Bromsgrove District Council
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BROMSGROVE HOME CHOICE

Housing Allocations Scheme

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BROMSGROVE HOME CHOICE

Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
Affordable housing	housing let at a social or affordable rent or a low cost home ownership property let to a specified eligible household whose needs are not met in the market. Also known as social housing
Allocation	an offer of housing from a Housing Association or Local Authority either directly or via a nomination from a Local Authority
Band start date	the date the household is awarded the banding applicable to their housing need
Banding/bands	the prioritisation of households on the housing register based on their housing need
Bid	A households' expression of interest in an available / vacant property
Direct matching	an allocation outside of the Bromsgrove Home Choice Policy/Scheme. Please see the policy for more details.
Bromsgrove Home Choice Allocations Policy / Allocations policy	the policy document that determines how housing is allocated to households
Bromsgrove Home Choice Scheme / Allocations Scheme	the scheme including the software, the policy and the processes involved for allocating housing to households
UK Data Protection Legislation	**UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)** governs how personal data must be processed, ensuring it is: ○ Used lawfully, fairly, and transparently ○ Collected for specified, explicit purposes ○ Adequate, relevant, and limited to what is necessary ○ Accurate and kept up to date ○ Stored only as long as necessary ○ Handled securely **Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018)** • Supplements the UK GDPR by providing additional rules and exemptions. • Includes specific provisions for: ○ Law enforcement processing (Part 3) ○ National security (Part 4) ○ ICO powers and enforcement (Parts 5 and 6)

	Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 (DUAA). Aims to modernize data use while promoting innovation and reducing compliance burdens for businesses **Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR)** Works alongside the UK GDPR and DPA 2018.
Homelessness	The legal definition of homelessness in the Housing Act 1996 Part VII / Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is that a person is homeless if they have no accommodation available to them in the UK or anywhere which would be reasonable for them to continue to occupy. They would also be homeless if they have accommodation but are not able to gain access to it, or if it is a moveable structure but they have nowhere to place it. A person is threatened with homelessness if they are likely to become homeless within the next 56 days.
Housing Association	for the purposes of this Scheme also includes Registered Providers and refers to social housing providers regulated by the Homes England
Housing Register	a database/list of households who have applied for affordable housing
Local Authority Agents	An organisation that acts on behalf of the Local Authority in relation to the Housing Register and Homelessness, under a contractual arrangement usually a Housing Association
Local connection	a household's connection to a local area or authority including residency, family connections and employment
Local Lettings Plan	Housing Associations 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. Local lettings plans are tailored to the needs of an area and protect the interests of existing residents and the wider community.
Persons from abroad	people subject to immigration control and any other persons from abroad where the secretary of state makes regulations
Qualification Criteria	To join the Housing Register the applicant must meet the eligible qualification criteria which relates to connection to the Bromsgrove District and Housing Need
Reasonable preference	categories of housing need which are defined by the Housing Act 1996, Part Six that are required to be included in an allocations policy
Registration / Effective date	the date of registration of the Housing Application
Section 106 Site	A **Section 106 site** is a parcel of land or housing development where planning permission has been granted **subject to a Section 106 agreement**. This agreement outlines specific **planning obligations** that the developer must fulfil, which can include the **Affordable housing provision** (e.g. a percentage of homes at below-market rent or sale).
Shared Ownership	Affordable housing option where the applicant parts buys and part rents a property. The Registered Provider owns the remaining share of the property.
Statutorily homeless	This term describes those households who have made a homeless application to the Council and where the full homeless duty has been accepted. This means the household has been determined to be eligible, homeless, in priority need,

	unintentionally homeless and having a local connection and has been issued with a written decision which confirms this.
Weekly bidding cycle	the period of time available for households to place bids on properties they are interested in

1. Introduction

Bromsgrove Home Choice is a scheme used to advertise and/or allocate social rented, low cost home ownership and privately rented properties.

Within the Bromsgrove Home Choice Scheme is an **allocation policy** which outlines how the Council will prioritise households on the Housing Register.

The Council works in partnership with a number of Housing Associations to allocate social housing in a fair and transparent way.

Housing Associations and Registered Providers will have their own Allocations Policies which they will apply when allocating to their properties. This means applicants at the top of the Housing Register on banding and date and time may not be rehoused by the Housing Association / Registered Provider if they don't meet the requirements of their allocations policy.

The Council has the following aims;

Aims of the Scheme

- The Council is committed to offering choice from a range of housing options for people in housing need.
- We aim to challenge the perception that the way social housing is allocated is unfair by ensuring that Bromsgrove Home Choice is easy to understand, transparent and fair.
- We will work to ensure that households are able to access the service we provide.
- We will develop sustainable communities by enabling people to make realistic and informed choices about where they wish to live.
- We will make effective use of all affordable housing stock.
- We will ensure that local people will have an enhanced priority within the banding structure.
- We want to encourage and recognise households who make a positive contribution to their community.
- We will enable a better understanding of the housing demand.
- We will ensure the scheme meets our equalities duties.
- We will publish information that enables households to understand how we assist them through the allocations scheme.

Access to Bromsgrove Home Choice is via a housing register. Once registered households are then able to bid for vacancies advertised in any of the participating registered providers.

Bromsgrove Home Choice enables people with a housing need to look for a home in an area of their choice. Households registered with Bromsgrove Home Choice will be banded according to the suitability of their current accommodation to meet their needs and their local connection.

What are Allocations under this Scheme?

The following are allocations of accommodation under this Scheme:

1. The nomination of an applicant or existing tenant to be tenant of housing accommodation held by a Housing Association/Registered Provider (via a Council's Nomination Rights Agreement with the Housing Association). By 'affordable housing' we mean social rent and affordable rent, allocated to specified eligible households whose needs are not met in the market. It should meet the needs of eligible households, including availability at a cost low enough for them to afford, determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices.

The ways in which we advise and assist applicants on a whole range of housing options, including access to the private rented sector and low cost home-ownership opportunities, can be found on the Council's website.

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

Allocations Policy

This Allocations Policy describes how you can qualify for the Bromsgrove Home Choice scheme and how it prioritises housing applicants to identify their housing need with regard to the legal definition of Reasonable Preference and other categories of housing need that the Council has recognised.

Whilst all applicants are assessed in accordance with the scheme, the allocation of properties will be subject to the allocation policies of individual Housing Associations where they have one who will assess applicants on the Housing Register according to their stated priorities. They may have different rules about the number of people who can live in a home of a particular size. This will be made clear when a property is advertised.

This policy 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, housing.

We have designed the Allocations Policy to meet current legal requirements and to promote sustainable communities and balance housing markets.

The Legal Framework

This Allocations Scheme complies with the requirements of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and takes into account the Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Authorities. All of these documents can be obtained through the Gov.uk website. The Scheme also complies with the Localism Act 2011, Welfare Reform legislation and Equalities Act 2010 where applicable.

This section describes this legal framework.

The 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness 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 Allocations Scheme must be published and made available free of charge to any person who asks for a copy. A summary of the Allocations Scheme and general principles is available through the Council's website at www. Bromsgrove.gov.uk or a printed brochure will be made available upon request. The Council will provide advice and support free of charge and will publish details of properties that have been recently let to help service users to understand their likelihood of being rehoused through the scheme.

The Housing Act 1996, (as amended) requires local authorities to give Reasonable Preference in their allocations policies to people with high levels of assessed housing need. This includes homeless people, those who need to move on welfare or medical grounds, people living in unsatisfactory housing and those who would face hardship unless they moved to a particular locality within the local authority's area.

The Act also requires local authorities to state within the policy its position on offering applicants a choice of housing accommodation or offering them the opportunity to express preference about the housing accommodation to be allocated to them.
The policy has been developed in line with the Council's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. In particular, the Council will have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics (including age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership) and those who do not.

This Policy has considered:

- The Local Authority's statutory obligations and discretion as to who is eligible for housing allocation.

- The Local Authority's statutory obligation to provide Reasonable Preference to certain categories of applicants set down by law i.e. those who must be given a greater priority under the Allocations Policy. This includes the need to make provision for those who need to move suddenly because of a life-threatening illness or sudden disability, families in such severe overcrowding that it poses a serious health hazard, and those who require urgent rehousing due to violence / threats of violence, whether intimidated witnesses or as a result of serious anti-social behaviour or domestic violence.

- The Local Authority's statutory discretion to grant "additional preference" and/or to determine priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference.

- The general and specific statutory discretions that can be exercised when allocating housing.

Service Standards

We will aim to:

- Register all eligible applications within 10 working days (where full information is available) although, where additional information is required, applications can take up to four weeks to assess.
- Process all supporting information within 10 working days.
- Complete shortlisting of applicants for properties within 10 working days of an advertising cycle ending.
- Advise all applicants excluded from the housing register within 10 working days with the reason for the exclusion.
- Assist applicants to bid for properties where required.
- Respond to applicant letters, client messages and emails within 10 working days.
- Respond to telephone calls within 1 working day.

We will:

- **Treat all customers with courtesy, fairness, honesty, and respect**.
- Use **plain English** in all communications and explain decisions clearly.
- Be **polite and helpful** in every interaction—whether face-to-face, by phone, or in writing.
- **Listen actively** to tenants' concerns and act on their feedback.
- Maintain an **accessible website** with clear navigation and housing service sections.
- Make **reasonable adjustments** for individuals with disabilities or specific needs. This may include access to interpreters, translation services, or assistance from staff. We are committed to ensuring that all customers can access our services fairly and without disadvantage
- Ensure **contact details are visible** in all published documents and communications.

What we ask of you…

- Speak to us in a polite and courteous manner.
- Provide us with the information we need, so we can help you.
- Contact us if you are unable to keep appointments.
- Inform us with any changes in your circumstances which may affect the service we provide to you.
- If you are unhappy with the service you have received, please contact us.
- If you are happy with the service let us know.

2. Statement on Choice

Choice and Constraints

We are committed to offering the greatest choice possible in the allocation of housing through the Bromsgrove Home Choice scheme. However, this is in the context of considerable pressure on allocations within our affordable housing stock and which means we will therefore have qualification criteria covering who is and isn't eligible to join the waiting list.

Whilst keen to encourage and facilitate mobility within housing, the Council recognises that provision of choice has to be balanced along with local needs. Those without a connection to Bromsgrove District, will not be eligible to go on the housing register unless they meet one of the exceptions criteria.

In determining priority for housing within the banding structure, a higher degree of preference will be awarded to applicants who have the greatest need and have a local connection to Bromsgrove District.

Applicants have the opportunity to view details of all properties that are available and to choose to 'bid' for properties for which they are eligible.

Whilst a key objective of the Bromsgrove Home Choice scheme is to offer applicants more choice, there will be a number of exceptional situations where this may not be possible, for instance;

- Where the applicant does not meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme or the vacant property.
- Where a Local Lettings Plan has been agreed and the applicant does not qualify.
- Where there is a legal agreement restricting who can be offered the property.
- Where the applicant is statutory homeless, or is a prevention or relief case under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

These exceptional circumstances will be made clear when the property is advertised, unless the exceptional circumstance concerns the individual specifically (who has bid for the property) in which case it will be discussed with the applicant at the point of allocation.

Applicants who bid on and subsequently refuse properties for no reason will be moved into the Band 4 (Reduced Priority) – for further details please see the relevant section in the Allocations Policy.

The Council will collect information from applicants about their particular preferences regarding where they want to live. This is to support our work in identifying housing needs and demands within specific parts of districts.

3. Eligibility and Reasonable Preference

Who is and who is not eligible under this Scheme.

Who can apply to register on the Bromsgrove Home Choice scheme?

Any United Kingdom resident aged 16 years or over can apply to join the scheme by completing an application form. The Bromsgrove Home Choice policy does exercise an eligibility criteria and so not all applications will be accepted where there is no close association to the area and/or where there is no or low housing need. Please see the following sections regarding the eligibility criteria.

Anybody can make joint applications including married couples, civil partners, cohabiting couples, same sex couples, and brothers and sisters. In such cases, it is usual for a joint tenancy to be granted in the event of an offer of accommodation being made. The eligibility of applicants to be on the Housing Register will also be checked at the point of allocation.

Qualification Eligibility Criteria

Applicants are not eligible to join the Bromsgrove Home Choice housing register unless they meet the qualifying criteria of a close association outlined below;

In determining whether the household has a close association we will agree a connection exists in the following circumstances;

- Where the local connection arises due to residency the applicant(s) must have lived in Bromsgrove District (by choice) for a minimum period of two years continuously.

- Where the applicant(s) meets any of the statutory homelessness definitions included in the allocations policy.

- Where the local connection arises due to employment and the applicant(s) has been in permanent, paid employment for a minimum period of six months continuously, within Bromsgrove District, immediately prior to the application (please see further information below).

- Where the applicant(s) has a close (immediate) family member living in Bromsgrove District and has done so for a minimum period of five years continuously, immediately prior to the application (please see further information below).

- Where the applicant has resided in Bromsgrove District for three out of the last five years continuously at the point of application.

- Has a local connection as a result of special circumstances. This would include people with a reasonable preference under legislation without a local connection identified above and those who are exempt for example; due to being care leavers or members of the armed forces

Local connection for homeless purposes will be assessed having regard to the definition of local connection contained in Section 199 Housing Act 1996 (in the case of homeless applicants) and the various codes of guidance.

In determining permanent employment we will give consideration to the Local Government Association guidelines which state that this is employment other than that of a casual nature.

In determining a close family member we mean mother, father, sister, brother or adult child (aged 18 and over).

If an applicant(s) hasn't got a connection that meets the qualification criteria and claims a connection on the basis of special circumstances then the decision about allowing them on the list must be made by a senior officer or manager.

Where the applicant is a member of the armed forces or is a care leaver, there are special arrangements – please see further details within this policy.

Applicants with a local connection to Bromsgrove District will be awarded a band depending on their housing need. For applicants who qualify for a reasonable preference but do not have a connection, they will be awarded Band 4.

Residency of Choice

For the purposes of determining eligibility on residency grounds, living in the Local Authority area will not include the following:

- Occupation of a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan where it is not their only or principal home.
- Occupation of a holiday letting (which includes a permanent building, hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation) for the purposes of a holiday.
- Resident of a prison, Bail Hostel or other such accommodation.
- In-Patient of Hospitals/specialist centres where they have a connection elsewhere.

Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, care leavers have a local connection with the area of the local authority that owes them leaving care duties. Where that authority is a county council, this will include all local housing authority districts within its area. For example, a young person leaving care with Worcestershire County Council will have a local connection with each of the six district housing authorities in Worcestershire.

In addition, a care leaver aged under 21 will have a local connection with any district where they were normally resident for a continuous period of at least two years as a result of being accommodated under Children Act duties, including some time before they reached the age of 16. This means that where a young person is placed in care in another local authority area (for example, Stratford-on-Avon District) for at least two years continuously, they may have a local connection with both that district and the districts within the area of the authority that owes them leaving care duties. This additional local connection ceases when the person reaches the age of 21.

Housing Need

Applicant(s) wishing to join the Bromsgrove Home Choice Housing Register must have a housing need recognised by the Allocations Scheme. This will include those applicant(s) with reasonable preference, those who are underoccupying social housing stock and those covered by the categories within the relevant banding. Where an applicant does not fall within a reasonable preference banding and does not have a local connection, they will not qualify to

register and will be offered alternative housing options. Applicant(s) will also be offered the right to request a review of this decision. See Section 8 Review of Decisions.

Age Eligibility Criteria

Young people aged between 16 – 18

Young people aged between 16 and 18 can apply to Bromsgrove Home Choice. For young people under the age of 18 years who are not able to hold a tenancy, a Housing Association may grant permission to allow the occupation of a property by way of an "Equitable Tenancy". However a Housing Association / Registered Providers will not normally grant a tenancy to anyone under the age of 18 years unless they are also able to provide a guarantor to cover rent. Please refer to individual Housing Association and Registered Providers policies for more details.

Persons from abroad

Applicants must have a right to live in the United Kingdom and be entitled to claim public funds. This will include applicants who are British Citizens, EEA nationals who are habitually resident in the United Kingdom, exercising their right as a worker or have settled or pre-settled status. People applying to join the Housing Register must provide documents to confirm their identity and their immigration status.

A person from abroad (or two or more persons jointly if any of them is an ineligible person) is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation 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 s.115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (c 33) (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;

- Refugee status.
- Exceptional leave to remain.
- Indefinite leave to remain.

This does not apply to a person who is already a secure or introductory tenant of the Council or housing association.

If an applicant has any further questions regarding their status they should contact the Council or seek independent legal advice.

Households who are living abroad and therefore not habitually resident will not be eligible to register.

Applicants who have been considered as ineligible due to immigration status can re-apply at any time.

Persons with no local connection to Bromsgrove District

Applicants who have no local connection to Bromsgrove District will not be eligible to join Bromsgrove Home Choice.

However, the following categories will be exempt and will be eligible to register;

- Households accepted as statutory homeless under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) by a Local Authority which has not yet been discharged.

- Households with a reasonable preference under the 1985 Housing Act.

- Households where the Council is satisfied that the applicant(s) needs to live in the area to provide ongoing, regular and significant care and support to a relative who lives in the area and their application is supported by the local Adult or Childrens Services team.

- Households where the Council has agreed to rehouse the applicant under a reciprocal agreement with their current landlord or local authority.

- Households where rehousing or relocation into the Local Authority area is accepted by the Local Authority as being essential due to public protection issues or for other exceptional reasons.

- Members of the armed forces as outlined in the Allocations Scheme. See Armed Forces section below.

- Victims of domestic abuse as outlined in the Allocations Scheme.

- Social services care leavers as outlined in the Allocations Scheme. See Care Leavers section below.

- Social housing tenants who need to move because they work or have been offered work in the Partnership Area and they have a genuine intention to take up the offer and will suffer hardship otherwise.

- Where a Local Letting Plan or s106 restriction applies on a specific site.

Unacceptable behaviour

Where the applicant, or a member of their household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority, they will be ineligible for registration.

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.

Unacceptable behaviour can include:

- Owing significant rent arrears and/or failing to comply with a current tenancy condition with a Council, Housing Association or private landlord to such an extent that a Court would grant a possession order.

- Conviction for using the property for an illegal or immoral purpose.

- Causing nuisance and annoyance to neighbours or visitors for example anti-social behaviour.

- Being convicted for committing certain indictable offences in or near the home and still posing a threat to neighbours or the community.

- Being violent towards a partner or members of the family or towards other people
- Allowing the condition of the property to deteriorate, unless good reason eg so unwell that property could not be kept in good condition.
- Allowing any furniture or fixtures provided by the landlord to deteriorate due to ill treatment.
- Obtaining a tenancy by deception, for example by giving untrue information.
- Paying money to illegally obtain a tenancy.
- Having lost tied accommodation provided in connection with employment due to conduct making it inappropriate for the person to reside there.

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

- Has the applicant or a member of the applicant's household been guilty of unacceptable behaviour?
- Was the unacceptable behaviour serious enough to have entitled the Landlord to obtain an order for possession?
- At the time of the application, is the applicant still unsuitable to be a tenant by reason of that behaviour, or the behaviour of a member of their household who wishes to reside with them?

The applicant will be excluded from the housing register. The applicant does have a right to review against this decision. This decision will be taken by the District Council. An applicant may be rendered ineligible at anytime during the process should Bromsgrove Home Choice become satisfied that they are ineligible.

Applicants classified as being ineligible for any reason can make an application for accommodation in the future if their circumstances have changed for any reason. It is for the Local Authority to consider behaviour, at the point of application to the housing register, and whether they are now eligible under the Policy.

Each application will be assessed on its merits and a decision regarding eligibility will be made accordingly. Anyone deemed ineligible for the Scheme will be provided with a full written explanation for the decision and will have a right of review of the decision. See Section 8 Review of Decisions.

Please see the section on Reviews below.

Applicants who are not eligible to join the housing register

At the point of registration all applicants are asked for information about their housing history and legal status to establish eligibility to join the housing register under the relevant legislation and this allocations policy.

Applicants are not assessed for the Scheme or placed into a Band until a decision has been made regarding their eligibility.

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 housing authorities in England the power to decide what classes of persons are or are not qualifying persons under section160ZA(7) of the Housing Act 1996, for an allocation of housing accommodation.

The Secretary of State has the power to prescribe in Regulations criteria that may not be used by local housing authorities in deciding what classes of persons are not qualifying persons (section 160ZA(8)(b)).These Regulations require that local housing 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 forces or have previously served in the armed forces;

(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.

The allocations policy will also extend the provision above, to 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.

Victims of domestic abuse

The qualifying criteria for local connection will not be applied to households who are victims of domestic abuse as per Regulation 2 The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Care Leavers) (England) Regulations 2025.

This includes where any individual of the household is, or was, a victim of domestic abuse carried out by another person, who needs to move for reasons connected with that abuse. This will include accommodation initially occupied on a temporary basis such as refuge accommodation.

Care leavers

The Council will not apply a local connection requirement as a qualifying criterion to applicants who fall within the scope of Regulation 2 of the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Care Leavers) (England) Regulations 2025. In accordance with those Regulations, a local connection test must not be applied to the following categories of applicant:

- An "eligible child" as defined by paragraph 19B of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989
- A "relevant child" as defined by section 23A(2) of the Children Act 1989

• A “former relevant child” as defined by section 23C(1) of the Children Act 1989, who is aged under 25

This means that such applicants cannot be excluded from qualifying for an allocation of social housing on the basis that they do not have a local connection to the district.

These provisions reflect national regulations introduced on 10 July 2025 to remove barriers to social housing for care leavers and other vulnerable groups.

Social housing tenants

The Secretary of State has the power, to prescribe in Regulations, criteria that may not be used by local housing authorities in deciding what classes of persons are not qualifying persons (section 160ZA(8)(b)).These Regulations require that local housing authorities do not use local connection (within the meaning of section 199 of the Housing Act 1996) as a criterion in deciding whether social housing tenants are a “relevant person”

A relevant person has a need to move because the relevant person—

(a) works in the district of the local housing authority, or

(b) (i) has been offered work in the district of the local housing authority, and

(ii) the authority is satisfied that the relevant person has a genuine intention of taking up the offer of work.

This regulation does not apply if the need to move is associated with work or the offer of work which is—

(a) short-term or marginal in nature,

(b) ancillary to work in another district, or

(c) voluntary work.

In this regulation “voluntary work” means work where no payment is received by the relevant person or the only payment due to be made to the relevant person by virtue of being so engaged is a payment in respect of any expenses reasonably incurred by the relevant person in the course of being so engaged.

Specifically a qualification criteria may not be applied to existing social housing tenants seeking to transfer from another local authority district in England who have a reasonable preference under s166(3)(e) because of a need to move to the local authority’s district to avoid hardship where they need to move because the tenant works in the district, or need to move to take up an offer of work.

In considering registering applications the Council will take into account the Right to Move Statutory Guidance March 2015 (or any relevant successor document).

Any other social housing tenant, who satisfies the eligibility criteria will be eligible to join the Housing Register, even if they have no housing need and don’t currently live in the local authority area.

The Application of Reasonable Preference

The Council is required by law to assess the relative priority that housing applicants are awarded. This is particularly important when the demand for social housing is greater than the availability of homes.

The law, as it applies to local housing authorities, requires that Reasonable Preference for housing must be given to those in the categories set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The statutory Reasonable Preference categories cover:

- All homeless people as defined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and 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 193 (2) or because they are threatened with homelessness, in priority need and not intentionally homeless (195 (2) of the 1996 Act (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 a disability).
- People who need to move to a particular locality within the district to avoid hardship to themselves or others.

Specific details and examples of how Reasonable Preference and priorities are determined and applied are detailed in section 5: The Banding Structure.

Determining priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference

The Council determines priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference by taking into account various factors including:

- The financial resources available to a person to meet their housing costs.
- Any local connection – as defined in s199 Housing Act 1996 (as amended) – that an applicant has with Bromsgrove District.
- The length of time the applicant has been waiting within their current band.
- Any community contribution made by the household.

Households with a Reasonable Preference can have their banding reduced because of their behaviour or circumstances

4. Registration and Assessment Process

How to Apply

Before anyone can apply for vacancies advertised through the Bromsgrove Home Choice scheme they must first register.

Initial registration can be completed online. Where an applicant is unable to use the online registration support to complete a registration form, it can be offered by phone or in person. It is also acceptable for an advocate (for example, a family member, friend or support agency) to complete the registration form on behalf of an applicant who is requesting assistance.

If the applicant is not eligible to register they will be notified giving the reason for the decision and informing them of their right to request a review.

All applications once received will be assessed and placed in the appropriate band. Assessment may involve a home visit or interview to discuss housing options.

Where additional information is required to confirm that a higher band is appropriate, the application may be placed in a lower band until the circumstances of the applicant have been confirmed.

Once registered with the Bromsgrove Home Choice scheme the applicant will be given a membership number.

Applicants to the scheme are entitled to request details about information that has been used to make a decision on their registration.

Help with registration

Help with registration can be given to applicants by the Bromsgrove District Council or other organisations such as County Council social care services, health workers, support workers and voluntary bodies. Help will be available to applicants who find it hard to fully participate in the scheme.

Support can be offered to assist an applicant to use the system where they are interested and ready to move.

Definition of Household Types

An Applicant(s) household type determines the size and type of housing they may be eligible for.

Single person (under 60)	One person household and with no resident children A woman who is less than 25 weeks pregnant
Couple	Married, cohabiting, civil partnership and same sex couples without resident children or with a woman who is less than 25 weeks pregnant
Family	Single parent or couple (as defined above) with minimum of one dependant child, who lives with parent (s) as the main or principal home A woman who is 25 weeks pregnant or more

Pensioner / Disability Living Allowance (DLA)	One person household and couples over 60 or person in receipt of DLA / Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or households with a disabled household member
Other	Any other household group including friends, brother and sister and families with non dependent children

In order to reflect an applicant's housing requirement for a particular property type or size the Council may need to put the applicant into a different category in order to achieve a correct allocation

Example – if the applicant is a single person with a medical need that means they require a larger property for a resident carer, their household type will be amended to "family" or "other" to enable them to bid.

Bromsgrove Home Choice Bedroom Standard			
Household Make-up	**Suitable Property Size :**		
	1 Bed	**2 Bed**	**3 Bed**
Single Person	✓		
Childless Couple	✓		
Parent(s) & 1 child		✓	
25+ weeks pregnant woman with or without partner and no other children		✓	
Parent(s) and 2 children of same sex aged between 0 and 16		✓	
Parent(s) and 2 children of same sex over 16			✓
Parent(s) and 2 children of different sex under the age of 10		✓	
Parent(s) and 2 children of different sex when the oldest reaches 10			✓

Parent(s) and 3 children – 2 of same sex aged between 0 and 16. Plus 1 other child			✓
Parent(s) and 3 children - 2 of different sex under the age of 10. Plus 1 other child			✓

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

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

For example:

A family with 2 parents and 3 children of the following age and sex:

- one girl aged 4
- one girl aged 6
- one boy aged 10

are eligible for a 3 bedroom property (one bedroom for the parents, one for the two girls and one for the boy).

A family with 2 parents and 3 children of the following age and sex:

- one girl aged 4
- one girl aged 16
- one boy aged 10

are eligible for a 4 bedroom property (one bedroom for the parents, one for the boy, one for the 4 year old girl and one for the 16 year old girl).The appropriate Bromsgrove Home Choice senior officer within the Local Authority may exercise discretion in deviating from the Bedroom Standard to increase the number of rooms an applicant requires. Examples would include where an extra room is required to accommodate a carer on health grounds, or where the applicant is a registered foster carer.

The Council will consider applications from prospective fosterers or adopters who would require an extra bedroom to accommodate a foster or adoptive child, and weigh up the risk that the application to foster or adopt may be unsuccessful against the wider benefits which would be realised if the placement was successful. The Council will work with children's services to meet the needs of prospective and approved foster carers and adopters, so that children's services can fulfil their duties under the Children Act 1989, s.22G, to ensure sufficient accommodation in the area to meet the needs of "looked after children eg in some circumstances it may be possible to award this banding and direct match a potential foster parent living in social housing to a more appropriately sized property.

The bedroom standard allows the policy to determine whether there is underoccupation or overcrowding for the purposes of banding. The Housing Association will determine, through their allocation policy the type and size of property an applicant can occupy.

Band 2 or Band 3 (please see below) will also apply to applicants needing to be re-housed on the application if they have no bed spaces available to them.

Evidence of overcrowding must be provided at the point of registration and at the allocation of accommodation and may be verified by a home visit.

There may be some exceptions to the bedroom requirements including the following;

- where there is a carer included in the household who cannot share a bedroom.
- where the household contains "a child who cannot share a bedroom". This definition applies to a child who (1) is entitled to the care component of disability living allowance (or equivalent PIP allowance) at the highest or middle rate, and (2) by reason of their disability is not reasonably able to share a bedroom with another child.
- where the household has care and supervision responsibilities for other children not normally residing with the household.

A carer is someone who, with or without payment, provides help and support to a partner, relative, friend or neighbour, who would not manage without their help. This could be due to age, physical or mental health, addiction, or disability. In all cases the carer must have been identified by the applicant as the person who is primarily responsible for providing them with care and that they need to live with them.

Even if a carer is in receipt of Carer's Allowance this does not necessarily mean that it is necessary for them to reside with the person who is being cared for. An application to include a carer on a housing application will be considered if the need for a carer has been assessed by a relevant specialist organisation e.g. a social care, health professional as needing to provide overnight support by a resident carer. In these circumstances the applicant must provide supporting evidence from other agencies e.g. Social Care or a Health professional.

In some limited circumstances it may be possible to consider cases where the carer is not in receipt of Carer's Allowance but would be eligible. Under these circumstances it will still be necessary for the applicant to demonstrate that the person looked after is in receipt of a relevant care related benefit.

Household with a disabled child

Where the household includes a disabled child and the child isn't able to share a room with another child because of their disability then an additional bedroom requirement can be considered. The disabled child would need to be in receipt of the care component of the disability living allowance (or equivalent Personal Independence Payment "PIP" award) at the highest or middle rate.

Households with access to other children

Anyone with access to children will need to demonstrate their involvement in the care and supervision of the child. A senior officer 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 be 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.

Currently case law around eligibility for benefits and homeless case law has found that separated parents do not have an automatic right to benefits or a bedroom for a child they do not have primary responsibility for.

Please note: the bedroom standard assessment is for determining overcrowding and does not guarantee that an applicant will be offered the exact property size for their household needs. In particular, where their housing need exceeds four bedrooms but there is a limited supply of larger properties, they are unlikely to be offered social housing that exactly meets their needs.

Also, households that include other adults rather than children may find it difficult to obtain social housing where they require larger properties normally allocated only to households with children, as priority is usually given for family houses to people with dependant children within the Housing Association / Registered Provider's allocation policies.

There may be other special circumstances subject to emerging case law where the bedroom standard does not apply and this will be determined by a senior officer or manager.

Adding adults to an application

Applicants can add other adults to their application, in addition to Applicants 1 and 2. In such cases, the Council would require written confirmation from the adult that they wish to be added to the application. The Council would also require ID; proof of address; confirmation of immigration status; confirmation of income or benefits etc.

5. The Banding Structure

Bromsgrove Home Choice operates a needs-based banding system as described below. Bands are arranged to reflect housing need, with the highest band indicating the greatest need for housing. The scheme consists of five bands, as summarised below. A more detailed description of the bands and of Reasonable Preference can be found under each band section.

The bands within the policy are based on the reasonable preference criteria set out within the 1996 Housing Act.

Once registered the applicant can only be in one band and the highest banding possible will always be applied according to the policy.

The table below describes the bands into which households will be placed according to their housing circumstances.

Band 1 (3-month time limit)

Applicants who are statutorily homeless with a duty to re-house under s193 of Housing Act 1996 (eligible, homeless, priority need, not intentional and with a local connection).

Applicants owed the relief duty who are likely to be accepted as statutorily homeless with a duty to rehouse under the above Act.

Applicants in this band are in the highest priority due to experiencing homelessness and therefore the community contribution will not apply.

Band 2 (6 months time limit) (Local Connection)

- Homeless cases where no statutory duty to re-house (excludes intentional homeless)
- Occupying property in a serious state of disrepair; factors taken into consideration by the Local Authority include where the Local Authority could have served an improvement notice for a Category 1 hazard or equivalent (not for overcrowding and space hazards)
- Verified high medical need / disability that is directly affected by the current housing situation and would be immediately improved by moving
- Applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness, and not intentionally homeless(excludes those in priority band)
- Applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness under the HRA 2017 (Prevention and Relief)
- Requiring move-on from supported accommodation where the Council has referred that person into the supported accommodation and made an agreement with the landlord to support with move on.
- Tenants who are under-occupying social rent or affordable rent housing in the within Bromsgrove District.
- Tenants who are occupying a social housing property within Bromsgrove District with major adaptations that they do not need
- Households suffering with serious overcrowding (3 or more bedrooms lacking)
- Two or more criteria in Band 3

Band 3 (12 months time limit) (Local Connection)

- Households suffering from harassment (excludes priority band cases)
- Overcrowding or lacking up to and including 2 bedrooms
- Living in exceptional circumstances. See below.
- Households with children under 10 years old and living in flat with no access to a private garden

Band 4 Reduced Banding (with reasonable preference)

- Households with financial resources above defined limits
- Households who have deliberately worsened their circumstances to qualify for a higher banding
- Households who are intentionally homeless
- Households in a reasonable preference but with no local connection to Bromsgrove District
- Owner Occupiers in reasonable preference
- Households with housing-related debts. See below.

- Households who have committed acts of anti-social behaviour and other tenancy breaches but not severe enough to have obtained outright possession
- Households who aren't bidding for properties that are available and suitable for their needs or successfully bid but then refuse properties that are suitable for their needs

Band 5 (12 month time limit) (Local Connection)

Households who do not meet any of the above reasonable preference criteria and with a local connection, and who may have a low housing need including;

- Eligible and interested in shared ownership
- Eligible and interested in older peoples accommodation
- Households with low level medical or welfare issues
- Households that are newly forming
- Households who are suffering financial hardship
- Households who are sharing facilities with other non-related households
- Households residing in an institution or supported housing scheme e.g. hospital with no access to settled accommodation
- Households who have insecurity of tenure (those in tied accommodation or lodging with family members)
- In social housing and seeking a transfer

Band 6 (12 month time limit) (No Local Connection)

Households who do not meet any of the above reasonable preference criteria and without a local connection, and who may have a low housing need including;

- Eligible and interested in shared ownership
- Eligible and interested in older peoples accommodation
- In social housing and seeking a transfer

Cumulative Preference in Band 3

Applicants whose circumstances match more than one criterion in Band 3 will be awarded 'cumulative preference', which means that they will move up a band. If an applicant fits the criteria for two or more reasonable preference categories in Band 3 they will move into Band 2 but cannot then move to the higher Band 1 unless they are accepted for the rehousing duty under s193 Housing Act 1996.

The Bandings Explained

Band 1

(Awarded for 3 months)

The following criteria will lead to Band 1 being awarded:

Statutory Homeless with a duty to re-house

Band 1 is awarded by the Local Authority it has accepted a full duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) to provide accommodation for an applicant.

This will include victims of domestic abuse who are accommodated in refuge or other temporary accommodation, who the authority owe a rehousing duty to.

Where households are owed the relief duty under the HRA 2017 and it is likely that they would be owed the full statutory rehousing duty (if their homelessness doesn't come to an end through one of the potential discharge routes during the relief period) they will be placed in this band at the point the determination is made.

Band 2

(Local Connection and High housing need – awarded for 6 months)

The following criteria will lead to Band 2 being awarded:

Homeless cases where no statutory duty to re-house (excludes intentional homeless)

Band 2 is awarded by the local authority where an applicant is determined under the homelessness legislation to be eligible for assistance, homeless, not in priority need, not homeless intentionally and has a local connection.

Homeless cases covered by the prevention (HRA 2017)

Band 2 is awarded by the local authority where the applicant will become homeless within 56 days (the prevention duty). The Band 2 award will last for 56 days and then the banding will be reassessed and a band based on housing need / duties owed at the time will be awarded. This will also be awarded to households owed the relief duty where they will not meet the thresholds for a main rehousing duty to be owed.

Properties subject to serious disrepair

Band 2 is awarded where an applicant is living in sub-standard accommodation (regardless of the tenure) and (following confirmation or notification by the relevant Officer) it is determined that action is required under the Housing Act 2004. This would be for a Category 1 hazard that is very severe and may have led to the service of the following notices (only);

- Emergency Remedial Action
- Demolition or Clearance Orders
- Improvement Notices for Category 1 hazard (other than for overcrowding and space)

NB In circumstances where the applicant is in a Local Authority tenancy and the Local Authority can't legally serve notice upon itself then this category would still be awarded where a notice would be served if the tenure was different.

Where applicants report poor housing conditions, the relevant Enforcement Officers may inspect the property to consider using their powers to remedy hazards.

Bromsgrove Home Choice will need to liaise with the relevant Officer on a regular basis to check that the property circumstances are still in disrepair prior to an offer of accommodation being made.

Where the property disrepair has been remedied the applicant's banding will need to be reassessed.

Where a notice has been served that prohibits occupation or the disrepair is so serious that the relevant Officer advises occupation of the property is not appropriate on health and safety grounds, applicants will be dealt with under the Homelessness legislation.

High Medical Need or Disability

This band is awarded following an assessment by Bromsgrove Home Choice, of the evidence provided by the applicant and/or by the preferred medical advisor in relation to their health and/or disability.

An applicant will normally be expected to complete a medical assessment if they have indicated that there is a medical or disability issue that is made substantially worse by their current housing. Their circumstances will be assessed by a Bromsgrove Home Choice officer based on evidence provided by the applicant, and officers will consider evidence from all appropriate medical professionals.

This banding will only be awarded if the current accommodation is so unsuitable in relation to their medical, welfare or disability needs that a move is essential. The assessment is not of the applicant's health, but how their health or welfare is affected by their accommodation.

The following are examples of cases that would qualify for this band:

- The applicant's accommodation is directly contributing to the deterioration of the applicant's health e.g. severe chest condition requiring intermittent hospitalisation as a result of prolonged periods of exposure to damp (i.e. mould spore allergens). The most vulnerable group is that of persons aged 14 and under. The effects of damp must be recognised as severe under the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System as assessed by the relevant Officer.

- A person with a severe disability requiring substantial adaptations to a property which are not provided in their current accommodation and where the current property cannot be adapted.

- A person suffering with a severe and enduring mental illness or disorder where the medical condition would be significantly improved by a move to alternative accommodation, including members and former members of the armed forces.

- An applicant suffering from terminal illness where they have not already been accepted for a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness through no fault of their own (who have not made a homeless application)

This status is awarded to all households who are homeless as defined by the Homelessness legislation but have not made a homeless application or do not wish to be considered under the homelessness legislation and where, following investigation, it is proven that the applicant is threatened with homelessness through no fault of their own.

Tenants who are under – occupying affordable social housing or living in an adapted property where they do not require the adaptations

It is important that the best possible use is made of existing housing stock and priority will be given where a Local Authority or Housing Association tenant, in Bromsgrove District, applies to move to a smaller, or more appropriate type of property.

Some examples would be;

a) Applicant's currently living in family sized accommodation, either social or affordable rent, who wish to 'downsize' and free up at least one bedroom.

b) applicants currently living in family sized accommodation, either social or affordable rent, wishing to move to a one bed property or a two bed property designated for older people e.g. Retirement housing, Extra Care or a bungalow.

c) an applicant occupying an adapted property where they do not require the adaptations.

Please note this only applies where a family sized property or a property with substantial adaptations will become available for reletting following the move

Move on from Supported Accommodation.

This status is awarded where an applicant was referred to the supported housing provider and an agreement between the Local Authority and the Supported Housing provider, is in place for applicants to move on from supported accommodation.

This status will only be awarded to applicants in supported accommodation or care- leavers where the following criteria have been met:

- The Council referred the applicant into the supported accommodation.
- The applicant is ready to move to independent settled social housing on the recommendation of the support provider.
- An ongoing support package has been assessed and where required, is in place.

In the case of young people moving on from care, applicants are awarded this category in accordance with the 16 and 17 year old Joint Protocol and the Care Leavers Protocol between the Local Authority and the County Council's Children's Services Department. Applicants must be a former "Relevant Child" as defined by the Children Act 1989.

The evidence to support this will be provided by the County Council's leaving care service and will consist of confirmation that:

- The care-leaver is ready to move to independent settled housing and is genuinely prepared for a move to independent living based on an assessment by the care leavers team, the support provider and housing options officer.
- The care-leaver possesses the life skills to manage a tenancy including managing a rent account.
- An ongoing support package has been assessed and where required, is in place.

Applicants are expected to make full use of their priority by placing bids on all suitable properties to enable them to move on to independent accommodation. Bromsgrove Home

Choice officers may use their discretion to place bids on behalf of the applicant where bids are not being placed or are being inappropriately placed to facilitate move-on through supported accommodation. This will be done in consultation with the applicant and (if relevant) their support worker.

For applicants meeting this criteria the band start date will be the date the applicant moved into the supported accommodation

Children accommodated out of area by Children's Services or Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children under the responsibility of Worcestershire County Council will be awarded a Band 2 under move on from supported accommodation and will be granted a local connection.

Serious Overcrowding

Applicants lacking three or more bedrooms will be awarded Band 2 e.g. where the applicant has a four bedroom need and is living in a one bedroom property.

Overcrowding assessments will include all household occupants and the overall size of the property in determining the band, regardless of whether the whole household wish to be rehoused together or not. In cases where there is a pregnancy (including multiple births, officers will need to consider whether the current property would be overcrowded when the baby (babies) arrive at the 25 week stage and beyond.

Applicants who claim they are overcrowded will have their circumstances assessed against the Bromsgrove Home Choice Bedroom Standard in the table above under the Definition of Household types section.

Band 3

(Local Connection and Housing Need - valid for 12 months)

The following criteria will lead to Band 3 being awarded:

Households suffering from harassment

Applicants who cite harassment as the main reason for making the application will be asked to provide information about all the circumstances surrounding the application and each case will be assessed on its merits. Any enquiries will be made in a sensitive manner so as not to prejudice the safety of the applicant. Any claims of harassment should be substantiated by evidence from a third party e.g. Police, Housing Officer etc. If the harassment is deemed so severe that it is not reasonable to continue to occupy the accommodation, this will be investigated under the Homelessness legislation.

If an applicant is suffering from domestic abuse or harassment from outside the home, and unable to remain in their home, it is likely that they will be treated as homeless and therefore awarded the appropriate homelessness-related bands.

Overcrowding or lacking required bedrooms

This applies to households who are overcrowded or lacking up to (and including) two bedrooms. Please see section above in Band 2 regarding how overcrowding is determined.

Living in exceptional circumstances

This banding on Bromsgrove Home Choice should only be awarded in those instances where the applicant's living circumstances are considered to be exceptional given the prevailing

housing conditions in the district and where no other banding criteria reflects or addresses the problem(s).

In reaching a decision to award the banding, account must be taken of the suitability of the current accommodation and the location of the accommodation in relation to the applicant's needs.

Examples are given below of potential situations where this banding may be granted – the list is not exhaustive and the decision lies with the local authority.

- The applicant is adequately housed but needs to give or receive support on the grounds of disability or illness that is substantial and ongoing and it is not possible for the person giving care to use public transport or their own transport to provide assistance.
- The applicant needs to move on welfare grounds e.g. hardship.
- The applicant's household is overcrowded, coupled with medical issues that do not accrue medical priority.

The applicant needs to take up or continue employment, education and/or training that is not available elsewhere and they do not live within reasonable commuting distance. Journeys exceeding **3 hours total per day** (return) are not considered reasonable but personal circumstances such as any disability will be taken into account when making this decision.

Households with Children living in flats or maisonettes

This status is awarded to households with children under 10 and living in a flat or maisonette with no access to a garden. This may be verified by a home visit.

Band 4 - Reduced Banding

(Reasonable preference but reduced priority)

This band will be used for households in reasonable preference categories where their priority is reduced for one of the following reasons;

Applicants will be banded according to their current housing need but demoted to Band 4. This decision will be reassessed by the District Council after a period of six months, or at the applicant's request at any time.

1.Households who have been determined to have become homeless intentionally

Where the local authority has carried out investigations under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) and found the applicant intentionally homeless.

2. Financial Resources

Home Owners in a reasonable preference for housing as defined under the Housing Act 1996, that own or part own a freehold or leasehold property in the UK or abroad will be unable to join the housing register. It is proposed that discretion will be applied where exceptional circumstances apply, these may include:

- Evidence supplied that the property is having a significant detrimental impact on their physical or mental health of the applicant, it has been verified by a professional that

the property cannot be adapted to meet their needs and they have limited financial resources to meet their own housing needs elsewhere.

- The current property is unaffordable, and the applicant does not have the financial resources to meet their rehousing needs. This will be assessed through an application on the grounds of homelessness.

- Cases where the applicant or a member of their household is suffering from domestic abuse or harassment, and there is evidence to suggest emergency rehousing is required. This will be assessed through an application on the grounds of homelessness.

- If homeowners are accepted onto the housing register, they will need to evidence they are in the process of selling their home prior to any offer being made. Those deemed to have sufficient financial resources to resolve their own housing needs will be placed in Band 4, the reduced banding.

Homeowners that do not fulfil any of the reasonable preference categories will be assessed as having no housing need and therefore will not qualify to join the housing register.

Home owners and people with sufficient financial resources available to them to meet their housing needs will be placed in Band 4.

Currently households who qualify for reasonable preference will be deemed to have sufficient financial resources to resolve their own housing need through home ownership or private renting where their earnings exceed;

- For singles and couples with no children, a gross household income (including benefits) of more than £47,000 per annum, or

- Households with children with a gross income (including benefits) of over £60,000.

Those with savings / capital / assets / equity of £50,000 or more unless they are in receipt of a pension (or fixed income where they would be unable to obtain a mortgage) where they would be allowed savings/capital/assets/equity of up to £95,000. The savings etc. of all adult members of the household will be taken into account for this criteria.

Applicants will be asked to provide income and asset/savings/capital details at the point of application and if, at that stage, they exceed the threshold their banding will be the reduced to Band 4 (where they have a reasonable preference housing need). The income and assets/capital/savings details will also be considered at the point of offer to ensure the applicant is still on the correct banding and they are therefore eligible for the offer.

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

Financial thresholds may also be determined by Registered Providers and applicants should contact individual organisations where they believe income or capital may be an issue at the point they are made an offer of accommodation.

Applicants who are registering for shared ownership purposes only, will not be adversely affected by the financial resources element of the Band 4 as it does not apply to shared ownership schemes.

Where applicant(s) have an exceptional need, such as a medical need that is adversely impacted by the current home, that can only be meet through the provision of affordable housing then Band 4 won't be applied.

2. Deliberately worsening housing circumstances

Where there is evidence that an applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances or deliberately moved into another property that is unsuitable and as a result qualify for higher priority on Bromsgrove Home Choice, their priority will be reduced to Band 4. This would include circumstances where an applicant surrendered their tenancy, where it was reasonable to occupy and / or against the advice of the Housing Advice / Options Officer or where they moved to a property that was smaller than their requirements.

Where there is evidence that an applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances in order to qualify for higher priority on Bromsgrove Home Choice, this priority will be reduced to Band 4. This may include the following;

- Unsuitable property choice – e.g. with stairs if need ground floor.
- Overcrowding – e.g. moved in with others / moved others in by choice.
- Causing disrepair – including not allowing access.
- Giving up a suitable tenancy.
- Adaptations – apply to move within 5 years and still meets need.
- Refused support which could have maintained tenancy.

Officers will consider the particular applicants circumstances and particularly issues of vulnerability or where poor advice has been given before reducing the persons banding.

3. Housing related debts

Where households have housing related debts these will be assessed by the Council. The officer must establish that the debts have arisen from a deliberate act or omission that leads to non-payment.

The applicants will be encouraged to make affordable arrangements to pay and they will be placed within the Band 4 until an affordable arrangement has been reached with whom they owe the money to, and the applicant has shown they are maintaining regular payments. The Local Authority will expect the debtor to demonstrate they have taken reasonable steps to resolve the issue prior to reducing the banding given. For this circumstance to apply the debt must not be more than six years old (as after this the debt cannot be recovered unless it has been secured through a court order / money judgement order in which case the six year timescale does not apply).

Band 4 will apply to those with rent arrears, recharges, former tenancy arrears, rent deposit debt, mortgage arrears etc where the debt is £500 or they owe the equivalent of 6 or more weeks target rent (whichever amount is the smaller). The Housing Association/Registered Provider will need to notify the Local Authority of the arrears and any arrangements made with the applicant. Where the applicant can demonstrate a regular payment history (complying with the agreement) for three months or more and the debt is less than £500 the Local Authority will move the applicant back to the higher banding. The Local Authority will exercise its

discretion, depending on individual circumstances where there are mitigating factors or an urgent need to move such domestic abuse cases.

4. Anti – social behaviour and other tenancy breaches

Where there has been a breach of tenancy such as anti-social behaviour, or due to the property condition, the applicant will be placed within Band 4. The Local Authority will expect the landlord where the problems occurred, to demonstrate they have taken reasonable steps to resolve the issue prior to reducing the banding given.

Band 4 will apply to applicants who are guilty of anti-social behaviour or tenancy breaches where formal legal action has been commenced e.g. injunction, ASBO, CBO or Notice etc. This would include anyone found guilty of sub-letting a social housing tenancy and waste /neglect of the property. The officer must consider any particular support needs the applicant might have and whether this is having an impact on their behaviour before we reduce the applicants banding. The officer should only consider recent tenancy breaches / anti social behaviour.

The officer can reinstate the higher banding where the tenancy breach is resolved or the applicant can demonstrate changed behaviour over a reasonable and sustained timescale.

5. No bidding or refuses offers of accommodation

Where applicants in band 1,2 and 3 have failed to place bids, or have placed successful bids but refused properties, and there is evidence that properties that would meet their needs have been advertised on Bromsgrove Home Choice, their banding will be reviewed within the set time period for their original band above and they will be placed in Band 4.

‘Successful bids’ means where the applicant(s) has been offered the property and invited to view it (where applicable).

The officer must consider the households’ vulnerability and any issues that may have affected their behaviour at the time e.g. domestic abuse, mental health problems.

How will Band 4 be applied

Applicants will be assessed according to their current housing need but demoted Band 4. This decision will be reassessed by the Council after a period of six months, or at the applicant’s request at any time (please note review requests where there has not been any change of circumstances will not be considered) but is unlikely to be removed if their circumstances remain the same.

Band 5

(Local Connection)

(Please note applications in this banding will be closed after one year where no bids have been placed)

This applies to all applicants who live, work or have a local connection as defined by s199 Housing Act 1996, to Bromsgrove District and do not meet any of the reasonable preference criteria, as set out above, and have a low housing need.

Where the household has a low level housing need due to medical, disability or welfare conditions / issues, the banding will only be awarded where the condition / issue will be improved by a move to alternative accommodation.

Examples of applicant(s) accepted onto the waiting list and awarded Band 5 include the following;

- Eligible and interested in shared ownership.
- Eligible and interested in older peoples accommodation.
- Households with low level medical or welfare issues.
- Households that are newly forming.
- Households who are suffering financial hardship.
- Households who are sharing facilities with other non-related households.
- Households residing in an institution or supported housing scheme e.g. hospital with no access to settled accommodation.
- Households who have insecurity of tenure (those in tied accommodation or lodging with family members).
- In social housing and seeking a transfer.

Bromsgrove Home Choice does not recognise insecurity of tenure where the applicant is in an assured shorthold tenancy in the private rented sector unless there is another issue arising such as threat of homelessness or disrepair.

Band 6

(No Local Connection)

(Please note applications in this banding will be closed after one year where no bids have been placed)

This applies to all applicants who do not meet any of the reasonable preference criteria, as set out above, and have a low housing need.

Where the household has a low level housing need due to medical, disability or welfare conditions / issues, the banding will only be awarded where the condition / issue will be improved by a move to alternative accommodation.

Examples of applicant(s) accepted onto the waiting list and awarded Band 6 include the following;

- Eligible and interested in shared ownership.
- Eligible and interested in older peoples accommodation.
- In social housing and seeking a transfer.

Applicants with no connection to the local authority who do not meet any of the reasonable preference criteria, or the criteria for low level housing need as set out above, will no longer qualify to join the housing register.

Time Limited Bands

All bands are awarded on a time limited basis, i.e. for 3, 6 and 12. At the end of the time limit, if an applicant has not been successfully housed, the Council will reassess the application and contact the applicant to confirm their circumstances and/or bidding pattern. Applicants in Band 5 will be closed after 12 months if there are no bids. Please see the Reviews / Complaints Section for more information.

Local Connection for Banding Purposes

To determine the relevant local connection of a household, who meet the eligibility criteria for registering, the Council would use the following;

- has lived in Bromsgrove District by choice for a certain time (for six months out of the last 12 months or for three years out of the last five years).
- has close family living in Bromsgrove District, who have been permanently resident for at least the previous five years.
- has permanent paid employment in Bromsgrove District.
- has a local connection as a result of special circumstances

Waiting Time

New applicants are placed into a Band 6, while their housing need is assessed and their waiting time will be from the date of registration (the effective date); this will be the date the form is received.

If an applicant is moved up into a higher band (following assessment) then the date they moved into that band will override the registration date (effective date). Please note it can take up to four weeks to assess a banding.

If the applicant remains in or moves down to a Band 6 then the registration date (effective date) will apply.

Removing Applicant from Band 4

Where an applicant is promoted from the Band 4 to a reasonable preference band, the band start date should be back-dated to the date they were originally placed in Band 4.

Please note that even once an applicant has been promoted from Band 4 to a reasonable preference band, housing associations may still refuse to accommodate them due to their own allocations policies. Applicants demoted to Band 4 should be encouraged to pursue other housing options such as private rented accommodation wherever possible.

The decision to promote an applicant from Band 4 should be undertaken as part of a full review of the applicant's circumstances to ensure that the applicant is awarded the correct banding.

Change of Circumstances

All applicants are required to notify the relevant Bromsgrove Home Choice immediately of any change to their circumstances which may affect their priority for housing. Applicants will need to provide proof of their change before it is assessed.

Applicants who have had a change of circumstances and have not informed Bromsgrove Home Choice may have their application status changed to 'application pending' whilst an investigation takes place in order to determine eligibility. The applicants' banding will be reassessed at the point that they submit the change of circumstances (not at the point when the circumstances change) and this will then determine their band start date. If an applicant does not respond to contact from Bromsgrove Home Choice within one month, their application will be closed unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Applicants should notify the Bromsgrove Home Choice of any change in their circumstances. For example:

- A change of address, for themselves or any other person on their application.
- Any additions to the family or any other person they would wish to join the application.
- Any member of the family or any other person on the application who has left the accommodation.
- Any confirmed pregnancy.
- Changes of name.
- Changes in financial circumstances, including change of employment.
- Accommodation issues.
- Medical or other housing needs.

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

Additional Preference – Community Contribution

The Council wants to encourage applicants who can, to work and/or volunteer to raise levels of aspiration and ambition and promote sustainable communities. The following criterion applies to either the applicant or joint applicant. The responsibility will be on the applicant or joint applicant to provide the evidence to be awarded this banding.

We will award an additional waiting time of six months if any of the following circumstances apply (please note households only qualify for one six months waiting time period regardless of how many of the below are relevant).

We will verify all claims of community contribution at the point of registration, at review and at the offer stage.

Applicants in Employment

This applies where applicants work for a minimum of 16 hours per week (permanent and not of a casual nature) and have been in employment for six out of the last nine months continuously.

Applicants Volunteering

This applies to applicants volunteering for a minimum of 20 hours per month and for a continuous period of at least six months, at the point of application, at review and the same at the point of offer.

Volunteering must be for a not for profit organisation registered with the charity commission or otherwise recognised by the Local Authority.

Applicants in Education and Training

This applies to applicants, who have been studying or training, which includes attending higher and further education or who are accessing a vocational course of study or engaging in a programme of work related courses. This must be for a continuous period of at least six months, up to the point of application and the same at point of offer.

Training which is compulsory in order to qualify for out of work benefits will not be taken into account in awarding this additional preference.

Applicants who are full time carers

This applies to applicants who are unable to satisfy the criteria outlined above, but who care for someone on a full time basis and have done so for a minimum period of six months (before applying) and are in receipt of carers allowance (due to disability or frailty).

Applicants with a disability

We recognise that it may not be possible for some applicants to achieve any of the community contribution due to severe mental or physical disability (e.g. where you are awarded the support element of Employment Support Allowance or higher rate Disability Living Allowance / Personal Independence Payment) and in these circumstances additional waiting time will be awarded.

Applicants owed the prevention duty

Where the applicant is owed the prevention duty having made a homeless application, we will therefore award an additional six months waiting time for an applicant under the prevention duty, in Band 2 in order to prevent their homelessness. If the applicant already qualifies for one or more other community contributions the waiting time will be in addition, up to a maximum of 12 months.

Members of the Armed Forces and their spouses / civil partners

By Armed Forces, we mean the “regular forces” and the “reserved forces” as defined by section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006(a). The “regular forces” means the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular army or the Royal Air Force. The “reserve forces” means the Royal Fleet Reserve, the Royal Navy Reserve, the Marine Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Territorial Army, the Royal Air Force Reserve or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Members of the Armed Forces who have been served with a cessation to occupy accommodation will be given housing advice and the appropriate banding and, if required, considered under the Homeless legislation (Housing Act 1996, Part VII and other relevant legislation).

Bromsgrove Home Choice recognises the contribution made by members of the armed forces and supports the principles of the Worcestershire Community Covenant.

The Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preferences for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012 require Local Authorities to give additional preference to a person with an urgent housing need and are in one of the reasonable preference categories.

The regulations are;

that local housing authorities must frame their allocation scheme to give additional preference to the following persons if they fall within one or more of the statutory reasonable preference categories and are in urgent housing need:

a) serving members of the regular forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service

b) former members of the regular forces

c) bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where;

(i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and

(ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service

d) existing or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service

If an “Armed Forces” applicant is able to meet the local connection criteria (or is exempt from this) and does not have sufficient resource to meet their own housing need, the Bromsgrove Home Choice Allocations Policy will award the applicant an additional six months in waiting time at the point that need has been assessed or date of registration (if need hasn’t changed over time).

If the applicant meets the criteria outlined above, also meets the community contribution criteria for one or more of the reasons then they will be awarded an additional six months e.g. a total of 12 months.

6. Applying for a Property and Lettings

Looking for available Properties

Once applicants have been registered with Bromsgrove Home Choice and been notified of their registration number, they can start to look for a property of their choice.

Advertising

All Housing Association landlords are committed to advertising their available properties as widely as possible. Properties will be advertised on a weekly basis on the Bromsgrove Home Choice website. Applicants will be able to view available properties on line at www.bromsgrovehomechoice.org.uk

Adverts will provide information about the location, property type and size, rent level, and eligibility criteria.

How to Bid

Applicants will be able to express an interest in a property using the website. Officers can provide assistance to applicants who are unable to access the website and do not have any other trusted adults who can act on their behalf.

When to bid for a Property

Vacant properties will be advertised from each Tuesday morning. Applicants can bid any time during that week until 12 midnight on the following Monday. This is called the weekly bidding cycle. The time that a 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 3 bids each week as long as they match what the advert criteria asks for. Bids must be 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 throughout the bidding cycle.

Multiple Bidding

Applicants will be able to bid for a maximum of three vacancies during any given advertising period. 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 Housing Association will then confirm the preferred property and further the application will be skipped if it appears on the top of any other shortlists. If the Housing Association has considered the applicant for a property but later decides not to offer it to them, the Provider will inform the applicant of the reasons for this directly, but the applicant will retain their banding and be able to continue bidding. Please see the section on "Reasons why an applicant may not be offered a property".

Applications from employees, Board Members and Co-optees

Staff, Board Members and Co-optees will be dealt with by a senior officer but treated and assessed as any other applicant to the Housing Register.

Homeless Households

Applicants who have been accepted as homeless (where a duty is owed under the HRA 2017) will be allocated an appropriate banding and applicants will be expected to try to secure suitable accommodation as soon as possible once they have received their rehousing (s.184, Housing Act Part VII) acceptance letter. Bromsgrove Home Choice would expect them to be bidding for as many suitable properties as available (up to three bids per week)

Failure to bid each and every week on all suitable properties (up to a maximum of 3) may result in the Local Authority, placing bids on an applicant's behalf to make sure its duties to the applicant as a homeless household are fulfilled. The Local Authority may also remove bids that an applicant has placed if they are not suitable e.g. where a victim of domestic abuse selects a property near to the perpetrator.

If applicants choose to only bid on one property when there are three suitable properties advertised, the local authority bid on the two remaining properties to ensure that the applicant is re-housed as soon as possible.

All bids in this banding must be on suitable properties (e.g. suitable size, location and type).

When a successful bid is made for a property the applicant will be notified of this and, subject to rights of review under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, this will constitute an offer of housing under Part VI as a discharge of the Council's homelessness duty. If this offer is subsequently refused and the applicant requests a review of the suitability of accommodation, then the

application will be suspended and no further bids made until the outcome of the review has been determined.

Should the applicant be rejected by the Housing Association under its, own allocations criteria, the homelessness duty will not be discharged and the applicant(s) will remain eligible for a further offer.

Eligibility for types of dwelling

Housing Association / Registered Provider partners will use their individual policies to determine an applicant's eligibility for a size and type of dwelling. Generally, the Housing Association will use the overcrowding standard to determine the appropriate size of property. However, in exceptional circumstances they may deviate from the overcrowding definition to advertise and allocate their housing stock.

Examples are:

- Where applicants require larger accommodation on health grounds. This will be considered on a case by case basis, taking into account the advice of a qualified medical advisor – this will be determined at the point of registration (please see section on overcrowding within the banding).

- Pregnant households (with no other children) will be recognised as a family by Bromsgrove Home Choice at 25 weeks, this will allow the applicants to apply for family sized accommodation.

- Where the applicant has been approved (or is going through the approval process) as a foster carer / to adopt by Children's Services, and so will need a larger property than normally required by the household (please see section on overcrowding within the banding).

- Where the applicant or a member of the household needs the support of a carer who will need to sleep in the home and cannot reasonably be expected to share a bedroom with another member of the household. See paragraph below for more information about including a carer in a housing application (please see section on overcrowding within the banding).

- Where the landlord or Local Authority wants to deliberately under-occupy a property and a Local Letting Plan is in place.

- Where there is little or no demand for a particular vacancy and it is therefore difficult to let (at the point of advertising the property).

- Where no suitable applicants can be identified to make the best use of larger accommodation.

Selection process

Applicants must note that individual Housing Associations will apply their own allocation policies and the suitability of the property will be considered by the Housing Association, 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 and then by date within the band and then by effective date.

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

Partner landlords advertising properties will select and may interview the top applicant/s before an offer is made.

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 partner landlord 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 landlord 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

Housing Associations may choose not to allocate you a property due to their own allocations policy, please contact the relevant Housing Association/Registered Provider for more information.

Restrictions on offers 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 or an age criteria such as those over the age of 55.

- Housing Associations 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 Housing Associations 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 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 4.

Refusals by Households to whom the full homeless duty is owed

If a homeless applicant refuses an offer of suitable accommodation, the local authority may decide that its duty under the Homeless Legislation is discharged, subject to the statutory review process and their banding will be reassessed.

Homeless applicants have the right to request a review of certain decisions made by the local authority in respect of their homeless application. This includes the decision to bring to an end the full homeless duty by making a suitable offer of settled accommodation. The applicant has this right whether they refuse or accept the offer of accommodation. If the review finds in favour of the homeless applicant, the applicant will retain their Band 1 (provided they are still homeless) and will be able to place bids on alternative properties. However, if the reasonableness and suitability of the offer is upheld, the homeless duty will be ended and the applicant's banding will be reassessed. Homeless applicants are therefore advised to accept an offer and then request a review if they believe it to be unsuitable.

Exempt Allocations – Accommodation provided for lettings that are not covered 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

Bromsgrove Home Choice reserves the right to apply additional criteria for example specific local connection criteria, offers of family sized accommodation to smaller households or employment, 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 Housing Associations 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 Council's website.

The principles in applying Local Lettings Plans (LLPs)

- 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 a regular basis.

The decision to implement a local lettings plan will be developed and approved by the Local Authority Senior Officer in partnership with the housing 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, covering an area, estate, or block:

- Age restrictions where a property has been designated for older people or for young people specifically.
- 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 Bromsgrove Home Choice to ensure fairness and transparency in the system and to give customers confidence.

Where applicants have got reasonable preference but their circumstances mean they have an extremely urgent housing need they may require a direct match. Examples of this would be those with critical health or social needs where an immediate move is necessary for their health and wellbeing; or those in fear of extreme incidences of domestic violence, harassment, hate crime, or extreme neighbour nuisance / antisocial behaviour where there is a genuine risk to their health and well being; and these 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, or to support a move through witness mobility schemes or similar.

There may be direct matching that takes place for tenants within the Housing Associations which are outside of the allocations scheme, 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.

7. Administration of the Scheme

Delegation of Authority

The Bromsgrove Home Choice Scheme operates alongside the separate allocation policies and activities of partner Housing Associations.

The Council may delegate or contract out functions to Housing Association partner organisations but will not abrogate any of its legal duties and powers to any Housing Association partner.

The administration of the scheme is undertaken by the Council in partnership with Bromsgrove District Housing Trust and they are also responsible for updating and improving the scheme in

line with good practice and legislation, consulting with partners and customers and ensuring the scheme is followed.

Certain functions within the scheme can only be undertaken by a senior officer or manager and, where this is the case, this has been highlighted throughout the allocations policy.

Reassessment of Bandings

Applications to the Bromsgrove Home Choice Scheme will be reassessed on a regular basis. The timescale for this is determined by their banding.

Bandings will be reassessed when it is apparent there has been a change of circumstances.

An applicant will be notified of the reassessment. Failure to respond to appropriate correspondence in relation to the reassessment within one month will result in the application being closed. If good reason can be shown why there was a failure to respond to the reassessment, then the application may be reinstated with the original band start date.

When the date is reached for reassessing the banding, the Local Authority will contact the applicant for confirmation of their circumstances. This contact may take the form of a letter, telephone call or email. If the applicant's circumstances have changed, they will be assessed and banded accordingly.

If the Local Authority considers that an applicant has not been using their priority and bids appropriately, a senior officer will review the application, and banding may be altered to Band 4 unless good reason can be shown as to why bids have not been placed.

Band 4 - Reduced Priorities

The process for reducing priority to Band 4

Any applicant whose priority is reduced to Band 4 will be provided with written notification of the decision that will contain the following information:

- The reasons for the decision to reduce priority.
- The Band that their housing circumstances would have warranted and the Band that they have been placed in as a result of the decision (Band 4).
- What they have to do before they can be considered again for any higher Band warranted by their housing needs.
- That the applicant has a right to request a review.

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 Bromsgrove Home Choice that they have moved and given a forwarding address.

When an applicant is re-housed through Bromsgrove Home Choice, 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 Bromsgrove Home Choice housing register at a later date, their new date of application will be the date they re-register.

Equality and Diversity

Bromsgrove District Council is committed to ensuring that its housing allocations service is fair, lawful, and accessible. In developing and implementing this policy, the Council will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and have due regard to its duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- foster good relations between different groups.

The Council will not treat any applicant less favourably on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. The Council will also ensure that policies and practices do not place individuals at a disadvantage unless this can be objectively justified.

Reasonable adjustments will be made where required, particularly for applicants with disabilities, to ensure equal access to the housing register and allocation process.

This policy will be subject to regular Equality Impact Assessment and monitoring to ensure it does not have an unjustified adverse impact on any group.

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 legislation. Bromsgrove Home Choice will advise all applicants joining the scheme about how their data will be used. The application and any information relating to it will be able to be viewed by the housing association landlord who has advertised the property. The information is shared under the Council's legal duty for the purposes of allocating housing.

False statements or withheld 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 Bromsgrove Home Choice

The Council will monitor the outcomes being achieved through this policy and provide relevant data to inform future reviews of the policy.

8. Reviews of decisions

Information about decisions and reviews

The Local Authority makes the decision regarding the start dates and banding of every applicant.

An applicant to the Bromsgrove Home Choice scheme has a right to request a review from the 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, Bromsgrove Home Choice 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 56 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 Authority's complaints procedure (please see below) or to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Reviews will be carried out by a senior member of staff within the Council or it's agent 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 receive may register a complaint with Bromsgrove Home Choice by telephone, e-mail or in person. All complaints will be acknowledged and investigated. Please see the organisation's individual complaints procedure for details on how to complain and the length of time to consider your complaint. You can ask someone else or an organisation such as Citizen's Advice Bureau to make a complaint on your behalf.

For those whose first language is not English, assistance can be made available. This may include access to interpreters, translation services, or assistance from staff to record your complaint. We are committed to ensuring that all customers can access our complaints process fairly and without disadvantage.

9. Feedback on let properties

Bromsgrove Home Choice 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 Council meets it's aims and objectives.

Appendix 1 – Bromsgrove Home Choice Advice and Contact Points

Bromsgrove District Housing Trust

Bromsgrove District Housing Trust, Buntsford Court, Buntsford Gate,
Bromsgrove, 1DAWorcs B60 3DJ
0800 0850 160 customer_services@bdht.co.uk
www.bdht.co.uk

Appendix 2 – Bromsgrove Home Choice Partners' Contact Details

Name	Address	Phone Number	Email	Website
Anchor Trust	Milestone Place 100 Bolton Road Bradford West Yorkshire BD1 4DH.	0845 140 2020	Online form via their website	www.anchor.org.uk
Bromford Housing Group	Shannon Way Ashchurch Tewkesbury Gloucestershire GL20 8ND	0330 1234 034	customerservices@bromford.co.uk	www.bromford.co.uk
Bromsgrove District Housing Trust	Buntsford Court Buntsford Gate Bromsgrove Worcestershire B60 3DJ	0800 0850 160	info@bdht.co.uk	www.bdht.co.uk
Community Housing Group	3 Foley Grove Foley Business Park Stourport Road Kidderminster DY11 7PT	0300 003 5454	information@communityhousing.co.uk	www.communityhousing.co.uk
Citizen	Lakeside 4040 Solihull Parkway Birmingham B37 7YN	0300 790 6555	info@citizenhousing.org.uk	www.citizenhousing.org.uk
GreenSquare Accord	2nd Floor 10 Brindleyplace Birmingham B1 2JB	0300 111 7000	info@greensquareaccord.co.uk	www.greensquareaccord.co.uk

Housing 21	Tricorn House 51–53 Hagley Road Birmingham B16 8TP	0370 192 4000	enquiries@housing21.co.uk	www.housing21.co.uk
Midland Heart Ltd	20 Bath Row Birmingham B15 1LZ	0345 602 0540	Online form via their website	www.midlandheart.org.uk
Orbit Heart of England	PO Box 6406 Coventry CV3 9NB	0345 850 0500	Online form via their website	www.orbitcustomerhub.org.uk
Platform	1700 Solihull Parkway Birmingham Business Park, Solihull B37 7YD	0333 200 7304	Online form via their website	www.platformhg.com
Rooftop Housing Group	70 High Street Evesham Worcestershire WR11 4YD	01386 420800	enquiries@rooftopgroup.org	www.rooftopgroup.org
Sanctuary Housing	Sanctuary House Chamber Court Castle Street Worcester Worcestershire WR1 3ZQ	0800 131 3348	Online form via their website	www.sanctuary-group.co.uk
Stonewater	Suite C, Lancaster House Grange Business Park Enderby Road Whetstone Leicester LE8 6EP	01234 889494	Online form via their website	www.stonewater.org

Stonham Housing Association	2 Gosforth Park Way, Gosforth Business Park, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8ET	0345 141 4663	Online form via their website	www.homegroup.org.uk
Southern Housing	41 Poplar Road Kings Heath Birmingham B14 7AA	0300 303 1066	hello@southernhousing.org.uk	www.southernhousing.org.uk