

# Stockport Council Allocation Policy

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METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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<b>SECTION</b>	<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
1	<a href="#"><u>Policy Statement</u></a>	2
2	<a href="#"><u>Policy Summary</u></a>	4
3	<a href="#"><u>The Housing Register</u></a>	9
4	<a href="#"><u>Maximising Use of Available Stock</u></a>	14
5	<a href="#"><u>The Priority Scheme</u></a>	18
6	<a href="#"><u>Priority Bands</u></a>	18
7	<a href="#"><u>Points</u></a>	19
8	<a href="#"><u>Applicants Considered Outside Of The Priority Scheme</u></a>	45
9	<a href="#"><u>Choice Based lettings</u></a>	50
10	<a href="#"><u>Allocation Reviews and Appeals</u></a>	55
Appendix 1	<a href="#"><u>Rehousing Staff Members, Board Members Councillors and their relatives</u></a>	61
Appendix 2	<a href="#"><u>Special Housing Panel (SHP)-Terms of Reference</u></a>	63
Appendix 3	<a href="#"><u>Offenders and Eligibility Procedure</u></a>	65

## **1. Policy statement**

Stockport Council's Allocation Policy incorporates the following principles:

- Accommodation should be allocated fairly and in open and transparent way
- Meeting housing need should be the core consideration when allocating homes
- The best use should be made of available housing stock
- Choice and mobility should be promoted as far as possible
- The allocations process should be supportive and inclusive
- Creating and promoting mixed and sustainable communities is a key allocations objective
- Allocations should be fully compliant with part 6 of the 1996 Housing Act, the 2012 Allocation of Accommodation: statutory guidance for local authorities, the 2010 Equality Act and relevant case law

### **1.1 Allocating in a fair and transparent way**

Properties will be allocated in line with this policy, and applicants advised of how their priority for rehousing has been assessed. Applicants have a right to review decisions made on their application for rehousing, and there is an established complaints process in place to respond to dissatisfaction with the allocations process.

Outcomes of letting information is monitored and published, and the Council is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all sections of the community in line with the Equality Act 2010. Housing applications are welcome from people of all backgrounds irrespective of ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, sexual orientation, age or marital/civil partnership status and diversity information is regularly monitored to ensure any barriers to access are addressed.

### **1.2 Meeting housing need**

The policy retains the central objective of allocating properties according to assessed need, reflecting the legal obligation to offer 'reasonable preference' to certain groups of applicants such as the homeless, people with medical or welfare needs or those otherwise living in overcrowded, insanitary or unsatisfactory circumstances. Housing need is primarily reflected through the allocation of rehousing points according to set criteria within the policy.

### **1.3 Making the best use of available stock**

The demand for social housing far outweighs supply and the policy has the objective of ensuring that it is used to best effect to meet housing need and create sustainable communities. As such it matches households to appropriate property types and sizes, and seeks to encourage and facilitate 'downsizing' where applicants are in properties that are too large for their needs.

## **1.4 The allocations process should be supportive and inclusive**

The policy and related processes aim to allow access to social housing from all sections of the community with related support. As well as ensuring those with protected characteristics under the 2010 Equality Act are not directly or indirectly discriminated against by its provisions, this extends to minimising the number of households who are otherwise disqualified from the housing register.

Where people are deemed not to qualify due to past anti-social behaviour, rent arrears or poor property condition, personalised plans will be offered to explore alternative rehousing options and look at steps that can be taken to ensure inclusion in the future. This particularly applies to people who have become street homeless or have faced particular barriers such as being a care leaver or a former member of the armed forces.

## **1.5 Promoting choice and mobility**

The policy operates primarily through Homechoice, the Council's established Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme, which advertises available properties on a weekly basis. Eligible applicants are able to apply for advertised homes, and offers of accommodation are made to those with the highest level of assessed need. The limited circumstances where properties are allocated directly outside of CBL are outlined within the policy.

It is recognised that the limited supply of housing becoming available to let means that applicants may need to explore other options to meet their housing needs, and the allocations service provides a range of information on other housing options including mutual exchanges, accessing the private rented sector and finding suitable supported accommodation.

## **1.6 Creating and promoting mixed and sustainable communities**

While meeting housing need is the core objective, the policy also recognises that for communities to flourish and provide homes where people want to live they need to be sustainable and contain a mix of people from different backgrounds and socio-economic groups. The policy reflects this by providing additional preference to applicants who are working or making a community contribution, and also makes provision for the use of local lettings policies where particular needs are identified in specific areas.

## **1.7 Allocations should be compliant with legislation, guidance and case law**

While there is flexibility in how local authorities decide to allocate accommodation, there remains a clear legal framework which policies must meet. This is primarily outlined in Part 6 of the 1996 Housing Act, with additional statutory guidance in the form of Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England (DCLG 2012).

The policy has also been assessed in line with the Equality Act 2010.

## **1 Policy Summary**

### **1.6 How can people apply for rehousing?**

Stockport Homes Group (SHG) manage the Council's housing stock, maintains its housing register and allocates available properties. To apply for rehousing, people need to make an application to SHG who will initially check whether they are eligible and qualify for an allocation, and then assess what level of priority they should be afforded.

Applications can be made on line at [www.stockporthomes.org](http://www.stockporthomes.org), and further assistance is available from the Homechoice Team through home visits, outreach surgeries and telephone registrations.

### **1.7 Who is eligible/qualifies for rehousing?**

There are some categories of people from abroad that the law says local authorities cannot allocate properties to. This is outlined in Part 6 of the 1996 Housing Act and includes people subject to immigration control (unless in a group specified by the Secretary of State), such as asylum seekers, and also others from abroad who are not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area (UK, Ireland, Isle of Man, Channel Islands). **There is no discretion when looking at this element of eligibility, with definitions set down by central government.**

The law also enables local authorities to define other groups of people it does not consider should qualify for rehousing. In Stockport, this includes:

- Applicants with housing related debt to a social landlord in excess of £500 or subject to a court order at lower levels
- Applicants with housing related debt to a private landlord in excess of £1000 (evidenced by a court order)
- Applicants exhibiting anti-social or criminal behaviour that would pose a risk to others or prevent the effective management of a neighbourhood, for example:
  - Serious offences where a medium or high risk of reoffending exists
  - Persistent lower level offences impacting upon the community
  - Drug dealing or cultivation
  - Actions leading to anti-social behaviour orders or similar sanctions
  - Harassment
  - Gang related activity

- Transfer applicants whose homes are in a very poor condition

Each application will be dealt with upon its own merits, taking into account the impact of any factors such as disability or other protected characteristics. The aim is to ensure that any tenancy would be sustainable, with the household not posing a risk to other residents, the wider community or staff.

Where an applicant is considered to be ineligible or does not qualify for rehousing they will be advised of this in writing, giving full reasons and outlining their right to have this decision reviewed. They will also be advised of the steps they need to take to be reconsidered for rehousing, such as reducing arrears to a certain level or a period of settled behaviour. Applicants in this position will be offered a housing options interview to look at other rehousing possibilities, including outlining the steps needed to be taken to be included on the housing register

### **1.8 What type and size of property can people apply for?**

To make the best use of the limited social housing available, applicants are advised of the size and type of property considered suitable for their needs which they can apply for. To calculate the size of property, the following are usually considered as needing separate bedrooms:

- The applicant and their partner.
- Additional adults (although siblings would be expected to share)
- 2 Children of the same sex, irrespective of age.
- 2 Children of different sexes, if both are under 10 years old.
- Any single child not paired as above.

To help facilitate access arrangements, single people or couples who only have access to children are also allowed to apply for two bedroom flats or maisonettes and additionally where an applicant is pregnant this will be taken into account where the baby would result in an extra bedroom being required. As houses are in exceptionally short supply, they are restricted to applicants who have children aged under 18, reflecting the need to make best use of family type accommodation.

Other restrictions on properties include where there is an age restriction in place, they are adapted for people with a disability or specific local lettings policies in place. These are advertised on a property by property basis.

### **1.9 How are people prioritised for rehousing?**

The allocation policy recognises nine categories of housing need, reflecting the reasonable and additional preference categories outlined in the 1996 Housing Act, and awards a level of rehousing points for each:

- Under-occupancy (*where an applicant is in a council or housing association property that is too big for their assessed needs*)
- Medical, social and welfare (*where an applicant needs to move for medical reasons, harassment or a need to move to a particular location to avoid hardship*)
- Homelessness (where a duty has been accepted towards a household by the local authority under part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act)
- Supported accommodation (*where an applicant is ready to leave supported accommodation or is bed-blocking in hospital or a care home*)
- Serious Hazard (*where an applicant has serious disrepair or is lacking basic facilities*)
- Overcrowding (*where an applicant has less bedrooms available than their assessed need*)
- Lodging (*where an applicant is staying in another person's home*)
- Having been in the armed forces and in urgent housing need (*an extra award of points to give additional priority to those in urgent housing need who have been in the armed forces*)
- Aged under 25 and having been a looked after child by a local authority and in urgent housing need (*an extra award of points to give additional priority to those in urgent housing need who have been looked after as a child by the local authority*)

Where an applicant meets at least one of these categories, they are classed as being 'in need', and will be considered for rehousing ahead of those who are not classed as being in need.

Additional 'local priority' points are also awarded for the following factors whether or not someone is in housing need:

- Having a local connection (*where an applicant has a connection to the Borough through residence, family members or employment*)
- The time an applicant has been registered for rehousing (*points awarded for each year an applicant has been registered*)
- Demonstrating a community contribution (*where an applicant is working, on a training course or volunteering, a registered carer or foster carer*)

Where there is more than one eligible applicant for a particular property, it will first be offered to the applicant considered 'in need' and with the highest level of points. If refused, it will then be offered to the applicant with the next highest

level of points who is 'in need', until such time as no other applicants are left with a housing need. In the unlikely event that no applicant with housing need wants a property, then those 'not in need' will be considered and an offer made to the person with the highest level of points in that category.

### 1.10 The Points Scheme

The points awarded for each criteria are outlined below:

	Points award category	Circumstances	Points award
A.	Housing Need points	<b>1. Under-occupancy</b>	• 25 points
		<b>2. Medical, Social and Welfare</b>	<b>10 /25 /50 points depending upon level of need</b>  <b>50 points subject to removal following refusal of 2 reasonable offers</b>
		<b>3. Leaving supported accommodation</b> <i>(replaces all other points except: medical, employment, local connection, community contribution, care leaver and armed forces &amp; urgent housing need)</i>	• 50 points: Families with children. • 30 points: Others.
		<b>4. Threatened with homelessness within 56 days (Homelessness prevention duty accepted)<sup>1</sup></b> <i>(replaces all other points except: medical, employment, local connection, community contribution, care leaver and armed forces &amp; urgent housing need)</i>	<b>25 Points</b>
		<b>5. Homelessness and in priority need (Homelessness relief duty accepted<sup>2</sup> and in priority need<sup>3</sup> or main homelessness duty accepted<sup>4</sup>)</b> <i>(replaces all other points except: medical, employment, local connection, community contribution, care leaver and</i>	<b>50 points</b>

<sup>1</sup> Under s195(2) of the 1996 Housing Act

<sup>2</sup> Under s.189B of the 1996 Housing Act

<sup>3</sup> Priority need as outlined in s.189 of the 1996 Housing Act – Households with dependent children, a pregnant person, a person deemed vulnerable, care leaver aged under 21 or someone homeless in an emergency.

<sup>4</sup> Under s.193 of the 1996 Housing Act

	<i>armed forces &amp; urgent housing need)</i>	
	<b>6. Homelessness relief duty accepted and not in priority need</b>	<b>30 points</b>
	<b>7. Threatened with homelessness or homeless but due to the actions of household<sup>5</sup></b> <i>(replaces all other points except: medical, employment, local connection, community contribution, care leaver and armed forces &amp; urgent housing need)</i>	<b>10 points</b>
	<b>8. Serious Hazard (Serious disrepair/lack of facilities)</b>	<b>30 points</b>
	<b>9. Overcrowding</b>	<b>15 points per bedroom lacking</b>
	<b>10. Lodging</b>	<b>10 points</b>
	<b>11. Having been in armed forces and in urgent housing need</b> <i>(additional preference added to applicants who have been in the armed forces and have 25 housing need points or more)</i>	<b>20 points</b>
	<b>12. Aged under 25 and having been a looked after child by a local authority and in urgent housing need</b> <i>(additional preference added to applicants aged under 25 who have been looked after and have 25 housing need points or more)</i>	<b>20 points</b>
<b>Local Priority points</b>	<b>13. Community Contribution</b>	<b>10 points</b>
	<b>14. Time-on-list</b>	<b>5 points per year (max 20)</b>
	<b>15. Local Connection (not awarded where an applicant has given up a Council tenancy within 12 months, or can meet their housing needs through equity/savings)</b>	<b>100 points</b>

## 1.11 How are properties let?

<sup>5</sup> In line with the criteria outlined in s.191 of the 1996 Housing Act

The vast majority of all properties that become available to let are advertised through Homechoice, the Council's choice based lettings (CBL) scheme. Homechoice advertises properties on a weekly basis and those on the housing register can express an interest ('bid') for up to three properties each time. Applicants can only apply for properties of the size and type that they have been advised they are eligible for.

At the end of each bidding period, applicants are shortlisted according to their rehousing priority, and made a provisional offer of accommodation. There is no penalty for refusing offers of accommodation, except for excessive refusals (see section 9.10 below), and for refusal of a final offer made to discharge a homelessness duty.

There are circumstances where direct offers of accommodation may be made, and these are expected to account for no-more than 25% of properties becoming available. These include offers to people made under specific protocols with social care for vulnerable groups, 'decants' where repair or refurbishments are required, or exceptional cases agreed by the Special Housing Panel (for example where child protection issues exist or a compulsory purchase order has been made by the local authority)

### **1.12 How can people ask for a review of allocation decisions?**

Applicants who have been advised they are ineligible or do not qualify to be allocated a property can request that the decision be reviewed at a hearing with a senior council officer. Applicants or their advocates can attend to explain why they feel they should be considered eligible, and a decision made with the assistance of a council solicitor.

Applicants can also ask for any decision relating to their application to be reviewed, including the priority afforded or property type allowed. These reviews are undertaken based upon written information provided, and again, decisions are made by a council officer.

### **1.13 Housing fraud**

It is an offence for anyone to give false information or withhold information in connection with their housing application. Where discovered, housing need points will be removed from applicants for 12 months, and existing offers may be withdrawn. Where a tenancy has been fraudulently obtained, or there is unlawful subletting, possession or other legal proceedings may be commenced.

## **2 The Housing Register**

The Housing Register includes applicants wishing to move into council accommodation, seeking a transfer and/or, to be nominated for housing association accommodation. Applications are assessed for priority using a dual banding and points scheme, and properties are advertised through the 'Homechoice' service.

Special/non-standard cases are those applications where the individual's circumstances do not fall within the priority scheme. The way in which such applications are dealt with is described in Section 9 of this document.

## **2.6 Organisation of the Housing Register**

### **2.6.1 *Registration***

The Homechoice team deals with registration of housing applications. Upon receipt of an application, checks are made on an applicant's eligibility and that they qualify for an allocation. If extra information is required, the application will be registered as provisional.

### **2.6.2 *Joint applicants***

Applicants can apply jointly where they are co-habiting as a couple, or otherwise have been living in the same property for 6 months or more, to demonstrate settled residence. In these instances, the expectation will be that any tenancy created will be jointly in both names.

### **2.6.3 *Employees, board members, councillors and their close relatives***

Employees of Stockport Homes Limited, Board Members, Councillors, and their close relatives will be eligible to join the housing register. However, to ensure the propriety of such lettings, a form containing the details of the applicant, including their priority, will be completed and checked by the Team Leader - Homechoice and authorised by the Head of Homelessness and Rehousing or the Head of Property Management, providing there is no irregularity. Once registered the applicant will bid in the same way as other applicants. For more info see [Appendix 1](#).

### **2.6.4 *Applicants prospects for rehousing***

Applications received will be processed in line with service standards and applicants will be advised of their assessed priority. These may be provisional if further investigation of information is required. At this time, prospects of rehousing with alternative options or advice will be made available.

### **2.6.5 *Annual renewal***

On the anniversary of a housing application, applicants who have not placed a bid in the previous 6 months will be sent a letter to ask whether they wish to remain on the register or not. An applicant must respond within the given time period, otherwise the application will be removed from the housing register.

### **2.6.6 *Change of circumstances***

Where the circumstances of an applicant change, in particular by a move to different accommodation, the application will be reviewed and their points amended, according to their new housing circumstances.

#### **2.6.7 *Confidentiality, data protection and access to files***

Information held about applications is completely confidential and is only available to those staff involved in their rehousing. Applicant information is also held on computer systems. These systems are protected against unauthorised disclosure in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act. Applicants are entitled to have access to their information.

#### **2.6.8 *False information***

It is an offence for anyone to give false information or withhold information in connection with their housing application. This constitutes housing fraud, and along with issues such as subletting of council tenancies is a matter taken very seriously by the local authority as it hinders the best use being made of available housing stock.

If it is suspected that false information has been provided or relevant details withheld, there will be an investigation by the Team Leader - Homechoice or Head of Housing Management. If confirmed, the following action may be taken,

- For current applications, all housing need points will be removed for a period of 12 months, following approval by the Head of Homelessness and Rehousing.
- If an offer of a tenancy has been received this may be withdrawn.
- If a tenancy has been obtained on the basis of false information, the Council may take possession proceedings.
- Consideration of the institution of any other available legal proceedings

#### **2.7 *Who can join the housing register – eligible applicants***

All applicants can join the housing register, except those who are ineligible or are deemed not to qualify for rehousing (see section 4.3 below).

#### **2.8 *Who cannot join the housing register – ineligible applicants or those not qualifying for an allocation***

Applicants may be found to be ineligible either because of their immigration status, or because they fall within a class of people that SHG have decided do not qualify for an allocation. Further information on both these reasons is detailed below:

### **2.8.1 *Immigration status***

Applicants may be found to be ineligible due to their immigration status, or because they are not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area. This is defined in depth within subsections 1-6 of section 160Z of the 1996 Housing Act and the associated code of guidance. Existing tenants of the Council are not affected by these provisions and will still be able to request a transfer regardless of their immigration status.

### **2.8.2 *Classes of people Stockport Council have decided they will not allocate a property to***

Sub sections 7 and 8 of section 160Z of the Housing Act 1996 enable local authorities to outline classes of people they consider do not qualify to join the housing register. Stockport Council has decided the following classes will be ineligible:

#### **2.8.2.1 *Applicants with unaddressed rent arrears or housing-related debt***

Applicants who have an outstanding court order in relation to rent arrears and/or owe rent arrears or a housing-related debt to a social landlord in excess of £500 will usually be considered not to qualify for rehousing. This will apply until such time as arrears are cleared below this level, or in the case of a possession order a regular repayment plan for 6 months or more has been maintained **and** arrears are reduced below £500. This applies to both current and former tenancies and includes associated court costs from related possession actions.

Applicants who owe rent arrears to a private landlord in excess of £1000 (evidenced by a court order) will be treated in the same way as social housing tenants owing £500 as outlined above. (This difference reflects higher rents in the private sector and the lower levels of support and advice generally available to tenants)

Where applicants declare they have previously held housing-related debts but these have been written-off by a bankruptcy or debt-relief order, there will be joint review of all the relevant circumstances by the Rehousing Services and Customer Finance Managers. Such applicants may potentially be found to be ineligible if unable to evidence increased financial stability.

#### **2.8.2.2 *Applicants who have exhibited criminal or antisocial behaviour making them unsuitable to be a tenant***

Applicants will not qualify to join the housing register if:

- They have committed criminal or antisocial acts making them unsuitable to be a tenant, and
- they have not demonstrated a consistent or meaningful period of addressing such behaviour.

Such acts are not limited to criminal convictions, and may include behaviour leading to anti-social behaviour orders, actions resulting in an injunction being served, or other demonstrable evidence of activity considered by the local authority as likely to lead to difficulty in the effective management of its housing stock and/or risks to other residents or staff. Behaviour that may lead to disqualification includes (but is not limited to):

- Serious offences where a medium or high risk of reoffending exists
- Persistent lower level offences impacting upon the community
- Drug dealing or cultivation
- Actions leading to anti-social behaviour orders or similar sanctions
- Harassment
- Gang related activity

Factors taken into account when assessing qualification in this respect will include:

- Risk assessments and information from Probation, the Police, Youth Offending Team or other involved agency.
- The nature and frequency of criminal or anti-social acts.
- The time that has elapsed since the most recent incident and level of engagement with support or other agencies.
- Willingness to engage with pre-tenancy training or acceptable behaviour contracts.

See also the Offenders and Eligibility procedure at [Appendix 3](#)

#### **2.8.2.3 *Council tenants failing a 'pre-transfer property check'***

Transfer applicants whose property conditions fail the standard required within the 'pre-transfer property check' will not qualify to join the housing register until identified remedial actions have been undertaken.

#### **2.8.3 *Process for making an applicant ineligible***

The decision as to whether an applicant qualifies to join the housing register or is ineligible to do so rests with the Homechoice Team Leader or Head of Rehousing Services, after taking all individual circumstances into account and making enquiries from the probation service, police, landlords and other agencies as appropriate. This includes the consideration of disability or any other protected characteristics under the 2010 Equality Act and the support available to enable an applicant to effectively manage a tenancy.

Applicants made ineligible or deemed not to qualify for rehousing will be advised of the steps they need to take to be re-included on the housing register and

offered alternative housing options advice and referral to appropriate support agencies as required.

Where an applicant is under-occupying a Council tenancy, but would usually not qualify for a transfer due to rent arrears or property condition, then each case will be assessed on its own merits. This will look at the sustainability of the tenancy, ability of the tenant to address outstanding issues and seek a solution to balance ensuring tenant responsibility as well as maximising the use of available housing stock.

Applicants will be notified of any eligibility or qualification decision and the reasons for it, including the information taken into account. A right to review of the decision exists in line with the review policy.

## **2.9 Applicants under 18 years of age**

Applications from people aged 16 and 17 years will be included on the Homechoice register, however, applicants will not be made lived until they have reached the age of 18 years. These applications will accrue time on list points.

However, an applicant under 18 years of age will be considered for rehousing where they have had a full homelessness duty accepted by the local authority, or they are a care leaver offered a tenancy in agreement with social care.

# **3 Maximising use of available stock**

## **3.6 Bedroom Matching**

To make the best use of housing stock and ensure that tenancies are affordable to those in receipt of housing benefit, the Council will not usually consider applicants for properties that have more bedrooms than their assessed need. Information on the assessment of bedroom need is detailed in the Bedroom Need and Points Entitlement Matrix in section 7. This is based upon the 'Bedroom Standard' outlined in the 2012 DCLG Allocations Code of Guidance.

Applicants will be considered for properties 1 bedroom smaller than their assessed bedroom need, as long as these are at least 1 bedroom (or parlour that could be used as a bedroom) larger than their current property, and this will not lead to statutory overcrowding. For example a household with a need for a 4 bed property but living in a 2 bed, would be eligible for a 3 bed (or 2 bed parlour type), as long as this would not lead to statutory overcrowding.

There are however, some limited circumstances where applicants can apply for a property larger than that outlined in the Bedroom Standard. These are as follows:

### **3.6.1 Access to children**

Where a single person or couple have access-only to children, then they are usually only able to apply for one bedroom flats. As well as ensuring that those with children on a full time basis are prioritised for available properties, this also reflects the fact that housing benefit rules disregard children towards whom tenants have access-only. However, where an applicant can demonstrate regular access to a child, and also that they can afford any housing benefit shortfall, then they can additionally apply for 2 bedroom flats or maisonettes to help facilitate overnight stays

### **3.6.2 *Under-occupation***

In some circumstances area housing teams or housing associations may designate a property as being available for under-occupation (i.e. available to applicants with an assessed bedroom need 1 bedroom less than the number of bedrooms in the property). This may be because it has a small second bedroom, is age restricted or is in a high rise block.

In these cases, applicants requiring a smaller property, but who can demonstrate they can afford to pay the rent on the larger home are eligible to bid alongside those needing a property of that size. However, households of the 'correct size' will always have priority when properties are short-listed for letting to make sure the best use of stock is made.

The process for assessing affordability is outlined in section 4.15 below.

### **3.6.3 *Pregnancy***

Where an applicant is pregnant with their first child, or where a subsequent pregnancy means the household will be overcrowded when it is born, then applicants will be assessed as requiring an additional bedroom. While potential affordability issues will be discussed with applicants, as any housing benefit shortfall will be limited in timescale the additional bedroom allocation will be automatic.

### **3.6.4 *Medical Need***

Following a medical assessment an applicant may be deemed eligible for an extra bedroom due to needing overnight care, or for other medical reasons. Where this is the case any affordability issues will be discussed with the applicant, although would not restrict the additional bedroom eligibility.

### **3.6.5 *Affordability Assessments***

Changes to housing benefit regulations in April 2013 mean that social housing tenants are eligible for less housing benefit if they have a property larger than they are entitled to under a national 'bedroom standard'. If they have one extra bedroom they face a 14% reduction in eligible benefit and 25% if they have two extra rooms.

To ensure tenancies are let sustainably, the allocation policy ensures most properties go to households who meet the bedroom standard, or will shortly do so due to a pregnant family member giving birth. In a limited number of cases, where a single person or couple have access to a child, or a property is let on an 'under-occupied' basis, applicants can however apply for a larger property if they can demonstrate they can afford any housing benefit shortfall.

To be considered eligible for a larger home, applicants in these situations must demonstrate they have enough resources to pay the rent on an average 2 bedroom flat or maisonette, and following receipt of housing benefit have remaining income that is at least equivalent to the level of income support.

### 3.6.5.1 *Procedure for affordability assessments*

- *Single applicants and couples*

Single applicants and couples will be registered as needing 1 bedroom properties and written to explaining their priority for rehousing. The letter will also advise they may also apply for under-occupied properties if they can demonstrate an ability to meet the rental costs.

Where the applicant does wish to apply for an under-occupied property, they will have an interview with a member of the Homechoice Team who will explain the housing benefit situation in full and the likely tenancy costs. If wishing to go ahead, they will be asked to provide proof of income which will be assessed against the table above.

Income taken into account will include wages, benefits and any other regular monies that the applicant can verify. For example, if a relative has been making regular payments to assist with a current housing benefit shortfall for a period of time this may be sufficient. Likewise a written undertaking to assist, with any shortfall, along with confirmation of a direct debit set up for the shortfall amount, would be acceptable. However a simple commitment to assist would not be sufficient.

If the decision is made that an under-occupied tenancy would be unaffordable, the applicant will be advised in writing and has the right for that decision to be reviewed. If affordable, the tenant will be made eligible for under-occupied properties.

- *Applicants with access to children*

Those with access to children will also be written to advising that they are registered for a 1 bedroom property, but can apply for 2 bedroom flats and maisonettes, if they can demonstrate the rent is affordable. This will be assessed through an interview, and those able to afford will be made eligible for 2 bedroom flats or maisonettes.

## 3.7 Age restrictions

Age restrictions primarily apply to sheltered or category one schemes or those with additional facilities for older people aged over 60.

Applicants together with anyone to be rehoused with them must meet any advertised age restrictions that are in place. However, there will be some occasions when the age restrictions will be waived depending on the circumstances of particular household. These are detailed below.

### **3.7.1 Age restriction waivers**

Age restrictions will be waived (except in the case of sheltered accommodation) for households under the following circumstances:

- The household contains an applicant with a partner who is aged up to 5 years younger than the age restriction on the property bid for.
- The household has one, or more, 'access' children who do not meet the age restriction, but the principal home of the child is elsewhere (i.e. with the other parent).
- The applicant meets the age restriction but has a live-in carer providing support for either physical or mental health reasons, who does not. The carer must be in receipt of the appropriate care allowances).
- The applicant does not meet the age restriction, but is assessed as being 'vulnerable' (including those with a disability or mental health issues) and their needs cannot otherwise be met. The waiver also applies to bungalows normally age restricted to 60+.

It is important for new tenants to note that existing age restrictions may be reduced or removed in the future following consultation.

### **3.8 Sheltered housing**

The Council has dedicated a number of housing schemes identified as sheltered housing. These are groups of self-contained dwellings with linked support and an emergency alarm system. There may also be a communal lounge and laundry. Household members must all be 60+ years, usually with a support need to be considered for these properties. The properties are allocated via CBL (see section 10).

### **3.9 Category 1 schemes**

The Council has a number of category 1 schemes that have a Carecall warden call system fitted as standard. Household members must all be 60+ to be considered for these schemes and properties are allocated via CBL (see section 10).

### **3.10 Local letting policies**

Local letting policies are exceptions to the Council's main allocations policy, introduced for the purpose of meeting specific local issues in defined geographical areas. Whilst the majority of the main lettings policy will continue to apply, the local lettings policy will include additional criteria that will be considered when letting properties within that area. Local lettings policies will be approved by the Housing Needs Policy Group and only introduced following comprehensive consultation.

Examples of circumstances where local lettings policies might be considered include:

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Local lettings policy</b>
To promote mixed communities	Prioritising applicants demonstrating a community contribution
To promote tenant satisfaction, tenancy sustainment and estate sustainability	Operating stricter than normal letting rules in relation to ASB, i.e. 2 references.
To counter low demand	Allowing lettings to those not meeting the normal household property size matching criteria

Local letting policies will be treated as appendices to the main allocation policy.

## **4 The Priority Scheme**

The allocation scheme recognises eleven different categories of housing need and any application falling into one or more of these is placed in Rehousing Band 1 (the 'in need list'). Applicants not meeting any of these categories are placed in Rehousing Band 2 (the 'not in need' list). Applicants are also given a level of points according to the nature and extent of their needs, plus additional points for factors such as having a local connection, or demonstrating a community contribution

Both transfer and housing register applicants are assessed in the same manner and according to the same priority scheme. The full details of which are outlined below.

## **5 Priority bands**

All applicants will be assessed to determine their housing needs and points will be awarded accordingly (see full details of point awards categories below). Applicants will be placed into one of two bands depending on which points they have been awarded.

### **5.6 Band 1 – In need**

Applicants awarded points in any one of the following categories will be placed into Band 1- Housing Need:

- Under-occupancy.
- Medical, social and welfare.
- Homeless
- Having been in the armed forces and in urgent housing need
- Leaving care and in urgent housing need
- Supported accommodation.
- Serious Hazard (disrepair and lack of facilities)
- Overcrowding
- Lodging.

### **5.7 Band 2- No housing need**

Applicants not awarded points in any of the above categories, will be placed into Band 2- No Housing Need. These applicants may have been awarded points in other categories including:

- Local connection.
- Demonstrating a community contribution
- Time-on-list

### **5.8 Prioritising Applicants**

When determining priority between applicants who have placed bids for properties (see Choice Based Lettings below), Band 1-Housing Need applicants will always be prioritised above those in Band 2- No Housing Need regardless of the number of points awarded. For example, in the table below an applicant on the Housing Need list with 10 points is prioritised above an applicant on the Not in Housing Need list with 25 points.

<b>Housing Band</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Priority</b>
Band 1 Housing Need	40	1 <sup>st</sup>
Band 1 Housing Need	10	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Band 2 No Housing Need	25	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Band 2 No Housing Need	0	4 <sup>th</sup>

Where two applicants are on the same housing list and have the same points, the one with the earlier date of application will receive greater priority.

## **6 Points**

Applicants will be assessed to determine their circumstances based on the information supplied in the application form, medical assessment form and following additional enquiries where required. Points will be awarded in the categories detailed below. Awards will be cumulative except where otherwise stated.

## **6.6 Under-occupancy- 25 points**

Under-occupancy points are intended to encourage tenants to downsize where they have one or more excess bedrooms (in line with the assessed size of property required under the allocation policy). The points will be awarded to applicants who are tenants of Stockport Homes Limited or housing associations (registered providers of social housing) in Stockport only.

## **6.7 Homelessness prevention duty accepted – 25 points**

25 points will be awarded to applicants where they are:

- a) being threatened with homelessness within 56 days, and
- b) a duty has been accepted by the local authority under section 195(2) of the 1996 Housing Act i.e. to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness

These assessments will be completed by the Housing Options Team at Stockport Homes.

These points do not apply if it is assessed that homeless is threatened with homelessness as a result of their own actions, as outlined in section 191 of the 1996 Housing Act.

These points replace all other points except those awarded for local connection, medical reasons, community contribution, care leaver or armed forces urgent rehousing points.

## **6.8 Homelessness relief duty accepted and in priority need or main duty accepted– 50 points**

50 homelessness points will be awarded to applicants where they are:

- a) assessed as being homeless; and
- b) a duty has been accepted by the local authority that the applicant is eligible for assistance and that reasonable steps must be taken to secure accommodation under 189b of the 1996 Housing Act and the applicant assessed as in a priority need category under section 189 of the 1996 Housing Act; or
- c) a duty has been accepted under s.193 of the 1996 Housing Act that the applicant is unintentionally homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need

These points do not apply if it is assessed that the applicant is threatened with homelessness as a result of their own actions, as outlined in section 191 of the 1996 Housing Act.

These points replace all other points except those awarded for local connection, medical reasons, community contribution, care leaver or armed forces urgent rehousing points.

With the agreement of the applicant and the Housing Options Manager, a delay in applying points may be agreed to allow further development of independent living skills or clarification of moving group, for example in child residency disputes.

**6.9 Homelessness relief duty accepted and not in priority need or final not in priority need homelessness decision made– 30 points**

30 points will be awarded to applicants where they are

- d) assessed as being homeless; and
- e) a duty has been accepted by the local authority under 189b of the 1996 Housing Act (as above) and the applicant assessed as not in a priority need category under section 189 of the 1996 Housing Act; or
- f) a final homelessness decision has been made that someone is homeless and not in priority need under s.192 of the 1996 Housing Act

**6.10 Homelessness relief duty or prevention duty accepted, but as a result of the applicants own actions, or final intentionally homeless decision made– 10 points**

10 points will be awarded to applicants where they are assessed as being homeless or threatened with homelessness, but:

- a) they are considered to have made themselves homeless or threatened with homelessness in line with the definition of 'intentionally homeless' under s.191 of the 1996 Housing Act; or
- b) a final homelessness decision has been made that they are intentionally homeless under s.191 of the 1996 Housing Act

Intentionally homeless points replace all other points except those awarded for local connection, medical reasons, community contribution, care leaver or armed forces urgent rehousing points.

**6.11 Armed forces urgent rehousing points – 20 points**

Where an applicant has been in Her Majesty's Regular Armed Forces at some time in the past (as defined in section 374 of the 2006 Armed Forces Act) and is in urgent housing need (assessed as having 25 or more housing need points), then they will receive an extra 20 points. This meets the legal requirement to provide additional preference to those in urgent housing need who have served in the armed forces.

## **6.12 Medical, social and welfare points – 10,25 or 50 points**

These points are applicable where an applicant has a need to move due to a medical condition, as a result of harassment or threats of violence, or a requirement to move to a different location to give or receive support.

Households will have their medical, social and welfare needs separately assessed from information supplied on application and medical forms. These will be assessed in accordance with the criteria detailed in the medical, social and welfare points award matrix attached below. All needs identified will be placed into one of three categories as follows:

- Cat 1 – immediate need to move- 50 points.
- Cat 2 – urgent need to move - 25 points.
- Cat 3- need to move - 10 points.

Households will be awarded the points relating to the category in which their needs have been placed, i.e. 10, 25 or 50 points.

However, households with needs identified in more than one category (e.g. medical and social) will be awarded only those points relating to their highest level of need. For example, if an applicant is assessed with Cat 1 medical needs plus Cat 3 social needs they will be awarded 50 points for the Cat 1 medical needs only.

50 medical, social and welfare points can be subjected to specific conditions. Any conditions will be detailed in the points letter to the applicant. For example 50 social need points they could be awarded to facilitate a move to a different area away from domestic violence. If such conditions were not met e.g. the applicant did not bid for properties outside the area, then the points can be withdrawn.

### **7.7.1 Assessment process**

Applicants may complete a self-assessment form to declare how any health, welfare or social needs issue impacts on their housing circumstances. This includes personal and family circumstances and environmental factors. Supporting letters from health professionals and other agencies will be taken into account if provided, but are not required as further information will be sought if circumstances are unclear or contradictory.

Information supplied will be assessed and priority awarded by the Team Leader - Homechoice after making investigations and with medical advice as required. Reassessment can be undertaken at any time should additional information be provided or circumstances change.

## **6.13 Aged under 25 and having been a looked after child and in urgent housing need – 20 points**

Where an applicant has been looked after by a local authority and is in urgent housing need (assessed as having 25 or more housing need points), then they will receive an extra 20 points.

# Medical, Social & Welfare Criteria

<b>Medical Need</b>	<b>0 Points</b>	<b>10 Points</b>	<b>25 Points</b>	<b>50 Points</b>
<b>Rationale</b>	No medical condition / medical condition but adequately housed	Where impact of med condition could be reduced by rehousing	Change of accommodation would significantly reduce the impact of the medical condition	Emergency / life threatening situation. Indicates an urgent need for rehousing into suitable accommodation due to medical condition.
<b>Evidence to support award</b>		Supportive evidence / treatment required e.g. prescription	Supportive evidence / treatment required e.g. prescription & evidence of other additional agency involvement	Face to face interview or home visit & supportive evidence / treatment required e.g. prescription & additional info from healthcare professional
<b>No medical condition – e.g. pregnancy</b>	-	-	-	-
<b>Depression/ Anxiety</b>	Mild depression / anxiety – no medication, pointed elsewhere for circumstances (e.g. Overcrowding, social need)	Depression / anxiety receiving treatment (e.g. medication or counselling)	High level of treatment e.g. Medication & other agency (e.g. Mental health team) involvement. May consider specific factors such as social isolation or traumatic event, etc.	High level of treatment & evidence from mental health professional (e.g. Consultant or CPN). Urgent / emergency need for rehousing from present accommodation
<b>Enduring mental health</b>	Adequately housed	Mental health may be improved by a change of accommodation even if adequately housed. Taking medication or counselling.	High level of treatment e.g. Medication & other agency (e.g. Mental health team) involvement. May consider specific factors such as social isolation or traumatic event, etc. A change of accommodation would significantly reduce or halt deterioration in their mental health	High level of treatment & evidence from mental health professional (e.g. Consultant or CPN). Urgent / emergency need for rehousing from present accommodation
<b>Elderly mental health</b>	Adequately housed or pointed for situation.	Mental health may be improved by a change of accommodation even if adequately housed.	Applicant is isolated; relocation would significantly improve quality of life. May need to move closer to family for support.	Severe mental health issues, current accommodation causes them to be vulnerable or unable to return to property. May include social isolation.

Medical Need	0 Points	10 Points	25 Points	50 Points
<b>Autistic spectrum disorders including; ADHD, Asperger's, Retts, Autism</b>	Adequately housed. Person with condition has own bedroom. May allocate extra bedroom on medical grounds but no medical award.	Rehousing may reduce impact of condition e.g. Space or safety issues.	Rehousing will significantly reduce impact of condition. Supporting evidence required e.g. CAHMS involvement.	Very urgent / emergency need for rehousing from present accommodation.
<b>Drug / Alcohol issues</b>	Long term issues, no recent change in situation/ /medical treatment	Change of accommodation may alleviate symptoms due to either disabilities or mental health issues associated with abuse or support change in lifestyle.	Change of accommodation would significantly reduce impact of condition which may be due to either disabilities or mental health issues associated with abuse & support a change in lifestyle.	Very urgent / emergency need for rehousing from present accommodation.
<b>Mobility issues</b>	Mobility problems but adequately housed / temporary mobility problems e.g. fracture	Mobility issues – some problems managing stairs within or outside property, or isolation due to property location (e.g. on steep hill). Will consider if medical condition affected by current situation (e.g. Lodging & no access to a bed).	Mobility issues – difficulty accessing the property and /or facilities within property (e.g. bathroom)	Unable to access property or use facilities within property – adaptations are not an option (e.g. Restricted to one floor within property) or causing applicant to be housebound. Unable to return to property after hospital stay.
<b>Bowel/bladder issues</b>	Adequately housed. No restrictions.	Increased toilet needs impacting on access to facilities.	Increased toilet needs & significant restriction in accessing bathroom facilities.	Unable or severely restricted in accessing bathroom facilities e.g. Use of commode
<b>Epilepsy</b>	Adequately housed, no impact on condition	Stress caused by current accommodation impacting on epilepsy	Change of accommodation would significantly reduce the impact of epilepsy. Use of bathing facilities restricted due to impact of epilepsy.	Very urgent / emergency need for rehousing or unable to return to property.

<b>Medical Need</b>	<b>0 Points</b>	<b>10 Points</b>	<b>25 Points</b>	<b>50 Points</b>
<b>Terminal / degenerative condition / Multiple medical needs</b>	Adequately housed, no impact on medical condition/s.	Impact of medical condition/s could be reduced by rehousing.	Change of accommodation would significantly reduce the impact of the medical condition/s. Consider prognosis.	Very urgent / emergency need for rehousing into suitable accommodation, or unable to return to property. Adaptations are not an option. Consider prognosis.
<b>Other medical conditions not addressed above E.g. Asthma, COPD, Diabetes, Raynauds disease</b>	Adequately housed, no restriction in use of all facilities.	Impact of med condition could be reduced by rehousing.	Change of accommodation would significantly reduce the impact of the medical condition.	Very urgent / emergency need for rehousing into suitable accommodation due to medical condition. Unable to use facilities within property – adaptations are not an option. Or unable to return to property after hospital stay.

<b>Social Need</b>	<b>10 Points</b>	<b>25 Points</b>	<b>50 Points</b>
<p><b>Social need for transfer applicants to be referred to Housing Management for assessment and recommendation forwarded to the Team Leader – Homechoice for checking and award.</b></p> <p><b>Social housing tenants – information required from landlord and passed to the Team Leader - Homechoice for assessment and award.</b></p> <p><b>For private tenants / homeowners full details to be obtained regarding issues and passed to the Team Leader - Homechoice for assessment and award.</b></p>	<p>Low level harassment confirmed with agency support.</p>	<p>Customer is victim of sustained harassment / fear of violence which is having serious adverse effect on their quality of life.</p> <p>Written confirmation and agency support (e.g. Social Services, Victim Support, Solicitors, ASB team)</p>	<p>Severe and escalating harassment / actual violence / threat to life and urgent / emergency rehousing is required from current accommodation.</p> <p>Written confirmation and support from police / ASB Team Leader / Head of Homelessness and Rehousing confirming severe / escalating harassment / actual violence / threat to life and immediate rehousing required.</p>

<b>Social Need</b>	<b>10 Points</b>	<b>25 Points</b>	<b>50 Points</b>
<b>All category A cases to be reported to Special Housing Panel for monitoring and policy development purposes.</b>			

<b>Welfare Need</b>	<b>10 Points</b>	<b>25 Points</b>	<b>50 Points</b>
<p><b><u>To give or receive support</u></b>  <b>Welfare need can be considered where an applicant has a need to give or receive support or otherwise would face hardship unless able to move to a different part of the Borough (e.g. cooking, shopping, cleaning, assistance with personal care / hygiene).</b></p> <p><b>Ability to travel must be taken into account. Each case will be assessed on its merits and when it is clear that travel is not a practical option (e.g. if applicant lives in Blackpool and wants to provide support to relative in Stockport on daily basis).</b></p> <p><b><u>For employment related hardship</u></b>  <b>Award of 10 welfare need points can also be considered for applicants from inside or outside the borough, who need to move to Stockport, or a different locality in Stockport, to take-up employment or move closer to,</b></p>	<p>Some level of support is being received from social services (shopping, cooking, cleaning)</p> <p>Written support from social services detailing support received is necessary.</p> <p>If need is related to isolation evidence from relevant agency (CPN, social worker) with details of isolation and effect on applicant.</p> <p>May also be appropriate for child with special needs who needs to move closer to specialist school or to receive medical treatment.</p> <p>Ability to travel would be considered.</p> <p>Evidence of employment, including length of contract, number of weekly hours and evidence of</p>	<p>Acute need to move to give or receive support clearly identified.</p> <p>Applicant in receipt of high level of personal care and support (meals on wheels, personal care / hygiene) from social services.</p> <p>Written evidence required from social services to confirm high level of care and that this will not be required following a move.</p>	<p>Where an applicant needs to move to a different property or location in order to permanently care for a child currently in care or otherwise deemed to be immediately at risk of being accommodated by the local authority. Only awarded upon the recommendation of a social care service manager with agreement from the Head of Homelessness and Rehousing as part of a court approved placement.</p>

Welfare Need	10 Points	25 Points	50 Points
<p><b>employment or training, where failure to move would cause hardship.</b></p> <p><b>In assessing whether or not an applicant is experiencing hardship, the following should be taken into account:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The distance or time taken to travel between work and home.</li> <li>• The availability and affordability of transport, taking into account level of earnings.</li> <li>• The nature of the work and whether similar opportunities are available closer to home.</li> <li>• Other personal factors, such as medical conditions and child care, which would be affected if the applicant was unable to move.</li> <li>• The length of the work contract.</li> <li>• Whether failure to move would result in the loss of an opportunity to improve their employment circumstances or prospects, for example, by taking up a better job, a promotion or an apprenticeship.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>For households above the first floor with children</u></b></p> <p><b>10 points can be awarded to families with children who live above the first floor</b></p>	<p>genuine intention to take-up the post supplied.</p> <p>Evidence of hardship suffered, in accordance with the hardship factors e.g. the distance or time taken to travel to work or the lack of available public transport etc.</p>		

## **6.14 Supported accommodation points – 30 or 50 points**

Supported Accommodation points are intended to reduce the occurrence of either supported accommodation units becoming 'silted up' or bed-blocking within hospital units or care homes for want of re-housing. These points will enable applicants to move-on from such units and free up scarce resources. Supported accommodation points replace all other points except those awarded for local connection, medical reasons, community contribution, aged under 25 looked after child or armed forces urgent rehousing points.

### **7.9.1 *Bed-blocking- 30 points***

30 points will be awarded to applicants defined as 'bed-blocking' by the health authority or social care. This usually means they are either an inpatient within a hospital, have completed their medical treatment, do not need specialist supported accommodation (e.g. residential care) but remain in a hospital bed at the request of medical authorities due to concern they would be discharged without access to suitable accommodation. Equally this applies where an applicant is in a residential care unit they do not need, and are deemed able to live independently in the community. By continuing to occupy a bed-space under such circumstances, applicants prevent allocation of bed space to individuals with clinical or high level needs. These replace all other points except those awarded for local connection, medical reasons, community contribution, aged under 25 looked after child or armed forces urgent rehousing points.

### **7.9.2 *Leaving supported accommodation: With dependent children- 50 points/ Without children- 30 points***

Leaving supported accommodation points address a similar issue to bed-blocking points by enabling those who have completed a programme of support at a supported housing project (e.g. Redcroft or English Churches, Stonham, Adullam or other supported lodgings), to move-on to independence, also freeing up scarce supported accommodation. Evidence that a support programme had been completed would be required from the relevant provider and agreed by the Team Leader - Homechoice. .

Points will not be awarded for support programmes completed by homeless applicants, i.e. residents in Brindale House, Strathclyde House, Buxton Road, or other temporary accommodation provided by any other Local Authority or Housing Provider as they will have priority according to their homelessness status.

There are two levels of supported accommodation points for applicants leaving supported accommodation, 50 points for those with dependent children and 30 for those without.

Supported Accommodation points replace all other points except those awarded for local connection, medical reasons, community contribution, aged under 25 looked after child or armed forces urgent rehousing points.

### **7.9.3 Awarding of supported accommodation points**

Supported accommodation points will be awarded by the Team Leader - Homechoice or Head of Homelessness and Rehousing.

## **7.10 Serious Hazard (serious disrepair or lack of facilities) - 30 points**

Applicants will receive 30 points if their property is either lacking facilities or is in serious disrepair. Points will be awarded in one category only, even if the property is both lacking facilities and in serious disrepair.

### **7.10.1 Lack of facilities**

30 serious disrepair / lack of facilities points will be awarded if there is no internal toilet, bathing facility or running hot water where the applicant is currently living.

Points will only be awarded where the facility is actually lacking and not when the facility is temporarily out of use/under repair.

If applicants are currently residing in a caravan, tent or a car on a driveway/garden or caravan site with access to facilities, lack of facility points will not be awarded.

Points will only be awarded when confirmation is received from landlord, Urban Renewal other agency or following a home visit by Council Official if living in Borough.

### **7.10.2 Serious disrepair points**

#### *7.10.2.1 Property Condition represents a Serious Hazard- 30 points*

Applicants will receive 30 points if the condition of their accommodation is assessed to represent a serious (category 1) hazard, AND that hazard cannot be easily remedied.

#### *7.10.2.2 Assessment of Serious Hazard*

The property will be assessed using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). This system is prescribed by Central Government and was introduced in the Housing Act 2004 to form the cornerstone of all housing standards. The HHSRS considers the potential effect of 29 different types of hazard, covering all aspects of the property, with serious hazards being categorised as 'category 1'. Serious hazards could include significant disrepair such that the property is dangerous, or missing amenities, such as no inside toilet.

#### *7.10.2.3 Assessment as to whether the Serious Hazard can be easily remedied*

Whilst an assessed hazard may have serious implications for the health or safety of occupants or visitors, in the majority of cases the works required to minimise the risk can be undertaken at relatively low cost and with minimal disruption. Although each case must be judged on its merits, two tests will be applied in all cases, for the points to be awarded, as follows:

- *Test 1*

Can the works to address the Serious Hazard(s) be carried out for less than 10% of the property value, or do the physical limitations of the structure mean that it is not possible to reduce the seriousness of the hazard from category 1 to category 2? Even where the estimated cost of necessary repairs exceeds 10% of the property value, points will not be awarded if financial assistance to substantially offset the cost is available through the Council's approved Private Sector Investment & Assistance Policy, or buildings insurance. The 10% Rule may, however, be set aside where a claim for exceptional hardship waiver is accepted, i.e. the estimated cost of necessary repairs is less than 10% of the property value but the applicant is able to demonstrate that s/he is completely unable to meet the cost from resources or borrowing.

- *Test 2*

Can the works be carried out without the need for the occupants to move out for a prolonged period of time. All building works will involve some level of disruption, but where the risks to the health or safety of the occupants are so great that it is not reasonable to expect the occupants to remain in situ, and that the risk is likely to be for a prolonged period, consideration will be given to awarding the additional points

The type of works that are likely to meet these criteria will be varied, but may include rampant dry rot, or significant structural instability requiring extensive rebuilding. Examples of cases where it may not be feasible to undertake works may include basement flats with very limited headroom or with no natural light.

#### 7.10.2.4 Evidence: Housing Health & Safety Rating System

- a. *Non-Stockport Council tenants (private, housing association, local authority):* If living in Stockport, such applicants must have first contacted their landlord and Stockport Council's Environmental Health Team. Confirmation of Serious Hazards identified, and whether these can be easily remedied will be sought from Environmental Health by staff responsible for the application. If living outside Stockport, the applicant must have contacted their own local housing authority over the possibility of pursuing enforcement action for the hazards, and contact details of the authority must be given so that staff dealing with the application can seek confirmation.
- b. *Stockport Council tenants:* Only in the most extreme circumstances will Serious Hazard points be applicable as the Authority will almost invariably remedy identified hazards regardless of cost. Should a Serious Hazard

arise, the matter will be referred to the local Area Housing Manager with a request for feedback confirming work in hand.

c. *Owner-occupiers:* Full information on the state of the property and itemised estimates for the costs of the works would normally be provided from an authoritative professional source such as a chartered surveyor, structural engineer or architect. In addition, in all cases where it is considered likely that a Serious Hazard exists, the property will be further assessed by the Council's Environmental Health Team for possible enforcement action, and/or the Home Repairs & Adaptation service for consideration for assistance under the Council's approved Private Sector Investment & Assistance Policy. If wishing to claim an Exceptional Hardship Waiver, the applicant will also provide full details of their financial circumstances (income and outgoings).

#### **7.10.2.5 Authority to award**

The decision as to whether to award Serious Hazard points will be made by the Head of Rehousing Services or Team Leader - Homechoice following receipt and consideration of all relevant supporting information as detailed above

### **7.11 Overcrowding- 15 points per bedroom**

Applicants will receive 15 points for each bedroom they lack. An applicant lacks a bedroom if their 'bedroom need' is greater than their 'available bedrooms'.

#### **7.11.1 Available bedrooms**

Information on bedrooms currently available to the household is obtained from the application form and by home visits.

#### **7.11.2 Bedroom Need- 'Standard households'**

'Standard households', are those with immediate family members only, i.e. the applicant and any partner or children they may have.

Bedroom need for standard households is calculated by assessing the circumstances of the applicant, including the age and sex of household members and any medical or support needs. This is done in line with the Bedroom Need and Points Entitlement Matrix outlined below.

This matrix calculates one bedroom need for each of the following:

- The applicant and their partner.
- 2 of the applicant's children of the same sex, irrespective of age.
- 2 of the applicant's children of different sexes, if both are under-10 years old.
- Any single child of the applicant not paired as above.

#### **7.11.3 Bedroom need- 'Non-standard households'**

'Non-standard' households are those with one or more non-immediate family members in addition to the applicant, partner or their children, i.e. the applicant's mother, father, brother, sister, granddaughter, grandson, carer, other female relative, other male relative, no relation or unknown are non-immediate family.

Non-immediate family members aged 18+ years will be assessed as needing their own bedroom (except for couples). For example, a household with an applicant, their daughter and mother would be assessed as needing 3 bedrooms: one for the applicant, one for the daughter and one for the mother, because the mother is categorised as non-immediate family, and would not be expected to share with either of the others.

Non-immediate family members can nominate to share if they prefer, reducing their bedroom need and thereby often increasing their housing options.

Non-immediate family children will be treated the same as children from standard households (as detailed above). For example, two nephews of the applicant (u-18 years old) would be expected to share with each other, and also a niece of the applicant would be expected to share with the applicant's daughter (both u-18 years old). Stockport Council will automatically group these household members together when assessing household needs.

In some cases households can request that other non-immediate household members (e.g. sister and other female relative), are grouped together in the same room for the purposes of calculating bedroom entitlement, providing this does not cause unacceptable overcrowding.

#### **7.11.4 Bedroom need- Medical and support needs**

Some applicants have medical or support needs which give rise to a need for an extra bedroom. Examples include an extra bedroom for a carer providing overnight support or to locate medical equipment such as a ventilator or dialysis machine. Such medical or support needs will be identified following a medical assessment by the Team Leader - Homechoice, in response to information received on the medical form.

#### **7.11.5 Pregnancy**

Pregnant applicants will be assessed as having a need for an additional bedroom only where the new-born child would definitely give rise to a new bedroom need, i.e. where there are no existing children or there are an even number of children in the household (the sex of the child will not be a factor until it is born).

#### **7.11.6 Definition of a child**

For the purposes of this procedure a child is defined as anybody below the age of 18 years of age.

#### **7.11.7 Access to children**

Households with access to children only (i.e. where the only child at the property would be on an access only basis), will be entitled to an extra bedroom for visiting purposes (providing they can afford any housing benefit shortfall), but will receive no extra priority for overcrowding. Where other children reside at the property on a full-time basis, but additional children may visit on an access only basis then no additional bedroom allowance is made.

#### **7.11.8 All-adult households**

Due to the scarcity of family-type accommodation, families where all the children are adults over the age of 18 years old will be entitled to a flat or maisonette only, not a house.

#### **7.11.9 Bedrooms used as studies**

Applicants who are lodging may not always have access to a bedroom because the person they are lodging with is using it for another purpose, e.g. as a study / office. In these circumstances the applicant will be assessed as having no bedroom available to them. Confirmation of this will be required, either by a letter from the householder or a home visit by one of the Homechoice team.

#### **7.11.10      *Foster carers***

The assessment of bedroom need will be done taking into account any foster children currently placed with the applicant at the time of registration. This acknowledges that although the placement may be short term, if the applicant is a registered foster carer, there is a commitment that further children may be placed there in future.

#### **7.11.11      *Applying for a property smaller than assessed needs***

Applicants will be eligible for properties 1 bedroom smaller than their assessed need, as long as this is at least one bedroom (or parlour that could be used as a bedroom) bigger than their current property, *and* this does not lead to statutory overcrowding. For example a household with a need for a 4 bed, but living in a 2 bed would be eligible for a 3 bed as long as this would not lead to statutory overcrowding.

## Bedroom Need and Points Entitlement Matrix- 'Standard Households' (Families with children)

<b>Adults</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Sex of children (in full care &amp; control)</b>	<b>Pregnant</b>	<b>Current Bedrooms</b>	<b>Bids accepted for:</b>	<b>Homechoice bed req</b>	<b>Points</b>
Single	1 child	(1)	Y or N	0 beds lodger	1 bed, 1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	30 points
Single	1 child	(1)	Y or N	0 beds studio	1 bed, 1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	15 points
Couple	1 child	(1)	Y or N	0 beds lodger	1 bed, 1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	30 points
Couple	1 child	(1)	Y or N	0 beds studio	1 bed, 1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	1 child	(1)	Y or N	1 bed	1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	1 child	(1)	Y or N	>1 bed	1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(2)	N	0 beds	1 bed, 1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(2)	N	1 bed	1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(2)	N	>1 bed	1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(2)	Y	0 beds	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	45 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(2)	Y	1 bed	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(2)	Y	2 bed	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(2)	Y	>2 bed	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(1&1) [both <10 years]	N	0 beds	1 bed, 1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(1&1) [both <10 years]	N	1 bed	1P or 2 bed	2 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(1&1) [both <10 years]	N	>1 bed	1P or 2 bed	2 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(1&1) [both <10 years]	Y	0 beds	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	45 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(1&1) [both <10 years]	Y	1 bed	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(1&1) [both <10 years]	Y	2 bed	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(1&1) [both <10 years]	Y	>2 bed	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(1&1) [1 or both >10 years]	Y or N	0 beds	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	45 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(1&1) [1 or both >10 years]	Y or N	1 bed	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(1&1) [1 or both >10 years]	Y or N	2 beds	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	10 points
Single or Couple	2 children	(1&1) [1 or both >10 years]	Y or N	>2 beds	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	3 children	(3) or (2&1)	Y or N	0 beds	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	30 points

<b>Adults</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Sex of children (in full care &amp; control)</b>	<b>Pregnant</b>	<b>Current Bedrooms</b>	<b>Bids accepted for:</b>	<b>Homechoice bed req</b>	<b>Points</b>
Single or Couple	3 children	(3) or (2&1)	Y or N	1 beds	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	20 points
Single or Couple	3 children	(3) or (2&1)	Y or N	2 beds	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	10 points
Single or Couple	3 children	(3) or (2&1)	Y or N	>2 beds	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(4) or (2&2)	N	0 beds	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	45 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(4) or (2&2)	N	1 bed	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(4) or (2&2)	N	2 beds	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(4) or (2&2)	N	>2 beds	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(4) or (2&2)	Y	0 beds	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	60 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(4) or (2&2)	Y	1 bed	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	45 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(4) or (2&2)	Y	2 beds	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(4) or (2&2)	Y	3 beds	3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(4) or (2&2)	Y	>3 beds	3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(3&1) [1 of each <10 years]	N	0 beds	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	45 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(3&1) [1 of each <10 years]	N	1 bed	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(3&1) [1 of each <10 years]	N	2 beds	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(3&1) [1 of each <10 years]	N	>2 beds	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(3&1) [1 of each <10 years]	Y	0 bed	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	60 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(3&1) [1 of each <10 years]	Y	1 beds	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	45 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(3&1) [1 of each <10 years]	Y	2 beds	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(3&1) [1 of each <10 years]	Y	3 beds	3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(3&1) [1 of each <10 years]	Y	>3 beds	3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(3&1) [all >10 years]	Y or N	0 beds	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	60 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(3&1) [all >10 years]	Y or N	1 bed	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	45 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(3&1) [all >10 years]	Y or N	2 beds	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(3&1) [all >10 years]	Y or N	3 beds	3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	4 children	(3&1) [all >10 years]	Y or N	4 beds	3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	5 children	(5) or (4&1) or (3&2)	Y or N	0 beds	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	60 points
Single or Couple	5 children	(5) or (4&1) or (3&2)	Y or N	1 bed	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	45 points

<b>Adults</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Sex of children (in full care &amp; control)</b>	<b>Pregnant</b>	<b>Current Bedrooms</b>	<b>Bids accepted for:</b>	<b>Homechoice bed req</b>	<b>Points</b>
Single or Couple	5 children	(5) or (4&1) or (3&2)	Y or N	2 beds	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	5 children	(5) or (4&1) or (3&2)	Y or N	3 beds	3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	5 children	(5) or (4&1) or (3&2)	Y or N	>3 beds	3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(6) or (4&2)	N	0 beds	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	40 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(6) or (4&2)	N	1 bed	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(6) or (4&2)	N	2 beds	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	20 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(6) or (4&2)	N	3 beds	3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	10 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(6) or (4&2)	N	>3 beds	3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(6) or (4&2)	Y	0 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	75 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(6) or (4&2)	Y	1 bed	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	60 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(6) or (4&2)	Y	2 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	45 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(6) or (4&2)	Y	3 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(6) or (4&2)	Y	4 beds	4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(6) or (4&2)	Y	>4 beds	4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [1 of each <10 years]	N	0 beds	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	60 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [1 of each <10 years]	N	1 bed	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	45 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [1 of each <10 years]	N	2 beds	2P, 3 bed, 3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [1 of each <10 years]	N	3 beds	3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [1 of each <10 years]	N	>3 beds	3P, 4 bed or 4P	4 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [1 of each <10 years]	Y	0 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	75 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [1 of each <10 years]	Y	1 bed	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	60 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [1 of each <10 years]	Y	2 bed	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	45 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [1 of each <10 years]	Y	3 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [1 of each <10 years]	Y	4 beds	4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [1 of each <10 years]	Y	>4 beds	4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [all >10 years]	Y or N	0 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	75 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [all >10 years]	Y or N	1 bed	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	60 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [all >10 years]	Y or N	2 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	45 points

<b>Adults</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Sex of children (in full care &amp; control)</b>	<b>Pregnant</b>	<b>Current Bedrooms</b>	<b>Bids accepted for:</b>	<b>Homechoice bed req</b>	<b>Points</b>
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [all >10 years]	Y or N	3 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [all >10 years]	Y or N	4 beds	4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	6 children	(3&3) or (5&1) [all >10 years]	Y or N	>4 beds	4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	7 children	(7) or (6&1) or (5&2) or (4&3)	Y or N	0 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	75 points
Single or Couple	7 children	(7) or (6&1) or (5&2) or (4&3)	Y or N	1 bed	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	60 points
Single or Couple	7 children	(7) or (6&1) or (5&2) or (4&3)	Y or N	2 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	45 points
Single or Couple	7 children	(7) or (6&1) or (5&2) or (4&3)	Y or N	3 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	7 children	(7) or (6&1) or (5&2) or (4&3)	Y or N	4 beds	4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	7 children	(7) or (6&1) or (5&2) or (4&3)	Y or N	>4 beds	4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	8 children	(8) or (4&4) or (6&2)	N	0 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	75 points
Single or Couple	8 children	(8) or (4&4) or (6&2)	N	1 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	60 points
Single or Couple	8 children	(8) or (4&4) or (6&2)	N	2 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	45 points
Single or Couple	8 children	(8) or (4&4) or (6&2)	N	3 beds	3P, 4 bed, 4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	8 children	(8) or (4&4) or (6&2)	N	4 beds	4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	8 children	(8) or (4&4) or (6&2)	N	>4 beds	4P, 5 bed or 5P	5 bed	0 points
Single or Couple	8 children	(8) or (4&4) or (6&2)	Y	0 beds	4P, 5 bed, 5P, 6 bed or 6P	6 bed	90 points
Single or Couple	8 children	(8) or (4&4) or (6&2)	Y	1 beds	4P, 5 bed, 5P, 6 bed or 6P	6 bed	75 points
Single or Couple	8 children	(8) or (4&4) or (6&2)	Y	2 beds	4P, 5 bed, 5P, 6 bed or 6P	6 bed	60 points
Single or Couple	8 children	(8) or (4&4) or (6&2)	Y	3 beds	4P, 5 bed, 5P, 6 bed or 6P	6 bed	45 points
Single or Couple	8 children	(8) or (4&4) or (6&2)	Y	4 beds	4P, 5 bed, 5P, 6 bed or 6P	6 bed	30 points
Single or Couple	8 children	(8) or (4&4) or (6&2)	Y	5 beds	5P, 6 bed or 6P	6 bed	15 points
Single or Couple	8 children	(8) or (4&4) or (6&2)	Y	>5 beds	5P, 6 bed or 6P	6 bed	0 points

P= Parlour type property (or second living room). Families with children (u18) will be entitled to houses, flats, maisonettes or bungalows.

## Other households (no children)

<b>Adults</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Pregnant</b>	<b>Access to children and can afford extra bed</b>	<b>Current bedrooms</b>	<b>Bids accepted for:</b>	<b>Home choice bed req</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Property type entitlement</b>
Single	0 children	N	N	Studio	Studio or 1 bed	1 bed	0 points	Flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single	0 children	N	N	0 beds (lodger)	Studio or 1 bed	1 bed	15 points	Flat/maisonette/bungalow
Couple	0 children	N	N	Studio	1 bed	1 bed	15 points	Flat/maisonette/bungalow
Couple	0 children	N	N	0 beds (lodger)	1 bed	1 bed	15 points	Flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single or Couple	0 children	N	N	>0 beds	1 bed	1 bed	0 points	Flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single (med. need)	0 children	N	Y or N	Studio	2 bed	2 bed	15 points	Flat/maisonette/bungalow
Couple (med. need)	0 children	N	Y or N	Studio	2 bed	2 bed	30 points	Flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single or Couple (med. need)	0 children	N	Y or N	0 beds (lodger)	2 bed	2 bed	30 points	Flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single or Couple (med. need)	0 children	N	Y or N	1 beds	2 bed	2 bed	15 points	Flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single or Couple (med. need)	0 children	N	Y or N	>1 beds	2 bed	2 bed	0 points	Flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single (med. need)	0 children	Y	Y or N	Studio	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	30 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Couple (med. need)	0 children	Y	Y or N	Studio	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	45 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single or Couple (med. need)	0 children	Y	Y or N	0 beds (lodger)	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	45 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single or Couple (med. need)	0 children	Y	Y or N	1 beds	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	30 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single or Couple (med. need)	0 children	Y	Y or N	2 beds	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	15 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single or Couple (med. need)	0 children	Y	Y or N	>2 beds	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	0 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single	0 children	N	Y	Studio	2 beds	2 bed	0 points	Flat/maisonette
Couple	0 children	N	Y	Studio	2 beds	2 bed	15 points	Flat/maisonette
Single or Couple	0 children	N	Y	0 beds (lodger)	2 beds	2 bed	15 points	Flat/maisonette
Single or Couple	0 children	N	Y	1 bed	2 beds	2 bed	0 points	Flat/maisonette
Single or Couple	0 children	N	Y	>1 bed	2 beds	2 bed	0 points	Flat/maisonette
Single	0 children	Y	N	Studio	1 bed, 1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	15 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single or Couple	0 children	Y	N	0 beds (lodger)	1 bed, 1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	30 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single or Couple	0 children	Y	N	> 0 beds	1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	15 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow

Single	0 children	Y	Y	Studio	1 bed, 1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	15 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Couple	0 children	Y	Y	Studio	1 bed, 1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	30 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single or Couple	0 children	Y	Y	0 beds (lodger)	1 bed, 1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	30 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single or Couple	0 children	Y	Y	1 bed	1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	15 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Single or Couple	0 children	Y	Y	>1 bed	1P, 2 bed or 2P	2 bed	0 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Two adults (no rel.)	0 children	N	Y or N	Studio or lodger	2 beds	2 bed	30 points	Flat/maisonette/bungalow
Two adults (no rel.)	0 children	N	Y or N	1 bed	2 beds	2 bed	15 points	Flat/maisonette/bungalow
Two adults (no rel.)	0 children	N	Y or N	>1 bed	2 beds	2 bed	0 points	Flat/maisonette/bungalow
Two adults (no rel.)	0 children	Y	Y or N	Studio or lodger	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	45 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Two adults (no rel.)	0 children	Y	Y or N	1 bed	1P, 2 bed, 2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	30 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Two adults (no rel.)	0 children	Y	Y or N	2 beds	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	15 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow
Two adults (no rel.)	0 children	Y	Y or N	>2 beds	2P, 3 bed or 3P	3 bed	0 points	House/flat/maisonette/bungalow

Families with children or pregnant applicants will be entitled to flats houses maisonettes or bungalows.

## **7.12 Lodging- 10 points**

Applicants will be awarded 10 points for lodging. An applicant is lodging if they are sleeping in somebody else's home. This could be either family (e.g. parents), or non-family members (e.g. friends, extended family or ex-partners family). They may, or may not pay rent.

## **7.13 Community Contribution - 10 points**

Applicants will be awarded 10 points for making a community contribution where working, volunteering, training, fostering or acting as a registered carer in receipt of the relevant benefits. This applies to any applicant who is:

- employed or self-employed:
  - ✓ An average of 16 hours per week as a guideline- but where ability to work is restricted due to a disability or caring responsibility must just be 'genuine and effective' relative to personal circumstances
  - ✓ To include people with an employment contract but currently on maternity or similar leave
- volunteering for an average of 8 hours per week as a guideline - but where ability to do voluntary work is restricted due to a disability or caring responsibility must just be 'genuine and effective' relative to personal circumstances
- in a recognised apprenticeship or vocationally related training for 16 hours per week as a guideline but where ability to attend courses is restricted due to a disability or caring responsibility must just be a recognised course requiring regular engagement, taking into account all personal circumstances.
- a carer in receipt of a carers allowance
- a registered foster carer

Individual circumstances and restrictions on an applicant's ability to meet the above criteria due to disability, caring requirements, childcare or other factors will be taken into account and varied in agreement with the Team Leader - Homechoice or Head of Homelessness and Rehousing.

## **7.14 Time on list- 5 points per full year on the housing register up to a maximum of 20 points**

Applicants (excluding homeless applicants) will be awarded 5 points per full year they are on the register up to a maximum of 20 points.

## **7.15 Local connection points (100 points)**

100 local connection points will be awarded to applicants who meet all-three of the following conditions

- They have not terminated a SHG tenancy in the past 12 months.
- They have a local connection to Stockport.
- They cannot meet their housing needs through their savings or equity in a property they own.

Full details of each of these conditions are provided below:

### ***7.15.1 Termination of tenancy - 12 month rule***

Local connection points will not be awarded to applicants that have terminated a Council tenancy in the past 12 months.

### ***7.15.2 A local connection to Stockport***

The applicant must have a local connection to Stockport. This is defined as follows;

- The applicant is currently living in Borough, and either:
  - Has done so for at least 6 of the last 12 months, or for at least 3 of the last 5 years, OR:
  - Has close relatives (mother, father, sister, brother or adult children) who have been living in the Borough for at least 5 years, OR:
- The applicant is currently living inside or outside of the Borough, but either:
  - Has lived within the Borough for at least 3 of the last 5 years OR:
  - Has close relatives within the Borough who have been resident for at least 5 years OR:
  - Has employment (or a formal offer of employment) in the Borough. Employment is defined as a contract, not voluntary but including apprenticeships, of greater than 12 months and greater than 16 hours per week, that is not ancillary to work in another local authority's district. The applicant must also be able to demonstrate they have a genuine intention to take-up the employment; OR:
- The applicant has been discharged from the Armed Forces and either the applicant or their partner was previously resident in the Borough.

## **7.16 Applicants with equity or savings**

All eligible owner-occupiers will be accepted on to the housing register. If an applicant can meet their own housing requirements through equity or savings, no local priority points will be awarded.

Applicants are judged to be able to meet their own housing needs where the level of their savings or any equity in a property they own, is in excess of the equity/savings threshold (see below). It is considered this would be sufficient for a significant deposit towards purchasing a property, or to privately rent a suitable property at the Local Housing Allowance rate for a period of five years or more.

The equity/savings threshold is calculated annually on 1 April, using the local housing allowance rate (LHA) for a three bedroom property as an indicative guideline of affordability. The calculation is as follows:

Either, LHA (at 1 April) x 52 weeks x 5 years, OR £50,000 whichever is the greater.

For example, if the LHA for a 3-bedroomed property was £150 per week, the equity/savings threshold will be £150 x 52 weeks (per year) x 5 years = £39,000). This is less than £50,000 so the savings/equity threshold is £50,000.

Applicants who exceed the equity/savings threshold but have medical needs or a disability requiring the need for specifically designed or adapted property that would be unaffordable at the set equity/savings level will be awarded housing need points.

#### **7.16.1 *Equity valuation***

To demonstrate the value of the equity in their property, all homeowners applying to join the register should provide a formal valuation (available free of charge from most estate agents) and a redemption statement (or details of any outstanding mortgage payments).

#### **7.16.2 *Income***

Income levels are not taken into account when determining priority, as levels available to meet housing needs vary considerably depending upon factors such as size of property needed, other financial commitments and household size. Income levels are however monitored to enable lettings outcomes to be monitored and identify if restrictions may be needed in the future.

#### **7.16.3 *Savings***

To demonstrate their savings level, applicants will be asked to declare, on the application form, the amount of any savings they have.

#### **7.16.4 *Re-assessment of equity value***

Any homeowner who wants a re-assessment of their equity value will need to supply a new property valuation and redemption statement dated after the re-calculation of the new figure in April.

#### ***7.16.5 Medical needs or disability requiring specifically designed or adapted property***

Any homeowner who declares a medical need or the need for specifically designed or adapted property will be assessed to determine what requirements exist.

All applications will be considered having regard to the assessed need, suitability of their existing property for adaptation and the availability of resources to carry out works, through for example mandatory disabled facilities grants. Where resources exist to complete required works, including savings or equity, then no points will be awarded. Where resources do not exist or cannot be accessed then the applicant will receive points as if they were not a home owner.

#### ***7.16.6 Sale of property***

Any homeowner offered a council tenancy will be expected to dispose of any property in their ownership and produce documentary evidence of their intent to this effect prior to sign-up (e.g. correspondence from solicitors, estate agents or other similar body).

#### ***7.16.7 Assessment of equity and savings level***

The Team Leader - Homechoice will be responsible for making any judgements relating to the standard of evidence required relating to valuations and property prices.

### **8 Applicants considered outside of the priority scheme**

In some pre-defined circumstances, properties will be withheld from the Homechoice system and let directly to applicants. This will generally be no more than 25% of total annual lettings. The circumstances when this will occur are as follows:

#### **8.1 Priority homeless applicants**

At the time that a homelessness relief duty towards someone in priority need, or main homelessness duty is accepted the applicant will be advised they have 2 bidding periods to bid with their 50 homelessness points. During this time they can refuse any offer made without being penalised. At the end of this period, their Housing Options Officer will submit a request to withhold a property from advertising for direct letting to the applicant (a withheld property). This is to help free up the temporary / interim accommodation and to minimise the time spent there by applicants.

Applicants can continue to bid for properties after a withheld request has been made, however refusal of any reasonable offer after this time, whether bid for or withheld, will result in the homelessness points being removed. After removal, applicants can continue to bid for properties if they are eligible, however, they will be assessed in accordance with their current living arrangements.

Properties offered will be comparable, in terms of points range and area, to those the applicant would have been able to obtain, had they been bidding through Homechoice. The applicant's preferences will also be taken into account, although the location and nature of offers made depends upon availability and turnover of stock. Where a particularly scarce type of property is required (for example a four bedroom or adapted home), the points level may have to be disregarded and any available property offered that meets the applicant's needs.

All relevant paperwork will be referred to the Property Management Team, who will retain a local list of referred applicants in order of date received (earliest first), and property type requirement. When properties of the correct type become available, these will be allocated to the applicant who is top of the local list.

Homelessness points are only applicable while a homelessness duty exists, and will be removed should that duty end at any point (for example becoming intentionally homeless from temporary accommodation provided).

## **8.2 Special needs applicants- Direct letting quotas**

Each year a small number of properties will be withheld for direct letting to applicants with exceptional special needs who may not qualify for medical re-housing priority status but have an identified urgent medical or social need. These cases will be identified under joint working agreements by one of three 'Special Needs Groups detailed below:

### **8.2.1 *Children Leaving Care***

Approximately 12 properties per year will be made available for direct letting to children leaving, or recently left care and in need. The number will vary from year-to-year depending on the number of children actually leaving care and in need that year. A multi-agency working group (will meet to select those children for whom a request will be made. Rehousing requests will be made in accordance with the 'Partnership agreement between SHG and Children and Young People Service to Respond to Young People with Accommodation Needs'.

### **8.2.2 *Mental Health Group***

6 tenancies will be available per year for direct letting to applicants with severe and enduring mental health issues whose needs cannot be met

through the existing Homechoice system. A multi-agency working group (in accordance with the Mental Health Rehousing Protocol), will meet to identify suitable applicants in accordance with a written agreement.

#### **8.2.3 *Applicants with learning difficulties or sensory impairments.***

6 tenancies will be available per year for direct letting to applicants with learning difficulties or sensory impairments, whose needs cannot be met through the existing Homechoice system. Requests will be received from Learning Disabilities and Social Care.

#### **8.2.4 *Requests for rehousing***

When one of the above groups identifies a person with special needs for whom they wish a property to be made available, they will make a request to the Team Leader - Housing Options who will arrange for a full housing options interview with the applicant to determine their suitability as a future tenant.

Once the applicant has been accepted, the Housing Options Team will then request that the property management Team withhold a property from Homechoice for direct letting as detailed in section 9.9.7 below.

### **8.3 Urgent Social Medical or Welfare Need Cases**

Properties can be withheld from Homechoice advertising for direct letting to urgent social, medical and welfare cases. This applies to cases where applicants have been awarded a maximum 50 medical points, but this has not accelerated re-housing into more suitable accommodation.

Should two suitable offers be refused, then the social, medical or welfare priority would be removed.

### **8.4 Applicants requiring wheelchair-accessible adapted properties**

A wheelchair-accessible property is one that contains two or more 'major' adaptations. A major adaptation is one that cost £500 or more to install (for example, a level access shower, a stair lift or a through floor lift).

Wheelchair accessible properties will mainly be withheld for direct letting outside the Homechoice system by a joint-panel of officers from Stockport Homes Limited and Social Care, known as the Adapted Homes Panel (see panel composition below).

<b>Social Care</b>	<b>Stockport Homes Limited</b>
Occupational Services Manager	Occupational Therapist
Senior Occupational Therapist	Head of Independent Living
Children's Occupational Therapist	
Occupational Therapist	

If not all officers can attend a panel meeting, there will be at least one officer from both SHG and Social Care. For each wheelchair accessible property, the Panel will identify a prioritised list of suitable applicants from the Adapted Homes Register- see below.

#### **8.4.1 *Adapted Homes Register***

The Adapted Homes Register is a list of applicants compiled by the SHG Occupational Therapist, who require a wheelchair-accessible property. Applicants will be entered onto this list following an assessment of their needs by the Health & Housing Officer or the Occupational Therapist.

#### **8.4.2 *Offer and refusal of a wheelchair-accessible property***

The Occupational Therapist will email a list of the applicants selected by the Adapted Homes Panel to the Property Management Team, who will offer any property to the first applicant on the list. If that applicant refuses the offer, the property must be offered to the next applicant until the list is exhausted.

If the list of applicants has been exhausted, the Property Management Team must check with the Occupational Therapist to ensure that there are no further applicants. If there are no further applicants, the wheelchair-accessible property will then be advertised through the Homechoice scheme and prioritised for applicants with a need for an adapted property.

The Property Management Team will advise any incoming applicant that the adaptation is fixed and cannot be removed.

### **8.5 Extra care schemes**

'Extra Care' scheme properties such as Birch Court in Marple will be withheld from advertising for direct letting to applicants who have an assessed need for one of these properties.

### **8.6 Relocating for work as an employee of Stockport Council or Stockport Homes**

Properties may be withheld for temporary direct letting to employees relocating to Stockport Council or SHG for work. Such temporary accommodation may be provided, generally for a period of 6 months from the date of appointment at the normal rent. The provision of such accommodation will be dependent upon availability. If an extension to the 6 month period is required this will require support from the employee's Service and evidence of difficulty in moving or personal financial hardship.

### **8.7 Relationship breakdown (Council tenants)**

Where a relationship breakdown occurs in a household with children, an offer of either a one bedroom flat or a two bedroom under-occupied flat/maisonette may be made to the leaving partner, if this enables the children to remain with

the main carer in the family home. More details are included within the Relationship Breakdown Policy.

## **8.8 Rehousing from properties requiring building work**

### **8.8.1 *Owner Occupiers***

Owner-occupiers can apply for temporary accommodation while grant aided work is being carried out to their property. Accommodation can only be offered after grant approval has been given by the Council. As far as possible, the needs of the owner-occupier will be taken into account, however this is subject to availability. A 13-week licence is generally granted to the owner occupier, and can be extended if the works are subject to a delay.

### **8.8.2 *Tenants of private landlords***

Landlords can apply for temporary accommodation for their tenants while urgent extensive repair work is carried out. Such requests will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, and where the landlord has been unable to secure alternative accommodation for his tenants.

The tenant pays their normal rent to the landlord who in turn pays a charge for the SHG licence, which is therefore in the landlord's name.

## **8.9 Compulsory purchase**

The Council is under a statutory duty to re-house people displaced by Compulsory Purchase Orders. It will seek to satisfy these needs as a priority.

In providing alternative accommodation the needs of the tenant or owner-occupier will be taken into account. In general, occupiers will be offered a property on a "like for like" basis as regards the size and type of accommodation.

## **8.10 Under-occupancy**

A property may be withheld for direct letting to an applicant where they are under-occupying and as a result are suffering from financial hardship or unable to maintain the accommodation. They must first have been unable to resolve their situation from the usual Homechoice process and been unable to find a suitable mutual exchange.

## **8.11 Hard to let properties**

If a property has been advertised once through Homechoice and has not been let, the Area Manager can withhold the property from any further Homechoice advertising and let directly to an applicant who is not from a Homechoice bidding shortlist. Such applicants may have previously expressed an interest in other vacant properties, or may have been identified by local advertising including shop windows etc.

## **8.12 Sheltered scheme transfer to ground floor flats**

In a sheltered scheme where a current resident lives on the first floor and has a significant (25 point) medical need for ground floor, then a ground floor flat can be withheld for them within that scheme. Only one in three ground floor flats in each scheme becoming vacant may be allocated on this basis. If two residents both qualify, suitable flats will be allocated to the one with the highest points/earliest date of application.

## **8.13 Special Housing Panel cases**

The priority scheme is intended to cover the vast majority of applications, so these can be dealt with in a consistent, equitable and accountable way. However no scheme can anticipate every eventuality.

The Council will consider an application for rehousing as a special case if there are exceptional circumstances that are not taken account of within the priority scheme. Such cases are referred to the Special Housing Panel, consisting of senior Stockport Homes, Council and Social Care Officers. Decisions to allocate outside of the policy can be made in these exceptional situations.

A request for a case to be considered by the Special Housing Panel can be made by a member of housing staff, an elected Member of the Council, or senior Council Officer. For more information see [Appendix 2](#)

# **9 Choice Based Lettings (CBL)**

SHG operates a choice based lettings scheme, known as 'Homechoice', for allocating around 75% of its available properties (around 25% are withheld for direct letting). Properties being let at 'social' or 'affordable' rent levels are treated the same way under the allocation policy and through CBL. The Homechoice process is detailed below.

## **9.1 Advertising of vacancies**

Each week details of properties that are available to let (including adapted properties that are not to wheelchair standard) will be advertised from 5pm on a Thursday to 5pm the following Tuesday on the Stockport Homes Group website and at other locations in Stockport, including libraries and information centres.

## **9.2 Direct letting/withheld properties**

The majority of vacancies will be publicised using the Homechoice advertising process. However, there will be occasions when a need for re-housing is identified which cannot be processed through the Homechoice system. At

these times it will be necessary to withhold a property from Homechoice for direct letting.

To ensure there are always a reasonable number of properties advertised through Homechoice, area teams will advertise at least one in three of their vacancies, even where they have a backlog of direct letting cases waiting for a particular property type. This is particularly important for those property types in short supply such as three bedoomed houses and flats.

### **9.3 Placing bids**

People can notify SHG of their interest in an advertised property by placing a 'bid'. To do this, people must be registered on the Homechoice register (see above). Bids can either be placed by the applicant or their nominated representative. They can be placed in the following ways:

- On the Homechoice website.
- By telephone to SHG on 0161 217 6016.
- By text.
- By email.
- In person at SHG's Cornerstone office at 2 Edward Street
- By letter.
- By 'supporting bidding' through Homechoice staff.

Applicants can bid for a maximum of **three** properties per bidding period.

At the end of each bidding period, bids will be checked to confirm they match the letting criteria for the property. Ineligible bids will not be considered.

Where ineligible bid are received by post the applicant will be notified by telephone as soon as possible. Where this is not possible, a standard Invalid Bid Notification letter must be completed, giving the reason for rejection and posted to the customer by 1st class mail within 24 hours with a copy for file.

Customers who have already received an offer may continue to bid until they sign up.

### **9.4 Prioritisation of bids**

Bidding closes at 5pm Tuesday and shortlisting will take place the following day. Bidders for each property will be compared against each other, and bidding shortlists will be produced. Applicants on the 'Housing Need' List will be prioritised above applicants on the 'Not in Housing Need' list, regardless of points awarded. Priority within each housing list will then be determined by points and date of application.

### **9.5 Prioritisation of bids for non-wheelchair-adapted properties**

For non-wheelchair adapted properties (and wheelchair adapted properties) advertised, bidders awarded adapted medical points will be prioritised above

applicants without these points. These applicants will be compared against each other in the same way as other applicants. Applicants without adapted medical points will be able to bid for these properties and will be prioritised as normal.

## **9.6 Provisional offers**

By 1pm on Wednesday, provisional telephone offers will be made to those applicants at the top of each property shortlist. Confirmation letters or e-mails will be sent the same day.

If the applicant has not accepted the offer within 48 hours, or has refused it, the shortlist will be re-run and the property offered to the next highest bidder until the shortlist is exhausted. Each time a new shortlist is run, a copy will be printed and retained with the applicant file for audit purposes.

Applicants who have bid three times and come top of 3 shortlists will receive three provisional offers. The applicant must decide which to accept and which to refuse, within 48 hours.

If an applicant accepts a provisional offer, prior to full acceptance and sign-up, checks (including office interview or home visit) will be carried out to ensure the following:

- The applicant's declared circumstances have not changed and information supplied is correct.
- In the case of transfer visits, a recent and satisfactory home visit has been conducted and recorded.
- If the applicant has a current or previous local authority or housing association tenancy, that up to date proof regarding the conduct of their rent account has been obtained.
- The care and residency arrangements of any children to be re-housed as part of the application has been confirmed by viewing child benefit books etc.

A home visit may be carried out on housing register applicants if further information is required to confirm an applicant's current housing circumstances.

## **9.7 The withdrawal of provisional offers**

A provisional offer may be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- The property is no longer available for letting. The applicant will be notified in writing.

- The applicant is found to be ineligible for the property due a change in their circumstances, or having supplied incorrect information on their application. Homechoice will send a change of circumstances form, or cancel the application as appropriate.
- The applicant is found to be ineligible for the Housing Register (e.g. because of immigration status or failure to comply with Council Policies). The applicant will be notified in writing and Homechoice will re-consider the eligibility of the application under the eligibility policy.

If a provisional offer has been accepted by someone who has a need for it to be adapted to meet their needs, the Neighbourhood Housing Officer will arrange for a Rehabilitation Officer from Social Services to assess the property. Consideration will be given to adapting the property if it is suitable for adapting to the standard deemed necessary to meet their needs.

## **9.8 Nominations to Housing Associations**

Stockport Council has a partnership arrangement with a number Housing Associations owning property in Stockport. These will offer a minimum of 50% of their properties available to let (new and existing), to applicants from the Council's register. Nominations will be made on the basis of every second property that becomes available.

SHG will be notified of available properties by email and then nominate an applicant (plus reserves as agreed with the provider) from their waiting list. This will usually be by advertising and shortlisting properties through the Homechoice process, or alternatively one of the exceptions outlined for direct offers within this policy. There is an obligation for a Housing Association to allocate to applicants in the order sent through.

Housing Associations will not however be obliged to offer the following properties for nomination:

- Adapted properties i.e. properties with fixed or semi-fixed adaptations such as a walk-in shower, ground floor adapted extension, track hoist, curved stair-lift etc.
- Supported housing (excluding elderly persons sheltered schemes).

Each member of the partnership will collate information on the outcome of nominations made by SHG and will supply this quarterly on request.

## **9.9 Bypassing of shortlisted cases**

There are three circumstances where applicants who have come top of property shortlists may be bypassed. These are:

- a. If rehoused into the property, there is, or may be a danger of the applicant or a member of their household causing or being subject to harm in the locality where the property is situated.
- b. Rehousing the applicant into the property may prevent the effective management of the locality where it is situated.
- c. The applicant is assessed (by the Customer Finance Team or Housing Association) to be unable to afford the rent at the property i.e. after payment of any priority debts (e.g. court fines etc), residual income will not meet basic income support benefit levels.

In situations a & b above, an assessment will be made by the Housing Management Team or in situation c by the Customer Finance Team or Housing Association, based on all available evidence.

If it is considered that the case meets one of these definitions, the assessor will liaise with the Head of Homelessness and Rehousing to ensure consistency of approach with previous cases.

If it is agreed that the applicant should be bypassed, the Housing Management Team will write to the applicant to advise them of the reason, and that they have a right of appeal. Any such appeal must be lodged within 7 days of notification of a bypass, and during this period, the property will be held open.

Appeals will be conducted by a Council Officer, not involved in the original decision and senior in rank to the officer making that decision. The review will take place within 7 days of the request being received.

The Head of Homelessness and Rehousing will report the details of each case, and outcome of any appeal, to the next Special Housing Panel.

## **9.10 Multiple refusals**

Applicants who repeatedly refuse offers cause unnecessary administration and increase the cost of empty properties (preventing earlier let to alternative applicants). As a result, applicants refusing 4 offers in any 6 month period will trigger a letter explaining that refusal of a further 5<sup>th</sup> offer within that 6-month period will result in the removal of all their allocations points for a period of 3 months.

Offers made must have been reasonable for the applicant to accept, particularly taking into account disability related issues and there is a right to a review of the decision to suspend priority. Once removed, the burden will be on the applicant to request their points are re-instated.

## **9.11 Proof of identity**

It is the responsibility of the member of staff conducting the sign-up to ensure they obtain two items proving identity, from each applicant signing the tenancy agreement. Copies must be taken of original documents, and placed on the tenancy file.

- The following items are acceptable as proof of identity:
- Birth certificate;
- National Insurance card;
- NHS card;
- Utility bill or statement (gas, electricity, phone);
- Benefit book;
- Bank statement;
- Driving licence;
- Passport.

#### **9.12 Rent in advance**

Applicants offered properties will be expected to pay rent in advance at sign-up according to the contractual arrangements outlined in their tenancy agreement. Inability to pay such advance-rent would be taken as an indicator that the applicant was unable to afford to a tenancy and considered in line with 9.9 above.

#### **9.13 Lettings**

The processing of the start of a tenancy and input of these details onto Northgate is the responsibility of the Neighbourhood Housing Officer.

Housing Associations are responsible for notifying Homechoice about the letting of properties which have been put forward for nomination purposes. The outcomes for nominations put forward are entered on to Northgate by the Homechoice team.

### **10 Allocation reviews and appeals**

Certain decisions made by local authority housing departments are subject to a review process as outlined in the 1996 Housing Act and 2002 Homelessness Act.

This procedure will outline the decisions that are subject to the right to a review and procedures that need to be followed. These include the following;

- Housing Register- eligibility
- Decisions affecting the allocation of a property
- Bypassing of shortlisted applicants

#### **10.1 Housing register - eligibility**

The Council's Housing Register and Allocations Policy contains details of how an applicant can be treated as ineligible. The Allocation of Accommodation Code of Guidance (November 2003), which supplements the Homelessness Act 2002 stipulates that an applicant has the right to a review of decisions which will affect their likelihood of being rehoused.

The Act also provides for the right, on request, to be informed of any decision about the facts of the applicant's case which has been, or is likely to be, taken into account in considering whether to make an allocation to them.

#### **10.1.1 Procedure**

All applicants will be notified in writing of the Council's decision

- As to whether they are eligible to be included on the housing register
- Any reasons for any decision to exclude or remove them from the register
- Their right to request a review of the decision and the facts which have been taken into account and the arrangements for such a review.
- 

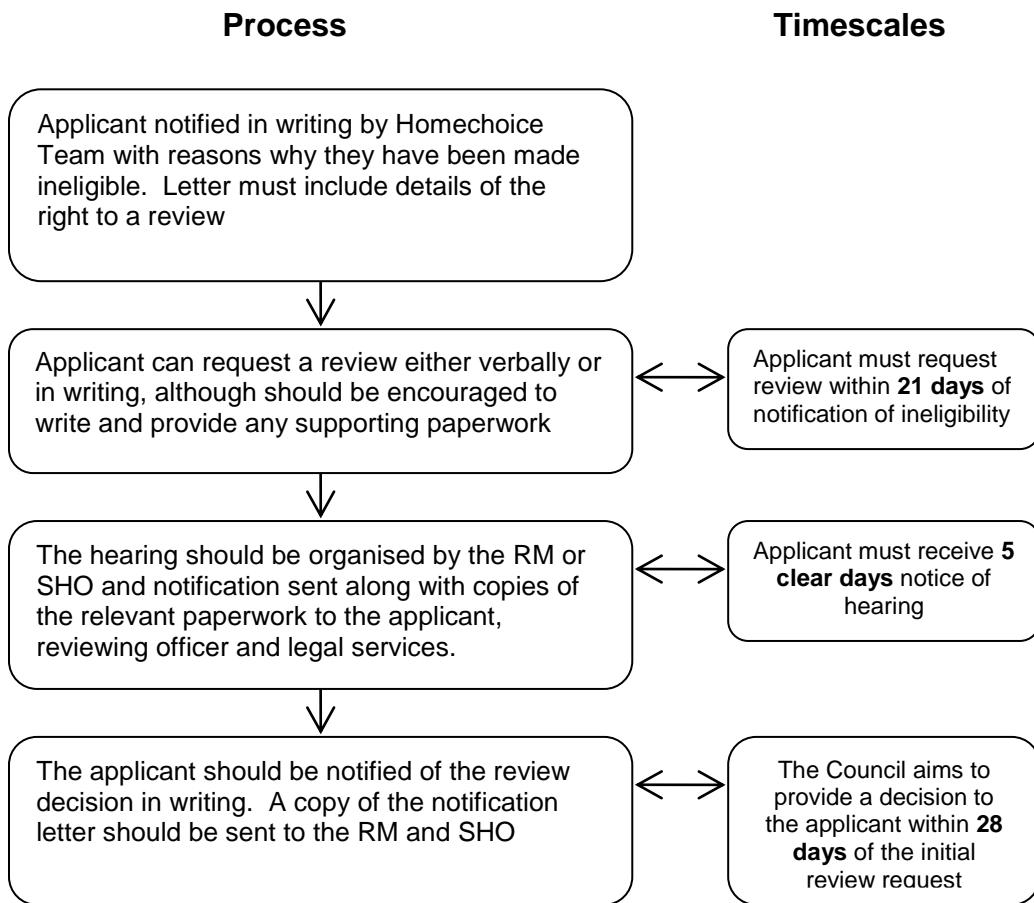
A request for a Review must be made within 21 days of the applicant being notified of the Council's decision. The applicant will be strongly encouraged to put the request in writing with their reasoning and any supporting papers, although a verbal request can be accepted. A written request will prevent disputes at a later stage. The administration arrangements for the review process are detailed at in the Review and Appeals procedure

The Review takes the form of an oral hearing at which the applicant may be accompanied or represented by another person, in line with the procedure outlined in the Review and Appeals procedure.

The Review will be conducted by an Officer from Stockport Council, who was not involved in the original decision and is senior to the Officer taking that decision, with a representative of the Council's Legal Service in an advisory capacity to the Reviewing Officer. A list of Officers who are Reviewing Officers is contained in the Review and Appeals procedure.

The Reviewing Officer makes a decision based upon all the facts available at the time of the hearing with guidance from the Legal Services representative. The decision should be made with due regard to the relevant legislation, Code of Guidance and case law. The applicant will be notified of the Review decision within 28 days of the initial Review request.

#### **10.1.2 Housing Register- Eligibility Flowchart**



## 10.2 Decisions affecting the allocation of a property including removal of priority for repeat refusals

The Homelessness Act 2002 extends the existing right to review to include the right for any applicant, on request, to be informed of any decision about the facts of their case which have been, or are likely to be, taken into account in considering whether to make an allocation to them. This includes where priority has been withdrawn due to repeat refusals or confirmed fraud.

### 10.2.1 Procedure

This procedure applies to all decisions affecting the allocation of a property, except the decision to by-pass an applicant, which is dealt with in a separate procedure below.

All applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application for re-housing. All letters will include the right to request a review of the decision and the arrangements for such a review.

A request for a Review must be made within 21 days of the date of the letter notifying the applicant of the assessment outcome. The applicant will be strongly encouraged to put the request in writing with their reasoning and any supporting information, although a verbal request can be accepted. A written request will prevent disputes at a later stage. The administration

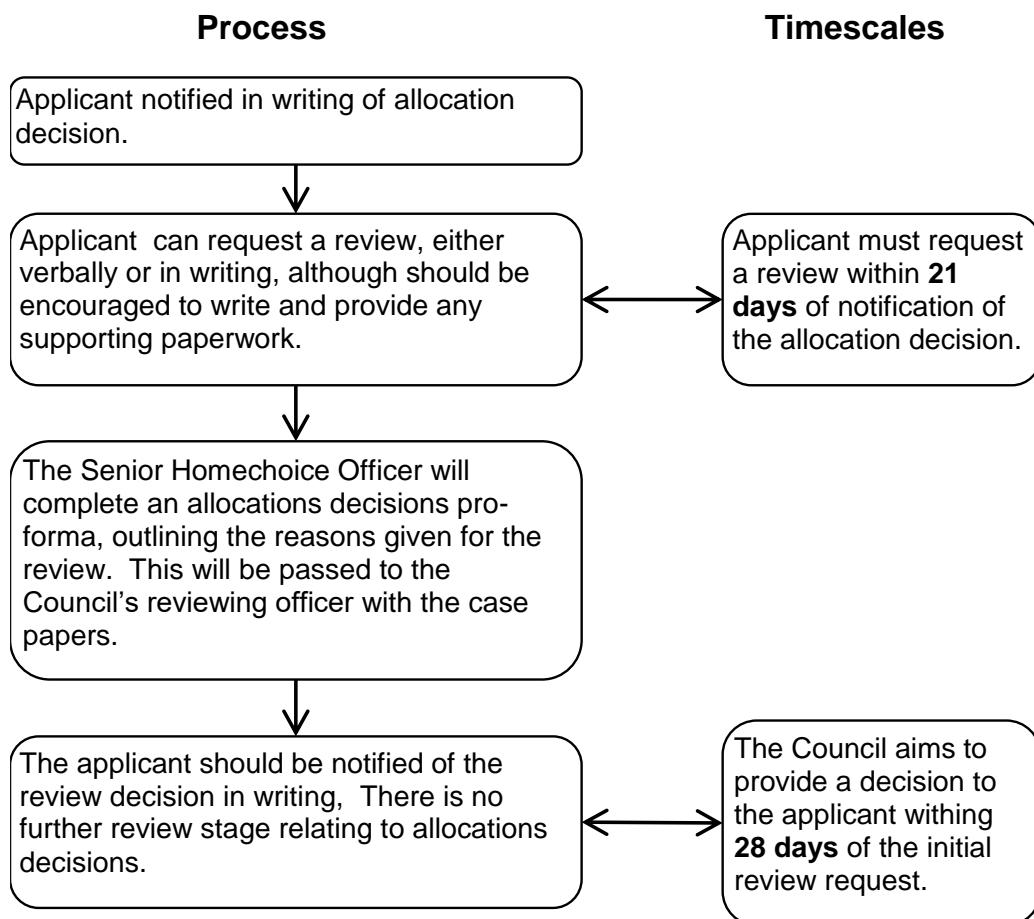
arrangements for the review process are detailed in the Review and Appeals procedure

The review will take the form of a review on the papers. It will be conducted by Council officer not involved in the original decision and senior in rank to the officer carrying out the original assessment.

Further enquiries may be necessary, for example additional advice on a medical issue and these will be carried out by the Homechoice team before the application is reviewed. When all enquiries have been completed the application file and any supporting information, including rationale, will be passed for a decision by the Council's Reviewing Officer.

The applicant will be informed of the Council Officer's decision by letter within 28 days of the review request being received.

#### **10.2.2 Decisions affecting the allocation of a property- flowchart**



#### **10.3 Bypassing of shortlisted applicants**

The Allocations policy provides that under pre-defined circumstances, applicants on property shortlists can be bypassed (i.e. the Area Team can

decline to offer the property to the applicant and offer it to the next person on that shortlist). The pre-defined circumstances when this can occur are:

- If rehoused into the property, there is, or may be a danger of the applicant or a member of their household causing harm in the locality where the property is situated.
- Rehousing the applicant into the property may prevent the effective management of the locality where it is situated.
- The applicant is assessed (by the Customer Finance Team or Housing Association) to be unable to afford the rent at the property i.e. after payment of any priority debts (e.g. court fines etc), residual income does not meet basic income support benefit levels.

#### **10.3.1 Procedure**

All applicants will be notified in writing of the decision to bypass them. Notification letters will include the reasons for the decision, the right to request a review and the arrangements for such a review.

Any property for which an applicant has been by-passed, must be held open for them during the period of any appeal. Review timescales will take account of the void-loss that may be incurred by the holding the property open.

A request for a Review must be made within 7 days of the date of the applicant being notified of the Council's decision. The applicant will be strongly encouraged to put the request in writing with their reasoning and any supporting information, although a verbal request can be accepted. A written request will prevent disputes at a later stage. The administration arrangements for the review process are detailed in the Review and Appeals procedure.

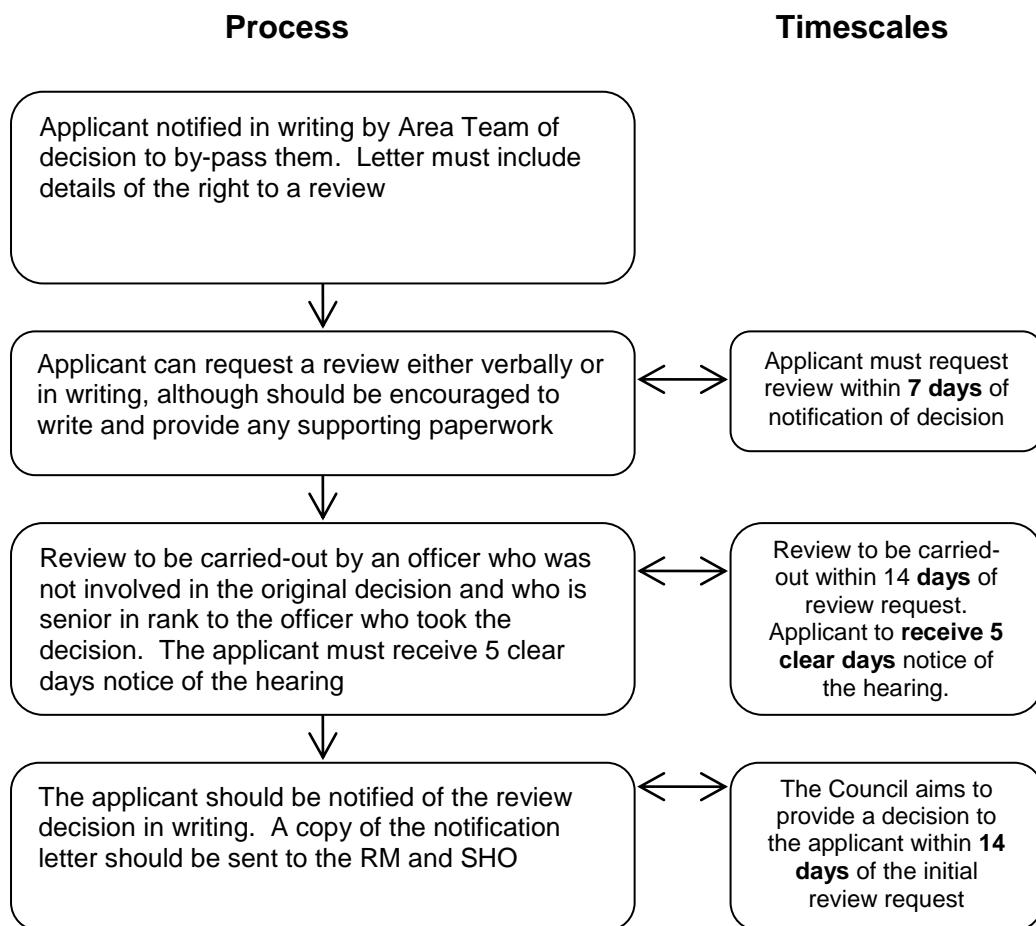
The Review takes the form of an oral hearing at which the applicant may be accompanied or represented by another person, in line with the procedure outlined in the Review and Appeals procedure.

The review will be conducted by an officer from Stockport Council who was not involved in the original decision and is senior to the officer making that decision, with a representative of the Council's Legal Service in an advisory capacity to the Reviewing Officer. A list Reviewing Officers is detailed in the Review and Appeals procedure.

The Team Leader - Homechoice will co-ordinate the review. Details of the reasons for the decision together with any supporting evidence and any written submission from the applicant will be forwarded to the Reviewing Officer at least 5 clear days before the review. The review will take place within 14 days of the review request being received.

If the Reviewing Officer finds in favour of the applicant, the Area Team will be notified within 1 working day and the offer will go ahead within the offer-timescales laid down. If the Reviewing Officer finds against the applicant, they will be informed of the decision by letter within 14 days of the review request being received.

#### **10.3.2 By-passing of shortlisted applicants- flowchart**



**END**

## **Rehousing Staff Members, Board Members Councillors and their relatives**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The Homechoice and Area Housing Teams at Stockport Homes Group (SHG) have a number of processes in place to ensure applications for rehousing are accurately assessed and inconsistencies or fraud detected.
- 1.2. However, to ensure confidence in the allocations process, it is important to have additional checks in place to minimise any potential for unfair or fraudulent behaviour by those with potential influence within the organisation. This applies to:
  - 1.2.1. SHG staff members and their relatives
  - 1.2.2. Stockport Council staff members and their relatives
  - 1.2.3. Stockport Councillors and their relatives
  - 1.2.4. SHG board members and their relatives
- 1.3. This procedure outlines the additional checks on applications required in these circumstances.

### **2. Application Stage**

- 2.1. The application form for rehousing asks applicants whether they fall within any of the above categories. When processing an application, the Homechoice Team will then place a note on the Northgate System flagging up where this is the case.
- 2.2. Before sending out a points letter, the application details will then be e-mailed to the Team Leader - Homechoice who will double check the assessment has been completed in line with the allocation policy and there are no issues that need further investigation.
- 2.3. Once checked, the Team Leader will make a note to that effect on Northgate confirming the total points awarded. Any further change of circumstances will also be treated in a similar manner.

### **3. Offer stage**

- 3.1. Where a relevant applicant is successful in applying for a property, the usual checks in line with the policy will be completed by the area housing team. However, an additional review of the offer process and application will also then be made by the Head of Homelessness and Rehousing or Head of Property Management as a final check, with a note added to Northgate.
- 3.2. The Northgate system provides a full audit trail of who has added notes and at what time, accessed through a password protected log-in so physical signatures are not required.

# APPENDIX 1

## 4. Nominations

- 4.1. If an applicant with links to SHG detailed in points 1.2.1 to 1.2.4 (above) is successful in bidding for a housing association property, prior to their nomination, the Homechoice Team will require them to supply proof of address, ID and confirmation their circumstances are unchanged. The housing association will be informed of the applicant's links to SHG in the nomination letter, so further checks can be made if desired.
- 4.2. A note this this effect will again be made on the Northgate system by the Head of Rehousing Services or Head of Property Management when satisfied there are no issues with the application and relevant proofs seen.

## **Special Housing Panel (SHP)-Terms of Reference**

### **1 Purpose of the Special Housing Panel**

- 1.1. The role of the Special Housing Panel is primarily to determine the priority of referred cases, or make recommendations for direct offers where the circumstances are not reflected within the Allocation Policy. The Panel's remit is limited to exceptional cases that the Policy is unable to address, not just where an applicant is unsuccessful in applying through the usual mechanisms.
- 1.2. The Panel also reviews and makes recommendations on cases where an award of 50 medical, social and welfare points has been to ensure cases are progressed, and homeless applicants in temporary accommodation having difficulty in moving on.

### **2 Business of the Special Housing Panel**

#### **2.1. *Case review***

Officers will present cases to the Special Housing Panel as outlined above, and make recommendations for action on a majority basis.

Cases can be referred by any Stockport Homes manager, the Social Care or Council Housing Strategy representative after discussion with the Rehousing Services Manager or Team Leader - Homechoice to ensure the circumstances cannot be reflected in the usual policy.

#### **2.2. *Monitoring***

The Special Housing Panel will monitor all cases where there has been a medical, social and welfare award of 50 points and make recommendations for action where necessary.

### **3 Organisation of meetings**

- 3.1. The Special Housing Panel will meet (bi-monthly) or more frequently at the discretion of the group.
- 3.2. Meetings will be chaired by the Head of Homelessness and Rehousing (or in their absence by their nominated representative)
- 3.3. The group will consist of the following officers or their nominated replacements:
  - 3.3.a Head of Homelessness and Rehousing
  - 3.3.b Council Housing Strategy representative
  - 3.3.c Social Care Representative
  - 3.3.d Team Leader - Housing Options
  - 3.3.e Head of Property Management
  - 3.3.f Team Leader - Homechoice
  - 3.3.g Anti-social Behaviour Team representative

## **APPENDIX 2**

- 3.4. Cases for the consideration of the Special Housing Panel should be submitted to the Housing Options Team (nominated person) two weeks prior to meetings.
- 3.5. Details of the cases for discussion and the venue for meetings will be circulated one week in advance of meetings by the Housing Options Representative.
- 3.6. Where a case is urgent and cannot wait until the next scheduled meeting, with the agreement of the Head of Homelessness and Rehousing it may be circulated to Panel members by e-mail for consideration. Decisions will then be fully ratified at the following meeting.
- 3.7. Meetings will be minuted and copies circulated for information prior to subsequent meetings.

# **Offenders and Eligibility Procedure**

## **1 Introduction**

This procedure details the process for determining how criminal offences/antisocial behaviour committed by Homechoice applicants affect their suitability to be a tenant. The process also determines what risk an applicant may pose to the wider community or to staff. For further information on eligibility, see the Allocations Policy. See also offences flowchart at the end of this appendix.

## **2 Initial Assessment**

- 2.1. All applications received by the Homechoice Team will be assessed to determine whether any unspent convictions have been declared for a household member. Where a conviction has been declared an unspent conviction declaration will be sent to the applicant for completion (see Appendix 2) and the application placed on hold.
- 2.2. Applicants will also be asked to declare any criminal charges that are currently pending. However these will be used solely to consider measures needed to manage risk to others, rather than being used when considering whether an applicant should be ineligible.
- 2.3. Where no unspent convictions have been declared the application will be processed and registered following the usual Homechoice procedure.
- 2.4. Where a declaration form has been completed, this will be assessed at the next eligibility panel, with the exception of non-custodial driving offences which will effectively be disregarded.
- 2.5. Where an applicant declares a conviction that is spent, the application will be registered as normal.

## **3 Eligibility Panel**

### *3.1. Frequency of meetings*

The Eligibility Panel will be convened by the Team Leader - Homechoice every two weeks to assess applications where any household member has completed an unspent convictions declaration, or declared any pending criminal charges. In addition, applications will be reviewed where no offences are known, but information has come to light from an area housing team or other source relating to anti-social behaviour or other behaviour that might pose a risk to staff.

### *3.2. Membership of the Eligibility Panel*

- 3.2.a Team Leader - Homechoice
- 3.2.b Representative from Antisocial Behaviour Team.
- 3.2.c Representative from Housing Management Team.
- 3.2.d Representative from Probation

## APPENDIX 3

### 3.3. *Investigation*

- 3.4. Where the applicant is currently under Probation supervision the panel will request further information from the Offender Manager regarding the conviction, the applicant's risk and whether they fit the RMX criteria.
- 3.5. The disclosure of risk information by Probation is limited to persons applying for housing and under statutory supervision of the Probation Service, for example those serving community sentences, those due for release from prison, and those on probation license. The following information will be requested:-
  - 3.5.a Nature of offence(s) committed
  - 3.5.b Level of harm and likelihood of harm presented by applicant
  - 3.5.c Action to address offending behaviour/participation in risk reduction program.
  - 3.5.d If case falls within the GMPS / Housing Information Sharing Protocol and meets RMX criteria
- 3.6. The Probation Service will conduct a risk assessment on all those applicants who meet their disclosure criteria. They will return details of the level of risk posed by each applicant, to Homechoice on an RMX form. Other information may be sought from the Youth Offending Team or other partner agencies involved with an applicant to try and build a holistic picture of the risks they pose, support needs and triggers for criminal or anti-social behaviour.
- 3.7. Having gathered and considered the relevant information, the Panel will then make one of the following decisions:
  - 3.7.a The applicant is suitable to be a tenant in line with the allocation policy and be registered according to the usual policy.
  - 3.7.b The applicant is unsuitable to be a tenant in line with the allocation policy for some locations, property types, or unless meeting other specified criteria (e.g. agreement to engage with specified support services). They may however be registered but with a note outlining any restrictions.
  - 3.7.c The applicant is ineligible in line with the allocation policy as their behaviour makes them unsuitable to be a tenant.
- 3.8. Where a Housing Management panel member is unable to attend a meeting, the panel will proceed but with decisions made on a provisional basis. Before finalisation the minutes with recommendations will be sent in password protected e-mail for comment by a representative of the absent team. Minutes of the meeting will also be distributed to the ASB Team Leader and Housing Management.
- 3.9. The Panel will then notify the applicant in writing of the outcome of the Panel hearing, outlining the right to review of any ineligibility decision.

## APPENDIX 3

3.10. Where an applicant is eligible for rehousing, with or without additional restrictions, a decision will then be made if any risk issues exist that need to be shared with staff who may come into contact with the applicant. Details below.

### 4 Information-sharing with area housing teams

4.1. Information on criminal offences is classed as being 'sensitive' by the Information Commissioners Office (ICO), and care needs to be taken around how it is processed. The key, relevant principles outlined in the 1998 Data Protection Act are that:

- 4.1.a Data should be obtained for one or more specified and lawful purposes; &
- 4.1.b Data held should be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose or purposes for which it is processed.

4.2. The ICO further states that security of sensitive data is a key issue, and that staff in organisations should only access information they need to do their job.

4.3. As the purpose of asking for details on criminal convictions is to determine eligibility for rehousing and assess risks to staff, data of this nature will usually only be accessible by the eligibility panel. However, minutes of panel meetings will be sent to Neighbourhood Managers and whilst the data on convictions itself will not be cascaded to other officers, information about any risks posed by an applicant will be.

### 5 Risk to employees

5.1. In addition to determining applicant eligibility, the panel will also use any information submitted to it, to determine the level of risk each applicant poses to staff, other residents or to themselves. The outcome of each risk assessment will be recorded as part of the minutes of the meeting whether or not any risk is identified. As the eligibility panel includes representatives from housing a management and anti-social behaviour teams, they will have contributed to the decision-making on risk and will ensure information about risk posed by any applicant is cascaded to those staff engaging with applicants on a day-to-day basis. In most cases, this will be information about the risk only, not the information itself.

5.2. Where a risk is identified, this will result in a red flag being placed on the Northgate IT system advising of precautions that should be taken. In line with data protection requirements, details of offences themselves will not usually be placed on Northgate. For example, where there is a historic crime of a violent nature, an alert to visit in pairs or hold meetings at an area office may be placed. In some exceptional circumstances details of specific offences may need to be shared, for example where an applicant is rehoused through a multi-agency, public protection arrangement, and levels and nature of disclosure will be agreed with probation or other relevant bodies to ensure that staff and residents are not placed at risk.

## **APPENDIX 3**

5.3. Where an alert is placed on Northgate, or there is the intention to share additional information, applicants will be advised in writing. In line with other system alerts, they will also be reviewed after 12 months.

## APPENDIX 3

