

Housing Allocation Scheme

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Housing Act 1996 (as amended) requires every local authority to develop and publish an allocation scheme. This document sets out Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Allocation scheme.
- 1.2. In view of the demand for social housing in the Borough of Runnymede, the Council believes that priority should be given to those applicants who have a real and enduring commitment to the Borough and that this will also help build a stronger local community. The Council believes that having a local residence connection, whether this is achieved through residing in the Borough, working here or by reason of some other circumstance provided for in this Scheme, will help achieve those aims.
- 1.3. The scheme is designed to outline who is eligible and qualifies to register for an allocation of social housing. There is significant demand for social housing in Runnymede and not everyone will be entitled to a social home.
- 1.4. We have developed our scheme to give preference to those groups with the greatest level of need to move, as set out in legislation. The scheme defines the priority awarded based on each individual case and sets out the procedure we will follow when allocating social homes to applicants.
- 1.5. Acceptance onto the register is not an immediate housing solution and does not guarantee an offer of accommodation. If urgent housing assistance is required, the applicant will need to contact the Council's Housing Solutions Team.

Aims of the scheme

- 1.6. This Allocation scheme has been devised to ensure that access to social housing supports the corporate strategic aims of the Council, reflects current legislation, and takes into account the limited supply of social housing in the borough.
- 1.7. The Allocation Scheme aims to treat all applicants for social housing in a fair, equitable and transparent manner. The scheme is designed to offer most applicants some degree of choice in the accommodation that they express a preference for, such as the location. However, this must be balanced with the needs of all applicants, the need to create sustainable communities and the need for the Council to make the best use of the limited social housing stock.
- 1.8. The specific aims of the scheme are to:
 - Meet statutory obligations.
 - Ensure the best use of social housing stock.
 - Ensure social housing fraud is addressed and dealt with robustly.
 - Meet the aims of the Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy.

- Provide housing applicants with a fair and transparent system by which they are prioritised for housing.
- Promote successful and sustainable tenancies.
- Ensure that priority is given to those with the greatest need for social housing.
- Promote and develop sustainable communities.

2. The Legislative Framework

- 2.1 The main pieces of legislation underpinning the allocation of social housing is the Housing Act 1996, Part VI (as amended), the Equality Act 2010 and the Localism Act 2011. The legislation requires Local Authorities to publish an allocation scheme for determining priorities and defining the procedures to be followed in allocating social housing. The Council may allocate housing in such a manner as it considers appropriate, subject to the specific provisions in Part VI of the Housing Act 1996.
- 2.2 In accordance with S.159 (4B) of the Act (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) the allocation scheme includes transfer tenants with reasonable preference. The scheme has been written with consideration for the legislation as well as the Government's code of guidance 'Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England (2020)' and 'Providing social housing for local people: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England (2013)'.
- 2.3 In accordance with S.166A (3) to (8) Housing Act 1996, the Council will give 'Reasonable Preference' to people with high levels of assessed housing need. The scheme has been developed with regards to these provisions, as well as the following statutory regulations:
- Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, and other relevant legislation.
 - Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997
 - Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002
 - Children's Act 2004, sections 10 and 11
 - Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006
 - Housing Allocations – Members of the Armed forces 2009
 - Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012
 - Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012
 - The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015

- Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse in refuges or other types of temporary accommodation statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England, 2018
- Improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces Statutory Guidance 2020
- The Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021

2.4 In framing and reviewing this Scheme, arrangements have been made under which the views of Surrey County Council have been sought, considered and where appropriate implemented having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young persons.

2.5 The Council has also had regard to existing case law, the Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy, the Council's Tenancy Strategy, and the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant when devising this scheme.

Definition of an Allocation

2.6 For the purposes of Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), a housing authority allocates accommodation when it:

- Selects a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by that authority
- Nominates a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by another housing authority
- Nominates a person to be an assured tenant of accommodation held by a Private Registered Provider

2.7 The term 'assured tenant' includes a person with an assured shorthold tenancy. 'Secure tenant' includes a person with a flexible tenancy granted under s.107A of the Housing Act 1985¹.

Additional Preference

2.8 The Council can give additional preference to particular groups of people who have a reasonable preference, if they have urgent housing needs. The Code of Guidance for the Allocation of Social Housing sets out examples that the authority should consider, for example those who need to move urgently because:

- Of a life-threatening illness or sudden disability.
- They are severely overcrowded, and this poses a serious health hazard.
- They are homeless as a result of violence or threats of violence.

¹ Inserted by s.154 of the Localism Act 2011

Deciding between applicants

- 2.9 When prioritising between applicants who fall within reasonable or additional preference categories, legislation sets out three factors that may be considered by the local authority when creating its allocation scheme. These are:
- a) The financial resources available to a person to meet her/his housing needs - for example the Council can give less priority to an owner occupier or an applicant who is financially able to secure alternative accommodation.
 - b) Any behaviour of a person or a member of her/his household which affects her/his suitability to be a tenant – for example the Council could give less priority to an applicant who has breached their tenancy agreement through their antisocial behaviour.
 - c) Any Local Connection (within the meaning of the homelessness legislation (s. 199 of the Housing Act 1996)).

3. Who is Eligible for Social Housing

- 3.1 The Council must consider if the application is 'eligible' for an allocation of social housing in accordance with the legislation. Eligibility will be assessed at both the initial application stage and again when considering an applicant for an allocation of housing.

Ineligible

- 3.2 Any applicant regarded by the Council as ineligible to join the Housing Register because they are subject to immigration control or not habitually resident, will be given written notification of the decision, outlining the reason for it and the facts on which the decision was made. The applicant has the right to request a review of this decision, see section 14.
- 3.3 The statutory provisions of the legislation set out that the Council must exclude from their allocation scheme people who are ineligible for social housing. A person may not be allocated accommodation under Part VI if he or she is a person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation under s.160ZA of the Housing Act 1996. There are two categories for the purposes of s.160ZA:
- i. A person subject to immigration control - such a person is not eligible for an allocation of accommodation unless he or she comes within a class prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State (s.160ZA(2)), and
 - ii. A person from abroad other than a person subject to immigration control - regulations may provide for other descriptions of persons from abroad who, although not subject to immigration control, are to be treated as ineligible for an allocation of accommodation (s.160ZA(4)).

3.4 Persons from abroad are not eligible to join the Housing Register who are:

- Subject to immigration control and have no resource to public funds; or
- Excluded by regulations made by the Secretary of State; or
- Not habitually resident in the United Kingdom (UK); or
- Who are required to leave the UK by the Secretary of State.

3.5 Specifically, the Secretary of State has determined that the following groups are not eligible to join the Council's Housing Register because of their immigration status:

- A person registered with the Home Office as an asylum seeker.
- A visitor to the UK (including overseas students) with limited leave to enter or remain in the UK granted on the basis that they will not have recourse to public funds.
- A person who has a valid leave to remain in the UK, which carries no limitation or condition and who is not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area. The Common Travel Area is the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, and the Republic of Ireland.
- A sponsored person who has been in this country less than five years (from date of entry or date of sponsorship, whichever is the later) and whose sponsor(s) is still alive.
- A person who is a national of a European Union (EU) country that is subject to immigration control.
- A person who is a national of a non-European Economic Area country that has ratified the European Convention on Social and Medical Assistance (ECSMA) and/or the European Social Charter, but is not lawfully present in the UK (i.e. does not have leave to enter or remain or is an asylum seeker 11 with a temporary admission) and/or is not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area.
- A person who is in the UK illegally or who has overstayed their leave to remain.

Habitual Residence Test

3.6 Applicants who have been resident in the Common Travel Area continuously for the two years prior to their housing application are likely to be habitually resident. The term 'habitual residence' is intended to convey a degree of permanence in the person's residence in the Common Travel Area. Where two years continuous residency have not been established (visits abroad for holidays or to visit relatives may be disregarded), the Allocations Team will need to make further enquiries to determine whether the applicant is habitually resident.

3.7 **Where two persons apply jointly for housing, at least one of the applicants must be eligible.**

Eligible

- 3.8 The regulations setting out which classes of persons from abroad are eligible for an allocation of social housing are the [Allocation of Housing and Homelessness \(Eligibility\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(SI 2006 No.1294\)](#) ('The Eligibility Regulations').

The following categories of persons do not require leave to enter or remain in the UK:

- i. British citizens.
- ii. Certain Commonwealth citizens with a right of abode in the UK.
- iii. Irish citizens, who are not subject to immigration control in the UK because the Republic of Ireland forms part of the Common Travel Area with the UK which allows free movement.
- iv. EEA nationals, and their family members, who have established citizens' rights in accordance with Part 2 of the Withdrawal Agreement, i.e. those who were residents and exercised a right to reside in the UK derived from European Union law or any provision under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972, and those who were frontier working, before 31 December 2020. Whether an EEA national (or family member) has exercised a particular right to reside in the UK or rights to be treated as a frontier worker will depend on their circumstances, at that time. For example, whether the EEA national is, for the purposes of the [Immigration \(European Economic Area\) Regulations 2016](#) ('The EEA Regulations') (as preserved by the savings provisions) a jobseeker, a worker, a self-employed person and so on.
- v. Persons who are exempt from immigration control under the Immigration Acts, including diplomats and their family members based in the UK, and some military personnel.

Joint tenancies

- 3.9 Under section 160ZA (1)(b), a housing authority must not grant a joint tenancy to two or more people if any one of them is a person from abroad who is ineligible. However, where two or more people apply and one of them is eligible, the authority may grant a sole tenancy to the person who is eligible. In addition, while ineligible family members must not be granted a tenancy, they may be taken into account in determining the size of accommodation which is to be allocated.

Existing Social Housing Tenants

- 3.10 The eligibility provisions do not apply to applicants who are already secure or introductory tenants or assured tenants of a Private Registered Provider.

4. Qualification

- 4.1 This section sets out the criteria that must be met for an applicant to qualify for social housing. The decision on whether a person is a qualifying person will be made by the Allocations Team. Any decision as to whether a person is a qualifying person has a statutory right of review, see section 14.
- 4.2 To be a qualifying person to join the Housing Register, the applicant must:
- i) Be eligible for an allocation of social housing (see Section 2).
 - ii) Be over 16 years of age (and, in the case of 16 or 17 year olds, non-dependent).
 - iii) Have a local connection to Runnymede, as defined in section 4.3.
 - iv) To not be disqualified, as defined in section 4.36.

Qualifying persons

4.3 Local Connection

- 4.4 An applicant can only join the Housing Register if they have a local connection to the Borough of Runnymede. A local connection means that the applicant meets one of the following groups:

a) Residence

Those where any permanent member of the applicant's household has a local connection with the Borough of Runnymede because s/he has lived in the Borough for the last three years consecutively

In calculating 3 years, the Council may disregard any period or periods together not exceeding 3 months in total at the date of application if it has reasonable grounds for believing that such period or periods of absence were forced upon the applicant through no fault or choice of their own.

b) Working

Those where any permanent adult member of the applicant's household is working or making some other significant community contribution, such as unpaid or voluntary work equivalent in terms of hours to paid work (as defined below), or being a recognised carer for an elderly or disabled adult or child, in the Runnymede Borough, which means that s/he:

- i) has been and is in continuous employment for more than three years (although not necessarily with the same employer), or
- ii) has been and is in continuous self-employment for more than 3 years

Employment and self-employment mean in paid full-time or part-time employment for 16 hours per week or more. Where working hours fluctuate, an average will be taken over the last 12-month period. The main place of employment and activity must be within the Borough of Runnymede. It is not sufficient, for example, for only the head office to be based in Runnymede.

c) Unique health or welfare need

Where any permanent member of the applicant's household has a connection with the Borough of Runnymede because they have a current and ongoing unique welfare and/or health reason for living in the Borough which can be evidenced by professionals supporting the household currently.

Unique means that the care/support is unique to specific health services in the Borough of Runnymede, and cannot be provided anywhere else, including where the applicant currently lives. Support from friends or relatives living in the Borough is not a ground for exceptional need if support is already, or can be, achieved where the applicant currently resides, whether through professional/statutory services, or informal support which may involve travelling. Exceptional and specific health care will have to be evidenced by health professionals currently engaged with the applicant and may be assessed by an Independent Medical Advisor. This ground is meant for exceptional and unique circumstances only.

- 4.5 In 4.4 (a-c) above, a permanent member of the household means someone who can evidence that they reside with an applicant on a full-time basis, as set out in section 9, and has no legal interest in another property, either in the private or social sector. This will need to be evidenced through required verification, and where not supplied will result in the household member not being included on an application until such time that they fulfil the requirements of being a permanent member.

Situations where no local connection will be established

- 4.6 An applicant will not establish a Local Connection with the Borough of Runnymede if s/he is in one of the following classes:
- i. Where the applicant has been placed in temporary accommodation in the Borough of Runnymede by another Local Authority in exercising their duties under homelessness legislation, or in discharging their homelessness duty. This includes all types of tenure, including bed & breakfast accommodation for any length of time.
 - ii. Where an applicant has been placed in a bail hostel or other offenders' interim supported scheme in the Borough of Runnymede.
 - iii. Where an applicant is a full or part-time student studying in the Borough of Runnymede, from out of area, and without any other Local Connection qualification.

iv. Where an applicant has been placed into supported accommodation within the Borough of Runnymede from another local authority/agency, where no Local Connection to this borough existed at the time of the placement. A Local Connection to the Borough of Runnymede will not be established during the supported placement.

v. Where an applicant has a court order for a child residency arrangement with a parent or other responsible adult, but where they do not fulfil the Local Connection criteria in this scheme. The Council is not bound by court orders made in respect of child residency orders.

vi. Where an applicant has been admitted to hospital within the Borough of Runnymede, and where no other Local Connection qualification criteria is met. This includes where an applicant is discharged from the Abraham Cowley Unit at St Peter's Hospital.

vii. Where an applicant is in any other interim accommodation that is not a recognised supported accommodation scheme operated by partners working with the Council under contracted arrangements.

viii. Where an applicant is residing in any type of holiday let, for example a bed and breakfast or temporary let for holiday purposes.

Exceptions to local connection qualification

- 4.7 Exceptions may include, but not exhaustively, the situations described below. Individual cases will be considered by the Allocations Team and documentary evidence may be required.

British Armed Forces

- 4.8 British Armed Forces personnel who fall into categories below are exempt from the local connection qualifying criteria:

- Armed Forces personnel who are currently serving in the armed forces and those who have served in the armed forces in the five years preceding their application for an allocation of social housing, except for those who have been dishonourably discharged.
- Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where the bereaved spouse or civil partner will shortly no longer be entitled to reside or is no longer entitled to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or partner.
- Existing or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to their service.
- Divorced, separated spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces living in armed force accommodation provided by the Ministry of

Defence who will shortly be no longer entitled to reside or are no longer entitled to reside in accommodation.

- 4.9 The Council requires proof of Armed Forces status. This proof should be official confirmation of current employment, discharge papers, or other proof such as confirmation provided by the Royal British Legion.
- 4.10 The definition of 'regular' and 'reserve' forces will reflect the definition set out in section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006.

Applicants seeking Independent Retirement Living/Sheltered Housing

- 4.11 Some applicants seeking independent retirement living accommodation may be exempt from the local connection qualifying criteria.
- 4.12 Single applicants aged 55 and over, and couples where the youngest person is aged 55 and over, who do not meet the qualification criteria as set out in section 4.1 – 4.5, but who have a family member that has lived in the borough for the last three continuous years, will be able to join the Housing Register. These applicants will only be considered for independent retirement / sheltered housing and will not be considered for any other accommodation (section 8.25 – 8.35). The age to qualify for most Independent Retirement Living properties in the borough is 60 with a small number of properties accessible at 55.
- 4.13 A family member for these purposes means a mother, father, brother, sister or adult son or daughter. Other family members such as step-parents, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, or uncles may be considered where there is evidence of a sufficiently close link in the form of frequent contact, commitment, or dependency. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.14 All applicants who are accepted onto the Housing Register under this criterion will be placed into band E, regardless of individual housing need. An applicant will only qualify for a different banding once they satisfy the local connection criteria as set out in section 4.3

The Right to Move

- 4.15 The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015 states that Local Connection criteria must not be applied to existing social tenants who seek to move from another local authority district in England and who have a need to move for work related reasons to avoid hardship.
- 4.16 Applicants without a qualifying local connection as set out in 4.3, that wish to join the Housing Register in Runnymede are able to do so, if they can

evidence that they are a social tenant that needs to move (as opposed to a wish to move) and that failure to meet that need would result in hardship.

- 4.17 The work undertaken (or offered) cannot be short-term, marginal in nature or ancillary to work in another district. Voluntary work is also excluded. The Council will need to consider whether work is regular or intermittent. Contracts of less than 12 months may be considered to be short term and therefore excluded. Work of less than 16 hours a week would be considered marginal in nature. The level of earnings is also relevant. An apprenticeship undertaken as part of an Apprenticeship Agreement will qualify as 'work' so long as the contract is for at least 12 months.
- 4.18 The Council will consider the following factors when establishing if there is a need to move:
- The distance and/or travel time between work and home.
 - Is the applicant able to take up an offer of work within Runnymede or continue to work in Runnymede from their existing home.
 - The availability of transport.
 - Any medical condition or childcare affected if the applicant could not move.
 - The nature of the work and whether similar opportunities were available more locally.
 - The length of the employment contract.
 - If failure to move would lessen opportunities to improve the applicant's employment circumstances e.g. promotion.
 - Evidence of contract and genuine intention to take up an offer of work.
 - The type of hardship and significant negative impact if the applicant were not to take up the offer of work or continued work.
- 4.19 Verification will be required to evidence that the work or job offer is genuine and therefore, the following documents will be required:
- Employment contract
 - Formal offer letter
 - Acceptance letter
 - Wage slips and bank statements
 - Tax and benefit information
 - Location of work i.e. homebased/office based
- 4.20 The Council also reserves the right to remove an application with Right to Move priority. This would apply where there have been properties available to bid for, but the applicant has either not bid for a property within three months of the priority being awarded or has unreasonably refused an offer of accommodation following a successful bid.

Care leavers

- 4.21 Care leavers who have lived in the borough continuously before they were provided with accommodation by Surrey Children Services. Some of this residency must have occurred before the age of 16 years. Supporting documentation must be provided.
- 4.22 Applicants who are young people, aged 16 to 21 years old, who have been placed in supported housing outside of the Borough of Runnymede, will retain their Local Connection in order to assist them with 'move-on' rehousing options. The placement will have been made by the appropriate agency and cannot be an informal arrangement. This must be notified to the Council at the start of the placement and any changes notified also.

Homeless Prevention

- 4.23 Where an applicant has a defined local connection as set out in section 4.25 and they have been assisted by the Council with privately rented accommodation outside of the borough, through a rent deposit / rent in advance scheme endorsed by the Council (to prevent homelessness), they will be assessed as retaining a local connection whilst they remain in that accommodation.
- 4.24 Where an applicant is placed in supported housing (to prevent homelessness), either in borough or not, by the Council and/or other public agencies such as the Community Mental Health Team, they will be assessed as having a local connection only where they met the following local connection qualification at the time of placement.
- 4.25 The local connection qualification at time of placement is:
- The applicant has resided in the Runnymede Borough for six out of the last 12 months or three out of the last five years
 - Or the applicant has a mother / father / brother / sister resident in the borough continuously for the last five years and still resident
 - Or the applicant is employed in the borough.
 - Other special reason agreed by the Senior Officer prior to the placement.
- 4.26 Any rehousing options will be determined by the outcome of the Part VII homelessness enquiries and will not automatically result in the offer of social housing. Where no housing duty arises under Part VII, the Housing Register application will be removed. Where a main housing duty arises under Part VII, the application will be handled under the Assisted Choice for Homeless Households Scheme detailed under section 12.1 -12.10 of this scheme.

Domestic Abuse

- 4.27 The Council recognises that victims of domestic violence and abuse often suffer physical and/or mental health issues as a result of their experiences and the medical assessment will take these fully into account.

- 4.28 Where, for example, applicants are fleeing domestic abuse or other serious violence for whom returning to their area of origin would place them at serious risk, and there is third party evidence that can be verified of the risk for example from a statutory agency such as the Police, Probation, Adult Social Care and Children's Services. The information will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and a decision made on whether the exemption on the Local Connection rules should be granted.
- 4.29 Domestic violence and abuse include any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional abuse.

Witness Protection Scheme

- 4.30 Applicants referred through the Witness Protection Scheme do not need to fulfil the local connection criteria. Proof is required to show compliance with other local qualification criteria on income, rent, Council Tax and anti-social behaviour.

Exceptional Circumstance

- 4.31 Where the applicant provides documentary evidence (that can be verified) that they have an exceptional circumstance which establishes a local connection to the borough. The decision and reasons on whether a local connection has been established will be recorded.

Assessing Reasonable Preference without fulfilling the Qualification Criteria

- 4.32 The Council's Allocation Scheme must give Reasonable Preference to applicants who fall into the categories as set out under the Legal Context section at the beginning of this document, for example, those owed a part VII duty by any local authority. The Council cannot automatically reject an applicant who does not qualify under Local Connection criteria but who may still fall into a Reasonable Preference group for housing need.
- 4.33 Applicants who apply to Runnymede without a local connection, but consider that the reasonable preference criteria may apply, can indicate this on the Application Form.
- 4.34 Applicants who are owed a reasonable preference but who otherwise have no particular housing need, or who are statutorily homeless and have been provided with suitable temporary accommodation, will generally be awarded Band E but may be considered for a discretionary uplift.

4.35 A Senior Officer has the power, to be exercised on a case-by-case basis, to award a discretionary uplift by which an applicant normally falling within Band E is to be placed in a higher band. This power may only be exercised:

(a) Where the Senior Officer is satisfied that it is in the Council's financial or other strategic interests to award a discretionary uplift, or

(b) Otherwise in exceptional circumstances. Exceptionality is to be judged for these purposes by comparison with the circumstances of others applying to the Council for rehousing and any other factor the Senior Officer considers relevant.

Disqualified Persons

4.36 Subject to exceptions (granted by a Senior Officer on the basis of exceptional or unforeseen circumstances), only an applicant with a local connection, or where a local connection exemption applies, can be a qualifying person.

4.37 This section sets out the criteria that will apply to all applicants, regardless of whether they had previously met the qualification criteria above. This could result in the applicant not being considered a qualifying person and therefore unable to join or remain on the Housing Register. This may, in exceptional circumstances, be waived by a Senior Officer.

Applicants living outside of the UK

4.38 Applicants living outside of the UK will not qualify to join the Housing Register. Applicants who are eligible by virtue of their immigration status who are seeking accommodation in the UK, and who are likely to qualify for housing in Runnymede should seek advice on their housing options prior to their arrival in the UK.

Financial resources

4.39 Only applicants with a net income that does not exceed the thresholds below will be allowed to join the Runnymede Housing Register:-

i. Single or couple households with a household net income of £30,000 or more per year

ii. Family households with a household net income of £50,000 or more per year

4.40 For the avoidance of doubt, a family household is defined as a household that is not a single person or a couple. A household income will take into account the income of all household members, including non-dependents. The Council wishes to recognise the difference in applicants supporting dependents and those not supporting dependents within their households. Income will also include all sources of income for the household, including (but not limited to) benefits, grants, student finance and earned income.

- 4.41 These income ranges will be reviewed periodically in line with Central Government Directive and legislation.

Property ownership

- 4.42 The Code of Guidance for Allocations recommends that local authorities should avoid allocating social housing to people who already own their own home. This will apply and only in exceptional circumstances will a Senior Officer exercise their discretion to allow an applicant onto the Housing Register where:

- i. Applicants, either jointly or solely, who own property either in the UK or abroad which they could reasonably be expected to reside in or liquidate to resolve their own housing difficulties.
- ii. Applicants who have exercised the Right to Buy and have disposed, gifted, sold the property, will be disqualified for five years from the date of disposal, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Assets / capital / savings

- 4.43 All applicants regardless of tenure, with capital / savings / investments in excess of £16,000. This is in line with DWP criteria for eligibility for Housing Benefit. An exception will be made for transferring social tenants downsizing their current accommodation in circumstances where such accommodation would become available to the Council for reletting.
- 4.44 Separate procedures apply for applicants seeking Independent Retirement Living who are over 60 years of age. Applicants who are over 60 years of age are able to have assets of up to £55,000.
- 4.45 Those applying for extra care housing are exempt from the £16,000 assets threshold as they can have up to £23,250 in savings. An applicant with this amount in savings or less is eligible to receive financial support towards their care.

Social housing tenants without an identified housing need / on a probationary tenancy

- 4.46 Applicants who are already suitably housed in social housing without an identified housing need according to this scheme will not be able to join the Housing Register. This applies to Runnymede Council tenants and tenants of Registered Providers of social housing.
- 4.47 All applicants who are on probationary or introductory tenancies are disqualified from joining the Housing Register except in exceptional circumstances.

Behaviour – deception and fraud

- 4.48 Those where the applicant is seeking, or has previously sought, to obtain accommodation by making a false or misleading statement or by withholding relevant information or by failing to inform the Council of any material change in circumstances. These applications will be referred to the Council's Corporate Fraud Team for full investigation and may lead to prosecution.
- 4.49 Those where the applicant has an unspent conviction (under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) for housing or welfare benefit related fraud.
- 4.50 Those where the applicant has obtained a tenancy by deception and/or tenancy fraud i.e. subletting a social home without permission. All applications will be referred to the Council's Corporate Fraud Team who will undertake investigations, which may lead to prosecution.
- 4.51 In all cases, applicants will be excluded for a minimum period of five years. Applicants who have been convicted of fraud or deception will be disqualified from the Housing Register indefinitely.

Behaviour – anti-social or criminal behaviour

- 4.52 Applicants, including members of their household, who are engaging in anti-social behaviour (ASB) or criminal activity or where there is evidenced ASB or criminal activity in the last 12 months from the date of application and where improvement cannot be evidenced by professionals engaged with the applicant or applicant's household. There is no time limit for disqualification on ASB grounds and the Council will seek evidence of continuing behaviour improvement before considering a new application.
- 4.53 Applicants who have an unspent conviction (under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) where the Council assesses that the nature of an ex-offender's conviction may make them unsuitable to be a tenant. The Offender Manager will be required to provide information, including offence details and engagement with probation services, so that an assessment can be made. All applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Where the Council assesses that an applicant is unsuitable to be a tenant, the applicant will be disqualified from the Housing Register until their conviction is spent.
- 4.54 Applicants, including members of their household, who have engaged in unacceptable housing related conduct that makes the applicant unsuitable to be a tenant. The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples:
- a. Anti-social behaviour
 - b. Illegal or immoral behaviour, including involvement in substance misuse
 - c. Threats of and / or use of violence
 - d. Racial abuse / violence
 - e. Domestic abuse / violence
 - f. Hate crime

- 4.55 There is no time limit for disqualification on these grounds and the Council will seek evidence of continuing behaviour improvement before considering a new application.

Behaviour – poor housing related conduct

- 4.56 Applicants who have been served a formal warning or a notice due to breaching the terms of a tenancy, whether social housing or private rented, within the past five years. Evidence from previous landlords / agencies will be considered. Applicants will be disqualified from the Housing Register for five years from the date of the breach.

Housing-related debt

- 4.57 Applicants who have a housing-related debt of over £100, whether under a social housing or private tenure. A non-exhaustive list of debt includes:
- i. any outstanding rent owed to a current or former landlord
 - ii. any sundry debt owed to Runnymede Council, for example rechargeable repairs or funds issued to applicants for former rent bond deposits and rent in advance
 - iii. any debts owed due to an overpayment of Housing Benefit
 - iv. any arrears of Council Tax owed to any Local Authority
- 4.58 Applicants will be disqualified until the debt is satisfied, except in the most exceptional circumstances that can be evidenced and will only be approved by a senior officer.

Households under a duty from another Local Authority

- 4.59 Applicants placed in the Borough of Runnymede by another Local Authority in exercising their duties under Part VI or Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, except where reasonable preference must be given to those owed a Part VII duty under s.166A(3) by any local authority.

Worsening of circumstances

- 4.60 Applicants who give up a home that they owned, rented, shared, or had rights to but chose to leave or dispose of within five years of an application being made. This includes 'gifting' a home to friends and/or relatives, both within and outside the UK, where they could have reasonably been expected to reside, or to sell, using the proceeds to resolve housing difficulties. Housing advice should always be sought before giving up a property or rights to a property. Applicants will be disqualified from the Housing Register for five years from the date that the applicant gave up their home.
- 4.61 Applicants who have given up a social housing tenancy within the past five years. This was not due to unaffordability / violence / threats of violence / harassment / anti-social behaviour / domestic abuse / hate crime, or any other similar danger to life and welfare. If the applicant does give such a reason for giving up their tenancy, this will need to be clearly evidenced by bank statements and/or professionals engaged with the applicant. Evidence from

the previous social landlord will also be considered. Applicants will be disqualified from the Housing Register for five years from the date that the applicant gave up their social tenancy.

- 4.62 In sections 4.60-4.61, this includes giving up accommodation due to relationship breakdown.
- 4.63 Applicants who have disposed of capital, savings, or an asset in value in excess of £16,000 within five years of the date of their application which they could reasonably have been expected to use to resolve their housing difficulty. This includes gifting or transferring money to children or a family member.
- 4.64 Applicants who deliberately overcrowd their home, either with or without the objective of obtaining priority for social housing. Applicants will be disqualified from the Housing Register for five years from the date that the applicant overcrowded themselves.
- 4.65 Applicants who deliberately move to a home which was clearly unaffordable, either with or without the objective of obtaining priority for social housing. Applicants will be disqualified from the Housing Register for five years from the date that the applicant moved into the unaffordable home.

5. Who can apply

Applicants aged 16 or 17 years

- 5.1 Applicants need to be at least 16 years of age, and not dependent on a parent or other guardian, to be accepted onto the Housing Register, provided that they are eligible and qualify. However, their application will need to be jointly assessed by the Council and Surrey County Council's Children's Services or Youth Support Service before an offer of accommodation can be made. A suitable guarantor will need to be identified if the young person is offered a tenancy who will then hold the tenancy in trust until the applicant is 18 years of age.

Joint applications

- 5.2 Joint applications can be made by married couples, partners, or civil partnerships. Siblings who are over 16 years of age can also apply jointly if the Council decides this to be a reasonable household, see section 9.2 – 9.7. The Council will not accept any other form of joint application.

Applications from Members of the Council, staff members and their relatives

- 5.3 Any application to the Housing Register from Members, employees of the Council or associated persons must disclose their status/relationship on the

Application Form. These applications will be assessed in the usual way, but allocation of housing will require specific approval from the Head of Housing.

One application only

- 5.4 Applicants can only be part of one household and will only be accepted on one application.

6. Fraud

- 6.1 The Council takes its responsibility to make proper use of public resources very seriously and all applications are investigated to ensure assessments and decisions are accurate. The Council will therefore verify applications and the supporting information that has been submitted.
- 6.2 The Council takes a strong approach to dealing with fraudulent applications and works in partnership with the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) to identify illegitimate applications.
- 6.3 Applicants who own property but rent it out will be expected to reclaim the property under lawful process so that they can re-occupy. This will apply to properties that are owned outright, gifted to an applicant or still under a mortgage loan process and to properties where an applicant's family may currently be residing.

False or misleading information

- 6.4 It is the duty of the applicant to bring any material change in their circumstances, which might affect either their entitlement to rehousing by the Council, or their priority for rehousing, to the attention of their Housing Officer. If the applicant is unsure whether a change in circumstances is material or not, they should discuss this with the Allocations Team.
- 6.5 It is a criminal offence if an applicant or anyone acting on their behalf, knowingly or recklessly makes a false statement, withholds information, or fails to disclose a change of circumstances relevant to an application.
- 6.6 Where an applicant is found to have given false information, their application will be removed, and they will be disqualified from re-joining the Housing Register for a minimum of five years. In addition, where an applicant has been convicted of fraud, they will be disqualified indefinitely. Where a fraudulent application is detected, the Council may consider initiating criminal proceedings to prosecute.
- 6.7 If an applicant obtains social housing by deception, the Council or registered provider landlord may seek possession of a tenancy granted as a result of a false statement.

Notifying the Council of a suspected fraudulent approach

- 6.8 If a member of the public is aware or suspects that an applicant may have withheld information or provided false or misleading information, then they should notify the Council's Fraud Team:

Email: fraud@runnymede.gov.uk

Phone: 01932 830821

7. How to apply

- 7.1 Applicants must be eligible (section 3) and qualify (section 4) to be accepted onto the Housing Register. For information on how social housing tenants can apply for a transfer, please see section 7.7 – 7.15.

Registration process

- 7.2 All applications to join the Housing Register must be made online through the Council's Housing Online Portal with no exception. Advocates can apply on an applicant's behalf with their permission.
- 7.3 The Council will assist those who are unable to complete the online Application Form, either over the telephone, by helping the applicant use the computer in the Civic Centre reception area or making a home visit in exceptional circumstances.
- 7.4 Online registration will include a pre-assessment process. If an applicant is ineligible to access the Housing Register or if they do not qualify in line with this scheme, they will be signposted to alternative housing options.
- 7.5 Once pre-assessment is complete, should the applicant be eligible and a qualifying person, they will be asked to watch a **Housing Register video** and then continue with the rest of the form. Applicants can complete the Medical Form at the end of the application form if there is a medical condition, disability or welfare need the applicant would like considered.
- 7.6 At the point of application to the Housing Register, applicants do not need to provide any documentation unless requested to do so. See section 11.37-40 for further details.

Options for existing Social Housing tenants

Runnymede Borough Council Tenants

Applying for a Transfer

- 7.7 Existing tenants of the Council can apply to the Housing Register for a transfer by creating a new application through their housing online portal, where their needs for re-housing will be considered.

- 7.8 Tenants cannot apply for a transfer if they have an introductory/starter tenancy. Discretion may be used in exceptional circumstances, with the decision taken by a Senior Officer.
- 7.9 To be accepted onto the register, tenants will need to demonstrate that they have an identified housing need and therefore a need to move. As with all other applications to the register, the Council will assess whether the application falls into one of the reasonable preference categories. If the tenant does not, then the application will be refused, and advice will be given on other housing options, such as mutual exchange (Section 7.19 – 7.20).
- 7.10 Tenants applying to the Housing Register for a transfer will need to meet the qualifying criteria set out in Section 4.1 – 4.35.
- 7.11 Tenants will be subject to the disqualification criteria as set out in Section 4.36 – 4.65, although exceptional circumstances will be considered by a Senior Officer. Therefore, tenants who have housing related debt or who have significantly breached the terms of their tenancy may be disqualified from joining the register. For further detail on the disqualification criteria, please see section 4.
- 7.12 Tenants who are accepted onto the Housing Register can bid for suitable properties advertised in the Council’s Choice Based Lettings Scheme. There may be occasions when a direct offer of accommodation will be made, for example if the tenant requires a specific type of property i.e. due to their disability (Section 12).
- 7.13 A request for a transfer can also be refused if the Council considers that the tenant has not satisfactorily maintained their current accommodation or has caused significant damage to it as evidenced by formal warnings and/or notice. The Council may make this decision as part of the initial assessment of the application, following information provided by the Housing & Neighbourhood Services Team. The tenant will therefore be disqualified from joining the register.
- 7.14 The decision to refuse a transfer can also be taken following a property inspection visit to the tenant’s home, after the tenant has placed a shortlisted bid on an advertised property. The tenant will then be by-passed for this accommodation if their home is in poor condition. The application will be placed on hold for an initial period of three months, to allow time for the tenant’s home to be brought up to standard.
- 7.15 In all cases, the Council will consider the vulnerability of the tenant and work in partnership with other services to offer support.

Local letting plan

- 7.16 Tenants may be invited to join the register if there is a local lettings plan in place which could be relevant to them. See section 11.15 for local letting plans.

Tenants under-occupying their homes

- 7.17 Priority will be given to those tenants on the Housing Register who are under-occupying their home and would like to transfer to smaller accommodation. These tenants are referred to as ‘downsizers’ and are placed into Band B.
- 7.18 Available family sized properties are in short supply, so giving priority to downsizers will free up this accommodation and make best use of the Council’s stock. These tenants may also be adversely affected by the under-occupancy charge or would find a smaller property easier to manage.

Mutual Exchange

- 7.19 Existing Council tenants will be encouraged to consider moving by mutual exchange as a means of resolving their housing difficulties. Tenants can register with Home Swapper <https://www.homeswapper.co.uk/> to look for other social housing tenants in the UK to swap their homes with.
- 7.20 The Council has a separate Mutual Exchange Policy. Moves facilitated via a mutual exchange scheme do not fall within Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and therefore are not part of the Allocation Scheme.

Emergency Management Transfers

- 7.21 Existing tenants who believe they have an emergency reason to move can apply to the Council’s Housing & Neighbourhood Services Team for assistance. The team will assess whether such a move is necessary. A decision on the transfer request will be made by the Housing Services Manager in agreement with the Allocations Team.
- 7.22 The tenant will need to apply to the Housing Register if they have not already done so. The applicant will be placed into Band A and the household’s housing needs will be assessed so that a direct offer of suitable accommodation can be made. There will only be one suitable offer of accommodation and this will be based on the household’s needs at the time.
- 7.23 If the tenant refuses the offer, they are entitled to request a review of the suitability and The Housing & Neighbourhood Services Team will undertake the review to determine if it is a suitable offer. If the decision is that the offer is found to be suitable, the emergency management transfer status will be removed, and the application returned to the original banding. Where an application had not previously been made, the application will be reassessed and will either be awarded the appropriate band in accordance with this scheme or removed.

Tenants who need to decant their property

- 7.24 Tenants may need to move either temporarily or permanently for the following reasons:

- Whilst major works are undertaken to the property
- Their home is due for demolition
- There is a Compulsory Purchase Order for refurbishment or development of their home

7.25 These moves are referred to as 'decants'. Temporary decants do not fall within Part VI of the Housing Act 1996. Temporary decants will therefore be managed by the Housing & Neighbourhood Services Team and so an application to the Housing Register is not required.

7.26 Applicants that are required to permanently decant from their home will be dealt with under the Council's Decant Policy. This requires the applicant to join the Housing Register where a band A will be awarded. Applicants who have been accepted for a permanent decant will be made one offer of accommodation only.

Options for other social housing tenants

7.27 This section refers to social housing tenants who are not Runnymede Borough Council tenants.

7.28 These tenants can apply to their landlord for a transfer. They can also apply to the Council's Housing Register and will be treated as a 'Registered Provider (RP) transfer'.

7.29 Such tenants cannot apply for a transfer if they have an introductory/starter tenancy. Discretion may be used in exceptional circumstances, with the decision taken by a Senior Officer.

7.30 As with Runnymede Council tenants, other social housing tenants will need to demonstrate that they have a need to move. If no such housing need is identified, then the application will be refused, and advice given on other housing options.

7.31 These social housing tenants will be subject to all the qualification and disqualification rules. Information will be sought from the landlord regarding the conduct of the tenancy.

7.32 These tenants are expected to satisfactorily maintain their home in order to be made an offer of accommodation. If information from the landlord confirms the property is in poor condition or has been significantly damaged, the tenant would be disqualified from the Housing Register or their bid on a property by-passed. The application could be placed on hold for an initial period of three months. This will allow time for the property to be brought up to standard.

7.33 In all cases, the Council will consider the vulnerability of the tenant and work in partnership with the landlord and other services to offer support.

- 7.34 A tenant with an emergency reason to move will need to apply to their landlord, who will assess whether a management move can be granted. The landlord will also be responsible for decanting any tenants who need to move on either a temporary or permanent basis.
- 7.35 Priority Band B may be given to social housing tenants who are under-occupying their home if their landlord agrees to offer the Council the resultant vacancy, over and above the nomination's agreement.

Reciprocal Arrangement

- 7.36 A reciprocal arrangement is where one social landlord rehouses a tenant from another housing association or Council on the understanding that the landlord that has rehoused the applicant will, at some stage, be offered a property by the other landlord for someone from their Housing Register.
- 7.37 Runnymede Council will consider a reciprocal move in the following circumstances:
- Where the applicant is fleeing violence, including domestic abuse and it is unsafe for them to continue living in their current Council area
 - Where there are exceptional management reasons for requiring a move e.g. when a tenant from another Council area is to be a witness in criminal proceedings and needs to be moved for their own protection
 - Where a request for assistance is made through the mobility scheme for rehousing victims of domestic abuse in accordance with procedures agreed by the Surrey Borough and Districts.
 - Where it considers that there is a realistic prospect of being able to nominate a suitable household from the Housing Register to a property in the referring landlords area.
- 7.38 Reciprocal arrangements will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances and where the referring landlord is unable to intervene to mitigate the risk to the household or where they are unable to house the applicants themselves.
- 7.39 Before any agreement is given to a reciprocal arrangement, a full written report detailing the circumstances of why the applicant requires a move and in particular the reasons why a move to the Borough of Runnymede is appropriate. The Housing Allocation Team will require written commitment from the current landlord that an applicant in housing need from Runnymede Council's Housing Register will be housed within a reasonable time period.

8. Assessment of Applications

Initial Assessment of application

- 8.1 The online registration process will assess an applicant's housing need according to the information electronically input by the applicant. A banding priority will be awarded on this basis, in line with this Scheme. The Council

can override any automated assessment if there is an exceptional need to do so.

- 8.2 Applicants who do not have a local connection but submit an application for a reasonable preference assessment, will be assessed in the usual way. Please see section 2 for a definition of reasonable preference.
- 8.3 If the Council is satisfied that the application meets the eligibility/qualification criteria, not be disqualified for any reason, and the information provided appears accurate, then the application will be approved and placed into a priority band. The applicant will receive written notification of this, together with the application reference number and details of how the Choice Based Lettings Scheme works. The applicant will then be able to place bids on suitable properties.

Providing information and documentation

- 8.4 If the Council is not fully satisfied with the application, then it will not be approved until further requested information or documents are provided. Applicants have 28 calendar days to provide the requested documents. A decision will then be made on whether the application can remain on the register or be removed.

At the time of applying to the register

- 8.5 At the initial assessment stage of the application, applicants may be asked to provide additional information or documents. Examples of this include:
1. To establish if local connection should be awarded due to exceptional circumstances. The applicant will need to provide relevant and current documentation from health and/or social care professionals.
 2. The applicant may need to provide a more accurate address history to establish a local connection to the borough with regards to residency.
 3. To establish a local connection to the borough by employment or self-employment. The applicant may need to provide payslips, the most recent P60 and/or bank statements. Those who are self-employed will need to provide business accounts and/or tax returns.
 4. To establish who is reasonably considered to be part of the household. Applicants may be asked to provide further detail as well as official documentation, such as to confirm the long-term residency of children if this is unclear.
 5. To assess whether there is a need to move on health/disability/welfare/hardship grounds if the Medical Form has been completed. Applicants will need to provide recent documentation from health professionals to support their current medical or disability related needs. Documents should be dated within the last six months. More information regarding this can be found in Section 8.12 - 8.16.

6. Any other information the Council deems is necessary to make an assessment of need.

8.6 Failure to respond to a request for information within 28 calendar days will result in the application being removed. This decision will be notified to the applicant in writing, advising of the right to request a review.

At the verification stage of the process

8.7 Applicants will need to provide further documents at the later verification stage, if the Council is actively considering them for an offer of accommodation. This is to verify the applicant's identity, address, and particular circumstances so that the Council can be satisfied that the applicant fulfils the criteria as set out in this Scheme. See Section 11.37 – 11.41 for more information.

Other documents and information that may be required

8.8 The Council may request supporting information and documentation from other services to confirm the type of accommodation that might be suitable for an applicant.

8.9 Written professional opinion may also be sought on whether the applicant is able to live independently and to enquire if there are any known risk issues. This information will be considered before any offer of accommodation is made.

8.10 The Council will also need to be informed if there are any on-going support needs and how these will be addressed, to ensure that any tenancy offered is sustainable.

8.11 Examples of these requests include:

1. Information from the Care Leavers Service to confirm that an applicant is ready to move to independent accommodation
2. Information from housing support providers to confirm that an applicant is ready to move-on from supported accommodation into independent accommodation
3. Information from Occupational Therapy Services recommending the type of accommodation that would meet an applicant's needs
4. Risk assessments

Medical, Welfare and Hardship Assessment

8.12 Applicants who would like their medical needs, disability, hardship or welfare to be considered will need to complete a Medical Form. The Council may

contact the applicant to request supporting information from health/social care professionals which is required within 28 calendar days.

- 8.13 Supporting medical and/or welfare information needs to be current and less than six months old. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain this information. The Council will not contact health professionals to seek this information and nor will it pay for reports or letters to be provided.
- 8.14 The Council may seek the opinion of an Independent Medical Advisor. This opinion or recommendation will be used to help the Council decide whether any priority can be awarded to an application on the basis of a medical need, including grounds relating to a disability. This opinion can also be obtained to recommend the type of accommodation that would meet an applicant's needs. The Council makes the final decision on all such cases.
- 8.15 The Council, in its assessment, will decide whether an applicant, or one or more members of the household, has a need to move. This is on the basis that their current accommodation is unsuitable on the grounds of ill health, welfare concerns, or a disability where the housing conditions are directly contributing to ill health and well-being. The Council will need to decide how urgent the need to move is on this basis and award the appropriate banding for the application.
- 8.16 The Council will notify the applicant in writing of the decision made in relation to the assessment of their health/welfare needs or needs relating to a disability. There is a right to a review of this decision.

Change of circumstances

- 8.17 Applicants will need to complete an online Change of Circumstances Form if there is any material change in circumstances that could affect priority for housing. For example:
1. A change in address either for the applicant or any other household member
 2. Any additions to the family or any other person joining the application
 3. Anyone included on the application who has now left the household
 4. Any change in income and/or savings for the applicant and any non-dependents included on the application
 5. Any medical or mobility needs which could affect the type of accommodation needed
 6. Any welfare needs which could affect the type of accommodation needed.
- 8.18 If the Council is aware of a change in circumstance but a Change of Circumstances Form has not been submitted, then the applicant will not be considered for an offer of accommodation.
- 8.19 Failure to declare a change in circumstance could lead to the application being removed from the Housing Register. The Council will decide if any non-

declaration is an attempt to knowingly withhold information in order to obtain social housing. The Council will take appropriate action as outlined in Section 6.

- 8.20 If the Council is satisfied that the applicant has genuinely forgotten to provide updated information, then the applicant will be considered for an offer of accommodation subject to their reassessed priority.

Annual review

- 8.21 The Council carries out automated reviews of Housing Register applications on an annual basis, from the initial date of application. The applicant will be asked to confirm whether there are any changes in their circumstances and if they would still like to remain on the Housing Register.
- 8.22 The applicant is expected to respond to this request by logging into their online Housing Register application. If the applicant fails to do so within 21 days, then a reminder will be sent. If this is also not responded to within a further 28 days, then the application will be removed from the Housing Register.
- 8.23 If the applicant later decides they would like to remain on the Housing Register, then they will need to complete a new Housing Register Application Form which will be assessed from the new date of application.
- 8.24 Applicants will be notified in writing of the decision to remove their application from the Housing Register. They will be informed of their right to request a review of this decision.

Independent Retirement Living

- 8.25 The Council has Independent Retirement Living Schemes, otherwise known as sheltered housing. The Council also nominates to retirement schemes managed by Registered Providers in the borough.
- 8.26 To be considered, an applicant will need to apply to the Council's Housing Register. This also applies to Council tenants wishing to transfer. Only those over the age of 55 will be considered for Council owned schemes, while some Registered Providers may accept those over the age of 50. Applicants under retirement age will need to demonstrate that they have a health or welfare need for this type of supported accommodation.
- 8.27 Applicants aged 55 and over, without a local connection to the borough, will only be considered for Independent Retirement Living accommodation, if they can demonstrate that a close family member has a local connection to the borough. A family member for these purposes means a mother, father, brother, sister or adult son or daughter. Other family members such as step-parents, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, or uncles may be considered where there is evidence of a sufficiently close link in the form of frequent

contact, commitment, or dependency. This will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Extra Care Housing

- 8.28 There is one Extra Care Housing Scheme in the borough, which is managed by a Registered Provider. The scheme comprises 56 self-contained flats with access to an on-site care team and a 24-hour emergency response call system.
- 8.29 As part of the nomination's agreement, there is a local lettings plan which sets out the specific qualification criteria for this scheme.
- 8.30 To be considered, an application will need to be made to the Housing Register, which will be assessed in the usual way. The applicant will need to demonstrate a need for this supported accommodation and therefore a referral from Adult Social Care will be required. The Council will alert the multi-agency Allocations Panel of the application.
- 8.31 The panel will meet regularly to recommend on the suitability of applicants for the scheme. The panel will comprise representatives from the Registered Provider, Adult Social Care, and the Council. It is envisaged that there will be assessed applicants waiting for a vacancy to arise.
- 8.32 Following the recommendations of the panel, the Registered Provider will make an offer of accommodation if the nomination is accepted or provide reasons for rejecting the nomination. Any appeals or disputes will be dealt with by the Registered Provider and any negative decisions put in writing to the applicant.
- 8.33 The Council may advertise vacancies on its Choice Based Lettings Scheme if it is decided to let the property as sheltered housing. This will only arise if there are no suitable applicants and the panel have made every attempt to identify applicants with a care need.
- 8.34 The above processes is likely to apply to any future Extra Care Housing Schemes that are developed within the borough.

9. Property Size

- 9.1 The size of accommodation that an applicant requires will depend on the size and composition of the applicant's household, based on those deemed reasonable to be counted as part of the household. The Council will need to be satisfied that any such person is likely to be a long-term member of the household and therefore included into the bedroom need calculation.

Assessment of household composition

- 9.2 The Council will assess who should be treated as part of the applicant's household. This would normally be members of the applicant's immediate family who usually reside or could be reasonably expected to reside with the applicant. Any other person or persons will only be accepted as part of the applicant's household in circumstances in which it is reasonable for that person or persons to reside with the applicant. This will normally exclude lodgers or anyone subletting from the applicant. A person may not appear on more than one Housing Register application at the same time.
- 9.3 It is unlikely that an adult child or parent wishing to return to live together would be considered as a reasonable household where they have lived independently and are able to continue to do so. Where a parent or child wish to live together, medical evidence will need to be provided to indicate why this would be appropriate.
- 9.4 When a decision has been reached on who can be included as part of the applicant's household, there will be a further test to assess whether this residency will be ongoing, and the person or persons treated as permanent household members.

Permanent members of the household

- 9.5 Except in exceptional cases, the Council defines a permanent member of the household as someone who has resided as part of the household for at least the last 12 months and this has been their sole residence. The applicant will need to provide evidence of this which will be considered by the Council. In conjunction, the Council also needs to be satisfied that this residency is permanently on-going and that it is reasonable for this person or persons to be residing with the applicant. Where children have joined a responsible adult and have been included onto their application, please see section 9.12 – 9.23.
- 9.6 A written decision will be provided if it is deemed that a person is not a long-term member of the household or reasonably expected to reside with the applicant. The letter will advise of the right to request a review.
- 9.7 Exceptional circumstances where the 12-month residency criteria may not be required, are likely to constitute exceptional health or welfare needs and will be determined by a Senior Officer. These will need to be evidenced by independent professionals working with the household.

Bedroom need calculation

- 9.8 The Council will allocate bedroom need as follows:

Size of Household	Bedroom Need Requirement
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Single applicant over 18 years of age, including those who are pregnant	Studio or one bedroom
Couple (including those who are pregnant) with no children as permanent members of the household	One bedroom
Every other adult couple included as part of the household, including those who are married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting	One bedroom
Any other person aged 16 years and over, who is a permanent member of the household	One bedroom
Any two children of the same sex aged under 16 years (both permanent members of the household).	One bedroom
Any two children of the opposite sex aged under 10 years (both permanent members of the household)	One bedroom
Carers who do not live with the applicant but provide overnight care to a permanent member of the household (Section 9.10)	One bedroom

9.9 The bedroom calculation refers to all children in the household, including stepchildren and children living as part of a blended family.

9.10 The Council will not offer accommodation which contravenes the above allocation of bedrooms unless there are exceptional reasons to do so. This means that the Council will not knowingly under-occupy or overcrowd a property.

Bedroom needed for carers

9.11 An applicant may request that an additional bedroom is needed for support from carers who do not reside with them but may need to stay overnight. The applicant will need to provide evidence of this, including medical information from a health professional involved in their care, evidence of carers benefits being received and written information from Adult Social Care stating that regular overnight care is essential. The Council will consider this information and provide the applicant with a written decision, which will advise of the right to request a review.

Need for separate bedrooms

- 9.12 An applicant may request that a separate bedroom is needed for a household member who would normally be expected to share a bedroom. The applicant will need to provide independent, supporting information from professionals which the Council will consider. The Council will assess the extent of the health, disability and/or welfare needs and how this affects day to day activities and sleep. Opinion may be sought from an Independent Medical Advisor, but the Council will ultimately make the final decision. If a decision is made that separate bedrooms are needed, then the Council will advise of the possible housing costs implications.

Fostering and Adoption

- 9.13 The Council will consider an applicant's request for an extra bedroom to accommodate a prospective foster or adoptive child. The Council will weigh up the risk that the application to foster or adopt may be unsuccessful (which could lead to any offered property being under-occupied). The Council will not include a prospective child as part of the long-term household unless there is a formal agreement in place with Surrey County Council. This would need to be for an imminent placement that will be on-going for 12 months or more. Written confirmation of this will be required from a senior officer at Surrey County Council's Fostering Service.
- 9.14 The Council will not accept informal or interim placement arrangements as an adequate reason to award an extra bedroom. The Council will offer full housing options and advice to the applicant as appropriate.
- 9.15 A foster child who is already part of the applicant's household will be taken into account when assessing the number of bedrooms, the household needs. We may be able to consider an additional bedroom for foster children who cannot share with children from the family unit. If the foster child has not resided with the applicant for 12 months, then evidence will need to be provided to confirm that this is a formal arrangement and will be on-going for 12 months or more. Written information will be required as set out above.

Shared parental care

- 9.16 An applicant may include a child in their Housing Register application who does not reside with them all the time. The care of the child may be informally shared between separated parents, meaning that they stay with each parent on a regular basis. The Council will assess these applications to determine where the child's prime residence is. For example, where does financial dependency lie (including which parent claims child benefit), who is the child dependent upon for daily care, as well as social factors such as where the child goes to school.
- 9.17 If it is determined that the child's prime residence is not with the applicant, then the child will not be considered a long-term member of the household and so not included in the bedroom need calculation. There is a shortage of

social housing, so the Council needs to ensure it makes the best use of any accommodation it offers.

- 9.18 The Council will consider any court directives with regards to shared custody arrangements for children. However, it should be noted that a family court order which refers to residence and accommodation arrangements is not binding upon the Council with regard to provision of accommodation. It is for the Council to determine whether priority or additional bedroom entitlement should be given in respect of shared custody.
- 9.19 Only in the most exceptional circumstances, would the Council consider a child to need accommodation with a second parent for the purposes of Housing Register applications, when they already have access to social housing with their other parent as it is not for the local authority to provide two social homes to children. Applicants in these circumstances will be offered full housing options and advice.

Children placed with responsible adults

- 9.20 The Council will not recognise additional bedroom need for applicants where placements have been made informally by Surrey County Council's Children's Services. Under section 27 of the Children Act 1989, the Council will work in partnership with partner agencies in these matters.
- 9.21 The Council will only recognise additional bedroom need where it is satisfied that permanent arrangements are formally in place and where Children's Services have notified the Council of the case in advance.
- 9.22 Permanent arrangements can be demonstrated by a court order, defining who the child/children will reside with as a responsible adult and under what circumstances. If this is not in place, then the Council will consider formal correspondence from a senior officer at Surrey County Council's Children's Services (to include their contractors or any other authority with responsibility for children under a statutory duty or otherwise), stating the current situation and likely long-term arrangements. In making its decision, the Council will also consider how long the children have resided with the applicant and the evidence that has been provided of this. Consideration will also be given to whether the children have accommodation available to them with the other parent. Only in the most exceptional circumstances, would the Council consider a child to need accommodation with a second parent when they already have access to social housing with their other parent as it is not for the local authority to provide two social homes to children. Applicants in these circumstances will be offered full housing options and advice.
- 9.23 The Council does not offer a respite service whereby it facilitates accommodation placements for assessment of Children's Service's service users, pending a decision to place a child/children in an applicant's care or not. It is the responsibility of Children's Services to find suitable placements for this function.

9.24 The Council is not bound by court orders made in relation to the residence of children and expects Children’s Services to work in partnership with the Council in all cases.

10. Banding

Determining Priority

- 10.1 Following assessment, an applicant will be placed into the highest band which reflects their need for housing. The bands are A, B, C, D and E, with Band A being the highest priority for housing and Band E being the lowest.
- 10.2 The banding assessment does not allow for movement between bands unless there is an assessed change of circumstances that meets the criteria for a higher or lower band. It is not possible to move from one band to another simply through time accrued on the Housing Register.
- 10.3 When an application is re-assessed to a higher or lower band, the priority registration date will be the date on which the new banding assessment is made. Accrued time in other bands will not be recognised and applicants will be prioritised by the date they have been placed within a band.
- 10.4 In exceptional circumstances, a Senior Officer may alter the applicant’s banding and priority within a band.
- 10.5 If an applicant’s banding assessment is to be altered following a review decision, then it will be backdated to the date of the review decision.
- 10.6 Where there is more than one applicant within the same band for an offer of accommodation, priority will be determined by the priority registration date. The applicant with the earlier priority registration date will have the greatest priority. If this date is the same, a Senior Officer will decide which applicant has the greatest priority.

Banding	Criteria	Housing Need – Full description
Band A: Emergency need to move	Emergency medical or disability	a) Where an applicant’s medical condition is expected to be terminal within a period of twelve months and re-housing is required to provide a basis for the provision of suitable care. b) The applicant’s health is so severely affected by the accommodation that it is likely to become life threatening. c) The applicant is unable to access their accommodation due to reasons relating to the medical or disability needs of

Band A: Emergency need to move		<p>the applicant and requires re-housing into accommodation suitable for their use.</p> <p>d) The applicant's accommodation is directly contributing to the serious deterioration of the applicant's health and the condition of the property cannot be brought up to a required standard within a reasonable period – usually 6 months.</p>
	Statutory Overcrowding	The applicant has been assessed by the Council's Environmental Health Team as statutorily overcrowded (as defined by the Housing Act 1985), provided that any overcrowding is not a result of deliberate actions or failure to adhere to housing advice.
	Welfare & Hardship	<p>a) Emergency need to move determined by the Council and authorised by a Senior Officer.</p> <p>b) Applicants who need to move due to domestic abuse / actual violence or threats of violence / extreme harassment / intimidation / hate crime. This may include where a move is necessary to protect a witness to criminal acts and would normally be recommended by the Police and must be authorised by a Senior Officer.</p> <p>c) Exceptional circumstances due to significant problems associated with an applicant's occupation of a dwelling, and there is a high risk to them or their household's safety if they remain in the dwelling / area.</p>
	Statutory succession	Where an applicant has succeeded to a Runnymede Borough Council tenancy but is required to move to a smaller property.
	Release of an adapted property	Where a Runnymede Council tenant or other social housing tenant will release an adapted property where the tenant does not require adaptations and is willing to move to a suitable non-adapted property. The released adapted property will then be available for re-letting by the Council or through a nomination, to an applicant in need of this accommodation.
	Private rented sector properties unfit or unsanitary	<p>a) Applicants in the private rented sector living in dwellings where all three of the following criteria are met:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Council has determined that the property poses a Category 1 Hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, and ii. The Council is satisfied that the problem cannot be resolved by the landlord within six months, and iii. as a result, continuing to occupy the accommodation will pose a considerable risk to the applicant's health.

Band A: Emergency need to move		<p>b) Applicants in the private rented sector living in dwellings where a statutory notice has been issued by the Council's Environmental Health Department that the property is unfit and is to be demolished under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This assessment does not include mobile homes unless there is a composite need on medical and / or welfare grounds and is evidenced by health professionals. • The Council operates a procedure for assessing the applications of mobile home owners whereby an inspection is required by the Council's Environmental Health team followed by a full housing options appraisal of the applicant's financial circumstances including their ability to buy or rent in the private market. This must happen before consideration is given to qualify to join the Housing Register. If there is a financial capability to buy or rent an applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register as the financial qualification criteria will apply.
	Major works or demolition	<p>a) Where a Council tenant must move permanently, because of major works to their current property, or where their property is due for demolition or Compulsory Purchase Order for refurbishment or redevelopment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These applicants are referred to as 'decants' and the Council has a separate Decant Policy • Applicants will be offered rehousing options suitable for their housing needs under this Scheme and this may be different in size to their current property. This will be based on their current and permanent household and will not include lodgers or any other non-permanent members of the household.
	Emergency Management Transfers	<p>Where an emergency transfer is approved for a Council tenant, where approval has been agreed by the Housing Solutions Manager or Homelessness, Housing Advice & Allocations Manager.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full details of why a transfer is needed must be provided by the Housing & Neighbourhood Services Team and authorised by the Housing Services Manager in the first instance.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants will be offered rehousing options suitable for their housing needs under this Scheme and this may be different in size to their current property. This will be based on their current and permanent household (see Section 9) and will not include lodgers or any other non-permanent members of the household. The applicant will be made one suitable offer of accommodation, and refusal will result in a reassessment to their original band if there was an existing live transfer application at the time of the management transfer request. New applications would be assessed and banded or removed in accordance with this Allocations Scheme.
Band B: Urgent need to move	Overcrowding	Where a household is lacking two bedrooms in their home and the overcrowding is not deemed to be deliberate. The bedroom calculation (under para 9.8) will be used to determine if bedrooms are lacking.
	Applicants living in unsatisfactory housing lacking basic facilities	<p>a) Applicants without access at all to any of the following facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kitchen Bathroom Inside WC Hot or cold water supplies <p>b) Applicants who occupy a private rented property which is in disrepair or unfit for occupation and is subject to a Prohibition Order. In addition, recovery of the premises is required to comply with the Order as defined by s. 33 of the Housing Act 2004.</p> <p>c) Where an authorised officer from the Council has determined that a private rented property contains one or more serious Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Health & Safety Rating System and there is no prospect of the issues being remedied in a period of time that the Council considers reasonable</p>

Band B: Urgent need to move	Urgent medical or disability	<p>Where an applicant's housing is unsuitable for urgent, but not life threatening, medical reasons, or due to their disability, who do not qualify for Band A assessment, but whose housing conditions directly contribute to causing serious ill health. Section 8.12 – 8.16.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This needs to be exceptional whereby the health care is unique to a specific health service in the Borough of Runnymede and cannot be provided anywhere else including in the area where the applicant currently lives. • Support from friends or relatives living in the Borough is not a ground for welfare if support is already or can be achieved in the current Borough the applicant resides in, whether through professional services or informal support which may involve travelling. • Exceptional and specific health care will have to be evidenced by health professionals currently engaged with the applicant and will be assessed by the Council's Independent Medical Advisor. • This ground is meant for exceptional and unique circumstances only.
	Welfare & Hardship	<p>Where an applicant's current accommodation is causing hardship and an urgent move is required to receive care or support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This needs to be exceptional whereby the health care is unique to a specific health service in the Borough of Runnymede and cannot be provided anywhere else including in the area where the applicant currently lives. • Support from friends or relatives living in the Borough is not a ground for welfare if support is already or can be achieved in the current Borough the applicant resides in, whether through professional services or informal support which may involve travelling. • Exceptional and specific health care will have to be evidenced by health professionals currently engaged with the applicant and will be assessed by the Council's Independent Medical Advisor. • This ground is meant for exceptional and unique circumstances only.
	Under occupation	<p>Where a Runnymede Council tenant or other social housing tenant, living in the Borough of Runnymede is under-occupying their home and by moving will release a family home for re-letting.</p>

		The Registered Provider landlord will need to agree that the vacated property will be offered to the Council for nomination by the Council, outside of established Nominations Agreements. This is a discretionary process for non-Runnymede Council tenants and will be authorised by a Senior Officer.
	Qualification under the Homelessness Reduction Act	Applicants where it has been determined that they qualify for a Section 195 Prevention Duty or a Section 189B Relief Duty, in accordance with the Part VII, Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Applicants will only remain in this band for the duration of the duty owed and if they are fully engaged with their personalised housing plan to explore all avenues to resolve their housing difficulty.
	Non-successor with a priority need	Where a person is living in an RBC property as a non-successor and is in priority need (Section 189) as defined by Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). This is a decision for the Housing Solutions Team to make and the applicant is expected to fully engage with the Housing Advice Team to explore all housing options to move.
Band C: Medium priority to move	Homeless households	Homeless households owed the main homeless duty by Runnymede Borough Council under section 193(2), will not be able to bid and one suitable direct offer of accommodation will be made.
	Armed forces	Serving Armed Forces Personnel occupying Service Living Accommodation, who: i. has already engaged with the Council's Housing Advice team, and ii. have been served with a Certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to Occupy Service Living Accommodation (usually six months prior to discharge), and iii. have failed to secure alternative accommodation and face potential homelessness within 56 days.
	Rough Sleepers	Applicants where it has been verified by the Council that they are sleeping rough in Runnymede and meet the local connection rules for homeless purposes (Section 4.25).
	Parental eviction – at home for over 12 months	A priority need household as defined by Part VII of the Housing Act, as amended (section 189) who was at threat of homelessness but has been able to remain in the parental home for over 12 months since the initial threat of homelessness. This will need to be approved by the Housing Advice Team. Applicants will need to complete a Change Circumstances Form to highlight this which will trigger the assessment.

Band C: Medium priority to move	Move on from Care (Surrey County Council)	<p>A care leaver (LAC) is ready and prepared to move to independent settled housing, which may be in the social or private rented sector, and both of the following criteria apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The care leaver possesses the life skills to sustain a tenancy including managing a rent account, and ii. The care leaver has been assessed for a support package, and one is in place. <p>It is the responsibility of Surrey County Council (SCC) to ensure that a Housing Register application has been completed by the care leaver. SCC will need to obtain the agreement with the Council regarding move on at least six months before a move is needed, to allow time for the application to be assessed. SCC will also need to ensure that the relevant information, including up to date pathway plans are submitted to the Council for assessment. This will prevent a homeless approach by a LAC to whom SCC have a continuing duty towards and to ensure the best opportunities for rehousing options are available within set timescales. SCC are also required to adhere to the current SCC Young Person (YP) Protocol.</p>
	Move on from supported accommodation	<p>Applicants from supported accommodation, under contracted arrangements, who are ready to move-on following a satisfactory move-on report being submitted by the care provider / landlord.</p> <p>The report will need to satisfy the Council that the applicant is ready to move onto general needs housing and sustain a tenancy independently. If the Council is not satisfied that the applicant is ready to move to independent general needs housing, then further supported housing must be considered. If the applicant is not ready to move on, the application will remain in Band E, and no offers of accommodation will be made.</p>
	Medium medical or disability or welfare need	<p>Where an applicant or a permanent member of an applicant's household (currently residing with the applicant) is assessed as having an identified reason to move on the basis of their health or welfare need to move or grounds relating to a disability. Their housing is considered unsuitable for non-urgent medical reasons, or due to their disability, and is directly contributing to causing ill health (Section 8.12 – 8.16).</p>

	Hardship	<p>The applicant has some other compelling (but not urgent) need to live in Runnymede which, if not met, will cause on-going hardship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting evidence will be required from relevant and qualified health professionals and is the responsibility of the applicant to provide. It must be current, relevant, and specific to an applicant or a member of their permanent household's condition, who is currently living with them. The Council will not request or pay for any supporting evidence. The Council will consider all recommendations from health professionals but will make the final decision as to the assessment of an application. Supporting evidence must be less than 6 months old at the time of any request submitted.
	Overcrowding	Where a household lacking one bedroom in their home and the overcrowding is not deemed to be deliberate. The bedroom calculation set out in para 9.8 will be used to determine if a bedroom is lacking.
	Reasonable preference – no local connection, exceptional need	Applicants without a Local Connection to the Borough, but who have been assessed as having an exceptional or emergency need to move, as authorised by a Senior Officer (4.32 – 4.35).
Band D: Identified priority to move	No priority need and/or intentionally homeless	<p>a) Applicants who are intentionally homeless, within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) following the negative decision issued by the Runnymede Housing Advice Team.</p> <p>b) Applicants who have been assessed as homeless but not in priority need within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended</p>
	Adult children / siblings sharing family home	<p>Adult children (aged 16 years and over who are no longer dependent on a parent/guardian) living with parents / guardians / family members, or adult siblings living together, in overcrowded accommodation or where there is inadequate space.</p> <p>Consideration will not be given to how a family chooses to use the space within a property.</p>
	Shared facilities – unique welfare need	An applicant is living in accommodation where the facilities are shared with non-relatives, and there is a unique and/or exceptional welfare need which renders this unsuitable.

		This does not include adult children living in family homes or adult siblings living in a family home or shared home. (Note - sharing facilities does not count as a factor in deciding if an application should be moved to a higher band).
	Low medical or disability need or welfare	Where it is identified that there is a need to move on the grounds of health, welfare needs or due to a disability. This need is deemed to be low, meaning that although the housing situation could certainly be improved, the accommodation is still considered to be suitable (8.12 – 8.16).
	RBC Non-successor with no priority need	Where a person is living in an RBC property as a non-successor and is not considered to be in priority need as defined by Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The applicants should seek housing assistance from the Housing Advice Team to explore all available housing options, which will include the private rented sector.
Band E: Low priority to move	Adult children seeking to leave the family home	<p>Adult children (aged 16 years and over who are no longer dependent on a parent/guardian) living with parents / guardians / family members, or adult siblings living together, without any statutory overcrowding or welfare issues, other than a desire to access independent accommodation.</p> <p>Consideration will not be given to how a family chooses to use the space within a property.</p>
	Move on from Care	<p>Applicants who are Looked After Children (LAC) currently in a residential, foster placement or other supported placement, whereby Surrey County Council has the statutory duty towards and where no agreement is in place with the Council to plan move-on accommodation.</p> <p>The originating area can only be Surrey for the purposes of rehousing.</p> <p>Offers of accommodation in the private rented sector will be offered as move-on accommodation where available.</p> <p>Once agreement is in place for move-on accommodation, which should be at least six months before, an application will be reassessed to a Band C.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of Surrey County Council to provide up to date information for the purposes of applications and</p>

Band E: Low priority to move		<p>move-on accommodation for those young people in their care.</p> <p>Applicants will not be able to bid whilst in this band</p>
	Armed forces	<p>a) Serving Armed Forces personnel who are not due to be discharged for the foreseeable future. These applicants will not need a Local Connection to the Borough.</p> <p>b) Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Armed Forces, where the bereaved spouse or civil partner will shortly no longer be entitled to reside or is no longer entitled to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or partner</p> <p>c) Separated spouses of Serving Armed Forces personnel who have or have not been asked to leave Military of Defence accommodation</p>
	Move on from supported accommodation	<p>Applicants from supported accommodation, under contracted arrangements, where the Council has not received a satisfactory move-on report by the care provider / landlord.</p> <p>Applicants, who have been placed in supported housing outside of the Borough of Runnymede, will retain their Local Connection in order to assist them with 'move-on' rehousing options (4.25 – 4.26).</p> <p>The applicant must have been referred to the supported placement outside of the Borough by the Housing Advice Team at Runnymede Borough Council.</p> <p>Applicants will be unable to place bids on properties. If the Council is satisfied that the applicant can live independently, the applicant will be placed in Band C and one direct offer of accommodation will be made.</p>
	Refusal of offers / failure to view	<p>a) Applicants who have refused to accept two reasonable offers of accommodation within the last 12 months. This also applies to those who fail to view a property without a reasonable cause. The Allocations Team will decide if an offer is reasonable (13.17 – 13.23).</p> <p>b) Applicants moving on from care placements or supported housing who have refused their one, suitable offer of accommodation.</p>
	Right to move	<p>Applicants applying under the Government's Right to Move initiative, assessed on a case-by-case basis following authorisation from a Senior Officer (4.15 – 4.20).</p>

Independent Retirement Living	Applicants aged 55 years and over without a Local Connection, who have a family member currently residing in the Borough of Runnymede and has done so for the last three years. This only applies to applicants wishing to access independent retirement living only (4.11 – 4.14).
Private Rented Sector	Applicants living in private rented sector accommodation, as a lodger, or on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy or similar, and is adequately and suitably housed.
Reasonable preference – no local connection	Applicants assessed as falling into one of the Reasonable Preference groups but without a Local Connection to the borough of Runnymede (as defined in this Scheme, Section 3). In addition, there is either no housing need or they are statutorily homeless and have been provided with suitable temporary accommodation (4.32 – 4.35).

11. How properties are let

- 11.1 The Council operates a Choice Based Letting Scheme whereby properties are advertised, and applicants can place bids thereby affording applicants a degree of choice as to any accommodation to be offered to them. This does not apply, however, to homeless households owed the main housing duty, who will only be eligible for one direct offer (11.3).
- 11.2 All social housing properties available to the Council including Registered Provider accommodation can either be advertised through the Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme or made as a direct offer to an applicant. A Senior Officer approves the selection of properties for direct offers.
- 11.3 Homeless households owed the main homeless duty by Runnymede Council under section 193(2) of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, will be unable to bid on any properties. Instead, they will be made a direct offer as their final Part VI offer, under the Assisted Choice for Homeless Households Scheme. Further information can be found in Section 12.1 – 12.10.
- 11.4 Homeseekers and those applying for a transfer from social housing accommodation will be able to express an interest in a property through the Choice Based Lettings Scheme by placing a bid. There may be occasions however when a property is selected to make a direct offer to an applicant. This could be for the following reasons:
1. Where the property has specific adaptations
 2. Where it will make best use of the housing stock
 3. For community safety reasons
 4. For emergency management moves
 5. For reasons of public protection

6. Where the move will facilitate a chain of lets releasing another property which the Council has a particular need of (usually involving under occupiers)
7. Where the property is deemed to be hard to let or to minimise the time that the property is empty
8. Any other reason as authorised by a Senior officer.

Local Lettings Plans

- 11.5 From time to time, the Council will adopt Local Lettings Plans for new housing developments or for other new schemes. A Local Lettings Plan could also be applied to an existing scheme or to an area of the borough.
- 11.6 Section 166A(6)(b) of the Housing Act 1996 enables housing authorities to allocate accommodation to people of a particular description, whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories. This is on the basis that overall, the authority can demonstrate compliance with the requirements of s.166A (3), in that the allocation scheme gives additional preference to those in the reasonable preference categories.
- 11.7 The aim of a Local Lettings Plan is to ensure the new residents integrate well to form a cohesive, safe, and sustainable community;
- Promote residents' satisfaction with their homes and neighbourhood.
 - Minimise the time that properties are empty
 - Ensure that the needs of local residents and the wider community are reflected within the development.
 - To create mixed, balanced sustainable communities.
 - Or where schemes are aimed at applicants with particular needs, for example, the Extra Care Housing Scheme or Independent Retirement Living Schemes
- 11.8 Local Lettings Plans for developments/existing stock of up to 50 units will be agreed by a Senior Officer.
- 11.9 Local Lettings Plans for developments/existing stock of over 50 units will be considered and approved by a Council Committee. An Equality Impact Assessment Screening will be compiled as part of the plan.
- 11.10 Local Lettings Plans will state whether they apply only to initial lettings or for subsequent lettings as well.

Letting properties through the Choice Based Lettings Scheme

Advertising Properties

- 11.11 An advert will be shown on the Choice Based Lettings Scheme via the Housing Online portal on the Council's website, for those properties that are selected for advertising. This will comprise a photograph of the outside of a property on the road or of a comparable property but not the actual property. The number/name of a property will not be provided.
- 11.12 Information will be provided about the property to enable the applicant to make an informed decision. This will include:
- The type of property
 - The rent
 - Any adaptations that have been carried out
 - The floor level
 - Whether there is a lift
 - If there is level access
 - The number of bedrooms
 - The minimum and maximum number of people in the household that the property is suitable for
 - Whether there is use of a communal or enclosed garden
 - If pets are permitted
- 11.13 Some properties may be restricted to certain groups of applicants and this will be stated in the advert. For example, if the property is within an Independent Retirement Living Scheme and there is a minimum age requirement.
- 11.14 The Council will make every effort to include all appropriate information on the property adverts but cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies or omissions. It is the responsibility of the applicant, to satisfy themselves at the point of viewing a property, whether they wish to accept the offer.
- 11.15 The Council may withdraw an advert if at any time it becomes aware of certain property features that may affect who the property is suitable for. For example, if it becomes known that the property is adapted and suitable for someone with limited mobility. The property will then be re-advertised with the correct information. If the Council chooses not to re-advertise the property in such an instance, then it will filter the shortlist to prioritise bids from applicants who would benefit from these special features.

Bidding

- 11.16 Applicants who are able to bid on advertised properties in the Choice Based Lettings Scheme will be able to have up to three live bids at any one time. There is a detailed guidance on how applicants can place bids available online at [Being offered a social housing tenancy - Runnymede Borough Council](#).

- 11.17 Applicants are expected to place bids on properties that they believe meet their needs and in areas where they are prepared to live. If a bid leads to an offer of accommodation, the applicant will be expected to accept the offer unless there are valid reasons not to do so.
- 11.18 The length of time a property is advertised can vary but this will be for a minimum of 48 hours. Properties may be advertised on any day of the working week. The closing date and time will be clearly marked on the advert. Applicants should regularly visit the Choice Based Lettings Scheme website to search for recently advertised properties.
- 11.19 Applicants can set up an alert to be notified when a property becomes available in the area of choice that they have specified, and an email will be sent to their specified email address. Applicants are required to be proactive and apply for all properties that may be suitable for their needs. An applicant can be set up to auto-bid where failing to do so would result in hardship for the customer. The applicant will not be able to bid themselves when auto-bid is in place.
- 11.20 Bids logged through auto-bid will be considered as an offer so applicants must clearly specify the areas in the Borough where they are able to live and provide evidenced reasons to explain why they can't live in other certain areas of the Borough.

Requirement to bid

- 11.21 Applicants are required to place bids on suitable properties within a given timeframe.
- 11.22 The Housing Register's aim is to provide housing to those in the greatest need. If applicants do not bid on suitable properties that meet their needs, then their need for housing is questionable. Waiting for the ideal property to become available does not suggest a strong need to move.
- 11.23 Therefore, where properties have been advertised that would meet the applicants housing needs, but an applicant fails to place a bid on a suitable property within a six-month period, they will automatically be set to auto-bid. Preference for a particular property type will not be considered for auto-bidding. Auto-bid will be set up for all areas in the borough that are suitable as well as all property types. Applicants who then fail to take up a suitable offer following an auto-bid, will be treated as refusing the offer if there are no valid reasons to refuse.

Considering the bids for a property

- 11.24 Once the bidding deadline on a property has ended, the Council will consider those bids on a shortlist to determine who to offer the property to.

- 11.25 As a general rule, applicants who have placed a bid will be prioritised in band order and within each band by the effective date, subject to any other preferences or restrictions set out in the advert.
- 11.26 In some situations, the property will not be considered for the highest banded applicant who has bid. Shortlisted applicants can be by-passed/overlooked at this stage.
- 11.27 The reasons for bypassing applicants could include:
1. Where it is known that the applicant has not informed the Council of a material change in their circumstances.
 2. Where the applicant has not provided the required verification to approve their application.
 3. The applicant has bid on a property that only working households or accommodation for specific key workers can be considered for.
 4. The household size does not match the requirement detailed in the advert.
 5. The ages of the applicant or those in the household does not match that detailed in the advert.
 6. The property has adaptations that are not required by the applicant.
 7. The property is deemed to be unsuitable for the applicant. This could be for health, welfare, or risk issues.
 8. If the Council considers on available information that the applicant is not ready for independent living with or without a support package in place.
 9. The applicant does not match specific criteria as set out in the advert. This could be because of a Local Lettings Plan which has been adopted for specific areas/schemes to ensure communities are balanced. Priority will be given to those who match the criteria.
 10. If it is known that the applicant or household members have a recent history of evidenced anti-social behaviour. This could lead to the application being disqualified from the Housing Register.
 11. The applicant has current or former rent arrears and/or other debts with any social housing landlord and where these are not being satisfactorily re-paid. The amount owed would need to be more than £100. This could lead to the application being disqualified from the Housing Register.
 12. The applicant has council tax arrears of more than £100. This could lead to the application being disqualified from the Housing Register.
 13. The applicant is a social housing tenant and has not maintained their accommodation to the standard that the Council considers to be acceptable. See Section 7.13 – 7.14 for more detail.
 14. The applicant has an outstanding offer of accommodation available to them which has not been resolved. For example, this could be an offer of social, private rented accommodation or supported housing.
 15. There is an indication that a fraudulent application may have been made or that accurate information was deliberately withheld. The applicant will

be bypassed as further enquiries will need to be made and a decision taken about whether to remove the application.

16. The applicant does not meet the specific criteria that some Registered Providers and charitable housing providers have built into their allocations policies or rules. These usually relate to ages of applicants or areas of residence. These requirements will usually be displayed in the advert.
17. In exceptional circumstances where a strategic let is required. An applicant may not be considered suitable for a property due to housing management reasons. For example, an applicant who has a history of substance dependency may not be suitable for a property in an area where the landlord is aware that there are already a number of other residents with similar issues.
18. The advert may be withdrawn because the property is urgently needed for a direct offer to a particular applicant or because it was advertised before the previous tenant had moved out of the property and they have rescinded their notice.

Enquiries into applications from social housing tenants

- 11.28 Enquiries will be made with the respective landlord as to how the applicant has conducted their social housing tenancy and evidence will be sought.
- 11.29 Enquiries will be made to establish the following:
 1. The level of any current and/or former rent arrears, including any sundry debts
 2. If the property has been maintained to a satisfactory condition and has not been significantly damaged, see Section 7.13 – 7.14.
 3. If there has been a serious breach of tenancy within the last five years. To include:
 - Anti-social behaviour
 - Illegal or immoral behaviour, including involvement in substance misuse
 - Threats or actual violence
 - Racial abuse
 - Domestic abuse
 - Hate crime
 - Criminal conviction
 - Refusal to co-operate with essential health and safety inspections of the property, including gas safety checks.
 - Any other serious breach of tenancy, evidenced by enforcement action i.e. a notice, community protection warning and/or notice, injunction etc
- 11.30 We will visit Runnymede Council tenants to assess the condition of the property.

- 11.31 The Council will consider the vulnerability of the tenant when deciding if the applicant should be bypassed due to the condition of their current accommodation. The Council will also decide whether the housing application should be suspended, meaning that no further bids can be placed during this time.
- 11.32 This would allow the tenant time to bring the property up to the required standard. The Council will work with support services and the landlord to enable this. An application could be put on hold for an initial period of six months, where the condition of the property would be re-assessed. If the condition remained unsatisfactory, then the housing application would remain suspended for a further three months and reviewed again.
- 11.33 If the Council decides to bypass the applicant or to suspend their application due to the condition of the property, then this will be put in writing. There will be a right to request a review of this decision.

Provisional offer of accommodation

- 11.34 The shortlist will be reviewed following the above enquiries. The Council will then contact the top three applicants on the shortlist to determine whether they would like to proceed with the property. A greater number of applicants may be contacted to minimise the time a property is empty or where a strategic let is needed.
- 11.35 Applicants will be given all the property details except for the property name or number. The highest placed applicant on the shortlist will be informed of their status. Those that are placed second and third will also be informed of this and advised that they could be offered the property if the first applicant refuses the offer or if it is unable to go ahead.
- 11.36 Bids for a property will be treated as an applicant's agreement to be offered the property and a refusal of an offer at any point following the closure of the bidding cycle will be deemed as a refusal. Applicants in second and third for a property may be offered the property at short notice. See section 11.24 - 11.27.

Verification of applications

- 11.37 If the applicants would like to proceed, then they will be asked to provide satisfactory documentation to verify their identity and circumstances. This is to ensure that only those applicants who meet the terms of this scheme are offered accommodation.
- 11.38 Applicants will be given 48 hours in which to provide this information. Failure to do so, will result in the application being bypassed. This could be treated as a refusal if the applicant does not respond.
- 11.39 The documents that are required:

- Proof of identity for all members of the household including photographic identification such as passport or driving licence for those who will be the named tenants. Birth certificates will suffice for children in the household.
- Additional proof to confirm eligibility if required.
- Proof of income for the applicants and all non-dependent members of the household. Payslips for the last three months will be required.
- Certified copies of business accounts if applicant is self-employed.
- Last three months banks statements for all members of the household to confirm savings amount.
- Benefit award letters (Child Benefit, Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Income Support, Universal Credit (UC), Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) etc).
- Proof of address for the past five years for the applicants and non-dependent members of the household. This will need to be official correspondence such as utility bills, Council Tax bills etc.
- Employment contract or other official documentation if the applicant is self-employed to confirm that the applicant works in the borough if local connection has been awarded on this basis.
- Copy of the current tenancy agreement if applicable.

11.40 All applications are then referred to the Council's Fraud Team who will carry out further checks to ensure that the applicant fulfils all requirements as set out in the scheme.

11.41 Applicants at this stage can be bypassed for the offer of accommodation due to the following reasons:

- i. The applicant is not considered to be eligible for an allocation of social housing.
- ii. The applicant does not fulfil the local connection criteria on the basis of residence or employment/self-employment within the borough or for exceptional circumstances. The applicant is not therefore considered to qualify for the Housing Register and the application will be removed.
- iii. The applicant has an income higher than the thresholds for single/couple and family households and there are not considered to be exceptional circumstances. The applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register and the application will be removed. The applicant will be given advice about other housing options, such as low-cost home ownership.
- iv. The applicant has savings/assets higher than that specified in the scheme and there are not considered to be any exceptional circumstances. The applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register and the application will be removed. The applicant will be given advice about other housing options, such as low-cost home ownership.
- v. The applicant owns a property either in the UK or abroad, which they could reasonably be expected to reside in or liquidate in order to resolve

their own housing difficulties. The applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register and the application will be removed.

- vi. The applicant has given up a home that they owned, rented, shared, or had rights to but chose to leave or dispose of, within the last five years. The applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register and the application will be removed.
- vii. The applicant has disposed of significant assets within a given time frame, which could have been utilised to resolve the applicant's housing difficulties.
- viii. The applicant has been assessed as deliberately causing overcrowding in their home. The applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register and the application will be removed.
- ix. The applicant has been assessed as deliberately moving to a home which was clearly unaffordable. The applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register and the application will be removed.
- x. There is an indication that a fraudulent application may have been made or that accurate information was deliberately withheld. The applicant will be bypassed as further enquiries will need to be made and a decision taken about whether to remove the application.
- xi. The applicant has not provided the documents within the timescale and there are no mitigating circumstances to justify the delay. Without the documentation, the Council is unable to confirm the applicant's circumstances. Failure to engage will be treated as a refusal.
- xii. Any other information that the Council becomes aware of as detailed in the reasons for bypassing applicants in section 11.27.

11.42 The shortlist will be reviewed following any applicants that have been bypassed.

11.43 Following satisfactory verification checks, the highest banded applicant, taking into account the effective date, will be invited to view the property. See section 13 for more information about this and for details on what happens after the viewing.

12. Lettings made directly

12.1 Not all lettings are made through the Choice based Lettings Scheme.

Homeless households who are owed a Section 193(2) main duty – Assisted Choice for Homeless Households Scheme

12.2 All homeless households who are owed a Section 193(2) main duty are made one suitable offer. This could be either an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector or in social housing as the final Part VI offer.

- 12.3 Main Duty accepted homeless households will not be able to bid on properties in the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Instead, they will be made one, direct offer of accommodation under the Assisted Choice for Homeless Households Scheme.

Areas of preference

- 12.4 Homeless households accepted as owed the main housing duty, as with all applicants to the Housing Register, will be asked where they would like to live within the borough on the Housing Register Application Form. If the applicant is not already on the Housing Register, then they will be asked to apply at the point they are accepted as being owed the main duty and issued with their section 184 decision letter.
- 12.5 These stated preferences will be taken into account when considering the household for an offer of suitable accommodation. However, it should be noted that there is no guarantee that the Council will be able to provide accommodation in these areas unless there is an overriding reason to do so. In discharging the homeless duty under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), in so far as is reasonably practical, we will secure accommodation within the Borough.

Considering housing needs

- 12.6 Information relating to the housing needs of the household will be assessed so that a suitable offer of accommodation can be made. This will include an assessment of medical/disability needs as well as welfare needs as set out in the Allocation Scheme. If there are restrictions on the property that can be offered, such as floor level, type of property or the location, then this will be explained to the applicant before an offer of accommodation is made.

Verification of circumstances

- 12.7 The applicant will be expected to provide documentation to verify their circumstances, which will also be referred to the Council's Fraud Team for further enquiries. These documents will be requested when the main duty is accepted. An offer of social housing will not be made until the documents have been received and verified.
- 12.8 The applicant will need to provide the following within 48 hours:
- Proof of identity for any new members of the household
 - Additional proof to confirm eligibility if required
 - Proof of income and savings for the applicants and all members of the household. The last three months' bank statements would usually be acceptable.

- 12.9 If the applicant is not provided with settled accommodation within that three-month period, then additional, up to date bank statements will be requested.
- 12.10 Applicants are required to satisfactorily maintain any temporary accommodation provided and must not owe more than £100 in housing related debt or Council Tax.

Other households who may receive Direct Offers of accommodation

- 12.11 It is not only homeless households who are owed a main duty that will receive a direct offer. A direct offer could be made to other households for the following reasons:
- i. Where the property has specific adaptations
 - ii. Where it will make best use of the housing stock
 - iii. For community safety reasons
 - iv. For emergency management moves
 - v. For reasons of public protection
 - vi. Where the move will facilitate a chain of lets releasing another property which the Council has a particular need of (usually involving under-occupiers)
 - vii. Where the property is deemed to be hard to let
 - viii. For moves to the Extra Care Scheme
 - ix. For certain moves to Independent Retirement Living Schemes
 - x. Those who are ready to move on from supported housing
 - xi. Any other reason as authorised by a Senior Officer
- 12.12 In all cases, the applicant's needs will be fully assessed under the Allocation Scheme so that a suitable offer of accommodation can be made. The applicant's preferred areas for where they would like to live will also be considered but may not be able to be accommodated.
- 12.13 Supporting information will need to be provided for those who feel they have a health, disability or welfare need so that this can be fully assessed. If there are health issues, a recommendation will be made about the floor level and type of accommodation that will meet the household's needs.
- 12.14 Direct let's may be made to applicants who are tenants of Registered Providers. The Council will require the subsequent vacancy of the applicant to be offered to the Council for nomination, outside of any existing Nominations Agreement. The Council will work flexibly with Registered Providers both within and outside of the Borough of Runnymede, to widen the choice of properties available and to address specific issues.
- 12.15 All decisions to make a direct offer will be made by a Senior Officer.

Those moving-on from supported accommodation

- 12.16 Applicants living in supported housing schemes will be unable to bid under the choice based lettings scheme and will be made a direct offer of accommodation instead. This will be one suitable offer of accommodation only.
- 12.17 A placement within a supported housing scheme is intended to be on a temporary basis, with a transition to more settled accommodation when the resident has been equipped with the skills required to maintain an independent tenancy. The Council will consider supporting information from the housing/support provider and will only offer accommodation to those it deems ready to move-on.
- 12.18 A direct offer of suitable accommodation will enable a planned move-on from the scheme. It will ensure that best use is being made of the supported housing units and that those who no longer require the support, move-on from the scheme, freeing up vacancies for those who would benefit.

13. Viewings, refusals and accepting a tenancy

Viewing the offer of accommodation

- 13.1 Applicants will be invited to view the offer of accommodation so that an informed decision can be made about whether to accept it. All applicants are strongly encouraged to attend a viewing. At this stage, the Council will issue a formal offer of accommodation in writing.
- 13.2 In the case of joint applicants, both should attend the viewing. The applicant cannot arrange for a representative to view on their behalf, although it is permitted for a representative or an advocate to attend with the applicant. Notice will need to be given to the Council of this.
- 13.3 The final decision to accept or reject an offer of accommodation can only be made by the applicant(s). The Council will not discuss an offer of accommodation with anyone else unless there is written permission to do so.
- 13.4 Applicants cannot informally view a property while building or maintenance works are being carried out due to health and safety implications. Viewings will only be by prior appointment and when accompanied by an officer of the Council. The Council will not be held responsible for the safety of anyone entering the property without an accompanied viewing appointment.
- 13.5 If the applicant first offered the property refuses it, then the property will be offered to the applicant with the next highest priority subject to the criteria in Section 11.37 -11.41.

Refusal of an offer of accommodation

- 13.6 Applicants who have successfully bid for a property and either chosen to refuse it or refuse or fail to view the property, without a reasonable cause, will only be entitled to one further offer of suitable accommodation. This does not apply to homeless households owed the main duty, those moving on from supported accommodation, emergency management transfers or decant. They are entitled to one suitable offer only. See Sections 12.2 – 12.3 and 12.16 – 12.18.
- 13.7 Upon viewing an offer of accommodation, the applicant will be given a reasonable period of time in which to accept or refuse the offer. This will usually be 24 hours but can be extended to 48 hours if the applicant is considered vulnerable and there are mitigating circumstances. This is to be agreed with a Senior Officer.
- 13.8 If the applicant does not provide their written reasons for refusing an offer of accommodation within the agreed timescale, then the Council will still deem this as a refusal.
- 13.9 Applicants can refuse an offer of accommodation without viewing it, but this is strongly advised against. Applicants who fail to view the property without a reasonable cause, will also be treated as refusing the offer.
- 13.10 The Council will then need to decide whether the refusal is reasonable, Section 13.17 – 13.30.
- 13.11 Applicants who fail to respond to contact from Officers or those who initially engage but fail to provide the required documentation within the prescribed timescale, will also be treated as refusing the offer.
- 13.12 All of the above applies to all applicants on the Housing Register.

Homeseekers and Transfer tenants who refuse

- 13.13 These applicants will need to provide in writing their reasons for refusing an offer of accommodation. These will be considered by the Allocations Team. Applicants can provide additional, supporting information but this will need to be provided at the time of the written refusal so that it can be considered.
- 13.14 The Council may make enquiries into the reasons for refusing so that an informed decision can be made. The applicant will be verbally notified of the Council's decision where possible within 24 hours of receiving the written refusal details.
- 13.15 The Council's decision will be put in writing to the applicant, also advising that there is a right to request a review. If the offer is considered to be suitable, then the applicant will be given 24 hours in which to reconsider and accept the offer.
- 13.16 Failure to accept the offer within the time period will result in the application being placed into Band E and the property being offered to another applicant.

- 13.17 The reassessment to Band E will also mean a new registration date for that applicant and the loss of accrued time on the Housing. The application will remain in Band E for 12 months.
- 13.18 It is the responsibility of the applicant to complete a Change of Circumstances Form to request reassessment after the 12-month period. The Council will not be responsible for any extended time in this banding due to an applicant's failure to request a reassessment.
- 13.19 Emergency Management transfer tenants in Band A who refuse one suitable offer of rehousing (where they have an existing transfer application live at the time of the management transfer request), will return to their original banding. Transfer applications not previously on the Housing Register will have their application re-assessed and banded according to their need.

Refusals under the Assisted Choice for Homeless Households Scheme

- 13.20 Homeless households owed the main duty have the right to accept the offer of accommodation and request a review on its suitability under Section 202 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended. This would mean that if the review finds that the property is suitable, the accommodation will still be available to them. These applicants will be strongly advised to take up this right.
- 13.21 Households may decide not to accept the offer of accommodation. They will need to provide in writing their reasons for refusing within 24 hours of viewing the property. This will be considered by the Housing Advice Team. Applicants can provide additional, supporting information but this will need to be provided at the time of the written refusal.
- 13.22 The Council may make enquiries into the reasons for refusing so that an informed decision can be made. The applicant will be notified of the Council's decision within 24 hours of receiving the written refusal details.
- 13.23 The Council's decision will be put in writing to the applicant, also advising that there is a right to request a review. If the offer is considered to be suitable, then the applicant will be given 24 hours in which to reconsider and accept the offer. After this time the property may not be kept available to the applicant.
- 13.24 Failure to accept the offer within this period will result in the Council discharging its statutory homeless duty. No further offers of accommodation will be made and the application will be removed from the Housing Register. The Council will serve a notice to quit on the applicant to leave the temporary accommodation, which will result in County Court proceedings and an order of costs being pursued, should the applicant remain in the accommodation beyond the date the Notice to Quit expires.
- 13.25 The Council will owe the applicant an advice and assistance duty only and it will be the responsibility of the applicant to secure alternative accommodation.

- 13.26 Where there are dependent children in the household, the Council will inform Surrey County Council's Children's Services of the discharge of duty and work with them to assist the family.

Reviews under Section 202 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended

- 13.27 Homeless households are advised in writing of the right to accept the offer and then request a review on its suitability under Section 202 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). In addition, households have the right of appeal to the County Court under Section 204.
- 13.28 Applicants will be able to move into the accommodation whilst the review is being undertaken.
- 13.29 If homeless households choose to refuse the offer of accommodation and not move in, they can still request a review on suitability. **The offer of accommodation will not remain available to them and will be offered to another household.**
- 13.30 If the review decision determines that the offer of accommodation was in fact unsuitable, then a further offer of accommodation will be made.

Accepting a tenancy

- 13.31 The applicant will be asked to confirm that they accept the offer of accommodation. At this stage, the Council will advise when the property is likely to be ready to move into and advise the applicant to make arrangements for the anticipated move. Arrangements will then be made for the tenancy agreement to be signed.
- 13.32 It is likely that there will only be a short period of time between accepting the offer and starting the tenancy, unless there are exceptional circumstances that prevent this, which have been agreed by a Senior Officer.

Rent in advance

- 13.33 In line with the Council's Rent Policy, applicants will be required to pay up to four weeks rent in advance at the sign up. This will also include the proportion of rent due for any days up to the first Monday of the tenancy, which will be detailed in the offer letter.

Applicants leaving Temporary Accommodation

- 13.34 Once an applicant has signed the tenancy agreement and has the keys for their new home, they are expected to leave their temporary accommodation

and return all keys without delay. Applicants will be responsible for ongoing rent until the keys are returned.

- 13.35 Applicants are expected to leave the temporary accommodation in good condition, with all personal possessions and furniture removed. Failure to do so could result in costs being re-charged to the applicant.

Transfer tenants

- 13.36 Once a transfer tenant has accepted the offer of accommodation, the Allocations Officer will send a Tenancy Termination Form to be completed. Applicants are required to give at least one weeks' notice on their current home. A longer notice period can be given but once the new tenancy has started, the applicant will be liable for rents on both properties.
- 13.37 It is expected that tenants will leave their council property in good condition, with all personal possessions and furniture removed. Failure to do so could result in costs being re-charged to the tenant.

14. Review, Complaints and Discretion

Requesting a review

- 14.1 The Council will notify an applicant in writing of any decisions that are made on their application. The decision letter will clearly set out the reasons for the decision and outline the applicant's right to request a review. Applicants have the right to request a review of one or more of the following decisions:
- Ineligibility to join the waiting list
 - Disqualification
 - The banding awarded
 - Removal from the list
- 14.2 Removal from the list may include circumstances where there are reasonable grounds for believing that an applicant has been bypassed for a specific property due to a failure to consider a material factor, or consideration of an immaterial factor, or otherwise due to administrative error.
- 14.3 Applicants are encouraged to discuss their circumstances with a member of the Allocations Team in the first instance, so that a clear explanation can be given regarding the reasons of the decision in accordance with the Scheme.
- 14.4 Should an applicant be dissatisfied with a decision reached on their application, they are able to request a review which will be processed in accordance with the review procedure.

Review procedure

- a) The applicant will be notified in writing of any decisions made in respect of their application stating their right of review.
- b) If an applicant wishes to seek a review, they must request a review of a decision within 21 days of being notified of the decision. Reviews requested outside of the 21 day limit may be considered in exceptional circumstances.
- c) The review request should be made in writing and should clearly outline the reasons why the applicant considers the decision to be wrong. The applicant is invited to provide any additional information and evidence they wish to be considered as part of the review. The review request can be submitted by a representative on the applicant's behalf, although we will need explicit consent from the applicant to discuss the case with anyone other than the applicant. If the applicant requires assistance to submit their review request in writing this will be provided.
- d) Requests for review should be sent to:
- Housing Allocations Team
Runnymede Borough Council
Civic Centre
Station Road
Addlestone
Surrey
KT15 2AH
- Email: housingallocations@runnymede.gov.uk
- e) Should an applicant wish to make verbal representations, as well as written submissions, the applicant will be able to do so. The applicant should indicate a wish to discuss the review verbally in the formal review request.
- f) The review will be carried out by an officer who is senior to the person who made the original decision.
- g) The review will be considered on the basis of the Councils Allocation Scheme, any legal requirements, and all relevant information. This will include all information provided by the applicant since the original decision was made and any other relevant developments, such as advice from medical and/or other specialist advisors.
- h) The deadline for completing the review is 56 calendar days from receiving the request, however, there may be some occasions where this takes longer. Should this be the case the applicant will be notified of any extension and the reasons for this.
- i) Applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review. The letter will set out the reasons for the decision.

j) This review response is the final decision and there is no further internal review stage.

- 14.5 Should the applicant have any new material information, for example a new medical diagnosis or medication, they are able to submit a Change of Circumstances Form.

Making a Complaint

- 14.6 Should an applicant be dissatisfied with the outcome of any decision that carries a right to a review (Section 14.1), the applicant should, in the first instance, request that this decision is reviewed in accordance with the review procedure.
- 14.7 Applicants can use the Council's formal complaints procedure to make a complaint about the Allocation Scheme or if they are dissatisfied with the service that they have received.
- 14.8 All applicants who make a complaint will be treated fairly and objectively. A written reply to any complaint received will be sent within the timescales set out within the Council's Complaint's Procedure, which is available online at <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/comments-complaints-and-compliments>

Senior Officer's Discretion

- 14.9 Where this Scheme includes a power vested in a Senior Officer to award any additional priority, grant any benefit or waive any requirement, that power shall be exercised by the Homelessness, Housing Advice & Allocations Manager, or authorised deputy and, unless otherwise provided for in this Scheme, will be exercised having regard to all the circumstances of the case as well as the general circumstances of others applying to the Council for rehousing.

15. Right to information, Data Protection & Confidentiality

Right to Information

- 15.1 All applicants have the right to request information about their application, including whether they are entitled to any reasonable preference (Section 2) for housing and when suitable housing may be offered. This is to enable them to assess how their applications is likely to be treated and whether they are likely to secure suitable housing.

Data Protection

- 15.2 Data collected from applications for housing is processed in accordance with EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018. For the purpose of the Act, Runnymede Borough Council is the “Data Controller” and is responsible for the information held.
- 15.3 Applicants, when making an application for housing, agree for the Council to share information with and to request information from relevant agencies and departments, both within and outside of the Council, in order to assess and verify the application. This may include credit reference agencies, current or former landlords, government departments or health and/or social care providers.

Confidentiality

- 15.4 Information received in relation to an application will be treated in confidence in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018. Confidential information held about customers will not be disclosed to third parties apart from:
- Where it is necessary to process the application
 - Where the individual has consented to the disclosure
 - Where the Council is required in law to make the disclosure
 - Where the disclosure is made in accordance with a recognised Information Sharing Protocol
 - For reasons of public protection
 - Otherwise in accordance with our Privacy Notice at <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/19597/Departmental-Privacy-Notices?p=1>

16. Equal Opportunities Monitoring and Review of the Scheme

- 16.1 In line with its Equality Policy, the Council is committed to ensuring its Scheme, procedures and service, in the letting of property are non-discriminatory and that all customers are able to access the service especially taking account of any vulnerability or other specific needs, and also the needs of different groups protected by Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.
- 16.2 Applicants are invited to indicate if they wish to make use of the Council’s translation and interpretation services, or if they require other special services as a result of a visual impairment, hearing difficulties or other disability. Confidential interview facilities are provided at the Civic Centre. There is full access to the Civic Centre for wheelchair users. Home interview services are available for applicants who are elderly or who experience mobility difficulties or have other vulnerabilities.

- 16.3 The Council will seek to ensure that its Allocation Scheme is being operated in a manner that is fair to all sections of the community regardless of nationality, ethnic origin, marital status, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/ maternity and religion. The information provided will be kept confidential and treated with respect. The Council believes it is important to understand the different communities who apply for housing and it is only by asking these questions can the Council check that it is operating a fair system.
- 16.4 All applicants for housing or re-housing will be asked to provide equalities information. Provision of this information will not be obligatory and not a requirement for acceptance of an application. However, such information will help the Council monitor the number and types of equality groups seeking support and therefore applicants will be strongly advised to provide this information. Equalities records will be monitored regularly to ensure properties are being offered and allocated fairly.
- 16.5 Allocation policies and any changes to them will be reviewed regularly to ensure they do not operate in ways that discriminate against or disadvantage any group.
- 16.6 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed on the entirety of this scheme and a copy is available on request.

Review of the Scheme

- 16.7 This Scheme is subject to regular review, and where the Scheme requires changes which are minor in nature, or where the changes are required urgently for legal reasons, or changes in government policy and / or legislation, these changes will be approved by the Chair / Vice Chair of the Housing Committee.
- 16.8 Subject to the urgency of the change, any major change required to the Scheme will be subject to full public consultation.