

Housing Allocation Policy Review

Consultation Response Analysis Report

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1. Consultation overview

What was the purpose of the consultation and who was consulted?	The Council is bound by legal requirements to undertake a minimum 12-week formal consultation for any key policy changes. Regardless of any legal implications, the Council is committed to consulting and engaging with residents, including tenants and a wide range of stakeholders. It is important that all views are considered in the decision making about how services are delivered and communicated in policy. Consultation on the Housing Allocation Policy has been captured via an online public survey and telephone surveys, supplemented with feedback from attendance at internal and external meetings, forums, targeted focus groups including Housing Associations, and tenant involvement forums such as the Housing Improvement Panel. Relevant statutory agencies and Council departments have also been involved. Housing services have actively worked in partnership with the Cabinet Member for Housing throughout the process and officers have engaged widely with Elected Members. The consultation set out to review the Housing Allocation Policy. A total of 22 proposed changes to the existing policy were presented during the consultation to understand opinions on how these changes would impact the public, partners, and staff members. Currently, the number of applicants on the Housing Register heavily outweighs the number of new tenancies let. • As of 1 April 2025, there was 7064 active applications on the Council's housing register. • New tenancies let 2023/2024 = 1398 • New tenancies let 2024/2025 = 1236 The rate of households becoming homeless in Rotherham also increased between 2022/23 and 2023/24 by 15.6% - increasing from 1,236 to 1,429. This places a further strain on council housing provision. The number of homelessness presentations for 2024/2025 increased further to 1752.
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What time period did the consultation run over?	The consultation started on 13 January 2025, and concluded on 6 April 2025. This period of consultation covered the public, partners, and internal staff members.
How many responses were received?	220 responses to the consultation were received via the online survey on the Councils consultation webpage. Further input was attained from various groups and sessions held across the borough.
How will the responses be used by the Council?	The outcome of the consultation has helped to influence the proposed Housing Allocation policy. The overall aim of the review was to ensure that the Council's Allocation Policy continues to help people in greatest housing need to gain access to suitable and appropriate accommodation, as well as supporting mixed and balanced communities and, where possible, providing choice. The review looked to ensure that the new Policy reflects national and sub-regional good practice, assists with the growing homelessness pressures the Council faces, and responds to the changing profile of demand for housing. It has also looked to ensure that the operation and administration of the Policy and the housing register remains efficient, transparent, and fair.
Where will the outcomes of the consultation be made public?	The outcome of the consultation is considered as part of the recommendations set out in the cabinet report. This consultation report will form part of the appendices included within the Cabinet report. The Cabinet meeting will be 15 September 2025. Reports are published a week in advance of the anticipated date of the decision and a decision notice published 3 working days after the resolution. The cabinet meeting is open to the public and is also webcasted to the public. The cabinet report and appendices which includes the outcome of the consultation will be accessible to the public on the Councils website.

1.1 Consultation context

The Council is committed to continuing to provide a high-quality housing options service that enables all residents in housing need to access social housing. It is a statutory requirement to have a Housing Allocation Policy, the Housing Act 1996 specifies groups of people who must be given reasonable preference in the scheme. Subject to these provisions being met, the Council can decide the principles on which the scheme is to be framed. The Policy provides the framework for ensuring this function is carried out fairly, consistently, and in line with local and national policy and

legislation. The Council's current Housing Allocation Policy was adopted in 2014, since then, it has undergone periodic revisions and additions.

There are certain circumstances when the Allocation Policy needs to be adjusted. These include when there are legislative changes, if there are changes in supply and demand, or where equality data suggests that the Council may need to change the way in which properties are allocated. The review will seek to ensure that the Policy reflects national and sub-regional good practice and responds to the changing profile of demand for housing.

The proposed changes to the Housing Allocation Policy will affect all households currently on the housing register and future applicants wanting to join. It will also affect current residents in housing provided by the Council. Within this, it may affect individuals or groups who are identified by protected characteristics.

Under the Equality Act (2010) the Council has a legal duty to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Through this duty and in the application of this Policy, the Council will carry out its functions in a way that:

- Removes discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is unlawful under the Equality Act (2010).
- Promotes equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't.
- Encourages good relations between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't.

1.2 Stakeholder engagement & consultation

To ensure a diverse range of responses was received, partners and stakeholders across Rotherham, both internal and external were informed about the Housing Allocation Policy consultation.

In a first instance, e-mail notification was disseminated from Directors, Managers and Officers across both Housing Options and Commissioning. This included:

- notification to regional recipients of Homes England,
- notification to commissioned housing and support providers in Rotherham,
- e-mail shots from Personal Assistants across various Directorates across the Council, including Adult Care, Childrens Services, Financial Services, Customer Services,
- notification to Registered Social Landlords,
- e-mail shot from Age UK to registered recipients,
- notification to other Voluntary Sector organisations such as REMA (Rotherham Ethnic Minority Association), The Rainbow Project and Clifton Learning Partnership.

In person meetings were used as a platform to promote the consultation. The Strategic Housing Forum, attended by Council Staff, Councillors and strategic partners were informed in person about the consultation. Other meetings where attendees were briefed on the consultation include the Strategic Housing (SHAD) Team Meeting, the

Assistant Directors meeting, Leaving Care Service meeting and the Armed Forces Covenant. Staff across Housing Options were provided the opportunity to ask questions and understand more about the proposed changes to the Housing Allocation Policy in the staff service events held in March 2025.

Officers from housing options attended the Housing Improvement Panel in February 2025, to present the proposed changes and rationale. The Housing Involvement Panel are a group of tenants that meet every month to contribute to the planning and direction of housing services, offer feedback, challenge performance, and help to influence change. The session was designed to provide context to housing in Rotherham and why the proposed changes were being consulted on, to improve accessibility to housing for those in urgent need. Tenants were supported to participate with the online consultation survey.

The scope of stakeholders briefed on the Housing Allocation Policy provided the best opportunity to achieve a diverse range of feedback on the proposed changes. Attaining a range of different internal Council services, commissioned services, voluntary sector, and other public sector services informed a broad range of service priorities, representing the complex challenges that are present within housing.

1.3 Community engagement and involvement

Community engagement and involvement focused on existing community groups in the borough that were appropriate for staff to attend. Staff attended two coffee mornings in Rawmarsh, after receiving invites from neighbourhood coordinators. This provided a platform to have informal conversations with members of the community, support with completing the consultation, and spreading awareness about how people can have their say on the proposed changes.

A session delivered at Rush House provided a platform to discuss how the proposed changes may affect young people looking to attain housing in the borough. This session was attended by both young people and staff, providing an overview of the proposed changes and an opportunity to discuss specific changes in more depth.

Capturing the thoughts of people who are at risk of, or already are homeless, were supported through a focus group with the support of Shiloh, a homeless charity in Rotherham. The session again looked to present different aspects of the consultation to get the input of people who may have different barriers to accessing housing. It also promoted the online survey and how to access it.

1.4 Public consultation

The consultation period ran from the 13 January through to the 6 April. During this period, 220 responses were received via the Council's online consultation survey. A detailed overview of the responses to the 22 proposed changes can be found below.

Alongside the completion of online surveys, staff from housing options attended a range of sessions across the borough, providing the public with the opportunity to discuss the consultation, understand how certain changes may affect them and access support to complete the consultation if necessary.

Public consultation drop-in sessions were advertised across the borough, including at Wath Library, Aston Library and two sessions at Riverside House, including an evening session to make consultation support accessible for those who may work through the day. Staff attended 3 drop-in support sessions at Clifton Learning Partnership in Eastwood, cross-delivering with the registration support offered monthly by the Housing Advice & Assessment team. By offering consultation support at Clifton Learning Partnership, the provision of interpreters was available to ensure that accurate understanding of the proposed changes and what it might mean for somebody could be discussed.

Additionally, staff attended two drop-ins at the Citizens Advice Bureau in Rotherham town centre, to provide further accessibility to support the consultation. Attendance at an Asylum & Refugee drop-in at the Unity Centre also provided better accessibility to the consultation for the public, as there are barriers around knowledge and access to housing-related information with this group in the community.

Staff from the Housing Advice and Assessment Team within housing options contacted households who had active registrations to discuss and complete the consultation survey. In total, 164 people were contacted and 62 were either supported to complete the survey, given advice around some of the proposed changes or provided information on where they can complete the survey in their own time.

To provide better access to the Housing Allocation Policy consultation, material was provided to the Regulation & Enforcement Team, to promote at consultation sessions on the Selective Licensing Scheme. This consultation focused on the private rented sector, looking to work with communities that may experience issues around deprivation, crime, anti-social behaviour, poor housing conditions, and low-housing demand. The nature of this consultation was looking for input from private tenants, landlords, letting agents, and businesses with an interest in the private rented sector, in specific areas across the borough. Cross-delivering access to the Housing Allocation Policy at these sessions further improved physical access across the borough and particularly targeted private tenants to try and achieve more balanced feedback.

Figure 1.1 below, demonstrates the type of engagement relating to the consultation in the borough. Figure 1.2 provides a full picture of the borough and where the consultation has been made accessible, whilst figure 1.3 provides a close-up of the Rotherham Town area for clarity. Figure 1.4. provides a timeline of engagement throughout the consultation period.

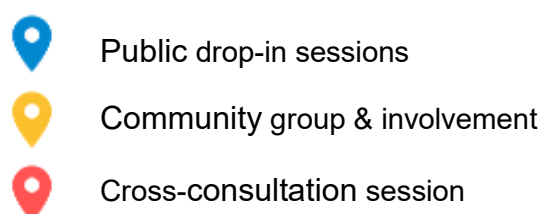


Figure 1.1. Consultation access across the borough

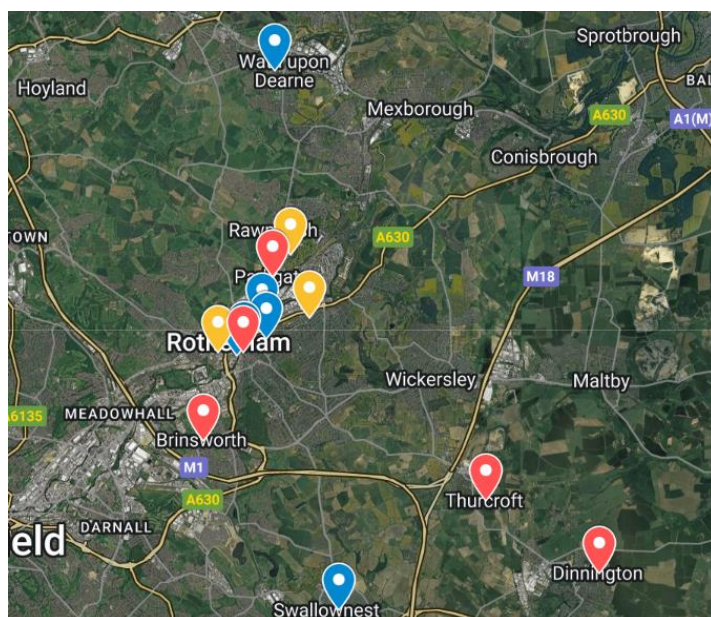


Figure 1.2. Full borough consultation map

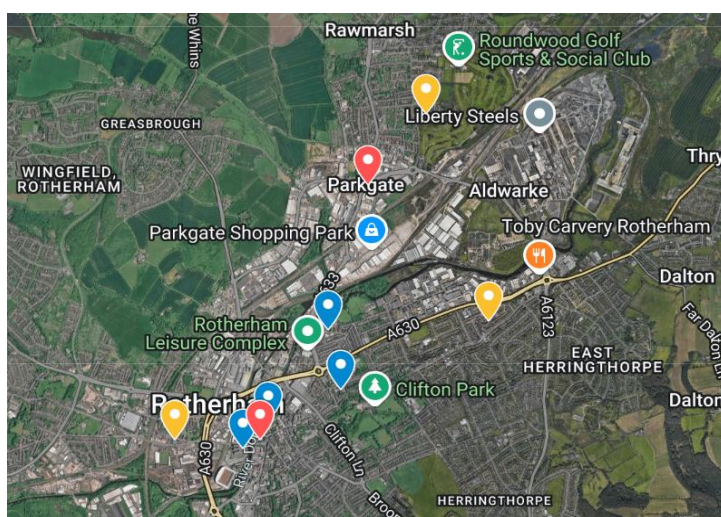


Figure 1.3. Consultation map of Rotherham Town area

Name	Session type	Date
Strategic Housing Forum	Stakeholder engagement	22/01/2025
Wath Library Consultation	Public drop-in	29/01/2025
Clifton Learning Partnership	Public drop-in	30/01/2025
Riverside House	Public drop-in	06/02/2025
Armed Forces Covenant	Stakeholder engagement	17/02/2025
Housing Improvement Panel	Community Involvement	19/02/2025
Clifton Learning Partnership	Public drop-in	27/02/2025

Turner Close Neighbourhood Centre	Community engagement	27/02/2025
Riverside House	Public drop-in	05/03/2025
Citizens Advice	Public drop-in	06/03/2025
Aston Library	Public drop-in	10/03/2025
Asylum & Refugee	Public drop-in	18/03/2025
Citizens Advice	Public drop-in	20/03/2025
Clifton Learning Partnership	Public drop-in	27/03/2025
Turner Close Neighbourhood Centre	Community engagement	27/03/2025
Hollowgate – staff session	Stakeholder engagement	01/04/2015
Rush House – Young People	Community involvement	03/04/2025
Shiloh	Community involvement	04/04/2025

Figure 1.4. Table of engagement

1.5 Communication

Different approaches were adopted to ensure the consultation was well publicised with details of how to access further information, where to find support on the consultation and how to complete the survey. The main approaches to capture a wide audience was through social media, with regular posts going out on both Facebook and LinkedIn. In total, 4,737 engagements were received on Facebook and 2,306 impressions were made on LinkedIn. E-mail shots and staff bulletins within the Council were sent to whole directorates, providing staff with the opportunity to complete the survey, or how to signpost members of the public should they require to. Both internal and external newsletters informed staff, partners, and residents of the consultation and where they could find further information. The Rotherham Roundup also promoted the consultation in a newsletter to approximately 11,000 tenants across the borough. Internal staff bulletins included information on the consultation and where to access it, ensuring staff across the Council were notified. The consultation was promoted via the Monday round-up, which is subscribed to by over 3,300 people. Staff newsletters contained promotional material, which has over 700 registered subscribers. Promotional material was also displayed on screens in libraries across the borough, again to spread awareness within communities.

Partnership working was key to ensure a diverse range of responses was received by the end of the consultation. Voluntary Action Rotherham promoted the consultation in a weekly bulletin, sent out to approximately 1,400 recipients across Rotherham's voluntary sector. Age UK disseminated information on the consultation to charities and residents of varying tenure across the borough, also providing details of staff to contact for further information and to arrange engagement sessions, where deemed appropriate. Support was provided by Rotherham Federation to promote the consultation across services with support-based objectives, such as mental health services, community support services and substance misuse agencies.

1.6 Responses

The information in Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the responses received during the consultation. This references how the respondent was choosing to complete the consultation survey, such as whether they were submitting as a resident, organisational responses, or other type, such as an employee of the Council.

Resident of Rotherham	187
Resident living outside of Rotherham	9
On behalf of a Housing Association	7
On behalf of a Statutory Agency	3
On behalf of a Voluntary Agency	2
Other	12

Table 1 – Table of responses

1.7 Tenure

The information in table 2 below provides a breakdown of the tenure type of people who completed the consultation survey. This information is pulled from the Equalities questions at the end of the survey:

Council tenant	53
Housing association tenant	16
Living in temporary accommodation or support housing	4
Living with family or friends	12
No fixed place of residence	4
Owner occupier	63
Privately rented tenant	35
No entry	33

Table 2 – Tenure of respondents

1.8 Geographical response

This section of the consultation was optional and received a low response rate. Whilst a numerical breakdown of the areas respondents currently live in would not be beneficial, it does evidence that people across the borough had their say on the consultation. Responses from the following Wards were received: Boston Castle, Dalton & Thrybergh, Dinnington, Greasbrough, Hellaby & Maltby West, Keppel, Kilnhurst & Swinton East, Maltby East, Rawmarsh East, Rotherham East, Rotherham West, Sitwell, Swinton Rockingham. Of the responses received, 6 were council tenants, 5 were private rented tenants, 4 were owner occupiers and 2 were housing association tenants.

1.9 Equalities information

Equalities information was not a mandatory field within the consultation survey; therefore, we do not have a full representation of data that matches the number of respondents. Out of 220 completed surveys, 62 (28%) respondents completed the equalities information section. Within this cohort, some respondents did not complete

all equalities questions as they were not mandatory. Due to a low completion rate, individual groups have not been outlined within the survey responses. Appendix C demonstrates the full breakdown of information received.

Equalities information is recorded to identify inequalities, ensure fair and equitable practices and to better understand the needs of different groups within the community.

Specific consultation drop-in sessions held at Clifton Learning Partnership and the Unity Centre at the Asylum & Migration sessions were aimed to try and make the consultation more accessible for groups which can sometimes be harder to reach due to language barriers or through lack of knowledge around services and where to access information on housing.

1.10 Further comments

The survey provided opportunity for responders to include comment and further explanation in support of their grading of each option. This additional information has been manually reviewed and analysed to capture any themes or additional issues for consideration. Due to the nature of some of this information, and the potential ability to identify individuals, it has not been included within this report. A full collation of themes and actions can be found on Appendix D.

2. Responses to the proposed changes of the Housing Allocation Policy

2.1 Change 1 – Local Connection

Background context to the change

The current Allocation Policy includes the following local connection criteria for applicants:

- lived for the last 3 years in Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's geographical boundary through their own choice.
- currently employed in Rotherham and have been for the last 3 years.
- have a close family relative or primary carer who live in Rotherham and have done so for the last three years.

Why change?

Demand for social housing is significantly higher than was the case when the current local connection criteria were agreed.

Currently applicants in other local authority areas can join Rotherham's housing register if they have a family connection. Proving this connection can be challenging, especially when looking at relationships with more distant family members (aunties, uncles, cousins, siblings etc).

Government policy supports local authorities taking the view that, in deciding who qualifies or does not qualify for social housing, applicants who can demonstrate a close association with their local area should be prioritised.

Recommended change

Implement a two-year residency connection.

Remove 'family connection' to comply with local connection criteria.

Retain exemptions, including:

- applicants who are currently in paid employment in Rotherham and have been for the past two years consecutively.
- care leavers under the age of 25.
- applicants fleeing domestic abuse.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The data shows that 68.6% of all responses agree with the proposed changes on Local Connection criteria in Rotherham, which demonstrates that the majority are in favour. 66.3% of Rotherham residents agreed with the proposal.

It is worth noting, however, that this proposal had the highest proportion of respondents across the consultation. 20.9% of all responses disagreed or strongly disagreed with the changes to the criteria. 22.5% of Rotherham residents stated they disagreed with the proposed change.

2.2 Change 2 – Tenancy related debt and tenancy breaches

Background context of the change

Applicants are excluded from joining the housing register if they have a tenancy-related debt exceeding £800. The debt criteria also apply to existing social housing tenants who wish to downsize to more affordable accommodation.

Why change?

The figure of £800 was set in 2014 and does not reflect the current cost of housing, particularly in the private rented sector.

Currently some existing social housing tenants are prevented from applying for re-housing where they are subject to the under-occupancy charge (bedroom tax), and would like to downsize to smaller, more affordable accommodation. This also prevents larger properties being freed up through a tenant downsizing.

Recommended change

Amend the debt criteria from £800 to 'the equivalent of 8-weeks rent'.

Where current social housing tenants are eligible to downsize and subject to the under-occupancy charge (bedroom tax), the debt shall not prevent them from joining the housing register.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show that 73.6% of all responses agree with the proposed changes around tenancy related debt and tenancy breaches, which demonstrates the majority are in favour. 72.7% of Rotherham residents agreed with the proposal.

13.2% of all responses did not agree with the proposed change, with concerns raised around the complexities of an 8-week rent equivalent, due to varying weekly charges. 14.4% of Rotherham residents did not agree with the change.

2.3 Change 3 – Applicants who do not qualify

Background context of the change

Applicants who have been evicted from a council or housing association tenancy are not able to re-join the housing register for five years from the date of eviction. This includes tenancies outside of Rotherham.

Why change?

Breaches in tenancy can include anti-social behaviour or damage to their property. Applicants who have breached the conditions of their tenancy may voluntarily terminate their tenancy to avoid the eviction process, and then rejoin the housing register.

Recommended change

Retain the five-year exclusion for applicants who have been evicted from a council or housing association tenancy and include council or housing association tenancies where eviction proceedings have commenced in the last five years but prior to eviction, the applicant has voluntarily handed back their tenancy. Where an applicant has been evicted due to rent arrears and there was no anti-social behaviour, if the debt is repaid in full before the five years, the applicant will be allowed to join the housing register. This incentivises applicants to re-pay the debt and may have had a change in circumstances from the time they were evicted.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show 72.3% of all responses agree with the proposed changes to applicants who do not qualify, demonstrating the majority are in favour of the change. 72.2% of Rotherham residents also agreed with the proposal.

13.2% of all responses did not agree with the proposed change, with a theme of concerns around homelessness. 14.4% of Rotherham residents did not agree with the proposal.

2.4 Change 4 – Qualification for owner occupiers or applicants with savings

Background context of the change

Applicants who own their own home, or applicants with savings over £16,000 are currently eligible to join the housing register in Band four, band four is the lowest banding for those who are not in housing need. Where the applicant has a medical need this is considered on a case-by-case basis.

Why change?

The demand for social housing is increasing and the Council does not have enough properties to house everyone on the housing register.

Applicants who have assets by either owning a property, or savings over £16,000 will often be able to resolve their own housing circumstances, as they have more housing options available to them, such as the private rented sector.

The figure of £16,000 is taken from the DWP's threshold for housing benefit.

Recommended change

Introduce a new qualification criterion that would mean an in-depth assessment of any applicant who owns a home, or formerly owned a home, or has savings over £16,000, to identify if the applicant is in housing need and if they have assets to resolve their own housing circumstances.

The assessment will assume that applicants who have equity, savings, or assets worth over a quarter of the average property price for Rotherham can resolve their own housing circumstances and not qualify to join the housing register, unless there are mitigating circumstances.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show 68.6% of all responses agree with the proposed changes to qualification for owner occupiers or applicants with savings, demonstrating the majority are in favour of the change. 66.3% of Rotherham residents agreed with the proposal.

Further comments identified a consensus that if people have the financial means of resolving their own housing situation, then they should do so.

16.8% of all responses did not agree with the proposed change. 19.3% of Rotherham residents did not agree with the proposal.

2.5 Change 5 – Next steps plan

Background context of the change

The Next Steps Plan was introduced to give homeless applicants who were not eligible for the housing register a second chance at securing accommodation.

Why change?

Section 2.4 of the Allocation Policy seeks to safeguard vulnerable adults with debt and can be considered when applicants are not eligible for the housing register and in housing need. This can include applicants who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The 'next steps plan' section therefore constitutes repetition.

Recommended change

Delete the 'next steps plan' section and amend Section 2.4 in the existing Policy to include that all applicants not eligible for the housing register and in urgent housing need, will be required to commit and engage with appropriate services and evidence presented to Housing Assessment Panel for consideration.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show 67.3% of all responses agree with the proposed changes to the "next steps plan", demonstrating the majority are in favour of the change. 64.7% of Rotherham residents agreed with the proposal.

This proposal received the largest proportion of neutral responses within the consultation, with 27.3% of all responses providing a neutral response. 28.9% of Rotherham residents provided a neutral response.

Only 5.5% of all responses disagreed with the proposed change, whilst 6.4% of Rotherham residents disagreed.

2.6 Change 6 – Tenancy fraud

Background context of the change

Section 3.2 of the current Policy covers declaration, verification of identity, and providing false information. The content is relatively limited.

Why change?

The Council has a dedicated Housing Fraud Officer and is strengthening its housing fraud prevention and detection approach. The review of the Allocation Policy offers an opportunity to clearly set out the Council's approach to dealing with tenancy fraud.

Recommended change

Include further information regarding tenancy fraud and investigation.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show that 90.5% of all responses agree with the proposed changes to tenancy fraud, demonstrating the majority are in favour. 90.4% of Rotherham residents

also agree with the proposal. This change has the largest proportion of people in agreement in the consultation.

Only 2.3% of all responses disagreed with the proposed change, whilst 2.1% of Rotherham residents also disagreed.

2.7 Change 7 – Pre-tenancy interviews

Background context of the change

The current policy mandates that all housing register applicants must undergo a pre-tenancy interview.

Why change?

All applicants are required to have a pre-tenancy interview when joining the housing register, including those households with little realistic chance of being rehoused. This creates additional administrative burden and is an inflexible approach.

Recommended change

Due to the demand on the housing register allow flexibility regarding when a pre-tenancy interview is carried.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show that 67.3% of all responses agree with the proposed changes around Pre-tenancy Interviews, demonstrating a majority are in favour of the change. 69.5% of Rotherham residents agreed with the proposal.

It is noted that 18.2% of all responses disagreed with the proposal, one of the highest levels of disagreement in the consultation. 17.6% of Rotherham residents also disagreed with the proposal.

2.8 Change 8 – Allocation of new build properties

Background context of the change

New build properties are currently prioritised for existing Council tenants.

Why change?

Advertising properties to existing Council tenants excludes applicants in all other tenures, including those who are in greater housing need who may be living close to newly developed homes. Some Council tenants prioritised for new build homes are not in housing need.

Recommended change

Remove the council tenant priority for new build properties and allocate them in the same way as any other property.

Landlord references will continue to be obtained. Where there are breaches in tenancy or unsatisfactory references are received, or a history of anti-social behaviour, the Council reserves the right not to offer a property.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The results demonstrate that 72.7% of all responses agree with the proposed change to how the Council allocate new build properties. 71.1% of Rotherham residents agreed with the proposed change.

15.5% of all responses disagreed with the proposed changes, whilst 16.0% of Rotherham residents disagreed.

2.9 Change 9 – Local lettings policy

Background context of the change

A Local Lettings Policy (LLP) is an additional criterion (or quota) for a specific area, estate, or block of apartments. It means that the LLP properties affected will be allocated in a different way to the usual approach. There are only two LLPs in our current Allocation Policy which cover Sensitive Lettings and Rural Lettings.

Why change?

The lack of flexibility in the Allocation Policy makes it challenging to introduce a new LLP to meet the particular needs of a local area or to address sustainability and community issues, which is particularly relevant when allocating to a large new build affordable housing development.

Recommended change

Include a provision to agree local lettings policies for larger new build schemes, allowing the Council to introduce specific allocations criteria in future.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show 68.2% of all responses agree with the proposed changes to the Local Lettings Policy, demonstrating the majority are in favour of the changes. 66.8% of Rotherham residents agreed with the proposed change.

9.5% of all responses received did not agree with the proposed change. 10.2% of Rotherham residents did not agree with the proposal.

2.10 Change 10 – Age restricted properties

Background context of the change

Currently there are properties and housing complexes within Rotherham that are advertised with an age restriction.

Why change?

These properties are not specified within Policy.

Recommended change

List all properties and complexes that are advertised with an age restriction within the Allocation Policy.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The results show that 76.8% of all responses agree with the proposed changes to age restricted properties, demonstrating the majority are in favour of the change. 77.0% of Rotherham residents also agreed with the proposal.

7.3% of all responses did not agree with the proposed change. 7.5% of Rotherham residents did not agree with the proposal.

2.11 Change 11 – Making best use of stock

Background context of the change

Section 3.4 of the current Allocation Policy sets out the size and type of properties different household types are eligible for.

Why change?

The aim of the Allocation Policy is to help those in greatest housing need whilst making best use of our housing stock. Rotherham's existing Allocation Policy is relatively generous in terms of allowing under-occupation, meaning the available stock is not utilised efficiently in all cases. This is more difficult to justify in the context of higher levels of housing need and demand. In particular, there are severe shortages of some types of homes including bungalows, four-bedroom houses and 'parlour' houses.

Recommended change

The proposed new Policy includes updated permitted occupancy levels, detailing the size and type of property each household is eligible for. Please refer to the proposed new Policy Section 4.5.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show 80.5% of all responses agree with the proposed changes to making the best use of stock, demonstrating the majority are in favour of the change. 79.1% of Rotherham residents also agreed to the proposed change. This proposal had one of the strongest rates of agreement within the consultation.

Only 5.9% of all responses to this proposed change did not agree with the proposal. 5.3% of Rotherham residents disagreed with the proposal.

2.12 Change 12 – Shared care of children

Background context of the change

Section 3.4 of the existing Housing Allocation Policy states:

If the arrangement is 50/50 shared care e.g., 1 week with one parent and one week with the other parent, both parents will be eligible for family accommodation, subject to affordability.

Why change?

The aim of the Housing Allocation Policy is to help those in greatest housing need, whilst making the best use of our housing stock.

Larger accommodation is in high demand. In allowing both parents with 50% care responsibilities to be eligible for houses, larger family accommodation is under-occupied for 50% of the time. The Council has also faced issues with verifying care arrangements.

At the same time, there is a high number of families homeless or overcrowded which need larger family accommodation.

Recommended change

Allocate houses to the main carer. The main carer will be established using the following test:

- which parent/guardian receives benefits, such as child benefit/ Universal Credit.
- the home address and next of kin which the child/ren's school and GP have registered for them.
- and by checking the identity of the parents/guardian shown on the birth certificate(s), and if necessary, conducting a home visit.

In exceptional cases, the Council will have the discretion to allocate houses to applicants with shared care. Evidence will be sought via a multi-agency approach and where there is a proven need for the additional space.

The other carer will still be eligible for a flat that is large enough to accommodate dependents.

This approach also reduces the risk of tenancy fraud as formal verification will have been undertaken by HMRC and the DWP.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The results show that 72.3% of all responses agree with the proposed changes around shared care of children, demonstrating the majority are in favour of the change. 71.7% of Rotherham residents also agreed with the proposal.

11.4% of all responses disagreed with the proposed change. 11.8% of Rotherham residents disagreed with the proposal.

2.13 Change 13 – Direct lets

Background context of the change

The use of direct lets is detailed in the current policy under Section 5 Housing Management Lettings. Direct lets are where the Council allocates a property outside of choice-based lettings. It is commonly used to discharge a homelessness duty.

Why change?

The use of direct lets has increased as the Council has had to deal with more urgent rehousing requests, including its homelessness duties, to support care leavers, and to rehouse current council tenants who must move urgently.

Recommended change

Strengthen the approach in the policy in order to give the Council more flexibility in utilising direct lets where appropriate and provide more transparency about how this is done. This will include emphasising the Council's right to make a single, direct offer of appropriate accommodation in order to fulfil a statutory homelessness duty.

This would mainly apply to applicants who are homeless and in temporary accommodation and owed a section 189B(2) relief duty or 193(2) main duty.

As a landlord, the Council has discretion to facilitate management moves for its own tenants and this is detailed in a separate decant procedure.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show that 69.5% of all responses agree with the proposed changes around direct lets, demonstrating the majority are in favour of the change. 67.9% of Rotherham residents agree with the proposal.

In contrast, only 7.7% of responses disagreed with the proposal. 8.6% of Rotherham residents disagreed with the proposal.

2.14 Change 14 – Band One bidding criteria

Background context of the change

Band One is the highest level of prioritisation awarded. The current policy specifies that Band One is time limited to three-months and bids are restricted to areas of Rotherham with sufficient stock and turnover.

Why change?

Applicants awarded Band One are recognised as being in greatest housing need, yet currently they are restricted in which areas they can bid for properties in. This does not support the choice-based lettings principle and is not applied to applicants in all other bands. In some cases, it can prevent applicants securing rehousing in their local area.

Recommended change

Retain the three-month timescale but remove restriction that Band One applications can only bid in areas of high stock and turnover.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show that 78.2% of all responses agree with the proposed changes around Band One Bidding Criteria, demonstrating the majority are in favour of the change. 78.6% of Rotherham residents agreed with the proposal.

7.7% of all responses did not agree with the proposed change, whilst 7.5% of Rotherham residents did not agree with the proposal.

2.15 Change 15 – Housing need categories

Background context of the change

The aim of the Allocation Policy is to help those in greatest housing need and applicants are placed in a band depending on their circumstances.

The three housing need categories are Band One (highest priority), Band Two and Band Three.

The Housing Act 1996 stipulates which housing need categories are required to be given 'reasonable preference'. Once these are met, the Council can then set the framework for its Allocation Policy.

Band Four is reserved for applicants with no housing need.

Why change?

Benchmarking has evidenced that Rotherham's Allocation Policy has a high number of housing need categories in bands one, two, and three. This has made the Policy challenging to apply and understand.

Current bandings do not always reflect or support the Council's homelessness responsibilities. For example, homeless households that are not in priority need currently receive the same level of priority on the housing register as those who are in priority need.

Band One is the Council's highest priority band and time limited to reflect the urgency to be re-housed, yet the current Policy includes a large number of categories within Band One.

Recommended change

Reduce the number of housing need categories across Band One, Band Two and Band Three.

- Band One will focus on the most urgent rehousing cases, including where a main homelessness duty is owed and/or where there is a significant and pressing safeguarding risk that can only be managed through urgent rehousing.
- Band Two will focus on the statutory 'reasonable preference' housing need categories.
- Band Three will focus on households who are in housing need but where statutory thresholds may not be met.

Please refer to the new proposed Allocation Policy Section 5 which details which housing need categories will fall into which bands.

Retain Band Four to enable applicants with no housing need to remain on the housing register.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show that 72.3% of all responses agree with the proposed changes to the housing need categories, demonstrating the majority are in favour of the change. 70.6% of Rotherham residents agreed with the proposal.

In contrast, only 7.7% of responses disagreed with the proposed change. 9.1% of Rotherham residents disagreed with the proposal.

2.16 Change 16 – Transfer band

Background context of the change

Council tenants in no housing need are eligible to re-join the housing register 12 months after securing their tenancy. The criteria applied is no tenancy breaches and a clear rent account. Currently 10% of all properties are advertised with a preference to the transfer band including all new build developments.

Why change?

Applicants in the transfer band are not in housing need and are adequately housed. They have already benefited from at least one allocation to social housing. Despite this, currently 10% of properties are advertised with a preference to the transfer band.

Recommended change

Remove the transfer band and place council tenants with no housing need in Band Four.

Council tenants will be assessed the same as all applicants, and where they meet the criteria for a housing need category, will be placed in the appropriate band.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show 71.4% of all responses agree with the proposed changes to the Transfer Band, demonstrating a majority are in favour of the change. 71.1% of Rotherham residents also agreed with the proposal.

11.4% of all responses did not agree with the proposed changes, whilst 12.8% of Rotherham residents did not agree.

2.17 Change 17 – Advertising quotas

Background context of the change

Advertising quotas are used to assign a 'preference' to applicants in certain bandings. Quotas are used to ensure that applicants in lower bands have a route to secure rehousing, which supports the principle of an open housing register and can contribute to mixed and balanced communities.

The current advertising quotas are:

- 60% to Band Two
- 30% to Band Three
- 0% to Band Four
- 10% to Transfer Band

Band One applicants are always placed at the top of any shortlist and therefore no advertising quota is required.

Why change?

Without advertising quotas there would be reduced housing options for applicants outside of bands one and two, so retaining quotas is considered an important feature of any open housing register.

While the current system provides a route to council lettings for existing social tenants not in housing need, it does not do so for private rented tenants not in housing need and this group is more likely to be experiencing challenges with housing costs.

Recommended change

The proposal is to retain advertising quotas to the following:

- 60% to band two (no change)
- 30% to band three (no change)
- 10% to band four (increase as no quota is currently applied to this band)

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show 65.9% of all responses agree with the proposed changes to Advertising Quotas, demonstrating a majority are in agreement with the change. 65.8% of Rotherham residents also agreed with the proposal.

8.6% of responses disagreed with the proposed change. 9.1% of Rotherham residents also disagreed with the proposal.

This proposal had one of the highest levels of neutral responses in the consultation.

2.18 Change 18 – Deliberate worsening of circumstances

Background context of the change

Currently there is no ability in the Policy to suspend and investigate an applicant where we have reason to believe they have deliberately worsened their circumstances to get housing priority. Examples includes owner occupiers who have “gifted” their property and approached the Council for re-housing.

Why change?

The demand for social housing is growing, resulting in the number of households on the housing register increasing. It is therefore important that applicants utilise other housing options available to them.

Recommended change

Insert new section in the Policy allowing the Council to suspend applications and conduct investigations.

Any applicant who has deliberately worsened their circumstances will not be awarded additional priority and the Council would reserve the right to cancel their application.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show 82.7% of all responses agree with the proposed changes around deliberate worsening of circumstances, demonstrating the majority are in favour of the change. 81.8% of Rotherham residents agreed with the change. This proposal was one of the strongest supported within the consultation.

Only 3.6% of all responses disagreed with the proposed change. 3.7% of Rotherham residents also disagreed with the proposed change.

2.19 Change 19 – Auto-bid

Background context of the change

Auto-bid is a facility that enables bids to be placed automatically where applicants may not wish to or be incapable of bidding themselves. All other applicants receive two offers on the housing register, and if both offers are refused their housing application is cancelled. This does not apply to those set to auto-bid.

Why change?

Because applicants set to auto-bid are currently not restricted to two suitable offers, some applicants receive considerably more than two offers and remain on the housing register. As the Council operates a housing register of need, all applicants should be actively bidding on properties that meet their requirements.

Recommended change

The proposal is that auto-bid is retained. In the event of two suitable offers being made by auto-bid and refused, auto-bid will be removed from their application and applicants will be required to bid themselves and will have two remaining offers. Where there are known advocates or support services, if consent has been given, we will also discuss re-housing preferences and review the requirements of the applicants re-housing needs and amend auto-bid as appropriate so that a second offer should be suitable.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show 79.1% of all responses agree with the proposed changes to auto-bid, demonstrating the majority are in favour of the change. 78.6% of Rotherham residents also agreed with the proposal.

9.1% of all responses disagreed with the proposed change. 9.1% of Rotherham residents also disagreed with the proposal.

2.20 Change 20 – Failure to bid

Background context of the change

The current Policy does not cover applicants failing to bid.

Why change?

The Council operates a housing register of need and therefore applicants are expected to be actively bidding. Currently this is not always the case.

Recommended change

Where no bids have been placed within 12 months, the application will be automatically cancelled, and applicants will be required to re-join the housing register. The applicant will receive a letter advising them of this decision.

Where applicants re-approach within a six-month period, if there have been extenuating circumstances such as bereavement, or long-term illness, which has led to no bids being placed, their application will be reinstated to their original band and effective date.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show that 77.7% of all responses agree with the proposed changes to failure to bid, demonstrating the majority are in favour of the change. 75.4% of Rotherham residents also agree with the proposal.

15.9% of all responses disagreed with the proposed change, with 18.2% of Rotherham residents also disagreeing. This proposal had one of the highest levels of disagreement in the consultation.

2.21 Change 21 – Assignments, successions and mutual exchanges

Background context of the change

Some applicants are eligible to assign, succeed, or mutually exchange social housing tenancies. There is no reference to these processes in the current Allocation Policy.

Why change?

Setting out the process for assignments, successions, and mutual exchanges supports transparency and provides information on further housing options.

Recommended change

Re-introduce and include a description of the criteria and processes for assignments, successions, and mutual exchanges.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show 70.9% of all responses agree with the proposed changes around assignments, successions, and mutual exchanges, demonstrating the majority are in favour of the change. 70.6% of Rotherham residents also agree with the proposal.

Only 3.2% of all responses disagreed with the proposed change. 2.1% of Rotherham residents disagreed with the proposal.

This proposal had one of the highest levels of neutral responses in the consultation.

2.22 Change 22 – fixed term tenancies

Background context of the change

The Council currently issues fixed term tenancies in the following circumstances:

- Accommodation with four or more bedrooms.
- Specialist adapted properties.

Why change?

Fixed term tenancies help to ensure people move to a suitable property when they no longer require a larger or adapted council house, freeing up suitable properties to enable the Council to continue to meet the needs of overcrowded families and families with a disabled household member, in priority need.

Recommended change

To review and amend the Strategic Tenancy Policy.

To retain existing approach and additionally apply fixed term tenancies in the following circumstances:

- Fixed term tenancies will be granted to families where a son or daughter is over the age of 18 at the point of signing for the tenancy and there are no dependent children under the age of 18. Discretion will be applied in circumstances where the son or daughter over the age of 18 has ongoing support needs.
- Applicants who do not have indefinite leave to remain but are eligible by virtue of their inclusion in a class set out in the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility)(England) Regulations 2006. The length of a fixed-term tenancy will depend on individual circumstances and will be reviewed in-line with their immigration status.

Survey responses

Appendix A provides the details of all responses received to this proposal. Appendix B demonstrates how residents of Rotherham responded to the proposed change.

The responses show that 71.4% of all responses agree with the proposed changes around Fixed Term Tenancies, demonstrating the majority are in favour of the change. 69.0% of Rotherham residents agree with the proposal.

Only 5.5% of all responses disagreed with the proposed change. 4.8% of Rotherham residents also disagreed with the proposal.

3. Conclusion

Responses to the consultation survey were consistent across the 220 different respondents. Where a majority of respondents supported the proposed changes, this is demonstrated in Appendix A.

The areas that respondents were most in agreement with were tenancy fraud, deliberate worsening of circumstances and making best use of stock.

The Next Steps Plan, Assignments, Successions and Mutual Exchanges, and Advertising Quota's had the largest proportion of neutral responses.

The areas that had a higher level of disagreement were changes to local connection criteria, pre-tenancy interviews and failure to bid.

The consultation survey asked respondents to state if they were responding as a resident, organisationally or other. The majority of respondents were local residents of

Rotherham (187), as is demonstrated in Appendix B. Because of this, it is acknowledged how Rotherham residents felt about the proposed changes, alongside the overall opinion.

Some respondents commented on more than one proposed change and a number made no direct comments. Appendix D provides a detailed overview of this, identifying trends and themes in feedback provided.

Appendix A – Consultation responses

Appendix A

All consultation responses

April 2025

Summary Explanation: The consultation period ran from the 13 January 2025 through to the 6 April 2025. During this period, 220 responses were received via the Council's online consultation survey. The table below evidences the outcome of the survey for each of the 22 proposed changes. Neutral percentage is not outlined in the responder's column as the value is presented in the graph.

	NUMBER OF RESPONDERS					% OF RESPONDERS					% RESPONDERS	
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total Disagree	Total Agree
Change 1 - Local connection	27	19	23	54	97	12.3%	8.6%	10.5%	24.5%	44.1%	20.9%	68.6%
Change 2 - Debt policy	12	17	29	75	87	5.5%	7.7%	13.2%	34.1%	39.5%	13.2%	73.6%
Change 3 - Applicants who do not qualify	19	10	32	56	103	8.6%	4.5%	14.5%	25.5%	46.8%	13.2%	72.3%
Change 4 - Owner occupiers with savings	18	19	32	48	103	8.2%	8.6%	14.5%	21.8%	46.8%	16.8%	68.6%
Change 5 - Next steps plan	7	5	60	73	75		27.3%		33.2%	34.1%	5.5%	67.3%
Change 6 - Tenancy fraud	3	2	16	45	154	7.3%		20.5%		70.0%	2.3%	90.5%
Change 7 - Pre-tenancy interviews	21	19	32	65	83	9.5%	8.6%	14.5%	29.5%	37.7%	18.2%	67.3%
Change 8 - Allocation of new build	15	19	26	61	99	6.8%	8.6%	11.8%	27.7%	45.0%	15.5%	72.7%
Change 9 - Local lettings policy	7	14	49	73	77	6.4%		22.3%	33.2%	35.0%	9.5%	68.2%
Change 10 - Age restricted properties	8	8	35	86	83		15.9%		39.1%	37.7%	7.3%	76.8%
Change 11 - Making best use of stock	7	6	30	66	111		13.6%		30.0%	50.5%	5.9%	80.5%
Change 12 - Shared care of children	16	9	36	63	96	7.3%	4.1%	16.4%	28.6%	43.6%	11.4%	72.3%
Change 13 - Direct lets	12	5	50	81	72	5.5%		22.7%	36.8%	32.7%	7.7%	69.5%
Change 14 - Band One bidding criteria	8	9	31	63	109	4.1%	14.1%		28.6%	49.5%	7.7%	78.2%
Change 15 - Housing needs	7	10	44	73	86	4.5%		20.0%	33.2%	39.1%	7.7%	72.3%
Change 16 - Transfer band	13	12	38	68	89	5.9%	5.5%	17.3%	30.9%	40.5%	11.4%	71.4%
Change 17 - Advertising quota	7	12	56	70	75	5.5%		25.5%	31.8%	34.1%	8.6%	65.9%
Change 18 - Deliberate worseing of circumstances	5	3	30	52	130		13.6%		23.6%	59.1%	3.6%	82.7%
Change 19 - Auto-bid	12	8	26	71	103	5.5%	3.6%	11.8%	32.3%	46.8%	9.1%	79.1%
Change 20 - Failure to bid	25	10	14	69	102	11.4%	4.5%	6.4%	31.4%	46.4%	15.9%	77.7%
Change 21 - Assignments, successions and mutual exchanges	3	4	57	74	82		25.9%		33.6%	37.3%	3.2%	70.9%
Change 22 - Fixed term tenancies	3	9	51	74	83	4.1%		23.2%	33.6%	37.7%	5.5%	71.4%

Appendix B – Rotherham resident's responses

Appendix B

Date: April 2025

Summary explanation: The consultation period ran from the 13 January 2025 through to the 6 April 2025. During this period, responses were received via the Council's online consultation survey. The table below evidences the outcome of the survey for each of the 22 proposed changes. Neutral percentage is not outlined in the responder's column as the value is presented in the graph.

	NUMBER OF RESPONDERS					% OF RESPONDERS					% RESPONDERS	
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total Disagree	Total Agree
Change 1 - Local connection	25	17	21	45	79	13.4%	9.1%	11.2%	24.1%	42.2%	22.5%	66.3%
Change 2 - Debt policy	11	16	24	64	72	5.9%	8.6%	12.8%	34.2%	38.5%	14.4%	72.7%
Change 3 - Applicants who do not qualify	17	10	25	49	86	9.1%	5.3%	13.4%	26.2%	46.0%	14.4%	72.2%
Change 4 - Owner occupiers with savings	17	19	27	38	86	9.1%	10.2%	14.4%	20.3%	46.0%	19.3%	66.3%
Change 5 - Next steps plan	7	5	54	59	62	3.7%	28.9%	31.6%	33.2%		6.4%	64.7%
Change 6 - Tenancy fraud	3	1	14	38	131	7.5%	20.3%	70.1%			2.1%	90.4%
Change 7 - Pre-tenancy interviews	20	13	24	58	72	10.7%	7.0%	12.8%	31.0%	38.5%	17.6%	69.5%
Change 8 - Allocation of new build	13	17	24	49	84	7.0%	9.1%	12.8%	26.2%	44.9%	16.0%	71.1%
Change 9 - Local lettings policy	6	13	43	60	65	7.0%	23.0%	32.1%	34.8%		10.2%	66.8%
Change 10 - Age restricted properties	6	8	29	72	72	4.3%	15.5%	38.5%	38.5%		7.5%	77.0%
Change 11 - Making best use of stock	5	5	29	57	91	15.5%	30.5%	48.7%			5.3%	79.1%
Change 12 - Shared care of children	15	7	31	55	79	8.0%	3.7%	16.6%	29.4%	42.2%	11.8%	71.7%
Change 13 - Direct lets	12	4	44	64	63	6.4%	23.5%	34.2%	33.7%		8.6%	67.9%
Change 14 - Band One bidding criteria	7	7	26	55	92	3.7%	13.9%	29.4%	49.2%		7.5%	78.6%
Change 15 - Housing needs	7	10	38	56	76	5.3%	20.3%	29.9%	40.6%		9.1%	70.6%
Change 16 - Transfer band	12	12	30	57	76	6.4%	6.4%	16.0%	30.5%	40.6%	12.8%	71.1%
Change 17 - Advertising quota	6	11	47	57	66	5.9%	25.1%	30.5%	35.3%		9.1%	65.8%
Change 18 - Deliberate worseing of circumstances	4	3	27	46	107	14.4%	24.6%	57.2%			3.7%	81.8%
Change 19 - Auto-bid	11	6	23	56	91	5.9%	12.3%	29.9%	48.7%		9.1%	78.6%
Change 20 - Failure to bid	24	10	12	60	81	12.8%	5.3%	6.4%	32.1%	43.3%	18.2%	75.4%
Change 21 - Assignments, successions and mutual exchanges	2	2	51	63	69	27.3%	33.7%	36.9%			2.1%	70.6%
Change 22 - Fixed term tenancies	2	7	49	60	69	3.7%	26.2%	32.1%	36.9%		4.8%	69.0%

Appendix C – Equalities data

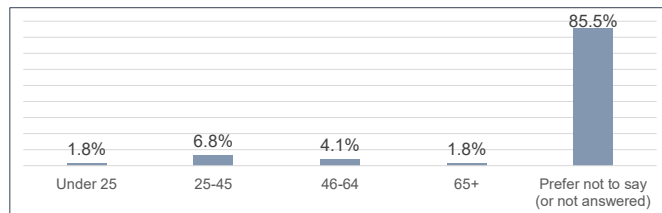
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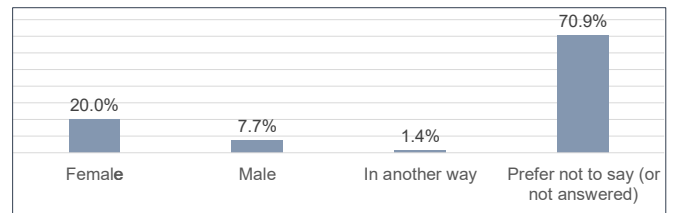
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Equalities Monitoring of Responders

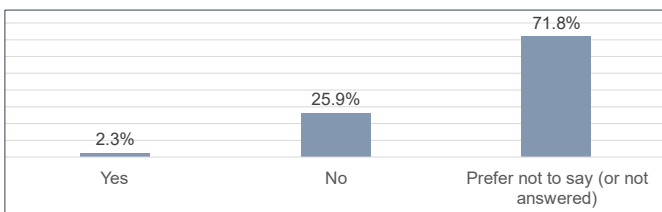
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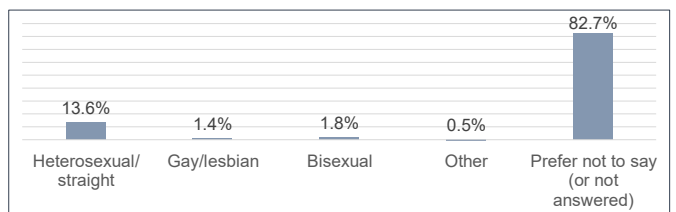
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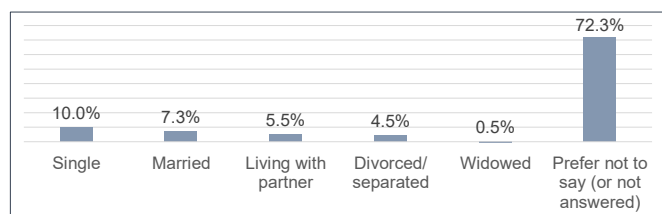
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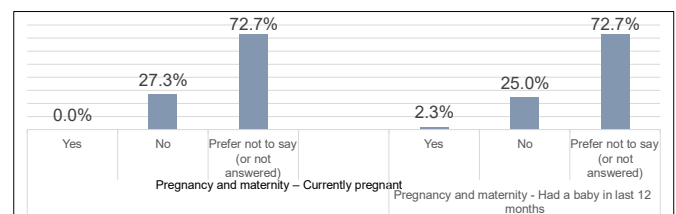
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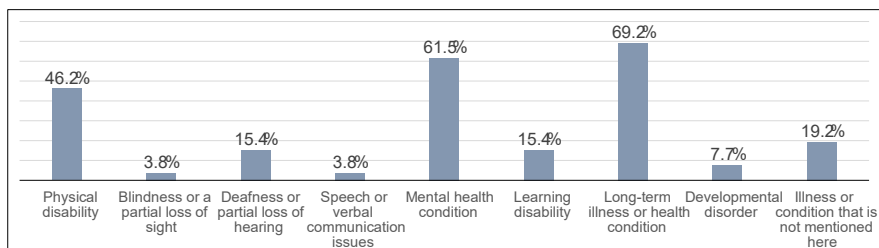
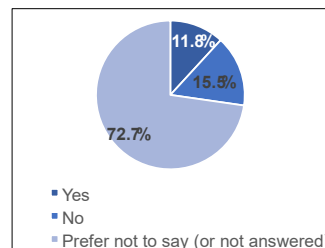
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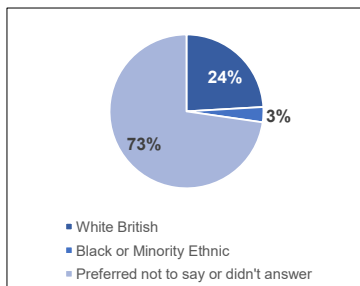
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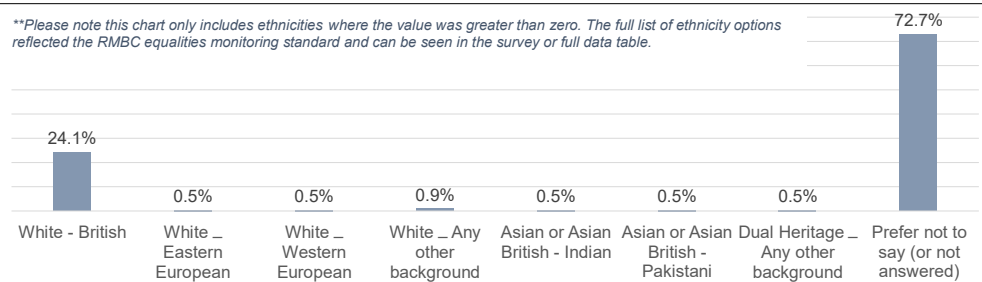
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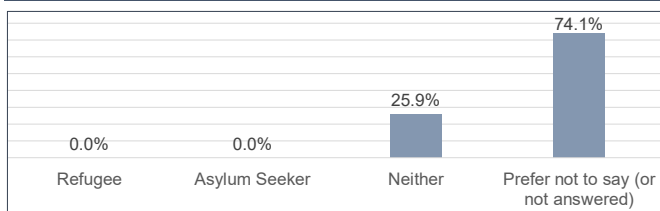
Ethnicity



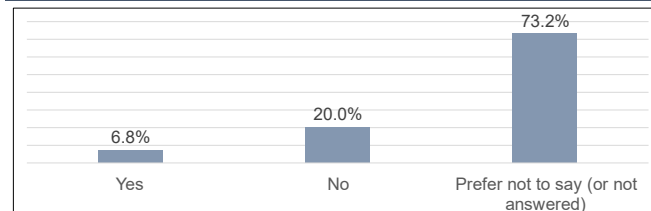
****Please note this chart only includes ethnicities where the value was greater than zero. The full list of ethnicity options reflected the RMBC equalities monitoring standard and can be seen in the survey or full data table.**



Refugee or Asylum Seeker status



Carers



Appendix D – Further comments

Summary of themes from comments and feedback from the Housing Allocations Policy Review Consultation 2025

In addition to the survey data, the Council have evaluated all comments and feedback received from the consultation. The summary below does not reflect all individual comments/feedback received; however, it provides the themes of feedback received. A record of all individual comments and feedback have been kept on Council file.

Proposed Change	Summary of themes from comments/feedback	Council's response
Change 1 Local connection	Feedback which supported the proposed change, included that it was let that the current system is open to abuse and hard to prove the change is welcomed. Other feedback included: There needs to be consideration on the effect on disabled applicants living out of borough and needing to move into the borough for support. Some feedback suggests that some respondents disagree with the reduction from 3 years to 2 years residency, suggesting 2 years is not long enough, some feedback stated they felt it should remain at 3 years or longer. Two years continuous employment rule, clarification is needed about those people who can't work due to disabilities. Consideration is needed where there should be exemptions, for example where a person can show	The Council proposed to move from 3-year local connection criteria to a 2-year residency test. Meaning that unless exempt, applicants are required to be resident in Rotherham continuously for the last 2-years. The feedback has been evaluated and whilst there is strong support to implement a residency test, comments suggest that some disagree with reducing the timescale to a 2-year period. Following this feedback, the new Policy has been amended, and unless exempt, applicants will be required to be resident in Rotherham for 3 out of the last 4-years. Additionally, applicants who have paid employment in Rotherham, and have done for the past two years has also been amended to 3 out of the last 4 years. Section 3.2 of the proposed Policy states: Where the Council agrees there are very exceptional circumstances requiring a move into the area. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis. Including:

	significant medical conditions or disabilities, and their primary carer lives in Rotherham.	where the Council agrees there is a very exceptional need to live in the area to provide or receive essential support. Once registered, an applicant must continue to meet the residential connection qualification rule. If the applicant no longer meets this rule, they will be removed from the housing register as they will no longer qualify for inclusion.
Change 2 Tenancy related debt and tenancy breaches	Feedback in support of the proposed change acknowledged the change amending the debt criteria from £800 to 'the equivalent of 8-weeks rent' can be beneficial. Feedback suggested that the current policy is outdated and should reflect the rise in rents. Other feedback included: 8 weeks rent equivalent can be too complicated. Clearing a percentage is more do able. This approach could penalise the most vulnerable people who are struggling. Debts should be cleared before being allowed to access the housing register, providing an incentive to pay.	The criterion for tenancy related debt was set in 2014. Since this time the cost of living has increased including rent, in particularly the private rented sector. Amending to criteria to the equivalent of 8-weeks rent allows the Council to assess applications on a case-by-case basis depending on the level of rent payable. The new policy retains the additional criteria including, reducing the debt by 25% and maintaining a payment plan. The Policy states: applicants in housing need (Bands One, Two and Three) will remain suspended 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 and agree to continue to reduce the debt by making regular payments via an agreed payment plan. Applicants not in housing need (Band Four), will be required to have no tenancy related debts.
Change 3 Applicants who do not qualify	Where feedback supported this proposal, comments suggested this approach should also be the same for private rented sector tenants, and those who have	The qualification criteria for applicants who have previously been evicted only applies to Council and Housing Association tenancies.

	had proceedings for their owned property (repossessed). Other feedback included: People shouldn't be allowed a tenancy if previously evicted through non-payment. It should depend on the circumstances. A strong theme of feedback focused on anti-social behaviour, this included: Consideration is needed to ensure the policy includes private tenants who are evicted due to behaviour. Where there are instances where people are failed during the tenancy and lack of support means they have been evicted. We need to consider options for these people. Suggestion of the council investing more into supporting tenants who are causing ASB, to manage the longer-term costs of rehousing and supporting through homelessness route. Consideration around people with mental health and allocation of properties. Perpetrators of ASB may be suffering from mental health and would be better suited to residing in quieter areas with less people around.	Prior to eviction proceedings, applicants in Council and Housing Association tenancies are more likely to receive additional support compared to applicants in other tenures. The Council make appropriate referrals to other supporting agencies to assist with applicants remaining in their home and prevent eviction. A strong theme of the feedback focused on anti-social behaviour and supported the changes. Amendments to the new Policy has been made to include where an applicant has been evicted due to rent arrears and there was no anti-social behaviour, if the debt is re-paid in full before the five years, the applicant will be allowed to join the housing register. This incentivises applicants to re-pay the debt and may have had a change in circumstances from the time they were evicted. Applicants who have been evicted from a Council tenancy are eligible to receive support from the Council's homelessness team. Other housing options are considered including referrals to supported accommodation providers.
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Change 4 Qualification for owner occupiers or applicants with savings	Feedback where this proposed change was welcomed voiced that people who own their own home should not be able to join the housing register. Social housing should be for those on low income etc. Other feedback included: In agreement with homeowners, however a theme from some of the feedback expressed that the proposed £16,000 threshold is a concern stating money doesn't go far these days. £16,000 may not be enough to cover the costs of their own circumstances. It was suggested that each individual circumstances needs to be looked at on a case by cases basis. Also, that the £16,000 saving threshold could discourage people saving and that private individuals who have worked hard and saved may feel penalised. It was also suggested that it should be age related, considering pensions. If money comes from pensions, it should be excluded but property assets should be included. Feedback expressed concerns over elderly applicants who are requiring bungalows for medical grounds and may not have the finance to meet their needs.	The new qualification criteria will ensure that applicants who have resources to resolve their own housing do not qualify to join the housing register. There will be an in-depth assessment of any applicant who owns a home, or formerly owned a home, or has savings over £16,000. The assessment will assume that applicants who have equity, savings, or assets worth over a quarter of the average property price for Rotherham can resolve their own housing circumstances and not qualify to join the housing register, unless there are mitigating circumstances. As of January 2025, the average house priced in Rotherham was around £180,000, therefore applicants with equity, savings, or assets over the value of £45,000 will not be eligible to join the housing register, unless there are mitigating circumstances. Applicants with a medical need will be assessed by the Medical Assessment Panel will consider the following: • The amount of capital in savings, or equity from home ownership, and whether there are sufficient resources to be able to resolve your own housing issue, taking in to account medical conditions and the type of property required. • If aids and adaptations can be considered to help applicants in remaining in their own home.
Change 5 Next steps plan	Feedback suggested that this proposed change was welcomed and was good way of looking at things. Stating that more support for people around why they've got into debt, rather than blanketing all debt	The proposal creates a single pathway to ensure that vulnerable applicants in housing need have access to housing.

	together would help individuals manage better moving forward. Other feedback included: This approach makes it easier to understand and everyone should have a second chance. Some feedback suggested respondents were unsure about what the proposed change meant.	Applicants will be required to commit and engage with appropriate services and evidence presented to Housing Assessment Panel for consideration.
Change 6 Tenancy fraud	Feedback welcoming this change and added that more investigation work needs to be done to stop tenancy fraud. This will help to stop people committing housing fraud and renting multiple properties and then re letting. It was suggested that more officers to tackle tenancy fraud may be needed in the future.	
Change 7 Pre-tenancy interviews	Where feedback suggests this proposed change was beneficial stating a pre-tenancy interview was a waste of time to do this right at the front end of a process when somebody initially applies for the housing register, and it would be much better when you get further down the line, and they are getting towards successful bidding. Other feedback included- Preference of being offered a face-to-face interview instead of a phone call.	All applicants will continue to have a pre-tenancy interview, the proposals are to allow flexibility regarding when a pre-tenancy interview is carried out due to service demand. At the request of the applicant, pre-tenancy interviews can be completed in-person, additionally home visits can also be undertaken for applicants who cannot access the service.

	Every applicant must have a pre-tenancy interview with a full and proper ID check with photo ID before a tenancy is granted. It makes sense to complete a pre tenancy prior to joining housing register, however some feedback suggested respondents may have interpreted the proposed change differently. The proposal was not to stop carrying out the pre- interview but to allow housing services to be more flexible when the most appropriate time was to undertake them.	
Change 8 Allocation of new build properties	Where feedback welcomed the new build proposal comments provided shared examples where an applicant was excluded from bidding for new build because they weren't a current council tenant. Feedback stated that nobody should be excluded, and everyone should be given the same opportunities. Feedback included: The assurance that the homes on new estates will be allocated to existing tenants with no history of anti-social behaviour is attractive to developers is needed. It also reduces the likelihood of complaints and housing management issues re new tenants. The same checks should apply to all tenures, e.g. an up-to-date tenancy check to check condition of property, rent arrears, ASB. One theme of feedback where the proposed change was not supported was centred around the opinion, they felt new builds should be only offered to existing council tenants with a good tenant history.	As detailed in section 6.7 of the new policy, thorough verification checks will be made prior to offer, these include: • Identity • Proof of address • Landlord references. • Affordability assessment • Suitability of the offer being made. Additionally further checks may be required including: • A telephone assessment with the Housing Officer. • Home visit. • Other services as appropriate including police. probation and social services. Where checks are not satisfactory the Council will reserve the "right not to offer" as detailed in section 6.11 of the new policy.

	Other feedback suggested that tenants of good record should have a preferential bid. This will free up an existing property to be improved as necessary and re-let. It could be that 50% of new builds are allocated in this way to give balance.	The aim of the housing register is to assist applicants in greatest housing need, advertising new build properties to the transfer band does not support this.
Change 9 Local lettings policies	Feedback supporting the proposed change emphasised the local letting policy will help to strengthen the community spirit. Other feedback included: The current local lettings policy on rural lettings needed reviewing as it was felt not all rural areas should be considered as rural areas.	In this review, no recommendations have been made regarding the rural lettings policy. The feedback is welcomed and will be considered in future reviews as this was not specified in the consultation.
Change 10 Age restricted properties	Feedback in support of this proposed change demonstrated that it was felt that this was a good idea. Stating it should also be refreshed regularly due to new build properties being built which may have the restriction or potential buy backs that may have an age limit and are new stock. Some feedback suggested respondents did not like the idea of age restricted properties in general.	Age restrictions have been applied to properties for a number of years, listing these properties within the Policy provides transparency. Properties subject to an age restriction mainly apply to properties that were part of the Council's sheltered housing schemes that were intended for older people.
Change 11 Making best use of stock	The general feedback supported this proposed change and recognised that under occupying a property needed to be addressed. Comments around the availability of family sized homes need to be more available and ensure they are not blocked by people who don't need them.	Since 2018, the Council has delivered 669 new homes for Council rent or shared ownership. Further sites and projects have been identified to deliver hundreds more properties to meet the Council's commitment to deliver 1,000 new Council homes across the borough by summer 2027.

	Feedback included the need to build more houses in Rotherham.	
Change 12 Shared care of children	Feedback in support stated the proposed changes would help more people who needed housing. Whilst it was recognised that people would want room for their children to stay and saw this proposed change as a positive move. Other feedback included: Where feedback was not in support of the proposed changes, it was expressed that this was unfair and likely to impact on the father of one of the parents. There were also concerns that if there are two children in the household of both sexes, they would have to share a room when staying with the parent not classed as the main carer. Also expressed in the feedback was that this approach may also feel like one parent is more important than the other.	Due to the demand on the housing register and the Council's homelessness service, the aim of the policy is to assist those in greatest housing need whilst making best use of stock. The occupancy levels set out in new Policy allow a level of under-occupation. Applicants not eligible for houses can under-occupy flats and maisonettes. Section 4.5 of the new policy states: In exceptional cases, the Council will have the discretion to allocate houses to applicants with shared care. Evidence will be sought via a multi-agency approach and where there is a proven need for a house.
Change 13 Direct lets	Feedback stated that there needed to be more information about direct lets and how this works in principle. Other feedback included: Although some feedback suggested direct lets were not considered fair and that prospective tenants should be treated as equals and were not in support of this proposed change.	The new policy outlines circumstances in which a property will not be advertised and instead offered as a direct let. Direct lets are let in accordance with the Housing Allocation Policy however, properties are not advertised via the choice-based lettings scheme and an applicant is directly matched. Applicants who are offered a direct let are registered and eligible for re-housing.
Change 14 Band One bidding criteria	Feedback in support of the proposed change stated where people are in greater need to be housed more	Band one applicants will no longer be restricted to areas of sufficient stock and turnover. Band one applicants have been assessed as being in greatest housing need

	urgently this is supported rather than waiting to cherry pick properties. Other feedback included: Clarification needed whether this means that band 1 get all the best houses in the best places? Clarification needed on what % of properties are let to Band 1 compared to the % of properties that are let to people with a rural connection? It was feedback that people should be given a chance with a rural connection to live in their communities. It was suggested that the Council should consider reducing the number of rural areas (if they have grown rapidly) but unfair to take away this priority. Feedback stated that people shouldn't be forced into areas because they are desperate depending on situation, they should be top of banding and able to have a choice of housing/ areas.	and require urgent re-housing, restricting areas can be a barrier to this. Retaining 3-month timescales ensure that applicants with band one is actively bidding when suitable properties are being advertised. As with all bands, band one should not be used to gain time on the housing register. Change 15, will also support these amendments. All housing need categories have been revised. Band one categories have been reduced from 14 to 5, meaning that under new policy there will be fewer band ones on the housing register. Reducing the number of band one categories will also support change 17 and advertising quotas. Applicants will still be able to choose suitable areas considering areas of support, employment, and education.
Change 15 Housing need categories	Feedback supporting this proposed change, acknowledged that there is increasing demand for social housing, mainly because of the cost of living. Some people need to be prioritised over others and the banding system does this. Other feedback included: Clarity on what will happen if the proposed change is approved to those already awarded a priority, for example a medical priority? Concern over people in band 4, who on paper my look like their need is not the highest need, however when	The banding categories assist with supporting those in greatest housing need. If approved, all housing applications will be banded in accordance with the new policy. Change 17 will assist applicants in band four, with 10% of properties being advertised with a preference to band four applicants. Feedback is welcomed regarding publishing lettings results; this will be discussed with IT and the housing systems management provider.

	living in the private rented sector landlords can take advantage as they have the power to issue a Section 21 notice, and this can be a worry. Other feedback also suggested that as the percentage of available properties was so low they did not feel the point of this. Feedback suggested that more transparently on properties let within each category was needed and the council should respond to customers request for such information.	
Change 16 Transfer Band	Feedback in support agreed with the proposal stating that rehousing should be for people who are more in need and not for tenants who are already adequately housed. Other feedback included: Where feedback was not in support concerns were raised when there are situations where a transfer may be needed due to personal need such as move closer to ill family. Support from other family members etc” or when there are neighbour issues. Feedback stated that the policy will need to account for tenant’s life changes, which is not covered by the allocation policy (for example, school change for SEN children, job change, additional caring.	Council tenants will be assessed the same as all applications. Where there is housing need identified, the application will be placed in the band relevant to the circumstances. Council tenants with a secure tenancy also have the option to mutually exchange their tenancy, they can register on Homeswapper which is a national database. Housing applications are assessed in accordance with the Housing Allocation Policy.
Change 17 Advertising quotas	Feedback in support of the proposed change agreed stating that it seemed very positive. Although in agreement some feedback expressed, they felt it was lenient on the band 4 quota.	Whilst the Council operates a housing register of need, advertising quotas assists re-housing for applicants outside of bands one and two.

	Other feedback included: There was a general theme of concerns over not having enough housing stock in general to meet peoples need and suggestions to consider other weighing of how the quota of each banding's are split. Suggestions included considering increasing the quota of band 2. Feedback suggested band 3 applicants should have the same chance as band 2 applicants regardless of the situation.	Reducing housing need categories in band one will help to meet the advertising quotas as there will be fewer applicants in band one. Many of the housing need categories in band two are awarded where the council has a statutory duty and are required to give reasonable preference within the policy as defined in the Housing Act 1996. If agreed, advertising quotas will be reviewed within the first 12 months.
Change 18 Deliberate worsening of circumstances	Feedback in support stated that that the current system was open to abuse and agreed with this proposed change to the policy. Other feedback included: Not in support of the council carrying out their own investigations and if there is evidence of fraud then the police should be involved.	Detailed below is specific housing legislation. 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. The Council will take legal action against applicants or tenants who give false information or withhold information regarding their housing application which may include criminal prosecution under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013.
Change 19 Auto bids	Feedback in support of the proposed change felt the proposed changes were fair. Also, it will help people to be proactive on their registration and help reduce administration that is caused by auto-bid refusals. Although in agreement it was asked if this area can this be clearer as unsure if the 2nd auto bid be counted as an offer as well - or will applicants have 1 more chance with 1 offer remaining?	Section 6.6 of the new Policy states: In the event of two suitable offers being made by auto-bid and refused, auto-bid will be removed from their application and applicants will be required to bid themselves and will have two remaining offers. Auto-bid still provides applicants with choice, during the pre-tenancy interview discussions with the applicant will take place to understand their re-hosing requirements, this includes suitable localities. Where there are known

	Other feedback included: Where respondents were not in support, there was a general theme of auto bids at times controlling what applicants got offered and people should have choice.	advocates or support services, we will also discuss re-housing preferences if consent has been given. Auto-bid ensure that applicants who cannot place bids themselves, do not miss out on properties being advertised.
Change 20 Failure to bid	In support of the proposal, feedback welcomed this as a positive proposed change and felt that not being proactive in bidding could mean that people are not in the most need for rehousing. Other feedback included: Feedback stated that there may be circumstance that have prevented an applicant from bidding and this needs to be considered and a warning to the applicant would prompt them. Feedback suggested to review the timescale, some felt that it should be less, although other opinions said it should be more than proposed.	Where no bids have been placed within 12 months, the application will be automatically cancelled. Applicants will be advised of this in writing. Where applicants re-approach within a six-month period, if there have been extenuating circumstances such as bereavement, or long-term illness, which has led to no bids being placed, their application will be reinstated to their original band and effective date.
Change 21 Assignments, successions, and mutual exchanges	Feedback in support of the proposal stated that succession is important, especially for vulnerable people however most people should be offered smaller homes to accommodate their needs. Other feedback included: Feedback suggested that the Council should review more frequently than every 5 years on fixed term tenancies.	To consider a discretionary succession, the applicant must also be eligible to join the Housing Register and qualify for an offer of accommodation in their own right and satisfy the qualifying conditions including the property type and occupancy levels as set out in section 4.5 of this Policy. In certain circumstances if the property becomes under occupied, Housing Assessment Panel will consider individuals cases to allow a discretionary succession if it is considered there are exceptional housing management reasons to do so.

Change 22 Fixed term tenancies	Feedback in support felt this proposed change was a sensible approach and that larger family homes should be for the families who need them.	Where applicants have a change in circumstances and no longer require the size or type of property, they can approach the Council prior to the expiry of a fixed-term tenancy.
General feedback about the Housing Allocation policy	Some people find it hard to register and need support to register.	The Housing Advice & Assessment Team will provide support to applicants who find it difficult to register. An in-person appointment can be scheduled, additionally home visits can be arranged for applicants who are unable to attend a Council building.