

Appendix 1. Summary of Changes

Key Major Changes

Policy Reference Number	Details of changes to current Bucks Home Choice Allocations Policy
<p>2.3 & Appendix 3</p>	<p>New qualification criteria</p> <p>In addition to existing criteria, the following applicants will be classed as non-qualifying unless they are assessed as being in a statutory <i>reasonable preference category</i>*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - applicants with income, assets including owning a home or savings, who are able to source private accommodation - those who have previously owned their own home in the last five years and have not had regard for sourcing adequate housing arrangements with the proceeds from the sale of their previous home - applicants who previously exercised the Right to Buy or Right to Acquire as a previous social housing tenant and have subsequently sold the property <p>Owner occupiers seeking aged persons' accommodation</p> <p>Applicants have previously qualified to join the Housing Register regardless of home ownership. This change will ensure that priority for rehousing is given to applicants who do not own a home of their own. Provision is made for those who have exceptional circumstances along with a definition of home ownership within the policy.</p>
<p>2.3.5 Appendix 1</p>	<p>Rent Arrears</p> <p>Those applicants in rent arrears or who have housing-related debt and have a housing need and therefore qualify to join the Housing Register are expected to fully clear the debt prior to being offered accommodation. These applicants are currently placed in Band D and it is proposed that they are placed in Band E until the arrears are fully cleared, at which time their application will be re assessed.</p> <p>Provision is made for those who have exceptional circumstances beyond the applicant's control and as such the council may depart from this policy and the decision will be referred to a Senior Officer of the Managing Partner.</p>

<p>2.3.2</p>	<p>Unacceptable Behaviour Where applicants and or a member of their household are considered to be guilty of unacceptable behaviour or considered to be causing or involved in activities that may be considered unacceptable behaviour, that is serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant at the time of the application for housing, they will not qualify to join the Housing Register by reason of that behaviour.</p>
<p>3.3, 5.5 Appendix 2</p>	<p>Sharing of same sex siblings age increase to 21 In line with the Allocation of Accommodation Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England 2012, households with children of the same sex are now expected to share a bedroom until the age of 21, as opposed to the current age of 16. Some applicants will no longer qualify to join the Housing Register where their current application gives preference for same sex siblings between the ages of 16 and 21 who are sharing a bedroom as they will now be considered as adequately housed. This ensures the best use of the limited social housing stock available.</p> <p>Household members over the age of 21 who are unable to source alternative accommodation will be expected to make their own application for housing, unless there are mitigating circumstances, for example evidenced support needs which means they must remain living within the family unit for support/care.</p>
<p>5.5 Appendix 1</p>	<p>Under occupation of a social housing tenancy Applicants who are assessed as under occupying rented social housing in one of the partnership areas in which they are seeking rehousing would be awarded Band A. Under the current policy these applicants are awarded a Band B. This allows the highest priority banding to be awarded to applicants and will make larger family homes available for allocation, promoting the best use of stock which is a high priority of the Partnership.</p>
<p>Appendix 1</p>	<p>Severely overcrowded housing, insanitary conditions and or significant disrepair Applicants who are living in severely overcrowded rented, either social housing or private sector, accommodation and assessed as lacking two bedrooms or more, would be awarded Band A. Under the current policy these applicants are Band B. This change will enable applicants to be housed faster and will prevent them from becoming homeless.</p> <p>and Applicants who are living in accommodation that has been assessed as insanitary and/or evidenced as being in a state of significant disrepair which cannot be repaired or rectified in a reasonable period of time, would be awarded Band B. Under the current policy these applicants are Band C. This change will enable applicants to be housed faster and will prevent them from becoming homeless.</p>

Other key changes, including statutory and priority level changes

Policy Appendix / Page number	Details of changes to current Bucks Home Choice Banding
Appendix 3	<p><u>Addition of Priority Band E</u></p> <p>The Partnership has added an additional priority band in order that appropriate priority can be awarded to applicants in different circumstances and housing need. The main changes are as follows;</p> <p>Local Connection: Legally councils must accept that where an applicant has been assessed as being in a reasonable preference category*, regardless of whether they have a local connection; they qualify to join the Housing Register. These applicants are currently Band D. These applicants would be awarded Band E which ensures that applicants without a local connection to the area in which they are applying are given lower priority than those with a local connection.</p> <p>Homelessness: Relief Duty and Prevention Duty Following the Homelessness Reduction Act the council has an additional duty to assist those that fall within its <i>Prevention</i> or <i>Relief</i> duty. This addition is statutory and reflects the Homelessness Reduction Act and the council's duty to prevent or relieve homelessness and is additional to any full homelessness decision. These applicants will be placed in Band E.</p> <p>Intentionally homeless households: Applicants who have applied for assistance to one of the four district councils in the Partnership under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, where the council has reached a decision that they are homeless and in priority need but have been determined to be homeless intentionally, are currently Band D. These applicants move to Band E which means that these applicants are not prioritised above those who have a full homelessness duty owed to them by the council.</p> <p>Non-priority homeless households: Applicants who have applied for assistance to one of the four district councils belonging to the Bucks Home Choice Partnership under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, where the council has reached a decision that they are homeless but not in priority need. These applicants are currently Band D and would move to Band E and not be placed above those who have a full homelessness duty and are in priority need.</p>

perspective **Homeless and in Priority Need:**

Priority homeless families:

Under the current policy applicants who have applied for assistance to one of the four district councils in the Partnership under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, where the council has reached a full decision that they are homeless and in priority need, are Band C, moving to Band B after 6 months where they have not been successful in bidding or received a final offer of accommodation from the council.

These applicants will be Band D under the proposed policy and will not progress to a higher banding after 6 months. These changes are important to align with the Homelessness Reduction Act, which places priority on prevention of homelessness.

It is important to note that the council has a right to make a direct offer of suitable and affordable accommodation to applicants who are owed a full homelessness duty by the council, both to manage its own temporary accommodation but also to ensure where possible that applicants do not spend extensive periods of time in homelessness accommodation.

***Reasonable Preference:**

The Housing Act 1996 requires that the Bucks Home Choice scheme must give Reasonable Preference to certain groups of people.

The Reasonable Preference groups are listed in Section 166A (3) of the Housing Act 1996 as follows:

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7 (Homelessness) of the Housing Act);
- People who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under Part 7 (Homelessness) of the Housing Act 1996 because they are:
 - Homeless and in priority need but homeless intentionally;
 - Homeless and in priority need and not intentionally homeless;
 - Threatened with homelessness and in priority need and not intentionally homeless;
 - Not intentionally homeless but not in priority need;
- People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to disability).
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others.

The specific categories in the Priority Need bandings (Appendix 1 Bucks Home Choice Policy 2014) take account of these Reasonable Preference categories. However, in deciding how one applicant should be prioritised compared to another with similar needs, the Bucks Home Choice scheme will also take account of factors such as local connection, behaviour and the financial resources available to each applicant.

For example, an applicant who;

- (i) falls into one of the Reasonable Preference categories and
- (ii) has a local connection to the Managing Partner's district will be placed in a higher priority band than an applicant with similar needs who does not have a local connection.