

Summary of proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Consultation

The main proposed amendments to the policy are as follows:

- (a) To maintain an 'open' housing register but to apply qualifying criteria, meaning those who qualify will be considered for an allocation of housing before those who are classed as 'non-qualifying'
- (b) To implement local criteria meaning that only applicants with a defined local connection to West Berkshire, who are in housing need and who are unable to afford to secure their own accommodation in the private sector (whether owned, part-owned or rented) are classed as 'qualifying' applicants. All other applicants will be 'deferred' and will not be considered for an allocation of housing before those who are classed as 'qualifying'
- (c) To defer households, who would otherwise have qualified, if:
 - ~ They owe money from the Threshold Loan Scheme or have failed to keep to rent arrears repayment plan schedules
 - ~ They are people who have been excluded for bad behaviour
 - ~ They are people who have supplied false or misleading information on their application for housing
 - ~ They have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances
 - ~ They have refused three reasonable offers of accommodation
 - ~ They are violent or abusive towards staff.
- (d) To apply the ability to exempt households from the qualifying criteria in exceptional circumstances
- (e) To apply additional assessments to applicants that are subject to Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), such that they will only receive an offer of accommodation after an appropriate risk assessment, which will take account of all factors, not just the legal conditions they may be subject to
- (f) To identify applicants either as 'Homeseekers' or as 'Transfer' applicants and to allow the ability for a property to be advertised for either or both groups
- (g) To allow additional preference to be given to members of the Armed Services in accordance with recently published regulations
- (h) To recognise under-occupation of social tenancies within the housing needs assessment and to increase the points awarded to facilitate move-on to smaller sized accommodation
- (i) To amend the housing need assessment for Security of Tenure to make it clearer and easier to understand
- (j) To introduce an age restriction on the children, and amend the definitions, for the housing need assessment for 'families with accommodation above or below ground-floor level' and 'families without gardens'
- (k) To amend the housing need award for medical assessments from a scale of points to a single award of points, assessable by the Housing Service. The definition of medical needs has also been amended to make it clearer
- (l) To amend the housing need award for disrepair from a scale of points to a single award of points, assessable by the Housing Service, retaining the ability to involve

Environmental Health in the most serious cases

- (m) To allow conditions and time-limits to be attached to awards of social needs points
- (n) To provide clearer guidance on who can, and cannot, be included on a Common Housing Register application
- (o) To introduce the ability for the Housing Service to immediately place bids on properties, rather than allowing a three-month time period during which they can exercise choice, for applicants to whom a full homelessness duty has been accepted
- (p) To introduce a clear Right to Review for certain decisions made under the Housing Allocations Policy
- (q) To have a clear complaints process for issues that are not covered by the Right to Review.