concerns?
- What are your objectives? E.g.....

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- increase stability by reducing tenancy turnover
- achieve a better mix of age groups and household types
- increase sustainability by assisting new tenants to establish and maintain their tenancies
- increase demand for the area or specific property types
- reduce abandonment; learn more about why tenants leave
- influence resident's perceptions about anti social behaviour/crime
- What targets would you want in place?
- Over what period of time?
- How will you know if you have been successful?
- Do your stakeholders agree with you?

### **4 Getting Approval**

- Refer to Housing Solutions Team who will carry out an Impact Equality Assessment and agree
  - (a) the exclusion criteria (if any) and further information required to substantiate the proposal, including how the impact on disadvantaged groups may be managed overall.
  - (b) how preference will be given to priority groups identified within the proposal, e.g. priority to local people, employed, priority to people outside of a reasonable preference group, under occupation, etc
  - (c) monitoring and review mechanism for the scheme including an Appeals procedure for applicants

### **5 Chief Officer Report**

A Joint report will be prepared to seek approval to introduce a Local Lettings plan based on the information obtained and agreements on how to introduce manage and monitor the scheme for a defined period.