



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CABINET**

**10<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2018**

### **REVIEW OF HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME AND ASSOCIATED KEY POLICY CHANGES**

#### **REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH THE DEPUTY CABINET MEMBER FOR PROSPERITY & WELL-BEING, COUNCILLOR R LEWIS**

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#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This report proposes policy and operational changes to Rhondda Cynon Taf's Housing Allocation Scheme ('the Scheme') as a consequence of a recent review of the Scheme and consultation process.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider the contents of this report and appendices.
- 2.2 Approves the proposed policy changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme for implementation in June 2018.

#### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To ensure that Rhondda Cynon Taf's Housing Allocation Scheme complies with relevant legislation, meets local strategic housing needs and enables the effective and fair allocation of social housing to people seeking affordable housing.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The Council, as local housing authority, has statutory obligations under the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to the publication of a Housing Allocation Scheme and for ensuring equality of access to social housing for all people with a housing need. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, since 2002, the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme has been delivered in partnership

with local housing associations, through the operational mechanism of a Common Housing Register. In 2015, a choice based letting system was introduced to the Common Housing Register and it was re-branded as 'HomefinderRCT'.

- 4.2 HomefinderRCT offers a single route through which all those seeking social housing can apply. This approach delivers significant benefits to the Council, Housing Associations and most importantly to those seeking accommodation in the area. These benefits include simple, fair and consistent processes and efficient, co-ordinated administration. Applicants can apply on line or over the telephone to join HomefinderRCT and once registered can 'bid' on properties that they are interested in via a user-friendly website. Properties are advertised weekly and are offered to the person in the highest band who has waited the longest in that band. This ensures that there is transparency in the way that lettings are made.

## **5. REASON FOR THE REVIEW**

- 5.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf's Housing Allocation Scheme was last reviewed significantly in 2014, with minor amendments made in 2016 and 2017 in relation to the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The Welsh Government issued a new Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness in March 2016. This Code provides guidance which Local Authorities must legally have regard to when exercising their functions in connection with housing allocations and the development and implementation of a Housing Allocation Scheme. The Code advises Local Authorities to review their Housing Allocation Schemes every two years to ensure compliance with the law and good practice. As such, it was timely in 2017, to undertake a more comprehensive review of the Scheme.
- 5.2 The other key reason to undertake the review was in relation to Central Government's welfare reform policies which were due to come into force in 2019. This included the intention to restrict the level of Housing Benefit, or the housing element of Universal Credit, claimed by tenants in social housing to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate. This policy would have resulted in significant shortfalls between the rent due and claimants' entitlement to Housing Benefit for some tenants. In addition the Government had intended to remove access to Housing Benefit for young people between 18 and 21 which would have meant that people seeking housing in that age group would not have had access to any financial assistance towards their housing costs. As such, there was a need to ensure that the Housing Allocation Scheme could respond effectively to this changed financial environment and assess and prioritise applicants accordingly.

5.3 However on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017 the Government announced a reversal of the policy decision relating to LHA and confirmed that the rate would no longer be applied to social housing tenants. Then, in March 2018, the Government also reversed the Housing Benefit policy regarding 18-21year olds. The consequence of these two Central Government policy reversals is that many of the changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme that were identified through the Review to address the impacts of welfare reform are no longer required and as such, are not included in this report. However, as Universal Credit is being rolled out in RCT in November 2018 the need to help potential tenants to understand their finances and identify any affordability issues or support required is still relevant.

## **6. RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME 2014**

### **6.1 Key features of the current scheme**

The current Housing Allocation Scheme (2014) is provided as background papers.

6.1.1 In the Scheme, the Council must give priority for housing to certain applicants. These are:

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014)
- People who are owed any duty by a local housing authority under Section 66, 73 or 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014
- People who are owed a duty by a local authority under Section 190(2), 193 (2) or 195 (2) of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 or who are occupying accommodation secured by any local authority under Section 192(3)
- People living in poor or overcrowded housing
- People who need to move for medical or welfare reasons
- People who need to move to an area of Rhondda Cynon Taf for a particular reason e.g to look after a family member

6.1.2 The Scheme uses a 'banding' system whereby applicants are placed into a 'band' according to their assessed need for a home. Each band includes applicants who have a similar level of housing need.

6.1.3 As well as giving priority to the groups mentioned above, the Council also gives priority to other groups of people as doing so helps the Council to meet its local strategic housing priorities effectively. This includes the following:

- Applicants who by moving will release an adapted property
- Applicants whose child is likely to be accommodated by the local

authority if re-housing is not made

- Applicants who have been recommended to foster or adopt children and whose current accommodation is not big enough
- Households including children who are forced to live apart owing to a lack of suitable accommodation
- Existing tenants with no housing need who wish to move

6.1.4 It is the Council's responsibility to accept applications for housing and assess those applications in accordance with the Scheme in order to determine their eligibility and priority. It is the responsibility of the Housing Associations to allocate their vacant housing in accordance with the Scheme and associated Operating Manual through HomefinderRCT. These roles and responsibilities are managed through a Service Level Agreement.

6.1.5 When a property becomes void, the relevant housing association advertises the property on HomefinderRCT and offers it to the applicant who has bid for the property, is in the highest band and who has waited the longest in that band.

6.1.6 Housing Association partners are closely monitored by the Council to ensure that they are adhering to the Scheme when making offers of/allocating housing and to ensure that correct processes are following in accordance with the Scheme.

## 6.2 **Key performance data**

- There are currently 3565 applicants registered with HomefinderRCT (as at 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018)
- On average, 115 new applications are received each week
- 5563 households have been housed via the common housing register over the last 4 years as follows:
  - 2014-15 - 1519
  - 2015-16 - 1283
  - 2016-17 - 1331
  - 2017-18 - 1430
- 91% of applications were processed within 10 days or under in 2016-17.

## 7. **POLICY CHANGES PROPOSED**

7.1 The Task and Finish Groups following their review of the Scheme, have recommended a number of policy changes across the various themes. In summary, the key changes proposed to the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme (2014) are as follows:

#### 7.1.1 **Affordability**

- Affordability information and advice will be provided to all applicants at the point of application by the HomefinderRCT Service in the context of the type of housing they need, and a more detailed financial assessment will be completed at offer stage by Housing Associations for all applicants. Housing Associations will use a common financial assessment tool and it will not be used to exclude applicants from the housing that they need. Applicants who are experiencing financial difficulties will be signposted proactively to support agencies.
- All benefits will be included in financial assessments to maximise the income that is taken into account when determining whether a tenancy is affordable. Those applicants requesting a property type larger than their needs, must have at least £15 per adult surplus income per week to ensure the sustainability of the tenancy.

#### 7.1.2 **Allocating adapted housing**

- A more detailed way of allocating houses that already have adaptations will be introduced. This will mean that applicants will be matched more directly based on the adaptations they require, to the properties advertised, whilst still according to the band they are in.
- In some exceptional cases, it will be permissible for adapted properties to be 'direct matched' to applicants before they are advertised in order to make best use of the existing stock. This will only be undertaken in consultation with the Council.
- Not all bungalows have adaptations or are suitable for adaptation. As such, the new Policy will allow for bungalows without adaptation to be let as 'general needs' housing.

#### 7.1.3 **Banding Scheme**

- Applicants in Band A who have not bid for 3 months will have their applications reviewed to identify whether they need any further support to bid, or whether they are still in urgent housing need.
- Some wording for criteria in Band A and Band C has been changed to ensure that the description of housing need required to be evidenced for the criteria/band is clearer for applicants.
- Applicants who are overcrowded and the overcrowding leaves the applicant at risk of infection will now be awarded Band B rather than

Band A as the review indicated that this is more similar to other criteria in Band B.

- All applicants experiencing or at high risk from domestic abuse will now be given the same priority in the Housing Allocation Scheme regardless of the existing tenure that they occupy. Previously only existing housing association tenants were awarded Band A.
- All applicants who are under occupying social housing by one or more bedrooms will be awarded Band A in line with the Welsh Government Code of Guidance.

#### 7.1.4 **Rent Arrears**

- The current policy for applicants with rent arrears is quite complex and involves a combination of reducing priority or 'demotion' for and determining ineligibility depending on the level of arrears. The new policy will just be based on eligibility and only those with rent arrears over 8 weeks will be considered ineligible to apply for housing. However, these applicants will be supported to set up repayment plans to reduce their rent arrears.

#### 7.1.5 **Local Lettings Plans**

- The existing policy on local lettings plans will be strengthened to allow housing associations to use their discretion and sensitively let an individual property or group of properties where there have been recent issues such as serious anti-social behaviour or a crime incident in a community. This will apply to the next let and will be undertaken in exceptional circumstances and in discussion with the Council.

#### 7.1.6 **Homeless Applicants**

- A review of best practice in this area has identified that it is more in line with the intention of the legislation to give all homeless people or those threatened with homelessness the same level of priority within the Housing Allocation Scheme, regardless of whether they would be in priority need if owed the full duty. As such, homeless people who are assessed as being owed the full homelessness duty under Sc75 will now be awarded Band A in the new Scheme. All other people who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014) and people who are owed any duty by a local housing authority under Section 66, or 73 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 will be awarded Band B.

7.2 A more detailed overview of the policy changes proposed and rationale for the changes is provided at Appendix 1

- 7.3 The new Housing Allocation Scheme incorporating all of the changes is provided at Appendix 2. If approved it is intended that this Scheme will be operational from June 2018 subject to timescales provided by Abritas (Civica) to make the required updates to the back office IT system.

## **8 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Council and its Housing Association partners must ensure that the Housing Allocation Scheme does not discriminate, either directly or indirectly on the grounds of a protected characteristic.
- 8.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening form has been prepared in relation to the proposed changes. This concludes that the proposal will have either a positive or neutral impact and therefore a full equality impact assessment will not be necessary. The screening form can be accessed by contacting the author of the report or the Cabinet Business officer.

## **9 CONSULTATION**

- 9.1 The Consultation on the Housing Allocation Scheme was carried out over a period of 8 weeks and ended on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2018. The full Consultation report is presented at Appendix 3. A range of mediums were used to carry out the consultation to ensure as many stakeholders as possible were consulted on the proposed changes. These included:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC website
- Rhondda Cynon Taf Homefinder Website
- Tenant Newsletters
- Tenant Forums
- Facebook – Council and Housing Association pages
- Twitter
- Discussions at various Forums and meetings

- 9.2 129 responses to the consultation were received via an online survey. Overall the feedback on the proposed changes has been very positive. There were thirteen questions asked in the consultation survey that related to the changes proposed. The responses to each question that were in favour of the proposed changes (who either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed') ranged from between 61% and 93%.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 10.1 Some of the policy changes proposed will require an update to the HomefinderRCT website and back office system provided by Abritas (Civica), which will incur a cost. It is not expected that this cost will be

significant and it is shared between the Council and the six Housing Associations who are currently part of HomefinderRCT.

## **11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 11.1 The proposals presented in this report have been developed in accordance with the Council's statutory obligations under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, and Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and have been produced with reference to the 'Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness (2016)'.
- 11.2 A Barrister's opinion on the proposed Scheme has however been sought to ensure compliance with the legislation and relevant case law and this will be taken into consideration before the scheme is implemented.

## **12. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP / FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.**

- 12.1 The review, consultation on and implementation of the Housing Allocation scheme will make a positive contribution towards the Council's Corporate Plan Vision of '*a County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all*'; as it will deliver against the specific priorities of '*People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone and Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work*'.
- 12.2 It will also help the Council to meet three of the seven wellbeing goals that The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:
1. A healthier Wales
  2. A more equal Wales
  3. A Wales of cohesive communities
- 12.3 The proposed changes are also consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act through the five ways of working:
- Long-term – the Housing Allocation Scheme will assist residents of RCT to secure long term and sustainable housing.
  - Prevention – effective implementation of the Scheme will help to prevent people from becoming homeless. Living in good quality housing that is suitable also helps to prevent ill health.



- Integration – the Housing Allocation Scheme ensures that the approach to allocating housing in RCT is integrated with other council priorities e.g helping people to live independently and safely.
- Collaboration – the Housing Allocation Scheme promotes collaboration between the Council and all Housing Associations with housing stock in the County Borough because it provides a common way of allocating all available social housing
- Involvement – The effective implementation of the Housing Allocation Scheme requires the involvement of the Council and its housing association partner and other third sector and statutory agencies

### **13. CONCLUSION**

- 13.1 The effective implementation of a fit for purpose Housing Allocation Scheme is critical to ensure the efficient allocation of social housing in Rhondda Cynon Taf. It assists in building balanced and sustainable communities, helps to prevent homelessness and promotes independence and prosperity for residents, whilst ensuring that the Council is able to discharge its statutory housing responsibilities effectively.
- 13.2 This report has outlined the changes proposed to the Housing Allocation Scheme. These changes will ensure that it continues to meet housing need effectively, assists people to understand their housing choices and continues to be responsive to the changing housing market and financial circumstances of those seeking affordable housing in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

#### **Other Information:-**

##### ***Relevant Scrutiny Committee***

Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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**Background Papers**

Housing Allocation Scheme 2014

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<b>Welfare Reform</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Current Policy</b>	<b>Proposed Policy</b>	<b>Reason for Change</b>
Affordability – Financial Assessments	People who would like an additional bedroom than they need are required to undertake a financial assessment to check affordability and are required to have surplus income. However, there is no definition of 'surplus' in the current Housing Allocation Scheme.	Financial Assessment for people requesting an additional bedroom above that which they have been assessed as needing must show a £15 per adult per week surplus.	To ensure tenancy will be affordable.
Affordability – Financial Assessments	No Financial Assessment currently undertaken.	Brief Financial Assessment will be undertaken at point of application by Homefinder Service and a more detailed assessment will be completed at offer stage by the Housing Association.	To ensure tenancy will be affordable and to signpost applicants who may be experiencing financial difficulties to appropriate support. Financial assessments will not be used to exclude applicants from housing that they need e.g appropriate size and type
Affordability – Financial Assessments	Disregarded benefits (e.g AA, DLA, PIP, AFIP, Child Benefit) are not currently included as income in a Financial Assessment	To include disregarded benefits in financial assessment	To maximise the income that is taken into account when determining whether a tenancy is affordable.
Affordability – Financial Assessments	Not all Housing Associations currently assess an applicant's affordability at the point of offer.	Agreed that all HAs will use a common Financial Assessment and affordability policy and that this will be undertaken at the short-listing stage.	To ensure tenancy will be affordable and to signpost applicants who may be experiencing financial difficulties to appropriate support. Financial assessments will not be used to exclude applicants from housing that they need e.g appropriate size and type
Bedroom size	Currently people of pensionable age who	People of pensionable age who request	To ensure that people who need a two

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	<p>wish to have an additional bedroom in excess of what they need, are assessed as 'needing' the bedroom because housing benefit would pay for the additional bedroom and therefore there would be no affordability issue.</p>	<p>an additional bedroom, but do not need it, will be financially assessed in line with other applicants. However if they can afford a 2 bedroom property they will no longer be assessed as needing the property, but instead will be placed on the 'aspirational' 2 bed list rather than the '2 bed need' list e.g they will have less priority than people who need a 2 bed.</p>	<p>bedroom property have more priority for that house type than people who do not need it, but would like a two bedroom property for other reasons.</p>
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<b>Adapted Housing</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Current Policy</b>	<b>Proposed Policy</b>	<b>Reason for Change</b>
<b>Short-listing</b>	<p>Currently all disabled applicants and adapted properties are assessed via a criteria which allows applicant to be matched to the most suitable type of property (Level 1, Level 2, level3). When an adapted property becomes available to let, it is allocated to the person who needs that Level of property and who is in the highest band. (pg 31 of Housing Allocation Scheme 2014)</p>	<p>There will be a more detailed process of allocated adapted housing which will prioritise type of adaptations required over band. This will allow Housing associations to allocate properties that best matches in terms of the actual adaptations in the property, rather than the overall Level e.g Mrs Jones is in Band B and needs a stair lift which would classify her as needing a level 2 property. Mrs Davies is in Band C and needs a level shower which would also classify her as needing a level 2 property. The property being advertised has a level access shower, but no stair lift. Although Mrs Jones is in a higher band, the property will be offered in the first instance to</p>	<p>To make the best use of the adapted housing stock and adaptations that have already been installed in properties.</p>

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		Mrs Davies as the property best matches the adaptations she requires	
<b>Direct Matching</b>	Currently Housing Associations are not able to direct match adapted housing and must follow the short-listing procedure as outlined in the Scheme	Whilst it is expected that the vast majority of adapted properties will be allocated based on the new proposed Policy, there may be times when a Housing Association would like to directly match a property to an applicant (e.g when they have a tenant whose current accommodation cannot be adapted). This will be done in exceptional circumstances and in consultation with the Council.	Allows Housing associations some flexibility in exceptional circumstances to make the best use of their housing stock.
<b>Bungalows</b>	Current Scheme states that bungalows will be offered to people requiring adapted housing in the first instance	Bungalows will be allocated according to the Level they have been assessed as (Level 1, 2 or 3 or general needs) and will be allocated based on this and as per either adapted or general needs short-listing.	

<b>Banding Scheme</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Current Policy</b>	<b>Proposed Policy</b>	<b>Reason for Change</b>
<b>Band A</b>	Applicants in Band A have their applications reviewed after 3 months.	To review application at end of 3 months and demote applicants who do not bid for suitable properties or refuse suitable properties within the first 3 months to Band B. Suitable is defined as a property that matches the size and type in their areas of choice.	This is the highest priority band for urgent cases who due to their urgency should be re-housed within 3 months. If applicants in this band are not actively bidding then the urgency of their case should be reviewed and band demotion considered.

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<b>Band A</b>	Criteria 5 is <i>'The applicant's health condition is terminal and re-housing is required to provide a basis for the provision of suitable care'</i>	Re-word criteria 5 to read <i>'The applicant's health condition is terminal and their current home is a barrier to receiving urgent medical care'</i> .	This wording is clearer for applicants to understand and more appropriately reflects the intention of the criteria in terms of the housing circumstance it is there to address.
<b>Band A</b>	Criteria 6 is <i>'The applicant's health condition is so severely affected by the accommodation that it is likely to become life threatening'</i> to read <i>'The applicant's health condition is life threatening and their existing accommodation is a significant contributory factor'</i>	Re-word Criteria 6 to read <i>'The applicant's health condition is life threatening and their existing accommodation is a significant contributory factor'</i>	This wording is clearer for applicants to understand and more appropriately reflects the intention of the criteria in terms of the housing circumstance it is there to address.
<b>Band A</b>	Remove Criteria 7 <i>'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'</i> from band A	Place the same criteria into Band B.	This housing circumstance is more similar to other criteria in Band B and is determined to be more of a high housing need rather than an urgent housing need.
<b>Band A</b>	Criteria 8 is <i>'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'</i>	Re-word Criteria 8 to read <i>'Disabled people whose current accommodation can't be adapted and it completely restricts them from carrying out day-to-day activities both internally and outside the home and they require a fully adapted property'</i>	This wording is clearer for applicants to understand and more appropriately reflects the intention of the criteria in terms of the housing circumstance it is there to address.
<b>Band A</b>	Criteria 9 is <i>'Applicants who have nowhere to live when they are discharged from hospital or a designated care setting where their current property is no longer</i>	Re-word Criteria 9 to read <i>'Planned discharge from hospital is imminent and there is no accommodation available to them that it is reasonable for them to</i>	This wording is clearer for applicants to understand and more appropriately reflects the intention of the criteria in terms of the housing

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	<i>suitable for their needs and cannot be made suitable and all other housing options have been explored'</i>	<i>occupy'.</i>	circumstance it is there to address.
<b>Band A</b>	Criteria 10 is <i>'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'</i>	Re-word Criteria 10 to include all applicants moving on from Supported Housing in addition to Care leavers as follows: <i>'Applicants (including those leaving Care) that are leaving supported housing and have been assessed and approved by the Move On Panel as ready for re-housing.'</i>	In practice all supported housing tenants are awarded Band A when they are ready to move on to permanent housing as this ensure sufficient capacity in supported housing accommodation to meet need. This proposal will ensure that the Policy is reflective of practice.
<b>Band A</b>	Criteria 11 is <i>'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'</i>	Re-word Criteria 11 to read <i>'The applicant is a currently under occupying social housing by one or more bedrooms and needs to transfer to a smaller property due to the current property being unaffordable'</i>	The Welsh Government Code of Guidance advises that all applicants who are under occupying social housing should be given additional preference in Housing Allocation Schemes regardless of the number of bedroom that they are under occupying by. This change brings the Housing Allocation Scheme more in line with the Code of Guidance.
<b>Band A</b>	Criteria 12 is <i>'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</i>	Remove criteria 12 from Banding Scheme	This criteria only relates to Housing Association tenants and therefore would not give private tenants or other people the same priority for re-housing which is not equitable. In addition, the Council and its partners use other methods such as target hardening to enable people at risk

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	<i>property to become available for an allocation to another applicant on the waiting list.'</i>		from domestic abuse to be safe. If a domestic abuse victim does require a move they will be assisted through homelessness in band B or in very high risk cases through Exceptional Circumstances in band A.
<b>Band A</b>	Criteria 13 is <i>'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.'</i>	Re-word Criteria 13 to read <i>'The applicant currently occupies a level 1 adapted property that they no longer require and there is a suitable applicant on the waiting list for the property'</i>	This wording is clearer for applicants to understand and more simply reflects the intention of the criteria in terms of the housing circumstance it is there to address
<b>Band C</b>	Criteria 30 is <i>'The applicant's current accommodation is unsuitable and is having a detrimental impact on their own/household member's existing health condition and the ability to live independently, which will deteriorate in the long term if more suitable accommodation is not offered'</i>	Re-word Criteria 30 to read <i>'The applicant has a health condition which is being adversely affected by an aspect of their current home which can only be resolved by moving house'.</i>	This wording is clearer for applicants to understand and more simply reflects the intention of the criteria in terms of the housing circumstance it is there to address.
<b>Band C</b>	Criteria 32 is <i>'The applicant is a currently under occupying social housing by one bedroom and needs to transfer to a smaller property due to the current property being unaffordable'</i>	Remove Criteria 32 from the Banding Scheme	All applicants who are under-occupying by one or more bedroom will be given additional preference in the Housing Allocation Scheme and awarded Band A in line with Welsh Government Code of Guidance.



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<b>Other</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Current Policy</b>	<b>Proposed Policy</b>	<b>Reason for Change</b>
<b>Rent Arrears</b>	<p>Applicants with rent arrears and no repayment plan in place are <b>not eligible</b> to join the register as this is assessed as ‘unacceptable behaviour’.</p> <p>Applicants who have under 8 weeks rent arrears but have agreed a repayment plan are <b>eligible</b> to join the register, but have their preference (priority) reduced to Band D.</p> <p>Applicants who have over 8 weeks rent arrears but have agreed a repayment plan are <b>eligible</b> to join the register, but have their preference (priority) reduced to Band D.</p> <p>Assessed Priority Band is reinstated after the repayment plan has been adhered to for an agreed number of weeks based on the extent of the debt.</p> <p>An applicant with rent arrears must adhere to their repayment plan for two consecutive weeks before they can be made an offer.</p>	<p>If an applicant has rent arrears/former tenant debt that equates to under 8 weeks rent arrears, they will be <b>eligible</b> to join the Register in their assessed priority band.</p> <p>If an applicant has rent arrears over 8 weeks they will be <b>ineligible</b> to join the register until they have reduced their rent arrears to under the equivalent of 8 weeks. At this point they will be eligible to join the register in their assessed priority band.</p> <p>Rent arrears may not be reasonable to consider if the rent arrears/former tenant debt is historic.</p> <p>Applicants with current /former tenancy related debt but who would otherwise be awarded Band A will be considered on a case by case basis by the eligibility panel under exceptional circumstances to both determine eligibility and priority band as relevant. Applicants in other bands may also be considered under exceptional circumstances on a case by case basis.</p>	<p>The current policy is quite complex and involves a combination of reducing priority and determining ineligibility which is not advised by the Code of Guidance. Councils should use only one of these approaches.</p> <p>In addition, applicants with under the equivalent of 8 weeks rent arrears cannot be ineligible to join the register or suspended from having an offer for any period as they have not demonstrated unacceptable behaviour as this level of debt would not result in an outright possession order being granted (the test of unacceptable behaviour).</p> <p>The requirement for two consecutive payments before an offer can be made whilst in Band D has been removed as this is technically a suspension, which is not in line with the Code of Guidance. Applicants cannot be eligible in spite of rent arrears, but then suspended from an offer.</p>

**Appendix 1 - Housing Allocation Scheme Review 2017 Proposed Policy Changes**

			<p>Reducing an applicant with rent arrears' priority to Band D has been removed from the policy as in RCT offers are often made from low bands and this can mean that applicants with large rent arrears can still be made an offer which Housing Associations are uncomfortable with as changed behaviour has not been demonstrated.</p> <p>As such, and on balance the most suitable approach for RCT is to have a policy that considers eligibility rather than one that demotes for unacceptable behaviour and provides for exceptional circumstances and discretion.</p>
<p><b>Local Lettings/Sensitive Lettings</b></p>	<p>The Current Policy (Pg 23) states that Local lettings Plans can be developed for certain areas</p>	<p>Where there are specific issues relating to individual property or group of properties that could result in creating unsustainable tenancies or exacerbating a current community issue the Housing Association is able to exercise its discretion around the allocation and apply a sensitive let. This will be done in discussion with the Council and will be monitored to ensure it is only used in exceptional circumstances.</p>	<p>Local Lettings Policies can take a while to agree and approve. The use of a Sensitive Lets Policy is exceptional circumstances allows the Housing association to respond more quickly to a need to rebalance a community (e.g a block of flats) where there have been issues or the balance of tenants is not correct.</p>

**Appendix 1 - Housing Allocation Scheme Review 2017 Proposed Policy Changes**

<p><b>Homeless Applicants</b></p>	<p>In the current Scheme, homeless applicants (under Sc 66 or 73) who are likely to be in priority need if the Council were to owe them a full duty under Section 75 (duty to secure accommodation) are awarded Band B.</p> <p>Homeless people who are already assessed as being owed the full duty under Section 75 are also awarded Band B.</p> <p>Homeless applicants in Sc66 or 73 who are <b>not</b> in priority need are awarded Band C.</p>	<p>Homeless people who are assessed as being owed the full homelessness duty under Sc75 will be awarded Band A.</p> <p>All other people who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014) and people who are owed any duty by a local housing authority under Section 66, or 73 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 will be awarded Band B.</p>	<p>A review of best practice in this area has identified that it is more in line with the intention of the legislation to give all homeless people or those threatened with homelessness the same level of priority within the Housing Allocation Scheme, regardless of whether they would be in priority need if owed the full duty. Those to whom the Council owes a full duty to provide accommodation will however now be awarded Band A to reflect the urgency of these cases.</p> <p>Analysis of the homelessness data from the last two years shows that most homeless applicants are awarded Band B and re-housed successfully from this band. A relatively small number of applicants in comparison are owed the full homelessness duty. As such, it is envisaged that this change in Policy will not result in a significant difference in the band that homeless people are awarded or to the number of people in each band, but will ensure that the Scheme is in line with best practice and legislation.</p>
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# Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council



## Housing Allocation Scheme

Draft

2018



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## **Section 1:**

This section of the document will explain

- 1.1 The purpose of the Housing Allocation Scheme
- 1.2 The legal context in which the Housing Allocation Scheme is framed
- 1.3 How the Housing Allocation Scheme allows applicants to exercise choice
- 1.4 How the Housing Allocation Scheme aims to offer fair and equal treatment to all types of applicant

### **1.1 The Purpose of the Allocation Scheme**

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's Housing Allocation Scheme (the Scheme) sets out the criteria used by the Council and its partners to allocate social housing accommodation. The housing accommodation available to the Council, which is covered by the Scheme, consists of the following:

- Housing accommodation owned by the HomefinderRCT partner Housing Associations
- Housing Association accommodation for which the Council has an agreement which allows the Council to nominate an applicant for this accommodation

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council operates a common housing register known as 'HomefinderRCT' in partnership with:

- Cynon Taf Community Housing Group
- Hafod Housing Association
- Newydd Housing Association
- Rhondda Housing Association
- Trivallis.
- Wales and West Housing

The Scheme and the operation of HomefinderRCT make it easier for people to find housing in Rhondda Cynon Taf as applicants only have to apply to one Scheme to be considered for housing by all the Housing Association partners.

Although the Council transferred its housing stock to RCT Homes (now Trivallis) in 2007, it still retains its statutory housing duties to have a Housing Allocation Scheme and to discharge its homelessness duties. The Council's Scheme operates alongside the separate allocation policies of some Housing Associations that operate in Rhondda Cynon Taf but who are not a partner of HomefinderRCT.

This Scheme describes who is eligible to apply for housing. It also sets out the priority that is given to different applicants and how it is decided who is offered a social housing tenancy in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The Scheme ensures that those in greatest housing need (those who fall into a defined reasonable preference category (see Section 3)) are given overall priority for available social housing. The Scheme sets out how applicants can apply for social housing in Rhondda Cynon Taf and how eligible applicants are assessed through the use of a banding system.

The Housing Allocation Scheme will make a positive contribution towards the Council's Corporate Plan Vision of *'a County Borough that has high aspirations, is confident and promotes opportunity for all'*; as it will deliver against the specific priorities of *'People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone and 'Place - Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work'*. It will also help the Council to meet three of the seven wellbeing goals that The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:

1. A healthier Wales
2. A more equal Wales
3. A Wales of cohesive communities

The proposed changes are also consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act through the five ways of working:

- Long-term – the Housing Allocation Scheme will assist residents of RCT to secure long term and sustainable housing.
- Prevention – effective implementation of the Scheme will help to prevent people from becoming homeless. Living in good quality housing that is suitable also helps to prevent ill health.
- Integration – the Housing Allocation Scheme ensures that the approach to allocating housing in RCT is integrated with other council priorities e.g helping people to live independently and safely.
- Collaboration – the Housing Allocation Scheme promotes collaboration between the Council and all Housing Associations with housing stock in the County Borough because it provides a common way of allocating all available social housing
- Involvement – The effective implementation of the Housing Allocation Scheme requires the involvement of the Council and its housing association partner and other third sector and statutory agencies.

The aim of this Scheme is to allocate homes in Rhondda Cynon Taf by:

- Treating people fairly and giving them choice
- Meeting the housing needs, wishes and aspirations of applicants
- Making the best use of the social housing stock
- Maintaining sustainable and safe communities
- Providing a route into permanent housing



The Council and its HomefinderRCT Housing Association partners share the use of the Abrisas (Civica) IT system to operate HomefinderRCT. The formal descriptions of the sharing of the system and roles and responsibilities are set out in Service Level Agreements and/or contracts between the Council and its partners.

## **1.2 The Legal Context in which the Scheme is Framed**

### **1.2.1 The Legal Framework**

This Scheme has been written to meet the duties set out in Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 (the legislation).

Part six of the Housing Act 1996 covers:

- allocating local authority properties to new tenants
- transfers that are requested by local authority tenants
- allocating local authority properties to current tenants of registered social landlords
- nominations that the Council makes to housing associations

The legislation above requires each local housing authority to make all allocations and nominations in accordance with a Housing Allocation Scheme. The Council is required to publish its Scheme and provide a summary free of charge to anyone who requests a copy. A summary of the Scheme is available from:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's offices
- Housing Association offices
- the Council's website at [www.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.rctcbc.gov.uk)

This document is the full version of the Scheme and is available for inspection at the Council's offices at Sardis House, Sardis Road, Pontypridd, CF37 1DU

The legislation states that existing tenants are treated on the same basis as other applicants applying for accommodation under the Scheme. The Scheme must ensure that reasonable preference is given to certain categories of people; consider all applications properly made; not allocate to persons ineligible because of their immigration status or who are from abroad and ineligible; ensure advice and information is available about the right to make an application; and to provide assistance to those who have difficulty making an application.

The legislation gives applicants rights under the Scheme to request certain information; to request to be informed of certain decisions and in some cases to request reviews of decisions. The Council will consult with its

HomefinderRCT partners and other Housing Associations with whom it has nomination agreements before making any changes to the Scheme. If making a major policy change, for example where amendments affect the relative priority of a large number of people being considered for social housing, the Council is required to notify all those likely to be affected by the change within a reasonable period.

The legislation also sets out the type of housing circumstances that the Council must take account of (the 'reasonable preference' categories) when deciding who will be offered a property.

The Scheme has also been written in accordance with Part 2 (Homelessness) of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

The Scheme takes into account the Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness 2016 issued by the Welsh Government, the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014 and also complies with the following:

- The 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act)
- The Equalities Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Welsh Language Act 1993
- The Rehabilitation and Offenders Act 1974
- The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

The Scheme has undergone an Equality Impact Assessment. The Scheme is operated in accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

### **1.2.2 What is an Allocation?**

Housing Allocation Scheme is the term used to describe both the Council's policy for allocating accommodation and the Operational Manual that officers use to make sure the policy is implemented correctly. It covers all of the accommodation owned by the HomefinderRCT partners and other Housing Associations who the Council has nomination agreements with, and also includes everyone who applies to us for housing.

An allocation is a selection of a person to be offered a tenancy or a nomination by the Council to a Housing Association which is not part of HomefinderRCT.

### **1.2.3 Nominations Agreements**

The Council will nominate applicants to those Housing Associations who are not part of HomefinderRCT. These nominations will be made on the basis of formal Nomination Agreements. The following table indicates the agreed percentage of vacancies which will be offered for nominations by these Housing Associations:

<b>Registered Social Landlord</b>	<b>% of Vacancies</b>
Aelwyd	30
Elim	100
Gwalia	100

### **1.3 How the Scheme Allows Applicants to Exercise Choice**

The Council promotes choice and accessibility to social housing and applicants may be considered for homes suitable to their needs and in any of the areas they have specified on their application. The applicant can change these areas at any time. However, applicants must remember that in some areas availability may be limited due to high demand and the responsibilities the Council has to meet priority housing need and as a result the Council's ability to satisfy their choice can be limited.

To help applicants to make informed choices, they will be provided with in-depth information on the demand for accommodation in certain areas and the estimated length of time they are likely to wait.

### **1.4 How the Scheme Aims to Offer Fair and Equal Treatment to all Types of Applicant**

This Scheme has been designed to ensure fairness and consistency in allocating housing, through setting a fair and transparent framework for assessing housing need.

The Council aims to deliver services that recognise the needs of different groups within the County Borough. The Council and its HomefinderRCT partners will ensure that no applicant is treated less favourably on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, caring responsibilities or Welsh language. The eligibility criteria, set out in Section 2, will be used to make decisions on allocations under this Scheme.

Applicants will be able to apply for housing in the County Borough using a range of methods. In addition to this interpretation services such as language line, availability of large print information or braille and printed information in minority languages will be available when requested.

The Scheme will be widely promoted to ensure that no individual or group is excluded from accessing services due to lack of information. To ensure that the services offer equality of opportunity, service provision and satisfaction they will be monitored by age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

## **Section 2:**

This section of the document will explain

- 2.1 Who is eligible to apply under this Scheme
- 2.2 Who is not eligible to apply under this Scheme
- 2.3 Who will be considered as part of the household

### **2.1 Who Is Eligible to Apply Under the Scheme**

#### **2.1.1 Who is eligible to be part of the Council's Allocation Scheme**

It is the Council's policy to consider all applications from anyone who is eligible to HomefinderRCT. Eligible people include:

- existing tenants who have been a tenant for longer than 12 months
- British nationals habitually resident in the Common Travel Area
- European Economic Area Nationals
- people subject to immigration control prescribed as eligible (e.g. refugees, those with humanitarian protection or who are nationals of a country with whom special arrangements have been agreed)

#### **2.1.2 Allocations to 16 and 17 Year Olds**

Anyone who is 16 years or over can apply under this Scheme. However a Housing Association will not normally offer a tenancy to anyone under the age of 18 years unless they have a Trustee. For young people under the age of 18 years the Housing Association will grant permission to occupy the property by way of an approved agreement rather than a tenancy agreement.

#### **2.1.3 Allocations to Owner-occupiers**

Owner-occupiers can apply under this Scheme and will be assessed accordingly. Owner-occupiers assessed as having no housing need and/or with the financial resources to buy or rent privately will be placed in Band D (see Appendix 1).

#### **2.1.4 Capital, Savings, Assets and Income**

All applicants will be assessed in accordance with the banding system and whether or not they fall into a reasonable preference category. Applicants with savings over £50,000 will be able to join the register, but will be placed in Band D unless there are exceptional circumstances. Applicants requiring Sheltered Housing, older persons or specialist accommodation are exempt from this.

### 2.1.5 Eligible Applicants Taking into Account Nationality and Immigration Status

The following groups are the main categories of applicants to whom an allocation can be made taking account of nationality and immigration status:

- **Existing Tenants** – Section 160A(6)/[s.14(2)] of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002), provides that none of the provisions relating to the eligibility of tenants with regards to immigration status is to affect those already a secure or introductory tenant or an assured tenant of housing accommodation allocated by a housing authority. Therefore where such a tenant applies for an allocation the housing authority need not question eligibility and an allocation can be made regardless of immigration status or habitual residence tests
- **British Nationals Habitually Resident In The Common Travel Area (CTA)** – where a British National arrives from abroad, as with all nationals of an European Economic Area (EEA) country, he/she must establish habitual residence in order to be eligible for an allocation, even in case where he/she was born in the CTA (please see Appendix 4 for details of Habitual Residence Test)
- **European Economic Area (EEA) Nationals Habitually Resident in the CTA** – these are the Nationals of the European Union (EU) countries plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein. They are eligible for an allocation if they are habitually resident in the CTA, are a worker, or have a right to reside (see Glossary for explanation) in the UK. All EEA nationals have an initial right to reside in the UK up to three months, and “qualifying persons” (jobseekers, workers, self-employed persons, students and people who are self-sufficient) have an extended right to stay
- The following are not to be treated as persons from abroad who are ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation pursuant to paragraph (1)(a)—
  - (a) a worker;
  - (b) a self-employed person;
  - (c) a person who is treated as a worker for the purpose of the definition of “qualified person” in regulation 6(1) of the EEA Regulations pursuant to regulation 5 of the Accession Regulations 2013 (right of residence of an accession State national subject to worker authorisation);
  - (d) a person who is the family member of a person specified in subparagraphs (a)-(c);
  - (e) a person with a right to reside permanently in the United Kingdom by virtue of regulation 15(1)(c), (d) or (e) of the EEA Regulations; and
  - (f) a person who is in the United Kingdom as a result of the person’s deportation, expulsion or other removal by compulsion of law from another country to the United Kingdom
- **Persons Subject to Immigration Control who are eligible for an allocation of housing accommodation** – persons subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 are

generally not eligible for housing accommodation. A person subject to immigration control requires specific permission to stay in the UK and will usually be subject to conditions attached to that permission. However, under s.160A(3)/[s.14(2)], and regulation 3 of 'The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014 Welsh Ministers have prescribed classes of person who are to be considered eligible. These are:

- **Class A** – a person who is recorded by the Secretary of States as a refugee within the definition in Article 1 of the Refugee Convention and who has leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom
- **Class B** – a person—
  - (i) who has exceptional leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom granted outside the provisions of the Immigration Rules; and
  - (ii) whose leave to enter or remain is not subject to a condition requiring that person to maintain and accommodate themselves, and any person who is dependant on that person, without recourse to public funds
- (c) **Class C** – a person who is habitually resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland and whose leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom is not subject to any limitation or condition, other than a person—
  - (i) who has been given leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom upon an undertaking given by the person's sponsor;
  - (ii) who has been resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland for less than five years beginning on the date of entry or on the date on which the undertaking was given in respect of the person, whichever date is the later; and
  - (iii) whose sponsor or, where there is more than one sponsor, at least one of whose sponsors is still alive;
- (d) **Class D** – a person who has humanitarian protection granted under the Immigration Rules; and
- (e) **Class E** – a person who is habitually resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland and who has limited leave to enter the United Kingdom as a relevant Afghan citizen under paragraph 276BA1 of the Immigration Rules.

## **2.2 Who is not Eligible to Apply under the Scheme**

### **2.2.1 Ineligible Categories**

The following categories of people are not eligible to apply:

- Young people under 16 years of age
- People from abroad who are ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation as prescribed by Welsh Ministers under s.160A(3)/[s.14(2)] and regulation 4 of 'The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014'. A person who is not subject to immigration control is to be treated as a person from abroad

who is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation under Part 6 of the 1996 Act if—

- (a) subject to paragraph (2), the person is not habitually resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or the Republic of Ireland;
- (b) the person's only right to reside in the United Kingdom—
  - (i) is derived from the person's status as a jobseeker or a family member of a jobseeker; or
  - (ii) is an initial right to reside for a period not exceeding three months under regulation 13 of the EEA Regulations(1); or
  - (iii) is a derivative right to reside to which the person is entitled under regulation 15A(1) of the EEA Regulations, but only in a case where the right exists under that regulation because the applicant satisfies the criteria in regulation 15A(4A) of those Regulations(2); or
  - (iv) is derived from Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in a case where the right to reside arises because a British citizen would otherwise be deprived of the genuine enjoyment of the substance of their rights as a European Union citizen; or
- (c) the person's only right to reside in the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland—
  - (i) is a right equivalent to one of those mentioned in subparagraph (b)(i), (ii) or (iii) which is derived from the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union; or
  - (ii) is derived from Article 20 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union in a case where the right to reside—
    - (aa) in the Republic of Ireland arises because an Irish citizen; or (bb) in the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man arises because a British citizen also entitled to reside there, would otherwise be deprived of the genuine enjoyment of the substance of their rights as a European Union citizen.

- Current tenants who have been a tenant for less than 12 months and do not fall into a Reasonable Preference Category
- Individuals, or any member of their households, who have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him or her unsuitable to be a tenant. Unacceptable behaviour includes:
  - A breach of tenancy obligations such as rent arrears, recharges, criminal damage to a property or common parts, premium paid for assignment/mutual exchange, conflict with conditions of tied accommodation
  - Anti-social behaviour such as causing nuisance or annoyance, racial or other harassment, illegal or immoral behaviour, making threats or actual violence against neighbours, landlords, Council staff, managing agents or contractors
  - Specifically, any applicant who has been previously evicted by a social landlord under Section 84A of the Anti-Social Behaviour and Policing Act 2014



- Obtaining a tenancy by deception for example by providing false information or excluding relevant information in support of an application
- Tenants wishing to transfer where their current property is in such poor condition that it cannot be re-let within a reasonable timescale

In assessing whether an applicant is ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour, the Council will consider:

- Where there is evidence of unacceptable behaviour, was it serious enough to have entitled an authority to obtain a possession order?
- Was the behaviour serious enough to render the applicant or a household member unsuitable to be a tenant?
- Is the behaviour still unacceptable at the time of application?

Access to housing by foreign nationals is governed by legislation. People from abroad can apply to join the Scheme but will require checks before their eligibility under the Scheme can be determined.

Applications are not assessed as completed and given a band until information confirming eligibility has been provided and checked.

An applicants' eligibility to join the Scheme will be kept under review during the application process. Although some applicants may initially be informed that they are eligible for the scheme, this decision could change if further information and checks are necessary. Applicants who have been classified ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour are permitted to make an application in the future if they can demonstrate a changed pattern of behaviour. The Council will determine if the changed behaviour makes the applicant eligible under the Scheme at the re-application stage.

Evidence that could be provided by an applicant in order to demonstrate a changed pattern of behaviour could include, for example:

- evidence that an applicant has reduced his or her rent arrears
- evidence that an applicant is receiving support or training to manage behaviour and engaging with this support

All applicants will be notified in writing of the decision on eligibility and the grounds for this decision. All applicants have the right to request a review of any decisions as to eligibility and a right to be informed of the decision of the review and the grounds on which that decision was made. All requests to review an application will be presented to the Eligibility Panel. In cases where the Eligibility Panel has determined an applicant is not eligible for an allocation, requests for a review of the application will be referred to the HomefinderRCT Steering Group for decision.

### **2.2.2 Applicants with Outstanding Housing Related Debts**

As outlined above (section 2.2.1) some applicants may be ineligible on the grounds of unacceptable behaviour, which can include housing related debts.



Housing related debt includes current or former rent arrears (including temporary accommodation arrears), damage to a former social housing property, clearance or storage costs, or the legal costs arising from court action in connection with a current or former tenancy.

HomefinderRCT will consider the following when assessing eligibility and unacceptable behaviour as a result of housing related debt:

- Whether the applicant still owes arrears/debt and if so what is the extent of the rent/debt
- Whether there are any exceptional circumstances for the applicant's debt
- Whether the applicant has demonstrated a commitment to repaying the debt and has a suitable arrangement in place to include the amount of arrears paid off, any outstanding debt and the regularity of the payments made

After the above considerations have been made HomefinderRCT may conclude that the applicant is ineligible.

### **2.2.3 Non Compliance to Tenancy Agreement**

Some applicants who have failed to adhere to any current or previous social housing or private rented housing tenancy agreement terms and conditions may be considered ineligible on the grounds of unacceptable behaviour as outlined in section 2.2.1. This will include failing to maintain their previous social rented or private rented property within the terms of their tenancy agreement, or cause nuisance or annoyance to neighbours or others within the locality of where they live or have previously lived.

When assessing eligibility and unacceptable behaviour as a result of non compliance to tenancy HomefinderRCT will consider whether the applicant can demonstrate that their circumstances have changed and the previous conduct is unlikely to happen in the future. This could include demonstrating co-operation with support agencies.

## **2.3 Who Can Be Considered As Part Of The Household**

When assessing an application the Council will consider the housing circumstances of everyone in the household. A household is considered to be:

- People who are part of the settled household at the date of registration, or in the case of existing tenants, were part of the household at the start of the tenancy and are still in occupation
- Partners who are living together in a settled relationship
- Children born since the registration date, or the start of the tenancy, or other dependent children joining the household where the applicant or tenant is the principal carer of the child. Birth certificates will need to be

produced to verify dependent relationship(s). Applicants must inform the Housing Solutions Team of any change to their household

- An adult relative who has become a settled member of the household because they are in need of support and cannot live independently. Such persons must have lived with the household for at least 12 consecutive months before being considered part of the household unless in exceptional circumstances
- Housing applications where an applicant and partner or their child/children are forced to live apart owing to lack of suitable accommodation

## **Section 3:**

This section of the document will explain how the assessment of need is carried out under the scheme

- 3.1 How the banding system works
- 3.2 The additional preference categories
- 3.3 The reasonable preference categories
- 3.4 Local Priorities
- 3.5 Discretionary allocations and local lettings plans
- 3.6 How the size and type of accommodation is assessed
- 3.7 Refusal of an Offer of Accommodation
- 3.8 Applicants with No Local Connection

### **3.1 How the Banding System Works**

The Council is committed to working in partnership with organisations and individuals both statutory and voluntary to deliver this Scheme to ensure it meets the needs of both individual applicants and the community as a whole in an effective and sustainable way. Where the waiting list exceeds the supply of vacancies it is necessary to prioritise applicants so that properties are offered fairly.

All applicants for social housing in Rhondda Cynon Taf will be assessed using a banding system. The bands are arranged to reflect housing priority;

- Band A Urgent housing need,
- Band B High housing need
- Band C Low housing need
- Band D No housing need

The banding system is designed so that each band includes applicants who have a similar level of housing need and distinguishes between the different needs of applicants.

Applicants will be prioritised within their band based on the date that their application was received for housing. The Housing Association will advertise a property and once the bidding cycle has closed, the Housing Association will go to the highest band first and, in most cases, will select the applicant with the longest waiting time suitable for that property. Only applicants who have bid for a property, and who are eligible for that property will be shortlisted and the person with the longest waiting time within the band will be selected.

The Housing Act 1996 (amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) states that Housing Allocation schemes must be framed to ensure **reasonable preference** is given to applicants experiencing certain types of housing need. However while housing authorities will need to ensure that, overall, reasonable preference for allocations is given to applicants in the relevant categories these should not be regarded as exclusive and an allocation scheme may allow for other factors such as **local priorities**, provided that they do not dominate the scheme and that overall the scheme gives adequate priority to applicants in the reasonable preference categories. As well as ensuring reasonable preference is given to applicants in greatest housing need, **additional preference** can be awarded to applicants who require urgent re-housing for various reasons.

Appendix 1 outlines the banding system and the circumstances and criteria used to assess the most appropriate band for the applicant's housing circumstances and need. The principle of this Scheme is that an applicant's priority for housing should reflect both their level of housing need and length of time spent in need. Therefore priority will increase with time and a new applicant should not normally overtake an existing applicant within the same band. The circumstances where an allocation can be made to an applicant who is not at the top of the band will be outlined in the Operational Manual and monitored by the Council.

## **3.2 The Additional Preference Categories**

The legislation gives housing authorities the ability to give additional preference to particular types of applicant. This means that the Council can give a priority to some applicants considered to have a particularly urgent housing need. Additional preference includes both Reasonable Preference categories and also local priorities. The Council will award additional preference to applicants with an urgent need to move and will be placed in Band A. Band A is time limited and cases are assessed every 3 months.

### **3.2.1 Additional Preference for Homeless Households**

Applicants who are awarded Reasonable Preference on Homeless grounds will be awarded Band A where they require an offer of accommodation within a short period of time as they have suddenly lost their existing home as a result of fire, flood or other disaster.

Applicants who are homeless and are owed a duty by the local housing authority under Section 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

### **3.2.2 Additional Preference for People leaving the Armed Forces**

Band A will be awarded to applicants who have served in the regular or reserve armed forces of the Crown who have been homeless since leaving the armed forces

Band A will be awarded to bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular or reserve 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

### **3.2.3 Additional Preference for Applicants Living in Unsatisfactory Housing Conditions**

Band A is awarded to applicants who currently occupy a property where there is a statutory requirement to vacate due to a prohibition order / demolition order / compulsory purchase

### **3.2.4 Additional Preference for Emergency Medical, Welfare or Disability Related Need**

Applicants who are awarded Reasonable Preference on medical, welfare or disability grounds and have an urgent need to move will be awarded Band A. These would include applicants with an emergency need to move due to high risk or life threatening grounds which will not improve or stabilise until more suitable accommodation is offered as their current accommodation is wholly inappropriate.

Examples of cases where applicants would qualify for Band A as having a Reasonable Preference and an additional preference under this category are:

- The applicant's health condition is terminal and their current home is a barrier to receiving urgent medical care
- The applicant's health condition is life threatening and their existing accommodation is a significant contributory factor
- Disabled people whose current accommodation cannot be adapted and it completely restricts them from carrying out day-to-day activities both internally and outside the home and they require a fully adapted property
- Planned discharge from hospital is imminent and there is no accommodation available to them that it is reasonable for them to occupy
- Applicants (including those leaving Care) that are leaving supported housing and have been assessed and approved by the Move-On panel as ready for re-housing\*
- The applicant is currently under occupying social housing by one or more bedrooms and needs to transfer to a smaller property due to the current property being unaffordable

\* Not all those leaving care will be awarded reasonable preference. Applicants must be vulnerable with an urgent housing need that is best met by the provision of long-term independent housing. Applicants who do not qualify for reasonable preference will be assisted by Children's Services with support from HomefinderRCT to identify accommodation through alternative housing options.

The evidence to support this will be provided by the social worker via the Move On referral form and will consist of confirmation that:

- The relevant child or former relevant child is ready to move to independent settled housing and is genuinely prepared for a move to independent living
- The relevant child or former relevant child possesses the life skills to manage a tenancy including managing a rent account
- The relevant child or former relevant child has either long term or medium term tenancy support arranged, as required
- Ongoing support needs have been determined and, where appropriate, a support plan is in place

\* Not all applicants who occupy supported housing will be awarded reasonable preference. Applicants must be vulnerable with an urgent housing need that is only met by the provision of *long term* independent housing. Applicants who do not require *long term independent* housing will be assisted by the supported housing project and HomefinderRCT to identify alternative suitable accommodation through alternative housing options. The criteria for an award of reasonable preference will be:

- An applicant is ready to move into independent settled housing as confirmed by the Move On Panel
- The applicant is in need of medium to long term ongoing tenancy support rather than short term support
- A support package has been assessed and is in place
- An applicant's vulnerability is such that accommodation in the private rented sector would through its own short term have a detrimental effect on their vulnerability
- All tenants in supported accommodation will be expected to evidence that they have completed specific training around being tenancy ready, this may be completed as part of an arranged group session facilitated by a housing provider or dependent on circumstances on a one to one basis. The Move On referral form will need to have details that this has taken place, otherwise the referral may be deferred until it is completed

### **3.2.5 Additional Preference for Applicants Releasing an Adapted Property**

Band A will be awarded to applicants who occupy a property assessed as a Level 1 adapted property that they no longer require and there is a suitable

applicant on the waiting list for the adapted property which will be released through the move.

### **3.2.6 Additional Preference for Child Protection**

Band A is awarded to applicants where there is a likelihood that their child will need to be accommodated by the local authority if re-housing is not made.

### **3.2.7 Additional Preference for Exceptional Circumstances**

Band A is awarded to applicants whose circumstances are not dealt with under any of the other circumstances in Band A, however their housing need has been assessed by the HomefinderRCT Steering Group as urgent and they require immediate re-housing.

## **3.3 The Reasonable Preference Categories**

The Housing Act 1996 requires local authorities to ensure that reasonable preference is given to all of the following categories of people:

- a) People who are homeless within the meaning of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014
- b) People who are owed any duty by a local housing authority under Section 66, 73 or 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014
- c) People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- d) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to disability
- e) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the local authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others)

The following section details applicants who fall within the Reasonable Preference categories. Applicants with a Reasonable Preference will be banded according to their housing need.

### **3.3.1 People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014**

#### **People who are owed any duty by a local housing authority under Section 66, 73 or 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014**

This includes a person who has no accommodation for his / her occupation, which he / she is legally entitled to or it is not reasonable for a person to continue to occupy the accommodation if it is probable that this will lead to abuse against him / her, or against a person who normally resides with the

occupant or any other person who might reasonably be expected to reside with him / her.

**Band A** will be awarded to applicants who are homeless under Section 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. These are households who are homeless, eligible and in priority need. The following have been classed as priority need categories under section 70 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

- A pregnant woman or person with whom she resides or might reasonably be expected to reside
- A person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside
- A person who is vulnerable as a result of some special reason for example old age, mental illness or physical disability, or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably be expected to reside
- A person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as a flood, fire or other disaster or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably reside
- A care leaver or person at particular risk of sexual or financial exploitation, 18 years or over but under the age of 21
- A 16 or 17 year old or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably reside
- A person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of being subject to domestic abuse or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably reside
- A person who has a local connection to the area of the local housing authority and who is vulnerable as a result of –
  - having served a custodial sentence within the meaning of section 76 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000
  - having been remanded in or committed to custody by an order of a court
  - having been remanded to youth detention accommodation under section 91(4) of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably reside

**Band B** will be awarded to applicants who are threatened with homelessness, and eligible under Section 66 and Section 73 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

### **3.3.2 Reasonable Preference category s167 (2) (c) – people occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions**

**Band B** will be awarded to applicants who are occupying accommodation which is short by 2 or more bedrooms suitable to their needs



**Band B** will be awarded to applicants 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

**Band C** will be awarded to applicants living in accommodation which is not suitable to their needs because it is short by one bedroom which is suitable to their needs

**Band C** will also be awarded to applicants who have to share facilities with other households and where they do not have a tenancy agreement

### **3.3.3 Reasonable Preference category 167 (2) (d) – Medical, Disability and Welfare**

#### **3.3.3.1 Medical and Disability**

Applicants will be awarded Reasonable Preference where a move will improve a medical condition. Applicants who indicate that they or a member of their households have an illness or disability that is affected by their current accommodation or who may be vulnerable on physical or mental health grounds will need to have their application supported by a GP or Consultant. The assessment is not of the applicant's health but how their accommodation affects their health or welfare.

**Band C** will be awarded to applicants who have a health condition which is being adversely affected by an aspect of their current home which can only be resolved by moving house.

#### **3.3.3.2 Welfare**

Reasonable preference (d) will be awarded to applicants with a need to move on welfare grounds.

**Band B** will be awarded to applicants who have an urgent need to move on welfare grounds due to any of the following:

- The applicant has been referred because they are at risk of being admitted to residential care or hospital if re-housing is not made
- The applicant needs to move due to relationship breakdown and there is a need identified to safeguard and promote the welfare of any children associated



### **3.3.4 Reasonable Preference category s167 (2) (e) – People who need to move to a particular locality within the local authority’s district where failure to meet need would cause hardship to themselves or to others**

Reasonable preference (e) will be awarded where the applicant needs to move to a particular locality within the local authority’s district where failure to meet the need would cause hardship to themselves or to others.

**Band B** will be awarded to applicants who meet any of the following:

- The applicant is giving or receiving essential support which can only be delivered if they live in a specific locality within the area
- The applicant has an offer of or has permanent or part time employment or a long term training or education placement cannot continue unless they live in a specific locality within the area and are otherwise adequately housed

**Band C** will be awarded to applicants who meet any of the following:

- The applicant needs to move to be nearer to:
  - A child’s school where the child’s need to move to a school has been recommended by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning
  - A place of worship where there is no suitable place of worship where the applicant currently resides

## **3.4 Local Priorities**

Whilst the Council is required by law to give overall priority to applicants who fall within the Reasonable Preference categories the Scheme allows for flexibility to ensure that the strategic aims of the Local Authority are also taken account of.

The following local priorities have therefore been adopted:

### **3.4.1 Fostering and Adopting**

**Band B** will be awarded to applicants who have been recommended by the Council to foster or adopt children and whose current accommodation is not large enough.

### **3.4.2 Separated Households**

**Band B** will be awarded to applicants whose households are forced to live apart because their current accommodation is unsuitable

This does not apply to those who are legally separated or are living apart due to relationship breakdown or family dispute.

## **3.5 Discretionary Allocations and Local Lettings Plans**

The aim of this policy is to ensure that overall priority for allocations is given to applicants in the relevant categories described above and to those that have waited the longest to be housed. However, some flexibility is required in order to meet urgent housing need, create sustainable communities and provide for the efficient use of the social housing stock. There are often circumstances where the only way these issues can be resolved is to give Housing Associations discretion to make the most appropriate allocation under the circumstances. The HomefinderRCT Steering Group will be responsible for approving allocations in such cases.

### **3.5.1 Local Lettings Policies**

The legislation enables housing authorities to allocate accommodation to people of a particular description who may not be at the top of their Band. For example, to ensure sustainability some accommodation may be restricted to persons over the age of 50.

Local Lettings Plans can also be implemented to help to improve the sustainability of some communities. Local lettings plans are developed and approved in accordance with an agreed procedure which considers the specific aims and justification of the plans. The plans are reviewed on an annual basis to determine whether they are still required. All local lettings Plans are evidence based with an aim to achieving community sustainability and ensure that they fit with and inform strategic priorities. We will ensure local lettings plans do not discriminate on the grounds of any protected characteristic and that they are monitored and evaluated to assess their impact.

From time to time a sensitive lettings approach may be also be agreed with a housing association, to deal with specific local issues at an individual property or street level. These do not require the same approval process as they are only implemented in relation to the next letting of a property, rather than a longer term plan. However, the Housing Association must provide evidence to the Council as to why they are undertaking a sensitive let of a property.

## **3.6 How the Size and Type of Accommodation is Assessed**

Applicants can apply for any area and type of property that is suitable to their needs. However the size of accommodation that can be allocated to an applicant will be calculated according to the standard set out in the following sub section. There may be circumstances where a larger size property may be allocated than what is needed. In such cases applicants will be made fully aware of the financial implications of having a property which is larger than their household size and will receive a financial assessment to determine that they are able to afford a larger property. However applicants will only be offered a larger property where there have been no other bids from an applicant who requires that size property in the same area. If an applicant who requires that size property in the area that the property is being advertised

bids for the property then priority will be given to applicant with a need for the size of the property that becomes available.

In addition some types of accommodation will only be allocated to certain groups of applicants. Further details of this are set out in sub section 3.6.2.

### 3.6.1 Size of Accommodation

The assessment for the type and size of accommodation is done in accordance with the Department of Works and Pensions' rules. Under these rules applicants are entitled to one bedroom for each of the following:

- every adult couple
- a person who is not a child (aged 16 and over)
- any two children of the same sex aged under 16
- any two children who are aged under 10
- any other child (other than a foster child or child whose main home is elsewhere)
- a carer (or group of carers) providing overnight care

The following table provides an example of the above criteria

Household Size	Accommodation Size
<b>Single Person</b>	1 bedroom
<b>Couple</b>	1 bedroom
<b>Co-tenant</b>	2 bedroom
<b>Single parent or couple with one child</b>	2 bedroom
<b>Single parent or couple with two children of the same sex</b>	
- both aged under 16	2 bedroom
- one or both aged over 16	3 bedroom
<b>Single parent or couple with two children of opposite sex</b>	
- both aged under 10	2 bedroom
- one or both aged 10 or over	3 bedroom
<b>Single parent or couple with three children</b>	
- two are able to share a room (under 16 same sex / under 10 opposite sex)	3 bedroom
- none able to share a room	4 bedroom
<b>Single parent or couple with four children</b>	
- if all children are able to share rooms	3 bedroom
- if two children are able to share a room	4 bedroom
- all other	4 bedroom

\* please note that housing benefit does not pay up to two bedrooms for same sex couples only one bedroom

Household members who are temporarily living away from home, for example in further education or the armed forces, will be included as part of the household. The individual currently living away will need to confirm in writing that they wish to be considered as part of the household and until the letter is provided the application will be considered as the individual not being part of the household.

Each application is assessed on the individual needs of the applicant in recognition that individual needs vary. There may be circumstances where a larger house size than which an applicant is entitled to may be awarded as outlined below:

- **Where the applicant has a disability and a non-resident carer, the applicant will be entitled to funding for an extra bedroom (WG Changes to Housing Benefit)**
- **Where there is a medical reason for requiring a separate or additional bedroom** – this will be considered on an individual basis
- **Where the applicant is pregnant** – applicants who are pregnant and have no other children will be accepted on to the waiting list for a 2 bedroom property. However applicants who already have children living with them will not automatically be awarded an extra bedroom because the sex of the baby is unlikely to be known at the point of application and therefore it is not possible to determine whether an additional bedroom is required. In these cases applications will be amended once the baby is born.
- **Where a separated spouse has access right to a child/children** – in some circumstances where the applicant can evidence that they provide essential support to the primary carer, then we may allow the applicant one additional bedroom, however the applicant will receive a financial assessment to determine affordability for a larger property. However applicants will only be offered a larger property where there have been no other bids from an applicant who requires that size property in the same area. If an applicant who requires that size property in the area that the property is being advertised bids for the property then priority will be given to applicant with a need for the size of the property that becomes available.
- **Where there is no stock of a suitable size** – in some areas, where landlords do not own properties of a smaller size, smaller households may be entitled to be considered for larger properties however applicants will receive a financial assessment to determine that they can afford a larger property and where their income is over the Benefit Cap they may be entitled to have a larger property. However applicants will only be offered a larger property where there have been no other bids from an applicant who requires that size property in the same area. If an applicant who requires that size property in the area that the property is being advertised bids for the property then priority will be given to applicant with a need for the size of the property that becomes available.

### **3.6.2 Type of Accommodation**

Applicants can usually apply for any type or size of accommodation that is suitable to their needs. However some types of properties may only be designated to certain client groups, for example sheltered or older persons' accommodation will usually be offered to people over 55 or 60, depending on the landlord of the sheltered scheme.

Certain types of properties and areas are available more readily than other areas and applicants will receive detailed information on areas of choice when they apply to HomefinderRCT.

### **3.6.3 Areas of Preference**

Applicants may request housing in an area where there is currently no social housing provided as it will help the future planning of new developments. In these circumstances, applicants will be made aware that if they only choose these areas they are likely to have to wait a very long time to be re-housed.

### **3.6.4 Areas with greater availability of housing**

In some areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf there are areas of housing that have a very short waiting lists or even no waiting list at all. In these circumstances the Council may agree with the landlord a local lettings plan that does not rely on the Housing Allocation Scheme but allows instant access without the need for any assessment beyond eligibility. The aim of such local lettings schemes will be to establish a viable community in the location. If demand increases subsequently then lettings may be brought back within the Scheme.

### **3.6.5 Access to Children**

The primary carer will be classified as the parent who receives Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit or Working Family Tax Credit in respect of the child / children, and accommodation will be allocated in accordance with the criteria set out above (Section 3.6.1).

Applicants who are separated or divorced, have joint custody, and can evidence via a court order or legal agreement that they provide essential support to the primary carer may be considered for a property based on the family size. Applicants who do qualify for this reason for a larger size property will be awarded reasonable preference category s167(2)(d) and placed in Band B. Applicants will need to provide evidence, such as a birth certificate, to support their application and each application will be assessed individually.

Access cases, where there is no essential support being provided, will be assessed according to the applicant's housing need and may be entitled to a property with one bedroom more than the permanent family's needs depending on the outcome of a financial assessment.

Applicants will be made aware of the cost implications of having a larger property as Housing Benefit for a larger property will only be paid to the primary carer.

### **3.7 Refusal of an Offer of Accommodation**

The Scheme allows applicants to specify any areas at estate or community level where they do not want to be offered housing. The scheme also allows them to be considered only for property types that would suit the size of the family. The intention therefore is to make offers of accommodation that meet the preferences of applicants and provide suitable accommodation. As a result, when applicants refuse two offers of accommodation that they have bid for, without offering a valid reason, their application will be cancelled.

A reasonable offer of accommodation is one that meets the housing need, size and location as specified in the applicant's application.

Homeless applicants who have refused an offer of accommodation made by the Council to discharge its legal duty will lose their priority band status and will be reassessed. Applicants can reapply to HomefinderRCT and will be assessed and awarded a band in accordance with their current housing need.

### **3.8 Applicants with No Local Connection**

Following an assessment of eligibility, applications can be accepted from people living anywhere in the United Kingdom. However applicants will have less priority within the scheme than those with a local connection to Rhondda Cynon Taf. A local connection is defined in s.199 of the 1996 Act as a connection which the applicant has with an area because:

- He or she is, or was in the past, normally resident there, and that resident was of his or her own choice, or
- He or she is employed there (i.e. the applicant actually works in the area rather than that the area is the site of his or her employers' head office), or
- Of family associations; or
- Of any special circumstance (e.g. the need to be near special medical or support services which are available only in a particular area)

In assessing whether the applicant's household has a local connection with their area, the Scheme will consider whether any person who is reasonably expected to live with the applicant has such a connection.

Applicants with no local connection will have their priority adjusted and will be awarded the next band down to the original band that they would have been awarded based on their housing need.

Applicants whose priority is adjusted will be provided with written notification of the decision which will include the following:

- The reason for the decision
- The band that they would have been awarded and the new band as a result of reduced priority
- The applicant's right to appeal and that this has to be done within 21 days of the written notification of the decision
- Any actions they need to take before they can be considered for a higher band
- Any appeal will be dealt with by an officer who was not involved in the original decision. All appeals will be dealt with within 8 weeks

Circumstances may arise where it is not appropriate to apply the local connection policy and managers' discretion will evaluate each case on its own merit:

- MAPPA cases will not be subject to local connection
- Armed Forces Personnel will be deemed to have established a local connection with Rhondda Cynon Taf by virtue of serving, or having served in the County Borough whilst in the Forces.
- Applicants who have been placed outside of RCT whilst being looked after by Children's Services
- Applicants who are currently living in institutional arrangements where they have a connection with the area and a known date for discharge which is not unreasonably distant e.g prisoners, hospital patients.
- Homeless applicants

MAPPA stands for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements – a set of arrangements established by police, probation and the prison services (known as the responsible authorities) to assess and manage the risk posed by sexual and violent offenders. A number of agencies are under a duty to co-operate with the responsible authority. These include: Local Authority social services, Primary Care Trusts and strategic health authorities, Youth Offending Teams, local housing authorities, registered social landlords, local education authorities, Jobcentre Plus, and electronic monitoring providers.

The purposes of MAPPA are:

- to ensure more comprehensive risk assessments, taking advantage of co-ordinated information sharing across the agencies, and
- to direct the available resources to best protect the public.

## **Section 4:**

This section of the document will explain the process for making an application

- 4.1 How to make an application
- 4.2 The provision of advice and information
- 4.3 Making a bid and the allocation of properties
- 4.4 Homeless right to review

### **4.1 How to Make an Application**

Anyone can make an application to join HomefinderRCT. However, the supply of vacant social housing for letting varies greatly across the County Borough and in some areas, or for some types of property, the waiting times are long. For this reason all applicants will be contacted by HomefinderRCT to discuss their application and areas of choice.

#### **4.1.1 Making an Application**

Applications to join HomefinderRCT can be made face-to-face at the Housing Advice Centre in Sardis House, Sardis Road, Pontypridd CF37 1DU or by telephoning 01443 425678. Applicants can also apply online at [www.homefinderrct.org.uk](http://www.homefinderrct.org.uk). Upon receipt of the application, a member of staff will contact the applicant in order to verify their application and discuss their areas of choice. Some applicants may require an officer to visit them at home. This can be arranged by telephoning HomefinderRCT on 01443 425678. Applicants can also contact HomefinderRCT by emailing [Homefinder@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:Homefinder@rctcbc.gov.uk)

Applicants with a criminal conviction will be referred to the Eligibility Panel. The Eligibility Panel is responsible for confirming eligibility based on the following test of unacceptable behaviour:

- Has the applicant been evicted for neighbour nuisance / and or anti social behaviour; or
- Has the applicant been convicted of specified conduct or in view of the panel have been guilty of such conduct; or
- Has the applicant made a clear attempt to obtain accommodation by deception

Where the Eligibility Panel assesses the applicant or member of their household as having unacceptable behaviour, where the behaviour is serious enough to make them (the applicant) unsuitable to be a tenant and where the behaviour is still deemed to be unacceptable at the point of application, the applicant will be determined as being ineligible to join the Scheme.



Where the Eligibility Panel has assessed the application as ineligible, the HomefinderRCT Manager will write to the applicant and advise them of this, providing full reasons for the decision and advising of their right to appeal.

Where an applicant is deemed eligible HomefinderRCT will continue the application process and inform the applicant of this decision. Applicants who are required to provide any supporting evidence are advised of this in writing once their application has been assessed and need to present this evidence to HomefinderRCT. Upon receipt of all supporting evidence the application is completed and a band is awarded. The decision is confirmed in writing to the applicant and includes information on the applicant's right to appeal.

All completed applications, regardless of whether supporting evidence is required, are verified by HomefinderRCT. The band is then confirmed in writing along with advising the applicant on their right to appeal.

Where supporting evidence is required, applicants are advised of this and asked to present the evidence to HomefinderRCT and the band is not confirmed until the evidence has been assessed.

#### **4.1.2 Registering an Application Online**

Applicants can register to HomefinderRCT online at [www.homefinderrct.org.uk](http://www.homefinderrct.org.uk). Internet access for completing a registration is available at a number of venues throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf including the Housing Advice Centre, One 4 All Centres and local libraries. Upon receipt of the application, a member of staff will contact the applicant in order to verify the application and discuss areas of choice. Applicants can also contact HomefinderRCT by emailing [Homefinder@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:Homefinder@rctcbc.gov.uk)

Where supporting evidence is required applicants are advised of this and asked to present the evidence to HomefinderRCT and the band is not confirmed until the evidence has been assessed.

#### **4.1.3 Home Visits**

Some applicants require a home visit and therefore at the point of contact to HomefinderRCT, the Team will:

- Arrange an appropriate time to visit the applicant and undertake a brief telephone assessment to assess eligibility and identify any supporting evidence that may be required, this can then be presented at the home visit
- Once eligibility has been confirmed undertake the home visit and verify supporting evidence
- Complete the application process and verbally confirm the band
- Confirm the band in writing and advise of the applicant's right to appeal

## **4.2 The Provision of Advice and Information**

All applicants must provide the information that is requested so that HomefinderRCT can confirm their details and award the appropriate band. If supporting evidence is not provided then this will delay the application process and therefore hold up any potential allocation.

The Council aims to provide advice and assistance to enable applicants to make informed choices about the most suitable housing option for them and to ensure that no applicant is disadvantaged.

Applicants will be provided with information regarding their own applications as follows:

- What band they have been awarded
- What information they need to supply for verification purposes
- If the applicant has been awarded reduced priority or are found to be ineligible what actions, if any, need to be undertaken to resolve this

### **4.2.1 Housing Options Advice**

The Council aims to provide applicants with detailed information regarding, not only the availability of social housing but also information on alternative housing options available in Rhondda Cynon Taf. All potential applicants will be provided with sufficient information to enable them to make an informed choice about whether to apply to the Scheme.

The HomefinderRCT website, [www.homefinderrct.org.uk](http://www.homefinderrct.org.uk) provides all types of housing advice. The website includes information on average waiting times and also includes information on selected properties which are immediately available for offer regardless of banding. There is also a wide range of information regarding other housing options and housing support/assistance as follows:

- Buying a house
- The Homestep Low Cost Homeownership Scheme
- Renting from a Private Landlord
- Local Area Information
- Supported Housing
- Adapted Housing
- Sheltered Housing
- Homelessness
- Housing Grants

Applicants who are unable to access the internet will be provided with printed copies of the information that is available.

#### **4.2.2 Financial Assessments**

The Council and its Housing Association partners are committed to ensuring that applicants can afford and sustain a tenancy they are offered. For this reason, at the point of application the HomefinderRCT Team will ask applicants some key questions regarding their finances to identify any potential affordability issues. This will ensure that applicants consider affordability when they are making housing choices and also will provide an opportunity to signpost applicants who are already experiencing financial difficulty to appropriate advice and support. A more detailed financial assessment will be undertaken by Housing Associations at the point at which they make an offer of accommodation. All Housing Associations will use a common Financial Assessment toolkit. Housing Associations will not use the findings of a financial assessment to exclude an applicant from housing or withdraw and offer of accommodation.

#### **4.2.3 Advice on Decisions and Reviews of Applications**

The Council will inform applicants of their rights regarding decisions made on their applications:

- The right to be notified in writing of any decision not to give an applicant any preference under the scheme because of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him/her (or a member of the household) unsuitable to be a tenant;
- the right, on request, to be informed of any decision about the facts of the applicant's case which has been, or is likely to be, taken into account in considering whether to make an allocation to him/her; and
- the right, on request, to review a decision mentioned in paragraph (i) or (ii) above or in respect of s.160A(9) regarding those who are ineligible or who may be treated as such on the grounds of unacceptable behaviour. The applicant also has the right to be informed of the decision on the review and the grounds for it.

#### **4.3 Making a Bid and the Allocation of Properties**

Properties are advertised on the HomefinderRCT website and applicants can bid for properties in their areas of choice and according to the type of property that they require. For all advertised properties, the eligibility of bids are checked against the labelling of the property used in the advertisement. Ineligible bids will not be considered. The allocation of advertised properties will be based on the priority of bids received, which means that Band A applicants will be given highest priority and Band D the lowest priority. Within each band applicants will be prioritised according to their waiting time, with those with the longest waiting time given highest priority. Therefore if there are multiple bids for a property from one band, the applicant with the longest waiting time in that Band will be offered the property by the relevant Housing Association.

## 4.4 Homeless Right to Review

Homeless applicants have the right, within 21 days, to request a review of suitability of an offer whether or not they have accepted the offer. If the applicant has been accepted as being owed a statutory duty by the Council, this duty, subject to a right of review, will have ceased if a final offer is refused.

The Council will cease to owe a duty if the applicant, having been informed of the possible consequence of a refusal and of their right to request a review of accommodation, refuses a final offer of accommodation. An offer of accommodation is considered a final offer if it has been made in writing and states that it is a final offer as the Council ceases to owe a duty as the applicant is no longer eligible for assistance.

The Homeless Review Panel will consider any requests to review the suitability of an offer of accommodation and will carry out the following:

- **If the offer is found to be unreasonable** reinstate their priority need status, or
- **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 5:

This section of the document will explain how lettings to specific groups are made under the scheme

- 5.1 How lettings to Councillors and Council Staff and Housing Association Board Members and Staff are made
- 5.2 How lettings to applicants requiring adapted properties are made

- 5.3 How lettings to applicants requiring older persons or sheltered accommodation are made
- 5.4 How lettings to the Council's Gypsy Traveller Caravan Site are made
- 5.5 How lettings to 16 and 17 years olds are made

### **5.1 How Lettings To Councillors and Council Staff and Housing Association Board Members and Staff are made**

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and its partners are committed to providing a fair and equitable Housing Allocation scheme to all its applicants. We do not exclude any employee, Council Member, Board Member, close relatives of employees or Board Members, or former staff from applying for a tenancy.

All persons eligible are entitled to apply to the Scheme and all applicants will undergo the same assessment procedure.

Staff, Board Members and Council Members and their relatives will be treated the same as any other applicant and will not receive any preferential treatment.

However the following steps will be followed when a member of staff, Board Member or Council Member submits an application:

- The applicant will have no involvement in any decisions or the inputting of their application
- The applicant will have no involvement in the awarding of priority or band
- Applications should be clearly marked that the application is that of a staff member, Board Member, Council Member or a relative
- At the point of offer the relevant form must be completed and signed off before the offer is complete

Guidance on permitted payments and benefits to staff and board members of Housing Associations in Wales states that when an offer is made there is an exemption to permit the grant of a tenancy or the disposal of a house to an officer or to a close relative of an officer provided that the written consent of the Welsh Government has been obtained.

### **5.2 How Lettings To Applicants Requiring Adapted Properties are made**

Applicants requiring adapted properties will apply for housing in the same way as applicants requiring general needs properties. Applications will be awarded priority in accordance with the banding system as set out in Section 3, Applicants will be advised on the level of adapted housing that they have

been assessed as needing based on the type and extent of adaptations they require.

When an adapted property becomes available for allocation the housing officer will identify applicants requiring an adapted property at the top of the relevant band. The Housing Association in most cases will follow the process used for selecting an applicant for a general needs property i.e. identifying an applicant from Band A first and if there is no suitable applicant in this band, moving to Band B and so on. However, the adapted property might not always be allocated to the person who has waited the longest in the band as in order to make the best use of the housing stock, the Housing Association is permitted to offer the property to the applicant who best matches the property type in terms of the adaptations they require and what is already provided at the property.

When a general needs property becomes available for allocation this will be allocated to the person at the top of the relevant band in accordance with Section 3.1. Some applicants requiring adaptations may not necessarily need a bungalow, level access or a fully adapted property and a general needs property, which can be adapted, may be suitable. If the applicant at the top of the band requires an adapted property, the housing officer will assess the suitability of the property to identify if the property can be adapted to meet the needs of the disabled applicant who is at the top of the list. Where the Housing Officer assesses the property as being suitable, an Occupational Therapist will be required to undertake a verification visit.

The Housing Officer and the Occupational Therapist must consider the, suitability, practicality and the cost effectiveness of adapting the available property.

### **5.3 How Lettings To Applicants Requiring Older Persons and Sheltered Housing Accommodation are made**

Sheltered housing offers accommodation, often within complexes, especially designed with the needs of older people in mind.

It aims to provide a safe environment where people can make friends and enjoy a range of social activities while living independently. In some cases, a warden service is supplied for greater reassurance and better security.

To be eligible for Sheltered Housing applicants must be:

- aged 55 or 60 and over, depending on the accommodation
- eligible for housing as detailed in the Scheme and appear in an appropriate band as set out in the Scheme
- be made aware of the cost of moving into a Scheme before a letting is carried out

Applicants wishing to apply for older persons' accommodation which is not sheltered accommodation can find details of this in Appendix 2.

#### **5.4 How Lettings to the Council's Gypsy Traveller Caravan Site are made**

Letting to the Council's Gypsy Traveller Caravan Site will be made in accordance with the Beddau Caravan Site Allocation Policy.

#### **5.5 How Lettings to 16 And 17 Year Olds are made**

Any United Kingdom resident 16 years or over can apply to the Scheme. However a Housing Association will not normally grant a tenancy to anyone under the age of 18 without a Trustee. For young people under the age of 18 the Registered Social Landlord may grant permission to allow for the occupation of the property by way of an approved agreement.

### **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 HomefinderRCT
- 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 (now Trivallis.) 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 Trivallis 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 HomefinderRCT
- 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, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, or marital status or age
- Regularly undertake equality monitoring
- Ensure that all information provided by applicants will be treated with strict confidentiality
- Applicants who have difficulty reading and understanding the Scheme will be offered the following services:
  - An interpretation service if their first language is not English
  - Provision of documents in large print
  - An interview to explain the Scheme and information where independent advice can be obtained regarding the Scheme

## **6.2 Monitoring**

The Housing Act 1996 requires housing authorities to determine and publish a Housing Allocation Scheme setting out how it prioritises applicants for social housing. Monitoring reports are published quarterly and presented to the HomefinderRCT 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 HomefinderRCT**

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



in Band A will have their applications reviewed every 3 months to ensure that they are actively bidding and also that their housing circumstances have not changed i.e they are still in urgent housing need.

Applicants will be sent a reminder after 14 working days where failure to respond to this will result in their application being cancelled. All cancelled 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 HomefinderRCT 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 HomefinderRCT.

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 HomefinderRCT 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 HomefinderRCT
- 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 provides information regarding 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 HomefinderRCT
- 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 HomefinderRCT on 01443 425678 or in writing to HomefinderRCT, Ty Elai, Dinas Isaf East, Williamstown, Tonypany, CF40 1NY

Upon receipt of a review request the HomefinderRCT Manager will prepare a report for the HomefinderRCT Steering Group. The Steering Group 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 decision.

## **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 HomefinderRCT Manager will deal and respond to all complaints and feedback regarding the Scheme and HomefinderRCT procedures and processes.

### **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 HomefinderRCT Manager to deal with.
- The HomefinderRCT 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 Housing Association 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 procedures and 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>Criteria for Band A Urgent Housing Need Applications awarded Band A will be reviewed every 3 months Local connection criteria will apply except for MAPPA and Homelessness Cases</b>
<b>Reasonable Preference Categories s167(2)(a), (b), (c), and (d)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Applicants who have suddenly lost their existing home as a result of disaster and require accommodation in a short period of time.</li><li>2. Applicants who are homeless under Section 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. These are applicants who are homeless, eligible and in priority need.</li><li>3. Applicants who have served in the regular or reserve Armed Forces of the Crown who have been made homeless since leaving the armed forces.</li><li>4. Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular or reserve 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>5. Applicants who currently occupy a property where a prohibition order, demolition order or compulsory purchase order has been served.</li><li>6. Applicants who have a health condition that is terminal and their current home is a barrier to receiving urgent medical care.</li></ol>

7. Applicants who have a health condition that is life threatening and their existing accommodation is a significant contributory factor.
8. Applicants who are disabled and their current accommodation cannot be adapted and which completely restricts them from carrying out day to day activities both internally and outside the home and they require a fully adapted property.
9. Applicants who are in hospital and a planned discharge is imminent but there is no accommodation available for them to reasonably occupy.
10. Applicants (including those leaving Care) that are leaving supported housing and have been assessed and approved by the Move On Panel as ready for re-housing.
11. Applicants who are currently under occupying social housing by one or more bedrooms and need to transfer to a smaller property due to the current property being unaffordable

#### **Local Priorities**

12. Applicants who currently occupy a Level 1 adapted property that they no longer require and there is a suitable applicant on the waiting list for the property.
13. There is a likelihood of a child being accommodated by the local authority if re-housing is not made
14. Applicants whose 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

**Criteria for Band B**  
**High Housing Need**  
**Applicants awarded Band A but with no local connection**  
**All Homeless Regardless of Local Connection**

**Reasonable Preference Categories s167(2) (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e)**

15. Applicants who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 or Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014
16. Applicants who are owed a duty under sections 66 or 73 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014
17. People who are owed a duty by a local authority under Section 190(2), 193 (2) or 195 (2) of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 or who are occupying accommodation secured by any local authority under Section 192(3)
18. Applicants who live in an overcrowded property which leaves them at risk of infection, for example, where an applicant is suffering from advanced HIV infection
19. Applicants who are currently occupying accommodation which has two bedrooms less than required based on the needs of the household.
20. Applicants who have an urgent need to move on welfare grounds and an application has been made because they are at risk of being admitted to residential care or hospital if they are not re-housed.
21. Applicants who need to move due to relationship breakdown and there is a need identified to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child.
22. Applicants who are giving or receiving essential support, which can only be delivered if they live in a specific locality within the area
23. Applicants who have permanent employment which cannot continue



<p>unless they live in a specific locality within the area and are otherwise adequately housed</p>
<p><b>Local Priorities</b></p>
<p>24. Applicants who have been recommended by the Director of Community and Children’s Services to foster or adopt children and whose current accommodation is not large enough</p> <p>25. Applicants who are forced to live apart from their partner or children because their current accommodation is unsuitable*</p> <p><i>* This does not apply to those who are legally separated or are living apart due to relationship breakdown or family dispute</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Band C</b> <b>Low Housing Need</b> <b>Applicants awarded Band B but with no local connection</b></p>
<p><b>Reasonable Preference Categories s167 (2) (a), (b), (c) and (d)</b></p>
<p>26. Applicants who have a health condition which is being adversely affected by an aspect of their current home which can only be resolved by moving house.</p> <p>27. Applicants who are currently occupying accommodation which has one bedroom less than required based on the needs of the household.</p> <p>28. Applicants who need to move to be nearer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. A child’s school (where the need to move to a school has been recommended by the Director of Education)</li> <li>b. A place of worship as there is no suitable place of worship where the applicant currently resides</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Band D</b> <b>No Housing Need</b> <b>Applicants awarded Band C but with no local connection</b> <b>(except Homelessness)</b></p>
<p><b>Reasonable Preference Category s167 (2) (e)</b></p>

29. Applicants who are assessed as having no housing needs.

30. Applicants who are current tenants of a Housing Association who wish to transfer and have no housing needs \*

*\*Applicants must have been a tenant with their current landlord for 12 months or more*

## **Appendix 2**

### **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.



## **Rhondda Cynon Taf Housing Allocation Scheme Consultation Review 2018**

### **1. Introduction**

The following report sets out the consultation process carried out with staff, service users and stakeholders on the proposed changes to the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme.

The Council's Housing Allocation Scheme is delivered in partnership with local housing associations, through the operational mechanism of a Common Housing Register. In 2015, a choice based letting system was introduced to the Common Housing Register and it was re-branded as 'HomefinderRCT'.

The main reasons for the review are to make sure the Scheme is in line with Welsh Government's Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness (2016), is in compliance with the law and good practice and that the Scheme addresses housing need effectively.

### **2. Background**

The Housing Allocation Scheme has not been reviewed since the introduction of a Choice Based Lettings scheme in 2015. In addition to this, the WG's Code of Guidance was updated in 2016, and the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 also introduced a number of key areas that impact on the Housing Allocation Scheme.

The review began in April 2017 in partnership with our Housing Association Partners. A series of working groups were set up to challenge and review different aspects of the Scheme. These included:

- Adapted housing
- Affordability
- Eligibility
- Criteria for the different bands
- Lettings

As well as the working groups with Partners, a series of consultation methods were used including surveys with applicants and tenants, questionnaires and focus groups with staff.

### **3. Consultation on the Allocation Scheme**

The consultation for the Allocation Scheme review was carried out over a period of 8 weeks and ended on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2018.

A range of mediums were used to carry out the consultation to ensure as many stakeholders as possible were consulted on the proposed changes. These included:

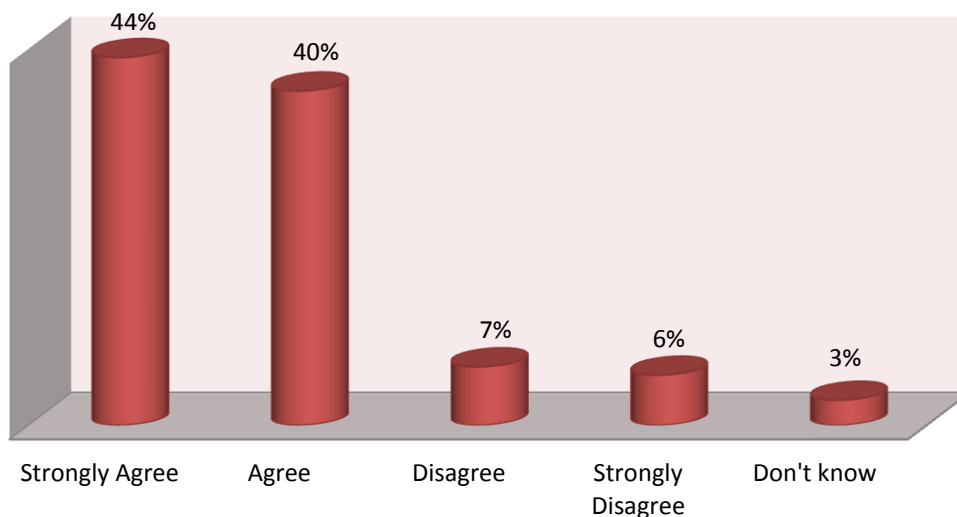
- Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC website
- Rhondda Cynon Taf Homefinder Website
- Tenant Newsletters
- Tenant Forums
- Facebook – Council and Housing Association pages
- Twitter
- Discussions at various Forums and meetings

129 responses to the consultation were received via an online survey.

#### 4. Key Findings

Overall the feedback has been positive with the majority of respondents 'strongly agreeing' or 'agreeing' to the proposed changes.

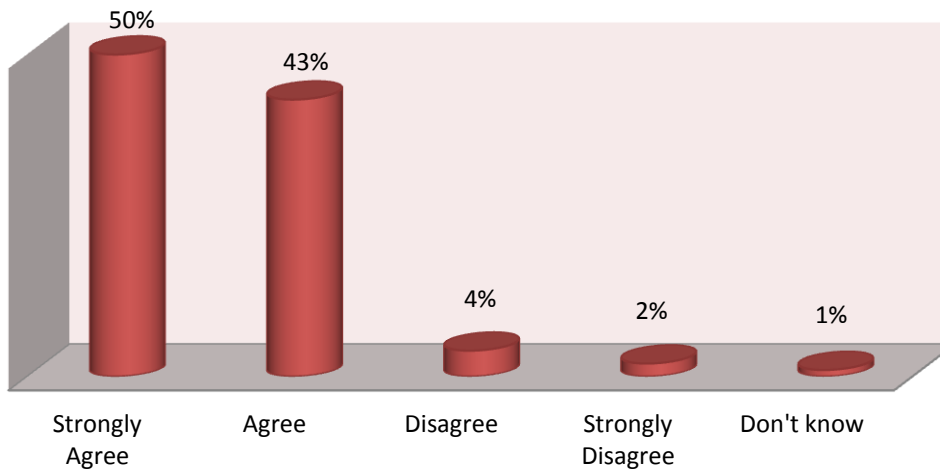
**Q1 Undertaking Financial Assessments**



The above graph indicates that 84% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed to undertaking financial assessments with every applicant before they are offered a property to check that they can afford the rent. In addition to this all Housing Associations would use a standard, common assessment for undertaking financial assessments at the point of offer. Undertaking financial assessments will ensure that people are financial difficulties and signposting to support agencies can be done at the earliest opportunity.

The comments received from respondents who disagreed with this proposal highlighted a need for awareness raising of changes to welfare reform and the introduction of Universal Credit as there seems to be an assumption that housing benefit will cover the rent of housing costs.

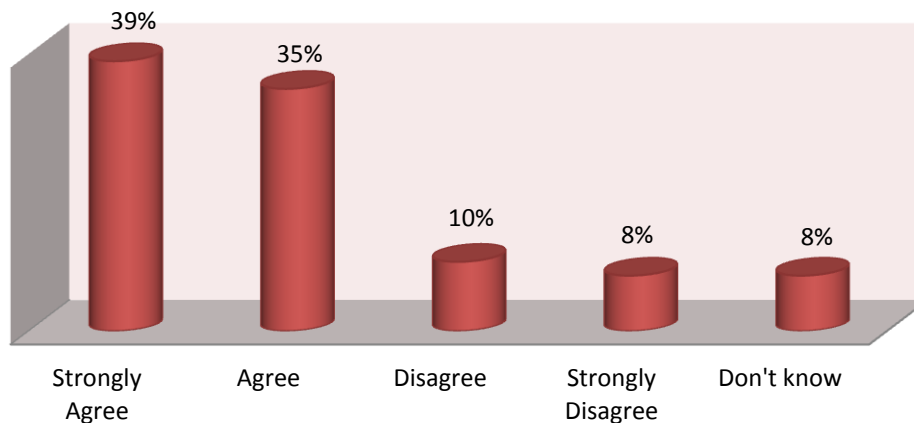
## Q2 Allocating Adapted Properties



The second question explores whether respondents agree with the proposal to have a more detailed way of allocating housing that have adaptations where priority will be given to the person who needs the type of adaptations that are in the property. In order to make best use of the stock, the Housing Association may direct match a property rather than advertising a property.

Some of the comments received by the respondents who don't agree with this change highlight concerns around all properties being advertised. However 93% of respondents either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with this proposed change.

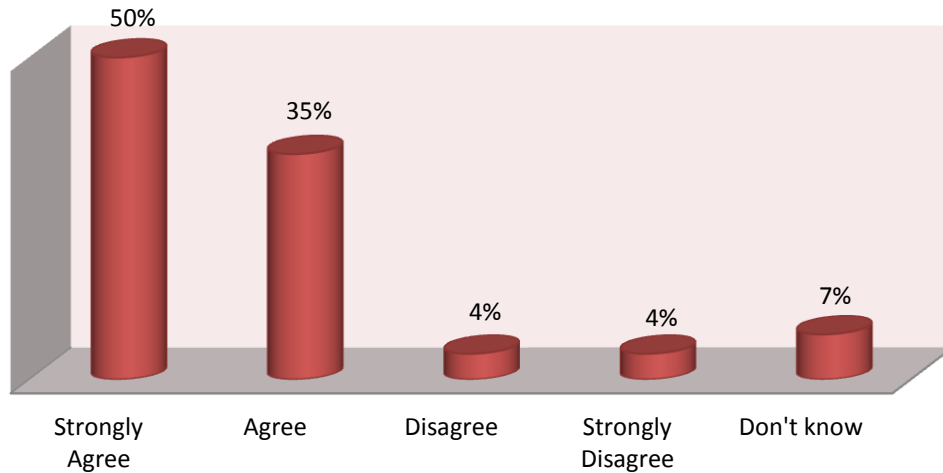
## Q3 Bungalows with no Adaptations Advertised as General Needs



74% of the respondents either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with this proposal. A number of comments have been provided by applicants who do not agree with this proposal, with the majority of comments referring to the need for bungalows to be prioritised for applicants requiring adaptations because they 'are a lot more suitable for adaptation requirements in the long run'.

Under the current Housing Allocation Scheme all bungalows are prioritised for applicants requiring adaptations, regardless of whether or not the bungalow itself has adaptations. However the proposal is to advertise bungalows with no adaptations as general needs properties. Applicants who require adaptations will still be able to bid on a bungalow, however they will not be prioritised for the property.

### Q4 Review of Band A Applications every 3 Months

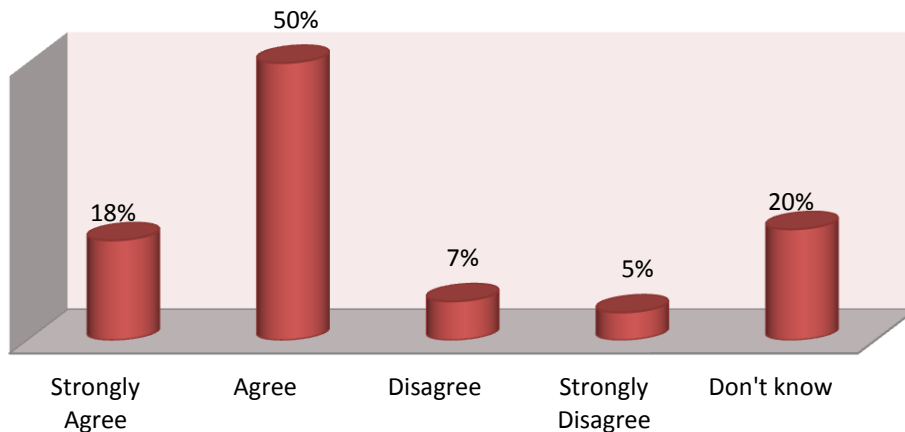


Applications awarded Band A are currently reviewed every 3 months, however the proposal is to demote applications where the applicant has not bid or has refused a suitable property within 3 months. Suitable is defined as a property that matches the size and type in their area of choice.

The above graph indicates that the majority of applicants either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with this change.

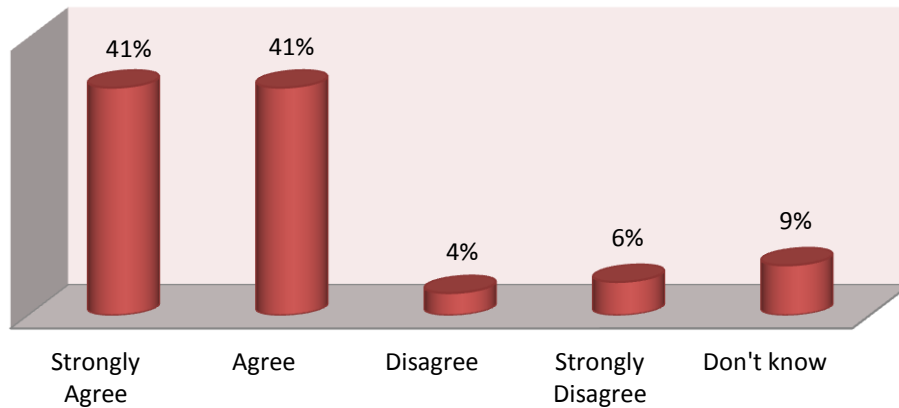
Questions 5 and 6 of the consultation focus on changes to wording to the banding criteria in order to make it simpler and user friendly. These changes relate to Band A and Band C and the majority of respondents agree with these changes (61% for Band A changes and 53% for Band C).

### Q7 Applicants with a Health Condition and Overcrowding placed in Band B



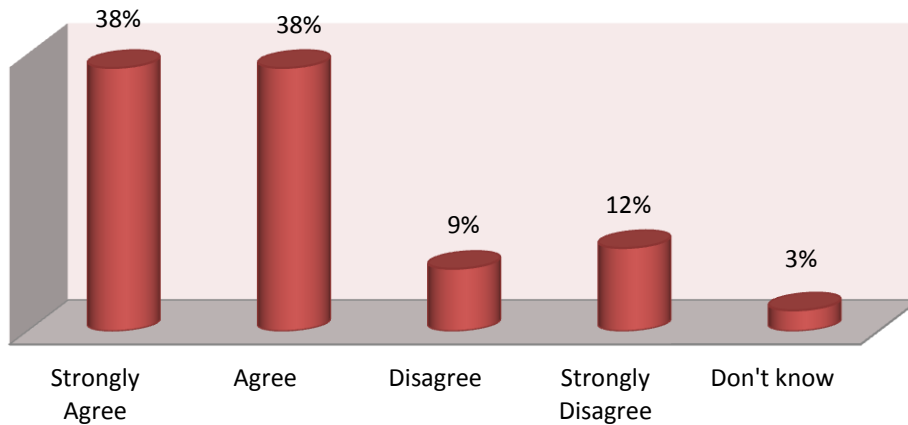
68% of respondents either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the proposal to place applicants 'where overcrowding in the property leaves them at risk of infection' in Band B, as opposed to Band A. This housing circumstances is more similar to other criteria in Band B and is determined to be more of a high housing need rather than an urgent need.

### Q8 Applicants at Risk of Domestic Abuse awarded Band B



Under the current scheme only social housing tenants at risk from domestic abuse are given Band A priority. The criteria will be removed from Band A and all applicants requiring a move due to domestic abuse, regardless of tenure, will be assisted through homelessness in Band B, or in very high risk cases through exceptional circumstances in Band A. 82% of applicants either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with this proposal.

### Q9 Applicants with Rent Arrears over 8 weeks ineligible

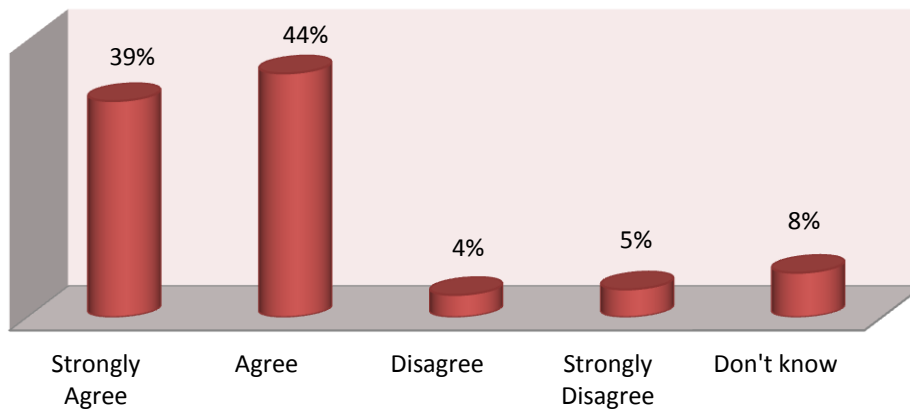


The current policy for assessing the eligibility of applicants with rent arrears/former tenant debt is complex and involves a combination of reducing priority and determining ineligibility which is not advised by Welsh Government's Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness 2016.

76% of respondents agree with the change to consider such applications based on eligibility. Therefore applicants with rent arrears/former current tenant debt under 8 weeks rent arrears, will be eligible to join HomefinderRCT. Applicants with rent arrears/former current tenant debt over 8 weeks rent arrears will be ineligible to join HomefinderRCT.



## Q10 Discretion for Housing Associations to Sensitive Let Properties



83% of respondents either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that the Housing Associations will be allowed to sensitively let a property where there have been certain issues because of that property and as a result there has been an impact on the community such as anti-social behaviour. The Housing Association would let the property by directly matching an applicant rather than in line with the banding scheme. This will be done in discussion with the Council and the number of properties subject to a sensitive let will be monitored by the Council.

The consultation also asked for feedback on proposals to change the priority of homelessness cases whereby applicants assessed as being owed a full homelessness duty under Section 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 will be awarded Band A and all other homelessness applicants awarded Band B. The majority of respondents agree with these proposals with 81% 'strongly agreeing' or 'agreeing' to Section 75 cases and 80% 'strongly agreeing' or 'agreeing' to Section 66 or 73 cases.

## Appendix 1

### Allocation Scheme Consultation Responses

Comments	Response
<p><b>1. Do you agree with the proposal to undertake financial assessments with every applicant before they are offered a property to check that they can afford the rent? All Housing Associations will use the same standard assessment at the point of offer and would signpost people for advice and support if needed?</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needless as info should be related to housing benefit minimum incomes as a minimum guide</li> <li>• Sometimes families need financial help with rent but still need housing</li> <li>• Social housing is suppose to be there to help people who can't afford private housing</li> <li>• People in receipt of a passport benefit would always qualify. Workers may not</li> <li>• Who is to judge fairly, if they could not afford it they would not apply</li> <li>• When universal comes in it means some will have no income for weeks and some never eligible</li> <li>• People may have bad credit scores so if this was to be the financial assessment then I disagree</li> <li>• If someone wished to use part of a benefit (eg PIP) to get out of hellish housing they should be all</li> <li>• At the end of the day its not fair</li> <li>• Social housing should be for people who can't afford private rented or to purchase a house</li> <li>• I disagree because everyone needs a home. Provide them with a home and provide money, job, support</li> <li>• A better benefit system to ensure that rent would be paid in times of</li> </ul>	<p>Undertaking a brief financial assessment at the point of application will ensure early referral of applicants experiencing financial difficulties.</p> <p>Affordability assessments will also be carried out at the point of offer by the Housing Associations using a standard, common financial assessment.</p> <p>Applicants requesting an additional bedroom above that which they have been assessed as needing must show a £15 per adult per week surplus to ensure the tenancy is affordable.</p> <p>Disregarded will be included in financial assessments.</p> <p>Financial assessments will only be used to assist people and not to exclude form an offer of accommodation.</p>

<p>hardship, emergency rent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The rent should always be cheaper than the open market. Get rid of bedroom tax</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2. Do you agree with the proposal to have a more detailed way of allocating houses that have adaptations where priority will be given to the person who needs the type of adaptations that are in that property? In some cases a Housing Association may also direct match rather than advertising a property.</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to understand and pleased to see it suggested</li> <li>• All houses should be advertised. As people’s situations change and the property may be better suited</li> <li>• No matter what the house or flat is, everyone should have a fair bid on it</li> <li>• People could be waiting longer for the right type of places, build more houses</li> </ul>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>To make the best use of the adapted housing stock and the adaptations that have already been installed, properties will be allocated to the applicant whose requirements best match the adaptations present in the property.</p>
<p><b>3. Some bungalows already have adaptations, and some do not. Do you agree with the proposal that bungalows with no adaptations will be allocated as general needs and bungalows with adaptations will be allocated to people who need adaptations rather than all bungalows always being offered to people who require adaptations in the first instance?</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocating a bungalow to a disabled person instead of fitting a lift makes more sense</li> <li>• I think if property can be adapted to fit needs, it should be</li> <li>• Need for adaptations should be priority at all times, with all properties</li> <li>• To allocate according to the persons needs i.e. requires adaptations as there is a cost element</li> <li>• These should be for elderly or the need for no stairs</li> <li>• Less availability is offered generally, keep as is</li> <li>• There is a lack of bungalows for people who need them and need them adapted</li> </ul>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>Some bungalows do not provide level access externally or have suitable adaptations already included and therefore are not suitable for disabled applicants.</p> <p>The Council and its housing association partners are committed to increasing the supply of adapted housing through its new build programme.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not all disabled people need adaptations, level access often is enough to ensure a better quality of</li> <li>• Some disabled or ill people just want to be without stairs</li> <li>• I think bungalows should be offered to disabled people first as those without the adaptations could</li> <li>• There is already a lack of bungalows so I think all bungalows should be allocated to those who are in</li> <li>• Bungalows are a lot more suitable for adaptation requirements in the long run. Need over want</li> <li>• I would suggest that this stays the same and be prioritised to those who may need adaptations first</li> <li>• Bungalows should be kept for people with the needs of being on one level. Probability of needs/adaptations</li> <li>• Bungalows should be offered to people with support needs. Allocated other homes to general needs</li> <li>• Disability needs should be taken into account first</li> <li>• I worked all my life bungalow will help older people who have paid their way and sick 'genuine'</li> <li>• Depends on level of adaptations needed, e.g. if just grab rails in bathroom they're quick to fit</li> <li>• I feel 99% of bungalows should be adapted as I feel there is a demand for them due to ageing</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4. Do you agree with the proposal to review applications that have been assessed as being urgent and in Band A every 3 months?</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be a weekly basis</li> <li>• Surely if urgent at least every six weeks</li> <li>• If they are in Band A surely they are there for a reason</li> </ul>	<p>Comments noted.</p> <p>In most cases, applicants in band A will be housed</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think a 3 month timescale is too long it should be weekly</li> <li>• Unnecessary extra stress on already ill people – self reporting changes, review 12 monthly</li> <li>• An urgent case should be dealt with way before 3 months</li> </ul>	<p>within 3 months, however this change is to ensure that applicants are supported to bid on suitable properties and their housing circumstances and reviewed regularly to ensure they are in urgent housing need.</p>
<p><b>5. Do you agree with the re-wording of the criteria for Band A as set out in the Consultation leaflet?</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cautious of the band a register not being up to date</li> <li>• Waste of time and money, could be used elsewhere</li> </ul>	<p>Comments noted</p>
<p><b>6. Do you agree with the re-wording of criteria for Band C as set out in the Consultation leaflet?</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would put in order of priority and financial affordability</li> <li>• What's the point of the band system when people are using it to cheat the system</li> <li>• Why put someone in a lower band if moving quickly will improve their quality of life? Needs higher band</li> <li>• How can you be homeless and considered low housing need. Surely this would be in band b</li> <li>• Waste of time and money. Resources could be used elsewhere</li> </ul>	<p>Comments noted</p> <p>Homeless applicants will be awarded Band A or Band B in the new proposed scheme</p>
<p><b>7. Do you agree with the change in priority from Band A to Band B for some applicants who are experiencing overcrowding and the property leaves them at risk of infection?</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcrowding is a risk to health and adds stress in the home which may impact on tenancy management</li> <li>• The way accommodation size is considered should be reassessed on who shares rooms</li> <li>• People's needs aren't being met if emergency accommodation is</li> </ul>	<p>Comments noted</p> <p>The Council keep under review the type of housing required in the County Borough and produces a Local Housing Market assessment which dictates the type and size of new social housing built to</p>

<p>required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leave in Band A</li> <li>• Plenty overcrowd on purpose, checks need to be done</li> <li>• I think all applicants who are suffering from overcrowding should be urgent cases</li> <li>• It restricts other residents in the same property using living areas</li> <li>• If there are children involved, overcrowding is unfair for both child and parent/s</li> <li>• Respect to privacy between boys and girls should be addressed, and before a younger age</li> <li>• More 4 bed houses built</li> </ul>	<p>effectively meet housing need.</p>
<p><b>8. At the moment only social housing tenants at risk from domestic abuse are given Band A priority in the Housing Allocations Scheme. Do you agree with the proposal to give all applicants assessed as being at risk from domestic abuse assistance through homelessness in Band B or for high risk cases, priority Band A (exceptional circumstances)?</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic abuse including a threat should be band A</li> <li>• Unfair in the victim they need to be moved ASAP to a safe place possibly being in Band B would delay</li> <li>• The safety of the person or family should be paramount if violence is proven</li> <li>• More people will say they are victims to jump ahead of others on the register</li> <li>• They have to move out to protect themselves or their children, make the perpetrator move</li> <li>• Leave in Band A</li> <li>• Some victims of abuse very often return to their abuser. Maybe it shouldn't be automatic priority</li> </ul>	<p>The Council and its partners use other methods such as target hardening to enable people at risk from domestic abuse to be safe. If a domestic abuse victim does require a move they will be assisted through homelessness in band B or in very high risk cases through exceptional circumstances in band A</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Domestic abuse is thrown about too easy with no need for evidence</li> <li>• Each case should be assessed on its own merits</li> <li>• Should be kept as it is, more women's shelters need to be built</li> </ul>	
<p><b>9. Do you agree with the proposal to not allow applicants with significant rent arrears/former tenant debt (over equivalent of 8 weeks rent) to be eligible for social housing? Applicants would be assisted to set up a repayment plan and would be able to apply for housing once they have reduced their debt. Some applicants who have been awarded Band A or have other exceptional circumstances may be considered eligible on a case by case basis.</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If they are paying debt should be as eligible as other and should get support</li> <li>• Allow people with arrears 2 rent and then take arrears direct from benefits</li> <li>• Because if they are in debt then they need help not more blocks in the road to get back on track</li> <li>• There are factors that should not be ignored</li> <li>• Place in Band D until arrears reduced unless S160A Housing Act 1996 applies (unacceptable behaviour)</li> <li>• The circumstances would have to be looked at thoroughly as it is not always the tenant at fault</li> <li>• Political policy is causing debt a rent break should be given until it is resolved affordable repayment</li> <li>• Will cause more homelessness</li> <li>• If they are in arrears with one landlord they should pay the arrears first unless there is a genuine</li> <li>• Because there might be a reason why they are behind and not fair to punish because of financial difficulties</li> <li>• Everyone is only two pay checks away from homelessness, that's 8 weeks arrears.</li> </ul>	<p>The most suitable approach for RCT is to have a policy that considers eligibility rather than one that demotes for unacceptable behaviour and provides for exceptional circumstances and discretion.</p> <p>Rent arrears may not be reasonable to consider if the rent arrears/former tenant debt is historic or if the person with the rent arrears was not in control of the household finances.</p> <p>Each application will be considered on its own merits.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They'll never get a home so then they won't be able to work and so less chance of paying off debts</li> <li>• If debt is owed then they have that person to pay it bit by bit with their rent</li> <li>• I think address housing issues first, then address debt</li> <li>• Rent arrears lead to eviction. More should be done to keep in property. If not affordable they need support</li> <li>• This must depend on circumstances and vulnerability</li> <li>• People who are genuine sick request help to change should not be Band D who worked all life</li> <li>• Build money management shelter where people can live while reducing their debt</li> <li>• Not taking into account if someone lost job, more help cancel bedroom tax if can</li> <li>• I think that everyone should be given the same chances as others for a property no matter what</li> </ul>	
<p><b>10. Do you agree that housing associations will be allowed to sensitively let a property where there have been certain issues because of that property which has had an impact on the community e.g. anti social behaviour at the property? The housing association would let the property by directly matching it to an applicant rather than in line with the banding scheme. This would only be done following discussion with the Council where evidence has been given to the Council. The Council will closely monitor the number of properties sensitively let by each housing association.</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel the property should go back into the bidding system</li> <li>• Needs to be clear/robust. How would suitable tenants be identified?</li> <li>• These type of people never change, makes for unfairness for decent residents</li> <li>• Because young people (classed as anti-social) will never get the chance to live somewhere quiet</li> <li>• Anti-social behaviour negatively impacts those want to better</li> </ul>	<p>Only a small number of properties are subject to a sensitive let and the policy would only apply to the 'next let'.</p>



<p>themselves in social housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It should be let out to whoever bids on it first</li> <li>• Direct matching for adapted needs acceptable, but I don't agree with any other direct matching</li> <li>• Everyone is different but should have the same chance as other for a property</li> </ul>	
<p><b>11. Do you agree with the proposal to award Band A to applicants who are assessed as being owed the full homelessness duty under Sc75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. These applicants are currently awarded Band B. This change would ensure that the Housing Allocation Scheme is in line with best practice and the Act.</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people make themselves homeless</li> <li>• I feel that band B works week and when allocating homelessness applicants are given priority</li> <li>• Private renting for short terms to jump bands is happening. Re-house in any area to solve this</li> <li>• If genuine sick/disabled are on Band D request help why should they be at B at least or a tent</li> <li>• You should get rid of the bands altogether and deal with applicants as they arrive</li> </ul>	<p>Comments noted</p>
<p><b>12. Do you agree with the proposal to award Band B to all other people who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and people who are owed a duty under Sections 66 or 73 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. Currently some homeless applicants are awarded Band B and some are awarded Band C depending on whether they would be in a priority need category. This change would ensure that the Housing Allocation Scheme is in line with best practice and the Act.</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redefining homelessness is ridiculous</li> <li>• All homeless should be given a chance of a home</li> <li>• That the council house people fairly as this is not the case at the</li> </ul>	<p>Comments noted</p>

<p>moment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homeless people should get priority housing regardless of anything else</li> <li>• Got no record of having the leaflet but I'm not good on internet.</li> <li>• Blocks of bedsits, should be built for homeless who should then have to wait their turn on the list</li> <li>• The reason for homelessness should be considered. Rent arrears/eviction?</li> <li>• No one should be without a home., when there are empty properties that can be used</li> </ul>	
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<b>Other Comments</b>		
<p>If you're in 1<sup>st</sup> position on the bidding system you shouldn't be knocked off that position, it should start from 2<sup>nd</sup> position not first</p>		
<p>I would just like the allocation scheme to be fair and serve the people applying in an easy to understand format, and that people who are genuinely desperate for housing out first rather than people cynically using the system to gain accommodation</p>		
<p>People who are suffering because of where they live should be given consideration. Even a letter of support from a GP only resulted in a category C listing. If the person dies or harms themselves because they weren't helped it should be RCT's responsibility they should be accountable. There are loads of empty properties around which should be bought up under compulsory purchase order if the owners leave them empty or derelict for any amount of time. There would be a lot more housing available if that were done instead of greedy developers, private</p>		

landlords locking people of the housing situation		
At the end of the day bed tax should be scrapped and people should respect social housing but they don't as for everything else like you have to have a check before moving into a bigger property it's disgusting should matter if you want to move to a 2 or 3 bedroom house it's disgusting		
The staff need to be more empathetic when dealing with clients and more helpful than they currently are as they try and get you to ring alternative numbers for staff when they are the department that should be dealing		
Homelessness should be tackled as a priority. Disability that is deemed to improve quality of life by moving should be next priority. Overcrowding where 3 bed house 5 children is not overcrowding. If they were in owned accommodation they would 'make do'. Those with rent arrears in private rented probably can't afford high rent social housing should be given. Rent arrears in social housing should have more support and bring back rent collectors every week for these people. Stop right to buy. If in social housing and want to buy a property and the can afford to do it then they shouldn't be in social housing. Stop allocations to properties that were built for the elderly i.e. Maerdy Court and put back the 24 hours wardens. Older and disabled people are vulnerable and places like Maerdy Court, The Bedw in Cymmer were safe options for not only them but for family knowing their relatives were safe. Social housing has gone backwards. It should be there to help our society that needs it, with full support of the HAPs not enough space on question to give full answers on this survey		
I had hell for 2 years and fighting for my life while dealing with a trouble		

<p>tenants. Complained, phone calls, letters, etc but the tenant was left to continue all the time, made my life really bad. This problem needs looking into and the person is not mentally sick, as far as i have seen. I am glad I'm still here. Think about should I have let it go and? Very shocking and disgusting really. Put them all in one place and let tidy tenant have, fair play. This is my opinion so there we are</p>		
<p>Do away with all bands and give priority to who has been on the list the longest, not the ones who become homeless, build bedsit blocks for them, with money management courses and support to get them back on their feet, until their turn comes to be offered from the register</p>		
<p>I believe that although there are people with needs that should be considered. Having spent years at the bottom of the housing list because i have chosen to do things properly is not fair in comparison to those who choose to play the system</p>		
<p>The struggles of paying rent, bills and other things are constant worry for many of us. The social housing should be there to provide all that cannot afford to buy or rent private. This Government have added to the pain of many with the dreaded bedroom tax, which is a shame that many Councils and social housing groups did not do more to stop it, or even try not to implement it. The taking into account of moving people on with anti-social behaviour is another issue to many that the problem is just moved to another place without being dealt with, for another area to cope. Social housing is the only way many of us can afford to rent a home, myself included, and hope that long may it continue, and that more be done to help the poor and homeless</p>		
<p>Councils should only be able to propose candidates for housing only they meet stricter criteria of housing associations. They will know each association and probably vacant properties. Agree, they have a duty to find accommodation, but it shouldn't be detrimental to others already in</p>		

<p>that particular community. Applicants should prove they are 'worthy' and allocations should be on a short probationary period, reviewed monthly. The council have, historically, just allocated tenancies to whoever they feel has a need. Regardless of where they are placed. In many cases, causing distress, contributing to antisocial behaviour. In other cases, not helping those they've allocated to have support. Usually allocating from one area to another. Suggest speaking to residents.</p>		
<p>Suggestion to prioritise people who are under occupying and want to downsize and will be releasing a three bed property</p>	<p>Applicants who are under occupying their property social housing and need to transfer due to the current property being unaffordable are awarded Band A.</p> <p>This suggestion has been considered however the Local Housing Market Assessment indicates that overall there is an oversupply of 3 bedroom properties in RCT (in fact the last four LHMA's have highlighted this trend). However this will continue to be monitored and reviewed in line with the LHMA which is updated every 2 years.</p>	