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- **If the offer is found to be reasonable** advise the applicant of the reason for this decision and of the effect that the decision has on their priority need status

Homeless applicants also have the right to appeal to the County Court on a point of law, arising from the decision on the review. A homeless applicant must bring an appeal to the County Court within 21 days of the date on which they are notified of the decision on review.

Where the Council ceases to owe a duty due to the above, the applicant will remain on the housing register as a general needs applicant and be considered for further offers based on their housing need and within their chosen areas.

## **Section 6:**

This section of the document will explain the service standards of the scheme and how it will be monitored

- 6.1 The service standard for administering the scheme
- 6.2 Monitoring
- 6.3 The annual review of the Common Housing Register
- 6.4 The procedure for dealing with changes in circumstances
- 6.5 Cancelling Applications

### **6.1 The Service Standard For Administering The Scheme**

The Council is no longer a social landlord and does not own any council houses, flats or sheltered housing complexes. In December 2007, the Council transferred all of its housing stock to RCT Homes which has been set up to specifically manage all of the Council's transferred housing stock.

If you were a Council tenant in Rhondda Cynon Taf at the time of transfer, you automatically became a RCT Homes tenant.

The Council still has responsibility to ensure the needs of residents are met through housing services provided locally and has a duty to help people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The Council will consider every application received and will:

- Provide free advice and information about the right to apply for accommodation
- Provide detailed advice on eligibility to join the Common Housing Register
- Ensure that all information is easy to understand and is readily accessible
- Outline how choice is offered and the ability of applicants to indicate their preferences
- Provide detailed advice on the types of accommodation that is available throughout the County Borough
- Provide detailed information on the length of time applicants are likely to have to wait to be re-housed in their area of choice, and also information on the length of waiting time for any other area
- Provide a full copy or summary of this Scheme to all households that request them and always provide a summary of the Scheme to people accepted as being owed a full duty as statutorily homeless
- Treat applicants equally in accordance with their housing need and where possible their choices, regardless of race, religion or creed, ethnic or national origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation or marital status or age

- Regularly monitor all nine equality strands of applicants
- Ensure that all information provided by applicants will be treated with strict confidentiality

## **6.2 Monitoring**

The Housing Act 1996 requires housing authorities to determine and publish an Allocation Scheme setting out how it prioritises applicants for social housing. Monitoring reports are published quarterly and presented to the Common Housing Register Steering Group. The monitoring reports are devised to ensure that the Local Authority meets its statutory obligations and to ensure that Reasonable Preference is provided to specific groups.

If monitoring shows that priority is not being given to the higher bands, the Council reserves the right to implement a quota system to ensure its statutory obligations are being met.

## **6.3 The Annual Review Of the Common Housing Register**

Each Common Housing Register application will be reviewed annually by writing to applicants and asking them to complete a short questionnaire to confirm that the information held on the Common Housing Register is up to date and accurate.

Applicants will be sent a reminder after 14 working days where failure to respond to this will result in the applicant being deleted from the Scheme. All deleted applicants will be notified in writing. If the applicant can provide a good reason, such as being on holiday or in hospital for not responding to the review request in time then the application may be reinstated with their original application date.

## **6.4 The Procedure for Dealing with Changes in Circumstances**

Applicants must immediately notify the Housing Solutions Team of any changes in their circumstances, for example a change of address, obtaining a job, and provide evidence to support these changes as a change in circumstances could alter an applicant's position on the Housing Register.

Any applicants that do not respond within the timescale for providing additional information may be removed from the Scheme. Applicants will not be considered for an offer of accommodation whilst the Housing Solutions Team is awaiting the required information. Applicants who have been removed from the register have the right to a review of the decision within 21 days.

If a household deliberately worsens their circumstances following a voluntary change of address, the application may, for a period of not more than 12

months, be assessed as though the applicant were still living at the previous address. For example this could arise if a tenancy is ended or a home abandoned for no good reason. Anyone forced to leave their home through violence or a genuine fear of violence will not be considered to have deliberately worsened their circumstances.

## **6.5 Cancelling Applications**

Applications will be cancelled for the following reasons:

- At the applicant's own request
- Upon changes in circumstances that result in them being ineligible for the Scheme
- Following failure to respond, without good reason, to an annual review
- An applicant has been housed in a secure or assured tenancy by another Local Authority or other Housing Association not part of the Common Housing Register
- Where an applicant leaves temporary accommodation without a forwarding address
- When the applicant moves to a new address and does not complete a new application form
- When the applicant fails to respond to an offer of accommodation
- When the applicant refuses two reasonable offers of accommodation

## **Section 7:**

This section of the document will look at additional legal duties

- 7.1 How personal information and confidentiality is dealt with under the scheme
- 7.2 The consequences of providing false information
- 7.3 The applicant's right to review of a decision
- 7.4 How to make a complaint

### **7.1 How Personal Information and Confidentiality is Dealt With Under the Scheme**

All applicants have a right to view and confirm the accuracy of information about them, which is held on computer. Personal information obtained from or about an applicant will only be used to process an application.

Privacy and confidentiality is respected and will normally only be used to verify the information to determine eligibility and priority. In some cases we may contact other agencies to confirm this information. Where information is to be shared with third party agencies, this will not be done without the applicant's agreement, unless they have a legal right to obtain it, and information will be transferred in a secure way.

In some cases the law may require or permit, and disclosure may be necessary, information about an applicant to be shared without consent and this will not breach data protection, human rights or the common law obligation of confidence. In terms of obligation of confidentiality/privacy, this may be set aside where disclosure of information is necessary to ensure one or more of the following:

- National security
- Public security
- The detection or prevention of crime or disorder
- Protection of health or morals
- The protection of the rights of freedom of others

### **7.2 The Consequences of Providing False Information**

It is a criminal offence for an applicant to knowingly or recklessly give false information or knowingly withhold reasonably requested information relevant to their application. This includes information requested for the application and information relating to any review of the application.

Where there is suspicion that a person has provided or withheld false information, the application will be recorded as 'application pending' until investigations are complete. If the outcome of the investigation is that the

information was not false and was not withheld, then the application will be reinstated to the Scheme.

Where applicants have obtained a tenancy by withholding information or providing false information, under Ground 5 in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the 1996 Act, s.146) the landlord can seek possession of the property.

If the Council determines that an applicant directly, or through a person acting on their behalf, has given false information or withheld required information it will result in them being ineligible for the Scheme.

### **7.3 The Applicant's Right To Review of a Decision**

In accordance with Section 167 (4A) of the Housing Act 1996 this Scheme is framed to ensure that an applicant:

- (a) Has the right to general information to enable them to assess:
  - How the application is likely to be treated under the scheme (including whether the applicant is to be considered to be awarded reasonable preference)
  - Whether housing accommodation appropriate to their needs is likely to become available and how long such accommodation is likely to become available for allocation
- (b) Is notified in writing of any decision that determines:
  - the applicant, or a member of their household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant
  - in the circumstances at the time the case is being considered, the applicant deserves by reason of that behaviour not be awarded reasonable preference
- (c) has the right to request any information of the decision about the facts of the case which is likely to be, or has been, taken into account when making the decision whether or not to make an allocation
- (d) has the right to be informed of the decision on the review and grounds for it

Every applicant has the right to appeal against the decision that the Local Authority makes about their applications.

Applicants can appeal against:

- the band they have been awarded
- the size of the property that they have been identified as needing
- how their application has been administered
- Exclusion from the CHR
- Restriction of the areas to be housed within

The applicant must request a review of any of the above within 21 days of the date of the decision letter. The request can be made orally by telephoning the



Housing Solutions Team on 01443 485515 or in writing to the Housing Advice Centre, 10 – 12 Gelliwastad Rd, Pontypridd, CF37 2BW.

Upon receipt of a review request the Housing Solutions Manager will prepare a report for the Appeals Panel. The Appeals Panel will consider the appeal within 28 days of the request. The applicant will be notified in writing of the appeal request within 7 days of the Appeals Panel.

## **7.4 How to Make a Complaint**

The Council aims to provide high quality service for its customers and values any feedback and comments. The Council promises to treat customers with respect, be fair and honest and admit and learn from its mistakes.

The Housing Solutions Manager will deal and respond to all complaints regarding the Scheme, to include the Common Housing Register.

### **STAGE 1:**

**The Council will aim to resolve the complaint or put things right swiftly and as far as possible at this point, to avert the need for Stage 2.**

- Stage 1 complaints can be made by an applicant or someone acting on their behalf, with their consent, by telephone, in writing, face to face, via e-mail or the Council's website.
- Complaints will be referred to the Housing Solutions Manager to deal with.
- The Housing Solutions Manager will arrange for the matter to be resolved and will acknowledge the complaint within 3 working days and provide a full response within 15 working days.

Where possible, complaints should be registered with the Council as soon as possible (and within 12 months of the problem occurring).

### **STAGE 2:**

**If an applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint at Stage 1, they may refer it to Stage 2 for formal investigation.**

- Upon receipt of a Stage 2 complaint, a Senior Officer will undertake a formal investigation of the case. All relevant documents/policies will be examined and, if appropriate, the applicant and staff member(s) involved will be interviewed.
- A formal, detailed letter of response will be sent to the applicant, in a bid to resolve the matter to his/her satisfaction.

- Should an applicant be dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 2 complaint, he/she may write to request a review of their complaint under Stage 3 of the complaints procedure.

**STAGE 3:**

**If an applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint at Stage 2, he/she may write to the Chief Executive and request a review of their case.**

If after stage 3 an applicant is still unhappy with how their complaint has been dealt with, the applicant can refer the matter to the Public Services Ombudsman, who may decide to independently investigate the case on your behalf.

The Ombudsman's contact details are:

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales  
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae  
Pencoed  
CF35 5LJ

Tel: 01656 641 150

Email: [ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)

## Section 8

### Operational Manual

The Council will use an Operational Manual that describes, for the purpose of the staff of the Council and its Partners an explanation of how the Scheme will be operated and implemented. It will describe what officers should do, how decisions are made and will include processes. Its purpose is to guide the operation and implementation of the policy as described in the main body of the Scheme. The Operational Manual may be updated from time to time to take into account any administrative or ICT improvements and changes. The Operational Manual will be available at [www.rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk](http://www.rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk)

## Appendix 1

### Rhondda Cynon Taf Banding System

<b>Band A</b> <b>Urgent Housing Need</b> <b>These are time limited cases to be reviewed every 3 months</b> <b>Local connection criteria will apply except for MAPPA and</b> <b>Homelessness Cases</b>
<b>Reasonable Preference Categories s167(2)(a), (b), (c), and (d)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ The applicant has suddenly lost their existing home as a result of disaster and requires accommodation in a short period of time</li><li>➤ Applicants who have served in the regular Armed Forces of the Crown who have been made homeless since leaving the armed forces</li><li>➤ Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service</li><li>➤ The applicant currently occupies a property where there is a statutory requirement due to prohibition order / demolition order / compulsory purchase</li><li>➤ The applicant's health condition is terminal and re-housing is required to provide a basis for the provision of suitable care</li><li>➤ The applicant's health condition is so severely affected by the accommodation that it is likely to become life threatening</li><li>➤ Where overcrowding in the property leaves the applicant at risk of infection, for example, where an applicant is suffering from late-stage or advanced HIV infection</li><li>➤ Disabled people whose current accommodation completely restricts them from carrying out day-to-day activities both internally and outside the home and they require urgent re-housing into a property that is suitable to their needs which has significant permanent adaptations; or a fully adapted property</li></ul>

- Applicants who have nowhere to live when they are discharged from hospital or a designated care setting where their current property is no longer suitable for their needs and cannot be made suitable and all other housing options have been explored
- The applicant is a care leaver, vulnerable and has a high housing need that is best met by the provision of long term settled housing and the applicant has been assessed and approved by the Move On Panel as ready for re-housing. Applicants must be a former 'Relevant Child' as defined by the Children Leaving Care Act 2000.
- The applicant is a currently under occupying social housing by two or more bedrooms and needs to transfer to a smaller property due to the current property being unaffordable

**Local Priorities**

- The applicant is a Housing Association tenant and is a high risk management transfer, who is receiving support from a professional agency or who is subject to a MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) that is making a recommendation of housing need. The transfer will enable the applicant's existing property to become available for an allocation to another applicant on the waiting list.
- The occupant of the property no longer requires the adaptations and will therefore be releasing a significantly adapted property by moving and there is a suitable applicant on the waiting list for the adapted property which will be released through the move. The property being released must have extensive adaptations.
- There is a likelihood of a child being accommodated by the local authority if re-housing is not made
- The applicant's circumstances are not dealt with under any of the other circumstances in Band A, however their housing need has been assessed by the Eligibility Panel as urgent and they require immediate re-housing

**Band B**

**High Housing Need**

**Applicants awarded Band A but with no local connection**











### **Appendix 3**

#### **Habitual Residence Test**

There is no legal definition “habitual residence” therefore each case must be considered individually. The most important factors for the habitual residence are period of residence, continuity and nature of actual residence.

The term ‘habitual residence’ is intended to refer to the permanence of the person’s residence in the Common Travel Area (the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland). When deciding whether an applicant is habitually resident, housing authorities should take account of the applicant’s period of residence and its continuity, the applicant’s employment prospects, the applicant’s reason for coming to the UK, the applicant’s future intentions, the applicant’s centre of interest and any other fact or circumstance which might be relevant.

A person who is in stable employment is more likely to be able to establish habitual residence than a person whose employment is, for whatever reason, transitory (for example, an au pair or someone on a fixed or short-term contract). Equally, a person, one of whose apparent aims is coming to the UK is to claim benefits, is less likely to be able to establish habitual residence.

A person who intends to take up permanent work is more likely to be able to establish habitual residence, as is a person who has immediate family or other ties to the UK.

While the majority of the categories eligible for housing require the applicant to be habitually resident in the CTA, most applicants for social housing will not be persons from abroad and there will be no reason to apply the test. It is also likely that persons who have been resident in the CTA continuously during the two years prior to their housing application will be habitually resident in the CTA. In such cases, therefore, housing authorities may consider it unnecessary to make further enquiries to establish habitual residence, unless there are other circumstances that need to be taken into account. A period of continuous residence in the CTA might include visits abroad e.g. holidays or to visit relatives. Where two years continuous residency in the UK is not established, housing authorities may need to conduct further enquiries to determine whether the applicant is habitually resident in the CTA.

Whilst habitual residence requires an appreciable period of residence, there is no minimum time limit set for an appreciable period. Case law suggests that in some circumstances ‘a month can be an appreciable period of time’.

A person cannot claim to be habitually resident in any country unless the person has taken up residence and lived there for a period. There will be cases where the person concerned is not coming to the UK for the first time, but is resuming a habitual residence previously held.