

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 15 February 2021

Report Title

Amendments to the Housing Allocation Policy and Strategic Tenancy Policy

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Anne Marie Lubanski, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Report Author(s)

Sandra Tolley, Head of Housing Options

Ward(s) Affected

All Wards

Report Summary

The Council's Housing Allocation Policy has been in place since 29 October 2014. There have been periodic revisions to the policy since then. The most recent update was in September 2019, which embedded the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

The purpose of this report is to propose further adjustments to policy, which aim to respond to lessons learned over the past 12 months and the outcomes of a recent benchmarking exercise within the sub-region. This has helped to refine the policy and presents an opportunity to further improve how the Council helps those in greatest housing need.

The proposed amendments will also ensure that the Council's policy reflects the Government's taskforce recommendations to accommodate people faced with rough sleeping. In addition, to consider the steps required so that they remain off the street permanently. The proposed changes will also help to prevent repeat homelessness.

The Council's Strategic Tenancy Policy was approved by Cabinet on 19 December 2012. As the policy aligns closely with the Council's allocation of housing stock, it is also being reviewed as part of this allocations policy review.

Recommendations

That the proposed amendments to the Housing Allocation Policy detailed below be approved:

1. That Cabinet note that the Housing Allocation Policy has been reviewed and updated in line with current legislation.
2. That Cabinet approve the updated Housing Allocation Policy as attached in relation to changes to eligibility criteria and outlined at 3.1 to 3.14.
3. That Cabinet approve the updated Strategic Tenancy Policy as attached in relation to issuing of fixed term tenancies to new tenants of specialist housing and outlined at 3.15.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Revised Housing Allocation Policy
Appendix 2 Revised Strategic Tenancy Policy
Appendix 3 Initial Equality Screening (Part A)
Appendix 4 Equality Analysis (Part B)

Background Papers

Housing Allocation Policy (May 2019)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Improving Places Select Commission Working Group - 8 January 2021
Improving Places Select Commission - 2 February 2021

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Amendments to the Housing Allocation Policy and Strategic Tenancy Policy

1.	Background
1.1	The Council's Housing Allocation Policy has been in place since 29 October 2014. A significant change was made during 2014 to ensure that only those in housing need were eligible to join the Register, resulting in a reduction of households from over 30,000 to 6,677 applicants by 1 August 2018. There have been various revisions since then, the latest being in September 2019.
1.2	The eligibility criteria to join the Housing Register are set by the Secretary of State. As the United Kingdom has now left the European Union, new regulations regarding the allocation of housing and homelessness assistance under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) have come into force. The Government's policy intent is that those granted pre-settled status under the European Union Settlement Scheme will be subject to existing eligibility rules following the end of the transition period on 31st December 2020.
2.	Key Issues
2.1	<p>The Council's Allocation Policy focuses on helping people in greatest housing need to gain access to suitable and appropriate accommodation. The proposed amendments will ensure that the policy reflects sub-regional good practice, assists with homelessness assessments, and responds to changing demand, so that households are considered for the most appropriate type of accommodation.</p> <p>The proposed amendments are detailed in Sections 2.2 to 2.26 below:</p>
2.2	<p>Changes to ensure that children are considered for appropriate homes</p> <p>The issue</p> <p>Families with children where parents have separated are not able to bid for houses if the children are only staying at the weekends or for occasional parenting stays or have 50/50 custody.</p> <p>The current policy in respect of relationship breakdowns or shared custody of children under the age of 18, is that the parent that has the child for overnight stays of less than 4 days will be eligible for a maisonette/ground floor flat. The parent with access to the child 4 nights or more will be eligible for a house.</p> <p>If the arrangement is 50/50 shared care e.g. 1 week with one parent and one</p>

	<p>week with the other parent both parents will be eligible for a flat or maisonette. This means that children in such circumstances are missing out on enjoying outdoor space that would be provided with a family house. There are other families with children without access to gardens on the housing register and these are considered on an individual basis to award the relevant priority. The issue here is the eligibility for a house, so that both parties get a house, as opposed to a flat, when they have 50/50 access arrangements.</p>
2.3	<p>Recommendation</p> <p>To allow parents with 50/50 shared parental access to be eligible for houses if it is assessed as an affordable option. Families will need to provide evidence e.g. Court Order, or an agreement from Mediation detailing custodial arrangements, or a signed disclaimer from both parents detailing overnight access arrangements.</p>
2.4	<p>The issue</p> <p>The policy currently awards Band 3 status to Rotherham families living in flats who have children under 12 years old. The age criteria has historically only been applied to those living in upper floor flats.</p>
2.5	<p>Recommendation</p> <p>Remove the age limit and state that a family living in a flat with one or more dependents under the age of 21, is eligible in Band 3 to move from a flat to a house.</p>
2.6	<p>Changes to assist with homelessness assessments</p> <p>With the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act, the number of people who present to the local authority due to being faced with homelessness is rising. In April 2018, the Homelessness team's case load was 132 cases. This has increased to 386 by 31 December 2020.</p> <p>Between the 30 March 2020 and 31 December 2020, the homelessness team received 1069 new homeless applications. 773 of those needed to be placed in temporary accommodation. Any changes to the Allocation Policy must therefore ensure that there are no detrimental or negative impacts for homeless people such as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadvertently delaying their ability to secure suitable accommodation, or • increasing the amount of time spent in temporary accommodation.
2.7	<p>The issues</p> <p>Intentional Homelessness Decisions</p>

	<p>The Allocation Policy rules regarding applicants who are excluded from joining the housing register remain in place. This includes applicants who have previously been evicted from a Council or Housing Association secure tenancy in the last 5 years due to breaches of their tenancy conditions. Such applicants are ineligible to join the housing register. However, applicants may have lost their home for other reasons. If the Council finds that an applicant has become homeless due to an act or omission on their part, it can decide that the applicant has made themselves intentionally homeless. However, intentional homelessness decisions can only be made 56 days after the person became homeless.</p> <p>The last policy amendments made provision whereby applicants in priority need who are homeless, where a relief duty is owed or when a full main housing duty is owed, are placed into Band 1. This means that applicants can be awarded Band 1 status as soon as they become homeless and as Band 1 is the highest priority, the household could be rehoused before the intentional homelessness decision is made. Therefore, homeless applicants are often being rehoused before the investigation into intentionality can commence.</p>
2.8	<p>Homelessness Assessment Stages</p> <p>A further issue is that applicants who are owed a main duty have the same Band 1 award as those in the relief duty stage. Awarding the highest priority can deter homeless applicants from seeking alternative housing options in the wider housing sector, such as private rented accommodation.</p> <p>The Council owes a main homelessness duty when an applicant has remained physically homeless for more than 56 days. The main housing duty is only owed to those who are in priority need and have not made themselves intentionally homeless. The main duty can only be ended in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsequently becomes homeless intentionally from temporary accommodation provided under the main duty • voluntarily ceases to occupy the temporary accommodation provided • accepts an offer of a 12 months (fully) assured tenancy from a private landlord (including a housing association) • accepts a private rented sector offer or a final offer under the Authority's Part 6 allocation scheme • refuses suitable offers of accommodation <p>The implications are that applicants in the relief stage are being rehoused before those in the main duty stage as they have had their Band 1 status for a longer period. Moving Relief Duty to Band 2, will give the Homelessness Team time to work with the applicant to consider all housing options.</p>
2.9	The table below shows a comparison of Homelessness Bands applied by

	<p>other local authorities in the sub-region. Most of the LA's award Band 1 (except Sheffield) to households owed a main duty. Those owed a relief duty are awarded Band 1 in Rotherham and Band 2 or Band 3 in other local authorities in the sub-region.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Rotherham MBC</th> <th>Doncaster MBC</th> <th>Barnsley MBC</th> <th>Sheffield</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Band 1 Main Duty</td> <td>Platinum Band (Band1) Main Duty</td> <td>Band 1 Main Duty</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Band 1 Relief Duty</td> <td>Gold Band (Band 2) Relief Duty</td> <td>Band 2 Relief Duty</td> <td>Band 2 (B) Main Duty</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Band 2 Prevention Duty</td> <td>Gold (Band 2) Prevention Duty</td> <td>Band 2 Prevention Duty</td> <td>Band 3 © Prevention and Relief Duty</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Rotherham MBC	Doncaster MBC	Barnsley MBC	Sheffield	Band 1 Main Duty	Platinum Band (Band1) Main Duty	Band 1 Main Duty	-	Band 1 Relief Duty	Gold Band (Band 2) Relief Duty	Band 2 Relief Duty	Band 2 (B) Main Duty	Band 2 Prevention Duty	Gold (Band 2) Prevention Duty	Band 2 Prevention Duty	Band 3 © Prevention and Relief Duty
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	<p>All other regions place the prevention and relief duty into Band 2. Rotherham places a greater emphasis on being relieved from homelessness as opposed to being prevented from becoming homeless and both should be on the same footing.</p>																
2.10	<p>Recommendation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Those owed a main homelessness duty retain the Band 1 status. 2. Those households presenting as homeless after the policy date change who are owed a relief or prevention homelessness duty irrespective of priority need are awarded Band 2 status. Existing applications will retain their current banding. 																
2.11	<p>Changes to ensure local homeless people are given greater preference</p> <p>The issue - Homeless households are exempt from the Local Connection criteria. This means that local people who become homeless are receiving the same priority Band 1 and 2 as applicants whose last settled address was outside of the Borough.</p>																
2.12	<p>Recommendation</p> <p>Award a lesser priority (Band 4) to homeless applicants with no local connection (existing applications will retain their banding).</p> <p>The band 4 banding will not apply however to those who present as homeless in the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members or Former Members of the Armed Forces, this includes Former Members of the Reserve Forces where the application is made within 5 years of discharge who present as homeless • Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces 																

	<p>leaving service family accommodation following the death of their spouse/partner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship breakdown and divorcees of Members of the Armed Forces and Former Members of the Reserve Forces at the time of application. • Serving or former members of the Armed Forces and Former Members of the Reserve Forces who need to move in urgent circumstances because of serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service irrespective of when this was. • Care Leavers who present as homeless • Applicants who present as homeless who are fleeing violence including domestic abuse and witness protection. 																				
2.13	<p>Changes to reduce the number of categories in Band 1</p> <p>The issue is the high number of applicants in Band 1, when the intention is to award Band 1 for those in extreme, urgent housing need. This volume creates problems when shortlisting, as often there could be between 5 or 10 applications at the top of the shortlist with Band 1 status. Before an offer is made the policy states that the offer may not necessarily be awarded to the earliest dated Band 1 applicant, with issues such as any known risks or safeguarding concerns also being considered. This means that all Band 1 applicants' current situations are reviewed. This can create anxiety for the customer awaiting the outcome of their bid for accommodation. It also impacts on the time taken to review each case and consider the complexity of the customers' individual circumstances, to ensure the applicant in the most urgent need is made the offer.</p>																				
2.14	<p>The table below shows comparisons of Bands since the last review of the Allocation Policy. On 1 August 2018 there were 6,788 applicants on the housing register and the number of applicants in Band 1 was 246, this has increased to 255 on 31 December 2020:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Band</th> <th>Reason</th> <th>Numbers in each band on 1/2/2018</th> <th>Numbers in each band on 31/12/2020</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Band 1</td> <td>Households who require immediate housing and are considered ahead of others for all vacant Council properties</td> <td>246</td> <td>255</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Band 2</td> <td>People who experience urgent housing need and require moving due to specific circumstances</td> <td>1,668</td> <td>1631</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Band 3</td> <td>Applicants who are entitled to reasonable preference on a non-urgent basis</td> <td>1,783</td> <td>2058</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Band 4</td> <td>Applicants who have no reasonable preference</td> <td>1,755</td> <td>1833</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Band	Reason	Numbers in each band on 1/2/2018	Numbers in each band on 31/12/2020	Band 1	Households who require immediate housing and are considered ahead of others for all vacant Council properties	246	255	Band 2	People who experience urgent housing need and require moving due to specific circumstances	1,668	1631	Band 3	Applicants who are entitled to reasonable preference on a non-urgent basis	1,783	2058	Band 4	Applicants who have no reasonable preference	1,755	1833
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	entitlement/priority need		
Transfer	Council or Housing Association tenants with no housing need	1,336	1028
Total		6,788	6802

The table below shows the number of lettings in each band:

Timeframe	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Transfer Band
01.04.18 to 31.03.19	415	670	526	114	94
01.04.19 to 31.03.20	366	773	302	49	88
01.04.20 to 31.08.20	177	215	66	2	34

2.15	Currently Rotherham's Allocation Policy has 18 categories for Band 1 status. Doncaster has 7, Barnsley have 6 and Sheffield has 5. Cases requiring Band 1 status are heard at the Housing Assessment Panel. This is a weekly meeting attended by Housing Management and Elected Members. The demand on the Housing Assessment Panel has significantly increased over the past 12 months. The recommendations below and section 2.2.2 will reduce the Band 1 categories to 6 which would be more in line with the Council's neighbouring authorities.
2.16	<p>Recommendations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce the categories by grouping the banding reasons for applicants who are bed blocking or have a terminal illness and be renamed to "Severe Medical Need". 2. Reduce the categories by grouping those who are at risk of harm in their present accommodation. This includes applicants who are experiencing domestic abuse and at high risk subject to MARAC, high risk offenders subject to MAPPA, witness protection, racial harassment, homophobic harassment, households that are subject to adult or child safeguarding issues and be renamed as "Severe Social and Welfare Circumstances". 3. Reduce the categories by grouping Housing Management Lettings, Decants & Successions and rename to "Housing Management Lettings". 4. Remove the category for individuals engaging and receiving drug or alcohol treatment during the last 6 months. Those without accommodation are considered under homelessness legislation and will have a support pathway for all applicants with addictions. 5. Remove the category Prolific Offenders, not a high risk to the Community. Those without accommodation are considered under homelessness legislation.
2.17	Changes to amend time limits

	<p>Issue 1 - There are circumstances within the policy that impose time limits. It is proposed that these should be updated to prevent blockages in temporary accommodation and to reflect current demand and pressures. The homelessness duty is discharged when applicants move into secure accommodation or supported housing, with a plan in place to move on to independent living.</p> <p>The aim of our “Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy” (2019 – 2022) is to end homelessness in Rotherham. The demand for temporary accommodation has continued to increase, due to factors such as the impact of Covid 19 and recent Government guidelines to support rough sleepers. In addition, since March 2020, there have been 300 homelessness presentations from households due to their family or friends no longer being willing or able to temporarily accommodate them. The Council has been proactive in increasing its temporary accommodation portfolio initially to 89 units and then supplementing that with a further 25 units of accommodation.</p> <p>With continuing demand on temporary accommodation, it is therefore essential to ensure there is sufficient throughput to free up temporary accommodation in a timely manner. To help achieve this, applicants living in temporary or supported accommodation are awarded Band 1 if they meet the requirements of the Housing Allocation Policy. This is irrespective of priority need.</p> <p>In respect of supported housing, the applicant is placed into Band 2, with the application held in suspension, until such time that the applicant is assessed as ready and able to live independently. Band 1 status is applied when the applicant is ready to live independently and has been living in temporary or supported accommodation for more than 6 months.</p> <p>Our current policy awards Band 2 for Looked after Children who are ready to live independently. The Leaving Care Team faces similar pressures for accommodation placements, with the associated costs of interim placements.</p> <p>Having to wait for the 6-month threshold for Band 1 status creates blockages in supported and temporary accommodation and additional budget pressures for Children and Young People’ Services.</p> <p>Removing the 6-month time limit will, if appropriate, help the applicant secure a home quicker and free up temporary accommodation for others.</p>
2.18	<p>Issue 2 - A further issue is that applicants awarded Band 1 are time limited to 28 days. This time limit is not realistic as properties do not usually become available within this very short period. The limit causes anxiety to applicants when they receive their Band 1 award letter. Often applicants will contact the Council for reassurance that they will not lose their Band 1 status if they are not re-housed within 28 days. Barnsley have a timescale of 3 months and</p>

	<p>the proposal is to adopt that approach. The Housing Advice Team will then conduct a review of Band 1 awards every 3 months, which reduces customer anxiety and the current administration demand on the Housing Register.</p>
2.19	<p>Recommendations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove the 6-month threshold and award Band 1 status to Care Leavers and all those living in temporary or supported accommodation, irrespective of priority need, when they are ready to live independently and can sustain their own tenancy. 2. Extend the Band 1 review date from 28 days to 3 months.
2.20	<p>Changes to ensure new, purpose built, older persons accommodation is let to older people</p> <p>The issue – The Allocation Policy age criteria for all bungalows was last reviewed in March 2012. The qualifying age criteria at that time was both 50 years and 60 years, depending upon the property type. The age criteria was amended so that 50% of bungalows were allocated to people over the age of 50 with an assessed need and 50% to all those assessed as needing ground floor accommodation, irrespective of their age.</p> <p>The age was reduced from 60 years to 50 years because there was less demand for smaller one-bedroomed bungalows which were designated for applicants over the age of 60 years. In some areas there was also an oversupply of such accommodation. The age reduction to 50 years encouraged and facilitated existing tenants to be able to downsize from a house to a bungalow, which in turn freed up homes for families.</p> <p>In respect of new build properties, these have been purposely built in areas of identified need for older persons accommodation, due to current high demand but low stock numbers and turnover. The Council is making significant investment to support people to live independently for longer. It is therefore essential that these properties are let initially to older people over the age of 60 with an assessed medical need for ground floor accommodation and then to those over the age of 60 without a current assessed medical need.</p>
2.21	<p>Recommendation</p> <p>Amend the eligibility criteria for new build bungalows. This will give initial preference to applicants over the age of 60 with an assessed need for ground floor accommodation. Those over the age of 60 with no current medical need would be considered thereafter. In respect of couples, to qualify only one party needs to be over the age of 60. The tenancy will be</p>

	held in joint names if their partner is over the age of 50 or has an assessed need for ground floor accommodation.
2.22	<p>Changes to stop repeat homelessness</p> <p>The issue - Transitioning from life on the streets into settled accommodation can be difficult and lead to failure. Many homeless people can find themselves in a never-ending cycle of repeat homelessness. Most homeless people need considerable help and support to successfully transition and rebuild their lives. The support needed can include help to address issues around mental, physical, and emotional health and wellbeing. In addition, support with developing the life skills needed to secure a place to live, food, clothing, a job, and a bank account. The Allocation Policy has restrictions which prevent those who have had previous issues, such as former tenant arrears over £800, from re-joining the housing register. This creates blockages in temporary accommodation as there are limited housing options to move people on. Currently there are 31 households living in temporary accommodation who are not eligible to join the housing register, mainly due to accruing former rent arrears.</p>
2.23	<p>Recommendation</p> <p>Those people who are willing to engage with all the following support (where applicable) will be considered by the Housing Assessment Panel for a 2nd chance to re-join the housing register. The commitment includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To sign up and engage with a relevant employment or training programme. 2. Complete the Crisis Skyline or Shiloh Renting Ready course. 3. Agree to referrals to debt advice and attend appointments. 4. Agree and engage with tenancy support. 5. Agree and engage with drug and alcohol treatment services. 6. Agree and maintain a payment plan based on what is affordable to reduce outstanding debt. 7. Complete an anger management course. <p>The progress of applicants would be reviewed at the end of the first two months of engagement with support and prior to making an offer of accommodation. If the applicant has not maintained the support agreement, their application would be placed into suspension and reviewed monthly thereafter. The support agreement would continue beyond the provision of settled housing and into the introductory tenancy period, to ensure the tenancy remains sustainable. Should there be any subsequent tenancy</p>

	breaches, such as anti-social behaviour or rent arrears which are grounds for possession, the tenancy would be subject to enforcement action and if necessary, possession proceedings.						
2.24	<p>Fixed Term Tenancies (FTTs)</p> <p>The Council's Strategic Tenancy Policy sets out the use of fixed term tenancies (FTT's) for larger family homes (4, 5 and 6 bedrooms) and closely aligns with the Council's allocation policy. It is therefore being reviewed as part of this housing allocations policy review.</p> <p>Data indicates that issuing FTTs has met the aims of reducing the numbers/level of under occupancy in the Council's larger family homes. This is set out in the table below.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>December 2012</th> <th>September 2020</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>RMBC owns 261 properties with 4, 5 and 6 bedrooms)</td> <td>RMBC owns 265 properties with 4, 5 and 6 bedrooms</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Of these 261 properties, 45% (117) of them house just one occupant</td> <td>Of these 265 properties, 7% (18) of them house just one occupant</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Issue 1 - The Allocation Policy does not currently capture the necessary rehousing Band status to be applied when a fixed term tenancy ends and a household is supported to move to a smaller property.</p> <p>Changes to the policy will give the tenant the opportunity to register in Band 2 and have more time to prepare to move on to alternative housing to better meets their needs.</p>	December 2012	September 2020	RMBC owns 261 properties with 4, 5 and 6 bedrooms)	RMBC owns 265 properties with 4, 5 and 6 bedrooms	Of these 261 properties, 45% (117) of them house just one occupant	Of these 265 properties, 7% (18) of them house just one occupant
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2.25	<p>Issue 2 - The Council is currently building new specialist homes and continues adapting existing properties, to meet identified needs. New Council tenants of adapted properties are provided with allocation policy information from the outset of their tenancy, relevant to their occupation of such accommodation. For example, that should the household at any time no longer require the extent of the adaptations offered by the property, the Council would seek to rehouse the household to suitable alternative accommodation. This ensures that tenants are appropriately informed should there be any changes in their circumstances and helps the Council to make full and appropriate use of its specialist accommodation. The Housing Act makes provision for such an occurrence, which is always handled in a sensitive and understanding way and at the appropriate time. Despite that, it can be very challenging for the household.</p> <p>An alternative would be to issue a Fixed Term Tenancy on such accommodation, which ensures the household is aware of the terms of the tenancy from the moment the tenancy is issued and offers reassurance that a lifetime tenancy will be granted for a general needs property, should they be required to move.</p>						

2.26	<p>Recommendation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate, the downsizing category of Band 2 is awarded 12 months before the expiry date of a fixed term tenancy. • To extend the use of fixed term tenancies to new tenants of specialist properties from April 2021.
3.	<p>Options considered and recommended proposal</p> <p>That the proposed amendments to the Allocation Policy detailed below be approved:</p>
3.1	To allow parents with 50/50 shared parental responsibility to be eligible for houses if it is assessed as affordable. Families will need to provide evidence e.g. Court Order, or an agreement from Mediation detailing custodial arrangements, or a signed disclaimer from both parents detailing overnight access arrangements.
3.2	Remove the current 12 years age limit and state an applicant who has a dependent/s under the age of 21 residing with them is eligible in Band 3 to move from a flat to a house.
3.3	Those owed a main homelessness duty retain the Band 1 status.
3.4	Those owed a relief and prevention homelessness duty are awarded Band 2 status.
3.5	Reduce the categories in Band 1 by grouping the banding reasons for applicants who are bed blocking or have a terminal illness. Band grouping to be renamed to “Severe Medical Need.”
3.6	Reduce the categories by grouping those who are at risk of harm in their present accommodation. This includes applicants who are experiencing domestic abuse and at high risk subject to MARAC, high risk offenders subject to MAPPA, witness protection, racial harassment, homophobic harassment, households that are subject to adult or child safeguarding issues. Band grouping to be renamed as “Severe Social and Welfare Circumstances”.
3.7	Reduce the categories in Band 1 by grouping Housing Management Lettings, Decants & Successions. Band grouping to be renamed to Housing Management Lettings.
3.8	Remove the category in Band 1 for individuals engaging and receiving a Drug or Alcohol Treatment Programme for the last 6 months. Those without

	accommodation are considered under homelessness legislation and will have an appropriate pathway of support.
3.9	Remove the category in Band 1 for Prolific Offenders, not a high risk to the Community. Those without accommodation are considered under homelessness legislation.
3.10	Remove the 6-month threshold and award Band 1 status to Care Leavers and all those living in temporary or supported accommodation irrespective of priority need, when they are ready to live independently and can sustain their own tenancy.
3.11	Extend the Band 1 review period from 28 days to 3 months.
3.12	Award Band 4 to homeless applicants with no local connection.
3.13	Amend the eligibility criteria for new build bungalows so that preference is given to those over the age of 60 with an assessed need for ground floor accommodation. Those over the age of 60 with no current medical need will be considered thereafter. In respect of couples only one party needs to be over the age of 60. The tenancy will be held in joint names if the other partner is over the age of 50 or has an assessed need for ground floor.
3.14	<p>Those people who are excluded from the housing register but are willing to engage with all of the following support (where applicable) will be considered by the Housing Assessment Panel to re-join the housing register. The commitment includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To sign up and engage with a programme to gain employment or training • Complete the Crisis Skyline Renting Ready course • Agree to referrals to debt advice and attend appointments • Agree and engage with tenancy support • Agree and engage with drug and alcohol treatment services • Agree and maintain a payment plan to reduce outstanding debt • Agree to attend an anger management course
3.15	The downsizing category of Band 2 to be awarded approximately 12 months before the expiry date of a fixed term tenancy. The Strategic Tenancy Policy to be revised to include the issuing of fixed term tenancies to new tenants of specialist housing.
4.	Consultation on proposal
4.1	Consultation - Extensive consultation has been undertaken with meetings held with partners including Shiloh, Crisis UK, Rotherham Federation of Communities, the Council tenants Quality and Standards Challenge Group and the Rotherham Strategic Housing Forum, with housing stakeholders

feeding into the process.

Timeline of engagement and consultation:

Stakeholders	Date
Providers /Service Users	2 meetings held in July 2020
Quality Standards and Challenge Group	23 September 2020
Officers	September/October 2020
Rotherham Federation	28 September 2020
Applicants and Tenants	October and November 2020
Strategic Housing Forum - providers	1 December 2020
Improving Places Review Group	8 January 2021
Improving Places Select Commission	2 February 2021
Cabinet	15 February 2021

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 If the proposed recommendations are approved by Cabinet the policy will be adopted 28 days from the date of approval. The changes will be communicated to customers via an easy read version of the Policy. The Council's Housing Allocation Policy will also be formally amended to reflect the changes and the new version published on the Council's website.
- Tenants will be informed of the policy changes through articles published in "Home Matters" which is the Council's Tenants' Newsletter.
- An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The policy changes will then be monitored to ensure there is no impact on communities or groups according to their protected characteristics.
- There will be a timetable of staff training and briefing paper for Members in March/April 2021.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

- 6.1 The proposed changes to the bandings for Homeless people will enable more effective allocation of housing to those most in need and should reduce the cost to the Council of temporary accommodation.
- 6.2 The allocation of fixed tenancies for specialist/adapted properties will help to make more properties of this nature available for re-let in the future to

	alleviate demand.
6.3	There are no other significant financial implications as a result of the recommendations in the report.
6.4	There are no procurement implications.
7.	Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)
7.1	<p>The legal implications are dealt with in the main body of the report.</p> <p>All applied allocation procedures must comply with the Council's statutory obligations under Housing Law and Part 6 and 7 of the Housing Act 1996.</p> <p>At all times compliance is required to the Homelessness Code of Guidance.</p> <p>At all times processes must be compliant with Equality & Diversity legislation, Human Rights and European Convention Rights.</p> <p>Allocation procedures must further comply with new provisions following the United Kingdom's departure from the EU and the withdrawal agreement.</p> <p>Compliance is necessary with Public Health England standards and up to date Government guidance in response to the COVID 19 pandemic.</p> <p>It is advised to timetable for regular reviews of the briefing note to identify areas of improvement or risk and to check the briefing note against ongoing updates from the Ministry of Housing.</p> <p>It is advised that an Equality Impact Assessment is applied, and that consideration is made to each of the nine protected characteristics, direct and indirect discrimination and provisions under the Equality Act 2010 are assessed.</p>
8.	Human Resources Advice and Implications
8.1	There are no Human Resources implications arising from this report.
9.	Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults
9.1	<p>The proposals are likely to bring indirect benefits for other directorates and partners, particularly in reducing homelessness for families with children and contributing to local targets on homelessness prevention and sustainable tenancies.</p> <p>The recommendation will help to prevent homelessness and will help people</p>

	to secure and sustain a home. This is of paramount importance to ensuring a stable home for families, the best start in life for children, and vulnerable adults. Good quality, stable homes also help people to avoid financial hardship and can have a significant impact on people's health and wellbeing.
10.	Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications
10.1	<p>The Council holds a wealth of housing intelligence data which has been used to determine local housing need and these have informed the proposed changes to the policy.</p> <p>The impact of the changes is considered using equalities impact assessments. This ensures that our policies and services are fair and accessible to all communities and meet the needs and requirements of all our customers.</p> <p>The Equalities Assessment only covers the proposed changes in this report and equalities issues for people with disabilities remain unchanged within the housing allocation policy.</p> <p>The changes to the Allocation Policy are designed to make it easier for local people in genuine housing need to get a Council home.</p>
11.	Implications for Ward Priorities
11.1	The Housing Options Service will liaise with Neighbourhoods Team and Ward Members to ensure the proposed amendments are aligned with local priorities.
12.	Implications for Partners
12.1	<p>The Council is working with partner agencies, specifically around homelessness prevention, and proposals have been developed in conjunction with these organisations.</p> <p>The proposals are likely to bring indirect benefits for other directorates and partners, particularly in reducing homelessness for families with children and contributing to local targets on homelessness prevention and tenancy sustainability.</p>
13.	Risks and Mitigation
13.1.	<p><u>Coronavirus existing implications</u></p> <p>Successful delivery of the letting service is heavily dependent on there being capacity within the repairs service to undertake the void work. The national crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic has impacted when services have been scaled back in response to the crisis.</p>

13.2	<u>Coronavirus 'second wave' or local outbreak</u> In addition to the existing effects of the coronavirus pandemic, a further 'second wave' or localised outbreak would cause further delays or complications if lettings need to be put on hold.
13.3	In respect of the policy changes there are no anticipated risks associated with approving the recommendations in this report. The main risks associated with not approving the report are that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New vulnerable applicants will be waiting for a property longer. • Homeless households will remain living longer in temporary accommodation
14.	Accountable Officers
	Tom Bell, Assistant Director for Housing
	Sandra Tolley, Head of Housing Options

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	01/02/21
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	28/01/21
Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Bal Nahal	28/01/21

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