

CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Venue: Town Hall,
Moorgate Street,
Rotherham. S60 2TH

Date: Monday, 2nd December, 2013

Time: 10.00 a.m.

A G E N D A

1. To determine if the following matters are to be considered under the categories suggested, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended March 2006).
2. To determine any item which the Chairman is of the opinion should be considered later in the agenda as a matter of urgency.
3. Revision of RMBC's Council Housing Allocations Policy (Pages 1 - 67)
4. Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring 2013-14 (Pages 68 - 74)
5. Neighbourhoods General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring 2013-14 (Pages 75 - 78)

(The Chairman authorised consideration of the following items to enable the matters to be processed.)

6. Exclusion of the Press and Public
Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (Exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Act – information relating to the financial/business affairs of any person (including the Council)).
7. External Works to 171 Council Dwellings - Maltby (Pages 79 - 82)
8. External Works to 261 Council Dwellings - Wath upon Dearne (Pages 83 - 86)

1.	Meeting	Cabinet Member of Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2.	Date	2 nd December 2013
3.	Title	Revision of RMBC's Council Housing Allocations Policy
4.	Directorate	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

RMBC's Allocations Policy was last substantially amended in January 2010, and it now needs to be revised again to take into account the new flexibilities and opportunities offered to social housing landlords by the Localism Act 2011, and to make the system as fair as possible. We also need to review the Allocation Policy because of the size of the Housing Register, the likelihood it will increase if we do nothing and to take account of the circumstances of local people and firmly base the Policy on addressing housing need.

The proposals contained in the report have been considered by Improving Places Select Commission, various stakeholders, applicants and staff. The consultation period has spanned over 1 year; the 3 key messages that people told us they would like to see change are:

1. Council houses should be for people in housing need
2. Rotherham Council homes should be for local people
3. Council tenants with breaches in their tenancy shouldn't be given another Council home

A summary of the feedback has been incorporated into Appendix 1 and the draft version of the Allocation Policy (See Appendix 2) now requires approval from Cabinet Member, Cabinet and full Council for formal adoption in June 2014. If the proposed policy is approved we will write to all applicants to explain the changes during March 2014.

6. Recommendations

That Cabinet Member:

- **AGREES THE AMENDMENTS IN THE ALLOCATION POLICY DETAILED IN SECTIONS 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4**
- **AGREES TO ADOPT THE REVISED ALLOCATION POLICY DETAILED IN APPENDIX 2**
- **THAT THE REPORT BE REFERRED TO CABINET FOR ADOPTION BY COUNCIL**

7. Proposals and details

7.1 Reasons for revising the Allocations Policy

The Localism Act 2011 seeks to devolve responsibility back to councils, allowing more decisions about housing to be taken locally. In the case of allocating housing, this means local authority landlords are able to apply locally determined criteria to their housing registers and no longer have to operate open registers, with the expectation from central government that social housing should be offered to those people in housing need.

The Council's Housing Register currently contains 25,314 applicants, and the vast majority of these are adequately housed, placed in the General group and do not currently need a Council house, although they may aspire to live in a Council home in the future. The main problems this causes are as follows:

- It is an expensive and inefficient use of Council resources to provide administration for such a large list
- People with no housing need are allocated social housing, such as owner occupiers or existing tenants who are adequately housed, which means those with a real housing need have to wait longer, causing frustration and anger with the Council
- People who have registered an application for future use and then become in housing need are unwilling to be assessed for a priority group for fear of giving up their General date
- We have an inaccurate picture of need and demand in Rotherham as nearly 20,000 of the people on the register do not bid for properties, and therefore do not currently need a Council home, although they may aspire to live in a Council home in the future
- The number of applicants is likely to increase throughout the recession and beyond, as will the cost of carrying out annual reviews and administration

This report proposes that we change the current Allocations Policy and process in order to address these problems, to take into account the new flexibilities offered in the Localism Act 2011, and to make the system as fair as possible. In order to ensure households who may no longer qualify for social housing in Rotherham, either because they have not lived in the area long enough, or because they cannot demonstrate that they qualify for other reasons, we propose that we operate a housing options approach alongside the housing register. This will include help to access alternative housing in the private rented sector.

The Allocations Policy was last substantially updated in January 2010, with further minor amendments in February 2011, and RMBC's response to a Government Consultation on Allocation of Accommodation was reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in March 2012.

Consultation

When there is a "major change of policy" on allocations RMBC has a statutory duty to consult other social landlords with whom it places people from its housing register. As the proposed policy is "an entirely new approach to the letting of accommodation" it is clearly a "major change of policy". Section 166A(13) of the Housing Act 1996 (inserted by the Localism Act 2011) states that before adopting an allocation scheme, or making an alteration to their scheme reflecting a major change of policy, a local housing authority in England must:

- (a) send a copy of the draft scheme, or proposed alteration, to every private registered provider of social housing and registered social landlord with which they have nomination arrangements
and
- (b) afford those persons a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposals.

Therefore on 5th November 2013, a copy of the proposed policy will be sent to every RSL's with properties in Rotherham with whom RMBC places people from its housing register, giving them opportunity to comment by 30th November 2013

To ensure that we involved local residents in the proposed changes we implemented a consultation timetable which captured the views of local communities, elected members, applicants, tenants on the housing register, stakeholders and staff.

The consultation has spanned over 1 year and has been conducted through various methods such as information at roadshows, publishing surveys on the internet, conducting face to face surveys with applicants in the Property Shop and with Rotherham residents at the Rotherham Show, undertaking workshops with staff and elected members, delivering presentations to various stakeholders such as Rotherfed, Rotherham Older People Forum (ROPES) Area Assemblies, and Improving Places Select Commission.

The results have been clearly analysed, and are reflected in proposed changes to the Allocation Policy. See Appendix 1

An Equalities Impact Assessment has also been conducted and consideration of equalities issues has been considered and included into the proposed changes.

Taking the feedback from the consultation and the Equalities Impact Assessment into account each of the proposed changes is set out in 7.2 below.

7.2 Proposed changes

7.2.1 Operate a Local Connection Criteria; A person will qualify to go on the Housing Register if they have a local connection to Rotherham for a minimum of 3 years

The current Allocation Policy allows people who don't live in Rotherham to join the housing register. The vast majority of people who were involved in the consultation agreed that we should change the current policy and have a 3 year local connection rule, and this will ensure we have the same rules as Doncaster. There were concerns that people who couldn't access Doncaster's and other Local Authorities registers would come to Rotherham, which would mean local people in Rotherham having to wait longer. Although there is only Doncaster, in the South Yorkshire sub region who have considered a local connection policy, there are many other Local Authorities with new local connection allocation policies such as Northampton, North Yorkshire, York, Leicester, East Riding, all have varying local connection criteria but none have exceeded 5 years. The Department for Communities and Local Government are also in the process of publishing statutory guidance on social housing allocations and local connection, which will strongly encourage all local authorities to adopt at least a two year residency test as part of the qualification criteria.

The proposed new policy for Rotherham is that a person has a local connection where:

- They have lived for the last 3 years in Rotherham through their own choice.
- They are currently employed in Rotherham and have been for the last 3 years
- They have direct family who live in Rotherham and they have done so for the last three years. Direct family members include spouses, civil partners, parents, sons, daughters, brother and sisters.

The three year residence rule will not take account of time spent resident in the borough where applicants have been rehoused in temporary accommodation in Rotherham by another Local Authority in a bail hostel or other such accommodation, detained in the district under the Mental Health Act, receiving specialist hospital treatment, in occupation of a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan which is not placed on a residential site, in occupation of a holiday letting this includes a permanent building, hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation for the purposes of a holiday

The proposal is that there will be cases that will be exempt from the Local Connection Criteria, these are:

- Members of the Armed Forces and former personnel where the application is made within 5 years of discharge
- Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving service family accommodation following the death of their spouse/partner.
- Relationship breakdown and divorcees of members of the Armed Forces where the application is made within 6 months from date of separation
- Serving or former members of the Armed Forces who need to move in urgent circumstances because of serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service irrespective of when this was.
- Homeless applicants accepted as owing a duty as defined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996
- Applicants considered via the Witness Protection Scheme as agreed by the Housing Options Manager

7.2.2 Operate wider qualifying criteria. This will mean some applicants won't be accepted onto the Housing Register and some households will be removed from the current Housing Register who are currently in the General group.

Currently because of the way the policy works there are various examples of properties that have been let to applicants in the General group with no housing need in preference to those who have been in greater need.

The pressure on Council and other affordable housing in Rotherham has never been greater, and the Council is responsible for helping those who are in the greatest need. There is a view that it is no longer possible or appropriate to allow people to move in to a Council house purely based on how long they have been waiting, if they have no actual need for Council housing. One of the possible approaches is to remove this group altogether from the housing register to ensure the register reflects current housing need, and not overall general demand / aspirations. We will move people who are in housing need from the General group into an appropriate 'current need' housing group.

The people who were consulted preferred this approach.

We therefore propose that in the new policy the following applicants won't qualify to join the housing register in the future and also we propose to cancel/close the following households in the current General group:

- Households living with family/friends/dependants who do not currently want to move home but have registered just in case they need to move in the future
- Households who are living in private rented homes who do not currently want to move home but have registered just in case they need to move in the future.
- Households subject to a relationship breakdown who no longer need to move home.
- Council Transfers with tenancy breaches that in the opinion of Council, affects the applicants suitability to be a tenant
- Home owners with no medical needs
- Households with savings over £16,000 with no housing need.
- Service Sector tenants living in tied accommodation, they will be able to re-apply and be considered in Band One when their employment ends and require alternative housing
- Applicants who live outside of the Borough with no local connection to Rotherham as per local connection criteria (See Section 2.2 of the Allocation Policy)

If the decision was to retain a register which contained people with no housing need eg owner occupiers with no medical need or affordability issues, the proposal is to introduce an annual administration fee of £50 which would cover the Council's administration costs, the income from the fees would be paid into the HRA. The proposal is that the person would only allowed be to register once they have paid the fee.

Of the 25,314 applicants on the Housing Register (in February 2013), approximately 19,000 are in the 'General' group. The vast majority of people in the General Group never bid, as there is a historical culture in Rotherham that people should put their name down in case they need a house in the future as their waiting time will qualify. Anecdotally, the types of circumstances of some people who are in the General category:

- People who are adequately housed, but expect to want a Council bungalow when they are older
- People who already own a home now but may wish to sell or rent this out and move into a Council house in the future. At the moment home owners of all age groups can bid on any property.
- Service tenants who live in tied accommodation who registers for the future when their employment ends
- People who feel that a Council house would be a good safety net in case their situation changes in the future e.g. if they lose their job
- People who are existing Council tenants who are adequately housed in the right size property with no medical need to move, but who aspire to move

Currently of the people in the General group who do bid, many are in some form of housing need, for example people living with family or friends who need to move on, or dependents who are ready to take on a tenancy, or people who have suffered a relationship breakdown. These people are often reluctant to move to a priority group due to the concept that their waiting time will enable them to get a Council home quicker.

Any changes to the Allocation Policy must be transparent and be communicated effectively and clearly.

We propose to write to all General group applicants to explain:

- The reasons why we are taking these actions
- That unless we hear from them within a certain time frame their application will be closed/ cancelled
- That if they do currently need to move to a Council home, they should contact Key Choices to update their circumstances. Their application will be changed to the relevant group and dated to reflect the date their circumstances changed and they will have a much better chance of getting a Council home as 90% of properties are made available to categories within the Register of Housing Need.

The recommended approach is to ensure the register contains households in housing need. However in some cases where there are households in housing need but have not made bids, these will be considered and re-dated to when their circumstances changed. (Possibly due to the fact that some applicants may have considered making a bid but were put off because of their lengthy queue position).

The preferred method as opposed to cancelling ineligible housing applications is to close the live application on the Abrisas ICT system. This means that the application will be removed from the Housing Register and won't be included in any statistic but the application is held on file. This can then be easily resurrected if the applicant later approaches in housing need (they will also retain the same application number). If the application is cancelled and the customer re-approaches then they will need to complete a full new application as their details will have been removed from the system. Housing Options will be provided to those households who do not qualify, for example advise to access accommodation in the private rented sector or home ownership.

7.2.3 Create a Transfer Register by moving the applications from Council tenants with no tenancy breaches in the last 2 years from the current General group into a Transfer Register

A Transfer Register will only contain applications from Council tenants with no housing need wanting to transfer to another Council home.

Currently Council tenants with tenancy breaches are allowed to transfer to another Council home, any unauthorised repairs are subsequently recharged to this tenant. Overwhelmingly the majority of people who were involved in the consultation agreed that Council tenants who have any breaches in their tenancy condition should not be allowed to transfer to another Council house, but thought that we should reward the good tenants and allow them to move. This supports the existing Local Lettings Policy for new build homes, where preference is given to existing Council tenants with a good tenancy record for the last 2 years. Council tenants in housing need eg people wanting to downsize due to bedroom tax, or people with medical issues where their current property isn't suitable will be placed in one of the priority groups.

7.2.4 Create a Register of Housing Need with 3 groups

The current Register contains over 25,000 applicants, the vast majority of whom do not need a Council house at present. By creating separate groups we can have a clear picture of who is in housing need, and which applicants would like a home in the future. When quoting housing need figures, we will quote the number of people on the Register, which we anticipate would be under 10,000 under the new proposed system.

The proposed 3 new groups to the Register of Housing Need as follows:

- **Current Priority Plus group rename to Band One or High Need**
- **Current Priority group rename to Band Two or Medium Need,**
- **Merge the current General Plus and General groups and rename to Band Three or Low Need**

We currently maintain an open Housing Register and anybody can apply for a Council house. Once an application is received the person is awarded into one of categories:

Current Category	Need	Definition
Priority Plus (P+)		Households who require immediate housing and are considered for all vacant Council properties
Priority (P)		People who experience urgent housing need and require moving due to specific circumstances
General Plus (G+)		Applicants who are entitled to reasonable preference on a non-urgent basis
General (G)		Applicants who have no reasonable preference entitlement/priority need

The names of the categories are not as clear and descriptive as they could be. Use of the term ‘priority’ suggests the Council sees some groups of people as having more importance than others. It would be more logical and simpler to define the categories into Bands 1 to 3 and have a Transfer band to reward good Council tenants with no tenancy breaches

7.3 Make changes to the advertised quota

7.3.1 Advertising Quota – The proposal is to retain the current rule that all vacant dwelling are offered to Band One (previously Priority Plus) ahead of other bands, retain the percentage of properties advertised to Band Two 50% (previously known as Priority group), but include a quota in Band Three of 40% (previously General Plus and General) and include a new proposed Transfer Band with a 10%. quota

Currently the Council operates a choice-based lettings (CBL) system. All vacant properties are advertised in the Key Choices Letting Scheme; 50% of properties are advertised as giving preference to bidders from the ‘Priority’ Group and 50% to the combined General groups (30% General Plus and 20% General). This is computer generated to ensure a fair distribution of properties between the categories. Any applicant can bid for any property – and the property will be offered to the person in the appropriate group with the longest waiting time. Households in the Priority Plus Group require immediate housing, and will be considered first for all properties, ahead of any other group.

The proposed change would increase the number of properties that are currently allocated to people in Band Three in housing need. The reason why this quota has been increased as opposed to Band Two is due to the fact that we have merged together a large volume of applicants from the General Plus and the people in housing need from the General

Band which means that Band Three will contain an extremely high volume of applications in housing need compared to less applications in Band Two. However it is recommended that the quotas are reviewed annually, see table below.

Old group	Old quota	New Band	New quota
Priority Plus	100%	Band One	100%
Priority	50%	Band Two	50%
General Plus	30%	Merged to Band Three	40%
General	20%		
		Separate Transfer Band	10%

The bidding process will remain unchanged, where all applicants can bid for any advertised group, and where there are multiple bidders within a group, preference will be given according to length of waiting time.

The properties will continue to be offered on a quota basis, which will assist in creating sustainable and balanced communities. It will also ensure that those people living in unsuitable housing, which include children living in flats, non-statutory homeless households etc are able to access Council housing. If the properties were not advertised on a quota basis and were only allocated to Urgent group people first ahead of others, those in the Unsuitably Housed group would have very little opportunity to access Council housing as they would always be placed last in the shortlists.

The properties will initially be offered to the Band One, and then to the advertised group, where there are no suitable bidders from band 1, the next group in the sequence will be selected and so on. Properties will be advertised and the shortlist will be sorted as follows:

Advertised to Band Two (50%): Band One, Band Two, then Band Three, then Transfers

Advertised to Band Three (40%): Band One, Band Three then Transfer Band

If it is decided that 10% of properties should be advertised to Transfers, the process would be:

Advertised to Transfer (10%): Band One, then Transfers, then Band Two, then Band Three

7.4 Within the Register of Housing Need categories, make the following amendments:

7.4.1 The proposal is to re-date the following households currently in the General group who have made a bid in the last 12 months to the date the household became in housing need (which should coincide with the earliest bidding date) and place in the appropriate band:

Existing	New Band
Priority Plus	Retain all applications and rename to Band One
Priority	Retain all applications and rename to Band Two

General Plus	Retain all applications and merge to Band Three
General	Remove some applications and merge the remaining applications to Band Three
General	Retain Council tenants in the current general group with no tenancy breaches in last 2 years and move to the new Transfer Band

Move and re-date the following categories from the General group as follows:

Move to Band Three

- Households living with family / friends / dependants, and who are ready to live independently but cannot afford other housing options such as private rented or owner occupation,
- Households who are subject to a relationship breakdown
- Households living in private rented homes but are struggling to afford the rent, this would be determined by affordability checks analysing income and expenditure.

Move to Band Two

- Households with medical need who choose to stay in the general group
- Homeless households who choose to stay in the general group

Move to the Transfer Band

- Council tenants with no tenancy breaches in the last 2 years.

Any other household currently in the general group in housing need will be moved to the appropriate Band.

The recommended approach is to re-date the applications to reflect the date when they became in housing need, this will ensure all applications in Band Three or the transfer Band have no long standing housing register dates. However in some cases where there are households in housing need but have not made bids, these will be considered and re-dated to when their circumstances changed. (Possibly due to the fact that some applicants may have considered making a bid but were put off because of their lengthy queue position)

7.4.3 Add Armed Forces provision into Band One

The Localism Act 2011, Regulation 2 amends section 166A(3) of the Housing Act so that local housing authorities in England must frame their Allocation Scheme to give additional preference to Members of the Armed Forces personnel and their partners in urgent housing need who were / are serving in the regular Forces at any time preceding their application. This also applies to bereaved spouses or civil partners where they cease to be entitled to occupy Ministry of Defence accommodation.

It is proposed that Emergency status in the current Allocation Policy be applied to those serving in the regular forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which

is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service, and Former Members of the Armed Forces and bereaved spouses or civil partners in Urgent Housing Need. This will be applied to partners and spouses if they have recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces. Other Former Members of the Armed Forces not in urgent housing need will be awarded "Unsuitably housed status" up to 5 years from the date of discharge.

7.4.4 Review applications with rent arrears and cumulative debt as per the Council's Rent Policy

A new rent arrears policy is being developed separately. This will apply to applicants with cumulative outstanding debt to the Council, Housing Associations or Private Landlords that are based in Rotherham. Outstanding debt will include rechargeable repairs/ damages, rent in advance loans, furnished or district heating charges, and money owed to Key Choices Property Management. The proposed new policy for allocation is for the policy eligibility rules to change from the current provision that applicants will be eligible to move following 13 weeks consecutive payments of a minimum of £2.50 per week to reducing the total debt by 25%

7.4.5 Make changes to policy and procedures in order to more effectively manage the Housing Register and encourage behaviour change:

7.4.6 Once an applicant has refused two offers their application should be cancelled

As stated above, the bidder with the longest waiting time within the specified category will be offered the property. If the person accepts the offer they move in and their details are removed from the Housing Register. If they refuse the offer, the property is offered to the person with the second longest waiting time and so on. If a person refuses the offer of a property they have bid on they are allowed to remain in the category and bid for further properties.

The main reason for this proposed change is to prevent people from repeatedly bidding for properties they are not seriously interested in (thus reducing the administrative burden), and to ensure that only people who are in genuine housing need can remain on the Register of Housing Need.

7.4.7 Once a person has decided and agreed to have major adaptations work that meet their long-term needs their application should be cancelled.

The main reason for this proposed change is to prevent people who have requested and have been assessed for major adaptation work that meet their long-term needs and then utilise their live application to move following the installation of major adaptations, most of which have incurred costs to the Council of over £1000. It is proposed that during the application for adaptations the customer is advised of their housing options, one of which is to transfer to an adapted home or where the customer prefers to remain in their own home and have the adaptations fitted that meet their long-term needs that any previous housing application should be cancelled. Where adaptations are fitted to assist the household with daily living, pending a move, the application will remain live.

7.4.8 Once an application has been cancelled for any reason, the applicant should not be allowed to re-enter the Housing Register for 24 months, unless their circumstances change

The current Allocation Policy sets out circumstances when an application will be cancelled, for example where a tenant has been evicted, where an applicant is granted a new tenancy by the Council, or where a tenant has accepted a mutual exchange.

When a person is evicted for breach of tenancy conditions, their live application is cancelled, but they can apply to re-register a new application immediately. Some people who have committed serious breaches are excluded from registration for a set period of time, others are allowed to re-register.

The reasons for this proposed change are that it will:

- Ensure consistency
- Prevent people who have been evicted from a tenancy from repeatedly moving around
- Reduce void and administration costs
- Restrict new tenants from registering an application within the first 12 months of their new tenancy
- Assist in creating settled communities and improving community cohesion within estates.

We will ensure officers use their discretion in cases where people's circumstances change.

7.4.9 Once an applicant that has been accepted as statutory homeless refuses one suitable private sector offer, or one Council or RSL offer, they will be moved down to the Band Three. On acceptance of a private rented offer their application should be cancelled.

The Council now has the power (through the Localism Act 2011) to discharge its statutory duty to homeless people by making an offer of a suitable *private sector* property. Implementing this change will ensure that homeless applicant have broadly similar opportunities to other applicants.

A private rented sector offer made under homelessness legislation is intended for a long term settled move. In order to discharge the homelessness duty the private rented sector offer has to be on a 12 months tenancy. This means that both the landlord and tenant have made a commitment for a 12 month period. If the housing application wasn't cancelled when rehoused the tenant could move before the 12 month period ended and they would still be liable for rent payments to the Private Landlord. Even though the application is cancelled the person will be protected for 2 years if they become homeless as the Council will have a duty to offer alternative housing under homelessness legislation, irrespective of whether they are in priority need as long as they didn't become homeless intentionally.

7.4.10 Encourage all new tenants to sign a direct debit or standing order form to pay their rent, and have the right not to offer a property to customers who cannot afford to take on a tenancy.

When Universal Credit is implemented tenants will receive all their benefit payment via a bank account. The direct debit or standing order for rent payments will not only facilitate easier payment methods for the customers but will also reduce the risk of uncollected rent.

Currently applicants are provided with advice and information regarding affordability at the "Its Your Move" meeting. To avoid people who cannot clearly afford to take on a tenancy the affordability check will be undertaken earlier in the process for example when the applicant first registers. If an affordability check determines that a customer would struggle to afford the tenancy, the officer would try to encourage the applicant to re-consider and wait until their circumstances change. However if the applicant insists that they can afford the tenancy and wishes to take it on there is no provision in the current Allocation Policy for officers to refuse to make an offer on that basis.

Unless we find new more efficient ways to collect rent, there is a possibility that using existing rent collection ratios there would be a need for over 30 additional rents staff to allow for the effects of Universal Credit.

7.4.11. Following the initial mail-out, stop all annual reviews as the resources spent on this costly administration would be better deployed on advice services to people on the full range of housing options in Rotherham

This was recommended by the people who were consulted.

7.5 Next steps

- Send a copy of the proposed policy to every RSL's with properties in Rotherham , giving them opportunity to comment. (Send out 5th November 13, comments back by 30th November 13)
- Submit the final report (with revised Allocations Policy appended) for formal sign-off, to Cabinet and Full Council in December 2013/January 2014
- Produce a new Summary Guide to the Allocation Policy in February/March 2014
- Make changes to the ICT – which will take 5 to 6 months
- Write to all people on the Housing Register within one month of formal approval for adoption to notify them of the new policy which will commence in June 2014.

8. Finance

Implementation of the changes proposed in this report will help us to house homeless people more expediently and therefore reduce the cost to the Council of temporary accommodation.

It currently costs the Council approximately £10K per annum to send out annual letters to people in the General housing group, i.e. those who do not currently require housing. This would be straightforward revenue saving if we stop providing administration to people who are not currently in housing need.

Although the removal of administration for the General group will result in some internal changes to staff workloads this will not have an impact on staffing budgets but will enable the service to adequately deal with the increase in demand for support and advice currently being experienced.

Following the completion of the revised Allocation Policy, a summary booklet will be amended and issued to existing and new applicants. This will incur a one-off cost of around £1.20 per applicant, which includes postage.

Most of the changes needed to the ICT system can be undertaken in-house at no extra cost, however there may be some more complex changes required which will incur a cost of £140 per day. This is envisaged to take no more than 5 days. The costs will cover amendments to the Housing Register and choice based letting module rules which ensure applicants are placed in the correct bidding queue position.

Changes to the Allocations Policy will need to be effectively communicated to staff. This training will be undertaken in-house by the Housing Options Manager.

9. Risks and uncertainties

Risk 1: If we continue to operate a single, open Housing Register with the General group being able to access 20% of all properties, the number of applicants is likely to balloon, and to the detriment of families who are struggling to find a decent home at an affordable rent level. Rotherham may also see an increase in applications from residents of neighbouring local authority areas who are considering applying local connection criteria to their housing registers. By making the changes proposed in this report we will effectively manage people's expectations, without excluding anyone from the register.

Risk 2: The main risk associated with reducing the number of properties we make available to people in the General group is that of increased dissatisfaction with the Council, but we will mitigate this by ensuring a careful and robust communication strategy.

Risk 3: Rotherham has a strong focus on encouraging and supporting sustainable communities and by reducing the percentage of properties that go to people who do not need rehousing, and are not bidding, this may lead to a greater number of tenancies being issued to households who are in need of housing. However, it should be noted that households in housing need are not always deemed to be vulnerable people, and the proposed changes do still ensure that a proportion of properties go to the Unsuitably Housed (and possibly General) groups, enabling us to continue to achieve a degree of balance.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Ensuring the Council's Housing Allocation Policy is as fair as possible will contribute to two of the priorities of Rotherham Partnership's Community Strategy: *Ensure the best start in life for children and families*, and *Support those that are vulnerable within our communities*.

It also contributes to four of the ten commitments within our new Housing Strategy:

- Commitment 1: We will deliver Council housing that meets people's needs
- Commitment 2: We will increase and improve the supply of affordable rented housing
- Commitment 6: We will help people to access the support they need
- Commitment 7: We will help people in Rotherham's most disadvantaged communities

11. Background papers and consultation

Background papers

- RMBC's Housing Allocations Policy, December 2008 (updated February 2011)
- RMBC's Response to Government Consultations; Allocation of Accommodation and Social Housing Fraud, Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, 23rd March 2012
- Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England. CLG, November 2011
- Localism Act 2011
- Discharge of Homelessness Statutory Duty, Cabinet, 18 July 2012

Consultation

Consultation was carried out during summer 2012 as part of the wider housing strategy consultation, and a consultation timetable has been implemented during 2013. We recorded a diverse range of opinions – initially some thought we should continue to maintain an open Housing Register, however more recently the majority of people thought we should prioritise Council housing for those in need.

Once the proposed changes have been agreed we will implement a robust communication strategy to ensure all housing applicants are aware of the changes and how they will benefit.

12. Contact details

Sandra Tolley, Housing Options Manager
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Allocation Policy Consultation Timetable and Summary of Feedback (Appendix 1)

Stakeholder	Format	How	Venue	Date	Lead Officers
Current and Future applicants (2012)	Workshops Surveys	Emails / invitations to public events to communities of interest and other key distribution lists including Supporting People providers, housing associations. Taras etc Online survey face to face surveys	Springwell Gardens x 2 Rotherham Show Online	11 th July 2012 16 th August 2012 September 2012	Sandra Wardle Jill Jones
Area Assembly meetings	Presentation	Workshops Discussions	Various venues	- Chairs meeting - 18th June 12 - Wentworth North – 9th July 12 - Rother Valley	Jane Davies -Haire

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> West – 9th July 2012 - Rotherham North and Rotherham South focus group – 16th July 2012 - Wentworth Valley – 24th July 2012 - Revisited October 2013 	
Supporting People Forums	Presentation	Workshops Discussions	Unity Centre	August 2012	Jane Davies -Haire
Sessions with learning from customers	Presentation	Workshops Discussions	Unity Centre	August 2012	Jane Davies -Haire
Tenant Quality and Standards Monitoring Group	Presentation	Workshops Discussions	Various Venues	August 2012	Jane Davies -Haire
Strategic Housing Partnership	Presentation	Discussions	Various Venues	July 2012	Jane Davies -Haire
Other Local Authorities in Yorkshire Region	Written Verbal	Emails Workshops Meetings Yorkshire and Humber	Various Venues	July 2012 onwards	Sandra Tolley Sandra Wardle Jill Jones

		Homelessness forum CBL North group			
Current and Future applicants (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Written - Face to face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Surveys - News Articles - Road shows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer Services Centres - Property Shop - Shiloh - Gate Surgery - Visits 	June 2012 to 30 th August 2013	Sandra Wardle Jill Jones James Greenhedge
Elected Members including Improving Places Select Committee	Seminar and written	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop - Report - Briefings - Discussions 	Town hall	August 2012 24 th July 2013 August 2013	Sandra Wardle Jill Jones
Rotherfed	Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Workshops -Discussions 	At Rotherfed	August 2013	Sandra Wardle Jill Jones
Staff	Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussions at team meetings - Briefings - Training sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing Management Housing options Property Shop 	Housing options -7 th August 2013 Rawmarsh champions 12 th August Wath Champions 14 th august Riverside champions 15 th august	Sandra Tolley Sandra Wardle Jill Jones

				Maltby champions 28 th august	
Housing Associations	Presentation	-Workshops -Discussions	Property Shop	August 2012 Sept 2013	Jane Davies –Haire Sandra Wardle Jill Jones
ROPES	Presentation	Workshops Discussions	My Place	October 2013	Sandra Wardle Jill Jones

A summary of feedback from the consultation is as follows:

- The vast majority agreed that the current Housing Register should be reduced and only include people who are in high housing need
- The vast majority wanted to remove people with no local connection to Rotherham from the register. A three year rule was proposed by most as this will be the same as Doncaster, although both a one year and a five year rule were also suggested. Households in the General group in housing need should be absorbed into other housing need groups, this would avoid applicants gambling with their waiting time date
- Cancel applications if they are not bidding
- Instead of calling the groups, emergency, priority, urgent etc what is the difference why not be simple and rename to numbers (1 to 3)
- The vast majority agreed that people not in housing need should be removed from the housing register, however a suggestion was to set aside a small quota for good council tenants to transfer, this supports the local letting policy for new build.
- People strongly agreed that applicants who own their own home who are fit and well with no medical housing needs should not be allowed to join the register
- People agreed that applicants who owe money to the Council shouldn't be allowed on the register

- One comment relating to employment was “We can’t give priority to people in work as it is difficult to find work, and how would we justify giving priority to people in work if they have no local connection to Rotherham other than work related, it wouldn’t be fair to local people trying to find a job.
- Direct debits should be encouraged rather than make it mandatory as we could contribute to debt if the direct debit was taken out of the bank when no funds available, would then incur bank charges
- Overwhelmingly the majority of people agreed that Council tenants who have any breaches in their tenancy condition should not be allowed to transfer to another Council house, but we should reward the good tenants and allow them to move
- People agreed that we should stop undertaking housing register reviews
- For people under 18 it should be mandatory to receive tenancy support
- The application should be cancelled following 2 refusals

Some of the individual comments from people who were interviewed, Improving Places Select Committee, various stakeholders and staff were:

“I’ve been waiting for a Council House for 5 years, it’s a joke. We need more homes for local people”

“I think home owners should Not get a council house, unless they are being repossessed”

“Why should people who can afford a mortgage get a council house?”

“Home owners should sell up and buy something suitable”

“Home owners with medical needs should be allowed to get a council house but their house should be sold”

“Council tenants who do not look after their property or who owe money should be barred”

“Council tenants who don’t look after their property or who owe arrears should be able to move, everyone deserves a second chance”

“Council tenants who don’t look after their property should be allowed to go on the register but stop them from moving until they have sorted out the problems”

“The housing register should be based on need, we need to rationalise the list”

“ The Council ought to offer a discount for those paying direct debit”

“ Agree we should remove the general group”

“If we remove people not in housing need it will mean the waiting time for people in housing need will reduce”

“ We need to have young person tenancy support”

“Scale down the general group”

“We need to stop people getting a council house then registering to move again”

We need to stop people for bidding for properties they don't want and have no intention of moving”

“Agree we need a local connection”

“If the general group remained its pointless if we don't let them bid as they will complain they are not getting properties”



Allocation Policy

Draft

A Housing Options Approach
For
Rotherham

June 2014

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1. General Guidance

1.1 Introduction The Council has re-evaluated and re-drafted its Allocation Policy, practices and procedures to take account of the requirements of the Housing 1996 Part VI and VII, the Homeless Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011 and the new CLG Code of Guidance for Allocations. The content of this document reflects an entirely new approach to the letting of accommodation based on need and choice. In reviewing the Allocation Policy the local housing authority have had regard to:

- Rotherham's Homelessness Strategy,
- Rotherham's Tenancy Strategy

Before we have adopted the new Allocation Policy various organizations, including customers, statutory and non statutory agencies have had the opportunity to comment and feedback has informed the changes. A copy of the draft scheme will be sent to every private registered provider of social housing and registered social landlord with which we have nomination arrangements with.

The Council's new Allocation Policy focuses on helping people in greatest housing need to gain access to suitable and appropriate accommodation. The Allocation Policy aims to make best use of the Council's available housing stock and will compliment other services we provide that advise applicants about other housing options available to them provided by the Council and other Landlords as well as Owner Occupation.

The term "Allocation of accommodation" is when the Local Authority selects a person to be either:

- a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by the authority
- nominates a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by another housing authority
- nominates a person to be an assured tenant of accommodation held by a Private Registered Provider (or Registered Social Landlord in Wales) (s.159(2))

By using a range of landlords within "Key Choices" Scheme we aim to:-

- Change the culture from one of "gate keeping" to one of customers exercising choice and empowerment.
- Ensure we let properties fairly.
- Lettings are appropriate and sustainable.
- Stimulate new markets and interest in social housing to improve our image and market perceptions.
- Contribute to sustainability, neighbourhood renewal by creating mixed and balanced communities.

Full details, of each landlord participating in "Key Choices" can be found at the end of this policy document.

1.2 Allocation Policy Overview

Policy Overview - Rotherham will allocate housing accommodation in accordance with our Allocation Policy. The Housing Act, 1996 Part VI and the Homeless Act 2002 require that each Housing Authority shall have a policy for the letting of housing. The Act specifies groups of people who must be given reasonable preference in the scheme. Subject to these provisions the Council can decide the principles on which the scheme is to be framed.

Rotherham's Allocation Policy meets the requirements of the Housing Act 1996, the Homeless Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011 and is based on choice, need and date of application and ensures that the needs of local people are met that cannot be provided by the market or afforded by households. In conjunction with the Housing Acts the Policy will aim to ensure that access into housing is based on:

- ⇒ sufficient advice, assistance and information to make informed choices about housing options available
- ⇒ fair and equal access to available accommodation
- ⇒ a choice of accommodation or the opportunity to express preference about the housing accommodation to be allocated

The Housing Act, 1996, the Homeless Act 2002 and the Localism Act require that reasonable preference is given to:

- people who are homeless (within the meaning of Housing Act 1996 Part VII);
- people who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3);
- people occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including any grounds relating to a disability); and
- people who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).

In addition Rotherham's Allocation Policy will also give preference to:

- ⇒ Customers unable to return home from hospital, as their current property does not meet their medical needs and temporary accommodation would be inappropriate or they require immediate rehousing preventing an admission to hospital or institution.
- ⇒ Ex Service Personal and their families who are leaving the Armed Forces (or who have left in the past 5 years) and have no accommodation to return to

- ⇒ Customers leaving temporary or supported accommodation schemes
- ⇒ Households that are subject to adult or child safeguarding issues
- ⇒ Households who need to move to a particular area in the district to avoid hardship to themselves or others. This includes those who give or receive care or need to access specialist treatment. In these circumstances an established medical need must be demonstrated such as mental illness or disorder, physical or learning disability, or progressive medical condition.
- ⇒ RSL and Council Tenants that wish to move to a smaller property that they are under occupying

Rotherham's Allocation Policy is also framed to take into account: qualifying criteria including:

- the financial resources available to a person to meet their housing costs;
- behaviour of a person (or of a member of his household) which affects his suitability to be a tenant;
- local connection which exists between a person and the authority's district.

1. 3 Delivering a Quality Service

Throughout the allocation process all customers will receive quality information about the service available to assist them in making informed choices about their future home.

We will ensure all our customers have access to quality housing that meets their housing need.

The Council's current services standards for letting homes are:

- All details of the customer's application will be treated with due care and will be completely confidential. Information will only be shared with other landlords where the applicant gives a signed declaration giving permission for this to take place
- We will give advice and assistance of the highest quality concerning all housing options available to the applicant.
- Customers will be told if they have been successful in the bidding process, and be contacted to arrange a convenient appointment time to verify their application details.

1.4 Equalities and Diversity in Action

Rotherham MBC has a responsibility to serve the needs and promote the interests of all who live or work in the Borough, or who use its services. The Council's Corporate Equalities Strategy works towards developing services, facilities and working

practices, which are equally accessible to and appropriate for all its customers, irrespective of their gender, age, race, sexuality, disability or income.

Rotherham MBC is committed to the principles set out in the Equalities Act 1010 and the Equalities Standard for local government. A key element of the Equalities Standard involves carrying out an Equalities Impact Assessment on all existing and, in particular, new policies to ensure they DO NOT have an adverse impact on or have any that can be justified on a particular group. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out in October 2013 to the Allocation Policy and will be reviewed following implementation.

The Allocation Policy is intended to improve community cohesion and will increase opportunities for applicants to move between neighbourhoods and communities. This will be done through the provision of information on the adverts regarding the local area, such as nearest schools, doctor's surgeries and leisure facilities. The Key Choices website also links to "up my street" where customers can search for a wide range of facilities including mosques, churches etc.

We will provide information in languages other than English, in Braille, Large Print and Audiotape. All reception areas will be fitted with a hearing loop.

1.5 Support for Vulnerable People – Vulnerability can be a result of being in urgent housing need or a result of health or social welfare issues. Individuals who are vulnerable will be supported by officers and agencies who will be sensitive to their needs. Types of support which will be offered are:

- Display property adverts in a range of media outlets.
- Utilise picture symbols as an alternative to written text on property adverts.
- Provide a free email address, which can be used in all Libraries.
- Undertake home visits to explain the Allocation Policy.
- Send out lists of advertised properties, where customers cannot access any of the media outlets.
- Send out property information to carers or advocates.
- Inform applicants to alert to vacancies.
- Officers taking time to explain property and local area information.
- Enabling a proxy to be nominated to request properties on behalf of the applicant.
- Viewing a property with an advocate or carer.
- Viewing a property via video footage, of internal and external shots of the rooms, décor and surrounding area.
- Ensuring information meets the requirements of other language users, people with a disability and people with sight or hearing impairment.

Rotherham MBC's Supporting People Team have also helped to develop a range of floating support schemes, which are aimed to help vulnerable people in developing life skills and supporting customers within their home. There are a number of different agencies that are part of the Supporting People Programme with support packages designed to meet individual need.

1.6 Monitoring the Scheme

The Council will seek to ensure that its Allocation Policy is being operated fairly in respect of all sections of the community in Rotherham.

Monitoring systems will be developed to enable performance to be reviewed against the stated objectives and any necessary changes to be made. Housing Register applicants will be asked to voluntarily provide details of their ethnic origin so that we can gather evidence to test whether the Allocation Policy is being administered fairly.

All elements of the Allocation Policy will be closely monitored through Key Performance Indicators. This is to ensure that:

- We are meeting housing need in the Borough
- Housing trends are being monitored
- Equality is achieved and diversity supported
- Information is collated for Government and other bodies
- We are offering a customer focussed letting scheme
- There is a reduction in refusal rates
- Void turn round times are not increasing
- There is sustainability within the estates
- Vulnerable people are not excluded

1.7 Right to Request a Review - The Allocation Scheme will also ensure that applicants has the right to request the authority to inform them of any decision about the facts of their case which is likely to be, or has been, taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing accommodation to him; and has the right to request a review of a decision mentioned in paragraph (b), or in section 160ZA(9), and to be informed of the decision on the review and the grounds for it.

The applicant has a right to request a review if an applicant(s) disagrees with the Authority's decision relating to applications to join the Housing Register and subsequent offers of properties including:

- if an applicant believes that they are in the wrong band, or that their band has been changed unfairly;
- cancellation following a Housing Register Review;
- date of application;
- an offer has been withdrawn because the authority believe that the applicant has provided false information or has taken action which has made their circumstances worse
- where applicants have been suspended or excluded unfairly in the `customers view;
- offers of property made; if an applicant believes that a property has not been allocated according to the allocation policy. For instance, if they expressed an

interest for a home, and were in the same priority band and had longer waiting time than, the successful applicant.

The applicant(s) must be informed of any decision concerning their application, in writing and giving the reasons for the action taken. Applicants or their representatives should in all cases be encouraged to make oral as well as written representations; this may be undertaken in person at the Neighbourhood Office or to an Officer visiting their home.

If the applicant(s) wish to exercise their right of review they must do so by providing reasons as to why s/he disagrees with the decision in writing to the Authority.

The appeal must be submitted within 28 days of the applicant receiving the decision letter concerning their application.

1.8 Housing Options

In order to ensure households who may no longer qualify for social housing in Rotherham, either because they have not lived in the area long enough, or because they cannot demonstrate that they qualify for other reasons, we operate a housing options approach alongside the housing register. This will include help to access alternative housing in the private sector.

The Allocation Policy aims to work closely with applicants in providing information on all housing options with a focus on meeting the individual needs of applicants.

We will promote a wide range of housing options and will work closely with applicants. Advice will be based on comparing the applicant's housing needs **and** preferences, aspirations financial resources with the range of housing options available to the applicant.

The aim of will be to:

- provide information on all housing options with a focus on meeting the needs and aspirations of individual applicants
- improve the quality of information, advice and support available to help applicants in housing need find suitable and affordable housing
- agree with the applicant on realistic achievability of their preferred housing option
- provide a framework, timetable and plan for applicants wishing to live independently, giving access to supported housing or moving from supported accommodation to more independent living
- agree a number of action points for the applicant to follow to take more control of their housing situation
- any necessary referrals can be made to appropriate support agencies

The range of housing options that will be explored are:

HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS (RSL) - As well as Council housing, there are other social landlords with rented properties in Rotherham. RSL's are "not for profit" organisations that have different types of property to rent, which includes homes for young people, families and older people.

Most of the RSLs are working together with the "Key Choices" scheme to provide a wider selection of properties for rent. Individual property adverts will identify who the landlord is, and you need only apply to the Council. This means that only one waiting list application form has to be completed and will be considered by the Council and all the Housing Associations who are part of this scheme. Applicants can make a request for an advertised housing association property.

Before making an offer of a tenancy, the housing association will check whether the applicant meets its own rehousing rules.

There is a list of all housing associations which have homes in the Rotherham area available at the Key Choices Property Shop and all Neighbourhood Offices.

PRIVATE RENTING - Private rented properties that are advertised through the "Key Choices" will be expected to comply with a range of standards, covering issues such as gas, electric and fire safety and general maintenance.

PRIVATE RENTED - BOND SCHEME - Robond is an agency that runs a bond scheme to help people to access private rented properties when they do not have enough money for a rent deposit. The Neighbourhood Office or the Housing Choices team can give further information and make referrals.

PRIVATE RENTED – RENT GUARANTEE SCHEME – Rotherham Credit Union offers a savings and loan service for customers with low incomes to enable them to borrow the rent in advance and repay at an agreed affordable repayment rate.

HOMESWAPPER MUTUAL EXCHANGE - provides an online mutual exchange database, with an online self -service function that enables customers who are already tenants the facility to transfer both locally and nationwide. Homewapper can be found at www.homeswapper.co.uk

Both secure council and housing association tenants in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, who occupy permanent accommodation, have a legal right to exchange their tenancies under Section 92 of the Housing Act 1985.

Before a mutual exchange can take place both exchange partners must get their own landlord's permission. The landlord has 42 days to notify the tenant in writing if they agree to the exchange taking place. An exchange can only be refused on one of the following specified schedule grounds, which are set out in Schedule 3 of the Housing act 1985.

SHARED OWNERSHIP – Is a form of home ownership designed for people who choose to buy a home but cannot afford to make the full mortgage payments. It is designed to give applicants the chance to own their own home in stages. Shared

ownership is where the applicant can buy a share of a property, paying a mortgage on that share and rent on the remaining share. The initial share is normally between 25% and 75%. The applicant must be made aware that in addition to making rent and mortgage payments; the applicant is responsible for most of the normal costs of home ownership.

HOME BUY –The Government’s Homebuy agent for West and South Yorkshire is a one stop shop for information and applications for low cost home ownership schemes across the area. The Homebuy agent provides information on different schemes:

FIRST BUY – this is a government backed scheme that aims to help certain groups of people who cannot afford to buy a home on the open market without assistance. FirstBuy works through a joint loan of 20% from the Government and the builder, which means that eligible purchasers only need put down a 5% deposit and obtain a 75% loan-to-value mortgage. The loan is repayable at the end of the 25 year mortgage term or when the property is sold. To be eligible, purchasers must be first time buyers and the total household earning should be less than £60,000.

NEW BUILD HOME BUY – New build flats and houses are sold with the Government’s backing on shared ownership, leasehold basis. The minimum share a customer can buy is 25% and the maximum is 75%, although the initial share is determined by the landlord. The rest of the share belongs to the landlord. Customers arrange a mortgage for the share they want to buy and will have to pay rent to the landlord on the share that they don’t own. The customer has the option of increasing their share until they own 100 per cent of the property. This is known as stair casing.

HELP TO BUY MORTGAGE SCHEME – a Government backed mortgage scheme which helps borrowers to buy a home with just a 5 per cent deposit

THE “RIGHT TO BUY” – Council tenants have the “Right to Buy” and RSL tenants have the Right to Acquire, which means that they may be able to buy their home at a discount. There are rules about who can do this. The Council’s or the RSL will be able to advise which people qualify to purchase their home under the Right to Buy or Right to Acquire regulations.

HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE OR HOUSEHOLDS WITH AN ASSESSED NEED FOR GROUND FLOOR ACCOMMODATION.

The properties are individual self-contained bungalows or flats that have 1 or 2 bedrooms. They have varying levels of adaptations some have level access showers, and are ramped for wheelchairs users.

Generally bungalows are available for people over the age of 50 with an illness or physical disability who would benefit generally from ground floor and level access accommodation. The Council's Rothercare service is available for people living in a bungalow this is our community alarm service that provides a 24 hour response, 365 days per year. It is an alarm service provided by Rotherham MBC to help people live safely in their own homes. This service is for anyone living in Rotherham either in private, rented or owner-occupied accommodation. It is available to anyone regardless of their age or personal circumstances who feels they may be vulnerable. There is a separate charge for these services, with Rother Care the tenant must also

have a telephone landline installed. Tenants are individually assessed for a Health and Well Being visit which is Free of Charge.

Where Rothercare is already installed the provision of Rothercare remains a condition of the tenancy and associated charges must be paid by the current and tenant. The properties remain exempt for the Right to Buy. New tenants of these properties with Rothercare also require the installation of a telephone land line. (Cabinet Member Minute 45 of 6th September 2010.) This amendment reflected the recent change to GSM dialler policy approved by the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care on 12th July, 2010, Minute No. H12 refers

EXTRA CARE HOUSING – Offers a new way of helping individuals over the age of 55 to live independently and gives the security and privacy of a home with a range of facilities on the premises.

REMAINING IN YOUR OWN HOME – Sometimes the best course of action is for customers to stay living where they are, rather than look for a new home. The Neighbourhood Champion can provide advice or signpost to another agency depending on the reason for moving, but there are a number of services which may be able to help with:

- Facing eviction or in arrears
- Experiencing Domestic Violence
- Requiring aids and adaptations
- The private rented home needs repairs
- Family breakdown - Family Mediation Services
- Help for Home Owners with Grants

2. The Housing Register - Who will qualify to go on the Housing Register?

2. 1 People subject to immigration control do not qualify for public sector housing. The rights of persons from abroad to social housing is decided by the Government and the rules may change from time to time.

To qualify for housing assistance, an applicant must be eligible for housing allocation.

The Housing Act 1996 defines the groups of people who are not eligible for assistance. These are:

- 'persons subject to immigration control' – These people are defined by the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, unless they fall within one of the classes of exceptions listed in the Homelessness Regulations
- anyone who is excluded from entitlement to housing benefit by s.115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- other 'persons from abroad' where the Secretary of State has made regulations that they are not eligible for assistance

These rules imply that if someone is subject to immigration control then they are not eligible for housing allocation, unless they meet the criteria for one of the specified

classes of persons who are re-included back into eligibility by regulations made under the Housing Act 1996. (See Housing Allocation Procedure guide for more details.)

2.2 Rotherham operates an Allocation Scheme with a Local Connection Criteria. All applicants over the age of 16 seeking accommodation through Key Choices Letting Scheme must provide evidence that they have a local connection to Rotherham for a minimum of 3 years up to and including the date of application.

A person has a local connection where:

- They have lived for the last 3 years in Rotherham through their own choice.
- They are currently employed in Rotherham and have been for the last 3 years
- They have direct family who live in Rotherham and they have done so for the last three years. Direct family members include spouses, civil partners, parents, sons, daughters, brother and sisters.

This does not include residence where they have been rehoused in temporary accommodation in Rotherham by another Local Authority in resident in a bail hostel or other such accommodation, detained in the district under the Mental Health Act, receiving specialist hospital treatment, in occupation of a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan which is not placed on a residential site, in occupation of a holiday letting this includes a permanent building, hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation for the purposes of a holiday

Applicants exempt from the Local Connection Criteria are:

- Members of the Armed Forces and former personnel where the application is made within 5 years of discharge
- Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving service family accommodation following the death of their spouse/partner
- Relationship breakdown and divorcees of Members of the Armed Forces at the time of application
- Serving or former members of the Armed Forces who need to move in urgent circumstances because of serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service irrespective of when the was.
- Homeless applicants accepted as owing a duty as defined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996
- Applicants considered via the Witness Protection Scheme as agreed by the Housing Register and Advice Manager

2.3 Applicants who will not qualify to go on the housing register

All housing applications will be treated on an individual basis, and therefore considered on their individual circumstances. The following applicants will not qualify to go on the housing register

- Applications with no local connection to Rotherham (see section 2.2 and exemptions)

- Applications that have been cancelled will not qualify to re-join the Housing register for 24 months. (See Section 3.6 Cancelled applications)
- Applicants who own their property anywhere in the world, which is adequate for their needs (including medical need) and can afford to purchase an alternative property on the open market. Owners includes properties which have secured loans, It also includes joint ownership when the applicant wishes to move with a family member who is the other owner.
- People who submit a Right to Buy application for the property they wish to transfer from (note that any live housing register application will be cancelled following submission of a Right to Buy application)
- Applicants with savings over £16,000 (with joint applicants both individual savings would be taken into account)
- Council and Housing Association tenants with breaches in their tenancy conditions that in the opinion of the Council, affects the applicants suitability to be a tenant.
- Council and Housing Association tenants who have breached their terms of their tenancy agreement and a Notice to Seek Possession or Suspended Possession Order have been issued and are still current.
- Applicants who have previously been evicted from a Council or Housing Association secure tenancy in the last 5 years due to breaches of their tenancy conditions

Unacceptable behaviour is defined which includes:

- (i) Owing serious rent arrears over £800.
- (ii) Failing to comply with a current or past tenancy agreement with a Council, housing association or private landlord which in the Council's opinion affects the applicant's suitability to be a tenant.
- (iii) Conviction for illegal or immoral purpose during the last 2 years.
- (iv) Causing nuisance and annoyance to neighbours or visitors during the past 2 years.
- (v) Committing certain criminal offences in or near the home and still posing a threat to neighbours or the community within the last 2 years
- (vi) Being violent towards a partner or members of the family within the last 2 years.
- (vii) Allowing the condition of the property to deteriorate.
- (viii) Allowing any furniture provided by the landlord to deteriorate due to ill treatment.
- (ix) Obtaining a tenancy by deception, for example, by giving untrue information.
- (x) Paying money to illegally obtain a tenancy.
- (xi) Having lost accommodation provided in connection with employment due to conduct making it inappropriate for the person to reside there.

In determining whether in the Council's opinion an applicant qualifies to join the register due to their behaviour, the Council will consider the following:

- Has the applicant any mental health issues that need to be taken into account.
- In the Councils' opinion would the unacceptable behaviour affect their suitability to be a tenant?

- At the time of the application, is the applicant still unsuitable to be a tenant by reason of that behaviour, or the behaviour of a member of his household?

Where an applicant does not qualify to join the Council's Housing Register scheme they will be entitled to re-apply if s/he considers that the local authority should no longer treat them as ineligible. For example see below rent qualification, an applicant has been determined that they don't qualify due to serious current or former rent arrears of over £800 they may reapply when they have cleared the arrears in full or kept to a repayment arrangement which reduces the debt by at least 25%.

2.5. The Rent Policy regarding qualification for Allocations

This section of the policy applies to applicants with cumulative outstanding debt to the Council, Housing Associations or Private Landlords that are based in Rotherham. Outstanding debt would include rechargeable repairs/ damages, rent in advance loans, furnished or district heating charges, and money owed to Key Choices Property Management.

Consideration will be given in respect households in Priority Need and vulnerable customers, who often lead quite chaotic lifestyles and have accumulated debt often through no fault of their own.

A tenant is liable to pay rent to the Council. If the tenant is claiming housing benefit it is the tenant's responsibility to provide full and correct information to the Housing Benefit Section and also inform the Housing Department how the claim is progressing.

- Applicants in all groups will not qualify to join the housing register if their debt exceeds £800 (see above section 2.3)
- All applicants with debt less than £800 in all groups will be allowed to join the register but will be placed in suspension. The application will remain placed in suspension until the arrears have reduced by 25%. It will be the responsibility of the applicant to inform the Council when the debt has reached the eligible level. The agreed 25% will be calculated from the highest amount of debt to the specified amount required at this point they would be taken out of suspension and then will be allowed to bid and be made an offer. Eg The highest level of accumulated debt 2 years ago was £400, the household must have reduced this debt by at least 25% (£100) and they will then become eligible to bid for properties and for an offer of Council housing when the arrears have reduced to at least £300.
- Those applications that are placed in suspension will remain until the applicant has informed us that they have either:
 - cleared the account
 - reduced the debt by at least 25% to an agreed amount

Safeguarding vulnerable applicants with debt. Whilst seeking to suspend tenants with outstanding debts owed to the Council, it is also important to provide appropriate safe guards for vulnerable applicants

All new applications are verified at the point of registration and prior to an offer of accommodation. The verification process involves undertaking checks on various databases which will confirm if the applicant has any outstanding debt. Where there are debts of any amount and the customer hasn't indicated on their application form that they are in urgent priority housing need; the customer should be contacted to reconfirm their personal circumstances. If there are no vulnerability issues or urgent housing needs identified following contact the applicant would be advised in writing that their application does not qualify and will be either excluded or suspended from the housing register until they inform us that their agreement has been met. The applicant would also be encouraged to get back in touch if their circumstances change.

All prospective tenants will undergo an affordability check as part of the offer process and the Council will have the "Right Not to Offer" a property to customers who cannot afford to take on the tenancy.

All applicants will be encouraged to open a basic bank account, and set up a direct debit or standing order form to pay their rent before a tenancy is offered

Delegated Powers will be given to the Housing Options Manager, who will consider urgent cases outside of the Housing Assessment Panel. The delegated powers decision will be made in consultation with the Housing Register and Advice Manager and Head of Housing Income and would have discretion and delegated powers to overrule the qualification rent policy.

The applicant would also be encouraged to get back in touch if their circumstances change. This would be reinforced in a paragraph included in the decision letter, which would also advise the applicant of their Right to Review the decision on qualification.

2.6 Local Lettings Policies

In some instances there maybe a requirement to undertake Local Lettings or "sensitive lettings" in particular areas. Where this applies a Local Letting Policy will be adopted and this will be clearly set out in the Property advertisement, which will be accompanied by an explanation of the Local Letting Policy criteria for that property. The Local letting Policies are published on the internet or a hard copy is available on request.

Section 167 (2E) of the 1996 Housing Act enables authorities to allocate particular accommodation to people of a particular description, whether or not they fall within a reasonable preference category. This is the statutory basis for "Local lettings policies". Local Lettings Policies maybe used to achieve a wide variety of housing management and other housing policy objectives. So for example, local lettings policies may be used to lower or increase the proportion of older children/young adults on an estate; or to deal with concentration of deprivation by setting aside a proportion of vacancies for applicants who are in employment.

The local lettings policy will apply to a limited part of the local authority's stock, and will be closely monitored to ensure that it does not produce outcomes which are discriminatory, or conflict with the Authority's ability to provide for housing need. If a household in the shortlist does not meet the local lettings policy criteria, the applicant must be contacted to verify that the evidence is correct and up to date. Where a local lettings policy is applied a checklist (appendix 2a) must be completed to justify why an offer of accommodation has not been made.

Local Letting Policies will be applied in the following circumstances:

Where there is Housing Management Difficulties

Certain streets or blocks of flats may have experienced management problems in the past. Such management problems can include high vacancy rates, low demand and high instances of anti social behaviour. Large amounts of money can be spent on repairing fixtures and fittings that are damaged due to neglect or acts of vandalism. Further repair costs can also be incurred whilst properties are standing empty waiting for new tenants to be found.

We will take into account previous letting trends and demand and also whether there is reported evidence of anti social behaviour, from existing tenants and their visitors within the immediate locality (same block or street).

All Aged persons and Sheltered bungalow complexes will exclude applicants with management difficulties (Cabinet Member Report 19th April 2010. Minute No. 167)

2.7 The Council reserves the Right Not to Offer a Property

In some cases the history of the applicant is not known until the applicant has made a bid and may appear at the top of the shortlist and be due to be made an offer. Where this will apply will include, but not be restricted to, if the applicant:

- Requests an area where they may be unable to sustain a tenancy from lack of support. For example in the case of an applicant with a medical priority on support grounds and the property requested is away from the support network.
- Requests a property that is too small for their family circumstances and this would lead to an unacceptable overcrowding or cramped living conditions of the property including non- statutory overcrowding as per the Allocation Policy.
- Has specific needs for disability adaptations and the property does not meet these requirements
- Where there is no local letting policy and the applicant or members of the household has been involved in anti - social or criminal behaviour in the last twelve months.
- Where there is no local letting policy and the applicants has breached a condition of their current tenancy. e.g. rent arrears
- Where the applicant cannot afford to take on the tenancy

Individual cases that are being considered by Housing Assessment Panel for Band One status will also take the above criteria into account when making their decision.

Where the Council has reserved the right not to offer a property the applicant will be advised in writing of the reasons for this decision.

2.8 If you qualify to go on the Housing Register, how do I apply and make requests?

There are several ways to complete an application form:

- At any Customer Service Centre
- At the Key Choices Property Shop
- By electronic registration at www.keychoices.co.uk
- By telephone

If you are eligible and qualify to go on the housing register your application will be placed in one of the following bands:

- Band One (previously called priority plus)
- Band Two (previously called Priority)
- Band Three (previously called General Plus and General)
- Transfer Band (new band)

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough operates a Choice - Based Letting Scheme; all empty Council homes that are available for letting are advertised weekly. Applicants can view advertisements in a range of locations:

- On the internet at www.keychoices.co.uk
- On a mobile application on a smart phone
- On a self -service kiosks at any Customer Service Centre
- On a self - service kiosks at the Key Choices Property Shop

The advertisements will be published from Tuesday at 12.01am to the following Monday at 12pm (midnight.)

Applicants can make a maximum of 3 requests per week at a range of outlets:

- By telephone to (01709) 336040
- In person at any Customer Service Centre, or at the Key Choices Property Shop
- Via an online request

All properties will be offered to the Priority One Band ahead of the other Bands. Properties will be advertised to the following quota 50% to Band Two and 40% to Band Three and 10% to Transfers.

Where there is no demand from the Band One or for the advertised Band then the properties will be offered as follows:

- Advertised to Band Two, and no demand then the Band Three Band will be considered next and if still no demand then the Transfer group will be next.
- Advertised to Band Three, and no demand then Band Two will be considered, and if still no demand then Transfers will be considered next.
- Advertised to the Transfer Band, and no demand then the Band Two and then Band Three will be considered next

2.9 Direct Homes - If a property has been advertised and no interest has been made from any suitable applicants, then this property will be advertised as a **Direct Home** and offered daily to the suitable/eligible applicant in the shortlist. The shortlist will be considered at the end of each day and will be offered in date turn order to Band One, then Band Two, then Band Three and then to a Transfer application. The offer won't be made on a first come first served basis.

Applicants who accept a tenancy including a Direct Home will have their application cancelled.

3. How properties are allocated.

3.1 Affordability - Applicants should consider affordability prior to making a request. This is important in light of the measure in the Welfare Reform Act 2012 which will reduce Housing Benefit entitlement for working age social sector tenants who under-occupy their property.

Affordability Assessments - as part of the offer process during the "It's Your Move interview" all new tenants will undergo a detailed affordability assessment to determine their ability to sustain a Council tenancy. This will take account of under occupancy fees and additional charges such as furnished packages and district heating. If there is a risk about the applicant's ability to pay the rent a referral will be made to Tenancy Support or Money Advice to ensure the tenant has the necessary budgetary management skills to maintain the tenancy from the onset. This process will reduce the propensity for arrears to accrue at the start of each tenancy

As part of the offer process the Council will have the "Right Not to Offer" a property to customers who cannot afford to take on the tenancy.

All new tenants will be encouraged to open a basic bank account, and set up a direct debit or standing order form to pay their rent

3.2 Declarations and Verification of Identity

Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that the Council reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action, including possession proceedings, against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. We will check if an applicant, or anyone in the household, is already registered. Only one application at any one time is allowed.

Before a property is offered for every applicant on the application form we must see at least two forms of proof of identity, and proof of current address. The applicant(s) sole or joint will be asked to provide photographic proof of identity. This will be at the

application stage and prior to offer of accommodation. A photograph will be taken of the tenant where there is no other photo ID is available.

Applicant checks will be carried out at the time of application and offer stage on all members of the household applying to be re-housed. These checks will be made to confirm:

- Identity e.g. passport, Identity Card (issued to certain Foreign Nationals), photo-driving licence, birth certificate or written confirmation from a professional person or support agency
- Public Sector landlord references (where the applicant has previously held a public sector tenancy)
- Police checks usually where applicants have indicated an “unspent” conviction

3.3 Offers

Applicants who have made requests, must inform the Council if they are unavailable. Eg going on holiday or into hospital. If the applicant is contacted by the Council and there is no response, a contact letter is sent giving the applicant 24 hours to make contact (during working time). If there is no response in the specified time period the application will be bypassed.

Where applicants have told us that they are on holiday or in hospital, the property will be held for no longer than 7 days.

If an applicant is short-listed for more than one property in the same week, they will be asked which property they prefer. If the keys are available in the same week the applicant can view all of these. All viewings will be classed as offers. The application will be cancelled following 2 refusals.

If an applicant has been short-listed for more than one property and the keys are not available then the applicant will be asked to choose which property they wish to view. The property that they accept will be classed as a firm offer and accepted.

Careful consideration has to be made in deciding whether a property should be classed as a withdrawal or refusal. If there are no genuine reasons for a refusal, such as: the garden is too large, or there is no off road parking, then this will be classed as a refusal as the information should have been attained from the advert.

3.4 Bedroom requirements

The Council will ensure that applicants are considered for the most appropriate type of property. The number of bedrooms required is assessed through the number of people to be re housed and the ages and gender of children.

Family houses will be allocated to couples that are either married, civil partners or cohabiting partners (2 bedroom only) and families with children **under the age of 18** will be eligible for houses..

The Allocation Policy considers that a woman who is pregnant (confirmation needed 21-24 weeks) would be considered as requiring a bedroom for the unborn child.

However the Welfare Reform will not consider awarding Housing Benefit in respect of the number of bedrooms until the child is born

In the Allocation Policy if she already has a child(ren), the unborn baby will be treated as if it were the same sex as one of the existing child(ren). A MATB1 form will be required as proof of pregnancy for the unborn child.

Single people who are not Council tenants and are pregnant and have provided proof at 21 – 24 weeks with a MATB 1 will be eligible for family accommodation before the child is born, as long as they are eligible on their date of application.

Single people who are Council tenants living in a flat will be eligible for family accommodation when their child is born.

If an applicant gives up a Council or Housing Association tenancy or is evicted for rent arrears, anti- social behaviour or other reasons the application will be cancelled from when their tenancy ended.

In accordance with Communities and Local Government (CLG) Code of Guidance the Allocation system must ensure that reasonable preference and flexibility is given to families that are separated who have carers, shared access, equal or staying access. Consideration can be given to families wishing to adopt or foster children and more bedrooms are needed to meet the adoption criteria. In cases of adoption or fostering a letter of supporting evidence is required from Children and Young People's Services.

Applicants may be considered for another bedroom in excess of their current assessed needs if they have shared access where a parent has the child up to the age of 18, to stay at least three nights per week. This will depend on the demand for properties in that particular area. It will not always be feasible to allow extra bedrooms for staying overnight or shared access. It is preferable that proof of access must be given e.g. solicitor's letter, court papers. A letter from the other parent maybe considered as proof. If proof is provided this will be acknowledged by letter which will contain the following statement:

"I am obliged to inform you that it is a criminal offence for an applicant of Council housing to provide false information regarding their circumstances, and it could result in the application being cancelled. If a tenancy is granted and it later transpires that it was granted on the basis of false information provided by the tenant, then the Council would have the right to issue Court proceedings to seek a possession order to end the tenancy."

If an extra bedroom is needed to give or receive care, supporting evidence would be needed e.g. reports from health care, carers or attendance allowance. A distinction should be made between a customer requiring 24 hour, seven days a week sleep over care, from a customer who only requires now and again sleep over care.

The Council will not offer a property if it will lead to a household being overcrowded.

Customers should consider the implications of the lettings criteria and a requirement upon them to provide evidence of compliance as a condition of an offer of a tenancy.

Policy regarding occupancy levels

What properties can I apply for											
	Bedsit	1 Bed Flat	2 Bed Flat	3 Bed Flat	2 Bed Maisonette	3 Bed Maisonette	1 Bed House	2 Bed House	3 Bed House	4 Bed House	Bungalows
Single Person	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	See key below	No	No	Assessment or age limit applies
2 Individual adults	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Assessment or age limit applies
3 individual adults	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Assessment or age limit applies
Single person with overnight access to children	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	See key below	No	No	Assessment or age limit applies
Couple	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Assessment or age limit applies
Household with 1 child or (single mums expecting their first child on production of a MATB1)	No	No	See key below	See key below	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Assessment or age limit applies
Household with 2 children / dependents	No	No	See key below	See key below	See key below	Yes	No	See key below	Yes	No	Assessment or age limit applies
Household with 3 children / dependents	No	No	No	See key below	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Assessment or age limit applies
Household with 4 or more children / dependents	No	No	No	See key below	No	See key below	No	No	See key below	Yes	Assessment or age limit applies
Colour Code to Rules											
Yellow	Ground floor flats only if child is under 12 years old										
Lilac	* Ground floor flats only if child is under 12 years old ** Children must be the same sex if they are over 8 years old and are to share a bedroom										
Blue	Council tenants under occupying 4 bedroom houses can apply for two bedroom houses										
Green	You can apply for this type of property										
Red	You cannot apply for this type of property										

NOTE THAT: AFFORDABILITY CHECKS WILL BE MADE BEFORE A PROPERTY IS OFFERED, IF THE OUTCOME IS THAT THE APPLICANT CANNOT AFFORD TO TAKE ON THE TENANCY THE COUNCIL HAS A RIGHT NOT TO OFFER THAT PROPERTY

3.5 The Banding on the Housing Register

In order to identify those in the most housing need in a fair, objective and sympathetic way we will use the information from the housing application and place in a band that best reflects the applicant's current circumstances.

Where a single applicant informs us of a change in circumstances, we will reassess his or her housing need and consider whether it is necessary to place the applicant in a different band or family category. The application will be changed from the date the customer advises of the change of circumstances. For example if a single applicant contacts the office on 1/1/2008 and advises of a birth of a child, which was on 2/2/1999 the change will be implemented from 1/1/2008 the date the customer approaches the service, not from the date of birth of the child.

Having determined the applicant's category of housing need, applicants will be placed on the Housing Register in one of the four bands from the date of assessment or from the date of receipt of the application and will be considered for rehousing in the date of application order.

The applicant will retain their banding application date throughout the rehousing waiting period. *The only time a change will be applied is if the applicant has a change of circumstances and moves bands or gives up a Council or Housing Association tenancy or is evicted for rent arrears or anti social behaviour, in these circumstances the application will be cancelled from the date their tenancy ended.

Single applicants who subsequently add a joint applicant to their housing application will retain their application date,.

In all other circumstances where the household accepts an offer of accommodation their application will be cancelled, this also includes mutual exchanges.

3.6 Cancelling applications

Applications will be cancelled in the following circumstances:

- transfer applicants on the housing register who then submit a Right to Buy application for the property they are transferring from
- is granted a tenancy by the Council or Housing Association
 - has voluntarily terminated their secure tenancy. (Note that: in exceptional circumstances where tenants have given up their tenancy eg due to having to move out of their property for a period of time, possibly due to needing care or support needs and terminates to avoid accruing arrears, their application will be cancelled on receipt of the termination but they will be able to reapply when their circumstances change
 - has been evicted from a Council or Housing Association tenancy
 - has abandoned their Council or Housing Association home
 - does not reply to a waiting list review letter within 4 weeks
 - has more than one application registered
 - has been nominated to a Shared Ownership Scheme
 - has succeeded or been assigned a Council Tenancy
 - has been granted a new secure tenancy when a successor dies
 - where a joint tenancy is granted their name will be taken off the Housing Register
 - On accepting and signing a Mutual Exchange
 - Has applied and accepted major adaptation work that meets their long-term needs
 - Has refused two suitable offers of Council or Housing Association accommodation
 - Has told us to do so

Once an application is cancelled for any of the above reasons the applicant will not be allowed to re-join the Housing register for 24 months

3.7 Homeless Households

Where a household presents themselves as homeless or are threatened with homelessness, the local authority will offer assistance to prevent homelessness. Where homelessness cannot be prevented, the local authority will make a homelessness assessment.

A statutory main homelessness duty (s193) is owed where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, homeless unintentionally, priority need or vulnerable and has a local connection. If the applicant qualifies to join the Housing Register, and if a homelessness duty is owed the applicant will be placed in Band 2.

Other homeless applicants who are owed a duty under s195 Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 are still entitled to appropriate assistance. Eg Homeless households not in priority need. If the applicant qualifies to join the housing register applicants these applicants will be placed in Band 3 of the Housing Register and will also have access to advice about securing alternative housing.

If an applicant is assessed under s190 Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 as intentionally homeless or if they satisfy the criteria for 'unacceptable behaviour' then the applicant will be deemed disqualified from the housing register. (see 'unacceptable behaviour') Applicants who are intentionally homeless will be offered advice and assistance to access private rented housing or Housing Association accommodation.

The revision of the code of guidance on the allocation of accommodation published in November 2002, states: "By virtue of s.167 (2B) and (2C) an allocation scheme may provide that no preference is given to an applicant where the housing authority is satisfied that he, or a member of his household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him unsuitable to be a tenant of the housing authority; and the housing authority is satisfied that, in the circumstances at the time the case is considered, he deserves not to be treated as a person who should be given reasonable preference." This will apply in Rotherham's Allocation Scheme.

It is recognised that social rented housing is not the only tenure available to accommodate statutorily homeless households and where appropriate they will be supported to secure a private tenancy.

Households who have been assessed as statutory homeless are entitled to 1 offer on the Housing Register in Band 2 or a Private Rented Sector Offer, and are given time limits to their banding status and are listed on table 4.1. The homelessness duty will be discharged following acceptance or refusal of a suitable offer.

Homelessness households who have been assessed as statutory homeless who refuse a suitable offer of either Council, RSL or Private Rented Sector Offer will be moved to Band 3. Once the applicant refuses 2 offers in total their Housing register application is cancelled.

Homeless households who have been accepted as homeless for more than 6 months and who have been actively bidding will be considered by Housing assessment Panel to move to Band 1 (table 4.1) and will subsequently be made 1 suitable offer.

If the household has been actively bidding and have had no previous offers then subsequently refuse a successful bid in Band 1 their homelessness duty

will end and they will move to the Band 3 and be entitled to 1 final offer on the Housing Register.

4. The tables below show descriptions of Bands:

4.1 Band One – High Need (previously known as Priority Plus) – all Vacant Council properties will be offered first to Band One .

Housing Assessment Panel will consider placing applications in one of four Bands but this will only be applied where the applicant is actively bidding. The award must be agreed by members of the Housing Assessment Panel, or Multi agency risk panel with at least 2 senior officers of the Council, one of which must be either the Housing Options Manager, Housing Register and Advice Manager or Coordinator or Homelessness Manager or Coordinator. In extreme urgent situations the award status can be considered by the Housing Options Manager under delegated powers.

Band One Award - The applicant will be entitled to choose up to 5 areas and be entitled to 1 offer of accommodation. When determining suitable areas the Housing Assessment Panel will consider the property household size, the type and size of property will be like for like, and subsequent stock, the turnover of a locality, the current demand, any support that maybe required and education of employment needs. The household will be advised by letter of the Housing Assessment Panel decision, including details of the property type and area they can bid for. Offers of accommodation will be dependent on confirmation that Care and Support Services are provided and funded where necessary.

In certain circumstances properties may not necessary be allocated in date order but be considered against pressing need and waiting time, such as adaptations within a property, associated risks and where the assessment recommends specific streets, or where a Band Two application has been waiting for a long period due to being restricted to certain areas due to support needs. For example a property is advertised in August 2013 and a Band One applicant is at the top of the shortlist dated 24/7/2013 but the applicant in Band Two has a date of 19/8/2010 and the property meets their needs due to being close to support needs.

With the exception of downsizing (due to financial difficulties), one offer of a property is allowed in Band One, if the offer is refused the applicant will lose their Band One status and their housing application will be moved to Band 3, where 1 remaining offer will be made. If the applicant has already had 2 offers the application will be cancelled following 2 refusals. Where a property is accepted the application will be cancelled. Time limits of 28 days is given to all applicants in the Band 1 If the applicant has not made a request and properties, which meet the household size and area of choice, have been available, the Band 1 status will be cancelled and the application moved to Band 3

BAND ONE	Status awarded by:	Details	Conditions
<p>Leaving Her Majesties Armed Forces, or is a family member who has resided with the Service Personal and has no accommodation to return to. (As per Allocation of Housing Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/1869)</p>	<p>Housing Assessment Panel or under Delegated Powers. Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armed Forces personal and their family who were serving in the regular forces at any time in the five years preceding their application for an allocation of social housing. • Applies to bereaved spouses or civil partners or other family members where they will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation 	<p>One Offer Do Not apply Local Connection rules</p> <p>Former members of the forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability should be assessed by the Medical Assessment team</p> <p>Time limited to 28 days, if no bids are made within 28 days or 1 offer is refused the application will move to band 3. If the applicant has already had 2 offers in total and these have been refused the application will be cancelled.</p>
<p>Service Sector leaving employment and have no accommodation</p>	<p>Housing Assessment Panel or under Delegated Powers Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel</p>	<p>1. Leaving employment where there has been a provision of Private Sector tied accommodation or Council tied accommodation and have no accommodation to return to This will only apply if conditions of employment have been met. Those applicants who have been dismissed will not be eligible.</p>	<p>One Offer</p> <p>Time limited to 28 days, if no bids are made within 28 days or 1 offer is refused the application will move to band 3. If the applicant has already had 2 offers in total and these have been refused the application will be cancelled.</p>

<p>Applicants who live in an Adapted property or Disabled Persons Unit (DPU) who wish to move once they no longer need the adaptation</p>	<p>Housing Assessment Panel or under Delegated Powers</p> <p>Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel</p>	<p>This will only include households who were allocated the property due to a medical need for an adaptation and the member of the household that needed the adaptation no longer lives there. For example; the person that needed the adaptation has died or moved out.</p>	<p>One Offer</p> <p>Not restricted to 5 areas due to limited stock of DPU</p> <p>Time limited to 28 days, if no bids are made within 28 days or 1 offer is refused the application will move to band 3. If the applicant has already had 2 offers in total and these have been refused the application will be cancelled.</p>
<p>Multiple Priority Needs.</p>	<p>Housing Assessment Panel or under Delegated Powers</p> <p>Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel</p>	<p>People in the Priority Group with at least 2 reasonable preferences. The reasonable preference groups include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there is evidence of severe medical need the assessment has been undertaken by the Assessment Team. • Assessed as Statutory Homelessness • Requiring a move from supported or temporary accommodation • Assessed as Statutory Over Crowded • Homes Subject to Repair, 	<p>One Offer</p> <p>Restricted to 5 areas</p> <p>Time limited to 28 days, if no bids are made within 28 days or 1 offer is refused the application will move to band 3. If the applicant has already had 2 offers in total and these have been refused the application will be cancelled.</p>

		<p>Renewal, Demolition, or Prohibition Order</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims of Domestic Violence • Individuals engaging and receiving a drug or alcohol treatment programme • Prolific Offenders not high risk 	
Applicants who have been awarded medical priority who are terminally ill	<p>Housing Assessment Panel or under Delegated Powers</p> <p>Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who require urgent housing because they have been diagnosed as terminally ill and life expectancy has been medically diagnosed. 	<p>One Offer</p> <p>Not restricted to 5 areas</p> <p>Time limited to 28 days, if no bids are made within 28 days or 1 offer is refused the application will move to band 3. If the applicant has already had 2 offers in total and these have been refused the application will be cancelled.</p>
Bed Blocking in hospital	<p>Housing Assessment Panel or under Delegated Powers</p> <p>Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is where the applicant is unable to return home from hospital because their property does not meet their medical needs, and where temporary accommodation would be inappropriate 	<p>One Offer</p> <p>Not restricted to 5 areas</p> <p>Time limited to 28 days, if no bids are made within 28 days or 1 offer is refused the application will move to band 3. If the applicant has already had 2 offers in total and these have been refused the application will be cancelled.</p>

<p>People subject to Multi- agency Risk Assessment Conferences MARAC meetings and are victims of Domestic Violence, or someone threatened with violence, including Adult Protection</p>	<p>Housing Assessment Panel or under Delegated Powers</p> <p>Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim of Domestic Violence who have been subject to a Multi- agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) and the where the recommendation is rehousing 	<p>One Offer</p> <p>Restricted to 5 areas</p> <p>Time limited to 28 days, if no bids are made within 28 days or 1 offer is refused the application will move to band 3. If the applicant has already had 2 offers in total and these have been refused the application will be cancelled.</p>
<p>Homes Subject to Repair, Renewal or Emergency Prohibition Order, or where demolition through regeneration schemes results in only 25% of the scheme remaining occupied</p>	<p>Housing Assessment Panel or under Delegated Powers</p> <p>Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This includes applicants in all sectors 	<p>One Offer</p> <p>Restricted to 5 areas</p> <p>Time limited to 28 days, if no bids are made within 28 days or 1 offer is refused the application will move to band 3. If the applicant has already had 2 offers in total and these have been refused the application will be cancelled.</p>
<p>Public Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High Risk Offenders subject to MAPPA - Witness protection 	<p>Housing Assessment Panel or under Delegated Powers</p> <p>Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases where the Multi Agency Public Protection recommendation is re-housing • Cases referred by police under witness protection programme 	<p>One Offer</p> <p>Restricted Areas to 5 areas as defined by MAPPA. The applicant will make requests in Key Choices and will only be offered a property following a suitability assessment by the Public Protection Unit of the police.</p>

programme			Time limited to 28 days, if no bids are made within 28 days or 1 offer is refused the application will move to band 3. If the applicant has already had 2 offers in total and these have been refused the application will be cancelled.
Housing Management Lettings, and exceptional circumstances detailed in Section 5, such as decants due to fire or floods, customers experiencing violence and need to move for safety	Housing Assessment Panel or under Delegated Powers Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See decant procedure • Housing Assessment panel report required 	One Offer Not restricted to 5 areas Time limited to 28 days, if no bids are made within 28 days or 1 offer is refused the application will move to band 3. If the applicant has already had 2 offers in total and these have been refused the application will be cancelled.
Households that are subject to adult or child safeguarding issues	Housing Assessment Panel or under Delegated Powers Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This includes cases where social services are involved, and where re-housing is recommended so that the family can be safe or live together in suitable accommodation. This may include care proceeding where suitable accommodation is 	One Offer Restricted to 5 areas Time limited to 28 days, if no bids are made within 28 days or 1 offer is refused the application will move to band 3. If the applicant has already had 2 offers in total and these have been refused the application will be cancelled.

		required in order to prevent a child being placed in Local Authority Care	
Households that are prospective foster cares or adopters that require suitable accommodation	Housing Assessment Panel or under Delegated Powers Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation required from CYPS 	<p>One Offer</p> <p>Restricted to 5 areas</p> <p>Time limited to 28 days, if no bids are made within 28 days or 1 offer is refused the application will move to band 3. If the applicant has already had 2 offers in total and these have been refused the application will be cancelled.</p>
Ex offenders who wish to voluntary terminate their Council tenancy on sentencing as their prison sentence is more than 6 months. Housing Assessment Panel will consider the voluntary termination and determine the level of priority that will be awarded one	Housing Assessment Panel or under Delegated Powers Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel	If the Housing Assessment Panel award Band 1 status, the application will be re-dated to the date of the panel meeting. The applicant will be encouraged to make requests 1 month prior to their release from prison	<p>One Offer</p> <p>Restricted to 5 areas</p> <p>Time limited to 28 days, if no bids are made within 28 days or 1 offer is refused the application will move to band 3. If the applicant has already had 2 offers in total and these have been refused the application will be cancelled.</p> <p>Where offenders have voluntary terminated their tenancy, any live application will be cancelled. The person will be able to reapply to go on the housing register on release from</p>

months prior to being released.			prison
Households living in temporary accommodation, who are not actively bidding without any apparent good reason within a 28 days period or homeless households who have lived in temporary/supporte d accommodation for more than 6 months and are ready to live independently	Housing Assessment Panel or under Delegated Powers Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel	Suitability as defined in Section 17.1 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance and Section 193 (5) (6C) and (7) of Housing Act 1996 as amended by Homelessness Act 2002. The offer will which will either be a Private Rented Sector Offer, Council or Housing Association tenancy will be made in writing	One Offer Households living in temporary accommodation for more than 6 months or who have not made requests will be made 1 offer of accommodation within the meaning of section 193 Housing Act 1996 and the Localism Act will be made to discharge the Council's duty to homeless persons under that section of the Act. For the purpose of this provision the phrase 'actively bidding' means submitting bids for suitable available properties with the genuine intent of securing that available property.
Households who are under occupying a family Housing association or Council home wanting to downsize to a Housing Association or Council home with	Housing Assessment Panel (HAP) or under Delegated Powers. Before HAP considers a case the following must be completed by the tenant: • Registered for a mutual exchange on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where there are occupants living in a Housing Association or Council family house and they wish to be re-housed separately to a flat or bungalow, Band 1 will be awarded to all applicants on separate applications 	One Offer - For downsizers in Band 1 status for under occupation for households living in family Social rented houses (RSL and Council) willing to move to a smaller property with fewer bedrooms. Re-dated to date of housing assessment panel Two Offers - If Band 1 is awarded by HAP to move to a home fewer less bedrooms, where council tenants financial appraisals indicate

<p>fewer bedrooms, a house, flat or a bungalow. An assessment will still be required for households with medical needs or who require a bungalow.</p>	<p>HOMESWAPPER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied for Discretionary Housing Payments • The tenant's financial means have been appraised by the Councils Money Advice Officer. • Has maintained the tenancy effectively, there are no other breaches of tenancy at the property, the tenant owes no other debts to the Council and the property is in good condition and can be re-let easily at reasonable cost • Is actively seeking work or training and have been seen and assisted by the Employment Solutions Officer (where appropriate) 		<p>they cannot afford the rent payments due to being affected by bedroom tax, and DHP has been refused a referral will be made by HAP to the Income team. The income team will consider whether the council tenant can be supported with top ups of weekly rent until they are rehoused (maximum value of £571.00 or 40 weeks rent.) If the tenant refuses 2 offers this rent top up payment will be recovered</p>
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4.2 Band Two- Medium Need (previously known as Priority Band) These applicants have been awarded Band 2 (priority) through an assessment process has having some form of priority status. Offers are made in date order in Band 2.

In certain circumstances properties may not necessary be allocated in date order but be considered against pressing need and waiting time, such as adaptations within a property, associated risks and where the assessment recommends specific streets, or where a Band Two application has been waiting for a long period due to being restricted to certain areas due to support needs. For example a property is advertised in August 2013 and a Band One applicant is at the top of the shortlist dated 24/7/2013 but the applicant in Band Two has a date of 19/8/2010 and the property meets their needs due to being close to support needs.

Applicants are entitled to 2 offers of accommodation on the Housing Register; if these are refused then the application will be cancelled. Where a property is accepted the application will be cancelled.

Band 2	Status awarded by:	Details	Comments
Homeless or Threatened with Homelessness and in Priority Need	Homelessness Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless or Threatened with Homelessness and in Priority Need • Discharge of duty can be through a suitable private rented sector offer 	1 Offer in Band 1 or 2 which is time limited to 28 days. This can be extended by the Homelessness Team if a suitable property has not become available. If the suitable offer is accepted or refused then the Homelessness duty will be discharged. If the property is refused the application will move to Band 3 with one offer of Council housing remaining
Homes Subject to Repair, Renewal, Demolition or Prohibition Order,	Housing Strategy Team, Environmental Health Cabinet Member	Homes subject to Demolition or Prohibition Orders, whose property has been approved for demolition/clearance and where major works are required to a customers property making it inhabitable.	Prohibition Orders Make requests in Key Choices- 2 offers Regeneration make requests in Key Choices - 2 offers. A Relocation Package will be offered to those affected by regeneration work

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be awarded Band 2 from the date of the Cabinet Member decision 	
Medical Needs	Assessment Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical needs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> severe and enduring mental health problems physical disability medical problems where a bungalow is required Individuals with a profound learning disability who would find it difficult to live independently. Individuals providing support, if the assessment identifies that care and support is given to the customer daily, that care given must be personal care e.g. assisting with bathing, dressing, medication etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 offers and time limited to 28 days Confirmation of the support to be obtained by Social Care Assessment (if one undertaken by Adult Services) Distance to provide care and family commitments will be taken into account The medical team have the right not to offer a property if it doesn't meet the applicants medical needs.
Households who are in low paid work who cannot afford to access or	Housing Register and Advice Officer	Dated from the date the applicant notifies the Council to advice of their circumstances.	<p>2 offers</p> <p>Affordability check to be undertaken and the Council has the right not to offer a tenancy if</p>

<p>maintain other housing options such as home ownership or private rented</p>			<p>the applicant cannot afford to take it on. To assist households who are struggling to manage private rented or homeownership due to affordability</p>
<p>Relationship Breakdown</p>	<p>Housing Register and Advice Officer</p>	<p>Dated from the date the applicant notifies us of their relationship breakdown.</p> <p>Existing applications that have been moved from the previous General group will be re-dated to the date of their first bid, or if no bids have been placed the date of the policy change (1/1/14)</p> <p>However, in some cases where there are households in housing need but have not made bids in the last 12 months, these will be considered and re-dated to when their circumstances changed. (Possibly due to the fact that some applicants may have considered making a bid but were put off because of their lengthy queue position)</p>	<p>2 offers</p> <p>Where children are involved, information should be attained that details where the children will be residing.</p> <p>Note: Where there are children under the age of 18, and both parents have an arrangement for at least 3 nights access, both applicants will be eligible for a house or a maisonette/ground floor flat.</p> <p>Note that they may be subject to bedroom tax. However if the parent is in receipt of Housing Benefit the parent who receives the Child Benefit will be entitled to bedroom tax that meets the size of the household. The other partner may only be entitled to a 1 bedroom rate.</p>

Victims of Domestic Violence not subject to a MARAC	Homelessness Team Rotherham Women's Refuge Domestic Violence Coordinator (RMBC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victim supported by Women's Refuge, or Domestic Violence Officer (SY Police) 	2 Offers
Statutorily Overcrowded	Environmental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutorily Overcrowded, and the household requires larger housing 	2 offers No time Limit due to lack of stock of 4 bedrooms.
Requiring Move on from Supported accommodation Assessed by Support Provider as ready to live Independently	Fleming Gardens Rush House Action Housing Youth Offending Supported Housing Action Housing Swallownest Court Browning Court Action for children Rotherham Mind SYHA Elliott Court Rotherham Women's Refuge Browning Court Any other supporting people funded accommodation projects in Rotherham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants ready to live independently leaving Supported accommodation, will be categorised "ready to live independently" The Support Provider will inform the Homelessness team who will categorise and date their application. The date of (Please see comment box for 16/17 year olds.) the Band 2 status date will be the same date that the applicant moved into Supported Accommodation. (this will ensure that the applicant moves quickly following assessment and will ensure that there is no 	Young people living in Supported accommodation who are ready to live Independently – the Support Provider will contact Homelessness Manager who will arrange for the individual case to be considered at the next Moving On Panel. The Support Provider will attend panel and confirm that the young person is ready to live independently, and confirm that the young person has agreed to a support plan for at least 3 months, the category of the application will then be amended to SC Make requests in Key Choices- 2 offer If the applicant has lived in Supported accommodation for more than 6 months and are ready to live Independently –the application can be consider for Band 1 status.

		blockages in supported accommodation	
Individuals engaging and receiving a Drug or Alcohol Treatment Programme for the last 6 months	PCT – DIP Homelessness officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals who have been assessed by the Drug Strategy team as having an urgent housing need and are engaging in a drug treatment programme for the last 6 months. Checks will be made prior to offer to ensure that the applicant has been engaging for last 6 months and is still receiving treatment 	<p>2 Offers</p> <p>The applicant must be on a drug treatment programme for the last 6 months and still engaging.</p> <p>It is a condition of the tenancy agreement that tenants must not sell, or possess illegal drugs or commit anti-social behaviour due to drunkenness</p>
Prolific Offenders, not a high risk to the Community	Probation Youth Offending team (YOT) Action Housing DIP Homelessness officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ex Offenders that require rehousing on release from prison 	<p>TIME LIMITED TO 6 weeks (42 DAYS) 2 Offers in the bidding process. Must be engaging with floating support services, DIP, Homelessness Officer. If the applicant is not making requests then the priority and application will be cancelled. However this can be extended by the Officer if a suitable property does not become available.</p>

4.3 Band 3 – Low Need (Previously known as General Plus and General) Households in the Band 3 will be entitled to 2 offers of accommodation. If these are refused the application will be cancelled. Where a property is accepted the application will be cancelled. If no bids have been made in the last 12 months the application will be cancelled.

Existing applications that have been moved from the previous General group will be re-dated to the date of their first bid, or if no bids have been placed the date of the policy change (1/1/14) However, in some cases where there are households in housing need but have not made bids in the last 12 months, these will be considered and re-dated to when their circumstances changed. (Possibly due to the fact that some applicants may have considered making a bid but were put off because of their lengthy queue position)

Band 3	Status awarded by	Details	Comments
Homeless applicants, not in priority need with no accommodation of their own, which are staying with family or friends on a temporary basis and have been asked to leave within 28 days.	Homelessness Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homeless applicants, not in priority need where the authority does not owe the main homelessness duty, Where the applicant has no accommodation to call their own, and are staying with family or friends on a temporary basis and have been asked to leave within 28 days. 	2 Offers. Dated to the date the applicant informs the authority of the change of circumstances
Homelessness households who refuse a suitable/affordable offer of either	Homelessness team		Homeless Households are entitled to 1 offer before the homelessness duty is discharged. Following refusal in Band 1 or 2, the application is moved to this band 3, and will have 1 remaining offer on the housing register.

Council, RSL or Private Rented Sector Offer, and the homelessness duty has ended.			Once the applicant refuses 2 offers in total their Housing Register application is cancelled. No bids in the last 12 months the application will be cancelled
Households that have been moved from Band 1	Housing Register and Advice team		These include applications that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - were time limited to 28 days in Band 1 and no bids were made within 28 days - refused 1 offer in band 1 <p>Note that if the applicant has already had 2 offers in total and these have been refused the application will be cancelled.</p>
Private tenants or homeowners, who lack amenities or where the applicant cannot afford to maintain the rent or mortgage	Housing Register and Advice team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private tenants with lack of amenities – no hot/cold running water, inside toilet bath/shower, wash hand basin • 	Coded and dated on receipt or to the date of notification of circumstances An affordability check analysing income and expenditure will be undertaken to determine affordability
Families forced to live apart.	Housing Register and Advice team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families forced to live separately and apart who are neither tenants nor owners of a property living in lodgings, single use of a room or sharing rooms with another person or family 	2 Offers. Dated to the date the applicant informs the authority of the change of circumstances

		and the accommodation is not large enough or appropriate for the family to live together	
Mobile caravans or boats with no static amenities	Housing Register and Advice team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile caravans or boats with no static amenities 	
Overcrowded as defined by the bedroom space standard	Assessment made by Environmental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locally Overcrowded 	<p>2 Offers.</p> <p>Dated to the date the applicant informs the authority of the change of circumstances</p>
Renting unsuitable Council or Housing Association accommodation for children under 12. This includes a flat or a bedsit at all floor levels. Note that if the child reaches 12 before rehousing, the original date and category will remain unchanged.	Coded and dated on receipt or to the date of notification of change of circumstances by the Council. Single people expecting their first child will be placed in this group when the child is born.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upper floor Council flats 	<p>2 Offers.</p> <p>Dated to the date the applicant informs the authority of the change of circumstances</p>

<p>If an applicant with children chooses to accept a Council tenancy which is a ground floor flat, commenced</p>	<p>Dated to the date the Council Tenancy commenced in the ground floor by the Council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground floor Council flats only 	<p>2 Offers.</p> <p>If no bids are made in 12 months the application will be cancelled.</p>
<p>Applicants who wish to be considered for Council or Housing Association accommodation who are living on a permanent basis with family or friends and are ready to move on</p>	<p>Coded on receipt by the Council</p>	<p>Applicants with no accommodation of their own, who are living with family or friends on a permanent basis and now require re-housing</p>	<p>2 offers – If no bids are made within 12 months the application will be cancelled</p> <p>Existing applications that have been moved from the previous General group will be re-dated to the date of their first bid, or if no bids have been placed the date of the policy change (1/1/14)</p> <p>However, in some cases where there are households in housing need but have not made bids in the last 12 months, these will be considered and re-dated to when their circumstances changed. (Possibly due to the fact that some applicants may have considered making a bid but were put off because of their lengthy queue position)</p>

4.4 Transfer Band	Status awarded by	Details	Comments
<p>Existing Council or Housing Association tenants who have been a good tenant and have had no breaches in their tenancy conditions in the last 2 years.</p>	<p>Housing Champion to confirm eligibility of the tenant before the application is registered</p>	<p>The tenant's current property and garden must be in good clean and tidy condition, with no unauthorised repairs.</p> <p>A reference must be attained from the current landlord.</p> <p>Breaches in tenancy conditions are defined in the Tenancy Agreement and includes rent arrears and reports of any anti social behaviour</p>	<p>2 Offers.</p> <p>If no bids are made in 12 months the application will be cancelled.</p> <p>Existing applications that have been moved from the previous General group will be re-dated to the date of their first bid, or if no bids have been placed the date of the policy change (1/1/14)</p> <p>However, in some cases where there are households in housing need but have not made bids in the last 12 months, these will be considered and re-dated to when their circumstances changed. (Possibly due to the fact that some applicants may have considered making a bid but were put off because of their lengthy queue position)</p>

5. Housing Management Lettings

There are certain circumstances when vacant properties may not be advertised in the “Key Choices” letting scheme, and on some occasions properties may have been advertised but the accommodation is required for a Management Letting.

These will normally apply to the following situations where the Council and its partner landlords may need to use vacant properties for specific management purposes in urgent circumstances. Some of the reasons include:

- Emergency re-housing, for example accommodation maybe required following fire, flood or other major incident
- Witness protection scheme
- Safeguarding Adults or Children
- Housing for those leaving foster care or ensuring foster placements are available
- Individuals re-housed through Multi Agency Public Protection Panel
- Customers who are in hospital and are well enough to return home, but their current home is not suitable for their needs; this is known as Bed Blocking and has direct financial consequences to the authority
- Customers who are experiencing violence and need to move to ensure their safety
- Provision of homeless temporary accommodation
- Other exceptional housing management reasons assessed by the Housing Assessment Panel, Risk Management Panel or Cabinet Member Report
- Other Exceptional urgent housing management reasons.

In extreme urgent circumstances where cases require an immediate decision, the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services or the Housing Option Manager will consider the case and update the Housing Assessment panel at the next meeting.

6. Furnished Homes

Applicants who have been offered a Council tenancy can choose to have a furniture package. Their application will be cancelled on taking a furnished home. A furnished charge is added to the rent account. The furniture charge is fully covered by Housing Benefit regulations for people on low incomes who would normally qualify.

There are different types of furnished packages to rent, which vary in cost.

7. Announcement of the Allocation Outcome

To ensure that all Allocations are transparent the results will be published on the internet on the Key Choices website and made available at all Customer Service Centres and at the “Key Choices” Property Shop. The General feedback will include the details of:

- The type of property, locality and advertised group

- Total number of requests received for the property.
- Registration Date and category of successful applicant.

8. List of Housing Associations

**Anchor Housing
Association
Milestone Place
100 Bolton Road
BRADFORD
ED1 4HD**

Tel: 0845 7758595

**Equity Housing Group
Ltd
Armitt House
Monmouth Road
Cheadle Hulme
Stockport
Cheshire
SK8 7EF**

Tel: 0800 733233

**Johnnie Johnson
Housing Trust Ltd
Central Regional
Office
109 Burngreave Road
SHEFFIELD
S5 9DF**

Tel: 0845 6041095

**Sadeh Lok Housing
Association
Trafford House
11 Halifax Road
HUDDERSFIELD
HD3 3AN**

Tel: 01484 435715

**South Yorkshire
Housing Association
Southfields
Grove Road
ROTHERHAM
S60 2ER**

Tel: 01709 820538

**Chevin Housing
Association Ltd
2 Carbrook Street
Carbrook
SHEFFIELD
S9 2JE**

Tel: 0114 2443388

**Habinteg Housing
Association
Ground Floor
Beech House
Woodland Park
Bradford Road
Chain Bar, Bradford
BD19 6BW**

Tel: 01274 853160

**North British Housing
The Old County Court
House
Bank Street
SHEFFIELD
S1 2DS**

Tel: 0845 6044446

**Salvation Army
Housing
33/35 New Chorley
Road
BOLTON
BL1 4QR**

Tel: 0845 3000008

**Yorkshire Metropolitan
Housing Association
24 Cumberland Street
SHEFFIELD
S1 4PT**

Tel: 0114 2765030

**English Churches
Housing Group
3 Lindon House
Sardinia Street
LEEDS
LS10 1BH**

Tel: 0845 0707074

**Housing 21
1 Staithgate Lane
Odsal
BRADFORD
BD6 1YA**

Tel: 01274 744190

**Northern Counties
Housing Association
77/79 Main Street
MEXBOROUGH
South Yorkshire
S64 9ND**

Tel: 01709 598800

**Sanctuary Housing
Association
52 Netherhall Road
DONCASTER
DN1 2PZ**

Tel: 0845 7573263

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL - REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2.	Date:	Monday 2nd December 2013
3.	Title:	Housing Revenue Account Budget Monitoring Report 2013/14
4.	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

This budget monitoring report presents the forecast outturn position on the 2013/14 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) based upon actual income and expenditure to the end of October 2013.

The overall forecast is that the HRA will outturn on budget with a transfer from working balance (reserves) of £1.845m which is a reduction of £754k against the approved budget.

6. Recommendations

- **That cabinet member receives and notes the latest financial projection against budget for 2013/14.**

7. Proposals and Details

- 7.1** This budget report is based upon actual income, expenditure and known commitments as at the end of October 2013 forecast to the end of the financial year to give a projected outturn position, compared to budget.
- 7.2** Appendix A of this report provides the Budget Operating Statement for 2013/14 which shows the various income and expenditure budget lines which make up the net cost of delivering the service. The latest forecast net cost of service is £6.567m which, together with Revenue Contribution to Capital (RCCO) costs of £8.437m and interest received (-£25k) will result in an overall deficit of £1.845m to be transferred from Working Balance.
- 7.3** Within the Operating Statement are several budget heads which are either year end adjustments (for example debt management costs £222k) or are subject to external influence and therefore outside direct control (for example cost of capital charges £14.602m).
- 7.4** Budget Monitoring is therefore mainly focussed upon expenditure and income which is within control, i.e. income of £78.904m, the repair and maintenance budget of £17.996m and supervision and management of £20.065m. Other budget heads as seen within Appendix A are currently being forecast to outturn in line with budget.

7.5 Budget Monitoring

- 7.5.1** Appendix A, column B demonstrates the projected outturn based upon activity to the end of October 2013.
- 7.5.2** Overall it can be seen that the net cost of service (before RCCO and interest received) is forecast to be £6.567m, a surplus of £754k as shown in the table below.

	Budget £000	Forecast £000	Variance £000
Expenditure	73,090	73,125	35
Income	-78,903	-79,692	-789
Net Cost of Service	-5,813	-6,567	-754

- 7.5.3** Several of the budget lines within income and expenditure are forecasting to outturn with a variance to budget. The table below highlights these budgets

	Budget £000	Forecast £000	Variance £000
Expenditure:			
Supervision and Management	20,065	20,300	235
Cost of Capital Charge	14,602	14,402	-200
Income:			
Dwelling Rents	-74,245	-74,330	-85
Non Dwelling Rents	-792	-798	-6
Charges for Services	-3,602	-4,197	-595
Other Fees and Charges	-214	-317	-103
Net Variance			-754

7.5.4 It can be seen that there is a forecast under spend on both income and expenditure budgets.

7.5.5 The balance of this report will focus on the main variations to budget.

7.6 Expenditure

Column B of Appendix A demonstrates that based upon expenditure and commitments to date, total expenditure is forecast to outturn at £73.125m compared to a budget provision of £73.090m, an increase in spend of £35k. The main variations are as follows:

7.6.1 Contributions to Housing Repairs

Appendix A demonstrates that the forecast year-end spend on Repairs and Maintenance is currently forecasting to budget at £17.996m.

7.6.2 The empty homes budget is difficult to forecast as this is a very responsive service. The original budget has been set around an estimated 1,500 minor voids in year. At the end of quarter 2 there were 123 more completions than budgeted. The main reason for the increase is the impact of the Welfare Reform as more tenants requested a transfer to smaller properties.

Within the Housing Repairs budgets there is an overall forecast overspend at this stage on cyclical works mainly around fixed wire testing and gas servicing together with an increase in responsive repairs. However, this is offset by forecast under spends within

unallocated Planned works to cover forecast overspends in responsive and empty homes budgets.

7.6.3 Supervision and Management

Column B of Appendix A demonstrates that based upon expenditure and commitment to date, total expenditure is forecast to outturn at £20.300m, a forecast overall over spend of £235k.

The main reason for the variation is the transfer to the Furnished Homes reserve due to additional income as more clients use the scheme (see paragraph 7.7.3) reduced by lower than expected staff turnover including slippage in implementing the review of structures across a number of teams.

7.6.4 Cost of Capital Charge

This latest forecast cost of capital charge is £200k less than budgeted due to lower than anticipated interest rates.

7.7 Income

7.7.1 Column B of Appendix A shows that based upon income received to date the total forecast income collectable is £79.692m an increase of £789k above the approved budget of £78.903m.

7.7.2 Dwelling rental income is projected to over recover by £85k, after allowing for 2% loss of income. Non-dwelling rents are also forecasted to slightly over recover against budget by £6k due to additional income from garage sites.

7.7.3 Income from charges for services and facilities are forecasting an outturn of £4.197m, an over recovery of income of £595k. This is mainly due to additional income on Furnished Homes (£614k) due to increase in number of clients. However, there is a forecast under recovery of income from clients using Sheltered Neighbourhood Centres services (+£15k) as tenants opting out of the laundry charge due to having their own facilities and more than anticipated level of voids on District Heating schemes resulting in a slight under recovery of income (+£4k).

7.7.4 Other fees and charges is forecasting an over recovery of income of £102k against budget, which includes additional unbudgeted income in respect of the sale of Tenants contents insurance, recovery of court costs, income from sale of second hand furniture and income from utility companies for the use of solar panels.

7.8 Summary

In summary it can be seen in foregoing paragraphs 7.6 and 7.7 that the variance to budget of £754k when comparing the forecast net cost of service against the budget of £5.813m is due mainly to variances within

the supervision and management and cost of capital together with an over recovery of income.

8. Finance

Impact on Working Balance - The report identifies that any deficit or surplus arising from the net cost of service will be transferred to the Working Balance which is reflected through the Appropriations section of the Operating Statement at Appendix A. Any forecast increase/decrease will be added to the budgeted sum shown under transfer to reserves.

Based upon the current forecast out-turn position on the net cost of service, the forecast transfer from balances will reduce from £2.599m up to £1.845m, an reduction of £754k. The reduction in contribution from reserves is mainly a result of an increase in the level of income anticipated together with lower than forecast borrowing costs.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

- **Inflation – Non Contractual** –The 2013/14 Budget was formulated around an inflation assumption of nil (except on utilities); if inflation rises costs may exceed budget provision. It should be noted that the inflationary increase on the repair and maintenance contract is locked in for the financial year at 2.6 % and this has been provided for within the budget set.
Mitigation: Ongoing monitoring
- **Vacancy Factor**
Salaries budgets assume various levels of vacancies. If vacancies do not arise this could lead to salary costs in excess of budget.
Mitigation: In depth monitoring and forecasting of salary budgets.
- **Repair and Maintenance Voids.** Whilst the current empty home forecast is considered to be a prudent projection based upon 1,500 minor voids, it should be noted that the final number of voids received and completed in year could change. Any change in numbers or values will impact on expenditure.
Mitigation: Ongoing monitoring and triangulation with contractors. Any forecast increase in expenditure will be offset by a reduction in planned revenue works.
- **Rental Income**
Net rental income has been calculated on the basis of 2% void loss. Any increase / decrease on the actual levels of voids will impact on the level of income achieved.
Mitigation: Ongoing monitoring.

- **Impairment of Fixed Assets**

HRA Self Financing legislation has resulted in the costs of impairment/revaluation of non-dwellings becoming a real charge to be met by the HRA. This figure cannot be calculated until year end after the asset register has been fully updated. In 2012-13 the impairment charge was £646k.

Mitigation: Action is being taken to review the management of expenditure on non-dwellings assets to minimise the risk of impairment charges to the HRA. Advice is also being obtained via CIPFA as this is a real issue affecting many other local authorities.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

10.1 The HRA supports the new Corporate Plan Priorities and is central to the long term strategy:

- Making sure no community is left behind.
- Helping to create safe and healthy communities.
- Improving the environment.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Budget and Council Tax Setting Report (2013/14) to Cabinet February 2013
- Director of Finance and Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services have been consulted on the preparation of this report.

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APPENDIX A

Housing Revenue Account - Budget Operating Statement

Narrative	2013/14 Full Year Budget £	2013/14 Forecast Out-turn £	Variance £
<u>Expenditure</u>			
Contributions to Housing Repairs Account	17,996,000	17,996,000	0
Supervision and Management	20,065,000	20,299,889	234,889
Rents, Rates, Taxes etc.	174,000	174,000	0
Negative Subsidy repaid to Government	0	0	0
Provision for Bad Debts	742,500	742,500	0
Cost of capital Charge	14,602,200	14,402,200	-200,000
Depreciation of Fixed Assets	19,288,734	19,288,734	0
Deferred Charges	0	0	0
Impairment of Fixed Assets	0	0	0
Debt Management Costs	222,000	222,000	0
Expenditure	73,090,434	73,125,323	34,889
<u>Income</u>			
Dwelling Rents	-74,245,061	-74,329,767	-84,706
Non-dwelling Rents	-792,280	-798,306	-6,026
Charges for Services and facilities	-3,601,649	-4,196,730	-595,081
Other fees and charges	-213,800	-316,726	-102,926
Contribution to Expenditure	0	0	0
Leaseholder Income	-50,910	-50,910	0
HRA Subsidy receivable (Major Repairs Allowance)	0	0	0
Income	-78,903,700	-79,692,439	-788,739
Net Cost of Services	-5,813,266	-6,567,116	-753,850
Amortised premia - Debt redemption	0	0	0
Interest received	-25,000	-25,000	0
Net Operating Expenditure	-5,838,266	-6,592,116	-753,850
Appropriations:			
Transfer from Capital Finance Account- Deferred	0	0	0
Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay	8,437,000	8,437,000	0
Transfer from Capital Finance Account- Impairment	0	0	0
Transfer from Major Repairs Reserve	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	-2,598,734	-1,844,884	753,850
Surplus/Deficit for the year	0	0	0

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2.	Date:	Monday 2nd December 2013
3.	Title:	Neighbourhoods General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring 2013/14
4.	Directorate:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Social Services

5. Summary

This Budget Monitoring Report provides a financial forecast for Neighbourhoods General Fund within the Neighbourhoods & Adult Services Directorate to the end of March 2014 based on actual income and expenditure for the period ending October 2013.

The forecast for the financial year 2013/14 is an overall forecast under spend of (-£93k) against an approved net revenue budget of £2.463m.

6. Recommendation

That the Cabinet Member receives and notes the latest financial projection against budget for 2013/14.

7. Proposals and Details

The table below shows the summary forecast outturn position against the approved Net Revenue Budgets:-

SERVICE AREA	Net Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance from Net Budget Deficit/ (Surplus)	% Variation to Net Budget
	£000's	£000's	£000's	%
Strategic Housing & Investment	188	199	11	5.85
Housing Options	289	260	-29	-10.03
Housing & Communities	265	221	-44	-16.60
Central	312	303	-9	-2.88
Business Regulation	207	189	-18	-8.69
Safer Neighbourhoods	1,202	1198	-4	-0.33
TOTALS	2,463	2370	-93	-3.77

The main variations against budget can be summarised as follows:-

7.1 Strategic Housing & Investment Service - SHIS (+£11k)

The SHIS team budget has a pressure of +£11k as a result of a small shortfall on the staffing budget.

7.2 Housing Options (-£29k)

This area is projecting an overall under spend of (-£29k). This includes a (-£36k) projected under spend on the Dispersed Units Trading Account which will be requested as an earmarked balance to be carried forward at year end to support the on-going refurbishment programme for these units.

There is also a small surplus of (-£3k) within the Private Sector Adaptations Service as a result of increased fee income, and a projected over spend of +£10k on the Key Choices Property Management Service as a result of lower than anticipated income.

7.3 Housing & Communities (-£44k)

This service area is projecting an overall under spend of (-£44k).

This consists of projected under spends both within Area Assemblies and Supplies and Services budgets (-£27k) as a result of the Council wide moratorium on non-essential spend, which is partially reduced by a small over spend on Anti Social Behaviour due to lower than expected staff turnover +£5k.

There is also a small under spend of (-£4k) on the Community Safety Unit budget as a result of a recent vacancy which is not expected to be filled this financial year.

The under spend includes (-£18k) within Community Leadership Fund, of which £16k is relating to Members Annual budgets, and is likely to be requested as an earmarked balance for carry forward at the year end.

7.4 Central (-£9k)

A small under spend is forecast due to savings on supplies and services.

7.5 Business Regulation (-£18k)

Overall Business Regulation is projecting an under spend of (-£18k). Pressures on staffing costs within Health and Safety, Food and Drugs and Animal Health budgets totalling +£23k are being offset by savings within Trading Standards mainly due to continued vacant posts (-£41k).

7.6 Safer Neighbourhoods (-£4k)

Savings within Community Protection through vacancy management and as a result of the moratorium on non-essential spend, partly reduced by a small remaining pressure on income due to reduced Environmental Protection Act (EPA) applications, leaving an overall forecast under spend of (-£16k).

Also, essential Health and Safety work on Landfill Sites is resulting in a forecast overspend of +£12k in this area.

7.7 Agency & Consultancy

To date there is no spend on either Agency or Consultancy within Neighbourhoods General Fund Budgets.

7.8 Non Contractual Overtime

There has been minor expenditure of £200 on Non Contractual Overtime within Safer Neighbourhoods area. This was for the cost of weekend enforcement of the removal of Travellers from a Town Centre site.

8. Finance

The financial implications for each service area have been outlined in Section 7 above.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

These forecasts are based on financial performance to the end of September 2013. The forecast outturn is dependent on delivery of planned management actions being achieved and thus effective and tight financial management practices remain essential including holding monthly budget clinics with the Service Director and senior managers.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The delivery of the Council's Revenue Budget within the limits determined in March 2013 is vital to achieving the Council's Policy agenda. Financial performance is a key element within the assessment of the Council's overall performance.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Report to Cabinet 20 February 2013 – Proposed Revenue Budget & Council Tax 2013/14.

The content of this report has been discussed with the Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods and the Director of Finance.

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