Warwick District Council
Housing Allocation Scheme 2018
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1 | Introduction

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) requires local authorities to have a scheme in place (known as an “Allocation Scheme”) for:

a. Determining priorities for those who require rehousing; and
b. Defining the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation.

1.1 Our Vision Statement and aims
We will provide a housing allocations service that is fair and transparent, meets all legal and regulatory requirements, and addresses the needs of our service users.

Our aims are to:

- help those in greatest need and help to prevent and relieve homelessness in line with our duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017;
- help create and maintain mixed, balanced and sustainable communities;
- make best use of scarce housing resources;
- give people the information they need to make informed choices over where they want to live and to make the most of their prospects of finding suitable housing;
- help affordable-housing providers manage their empty properties effectively and efficiently.

1.2 What is an allocation
A local authority allocates housing accommodation when it:

- selects a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation held by that authority;
- nominates a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation held by another housing authority;
- nominates a person to be an assured tenant of housing accommodation held by a Registered Provider.

1.3 What is not an allocation
Where properties are let in ways that do not meet the definition set out in section 1.2, for example on licences, or on tenancies that are not secure or introductory, then this will not be an allocation and does not have to be arranged through HomeChoice.

Furthermore some secure, introductory or demoted tenancies arising in certain circumstances fall outside the scope of this document. The circumstances not covered are as follows:

- Succession to a tenancy on the death of the previous tenant;
- Assignment of a tenancy by way of mutual exchange;
- Assignment of a tenancy to a person who would be qualified to succeed to the tenancy on the death of the current tenant;
• Transfer of the tenancy pursuant to a Court Order under family law provisions or the Civil Partnership Act 2004;
• Allocation to an existing secure tenant, unless that tenant applied for a move and has a “reasonable preference” (see section five below);
• Where a person becomes a secure tenant on ceasing to be an introductory tenant.

There are also two situations set out in legislation where the Allocation Scheme rules are not applied. These are:

• Where the local authority has a duty to find accommodation for a household under section 39 of the Land Compensation Act 1973; and
• Where the local authority grants a secure tenancy to a former owner-occupier or statutory tenant of a defective dwelling-house under sections 554 and 555 of the Housing Act 1985.

1.4 The Housing Register
Warwick District Council (WDC) operates a ‘choice-based lettings’ Housing Register in partnership with local Registered Providers (more commonly known as housing associations). Details of the housing associations that we work in partnership with can be found at Appendix 1 below.

The Housing Register is known as ‘HomeChoice’ and allows most new and existing Council and housing association homes that become empty to be available to eligible households. Every year, more people are applying for housing and demand outstrips supply. HomeChoice helps us to prioritise those households who are in greatest need and provide rehousing options to local residents and tenants. HomeChoice also allows us to monitor the level and the nature of housing need locally.

1.5 How HomeChoice works
Anyone who wants to be considered for a Council or housing association home can apply to join HomeChoice, although not everyone will be accepted. If we accept you, we will assess your housing needs and place you into one of five bands reflecting your current situation and the severity of your housing need. We also assess you to decide which properties, in terms of size and type, are suitable for your household.

You may then express an interest for advertised properties that are suitable for your household. This is often referred to as ‘bidding’.

After an advert closes, the landlord will offer the property to the interested applicant with the most need, according to the various rules of HomeChoice and any other rules that may apply.

WDC will make all allocations and nominations in accordance with this Allocation Scheme, with the proviso that the Head of Housing Services of WDC has delegated authority, in exceptional circumstances, to let residential properties to persons who are not eligible for accommodation in accordance with this policy.
1.6 Statement of choice
We are committed, along with our partner housing associations, to offering the greatest choice possible when it comes to letting housing, while also making sure that housing goes to those with the greatest need.

With HomeChoice you will know your level of priority and can develop an awareness of the availability of accommodation suitable to your needs within the district. You can make an informed decision, balancing your need for accommodation with the availability of properties. HomeChoice also allows you to make an informed choice about whether you want to look for other solutions such as privately rented or full or part ownership properties.
2 | Legal and policy framework

This Allocation Scheme has been drawn up having regard to all of our statutory duties along with key corporate strategies including the Housing & Homelessness Strategy and Warwickshire Tenancy Strategy.

2.1 Relevant legislation and guidance

The Allocation Scheme takes into account the following additional legislation:

- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Equalities Act 2010
- Health and Social Care Act 2012
- ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Immigration and Nationality Act 2016
- General Data Protection Regulations 2017
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Data Protection Act 2018

The Allocation Scheme takes into account the following Codes of Guidance:

- Providing social housing for local people: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England (DCLG, December 2013) “Supplementary Code”.

The Allocation Scheme takes into account the following regulations:

- Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006/1294
- Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right To Move) (England) Regulations 2015 SI2015/967
- The Homeless (Review Procedure etc.) Regulations 2018

2.2 Statement on the protection of public funds

WDC is committed to protecting the public funds entrusted to it. The allocation of social housing via this Allocation Scheme is considered to be the allocation of public funds. WDC will seek to ensure that all housing allocations are in accordance with this scheme and that
applicants on the Housing Register are subject to thorough verification and identity checks to minimise losses to fraud and corruption.

2.3 Fraud, misrepresentation or withholding information
Under section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 it is a criminal offence for anyone to try and obtain accommodation from WDC by knowingly and recklessly giving a false statement or knowingly withholding information. Offences under these provisions are prosecuted in the Magistrates’ Court and carry a maximum fine of £5,000. WDC may seek possession of a tenancy that was granted because of a false statement and may also attempt to recover any costs incurred. Housing Register applicants are also reminded that it is an offence under the Counterfeiting and Forgery Act 1981 to hold or present false documents such as passports or bank statements with a view to receiving goods or services including social housing.

Failure by an applicant to inform WDC of changes to his/her application or deliberately withholding information relevant to, or misrepresenting, his/her housing circumstances, may result in an offer/nomination for accommodation being withdrawn. Under certain circumstances we may also prosecute any applicants who deliberately provide us with false information.

You can be disqualified from registering on HomeChoice for up to two years if you are found to have given false or misleading information in connection with your application.

2.4 Equality and diversity
We serve a wide-ranging community and are committed to meeting the needs of that community when allocating housing. We will:

- Make sure that customers are treated fairly and equally and will not use discriminatory practices when allocating housing;
- Monitor and analyse how effective HomeChoice is at meeting the needs of our community and use the information to develop future policies and services; and
- Recognise that it is important that everyone who applies for rehousing understands HomeChoice. We will produce an information leaflet, and this will be made available in other formats, including in large print, on CD and in other languages.

2.5 Data protection and privacy
Any personal data provided to the Council will be managed in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018/ General Data Protection Regulations 2017. The Council will use this information to respond to customers and improve services. The Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the data and information (including sensitive information) it collects and holds is protected against any unauthorised access in line with the Computer Misuse Act 1998.

We collate a range of data relating to Housing Register applications including names, address and address history, national insurance numbers, information relating to ethnicity and gender as well as sensitive information for example relating to medical health needs.
All data is held in line with our obligations under the Data Protection Act. All applications for housing accommodation will be dealt with in a confidential manner. Information held by WDC will not be disclosed to any third party except where:

- the individual who is the subject of such confidential information has consented to disclosure to a third party to facilitate securing accommodation e.g. through a nomination to a housing association where an information sharing protocol is in place; or
- WDC is permitted to disclose the information under data protection legislation; or
- there is a requirement in law to make such disclosures; or
- it is considered by WDC that the applicant has given express consent for any information held on an application to be shared with other social housing landlords, such as housing associations and other agencies.

An applicant accepted onto the Housing Register is entitled to see his/her entry and receive a copy of the details we hold. An applicant also has the right to request general information to assess how his/her application is likely to be treated under the Allocation Scheme and whether housing appropriate to his/her needs is likely to be made available to him/her.

For more details about how we use your data – please see our Privacy Statement which can be found on our website at:

[https://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/privacy](https://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/privacy)
3 | Eligibility

WDC is required by law to decide whether certain applicants are eligible for assistance in line with UK immigration and nationality law.

3.1 Eligible persons
You will normally be eligible to apply to HomeChoice if you are a British national or Commonwealth citizen with Right of Abode.

You may be eligible for Council housing if you normally live in the UK and you:

- are a worker from the European Economic Area (EEA) (the EU countries plus Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein) or a member of an EEA worker’s family; or
- are a self-employed EEA worker or a member of an EEA worker’s family; or
- have indefinite leave to remain in the UK (settled status); or
- have refugee status; or
- have exceptional leave to remain, discretionary leave or humanitarian protection, as long as your immigration status doesn’t specify that you should have no recourse to public funds.

The rules on immigration can be complex so all applicants will automatically be subject to an eligibility assessment.

3.2 Ineligible persons
If you are subject to immigration control you may not be eligible to apply to HomeChoice.

You will not be eligible if any of the following apply:

- you have a visitor’s visa;
- you have a student visa or certain restrictions on your residence in the UK;
- you entered the UK unlawfully and have not been granted any leave to remain here;
- you have overstayed your visa.

British citizens returning from a period abroad to take up residence in the UK will not usually be eligible for an allocation of housing immediately on arrival. If you have arrived in the UK in the last two years you will be asked to provide additional information to help us decide if you are “habitually resident”.

Eligibility can change with a change of immigration status and you are responsible for informing WDC of any change in immigration status. A member of the Housing Options Team will determine the eligibility of an applicant based on immigration status and applying the immigration and nationality legislation that is in place both at the time of application and again at the time of any allocation.
4 | Qualifying persons

The rules about eligibility in section three are fixed by government and have to be followed but the Housing Act 1996 also gives local authorities the power to set additional rules about who can qualify for an allocation. This section explains how we use this power.

4.1 Local connection

To join HomeChoice most people must also have a local connection. A local connection is defined as follows:

- You have lived in the district by choice for at least six months out of the last 12 months, or at least three years out of the last five years; or
- You are employed in the district in permanent paid work; or
- You have a son, daughter, brother, sister, mother or father who is over 18 and has lived in Warwick district for at least the last five years as their only or main home at the date of your application.

Some applicants can join HomeChoice even though they do not have a local connection. These are known as “exempt categories” and are as follows:

a) People needing to move to the district to receive support.
b) People in the armed forces. This is defined as at least one of the applicants:
   - Is currently serving in the armed forces; or
   - Has served in the regular armed forces at any time in the five years up to the time of their HomeChoice application; or
   - Is serving or has served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is totally or partially due to their service; or
   - Has recently stopped living in, or will stop being entitled to live in, Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service husband, wife or civil partner if the person who has died has served in the regular forces and their death was totally or partly due to their service.

c) People suffering domestic violence or harassment. There are rules in homelessness law about how this is defined and we will use those rules in deciding whether to let you on HomeChoice for this reason.
d) Key workers. People who want to move to the district to take up a confirmed offer of a key public sector post will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may not have to meet the local connection criteria. Issues we will consider include the nature of the service to be provided, an affordability assessment, and the efforts that have been made to recruit locally.

We will consider requests from private sector employers wanting key-worker housing for employees who do not live in the district on an individual basis. If the Head of Housing Services considers that there is a strong argument in favour of agreeing the request it will be reported to Executive for approval.
e) Cases where WDC has accepted a full homeless duty. Again there are detailed rules in law about this that we will use to assess whether this applies to an application.
f) Council and housing association tenants who do not live in Warwick district who:
   - have a reasonable preference because of a need to move to the district to
avoid hardship; and
- need to move because they work in the district; or
- have been offered work in the district.

We will make up to five properties a year available for this category of people.

4.2 Age requirements
Only people aged 16 years of age or more are allowed onto HomeChoice. However, if you are aged 16 or 17, you may not be able to bid for, or be offered, a property until you are 18 or over, unless you are:

- accepted as statutorily homeless; or
- the subject of a Special Agency Referral.

WDC only grants tenancies to people aged 16 or 17 in exceptional circumstances and may need an adult or organisation to guarantee to pay the rent if you get into arrears. Wherever possible 16- and 17-year-olds will be moved into a home where appropriate support is provided.

4.3 People housed through HomeChoice in the past 12 months
Anyone that takes up a tenancy allocated through HomeChoice, regardless of the type of tenancy, will be required to wait 12 months before being able to go back onto the Housing Register. The exceptions would be, for example, a change of circumstances which come under the ‘reasonable preference’ categories which are set out in section five below.

4.4 Unacceptable behaviour
If you or members of your household have been guilty of unacceptable or anti-social behaviour serious enough to make you unsuitable to be a Council or housing association tenant, we will treat you as non-qualifying and you will be excluded from HomeChoice. This applies to all applicants, including those where the unacceptable behaviour occurs or comes to light after the applicant has been accepted onto the register.

Unacceptable behaviour or anti-social behaviour is defined as behaviour that, had the applicant been a tenant, the Council or housing association would have been entitled to a possession order under the legislation relevant to that tenancy.

Unacceptable behaviour may include behaviour such as:

- not paying rent, especially if you have previously been evicted for rent arrears;
- breaking or not performing an obligation of a tenancy;
- behaviour likely to cause a nuisance or annoyance to others;
- domestic abuse/violence;
- using a property or allowing it to be used for illegal or immoral purposes;
- committing a serious offence, for which you could be arrested, in (or in the area near) your home;
- deliberately damaging your home;
- knowingly or recklessly giving false statements in relation to a housing application;
- loss of tied accommodation due to misconduct; or
- harassment.

Housing-related debts that actually result in an eviction are considered ‘unacceptable behaviour’ unless:

- The applicant has kept to an arrangement with the landlord and has reduced the debt by at least 50% at the time of the HomeChoice application; or
- The applicant is assessed and found to be unintentionally homeless.

### 4.5 Housing-related debt

If you have a housing-related debt you may be treated as non-qualifying under the unacceptable behaviour rules as explained in section 4.4. Otherwise you can apply to go on HomeChoice but we might not offer you a property. Housing associations will have their own policies on letting to people with debts and are entitled to apply this as well as any criteria within HomeChoice. Housing related debts may include:

- rent arrears from a Council, housing association or private tenancy;
- former tenancy arrears;
- rent arrears which resulted in an eviction;
- Housing Benefit overpayments;
- Council Tax;
- court costs;
- repair charges;
- housing-related support charge overpayment;
- debts owed to building societies, banks and other lenders.

An applicant with a combined housing-related debt exceeding £500 will be suspended from being able to bid until the debt is brought below that figure or the applicant has made an agreement to pay off the debt and has kept to it for at least 13 consecutive weeks. Exceptions to this will be considered on a case-by-case basis by a senior officer within the Housing Advice & Allocations Team, in conjunction with the body to whom the debt is owed. In particular, exceptions will be considered for tenants being affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy who are seen to be trying to keep up with their rent payments but nevertheless falling into arrears.

Applicants who are guilty of unacceptable behaviour will be non-qualifying for two years unless they can show that their circumstances or behaviour have changed, in which case they can make a new application. However, the Council reserves the right to extend this period beyond the two-year threshold if the behaviour has not changed in that time.
5 | Reasonable preference and priority bands

5.1 Reasonable preference categories
Under the Housing Act 1996 ‘Reasonable Preference’ must be given to certain types of households as detailed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasonable-preference categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 How we prioritise applications
The Council uses a banding system to prioritise each housing application. There are 4 priority bands that take into account ‘reasonable preference’ along with the urgency of housing need. Once your application has been assessed and verified, you will be placed in a priority band which reflects your housing need.

Applicants with reasonable preference and a local connection, or in an exempt category, will be placed in Band One, Band Two or Band Three depending upon the severity of the housing need.

Applicants with reasonable preference that do not have a local connection and are not in an exempt category will be placed in Band Four.

Existing Council or housing association tenants in Warwick district who do not have a reasonable preference will be placed in the Transfer Band.

Other applicants who do not have a reasonable preference but who do have a local connection, or are in an exempt category as explained in section 4.1, will be placed in Band Four.

5.3 The priority bands
Each band contains a number of different categories of need as set out below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Household types</th>
<th>Description of housing need</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Homeless applicants</td>
<td>An applicant assessed under the homelessness legislation who has a local connection, is eligible, in priority need, homeless, not intentionally homeless and owed a full statutory duty under S193(2) of the Housing Act 1996.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Medical priority in exceptional circumstances</td>
<td>You or a member of your household has an immediately life-threatening or progressive condition which is seriously affected by your current housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Special agency referrals including care leavers</td>
<td>Referrals from organisations such as Warwickshire County Council Adult Health and Community Services; Children, Young People and Families Services; and Probation. Referrals will be considered on a case-by-case basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Extraordinary cases</td>
<td>Urgent and immediate housing needs not covered by HomeChoice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Armed forces cases</td>
<td>Promoted from Band Two due to urgent housing need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Serious violence or harassment</td>
<td>People suffering serious violence or harassment of a severity that would result in them being accepted as homeless were they to make such an application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Demolition Order/Regeneration</td>
<td>Where the Council is planning to demolish a WDC tenant’s home or regenerate an area resulting in one or more Council tenants losing their home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>Statutory Overcrowded</td>
<td>Households living in statutorily overcrowded accommodation – this will need to be confirmed by an Environmental Health Officer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ref</td>
<td>Household types</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Medical or welfare priority</td>
<td>Current home has a negative effect on your medical condition or welfare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Homeless prevention cases</td>
<td>Households who have been assessed as owed the “prevention duty” under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Non-priority, unintentionally homeless applicants</td>
<td>Applicants assessed as such under homelessness law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Overcrowded – Bedroom Standard</td>
<td>Households who are overcrowded when assessed against the bedroom standard set out in section 8.1 below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Demolition or closing order</td>
<td>Private tenants living in a property that has been served with a demolition order or closing order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Armed forces personnel</td>
<td>Applicants with three years’ or more service, who have lived in the district for two years before joining, within 12 weeks of their discharge date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Armed forces personnel</td>
<td>Applicants promoted from Band Three due to urgent housing need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Move on/ Supported Housing</td>
<td>People moving on from supported-housing projects under agreed referral arrangements between supported-accommodation providers and WDC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Homelessness Relief Cases</td>
<td>All eligible applicants owed the “relief duty” under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, including those placed in ‘interim accommodation’ by the Council, and who are cooperating with the Council to prevent their homelessness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>Multiple needs</td>
<td>People with two or more Band Two needs. Applicants in this category will be prioritized over others in Band Two.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## PRIORITY BAND 3 | Low need for rehousing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Household types</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Homeless Households</td>
<td>Households in priority need who we have decided have become homeless deliberately in line with homelessness law. Also those who are tenants or owners but WDC have established there are reasons to believe that they are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>People who are neither an owner nor a tenant</td>
<td>This might be lodgers, or adult sons and daughters living with parents, who would like to be rehoused.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Children above first floor</td>
<td>Families who are private-sector tenants or Council/housing association tenants living outside Warwick district but with a local connection or exempt from those rules) with one or more children younger than 16 living above the first floor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>People having to share facilities</td>
<td>Applicants lacking or sharing more than one facility (for example bath, toilet, kitchen) with another household.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Non-priority intentional homeless cases</td>
<td>Applicants who have made a homeless application but who do not have a priority need and are intentionally homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Armed forces personnel</td>
<td>Armed forces applicants promoted from Band Four due to urgent housing need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Multiple needs</td>
<td>People with two or more Band Three needs. Applicants in this category will be prioritized over others in Band Three.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PRIORITY BAND 4 | No priority for rehousing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Household types</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>No housing need</td>
<td>All applicants without a housing need, with a local connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Homeowners.</td>
<td>Applicants who are freeholders or long leaseholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Sufficient financial resources</td>
<td>Applicants whose financial resources are above the limits set out in the policy – please see section 6.12 below.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Reasonable preference with no local connection</td>
<td>Applicants without a local connection (and not exempt from the local-connection criteria as set out in section 4.1 above) but who are in a reasonable preference category.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 | Additional information about priority bands

6.1 Special rules applying to Band One applicants
If you are in Band One, you will have this priority for up to 12 weeks. The 12 week period will begin from the date you are registered in Band One. During this period we will make only one reasonable and suitable offer of accommodation. The Housing Advice Team will be able to make bids on behalf of applicants for any suitable properties that become available. If your bid is successful we will not make you any further offers.

If you have a successful bid, we will offer that property as long as you meet the criteria and it is considered reasonable and suitable for your needs. Once the offer has been made you will no longer be able to bid for properties. If you refuse the offer, apart from any request for a review, we will reassess your application and move you to the appropriate band with your original date of registration staying the same. The same is true if your circumstances change or you make other arrangements to sort out your housing situation.

If you have not been housed, or received an offer of suitable accommodation, within the 12-week period we will review your case. In these circumstances we will either extend the time period or make one final direct offer of suitable and reasonable accommodation.

6.2 Homelessness cases
The Homelessness Reduction Act came into force in April 2018 and the Council’s statutory obligation is to provide support to all eligible housing applicants affected by homelessness. It includes the following two main provisions:

Duty to prevent homelessness: The Council is obliged to help people at risk of losing their home if they are threatened with homelessness within 56 days. This means that we will try to prevent you from becoming homeless if you are eligible and threatened with homelessness. We will automatically try to prevent you from becoming homeless if we can. You must however fully co-operate with the Council to try to prevent your homelessness.

Duty to take steps to relieve homelessness: This duty is for those who are already homeless. We will provide you with ongoing support and assistance to try to help you to find suitable accommodation including accommodation in the private rented sector. If the relief duty applies to you the Council will only provide you with emergency accommodation if you are considered to be in priority need within the meaning of the Housing Act 1996, for example if you are pregnant or have dependent children. You must however fully cooperate with the Council to try to relieve your homelessness.

If you are in priority need and we have not been able to prevent or relieve your homelessness, we will make an assessment to decide whether you are owed a main housing duty. If a main duty is owed you may be placed in Band One.
If we are working with you to ‘prevent’ or ‘relieve’ homelessness – you will be placed in Band Two. If you are not cooperating to try to ‘prevent’ or ‘relieve’ your homelessness your banding will be Band Three. Whilst homeless you will be expected to bid on all suitable properties available; failure to bid on suitable properties may mean that our Officer will place bids on behalf of the homeless applicant.

6.3 Medical need
We give priority to medical needs depending on how unsuitable your current accommodation is in relation to your medical needs. A medical condition can include a physical or mental illness, disability or incapacity. You will need to provide information on a self-assessment medical form.

We assess each case on its individual merits and will often seek independent medical evidence. We may need information from your doctor, health professionals or other agencies or we may arrange a home visit. We will take account of such information but it may not result in us giving you medical priority.

We may only award priority if repairs or adaptations to the property that will ease the medical condition cannot be reasonably carried out. We award medical priority as follows.

1. We grant Band One priority in exceptional circumstances when you, or a member of your household, has an immediately life-threatening or progressive condition which is seriously affected by your current housing. This would include for example, if you have been discharged from hospital and your home is totally unsuitable for your needs or if you are completely housebound because of the type of accommodation you live in.

2. We may award Band Two if your current housing conditions are having a major negative effect on your medical condition or welfare, or that of a member of your household, but the need to move is not urgent enough to qualify for Band One.

3. We do not grant medical priority if your current accommodation has no significant effect on your health and the accommodation is suitable for your medical needs.

4. We will not give any priority unless you are capable of independent living. We will refer these cases to the relevant Social Services team.

If we are rehousing you due, partly or totally, to a medical assessment, we may consider ignoring our policy restrictions on type, size and location. If we do give you priority, it will only be for a property type that will deal with your housing need. For example, if we award you priority for a ground-floor property because the stairs in your current home present a barrier, we will only consider you for ground-floor properties. You will not be considered for a house unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If you own your home and you are adequately housed, or your needs can be met by selling or adapting the property, we will not give you medical priority but will give you advice and assistance with housing options where possible.
6.4 Welfare need
You may want to apply for rehousing on welfare grounds. In these circumstances, we give priority if your housing or domestic situation severely affects your welfare. Examples of this may include the following.

- To give care and support to, or receive it from, a family member if no alternative support is available.
- A need for rehousing to avoid hardship (including financial hardship) to you or to others as jointly assessed by WDC and another relevant professional agency.
- You are living in such insanitary conditions that your health or welfare is severely affected and there are no solutions available to improve the conditions.
- A recommendation is made to transfer existing tenants of the local authority or housing association due to being victims of violence or harassment, in line with local policy. Wherever possible, we will take appropriate action to deal with the situation rather than move the victim.
- A child under 16 has been identified as vulnerable, following a joint assessment by the housing authority and Social Services, and settled accommodation is needed.

6.5 Armed forces applicants with urgent housing needs
We are required by law to give additional preference to people who are armed forces personnel who have a reasonable preference and an urgent housing need.

An urgent housing need is a housing situation that needs to be dealt with immediately. The Housing Advice & Allocations Manager will decide who to give preference to. An armed-forces case is defined for these purposes as a person who meets one or more of the following:

1. Is serving in the regular forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is caused (totally or partly) by the person’s service.
2. Someone who used to serve in the regular forces
3. Someone who has recently stopped, or will stop, being entitled, to live in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person’s husband, wife or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was caused (totally or partly) by their service.
4. Is serving or has served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is caused (totally or partly) by the person’s service.

This definition is different to the one that applies for local connection exemption. It is possible for an applicant to meet the definition for exemption from the local connection criteria but meet the definition for additional preference.

For the purposes of banding and local connection assessment we will treat an ex-partner of a serving or former armed forces member as if they were entitled to the service history of their former partner. This is conditional upon them having lived with their then-partner while he or she was serving in the forces for a period of at least six months at the time that they separated.
If you fail to meet the definition for exemption from the local-connection criteria but still meet the definition for additional preference - you will be accepted on the Housing Register and placed in Band Four because of your reasonable preference and then promoted to Band Three if you have an urgent housing need.

6.6 Deliberately making your circumstances worse
If we think that you have acted unreasonably to make your housing circumstances deliberately worse than your previous accommodation without good reason, or with the aim of qualifying for a higher banding, we will not give you any extra priority. You can ask for a review of this decision. If that review is unsuccessful you will keep the banding and priority you had before worsening your circumstances. This will remain in place for 12 months after which you can ask for it to be reconsidered.

6.7 Extraordinary cases
We may consider you for extraordinary-case priority if you have an urgent and immediate need for housing, the circumstances of which are unusual and are not covered by HomeChoice. We will only give you priority if the housing need cannot be sorted out, or cannot be sorted out quickly enough, through HomeChoice.

6.8 Supported Accommodation referrals
We agree referral arrangements with the individual supported accommodation providers if you are leaving your accommodation. The Housing Advice Team will award priority if they are satisfied that you are ready and able to live independently and a ‘move-on’ package is in place. Our referral arrangements are with the following providers of supported accommodation in the district:

- Salvation Army Housing Association
- Fry Accord
- Salvation Army
- Stonham (Home Group)

6.9 Special-Agency referrals
Referrals may also be received from:

a. Warwickshire County Council Adult Health and Community Services and Children, Young People and Families Services; and

b. The Probation Service.

In the case of people from offending backgrounds, we will not accept more than five referrals a year.

Referrals will be considered on a case-by-case basis and you must meet the eligibility criteria for an allocation of housing. We also consider our responsibilities under the Children Act.
Examples of the groups of applicants who may be helped under this arrangement are:

- young people leaving care;
- people with mental-health issues;
- people with learning disabilities; and
- people from offending backgrounds.

6.10 Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA)

If an applicant is shown to be a danger or potential danger to themselves or to others we may have to take additional precautions in relation to offers of accommodation. Applicants within this category may include for example those who are referred to us via the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) joint meetings.

High-risk offenders can apply to join HomeChoice and make bids for properties, however before an offer of accommodation is made to a high-risk offender full consultation and a risk assessment will be carried out with the relevant support agencies. We do not have to offer a property to a high-risk offender if we consider, on the basis of the information that is available to us, that the offer is likely to result in harm to either the victim or the offender.

In some instances, depending on the nature and merits of an individual case, we can make a direct offer of accommodation to a high-risk offender rather than make an offer through HomeChoice.

6.11 Homeowners

We do accept home owners onto HomeChoice but will place you in the lowest priority band (Band Four). You will only receive extra consideration if we believe you have a reasonable preference (as defined in section five above) and have shown that you have no financial way of helping yourself. If you are adequately housed or your housing needs can be met by selling or adapting your home, we will give you advice about your options.

6.12 Financial resources

If you have an income or savings or investments that will allow you to get private accommodation, we will encourage and support you to take this option.

An applicant and their household with assets, or equity in a property, with a net value of more than £16,000 will have this taken into account when their application is assessed and will not receive any priority: they will be placed in Band Four.

Where the applicant is part of a couple, the income of an applicant and their partner is taken into account. Single applicants who have an income in excess of £30,000 per annum and households with a joint income in excess of £50,000 will not receive any priority. Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and War Pensions are not included as income.

The above restriction may be removed for individual cases by the Head of Housing Services in exceptional circumstances where it can be show that it would cause exceptional hardship.
If you are an existing Council or housing association tenant within Warwick district and do not meet the criteria for one of the reasonable preference categories, we will place you in the Transfer Band. This makes it easier for existing tenants to move home while still resulting in an empty property being available for applicants who are in bands one to four.

Tenants in a reasonable preference category (usually overcrowding or medical/welfare priority) will be placed in Band Two as required by law.

7.1 Transfer categories
Transfer applicants may fall into any of the following categories. These are listed in order of priority where category A is the highest priority:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category A</th>
<th>Under-Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This covers tenants who live in properties that have more bedrooms than the household needs. This is known as under occupying. Under-occupying tenants who live in a property with three or more bedrooms and wish to move to a smaller property may be able to bid for a property with up to one bedroom in excess of need subject to demand levels for the property they will be vacating.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category B</th>
<th>Two for One moves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A two-for-one move is where two tenants of social landlords want to move in together so they are freeing up two vacancies in return for the one property available. There are a number of conditions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Both properties must be within the Warwick District Council (WDC) boundary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Both landlords must be social landlords.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Both vacancies must be in demand. (The views of landlords and lettings staff will be asked for before a two-for-one offer is made.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Both resulting vacancies must be advertised through HomeChoice. (A housing association landlord will need to confirm this to us before a two-for-one offer is made.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Both tenants must sign a joint tenancy for the new property.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Both properties must be returned to the landlord(s) of the existing tenancies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Normal bedroom need requirements will apply.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category C</th>
<th>Making best use of adapted stock</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This covers situations where a tenant in an adapted property no longer needs the adaptations and is willing to move to a property without adaptations, or where an adapted property is available and a tenant needing the adaptations does not have priority under the banding system.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category D</th>
<th>Children under 16 above first floor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A tenant, with one or more children under 16 years of age, living in a flat or maisonette above the first floor can be considered for a transfer to a lower floor. If there is more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
than one applicant in this class, we will give priority to the applicant on the higher floor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category E</th>
<th>Good housing management grounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are a number of exceptional circumstances that are considered under this heading, such as:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Tenants who have inherited a secure or introductory tenancy after the death of the previous tenant but who cannot stay in the property because this would lead to under occupation or overcrowding.
2. Tenants who need accommodation that would allow a carer to live-in and their current property is unsuitable for this purpose.
3. If a property needs repairs that cannot be carried out while a household is living there. A priority transfer in these circumstances is normally temporary until the property is ready to be lived in again, but in appropriate circumstances it may be made permanent. While we may consider providing temporary accommodation for a housing association tenant in this situation, the option to make the move permanent would only apply to our tenant.
4. If there is a significant threat of violence or other harm to an individual (including domestic violence or racial harassment). The request for rehousing will need to be supported by the police or a formally established organisation such as the Risk Assessment Management Panel under the countywide Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) or the National Witness Support Scheme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category F</th>
<th>Other circumstances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For all those transfer applicants who do not have a reasonable preference and do not fit any of the other transfer categories listed above. These applicants are able to bid for properties of an appropriate type and size for their household that are advertised to the Transfer Band, including a like-for-like move, and will be shortlisted as the lowest priority transfer category.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8 | Property size and type

Your banding determines how much priority you have but you will not be able to be considered for every property that becomes available. We have rules about the size of property (in terms of number of bedrooms) and types of property that different households will be considered for.

8.1 Bedroom requirement
As part of the application process, we will assess how many bedrooms are needed for your household. You will be notified of this once we have completed our assessment of your HomeChoice application.

We consider that each of the following need one bedroom:

- An adult couple (note that an adult couple in a bedsit is classed as lacking a bedroom);
- Any other person aged 16 or over, including a live-in carer where the need for a bedroom would be accepted under Housing Benefit regulations;
- Two children of the same sex under the age of 16;
- Two children under the age of 10 no matter what their sex;
- Any other child.

When assessing how many bedrooms you need, we only take account of children if their main home is with you and they live with you permanently. We take account of babies in the womb from 25 weeks into the pregnancy. We will assume their sex is the one that will minimise the number of bedrooms needed, unless you confirm the baby’s sex.

If an applicant needs more bedrooms because he/she has been approved by the relevant agencies to foster or adopt a child or children – the bedroom requirements will be assessed taking account of the adoptee(s). The child does not have to be living with the applicant at the time of the application, but we will require formal written evidence that the fostering /adoption has been approved. If the number of bedrooms in their current property is less than the number that they are assessed as needing, the applicant will be banded as overcrowded.

As a rule, you cannot bid for properties with more bedrooms than you need. However, there are three situations where a property can be allocated to you even though it has one bedroom more than you need. These situations are:

1. properties where the occupier has to be of a certain age (normally 55 or over);
2. if you need an extra bedroom under the rules used for assessing claims for Housing Benefit, for example because you need a live-in carer or room for medical equipment;
3. if you are a Council or housing association tenant living in Warwick district and under-occupying a high demand property with three or more bedrooms.
Similarly, as a general rule you cannot bid for a property with fewer bedrooms than you need. However due to the shortage of four-and five-bedroom properties in the district, if you need this size of property, you can bid for three bedroom properties with our permission providing that your household would not be statutorily overcrowded if you moved into the property. If you successfully bid for a smaller property you will not be able to re-apply to HomeChoice at a later date for reasons of overcrowding, unless your circumstances have changed. If you do bid for a smaller property some housing associations may refuse your bid.

8.2 Property types
There are a small number of rules about particular property types:

- Bedsits are only offered to single people;
- Houses are only offered to people with children younger than 16.

For certain properties there are specific other rules that the landlord may set about who can bid. Landlords have the right to refuse to let properties they consider unsuitable for the person applying.

In some circumstances, we may restrict the sort of property you can bid for or area that you would like to live in. We will do this if there are concerns about the risks you pose or which are posed to you in a specific location or type of property. This decision may be part of a multi-agency risk assessment.

8.3 Adapted properties
There are a number of properties which have adaptations and are suitable for applicants with disabilities. We advertise all adapted properties through HomeChoice. However, we give preference for this accommodation to those people who have the appropriate level of need for this type of accommodation.

8.4 Age-restricted properties
Certain properties, for example, sheltered accommodation and some (but not all) bungalows have an age restriction. At least one applicant will need to meet the age criteria to be eligible for an age-restricted property, and that applicant must agree to be the tenant or one of the joint tenants.

8.5 Local lettings policies
Local lettings policies are rules that apply as well as the HomeChoice rules to a particular group of homes or to a small area. They are very specific and differ from place to place. The rules are generally applied to try to make sure that areas have a balanced mix of households or to help landlords to make the best use of their homes.
8.6 Rural local lettings policy

We have a rural local lettings policy to help people to stay or return to a rural area to which they have a connection, and to develop long-term communities within rural areas. The local connection must relate to current or past homes, family associations or employment in the relevant parish. This policy applies to the allocation of affordable housing in parishes where a need has been identified by way of a current housing needs survey.

If an empty property is covered by the rural local lettings policy, it will be clearly identified in the advert and you will need to prove how you meet the criteria. This section only provides a very brief overview. The full policy is set out in Appendix Two below.
9 | Applying to go on HomeChoice

If you are applying for housing you must provide us with accurate up to date details and supporting documents. Once you have submitted your application you must:

1. Tell us if you have a change in circumstances;
2. Respond to all of our requests for information;
3. Allow us to carry out a home visit if requested.

9.1 Completing the HomeChoice application form
If you would like to be considered for housing you must complete a HomeChoice application form and send this to WDC.

9.2 Who can be included on the HomeChoice application form?
WDC will usually consider single and joint applications. Joint applications can be made by married couples, civil partners or people living together; however acceptance onto the Register will be subject to eligibility. Other people included on the application form will be considered to be either members of the applicant’s household or members of a host household, with whom they currently live. The following information gives details of who can and cannot be included as part of your household.

9.3 Family members who do not reside in the UK
Family members who do not currently reside in the UK cannot be added to a HomeChoice application form.

9.4 Family members who do not reside with you but are part of your household
WDC will consider members of an applicant’s household to be people who normally live with him/her, or who are reasonably expected to live with him/her as a member of his/her household.

Where a separated couple share the care of children, the housing arrangements of both parents will be considered. Only in exceptional circumstances can a child be included on the housing application of more than one person.

9.5 Split households
Where people living separately wish to live together each household is expected to complete a separate application form which will be submitted and assessed jointly. A joint application will be registered to the address that would attract the lower banding were the parties to move in together. Where an offer of accommodation is made, both parties must sign up to a joint tenancy. If either party moves out or seeks to terminate the tenancy and leave the other in occupation during the first twelve months of the tenancy - a fraud investigation will be initiated if there is reason to believe that the tenant or tenants have mislead the Council.
If both parties are social housing tenants then they may be banded as a transfer “two for one” case (see section 7.1).

9.6 Applications from staff, their family members and Ward Councillors
All applicants are expected to automatically disclose if they are employed by WDC or have any form of relationship/connection to WDC. As part of the housing registration application process, all applicants, including existing Council tenants, must disclose if they are:

- An elected member of the Council; or
- A Council member of staff; or
- A board member of a partner housing association; or
- Related to any of the above e.g. spouse, child, parent, grandparent, niece etc.

Any such applications will be treated in the same way as any other HomeChoice application however formal approval will be needed by a senior officer within Housing Services.

Where an applicant fails to disclose the above information but it subsequently comes to the Council’s attention, the HomeChoice application will be closed.
10| The verification process

When we receive your application form a Housing Advice & Allocations Assistant will complete a range of checks relating to all members of your household who are included on your HomeChoice application form.

10.1 Supporting documentation
The verification process includes requesting supporting information and documentation as set out below (other documents may be required depending upon your individual circumstances):

- Proof of Identification e.g.: passport or immigration documents
- Tenancy agreement and eviction notices
- Proof of pregnancy e.g.: ante-natal record
- Proof of dependent children e.g.: full length birth certificates
- Proof of income /assets /employment e.g.: wage slips and bank statements
- Proof of address history and residence e.g.: Council Tax record, utility bills etc

We will need to see original documents (photocopies will not be accepted). A Housing Advice & Allocations Assistant may also carry out a home visit to verify your circumstances.

10.2 Decision (award) letters
Once we have completed an assessment of your HomeChoice application a Housing Advice & Allocations Assistant will write to you to give you details of the result of the assessment. The letter will confirm the following information:

- whether you are eligible;
- whether you are a qualifying person;
- whether you have a reasonable preference;
- what band you have been placed in;
- how many bedrooms you are entitled to;
- the type of property you are entitled to;
- your registration date;
- your right to request a review if you are unhappy with our assessment.
### Change of circumstances

After you have submitted your application form to us you must let us know immediately if your circumstances change as this may affect your priority for housing.

If you have changed address, you need to fill in a new application form. As long as you tell us about the change of address straight away, the date of application will still be the date you first applied.

You can tell us about other changes in your circumstances using a ‘change of circumstances’ form. This covers things like:

- a confirmed pregnancy;
- any member of the family or any other person on the application leaving your household;
- a change of name;
- an addition to the family (we will need proof of residence and identity);
- any change in income or savings; and
- changes in status of accommodation (for example, receiving a notice to quit).

A Housing Advice & Allocations Assistant will update your records with the change of circumstances information. If this results in your priority band changing we will tell you in writing.
12 | Annual review and cancelled applications

12.1 Annual Reviews
We will write to you every year around the time of the anniversary of your application to ask you if you wish to remain on HomeChoice. If you do not reply your application will be cancelled.

Before removing you from the HomeChoice scheme for failing to respond to a review letter, we will give you 21 days’ notice of this action.

12.2 Cancelling your application
There are other reasons why we may cancel your application including if you:

- accept a tenancy with us or a housing association;
- become a joint tenant with an existing tenant of WDC or a housing association;
- buy a property through the Help to Buy Scheme;
- have an introductory tenancy that has been ended or is in the process of being ended due to unsatisfactory conduct;
- ask us to cancel it;
- do not respond to correspondence;
- move and do not tell us your new address;
- have a change of status within the Asylum and Immigration Act currently in force; or
- give us false or incomplete information connected with your registration.

If we do remove you, we will notify you in writing and also give you details about your right to request a review of our decision. For more information about ‘the right of review’ please see the following section.


A Housing Advice & Allocations Assistant will write to you about all decisions taken on your application. The letter will give clear reasons for the decisions, which will be based on the relevant facts of the case. If you do not agree with the decision, in some cases you have the right to ask for a review. The review will be carried out by a Senior Housing Officer who was not involved in the original decision. This right will be made clear in the decision letter.

13.1 Decisions subject to review
You can ask for a review of the following decisions:

- We have decided not to accept you onto HomeChoice, for example because we have decided that you are ineligible;
- We have decided that you are not a qualifying person;
- If we have not taken into account facts about your household circumstances;
- We have changed your priority banding;
- We have cancelled your application;
- We have removed you from HomeChoice;
- We have decided that you have no local connection and are not exempt from the local-connection rules or in a reasonable preference category;
- We have decided not to give you any reasonable preference because of the financial resources available to you;
- We have decided not to make an allocation to you because it has been considered that you would not be capable of independent living;
- We have made you a direct offer;
- The outcome of a request for welfare or medical priority.

13.2 Timescales for review
You must make any request for a review within 21 days of being told in writing of our decision. You will need to provide us with any supporting evidence or documentation.

The Senior Housing Officer will normally tell you the outcome of a review in writing, within 28 days of receiving your request, giving the reasons for the decision.
14 Advertising properties

When properties become available (including new build properties) they are advertised on the website and applicants can express their interest in them (often called “bidding”).

14.1 Property Adverts
The advert goes live on our website from Thursday morning and runs until midnight the following Tuesday.

The properties advertised will generally be accompanied by the following information:

- Type of property with a picture of the front;
- Number of bedrooms;
- Location with a link to a map;
- Any adaptations and level of accessibility for people with mobility problems and wheelchair users;
- Rent charges and service charges;
- Any specific letting criteria in other words, restrictions linked to the age or number of children;
- Landlord details;
- Property reference number;
- If there are any age restrictions, for example if a property is only suitable for people aged 60 and over.

14.2 Properties that are not advertised - direct offers
In some very urgent circumstances, we or a housing association may reserve a property before it is advertised to offer it as a ‘management let’. Examples of these cases include to:

- provide emergency temporary accommodation following a fire or flood;
- provide a temporary property for tenants affected by regeneration work; or
- deal with an urgent and immediate need for housing, the circumstances of which are unusual in nature and not covered by HomeChoice.

In some case properties will be allocated through a ‘direct offer’. A direct offer means that an applicant will not bid on properties but will receive one offer of suitable accommodation. Direct offers are made by the housing service outside of HomeChoice.

14.3 How to place a ‘bid’ for a property
A bid is an expression of interest in an available property and does not involve money. You may only bid if you are eligible for the type of property advertised (please also see details about properties you can bid for). Adverts have a start and end date and you can bid during the advert period in the following ways:

- On the website at www.warwickdc.gov.uk/HomeChoice
• In person at the Council offices

You can bid for up to five properties in any one advert. If you have come top for more than one property, we will only offer you one. We choose this property by picking the first property that you bid for. If it has not been possible to let a property after two adverts, we can consider options outside of HomeChoice to allocate the property.

14.4 Preferred bands
All applicants, regardless of band will be able to bid for any property of the right size and type (including age-designated properties, subject to being of the required age). However properties will be advertised with a preference for a specific band and applicants in that band will be considered first for that property.

To ensure fairness, the preferred band for a property is determined at random by the computer, but subject to the following quotas:

- 50% of all available properties will be advertised to applicants on the Transfer Band;
- 50% of all available properties will be advertised to applicants in priority bands one to three.

14.5 Quota for priority bands one to three
Along with our housing association partners we want to make sure that applicants with the highest priority band (the most urgent need to be rehoused) have the best opportunity to be rehoused. Of the above 50% quota available to bands one to three, we set another quota for advertising properties across each priority band as follows:

- 50% for Band One;
- 30% for Band Two;
- 20% for Band Three.

Band Four applicants can bid for properties but it is likely that they will only be successful if no applicants from the higher bands place a bid or accept the property.
After the bidding round has closed, a shortlist is automatically produced listing all the applicants who have placed a legitimate bid for the property. The list is ordered according to a set of rules about bands and time on HomeChoice.

15.1 Shortlisting applicants
A property will have been advertised with a preferred band, decided randomly by the computer according to the quotas referred to in sections 14.4 and 14.5 above. The shortlist will be arranged according to the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Transfer</th>
<th>Band One</th>
<th>Band Two</th>
<th>Band Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>Transfer Band</td>
<td>Band One</td>
<td>Band Two</td>
<td>Band Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Band One</td>
<td>Band Two</td>
<td>Band Three</td>
<td>Band One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Band Two</td>
<td>Band Three</td>
<td>Band One</td>
<td>Band Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Band Three</td>
<td>Transfer Band</td>
<td>Transfer Band</td>
<td>Transfer Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>Band Four</td>
<td>Band Four</td>
<td>Band Four</td>
<td>Band Four</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An Allocations Officer will work through the shortlist. If there has been no bid from an applicant in the preferred band, the bid will be accepted from the highest-placed applicant bidding from the next preferred band and the Allocations Officer will work through each band in turn until a suitable applicant is found.

As an example, if a property is advertised with Band Two as the preferred band, we will follow the order shown in the column highlighted in the table above. The Allocations Officer will first look at bids from Band Two applicants. If there are no suitable bids then, as shown in the table, we will consider the bids from Band Three applicants. If there are still no suitable applicants we will move on to look at Band One applicants and then Transfer Band applicants. If we have still found no suitable applicants we will consider Band Four applicants who have placed a bid for the property.

The highest placed applicant in the band will be selected. If two or more applicants expressing an interest in an empty property have equal priority, we will give preference to the applicant who has been on the register the longest.

If two or more applicants with exactly the same level of priority and amount of time waiting on the register express an interest in the same property, we will allocate the property to the applicant who expressed an interest first.
15.2 What happens once an applicant has been selected
Once an applicant has been selected the Allocations Officer will notify the relevant landlord who will make an offer. If your bid has not been successful, you will not hear from us and should continue bidding on the next available advert. The results of each bidding round are available on our website at www.warwickdc.gov.uk/housing

If the selected applicant refuses the property, we will make an offer to the next person according to the rules set out above until the property is accepted. If nobody accepts the property, it will be advertised on HomeChoice one more time.

15.3 Offer of accommodation – verification checks
If you successfully bid for a property an Allocations Officer will normally tell you within a week of the bidding period closing date. We will then complete an additional verification check before an offer of accommodation is made to you. You will need to provide:

- proof of identity for each member of the household;
- evidence of parental responsibility such as Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit claims;
- details of income such as payslips and bank statements;
- Up to date confirmation of immigration status and right to work if from abroad;
- Up to date medical evidence (if relevant).

You may also have to provide other information, depending on your application.

Landlords have their own criteria and will carry out their own checks on applicants that are nominated for one of their properties. They have the right to refuse to allocate properties which are considered unsuitable for an applicant. Reasons for refusal may for example include:

- affordability;
- medical reasons;
- if you have bid for an adapted property for which you do not have a need; or
- if you pose a risk to the community or you are at risk in a specific location or type of property.

15.4 Viewing the property
The landlord will give you the opportunity to view the property and carry out an affordability assessment before you sign the tenancy agreement. Landlords may also need a payment of rent up front which, in most cases, will be a condition of the tenancy.

15.5 Refusing an offer and suspension from bidding
An applicant will be suspended from bidding for a period of three months if they have refused three offers of suitable accommodation that they have placed bids on in any six-month period.
15.6 Accepting an offer
Once you accept an offer of a property the relevant landlord will arrange to sign you up for the tenancy. Your HomeChoice application will then be cancelled and you will not be able to re-apply to go back on HomeChoice for a period of 12 months from the date of cancellation of the application.
Warwick district is an area of high housing demand and need. In recognition of the extreme pressures on affordable housing in the district, we will give you advice and help about a range of housing options available from us and from partner landlords. These may include one or more of the following.

16.1 Private rented accommodation and rent deposit or bond schemes
Households who are in need of housing may find that renting privately is a quicker way of finding accommodation. Many landlords and letting agents advertise properties online. Some popular websites that advertise rooms and properties are shown below.

- Rightmove – www.rightmove.co.uk
- Zoopla – www.zoopla.co.uk
- Spare room – www.spareroom.co.uk
- Gumtree – www.gumtree.co.uk

Disclaimer: Please note that Warwick District Council does not endorse particular websites or services and is not responsible for the content or accuracy of external websites.

Most landlords will need some form of deposit and rent in advance. If you receive Housing Benefit, you may be able to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to help you with some of these costs.

Under our prevention and relief duties we can also provide homeless households, or those threatened with homelessness within 56 days, with the deposit needed by landlords so they can rent a property in the private sector.

16.2 Low-cost home ownership
The affordable housing on all new developments in the district, both rented and shared ownership, are advertised through HomeChoice.

a) Shared ownership
Shared ownership, also known as part rent/part buy, is where we or a housing association sell a share of a home to an applicant and then charge rent on the remaining share. This allows people who cannot afford to buy on the open market the opportunity to get into home ownership.

If eligible you will be able to buy an initial share of the property ranging from 25% up to 75% depending on what you can afford. You can then buy extra shares up to a total of 100% at a later date if you so wish.

You will have a lease agreement which sets out all of your rights and responsibilities.

To qualify for shared ownership, you generally need to:

- have a household income of less than £80,000 a year if you live outside of London;
• be a first-time buyer (or you used to own a home, but can’t afford to buy one now);
• be unable to buy a home suitable for your needs without help.

If you are interested, you need to be registered, both on HomeChoice and with the help-to-buy agent for the Midlands area, which is Orbit Homes, part of the Orbit Group, at www.helptobuymidlands.co.uk

Shared-ownership properties are advertised on the HomeChoice website at www.warwickdc.gov.uk/housing

b) New starter homes

New starter homes will be built on designated starter-home developments. Starter homes will be sold at 80% of the market value of the home, which will be set by an independent valuer. You will need to have a deposit and get a mortgage. Only first-time buyers under the age of 40 are eligible to buy a starter home. Starter homes cannot be resold or let at their open-market value for five years after the initial sale.

c) Discounted market housing for sale

Discount market sale allows you to buy a home at a percentage below the market value, yet still own 100% of the property.

d) Rent to buy

Rent to buy allows you to rent a property at a reduced rent for a set period with the expectation that you will buy the property at the end of the tenancy either outright or on a shared-ownership basis.

e) Equity loan

The scheme helps you to buy your home with an equity loan of up to 20% of the full price of the property. You won’t have to pay any interest charges on this loan for the first five years and you will own 100% of your own home from the start. The equity loan scheme is open to both first-time buyers and existing homeowners. There is no income cap for applicants and you can buy a new-build property with a value of up to £600,000.

16.3 Resettlement service

The resettlement service allows certain tenants to benefit from any of the services listed below up to a value of £1,000. To be eligible for the resettlement service, you must be a Warwick District Council tenant who is:

a) affected by the under-occupation charge and is moving to a smaller or lower-cost property; or
b) a person with a disability who is moving to a property that is already adapted to suit your needs.

There are no age restrictions on who can apply for help from this service and each person’s circumstances will be considered. The resettlement service is managed by the Financial
Inclusion Project Officer within the Sustaining Tenancies Team and referrals will be made by the Allocations Officer when suitable applicants are offered a property.

Example of support you could receive from the Resettlement Service include:

- Arranging removal, including cost of removal and packing service if needed;
- New carpets or curtains (including fitting);
- Decorating the property;
- Refitting (but not buying) a washing machine, dishwasher and cooker.

You can also receive help with:

- filling in relevant benefit and other forms;
- registering for Council Tax, electoral registration, change of address with the DVLA and any other necessary administrative matters arising from your move; and
- disconnecting and connecting utilities and other services.

16.4 Homefinder UK
This is an online service for social housing tenants (tenants of the Council or housing associations) who would like to move to another area but want to remain in social housing. It allows social housing tenants to access available properties provided by a range of social landlords.

The Homefinder website can be found at: https://homefinderuk.org/

16.5 Mutual exchange (Homeswapper)
A mutual exchange is where two or more Council or housing-association tenants swap their homes. It does not involve any property becoming empty.

You need your landlord’s permission before any mutual exchange can take place. They cannot withhold this permission unreasonably. The grounds for refusing permission could include:

- exchanges leading to overcrowding or under-occupation of one of the properties;
- exchanges where recovery or legal action is being taken against either tenant because of rent arrears or other problems with the tenancy conditions;
- exchanges involving the landlord’s special-needs accommodation where this is not needed by the applicant or a member of his or her household;
- if the accommodation has been provided under a planning condition and the incoming tenant does not qualify; or
- if the tenancy agreement does not allow exchanges between tenants.

Details about Mutual Exchange can be found at the following website: www.homeswapper.co.uk
17 | Monitoring and scrutiny

17.1 Monitoring the Allocation Scheme
This Allocation Scheme will be reviewed on a regular basis for example in response to national policy, regional and/or local policy, changes in legislation and the implications of any relevant case law. We will monitor the effectiveness of this scheme on an annual basis to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of households seeking social housing in the district.

18 | Amendments to this policy

18.1 Delegated authority
The Head of Housing Services has delegated authority, in consultation with the Housing & Property Portfolio Holder, to make minor policy changes from time to time. The Portfolio Holder will report any changes approved in this manner as part of their annual report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

More substantial changes will be the subject of reports to Executive and Council.
# Glossary of key terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing Act 1996</td>
<td>An Act of Parliament that makes provision about the allocation of social housing and duties to the homeless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Localism Act 2011</td>
<td>An Act of Parliament that changes the powers of local government in England. The aim of the act is to facilitate the devolution of decision-making powers from central government control to individuals and communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Register</td>
<td>A list of applicants who are eligible and qualify for assistance with housing in accordance with the rules set out in this Allocation Scheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>Behaviour that causes harassment, alarm or distress to other people living in the area. Examples include: noise, verbal abuse, drug dealing, and violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject to Immigration Control</td>
<td>The term ‘person subject to immigration control’ (PSIC) is defined in s.13(2) of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 as a person who requires leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom (whether or not such leave has been given).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice based lettings</td>
<td>Choice Based Lettings allows social housing landlords to advertise available properties. Customers can then choose and bid for properties based on their priority band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Association or Registered Provider (RP)</td>
<td>A non-profit organisation that rents houses and flats to people on low incomes or with particular needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Data Protection Regulations 2017</td>
<td>“The General Data Protection Regulations” (GDPR) is the name of the new European privacy regulation which came into force in May 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendices
APPENDIX 1 | Partnership with Registered Providers

We work in partnership with the following Registered Providers (housing associations) operating in the district.

Ashram Housing Association
Riverside ECHG

Bromford
Stonewater

Fortis Living
Optivo

Housing & Care 21
Warwickshire Rural

Midland Heart
Waterloo Housing Group

Orbit Housing Group
WM Housing
Warwick District Council

RURAL LETTINGS POLICY

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This policy covers all new rural affordable-housing-development schemes granted planning permission after February 2011.
1.0 Aims

1.1 The aim of the local lettings policy is to allow people to stay or return to an area they have a connection to, and to develop sustainable communities within rural areas. The local connection will relate to current or past home, family associations or employment in the relevant parish.

2.0 Planning policy

2.1 Local Plan Policy SC11 (Affordable Housing) provides for negotiation for affordable housing on private development sites of three or more homes in rural areas.

2.2 Local Plan Policy RAP4 allows “the development of affordable housing in the rural areas to meet the local needs of a village or parish in exceptional circumstances”. These exceptional circumstances relate to:
   • the evidence of need;
   • the scale and location of the development; and
   • the ability of the homes to meet the particular need over the long term.

3.0 Areas covered by the policy

3.1 The policy will apply to affordable housing in parishes where a need has been identified by way of a Housing Needs Survey. Please see our website for further details: https://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/downloads/download/855/rural_housing_needs_surveys

3.2 We review the policy every six months to take account of new surveys being carried out and new developments being completed. The parishes that the policy may be applied in are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ashow</th>
<th>Baddesley Clinton</th>
<th>Baginton</th>
<th>Barford</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beausale, Haseley, Honiley and Wroxall</td>
<td>Bishops Tachbrook</td>
<td>Blackdown</td>
<td>Bubbenhall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budbrooke</td>
<td>Cubbington</td>
<td>Eathorpe</td>
<td>Hatton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunningham</td>
<td>Lapworth</td>
<td>Leek Wootton</td>
<td>Norton Lindsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offchurch</td>
<td>Old Milverton</td>
<td>Radford Semele</td>
<td>Rowington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherbourne</td>
<td>Shrewley</td>
<td>Stoneleigh</td>
<td>Wappenbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasperton</td>
<td>Weston under Wetherley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.0 Allocations

4.1 We make all allocations in line with the HomeChoice allocations policy which applies at the time of allocation. If the HomeChoice Allocation policy has been replaced, we make all allocations in line with our allocations policy which applies at the time of allocation.

4.2 The only exceptions to this will be those shown below.

1. The properties will not be included within the band quotas for HomeChoice to make sure all applicants with a local connection are considered.

2. In the first allocation of affordable-housing schemes where the housing needs survey for the parish has identified a need for singles and couples without children but no one-bedroom houses, or 1- or 2-bedroom flats or maisonettes are built on the site. Only in these circumstances will single or couple households without children be allowed to bid for a two-bedroom house. This will be as well as the standard property types they are eligible to bid for.

In these instances, the properties will be allocated by band, then local connection. In circumstances when two or more households have the same band and local connection, the allocation will be made to the household who has waited the longest on HomeChoice.

This exception is to make sure people’s housing needs, as identified by the survey used to support the new development, can be met.

5.0 Defining the order for local connection

5.1 As well as the HomeChoice allocation scheme eligibility criteria, you will also need to show your need to be housed in the area. You can do this by meeting at least one of the following criteria (listed in priority order).

5.1.1 People who currently live in the parish and have done so continuously for at least the last two years and are looking for more suitable accommodation.

5.1.2 People who have lived in the parish for at least two years out of the last 10 years.

5.1.3 People who used to live in the parish and who have immediate family (mother, father, son, daughter, brother or sister) living in the parish.

5.1.4 People who have relatives living in the parish to whom it is essential to live near for support, for example, elderly relatives, young families.

5.1.5 People who are employed in the parish in permanent paid work, other than that of a casual nature and have been for at least 12 months.

5.2 If there are no suitable applicants who fulfil any of the above criteria, the properties will be given to applicants who can show they meet any one of the above criteria (in priority order) for the adjoining parish or parishes shown in the appropriate schedule of the S106 agreement.
5.3 If there are no suitable applicants who fulfil any of the above criteria for the parish or the adjoining parishes shown in the relevant schedule of the S106 agreement, we will advertise the property on HomeChoice without the need for you to prove you meet any of the above criteria. At this point, the property will be included within the band quotas.

5.4 You would need to be registered on our Housing Register and be in housing need according to the HomeChoice Policy that applies at the time.

6.0 How to apply for housing

6.1 If you want to be considered for a property in the parish, you must apply for housing in the normal way. You will need to fill in the standard housing application form and provide the relevant supporting evidence.

6.2 When we receive your application, we will register and assess it in line with the HomeChoice allocations policy. We will write and tell you what your priority is by confirming which band you have been placed in and the number of bedrooms you need.

7.0 Advertising and reletting

7.1 Properties will be advertised as shown in the HomeChoice allocations policy.

7.2 If there are no bids from applicants in the preferred band, we will offer the property to the highest-placed applicant in the next band who has the highest local connection to the parish.

7.3 If after advertising it has not been possible to rent the properties to a applicant fulfilling the criteria set out above, we will offer the properties to applicants who can prove they meet any of the criteria as set out in 5.1.1 to 5.1.5 (in priority order for neighbouring parishes (which will be named in priority order in any S106 agreement).

7.4 In the case of reletting two-bedroom houses, if after advertising it has not been possible to rent the properties to an applicant eligible for this type of property and who fulfils any of the criteria as set out in 5.1.1 to 5.1.5 (in priority order) for the specified parishes, we will offer the properties to single and couple applicants with no children who meet any of the criteria set out in 5.1.1 to 5.1.5 (in priority order) for the parish or neighbouring parish or parishes (in priority order).

7.5 If after advertising it has not been possible to rent the properties to an applicant fulfilling the criteria set out in 5.1.1 to 5.1.5 (in priority order for neighbouring parishes, we will offer the properties to applicants registered on the HomeChoice allocation scheme who do not have a local connection to the parish or neighbouring parishes. In the case of two-bedroom houses for rent, these will only be available to households who are eligible to bid for this size property.
8.0 Reselling shared-ownership or low-cost affordable housing

8.1 We will advertise properties for applicants who can prove their need to be housed within the area by fulfilling any one of the criteria as set out in 5.1.1 to 5.1.5 (in priority order) for the relevant parish or parishes.

8.2 If after two successive advertisements no suitable applicants with a local connection have applied for the properties, we will advertise them on our HomeChoice scheme for all eligible applicants to apply.

8.3 If after a further period of advertisement no suitable applicants apply for the properties, the owner will have the right to advertise the properties generally.

9.0 Existing Council-owned affordable housing

9.1 The conditions set out in 5.1 to 5.3 will be applied when reletting existing affordable housing we own within a parish where a housing need has been identified by a current housing needs survey.

9.2 Adjoining parishes will be those which are next to the main parish in question and will only include parishes within Warwick District.

10.0 Applying this policy

10.1 There will be no individual agreements for particular schemes, unless there is a specific need for a local lettings policy. The above policy will apply to everyone and should be read alongside the HomeChoice allocations policy.