

HomeMove ⇨ Choice-Based Lettings Policy

1. Introduction

The aim of a choice-based letting scheme is to enable housing applicants to select a property through a bidding procedure and thereby to fully engage in the process of finding their new home. The council has to balance this with housing priorities based upon people's housing circumstance, housing need and legal responsibilities.

Objectives of the HomeMove scheme are:

- To enable access, engagement and improve customer satisfaction;
- To improve understanding and provide transparency in the allocation process;
- To reduce refusals and improve vacant property turnaround times;
- To achieve a change in service quality through working practices and Information Technology;
- To work in partnership with Housing Association partners.

Applicants for housing or transfers who are eligible for the list will be accepted onto the Eastbourne HomeMove Register. Applicants and tenants will be referred to as Homeseekers unless a policy is specific to types of applicants or tenants.

2. Housing Register Partners

The following Registered Social Landlords are partners to the Housing Register:

- Downland Housing Association Limited
- Raglan Housing Association Limited
- Southern Housing Group Limited
- Orbit Housing Association
- Hyde Martlett
- Moat Housing Group Limited
- Home Group limited
- Anchor Trust
- Southdown Housing Association Limited

Appendix 1

- Places for People
- Hanover Housing Association
- Amicus Horizon.

3. How to apply

All Homeseekers requesting re-housing, and tenants requesting transfers, must complete an application form to be included on the housing register. These are available from the Housing Department, council offices, local Citizens Advice Bureau or on line at www.eastbourne.gov.uk. The Housing Department at Eastbourne Borough Council can be contacted on 01323 410000.

If this information is required in large print, Braille, tape/CD or in another language, please contact Eastbourne Borough Council on 01323 410000. Assistance with completing applications can be arranged by appointments with housing staff or at local Citizen Advice Bureau.

4. Eligibility

All Homeseekers will be eligible to register unless they fall into any of the following categories:

- i) Person who is subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, unless they fall into a category defined by the Home Secretary;
- ii) Person who the CLG defines as falling into a non-qualifying category such as those who do not have recourse to public funds under Part VI of the Homelessness Act 2002;
- iii) Person not habitually resident in the UK;
- iv) Person whose behaviour is considered to make them an unsuitable tenant. This exclusion relates to an applicant whose past behaviour has been sufficiently extreme to make it likely that a landlord would obtain a possession order. As an example, this could cover anti-social and illegal behaviour or non-payment of rent. This could also include threatening behaviour towards staff.

5. Registering for HomeMove

Homeseekers and tenants must apply by completing the Council's housing application form. They should expect to validate their identity and that of other members of their household, their income, their previous addresses and other reasonable aspects of the application and give basic details of their current housing circumstances. Homeseekers will also be asked to provide documentary evidence, for example:

Appendix 1

- Birth certificates for household members;
- Copy of current tenancy agreement/mortgage documents;
- A recent utility bill (for the last 3 months) or other proof of address for each adult on the application.

The application will then be assessed and a decision made as to the Band the Homeseeker will be placed within. Existing social housing tenants¹ who are seeking to transfer will normally be assessed and allocated a Band based upon the same criteria as Homeseekers. The only exception is for tenants who are under-occupying family housing and who are eligible for an incentive grant to move to smaller housing. These tenants will be placed in Band A.

Once assessed, the applicant is placed in the appropriate bedroom category (see Appendix B) and into one of the four priority bandings in date order of registration.

The Council will write to the applicant to inform him/her of their registration date and registration number and give the following information:

- Priority Band and reason for it;
- Priority date, which is the date the application is received, or in the case of homeless applicants, the date that Eastbourne Borough Council accepts a duty to re-house;
- The minimum and maximum bedroom size they can bid for;
- Mobility group (physical disability level) if applicable;
- Advise the applicant that they have a right to see the information held in relation to the application. If they consider any details or decision to be inaccurate then they can request a review.

Medical priority is assessed, where appropriate, by the Senior Allocations Officer. This assessment is based on the information supplied by the applicant using the Council's Self Assessment Medical form and details from the applicant's GP or other medical professional where appropriate. The Special Needs Housing Officer will refer the Self Assessment Medical Form to the Occupational Therapist (OT) where there is a need for an OT assessment.

¹ Transfers are considered to be secure tenants of Eastbourne Borough Council and assured tenants of Registered Social Landlords who live within the borough.

6. Who Can Apply?

The Housing Register is open to anyone who is aged 16 years or over (subject to the statutory exclusion provisions²) although applicants under the age of 18 will only be offered accommodation in certain circumstances (see below).

7. Exclusions from the Register

By virtue of Section 160A of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) (but subject to certain exceptions set out therein) the Council cannot allocate housing accommodation to the following:

- (a) A person who is subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 unless that person falls within an exemption specified by the Secretary of State;
- (b) A person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by virtue of any regulation made by the Secretary of State;
- (c) A person, or a member of that person's household, who has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour that is serious enough to make him unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council or housing association.

Section 160A of the 1996 Act defines unacceptable behaviour as behaviour that would entitle the Council to a Possession Order on any ground (apart from Ground 8) set out in Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 (as amended). These grounds include:

- failing to pay rent or other breach of tenancy condition;
- conduct causing or likely to cause a nuisance and annoyance;
- being convicted of using a dwelling-house for illegal or immoral purposes;
- conviction of an indictable offence committed in, or in the locality of, the dwelling-house
- perpetrating domestic violence that led to the other party having to leave their home.

Section 160A of the 1996 Act further provides that if the Council decides that an applicant for housing accommodation is ineligible for one of the reasons given above it must notify the applicant in writing and set out the reasons for its decision. Such a notice, if not received by the applicant, is treated as having being given if it is made available at the Council's offices for a reasonable period for collection by him/her or on his/her behalf.

² See Section 4 'Eligibility' on page 2

Appendix 1

There is a right under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 to ask the Council to review a decision to refuse an application to join the Housing Register. A senior officer from the Council, not involved in the decision to exclude the applicant, will carry out the review.

We will write to anyone who is excluded from the Housing Register giving our reasons for this decision, the length of time the exclusion will remain in operation and their right to request a review of the decision. If a review is requested we will provide our decision in writing and set out the reasons for it and the facts that we have taken into account.

A fresh application will be considered if:

- The applicant's immigration status has changed, or
- The applicant can demonstrate good behaviour for a sustained period of time, including references from existing landlords and/or support agencies, or
- The applicant's financial circumstances have changed.

8. Who can be included on the application?

The following people may be included on a housing application:

- Anyone who is part of the household at the date of registration and is still in occupation.
- Someone living with the applicant who is married or has undertaken a commitment through a civil ceremony or who would otherwise be reasonably expected to live with the applicant as their partner.
- Dependent children under 18 years who live with the applicant, or who might reasonably be expected to live with them, where the applicant is the parent or guardian in receipt of Child Benefit or has an agreement for residency, normally for at least 50% of the time. A level of actual dependence and residence must be proven and each case will be considered on its own individual merit.
- Someone not currently living with the applicant but for whom it would be reasonable to do so. For example, an applicant may be able to include a close relative who needs care but is unable to live with them due to a genuine lack of appropriate accommodation or the unsuitability of the present home.
- A carer, where the applicant can demonstrate that a live-in carer is essential and a carer has been identified and has moved in with the household or is ready to do so when accommodation becomes available.

Appendix 1

- Any other non-dependant adult who is normally permanently resident with the applicant.

9. People aged under 18

Anyone aged over 16 can join our housing register although we will not usually offer them a permanent tenancy until they are over 18. In the event that there is an urgent housing need a further assessment will be carried out and we will work with the individual to find the most suitable accommodation to meet their need.

An offer of permanent accommodation will only be made if we are satisfied that the young person has the necessary skills to live independently, is able to sustain a tenancy, and has an identified package of support available to them.

10. Owner occupiers and people with savings or capital

Section 167(2A) of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act) allows allocation schemes to give less priority to an applicant who is financially able to secure alternative accommodation either by renting privately or buying a suitable home.

We will therefore normally place in Band D any owner-occupiers or households with a substantial amount of savings or equity in a property that would enable them to obtain accommodation suitable to meet their needs. These applicants will be provided with advice and guidance on other housing options. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, and medical, disability, community care and other relevant needs will be taken into account.

Where there are medical problems, applications from such households will be considered in the following circumstances:

- Where it is not possible to adapt the current accommodation to make it suitable for their medical condition;
- Where it is too expensive to adapt the existing accommodation to make it suitable for their medical condition³ and they cannot afford to buy or rent suitable alternative housing;
- The sale of the property would not enable the owner/occupier to purchase or rent an alternative property suitable to their needs.

³ Taking into account any grants or loans available to private householders at the time of the application

Appendix 1

11. Reviews of the register

The Council will carry out annual reviews of applicants on the Housing Register to check that their circumstances have not changed. Applicants are required to notify the Council of any change in circumstances that might affect the application and its status on the Register.

Applicants will be removed from the Register if they fail to re-register within four weeks of receipt of a review letter, unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated.

Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that the council reasonably requires to assess an application, or to provide false information.

The Council will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/or the loss of the home.

The Data Protection Act 1988 is designed to protect personal data about living individuals. The Act also places obligations on those organisations that process personal data (Data Controllers). As a Data Controller, the Council and its partners on the Housing Register are committed to complying with this legislation by applying the principles of good information handling across all services related to HomeMove.

12. Tenants who wish to transfer

The following tenants may register on the Housing Register if they wish to move:

- Any secure tenant of Eastbourne Borough Council
- Anyone who lives within the borough and is an assured tenant of one of the partner housing associations shown on page 1.

The Council will not normally make an offer of accommodation to a transfer applicant who is guilty of a breach of tenancy that has resulted in:

- A valid Notice of Seeking Possession or Suspended Possession Order for rent arrears;
- Housing Act Injunction, Anti-Social Behaviour Order, Notice of Seeking Possession, Suspended Possession Order or demoted tenancy (if adopted) granted as a result of the breach of other aspects of the tenancy agreement.

Mutual Exchanges (Assignments pursuant to Section 92 of the Housing Act 1985) are not included within this allocation policy.

Appendix 1

In all transfer cases the tenant's conduct and rent history will be taken into account in determining the suitability for an offer of accommodation.

13. The Banding Structure

There are four priority Bands. Applicants will be placed within one of these bands as follows:

Band 'A'

- Accepted homeless households owed the main housing duty by the Council, have been placed in B&B or short-term temporary accommodation and where the only prospect of meeting the household's needs is in permanent accommodation (e.g. the applicant has obtained employment and is experiencing severe financial hardship or the household has severe medical or disability reasons).
- Accepted homeless households owed the main housing duty by the Council and placed in temporary accommodation where the landlord requires the property back or the property is unsuitable to meet the applicant's needs or a member of the household's needs.
- Accepted homeless households owed the main housing duty by the Council and making their own temporary arrangements or suffering a family split due to a genuine lack of accommodation.
- Households with high medical priority where the housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or member of the household as to warrant emergency priority.
- Transfer applicants under-occupying family sized accommodation and qualifying for the Transfer Incentive Scheme.
- Households who are statutorily overcrowded (as defined in Part X of the Housing Act 1985) or under a Court Order to re-house.
- Transfer applicants needing permanent or temporary decant where the property is imminently required for major repair or redevelopment.
- Households in properties issued with a Housing Order or Notice by the council's Private Housing team (i.e. properties with a category 1 hazard as advised by Environmental Health and where there is an imminent risk to the tenant or it would be unreasonable for the tenant to remain in the property whilst remedial works were carried out.)
- Tenants living in an adapted property where the adaptations are no required by any of the tenant's household or where the existing property cannot be adapted to meet the applicant's needs. (To be determined by the Council).

Appendix 1

- People who are ready to move on from care or supported housing as agreed by the Housing Options Team Leader and social care providers.
- Priority transfer applicants e.g. those experiencing severe harassment, as agreed in exceptional circumstances by the council due to significant and insurmountable problems associated with the tenant's occupation and where there is imminent personal risk to the household if they remain.
- Households in severe need, e.g. in exceptional circumstances and/or with cumulative needs which warrant emergency priority. To be agreed by a senior officer on a case-by-case basis.

Band 'B'

- Severe Overcrowding - Households lacking 2 or more separate bedrooms.
- Successors and non-statutory successors – approved for an offer of suitable accommodation by a senior officer of Eastbourne Homes Ltd.
- Management Transfers – recommended by Eastbourne Homes Ltd and agreed by Officer Panel for transfers on management grounds to properties of same size and type.
- Medium medical priority.
- Ex-tenants returning from institutions e.g. a rehabilitation centre, where a commitment has been made in order to secure the relinquishment of a Council or RSL tenancy on entering the institution.
- Homeseekers with a dependent child/ren living in insecure accommodation, e.g. staying with family or friends, lacking any bedroom and lacking or sharing essential amenities.
- High Needs - circumstances and/or cumulative needs which warrant high priority – to be agreed by the Senior Allocations Officer on a case-by-case basis.

Band 'C'

- Moderate Overcrowding - households lacking one separate bedroom.
- Council and Housing Association tenants who are under-occupying their home but do not qualify for the Transfer Incentive Scheme.
- Accepted homeless households occupying temporary accommodation on an assured short-hold or non-secure tenancy until such time as the landlord requires the property back or the household's needs are no longer met unless offered permanent accommodation.

Appendix 1

- Delivering a care plan - households identified in an Adult Social Care Plan where accommodation is required to assist in delivering a Care Plan or to relieve other social/welfare hardship as agreed between Adult Social Care and a senior officer within the council's Housing Services team.
- Low medical priority.
- Unsanitary conditions that cannot be addressed by Environmental Health action e.g. lacking one or more of the following; a kitchen (e.g. sink and space for a cooker); an inside WC or a bathroom (e.g. basin and bath or shower).
- Other unsatisfactory housing conditions e.g. substantial disrepair as assessed by Environmental Health.
- Applicants for sheltered housing where there is no significant need that would place them in a higher band.
- Other social welfare or hardship need, e.g. people who need to move to a particular area in the district to give or receive necessary support and where failure to meet that need would cause hardship.

Band 'D'

- Transfer applicants with no other housing need.
- Homeseekers with no other housing need.
- Key workers with no other housing need.
- Owner-occupiers or those with a substantial amount of savings or substantial equity, unless they have cannot afford to meet their specific housing needs (see Section 10 on page 6 for more details).

Full details of how assessment and banding decisions are made can be found in Appendix A.

The national and regional housing agendas are encouraging new housing schemes to be of mixed tenure. Where the Council has the opportunity to nominate applicants to new schemes, we will consider the needs of people in all Bands 'A' to 'D' to ensure new developments have a mix of residents.

14. Re-assessing need and priority dates

The Council reviews all applications annually. If an applicant's circumstances change they may be moved up or down a band depending on their need.

Appendix 1

All applicants must inform the HomeMove team immediately when their circumstances change. If this results in a change of Band, the HomeMove team will write to inform the applicant of the new Band, their new priority date if applicable and of their right to request a review of this decision.

The principle of the scheme is that no one should overtake existing applicants in a Band.

Moving up a Band

If an applicant moves up a Band their priority date will be as follows:

- **Overcrowding due to the birth of a child:** the date will be taken from the child's date of date of birth
- **Transfer Priorities:** the date the information is received from Eastbourne Homes Ltd
- **Environmental Health Reasons:** the date the decision is received from the Environmental Health Officer
- **Medical reasons:** the date the medical need is assessed;
- **Homeless Households:** the date the statutory duty was accepted by the Council
- **All other reasons:** the date the relevant information is received by the Housing Services team.

Moving down a Band

If an applicant moves down a Band, then their priority date will revert to the date that applied when the applicant was previously in that Band, or any earlier date in a higher Band.

15. Multiple Needs

Applications will be assessed to identify those applicants whose needs, when considered cumulatively, are deemed to be such as to warrant them being placed in a higher priority Band.

Where such exceptional circumstances exist the Allocations Team, having fully considered the details of the case, will forward their recommendation to the Senior Allocations Officer to seek authorisation that the applicant be placed in a higher priority Band, either 'A' or 'B' as appropriate to their needs.

Appendix 1

16. How does the council advertise available properties?

All available properties are advertised in the Eastbourne Herald Property News, on the Internet at www.homemove.org.uk and in the Customer Contact Centre at 1 Grove Road. Personalised sheets will also be sent to applicants identified as especially vulnerable in order to highlight properties that are available for bidding and suitable for their needs.

Full details of how to bid are set out in the Scheme User Guide which is sent to all new applicants and is available on the internet at www.homemove.org.uk or from the Council's Allocations team. The Council will advertise all properties and specify whether they are available for transfer applicants, homeseekers (housing applicants) or both types of applicants.

We will set the eligibility criteria for the property, including:

- The minimum and maximum number of persons in the household (please refer to table in Appendix 'B');
- Any age limits for applicants or restrictions for households with children between certain ages;
- Whether pets are allowed;
- Whether it is sheltered housing;
- Who owns the property, whether Council or Housing Association;
- The weekly rent, including any other charges;
- The mobility group the property is suitable for, if applicable.

Properties that are suitable for people with limited mobility will display one of the following three mobility classifications:



Suitable for a wheelchair user indoor and outdoors.



Suitable for people who cannot manage steps or stairs and may use a wheelchair some of the time.



Suitable for people who are independent but can only manage one or two steps.

Priority will be given to those with a matching need. Properties will also be advertised with explanatory notes where there is potential for adaptation or further adaptation.

Appendix 1

Homeless households

In cases where households have been accepted as homeless under Part VII Housing Act 1996 and have been awarded the relevant Band, a household may bid for accommodation that falls outside of the criteria in Appendix B provided that the property is reasonable for the household's needs. The offer will be regarded as discharging the Council's duty under Part VII Housing Act 1996.

Sheltered and Retirement housing

The Council and housing association partners have a variety of accommodation that is specifically intended for people aged 60 years or over. In addition there are a small number of housing association sheltered schemes that will accept applications from people aged 55 and over.

Bids for accessible flats in sheltered schemes may be considered from applicants with mobility needs who are under the age of 60 provided it has been previously agreed by the council.

Sheltered and retirement housing is for older people who can live independently but who prefer to live with other people of their age. This will generally include people who can live independently with a Social Care & Health Care package in place.

Other issues to note:

- No applicants should bid for properties that would not be a suitable size for the household size.
- Where there is an overriding medical need the Council may allocate households up to one additional bedroom over the standards set out in Appendix B.
- Where a household is moving to smaller accommodation they may be entitled to assistance under the Transfer Incentive Scheme.
 - Accommodation in specialist supported housing schemes will normally be allocated outside of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme to applicants with relevant needs that have been assessed and approved by the Council and support providers.
 - Offers of temporary accommodation made to homeless households will be allocated outside of the Choice Based Lettings scheme.

Appendix 1

17. The bidding process

Eligible applicants can make bids for advertised properties by sending in a completed coupon, by telephone bidding, text bidding or by bidding online via the website. Full details of how to bid are set out in the Scheme User Guide, which will be sent out to all new applicants and is available on the website www.homemove.org.uk.

Accepted Homeless applicants, applicants with support needs and those who have difficulty with written English will be supported to make appropriate bids by the Allocations Team. Additional support may be provided as required by an appointed support provider or a translator.

All bids for a property are checked against the eligibility rules, e.g. to ensure they meet any age restrictions or are suitable for the size of property. Ineligible bids are excluded from consideration. We will provide advice and support to applicants who regularly bid for properties they are not eligible for.

Once an offer has been made the applicant has the choice to refuse the property. If they refuse they will be able to bid again in the following cycle. If an applicant is accepted as homeless and refuses a successful bid of a suitable home, the Senior Housing Needs Officer will consider that the council's statutory duty has been fully discharged and no further offers will be made. Any homeless applicant who is considering refusal of such an offer should speak to their Homeless Case Officer before taking such a decision.

18. The selection process

All eligible bids for each property are placed in priority order. Priority is decided in the following order:

- Firstly by local connection to Eastbourne Borough Council
- Secondly by Band
- Thirdly by priority date within the Band.

Where a property has been advertised to give preference to a mobility group, bids from these applicants will be prioritised in Band order above bids from applicants who are not in that mobility group.

Every bid will be assigned a random number when the bid is made. This number is used to resolve a tie, with the highest number receiving the higher priority. If there are no eligible bidders for a property, the Housing Allocations Team will decide either to make a direct allocation or re-advertise the property.

Appendix 1

To minimise delays the landlord may arrange multiple viewings for up to three applicant households per property. Applicants will be required to bring proof of identity and any other relevant documentation that has not already been verified to the viewing.

If the property is owned by a Housing Association, the prioritised list will be referred to the landlord for an offer. When the property is owned by the council the Allocations Team will arrange a date and time for accompanied viewings and send details to the successful applicant.

If the applicant chooses to refuse an offer, the Allocations Officer will note the reasons for the refusal and the next applicant will be selected for an offer. Applicants are not penalised for refusing offers although checks will be made if an applicant refuses several properties.

If the applicant is an accepted homeless household in Band 'A', the Council may regard the refusal of an offer of suitable accommodation as a discharge of its statutory duty and no further offers will be made.

Applicants who do not provide proof of identity or other relevant requested documentation at the viewing will be given 24-hours to provide this at the Customer Contact Centre prior to signing for the tenancy.

If a property is considered to be a sensitive let, any issues surrounding this will be discussed with the incoming tenant prior to a tenancy being granted, where appropriate.

19. How short listing takes place

An offer will normally be made to the applicant at the top of the shortlist. In very exceptional circumstances we may need to reject a shortlisted applicant for a particular property to ensure that we meet the following objectives:

To ensure that communities are as balanced as possible

We may adopt Local Lettings Plans for specific properties or areas, such as those with a history of anti-social behaviour. These plans will need to be agreed by stakeholders and will consider the problems that need addressing, backed up by evidence. Properties subject to Local Lettings Plans will be clearly advertised and priority will be given to those that meet the agreed criteria.

To ensure that allocations are sensitively made

In exceptional cases we may not offer to the person at the top of the shortlist for housing management reasons. Certain properties are also subject to maximum and minimum age restrictions and these will be clearly labelled in the property advert.

Appendix 1

A senior housing management officer will be able to reject an allocation in if there is reliable evidence of one or more of the following:

- A significant risk of serious anti-social behaviour or nuisance to others
- A significant risk of serious violence to neighbours or others
- Outstanding debts to the council where there is no agreement to repay or where there is non-compliance with an agreement to repay

To make best use of the Council's stock and to reduce under occupation

From time to time a property may be advertised for those who are releasing larger Council accommodation or reserved for those who need to move urgently because the Council is undertaking work on their property.

To ensure properties are let quickly

This is important to minimise rent loss. Applicants must be available and able to take up an offer of accommodation although applicants can choose not to accept any offer made. If an applicant is being made an offer of accommodation as a discharge of homeless duty the applicant should seek advice on the consequences of refusing an offer.

20. Direct Lettings: households considered for housing outside the HomeMove Scheme

The Council needs to retain some flexibility to deal with exceptional circumstances.

Officer Panel

The Officer Panel role will be:

- To consider and agree people and households to be considered as an exception to HomeMove policy;
- To match suitable properties to households being dealt with as an exception to HomeMove policy;
- To consider the banding status of those applicants with complex medical needs.

The panel will meet fortnightly. It will comprise at least three officers of which one must be a senior officer. The main representatives on the Officer Panel are:

For Eastbourne Borough Council: Senior Allocations Officer
Special Needs Housing Officer
Senior Housing Needs Officer

Appendix 1

For Eastbourne Homes Ltd:

Housing and Estates Services Manager

If a property is allocated by the Officer Panel the council will make one reasonable offer. If this offer is refused the applicant will be entitled to request a review.

Lettings may be considered by the Officer Panel in the following circumstances:

1) Vulnerable groups

- a) Person requiring a specially adapted property to cater for a specific disability.
- b) Housing in specialist accommodation with support services for vulnerable groups e.g. the Independent Living Scheme or other specially designated mental health or learning disability schemes.
- c) Urgent need to move-on from a specialist supported housing scheme to more suitable housing.
- d) Vulnerable households unable to adequately use the choice-based lettings system without a significant degree of support e.g. due to mental health issues.
- e) Emergency cases where there is a requirement for immediate housing to secure the safety of the applicant or the community.
- f) Urgent Medical or Welfare grounds. This is considered to be:
 - Applicants with an immediate urgent and overriding medical condition which results in the current accommodation being totally unsuitable or impossible to occupy, or
 - Applicants that need to immediately move to a different type of housing or location due to overriding welfare grounds placing the family member/s at high risk, and
 - Alternative accommodation is expected to significantly improve or resolve the issue.

Note: Medical supportive information or from a statutory support agency will be required in most of the above instances.

2) Property Maintenance

- Households required to move people out of a property for urgent improvements or repairs.

Appendix 1

- Households required to move to enable the redevelopment or demolition of their property.

3) Housing Management

- a) Management Transfers where there is a serious health or safety risk and efforts to resolve the issue in situ have been unsuccessful.
- b) Households required to move out of a private sector property that is leased by EBC or a housing association and which lease is coming to an end.

Refusal of an offer made via the Officer Panel

The Council will normally make only one offer of reasonable and suitable accommodation outside the HomeMove scheme via the Officers Panel.

An applicant refusing a reasonable offer will continue to be registered on the Housing Register and can bid for housing through the HomeMove scheme. Refusal of accommodation by a homeless applicant may result in the Council having fulfilled its statutory housing duty to that person.

21. Feedback on let properties

All properties that have been let will be listed on the website at www.homemove.org.uk. We will show the Band of the successful applicant and the date they applied to the Housing Register.

22. Joint tenancies

In most circumstances the Council will grant a joint tenancy to partners applying together. A joint tenancy remains in joint names until one or both joint tenants terminate the tenancy. For further advice please contact your Housing Officer or seek independent legal advice. The council will not generally issue joint tenancies across generations, such as between mother and son.

23. Local Lettings Policies and Plans

A local lettings plan is an agreement between the Council, relevant social landlord and local tenants and residents that restricts lettings in the area to certain households. This is done to tackle a specific issue or problem that has been identified locally, from an individual block of flats or street up to a whole estate or neighbourhood.

Appendix 1

Local letting policies will have an important role in widening housing choices for local people and ensuring that good housing contributes to regeneration and renewal.

The national and regional housing agendas are encouraging new housing schemes to be mixed tenure, catering for a range of households with varying needs and aspirations.

Where there are such developments in Eastbourne, properties may be made available to households that would not otherwise have the opportunity to access affordable housing. This is to ensure the developments cater for a variety of residents as opposed to concentrations of households with particular support needs.

In areas of the town where there are higher than average concentrations of deprivation or vulnerable households with high support needs there may be instances where the Council will offer housing specifically to working households or those with a less urgent housing need. Through this process lettings can contribute toward balanced, sustainable communities, with a positive impact on education, local businesses, and health.

We will work with housing association partners and Eastbourne Homes Ltd. to develop local letting policies for new developments and deprived areas if appropriate. These policies will be carefully considered to ensure that in correcting an imbalance in one area they do not create anomalies in another area.

24. Other Linked Schemes & Housing Options

Due to the pressures on social housing across the borough applicants will receive advice and information about a range of housing options such as low-cost home ownership schemes, accommodation outside of the district and suitable private sector rented accommodation.

The Council currently operates:

- **Transfer Incentive Scheme** - financial assistance offered to Council tenants giving up family sized accommodation;
- **Tenancy Deposit Scheme** – a loan for certain vulnerable homeless households to help them secure accommodation in the private rented sector;
- **Mutual Exchange Register** - to assist existing social housing tenants to exchange their properties outside of the bidding scheme.

Appendix 1

25. Appeals And Reviews

This section sets out the procedure for reviewing or appealing the following decisions:

- 1) To exclude an applicant from joining the Housing Register or to remove someone from the Housing Register other than at his or her request;
- 2) That an applicant is ineligible for an offer;
- 3) Other decisions relating to the Choice Based Lettings Scheme, including banding and priority dates;
- 4) Where a priority has been removed and a Direct Let implemented.

An officer who is senior to the officer making the original decision (and who was not involved in making the decision) will carry out these reviews.

Procedure

- A request for a review must be made within 21 days from the day on which the applicant is notified of the Council's decision and the reasons for it. The Council has discretion to extend the time limit if it considers this would be reasonable.
- A request should be in writing. (Assistance is available at Local Citizens Advice Bureau and other agencies).
- The reviewing officer will carry out an investigation and, if further information is needed, invite the applicant to write or, if unable to do this, make oral representation. The applicant may also appoint someone on his/her behalf to do this.
- If the reviewing officer finds that the officer who took the decision did not take relevant information into account, he or she will refer the file back to that officer for reconsideration or overturn the decision.
- The officer will notify the applicant of the decision and the reasons for it within eight weeks of the request for a review. There is no right to request a review of the decision unless the applicant's circumstances change.

Appendix A: Assessments and Banding decisions

Following registration a decision will be made about what, if any, follow up action is appropriate e.g. referral to an Occupational Therapist, Environmental Health Officer, Housing Options Team (if there is a threat of homelessness), Social Services or other support agencies. The Housing Options Team makes decisions about banding in the light of appropriate advice and the following guidelines.

Medical Needs

A completed medical self assessment form will be requested from the following applicants:

- Those who indicate that they or someone in their household have an illness or disability which is affected by their current housing situation
- Those who may be vulnerable on physical or mental health grounds and are in need of settled accommodation.

The Housing Options Team will consider the details provided on the medical assessment form, together with any relevant information from the General Practitioner, Hospital Consultant, or Occupational Therapist as appropriate.

An assessment will be made of the effect of their present housing on the state of health of the applicant or anyone in the household. In reaching the decision we will consider whether the overall effect on the household or any member of the household is sufficiently severe to warrant inclusion in a higher Band.

In each case the recommendation is based on a judgement of need, and the relative need of other households in the relevant Bands.

Applicants with medical needs will be placed in one of the following Bands:-

Band 'A'

High Priority will be recommended where the applicant (including accepted homeless applicants) or a member of the household has a life threatening condition which is seriously affected by their current housing. Band 'A' will also be given where current housing conditions and/or other circumstances are having such a major adverse effect on the medical condition of any member of the household as to warrant emergency priority.

Appendix 1

Band 'B'

Medium Medical Priority will be recommended where the current housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or on one of the household.

Band 'C'

Low Medical Priority will be recommended where the current housing conditions are having an adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or on one of the household that creates a particular need for them to move.

Where a household is experiencing overcrowding and/or other adverse circumstances, the medical assessment will take into account the effect of these circumstances on the health of the household.

Mobility Needs

Irrespective of the Band assessment, where an applicant or one of the household has a substantial and permanent physical disability which may place them in mobility groups 1, 2 or 3 (see below), the Housing Options Team will refer to the Occupational Therapist for a report on their housing needs. Taking into account the recommendations of the report, the Housing Options Team will place the member in one of the following mobility groups:

- Group 1: Wheelchair user indoors and outdoors;
- Group 2: People who cannot manage steps or stairs and may use a wheelchair some of the time;
- Group 3: Independent but can only manage one or two steps.

Unsatisfactory housing conditions and statutory duty

Households will be placed in **Band 'A'** where there is a statutory duty to re-house as assessed by Environmental Health because a Housing Order or Notice has been issued. This will apply to properties with a Category 1 hazard as advised by Environmental Health, and where there is an imminent risk to the tenant or it would be unreasonable for the tenant to remain in the property whilst remedial works were carried out.

There is a similar duty where emergency housing is essential.

Households will be placed in **Band 'C'** where there are unsanitary conditions that cannot be addressed by Environmental Health action including a lack of one or more of the following; a kitchen (e.g. sink and

Appendix 1

space for a cooker) and/or an inside WC or a bathroom (e.g. basin and bath or shower).

Key Workers

Key workers will be considered for specifically designated accommodation as an exception to the HomeMove scheme. This will normally be low-cost home ownership or sub-market rented schemes. They will also be entitled to register as a Homeseeker on the Housing Register.

Key workers are currently specified by the government as working in one of the following occupations:

- Clinical NHS staff (except for doctors and dentists)
- Teachers and nursery nurses in schools and further education or sixth form colleges
- Police officers, community support officers and some civilian staff
- Prison officers and some other prison staff
- Probation Service staff
- Planners working in a local authority
- Firefighters and some other uniformed staff in Fire and Rescue Services
- Connexions personal advisors employed by a local authority or a Connexions partnership
- Armed Forces personnel and Ministry of Defence clinical staff, Ministry of Defence police officers and uniformed staff in the Fire and Defence Service
- Qualified environmental health officers/practitioners who work in a local authority, government agency, the NHS or other public sector agencies
- Highways Agency staff in certain safety roles in the traffic officer service
- Social workers, nursery nurses, educational psychologists and therapists (eg occupational therapists) employed by either local authorities, the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service or the NHS
- Health workers (e.g. nurses), Teachers and Police under the Government promoted Starter Homes Initiative, which provides low-cost home ownership options via RSLs. In addition, Eastbourne B.C. intends to develop its own local key worker policy.

Appendix 1

Elected Members and staff of the council

Any elected Member or person employed by or having a family member employed by Eastbourne Borough Council must declare this at the time of applying for the register. The Senior Head of Community must agree any offer of accommodation.

Household eligibility for property type and size

Each vacancy advertised through HomeMove will include a photograph of the property and useful information including its street location, details of the landlord and the weekly rent.

Homeseekers will only be able to bid for a property if the following conditions are met:

- The property is suitable for their household (see table below)
- It is advertised for applicants within their allocated Band, and
- They meet the waiting time criteria if specified. For example, we may state that bids for a property are invited from applicants who registered before January 2000.

With regard to the occupancy level for vacancies, the following criteria normally apply.

Type of Vacancy	Suitable for:
Bedsit or studio flat in a Sheltered or Retirement housing scheme	Single elderly person
1 bedroom flat in a Sheltered or Retirement housing scheme	Elderly single person or couple
2 bedroom flat in a Sheltered or Retirement housing scheme	Elderly couple needing 2 bedrooms
1-bedroom bungalow or other appropriately adapted property	Disabled household (single or couple)
2-bedroom bungalow or other appropriately adapted property	Disabled couple or single person with a carer
3-bedroom bungalow or other appropriately adapted property	Disabled household with 3-bedroom requirement
Studio or bedsit	Single person

Appendix 1

Type of Vacancy	Suitable for
1-bedroom flat	Single person or couple
2-bedroom property	Parent/couple with 1 or 2 same sex children
3-bedroom property	Parent/couple with 2 children of different sex at least one aged over 10
3-bedroom parlour type house	Household with 4-bedroom need
4-bedroom house	Parent/couple with 3 or more children
4-bedroom parlour house	Parent/couple with 5 or more children

Special Labelling Of Properties

In addition to the above general labelling criteria, there may be circumstances that require particular labelling of properties or estates. For example, where a property is adapted for disabled use or where it has been provided for a specific purpose such as supported accommodation, it will be labelled for the appropriate client group. These dwellings may be allocated as an exception to HomeMove through the Officers Panel in order to make the most efficient use of these scarce resources.

Housing Management Grounds

A Senior Housing Management Officer will be able to veto an allocation through HomeMove on grounds of good housing management with evidence of one or more of the following circumstances:

- threat of serious anti-social behaviour or nuisance;
- threat of violence to resident/s or housing applicant;
- outstanding debts without an agreement to pay or non-compliance of an agreement.

Assisting Homeseekers

There may be instances where bids for housing will be submitted on behalf of Homeseekers. This can arise in the following circumstances:

1. A Homeseeker considered to be vulnerable and being assisted to bid by the Allocations Officer or Special Needs Housing Officer

Appendix 1

2. A statutorily homeless household living in temporary accommodation. A Housing Officer will bid on their behalf to ensure they are re-housed into a more suitable home as quickly as possible.
3. A Homeseeker who has appointed a representative to assist them and act as a proxy in the bidding process. This may be a statutory or voluntary agency representative or other individual.

Fair Housing Policy

The Council and its partner landlords are committed to providing equality of opportunity to all applicants in housing need. Monitoring of applications and lettings will take place to ensure that everyone is being treated fairly and in line with the CRE Code of Practice for rented housing.

February 2010