



North Tyneside Council

Housing Sub Committee

Friday, 1 October 2021

Monday, 11 October 2021 Quadrant, The Silverlink North, Cobalt Business Park, North Tyneside **commencing at 6.00 pm.**

Agenda Item	Page
1. Apologies for Absence	
To receive any apologies for absence.	
2. Appointment of Substitute Members	
To be notified of the appointment of any Substitute Members.	
3. Declarations of Interest	
You are invited to declare any registerable and/or non-registerable interests in matters appearing on the agenda, and the nature of that interest.	
You are also invited to disclose any dispensation in relation to any registerable and/or non-registerable interests that have been granted to you in respect of any matters appearing on the agenda.	
Please complete the Declarations of Interests card available at the meeting and return it to the Democratic Services Officer before leaving the meeting.	
4. Minutes	3 - 6
To consider the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2021.	
5. Lettings Policy Review	7 - 52
To consider a report and presentation in relation to a review of the Lettings Policy.	

Circulation overleaf ...

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Members of the Housing Sub Committee

Councillor Linda Darke
Councillor Andy Newman (Chair)
Councillor Matthew Thirlaway
Councillor Erin Parker-Leonard (Deputy
Chair)
Councillor Muriel Green
Councillor Steven Phillips

Councillor John Hunter
Councillor Alan Percy
Councillor Joan Walker
Councillor Ken Barrie

Councillor Janice Mole
Councillor George Westwater

Housing Sub Committee

Monday, 27 September 2021

Present:

Councillors E Parker-Leonard (Chair) John Hunter, A Percy, M Thirlaway, J Walker, K Barrie, M Green, J Mole and S Phillips

Apologies: Councillors L Darke, A Newman and G Westwater

HO6/19 Appointment of Substitute Members

There were no substitutes reported.

HO7/19 Declarations of Interest

Councillor M Thirlaway declared a non-registerable personal interest in Item 5, Construction Project, as his father works for North Tyneside Council.

HO8/19 Minutes

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

HO9/19 Construction Project

The sub-committee received a presentation which provided an update in relation to the Construction Project, including the financial benefits realised, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and current position and performance.

Members were informed that the financial benefits realised as part of the Construction Project had allowed for re-investment in the housing service. The overall net benefits realised would be around £3.5 million. Investment priorities from these benefits included an increased focus on sustaining rental income, improved empty homes standards and the provision of pest control services to tenants. The benefits realised had also allowed the authority to be more ambitious in the delivery of affordable homes.

The sub-committee was informed of the impact the Covid-19 lockdown had on the housing service. It was explained that at the beginning of the pandemic several services, including non-urgent repairs, planned works and routine lettings, were stood down. Emergency, urgent repairs and out of hours service continued with risk assessments in place. A risk-based approach was taken to standing services back up, with a focus on staff and tenant safety. It was acknowledged that as a result of the pandemic non-urgent repairs would build up and there would be an increased number of empty homes.

As part of a staged recovery, a plan was developed to deal with outstanding repairs, gas safety checks where access was not possible and the increased number of empty homes. Plans were implemented for covid secure workplaces and vulnerable staff were supported via Covid 1-2-1's. The recovery plans developed and implemented dealt with a backlog of 4,600 jobs that had built up. This was achieved using in-house resources, employing some of the local supply chain and engagement of some agency staff. The outstanding work had all been physically completed and the back-office processing was coming to an end. Risk assessments and safe operating procedures continued to be monitored, as well as sickness levels and self-isolation that could impact on service delivery.

Members were informed of the current performance in relation to responsive repairs and how this compared to pre-covid (2019/20) and during covid (2020/21). The sub-committee was informed of plans to procure a unified system to coordinate all jobs. The Authority deployed a number of systems which were also supported and supplemented by spreadsheets and data outside of these systems. A unified system would bring benefits of improved data sharing, improved customer experience and potentially at a lower cost. A tender exercise for a new system would begin in September 2021, with a view to going live at the beginning of April 2023, following a period of design, building, testing and training of staff.

The sub-committee was made aware of emerging issues around the supply of materials. The increase in the number of people carrying out home improvements during the pandemic, combined with a shortage of HGV drivers, meant that there were delays in the supply and delivery of some materials. Increased costs on many materials had been found during the annual refresh of prices. Some mitigation measures, including bulk buying and alternative suppliers/products, had been put in place. The contact centre was communicating with tenants that there may be a delay in relation to certain jobs. A member of the sub-committee suggested that if supply problems continued, local authorities could work together to share out the resources needed.

The sub-committee was informed of the apprenticeship programme across the housing service. There were 25 apprentices across the service at different stages and the Health and Safety apprentice had been shortlisted through the Association for Public Service Excellence for a national award. All apprentices have a work place manager and a mentor for support. Following questions from members, it was explained that the majority of trade apprentices end up with permanent contracts with the Authority, as long as they meet the required standards and that many staff were willing to put themselves forward to mentor apprentices.

The Chair thanked the officers for the informative presentation.

It was **agreed** to note the information provided.

HO10/19 Community Protection

The Community and Public Space Protection Manager was in attendance at the meeting to provide the sub-committee with an update in relation to anti-social behaviour. The presentation covered the roles and responsibilities of the Community Protection team, current key headlines and partnership working.

Members were informed that the services delivered by the Community Protection team were: housing related anti-social behaviour; environmental crime; dog warden services; security operations and CCTV control room; public space disorder and victim support.

The sub-committee was informed that there were 3786 new anti-social behaviour related cases since the beginning of the first Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020. In comparison to the previous 18 months, this was an increase of 800 cases. Noise complaints had increased since lockdown and independent mediation was used in some cases to manage situations.

The sub-committee discussed project Vita which was in operation to help prevent youth related anti-social behaviour. The project helped to engage young people in activities that they wanted to do and offered support to those that were vulnerable. The project had been seen as a model of best practice to deal with youth related anti-social behaviour.

Members were informed of partnership work undertaken to tackle anti-social behaviour in the borough. This included operation coast watch in the summer months to help reduce anti-social behaviour linked to alcohol consumption. This was done in conjunction with the Tynemouth/Cullercoats Collective and Northumbria Police and helped to reduce anti-social behaviour in the area by 42%. The Community Protection team also carried out joint visits with Northumbria Police to residential properties where there were reports of anti-social behaviour.

Members were informed that as part of changes in the way that anti-social behaviour is tackled, all victims are now risk assessed to find out about any support needs they may have in dealing with the impact of anti-social behaviour. This involved victims completing a survey with a number of questions that provided a score at the end to indicate the level of support required.

The sub-committee discussed the security cameras that were in use around the borough, both fixed and mobile, to capture and deter anti-social behaviour. The mobile cameras could be moved quickly to areas where most needed and where people were not used to them being there. The control centre operating the cameras worked closely with Northumbria Police and responded to requests to reposition cameras when police were responding to incident calls.

Anti-social behaviour on the Metros was raised and it was acknowledged that there were challenges to addressing anti-social behaviour at stations and on the trains themselves. New CCTV had been installed on trains and at stations, along with the recruitment of customer assistants. The Authority held regular conversations with Nexus about the issue of anti-social behaviour on the Metro.

Members were reminded that at the previous meeting of Housing sub-committee it was agreed that a sub-group be established in relation to anti-social behaviour. Volunteers had been sought to serve on the group and discussions would be held with the Chair of the sub-committee and relevant officers to help shape a scope for a study prior to the initial meeting of the group.

It was **agreed** to note the information provided in the presentation and discussion.

Meeting: Housing Sub

Date: 11 October 2021

Title: Lettings Policy Review

Author: Liz Archer

Service: Housing Services

Wards affected: Borough Wide

1. Purpose of Report

This paper provides an overview of North Tyneside Council's lettings policy. It takes account of the relevant legislation and sets the context for the current lettings policy review.

A presentation will be delivered at Housing Sub on 11 October 2021. This will provide feedback on the outcomes of the previous lettings review, whilst also detailing the main areas considered under the current review.

2. Introduction

As a social landlord, North Tyneside Council must comply with relevant legislation. Of particular note to lettings is part 6 of the Housing Act 1996, which has subsequently been updated with guidance notes.

North Tyneside Council has a published lettings policy, with the most recent version approved in 2019. The lettings policy takes account of the relevant legislation, best practice and local issues.

All housing applications are assessed in accordance with the Lettings Policy, to confirm eligibility and identify priority.

Empty homes within North Tyneside are also let in line with the Lettings Policy. It is our aim to advertise as many homes as possible via Tyne and Wear Homes, a choice based lettings system. Customers are given the opportunity to review available homes and express an interest, or 'bid', for homes which match their needs and preferences.

There are also circumstances where the Authority will make a 'direct offer' to a customer, which means that we allocate a home without advertising. The majority of 'direct lets' occur where the Authority has accepted a full duty to a homeless applicant, or in cases where applicants are identified as being at high risk and require an urgent move.

3. **Details**

The North Tyneside Council Lettings Policy 2019 is a comprehensive document and includes information on the following:

- Applying for a home
- Eligibility to join the scheme
- How applications are assessed, with reasonable preference categories identified
- The bidding and shortlisting process
- Making offers of accommodation

The Lettings Policy was last reviewed in 2019. It is best practice to review the policy every two years, to ensure it remains fit for purpose and account for any changes within the sector. It is for this reason that the Lettings Policy is currently being reviewed.

Key considerations for the current review are:

- Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – the new legislation was enacted this year. The existing policy has been reviewed and we are satisfied that the policy already meets the requirements to provide priority for rehousing.
- EU Nationals – following a change for EEA citizens, it has also been confirmed that this is covered by current policy, due to the requirement to be ‘in a class prescribed as eligible by the Secretary of State’.
- Rent Arrears – due to the changing financial climate, it would seem appropriate to consider whether the current Lettings Policy takes account of financial circumstances, where rent arrears have accrued. For example, the government previously introduced an eviction ban (which has now been lifted), due to hardship potentially experienced during the pandemic.
The policy considers the severity of the rent arrears; wilful behaviour; and increase in rent arrears since been accepted onto the scheme. Where there are arrears and depending on the circumstances, there is the option to join the scheme, but where appropriate, with a reduced priority. In other cases, it may be more suitable to consider a direct offer.
It is therefore felt that the current policy offers a firm but fair approach, which enables individual circumstances to be assessed, both in terms of their housing need and suitability to be a tenant.
- Armed Forces – Guidance was issued by MHCLG in 2020 to ‘Improve Access to Social Housing for Members of the Armed Forces’. Whilst the current policy considers Members of the Armed Forces, additional requirements have been set which include consideration of adult children leaving the family home; disregarding lump sum payments from MOD when completing a financial assessment; and awarding priority on more than one occasion within 5 years of leaving service.

4. **Consultation**

Having completed a review of the Lettings Policy, at this stage, it is felt that there are no significant changes to be made.

Meeting with members is the first stage of the process. From there, the Lettings Review will be referred to Legal Services, to confirm wider consultation requirements.

5. Further Information

North Tyneside Council Lettings Policy 2019 can be accessed via:

https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/sites/default/files/web-page-related-files/North%20Tyneside%20Lettings%20Policy%20December%202019_1.pdf



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North Tyneside Council Lettings Policy 2019



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1 Aims and Objectives of North Tyneside Council's Lettings Service

To help people access secure, suitable and affordable homes within North Tyneside, the Authority will:-

- Work with our Registered Provider Partners and Private Landlords to ensure that people seeking a home or those who need to move from their current home, have as much choice as possible over where they live.
- Be an effective partner in the Tyne and Wear Homes Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme, to enhance opportunities for housing applicants to move homes within our own Borough and between that of our Tyne and Wear Partners.
- Recognise the support needs of vulnerable people and work with organisations providing care and support, in order that they can access the help they need and where relevant provide help for them to stay in their own home or obtain support in moving home.
- Meet all legislative requirements, including the two primary Housing Acts, 1985 & 1996 and act in accordance with the statutory Codes of Guidance.
- Promote equalities in our service to help ensure that no customer or potential customer is unjustifiably treated less favourably on any grounds, subject to the protected characteristics as defined under s4 of the Equalities Act 2010.
- Contribute to preventing anti-social behaviour and nuisance and promote neighbourhood sustainability.

Our Lettings Service is designed to: -

- Offer as much choice as possible to applicants.
- Provide a fair and transparent service in which people receive the correct priority for housing.
- Meet housing need.
- Support and assist customers to understand how the service works, in order that they can access and use the service.
- Create more sustainable communities, as people who exercise choice over where they want to live are more likely to want to stay there.
- Make efficient use of our resources and those of our partners.

1.1 An Applicant's Rights

Upon request, applicants for housing have the following rights to information. The right to: -

- Free advice and assistance about their housing options.

- Be informed in writing of any decision about their housing application, what facts were taken into account in assessing their application; how their application was treated; what preference is to be given and whether appropriate housing to meet their needs is likely to become available.
- Be notified in writing of any decision that preference will not be given because of unacceptable behaviour.
- Request a review of decisions made on their application and subsequent priority.

Confidentiality and Access to Information

The Data Protection Act 2018 ('the Act') and General Data Protection Regulations 2016 (GDPR) are designed to protect personal data about living individuals (Data Subjects). The Act also places obligations on those organisations that process personal data (Data Controllers). As a Data Controller, the Authority and its Tyne and Wear Homes partners are committed to complying with this legislation by applying the Principles of the Act and GDPR.

The Authority policy on Data Protection can be viewed at <https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/1001/data-protection>

The Authority will seek only information that they require to assess the applicant's application and housing needs. The Authority will collect and keep data in accordance with the Act and GDPR, Authority policy and ICO guidelines on handling personal data.

Confidential information held about applicants will not be disclosed to third parties apart from:

- Where the individual who is the subject of the confidential information has consented to the disclosure
- Where the Authority is required by law to make such disclosures
- Where disclosure is made in accordance with an information sharing protocol

Freedom of Information

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Authority has been obliged to provide information to anyone who requests it, unless an exemption applies. It is free to make a request, which can be done online at <https://services.northtyneside.gov.uk/freedom/Welcome.aspx>

Subject Access Request

If you are looking for your own personal information, this is handled under the Data Protection Act 2018 as a subject access request, further information can be found on North Tyneside Councils webpage <https://services.northtyneside.gov.uk/freedom/Welcome.aspx>.

Please note that we cannot provide you with personal information about third parties, in doing so will breach the Data Protection Act 2018.

2 Choice Statement: Tyne and Wear Homes

The Authority is a partner of the Tyne and Wear Homes Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme that allows applicants to search and apply for available homes from across Tyne and Wear. The four main authorities - Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and their respective housing organisations have joined together to bring applicants an easier way to access all of the housing options available.

The scheme aims to promote greater choice and wider housing options through a gateway for accessing affordable housing in the social and private rented sectors and for shared ownership. It provides the applicant with a choice of landlords and tenures.

Mutual exchanges within and between social sectors for existing tenants will be promoted through our Lettings Service.

The Authority must make sure it makes the best use of its available homes.

2.1 Working with Registered Providers and Private Landlords

The Authority will work with Registered Providers and Private Landlords to meet housing need and to offer greater choice.

Applicants who have indicated their interest in Registered Provider's accommodation will be short-listed for nominations using this policy but the Registered Provider may apply their own policies in determining which applicants will be offered accommodation or which applicants they may wish to exclude.

An offer of suitable accommodation from a Registered Provider or Private Landlord to a priority homeless applicant through this scheme, will be regarded as a final offer, discharging the Authority's homeless duty under section 193(5) & (7) of the Housing Act 1996.

2.2 Shared Ownership

Tyne and Wear Homes may advertise shared ownership properties; however the Shared Ownership Organisation will consider any application using their set criteria.

3 Applying for a Home

To register for the Tyne and Wear Homes Scheme, all applicants must complete an application form and they must be registered and accepted before they can participate in the scheme. Applicants can register for the scheme at www.tyneandwearhomes.org.uk

North Tyneside Homefinder is part of the Tyne and Wear Homes Lettings Scheme. All allocations will be made in line with North Tyneside Council's Lettings Policy.

3.1 Sub-regional Applications

If an applicant has applied to the Tyne and Wear Sub-regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme and their application for housing has not been assessed by North Tyneside Council, they will not be able to bid for available homes owned by the Council. Applicants will only be able to bid for available homes, once they have been assessed and accepted onto North Tyneside Council's Housing Register.

3.2 Information Required From Housing Applicants

Housing applicants have a responsibility to provide, either as part of their application or upon request, information which allows a full assessment of their housing needs to be completed. Applicants will be advised of the information required. This will include but is not limited to:-

- Proof of identity of the applicant, any joint applicant or any member of his or her household, including details of any living arrangements
- Photographic identification of applicant and any joint applicant
- National Insurance Number(s)
- Confirmation of nationality and immigration status
- Information on capital and interest and/or equity in a property
- Proof of all financial resources
- Confirmation of residential arrangements for any children
- Confirmation from a medical practitioner of any limiting illness, disability or relevant medical circumstances
- Details of any previous and / or current tenancies and the contact details of the landlord(s). This must be provided for a minimum of the last 6 years or the time elapsed since the applicants 16th birthday
- Details of all unspent convictions
- Suitable references where appropriate. The Authority will request these before an application assessment can be completed and / or at any point prior to an offer being made

All applicants must complete the housing application in full, which means answering all of the questions asked. Where either:-

- the application is not completed in full to allow a full housing assessment to be made or;
- any other information which is requested or needed as part of the housing application is not provided,

The applicant will be advised that they must submit the required information within 21 days of their form being received or their application will be closed.

Where forms are returned to the applicant for completion of information, if the form is returned within 21 days, the original application date will apply.

The Authority will seek references from existing and/or previous landlords or contact relevant agencies to decide whether or not an applicant or anyone registered on their application is ineligible.

Checks can be carried out at any stage of the lettings process to confirm:-

- That the eligibility and qualification criteria are being met
- There is no evidence of anti-social behaviour, harassment or relevant criminal activity
- That there are no current or previous rent arrears or any outstanding housing debt owed to any landlord(s)
- The applicant's financial resources
- That there are no other current or previous breaches of tenancy
- There has been no current or previous damage to properties

3.3 Applicant's Obligation to be Truthful

It is an offence for an applicant to knowingly withhold information that is reasonably required to assess their application or to knowingly or recklessly provide false information that may lead to the applicant being granted a tenancy.

The Authority reserves the right to remove or suspend an applicant from the scheme. Where this happens the applicant will be notified in writing of the decision and of the reasons why. The applicant can request a review of this decision.

The Authority will take appropriate action against any applicant who is successful in obtaining a Council tenancy, after knowingly providing false information or withholding information that is reasonably required to assess their application.

A person guilty of an offence under this section (s171 of Housing Act 1996) is liable, on summary of conviction, to a fine not exceeding Level 5 (the maximum level of

fine, imposed for an offence by law) on the standard scale. In addition the Authority will take action to recover possession of any property to which a tenancy has been granted (Ground 5 of schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985).

3.4 Change of Circumstances

Applicants are required to notify North Tyneside Council's Homefinder Team of any change in their circumstances that may affect their housing needs or level of priority awarded.

The applicant will be advised in writing of any change in the assessment of their application or eligibility for housing.

3.5 Annual Review of Applications (Renewals)

Applicants are required to renew their application on an annual basis to remain registered on the scheme. Applicants will be notified of this requirement on an annual basis.

Where applicants fail to respond within 28 calendar days, it will be assumed that they no longer wish to be registered on the scheme and their application will be closed.

An applicant may request re-instatement to the scheme. If an applicant requests this within three months they will not need to complete a new application, unless the applicant has changed address or their circumstances have changed. If the applicant does not request reinstatement within three months, they will be required to make a new application and a new application date will apply.

3.6 Cancelled Applications

An applicant will be removed from the scheme where they:-

- Request to be removed
- Accept a tenancy through the scheme as a sole or joint tenant
- Do not respond to correspondence relating to their application that requires a response
- Move and do not advise the Homefinder Team of their new address within 3 months
- Become ineligible, either through the statutory provisions for persons from abroad or through unacceptable behaviour
- Have provided false or incomplete information in or connected with their housing application
- Have exchanged homes through the mutual exchange scheme

Where an applicant has been removed from the scheme, where appropriate, they will be notified in writing.

4 Eligibility – Who Can Register With the Scheme

Any person 18 years or older, together with those falling under paragraph 4.1 below, can be registered for the Tyne and Wear Homes Scheme, unless they are:-

- a) A person from abroad who:-
- Is not already a secure or introductory tenant or an assured tenant of housing accommodation, allocated to them by a Local Housing Authority and
 - Is ineligible because they are either:-
 - Subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 and not in a class prescribed as eligible by the Secretary of State or
 - In a class prescribed by the Secretary of State as ineligible
- b) A person treated by the Authority as ineligible because of 'Unacceptable Behaviour.' (See section 4.2)

Additionally, the Authority is prohibited from allocating accommodation to two or more persons jointly, if any of them is a person who is ineligible or treated as ineligible under the categories set out above.

Information as to the classes of person currently prescribed by the Secretary of State as ineligible for housing, can be obtained from Communities and Local Government at www.communities.gov.uk

4.1 16 and 17 Year Olds

The Authority will accept a housing application from a young person, aged 16 or 17 who is:-

- Homeless, in priority need and owed a duty under Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act
- A child in need, as defined by Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989, considered to be vulnerable and supported by Children's Services or other appropriate support agencies
- Pregnant or a parent with a dependent child

4.2 Assessment of Ineligibility

Before an applicant is considered to be ineligible, the circumstances of their case will be considered in line with the procedural guidance for staff. Information may be sought from any agency to help inform the assessment.

North Tyneside Council reserves the right, when determining the suitability of an applicant, to assess the suitability of all proposed members of the household, not only the applicant(s). This determination can be re-assessed at any point to ensure the suitability of the application as a whole. This will include the way in which any applicant or household member has conducted any current or former tenancies.

The Authority may treat an applicant as ineligible, if satisfied that:-

- Any applicant or any member of the applicant's household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour in or around the property or in the locality of the property
- The behaviour is serious enough to make the applicant unsuitable to be a tenant under the scheme, and
- In the circumstances at the time the application is considered, the applicant is unsuitable to be a tenant by reason of that behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour (including rent arrears) is defined as behaviour by the applicant(s) or a member of their household which would, if that person had been a secure tenant or residing with a secure tenant of the Authority, have entitled the Authority to a Possession Order under the Housing Act 1985 s84, on any of the grounds mentioned in Part I of Schedule 2 to that Act, other than ground 8.

When it is decided an applicant is ineligible for the scheme, they will be given the reasons for this decision, in writing and will be advised of the conditions they must meet before they can re-apply for the scheme. The onus is on the applicant, not the Authority, to demonstrate in any new application that any unacceptable behaviour has ended. The applicant would need to prove that they have amended their behaviour over a 12 month period.

Applicants must demonstrate that their or a member of their household's behaviour has improved and there have been no further incidents of unacceptable behaviour or that their circumstances have sufficiently changed, as to warrant a new application. The applicant will be required to support this by supplying appropriate evidence, including positive engagement with agencies.

An applicant can be made ineligible at any point and removed from the scheme under the criteria given above, for example if their arrears have increased and/or they have been involved in anti-social behaviour since being accepted onto the scheme.

4.3 Transfer Applicants

Current tenants of North Tyneside Council with no housing need applying for a transfer will not be eligible to go on the Housing Register until they have lived in their

home for period of 12 months or more and shown they have conducted their tenancy satisfactorily. Exceptions to this are:-

- Unable to afford the rent (welfare reform)
- Fleeing Domestic Abuse, ASB or medical need
- Mutual exchanges
- Any other exceptional circumstances

4.3 Applicant's Financial Resources

Home Owners

Where a housing application is received from an applicant who owns their own home, the applicant will be considered to have the financial resources to meet their own housing needs and will therefore not be accepted on to the Housing Scheme.

Exceptions to this are:-

- Those at risk of homelessness or who are in financial hardship as assessed by the Authorities' Housing Options Team
- Those moving into older people's accommodation who are aged 60 years or over where the current level of equity is set against the average price of similar older persons accommodation in the borough.

Resources

Households with sufficient resources to accommodate themselves will be required to complete a financial assessment. If a household's income exceeds the following amounts, they will not qualify to join the housing register:

- Applicants, including transfer applicants, with a combined gross household income of £50,000 per year or more.
- Applicants, including transfer applicants, with savings and or assets, in excess of £100,000.

The Authority will carry out financial checks, which may include credit checks, on any applicant, joint applicant or spouse of the household included on the application, to determine combined household income and savings.

Financial checks may apply to any part of this policy, which requires such an assessment, including at the offer of accommodation stage. Income will include earnings, savings and welfare benefits.

The Authority will not take into account the following in assessment of savings or income:

Exceptions may be made on a case by case basis for example:-

- Any members of the armed forces recently discharged from the forces with a payment due to injury or disability, unless there is an award towards resolving their housing costs.
- Those with severe mobility needs that cannot be met with the funds available.

Where income/savings is derived from the sale of any assets such as a house then the Authority will assume that this sum is available as part of the financial assessment.

If an applicant deliberately deprives themselves of capital or income in order to qualify for housing, they will be treated as still having it for the purpose of the financial assessment. Deliberate deprivation includes gifted money to relatives and friends and payments to third parties that do not form part of authorised loans that are regulated by the Financial Services Authority.

Where an applicant has financial means in excess of the above thresholds, applications will be considered in the following circumstances:

- Where it is not possible to adapt the current accommodation to meet the needs of the owner/occupier's medical condition.
- Where the applicant does not have sufficient resources to adapt the existing accommodation to meet the needs of the owner/occupier's medical condition and they cannot afford to buy or rent suitable, specialist housing.
- The sale of the property would not enable the owner/occupier to purchase or rent an alternative property suitable to their specific medical needs.

If an applicant(s) has sold or transferred ownership of their home within the last three years and the equity from their sale or transfer of ownership is greater than the average house price for similar accommodation, they may be considered ineligible, as it will be deemed that they have enough financial resources to meet their own housing needs. The exceptions given above may apply.

Average house prices in the Borough and financial assessment figures will be reviewed annually.

5 Assessing Housing Need / Reasonable Preference Categories

North Tyneside Council is required by Law to determine the relevant priority that housing applicants are awarded. The Law, as it applies to Local Housing Authorities, requires that reasonable preference must be given to those categories set out in s.167 (2) of the 1996 Housing Act and are as follows:-

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996): this includes people who are intentionally homeless and those who are not in priority need;
- People who are owed a duty under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996 (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or are occupying accommodation secured by any local authority under section 192(3);
- People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability, this does not include short term or minor medical conditions; and
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the housing authority: where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).

The Authority will use a banding system to allocate accommodation. In assessing housing need, the Authority will give Reasonable Preference to those applicants who fall into the statutory categories.

North Tyneside Council's Lettings Policy has been devised to ensure it meets the legal obligations to provide overall Reasonable Preference to the above categories of applicants, whilst also prioritising those with a local connection.

5.1 Local Connection

A 'Local Connection' exists where the applicant has a connection with the Borough of North Tyneside because:-

- They have been resident in the Borough, continuously for at least the last 2 years
- They are moving to the Borough for permanent employment
- Of family associations with others living in the Borough. A family member or family association is defined as parents, grandparents, children, brothers or sisters, stepparents, grandchildren, aunts or uncles. Family members must have lived in the Borough continuously for the last 2 years

- The applicant was / is a member of the Armed Forces or former Service Personnel and the application is made within five years of discharge or where a bereaved spouse or civil partner of members of the Armed Forces is leaving Service Family Accommodation, following the death of their spouse or partner or where a serving member or former member of the Reserve Forces who needs to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of being in the forces
- They have been accepted as a priority homeless applicant in North Tyneside and the Authority has a duty to re-house them
- Special Circumstances - Under special circumstances where an applicant has no local connection, a local connection priority may be awarded. Special circumstances may include the need to be near a special medical or support service within the Borough or the applicant or a member of their household is confirmed by the National Witness Mobility Scheme as being on a Witness Protection Scheme

5.2 **Band 1 - Urgent and High Housing Need (applicants with a local connection)**

The Authority will place applicants with an 'urgent and high' housing need in Band 1. 'Urgent and High' housing need applies to the following:-

- a) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds for one of the following reasons:-
 - i. There is a severe long term limiting illness or permanent and substantial disability where an appropriate specialist health professional has recommended that an immediate move is necessary because:-
 - There is an immediate or substantial risk to life in their current home because of the combination of health and housing circumstances or;
 - It is impossible for the applicant to live in their current home and adaptation is not practical or existing adaptations are no longer effective.
 - ii. The applicant is in hospital or residential care, awaiting discharge to a suitable home and the present home is unsafe or discharge is prevented by their housing situation.

- iii. An applicant's current home does not reasonably allow essential health treatment to be carried out e.g. renal dialysis and adaptation to the home is not possible.
- b) There is a strong likelihood of a child being taken into care if re-housing is not made and this is confirmed by an appropriate social care professional
- c) There is a strong likelihood of admission to residential care of an applicant or member of his / her household, if re-housing is not made and this is confirmed by a health or social care professional
- d) A child experiencing abuse needs to be moved away, to protect their safety and reduce the risk of further abuse from the perpetrator. This has to be confirmed by a health or social care professional.
- e) The applicant is living in insanitary or overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing conditions by virtue of:-
 - i. The household being statutorily overcrowded in their current home
 - ii. The household occupying insanitary or unsatisfactory housing conditions that pose an ongoing significant threat or danger to health, well-being and safety, which is confirmed by an assessment by Environmental Health Officers. However, due regard will be given to any remedial action that can be taken by the tenant, owner or landlord to make the property satisfactory. In the case of owner-occupiers, due regard will be given to their financial circumstances and their vulnerability because of age or infirmity. This may result in the applicant being awarded a lower priority, if they are accepted onto the scheme.
- f) People who need to move to avoid hardship:-
 - i. Applicants whose life is threatened or there is an immediate and substantial risk to life because of violence, including threats of violence or severe harassment. This includes victims of racially motivated attacks, harassment on grounds of disability, crime or witnesses of crime and where there are no alternatives to re-housing.
 - ii. Witnesses of crime who have been confirmed by the National Witness Mobility Scheme as being on a Witness Protection Scheme.

- iii. Applicants who are suffering immediate potential domestic abuse with a serious risk of intimidation amounting to violence, threats of violence or serious harassment, if they were to remain in their current home.
- iv. Applicants who are at immediate risk of serious harm or a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is recommending urgent re-housing.
- v. Witnesses or victims of crime, who would be at risk of intimidation amounting to violence or threats of violence if they remained in their current home.

Determination of Band 1 status will be made by a Team Leader or above.

All circumstances of the case will be considered and professional, statutory and voluntary agencies may be called upon to provide evidence to confirm the applicant's particular needs.

Urgent and high housing need applicants will be given priority for all homes they are eligible for, unless there is a Local Lettings Scheme in place or a Direct Offer is to be made.

Band 1 status is time limited for 3 months.

Band 1 applicants who are not actively seeking re-housing and who are not participating in the scheme or have refused a direct offer of accommodation may have their application re-assessed and a lower priority may be awarded.

5.3 Band 2 - High Housing Need (applicants with a local connection)

High housing need applies to the following:-

- a) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds. The applicant or a member of their household or for whom the applicant provides care, has a severe long term limiting illness or permanent and substantial disability, where their quality of life or health is severely affected by the accommodation occupied or by the place in which they live. An established medical need must be demonstrated, such as mental illness or disorder, physical or learning disability, progressive or chronic medical condition.

Examples include but are not limited to:-

- i. The ability to live in the community is at risk without suitable accommodation (and is confirmed by a health professional).

- ii. Where a household member is housebound or cannot reasonably access the essential facilities in the home and an adaptation to the home is not possible.
 - iii. There are concerns about safety, for example through a high risk of falling due to difficulties with access and adaptation to the home is not possible.
 - iv. Applicant's with a diagnosed mental health condition and the applicant is living in conditions which are significantly contributing to a deterioration in their mental health, where a move would prevent deterioration, relapse or exacerbation in their mental health condition and is recommended as being urgent by mental health professionals
- b) People living in insanitary or overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing conditions by virtue of:-

- i. Occupying a home on an assured short-hold tenancy for a minimum of 12 months, where a valid Notice of Seeking Possession has been served and where that Notice has no more than two full calendar months until its expiry date. The applicant would need to undergo a homelessness assessment and be seen to be in priority need but not determined to be intentionally homeless or seen to have deliberately worsening their circumstances.
- ii. Occupying non-secure tenancies and is legally required to vacate their home. (Applicants would need to undergo a homelessness assessment and be seen to be in priority need but not determined to be intentionally homeless or seen to have deliberately worsening their circumstances). This includes people living in supported housing or in accommodation provided as a condition of employment, such as those in Her Majesty's Forces or Tied Tenants of North Tyneside Council. If an applicant leaves the accommodation of their own accord or in circumstances of misconduct, this priority will not be applied.

For those in the Armed Forces, this applies where the applicant is either in the Armed Forces or has been a former member of Service Personnel and their application is made within 5 years of discharge; or the applicant is a bereaved spouse or civil partner of a deceased member of the Armed Forces and they are having to leave the Services' Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner; or the applicant is a serving or former member of the Reserve Forces and needs to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of being in the forces.

If the applicant is still in service, the Band 2 priority will be awarded 6 months prior to the date they are required to leave. This priority will also apply for those leaving of their own accord; however it will not apply to those that have been dishonourably discharged. The priority will only be awarded once.

- iii. The household being over-crowded and the applicant requires two or more bedrooms than they currently have, in line with the Local Overcrowding Definition.
 - iv. The applicant, who must be a North Tyneside Resident, has been approved for foster caring / adoption (by North Tyneside Council) and a larger home is required to facilitate the needs of the family and this is supported by the Adoption and Fostering Caring Service.
 - v. Lacking (not sharing) a bathroom, kitchen or inside WC.
- c) People who need to move to avoid hardship where:-
- i. They are suffering from the effects of serious anti-social behaviour that is severely affecting their health and quality of life, which is supported by the Police.
 - ii. They are suffering domestic abuse, intimidation or harassment, including racial harassment amounting to threats of violence but who are not at immediate risk and can remain in their current home.
 - iii. Young people who are being supported by Children's Services, the Leaving Care Team or who are considered to be vulnerable by a recognised care or support professional and an appropriate care or support service is in place.
 - iv. Supported Accommodation is due to end within the next 3 months and the household is unable to provide their own permanent housing.

All circumstances of each case will be considered and professional statutory and voluntary agencies may be called upon to provide evidence to confirm the applicant's particular needs.

Band 2 applicants with the time limit of 3 months will have their application reviewed to ensure their needs still warrant a Band 2 and those who are not actively seeking re-housing or who have refused suitable offers of accommodation (regardless of the refusal limit), will have their application re-assessed and a lower priority may be awarded.

5.4 **Band 3 - Medium Housing Need (applicants with a local connection)**

Medium Housing Need applies where:-

a) People who are homeless

- Homeless, as defined under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and are not owed a full statutory duty to secure accommodation by the Authority. This includes those applicants who are homeless and not in priority need but does not include those who are intentionally homeless. This includes households that are unintentionally homeless but not in priority need and are occupying accommodation secured under section 192(3) of the Housing Act 1996.
- Applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness as defined under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, who are not owed a full statutory duty to secure accommodation by the Authority, as they have been determined to be intentionally homeless. This includes households that are intentionally homeless and in priority need and are occupying accommodation secured under section 190(2) of the Housing Act 1996.

b) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds:-

- The applicant or a member of his household has a medical need that could be eased or improved by re-housing.

c) The applicant is living in insanitary or overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing conditions by virtue of:-

- i. Sharing a kitchen, toilet and bathing facilities with someone not part of the applicant's household (this does not include invited guests living within the household).
- ii. The state of repair or condition of the property, as confirmed by an Environmental Health Officer. However, due regard will be given to any remedial action that can be taken by the tenant, owner or landlord to make the property more satisfactory.
- iii. Over-crowding and the applicant requires one bedroom more than they currently have, in line with the Local Overcrowding Definition (see section 5.12).
- iv. The applicant or any joint applicant needs to move to the Borough to be near permanent employment.

- v. North Tyneside Council Tenants living in flat or maisonette above the ground floor, with a permanent household child who is aged 5 years or younger and the applicant is finding access to the home difficult due to the stairs.

5.5 Band 4 - Applicants with a reasonable preference but who do not have a local connection

This applies to applicants outlined in sections 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 but who do not qualify for a local connection.

5.6 Band 5 – Applicants with a General Housing Need who have a local connection

This applies to those applicants who do not have Urgent and High, High or Medium Housing Need but who have a Local Connection.

5.7 Band 6 – Applicants with a General Housing Need with no local connection

This applies to those applicants who do not have Urgent and High, High or Medium Housing Need and do not have a Local Connection.

5.8 Re-assessment of Band 1 and Band 2 Applications

Band 1 applicants will be reviewed when they are not actively seeking re-housing and are not participating in the scheme. Certain categories of Band 2 applicants will be reviewed to ensure their needs still warrant a Band 2 priority.

Where it is identified that applicants are not participating in the scheme and / or have refused suitable offers of accommodation, an applicant's priority can be re-assessed.

5.9 Time-Limited Priority

Band 1 and Band 2 applicants who are subject to a time-limited priority associated with the urgent nature of their housing circumstances, may be granted an extension to their time-limit where:-

- A recommendation has been made for a specific type of accommodation which has not been available
- No suitable accommodation has become available
- The applicant has not come top of the list for any specific properties for which they have bid on

- Personal circumstances have prevented the applicant from being pro-active e.g. after effects of threats of or actual violence or because of severe health reasons
- The applicant was incapable of accessing the scheme, without advice and assistance and this was not available

An extension of time-limited priority will not normally be authorised in any other circumstances. All extensions of time-limited priorities will be authorised by a Senior Officer.

5.10 Additional Priority

The Housing Act 1996 section 167(2E) allows the Authority discretion to allocate housing accommodation to particular types of applicants. The Authority considers it important to give additional priority to existing tenants in the circumstances set out below, to make best use of the stock and to enable existing tenants to exercise choice over where they live and to contribute towards the creation of sustainable communities.

Additional priority will only be given where the tenant has shown a history of being a responsible tenant and the Authority has not taken any action against them for breaches of their Tenancy or Occupancy Agreement.

Additional priority will not be awarded if the tenant owns another property.

5.10.1 Band 2 Additional Priority

This will be awarded to North Tyneside Council Tenants where:-

- They are under occupying their current home by at least 2 bedrooms and they are prepared to take a smaller home that they are eligible for under the Authority's Property Letting Criteria. This priority will not apply if the household wishes to move to a similar sized accommodation. In such cases, the application will be re-assessed and any identified queue position may change.
- They have lived in their current home and have been a tenant for at least 10 years and wish to move to another area of the Borough. The applicable date will be the date of application or after 10 years tenancy has been completed, whichever is latest. This priority will only be awarded if the tenant has complied with the Authorities' Tenancy or Occupancy Agreement. A pre-termination inspection may be carried out to verify the circumstances.

5.10.2 Band 3 Additional Priority

This will be awarded to North Tyneside Council Tenants where:-

- They are under-occupying their current home by at least one bedroom and they are prepared to take a smaller home that they are eligible for, in line with the Authority's Property Lettings Criteria. This priority will not apply if the household wishes to move to a similar sized accommodation. In such cases, the application will be re-assessed and any identified queue position may change.

5.11 Homeless Applicants

In the case of those applicants where the Authority accepts a duty for accommodation, under the Housing Act 1996 s193 (2) and 195 (2), one direct offer of suitable accommodation will be made.

Before making a direct offer, the Authority would need to consider the following:-

- Property eligibility i.e. size and type of home
- Social considerations relating to the applicant and their household, including risk of violence, racial or other harassment in a particular locality
- The suitability of accommodation for households with particular medical and/or physical needs
- The need for support from family where there is a high need

Applicants would have a right to appeal against the suitability of an offer, which will be assessed by a senior officer who has not been involved with the original case.

If the offer of a home is considered suitable to the applicant's needs, this will be classed as a final offer under s193 (7A). If they then refuse the offer of accommodation, the Authority will have discharged its duty under s193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996.

Homeless Reduction Act 2017

- Prevention Stage - this is where free advice by the Authority is given to prevent homelessness and secure accommodation. Personalised Housing Plans are developed and agreed with individual(s). The applicant will be assessed in line with the Lettings Policy.
- Relief Stage - this is where the individual has been has not been successful in the Prevention Stage by being supported to find alternative suitable accommodation. The applicant will be assessed in line with the Lettings Policy.

During the Prevention and Relief stages, if a homeless applicant refuse a reasonable offer they have made a bid for, under their housing application, the Authority's homeless duty under Prevention and Relief will end.

5.12 Overcrowding

Statutorily Overcrowding is determined by a Senior Officer in line with legislation. An assessment will be carried out based upon room size and living space.

The local definition of overcrowding, regards a household as being overcrowded based on the following:-

- The applicant needs two or more bedrooms than they currently have
- The applicant needs one more bedroom than they currently have

In applying this definition a separate bedroom is required for:-

- A single parent
- A couple (including same sex couples)
- Anyone aged 18 years or over
- Anyone aged 18 years or over with a partner
- Up to 2 children under 10 years (regardless of gender)
- Up to 2 children under 18 years of the same gender
- Where there are 2 children of the opposite gender and one of them is aged 10 years or over, a separate bedroom is required for each child

Children have to be permanent members of the household and the household must be their primary residence.

5.13 Unacceptable Behaviour (Not resulting in Ineligibility) / Factors Affecting an Applicant's Priority

An applicant's priority may be reduced where they or a person registered on their application to be re-housed has:-

- A history of rent arrears or other housing debt, which affect their suitability to be a tenant. This will be determined by the seriousness of the arrears and whether this was the result of wilful behaviour
- A history of anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhood or deliberate damage to their own or another's property
- Demonstrated behaviour which was not serious enough to justify a decision to treat the applicant as ineligible
- Any other breach of the tenancy conditions where the behaviour is deemed unacceptable
- Not met the Pre-termination Inspection requirement (North Tyneside Council tenant's only)
- Intentionally worsened their housing circumstances without good reason. For example, a household that has moved into overcrowded accommodation,

making their circumstances worse. This applies to new applicants or applicants who are already registered for re-housing, who have moved within the last 12 months to worse housing conditions than their previous accommodation or who have deliberately overcrowded their current residence without good reason.

This will be done by placing the applicant in the band below that of which they would normally have been placed. Applicants with a local connection, who fall into a reasonable preference category, will not fall below a Band 4.

Applicants with no local connection, who fall into a reasonable preference category, will not fall below a Band 5.

Where an applicant has their priority reduced, they will be notified in writing and may request a review of the decision. The applicant will be notified of any conditions they must meet for their application to be re-assessed. The onus is on the applicant, not the Authority, to request their application to be re-assessed.

In the circumstances where an applicant has an 'urgent and high housing need,' any decision not to reduce the applicant's priority will be made by a Senior Officer.

An applicant can be removed from the Housing Register, if for example, their arrears have increased and/or they have been involved in anti-social behaviour since being accepted onto the scheme.

6 Bidding and Short-listing

All homes that are available for letting are advertised weekly at www.tyneandwearhomes.org.uk and in the local Customer First Centres in North Tyneside. Available homes are advertised from 00:01 on a Thursday until 23:59 the following Monday. This period is known as the Lettings Cycle. Bids can only be placed during a Lettings Cycle. Note: Lettings Cycles are subject to change or cancellation to accommodate Bank Holidays and other holiday periods.

On occasion, landlords may need to withdraw a property from advert, during or after a Lettings Cycle has closed. In this instance applicants have no right to an offer.

Each advertised home will contain information to inform applicants of any set criteria that applies. It will also include information such as the property type, size, area, type of heating and weekly rent, so that applicants can make an informed choice.

Applicants (not where homeless duty has been accepted) can place up to three bids per week on advertised homes (across the sub-region); this can be done on-line, by telephone, in person or through an advocate, such as a care or support worker or family member.

If an applicant is in queue position one (top of the short-list) for more than one property, the applicant will be contacted to decide which property they would prefer. If the applicant cannot be contacted within 24 hours, an Officer will make the decision on what property is to be offered. The applicant is not able to put a hold on more than one property at any given time.

Where more than one applicant applies for an advertised home, the home will be offered to the applicant who is placed in the highest priority band, using the short-listing criteria below. Exceptions to this may apply.

Applicants who have an outstanding offer are not able to bid on other available homes.

Applicants (not where homeless duty has been accepted) are limited to three refusals within a 12 month period.

To assist applicants who have been unsuccessful in bidding, the Authority provides regular feedback on the criteria met by successful bidders. This allows applicants to make more informed choices about future bids they may place.

6.1 Short-listing Criteria

Shortlists are created in the following order:-

- Band 1
 - Date of Priority Award
- Band 2
 - Date of Priority Award
- Band 3
 - Under Occupation (North Tyneside Council Tenants only, who are effected by Welfare Reform)
 - Date of Application
- Band 4
 - Date of Application
- Band 5
 - Date of Application
- Band 6
 - Date of Application

There may be occasions where a home is advertised but is let outside of the normal short-listing criteria by way of a direct offer. In these instances, it will be clearly stated in the advert.

7 Matching Homes and Households

In order to make the best use of the accommodation, it is essential to let homes to those who need that size and type of property. When deciding the size and type of property for which applicants are eligible, the Authority will consider the Household Criteria and the Property Letting Criteria.

7.1 Household Criteria

The following apply in relation to Household Criteria:-

- A child is a person aged under 18 years
- A couple is two people living together as spouses, partners or civil partners
- A single parent household is entitled to the same size accommodation as a two parent household with the same number of children
- For households that include a pregnant woman (proof of pregnancy will be required), the unborn child will be considered in determining the household's requirements
- An older person is defined as someone who is aged 60 years or over
- For couples, only one of the partners has to meet any age requirement and only the person meeting the age requirement would be a tenant
- Households with a disability, refers to a household where at least one of the members has a medical or mobility need which requires them to an adapted property to meet those needs. This needs to be confirmed by a health professional
- Applicants with a shared residence order or staying access for children are not entitled to additional bedrooms for their children, if there are already permanent children residing in the household. The general principle is that children need one home of an adequate size and the Authority will not accept responsibility for providing a second home for children. The shortage of housing locally means that where there are no permanent children in the household, only one extra bedroom will be allocated and will be restricted to certain property types

On advertising an available home the Authority will set out the minimum size of household that can be considered. Applicants must meet the correct household criteria before their application is considered.

7.2 Property Letting Criteria

The Property Letting Criteria will be used in advertising to determine the eligibility of applicants bidding for available homes.

Exceptions may apply, for instance:-

- Where a North Tyneside Council tenant is under-occupying their home by at least one bedroom and they are prepared to take smaller accommodation (this does not include bungalows where the age restriction eligibility remains at 60 years and over)
- If an increase in accommodation size on disability or medical grounds is recommended, for example, in response to the specific needs of a child or adult or a need for a live-in carer (criteria applies)

	Bedsit	1 Bed NT Living	1 Bed Flat	1 Bed Bungalow	1 Bed House	2 Bed NT Living	2 Bed Flat	2 Bed Bungalow	2 Bed House	2 Bed Maisonette	3 Bed Flat	3 Bed Bungalow	3 Bed House	3 Bed Maisonette	4 Bed Bungalow	4 Bed House / Flat / Maisonette	5/6/7 Bed House
Single person	●		●		●												
Single person aged 60 years or over	●	●	●	●	●												
Single person with overnight access to 1 child or 2 children of the same sex	●		●		●		●			●							
Single person with overnight access to 2 or more children	●		●		●		●			●							
Single person with a need for a resident / overnight carer							●	●	●	●							
Single person requiring level access accommodation (see note below)			●	●													
Couple with overnight access to 1 child or 2 children of the same sex			●		●		●		●	●							
Couple with overnight access to 2 or more children			●		●		●		●	●							
Couple			●		●		●		●	●							
Couple where one or both is aged 60 years or over		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●							
Couple where one requires level access accommodation (ground floor)			●	●			●	●									
2 adults not living together as a couple							●		●	●							
3 adults where none are partners											●		●	●			
3 adults where none are partners and where one is aged 60 years or over											●	●	●	●			
Families with 1 child							●		●	●							
Families with 2 children							●		●	●	●		●	●			
Families with 3 children											●		●	●		●	
Families with 4 or more children, depending on family size & make-up											●		●	●		●	●

● Black Dots A household can apply and be considered for any of these homes

No Dots A household may be considered for these homes, only if there is no demand from any eligible applicants and / or if there is no age restriction in place or the age restriction has been lowered

The above is only for guidance only and does not include all household types and sizes.

7.2.1 Bungalows

Bungalows will only be allocated to applicants aged 60 years and over, unless they are purpose built for disabled applicants. Bungalows may be offered to applicants under the age of 60 years, outside of the Letting's Policy, where a member of the household have been assessed as requiring ground floor accommodation and meets the Authority's Disability Criteria or where a mental health issue has been confirmed and no other accommodation type is deemed suitable. Therefore any applicants(s) not meeting these criteria will only be eligible for a ground floor flat.

In the allocation of bungalows to couples, where only one applicant is aged 60 years or over, the tenancy will be granted as a sole tenancy to the applicant who is aged 60 years or over or to the applicant whose circumstances have led to the allocation of the home.

7.2.2 North Tyneside Living

North Tyneside Living offers high quality rented accommodation, exclusive for people aged 60 and over, allowing them to continue to live independently in their own home.

Apartments provide private living space, with their own secure front door and high specification interior. Communal areas include a hair salon / therapy room, laundry facilities and lounges, which can provide a focal point for social interaction and inclusion. This is an essential part of ensuring vibrancy and maintaining independence.

Where it is considered an applicant may not be suitable for North Tyneside Living accommodation, they will be advised accordingly in writing. The applicant will have the right to request a review of the decision.

In the allocation of North Tyneside Living homes to couples, where only one applicant is aged 60 years or over, the tenancy will be granted as a sole tenancy to the applicant who is aged 60 years or over or to the applicant whose circumstances have led to the allocation of the home.

Children are not permitted to reside in North Tyneside Living accommodation.

7.2.3 Properties Suitable for People with a Disability

Where homes are specially built or have been significantly adapted for person(s) with a disability, only applications where at least one member of the household is regarded as having a physical disability will be considered.

In these cases the home may be allocated directly to the most appropriate applicant. The needs of the household and the type of home being allocated will be considered; therefore the shortlist position does not guarantee an offer.

7.2.4 Flats and Maisonettes

Applicants with children under 10 years cannot be considered for flats with a shared / communal entrance. This will not apply to applicants who have overnight staying access or shared residency to children.

7.3 Restrictions on Property Type and Location Requirements

Applicants who have been awarded a priority on health grounds or because they are fleeing harassment or violence, may require a specific area or property type, as a result of their disability or health condition.

The priority may be awarded with a recommendation for a specific type of property, e.g. ground floor accommodation. It may also be awarded with regards to support needs and / or the safety of the applicant. In such cases, there will normally be some restrictions on where the applicant can bid on, in relation to the location, property type or acceptance of support.

Consultation may be necessary with appropriate agencies or health professionals in determining what these restrictions should be. These could include, only being able to bid on a property, which is in:-

- A location specifically recommended by a health professional, support agency or statutory agency, where it would increase the chances of the applicant maintaining a tenancy successfully
- An area where the applicant(s) or a member of the household's personal safety will not be compromised, if they are being allocated priority due to risk of violence or harassment of any kind

8 Offers of Accommodation

All offers of accommodation are conditional upon the applicant continuing to meet the necessary criteria and qualification, up to the point of the signing of a Tenancy or Occupancy Agreement. Verification / eligibility checks in line with this policy will be conducted on all successful bids, to determine that the applicant(s):-

- Are still eligible under the scheme
- Their household size matches the property
- Their household meets the advertised Letting Criteria

In addition to this, North Tyneside Council (and its partner Landlords), will be entitled to carry out an affordability assessment to ensure that any tenancy offered will be sustainable. The assessment will be based on the actual income and expenditure of the applicant(s). Where the Landlord considers the applicant cannot afford the level of rent attributed to a property, no offer of accommodation will be made and any existing conditional offer will be withdrawn. Applicants will have a right to request a review of the decision but such properties will not be held pending the decision.

Prior to any offer of accommodation being made to a North Tyneside Council tenant, the following conditions relating to the applicant's present home will be assessed:-

- The internal condition by way of cleanliness and decorative standards are satisfactory
- The conditions of the gardens are satisfactory

This will be determined by a pre-termination inspection / home visit prior to an offer being made.

Any outstanding housing debt will be considered before any offer of accommodation is made.

Prior to any offer of accommodation being made to a 'none' North Tyneside Council tenant; reference(s) will be sought from their current and / or previous landlords(s) to determine that their tenancy has been conducted satisfactorily.

If any of the above are found to be unsatisfactory, a review of the applicant's application will be carried out, which may result in ineligibility or a reduced priority and the withdrawal of any conditional offer of a property.

If there has been either:-

- material changes to the circumstances declared by the applicant (for example, in the household size or their health or medical condition) resulting in a likely

change in the level of priority awarded to the application or the type and size of property for which they are eligible; Or,

- The applicant or a member of their household is guilty of unacceptable behaviour

Then a review of the applicant's application will be carried out, which may result in ineligibility or a reduced priority and the withdrawal of any conditional offer of a property.

At the offer viewing stage, the applicant will be given up to 48 hours to decide if they wish to accept the home. A longer period may be agreed with a Housing Officer at the time, where the circumstances of the applicant warrant a longer period.

An offer can be withdrawn at any point up to the signing of a Tenancy or Occupancy Agreement.

8.1 Offers to Applicants with Pets

Certain pets cannot usually be kept in properties with a shared entrance; applicants will be informed of any restrictions in any property advert and at the time of the offer.

8.2 Restricting Refusals

Applicants, who have refused three offers of accommodation made by North Tyneside Council within a 12 month period, will have their application suspended for six months. After the suspension period, it is the applicant's responsibility to request for their application to be reinstated. This must be requested within 3 months of the six months suspension, otherwise a new application will need to be made and any previous priority awarded will no longer apply.

Where an applicant continues to refuse offers of accommodation, the application may be re-assessed and a lower priority awarded and or removed from the housing scheme.

9 Lettings outside of the Allocation Scheme

The Authority is permitted by law to allocate property outside of the provisions of the Allocation Scheme in particular circumstances. Some examples have been included within the policy for completeness:-

- If due to demolition or regeneration of a North Tyneside Council property, the Authority needs to find a new home for the occupant.
- When employment ceases for Tied Tenants of the Authority and their accommodation is required for the continuation of the Service. This will not apply if their employment is ending due to misconduct or if the employee is leaving of their own accord.
- To an existing tenant who has succeeded to a North Tyneside Council Tenancy on death of the previous tenant but the property is more extensive than is required according to their household circumstances and the Authority considers it reasonable to move them to a more appropriately sized property.
- To an existing tenant or joint tenants, who have requested a move to a smaller property because they occupy a property with substantial adaptations which are no longer needed by the household and the Authority believes a transfer to another property would assist with the more efficient use of housing stock.
- High-risk offenders will be made a direct offer following the agreement between the Authority and other relevant agencies, such as the Probation Service and / or the Police, where this is in the interest of public protection. This is intended to support the multi-agency approach to risk management (MAPPA), adopted for such a category of applicant.
- Direct offers to applicants with 'exceptional circumstances' that are not covered within the policy. Authorisation for these direct offers can only be made by the Head of Service in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

9.1 Direct Offers / Direct Lets

It is our aim to advertise as many homes as possible through the Tyne and Wear Homes Scheme but there may be circumstances where the Authority will make a Direct Offer, which means allocating a home without advertising it. There may also be circumstances where a home is advertised but later withdrawn.

A direct offer can be made regardless of the Band awarded.

Examples of when this may happen are:-

- Applicants where the Authority has accepted a full duty to a homeless applicant
- Witness Protection (Supported by the Police)

- Applicants who are assessed as being high-risk offenders
- Urgent and high need applicants placed in Band 1 may be made a direct offer in order to expedite re-housing
- Any other 'exceptional' circumstances will be considered at the discretion of the Head of Service

A Senior Officer must authorise any direct offer, prior to the offer being made.

When an applicant has a direct offer pending, no further bids can be made.

9.2 Restriction on Choice

A choice of accommodation will be restricted to certain applicants, such as high risk offenders, where the need to manage the risk which they pose to other individuals or the community in general, limits the amount of choice they can reasonably be allowed.

High-risk offenders will be made a 'direct offer' following the agreement between the Authority and other relevant agencies such as the Probation Service and / or the Police, where this is in the interest of public protection. This is intended to support the multi-agency approach to risk management, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), adopted for such a category of applicant.

10 Local Lettings Policies

The Authority may adopt Local Lettings Policies for specific estates, types of property or areas.

The criteria for adopting a Local Lettings Plan are as follows:-

- The need for a Local Lettings Plan can be identified from local residents, officers of the Authority, local housing landlords, key stakeholders within the community or elected members.
- Full consultation with all key stakeholders, including residents must take place.
- The need for a Local Lettings Plan must be evidenced and demonstrated using a range of factors, including demographics, property type demand, crime and anti-social behaviour reports and complaints.

A report on the proposed Local Lettings Policy with supporting evidence must be considered and agreed by the Head of Service and the appropriate Cabinet Member.

Local Lettings plans will be reviewed on an annual basis.

11 Staff Lettings

Applications from:-

- Employees who work for North Tyneside Council
- Elected Members of North Tyneside Council
- Family of an employee or Elected Members

Will be treated in same way as any other application, no undue favour will be shown and neither will it be disadvantaged. A designated Senior Officer must authorise any offer to an applicant falling into any of the above categories.

12 Right to Review

The Authority will inform an applicant, in writing, of any decision relating to their housing application.

Applicants will have a right to request a review (Housing Act 1996 s 166A (9) (c)) of any decision made by the Authority, this may include:-

- Ineligibility
- Reducing the priority of the application
- The preference or priority awarded to their application, including the removal of preference because of unacceptable behaviour or any change in circumstance

An applicant must request a review in writing within 21 days of being notified of a decision. Their request must state all the aspects of the decision they wish to be reviewed. As an applicant is only entitled to one request for a review, any aspect of the decision letter not referred to in their request, cannot be referred to at a later date.

Reviews will be carried out by a Senior Officer who was not involved in the original decision. The Senior Officer will, where appropriate, seek information from all parties who provided information which contributed to the original decision.

The Authority will notify the applicant of the outcome of any review, including a full explanation of how the decision was arrived at. This will be sent to the applicant and any nominated representative.

If an applicant continues to be dissatisfied, they may make a complaint through North Tyneside Council's complaints procedure. If they consider that an injustice has been caused due to maladministration, they may contact the Housing Ombudsman. The contact details are: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ; Tel: 0300 111 3000, email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk, www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

13 Monitoring and Reviewing the Lettings Policy

13.1 Monitoring

To ensure that the policy and procedures are fair and non-discriminatory and that service standards are being met; standards and key performance indicators will be set in consultation with participants.

The Authority will monitor the effectiveness of the Lettings Policy by:-

- Publishing the results of lettings made through the Lettings Scheme and by Direct Lettings
- Monitoring all lettings by protected characteristics to eliminate discrimination
- Nominations will be monitored by the sub-regional partnership
- Publishing an Annual Report on lettings, including performance information on lettings
- Auditing the implementation of the Lettings Policy

The Authority will use this performance monitoring information to analyse current and future housing needs and to inform future reviews of the Lettings Policy.

13.2 Review

The policy will be reviewed periodically but at least biennial. Where appropriate the review will be conducted in consultation with applicants, tenants and key stakeholders.

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