



# **Common Allocations Policy for the North Surrey Choice Based Lettings Scheme**

**September 2011**

**Version 3**

**A partnership between:**

**Spelthorne Borough Council  
Elmbridge Borough Council  
Runnymede Borough Council  
A2Dominion Housing Group  
Elmbridge Housing Trust**

**This booklet is as required by Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. It should be read in conjunction with the current Search Moves User Guide.**





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## **1. Introduction and aims of this Policy**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Spelthorne Borough Council, Elmbridge Borough Council, Runnymede Borough Council, A2 Housing Group and Elmbridge Housing Trust have joined forces to promote a new way of helping people to move or find a new home. This is called Spelthorne, Elmbridge and Runnymede Choice Home Moves (SEARCH Moves).

These partner organisations have agreed to operate a common Banding Scheme to prioritise households on their housing registers and adopt a common lettings or allocations policy across the three boroughs for advertising and letting vacant properties. The overall aim of this policy is to ensure that all social housing in the three boroughs is allocated fairly and objectively to those most in need, having regard to any legislative requirements, regulations or Codes of Guidance issued by Department of Communities and Local Government.

Under the scheme, applicants for housing with all the partner organisations will have opportunities to apply for homes across the three areas of Spelthorne, Runnymede and Elmbridge.

### **1.2 The Search Allocations Scheme**

The Search Allocations scheme has been established with a view to meeting the following principles and key objectives:

- To operate a lettings policy based on housing need, which is simple, easy to understand, transparent, open and fair
- To ensure that every application is dealt with fairly and consistently irrespective of age, race or gender
- To give adequate priority to people who fall within the Government's "Reasonable Preference" categories
- To provide timely information, advice and assistance and make the best use of the powers and resources available to assist people to solve their housing problems in a way more suited to their needs.
- To ensure that applicants have ready access to information on their prospects of housing
- To give adequate priority to homeless people whilst maintaining a balance between the needs of the homeless and other applicants in housing need
- To empower applicants by giving them more opportunity to express choice and preferences about where they want to live whilst having regard to the availability of housing resources and the high demand for housing
- To widen area of choice for applicants and to enable applicants to move across Borough and District Boundaries

In addition to the above, this policy has been designed to make best use of the housing stock in all three boroughs and to ensure that:

- Sustainable and balanced communities are maintained
- Re-let times are minimised
- Difficult to let properties are dealt with
- Under-occupation is reduced
- Best use is made of Supported housing for those who are suitable for this type of housing and in the greatest need of the support

## 1.3 The Legislative Framework

Legislation states that when making an allocation a local authority must comply with the provisions of Part 6 Housing Act 1996. This states that the policy should be set out to ensure that reasonable preference is given to specific groups of people.

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996)
- People who are owed duties under s.190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996 or similar duties under the Housing Act 1985 or who are occupying accommodation secured by the Council under s.192(3) of the Housing Act 1996
- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to disability
- People who need to move to a particular locality to avoid hardship to themselves or others

The Search scheme gives reasonable preference to these categories of people.

Information on the Reasonable Preference categories and other factors that an allocations scheme may take into account as set out in the legislation is set out in **Appendix 1**

## 2. The Housing Registers

### 2.1 Introduction

The following registers are covered by this scheme

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| • Spelthorne Borough Council | - Housing Needs Register                           |
| • Runnymede Borough Council  | - Housing Needs Register                           |
| • Elmbridge Borough Council  | - Housing Needs Register                           |
| • Elmbridge Housing Trust    | - Transfer Register                                |
|                              | - Elmbridge retirement accommodation Register      |
| • A2D Housing Association    | - Transfer Register for North Surrey Search Scheme |

All applications for housing will need to be checked and verified before an applicant can bid.

### 2.2 Housing Register eligibility, exclusions and removals

In certain circumstances, applicants may not be eligible for housing and they will be excluded from the housing register they apply to. These are people from abroad who are ineligible for social housing, people who have demonstrated unacceptable behaviour, applicants who have been found to have made fraudulent applications or those who are under 16. These are further set out:

#### (i) Nationality and immigration status/persons from abroad

Persons from abroad who are subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 are ineligible to join the housing register unless they are:

1. In a category of persons specified by the Secretary of State as being eligible for an allocation of accommodation under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996.
2. An existing secure or introductory tenant of a council or other housing authority.
3. An existing assured tenant of housing allocated to them by a council or other housing authority

Most persons from abroad who are not subject to immigration control (including British Citizens) must also be habitually resident in the Common Travel Area (i.e. the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland) in order to be eligible to join the housing register.

## **(ii) Unacceptable behaviour**

Applicants may be excluded or removed from the housing register they apply to if evidence is available that they (or a member of their household) are unsuitable to hold a tenancy due to unacceptable behaviour.

Unacceptable behaviour is classed as behaviour that would allow a local authority to obtain a possession order against the tenant, if he/she was a secure tenant, under Section 84 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the Housing Act 1996) under grounds 1-7 in Part 1 of Schedule 2. These grounds are set out in **Appendix 2**.

If the behaviour of an applicant (or a member of their household) is likely to affect their suitability to be a good tenant this will be taken into account when deciding whether to exclude them. For example, if a household contains somebody who has been served with an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) this would be taken into account when deciding whether to exclude the applicant.

Applicants that have been excluded or removed in the past can make a new application if they feel they have improved their behaviour. When considering a new application, the severity and persistence of any previous anti-social behaviour, (ASB), will be taken into account and the length of time that has elapsed since the previous incidents /anti social behaviour.

All relevant information, such as health problems, people who are dependant on the applicant and other issues will be considered before a decision on whether to exclude is made. The interests of the applicant and their household will be considered balanced against the interests of the people who live and work in any of the partner organisation's housing areas.

Applicants can appeal against any decision to exclude or remove them from the register.

## **(iii) Fraudulent Applications**

Where an applicant is discovered to have knowingly or recklessly made false statements or knowingly withholds information in respect of his/her application for housing, consideration will be given to excluding the applicant from the housing register. The period of exclusion will be at the discretion of the Head of Service and may last for a period of up to two years.

Consideration will also be given to pursuing a criminal prosecution under s.171 of the Housing Act 1996.

**(iv) Age**

A person under 16 years of age is not eligible to join the housing register. Applicants aged 16 or 17 years old are able to be accepted on to the housing register. As an applicant under 18 cannot legally hold an independent tenancy a guarantor will normally be required before any 16/17 year old is offered a property.

### 2.3 Appeals Against Exclusions

Any applicant who is excluded from the housing register will be notified of the reasons why the decision has been made. They will be advised that they can appeal against this decision. (See Section 7 for further information on the appeal procedure).

### 2.4 Joint Applications

Joint applications may be made by:

- Husband and wife
- Civil partnership couples
- Partners
- Parent and child over 18 years of age
- Two or more friends
- Siblings

By making a joint application this does not necessarily mean an offer of a joint tenancy will be made. Local arrangements may apply and this will be subject to the discretion of the landlord offering the property.

### 2.5 Applicant Consent And Declaration

Each applicant will be expected to complete the application form and sign the declaration at the back of the form confirming that the details they have provided are correct. Checks will be made by the relevant Council, A2 Dominion or Elmbridge Housing Trust as part of the verification process that the details are correct but the onus is on the applicant to give the correct information on their application.

Legal action can be taken against any applicant who provides false information when applying for housing (including a fine of up to £5,000). Under Section 172 of the Housing Act 1996 it is an offence to:

- a) deliberately provide false information; or
- b) deliberately withhold information that should have been given

Possession proceedings can be instigated if a tenancy was obtained by giving false information.

Applicants will also be expected to sign to give authorisation to contact other agencies, e.g., social services, current or former landlords, to obtain and share relevant information about them. This includes all the partner organisations in the SEARCH Moves Scheme.

### 2.6 Change Of Circumstances

Applicants who move home or whose circumstances change after they have been accepted onto the housing register (e.g. someone joining or leaving their household, or a change in income or employment etc) should immediately contact the partner organisation they applied to and notify them of the change. An applicant may have to complete a further housing application form.

If the change of circumstances affects an applicant's banding they will be informed in writing of the outcome of the reassessment. Applicants will retain their original registration date if their banding changes except if they are placed in **Band A**. In this case their registration date will be the date their application was moved to **Band A** (see **Appendix 3** for information on the Banding Scheme).

### 2.7 Re-Registration Of Applications

Every year a letter will be sent asking if they wish to stay on the housing register and if there has been any change in their circumstances. If an applicant confirms they want to remain on the register the application remains live but if there is a change of circumstances the application will be reassessed and a letter sent advising if this affects the banding or any other part of the assessment.

If there is no reply to the re registration letter within 28 days a reminder letter will be issued and if there is no further response within 28 days the application will be cancelled.

If an applicant is known to be vulnerable every effort will be made to contact them, either by telephone, visiting them at home or contacting a support agency (if there is one) to confirm whether a move is still required.

## 2.8 Banding

All applications are assessed and awarded a Band to reflect the level of need of the applicant and local connection. There are five Bands:

- **Band A** – Emergency/Priority
- **Band B** – Urgent need to move
- **Band C** – Identified need to move
- **Band D** – Housing need but no local connection
- **Band E** – Low housing need and No 'deemed' housing need

A detailed list of the factors taken into account when awarding these Bands is set out in **Appendix 3**.

All Band A cases will be reviewed on a six monthly basis

## 2.9 Prioritising Applications Within Bands

An applicant's priority date is taken from the date the application was registered by one of the partners in this policy, except for applications in **Band A** when the priority date is taken from the date the application was moved into **Band A**.

## 2.10 Cumulative Need

If an applicant (or one or more members of their household who will move with them, as applicable) has more than one housing need (cumulative need) within the priority Band in which they have been placed, their case will be assessed by the Senior Manager or nominated officer (job titles may differ between partner organisations) who will decide whether the applicant should be given additional priority and placed in a higher Band.

This includes cases where more than one member of the applicant's household has housing needs, of such an extent or severity that the household's overall needs justify the applicant being given additional priority and placed in a higher Band.

## 2.11 Movement Between Bands

Applicants can move between Bands if:

- Their circumstances change
- Additional information is received about a medical or welfare issue

If an applicant moves to **Band A** their registration date will be the date they were moved to this Band. If an applicant moves to any other Band their registration date will remain the same.

## 2.12 Applicants Who Have Deliberately Worsened Their Housing Circumstances

If there is evidence that an applicant has deliberately made their housing circumstances worse to get more priority on the housing register their application will be placed in **Band E**.

## 2.13 Local Connection

The issue of local connection with the three Council areas is relevant in determining an applicants Band.

Applicants who fulfil any of the following will be classed as having a local connection with one of the partners within this policy:

- They currently live within the borough of Spelthorne, Elmbridge or Runnymede and have done so for at least six months out of the last twelve or three years out of the last five
- They have previous continuous residence within the borough of Spelthorne, Elmbridge or Runnymede amounting to five or more continuous years in that borough within the last 10 years (Only residence as an adult will be taken into account).
- They have immediate family (mother/father/brother/sister/adult son/adult daughter) who are currently living in the borough of Spelthorne, Elmbridge or Runnymede and have done so for at least five years or more
- They have a permanent job in the borough of Spelthorne, Elmbridge or Runnymede
- They have a connection with the borough of Spelthorne, Elmbridge or Runnymede because of any special circumstances, such as the need to be near specialist medical or support services which are only available in a particular district

Applicants who do not have a local connection with Spelthorne, Elmbridge or Runnymede will be assessed as having no local connection and placed in **Band D** if they have a housing need; otherwise their application will be placed in **Band E**.

## 2.14 Medical Or Welfare Needs

Additional priority may be awarded on medical or welfare grounds if the information received indicates a move will benefit the health and wellbeing of the applicant and/or their household following consideration by a senior officer and/or advice from an independent medical adviser. The medical assessment will reflect the household as a whole and one banding will be awarded per application which will take into account the factors for the applicant and if relevant, any individual household members.

Where an applicant requires a live-in carer, the carer will be treated as a member of the household and the bedroom requirement will be assessed accordingly.

The awards are as follows:

**Band A** – where the applicant is assessed as having an “emergency” medical or welfare need to move because the current property is unsuitable.

This award should be for the most extreme cases where the need to move is seen as an emergency and it is highly probable the applicant’s life might be at risk or there is a risk of severe injury to an applicant or a member of the household included on the application if they continue to occupy the accommodation.

**Band B** – where the applicant is assessed as having an “urgent” medical or welfare need to move because the current property is unsuitable

**Band C** – where there is an “identified” medical or welfare need to move because the current property is unsuitable

If there is a relevant change in the applicant’s circumstances, e.g. a change of address, a new application and a medical assessment may need to be completed.

Applicants will be notified in writing of the decision about a medical or welfare award. They will be advised they have the right to appeal against the decision. (See Section 8 for further information on the appeals procedure).

## 2.15 Income/Financial Resources

Less priority (**Band E** priority) may be given to applicants who:

- Can afford to buy a property on the open market that is suitable for their needs, either outright or by shared ownership
- Can afford to rent a privately rented property without recourse to means tested benefits
- Owned a property that was suitable for their needs but transferred/sold it within the last three years when it was reasonable for them to continue living there
- Have disposed of an asset within the last three years which they could have reasonably been expected to use to resolve their housing difficulties
- Are owner occupiers with an asset that could be used to obtain accommodation suitable for their needs

If an applicant has the income to pursue shared ownership they will be sent details of any Shared Ownership, Homebuy and Starter Home (keyworkers only) Schemes.

It is considered reasonable for an applicant to use up to 30% of their gross income towards housing costs (i.e. rent/mortgage). This threshold is used when determining whether an applicant has sufficient income to pursue outright purchase or shared ownership options.

## 2.16 Assessing Overcrowding/Bedroom Shortage

An applicants’ level of overcrowding will be carefully assessed in determining their Band.

If an applicant is assessed as being statutorily overcrowded as defined in Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985 they will be placed in **Band A**. If an applicant is assessed as overcrowded and requires two or more additional bedrooms they will be placed in **Band B**. If an applicant requires one additional bedroom they will be placed in **Band C**.

For the purposes of assessing their bedroom shortage the following criteria will be used.

Household	Bedroom Need for Banding Assessment
Single Person	Bedsit / One Bedroom
Couple	One bedroom
Two children of opposite sex, both under five years old	One bedroom
Two children of the same sex, less than a ten year age gap	One bedroom
Two children of opposite sex, one over five years old	Two bedrooms
Two children of the same sex, with a ten or more year age gap	Two bedrooms

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In certain circumstances the size of the bedrooms in an applicant's property and the relationship between those sharing a bedroom will be taken into account when carrying out an overcrowding/bedroom shortage assessment.

Overcrowding priority will not be given if the applicant has caused the situation by moving in others who are not part of their household. E.g. an applicant with a child is living in two-bedroom accommodation and they choose to share a bedroom in order to let the second bedroom to a tenant/acquaintance/extended family member.

## **2.17 Assessment Of Cases Where Children Stay With More Than One Household**

There may be informal agreements between separated parents to share the care of their children and they may stay with each parent on a regular basis. However only in the most exceptional circumstances would a child/children be considered as needing accommodation with more than one parent for the purposes of applications for social housing.

In assessing whether there is a bedroom shortage for the purposes of awarding a Band and in deciding the size of property an applicant is eligible for, an assessment will be made on the facts of each case. In reaching a decision regard will be had to what is considered to be the child's **prime residence** i.e. where they stay overnight, where there is financial dependency including who claims child benefit, who the child is dependant upon for daily care as well as social factors such as, where the child goes to school.

In considering shared custody arrangements the housing authority will take into account any court directives, however it should be noted that a family court order which refers to residence and accommodation arrangements is not binding upon the housing authority with regard to provision of accommodation. It is for the housing authority to determine whether priority should be given in respect of shared custody.

## **2.18 Assessment Of Homeless Applicants**

### **a) The Council's Legal Duty**

All Local Authorities have a legal duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) to make sure that homeless applicants owed the "full" duty under s.193(2) are provided with suitable accommodation. There is no requirement that this be permanent. Other duties in relation to accommodation or advice/assistance depend on their priority need.

**Appendix 3** shows the priority of homeless households within the Banding Scheme.

Homeless households are one of the categories who must be given a reasonable preference and the SEARCH allocations policy meets this requirement as outlined below

### **b) Priority Banding**

Homeless applicants to whom the full duty is owed will normally be placed in **Band B**. They will be placed in **Band A** if they have resided in temporary hostel for more than a year and no suitable alternative accommodation has become available, or if they are occupying temporary accommodation which the council deems to be unsuitable.

### **3.0 Advertising of Vacant Properties**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Properties that become vacant and available for letting will be advertised each fortnight through the SEARCH Moves website and through advertising free sheets available/on display in partner organisation offices and at a number of locally accessible venues such as libraries. Property adverts will clearly set out any restrictions that apply to who may bid as well as any preferential advertising arrangements that may apply.

#### **3.2 Restrictions**

Property adverts will set out the size and type of the vacant property and only applicants who have been assessed as needing that size or type may apply/bid. For example a one bedroom property would be restricted to single or couples only, a sheltered housing flat would be restricted to elderly applicants only, a property with adaptations suitable for a disabled occupant may be restricted to applicants requiring such adaptations.

Some property adverts will also restrict bidding to tenants only, tenants of specific landlords only or to Home seekers only. Where this is done, this is intended to ensure that the needs of tenants needing to move to alternative accommodation can be balanced alongside meeting the needs of new applicants.

At any given time a landlord partner may reduce the number of properties available for transfer in order to manage/ balance the cost of its voids . Any emergency transfer cases that arise during a period of restricted transfer activity may be considered for a direct let. Whilst recognising the need for landlords to occasionally restrict transfers, the Search Moves partnership will monitor periods of restricted availability of vacancies to ensure there is no detriment to any member of the partnership.

#### **3.3 Preferential Advertising**

Property adverts will also set out if there are to be any factors, other than Band, that may be taken into account in prioritising the applicants who have bid.

Houses with two or more bedrooms may be advertised with preference to households with a dependant child under 18. However this preference would only apply where applicants were in the same Band so a **Band C** applicant with dependant children would not be given preference over an applicant with adult children in **Band B** for example.

Some property adverts may give preference to Tenants only or to Tenants of specific landlords (as oppose to restricted bidding). This is to ensure the needs of tenants can be balanced against new applicants.

#### **3.4 Preferential Advertising Based On Local Connection**

Some properties will be advertised with preference given to applicants who have a local connection with **either** Runnymede, Spelthorne or Elmbridge.

There will be three phases to the Search Moves Scheme under which each Council will offer an increasing proportion of their vacancies to all applicants irrespective of their local connection within the three Council areas of Spelthorne, Elmbridge and Runnymede. However in the first two phases each Council will set aside a proportion of their vacancies for which preference will be given to those with a specific local connection to the area in which the property is in. At the time of registration applicants will be able to indicate how many of the three areas they have a local connection with.

In Phase 1 – Approximately 70% of properties available to the Councils that become vacant in each 12 month period will be advertised to all applicants but with preference given to applicants who have a local connection with the Council area in which the property is in. The remaining 30% will be advertised with no local connection preference and will be available for all applicants.

In Phase 2 – Approximately 40% of properties available to the Council's that become vacant in each 12 month period will be advertised to all applicants but with preference given to applicants who have a local connection with the Council area in which the property is in. The remaining 60% will be advertised with no local connection preference and will be available for all applicants.

In Phase 3 - 100 % of partner organisation properties will be advertised with no local connection preference.

The Partnership reserves the right to amend these percentage figures if there is an imbalance of movement between the partner boroughs.

After each phase there will be a full review. Phase 1 will apply from the date the scheme goes live and there is no fixed date for Phase 2 or Phase 3. These dates will be decided by the Partnership Board of the SEARCH Moves Scheme.

### **3.5 Local Letting Policies**

Some properties will be advertised with the statement "local lettings policy applies". In order to encourage balanced communities it will be necessary, from time to time, for a partner organisation to apply specific criteria designed to address local management issues. The policy will be representative of the needs of the community and promote community cohesion.

The terms of a Local Lettings Policy may provide for under occupation of a property below that set out in the table at 4.4.

Local Lettings Policies will normally apply to any new build scheme or letting of homes following conversion where there are 10 or more units to be let.

Local Lettings Policies may be considered or in existence for the following reasons:

- Planning Restrictions
- Section 106 agreements
- The proportion of homeless households on estates
- Properties may be unsuitable for young children
- Restriction on the family size on estates to reduce child density.
- Specific housing management reasons. E.g. anti-social behaviour
- People who are able in employment who are not solely reliant on benefits
- Changes to eligibility criteria for difficult to let schemes e.g. lowering the age of applicants to sheltered developments

### **3.6 When Properties Will Not Be Advertised - Direct Offers**

Occasionally properties that become vacant will not be advertised and made available for bidding. Instead the vacancy will offered directly to an applicant by the relevant partner organisation. Where properties are let in this way they will still be allocated in accordance with need indicated by their Band. Information will be published each year on the number of direct lets made in this way. The circumstances under which direct offers may be made are as follows:

- a) **Surrey Mobility Scheme**

Where a request for assistance is made through the Surrey Domestic Violence mobility scheme for the re-housing of victims of violence in accordance with the current procedure agreed by the Surrey District Housing Authorities.

b) **National Witness Mobility Service**

In certain circumstances a SEARCH partner organisation may need to offer accommodation to an applicant who is giving evidence in a criminal or civil case and they are suffering from intimidation or harassment which means they cannot remain in their current home. These applicants will be given **Band A** priority but if it is unlikely they will receive an offer within a reasonable timeframe, the case may be considered as a general exception to the Banding Scheme and, if appropriate, offers of accommodation will be made before other applicants.

c) **MAPPA/PPO Clients**

These lets will be managed in liaison with MAPPA and relevant agencies.

d) **Decants/Major Works**

In certain circumstances a partner organisation may need to move a tenant out of their property, so that it can sell, demolish or renovate the property. Tenants will be awarded **Band A** or **B** priority in these cases depending on the level of urgency. If it is unlikely the tenant will receive an offer within a reasonable time frame, the case may be considered as a general exception to the Banding Scheme and, if appropriate, offers of accommodation will be made before other applicants. Such tenants will normally be considered for a property of a similar type to their current home, except where the current property size is not suitable for their needs or is substantially larger than their current household requires.

e) **Management Transfers**

In certain circumstances a partner organisation may need to move an existing tenant immediately because of serious violence or harassment where they live and because they may be in immediate danger. Tenants will be given **Band A** priority in this case, but if it is unlikely the tenant will receive an offer within a reasonable time frame, the case may be considered as an exception and direct offers of accommodation will be made. Cases will need to have been substantiated and management action against the perpetrator(s) cannot resolve the situation.

If an applicant refuses a property through the direct letting process that is reasonable and suitable for their needs or chooses not to bid for suitable vacancies that become available, their priority may be downgraded to their original banding. This will not apply to residents under-occupying family sized homes or tenants waiting to be decanted.

f) **Exceptional Housing Need**

In certain circumstances a case may be recognised as having an exceptional housing need. If it is deemed that an applicant is suffering severe hardship on welfare or medical grounds and it is unlikely they will receive an offer of accommodation within a reasonable time frame, at the discretion of the Head of Housing Needs or equivalent (job titles may differ between partner organisations), they may be considered for a direct offer of accommodation.

g) **Exceptional Circumstances / Homeless Households**

Direct offers may be made to homeless households in some circumstances where

- They are owed the full homeless duty to secure accommodation and they need a specific type of housing to meet their needs such as a serious medical need requiring a property with adaptations

- They have not actively bid, for at least three months, for accommodation that is suitable for their needs and there have been suitable properties advertised within this time

If the direct offer is to be the final offer to discharge the homeless duty the applicant will be notified of this in writing.

## 4.0 Applicant Bidding

### 4.1 Bidding Process

The bidding process is explained in the User Guide.

### 4.2 Express An Interest

Applicants can express an interest in up to 3 properties per bidding cycle.

### 4.3 High Priority Band

The property will be offered to the applicant who has the highest priority Band and priority date on the housing register and meets the property criteria. Once an applicant has accepted an offer of accommodation any other bids placed by them are discounted.

### 4.4 Size Of Property Applicants Can Bid For

Applicants can only bid for properties that are of the correct size for their household. This is to ensure that best use is made of the stock and minimises under occupation or overcrowding of homes. The size of property a household is eligible to bid for is outlined below.

Household Size	Property Eligibility
Single person	Bedsit or one bedroom property
Couple	One bedroom property
Family with one child	Two bedroom property
Family with two children	Two or three bedroom property depending on ages and sex of children*
Family with three or more children	Three or four bedroom, or larger property depending on age and sex of children* **
Household requiring a live-in carer	Bedroom to be provided for carer in addition to the bedroom needs of the household

Property adverts will indicate both the number of bedrooms and 'bed spaces'. Bed spaces indicate the number of people that can sleep in the property.

\* Refer to the table contained in 2.16 to determine the size of property an applicant can bid for based upon the age and sex of the children who will reside at the property

\*\*Due to the shortage of larger properties, applicants who are eligible for four bedroom properties may also be considered for larger three bedroom properties, for example, a three bedroom property with two separate living areas.

## 5.0 Shortlisting, Offering And Letting Of Properties

### 5.1 Bidding Closing Date

Once the deadline has passed for bidding for a property, the relevant partner organisation will consider those who have bid and will select applicants for viewing and offering. As a general rule applicants who have bid for a property will be prioritised in Band Order (and within each Band by date order) subject to any other preferences or restrictions set out in the advert.

### 5.2 Bypassing Of Applicants

In some situations a property will not be offered to the highest banded applicant who has bid. Shortlisted applicants can be bypassed for a number of reasons and these are set out overleaf:

**(a) Applicant Is Ineligible Or Unsuitable For The Property**

Applicants may be bypassed where their household does not meet the criteria for the property set out in the advert e.g. due to age restriction requirement, due to the household size not matching the property size, due to ages of household members or because any property adaptations in the vacant property are either not required or not matched to the household who has bid. .

**(b) Applicant Is Not Ready To Move And/Or To Live Independently**

Applicants may be bypassed where, even though they have bid for a property, they themselves decide they are not ready to move. Applicants may also be bypassed if they are considered not to be ready to move or to live independently due to social or medical reasons. In determining this, regard will be had to any support available.

**(c) Change In Applicant's Circumstances**

Applicants may be bypassed where there has been a change in their circumstances which makes them unsuitable or ineligible e.g. new pregnancy, change in medical requirements, change in financial situation

**(d) History of Anti Social Behaviour**

Applicants may be bypassed where they or their family members have a recent history of significant antisocial behaviour which would make them unsuitable for the property.

**(e) Rent Arrears / Debt**

Applicants may be bypassed where they have current or former rent arrears and/or other debts with the partner organisations and which is not being satisfactory repaid.

Statutory homeless applicants may be bypassed for this reason but individual circumstances will be assessed both by the landlord concerned and by the relevant Council.

**(f) Community Safety Concerns**

Applicants may be bypassed where there are community safety concerns/risks which relate to the applicant being placed in a particular property or area.

**(g) Fraudulent Application Has Been Made**

An applicant will be bypassed where it has been found that false information has been given.

**(h) Circumstances Not Confirmed**

Applicants may be bypassed where the required verification process has not been completed.

**(i) No Response From Applicant**

Applicants may be bypassed where they have been contacted for information relating to their application and/or a potential offer of accommodation and the applicant has not responded to that contact within a reasonable period of time.

**(j) Local Letting Plans**

Applicants may be bypassed where they do not match specific criteria set out in Local Lettings Plans. Local Lettings plans will be adopted for specific

areas/schemes to ensure communities are as balanced as possible. Properties subject to local letting plans will be clearly advertised and priority will be given to those that meet the criteria.

**(k) Sensitive Letting**

In exceptional circumstances, an applicant may be bypassed for a property where they are not considered suitable due to housing management reasons. For example an applicant who has a history of drug dependency may be bypassed for a property in a area where the landlord is aware there are a number of other residents with drug problems.

**(l) Property Not Suitable For Adaptation**

Applicants requiring property adaptations to meet their mobility needs may need to be bypassed if the property they have bid for cannot be adapted to meet their needs.

**(m) Property Advert Withdrawn**

Some properties advertised for letting may need to be withdrawn either because it is urgently needed for a direct letting or because it was being advertised before the previous tenant had left and they have rescinded their notice. This could result in those who have bid needed to be treated as having been 'bypassed'.

**(n) Special Requirement Of Landlord**

Some housing association landlords have very specific applicant criteria built into their allocation policies or charitable rules relating to ages of applicants or area of residence for example . These requirements will usually be set out in the adverts but applicants who bid may need to bypass if the requirements are not met.

**(o) Applicant Has Alternative Property Offer Outstanding**

An applicant will be by passed if there is an outstanding offer of accommodation available to them which has not been resolved.

**(p) Properties in Poor Condition**

Transfer applicants may be bypassed if their current home is considered to be in a state of neglect or has been damaged by any household member or visitor to that property. In making this decision, partners will have regard to vulnerable tenants.

### **5.3 Appeals Against Bypassing**

Where an applicant believes they have been bypassed for a vacancy that they have bid for (in other words where they otherwise believe they were the highest placed applicant but have not been offered the property for one of the above reasons) then they can appeal against this decision to the organisation that made the bypass decision. This applies even if the property is classed as one where the local authority has the nomination right. (See Section 7.1 for further information on the appeal procedure).

A successful appeal will not result in the applicant being made an offer of that vacancy, owing to the short timescales within which properties have to be let. It will, however, enable the applicant to bid in the future and not be bypassed unless there is a change of circumstances.

### **5.4 Council Nomination Rights**

The three councils retain 'nomination rights' to a proportion of vacancies owned by Housing Associations including A2 Dominion and EHT. Where A2 Dominion, EHT or another Housing Association undertakes the selection of an applicant for a property

subject to nomination rights then they will consult the relevant council over the bypassing of applicants where required by the respective Council. A review/appeal process must be followed in the event of a disagreement between the two organisations.

## **5.5 Viewings And Offers**

Once the bids have been received and selection of applicants finalised (excluding any bypassed cases) viewings will be arranged by the relevant Landlord.

If the household with the highest banding and registration date (or date of awarding **Band A**) does not want to accept the property, it will be offered to the household with the next highest priority.

## **5.6 Introductory Tenancies**

All offers of Council and some Registered Social Landlord accommodation will be for an introductory tenancy for the first twelve months.

## **6.0 Assistance For Vulnerable Applicants**

We recognise that some households may need additional help with the Search Moves Scheme.

Examples may include but are not exclusive to ....

- Care Leavers
- People with a physical or mental disability
- Domestic violence and serious harassment victims
- People with Learning disabilities
- Offenders or ex offenders
- Older applicants
- People with drug or alcohol issues
- Rough Sleepers
- Teenage parents
- People with low literacy skills
- Applicants whose first language is not English

### **6.1 The partner organisations will use the following methods to identify who will require additional assistance:**

- Ask applicants or their advocate to indicate whether they consider themselves in need of support by completing the relevant documentation or speaking to one of the staff in the partner organisations.
- Close liaison and information sharing with statutory and voluntary agencies
- Ask all staff completing interviews and visits to identify potential vulnerable applicants so additional assistance can be given.
- Ensure any medical information submitted is evaluated and any support needs are identified.
- Close monitoring by the partners as to who is bidding or not and the suitability of the offers being bid for, so proactive action can be taken to assist.

### **6.2 The partners may assist vulnerable applicants in the following ways**

- Online translation of Search Moves website

- Translation of relevant documentation on request
- Staff from the partner organisations will be available to assist vulnerable applicants by identifying suitable properties and directly communicating with the applicant. They will also be able to assist with the bidding process.
- Advertisements will be labelled with clear information and symbols to ensure simplicity
- An online video to introduce the Search Scheme and how to use it will be available on the website.
- Applicants will be able to bid for properties by the postal coupons, telephone, text or online.
- Free sheets will be placed in accessible locations throughout the boroughs and can be sent to clients if vulnerability was an issue.
- Extensive communication will take place with agencies and special needs referral panels who represent and advocate on behalf of vulnerable clients.
- A constant review of all aspects and procedures of Search Moves will take place to ensure access and engagement for all vulnerable clients.

## **7.0 Appeals and Complaints**

### **7.1 Appeals**

Applicants have the right to appeal against a range of decisions made in the allocation process. These include:

- A decision to exclude an application from a register
- A decision to bypass an application \*
- A decision about banding on the housing register
- A decision on awarding medical or welfare priority

\* Applicants will not be advised their case has been bypassed but can establish this by specific enquiry if they have bid for a property but find out in the lettings outcome list that the property was offered to someone with a lower banding or later registration than the applicants within the same banding.

The applicant's appeal should be made in writing within 21 days of the original decision being made. Details of why they are appealing against the decision and any information they wish to be considered should be provided.

An independent senior officer who was not involved in the original decision will consider the appeal and they will decide whether to overturn or support the original decision. The applicant will be informed in writing of the decision within 21 days of receipt of the appeal request. The reply will contain the decision made, the reasons for the decision and the facts taken into account when making the decision.

If an applicant is still not satisfied with the decision that has been made they have a right to make a formal complaint

### **7.2 Complaints**

Applicants can use the complaints procedure of the relevant partner organisation if they believe:-

- Something has been done badly or wrong
- If something has not been done that should have been done
- If the service has not been delivered in accordance with policies and procedures
- If they have been treated in an impolite or discourteous manner

All applicants who make a complaint will be treated fairly and objectively. A written reply to any complaint received will be sent out within the timescales set out in each partner organisation's complaints policy.

Information on the complaints procedures administered by the partner organisations is available at their local housing office. See **Appendix 4** for their contact information.

If the applicant has gone through the partner organisations' complaint procedure and remains dissatisfied, they can write to the Housing Ombudsman (housing association tenants) or the Local Government Ombudsman or apply for a judicial review (council tenants and other applicants).

## **8.0. Monitoring And Review Of This Policy**

This policy and the operation of it will be reviewed regularly by the Partnership Board. Complaints and feedback from applicants will be considered as part of this review alongside detailed reports on lettings that have taken place.

## **9.0 Personal Information And Data Protection**

### **9.1 Applicants Accessing Own Personal Data**

Applicants on the Housing Registers have the right to see any entry relating to them that is held on computerised systems. Applicants can also obtain copies of their paper file subject to any relevant charges. Where there is third party information held on file, the Council will seek their permission before disclosing documents to the applicant.

Personal information provided to the Council as part of an application for housing will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Information provided will be used to process their application and may be passed to third parties involved in assessing their application and offering them accommodation.

## **10.0. Requirement To Consult Registered Social Landlords On The Allocations Scheme**

**10. 1** Before adopting an Allocations Scheme for housing, or altering its existing scheme, the Council is required to:

1. send a copy of the draft Scheme, or a new Proposal, to all Registered Social Landlords with which the Council has Nomination Agreements, and
2. ensure that all such Registered Social Landlord have the opportunity to comment on the proposals

## **11.0 Equal Opportunities**

The Council will comply with the requirements of the Race Relations Act, Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1999.

The Council is fully committed to equality in housing allocations and will oppose any form of discrimination on the grounds of sex, sexuality, marital status, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, age or religion.

### Reasonable Preference

The Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 states that certain categories of people must be given “reasonable preference” within an allocation scheme when assessing their housing need. The policy must ensure that reasonable preference is given to the following categories of people:

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996)
- People who are owed duties under s.190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996 or similar duties under the Housing Act 1985 or who are occupying accommodation secured by the Council under s.192(3) of the Housing Act 1996
- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to disability
- People who need to move to a particular locality to avoid hardship to themselves or others

The Legislation also provides that the Allocations Policy may also be framed to take into account:

- The financial resources available to an applicant to meet their housing costs
- Any behaviour of a person ( or household member) which affects the applicants suitability to be a tenant.
- Any local connection an applicant has with the Borough

Subsequent amendments contained in the 2002 Homelessness Act also require Authorities to:

- a) Seek to maximise the choice available to applicants;
- b) Support the principle of recognising local connection as a determinant of priority;
- c) Incorporate mechanisms to reflect the higher needs of certain vulnerable categories of applicants;
- d) Offer some limited support for the principle of assisting key workers;
- e) Be constructed so as to minimise homelessness and the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation;
- f) Be kept simple and easy for applicants to understand and use.

**Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985**

Grounds for possession of dwelling-houses let under secure tenancies

**Part I**

Grounds on which court may order possession if it considers it reasonable

**Ground 1**

Rent lawfully due from the tenant has not been paid or an obligation of the tenancy has been broken or not performed.

**Ground 2**

The tenant or a person residing in or visiting the dwelling house:

- a) has been guilty of conduct causing or likely to cause a nuisance or annoyance to a person residing, visiting or otherwise engaging in a lawful activity in the locality, or
- b) has been convicted of:
  - i) using the dwelling-house or allowing it to be used for immoral or illegal purposes, or
  - ii) an indictable offence committed in, or in the locality of, the dwelling- house.

**Ground 2A**

The dwelling-house was occupied (whether alone or with others) by a married couple or a couple living together as husband and wife and:

- a) one or both of the partners is a tenant of the dwelling-house,
- b) one partner has left because of violence or threats of violence by the other towards:
  - that partner, or
  - a member of the family of that partner who was living with that partner immediately before the partner left, and
- c) the court is satisfied that the partner who has left is unlikely to return.

**Ground 3**

The condition of the dwelling-house or of any of the common parts has deteriorated owing to acts of waste by, or the neglect or default of, the tenant or a person residing in the dwelling-house and, in the case of an act of waste by, or a neglect or default of, a person lodging with the tenant or a sub-tenant of his, the tenant has not taken such steps as he ought reasonably to have taken for the removal of the lodger or sub-tenant.

#### Ground 4

The condition of furniture provided by the landlord for use under the tenancy, or for use in the common parts, has deteriorated owing to ill-treatment by the tenant or a person residing in the dwelling-house and, in the case of ill-treatment by a person lodging with the tenant or a sub-tenant of his, the tenant has not taken such steps as he ought reasonably to have taken for the removal of the lodger or sub-tenant.

#### Ground 5

The tenant is the person, or one of the persons, to whom the tenancy was granted and the landlord was induced to grant the tenancy by a false statement made knowingly or recklessly by:

- a) the tenant, or
- b) a person acting at the tenant's instigation.

#### Ground 6

The tenancy was assigned to the tenant, or to a predecessor in title of his who is a member of his family and is residing in the dwelling-house, by an assignment made by virtue of section 92 (assignments by way of exchange) and a premium was paid either in connection with that assignment or the assignment which the tenant or predecessor himself made by virtue of that section.

In this paragraph "premium" means any fine, or other like sum and any other pecuniary consideration in addition to rent.

#### Ground 7

The dwelling-house forms part of, or is within the curtilage of, a building which, or so much of it as is held by the landlord, is held mainly for purposes other than housing purposes and consists mainly of accommodation other than housing accommodation and:

- a) the dwelling-house was let to the tenant or a predecessor in title of his in consequence of the tenant or predecessor being in the employment of the landlord, or of:

- A local authority
- A new town corporation
- An urban development corporation
- The Development Board for Rural Wales, or
- The governors of an aided school

and

- b) the tenant or a person residing in the dwelling-house has been guilty of conduct such that, having regard to the purpose for which the building is used, it would not be right for him to continue in occupation of the dwelling-house.

## The Banding Scheme

### Emergency/Priority (Band A)

Applicants will fall into this banding where:

- An applicant is assessed as having an “emergency” medical or welfare need to move, including grounds relating to a disability, and this is seriously affected by their current housing
- An applicant has been accepted as homeless and the full duty to secure accommodation has been accepted by Spelthorne, Elmbridge or Runnymede Council and 1. the applicant has resided in temporary hostel or mobile home accommodation for twelve months or more; or 2. the applicant is residing in temporary accommodation which the council deems to be unsuitable for another reason
- An applicant’s life would be in immediate danger if they continued to live in their current accommodation and this has been substantiated
- An applicant needs to move because their home is to be demolished or redeveloped within the next six months
- An applicant is a social housing tenant in the Search Moves area and is either residing in an adapted property in the sub-region where the adaptations are no longer required or is under occupying a property in the sub-region AND the property is considered to be of high demand
- An applicant is occupying a property that is subject to a compulsory purchase order and there is a statutory duty upon one of the partner organisations to secure accommodation for them
- An applicant is assessed as statutorily overcrowded within the meaning of Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985 (but only where the applicant has not worsened their housing situation without good reason)
- An applicant has been nominated via the National Witness Mobility Service
- An applicant’s household’s needs fit into two or more categories in **Band B** and the applicant is judged to have a higher *overall* priority following an assessment by a senior officer (sharing facilities does not count as a category for the purposes of this assessment)

Cases that fall into any of the above categories will be placed in **Band A** unless they do not have a local connection with one of the partner organisations in which case they will be placed in **Band D**.

### Urgent Need to Move (Band B)

Applicants will fall into this banding where:

- An applicant is assessed as having an “urgent” medical or welfare need to move, including grounds relating to a disability, and this is seriously affected by their current housing
- An applicant needs to move because of harassment or threat of violence but this is not judged as serious as **Band A**

- An applicant has been accepted as homeless and the full duty to secure accommodation has been accepted by Spelthorne, Elmbridge or Runnymede Council
- An applicant is overcrowded and requires two or more additional bedrooms
- An applicant is a social housing tenant in the CBL area and is under occupying a property in the sub-region and the nature of the under occupation is not related to any special letting criteria for that unit or part of a wider lettings plans for that scheme/development .
- An applicant's accommodation lacks basic facilities, i.e. kitchen, bathroom or toilet and this cannot be provided by the landlord/owner within a reasonable timescale
- An applicant's accommodation has been assessed under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System as not reasonably suitable for occupation and cannot be rectified by the owner/landlord at a reasonable cost or timescale
- An applicant is in supported housing and has been assessed as no longer requiring the support and the accommodation is needed by other applicants
- An applicant is pregnant or has at least one dependant child and is living in accommodation where the facilities are shared with others and they are lacking at least one bedroom
- An applicant needs to move because their home is to be demolished or redeveloped within the next twelve months
- An applicant's household's needs fit into two or more categories in **Band C** and the applicant is judged to have a higher *overall* priority following an assessment by a senior officer (sharing facilities does not count as a category for the purposes of this assessment)
- Care Leavers with Children's Services in Surrey who it has been agreed have a local connection with the SEARCH housing authorities during the time they were in Care and who are aged 18 to 21 years old.
- An applicant is unintentionally threatened with homelessness and has a priority need (within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) and this has been validated and acted upon by the Housing Options Team and there are no other prevention options available.

Cases that fall into any of the above categories will be placed in **Band B** unless they do not have a local connection with one of the partner organisations in which case they will be placed in **Band D**.

### Identified Housing Need (Band C)

The following applicants will fall into this banding:

- An applicant is assessed as having an "identified" medical or welfare need to move, including grounds relating to a disability, and this is seriously affected by their current housing
- An applicant is living in private sector accommodation and has an Assured Shorthold Tenancy

- An applicant has been assessed as homeless but is not in priority need within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
- An applicant has been assessed as intentionally homeless but is in priority need within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
- An applicant is overcrowded and requires one additional bedroom
- An applicant is living in accommodation where the facilities are shared with others (Note - sharing facilities does not count as a factor in deciding if an application should be moved to a higher Band)
- An applicant has some other compelling need to live in either the borough of Spelthorne, Elmbridge or Runnymede which, if not met, will cause hardship

Cases that fall into any of the above categories will be placed in **Band C** unless they do not have a local connection with one of the partner organisations in which case they will be placed in **Band D**.

### **Housing Need But No Local Connection (Band D)**

Applicants who have any of the needs mentioned in **Bands A-C** will be placed in this banding if they do not have a local connection with either the boroughs of Spelthorne, Elmbridge or Runnymede.

### **Low and No 'Deemed' Housing Need (Band E)**

The following applicants will fall into this banding:

- An applicant does not fit into any of the categories in **Band A, B, C** or **D**
- An applicant has deliberately worsened their housing circumstances within the last three years to get more priority on the housing register
- An applicant has given up accommodation within the last three years that was suitable for their needs and by doing so, has knowingly worsened their housing circumstances
- An applicant can afford to buy or part-buy a property in the private sector that is suitable for their needs
- Can afford to rent a privately rented property without recourse to means tested benefits
- An applicant has an asset that could be used to obtain accommodation suitable for their needs
- An applicant owned a property that was suitable for their needs but transferred or sold the property within the last three years when it was reasonable for them to continue living there

**PARTNER CONTACT INFORMATION**

The Housing Options Team  
Spelthorne Borough Council  
Council Offices  
Knowle Green  
Staines, TW18 1XB  
Tel: 01784 446380/1/2/3/4/5/6

The Housing Allocations Team  
Elmbridge Borough Council  
Civic Centre  
High Street  
Esher  
Surrey, KT10 9SD  
Tel: 01372 474474

The Housing Allocations Team  
Runnymede Borough Council  
Runnymede Civic Centre  
Station Road  
Addlestone  
Surrey, KT15 2AH  
Tel: 01932 425832

The Lettings Team  
A2 Housing Group  
Head Office  
Spelthorne House  
Thames Street  
Staines, TW18 4TA  
Tel: 0845 408 6666

The Customer Services Team  
Elmbridge Housing Trust  
Case House  
85-89 High Street  
Walton-on-Thames  
Surrey, KT12 1DZ  
Tel: 01932 235700

### **Officer Roles And Responsibilities**

This appendix explains which officers are responsible for taking decisions under the common allocations policy.

Whenever an officer is named, the decision can be taken by a more senior officer in their management line.

### **Eligibility**

The Allocations Officers or equivalent (job titles may differ between partner organisations) have the authority to decide whether an applicant is eligible to apply to join the housing register in line with the criteria contained in the common lettings policy.

### **Assessing Priority**

The Allocations Officers or equivalent (job titles may differ between partner organisations) are responsible for assessing an applicant's housing need in line with the common lettings policy and placing them in a specific banding. The application will then be checked and signed by another Officer who was not involved in the original assessment.

### **Cumulative Need**

The Housing Needs Manager or equivalent or designated officer (job titles may differ between partner organisations) has the authority to put an applicant in a higher banding where their needs fit into two or more categories within a banding. This is subject to an individual assessment of their needs and sharing facilities does not count as a category for the purposes of this assessment.

### **Removing An Application From The Housing Register**

The Allocations Officers or equivalent (job titles may differ between partner organisations) will decide whether it is appropriate to remove an applicant from the register in line with the common lettings policy.

### **Reviews And Appeals**

If an applicant submits an appeal requesting a review of a decision made, a senior officer who was not involved in the original decision will consider the request. No officers directly involved in the original decision will take part in any review.

### **Direct Lets**

#### **a) Supported Housing**

The Housing Needs Manager or equivalent (job titles may differ between partner organisations) has the authority to make a direct let to an applicant that requires supported accommodation where supported housing is allocated through the housing register and this arrangement exists with the supported housing provider

#### **b) Reciprocals**

The Housing Needs Manager or equivalent (job titles may differ between partner organisations) has the authority to accept a reciprocal in line with the criteria set out in *Section 4.5b* of the common lettings policy.

c) **Decants/Major Works**  
The Housing Needs Manager or equivalent (job titles may differ between partner organisations) has the authority to make a direct let to a tenant of a partner organisation in the common lettings policy, if after being placed in **Band A** it is unlikely they will receive an offer within a reasonable timeframe.

d) **Management Transfers**  
The Housing Needs Manager or equivalent (job titles may differ between partner organisations) has the authority to make a direct let to a tenant of a partner organisation in the common lettings policy, if after being placed in **Band A** it is unlikely they will receive an offer within a reasonable timeframe.

**NOTE: This will be an action for the relevant landlord?? – EHT tenant on their list from their percentage?**

e) **Homeless Applicants**  
The Housing Needs Manager or equivalent (job titles may differ between partner organisations) has the authority to make a direct let to a homeless applicant that has unreasonably failed to register an interest in suitable properties.

f) **Exceptional Housing Need**  
The Head of Housing Needs or equivalent (job titles may differ between partner organisations) has the authority to:

- agree a priority offer of accommodation if there is evidence of immediate and exceptional need
- agree to offer an applicant rented accommodation if their income is of a level where they can afford to part-buy, but they cannot secure a mortgage and there is evidence of immediate and exceptional need

g) **Significant Adaptations**  
Where the applicant has a requirement for significant adaptations and a suitable property matching these requirements becomes available.