

Housing Allocation Policy and Choice Based Lettings Scheme

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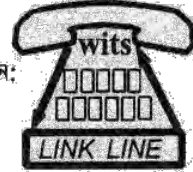
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Housing Allocation Policy and Choice Based Lettings Scheme

1. Introduction

This document outlines Epsom & Ewell Borough Council's Housing Allocation Policy and Choice Based Lettings Scheme (CBL) as required by section 167 of the Housing Act 1996. It identifies the priorities the Council will follow in allocating the Social Housing properties where it has nomination rights.

The policy enables the Council to consider the individual needs of its applicants while making best use of the limited housing stock within the Borough. The policy sets out:

- How to apply for housing
- Who is eligible to be accepted onto the housing register
- Who is not eligible to be accepted onto the housing register
- How priority for housing applicants will be given
- What the decision making processes are
- How properties will be advertised
- How applicants will be selected
- How properties will be let

This policy has been written after consultation with the Council's housing register applicants, registered social landlords (housing associations) and other stakeholders operating within the Borough.

1.1 Legal Background

In framing the Housing Allocation Policy and Choice Based Lettings Scheme the Council has had regard to the following:

- The Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and other relevant legislation
- The CLG Code of Guidance on the Allocation of Accommodation (2002)
- Fair and Flexible – Statutory Guidance
- The CLG Code of Guidance on Choice Based Lettings (2008)
- Existing case law
- The Race Relations Act 1976
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulation 2007
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Data Protection Act 1998

References in this policy to statute and case law, regulations, and ministerial guidance are necessarily limited. They are not intended as a substitute for the original sources, which should be consulted directly where necessary.

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Allocations policy

The overall aim of the Council's policy is to ensure that all social housing in the Borough that the Council has nomination rights to, is allocated fairly and objectively to those most in need, having regard to any legislative requirements and any regulations or Codes of Guidance issued by CLG.

The policy has been written with a view to meeting the following key objectives as summarised below: -

- To operate an Allocation Policy and Choice Based Lettings Scheme based on housing need
- To meet the legal requirements for the allocation of social housing as set out in the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
- To empower applicants by giving them more opportunity to express choice and preferences about where they want to live while having regard to the availability of housing resources and the high demand for housing
- To make best use of the housing stock
- To provide a simple and easy to understand allocation service which aims to be transparent, open and fair
- To ensure that applicants have ready access to information on their prospects of housing
- To provide increased choice and information to applicants
- To provide a wider housing options approach which encourages applicants to explore all of the alternative housing options which may be available to them; including low cost home ownership and private renting
- To improve mobility across the sub region
- To reduce refusal rates by offering properties to people who want to live in them
- To provide information and feedback on homes that are let through the CBL scheme in order to enable applicants to make informed decisions about their housing choices
- To promote social inclusion and help achieve sustainable communities
- To ensure that applicants are not discriminated against, whether directly or indirectly
- To support vulnerable applicants

1.3 Housing Stock Profile

There is no „council housing' in Epsom and Ewell. The Council transferred its entire permanent housing stock through Large Scale Voluntary Transfer to Rosebery Housing Association in 1994. In order to meet housing need the Council has „nomination rights' to a percentage of the housing association vacancies. All tenancies allocated for permanent social rented housing are Assured Tenancies. Rosebery Housing Association also manages hostels and self-contained accommodation providing temporary accommodation to persons owed a duty under sections 188, 190, 193, 195 or 200 of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended and extended by the Homelessness Act 2002, and as well as properties let on Assured Shorthold Tenancies to prevent homelessness.

1.4 Statement on Choice

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council has developed this Allocation Policy and Choice Based Lettings scheme to extend choice to all eligible applicants for social housing by giving them an opportunity to express their preference for the area and type of housing they want to live in. Wherever possible such preferences will be taken into account in allocating accommodation. However, this must be balanced with the requirement that the Council meets its legal duties as a local authority, addresses local housing need and ensures the efficient management of its housing stock.

It should be noted that in order to make the best use of the stock, available lettings plans and property selection criteria may specify that only applicants of a specific household type may bid for particular sizes or types of property. Where this is the case the property advert, wherever possible, will set out clearly the particular criteria that applies to that property. Applicants will then be short-listed based on these criteria.

1.5 Epsom & Ewell Home Choice

In order to offer choice Epsom and Ewell Borough Council operates a Choice Based Lettings scheme known as Epsom and Ewell Home Choice. The Council will advertise housing association vacancies to which it has nomination rights in its offices, on the internet, on a dedicated telephone line and by newsletter. Applicants on the Housing Needs Register are invited to express an interest in, or bid for, the properties advertised.

In addition Epsom & Ewell Borough Council participates in a Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme known as East Surrey Home Choice. The other partners to this scheme are Tandridge District Council, Mole Valley District Council and Reigate & Banstead Borough Council. Each partner authority has agreed to offer 10% of its available properties in each year to applicants on any of the partner authorities' housing registers.

1.6 Type of Allocation Scheme

This allocation scheme is a points based scheme. Applicants are awarded points and are held in priority order, based on an assessment of their current circumstances and housing needs. The criteria and details of the points scheme are set out in section 5 and appendix A below.

In addition the 10% of its available properties advertised through East Surrey Home Choice will be allocated in accordance with the East Surrey Home Choice Allocation Scheme, which uses bands and waiting time to select applicants (appendix B).

1.7 Legal Duties

The law states that there are five groups of applicants where reasonable preference must be considered. The system for determining priority has been designed to ensure that reasonable preference is given to the following groups of people, as required by section 167 of the Housing Act 1996:

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part V11 of the Housing Act 1996)
- People owed a duty under section 190(2), 193(2) or (195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65 (2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or are occupying

accommodation secured by such authority under section 192(3) (as amended by section 5 of the Homelessness Act 2002)

- People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).

The scheme has been framed to allow additional preference to be given to those households identified as having the most urgent needs and/or composite needs.

In addition the Council takes into account:

- Any behaviour of a person (or a member of his household) which affects their suitability to be a tenant
- Any local connection (within the meaning of section 199) which exists between a person and the authority's district.

2. The Housing Needs Register

The Housing Needs Register is a single list of households in need of affordable social rented housing and low cost home ownership and is the primary access route into social housing in the Borough. As there is no 'council housing' in Epsom and Ewell. Social rented housing, or 'affordable housing' is provided by a number of different housing associations, the largest being Rosebery Housing Association. The Council has 'nomination rights' to a percentage of the Housing Association vacancies, however the demand for housing exceeds supply and the Council uses the register to assess need and decide who will be put forward to each vacancy. The majority of vacancies will be allocated through the Council's choice based letting scheme, Epsom & Ewell Home Choice.

The Housing Needs Register includes the following types of applicant, subject to their meeting the eligibility criteria:

- Current housing association or Council tenants wishing to move
- New and existing housing applicants
- Homeless households

2.1 Supported Housing and Extra Care Housing

Supported housing and extra care housing for older people, where additional support and social care services are required will not be advertised through Epsom & Ewell Home Choice and will be allocated by dedicated allocation panels. Allocations through these panels will be based on an assessment of the level of support and care required by the applicant.

2.2 Who Can Apply to join the Housing Register?

The Housing Needs Register is open to anyone aged 16 years or over, who is eligible by law for inclusion. (See Section 2.4 Exclusions from the Housing Needs Register). Therefore the Council's policy does not have any blanket exclusion or restrictive access policies, relating to age, residence, financial or any other personal circumstances and

generally, subject to persons who are ineligible as described in detail below, the Council will maintain an “open” housing register.

Whilst young people aged 16 and 17 may join the Housing Needs Register, they will not be entitled legally to hold a tenancy until they are 18. Social Services may in some circumstances consider it appropriate to underwrite a tenancy agreement for an applicant who is under 18. Young people aged 16 or 17 will not normally be allocated an independent tenancy without appropriate support. The Council will seek the applicant’s consent to undertake a joint assessment with Social Services of their housing, care and support needs, in order to identify the most appropriate type of accommodation for the young person. Consent will not be sought if there are child protection or child in need concerns and where to seek such consent might endanger the welfare of a child or young person.

The Secretary of State may from time to time amend the classes of person eligible to be considered for housing. The allocation policy would automatically be amended to reflect any such changes from the date of their implementation.

2.3 Who can be included on the application?

All applicants can register the following people as part of their household:

- Anyone who would live with them as a partner
- Any children for whom the applicant or joint applicant receives child benefit
- Other dependants
- Non-dependants where there is an approved medical or social need and where supporting evidence is provided
- Non-dependants with the need for and a long-term commitment to a joint home.

2.4 Exclusions from Housing Needs Register

The following persons are not eligible for entry on the Housing Needs Register for the allocation of social housing:

- Persons from abroad who are subject to immigration control within the meaning of the 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, unless they are:
 - a) An existing secure or introductory tenant or an assured tenant of housing accommodation allocated to them by a housing authority
 - b) In a class of persons prescribed by the Secretary of State as being eligible for an allocation. Subject to certain conditions these include:
 - Persons granted refugee status
 - Persons granted exceptional leave to remain
 - Persons granted indefinite leave to remain
 - Persons who are nationals of a country that has ratified the European Convention on Social and Medical Assistance (ECSMA) or the European Social Charter (ESC).
- Certain persons from abroad not subject to immigration control but who are NOT habitually resident in the Common Travel Area (i.e. the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and Republic of Ireland). This includes British Nationals arriving

from abroad and any person, who is a national of any of the countries in the European Economic Area (EEA), where habitual residence must be established unless an EEA National is a worker, or has a right to reside in the UK.

- An applicant or any member of their household, who is
 - a) Guilty of unacceptable behaviour that is considered that which, if the applicant were a secure tenant, would entitle the housing authority to an outright possession order under the grounds for possession in the Housing Act 1985 Schedule 2 part 1. Such behaviour includes:
 - Failing to pay the rent
 - Breaching a condition of the tenancy agreement
 - Causing nuisance to neighbours
 - Being convicted of using their home for immoral or illegal purposes
 - Being convicted of an arrestable offence committed in, or in the vicinity of their home
 - Causing the condition of the property to deteriorate by a deliberate act, or by neglect
 - Making a false statement to obtain a tenancy and
 - b) The behaviour is serious enough to make the applicant unsuitable to be a tenant and
 - c) The applicant is unsuitable, by reason of that behaviour; at the time the application is considered.

Where an applicant who the Council has decided is to be treated as ineligible considers that they should no longer be treated as ineligible they may make a fresh application to the Council. On that application the applicant will need to show the Council that their circumstances or behaviour have changed so that they should not now be excluded. Any such change will be considered by the Council on its merits and against the Council policy and local conditions at the time of the fresh application.

If at any time the Council obtains information that leads it to believe that an applicant already on the housing list is ineligible, it will inform the applicant in writing. The applicant will be given 28 days to provide information showing that they are eligible. If they do not reply within this period, or if they reply but the Council remains of the view that they are ineligible, they will be removed from the Housing Needs Register.

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council will consider an applicant's eligibility, both:

- at the time of the application to join the housing needs register; and
- at the point at which the applicant is considered for an allocation of accommodation

2.5 Notifying ineligible applicants

The Council will write to anyone who is being excluded from the Housing Needs Register giving their reasons. Applicants have the right to ask for a review of a decision to exclude them from the Housing Needs Register (See Section 11.2, Right to Review).

3. Applying For Housing

3.1 How to Apply

To apply for social housing, applicants must be registered on the Council's Housing Needs Register. All applicants requesting entry on to the Housing Needs Register must complete an application form. The form can be obtained from the Council offices or via the website at www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk. The completed form should be returned along with the required documentation to Housing Services, The Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5BY.

The form asks for information about the applicant and any family members and about the applicant's current accommodation. It is important to answer every question on the form and to write clearly. Any incomplete application forms will be returned to the applicant and the form will not be processed. The registration date of the application will be the date the fully completed form and documentation is later received by the Council.

3.2 Supporting Documentation

At the time of applying all applicants will be required to provide original documents to support the application form. This will be photocopied and returned to the applicant. Supporting documentary evidence will normally include:

- Photographic proof of identity for all household members and evidence of their right to be allocated housing in the UK if they are not British Citizens. Note: Under recent regulations some people have the right to reside in the UK but no right to housing.
- Proof of current address
- Proof that any dependent child(ren) reside with the applicant i.e. child benefit
- Additional information will be required where an applicant currently or has previously owned a property.

A full list of acceptable documentation is listed on housing application form.

3.3 Applicant's consent and declaration

When an applicant applies for social housing, they will be required to sign a declaration on the application form to confirm that:

- The information they have provided is true and accurate
- They will inform the Council of any change in circumstances that affects their housing
- They consent for the Council to contract and information share with the Social Housing providers and support agencies, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Local Authorities, Social Services, the Police and Probation Services, Solicitors, former landlords/agents, the Benefit Agency (DWP), Doctors and other health professionals including the Primary Care Trusts.
- They consent to the Council making enquiries of any relevant persons to confirm the information on the application form is correct.

The Council may take legal action against applicants who withhold or provide false information regarding their housing application.

Where an applicant has been allocated a property as a result of providing false information, the Landlord of that property may take court action to obtain possession of the property.

3.4 Verification

The Council will verify the information provided which may include inviting the applicant for an interview or completing a home visit. Further verification will be required at the time an applicant is nominated for a property and the Council may check information with other sources as allowed by the law, including credit referencing agencies.

3.5 Needs Assessment

Once the applicant has provided all the required information the application will be assessed. All eligible applicants will be awarded points and placed in the appropriate bedroom category for their household size according to the Council's Standard Accommodation Requirement. Applicants will also be assessed for the East Surrey Home Choice Scheme. They will then be registered on the Council's computer system for the Housing Needs Register and will be able to bid for properties through Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme, Epsom & Ewell Home Choice and East Surrey Home Choice.

3.6 Registration Date

All applications will be given a 'registration date'. This will be used when allocating properties to determine how long an applicant has been entered on the Housing Needs Register. The registration date of the application will be the date the fully completed form and documentation is received by the Council.

3.7 Notification

After assessment the Council will write to an applicant to inform them:

- Whether the applicant is eligible for housing and if so;
- Their unique reference number, which will allow them to bid for properties through the choice based letting scheme Epsom & Ewell Home Choice and East Surrey Home Choice
- The size of property for which the applicant is able to bid
- The amount of priority points they have been awarded and their banding under the East Surrey Home Choice scheme
- Their registration date

If the Council decides that an applicant is not eligible to register then the reasons for this will be explained in writing and the applicant will be given the right of review. (See Section 11.2, Right To Review).

4. Application Update and Renewal

4.1 Annual Renewal

All applicants registered will be required to renew their Housing Needs Register application on an annual basis. On the anniversary of an application the Council will send out a renewal notice to those applicants. All applicants who receive this notice must complete and return it within 28 days. If the notice is not returned within 28 days the applicant is informed in writing that the application has been cancelled and that their application will be removed from the Housing Needs Register.

If the applicant wishes to appeal against a decision to cancel their application they may contact the Council in writing within 21 days of the date of the cancellation letter to request a review. (See Section 11.2, Right to Review).

Where an applicant wishes to re-join Housing Needs Register at a later date their new registration date will be the date they re-apply and their application will have to be re-assessed. Any points or bands previously awarded may no longer apply.

4.1 Change of Circumstances

Applicants are required to notify the Council of any changes in their personal circumstances that affects their housing in order that any necessary amendments can be made to their application.

4.2 Cancelling an application

An application will be cancelled from the Housing Needs Register in the following circumstances:

- At the applicant's request
- If the applicant becomes ineligible for housing (See Section 2.4, Exclusions from the Housing Needs Register)
- When the applicant has been housed through the allocations policy
- When a tenant completes a mutual exchange
- Where an applicant does not maintain their application through the renewal process, or where they move and do not provide a contact address
- Where the applicant has died

When an application is cancelled, we will write to the applicant or their representative to notify them. Where an applicant has been highlighted as vulnerable, the Council will contact the applicant to check their circumstances before cancelling the application. If the applicant wishes to appeal against a decision to cancel their application they may contact the Council in writing within 21 days of the date of the cancellation letter to request a review. (See Section 11.2, Right To Review).

5. Assessment of Housing Needs

This section of the policy sets out the factors which will be considered and the priority accorded to them when someone makes an application for housing. Applications will be considered on an individual basis however all assessments and subsequent nominations will be made in accordance with this allocations policy.

5.1 Legal Context

As stated on page seven, the Housing Act 1996 lists five groups of applicants where reasonable preference must be considered. The system for determining priority has been designed to ensure that reasonable preference is given to those groups of people.

The scheme has been framed to allow additional preference to be given to those households identified as having the most urgent needs and/or composite needs.

In addition the Council has taken into account local circumstances as well as:

- Any behaviour of a person (or a member of his household) which affects their suitability to be a tenant
- Any local connection (within the meaning of section 199) which exists between a person and the authority's district.

5.2 Assessment Procedure

An applicant's priority for housing will be assessed on the basis of the information provided in the application form they have completed, revised information provided by the applicant as a result of a change in their circumstances and other information which comes to the attention of the Council which is relevant to their application.

The supply of social housing within the Borough is limited and the Council cannot provide social housing to everyone who requests it. Therefore, less priority will be given to applicants where:

- They do not have a local connection with the Borough of Epsom and Ewell
- Their behaviour or that of a member of their household affects their suitability to be a tenant

5.3 How Needs are Assessed

The Council will administer the Housing Needs Register on a points based system which will include a variety of factors to reflect the extent of their need for permanent social housing. The Council's system for awarding points is detailed on Appendix A. The basis for that system is set out below:

- **Homelessness within the meaning of Part V11 Housing Act 1996**

Points will be awarded if this Council accepts a section 193, 195, 192 or 190 duty to any applicant who makes an application for assistance under Part V11 Housing Act 1996.

- **Unsanitary, overcrowded or unsatisfactory current housing**

Points will be awarded where an applicant's current accommodation lacks particular basic amenities such as bath, kitchen or hot/cold water supplies, or these facilities have to be shared with another household.

Points will also be awarded where the Council's Environmental Health Department certifies that a property is in disrepair and thus renders a property dangerous for occupation or significantly affects the suitability of accommodation for occupation,

or the property is statutory overcrowded. The points allocation will be assessed following an inspection by the Council's Environmental Health Officer under Part 1 of the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (Housing Act 2004).

The accommodation itself and the facilities it provides may make it unsatisfactory for a particular applicant or their household. Points will therefore also be awarded for a deficiency in the number of bedrooms required, having regard to the needs of the applicant and their household and the Council's Standard Accommodation Requirements, where additional bedrooms are required for medical reasons, or where children of opposite sexes are sharing a bedroom and at least one is 6 years of age. In certain circumstances points may also be awarded if the accommodation lacks a living room.

- **Medical Factors**

Additional priority points can be awarded where an application is made on the grounds that an applicant's accommodation is no longer suitable for the household needs and/or the illness/disability is likely to be exacerbated by their current housing conditions. The applicant or a member of their household will be required to complete a medical questionnaire, which will be referred to the Council's Medical Adviser for assessment and consideration. There will usually be a need for supporting documentation from the most appropriate health or social care professional that has direct knowledge of the applicant's condition, as well as the impact their condition has on their needs to be re-housed to be provided.

The information given on this form will help the Council Officers and /or the Council's Medical Adviser to assess an applicant's priority for housing and the type of accommodation that is required. Where the information provided relates to minor ailments, a Council Officer may carry out an assessment. The Council's Medical Adviser will assess information of a more serious nature and provide a recommendation for the Council to consider.

In exceptional circumstances the Council's Medical Adviser may recommend that overriding medical points are awarded. If an applicant refuses a suitable offer of accommodation after receiving overriding medical points these points may be then removed.

- **Need to move on Welfare Grounds**

Additional points will be awarded to an applicant where there are particular welfare or social factors or exceptional circumstances, which are not covered elsewhere within the policy. The award of these additional points will only be made in exceptional circumstances and these will usually need to be supported by evidence. The Housing Operations Manager will make the award of these points after a review of the applicant's circumstances.

- **Need to move on Hardship Grounds**

Additional points will be awarded to applicants who need to move to a different locality in order to give or receive care, to access specialised medical treatment or to take up a particular employment, education or training opportunity. The award of these additional points will only be made in exceptional circumstances and these

will usually need to be supported by evidence. The Housing Operations Manager will make the award of these points after a review of the applicant's circumstances.

- **Additional Preference**

Additional preference will be given to those households identified as having the most urgent needs and/or composite needs. The award of these additional points will only be made in exceptional circumstances and these will usually need to be supported by evidence. The Housing Operations Manager will make the award of these points after a review of the applicant's circumstances.

- **Time in Local Authority arranged accommodation**

In recognition of the need for certain applicants to have settled accommodation, points will be awarded for the length of time an applicant occupies short term accommodation (AST) arranged by this Council to prevent homelessness or temporary accommodation arranged by this Council in pursuance of its duties under Part 7 Housing Act 1996, as amended and extended by the Homelessness Act 2002. The amount of the points awarded will depend on the suitability of the accommodation. The date used to assess time points will be the date the fully completed form and documentation is received by the Council.

- **Time on Housing Register**

Additional priority points are awarded to reflect the time spent waiting on the register. The registration date of the application will be the date the fully completed form and documentation is received by the Council.

- **Local Connection**

Applicants will be awarded points if they can demonstrate a local connection, within the meaning of section 199 Housing Act 1996.

- **Care Leavers**

Applicants who are care leavers and who have been referred by Surrey County Council Social Services Department. Additional priority points will be awarded when they are within 12 months of having to leave their care placement and where there is a local connection with this borough.

- **Under Occupancy**

Points will be awarded for Social Housing tenants living in the borough who are under occupying a property and wish to down size. The resulting vacancy will then be made available to the Housing Needs Register.

5.4 Transfers












The transfer list is part of the Housing Needs Register. All applications from existing social housing tenants will be assessed on the same basis of housing need, with points awarded following assessment, i.e. needing larger or smaller accommodation, a medical or social need to move. Applications for transfer are not usually considered unless their current rent account is clear.

5.5 Sheltered Housing

Sheltered housing will be advertised through the choice based lettings scheme. Applicants for sheltered housing must normally be aged 60 or over. Before an applicant is offered sheltered housing, an assessment will also be undertaken to determine the applicant's suitability for sheltered housing and whether they are likely to benefit from the support available.

5.6 Bedroom Requirement

The maximum number of bedrooms for which applicants are eligible is determined by the size of their household. This will be decided according to the Council's Standard Accommodation Requirements (used to access room deficiency and to access housing requirements). Maximum bedroom eligibility is determined using the following guidelines: -

Standard Accommodation Requirements					
Household Size	Number of Bedroom				
	Bedsit	1	2	3	4
Single Person					
Couple without children					
Couple/Single Parent with 1 child					
Couple/Single Parent with two children of different sexes who are both under 6 years of age or older					
Couple/Single Parent with two children of same sexes under 18					
Couple/Single Parent with two children of same sex under 18 where there is an age gap of 5 years.					
Couple/Single Parent with two children of different sex where eldest is 6 years of age					
Couple/Single Parent with three or four children depending on the age and sex of the children*					
Couple/Single Parent with five or more children					
*Children or Additional Adults					
One bedroom for any two children of different sex who are both under 6 years of age					
One bedroom for any two children of the same sex under 18 except where there is an age gap of 5 years (one bedroom each where there is an age gap of 5 years or more).					
One bedroom each for children of different sexes where one or both or over 6 years of age					
An additional bedroom for any remaining children or additional person aged 18 years or over to a maximum of 4 bedrooms					
A child up to 12 months is ignored in the calculation of room deficiency points, but not in the assessment of rehousing bedroom requirement.					
If any bedroom(s) fall below the minimum legal size requirement the Council can award points on the basis of room deficiency.					
In exceptional circumstances the Council's Medical Advisor may recommend that an additional bedroom is needed on medical grounds.					

There will be occasional exceptions to the above guidelines for example:

- Certain 2 bedroom properties designated for older people may be allocated to a couple or single older person
- Under occupation may be permitted in certain properties if it would be in the interests of achieving a sustainable community under local lettings plans and property criteria.

There is a severe shortage of four bedroom homes within the Borough with only 50 properties in the entire social housing stock. Where a property has two living rooms and one can reasonably be used as a bedroom, it will be allocated on that basis. Four bedroom vacancies occur very infrequently, with one vacancy occurring every 3-4 years.

6. Lettings of Properties

6.1 Advertising

When a property becomes available it will be advertised through the Council's choice based letting scheme, Epsom and Ewell Home Choice.

Properties are advertised on a weekly cycle from midnight Thursday to midnight the following Wednesday. They are advertised in the following ways:

- Via Epsom & Ewell Home Choice website www.eebc-homechoice.org.uk
- In a newsletter available from the Housing Services, Rosebery Housing Association and the C.A.B.
- On display in the Reception area at Town Hall and other locations around the Borough.
- On our property information line 01372 732666

6.2 Describing and Labeling Properties for Advertising

The advert will contain details of the property to help applicants decide which properties are right for them. Where available a general photograph of road, block or scheme is provided and along with information about the local area and facilities.

The advert will state if there are any special requirements that the applicant must meet such as age requirements, if the property is adapted or if a lettings plan applies to the property. Applicants who do not meet the requirements stated may still apply for the property providing it is suitable for their household size but preference will be given to those households who do meet the criteria, even if they are lower in the list.

6.2.1 Description

A property description would normally include the following information:

- Who owns the property and whether it is a specialist landlord
- Size and type of property
- Availability of a lift (if appropriate)

- Type of heating
- Any special features
- Parking facilities and if any garage is within the curtilage of the property
- If there is a garden, whether it is communal or for the properties sole use
- Weekly rent including any other charges
- Council Tax Band
- Local facilities e.g. access to shops, schools etc.
- The date the property is likely to be ready for occupation (if known)

6.2.2 Labeling

All properties advertised will be labeled with the eligibility criteria for that property. The Housing Operations Manager will be responsible for making a decision about labeling after liaising with the landlord and having regard to any lettings plans they may apply. Labeling will normally include the following:

- Minimum and maximum numbers of persons in the household
- Size and type of household the property is suitable for
- If applications are restricted to particular cases e.g. for adapted properties, criteria for Supported Housing Schemes
- Age requirements
- If pets are allowed
- Lettings plan or property selection criteria

6.3 Bidding for Properties

Applicants will be able to bid for a maximum of 3 properties during the advertising cycle. Bids will not be accepted after midnight on a Wednesday. Applicants will only be able to bid for a property that is suitable for their household size. During the advertising cycle applicants can withdraw bids and reallocate the bid to other properties.

Applicants can express their interest in or bid in one of the following ways:

- Online via Epsom & Ewell Home Choice website, www.eebc-homechoice.org.uk
- By telephoning the 24hr automated bidding line on 0845 2701908
- By using the kiosk in the main Reception area of the Town Hall. Our staff will be happy to show you how to do this
- Local Libraries, such as the Ebbisham Centre
- By autobid, if applicants are unable to access the service in any other way. Applicants will need to tell us that they would like this facility

6.4 Vulnerable or Potentially Excluded Applicants

The Council believes that applicants should be given every assistance to access the Housing Needs Register and search/bid for suitable properties. For example, the provision of interactive telephone bidding will assist those with mobility issues, visual impairment and literacy.

To further assist potentially vulnerable or excluded residents the following methods will be used:

- Potentially vulnerable residents will be identified through the assessment process. These applicants will be contacted by the Council staff to establish

what support is required and to identify ways to ensure they can access the Epsom and Ewell Home Choice system

- Where applicants agree, support agencies will be provided with access on behalf of the applicant to view advertised properties and make proxy bids
- Automatic bids can be made for the most vulnerable residents to ensure that they are able to consider all suitable available properties. Further information will be required on the applicant's preferred properties and areas
- Direct mailing of adverts will be made available to all vulnerable applicants, on request
- Translation services are available online and by request at the Council Offices.

6.5 Excluded Properties

The Council is committed to advertising as many vacant properties as possible through the CBL system. There will be occasions when certain properties will not be advertised and the reasons for these exclusions will be monitored. Please see section 8 Exceptions to the Standard Allocation and Advertising Process

6.6 Time Limits for Bidding for Properties

In line with good practice, the Council wishes to give households who occupy short term (AST) housing association accommodation arranged by the Council to prevent homelessness or temporary accommodation (in pursuance of its duties under Part 7 Housing Act 1996) as much choice as possible about where they live. However if applicants were able to remain in this accommodation until their ideal property was available this would lead to problems with the supply of accommodation for other people. These households will therefore be allowed to freely choose their preferred landlord, property type and area for a period of 9 months only. Where such households fail to bid for suitable properties that become available, the Council reserves the right to make a bid on behalf of that household for a suitable property anywhere in the Borough. The household will be advised that this offer is a final offer and if the offer is refused the Council will discharge any duty that may be owed under Part 7 of the Housing Act (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002) and possession proceedings will be commenced to evict them from their current accommodation.

7. Short-Listing and Selection

After the close of the advertising and bidding cycle a shortlist of eligible applicants will be taken from the choice based lettings computer system. The shortlist will identify the order of applicants by placing all eligible bids into priority order. For Epsom & Ewell Home Choice properties priority is decided first by points and then by registration date. For East Surrey Home Choice properties priority is decided first by bands and then by band date.

If an applicant comes to the top of more than one shortlist the decision as to which property to offer is at the Councils discretion, however the Council may contact the applicant and ask them to decide which property is their first preference and will prioritise them accordingly.

Accommodation which has been advertised will be offered to the applicant who has the highest priority under the allocation scheme, and matches the letting criteria for that

property, unless one of the exceptions outlined in section 8 applies. However details of the top two shortlisted applicants will be supplied to the landlord, with the first applicant being given first refusal.

7.1 Offers of Accommodation

Prior to nomination the Council will carry out any verification required. If the applicant is either ineligible (See Section 2.4 and 8) for an offer or the required documentation to verify their circumstances is not provided the Council will overlook the applicant and move onto the next applicant on the shortlist. Where the applicant is eligible for an offer and the verification is completed, a formal nomination will be made by letter with an opportunity to view the property.

If there is no response to an offer of accommodation after 3 working days the offer will be withdrawn and, after reasonable steps have been taken to check that the offer has been received, this will be treated as a refusal.

7.2 Viewing

The top two shortlisted applicants may be offered an accompanied viewing of the property, with the first applicant being given first refusal. This is to ensure that if the applicant at the top of the short list decides not to take the property it can be quickly offered to the next person on the shortlist. If the applicant does not attend the appointment time set and does not contact the office prior to the appointment, they will normally be deemed to have refused the offer.

The applicant at the top of the shortlist will be given 24 hours after viewing a property and receiving an offer of a tenancy, to accept or refuse the offer. If the offer is refused the person next on the short list will be offered the property. An applicant will not usually be penalised for refusing a property, unless the criteria outlined in section 6.6 Time Limits for Bidding for Properties applies. Checks are likely to be made if several properties are refused. (See section 6.6 Time Limits for Bidding for Properties).

Nominations to Housing Association vacancies will generally be made in accordance with the Council's Allocation Policy, however on some occasions the Housing Association may themselves have different eligibility criteria that the Council will need to apply when selecting a suitable household for the vacancy.

If there are no eligible bidders for the property the Council may decide to consider an applicant who has bid but does not meet the eligibility criteria and make a direct offer, re-advertise it or where appropriate refer it back to the landlord.

7.3 Feedback

An important part of the choice based letting scheme is giving applicants feedback on who has recently been allocated properties. This information will enable applicants to make informed decisions about their likely chances of being housed in light of patterns of varying level of supply and demand.

Feedback on recent lets will be available on Epsom and Ewell Home Choice website and in the Home Choice Newsletters and will include:

- Property size and type

- Property location
- Number of applicants who applied for each property
- Points/ Band of successful applicant
- Registration Date of successful applicant

7.4 Withdrawal of Offers

In the following very exceptional circumstances, the Council may withdraw an offer of a property:

- Where there has been a change in the applicants circumstances
- Following verification the applicant is not eligible for the property; or
- Where an error has been made in the advertising criteria
- Where an error has been made in the assessments of the applicants housing priority
- Where an offer of accommodation could put a vulnerable person at risk of any harm
- Where applicant may not have sufficient support to live independently
- Where there is no response to an offer of accommodation after 3 working days the offer will be withdrawn.

7.5 Refusing an Offer of Accommodation

An applicant will not usually be penalised for refusing a property, unless the criteria outlined in section 6.6 Time Limits for Bidding for Properties applies. If an applicant refuses three offers of a property they have bid for the Council will contact the applicant to offer support and assistance and verify their circumstances. In order to assist the lettings process and monitoring of offers applicants are requested to provide written reasons for refusals.

7.6 Allocations to Staff, Elected Members or their Family Members

Members of staff, elected members and their family who require housing may apply for housing in the same way as other applicants. Their status should be disclosed on the application form at the time of applying.

If an applicant who is a member of staff, elected member or a member of their family, makes a successful bid for a property, Head of Housing & Environmental Services will be informed and must approve the letting prior to the formal offer being made.

8. Exceptions to the Standard Allocation and Advertising Process

8.1 Exceptions to the Standard Selection Process

Properties which have been advertised will be usually offered to the applicant who has the highest priority under the relevant allocation scheme, and who matches the letting criteria for that property, unless one of the exceptions applies.

Exceptions to this would be:

- (a)** The applicant at the top of the list will not have sufficient support to live independently
- (b)** The applicant at the top of the list has outstanding rent arrears or owes any of the following housing related debts:
 - Welfare/Housing Benefit overpayment
 - Court costs
 - Former tenant arrears
- (c)** The applicant at the top of the list has been served with a Notice of Seeking Possession or Notice of Proceedings for Possession which remains valid for any of the grounds listed in Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985
- (d)** The applicant at the top of the list has been found to be intentionally homeless (or where a member of their household has been found to be intentionally homeless) by any local authority under Part V11 of the Housing Act 1996 within the previous 6 months
- (e)** The applicant at the top of the list is not suited to, or is not eligible for, the vacant property
- (f)** The allocation of the tenancy is likely to result in serious estate management difficulties
- (g)** A mix of applicants is required to establish a balanced community
- (h)** The applicant at the top of the list has sufficient financial means (at the time of eligibility to receive an offer), to secure his/her own accommodation
- (h)** The property is subject to a lettings plan and the applicant at the top of the list does not meet the criteria (See Section 8.5, Letting Plans)
- (i)** The applicant at the top of the list does not meet the advertised property criteria
- (j)** Direct Allocations (See Section 8.3, Direct Allocations)
- (k)** Anti-social behaviour from the applicant or any member of the household
- (l)** The applicant at the top of the list has a conviction for Housing/ Welfare Benefit fraud
- (m)** The applicant at the top of the list circumstances have changed and this results in a reduction in the level of priority
- (n)** The applicant at the top of the list has provided incorrect or misleading information, which has resulted in the application being awarded a higher priority than it deserves
- (o)** Properties advertised through East Surrey Home Choice (see 8.2 East Surrey Home Choice)

- (p) Where there is a multi property advert or more than one similar property is available, more than one applicant may be selected from a single shortlist.

8.2 East Surrey Home Choice

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council participates in a Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme known as East Surrey Home Choice. The other partners to this scheme are Tandridge District Council, Mole Valley District Council and Reigate & Banstead Borough Council. Each partner authority has agreed to offer 10% of its available properties in each year to applicants on any of the partner authorities' housing registers. These properties will be allocated in accordance with the East Surrey Home Choice Allocation Scheme (Appendix B).

8.3 Direct Allocations

On rare occasions, the Council may decide to remove properties from Choice Based Lettings process and make a direct allocation. This allocation will still be made based on an assessment of the applicants needs and to the applicant who has the highest priority under the allocation scheme for that type of property.

The list below gives some examples of where the Council might do this.

- Sensitive allocations e.g. Public Protection cases
- Homeless households in temporary accommodation or short term housing association accommodation arranged by the Council, to prevent homelessness who have failed to exercise choice within 9 months of their placement in the accommodation, will be made one suitable offer. The household will be advised that this offer is a final offer and if the offer is refused the Council will discharge any duty that may be owed under Part 7 of the Housing Act (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002) and possession proceedings will be commenced to evict them from their current accommodation
- Special Mobility Arrangements. One offer will be made to meet the Council's obligations under the Surrey Mobility Scheme. If the offer is refused the referring authority will be advised that the Council is unable to assist this applicant further under this scheme
- Witness Protection Mobility Arrangements
- Hard to let properties
- Special Needs Register applicants ready to move on from Supported Housing
- An adapted property that has been identified as being particularly suited to a household's needs may be directly offered to that household
- Offers of assured shorthold tenancies for accommodation normally used as permanent stock in pursuance of any of the Council's duties under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996
- Supported Housing and extra care sheltered accommodation - all applicants who meet the criteria for this type of accommodation will be subject to a separate assessment process. A direct offer outside the scheme will be made to the most suitable applicant.

8.4 Reciprocal Arrangements

The Council may, at its discretion and in partnership with other housing authorities or registered social landlords, enter into arrangements to nominate to or receive a nomination for supported, adapted or move on accommodation which is available within the Borough

and for which there is no one on Epsom and Ewell's housing register in need of the type of accommodation available.

The Council may, at its discretion and in partnership with other housing authorities or registered social landlords, comply with a request for assistance made through the mobility scheme for the re-housing of victims of violence or re-housing of offenders in accordance with the current procedure agreed by the Surrey District Housing Authorities.

Where under the above reciprocal arrangements the Council in partnership with other local housing authorities or registered social landlords enters into arrangements whereby an individual or household has been re-housed by another housing authority, the Council shall at the request of that other authority seek to nominate an individual or household within the Borough and shall do so without reference to the points scheme within this policy.

8.5 Lettings Plans

In order to ensure socially and economically balanced communities the Council operates two types of lettings plans; an annual lettings plan and local lettings plan for new build properties.

8.5.1 Annual Lettings Plan

Each year the Council draws up a lettings plan to be used as a guide to ensure that there is an appropriate balance of property allocation between the different categories of applicants on the Housing Needs Register. The lettings plan will be updated annually to reflect current issues and needs.

8.5.2 Local Lettings plan

For new build estates, the Council and the Housing Association will operate a local lettings plan. The aim of this plan is to establish additional criteria for allocation of new build homes in order to achieve a socially and economically balanced community. The criteria will clearly be displayed on the property adverts and applicants are then shortlisted according to these criteria.

9. Low Cost Home Ownership and Homebuy

HomeBuy is a Government-led initiative that enables eligible individuals and families into homeownership by offering assistance in a number of different ways. For many people, this program will provide the best chance of owning a home in the area in which they want to live and work.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council work with Catalyst Housing Group, the Government appointed Homebuy Agent covering the Surrey area, to promote the HomeBuy initiative and all the available options. There are three core parts to the HomeBuy program:

1. Shared Ownership
2. Equity Loan Schemes
3. Intermediate Rental Schemes

To apply for Homebuy you need to apply to the Council's Housing Needs Register and also with Catalyst Housing Group who are the Homebuy Agents for Surrey. All applicants may be subject to confirmation of employment status and eligibility criteria.

To register with Catalyst Housing Group, telephone 0845 601 7729 or complete an online application at www.catalysthomebuy.org.uk More details about the available options and schemes are available on this website and from Housing Services.

10. Performance Monitoring and Amendments to the Policy

10.1 Monitoring of the policy

This policy will be reviewed annually to

- Consider whether the aims and objectives need amending
- Determine if the policy is meeting the objectives that have been set.

10.2 Monitoring of Allocations

The Housing Operations Manager is responsible for ensuring that allocations are made in accordance with the agreed policy. They will make random checks to confirm that allocations are being made appropriately and will take corrective action if required.

10.3 Minor changes to the Policy

The Housing Operations Manager is authorised to make minor changes to this allocations policy. However these changes should not significantly affect large numbers of applicants.

11. Rights to Information and Reviews

11.1 Right to Information

Every applicant has the following rights regarding the provision of information:

- The right to request general information that will enable them to assess how their application will be treated, including whether they are likely to be eligible for reasonable preference
- The right to request general information that will enable them to assess whether housing 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 right to be informed of any decision about the facts of their case which is likely to be taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing to them
- The right to be informed of any decision that they are unsuitable to be a tenant, which is likely to be taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing to them

11.2 Right to Review

An applicant has the right to request a review of the following decisions:

- That they are ineligible to join the Housing Needs Register or that they have become ineligible
- That they are ineligible for an offer
- That their application has been cancelled other than at their request
- Any other decisions relating to the Allocation Policy, including points/banding and priority dates.

An officer senior who was not involved in making the original decision will carry out these reviews. The procedure is:

- A request for a review must be made by writing to, visiting or telephoning the Council within 21 days from the day on which the applicant is notified of the authority's decision and the reasons for it. The Council has discretion to extend the time limit if it considers this would be reasonable
- An applicant may provide any additional information that they think the Council should take into account when reviewing its decision. This must be in writing and provided within 14 days from the date the Council notifies the applicant that it is carrying out a review. The applicant will be advised of the outcome of the review within eight weeks unless the applicant has agreed to an extension of time
- There is no right to request a further review.

Reviews of decisions made under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (Homelessness) are outside the scope of this Policy.

11.3 Offences

Under section 171 of the Housing Act 1996, an applicant or someone acting on their behalf commits an offence in the following circumstances:

- where they knowingly or recklessly give false information to the authority
- where they knowingly withhold information, which the authority has reasonably required an applicant to give in connection with their application.

The Council has decided that where a person commits such an offence it will consider taking the following action:

- instituting criminal proceedings; and or
- seeking possession of any tenancy granted to the applicant; and/or
- removing any applicant from the register or, as appropriate, not allowing the applicant to join or re-join it.

11.4 Equal Opportunities

This Council is strongly committed to fairness and equal treatment for all. The Council aims to treat everyone equally and fairly regardless of race, family/marital status, gender, religious belief, age, disability or sexuality. In doing so we aim to prevent unlawful discrimination and to take positive action to promote equality of opportunity for everyone.

11.4 Data Protection

In line with the Data Protection Act 1998, information regarding a person's application for housing will not be disclosed to any third party or member of the public without the applicant's express consent unless the Council is required to do so legally. Applicants who wish another person to represent them must provide a signed authorisation to that effect.

By signing the housing application form an applicant gives consent for Epsom & Ewell Borough Council to make relevant enquiries with regard to their housing need and their potential ability to manage a future tenancy. This includes conducting a search with a credit reference agency to verify the information given.

The declaration also gives consent for the Council to contract and information share with the Social Housing providers and support agencies, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Local Authorities, Social Services, the Police and Probation Services, Solicitors, former landlords/agents, the Benefit Agency (DWP), Doctors and other health professionals including the Primary Care Trusts share information with Citizens Advice Bureaux, Local Authorities, Social Services, Primary Care Trusts, the Police and Probation Services and Social Housing providers, including support agencies.

11.5 Access to Personal Information

In line with the Data Protection Act 1998, the Housing Services believes that people have a right to see what information is kept about them on written records. As far as possible we will make this available, subject to certain restrictions. If you wish to view your records, please contact the Housing Services Section:

The Town Hall
The Parade
Epsom
Surrey
KT18 5BY
01372 732000

Information about the Housing Allocation Policy and Choice Based Lettings Scheme

This document is available for inspection during working hours at the Housing Services at the Town Hall. Copies of this document are also available from the Council or the document can be downloaded from the Council's website at www.epsom-ewell.gov.uk

A summary of this Housing Needs Register and Allocations Policy will be made available free of charge to any member of the public who asks for one.

Points Assessment Sheet

	<u>Factors for which points can be given</u>	Number of points
1	<p>Unsanitary, overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing</p> <p>(a) Disrepair (certified by the Council's Environmental Health Department) which:</p> <p>Renders a property dangerous for occupation or; Significantly affects the suitability of accommodation for occupation</p> <p>(b) Statutory overcrowded (certified by the Council's Environmental Health Department)</p> <p>(c) Facilities lacking</p> <p>WC Bath or Shower Kitchen/cooking facilities Hot/cold water supplies</p> <p>(d) Facilities shared</p> <p>WC Bath or shower Kitchen/cooking facilities Living room</p> <p>(e) Room deficiency</p> <p>For each bedroom lacking</p> <p>For each person requiring an additional separate bedroom for medical reasons (Certified by the Council's Medical Advisor)</p> <p>In addition to above where children of the opposite sex are sharing a bedroom & at least one is 6 years of age.</p> <p>No Living Room</p>	<p>1-20</p> <p>20</p> <p>10</p> <p>10</p> <p>10</p> <p>10</p> <p>5</p> <p>5</p> <p>5</p> <p>5</p> <p>10</p> <p>10</p> <p>5</p> <p>10</p>
2	<p>Medical factors (Certified by The Council's Medical Advisor)</p> <p>High Priority Medium Priority Low Priority</p>	<p>15</p> <p>10</p> <p>5</p>
3	<p>Applicants who are owed a duty by the housing authority under s.190 (2), s.192 (3), 195 (2), s193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996.</p>	

	s.193 (2) duty s.195 (2) duty s.192 (3) duty s.190 (2) duty	50 30 20 10
4	<u>Need to move on welfare grounds</u> (This would apply where a person has either social or care needs, or other needs on welfare or medical grounds)	1-20
5	<u>Need to move on “hardship” grounds</u> Needs to move to a different locality in order to give care Need to move to a different locality in order to receive care Needs to access specialised medical treatment Wishes to take up employment, education or training opportunity	15 20 20 10
	<u>How additional points may be awarded</u>	
6	Additional preference Victims of domestic violence Victims of racial harassment amounting to violence of threat of violence Witnesses of crime, or victims of crime who would be at risk of intimidation if they remained in their current home Those who need to move due to urgent medical reasons Applicants who are Surrey County Council Care Leavers within 12 months of having to leave their care placement Social Housing tenants living in borough wanting to down size	20 15 15 100 50 50 per bedroom
7	Temporary accommodation/short term accommodation provided/arranged by EEBC to prevent homelessness Bed and Breakfast RSL temporary accommodation or short term prevention accommodation Refuge/Hostel Private rented accommodation secured by a rent deposit Floating Support Scheme	Points per month 5 5 2 2 2
8	1 <u>Time on housing register</u> For each continuous period of 12 months that an applicant is registered (up to a maximum of 10 points)	Points per year 2
9	Local connection - within the meaning of section 199 Housing Act 1996.	20



East Surrey Home Choice Allocation Policy

May 2008

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1. Introduction

This policy has been agreed between the following local housing authorities: Reigate and Banstead, Tandridge, Epsom and Ewell and Mole Valley to facilitate cross-boundary mobility via the Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme known as East Surrey Home Choice.

2. Aims

The aim of East Surrey Home Choice is to facilitate cross boundary moves for applicants included on the Housing Registers of partner authorities. In principle, each partner authority agrees to offer an agreed proportion of available properties each year to applicants included on any of the partner authority's housing registers. These properties will be let in accordance with this allocation policy. Each partner will continue to allocate the remaining proportion of properties becoming available, through its own allocation scheme, details of which are available on the individual partners' websites.

3. Information Sharing

Each partner authority will seek the express permission of housing applicants applying to join their housing register to share personal information about the applicant, and any members of their household expected to reside with them, with the other partner authorities and housing associations to whom nominations may be made. However, information may be shared about the individual and their history irrespective of whether their consent has been obtained if:

- it is in accordance with the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (Section 115);
- there is a serious threat to the other partner's staff or contractors;
- information is relevant to the management or support duties of the partner authority or housing association.

Each partner will comply in all respects with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

4. Equalities & Diversity

The partnership, through each individual partner authority's own Equalities and Diversity Policy and Procedures, will ensure that it does not discriminate against any person on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, disability, nationality, gender, sexuality, age, class, appearance, religion, responsibility for dependants, unrelated criminal convictions, HIV positive status or diagnosis of AIDS, or any other matter which causes any person to be treated with injustice or inequality.

5. Allocation Criteria

Any applicant who has been accepted onto the housing register of one of the partner authorities will also be eligible to bid for properties identified for cross-boundary mobility moves that are suitable for their household size. This includes

applicants who are on the housing register of the partner authority that is advertising the property.

The partner authority identifying a property for inclusion in this scheme will also identify the band in which applicants should be included.

Applicants' needs will be assessed in accordance with this policy and their application will be placed in one of five bands, as follows:

Band 1

- Households who cannot occupy their current accommodation because of a medical problem or disability, and the property cannot be adapted e.g. a wheelchair user who lives in a first floor flat with no lift. An Independent Medical Adviser will normally have advised that the application should be awarded band 1/overriding priority.
- An application where the life of a household member would be in immediate danger if they continued to live in their current accommodation and this has been substantiated. E.g. Victims of domestic violence, racial harassment and applicants accepted under the Witness Protection Scheme.
- Other cases recognised as exceptional and/or emergencies but not fitting into the above.
- Applicants who are under occupying a property that is in high demand and who are a successor or a tenant of a local authority or registered social landlord.
- Applicants who are occupying a property, which is subject to a compulsory purchase order and/or where the Council has a statutory duty to move the applicant or they need to move because their home is to be demolished or redeveloped within 6 months
- Applicants whose needs fit into two or more categories in Band 2 or and who are judged to be top priority.

Applications that come within the above categories will be placed in Band 1, unless they have a high income, are home owners or they do not have a local connection with the partner authority on whose housing register they are included, in which case they will be placed in Band 4.

Band 2

- Households with an urgent need to move for medical or welfare reasons
- Households for whom the Council has accepted an obligation to provide housing under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996
- Households for whom the Council has facilitated an Assured Shorthold Tenancy in order to prevent their homelessness
- Vulnerable applicants who are retiring or whose contract is terminated on health grounds from tied accommodation

- Vulnerable applicants who are receiving a discharge from HM Forces due to redundancy and/or end of service
- Applicants who are care leavers and who have been referred by Surrey County Council Social Services Department. These applicants will be included in band 2 when they are within 12 months of having to leave their care placement
- Households with insufficient bedrooms for their needs
- Households whose accommodation lacks basic facilities (i.e. a kitchen, bathroom or lavatory) and this cannot be provided by the owner at reasonable cost
- Households whose accommodation is assessed as being uninhabitable, by a Private Sector Housing Officer or Environmental Health Officer, and which cannot be repaired at a reasonable cost
- Households with dependent children where the facilities are shared with others who are not members of the applicant's household
- Households who need to move on welfare grounds including to give or receive care or support, to take up a particular employment, education or training opportunity, to recover from the effects of violence (including racial attacks) or threats of violence, or physical, emotional or sexual abuse

Applications that come within the above categories will be placed in Band 2, unless they have a high income, are home owners or they do not have a local connection with the partner authority on whose housing register they are included, in which case they will be placed in Band 4.

Band 3

- Households with a need to move for an identified medical or welfare reason which is not considered an emergency or urgent
- Households with no living room or those sharing a living room with another household
- Households who are renting accommodation with limited security of tenure e.g. Assured Shorthold Tenancies
- Households who are homeless but who are not owed the full housing duty within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996
- Applicants who are sleeping rough and whose circumstances are confirmed by a visiting Officer
- Households containing a dependent child/children who live in accommodation above the ground floor

- Households containing one or more people who have health problems which may be improved by moving to alternative accommodation

Applications that come within the above categories will be placed in Band 3, unless they have a high income, are home owners or they do not have a local connection with the partner authority on whose housing register they are included, in which case they will be placed in Band 4.

Band 4

- Households who have sufficient funds to secure their own accommodation. Sufficient funds will be deemed to include the total of the household's equity, savings and gross income
- Households who have no local connection with any of the partner authorities

Band 5

- Households with no housing need as detailed in bands 1,2 and 3 above
- Applications that include a household member with a history of anti social behaviour that would give grounds to a social landlord providing them with accommodation, for an outright possession order.

The applicant with the earliest application date in the band identified by the advertising partner authority will normally be offered the property.

6. **Local Connection**

Local connection is defined by the individual partner local authority on whose housing register an applicant is included.

7. **Anti-Social Behaviour**

This will apply where any member of the household has behaved in such a way that their behaviour would have entitled a Council to a Possession Order had they been a secure tenant of a Council. Furthermore, that they are still unsuitable to be a tenant of a Council because of that person's behaviour.

Examples of such unacceptable behaviour would include

- Significant rent arrears or breach of tenancy obligations
- Serious nuisance or annoyance to neighbours
- A conviction for using accommodation or allowing it to be used for immoral or illegal purposes such as drug dealing
- Serious damage or neglect of a property

Each application will be considered on its own merits but where the Council on whose register the applicant is included is satisfied that these conditions are met, the applicant will be regarded as ineligible for the housing register.

Any applicant regarded by one of the partner Councils as ineligible to join their housing register because of unacceptable behaviour may request a review of this decision from the Council which made the decision. (See section 13).

8. **Financial Resources**

Less priority for rented units will be given to applicants who:

- Have sufficient income, funds or assets to purchase alternative accommodation suitable for their needs privately or by using one of the East Surrey Shared Ownership / HomeBuy Schemes, or
- have within five years of the date of their application, disposed of an asset which they could reasonably be expected to use to resolve their housing difficulties, or
- are owner-occupiers that have an asset that could be used to obtain accommodation suitable to their needs.

The table below shows the income levels above which households will be considered to have sufficient income, funds or assets to purchase alternative accommodation suitable to their needs. Only applicants with an identified housing need and incomes below these levels will be considered for inclusion in bands 1-3.

Applicants with an identified housing need (as defined by bands 1-3 above) that have a higher income or assets or have disposed of an asset will be placed in band 4.

Applicants with no housing need will be placed in band 5, regardless of their financial resources.

Table 1 Income levels

	Bedroom Need		
	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom
Single income	£30,000	£35,000	£40,000
Joint income	£35,000	£40,000	£45,000

9. **Medical Assessment**

An applicant can apply to have medical priority awarded to their case. They will need to complete a self-assessment medical form. The Council will seek specialist opinion from its Medical Advisor to assess whether or not the application should be given one of the following:

i) Emergency Medical Priority

In very exceptional circumstances an applicant may be assessed as requiring an emergency move on medical grounds. This level of priority may only be awarded

by the Housing Needs Manager following a recommendation from the Medical Adviser. An example of this situation is where –

- An applicant cannot occupy their property because of a medical problem or disability and the property cannot be adapted e.g. wheelchair user who lives in a first floor flat with no lift.

ii) Urgent Medical Priority

This will be awarded where an applicant's health, or that of a member of his/her household, is likely to decline very rapidly and lead to a life-threatening situation if they are not moved from their current accommodation within the next six months. Examples might include:

- An elderly applicant who lives above the ground floor without a lift and who has had a series of heart problems, or
- Where an applicant's continued occupation of their current home is likely to cause a marked deterioration in their health e.g. severe depression or mental illness

iii) Medical Priority

This level of priority will be awarded where the applicant's health is being affected by their current accommodation but their health is unlikely to deteriorate significantly within a short period of time.

iv) No Medical Priority

Where:

- a) rehousing is unlikely to improve the applicant's health; or
- b) the accommodation in itself is not affecting the illness; or
- c) full recovery is likely within one year

Then no medical need will exist and no priority will be given on this basis.

10. **Welfare Assessment**

Priority may be awarded to applicants following a welfare assessment by in the following circumstances:

- a) where a person needs to move to another locality in order to give or receive care, to access specialist medical treatment, to take up particular employment or training. Furthermore that hardship would be caused to themselves or others if they were unable to do so;
- b) where the cumulative needs of an applicant and their household warrant additional priority. During the assessment of the application, applicants who have a range of

needs, that would, when considered independently of each other, qualify them for the same band, will be identified. These cases will be further assessed to identify those applicants whose needs, when considered cumulatively, are considered to be sufficient to warrant them being placed in a higher band;

- c) where an applicant has a particular special need that causes them to be vulnerable, other than on medical grounds. Examples of such applicants, including those with a learning disability, a care-leaver aged 18-21 etc. Priority will normally be awarded following assessment of an applicant's case at a Multi-Agency Special Needs Panel or similar meeting
- d) other special circumstances as determined by the Housing Needs Manager.

One of the following awards on welfare grounds may be given by the Housing Needs Manager:

1) Urgent Welfare Priority

This will be awarded where an applicant has an urgent need to move on welfare grounds or needs to move urgently to a particular locality to avoid hardship to themselves or others and written support for this has been received from an appropriate agency.

2) Welfare Priority

This will be awarded where an applicant has a less urgent need to move on welfare grounds or needs to move to a particular locality to avoid hardship to themselves or others.

11. Bedroom requirements

The number of bedrooms for which an applicant will be listed within the various bands will be assessed by looking at the size and structure of the household. The size of property for which a typical household will normally be eligible is shown below -

Household composition	Bedrooms
Single applicant	Bedsit/1
Couple	1
Household with 1 child	2
Household with 2 children, same sex under 16	2
Household with 2 children, opposite sex under 7	2 or 3
Household with 2 children, opposite sex eldest over 7	3
Household with 2 children, same sex eldest over 16	2 or 3
Household with 3 children (depending on ages)	3 or 4
Household with 4 children (depending on ages)	3 or 4
Household with more than 4 children	3 or 4 or 5

Because of the lack of large properties available to all partner authorities, households who are eligible for 4 and 5 bedrooms may also be nominated to large 3 bedroom properties that have 2 living rooms. The second living room would be converted for use as a fourth bedroom for these households.

Households, with no more than three children, who are eligible for 4 bedrooms may also be nominated to 3 bedroom properties provided that there are 2 double bedrooms within the property.

3 bedroom properties with 1 living room, 1 double bedroom and 2 single bedrooms will be available for households requiring 3 bedrooms.

Any person wishing to be included as part of an applicant's household must satisfy the partner Council that they are a permanent member of that household, and show that it is reasonable to expect them to reside with the applicant.

Priority for houses will usually be given to households with dependent children under 16 years of age and households who have been awarded priority for this type of property on medical grounds.

Children will not normally be expected to share a bedroom where they are of opposite sex and one of them is over 7 years of age, or where they are of the same sex and there is an age difference of at least 10 years.

In exceptional circumstances, the Councils will consider allocating properties of alternative sizes to applicants. Such decisions will only be authorised by a Housing Needs Manager following advice from the Council's Medical Adviser or support from other statutory agencies.

Other Considerations

- The partner authority that has advertised the property will also consider which households "best fit" the property by comparing the size of the property with the number of people on the application
- If the property has features, which are best suited to a particular applicant, for example it is ground floor or has disabled adaptations, priority will be given to those applicants requiring those features
- The provisions of any local lettings policy that is in place for the property advertised.

12. Lettings Targets

Lettings will be monitored to ensure there is a fair distribution between transferring tenants and housing need applicants. Targets may be introduced in the future.

13. Properties to be Included in the Scheme

Each partner authority agrees to offer 10% of its available properties in each year to applicants on any of the partner authorities' housing registers.

General Principles

- Both Council and RSL properties will be included in the 10%
- Partner authorities are encouraged, but not obliged, to include properties adapted for the disabled. These may be advertised when the vacancy first occurs, or later where it has not been possible to identify a suitable applicant from the partner's own housing register.
- Any other exclusion agreed by the partnership.

Number of each Property Type to be Included

The exact number and type of each property to be included will be agreed annually by the partners and will be based on the stock profile and vacancy rate for each property type for the previous 3 years. In future years the proportion of properties may take into account the rate of population growth of the different local authority areas.

These figures will be the minimum number of properties to be identified for cross-boundary mobility moves. Each partner may choose if they wish to include additional properties e.g. hard to let sheltered bed-sit flats.

It is up to each partner to select the properties that are to be identified for cross-boundary mobility moves. However, low demand or less popular properties would not be expected to be overrepresented.

Timing of Properties to be Included

In order to ensure as even a distribution as possible of properties available for cross-boundary mobility moves over the course of each year, a target has been set that each partner will aim to provide 25% of such properties each quarter.

Monitoring & Evaluation

The outcome of each cross-boundary mobility move will be monitored by the partnership on a quarterly basis and corrective action proposed, if required, where an imbalance exists between properties advertised by each partner and cross-boundary mobility moves achieved.

14. Eligibility for Properties According to Size

Each authority will allocate properties in accordance with the East Surrey allocation matrices set out in this allocation policy.

15. Lettings Process

Advertising through East Surrey Home Choice

- Each partner authority will identify properties to be advertised as available for cross-boundary mobility moves in accordance with Section 10 above.

- The partner authority or housing association landlord will prepare an advertisement for these properties to be included in the next available weekly cycle. Each cycle will commence on midnight Thursday and close on midnight Wednesday the following week.
- The advertisement will contain a photograph of either the particular property in question, if considered appropriate, or a photograph of a similar property type, or if no photograph is available the landlord's logo; a description of the property; other details including the weekly rent and any other charges and eligibility criteria as required by the software. It is the property landlord's responsibility to ensure that a photograph is provided if at all possible and that the information is accurate and complete.
- The partner authority or housing association landlord will set the requirements that the successful applicant must fulfil, for example with regard to age criteria or the need for particular features of the property, such as disabled adaptations.
- When advertising a property the partner authority must ensure that the minimum and maximum bedroom size fields are set so that applicants on all the partner authority housing registers that would meet the required eligibility criteria for that property size are able to bid for it.

Bidding for Properties

- Applicants may make a combined total of 3 bids in any one advertising cycle for properties advertised by the partner authority on whose housing register they are included and properties that are advertised for cross-boundary mobility moves.
- Any applicant who has been accepted onto the housing register of one of the partner authorities is eligible to bid for properties identified for cross-boundary mobility moves that are suitable for their household size, provided that they have not already accepted the offer of any other property.
- Applicants will be able to bid through the following mechanisms: -
 - Online via the website
 - Automated telephony system
- Bids must be made before the deadline shown in the advertisement otherwise the bid will not count.
- It is recognised that there will be applicants who have support needs and may need assistance with accessing or using the bidding system. Each partner authority will have in place their own mechanisms for providing the level of support required by the individual applicants.

Selection Process

- After the close of bidding the partner local authority that has advertised the property will review the shortlist and decide which applicant is eligible to be offered the property in accordance with this policy. The shortlist will contain the names of eligible applicants in order of band priority and application priority date.
- If the partner authority that has advertised the property does not have sufficient information on which to base a decision they may ask the partner

authority on whose housing register the applicant is registered to provide additional information either by telephone or through the completion of a pro forma. This should be completed electronically and sent back by secure e-mail/fax within 1 working day.

- It is the responsibility of the partner authority advertising the property to carry out their own verification checks in accordance with their own policy. The authority in which the applicant is resident will carry out a home visit, information will be recorded on an East Surrey Home Visit form. It will be sent to the landlord advertising the property back by secure e-mail/fax within 1 working day.
- If an applicant does not meet the verification criteria of the partner authority advertising the property they will be considered to be ineligible to be nominated to the landlord advertising the property. The partner authority will overlook the applicant and move onto the next applicant on the shortlist. In doing so they will be responsible for advising, at the very least, the highest placed applicant that they are not eligible for the property and the reason for this.

Offers

- Having identified the applicant who is eligible to be nominated, the partner authority will nominate the applicant to the landlord advertising the property.
- The landlord advertising the property will make a decision about offering the property to the applicant in accordance with their own policies and procedures. Nomination by one of the four East Surrey Councils to a landlord does not guarantee that individual applicants will be offered properties by that landlord. The final decision rests with the landlord advertising the property.
- After a property viewing, the applicant will be required to confirm whether or not they wish to accept the property. The timescale for this will be based on the normal timescale used by the partner authority or landlord advertising the property.
- If the applicant accepts the property they will be invited to sign for the tenancy. If the applicant refuses the property the next eligible person is selected.
- If an applicant who accepts a property is on the housing register of another partner authority the partner authority that advertised the property will inform the applicant's current partner authority and housing association landlord, if they are a tenant of a housing association, of the tenancy start date within 1 working day of its being agreed.
- At the end of each month each partner authority will compile a list of all applicants housed under the common allocation policy during the last month and forward this by secure e-mail/fax to the other partner authorities. This is to ensure that these applicants are shown as housed on all partner authorities' housing registers.
- Once a tenancy start date has been agreed the partner authority that advertised the property may request the applicant's file from the partner authority on whose housing register they are included. The file will be provided within 10 working days of this request.

16. Appeals Process

An applicant has a right to request a review of the following decisions:

- That they are ineligible for an offer. This request will be made to the partner authority that has advertised the property. An officer senior to the officer making the original decision and who was not involved in making the decision will carry out any such reviews.
- That they were not offered the property having successfully bid for it. This request will be made to either the partner authority or the landlord of the property advertised depending on who is responsible for making the decision not to offer the property.

Any request for review relating to the individual partner authorities' allocation schemes will be dealt in accordance with their own policy.

The procedure for carrying out a review will be in accordance with each individual partner authority or landlords' own procedures and timescales, providing they meet the requirements of the relevant legislation or code of guidance.

17. Review of East Surrey Allocations Policy

The East Surrey Authorities will monitor this policy. These authorities may undertake minor reviews of this policy as appropriate.

If you would like a copy of this document in large print, on tape or in Braille, please telephone the Contact Centre on 01372 732000.

If you require a translation in your language, please contact:

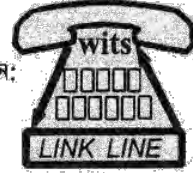
ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੀ ਜ਼ਬਾਨ 'ਚ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ:

જો તમને પોતાની ભાષામાં ભાષાંતર જોઈએ છે, તો મહેરબાની કરીને સંપર્ક સાધો:

Se necessitar de uma tradução, contacte por favor:

যদি আপনার নিজের ভাষায় অনুবাদ চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন:

اگر آپ کو ترجمہ اپنی زبان میں چاہئے تو براہ کرم ہمارے ساتھ رابطہ کریں۔



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