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HOUSING FOR YOU

South Worcestershire Allocations Scheme

Draft

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To be completed**

Draft

Introduction

The South Worcestershire Allocations scheme (**TITLE**) 'Housing For You' is used to allocate the homes of Housing Association landlords in partnership with Local Authorities. This policy covers the three South Worcestershire Authorities:

- Malvern Hills District Council
- Worcester City Council
- Wychavon District Council

The Districts above work in partnership with a number of Registered Providers to allocate housing in a fair and transparent way. Registered Providers have their own Allocations Policies which they will apply when allocating their homes. This means that applicants at the top of the Housing Register on banding and time in band may not be re-housed by the Registered Provider if they do not meet the requirements of their Allocations Policy for the property in question. Please refer to the Registered Provider websites for further information on their 'Allocations' or 'Access To Housing' policies. These are set out in Appendix 1.

Partners within the Scheme include the following (organisational changes may result in changes to this listing):

- Advance
- Anchor Housing
- Bromford Housing Group
- Bromsgrove District Housing Trust
- Citizen Housing
- Community Housing Group
- Cottsway Housing
- Fry Housing
- Greensquare Housing Group
- Housing 21
- Midland Heart
- Muir Housing
- Orbit Housing
- Pershore Alms Houses
- Platform Housing Group
- Rooftop Housing Group
- Sanctuary Housing Group
- Severn Vale Housing
- Stonewater
- Viridian Housing
- Walsall Housing Group

The Aims Of The Partnership

Collectively the Partnership has the following aims and objectives:

- To provide a single point of access to apply for housing in the three Local Authority districts which is accessible to all those who are eligible to be considered for social housing.
- To improve awareness and accessibility about the Housing Register, using a range of devices and communication methods which embrace technology e.g. email, texting, social media, real time updates through a customer portal but do not disadvantage those without digital access. Our aim is to reduce the use of paper wherever possible.
- To enable applicants to have choice across a range of affordable housing tenure types
- To prioritise households for accommodation based upon stipulations in the Allocations Policy.
- To enable Registered Providers to allocate to their homes, enabling mobility for existing tenants and those moving to take up work or to receive/provide care and support.
- To empower customers to work with us and share the responsibility of finding a new home which meets their needs..
- To provide a simple, open, fair and transparent Allocations Policy which offers applicants choice.
- To ensure effective use of all affordable housing stock.
- To ensure that local residents have an enhanced priority within the banding structure.

What Is An Allocations Policy?

The Allocations Policy sets out how you can qualify for 'Housing For You' and how it prioritises housing applicants to identify their housing need. This is delivered with regard to the legal definition of Reasonable Preference. It sets out in detail who can or cannot be accepted under the policy and how this assessment is made. It also sets out how applicants can apply for and access affordable housing.

This scheme complies with the requirements of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) requiring reasonable preference to be given to specified applicants with increased levels of housing need, the Localism Act 2011 and the Equalities Act 2010 where applicable.

The 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homeless Act and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) requires Local Authorities to make all allocations and nominations in accordance with an Allocations Scheme. A summary of the Scheme must be published and made available free of charge to any one who asks for a copy. The Scheme is published on the website also.

The Act also requires Local Authorities to explain within their policy the position on offering applicants a choice of accommodation, or offering them the opportunity to express preference about the accommodation to be allocated to them.

The policy is framed to ensure that it is compatible with our Equality duties including the duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality.

What Is an Allocation?

An allocation is the nomination of an applicant or existing tenant to be an Assured or an Assured Shorthold tenant of a Registered Provider. This may include a 'starter tenancy' where an Assured Shorthold Tenancy is offered by a Registered Provider for a set probationary period, usually twelve months, which if the tenant successfully completes the given period, the landlord will grant a further fixed term tenancy or an assured tenancy. Please refer to each Registered Provider website for their tenancy policy.

The scheme may also be used to advertise intermediate market rent, shared ownership and privately rented properties. Please see the eligibility criteria of the relevant landlord for more details regarding the allocation of these types of properties.

Exempt Allocations

The following are not allocations under this Policy (covered by Section 160 Housing Act 1996):

- Succession to a tenancy on a tenant's death pursuant to S89 Housing Act 1985 and S17 Housing Act 1988. This will be dealt with by the landlord under the relevant legislation and policies.
- Assignment of a tenancy by way of a mutual exchange.

- Transfer of the tenancy by a court order under family law provisions or under the Civic Partnership Act 2004.
- An introductory tenancy (including assured shorthold) becoming an assured / secure tenancy.
- Transfers initiated by the Housing Association e.g. decant to alternative accommodation to allow for major works

The following allocations are deemed to be exempt as they require a different decision making process and criteria for assessments:

- Provision of non-secure temporary accommodation in discharge of a homelessness duty or power.
- Supported accommodation such as a Foyer.
- Where a property is required for a 'direct match'
- Extra Care and Very Sheltered accommodation
- Changes to joint tenancies which may include the granting of a new tenancy through changes from a sole to joint tenancy and from a joint to a sole tenancy.
- Households requiring a move through the Witness Protection Scheme, or similar, at the formal request of the appropriate authority.
- Some adapted properties with significant adaptations that may be direct matched to an appropriate applicant.

Our Commitment to Applicants

The Partnership commits:

- To ensure that the Allocations Policy is legally compliant and meets any equality duties for applicants
- To provide simple information to applicants about how to use the allocation system/scheme
- To strive to make the allocations system/scheme as user friendly and interactive as possible
- To be responsive to applicants' needs and to set timescales for key activities/actions
- To provide consistent quality housing advice for applicants

Applicants are required to:

- Provide full details of their housing needs at the point of application
- Respond to requests for information or action within an agreed time
- Provide correct information and not to deliberately withhold information that is relevant to the application
- Advise of any changes in circumstances within an agreed time
- Apply for housing using the on-line facility***
- Actively and responsibly bid for vacancies
- Discuss with the Local Authority or their agents any proposed decision to refuse an offer of suitable accommodation to enable the consequences to be clearly understood
- Actively participate in the scheme as an application will be removed after 12 months if no bidding has taken place
- Engage with any tenancy ready scheme that is offered (if applicable)

*** Applicants who require assistance completing an online application, should make contact with the relevant Housing Options Team who will provide further support.

If you are an existing tenant of a Registered Providers you will also need to commit to:

- Ensuring that you meet the transfer standard of your Registered Provider landlord (please refer to your landlord's website)
- Keeping your home in good condition, including your garden and any outbuildings
- Maintaining your rent account up to date including rent, repairs and any court costs.

Service Standards

In delivering the Scheme the partners aim to:

- Ensure all applicants who do not qualify to join the Housing Register are informed of this, within 10 working days of application
- Ensure all qualifying applications are registered within 10 working days of receipt (if all supporting information has been provided).
- .
- Any requests to the applicant for additional supporting information should be sent within 10 days of receipt of the original application
- Respond to telephone calls or voicemails within 3 working days
- Respond to applicants letters or letters from professionals within 7 working days of receipt
- Respond to applicant emails or messages within 3 working days
- Provide advice to customers around how to bid
- Produce a shortlist for properties within 10 working days of the end of an advertising cycle
- Registered Providers will advise applicants who are excluded by a Landlord when shortlisting, within 10 working days of the reason(s) for the exclusion and rights of appeal
- Respond to requests for a banding or eligibility review within 28 working days
- Provide feedback to applicants via the customer portal on whether they have been successful or where a property has been withdrawn.

Requirements of applicants:

- Speak to us in a polite and courteous manner
- Provide us with the information we need within the timescale set so that we can help you
- Contact us if you are unable to keep an appointment(s)
- Inform us of any change to your circumstances that may affect your banding or the service we provide to you, within 14 days of the change taking place
- Actively bid for properties during each bidding cycle (where suitable properties are available)

Tell us if you are not happy with the service are receiving Tell us if you are happy with the service you are receiving

Statement of Choice

The Scheme provides the greatest choice possible for applicants but it is important that all qualifying applicants are prioritised as the number of housing applications exceeds the number of homes are available for letting. The provision of choice has is balanced alongside local needs and housing provision.

Applicants have the opportunity to view the adverts for all the properties that they qualify for. Some Registered Provider landlords may also offer the opportunity to view the property before the applicant makes a decision on whether to accept an

offer or not. If an applicant wishes to decline an offer of accommodation it is vital that they speak to their relevant Housing Options Team before doing so as it may affect their banding or timescales for an offer of alternative accommodation. If an applicant is homeless and owed a re-housing duty by a Council, or is threatened with homelessness, they **MUST** contact their Housing Officer before refusing an offer of accommodation. Refusing an offer of suitable accommodation may result in a discharge of a homelessness duty.

In the following situations, choice may be restricted for applicants:

- Where the applicant is not eligible for a particular property
- Where a local lettings plan has been agreed and the applicant does not qualify
- Where a criminal conviction determines unsuitability for an area or neighbourhood as determined and set out in licence conditions
- Where there is a legal agreement restricting who can be offered the property e.g. preference to those with a local connection to a parish or other defined area – a Section 106 agreement
- Where there are particular additional needs for an applicant such as an adapted home or as a result of an emergency such as a fire or flood which has rendered their current home uninhabitable.

In all of the above, advice is provided to the applicant about the housing options available.

It is important that applicants understand how social housing is allocated in our area and for us to be able to demonstrate that the allocations scheme is fair. We will collect and publish accurate, up to date and anonymised information on waiting list applicants and the lettings outcomes.

Anonymised data from the allocations scheme may be used to identify where there is a need for more affordable housing within each Council area. This information will be used to support a development programme for additional affordable housing; however, this is not the primary use of the scheme.

Qualification Criteria and Eligibility

The criteria which determines whether an applicant is eligible or qualifies to join the Housing Register is set out below:

Persons from Abroad

To qualify, applicants must have a right to reside in the United Kingdom and must have recourse to public funds. This will include applicants who are British Citizens or EEA nationals (generally those who are working). If you are a British Citizen returning from abroad you may have to pass a habitual residency test. Applicants will be required to provide documentary evidence to confirm their identity and immigration status.

A person from abroad (or two or more persons jointly) is ineligible for an allocation of social housing if they are subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, or are excluded from entitlement to Housing

Benefit by merit of S.115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (c33) (exclusion from benefits) unless they are of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State. Persons who are subject to immigration control and eligible for housing assistance are:

- Applicants who have refugee status
- Applicants who have exceptional leave to remain
- Applicants who have indefinite leave to remain

This does not apply to a person who is already a secure or introductory tenant of a Council or Registered Provider.

Applicants who have been considered as ineligible due to their immigration status can re-apply at any time if their status changes. If an applicant has any further questions regarding their status they should speak to the Housing Options Team or seek independent legal advice.

Residency of Choice

When assessing eligibility, the following accommodation options will not be considered as a principal home and therefore will not enable the applicant to develop a local connection to a specific district.

- Occupation of a mobile home or caravan or motor home where it is not an applicants main or principal home
- Occupation of a holiday letting for the purposes of a holiday
- A stay in prison, bail hostel or other such accommodation
- In-patient of a hospital/specialist centre where a connection exists elsewhere

Unacceptable Behaviour

If an applicant or someone living with them has engaged or participated in anti-social or unacceptable behaviour that would have been considered serious enough for the applicant to be evicted from a Registered Provider tenancy, they will not qualify to join the Housing Register .

Unacceptable behaviour is defined as 'behaviour, which would, if an applicant or member of their household was a secure tenant, entitle a landlord to outright possession under any of the Grounds 1 to 7, Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour may include: (This list is not exclusive.)

- Conviction for using the property for an illegal or immoral purpose
- Abusive, threatening or violent behaviour that has caused intimidation or harm to staff, neighbours, visitors or other household members

- Causing deliberate damage to the property that has resulted in financial loss or the Landlord or responsible Agent

If the applicant does not qualify to join the Housing Register as a result of unacceptable behaviour, they will have a right of review of this decision.

They will also be entitled to re-apply 6 months after their original application and will be able to qualify if they can evidence a behavioural change during that period of time.

Non-qualification as a result of anti-social or unacceptable behaviour can be considered at any time during the application process.. A full written explanation of the decision will be provided to the applicant and they will have a right of review to the decision. Please see section on reviews.

Income

Households who have a gross household income including benefits of more than £38,000 (per annum) will not qualify to join the register.

Households who have assets, equity, savings or capital of over £60,000 and are assessed as able to compete in the private market will not qualify to join the Housing Register..

However if a household is in receipt of a pension or fixed income where they are unable to obtain a mortgage; equity, savings or capital of up to £95,000 would not prevent them from qualifying for the Housing Register The savings etc. of all adult members of the household will be taken in to account when establishing whether an applicant qualifies to join the Housing Register.

Where financial circumstances change, applicants will be entitled to reapply at any time..

The financial resources of an Armed Forces applicant will be disregarded where there is a lump sum that was received as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service.

Please be advised that Registered Provider Landlords may also set their own thresholds for income and capital which applicants will need to consider. Further information can be obtained from the landlords direct.

Age

Any United Kingdom resident aged 16 years or over can apply to join the Scheme by completing an on-line application form (help can be provided if unable to access on-line).

It is important to note that Registered Provider landlords will only be willing to consider applicants under the age of 18 where there is a guarantor for both rent and repairs. The landlord will only be able to offer an equitable tenancy to

an applicant under the age of 18, as they are unable to legally hold a full tenancy. Please seek further advice on this from your Housing Options Team.

Persons with no local connection to the partnership area

Applicants who have no local connection to the partnership area will not qualify to join Housing Register. There are exemptions to this and applications will be considered on a case by case basis. The partnership will grant a Discretionary Local Connection if an exemption applies; this will be agreed at a management level within the relevant district. Some examples of applicants exempt from the local connection criteria are as follows:

- Applicants accepted as statutory homeless and owed a Prevention, Relief or Main Housing Duty under the Housing Act 1996, Part VII as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Applicants who can demonstrate a need to live in the partnership area to provide ongoing, regular support or significant care as an occupation or to a friend/family member, Supporting evidence will be required from Adult or Children's Social Care before the applicant can be granted a local connection
- Applicants who can demonstrate there is a reciprocal agreement in place to re-house the household between the district and current landlord
- Applicants who can demonstrate the need to relocate to the partnership area as a result of public protection or any other exceptional circumstances
- Members of the Armed Forces as outlined in the allocations scheme
- Victims of Domestic Abuse, fleeing accommodation that is unsafe for them
- Care Leavers who have a Local Connection in a variety of areas as a result of their placement history, where they are choosing to reside in one of the partnership districts

Local Connection to a District Council within the Partnership Area

All applicants will be required to meet one of the Local Connection criteria set out below to qualify for the Housing Register. Any applicant, who doesn't meet the criteria below and would not be considered for any of the exemption criteria above, will not qualify to join the Housing Register.

- The applicant must have lived in the relevant district area for 6 months out of the last 12 months. The residency must have settled accommodation and chosen by the applicant – time spent in prison or accommodation that was casual in nature does not qualify as a local connection.
- As outlined above but for 3 years out of the last 5 years.
- The applicant must have permanent paid employment in the relevant district area over 16 hours per week
- The applicant must have an immediate family member living in the relevant district area for a minimum period of 5 years immediately prior to the housing application being made. Immediate family is defined as mother, father, brother, sister or adult children (children aged 18 and over).
- The applicant has a local connection as a result of special or exceptional circumstances. Examples of special or exceptional circumstances may include:
 - Connection through foster care
 - Connection through step parent

Applicants who have previously been or who are currently serving in the Armed Forces will be able to qualify for the register as it is accepted that any placements outside of the district area may have been a necessity to their employment

Care leavers who have been a Looked After Child of Worcestershire County Council, will have a local connection to the full partnership area. This includes care leavers who may have been placed outside of the partnership area

Applicants who are wishing to move to the area to take up work or apprenticeship opportunities as a result of Right to Move legislation

Armed Forces

Members of the UK Armed Forces stationed abroad will be considered as living in the United Kingdom for the purposes of applying for social housing.

The Localism Act 2011 amends the Housing Act 1996 to give Local Authorities in England the power to decide what classes of persons are or are not qualifying persons (Section 160ZA(7) of the Housing Act 1996, for an allocation of social housing.

The Secretary of State has the power to prescribe in Regulations, criteria that may not be used by Local authorities in deciding what classes of persons are not qualifying persons (Section 160ZA (8) (b). These Regulations require that Local Authorities do not use local connection (within the meaning of Section 199 of the Housing Act 1996) as a criterion in deciding whether the following are not qualifying persons:

- (a) Persons who are serving in the regular armed forces or have done so in the five years preceding their application for an allocation of housing.
- (b) Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where their spouse or partner's death is attributable (wholly or partly) to their service and the bereaved spouse or civil partner's entitlement to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation then ceases.
- (c) Seriously injured, ill or disabled reservists (or former reservists) whose injury, illness or disability is attributable wholly or partly to their service.

As an extension to the prescribed regulations, the Scheme will include divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who are required to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence.

Section 106 Sites

Where an applicant meets the qualifying criteria established in the section 106 agreement they should already have met the local connection qualifying criteria for the district and be registered.

Bedroom Need

Applicants who meet the above criteria and are therefore qualify to join the Housing Register, will be assessed based on the number of people who live in the household and the amount of bedrooms they need. .

Households who are considered to be under occupying or overcrowded must meet the specific guidelines.

Household Make-Up	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed
Single Person	X		
Childless Couple	X		
Parent(s) & 1 Child		X	
25+ weeks pregnant woman with or without partner and no other children		X	
Parent(s) and 2 children of same sex aged between 0 and 16		X	
Parent(s) and 2 children of same sex over the age of 16			X
Parent(s) and 2 children of different sexes under the age of 10		X	
Parent(s) and 2 children of different sexes when the oldest reaches 10			X
Parent(s) and 3 children – 2 of the same sex aged between 0 and 16, plus one other child			X
Parent(s) and 3 children – 2 of different sex under the age of 10, plus one other child			X

To calculate the property size for larger households please use the following guidance:

- 2 children of the same sex are able to share a room until the eldest reaches the age of 16, at which point an additional bedroom will be required
- 2 children of different sex are able to share a room until the eldest reaches the age of 10, at which point an additional bedroom will be required

Households with access to children

Anyone with access to children will need to demonstrate their involvement and the care and supervision of the child. A Senior Officer within the local authority will give consideration to factors including regularity of contact, who claims the relevant benefits for the child and any residency orders as well as legislation, codes of guidance and case law in determining which parent has primary responsibility for the children. Therefore unless there is an exceptional circumstance we would unlikely to provide family accommodation where they are not the primary carer for the child, even if they have 50% access rights to their child.

Other exceptional circumstances

There will be exceptional situations where a Senior Officer may exercise discretion in deviating from the bedroom standard.

Where a child is entitled to the care component of DLA/PIP at the highest or middle rate and by reason of their disability means they are unable to share a bedroom with another child they may be treated as an exception to the bedroom requirements. Similarly where there is a carer within the household they cannot share a bedroom.

Households that include other adults rather than children may find it difficult to obtain social housing where they require larger properties. Normally houses are allocated only to families with children, as priority is given to those with dependent children.

Property Type

In addition to the above table applicants would normally only be considered for a house where there are dependent children as part of the household.

To be considered for a bungalow at least one member of the household needs to be over 60 or in receipt of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or high level Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

Single people and couples who do not have dependent children or meet the criteria for a bungalow would be considered for flats.

The Reasonable Preference Criteria

The Scheme is required by law to assess the relative priority for housing applicants.

The law requires Local Authorities to give 'reasonable preference' to those categories set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The 'reasonable preference' categories are:

- All households who have been accepted as statutory homeless under the Prevention Duty, Relief Duty or Main Housing Duty as defined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- People who are owed an accommodation duty because they have a priority need but are intentionally homeless (under S190(2)), because they are not in priority need and not homeless intentionally (Section 193(2) or

because they are threatened with homelessness, in priority need and not intentionally homeless (Section 195(2)) of the Housing Act 1996 (or under Section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any Housing Authority under Section 192(3).

- People occupying unsanitary, overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory housing
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to disability)
- People who need to move to a particular locality within the district to avoid hardship to themselves or others.

The allocations policy sets out the basis on which priority will be awarded based on the above preferred preference criteria, and other factors.

Determining priority between applicants in band

“Housing For You” determines priority between applicants in each band taking into account the length of time the applicant has been waiting within their current band.

Registration and Assessment Process

How to Apply:

You can apply to join the scheme on-line at XXXXXXXX

If there are any difficulties in applying on-line please contact the Housing Options Team who will explore alternative options for you. An advocate may do this on your behalf.

If it is determined that the applicant does not qualify to join the Housing Register they will be notified in writing giving the reason(s) for the decision and advised of the right to request a review of that decision.

All applications will be assessed and placed in the lowest band pending verification of circumstances before being re-banded based on their circumstances

If further information is required before awarding a banding, or a home visit carried out, the application may be placed in a lower band until a full assessment can be carried out.

When the registration process has been completed an applicant will be notified of their registration number and banding. If an applicant has reason to believe that their banding is incorrect they will be advised of their right of review.

During the registration process an application will be put into a household type. An applicant will only be able to bid on those properties which match their housing need.

Please note that the Registered Provider landlords will set their own eligibility criteria for properties. For example, they may not consider households with non-dependent children for houses, only for flats or bungalows.

Banding Criteria

Housing For You provides a needs based banding system with the highest band indicating the greatest need for housing. The bands within the Policy are based on the reasonable preference criteria as set out in the 1996 Housing Act. Once registered the applicant can only be in one band per local authority and the highest banding possible will always be applied under the policy. The scheme consists of five bands as summarised below.

Banding	Description
<p>Band 1 – Priority</p> <p>This banding will be under continual review.</p> <p><i>Applicants within this band must actively make bids and make sure bids are being placed on suitable properties which become available. Failure to apply bids will result in bids being placed by the Housing Options Team on behalf of the applicant, and may lead to a reduction of priority on the housing register.</i></p> <p><i>Refusal of an offer of a property may lead to a reduction of priority on the housing register.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applicants who have been placed in Temporary Accommodation or are owed the s.188 interim accommodation duty and are owed the Relief Duty. The household must be actively engaging with the Local Authority to relieve their homelessness and be working to achieve the agreed actions within their personal housing plan. ▪ Applicants who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days and a member of the household have specific needs. The household must be actively engaging with the Local Authority to prevent their homelessness and be working to achieve the agreed actions within their personal housing plan. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Specific needs may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pregnancy/dependent children - Diagnosed significant physical health needs - Diagnosed significant mental health needs </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applicants who need to move urgently to facilitate an adoption or fostering placement. Evidence from Children’s Services or relevant fostering and adoption agencies will be sought before this band is awarded <p>Applicants who statutorily homeless with a duty to re-house under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 (eligible, homeless, priority need, not intentional and with a local connection). The household must be actively engaging with the Local Authority to resolve their homelessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applicants who have an exceptional need for accommodation where their housing needs are not reflected in the banding policy. This banding would be awarded for a

	<p>maximum of 3 months.</p> <div data-bbox="557 253 1362 432" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>An exceptional need for accommodation may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urgent medical or welfare need - Urgent unsatisfactory housing conditions </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applicants who are under occupying properties who wish to downsize to smaller accommodation or if a significantly adapted property is no longer required by the household. This relates to properties where the Landlord is a Registered Provider. This banding will be for a maximum of 3 months before being reassessed. ▪ Young people leaving care that are identified as 'tenancy ready'. Registered Provider Landlords will also assess the young person and be satisfied they are 'tenancy ready' and that an ongoing support package is being offered where required. ▪ Armed Forces Personnel
<p>Band 2</p> <p>This band will be awarded for a period of 6 months and will then be subject to review.</p>	<p>Applicants in band 1 or 2 who are not working with the Local Authority to achieve the actions in the Personal Housing Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applicants who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days and are not included in band 1. Applicant must be actively engaging with the Local Authority through a personal housing plan to resolve their homelessness. ▪ Applicants who are owed the Relief Duty but are not owed a duty under s188 and not included in Band 1. Applicant must be actively engaging with the Council through their personal housing plan to resolve their homelessness. ▪ Applicants who have been assessed as ready to move on from supported accommodation. <div data-bbox="523 1749 1329 2002" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>That the applicant is ready to move to independent settled accommodation and is 'tenancy ready'. Evidence must be provided of the programmes undertaken in readiness for independent living and the outcomes achieved. That an ongoing support package has been assessed and is in place.</p> </div>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applicants who are living in a property that has become unsuitable due to medical need or illness, including where a home cannot be adapted to meet the needs of the customer. Applicants who have expressed that they have medical need, will be directed to complete a Medical Assessment form and provide supporting evidence from a medical professional ▪ Applicants who are experiencing severe overcrowding (2 or more bedrooms short).
<p>Band 3</p> <p>This band will be awarded for 12 months and then will be subject to review.</p> <p><i>Households who meet 2 or more criterion in Band 3 will be awarded Band 2.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applicants who are experiencing overcrowding (1 bedroom short). Including children under 10 years old and living in a flat with no access to a private garden. ▪ Applicants who are moving to receive or provide care, either as an occupation or to relieve hardship. ▪ Applicants who are living in disrepair or unsuitable accommodation <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>The property will be inspected and assessed by the Property Standards Officers. The applicants must have tried to resolve the issue with the Landlord. Properties that are assessed as having category 1 or category 2 hazards will be placed in band 3.</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applicants who have been determined by the Local Authority to be Intentionally Homeless under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.
<p>Band 4 – Reduced Priority Band</p> <p>This band will be awarded for 6 months and will then be subject to review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applicants who were in Band, 2 or 3 but failed to bid on any suitable properties within the last 6 months or successfully bid but then refused a property which would have been suitable to meet their needs. ▪ Applicants who own their own home who have sufficient financial resources available to them to meet their housing need. ▪ Applicants who have deliberately worsened their circumstances to qualify for a higher band or deliberately moved into a property that was unsuitable and as a result qualify for a higher band.

	<div data-bbox="523 226 1334 465" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="color: red;">This would include circumstances where an applicant surrendered their tenancy when it was reasonable to continue to occupy and / or against the advice of the Housing Options Team or where they moved to a property that was smaller than their requirements.</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Applicants with housing related debts <div data-bbox="560 573 1382 786" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>This applies where debts have arisen from a deliberate act or omission, and exceeds £500.</p> <p>Applicants will be encouraged to make an affordable arrangement for repayment.</p> </div>
<p>Band 5</p> <p>This band is for any other eligible applicants.</p>	<p>Examples of where this will apply include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Households who do not meet any of the above banding criteria.

Waiting Time

All households will be prioritised based on the band they have been awarded and the date the band was awarded.

Households who are re-applying from Housing For You will keep the band start date so the period of waiting will be reasonable and will consider the previous waiting time. This will apply as long as the household re-applies within 1 month of the re-registration. However, the band award will be re-assessed during the re-registration so households are not guaranteed eligibility or the same banding award.

Applications are sorted in band order and within bands, by waiting time in band.

Applications will be placed in a band from date of registration. If the band is increased at any time, the date in band will be the date the change was made.

If a band is reduced at any time, the date in band will be the date the change was made.

If an application is demoted into Reduced Preference Band, this will be from the date the change was made. If an application is subsequently moved out of Reduced Preference Banding into a higher banding the band start date should be back-dated to the date they were originally placed in the reduced priority band.

Band Reviews

All bands are awarded on a time limited basis and at the end of the time limit (other than homelessness, Band 1), if an applicant has not been successfully housed, the Local Authority will reassess the application. This may require applicants to complete a new on-line application form and provide additional evidence. The review should take no more than 28 working days and may result in a change of banding. If an applicant is asked to provide a new form or evidence and fails to do so, their application may be closed.

Following a review of applications in the reduced priority band then where conditions have been met an applicant maybe promoted to a higher band dependent on their circumstances and the band start date will be back dated to the date they were originally placed in the reduced priority band.

Changes In Circumstances

All applicants are required to notify the Local Authority of any change to their circumstances that may affect their priority for housing. Applicants will need to notify the Local Authority within 14 working days of the change and to provide any relevant evidence e.g. birth certificate for a new child in a household, before being assessed.

Bandings will be re-assessed from the date the Local Authority becomes aware of the change, and this will determine the band start date.

Most changes of circumstances can be completed online, but evidence will still be required.

Applying for a property and lettings

Looking for available properties

Once applicants have registered online ([insert website address](#)) applicants will be provided with a login. Once the applicant has this login, they are able to look at available properties to bid on.

Advertising

All Registered Providers are committed to advertise their properties; properties are advertised through the following website ([Insert website address](#)).

Adverts will include the location of the property, property type, property size, rent amount and any specific eligibility criteria.

How to bid

Applicants will need to bid online, through: [Insert website address](#). If an applicant needs assistance to enable them to bid, the applicant can contact their Local Authority who will advise what assistance is available.

When to bid for a property

Properties will be advertised as they become available; the properties will be available to bid for one week from the point of advertisement. The time that the bid is placed during the week does not make a difference to the shortlist position – it is not a first come first served system.

Number of properties an applicant can bid for

Applicants can make unlimited bids each week as long as they are placed on suitable properties and match the advertisement criteria. Only one bid can be made per property listing and must be used on separate properties that they are eligible for. Applicants can withdraw their bid if they change their mind and re-bid on a different property at any time during the time the advertisement is open.

Multiple bidding

If an applicant appears at the top of more than one shortlist in a bidding cycle, they will be contacted to discuss which property they wish to consider.

The selected Registered Provider will then shortlist against the property, if they are at the top of a shortlist for another Registered Provider they will be skipped.

If the Registered Provider who “Match Suggested” the applicant and subsequently decides not to offer them the property, the Registered Provider will inform the applicant of the reasons for this directly, but the applicant will retain their banding and then be able to continue bidding.

Applications from employee, board members and co-optees

Staff, Board Members and Co-optees will be treated and assessed as any other applicant to the housing register.

Selection process

Applicants must note that individual Registered Providers will apply their own allocation policies and the suitability of the property will be considered by the Registered Provider, in accordance with its allocation policy, at the point of allocation.

All eligible bids for each property are placed in order of housing need. Priority is decided first by band, then by date within the band and finally by effective date.

A bid for a property will not be considered if the applicant’s household does not meet the size, or eligibility requirements for that property unless there are exceptional circumstances which need to be taken into account.

A property will not always be offered to the applicant at the top of the shortlist if there are reasons why this applicant is not eligible or would not be suitable. Please see the ‘Reasons why you may not be offered a property’ section below for more details.

Successful applicants may be given the opportunity to view the property prior to tenancy sign-up.

If the applicant chooses to refuse the property, the reasons for the refusal will be recorded by the Registered Providers advertising the property and their banding may be reassessed.

If an applicant is matched to a property they will not be able to bid for other properties until they have decided to either accept or refuse the offer.

If the applicant is at the top of the shortlist the local authority or registered provider will check the application to ensure the banding is correct and there aren't any other factors that would limit offers of accommodation e.g. change of circumstances.

Reasons why you may not be offered a property

Registered Providers may choose not to allocate you a property due to their own allocations policy, please see the **INSERT WEBSITE** or contact individual Registered Providers for more information.

Restrictions on adverts through the advert

Landlords may apply restrictions in order to identify suitable applicants in particular circumstances and these will always be specified in the advert. Where a property is advertised with certain restrictions, the letting will be made to the bidder who meets the criteria with the earliest band start date in the highest band as with usual lettings. Some properties may be restricted for bidding as follows;

- Under agreements pursuant to Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) imposing conditions on who is able to bid – normally a restriction to households with a local connection
- Registered Providers may adopt specific lettings criteria in relation to particular developments or areas in order to address identified problems and to create sustainable and balanced communities. In these circumstances a local lettings policy would apply.
- Partner Registered Providers will also be entitled to advertise properties with preference given to their existing tenants in order to facilitate transfers.

Refusing offers of accommodation

Households are expected to take reasonable care when bidding for a property to ensure it meets their needs. If, however, an applicant decides to refuse an offer of accommodation, the property will be offered to the next suitable applicant. An application may be reassessed if an offer of a property is refused. The Local Authority or its agent will take into consideration suitability of the property and reasonableness of the offer in any reassessment undertaken.

If an applicant in a time limited band refuses an offer of accommodation the application including the banding will be reassessed and may be placed in the reduced priority band.

Exempt allocations – accommodation provided for lettings which are not provided by this scheme

The following exempt allocations are covered by s160, Housing Act 1996;
The following are not allocations under this Policy:

- Succession to a tenancy on a tenant's death pursuant to s89 Housing Act 1985 and s17 Housing Act 1988 (this will be dealt with by the landlord under the relevant legislation and policies)
- Assignment of a tenancy by way of mutual exchange
- Transfer of the tenancy by a court order under family law provisions or under the Civil Partnership Act 2004
- An introductory tenancy (including assured shorthold) becoming an assured / secure tenancy
- Transfers initiated by Council / Housing Associations (e.g. decant to alternative accommodation to allow for major works)
- Rehousing due to being displaced from previous accommodation by a Council or being rehoused by a Council pursuant to the Land Compensation Act 1973

The following allocations are deemed to be exempt as, although they may consider this allocation policy to some extent, they also require different decision making processes and criteria in making assessments and rehousing the applicant:

- A person being granted a family intervention tenancy
- Provision of non-secure temporary accommodation in discharge of any homelessness duty or power
- Supported accommodation
- Where a Housing Association needs to directly match a property (more details regarding this are included later in this policy)
- Some Extra Care and Very Sheltered accommodation
- Changes to joint tenancies which will include the granting of a new tenancy through changes from a sole to a joint tenancy and from a joint to a sole tenancy. The individual Housing Association will decide whether to allow a Joint Tenancy depending on the circumstances of the case.
- Households requiring a move through the Witness Protection Scheme or similar, at the formal request of the appropriate authority
- Some adapted properties may be held on a separate register specifically for people with disabilities

Local lettings plans

Housing for You reserves the right to apply additional criteria for example specific local connection criteria, offers of family sized accommodation to smaller households - while still meeting the statutory obligations for Reasonable Preference when using Local Letting Plans. The Local Authority partners may, in the interests of promoting balanced and sustainable communities, agree with participating Registered Providers local lettings plans for specific areas, estates, or blocks. This is to ensure that lettings plans are tailored to the needs of an area, and protect the interests of existing residents and the wider community.

All local lettings plans will be published on the Housing For You website.

Local Lettings Plans may be developed to meet the particular needs of a local area.

- There must be a clear reason for having LLPs (this may take the form of recurring antisocial behaviour issues, high child densities or a concentration of older residents) and will be subject to reconsideration.
- LLPs must be developed and approved in accordance with an agreed procedure that must have specific aims and will be reconsidered on an annual basis.
- The decision to implement a local lettings plan will be developed and approved by the Local Authority Senior Officer responsible for the relevant Housing For You area and a Senior Manager of the relevant Registered Provider. Any decision to implement a local lettings policy will always take into account the implications for equal opportunities and the need to ensure that the Council is able to meet the allocation needs of those owed a reasonable preference.
- Where a property is advertised in accordance with a Local Lettings Plan (LLP), the letting will be made to the highest bidder who meets the eligibility criteria of the LLP

Examples of possible Local Lettings Plans:

- The following are examples of local letting policies that could be employed in Housing For You covering an area, estate, or block:
- Age restrictions.
- Where the property forms part of a rural housing scheme on an exception site
- Restrictions on lettings to vulnerable households where there are already a concentration of supported tenants/residents
- Lettings to childless households where there are high concentrations of children and young people living on a specific estate or scheme

Direct matching for urgent cases with reasonable preference

Where possible all lettings should be made through Housing For You to ensure fairness and transparency in the system and to give our customers confidence. Where applicants have got reasonable preference but their circumstances mean they have urgent housing need they may require a direct match. An example of this would be those with critical health or social needs where an immediate move is

necessary for their health and wellbeing and this can only be achieved through direct matching.

The direct matching might also occur because of the type of accommodation e.g. because it has adaptations and requires a specific applicant.

Direct matching may also occur for those in fear of extreme incidences of domestic violence, harassment, hate crime or extreme neighbour nuisance / anti-social behaviour where there is a genuine risk to their health and well-being or to support a move through witness mobility schemes (or similar).

There may be direct matching that takes place for tenants within the Registered Providers which Housing For You (these are often known as management moves).

This would apply in circumstances such as tenants who are required to decant from their premises due to re-designation, demolition or refurbishment or where Successors left in a property too large for their needs or where a non-successor has exceptional needs / would be deemed to be owed a duty under Part 7 Housing Act 1996 for example.

There may also be a requirement to direct match an existing social housing tenant to a larger property to facilitate their approval as a registered foster parent.

Closing of applications

Applications will be closed if applicants:

- Request their application to be closed
- Do not respond to a request to provide updated information about their registration, or
- Do not make a bid within 1 year of applying to join the Scheme
- Circumstances have changed and they are no longer eligible under this allocations policy.
- Have not informed Housing For You they have moved and given a forwarding address.

When an applicant is re-housed through Housing For You, their application will be automatically closed and they will need to complete a new registration form if they want to remain on the Housing Register.

In all other circumstances where they have moved they will need to complete a change of circumstances and be reassessed.

Re-joining the housing register

Where a household wishes to re-join the Housing For You housing register at a later date, their new date of application will be the date they re-register.

Equality and diversity

Our aim is to implement and maintain services which ensure that no potential or current applicant is treated less favourably on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, age or sexual orientation, nor is disadvantaged by the application of a rule, condition, or requirement, which has a discriminatory effect which cannot be justified by law. Allocations will only be made to those persons who are eligible.

This policy will be subject to periodic equality impact assessments.

Confidentiality

The fact that a person is an applicant on the Allocation Scheme will not be disclosed (without their consent) to any other member of the public.

Data Protection and Information Sharing

All information held is subject to the Data Protection Act 1998 and any subsequent relevant legislation. Housing For You will seek the express consent of applicants joining the Allocation Scheme to share personal information about the applicant, and any member of their household. Please be aware that the application and any information relating to it can be viewed by all key partners through the Housing For You partnership.

Information may be shared about the individual and their history irrespective of whether their consent has been obtained in exceptional circumstances which will include:

- In accordance with the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (Section 115).
- Where there is a serious threat to the other party's staff or contractors.
Where information is relevant to the management or support duties of the proposed landlord or support organisation to ensure the health and safety of the applicant, a member of his or her household, or a member of staff.

False statements or withholding information

It is a criminal offence for applicants and/or anyone providing information to this Scheme to knowingly or recklessly make false statements or knowingly withhold reasonably requested information relevant to their application (s171 Housing Act 1996). This includes but is not limited to information requested on the housing registration form, in response to correspondence at the renewal of the application, or relating to any other reassessment of the application. An offence is also committed if a third party provides false information whether or not at the instigation of the applicant. This would apply at any stage of the application process.

Where there is suspicion or an allegation that a person has either provided false information or has withheld information, the application will be placed under pending status during the investigation and will be excluded from this Allocation Scheme until an outcome is reached.

If the outcome of any investigation is that they did not provide false information or there was no withholding of information or such was not found to be withheld knowingly, then the application will be reinstated from the date of registration meaning the relevant applicant should not suffer prejudice.

However, where the investigation shows that false information was provided on the application form the application will be re-assessed. The applicant may also be liable to prosecution.

Ground 5 in Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the 1996 Act, s.146) enables the landlord to seek possession of a property where it has been granted as a result of a false statement by either the tenant or a person acting at the tenant's instigation.

If it is determined that an applicant directly, or through a person acting on his or her behalf, has given false information or withheld required information it will result in an applicant being removed from the Scheme and deemed Ineligible.

Monitoring Housing For You

The full Housing For You Partnership will meet regularly to monitor the outcomes being achieved (please see the Terms of Reference for the Housing for You Steering Group and associated groups).

The Housing For You Steering Group will complete an annual report to Registered Providers as part of regular monitoring.

Reviews of decisions

Information about decisions and reviews

The Local Authority, or its agent, makes the decision regarding the start dates and banding of every applicant.

An applicant to the Housing For You scheme has a right to request a review from the owning Local Authority, or its agent, if unhappy with any decision (finding of fact) including decisions to exclude from registration, the level of priority awarded or the way in which the application has been dealt with. Applicants will be able to appoint an advocate, and once appointed, the Housing For You partner will deal directly with the advocate. The applicant should request an internal review within 21 days of the date of the decision letter.

Applicants have the following further and specific rights to information about decisions and rights of review of decisions:

- the right, on request, to be informed of any decision about the facts of their case which has been, or is likely to be, taken into account in considering whether to make an allocation to them
- the right, on request, to review a decision mentioned above, or a decision to treat them as ineligible due to immigration controls or unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant
- The right to be informed of the decision on the review and grounds for it.

The applicant will be notified of the outcome of the review including the reasons if the original decision is confirmed. We will aim to determine the review within 21 working days of the request or such longer period as may be agreed with the applicant. Once the review has been decided upon there is no further right of review on the same matter unless there is a material change of circumstance.

The applicant will also have the right to seek judicial review, make a formal complaint through the Local Authorities complaints procedure (please see below - Complaints) or to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Reviews will be carried out by a senior member of staff within the Housing For You partnership or delegated to an appropriate organisation and an officer who was not involved in the original decision.

Where the complaint concerns an issue with the letting of a property, the applicant should address their complaint directly to the relevant Registered Provider and follow that organisation's complaint procedure.

Complaints

An applicant, who is not satisfied with the service that they have received, can register a complaint with their Housing For You partner, by telephone, email, in writing or in person.

All complaints will be acknowledged and investigated. Please refer to the individual partners complaints procedure for details on how to complain and the length of time to consider the complaint. You can ask someone else or an organisation such as Citizens Advice to complain on your behalf.

Feedback on let properties

Housing For You will publish details of the number of bids for each property on the website giving details of the successful applicant's band and their band start date. This feedback will help applicants determine their prospects of success in obtaining housing.

Lettings are monitored by property type and household to demonstrate how the Housing for You partnership meet their various aims and objectives. The Housing for You Partnership will share this information with the Full Partnership on an annual basis and will ensure it is published on the Housing for You website.

Appendix 1 – Housing For You advice and contact points

Malvern Hills

Malvern Hills District Council, Council House, Avenue Road, Malvern, WR14 3AF

Telephone: 01386 565020

Email: housing.needs@wychavon.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.malvernhills.gov.uk/housing/>

Worcester City

Worcester City Council, The Guildhall, High Street, Worcester, WR1 2EY

Telephone: 01905 722233

Email: housing@worcester.gov.uk

Website: www.worcester.gov.uk

Wychavon

Wychavon District Council, Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore, WR10 1PT

Telephone: 01386 565020

Email: housing.needs@wychavon.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.malvernhills.gov.uk/housing/>

Appendix 2 – Housing For You partners contact details

Registered Provider	Address	Phone Number	Email	Website
Advance Housing Trust	2 Witan Way Witney Oxon OX28 6FH	01993 772885	info@advanceuk.org	www.advanceuk.org
Anchor Trust	Milestone Place, 100 Bolton Rd, Bradford, BD1 4DH.	0845 140 2020		www.anchor.org.uk
Bromford Housing Group	1 Venture Court, Broadlands, Wolverhampton, WV10 6TB.	0330 1234 031	customerservices@bromford.co.uk	www.bromfordgroup.co.uk
Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (bdht)	Buntsford Court, Buntsford Gate, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B60 3DJ	0800 0850 160	info@bdht.co.uk	www.bdht.co.uk
Citizen Housing	Apex 2, Apex Park, Wainwright Road, Worcester WR4 9FN	0300 790 6555		www.citizenhousing.org.uk/
Community Housing	The Community Housing Group, Community House, Stourport Road, Kidderminster, DY11 7QE	0800 169 5454		www.communityhg.com
Cottsway Housing	Cottsway House Avenue Two Witney, OX28 4XG	01993 890000	contact@cottsway.co.uk	www.cottsway.co.uk

Registered Provider	Address	Phone Number	Email	Website
Fry Housing	43 Rowley Village, Rowley Regis, West Midlands, B65 9AS	0121 559 6406	admin@fryha.org.uk	www.fryha.uk
Gloucester City Homes	Railway House, Bruton Way, Gloucester, GL1 1DG	01452 424 344	Tenancy.services@gch.co.uk	www.gch.co.uk
GreenSquare Housing Group	GreenSquare, Methuen Park, Chippenham, Wiltshire SN14 0GU	01249 465465	info@greensquaregroup.com	www.greensquaregroup.com
Haig Housing	Alban Dobson House, Green Ln, Morden SM4 5NS	020 8685 5777	enquiries@haighousing.org.uk	https://www.haighousing.org.uk/
Hanover	2 Godwin Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD1 2ST	0800 280 2575	lettings.enquiries@hanover.org.uk	www.hanover.org.uk
Housing 21	The Triangle, Baring Road, Beaconsfield, HP9 2NA.	0370 192 4000	enquiries@housing21.co.uk	www.housing21.co.uk
Legal and General				
Miur Housing	80 Lightfoot Street Hoole, Chester, CH2 3AL	0300 123 1222	info@muir.org.uk	www.muir.org.uk
Optivo Housing Group	Building 1060, Cornforth Drive, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne, ME9 8PX.	0800 121 60 60		www.optivo.org.uk

Registered Provider	Address	Phone Number	Email	Website
Orbit Housing	10 Greenhill Street, Stratford upon Avon, WARKS CV37 6LG	0345 8 500 500	info@orbit.org.uk	www.orbitheartofengland.org.uk
Platform Housing Group	Progress House, Midland Road, Worcester, WR5 1DU	0333 200 7304		www.platformhgwest.com
Rooftop Housing Group	70 High Street, Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 4YD	0800 0421 800	info@rooftopgroup.org	www.rooftopgroup.org
Sanctuary Housing Group	Sanctuary Midlands, 164 Birmingham Road, West Bromwich, Birmingham, B70 6QG	0800 131 3329	midlands@sanctuary-housing.co.uk	www.sanctuary-group.co.uk
Stonewater Housing Group	Jephson House 1 Stoneleigh Road Blackdown Leamington Spa CV32 6RE	0800 011 6420	blackdown@stonewater.org	www.stonewater.org
Walsall Housing Group	100 Hatherton St, Walsall WS1 1AB	0300 555 6666	enquiries@whgrp.co.uk	

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