

**EASTBOURNE**

**Borough Council**



**EASTBOURNE BOROUGH  
COUNCIL  
HOUSING ALLOCATION  
SCHEME**

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on 01323 410000**

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# Introduction and Overview

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Part VI of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011) requires that the Council has, and publishes, an Allocation Scheme which sets out how it decides whom to put forward as a prospective tenant for social housing in the Borough. The Scheme must show how the Council awards priority to particular descriptions of applicants and the procedure that is followed in allocating housing.

This Housing Allocation Scheme, which has been approved by elected Members, is intended to meet these legal obligations and has been framed with due regard to the Council's published Housing and Homeless Strategy, *Eastbourne at Home*, and the Tenancy Policy.

In Eastbourne, applying through the Eastbourne Housing Register is the usual route to social housing for most people, including, with certain exceptions (see **13**), current tenants of social landlords living either inside or outside Eastbourne who wish to move to a home in the borough owned by their own landlord or a different social landlord.

The Allocation Scheme sets out who qualifies to go on the Housing Register, how priority is given to Applicants with differing housing circumstances, and the procedures that are to be followed when applicants are selected to be allocated accommodation by the Council.

### Effective Date

This Housing Allocation Scheme will take effect in respect of all allocations procedures of housing on or after January 1<sup>st</sup> 2015. The qualifying policy set out at **13** below will be applied to new Applicants from this date. Where transition arrangements for existing applicants apply these are explained under the relevant sections: **22 and 23**.

### Qualifying/Eligibility criteria

The Council will only arrange housing options for an Applicant if they are 'eligible' and 'qualify' for social housing and their name appears on the Eastbourne Housing Register.

The rules which govern who is 'eligible' for housing are set out in Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 and details of this are given at **12** below.

The rules covering who can 'qualify' for social housing are set out at **13** below.

## **Priority Bands**

An Applicant's priority for housing is gauged by assessing the housing needs of their household and comparing them against the needs of other Applicants. By law the Council must give reasonable preference to certain categories of Applicant and these categories are set out at **7** below. The law allows the Council to give different priority to Applicants falling within these categories and details of how it does this are set out in the Scheme.

Applicants are placed in one of three broad Bands of housing need according to their circumstances. Applicants are ranked in date order within each Band by the date they registered or moved into a higher Band.

## **Choice-Based Lettings through Sussex Homemove ([www.homemove.org.uk](http://www.homemove.org.uk) )**

Since April 2001 the Council has adopted a Choice-Based Lettings Scheme which is operated through a countywide partnership called Sussex Homemove. Vacant homes in Eastbourne are advertised in a regular electronic magazine on the internet at [www.homemove.org.uk](http://www.homemove.org.uk) . Applicants who are registered on the Eastbourne Housing Register may actively 'bid' for (express an interest in) any home that matches their need. With certain exceptions, the successful 'bidder' will be the highest placed suitable applicant in the highest Priority Band.

The Council's policy on offering choice and preference to housing applicants is set out at **6** below.

## **'Affordable Rented homes', 'Social Rented Homes' and 'Flexible Tenancies'**

Since April 2011 housing providers have been allowed to offer some homes for rent at 'Affordable Rents' set at a maximum of 80% of market rents in the private sector. These rents are higher than the 'Social Rents' that other social housing is let at. All advertisements of homes will indicate which type of rent applies and will also detail the actual rent payable so that this is clear to any Applicant who bids.

The way Applicants are selected, and the way bids from Applicants are prioritised, is the same whether the rent is set as an 'Affordable Rent' or at a 'Social Rent'.

Housing providers are now also allowed to offer homes for rent on Flexible Tenancies, presently within the Borough for a minimum fixed term of 5 years. Most fixed term tenancies will be renewed when they come to an end but this cannot be guaranteed. At the end of a fixed term tenancy, the tenancy and the individual tenant's circumstances will be reviewed by

the housing provider. At that stage the tenancy may be renewed for a further fixed term or in some circumstances may be ended.

It is possible that a tenancy might not be renewed if the tenant has not complied with their tenancy agreement (e.g. they have rent arrears), or they no longer need the accommodation because their income is now high enough for them to afford to buy or rent privately. A tenant could also be asked to move at the end of their fixed term to a different affordable home if the home they occupy is more suitable for someone else e.g. because some of their family have moved away and they no longer need so many bedrooms. Each housing provider will be able to advise the tenant about its own particular policies on renewing tenancies.

### **Direct Allocation of homes**

Homes (e.g. most supported housing) are allocated direct to Applicants and are not advertised through choice-based lettings. Details of rules associated with the Direct Allocation of these homes are set out at **40** below.

#### **In summary, the Allocation Scheme explains:**

How to apply, register and renew an application (**9-10**)

Who is excluded from joining the housing register (**11-13**)

The Priority Bands and categories of need within them (**14-17**)

The factors affecting priority and banding (**18-28**)

How we advertise homes to let (**29**)

How to bid (**32-35**)

How we prioritise bids (**36-38**)

The letting process (**39**)

Direct allocation of homes (**40**)

Other housing options available to Applicants (**41**)

## **2. THE EASTBOURNE HOUSING REGISTER**

The Eastbourne Housing Register is a partnership between Eastbourne Borough Council and housing associations that provide homes in the borough. It is a list of people (and their details) who want to apply for social housing in Eastbourne.

The purpose of the Housing Register is to make it easier for Applicants to be considered for housing by the Council and all the housing associations

in the partnership, without them having to complete a separate form for each one.

The current housing associations who are the Housing Register partners are as follows:

- Affinity Sutton
- Stonewater
- Orbit Housing Association
- Moat Housing Group Limited
- Home Group Limited
- Southdown Housing Association Limited
- Places for People
- Hanover Housing Association
- Amicus Horizon

### **3. WHO CAN APPLY TO JOIN THE COMMON HOUSING REGISTER?**

**Any Applicant aged 16 or above** may apply to join the register, although some may not be eligible or qualify to join (see **11** below).

An Applicant under the age of 18 will not usually be allocated accommodation. Exceptions may include:

- an Applicant who has been accepted for housing by the Council because they were homeless
- an Applicant who has been in the Care of Social Services or otherwise considered to be vulnerable and will be receiving on-going support

A guarantor may be required by housing providers when letting to an Applicant who is under 18.

**Some existing social housing tenants who wish to apply for a transfer** may also join the register (see **24** below). However, with certain exceptions, existing tenants of housing associations who provide them with alternative access to their housing stock in Eastbourne, and have therefore opted out of the Housing Register partnership, will not be 'qualifying persons' and will not be able to join the register, as set out at **13** below.

Details of how transfers are dealt with are set out at **24** below.

#### **Who can be included on the application?**

- Anyone who is part of the Applicant's household and residing with the Applicant

- Anyone who normally resides with the Applicant or who it would be reasonable to expect to live with the Applicant
- Children can normally only be included if they normally live with the Applicant and the Applicant can demonstrate that they have responsibility for them. For example, the Applicant is in receipt of Child Benefit.

#### **4. AN APPLICANT'S RIGHT TO REQUEST GENERAL INFORMATION**

An Applicant has the right to request general information that will enable them to assess:

- How their application is likely to be treated under the Allocation Scheme and, in particular, whether they are likely to fall within the reasonable preference categories.
- Whether accommodation appropriate to their needs is likely to be made available and, if so, how long it is likely to be before such accommodation becomes available.

The law prohibits us from divulging to other members of the public that a particular individual is an Applicant without their consent. All information about individual Applicants is kept strictly confidential.

All enquiries and requests for general information should be made to the Casework Team. *Appendix 1: Contacting the Eastbourne Borough Council about Allocations* provides up to date details on how to contact the Casework Team.

#### **5. NOTIFICATION OF DECISIONS AND THE RIGHT TO APPEAL**

An Applicant has the right, on request, to be informed of any decision made by the Casework Team concerning his/her application for housing.

An Applicant who is unhappy with any decision made on their case should first raise the matter with the Casework Team who will informally reconsider their decision.

An Applicant who is still unhappy with a decision has the right to request a reconsideration and to be notified in writing of the decision and the grounds for it.

A request for a reconsideration must be made within 21 days of the Applicant being notified of the decision (or the outcome of an informal reconsideration described above). Any request must be in writing and should indicate why the Applicant believes the decision is wrong.

The reconsideration request should be made to the Caseworker Team who will notify the Applicant of the decision within two weeks of the request being made or such longer period as may be agreed in writing. Any further reconsideration such as where the Housing Specialist Advisors were a party to the decision being challenged, the reconsideration will be

undertaken by a Senior Specialist Advisor or the Manager of the Council's Specialist Advisory Team Manager. If an Applicant considers that the reconsideration decision is wrong, the Applicant may wish to get advice from a solicitor or other advisor as to what options are available to them.

Practical details of the reconsideration process and the contact details of agencies providing independent advice are kept up to date in *Appendix 2: appealing an Allocation Scheme Decision*.

## **6. OUR POLICY ON OFFERING CHOICE AND PREFERENCE TO HOUSING APPLICANTS**

The Council is committed to giving people greater choice in where they live. Our aim is to take account of people's views about where they wish to live and who they wish to have as a landlord. We wish to balance the real housing needs of people who apply for housing with the need for sustainable communities where people want to live. We believe that people who have a part to play in the decision about where they live are more likely to contribute to their community and to encourage others to do the same.

To assist Applicants to make informed choices about their future housing we will provide them with accurate and relevant information about the stock of social housing in the Borough together with details of the number of lettings in previous years to enable them to assess the likelihood of them successfully obtaining housing of the type and in the area they wish to live.

We are committed to a system of Choice-Based Lettings in which applicants are encouraged to actively search for a home. Vacant homes are advertised every two weeks on the internet. For those requiring it, the Council will provide access to the internet at its offices, offer assistance, or provide information in an appropriate format.

Applicants are able to express an interest, or 'bid', for suitable homes they like. Applicants are placed in one of three broad Priority Bands of housing need according to their housing circumstances. With certain exceptions, the successful Applicant will be the person who bids who has the highest housing need and who has been registered with that need the longest.

### **Refusing an offer of accommodation**

With certain exceptions we will not normally penalise Applicants who, having successfully bid for a home, subsequently refuse an offer of accommodation.

## **7. THE CATEGORIES OF APPLICANT TO WHOM WE MUST GIVE REASONABLE PREFERENCE**

The law says we must give reasonable preference to certain categories of people on our register when we decide whom to offer accommodation. The Allocation Scheme therefore takes account of these categories and does so by placing people in an appropriate Priority Band, although the priority given to each category is not necessarily equal.

**The categories of people the law says we must give reasonable preference to are as follows:-**

(a) People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996;

(b) People who are owed a duty by any housing authority under the following sections of the Housing Act 1996:-

s.190(2) (intentionally homeless and in priority need);

s.192(3) (non-priority need homeless who are occupying accommodation arranged by the Council);

s.193(2) (unintentionally homeless and in priority need);

s.195(2) (threatened with homelessness intentionally and in priority need);

(c) People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsuitable housing conditions;

(d) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including any grounds relating to a disability;

(e) People who need to move where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).

**8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

Eastbourne Borough Council is committed to the principle of equal opportunity and accessibility in relation to affordable housing and full regard to the Equality Act 2010 has been given by this Allocation Scheme. We seek to ensure that all housing Applicants are treated fairly and that no one receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, disability, gender, religion, race, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or any other factor that might cause disadvantage that cannot be justified.

Eastbourne Borough Council is committed to helping anyone who needs assistance in accessing affordable housing in the Borough. The Casework Team will work closely with all agencies to assist customers wherever possible. The Council has undertaken its own Equality Impact Assessment on the changes introduced in 2014.

In order to ensure that all applicants are treated fairly, equality monitoring information is requested on the housing application form. Additionally, equality monitoring of the allocation of accommodation is undertaken.

## **How to apply, register and renew an application**

### **9. HOW TO APPLY**

Application to register on the Eastbourne Housing Register must be made by completing an online application form, available at [www.eastbourne.gov.uk/homemove](http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/homemove). See *Appendix 3: Making an online application for housing* for up to date details in plain English on how to do this.

If an Applicant cannot access the internet, or needs any help completing the form, they should contact the Customer First Team at Eastbourne Borough Council for assistance. The team has arrangements in place for interpretation for people whose first language is not English. (See *Appendix 1: Contacting the Eastbourne Borough Council about Allocations.*)

Applications will not be registered until all information has been received by the Customer First Team that they consider is necessary to assess an application.

When an application is registered, notification will be sent to the Applicant confirming the registration and which Band they have been placed in, along with the right to request a reconsideration.

#### **Medical circumstances**

If the Applicant or a member of their household has a 'Medical Need' to be rehoused, i.e. has any significant medical issue that is directly affected by the Applicant's current housing circumstances and would be relieved by rehousing, then the Medical Circumstances section of the form should be completed. Applicants may supply letters of support from their GP, Consultant etc. if they wish. For more information about how 'Medical Need' is assessed, see **19** below.

#### **Needing to move for care and support reasons**

Where the Applicant or a member of their household has a need to move for care and support reasons, the Support Needs section of the form should be completed. This should also be completed where the Applicant needs to move in order to give care and support to another person. For more information on needing to move for care and support reasons see **20** below.

## **Need for Supported Housing**

Those Applicants who may need supported housing or who have special housing needs should indicate this where requested to on the application form. The information on the form will be used to assess the Applicant's need so they can be allocated appropriate housing and or support.

## **Notifying changes of circumstances**

The applicant is responsible for notifying the Casework Team of any relevant changes in their circumstances which will affect the assessment of their housing application.

Examples of this are:

- changes of address
- changes in the household, such as the birth of a baby or the departure of a household member
- the development of a relevant medical condition
- threatened with homelessness.

This list is not exhaustive, and if the Applicant is in any doubt about whether a change is relevant they should contact the Customer First Team to discuss the matter.

## **Help if you become homeless or threatened with homelessness**

If Applicants become homeless or threatened with homelessness, they should contact the Council and make an appointment to see the Councils Customer Advisory Team at the earliest opportunity to discuss their housing options. The Housing Casework Team will assess whether the Council has legal responsibilities towards an Applicant and to advise and assist as appropriate. (See *Appendix 1: Contacting the Eastbourne Borough Council about Allocations.*)

## **Providing False information**

A person may commit a criminal offence if:

- he/she knowingly or recklessly makes a statement which is false in a material particular, or
- he/she knowingly withholds information which the authority have reasonably required him/her to give in connection with their application for housing.

A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding 5 on the standard scale (currently £5,000).

If it is found that false information has been given or relevant information withheld, the application will not be registered or, if already registered, the Applicant may be removed from the Housing Register.

Any tenancy granted on the basis of information subsequently found to be false or because material information has been withheld, may be terminated and legal action taken by the landlord to recover possession of the home.

### **Data Protection**

All information provided by an Applicant and any associated documents will be held on a filing system and may be used by all of the members of the Housing Register Partnership in carrying out their functions. In respect of those Applicants needing a Supporting People funded service, data will also be shared with that service if the Applicant has given their permission. This information is subject to the Data Protection Act 1998 and will be treated with confidentiality and used in accordance with the Council's registration under that Act.

## **10. THE REGISTRATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

Once a completed application form is received, the Casework Team will make an assessment of the Applicant's housing needs based on the information provided and other documentation made available to them.

A decision will be made on whether the Applicant is 'eligible' and 'qualifies' to join the register according to the conditions set out at **11** below. If it is considered that an Applicant is not 'eligible' or does not 'qualify', the Casework Team will notify the applicant of this decision and the grounds for it, along with the right to request a reconsideration.

Where relevant, the Casework Team assess medical priority, based on the information supplied by the Applicant and using the medical criteria set out at **19** below.

Once their housing need has been assessed, the Applicant will be placed into one of the three Priority Bands as set out at **15** below and will be given a Priority Date which will be the date they applied to go on the Register or entered a Band. Applicants will also be assessed for the appropriate size of home they can bid for using the bedroom entitlement criteria set out at **18** below.

Eastbourne Borough Council will write to the Applicant to inform them of their successful registration giving them the following information:

- Their Priority Date and reference number
- Their Priority Band
- The type and size of home they can bid for
- Their right to request a reconsideration if they are not happy with their assessment.

## **Renewals of Application**

All Applicants will be requested to re-register annually to stay on the Housing Register.

If the Applicant fails to re-register when requested, a Housing Caseworker will check their contact details and if the Applicant appears to be a vulnerable person and/or has a high priority need, they will be contacted by phone, visited or referred to the relevant support service for help.

If there is no contact and the Applicant fails to re-register, the application will be deregistered.

It is important that the Housing Caseworker is notified of any relevant change in the circumstances of the Applicant or of their household which could affect the assessment of their housing application.

Changes should be notified to the Casework Team by the Applicant as soon as they occur and not left until the application is renewed. Failure to do so may result in the Applicant being removed from the Housing Register.

## **Who is excluded from joining the register?**

### **11. Overview**

Although anyone aged 16 or above may apply to join the housing register, the law does not allow the Council to allocate accommodation to people unless they are 'eligible for an allocation of accommodation' and only such people will be allowed to join the register. For a description of who is 'not eligible', see below.

In addition, the law allows the Council to disqualify other categories of people from joining the register. For a description of these categories, see below.

The Council will notify the Council's Casework Team of any Applicant found 'not eligible' under **12** or not to 'qualify' because of unacceptable behaviour under **13** in writing and with full reasons.

## **12. Applicants who are 'not eligible' to join the housing register**

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) sets out two categories of applicant who are 'not eligible' and may not join the register. The two categories are as follows:

- Persons subject to immigration control who are 'not eligible'.
- Other persons from abroad who are not eligible.

The law does not allow the Council to allocate a joint tenancy to two or more people if any one of them is considered not to be eligible.

### **Persons subject to immigration control who are 'not eligible'**

Anyone who is subject to immigration control is 'not eligible' unless they fall into one of the following categories:

(a) a person who has been granted refugee status and who has leave to enter or remain in the UK; or

(b) a person who has exceptional leave to enter or remain in the UK granted outside the provisions of the immigration rules - provided that there is no condition that they shall not have recourse to public funds; or

(c) a person who is habitually resident in the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland and whose leave to enter or remain in the UK is not subject to any limitation or condition.

(d) a person who has humanitarian protection granted under the Immigration Rules.

### **Other persons from abroad who are 'not eligible'**

Anyone who has come from abroad who is not subject to immigration control will be 'not eligible' if they are not habitually resident in the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or the Republic of Ireland, unless they fall within one of the following categories:

(a) an EEA national (i.e. from any EU country, plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein) who is a 'worker' or is self-employed; or

(b) a person who is an accession state worker from Croatia requiring registration who is treated as a worker; or

(c) a person who is an immediate family member of a person in (a) or (b) above;

(d) a person with a right to reside permanently in the UK by virtue of regulation 15(c), (d) or (e) of the EEA Regulations; or

(e) a person who left Montserrat after 1st November 1995 because of a volcanic eruption; or

(f) a person who is in the UK as a result of his deportation, expulsion or other removal by compulsion of law from another country to the UK.

**Additional persons from abroad who are 'not eligible'**

A person who is not subject to immigration control will be 'not eligible' if their only right to reside in the UK:

(a) is derived from his status as a jobseeker or the family member of a jobseeker; or

(b) is an initial right to reside for a period not exceeding 3 months under regulation 13 of the EEA Regulations; or

(c) his/her only right to reside in the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland is a right equivalent to one of those mentioned in (b) which is derived from the Treaty establishing the European Community.

**13. Applicants who do not qualify**

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) allows the Council to decide that some categories of Applicant do not qualify to join the Housing Register. The Council has decided that the following categories of applicant do not qualify:

a) Applicants without a Local Connection to Eastbourne

b) Applicants who are existing tenants of a housing association that provides its tenants with alternative access to its housing stock in Eastbourne

c) Applicants who have been registered for at least 12 months who have not 'bid' on a home in the preceding 12 months

d) Applicants with over £32,000 of savings or assets do not qualify

e) Applicants who own accommodation; have a legal interest in homeownership; or have the financial resources to own accommodation

f) Applicants whose unacceptable behaviour is serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant.

### **Applicants without a local connection to Eastbourne do not qualify**

To establish a 'Local Connection' with Eastbourne an Applicant or joint Applicant must (with certain exceptions as set out below) meet at least one of the following criteria:-

- a) Reside in the Borough as their only or principal home and have done so for the previous 2 years; or
- b) Have resided in the Borough as their only or principal home for a period of at least 3 years in aggregate out of the previous 5 years; or
- c) Are in paid employment in the Borough and have been for the previous 2 years; or
- d) Have close relatives who reside in the Borough as their only or principal home and have done so for at least the previous 5 years. Close relatives will normally only cover parents, adult children or brothers or sisters, including corresponding step relationships. Grandparents, grandchildren, aunts or uncles and non-adult children will normally be included only where the Council considers that it is necessary for the Applicant to be accommodated within the District in order to provide or receive medical or social support to/from the relative.

If an Applicant ceases to meet the Local Connection criteria they will cease to qualify.

### **Armed Forces Personnel – exemption from Local Connection qualifying criteria**

Armed Forces Personnel do not need to meet the Local Connection criteria set out at above to qualify if they are an Applicant who:

- a) is serving in the regular forces or who has served in the regular forces within the previous 5 years; or
- b) has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of their spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable to their service; or
- c) is serving or has served in the reserve forces and who is suffering from serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable to their service.

For this purpose "the regular forces" and "the reserve forces" have meanings given in section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006(b).

### **Homeless Applicants - exemption from Local Connection qualifying criteria**

Homeless Applicants who are owed a full housing duty under the homelessness legislation by Eastbourne Borough Council do not need to meet the Local Connection criteria set out at above, unless the Council has decided to refer them to another council under s.198 of the Housing Act 1996 (see **23** below).

### **Other exemptions from Local Connection qualifying criteria**

Other Applicants who cannot meet the Local Connection criteria set out above may be allowed to qualify, in exceptional circumstances only, at the discretion of the Housing Specialist Advisors.

### **Existing tenants of a housing association that provides its tenants with alternative access to its stock in Eastbourne do not qualify**

With certain exceptions, existing tenants of a housing association that provides its tenants living inside or outside Eastbourne with an alternative means to transfer to a tenancy within its housing stock in the Borough, by retaining a proportion of its lettings to facilitate this or by limiting the Council's nomination rights to a proportion of its vacancies, do not qualify.

An exception may be made, at the Casework Team's discretion, for a particularly vulnerable tenant who requires a placement in specialist supported housing or an Extra Care Scheme.

### **Applicants who have been registered for at least 12 months who have not 'bid' on a home in the preceding 12 months do not qualify**

Applicants who have been registered for at least 12 months but have not bid on a home within the preceding 12 months do not qualify.

It is considered that Applicants who are not regularly bidding for homes are unlikely to be in sufficient housing need to qualify.

The Housing Specialist Team will, at its discretion, make exceptions to this where it considers that there is a reasonable explanation for the Applicant's inactivity. Sensitivity will be applied, for example, where the Applicant is identified as being particularly vulnerable or in need of a specific type of property which does not commonly become available to let.

Applicants who are disqualified due to their inactivity may make a fresh application by completing a fresh application form. However, their earlier Priority Date will not be retained.

### **Applicants with over £32,000 of savings or assets do not qualify.**

**Applicants who own accommodation, have a legal interest in homeownership, or have the financial resources to own accommodation do not qualify**

**(a) Homeownership or legal interest in homeownership** - Applicants who own or part own accommodation or who have a legal interest in home ownership (for example through marriage or civil partnership in accommodation owned by their spouse or civil partner) do not qualify.

However, if as a result of legal proceedings a Court has ordered that the Applicant may not reside in the former matrimonial or civil partnership home in which they still have a legal interest for a period which is likely to exceed 5 years, then the Applicant will be treated as if they do not own or part own accommodation.

**(b) Financial resources** - Applicants who are considered to have sufficient financial resources to buy suitable accommodation in Eastbourne also do not qualify. A sufficient financial resource means sufficient capital to buy; or sufficient income to raise a mortgage to buy; or a combination of both. It is considered that normally a mortgage can be obtained amounting to 3 times a single annual income or 2½ times joint annual incomes in addition to a suitably sized deposit. 'Sufficient capital' includes any assets or investments, even if they are not immediately available to the Applicant, such as any residential or non-residential property that they own or part own anywhere in the world. Applicants with over £32,000 of savings or assets do not qualify. However, any lump sum received by a member of the Armed Forces as compensation for an injury or disability on active service is disregarded.

**Exceptions** – Applicants who do not qualify under the criteria set out above may be considered as an exception by the Casework Team if:

- they own or part own accommodation or have a legal interest in accommodation; and
- they are over state pension age or have a substantial disability; and
- their current home is not suitable for their specific needs; and
- they have insufficient financial resources to buy accommodation that meets their particular housing needs in the private market in Eastbourne

**Applicants whose unacceptable behaviour is serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant who do not qualify**

Where the Council is satisfied that the Applicant (or a member of their household) is guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council the Applicant does not qualify.

The only behaviour which can be regarded as unacceptable for these purposes is behaviour by the Applicant or by a member of their household

that would – if the Applicant had been a Council tenant at the time – have entitled the Council to a possession order under s.84 of the Housing Act 1985 in relation to any of the grounds (other than Ground 8) in Part I of Schedule 2 to that Act. These are fault grounds and include behaviour such as conduct likely to cause nuisance or annoyance, and use of the home for immoral or illegal purposes.

There is no need for the Applicant to have actually been a Council tenant when the unacceptable behaviour occurred. The test is whether the behaviour would have entitled the Council to a possession order if, whether actually or notionally, the Applicant had been a secure tenant.

If an Applicant, who has in the past been deemed by the Council not to qualify, considers their unacceptable behaviour should no longer be held against them as a result of changed circumstances, they can make a fresh application. Unless there has been a considerable lapse of time it will be for the Applicant to show that their circumstances or behaviour have changed.

## **The Priority Bands**

### **14. OVERVIEW**

When Applicants are registered on the Housing Register, their application will be assessed and they will be placed in one of three Priority Bands according to their category of need as set out below at **15** and given a Priority Date, which is the date they applied to go on the register or entered a Band.

When bids are considered for advertised homes, priority will normally be given to eligible bids from Applicants in the highest Priority Band, although there are some important exceptions to how bids are prioritised which are described at **36** below. Within a Band, a bid from the Applicant with the earliest Priority Date will normally be considered first.

### **15. THE PRIORITY BANDS**

#### **BAND A – emergency or urgent priority**

To be placed in this Priority Band the Applicant must fall within one or more of the following categories:

(a) The Applicant has a *High Medical Priority* (defined by the applicant's DLA/PIP entitlement, see Table 1 below) and a relevant Occupational Therapist Report that fully supports a move (see **19** below)

*Table 1: High Medical Priority (required for a Band A medical priority)*

	<b>Care Component</b>	<b>Mobility Component</b>	<b>Band</b>
For DLA:	Highest	Higher	A
For PIP:	Enhanced	Enhanced	A

(b) The Applicant is a Transfer Applicant who is under-occupying their home (see **24** below)

(c) The Applicant is a Transfer Applicant who is occupying a significantly adapted home they no longer need but which could be used by someone else who needs the adaptations (see **24** below)

(d) The Applicant is a Transfer Applicant who needs to move urgently because there is a serious personal risk if they remain (to be approved by the Discretionary Allocation Panel)

(e) The Applicant is in exceptional need of housing that warrants placement in Band A (to be approved by the Discretionary Allocation Panel)

(f) The Applicant has needs that, when considered together, are so high that they should be placed in Band A (to be approved by the Discretionary Allocation Panel)

(g) The Applicant is a Transfer Applicant who is a successor wishing to move to suitable accommodation. (see **25** below)

(h) Accepted homeless households who are in bed and breakfast type accommodation. 'Accepted homeless' refers to cases where the Council has accepted a legal duty to provide accommodation under part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

(i) Accepted homeless cases that are in other forms of insecure temporary accommodation or their temporary accommodation/ tenancy is due to end in the next two months.

(j) The Applicant is ready to move on from supported housing in Eastbourne; or is homeless and is owed a full duty by Eastbourne Borough Council under the homelessness legislation; and their priority has been increased at the discretion of a Housing Specialist Advisor or their deputy (see **23**; **24** respectively below).

## **BAND B – high priority**

To be placed in this Priority Band the Applicant must fall within one or more of the following categories:

(a) The Applicant has been assessed as lacking two or more bedrooms (see **18** below)

(b) The Applicant has a *Medium Medical Priority* (defined by the applicant's DLA/PIP entitlement, see Table 2 below) and a relevant Occupational Therapist Report that fully supports a move (see **19** below)

*Table 2: Medium Medical Priority (required for Band B medical priority)*

	<b>Care Component</b>	<b>Mobility Component</b>	<b>Band</b>
For DLA:	Middle	Higher	B
For PIP:	Enhanced	Standard	B
	Standard	Enhanced	B

(c) The Applicant is a Transfer Applicant who needs to move urgently because of harassment or threat of violence, subject to approval by the Discretionary Allocation Panel (see **24** below)

## **BAND C – standard priority**

To be placed in this Priority Band the Applicant must fall within one or more of the following categories:

(a) The Applicant is homeless and is owed a full housing duty under the homelessness legislation by Eastbourne Borough Council and is not in circumstances that warrant Band A priority (see **23** below)

(b) The Applicant has a home but Eastbourne Borough Council has a statutory duty to rehouse them, e.g. Compulsory Purchase Order (see **24** below)

(c) The Applicant has been assessed as lacking one bedroom (see **18** below)

(d) The Applicant has a *Low Medical Priority* (defined by the applicant's DLA/PIP entitlement, see Table 3 below) and a relevant Occupational Therapist Report that fully supports a move (see **19** below)

*Table 3: Low Medical Priority (required for Band C medical priority)*

	<b>Care Component</b>	<b>Mobility Component</b>	<b>Band</b>
For DLA:	Highest	Lower	C
	Middle	Lower	C
	Lowest	Higher	C
	Lowest	Lower	C
For PIP:	Standard	Standard	C

(e) The Applicant is a Transfer Applicant who resides in unsanitary or unsatisfactory housing conditions (excluding overcrowding) that cannot be addressed by Environmental Health action such as lacking either a kitchen, bath/shower room, or inside WC.

(f) The Applicant needs to move for care and support reasons where failure to meet that need would cause hardship; e.g. to give support to, or receive support from, a family member (see **20** below)

(g) The Applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances or become homeless intentionally (see **28** below)

(h) The Applicant would normally be disqualified from joining the register because of homeownership under criteria set out at **13** above, but has been made an exception

(i) The Applicant is eligible and qualifies for the Housing Register but the Applicant does not have a housing need that is identified in Band A or B.

## **16. REASSESSING NEED AND CHANGING BAND**

### **Re-assessing need because of changes in circumstances**

The Casework Team will review all applications periodically. If an Applicant's circumstances change, they may be moved up or down a Band depending on their need and if this happens the Applicant will be informed in writing of their move to a new Band and their new Priority Date.

It is important that the Housing Casework Team is notified of any relevant change in the circumstances of the Applicant or of their household which could affect the assessment of their housing application.

Changes should be notified to the Casework Team by the Applicant as soon as they occur and not left until the application is reviewed. Failure to do so may result in the Applicant being removed from the Housing Register.

When an Applicant notifies of a change that is likely to entitle them to a move to a higher Band, they will not be moved to the higher Band until any evidence or documentation requested by the Casework Team is received.

When an Applicant notifies of a change that is likely to mean they will be moved to a lower Band, they will be moved to the lower Band immediately whilst their case is considered. In the event that it is decided that the Applicant is entitled to remain in the higher Band they will be returned to that Band.

### **Moving up a Band**

If an Applicant moves up a Band after they are re-assessed because of a change in their circumstances, they will be given a new Priority Date

which will be the date that the Casework Team was notified in writing of the Applicant's change in circumstances.

If an Applicant has moved up a Band as a result of a formal reconsideration under **5** above, they will be given a new Priority Date of the date they requested a reconsideration, or an earlier date if considered appropriate by the Housing Specialist Advisors.

If an Applicant has moved up a Band as a result of a duty being accepted by Eastbourne Borough Council under the homelessness legislation, they will be given a new Priority Date of the date the duty was accepted.

### **Moving down a Band**

If an Applicant moves down a Band, then the Priority Date they had in the higher Band will be retained or their Priority Date will revert to an earlier date that they had if they had been in the lower Band previously.

## **17. THE DISCRETIONARY ALLOCATION PANEL**

The Terms of Reference Discretionary Allocation Panel are approved by the Senior Head of Community.

When an Applicant is awarded Discretionary Allocation by the Discretionary Allocation Panel in recognition of cases of exceptional need:

- In all cases a formal report will be prepared either by the Applicant's current social landlord if they are an existing social tenant, or the Council's Housing Specialists if they are not, and submitted to the Discretionary Allocation Panel
- An Applicant who is awarded Discretionary Allocation will be subject to a 12 week time limit for bidding as detailed at **34** below
- The Discretionary Allocation Panel may remove any priority it has awarded if the Applicant's circumstances change or the Panel considers that priority is no longer justified
- The Discretionary Allocation Panel will inform an Applicant in writing of any decision affecting his or her application made by the panel and how to request a reconsideration of any decision
- The Discretionary Allocation Panel may also consider cases where there are exceptional circumstances (complex medical cases that involve catering for a specific disability) and may also consider non qualifying successors

## **Factors affecting priority and banding**

### **18. BEDROOM ENTITLEMENT**

Applicants will be assessed for overcrowding in their current home, and the size of home they may bid for, according to the standard set out below.

Applicants will be considered to be lacking a bedroom for each bedroom their current accommodation falls short of this standard. Applicants will be entitled to be placed in Band C if they lack 1 bedroom or in Band B if they lack 2 or more bedrooms.

#### **The bedroom entitlement calculation**

The number of bedrooms needed by a household is calculated as follows:

- 1 bedroom for every adult couple
- 1 bedroom for any other person aged 16 or over
- 1 bedroom for any two children under 16 of the same sex
- 1 bedroom for any two children aged under 8, regardless of sex
- 1 bedroom for any additional child under 16

Subject to a maximum of 4 bedrooms in total.

For these purposes:

- a room under 50 square feet in floor area does not count as a bedroom
- a second reception room will generally be considered to be available as a bedroom
- kitchens and bathrooms are ignored
- Applicants occupying a studio flat are considered to have access to a bedroom.

#### **Exceeding the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) bedroom criteria**

It is possible that the Council will make an offer to an Applicant where the household may be affected by the Welfare Reform reduction in Housing Benefit to under-occupying households. In such circumstances, the Council will ensure that applicants are fully aware of this. However, Applicants should be aware that an additional bedroom may exceed the bedroom entitlement criteria for Local Housing Allowance (LHA), and may not be fully covered by housing benefit. Once aware, the decision to take up the offer is the Applicant's choice.

Should an Applicant refuse a property on grounds of unaffordability, then that applicant will not be penalised but may be required to enter into an agreement suitable to the circumstances of the Applicant to avoid similar refusals reoccurring.

### **Joint custody of children**

Where an Applicant has joint custody/residence of a child, that child will not normally be counted as part of the Applicant's household where the child already has the use of a bedroom with another parent/guardian.

### **Expected baby**

Reference to a child includes a baby who is expected within 12 weeks. For the purposes of calculating bedroom entitlement until the baby is born, it will be assumed that the expected baby can share a bedroom with an existing child who is under 16, regardless of the expected sex of the baby.

### **Additional bedroom because of a medical need**

The Housing Specialist Team may, at its discretion, consider that an Applicant needs an additional bedroom over and above the calculation set out above where there is a medical requirement for a household member to sleep in a room alone or where an additional room for medical equipment or an overnight carer is required.

However, Applicants should be aware that an additional bedroom may exceed the bedroom entitlement criteria for Local Housing Allowance (LHA), and may not be fully covered by housing benefit.

### **Additional bedroom for approved foster carers or adopters**

The Housing Specialist Team may consider that an Applicant needs an additional bedroom over and above the calculation set out above where the Applicant has been approved by East Sussex County Council to enter into an adoption, fostering, or special guardianship arrangement.

However, Applicants should be aware that an additional bedroom may exceed the bedroom entitlement criteria for Local Housing Allowance (LHA), and may not be fully covered by housing benefit even after a child has been placed with them.

## **19. MEDICAL NEED FOR REHOUSING**

The procedure for establishing the priority given to an Applicant with Medical Need for rehousing is set out below.

Low Medical Priority entitles an Applicant to be placed in Band C

Medium Medical Priority entitles an Applicant to be placed in Band B

High Medical Priority entitles an Applicant to be placed in Band A

The medical aspects of a housing application will be assessed by the Housing Specialist Team, with regard to appropriate professional advice as necessary. Any Applicant who completes the Medical Circumstances section of the housing application form is asked to authorise contact with their GP or other medical practitioner if necessary in order to verify or obtain further information about their medical condition.

Medical Priority will only be awarded where the Applicant or a member of their household has a significant medical need to be rehoused, i.e. has a significant medical problem that is directly affected by their current housing circumstances and which is likely to be relieved by rehousing.

**Medical Priority** is awarded as follows to reflect the urgency of rehousing:

a) **No Medical Priority** will be awarded where an Applicant, or a member of their household, has a medical condition where it is considered by the Casework Team that rehousing would not improve their health or ability to cope with the condition.

b) **Low Medical Priority** (Band C) will be awarded where an Applicant, or member of their household, has a significant medical condition which is likely to be improved by rehousing. This would also apply where it is considered that the ability to cope with the medical condition is likely to be improved by rehousing even where it is unlikely that the condition itself may be improved.

c) **Medium Medical Priority** (Band B) will be awarded where the Applicant's current housing has a significant detrimental effect on their, or a member of their household's, medical condition and that their health is likely to seriously deteriorate unless early rehousing takes place.

d) **High Medical Priority** (Band A) will be awarded where an Applicant, or a member of their household, has an emergency medical condition requiring immediate rehousing. Medical conditions justifying High Medical Priority would include severe/acute disability which may render the Applicant housebound or technically homeless where it is considered unreasonable for them to remain where they are.

## **20. NEEDING TO MOVE FOR CARE & SUPPORT REASONS**

Applicants who need rehousing for 'Care & Support reasons' are placed in Band C, category (f).

The welfare, care and support needs of an Applicant will be assessed by the Casework Team with the help of and in liaison with social services and other relevant agencies as appropriate.

'Care & Support reasons' for rehousing would apply to an Applicant whose household includes someone who has an established need for care and support in order for them to manage in their own home within the community and it is shown that they require rehousing to suitable and settled accommodation in order that these needs can be met and support services arranged and provided.

'Care & Support reasons' might also apply to a care leaver or other vulnerable person who needs a secure base from which they can build a stable life. This would include a person with a disability that renders them

less able than others to find their own accommodation and who is ready to live independently from their parent or carer.

'Care & Support reasons' for rehousing may include the need of an Applicant to move to a different locality to give care and support to another person. The need for such a move will be assessed on the basis of the recipient's need.

## **21. VULNERABLE APPLICANTS PRIORITISED FOR GENERAL NEEDS TENANCIES OR LICENCES WITH SUPPORT**

Particularly vulnerable Applicants who have been selected for specialised floating support in self-contained general needs housing will be assessed for move on via a Specialist Advisor.

Referrals under this scheme will be considered by a multi-agency Panel who will select appropriate Applicants using the scheme criteria which have been agreed with the Council. Such Applicants will be accepted onto this scheme subject to the requisite support being available. For example, Independent Living Scheme.

Applicants will be selected on the basis of a combination of their housing need, their need for the specific support provided by the scheme and the likelihood of a successful outcome in terms of independent living after the support is eventually withdrawn. Such Applicants could, for example, be particularly vulnerable Applicants who are considered to be ready for move on from supported housing (see **22** below)

Once selected under these arrangements, the Applicant will be subject to a 12 week time limit for bidding as detailed at **34** below. An Applicant who fails to bid successfully within this time limit may be subject to Direct Bidding on their behalf, and also the rules on refusing an offer resulting from a Direct Bid, as set out at **35** below.

**Local Connection to Eastbourne** – Only Applicants on the Eastbourne Housing Register may be considered by the Panel. As with all Applicants, in order to qualify, they must meet the Local Connection criteria that are set out at **13** above.

This arrangement applies to the following categories of vulnerable people who are thought likely to require support for a minimum period of 12 months and are eligible for support funded by the ESCC SAILS programme, particular housing provider schemes or other funding streams.

These categories may include Applicants with enduring mental health issues; Applicants with alcohol and substance misuse issues where the Applicant has undergone successful rehabilitation; Applicants with significant learning disabilities; and some young people with long-term support needs, e.g. some care leavers.

**Transitional arrangements** - Applicants who were selected for tenancies with floating support before 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015 and were placed in Band A or put forward for direct allocation will remain in that category but will otherwise be subject to the same rules as other Applicants who have been selected under this scheme.

## **22. APPLICANTS IN SUPPORTED HOUSING WHO ARE READY TO MOVE ON**

An Applicant who is living in supported housing, and is not ready to live independently, will not be accepted on the Housing Register.

Where it is confirmed to the Housing Specialist Team in writing by the by the manager of the supported housing provider that the Applicant is ready to live independently and move on to general needs housing, the Applicant will be placed in Band A, category (j) whatever other housing need they may have.

An Applicant will not be placed in this category if they are being required to leave supported housing because of a breach of tenancy conditions.

An Applicant who is placed in Band A, category (j), will be subject to a 12 week time limit for bidding as set out at **34** below. An Applicant who fails to bid successfully within this time limit may be subject to Direct Bidding, and the rules on refusing an offer resulting from a Direct Bid, as set out at **36** below.

**Transitional arrangements** - Applicants living in supported housing who are ready to move before 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015 and were placed in Band A or put forward for direct allocation will remain in that category but will otherwise be subject to the same rules as other Applicants who are ready to move on from supported housing as set out in this Allocation Scheme.

## **23. APPLICANTS WHO HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED AS HOMELESS**

Applicants who have been accepted as homeless by the Council need to meet the Local Connection criteria set out at **13** to qualify to join the Housing Register, unless the Council has decided to refer them to another council under s.198 of the Housing Act 1996.

Applicants who make a homelessness application to the Council will remain in the Band they were in before they applied as homeless whilst their application is considered. Applicants who apply to join the register after they have applied as homeless will be placed in Band C whilst their homelessness application is considered, unless they have been disqualified from joining the housing register as set out at **13** above.

**Review of Applicant's Priority** - the Housing Specialist Advisors may increase an Applicant's priority by authorising a move into Band A category (e) where they consider that this is appropriate. A decision will be made on a case-by-case basis taking into account the Applicant's

particular circumstances; the suitability of their current accommodation and urgency for a move; and the prospects of them moving out of temporary accommodation without an increase in priority.

Any Applicant whose priority is increased in this way will be subject to Direct Bidding as set out at **35** below.

**Transitional arrangements** - Applicants to whom the Council accepted a full homelessness duty before 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015 and who were placed in Band A will remain in that Band but will otherwise be subject to the same rules as other homeless Applicants as set out in this Allocation Scheme.

## **24. TRANSFER APPLICANTS**

### **Definition of a Transfer Applicant**

Any reference to Transfer Applicants in this Allocation Scheme refers only to Eastbourne tenants of Council properties or housing associations that are partners of the Eastbourne Housing Register listed at **2** above (or others that become partners subsequent to the publication of this Allocation Scheme) who wish to transfer to another tenancy in Eastbourne with the same or a different social landlord.

Other social tenants, not fitting this definition, are considered in the same way as all other Housing Applicants.

However, with certain exceptions, existing tenants of a housing association that provides its tenants with alternative access to its stock in Eastbourne, and has therefore opted out of the Eastbourne Housing Register Partnership, do not qualify to join the housing register (see **13** above) and are not considered as Transfer Tenants for the purposes of this Allocation Scheme.

Homeless Applicants residing in temporary accommodation arranged by the Council are not considered as Transfer Applicants.

The notice period provided by tenants when transferring is often truncated with the result that both tenants and housing providers may have a short time period to make moving arrangements. In anticipation of this, Transfer Applicants may be required to complete certain actions specified by their present housing provider as part of the offer procedure e.g. a moving out inspection. *Appendix 4: How to bid for properties* will specify these actions.

Transfer Applicants may join the Housing Register and will be considered for an allocation of accommodation through the Choice-Based Lettings process in the same way as any other Applicant, subject to the following:

### **Banding decisions affecting Transfer Applicants**

#### **(a) Transfer Applicants under-occupying accommodation**

In the interests of freeing up family-sized accommodation for those in need, it is appropriate that existing social tenants who wish to move to smaller accommodation are given the priority to do so. Transfer Applicants who have exclusive occupation of bedrooms in excess of the standard set out at **18** (Bedroom Entitlement) and express a wish to move to smaller accommodation suitable to their current need will be placed in Band A, category (b).

A Transfer Applicant who is required to move because their fixed term tenancy has been brought to an end by their landlord because they are under-occupying their home will also be placed Band A, category (b).

Any 3 or 4 bedroom house that is released in such a way will be advertised for bidding by Transfer Applicants only. If no successful bids are received from Transfer Applicants in the first cycle of advertising, the property will be advertised for bidding by any Applicant.

### **Transfer Applicants occupying a significantly adapted home**

In the interests of freeing up significantly adapted homes that are no longer needed but which could be used by someone else who needs the adaptations, Transfer Applicants in this position and wishing to move will be placed in Band A, category (c).

A Transfer Applicant who is required to move because their fixed term tenancy has been brought to an end by their landlord because they are occupying a significantly adapted home which they no longer need will also be placed Band A, category (c).

### **(d) Transfer Applicants who are successors**

A Transfer Applicant who is a successor wishing to move to smaller or more suitable accommodation will be placed in Band A, category (g).

### **(e) Transfer Applicants facing serious personal risk**

A Transfer Applicant who needs to move urgently because there is a serious personal risk if they remain will be placed in Band A, category (d), subject to approval by the Discretionary Allocation Panel.

### **(f) Transfer Applicants facing harassment**

A Transfer Applicant who needs to move urgently because of harassment or threat of violence will be placed in Band B, category (d), subject to approval by the Discretionary Allocation Panel.

### **Priority given to bids from Transfer Applicants**

Priority is given to bids from Transfer Applicants in certain circumstances. These are detailed in 'How Bids are Prioritised' section of this scheme at **36** below.

Additionally, some priority is given to bids from Transfer Applicants for the following accommodation:

3 or 4 bedroom houses released by a Transfer Applicant who was under-occupying (see **24** above)

### **Transfer Applicants who are subject to possession action by their landlord**

Bids for homes will not be considered from any Transfer Applicant who is subject to possession action by their landlord, including those subject to a Notice Seeking Possession, unless their landlord expressly advises the Casework Team, in writing, that they are happy for their tenant to move with arrears.

### **Temporary Decants**

A temporary decant into a suitable property may be arranged by a housing association landlord through Direct Allocation (see **40**) so that major works can be carried out before a tenant can return to their home. A Temporary Decant may be converted to a Permanent Decant where repairs to a tenant's home become so extensive, and the decant time so long, that it is considered unreasonable to expect the tenant to return to their original home.

### **Permanent Decants**

A permanent decant into a suitable property may be arranged by a landlord through Direct Allocation (see **40** below) where a tenant's home is to be demolished or redeveloped.

Alternatively, with Discretionary Allocation Panel approval, the Applicant may be placed in Band A category (e) to allow them to bid for a home of their choice as set out at **17** above.

## **Management Transfers**

All Transfers required in cases of exceptional need, e.g. where special medical, social, or unusual circumstances arise, may only take place through the normal Choice-Based Lettings process and must be considered within the provisions of this Allocation Scheme.

### **25. REFUSALS OF DIRECT BIDS AFFECTING PRIORITY**

With certain exceptions we will not normally penalise Applicants who, having successfully bid for a home, subsequently refuse an offer of accommodation. However, Applicants who refuse a reasonable offer of a home resulting from a Direct Bid on their behalf may be removed from the Housing Register, be moved down a band priority and be re-banded or for Applicants in Band C, priority may be given to other Applicants amongst Band C for a specified period of time. The specified period of time will be decided by the Casework Team, approved by a Housing Specialist Advisor, and set for 3 months, 6 months or for a year. The Housing Specialist Team will notify in writing Applicants affected by such a decision, providing the reason for the decision and how an Applicant may request a reconsideration.

Applicants who refuse an offer on grounds of unaffordability will not be penalised but may be required to enter into an agreement suitable to the circumstances of the Applicant to avoid similar refusals reoccurring. If the Applicant does not enter into a required agreement or does not abide with that agreement then the above

### **26. HOUSING RELATED DEBT OR RENT ARREARS AFFECTING PRIORITY**

The Council considers that priority should be given to those applicants who do not owe money to a council or housing association in connection with housing.

Less priority will therefore be given to an Applicant who has any housing related debt or rent arrears (whether legally recoverable or not) with the Council, another local authority, or a housing association, unless the Applicant is a Transfer Applicant and their landlord expressly advises the Housing Specialist Team, in writing, that they are happy for their tenant to move with arrears.

Bids from an Applicant in housing need in Band A or Band B to whom this applies will be given less priority than bids from other Applicants in any of these Bands until the debt or arrears have been cleared in full.

This means, for example, that a bid from an Applicant in Band A with a debt could be given less priority than a bid from an Applicant in Band B who does not have a debt.

Bids from Applicants in Band C to whom this applies will be given less priority than bids from other Applicants in Band C until the debt or arrears have been cleared in full.

For the avoidance of doubt, a bid from an Applicant in Band C will not be given a higher priority than a bid from an Applicant in housing need in Band A or B who has a housing related debt or arrears.

Although an Applicant with a housing related debt may be nominated for an allocation of housing, the housing provider to whom the debt is owed or indeed any other housing provider may reserve the right to refuse the Applicant a tenancy until the debt is cleared.

Any Applicant affected by a decision that they are to be given less priority than other Applicants because of a housing related debt will be notified in writing, with reasons, by the Casework Team.

## **27. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AFFECTING PRIORITY**

Some Applicants are excluded from joining the register because they do not qualify as a result of unacceptable behaviour; see **13** above (Applicants who not qualify).

However, even where it is decided that an Applicant does qualify, any history of anti-social behaviour of the Applicant (or member of their household) which affects their suitability to be a tenant may still be taken into account when allocating a home that is 'subject to a sensitive letting' under a Local Lettings Scheme as described at **30** below.

Any Applicant affected by a decision that their history of anti-social behaviour may be taken into account when allocating a home that is 'subject to a sensitive letting' will be notified in writing, with reasons, by the Casework Team.

Any home that is 'subject to a sensitive letting' will be identified as such when it is advertised.

Whilst any Applicant may bid for homes that are 'subject to a sensitive letting', the Housing Specialist Team will consider bids from those with a history of anti-social behaviour on a case-by-case basis as to whether the Applicant is suitable to be allocated the home they have bid for.

The Council reserves the right to take full account of the needs of the local community as well as the Applicant's when deciding to make an allocation of accommodation to the Applicant. In very exceptional cases this right may extend to not allocating a particular home to an Applicant even where the home has not been advertised as being 'subject to a sensitive letting'. In such cases the Casework Team will seek the authority of a Housing Specialist Advisor.

## **28. DELIBERATE WORSENING OF CIRCUMSTANCES AND BECOMING HOMELESS INTENTIONALLY**

The Council considers that Applicants who have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances or have become homeless intentionally should not receive immediate priority over other Applicants as a result of their worsened circumstances.

An Applicant who is considered to have deliberately worsened their circumstances, or is found by the Council to have become intentionally homeless within the meaning of the homelessness legislation, will therefore be placed in Band C (the lowest Band) for a period of 12 months from the date of the decision that this paragraph should apply to them, whatever other housing need they may have.

After 12 months, the Applicant's housing need will be re-assessed and they will be placed in the Band that applies to their new circumstances at that time.

## **How homes are advertised for bidding**

### **29. HOW WE ADVERTISE HOMES TO LET**

Social Housing to let in Eastbourne is advertised through the Sussex Homemove Partnership via its website at **[www.homemove.org.uk](http://www.homemove.org.uk)**. On the homepage of this site there is a link to the electronic 'Sussex Homemove Magazine' which lists, with photographs, all the available homes to let in all the local council areas that have joined the Sussex Homemove Partnership.

The Sussex Homemove Magazine is published electronically every two weeks on a Friday and as soon as it is published Applicants can bid for the home of their choice until 2pm the following Wednesday when bidding closes. Shortlists will be created that day and successful Applicants contacted as soon as possible.

Only Applicants who are registered on the Eastbourne Housing Register can bid for Eastbourne Homes properties, unless the Housing Specialist Team decides to place hard-to-let homes in the 'cross-boundary' section of the magazine so that applicants from other boroughs can bid for them.

### **Labelling of homes in adverts**

(a) Each home that is advertised in the magazine is accompanied by a photograph and a brief description as well as symbols for an at-a-glance guide to the details and who can bid for it. This will also include:

- whether the home is to be let at a Social Rent or an Affordable Rent
- whether the home is subject to a Local Lettings Scheme

- whether the home is subject to a sensitive letting

(b) **Homes suitable for disabled people** - All homes that are suitable for disabled people will be considered as a part of the Discretionary Panel.

(c) **Older person's accommodation or sheltered homes** – All homes that have been designed to provide facilities which are intended specifically for use by an older person aged 60 or above will be advertised for bidding from Applicants in any Band. However such homes will only be allocated to older people and will be labelled as such when advertised.

(d) **Local Lettings Schemes** - Some homes will be advertised as being subject to a Local Lettings Scheme agreed with Eastbourne Borough Council to ensure that communities are as balanced as possible.

In such cases this will be clearly indicated in the advert.

Further details about Local Lettings Schemes can be seen at **30** below.

### **30. LOCAL LETTINGS SCHEMES**

#### **Achieving Balanced Communities**

The Council may, where appropriate, in consultation with the relevant housing providers, adopt a Local Lettings Scheme whereby individual homes, blocks, streets, estates or neighbourhoods may be allocated according to different criteria to those normally used.

Some Local Lettings Schemes limit who can be considered as a tenant, e.g. they may limit allocation on the basis of employment or positive contribution to the Borough. Others may allow for a 'sensitive letting' so as to exclude Applicants with a history of antisocial behaviour.

Such a scheme might be adopted in order to achieve a balanced community on a new estate for example or to assist in rectifying problems on an existing estate where there are management difficulties or the homes have become difficult to let.

Any such Local Letting Scheme will endeavour to ensure that the twin aims of firstly meeting housing need and secondly maintaining sustainable communities within the social housing stock are achieved.

Such schemes will be agreed to operate for a strictly one off letting or for a limited period of time after which the scheme will be reviewed by a Senior Specialist Advisor and the Specialist Advisor Manager.

Any home that is subject to a Local Lettings Scheme will be identified when advertised in the Eastbourne Homemove Magazine along with details of restrictions on who may be considered when allocating the home.

## **Essential or Key Workers**

The law allows the Council to allocate accommodation to people of a particular description, whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories. Occasionally, specific funding is made available for schemes to develop low cost home ownership and affordable rented housing for keyworkers such as teachers, nurses and police officers. These homes will be made available only to Applicants who meet the qualifying criteria. Such homes will be labelled when advertised.

## **Sensitive lettings**

Some homes will be advertised as being 'subject to sensitive letting' to assist in rectifying problems on an estate where there are management difficulties or the homes have become difficult to let. Whilst any Applicant may bid for homes that are 'subject to a sensitive letting', the Casework Team will consider bids from those with a history of anti-social behaviour on a case-by-case basis as to whether the Applicant is suitable to be allocated the home they have bid for.

# How to bid

## **31. THE BIDDING PROCESS**

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 [www.homemove.org.uk](http://www.homemove.org.uk) website. *Appendix 4: How to bid* provides a plain English guide on how to bid.

Bids must be received by 2pm on the Wednesday. Shortlists will be created after this and successful Applicants contacted as soon as possible.

Applicants can make bids for homes that are advertised by either bidding online via the [www.homemove.org.uk](http://www.homemove.org.uk) website, by telephone bidding, text bidding or by sending in a completed paper coupon. Applicants can also nominate a proxy bidder and in exceptional circumstances request that the Casework Team bid on their behalf.

Applicants with support needs and those who have difficulty with written English will be supported by the Casework Team or an appointed support provider.

All bids for a home are checked against the criteria that have been set for the home, e.g. the size of the home, or any age restrictions that might apply. Bids that do not meet the set criteria will be excluded from consideration. The Casework Team will provide advice and support to Applicants who regularly bid for homes where they do not meet the correct criteria.

Applicants can bid for up to three homes each fortnight and, if done online at [www.homemove.org.uk](http://www.homemove.org.uk), Applicants can switch their bids to other homes if they change their mind before the bidding deadline.

## **32. THE SIZE OF HOME APPLICANTS CAN BID FOR**

Applicants may only bid for the size of home that is considered to be suitable for their household. Applicants will be advised of the size they can bid for when they register.

### **Bedroom entitlement calculation**

The calculation and rules used to decide the size of home an Applicant may bid for are the same as those used to assess how many bedrooms an Applicant is lacking in their current home.

The bedroom entitlement calculation and rules can be found at **18** above.

## **33. FEEDBACK ON LET HOMES**

All homes that have been advertised in the electronic Sussex Homemove Magazine that have been let will be listed in a future copy of the magazine

showing the number of bidders for each home and the Priority Band and Priority Date of the successful Applicant.

### **34. TIME LIMITS FOR BIDDING**

#### **6 week time limit**

There is a 6 week time limit for free bidding for the following categories of Applicants within Bands A: (h) and (i) (see **15**).

Within the 6 week time limit for free bidding Applicants who have not bid for a property will be subject to the conditions outlined below under **Failure to bid within time limit**.

Within the 6 week time limit for free bidding, as an offer resulting from a successful Direct Bid made on behalf of a Homeless Applicant will be considered to be a Final Offer for the purposes of the homelessness legislation, Applicants who successfully bid for a property and unreasonably reject an offer of a tenancy, the legal duty to rehouse may be discharged. (See below: **Refusal of an offer resulting from a Direct Bid made on behalf of an Applicant (a) Homeless Applicants**)

#### **12 week time limit**

There is a **12 week time limit** for free bidding for the following categories of Applicants within Bands A, B and C. Within the 12 week time limit for free bidding Applicants who successfully bid for a home may reject an offer of a tenancy without any penalty.

#### **Band A**

Category (**d**) The Applicant is a Transfer Applicant who needs to move urgently because there is a serious personal risk if they remain (to be approved by the Discretionary Allocation Panel (see **17**)).

Category (**e**) The Applicant is in exceptional need of housing that warrants placement in Band A (to be approved by the Discretionary Allocation Panel (see **17**)).

Category (**f**) The Applicant has needs that, when considered together, are so high that they should be placed in Band A (to be approved by the Discretionary Allocation Panel (see **17**)).

#### **Band B**

Category (**c**) The Applicant is a Transfer Tenant who needs to move urgently because of harassment or threat of violence (to be approved by the Discretionary Allocation Panel (see **17**)).

## **Band C**

Category **(a)** The Applicant is homeless and is owed a full housing duty under the homelessness legislation by Eastbourne Borough Council (see **24**).

Category **(b)** The Applicant has a home but Eastbourne Borough Council has a statutory duty to rehouse them (e.g. under a Compulsory Purchase Order) (see **26**).

### **Start date for time limits**

The 12 week time limit starts from:

- the date the statutory duty was accepted by the Council to the Applicant; or
- the date the Applicant is ready to move on from care or supported housing; or
- the date the Applicant was chosen by a Supported Housing Panel; or
- the date of the Discretionary Allocation Panel decision, as applicable.

The 12 week time limit may be extended at the discretion of a Housing Specialist Advisor.

### **Failure to bid within time limit**

If an Applicant does not bid successfully within the time limit then the Applicant loses their right to bid for the home of their choice and any bids they make may be removed or disqualified.

After the time limit has expired, the Casework Team may make Direct Bids (see **35** below) on their behalf until a bid is successful and a reasonable offer is made to the Applicant, having reasonable regard to the areas of choice that the Applicant has indicated.

Any bid made by the Applicant after the time limit expires, which is not removed or disqualified, will be treated as if it was a Direct Bid that was made on their behalf, and the refusal of any offer resulting from this bid will be subject to the rules set out at **35** below.

An offer resulting from a successful Direct Bid made on behalf of a Homeless Applicant will be considered to be a Final Offer for the purposes of the homelessness legislation.

## **35. DIRECT BIDDING ON BEHALF OF APPLICANTS**

In certain cases, the Housing Casework Teams may make Direct Bids on behalf of Applicants as follows:

(a) **After the expiry of a time limit for bidding** – where an Applicant who is subject to a time limit for bidding (see **34** above) fails to successfully bid within the specified time limit that applies to them, Direct Bids may be made on their behalf having reasonable regard to the areas of choice that the Applicant has indicated.

(b) **Where the Applicant's priority has been increased at the discretion of a Housing Specialist Advisor** – where the Applicant is ready to move on from supported housing in Eastbourne; or is homeless and is owed a full duty under the homelessness legislation by Eastbourne Borough Council; and their priority has been increased at the discretion of a Housing Specialist Advisor (see **23** or **24** above), Direct Bids may be made on their behalf having reasonable regard to the areas of choice that the Applicant has indicated.

(c) **Where the Applicant is a MAPPA case** - Applicants who pose a potential risk to the public as assessed by the Multi-Agency Public Protection Assessment Panel (MAPPA) will be restricted from bidding and will not be allowed to choose their home. Instead, Direct Bids may be made for suitable homes on their behalf until a reasonable offer is made and accepted by the Applicant.

### **Refusal of an offer resulting from a Direct Bid made on behalf of an Applicant**

#### **(a) Homeless Applicants**

A Homeless Applicant who is owed a housing duty by the Council under s.193 or s.195(2) of the Housing Act 1996 who refuses a Final Offer of a home resulting from a Direct Bid on their behalf, which is considered to be suitable by the Council, will result in the ending of that housing duty and an ending of the provision of any temporary accommodation that has been arranged for the Applicant.

Whether or not a Homeless Applicant accepts an offer, they have the statutory right to request a reconsideration of the suitability of the accommodation they have been offered. Any offer of a home will not be kept open while the Applicant's case is considered but may be let to another Applicant who has bid. Homeless Applicants are therefore encouraged to accept the offer that has been made to them, even if they intend to request a statutory review of its suitability.

### **(b) Other Applicants who the Council has a statutory duty to re-house**

An Applicant owed a statutory duty to re-house other than a duty under the homelessness legislation (e.g. under a Compulsory Purchase Order) who refuses a reasonable offer of a home resulting from a Direct Bid on their behalf will result in the ending of that housing duty.

### **(c) Applicants who are ready to move on from supported housing in Eastbourne**

An Applicant who is ready to move on from supported housing in Eastbourne who refuses a reasonable offer of a home resulting from a Direct Bid on their behalf will lose their priority in Band B and be re-banded according to their current housing circumstances; or for Applicants in Band C, the conditions detailed in **25** will be applied. An Applicant who refuses a reasonable offer may request a review of the suitability of the home they have been offered. However, any offer will not be kept open while the Applicant's case is considered but may be let to another Applicant.

## **How we prioritise bids**

### **36. HOW BIDS ARE PRIORITISED**

All bids that meet the criteria for each home are placed in priority order on a shortlist. With certain exceptions, priority is normally decided first by Priority Band and then by Priority Date within the Band. Exceptions to this are detailed under the headings below and under the further headings at **38 – 40** below.

During transitional arrangements, Applicants placed in Band D prior to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015 will be included in the prioritising of bids. For these Applicants transitional arrangements will cease following the required annual reapplication to register where Applicants will either be awarded a new banding or determined to be no longer eligible or as qualifying to be placed on the Housing Register.

### **Where an Applicant's bids are first on the shortlist for more than one home**

When an Applicant is first in priority order on more than one home, the Casework Team will use its best endeavours to contact the Applicant to allow them to choose which of these homes they should be nominated for.

### **Tied bids**

Every bid will be assigned a random number when a bid is made and this number will be used to resolve a tie. The highest random number gets priority.

### **If there are no successful bids on a home**

If there are no bids that meet the criteria for a home, a Housing Specialist Advisor will decide whether the home should be re-advertised or re-advertised as available for bidding from applicants in the Homemove partnership who are not registered on the Eastbourne Housing Register.

### **Housing related debt or rent arrears affecting priority**

Bids from Applicants with a housing related debt or rent arrears will normally be given less priority than bids from other Applicants in Band A, or Band B, and amongst Applicants in Band C. For full details see **26** above.

### **Transfer Applicants who are subject to possession action by their landlord**

Bids for homes will not be considered from any Transfer Applicant who is subject to possession action by their landlord, including those subject to a Notice Seeking Possession, unless their landlord expressly advises the Casework Team, in writing, that they are happy for their tenant to move with arrears.

### **Homes advertised as being 'subject to a sensitive letting'**

Bids from Applicants with a history of anti-social behaviour will be given less priority than bids from other Applicants for homes that are advertised as 'subject to a sensitive letting'. For full details see **27** above.

### **Homes advertised as being 'subject to a local lettings scheme'**

Bids from Applicants for homes advertised as being 'subject to a local lettings scheme' will be prioritised according to specific criteria specified in the agreed scheme as detailed at **30** above.

### **37. SPECIAL RULES FOR ACCESSIBLE HOUSING All adapted properties will be let through the Council's Discretionary Allocation Panel**

### **38. ADDITIONAL PRIORITY FOR ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL**

Bids from Armed Forces Personnel in Band A or B will be given priority over bids from other applicants in their Band when they bid on a suitable home if they are an Applicant who formerly served in the regular forces as defined in section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006(b).

## **The letting process**

### **39. THE LETTING PROCESS**

The prioritised list of Applicants who bid for a home will be nominated to the housing provider so that the home can be let.

After close of bidding, and to minimise delays, the housing provider may arrange multiple viewings for no more than the 3 highest bidding Applicants per home. These Applicants will normally be contacted within 5 working days of close of bidding. If contact cannot be made with an Applicant within 5 days, then another Applicant may be contacted.

Applicants will be required to bring proof of identity, e.g. driving licence or passport to the viewing.

To ensure homes are let quickly and so minimise any loss of rent and homes being left empty unnecessarily, Applicants must be available and ready to sign for and take up an offer of accommodation they have bid for and viewed. If the successful Applicant has not signed for the tenancy within 2 days of viewing and verbally accepting the offer of the home, then the housing provider is entitled to offer the home to the next Applicant.

If the Applicant at the top of the prioritised list refuses the home, the next Applicant will be offered it, and so on down the list of bidders.

In exceptional cases, the housing provider may refuse to accept the nomination of an Applicant who appears on the prioritised list if to do so would conflict with its own Lettings Policy. In such cases, the housing provider will have to give reasons for its refusal to the Casework Team who will consider the refusal in consultation with a Housing Specialist Advisor at Eastbourne Borough Council.

For General Needs housing, the housing provider lettings team will:

- usually arrange accompanied viewings, advising of any non-essential work to be completed after the tenancy start date, giving a target date for the completion of these
- offer the Applicant the option to accept and invite to sign for the tenancy or agree to a decision within a reasonable time. Some flexibility is needed when vulnerable Applicants are involved who may need to consult with support staff or their Occupational Therapist before making a decision.
- on refusal by the Applicant, note the reasons for refusal, and offer the home to the next Applicant
- on failure of the Applicant to provide adequate proof of identity at the viewing, give the Applicant further time to provide this at the Neighbourhood Caseworkers discretion and, on expiry of further time provided, another Applicant may be offered the property.

- notify the Housing Caseworker immediately the accommodation has been accepted and the name of the successful Applicant.

*Appendix 5: Receiving and accepting an offer* provides a plain English guide on the letting process.

## **Direct allocation**

### **40. DIRECT ALLOCATION OF HOMES**

Some homes will not be advertised and will not be available for bidding by Applicants. These homes will be allocated by Direct Allocation by the Specialist Housing Team in liaison with the housing support provider and Supporting People, as appropriate. Direct Allocation will then apply as follows below:

#### **Supported housing**

Most supported special needs housing (except sheltered housing) will be allocated through Direct Allocation and will not be advertised.

However, Applicants who have been selected for specialised floating support in self-contained general needs housing will be allowed to bid for a home of their choice (see **21** above).

#### **Supported housing allocated by multi-agency panel**

Referrals of Applicants considered to be appropriate for specific supported housing schemes will be considered by a multi-agency Panel who will select the appropriate Applicant using scheme criteria which have been agreed with the Council.

All Applicants who are referred to supported housing vacancies that are subject to Council nomination rights will be prioritised on the basis of a combination of housing need and need for the specific support provided by the scheme.

#### **Temporary accommodation**

Short term tenancies for homeless households in designated (or temporarily designated) temporary accommodation will be allocated through Direct Allocation.

#### **Temporary and Permanent Decants of housing association tenants**

Some homes may be allocated through Direct Allocation in order to affect Temporary and Permanent Decants of an existing tenant whose home is undergoing extensive repair or is to be demolished or redeveloped. See **24** above.

## **Other housing options available to applicants**

### **41. ALTERNATIVES TO SOCIAL HOUSING**

As in many areas in the South East of England there is a shortage of social housing in Eastbourne compared to the demand for such accommodation. Applicants may wish to consider other housing options including the following:

#### **Renting Privately**

Renting privately is a good option to consider and offers several advantages over waiting a long time for social housing. Housing Benefit is available from the Council to help private tenants afford the rents that private landlords charge. Tenants may be entitled to receive Housing Benefit even if they are in paid employment. Help and advice on renting privately and financial help with deposits and rent in advance is available from the Council (*See Appendix 1: Contacting the Eastbourne Borough Council about Allocations*).

#### **Affordable Home Ownership Schemes**

Applicants wishing to be considered for schemes designed to help people into home ownership should register with the Government's "Help to Buy Agent" (*See Appendix 1: Contacting the Eastbourne Borough Council about Allocations*) for Low Cost Homeownership Schemes.

Priority will be given to Applicants with a Local Connection to Eastbourne as defined at **13** above. Priority will then be given to Applicants who are existing social housing tenants in Eastbourne, because this frees up affordable homes for other people, and Applicants who are armed forces personnel. Next priority is given to Applicants who are first-time buyers. Exceptions to this may be where funding has been provided to meet the housing needs of specific categories of people, such as key workers.

#### **Mutual Exchanges**

Existing social tenants of any social landlord who wish to swap homes with another social tenant may wish to consider a Mutual Exchange. To do this, they should register on one or more of the home swap schemes available on the internet. Eastbourne tenants may register for free on [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk). However, both tenants must have the agreement of their landlords to carry out a Mutual Exchange.

## **APPENDIX 1: CONTACTING EASTBOURNE BOROUGH COUNCIL REGARDING A HOUSING ALLOCATION ISSUE**

If you have an enquiry about a housing Allocation issue there are several ways you can contact us.

Please make sure that you have your Locata reference number (if you have been given one)

- By phone on 01323 410000. Phone lines are open 8.30am – 5.30pm Monday to Friday
- In person – Customer Contact Centre – 1 Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4TW – Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm
- Online at [www.eastbourne.gov.uk](http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk)
- Via Text relay – 18001 01323 410000 for those who are deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired and have a text phone

## **APPENDIX 2: RECONSIDERATION OF ALLOCATION DECISION**

If a customer does not agree with the Council's decision they can request a reconsideration of their housing assessment. Often reconsideration requests can be dealt with by contacting the customer's caseworker who is dealing with the assessment and who will be able to explain the decision.

The target for completing reconsideration of a housing decision is 33 days. The legislative requirement is 56 days.

The sort of decisions a customer might ask for reconsideration would include:

- Being prevented from applying for social housing after completing or part completing the Council's new online housing self-assessment form
- A reconsideration of their banding
- The type of properties the customer is being presented with during bidding
- A reconsideration of the number of bedrooms the household may require bedrooms or the type of adaption required

Customers are allowed 28 days to submit all the information and documents needed for the reconsideration. The customer will receive an automated message acknowledging receipt of the request using the customer's preferred method of contact.

A general guide for reconsiderations include:-

- If the customers' enquiry is to do with an initial homeless assessment, housing options decisions or full homeless assessment then enquiries would need to be made to the Council's case management team
- If the customers enquiry is a request for assistance with a grant or loan then enquiries the case management team
- If the customers enquiry is to do with a housing application, a banding decision or about bidding –then enquiries to the Council's case management team
- If the customers enquiry is to do with property offers, the type of property being offered, expiration of offers – then to the Council's Neighbourhood Caseworker Team
- If the customers' enquiry is to do with property requests such as adaptation permission, voucher requests, boundary enquiries and anything else relating to a tenancy – to the Council's Neighbourhood Caseworker Team

### **Appendix 3: MAKING AN ONLINE APPLICATION FOR HOUSING**

To make an application for housing with Eastbourne Borough Council customers will need to make the application online at:

[www.eastbourne.gov.uk/housingapplication](http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/housingapplication).

Customers will also be able to use the self-help terminals in the contact centre to complete an online form and can be assisted by members of the Customer Advisory Team should they request help with completing on-line applications. Please come to Eastbourne Borough Council's Contact Centre at 1 Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4TW.

The housing application will be entered onto the Council's Homemove system and customers will be seamlessly linked into this from the EBC website.

Once the housing application has been submitted a Customer Advisor will also assist with the collation and checking of supporting documents.

Validation of the information provided and confirmation of the customer's banding will be processed by Council's Caseworker team.

## **APPENDIX 4: HOW TO BID FOR PROPERTIES**

All available properties are advertised on [www.homemove.org.uk](http://www.homemove.org.uk) on a fortnightly basis. If there is a property that you are interested in and the applicant's criteria matches that of the accommodation being advertised, then you are eligible to place a bid of interest (which can be done via the Homemove website ([www.homemove.org.uk](http://www.homemove.org.uk)), or by visiting the Customer Contact Centre at 1 Grove Road, Eastbourne BN21 4TW, by telephone on 01323 410000.

## **APPENDIX 5: RECEIVING AND REFUSING AN OFFER**

The Council's Neighbourhood Caseworker will send an email or letter to the successful candidate to advise them that they have been shortlisted. This will include the property reference. It will include links to web based information about the neighbourhood the property is located in such as proximity to schools or public transport and confirm important details about the property itself (e.g. accessibility, adaptations). It will list the documents customers will need to produce if they are offered the property.

Once the property is ready to offer the customer will be contacted by the Neighbourhood Caseworker to arrange a viewing and advise of the proposed tenancy start date.

The customer will then have 2 working days to accept or refuse the offer of the property.

If the property is accepted the Neighbourhood Caseworker will arrange a mutually acceptable appointment for signing of the tenancy and collection of keys.

If the property is refused the Neighbourhood Caseworker will be asked to state the reasons for the refusal and this will then be discussed between the Caseworker and the customer.