

Vale of Glamorgan County Council Housing Allocation Policy

This is the Common Allocation Policy operated by Vale of Glamorgan County Council and the Registered Housing Associations that own housing stock in the County Borough

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Section 1 Introduction and Background

Legal Context

This policy sets out who is and who is not eligible for social housing in Vale of Glamorgan and how the Council will make this assessment. It covers how applicants can apply for and access social housing; the priority they will be given and the order in which any offer of social housing will be made.

This policy has been developed in accordance with Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996; the Code of Guidance for Local Authorities: Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness (Welsh Government, 2015 and the Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations Registered in Wales (Welsh Government, 2011).

The Policy meets all data protection requirements and will be carefully monitored. Vale of Glamorgan Council is committed to ensuring that its policy and procedures in the letting of property are non-discriminatory and that all customers are able to access the service especially taking account of any vulnerability or other specific needs, and also the needs of different groups protected by the Equality Act 2010.

The Allocation Scheme is called the 'Vale of Glamorgan Homes4U Scheme' and is a choice based letting scheme where applicants are able to bid for advertised vacant properties.

The following are members of the 'Homes4U' partnership:

1. Vale of Glamorgan County Council
2. Newydd Housing Association
3. Wales & West Housing Association
4. Hafod Housing Association
5. United Welsh Housing Association

Each of these Housing Associations have voluntarily signed up to this common policy to ensure that all applicants applying for social housing in the County Borough are provided with a single route of access and assessed using a single policy.

Participating Housing Associations have agreed to advertise all their vacant properties through the Homes4U scheme and in accordance with this policy. The policy covers the allocation of the Council's vacant housing stock and the nomination of any applicant under the scheme to be an Assured or an Assured Short hold tenant of housing accommodation held by a participating Housing Association.

In developing this policy the Council has followed and fully considered the following housing legislation and guidance:

The allocation scheme has been designed to ensure that reasonable preference is given to all of the following categories of people, as set out in s.167(2ZA) of the Housing Act 1996. These are:

(i) People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014;

(ii) People who are owed a duty by the local authority under section 66, 73 or 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014;

(iii) People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;

(iv) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds including grounds relating to disability.

(v) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the Council, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).

The Council has also recognised 2 local priority preference groups , these are;

(vi) Members of the armed forces and their families, who are serving in the regular forces who will be discharged within 3 months, or have served in the 5 years preceding their application for an allocation of housing accommodation and have no access to their own housing. Including widows/ widowers of personnel who have been killed in service. Also to be included are serving Armed Forces Reservists and their families who have experienced active service in the past 5 years preceding their application Including widows/ widowers of personnel who have been killed in service and have no access to their own housing

(vii) Foster carers, those approved to adopt, or those being assessed for approval to foster or adopt, who need to move to a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child or a child who was previously looked after by a local authority. It would also include special guardians, holders of a residence order and family and friends carers who are not foster carers but who have taken on the care of a child because the parents are unable to provide care

The detailed criteria we will use to assess whether an applicant should be awarded one of these 5 reasonable preference and 2 local preference categories is set out in appendix 1.

For people unlikely to be offered accommodation through the scheme there will be advice about alternative housing options. There will be information on the Homes4U website and available in written material covering options such as; mutual exchanges, the private rented sector, low cost home ownership and the availability of shared ownership properties.

The Council acknowledges that some customers applying to the scheme may not be eligible under the qualification rules due to unacceptable behaviour, such as anti-social behaviour, or significant rent arrears. However the Policy

aims to be open and as transparent as possible and wherever possible the Council will look to register people, but once registered applicants will not be considered for an offer of social housing until they have resolved the issues of concern to the satisfaction of the Council. How people are expected to resolve the concerns are set out in the relevant sections of this policy for unacceptable behaviour and rent arrears that have not been addressed.

Although the Council has nomination rights to a percentage of vacant properties held by the Registered Housing Association Providers each association has agreed to join the '*Homes4U Partnership*' and allocate accommodation through one housing register and to an agreed set of rules.

As part of the scheme the Council and Housing Association Partners will agree an *Exclusions Policy* so that as far as possible there is also agreed criteria and a process for allocating accommodation when an applicant's circumstances require further consideration regarding whether they may be excluded from being considered for an offer of social housing until they have addressed any concerns to the satisfaction of the Council and, or, a Housing Association Partner.

Publicising the policy

We will provide a copy of the policy free of charge to any individual who requests one as well as making it available on line. Advice on the working of this policy is available through the housing options and advice team. The Policy will be available in Welsh and English.

The Council will formally publish this Allocation Policy through its website. The published policy available through the website will include 1) The agreed Exclusion Policy and 2) Any individual rules or criteria that may be applied by an individual housing association Homes4U partner that are outside of the rules set by this Common Policy or set out in the Exclusions Policy.

Members of the Council, staff and their relatives

Elected Councillors cannot be involved in assessing housing applications or the allocation of housing. However this does not prevent them from seeking or providing information on behalf of their constituents.

The prime role, as outlined in statutory guidance, is developing and approving future policy and holding officers of the authority to account for their actions.

In order to ensure that the Council is treating all applicants fairly, any application for housing from Councillors or employees of the Council or a partner Housing Association must be disclosed. Canvassing is not allowed. These applications will be assessed in the normal way, but any allocation of housing must be approved by the Senior Officer in the Vale of Glamorgan Council with responsibility for administering the scheme.

Changing the policy

The policy cannot be amended until a copy of the proposed amendments has been sent to every housing association in the County. They must be given a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposals.

All major changes will be approved by a meeting of the Full Council, all minor changes will be approved by Cabinet, all changes to operational procedures will be approved by the officer with responsibility for Housing Services or their delegated officer. *All major and or minor changes* will be subject to consultation with all Registered Social Housing Providers in the County Borough, regardless of whether a provider is a member of the Homes4U scheme now or in the future.

The relevant decision-making bodies of Registered Social Landlords, namely their Boards, will also need to consider and endorse any major changes that the Council or a member of the Partnership wish to see. For more minor changes this may be delegated to the Chief Executive of a partner housing association depending on the governance rules that operate for that association.

The Council will notify in writing, and within a reasonable period, any major changes in policy to those it may affect. Any major changes will require a full and detailed consultation process for those potentially affected by the changes. The Council will fully consider the Housing Act 1996 Part 6 and the relevant sections of the Code of Guidance 2015 relating to amending an Allocations Policy when deciding the appropriate level and method of consultation for any changes.

Information sharing, confidentiality and data protection

Information received in relation to a customer's application will be treated in confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Confidential Information held about customers will not be disclosed to third parties apart from:

- Where the individual has consented to the disclosure
- Where the Council is required by law to make such a disclosure.
- Where disclosure is made in accordance with a recognised Information Sharing Protocol or for reasons of public protection.

Data Protection and information sharing

The Council will ensure that all information provided to it by applicants, and by third parties in relation to an application, is treated in strictest confidence. In doing so, the Council will ensure that it complies fully with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, in relation to the way it stores and processes the information it holds on applicants, and with s.166(4) of the Housing Act 1996. This undertaking is also extended to all participating landlords that are signed up to this policy.

The Council will seek the express consent of applicants joining the HOMES4U scheme to share personal information about the applicant, and any member of the household.

Information may be shared about the individual and their history irrespective of whether their consent has been obtained in exceptional circumstances which will include:

- a) In accordance with the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (Section 115).
- b) For the purposes of the prevention or detection of crime and fraud.
- c) Where there is a serious threat to the applicant or a third party including staff or contractors.
- d) Where information is relevant to the management or support duties of the proposed landlord or any nominated support organisation, to ensure the health and safety of the applicant, a member of his or her household, or a member of staff.

The local authority and Housing Association Partners are signed up to a protocol, which governs the way information is shared for the purpose of maintaining the common housing register. The information sharing protocol has been developed in-line with the framework produced by The Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information. The protocol ensures that information is shared between organisations safely and securely. This and, where applicable, other protocols will be utilised by the Council to verify any aspect of the application to ensure that it fulfills all statutory requirements.

As part of the application process, applicants will be required to consent to their personal information being shared for the purpose of being rehoused. Those applicants unwilling to consent to their information being shared will be considered by the Council not to have completed their application and, consequently, unless there is an exceptional reason for not consenting which is agreed to be exceptional by the Council will not be admitted onto the common housing register

Right to information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 makes it a requirement for every public authority to produce a Publication Scheme which sets out all the information it makes available to the public, and whether copies of that information are available free of charge. The Publication Scheme includes information that the Council is legally obliged to publish. The Scheme is also intended to assist in developing a culture in which openness and transparency are encouraged which supports the requirements of the Local Government Act 2000. This duty does not apply to registered social housing providers.

Equality, accessibility and monitoring

Vale of Glamorgan Council is committed to ensuring that its policy and procedures in the letting of property are non-discriminatory and that all customers are able to access the service especially taking account of any

vulnerability or other specific needs, and also the needs of different groups protected by the Equality Act 2010.

To identify the needs of our customers the application form will have specific questions relating to vulnerability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disabilities and other relevant criteria. This information will be used to monitor the impact of the policy on minority and specific needs groups and to make such amendments, as may be required, to ensure no group is disadvantaged by the policy.

Under the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 of the Public Sector Equality Duty, Local Authorities are required to give due regard to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, in their exercise of a public function.

The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Council will ensure that its policy complies with the current equality legislation and with the relevant statutory codes and guidance. The new policy will be subject to an Equality Audit before it is adopted and this will be regularly reviewed. The Council will ensure that the system is as accessible as possible to any applicant and customers will be given support to apply whenever they require or request it.

The outcomes for customers identified as having specific needs or who meet the definition of a protected characteristic under the Equality Act will be monitored regarding the outcomes for applications to join the register and offers of social housing.

The Council will monitor the policy and outcomes to ensure that it is meeting all legal requirements and that the aims and objectives set for the policy are being met. Monitoring will be used to ensure that:

- Those in the 'reasonable preference' categories are given priority for housing
- The Council is complying with its Equality Act duties
- There is overall customer satisfaction with the scheme

Complaints

Complaints should first be made using the Council's complaints procedure. A copy of the current procedure is available on the Council's website.

A customer still has the right to continue with their complaint to the Wales Housing Ombudsman service.

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales is an independent service run by the Welsh Government to make sure that Local Authorities provide the required standard of service to their customers.

The Ombudsman can investigate complaints about how the Council has done something but they cannot question what has been done simply because someone does not agree with it.

The Ombudsman will normally deal with a complaint if a customer feels they have been treated unfairly as a result of maladministration.

For example, if the Council has:

- Delayed taking action without good reason
- Taken into account facts which are not relevant or ignored facts which are relevant
- Not followed their own rules or complied with the law
- Not taken action that they had promised to
- Given a customer the wrong information
- Not reached a decision in the correct way

The Ombudsman will not normally investigate:

- ✓ Until after the Council has had the opportunity to review its decision (normally by going through the complaints process)
- ✓ Matters which have been, are, or could be dealt with by the courts or the internal review procedure
- ✓ Matters which the customer was aware of more than twelve months before making the complaint
- ✓ The aim of the Ombudsman is to have the Council put right any wrongs which may have been done to the complainant and to ensure that things are done right in the future.

All complaints to the Ombudsman must be in writing. Applicants can request assistance from their local Councilor or get another advocate to write on their behalf. The contact details for the Local Government Ombudsman are:

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae 60

Pencoed CF35 5LJ

Tel: 0300 790 0203 Fax: (01656) 641199

Email: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Section 2 Who can apply to the Housing Register and the criteria for assessing qualification

Anyone over the age of 16 can apply to join the register. However if applicant is under 18 years of age their ability to manage a tenancy will need to be assessed. This is to make sure that they can cope with being a tenant at a young age and that they do not lose any tenancy offered through a lack of support. This may include a referral to Social Services or other support services to ensure the appropriate support is in place. If a person is 16 and if they are given a tenancy, this will be held in trust until they reach 18. This means that another suitable person (such as a parent, legal guardian, social worker or relative) will be responsible for the property.

Everyone can apply to join the register but there are some groups of people who by law cannot join the register regardless of their housing need or circumstances. These are people who:

- Come under various immigration rules and cannot claim housing help;
- Do not live permanently in the Common Travel Area (UK, Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland) for tax purposes;
- Who do not have the right to live in the UK;
- Plus other categories of people who the Secretary of State or the Welsh Government has, or may in the future, decide are not eligible for housing.

The Council acknowledges that some customers applying to the scheme may not be eligible under the qualification rules due to unacceptable behaviour, such as anti-social behaviour, or significant rent arrears. However the Policy aims to be open and as transparent as possible and wherever possible the Council will look to register people, but once registered applicants will not be considered for an offer of social housing until they have resolved the issues of concern to the satisfaction of the Council. How people are expected to resolve the concerns are set out in the relevant sections of this policy for unacceptable behaviour and significant rent arrears.

Appendix 2 of this Policy fully sets out the rules the Council will apply to determine whether a person is eligible to join the register due to 1) The Welsh Government's rules for allocating housing accommodation to persons from abroad or persons subject to immigration control, or 2) The rules adopted concerning eligibility to join the register, or to receive an offer of accommodation, where there is unacceptable behavior

If you are in an introductory tenancy you will be able to register but you will not be considered for an offer of social housing unless there are exception circumstances as you would be considered as adequately housed.

Joint Applicants:

Joint applications will be accepted and will be treated as one application. The housing need of the full household will be considered in assessing housing need. However, in relation to the Housing Associations that are part of this policy the individual association will decide whether to allow a joint tenancy depending on their own rules. The exception to the rule would be for tenants occupying shared accommodation where joint tenancies can be awarded but the tenants considered as individuals.

Households with access to children/shared residency order

As part of the assessment process the Council will record whether the applicant has children that live with them part of the week whether or not this arrangement is set by the court or not. An applicant will be advised as to what size of property the applicant is likely to be able to access depending on the rules applied by each Housing Association for allocating accommodation to households where children do not exclusively live with an applicant. A decision of a Housing Association will depend on a number of factors including:

- The ability of the applicant to afford the rent with or without help from benefits
- The availability and popularity of family housing in any area that an applicant expresses a preference to live in.

Section 3: How to apply to join the Housing Register

How to apply

The HOMES4U Common Housing Register is a single register operated by the HOMES4U Partnership. Social housing is only allocated to people on the housing register.

To apply to be considered for accommodation, applicants are encouraged to complete an online application which can be found on the Vale of Glamorgan website. An advisor can discuss individual housing circumstances and give appropriate advice on all of an applicant's housing options. This will be in total confidence.

If an applicant is unable to complete an on line form, please contact the below:

Administration Team (Housing)
Civic Offices
Holton Rd
Vale of Glamorgan Council
CF63 4RU
Tel; 01446 709840
housingcustomerliaisonteam@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Completing the application form

Applicants are encouraged to complete an application themselves. However if support is required please see above for contact details for assistance.

Assessing Applications

In order to assess an applicant's place on the Housing Register the HOMES4U scheme uses a needs based Banding system scheme, summarised below and set out in detail in Appendix 1 of this policy. The Bands are awarded to reflect housing need, whereby the needs reflected in the highest Band indicates the greatest need for housing.

The submitted application will be used to assess an individual's housing need. A person's housing need will be reflected through the application of a priority 'Banding' system.

The housing team responsible for assessing new applications will assess whether the person qualifies for the Housing Register and, if they do, will use the policy to assess the person's housing needs and will award any priority to that persons' application if they meet the criteria set out.

When completing the on-line application applicants will be required to make a declaration to:

- Confirm that the information given is correct and that they will notify the Council of any change in their circumstances.
- Give consent to allow enquiries to be made concerning their eligibility for housing and level of priority.
- Give consent to allow information to be provided to another partner organisation in the scheme.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the Council with all the information and to provide any supporting information or documents as requested. Incomplete applications will not be made active until such time as the Council is satisfied that it has in its possession all of the information it requires to complete its assessment. All incomplete applications will be cancelled after a period of 28 days of inactivity from the applicant from the date information has been requested and not been provided. This cancellation does not prevent the applicant making a subsequent application at a later date, although all applicants should note that in such cases the effective date of registration would not be backdated to the earlier application date.

The Council will contact any social housing landlord where the applicants have left that address within the last 3 years. The Council will also contact the private sector landlord where that is their last settled address. Where a landlord does not reply a reminder will be sent and if still not forthcoming any other information or records available will be checked to try to determine that there have been no concerns over the way an applicant conducted their tenancy. An applicant should not be disadvantaged if despite every effort it is not possible to obtain a reference from their current or previous landlord and the case may, if required, be referred to the Letting Assessment and Exclusions Lettings Panel for consideration.

Checks into any court cases or unspent criminal convictions

In the interests of assessing an applicant's eligibility to join the register all applicants and members of their prospective household will be requested but not required to disclose any pending court cases or unspent criminal convictions.

The Council may use any information disclosed, or any other information obtained during the assessment or following registration, to ascertain whether the applicant should be disqualified from joining or remaining on the register due to serious unacceptable behavior and/or because depending on the facts they may pose a serious risk to a community where they might be housed. Where a criminal conviction is spent the Council will not take into account that an applicant had received a criminal conviction is assessing that person's eligibility to join the register. The assessment will reflect whether there is evidence of any current serious unacceptable behavior regardless of whether a person has been convicted in the past for that behavior.

If the Council decide on the information obtained during the assessment process that there is a real pressing need for a police check an approach may be made to the Disclosure Scotland agency for information but only to establish whether the person has been involved in a serious crime(s) that may come under the unacceptable behaviour non-qualification criteria.

Information gained will not automatically exclude an applicant from the register. It may also be used to make informed decisions about any nomination for vacant property.

All assessments will be carried out in accordance with the data protection and information sharing policies and legal requirements.

Notification of Registration

When an application has been fully assessed the person who applied will be notified in writing and this notification will include the following information:

- Whether they qualify for the register and if not why not
- If they do qualify they will be informed in the notification of their registration date and their registration reference number and
- The Band they have been placed into according to their housing need, and the type of property for which they may bid for

The requirement to inform the Council of any change of circumstances

It is the responsibility of the applicant to inform the Council of a change of circumstances and, where requested, provide proof of the change. Notification of a change in circumstances should be done without undue delay and within 2 weeks of the change. Examples of a change in circumstances include but are not limited to:

- (i) A change of address or contact details, for either themselves or members of their prospective household;
- (ii) A change in their medical condition or disability (either existing or newly acquired);
- (iii) Additional family members or other people they wish to add to their application (It will be for the Council to decide whether they will allow additional people to join the application);
- (iv) Any family member or any other person on the application who has left the accommodation; and
- (v) Any significant changes in income, savings or assets, which is likely to have a material effect on the application.

It does not follow that every change in circumstance will result in a change in priority. However, a change may mean an applicant qualifies for additional preference or may mean that an applicant no longer qualifies for the priority band. The Council will verify and assess the extent of the change to ascertain whether this will result in a change in priority. Applicants will not actively be considered for housing whilst the change of circumstance is being verified and the Council will endeavor to assess the change as quickly as possible.

Reviewing the Register

Each customer on the Housing Register will have their application reviewed annually. This may be based on an annual review date or a rolling review 12 months from the applicant's date of registration. A letter will be sent to all customers requesting confirmation of their current circumstances and that they wish to remain on the register. If a reply is not received within 28 days of the date sent the application would be cancelled. It is however very important for all applicants to ensure any change in circumstance is communicated to the Homes4U Team as they occur.

Cancelling Applications

An application will be cancelled from the housing register in the following circumstances:

- i. At the customer's request.
- ii. If the customer becomes ineligible for one of the qualification grounds.
- iii. When the customer has been housed.
- iv. On failure to reply to a review letter or requests for further information within a given time period.
- v. Where it is discovered that the customer has given false or misleading information

In circumstances (ii) and (v) the customer will be notified in writing and informed of the reason why their registration has been cancelled and of their right to request a review of that decision.

Giving False Information

Under section 171 of the 1996 Housing Act it is a criminal offence for anyone applying for housing from a housing authority to knowingly give false information or to withhold information relevant to their application. An offence is also committed if a person allows a third party to provide false information on their behalf.

Customers who are found to have withheld or given false information may be removed from the register and will not be able to reapply for a period of 12 months. Decisions to remove the person from the register will be made based on the seriousness of the false information given and an assessment of why the information was withheld.

Deliberate Worsening of Circumstances

Where there is evidence that a customer has deliberately made their housing situation worse in order to gain a higher priority on the register, they will be assessed based on the circumstances before their situation changed.

Examples of this are:

- Customers who have allowed family members or others to move into their property, who previously had suitable accommodation or the financial means to secure their own accommodation, and this has resulted in the property being overcrowded.
- Customers who have moved from previously suitable or more suitable accommodation which it were reasonable for them to continue to occupy, into a less suitable property.
- Homeowners who have transferred their property to another family member within the last 5 years from the date they make their application to the Register.
- Giving up affordable and suitable private rented accommodation which they are able to maintain, to move in with other relatives or friends, creating a situation of overcrowding and/or sharing of bathroom/kitchen and/or a split household;
- Requesting or colluding with a landlord or family member to issue them with a Notice to Quit;

Section 4: The Council's Statement on Choice and the ability for applicant's to express a choice for where they wish to live.

Statement on Choice

The Council wishes as far as possible to give choice to customers who are looking to obtain an offer of social housing. This is why it operates a choice based letting scheme with Housing Association Partners working in the Vale to give applicants the best possible choice over where they may wish to live.

However, giving choice must be set against the need for the Council to resolve some applicant's housing situation urgently, for example, where there is are homeless households to whom there is a statutory duty to provide housing. Therefore in certain circumstances choice may be limited. For any applicant owed a homelessness duty under section 66, 73 or 75 of the Housing Wales Act 2014 the Council may make a direct offer of suitable accommodation at any time in order to resolve a threat of homelessness or homelessness itself. This may restrict the time an applicant is therefore able to bid for accommodation in an area where they would prefer to live. The offer of accommodation could be made in any area of the County Borough.

A decision to make a direct offer of accommodation outside of the choice based letting system could be where:

1. An applicant is not being realistic in the areas they are bidding for accommodation and as a result they may be occupying a temporary accommodation unit that may be needed for another newly presenting homeless applicant.
2. Where for financial or operational reasons the Council needs to house households owed a homeless duty.

The housing pressures faced limit the degree of choice that the Council is able to offer along with the responsibility the Council has to some groups in urgent housing need. For all applicants eligible and registered under the scheme the Council believes that any applicant should be able to express a preference over the area in which they would like to live and the type of property they would ideally like but should be fully aware that the Council's ability to satisfy their preference might be severely limited, and expressing a preference over where an applicant would prefer to live does not mean that the Council will be able to meet that preference or that they Council will not offer suitable accommodation outside of a preferred area in order to meet the needs of any applicant owed any form of duty under Part 2 of the Housing Wales Act 2014, or to offer accommodation to any other applicant not owed such a duty but who has an urgent housing need that must be met and the need to offer suitable housing is more important than the need to respect the applicants preference for the location where they wish to live.

The Council will ask all applicants to state those areas where they believe they cannot live due to fear of violence, harassment or domestic abuse. The Council must be satisfied such factors exist and that it should, on the facts, take into account these concerns.

For all applicant's (see below for how applicants owed any duty under the Housing Wales Act 2014 will be dealt with) who have refused 2 offers of suitable accommodation will be downgraded to the Reduced Preference Band (RPB) for those owed reasonable preference and the Bronze Band for those not owed reasonable preference unless there is an exceptionally urgent and immediate need to be housed.

An applicant will remain in this lower band for a 12 month period. It will then be the applicant's responsibility after this time to contact the Council to request that their Homes4U application is re-assessed. Following the assessment, the applicants banding may be amended to meet a change in circumstances and where appropriate backdated to their initial registration date. Any decision to waive the 12 month reduced preference rule because there is an exceptionally urgent and immediate need to be housed will be made by the service manager responsible for the operation of the allocation policy.

Those households 1) owed a homelessness duty under section 66, or, s73, or s75 of the Housing Wales Act 2014 or applicants who are considered homeless within the meaning of Part 2 of the Housing Wales Act 2014, will lose their priority status banding if the duty owed to them is ended due to the refusal of one suitable offer of accommodation. Thereafter, unless they have another reason to awarded one of the Gold, or Silver priority bands they will be placed in the Bronze Band. The one offer of suitable accommodation made will also bring to an end any statutory homeless duty owed under s66, s73, or s75 and they will be warned in writing of this consequence at the point a property is formally offered to them

Section 5: How an applicant's housing needs and circumstances are assessed.

A banding system will be used to decide when to make an offer of accommodation and to whom.

The Banding system

There are three bands Gold, Silver and Bronze. The Gold and Silver Bands are split between Gold Plus and Gold and Silver Plus and Silver. Properties will be normally be allocated in the following order:

- 1. The Gold band - High Priority:** These are applicants that are owed a statutory award of reasonable preference but whom the Council believes should also be awarded additional preference based on their urgent housing needs.
- 2. The Silver band – Medium Priority:** These are applicants that are owed a statutory award of reasonable preference under the policy.
- 3. The Bronze band – Low Priority:** These are applicants who have not been assessed as being in the additional preference group or the reasonable preference group. N.B. Given the demand for social housing in some areas of the County Borough such applicants are likely to only be successful bidding for less popular areas or certain property types that may become available in the County Borough.

Below is a summary table of what circumstances will be awarded one of the 3 bands. It is only a summary table and the full definition for the criteria used to award the priority band is set out in appendix 1.

Section 6: Banding Summary Table

Note the descriptions used below are a summary of the criteria for qualification under each Band. This is not a substitute for the full detailed policy on how an applicant's housing needs will be assessed in order to decide what Banding will be awarded. This is contained in appendix 1 of the Policy.

<p>GOLD PLUS BAND: Urgent Need Band with additional preference being granted to households who are owed reasonable preference and whose housing needs must be met urgently.</p> <p><i>Note: In cases of immediate urgency this will be determined by the Head of Housing for the Council's HOMES4U Policy in conjunction with a senior nominated representative from the HOMES4U partnership.</i></p> <p><i>In all other cases where a decision is not immediately required a decision may be referred to the HOMES4U Letting Assessment and Exclusion Panel, in some circumstances housing issues that warrant this banding housing issues could be alleviated by a direct offer of accommodation.</i></p>	<p>Need Category</p>
<p>Emergency Medical, or disability.</p> <p>Emergency Medical or Disability Circumstances</p> <p><i>Note: An applicant who has an extremely urgent and immediate need to move for medical reasons or due to a disability, which is being exacerbated by their current housing situation will be awarded additional preference depending on the severity of the circumstances.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This includes when the applicant or a member of the applicant's household has a life threatening condition, which is seriously affected by their current housing, or their home cannot be accessed due to ill health or disability.
<p>Armed Forces Leavers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the armed forces and their families, who are serving in the regular forces who will be discharged within 3 months, or have served in the 5 years preceding their application for an allocation of housing accommodation and have no access to their

	<p>own housing. Including widows/ widowers of personnel who have been killed in service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also to be included are serving Armed Forces Reservists and their families who have experienced active service in the past 5 years preceding their application Including widows/ widowers of personnel who have been killed in service and have no access to their own housing
<p>Housing Conditions – Fitness or overcrowding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private sector tenants living in conditions which give rise to an imminent risk of serious harm and where the Local Authority has served a Prohibition Order under Part 1 of the 2004 Housing Act and the Council is satisfied that the problem cannot be resolved by the landlord within 6 months and as a result, continuing to occupy the accommodation will pose, in the Council's view, a serious risk to the applicant's health. This includes a property that has severe damp, major structural defects including subsidence, flooding, collapse of roof, or have living conditions which are a statutory nuisance, and there is no prospect of the problems being remedied within a 6 month time period. • Demolition or Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). Where the applicant's property is subject to demolition or subject to a Compulsory Purchase Order for redevelopment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptional circumstances due to significant problems associated with the tenant's occupation of a dwelling in the social or private rented sector and there is high risk to the tenant or their family's safety if they remain in the dwelling/area.
Release adapted property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where a tenant does not require a specially adapted property for disabled use, and there is a demand for its use from a disabled applicant in high housing need. • Where a tenant's home is suitable for adaptation and where the Council decides it would benefit another household requiring a property that can be adapted and that property is considered to be a suitable property to meet a specific applicant's needs.
Overcrowding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive Overcrowding by more than 2 bedrooms measured by the bedroom standard and defined by the HOMES4U Matrix.
Those living in Supported Housing who have been assessed as ready to move on to independent living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants will be awarded this category for certain listed projects in accordance with protocols agreed between the Council and the voluntary sector body.

Leaving care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants are awarded this category in accordance with protocols between Vale of Glamorgan Council's Housing and Children Services Departments. Applicants must be a former "Relevant Child" as defined by the Children Leaving Care Act 2002.
Foster Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This would include foster carers, those approved to adopt, or those being assessed for approval to foster or adopt, who need to move to a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child or a child who was previously looked after by a local authority. It would also include special guardians, holders of a residence order and family and friends carers who are not foster carers but who have taken on the care of a child because the parents are unable to provide care"
GOLD BAND: Assessed as being owed reasonable preference because of their high level of housing need	All of the following are owed a statutory reasonable preference (RP).
Applicant's owed specifically named duties under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Wales Act 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All households owed a full homeless duty under section 75 of the legislation Any households owed a Section 73 duty and additionally also owed a section 68 temporary accommodation duty as they are or may be in priority need. They will be awarded Gold Band for the period of time they are owed that duty and remain in temporary accommodation. <p><i>Note: Any household owed a</i></p>

	<p><i>duty to prevent their homelessness (Section 66 duty) will be awarded Silver Plus Band whilst the duty is owed and this will fall to Bronze Band once the duty has ended.</i></p>
Overcrowding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants who are lacking 2 bedrooms, measured by the bedroom standard and defined by the HOMES4U Matrix.
Applicants living in unsatisfactory Housing that lack basic facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants without access at all to any of the following facilities. No access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A bath or shower ○ A toilet ○ Cooking facilities ○ Running hot water supplies ○ Electric/gas needed for essential activities <p>Applicants who only have access to shared facilities in shared accommodation will not qualify under these criteria.</p> • Applicant/s who are currently in private rented accommodation which is subject to a Prohibition Order, and recovery of the premises is required in order to comply with the Order as defined by Section 33 of the Housing Act 2004
Under-Occupying tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A social housing tenant in the Vale of Glamorgan who is a member of the Homes4U partnership who is under-occupying family accommodation by one or more bedrooms.
Medical grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants who have an urgent need to move on medical grounds because their current home is having a severe adverse effect on their health or a member of

	<p>the household, but who do not qualify for GOLD PLUS urgent medical priority (see the detail for the policy award in appendix 1 for details of how GOLD PLUS and GOLD Medical priority will be assessed).</p>
SILVER PLUS BAND: Reasonable Preference and a recognisable need	
<p>Applicant's owed specifically named duties under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Wales Act 2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are homeless and have been assessed as not being owed a s75 duty because they are not found to be in priority need. • Any households owed a section 73 duty to relieve that person's homelessness but who are not owed a section 68 temporary accommodation duty as the Council is satisfied they do not pass the 'may be in priority need' legal test. • People where it has been verified by the authority that they are rough sleeping in Vale of Glamorgan. • Applicants owed a S66 threatened with homelessness duty.
<p>Hardship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases of financial hardship, following assessment, an applicant living in the private rented sector may be awarded reasonable preference. This is defined in the policy as working families whose income levels and hours worked qualify for Working Families Tax Credits and who are struggling to meet their housing costs in the private rented sector. • Employment Hardship - Priority will only be given in exceptional circumstances and applicants will need to show that they need to move

	<p>to take up or continue an employment opportunity not available elsewhere. They will only be considered where they do not live within a reasonable commuting distance and will be required to provide confirmation of employment details from the employer.</p>
<p>SILVER BAND: This band includes applicants owed Reasonable Preference but who have been awarded adjusted preference (reduced preference) under the Policy due to rent arrears, poor behaviour, no local connection, savings, equity or earnings, or where 2 offers have been refused.</p>	
<p>Applicants owed a S66, or S73, or S75 duty by another Council not Vale of Glamorgan Council will be given reduced preference and will sit at the bottom of the Silver Band</p> <p>Applicants who would have been owed reasonable preference but whose priority has been reduced according to the policy detailed in the main policy document for rent arrears, intentional homelessness, poor behaviour, no local connection, savings, equity or earning or for refusing 2 offers of accommodation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants will be awarded the reasonable preference Band that their assessed housing needs warrant once they have complied with the criteria for the removal of reduced preference. This is fully set out in the policy.
<p>Overcrowding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant's living in overcrowded conditions and whose housing circumstances have been assessed as being 1 bedroom short of what they need.
<p>Applicants not assessed as being owed reasonable preference but who meet the HOMES4U 'Positive Community Contribution' criteria including:</p> <p>Applicants not assessed as being owed reasonable preference but who meet the recognised Key Worker requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant/s are a part of a recognised Key Worker scheme supported by the Vale of Glamorgan Council, that has been offered a full time job in the Vale of Glamorgan under a recognised key worker scheme) and need accommodation.

<p>Hardship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants who live in a flat above first floor level (without a lift) with at least one child under 5 permanently residing at the property. • Support Hardship - Priority will only be given in exceptional circumstances and customers will need to show: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That they require substantial and ongoing support from relatives or friends or it is essential that they give substantial and on-going support to relatives. This will only be considered where there is a severe mental health, medical or welfare issue and there are reasons why this support cannot be achieved or maintained through reliance on public transport or the customer's own transport. Need to move to silver band • Need to access medical care and/or social services facilities that cannot be met through reliance on public transport, the customer's own transport, or through provision put in place by health or social services.
<p>Applicants owed reduced preference as set out in detail in Appendix 1 of the policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants owed Reasonable Preference but who have been awarded adjusted preference (reduced preference) under the Policy due to rent arrears, poor behaviour, no local connection, savings, equity or earnings, or where 2 offers have been refused
<p>BRONZE BAND: Applicants with no recognisable Housing Need</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants who have made a homelessness application and have been determined by the Council to be homeless but not owed a s75 duty because they have

	<p>been found to be intentionally homeless. Note these cases will sit at the top of the bronze band</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All other Applicants that are tenants of the Council or Registered Social Landlord and live in accommodation that is sufficient for their needs. • Applicant/s who are owner occupiers of a property or live in a private rented home which sufficiently matches their needs. • All other applicants not covered by any other category as outlined above. • Applicants who have failed to address former rent arrears or housing related debts. • Applicants or a member of the household who is considered to be guilty of unacceptable behaviour or have current or former rent arrears. Whether they are able to be considered for an offer of social housing will be depend on the application of the unacceptable behaviour. • An applicant who is not yet considered by the Council to be ready for move on or ready to maintain a tenancy until support is in place or where a support plan to enable an applicant to be tenancy ready has been completed.
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When exceptions will apply to the allocation by band and waiting time within band procedure.

Priority within a Band will be determined by the length of time the application has been placed in that Band and most allocations will be made by band and the time they have waited within that Band. In some circumstances an offer will be made to an applicant outside of the priority band and ‘time registered’

procedure. This is where there is an urgent need for an individual household to be housed or where there is an operational or financial need to house certain categories of applicants.

For example, where an applicant has been given additional preference due to an exceptionally urgent need for housing they may be placed at the front of the priority band and made an offer of housing as soon as possible. A decision that a person's need to be housed is exceptionally urgent would be made by the Letting Assessment and Exclusions Panel or can in urgent cases be made by the Chief Officer responsible for the Council's allocation policy.

In addition there may be other circumstances where there are urgent operational or financial reasons to make a direct offer of housing outside of the band and date order criteria. The qualifying criteria for awarding additional preference are set out in appendix 1. Specifically, examples of the circumstances where there may be urgent operational or financial reasons to allocate outside of the band and date order criteria are:

- People that need to move due to a fire or flood, or severe storm damage to their home.
- People who are at imminent risk of violence and are to be housed through a witness protection programme.
- People who it has been agreed must be housed urgently as part of a for example – a multi-agency protocol such as a MAPPA, MARRAC case or a protocol between the Housing and Social Care Departments of the Council where there is a need agreed between housing and social services to provide a specific property for a vulnerable individual.
- Where an applicant is homeless and in temporary accommodation that would not be suitable for more than a short period of time or where the Council needs to move applicants out of temporary accommodation to manage the budgetary impact on the Council as a whole.
- Where a vacant adapted property or a property designed to disability standards becomes available it may be offered to those customers with a need for this property type regardless of the date they were registered.

The Operation of the Letting Assessment and Exclusions Panel

The assessment of applications will be supported by the operation of a Letting Assessment and Exclusions Panel. This Panel consists of a nominated representative from all partners with the delegated authority to make a decision or recommendation on behalf of their organisation.

The Panel will have a wide remit covering:

- a) When a case warrants immediate housing due to exceptional urgency
- b) Any complex cases where it has not been possible to award medical priority based on the set criteria and process
- c) Where it is claimed that there are welfare circumstances or exceptional circumstances that are not covered in the policy criteria
- d) Where there may be a sensitive case requiring a sensitive let
- e) Where a Housing Association may wish to allocate a larger property than the applicant's household qualify for.

- f) The operation of the Exclusions Policy
- g) To agree and decide how to apply any Local Letting Policy and to review that policy
- h) To monitor performance and letting information

The Panel will consider each case along with any supporting information that has been provided and decide whether urgent action is required based on the severity of the case. Where a positive decision is reached by the Panel, the household will receive one direct offer of accommodation deemed suitable to resolve the urgent need for re-housing. Where a direct offer is refused the applicant will be offered the chance to appeal in writing within 48 hours for the Panel to consider. If unsuccessful or if no appeal is made no further direct offers will be made, no further direct offers will be made.

A record will be kept of the Panel's decisions and the reason for reaching a decision on a particular application. The remit for the Panel is set out in appendix 6.

Section 7: Offering accommodation and the review process

The table below sets out the type and size of accommodation households will normally be offered.

Family Size	Shared Property	Bedsit / Studio	Bungalow	1 Bed Flat	2 Bed Flat or Maisonette	2 Bed House	3 Bed Maisonette	3 Bed House / 3 Bed Bungalow	4 Bed + House
Single Person	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					
Single Person aged 55+	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					
Couple				Yes					
Couple aged 55+			Yes	Yes	Yes				
*Parent / couple with 1 child					Yes	Yes			
*Parent / couple with 2 children					Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
*Parent / couple with 3 children							Yes	Yes	Yes
*Parent / couple with 4+ children							Yes	Yes	Yes

The following rules will apply to the size and type of property offered under the scheme:

- Where child is referred to in the table, this refers to at least 1 dependent child under the age of 18 and/or qualifying for Child Benefit. Applicants with households where there are no dependent children will not be offered houses except in exceptional circumstances which have been agreed with the HOMES4U panel.
- Sheltered housing will normally be available only for applicants over 60. However partner organisations may have individual rules for example some may allocate to a person over 50 if there is a diagnosed medical condition.
- The Council will allocate one and two bedroom ground and upper floor flats to all households (with a few exceptions such as specifically adapted properties).
- Bungalows (except for specifically adapted properties) will be allocated to households with a family member over the age of 55. If there are no eligible households meeting these criteria then other people will be considered below this age taking account of their circumstances.
- Adapted properties will be allocated to the household who has been assessed by the council as would benefit most from the existing adaptations at the property. The council will seek advice from an Occupational Therapist in making this decision.
- A Housing Association may consider allocating a larger property than the applicant's household qualify for, if the applicant requests it and the association are satisfied that the applicant can afford the rent approval to be sought through the Letting Assessment and Exclusions Panel.
- The size of property will be allocated based upon on children's age and sex in line with Housing Benefit eligibility regulations, whether or not an applicant is eligible at the time for Housing Benefit.
- The allocation of Council owned age restricted accommodation will take account of the ages of all occupants registered with the applicant at the time. Properties will not be allocated to applicants where there occupants do not meet the age restriction of the accommodation.

Size and type of property for which applicants are eligible

In order to make the best use of the available housing stock, it is essential to let vacancies to those who need that size and type of property. Examples include houses with two or more bedrooms to be let to families with dependent children, sheltered housing flats for older people and properties that have been built or adapted for a person with a physical or sensory disability.

When deciding the size and type of property for which applicants are eligible, the Bedroom Standard in Appendix 2 will normally be used.

In exceptional circumstances the HOMES4U Manager may exercise discretion in deviating from the Bedroom Standard. Examples are:

- a) For those applicants who are separated or divorced and sometimes care for their children, the HOMES4U Manager will consider how often and for how long the children stay with them. If appropriate, that officer may exercise discretion and award additional bedrooms for the children in accordance with national guidance.
- b) Where applicants require larger accommodation on health grounds. The HOMES4U Manager will consider this on a case by case basis, taking into account the advice of a qualified medical advisor.
- c) Where there is little or no demand for a particular vacancy, and it is therefore difficult to let.
- d) Where no suitable applicants can be identified to make the best use of larger accommodation.
- e) Where the applicant has been approved as a foster carer by Children's Services, and so will need a larger property than normally required by the household.
- f) Where the applicant or a member of the household needs the support of a carer who will need to sleep in the home and cannot reasonably be expected to share a bedroom with another member of the household. See paragraph below for more information about including a carer in a housing application.

Including a Carer in the application

A carer is someone who with or without payment provides help and support to a partner, relative, friend or neighbour, who would not manage without their help. This could be due to age, physical or mental health, addiction, or disability. In all cases the carer must have been identified by the applicant as the person who is primarily responsible for providing them with care, and the need to live with them or near them.

Even if a carer is in receipt of Carer's Allowance this does not necessarily mean that it is necessary for them to reside with the person who is being cared for. An application to include a carer in a housing application will be considered if the carer has been assessed by Social Care and Health as needing to provide overnight support. In these circumstances the applicant must provide supporting evidence from other agencies e.g. Social Care or a Health professional.

Offers of accommodation

This section sets out the procedure that will apply to making the offer of accommodation once an applicant has been selected from a shortlist of successful applicants bidding for that property.

Once selected and prior to an offer being made the Council or the Housing Association landlord for that property will carry out a further verification of the customer's eligibility and priority. In certain situations the offer will not be made or maybe withdrawn if;

- Since joining the scheme an applicant has become ineligible.
- On verification of the applicants' details, the priority band was found to have been incorrectly awarded due to the information received by the applicant or due to mistakes in the assessment of the application itself.
- The applicants' circumstances have changed since the priority band was awarded and the applicant is no longer entitled to the same level of priority.
- The landlord has good housing management reason not to offer a property.

In order to ensure fairness and consistency across the Council and all Housing Association Partners to the Homes4U Policy an '*Exclusions Policy*' will be agreed by the Council and all participating partners and a draft is attached at appendix 4 of the policy. The Exclusions Policy includes the circumstances when an applicant who has bid for a property can be legitimately by-passed for that property.

If a customer does not reply to an offer within 2 working days of receiving an offer then the offer will be deemed to have been refused and the property will be offered to the next customer on the shortlist who qualifies for that offer.

A suitable offer of accommodation means the property:

- Is the right size for the household
- Any potential impact of the property location on education, employment, support and essential services have been fully considered and the Council view is that it is suitable.
- Is free from the threat of violence or domestic abuse
- Is in a chosen area. See note below

Note: There are times and circumstances when this may be varied. For example:

- 1) The Council may make a suitable offer outside an area of choice to ensure that it meets its legal responsibilities for homeless people, or to reduce the financial impact of temporary accommodation on the Council.
- 2) The Council may make a suitable offer outside of an area of choice where an applicant in a priority band has not expressed a preference for an area

where a property is likely to become available and there is an urgent need to house that applicant.

All formal offers will be in writing. Notification in writing may be made by letter, e-mail or in an urgent situation by text.

There may, unfortunately, be exceptional circumstances where an offer is withdrawn following notification. This may be done up to the point when a tenancy agreement is signed. Examples of reasons when a property offer may be withdrawn are:

- The property is not suitable for the households needs
- The property fails to become available
- There is an issue and concern for community safety
- It comes to light that information has been withheld
- It comes to light that the household or member of the household has a property related debt
- The offer has been made in error
- The households circumstances changed
- The property is required for an emergency
- It transpires that the rent would not be affordable

The Review Process

Customers who want to review a decision made in relation to their application to join the register and certain subsequent decisions have a right to ask for a formal review of the decision.

There is a legal right to a review of a decision in the following circumstances:

- a) The customer disagrees with a decision not to place them in a band or disagrees with the band they have been placed in. This includes where an applicant has been awarded adjusted preference meaning a reduced preference award.
- b) The customer considers that a decision has been reached based on incorrect information.
- c) The customer has been treated as ineligible on the basis of their immigration status.
- d) They have been treated as ineligible to join the register due to serious unacceptable behaviour.
- e) Their priority on the register has been given no priority status due to unacceptable behaviour.

The review procedure

1. Customers will be notified in writing of decisions made in respect of the review.
2. Customers must request a review of a decision within 21 days of being notified in writing, unless there are exceptional circumstances that they did not request a review within that timescale. They must give reasons why they wish

to have the decision reviewed including where they believe an incorrect decision has been made on the facts.

3. A senior officer in Vale of Glamorgan Council will carry out the review. That officer will not have been involved in making the original decision.

4. The review will be considered on the basis of the authority's allocation scheme, any legal requirements and all relevant information. This will include information provided by the applicant on any relevant developments since the original decision was made

5. The Council will aim to complete and inform the applicant in writing of the decision within 21 working days, after taking into account any additional information that has been provided by the customer. Alternatively, the customer will be advised of any time extension required to make the decision.

Specially adapted accommodation and the Accessible Housing Register

Some homes have been specially adapted to meet people's needs or have the potential to be adapted to meet people's needs. This includes homes for the disabled and for older people. To ensure we match people to homes, and make the best use of the accommodation, an Accessible Housing Register (AHR) is also operated as part of the main register.

The HOMES4U Accessible Homes Scheme (AHS) has been developed to better coordinate the effective use of the social housing stock that is accessible, or has been adapted to meet the specific needs of disabled and/or chronically sick households.

There are currently many families and individuals who are living in inappropriate accommodation that need to move to suitably adapted properties to attain a reasonable standard of living. There is an overall shortage of social housing within the Vale and this is particularly acute in relation to properties that are suitable for people with physical disabilities. This in turn leads to many disabled people having an unacceptably long wait for a suitable accessible property to become available. In addition, where all properties were advertised via the usual HOMES4U process it was difficult to monitor whether the specific considerations in relation to accessibility for disabled tenants was being acknowledged.

The Homes4U team developed an Accessible Homes Register (AHR) which holds the details and specifications of the individuals, couples and families who are in need of the provision of accessible housing.

Situations when offers of accommodation will be made or impacted by other policies or operational or management requirements

There are a number of situations when offers of accommodation will be made or impacted by other policies or operational or management requirements. These are:

<p>Local Lettings Polices (areas)</p>	<p>In some circumstances, particular areas may have a formally agreed local lettings policy. A local lettings policy would be in place to make sure that homes in that area are given in a way that helps to tackle particular issues. To agree a local lettings policy it should be based on the following test:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear definition of what is to be achieved by the local lettings policy • clear evidence base to back up the need of the local lettings policy • any potential equality impact has been considered • how long the local lettings policy is to be operational • when the local lettings policy is to be reviewed <p>A local lettings policy must be approved by the Executive Board Member for Housing (council) or Board Member (Housing Association) before it can be put into place the policy and then published online. (See appendix 3 for more detail on how any local letting policy will be developed, applied and reviewed).</p>
<p>Sensitive Lettings (individual properties)</p>	<p>An individual property may be a 'sensitive let'. This could be where there is a confirmed history of antisocial behaviour or criminal activity at that property involving the previous tenant or members of their household. A property will only be named a sensitive let with the approval of the Head of Housing (council) or by a Manager of equal seniority (housing association).</p> <p>If a property is a sensitive let, certain households will not be considered for that property. Once the property has been let it will no longer be classed as a sensitive let.</p>

Appendix 1: Assessment criteria for when an applicant's housing needs be awarded the first priority band for additional preference, or the second priority band for reasonable preference?

The allocation scheme has been designed to ensure that reasonable preference is given to all of the following categories of people, as set out in s.167(2ZA) of the Housing Act 1996:

- (i) People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014;
- (ii) People who are owed a duty by the local authority under section 66, 73 or 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014;
- (iii) People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- (iv) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds including grounds relating to disability.
- (v) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the Council, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).

These reasonable preference groups have been reflected in the Allocation Policy through a Banding system. Anyone with an award of reasonable preference plus additional preference to reflect their very urgent housing needs will be placed in the Gold Plus Band. All other applicant's owed a statutory reasonable preference will be awarded either Gold, Silver Plus or Silver Banding depending on the Council's assessment of their relative housing need. The summary table set out in the main body of the Policy records when Gold, Silver Plus or Silver Banding will be awarded.

Below is the detailed criteria that will be used to assess whether an applicant should be awarded one of the 5 statutory reasonable preference categories and what Band will be awarded to reflect this. Note once an applicant is awarded reasonable preference they will receive no more priority if they would qualify for more than one priority category unless their housing circumstances are so urgent that they qualify for an award of additional preference – the Gold Plus Band.

Reasonable Preference Group 1: People who are homeless within the meaning of Part 2 of the Housing Wales Act 2014

Circumstances when Gold Plus Band (additional preference) will be awarded

There are no additional preference criteria for this category

Circumstances when Gold, Silver Plus or Silver Banding to reflect a reasonable preference will be awarded

Customers assessed, as meeting the criteria for this reasonable preference category will be.

- a) People who are homeless and have been assessed as not being owed a s75 duty because they are not to be in priority need.
- b) People where it has been verified by the authority that they are rough sleeping in Vale of Glamorgan.
- c) Applicants who live in accommodation that is a moveable structure, like a caravan, but there is no lawful place they can lawfully place it and live in it.
- d) Applicants who have made a homelessness application and have been determined by any Council to be homeless but not owed a s75 duty because they have been found to be intentionally homeless. Note: those found intentionally homeless may be granted no priority or be made ineligible by virtue of any unacceptable behaviour that led to the intentional homeless decision. This will be decided by applying the unacceptable behaviour criteria set out in the policy.

Reasonable Preference Group 2: People who are homeless and are owed a duty by the local authority under section 66, 73 or 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014

Note: The reasonable preference award will only apply whilst the any of the duties listed are still owed. Once an applicant is no longer owed a duty, (say for example where an applicant who was owed a s73 duty because they are homeless but where that duty has come to an end for any of the rules set out in the legislation including where a period of 56 days have elapsed, no duty will then be owed and the applicant will no longer be entitled to an award of reasonable preference for being owed a s73 duty to relieve homelessness.

Circumstances when Gold Plus Band for additional preference will be awarded

1 – Armed Forces persons or former armed forces persons and bereaved spouses

Members of the Armed Forces and their families who are serving in the regular forces who will be discharged within three months, or have served in the five years preceding their application for an allocation, including widows/ widowers of personnel who have been killed in service who do not have access to their own accommodation.

2 – Armed Forces Reservists

Serving Armed Forces Reservists and their families who have experienced active service in the past five years preceding their application, including widows/ widowers of personnel who have been killed in service who do not have access to their own accommodation.

Circumstances when Gold, Silver Plus or Silver Banding to reflect a reasonable preference will be awarded

Applicants who will be given this preference are:

- a) Applicants owed a S75 duty because they have been assessed as eligible, homeless, in priority need and not intentionally homeless.
- b) Applicants owed a S66 threatened with homelessness duty, or S73 homeless duty but only for as long as that duty is owed to the applicant.
- c) Applicants owed a S66, or S73, or S75 duty by another Council not Vale of Glamorgan Council will be given reduced preference and will sit at the bottom of the priority band 2 and will only be considered for an offer of accommodation in the circumstances where no other applicants in priority bands 1 and 2 with a local connection have expressed a preference for a vacant property. They do, however, remain able to be considered for any property where no one in bands 1 or 2 have bid and will be considered for any such property before applicants in band 3.
- d) Applicants who have been found to be intentionally homeless will normally have their priority reduced to Bronze until the matters that have led to that decision have been successfully resolved by that applicant

Reasonable preference group 3: People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions

Circumstances when Gold Plus Band for additional preference will be awarded

Customers will be awarded additional preference in the following circumstances:

- a) Households living in conditions which give rise to an imminent risk of serious harm and where the Local Authority has served a Prohibition Order under Part 1 of the 2004 Housing Act.
- b) Excessive Overcrowding of 2 bedrooms or more measured by the bedroom standard i.e. Where a Local Authority officer has made an assessment using the Housing Health and Safety Rating system and concluded there is a serious high risk of harm due the impact of severe overcrowding.
- c) Demolition or Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). Where the applicant's property is subject to demolition or subject to a Compulsory Purchase Order for redevelopment.

Note 1: For tenants of a Registered Social Housing Provider in Vale of Glamorgan or beyond or of another local authority council accommodation the imminent risk of harm will be assessed taking into account the responsibility on that landlord to resolve the problem or transfer the tenant immediately. Therefore only in an absolutely exceptional case will additional preference be awarded.

Note 2: Applicants guilty of deliberately worsening their circumstances will not be given additional preference.

Note 3: Children will only be included in the overcrowding calculation at their main place of residence.

Note 4: The assessment applied by the Council will be to consider the facts and information received from the applicant and from any other Council department (such as the private sector housing team) or from any other organisation and the officer assessing the impact will apply the test set out below.

Assessment check 1: The officer will decide on the facts known what the seriousness of the impact is on the applicant and, or, any member of the household – the typically impact could be on the applicant's health for example.

Assessment check 2: Then the officer will consider what can be done to 1) immediately lessen or remove the impact and 2) in the near future to lessen or remove the impact e.g. action that can be taken by a landlord or the team responsible for private sector enforcement work in the council.

Assessment check 3: The officer will assess the new likely impact following any actions that can be carried out immediately and in the near future to lessen or remove the impact and will decide if there is still an imminent risk of serious harm.

Circumstances when Gold, Silver Plus or Silver Banding to reflect a reasonable preference will be awarded

Applicants will be awarded reasonable preference in the following circumstances:

a) Applicants without access at all to any of the following facilities. No access to:

- a. A bathroom or kitchen
- b. An inside WC
- c. Hot or cold water supplies, electricity, gas or adequate heating.

Applicants who have access to shared facilities in shared accommodation will not qualify under these criteria.

b) Elderly people living in flats in the private rented sector or with friends above ground floor with no lift.

c) Where an officer from the Council has determined that a private sector property (tenanted) contains one or more serious Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Health & Safety Rating System that are having a severe impact on the household. The awarded is made in respect of a significant risk to the health and wellbeing of the occupant(s), and where there is no prospect of the issues being remedied in a period of time that the Council considers reasonable.

c) Applicant's living in overcrowded conditions and whose housing circumstances have been assessed as being 1 bedroom short of what they need.

The standard used to assess overcrowding is as follows:

A separate bedroom should be allocated to the following persons:

- ✓ A person living together with another as husband and wife (whether that other person is of the same sex or the opposite sex).
- ✓ A person aged 16 years or more.
- ✓ Two persons of the same sex aged less than 16 years.
- ✓ Two persons (whether of the same sex or not) aged less than 10 years.
- ✓ Any person aged less than 16 years in any case where he or she cannot be paired with another occupier.

Note 1: For tenants of a Registered Social Housing Provider in Vale of Glamorgan or beyond or of another local authority council accommodation the imminent risk of harm will be assessed taking into account the responsibility on that landlord to resolve the problem or transfer the tenant immediately. Therefore only in an absolutely exceptional case will reasonable preference be awarded.

Note 2: Applicants guilty of deliberately worsening their circumstances will not be given reasonable preference.

Note 3: Children will only be included in the overcrowding calculation at their main place of residence.

Note 4: The assessment applied by the Council will be to consider the facts and information received from the applicant and from any other Council department (such as the private sector housing team) or from any other organisation and the officer assessing the impact will apply the test set out below.

Assessment check 1: The officer will decide on the facts known what the seriousness of the impact is on the applicant and, or, any member of the household – the typically impact could be on the applicant's health for example.

Assessment check 2: Then the officer will consider what can be done to 1) immediately lessen or remove the impact and 2) in the near future to lessen or remove the impact e.g. action that can be taken by a landlord or the team responsible for private sector enforcement work in the council.

Assessment check 3: The officer will assess the new likely impact following any actions that can be carried out immediately and in the near future to lessen or remove the impact and will decide if there is still an imminent risk of serious harm.

Reasonable preference group 4: People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds including grounds relating to disability.

Circumstances when Gold Plus Band for additional preference will be awarded on medical or disability grounds

A customer who has an extremely urgent and immediate need to move for medical reasons or due to a disability, which is being exacerbated by their current housing situation will be awarded additional preference.

An officer of the Council in the Housing Options Assessment team will make the initial assessment of whether the applicant's medical circumstances qualify for an award of additional preference or reasonable preference or do not meet the criteria to be awarded any priority. All officers will have received training on assessing such cases. They will assess cases according to clear criteria. The assessment will not be of the customer's health but how their accommodation affects their health.

If the medical impact lies outside of the criteria set out in the policy the assessing officer may take further advice from the Council's Occupational Therapist Service. Where it is felt necessary further information may be required from the applicant's Doctor or Health Specialist.

The following are examples of cases that may qualify for additional preference priority. It may apply to the applicant or a member of their household:

- 1) An immediate life threatening condition which is seriously affected by the current housing and where re-housing would make it significantly easier to manage
- 2) A serious illness, is currently receiving palliative care and urgently requires rehousing to facilitate the on-going provision of this care;
- 3) A life limiting condition and their current accommodation is affecting their ability to retain independence or enable adequate care;
- 4) The applicant's health is so severely affected by the accommodation that it is likely to become life threatening, e.g. applicant has severe mental health problems that are significantly exacerbated by their accommodation;
- 5) A new and life-changing condition that severely impairs their mobility, meaning they are unable to carry out day-to-day activities or have difficulty accessing facilities inside and outside of their accommodation and requires rehousing into accommodation suitable for their use;
- 6) Where their current property leaves a person at risk of infection, e.g. where an applicant is suffering from late-stage or advanced HIV infection
- 7) A member of the household cannot be discharged from hospital until a suitable adapted property is provided.
- 8) Due to limited mobility a person is unable to access essential parts of the property e.g. bathroom/toilet and requires re-housing into accommodation suitable for their use.
- 9) A member of the household is elderly or disabled or has a progressive illness and is likely to require admission to hospital or residential/nursing care in the immediate future and re-housing would enable the person to remain at home.
- 10) Armed forces personnel who need to move to suitable adapted accommodation because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability he or she, or a member of their household, has sustained as a result of service.
- 11) Veterans who have seen active service within the armed forces and are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or serious illness directly related to service in the Forces
- 12) People who have a severe mental health or learning disability which significantly affects their ability to lead a normal life and which puts them at risk of admission to hospital or residential care.

- 13) People living in a mobile home, caravan or converted vehicle which, due to medical conditions, does not meet their needs
- 14) The applicant or household member requires significant disabled adaptations to meet their needs and this is not possible in their current accommodation or would not be cost effective.

Circumstances when Gold, Silver Plus or Silver Banding to reflect a reasonable preference will be awarded

Customers whose housing is unsuitable for severe medical reasons, or due to a disability, but who are not housebound, or whose health, or safety is not at such a risk level to require immediate urgent housing will be awarded reasonable preference priority if they meet the criteria set.

The following are examples that may qualify for the reasonable preference priority:

- 1) Children with severe conditions such as autism, or cerebral palsy where their long term needs cannot be met without settled accommodation.
- 2) A person whose disability means that re-housing would enable them to overcome physical barriers created by their current accommodation e.g. stairs and steps.
- 3) A person with a severe disability requiring substantial adaptations to a property not provided for in their current accommodation.
- 4) A person with a terminal illness or long term medical debilitating condition whose current accommodation is not having a significant impact on their condition but where their quality of life would be significantly improved by moving to alternative settled accommodation which may or may not be closer to support.

Circumstances when Gold Plus Band for additional preference will be awarded on welfare grounds.

1 - Domestic abuse, extreme violence or extreme harassment.

Applicants who need to move immediately due to domestic abuse, extreme violence or extreme harassment will be awarded additional preference. This includes hate crime, disability, racial, homophobic or transgender harassment and will be awarded for exceptional circumstances where there is a high risk to the tenant or their family's safety if they remain in the property/area and they therefore require an immediate move.

The assessment will be made by a senior officer within the Council and will be based on evidence provided by the customer and other appropriate statutory and voluntary agencies. This would include, the Police, Social Services, referrals by MARAC, Domestic Violence organisations and Lesbian and Gay support groups.

For tenants of Registered Social Landlords within Vale of Glamorgan or elsewhere applying for accommodation because of an urgent welfare issue such as harassment, the Council will assess their case taking into account the responsibility on that landlord to resolve the problem or to transfer their tenant

to resolve the problem. Therefore only in an absolutely exceptional case will additional preference or reasonable preference be awarded.

2 - Move on from supported housing projects

Applicants who are moving on from a specified list of supported housing projects will be awarded additional preference if they meet the following criteria:

They must have vulnerability and urgent housing need that is best met through the provision of long-term settled housing. To qualify for this additional preference the support provider will provide a completed Move On from Supported Accommodation Request Form which provides evidence that the Council will use to assess whether the applicant:

- a) Has successfully completed a minimum of 6 months in the supported housing scheme (except in proven exceptional circumstances when a lesser period may be considered).
- b) Is ready to move to independent settled accommodation and is required to move on by the project to free up the unit for another individual in need.
- c) Has a support package that has been assessed and is in place.

Please note that for the majority of people, to move on from support accommodation, a private rented sector offer may be made rather than an offer of social housing.

Where people assessed as needing move on but are not bidding, the Council may bid on their behalf or a direct offer of accommodation may be made.

Customers can register when they move into supported accommodation and if they qualify for the priority band criteria they will be awarded the priority band when there is evidence that the person is ready to move on and can sustain a tenancy. Where the assessment is that the person is not ready to move on and is unlikely to sustain a tenancy they will be suspended until a time when they are assessed as ready to move on and can sustain a tenancy.

3 - Move on from Care for a young person.

Young people in care and ready to move out of care referred by Social Services in accordance with the joint protocol will be awarded additional preference.

Referrals will be made where a young person is ready to leave care. The criteria for the award of additional preference are:

- a) The young person is ready to move to independent settled housing and is genuinely prepared for a move to independent living.
- b) They possess the life skills to manage a tenancy including managing a rent account.
- c) The young person is in need of medium or long-term tenancy support.
- d) The support package has been assessed and is in place.

Please note that for the majority of people, to move on from support accommodation, a private rented sector offer may be made rather than an offer of social housing.

Where people assessed as needing move on but are not bidding, the Council may bid on their behalf or a direct offer of accommodation may be made.

4 - Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces or Territorial Army

Where their spouse or partner's death is attributable (wholly or partly) to their service and the bereaved spouse or civil partner's entitlement to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation then ceases.

5 - Where an applicant wants to move from an adapted home that would benefit another household that needs adaptations

Where an applicant is a tenant of a social housing home that has been adapted or is suitable for adaptation and where the Council decides it would benefit another household requiring a property that has or can be adapted and that property is considered to be a suitable property to meet a specific applicant's needs.

Circumstances when Gold, Silver Plus or Silver Banding to reflect a reasonable preference will be awarded

The following groups will qualify for reasonable preference on welfare grounds:

1 - Reasonable preference for financial hardship

Cases of financial hardship, following assessment, an applicant living in the private rented sector may be awarded reasonable preference. This is defined in the policy as working families whose income levels and hours worked qualify for Working Families Tax Credits and who are struggling to meet their housing costs in the private rented sector.

Reasonable preference group 5: People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the Council, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).

Circumstances when Gold Band for additional preference will be awarded

There are no additional preference criteria for this category

Circumstances when Gold, Silver Plus or Silver Banding to reflect a reasonable preference will be awarded

The categories of people who will be awarded reasonable preference on the grounds of hardship are:

- a) People who need to move for employment purposes
- b) People who need to move near relatives to give or receive support
- c) People who need to move to access medical treatment/social service facilities

a) *Employment Hardship* - Priority will only be given in exceptional circumstances and customers will need to show that they need to move to take up or continue an employment opportunity not available elsewhere. They will only be considered where they do not live within a reasonable commuting distance and will be required to provide confirmation of employment details from the employer.

b) *Support Hardship* - Priority will only be given in exceptional circumstances and customers will need to show:

That they require substantial and on-going support from relatives or friends or it is essential that they give substantial and on-going support to relatives. This will only be considered where there is a severe mental health, medical or welfare issue and there are reasons why this support cannot be achieved or maintained through reliance on public transport or the customer's own transport.

Example of the information required in order to assess the priority include:

- Confirmation of name and address of the person who is to provide the care and the person who is to receive care
- Evidence of their care requirements (Doctor, Social Services)
- Evidence of links to care groups
- Other forms of support or care available to the applicant or the person to whom it is claimed support is required.
- Benefits relating to any disability or care. Disability living allowance information

c) *Need to move to access medical treatment/social service facilities*

Priority will only be given in exceptional circumstances and customers will need to show that they have a need to access medical care and/or social services facilities and that cannot be met through reliance on public transport, the customer's own transport, or through provision put in place by health or social services. The Council will consider the following test:

- Confirmation of name and address of the medical or social provision to which they need access
- Evidence of their care requirements (Doctor, Social Services)
- Evidence that no other provision is available and no assistance can be provided to enable them to access the service
- A determination by the Council that the need to access the medical treatment/social services facilities is essential

When will Reduced Preference be awarded?

The Council can grant applicants who would be owed either Gold Plus, Gold or Silver Plus no priority or an adjusted priority (commonly referred to as reduced preference) in certain circumstances. The rules relating to when no priority will be awarded for unacceptable behaviour are set out in the eligibility section appendix 2.

Reason 1: No Local Connection

The Council will give reduced preference for applicant's whose housing needs qualify for a reasonable preference award but where they do not having a local connection to the Vale of Glamorgan.

The exception to this would be to those owed a s.73 OR s.75 duty under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 but not those owed a s.66 duty. For all those who do not have a local connection with the exception of s.73 OR s.75 will be awarded Bronze Banding.

Applicants without a local connection whose housing needs would qualify for the additional preference band under the scheme will not be awarded additional preference unless the Council considers their circumstances to be absolutely exceptional. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the Service Manager responsible for the operation of the scheme.

A local connection with The Vale of Glamorgan is defined as one of the following:

- a) Having lived in the Vale of Glamorgan for 3 years out of the past 5 years or 6 months out of the last 12 months
- b) Full time permanent paid employment in the Vale of Glamorgan, providing the applicants has done so for at least 6 months before applying to go onto the register
- c) Close family associations in the Vale of Glamorgan, i.e. parents and siblings or equivalent and the applicant is in regular close contact with that member of their family.
- d) Other very special reasons decided on the facts of the case basis.

Where an applicant qualifies for an award of reasonable preference but that applicant does not have a local connection with Vale of Glamorgan as defined above, they will be awarded a Silver Band.

Financial Resources

The HOMES4U Partnership will take into account an applicant's financial resources in determining their banding where an applicant would qualify for a reasonable preference. This could result in a reduction in their banding if the applicant has sufficient resources available wherever in the world they are located

This category applies to households whose total gross income from all sources exceeds the threshold for the higher rate of income tax (currently calculated at £31,786) or whose household's capital assets or savings exceeds £120,000. Assets will include equity in any property. Such applications will be awarded the reduced preference band which will mean that they are unlikely to receive sufficient priority for an allocation until all applicants with higher priority have been housed.

This is unlikely to happen as higher priority applicants will be continually joining the register. This restriction does not prevent applicants being considered for any Low Cost Home Ownership/Shared Equity property through the Council's Aspire 2 Own Scheme.

No Permanent Address in the UK

Applicants that are not currently living permanently in the UK but are eligible for housing will be placed in the reduced preference band.

Owed a Homelessness duty under the Housing Wales Act 2014 or by the Housing Act 1996 by another Council in Wales or England

Applicants owed a S66, or S73, or S75 duty by another Council in Wales or a full homelessness duty by a Council in England or Scotland by another Council not Vale of Glamorgan Council will be given reduced preference.

Appendix 2: Detailed information on the rules that will be applied to deciding whether an applicant is eligible to join the register.

The Eligibility rules set by the policy

Where a person applies but is deemed to be ineligible due to the application of the Government's rules for allocating housing accommodation to persons from abroad or persons subject to immigration control they will not be able to join the register. The rules are complicated and anyone who is impacted or believes they may be impacted by the rules can approach the Council for advice on the rules.

Section 166(3) of the Housing Act 1996 obligates the Council to consider all applications for social housing that are made in accordance with the procedural requirements of this policy. It must, however, when considering applications, ascertain if an applicant is eligible for accommodation or whether they are excluded from allocation under s.160A of the same Act.

The following is a summary of the main categories of eligible applicants to whom the Council may allocate accommodation under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, taking account of nationality and immigration status. For the full criteria please refer to Chapter 2 of the Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation & Homelessness 2015:

- (i) Existing tenants;
- (ii) A person from abroad other than a person subject to immigration; and
- (iii) Persons subject to immigration control prescribed as eligible.

Welsh Ministers have prescribed classes of person who are to be considered eligible Allocation of Housing & Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014. These are:

- (i) Refugees;
- (ii) Exceptional leave;
- (iii) A person with current leave to enter or remain in the UK with no condition or limitation, and who is habitually resident in the UK, Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland;
- (iv) Persons who have been granted Humanitarian Protection; and
- (v) An Afghan citizen who, as a result of serving in the UK Government, has been granted permission to relocate to the UK, Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland, and who is habitually resident in one of those areas will be eligible.

Applications received from asylum seekers will not be eligible to be admitted onto the common housing register until a positive decision on their claim for asylum is received and they are awarded refugee status, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave to remain.

Not eligible due to unacceptable behaviour

Under s.160A(7) of the Housing Act 1996, the Council, where it is satisfied that, an applicant or a member their prospective household, is guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant, the council may treat the applicant as ineligible for an allocation of social housing through the scheme. They will not be given a priority however, the applicants will be registered on the Council's Housing Register. All decisions of no priority will be made by the Letting Assessment and Exclusions Panel.

Section 160A(8) of the Housing Act 1996 provides that the only behavior which can be regarded as unacceptable for these purposes is behaviour by the applicant or by a member of their household that would, if they had been a secure tenant of the local authority at the time, have entitled the local authority to a possession order under s.84 of the Housing Act 1985 in relation to any of the discretionary grounds in Pt I of Schedule 2, other than Ground 8. These are fault grounds and include behavior such as:

- (i) Non-payment of rent;
- (ii) Breach of tenancy conditions;
- (iii) Conduct likely to cause nuisance or annoyance; and
- (iv) use of the property for immoral or illegal purposes.

It is not necessary for the applicant to have actually been a tenant of the local authority when the unacceptable behaviour occurred. The test is whether the behaviour would have entitled the local authority to a possession order if, whether actually or notionally, the applicant had been a secure tenant.

Applicants will be notified in writing of the Council's decision that they are ineligible due to:

1. The application of the Welsh Government's rules for allocating housing accommodation to persons from abroad or persons subject to immigration control; Or
2. They are ineligible on the grounds of unacceptable behavior.

Applicants will have the right to request a review of any decision made by the Council regarding their eligibility within 21 calendar days of receiving their notification letter.

The criteria that will be applied to assess unacceptable behavior.

Serious behavior or former rent arrears: the rules that will be applied

This will apply where an applicant, or any member of their current or prospective household, has a history of serious behavior or former rent arrears, which in the view of the Council makes the applicant unsuitable to be a tenant

until the issue has been resolved to the satisfaction of the Council. This includes, but is not limited to:

- The level of former or current rent arrears and/or any recoverable housing related debt. (See below for how these rules will be applied)
- Serious behaviour including non-compliance with a current or former tenancy agreement. (See below for how these rules will be applied).
- Where they, or any member of the household, have assaulted a member of staff and an injunction is being sought or has already been obtained
- Where they, or any member of the household, who have knowingly given false or misleading information, or withheld information, that has been reasonably requested

A decision will be taken by the Council on the facts whether the unacceptable behavior either:

- 1) So serious that the applicant is ineligible to join the register, or
- 2) Is not so serious to make the applicant ineligible to join the register but is serious enough that it comes under the criteria set by the allocation policy whereby an applicant will be granted no priority and will not be made any offer of accommodation until they have addressed the concerns of unacceptable behavior to the satisfaction of the Council.

The decision to make an applicant not eligible to join the register or eligible but to be awarded no priority will be taken in full consideration of the test of eligibility set out in Section 160A(8) of the Housing Act 1996. This provides that the only behaviour which can be regarded as unacceptable for these purposes is behaviour by the applicant or by a member of their household that would, if they had been a secure tenant of the local authority at the time, have entitled the local authority to a possession order under s.84 of the Housing Act 1985 in relation to any of the discretionary grounds in Part 1 of Schedule 2, other than Ground 8

Guidance on the criteria that will be applied to decide whether an applicant is ineligible for unacceptable behavior, or that the applicant is eligible but will be granted no priority until the concerns are satisfactory addressed, is set out below.

1 – The criteria to be applied for considering whether an applicant is not eligible, (or is eligible but will be granted Bronze band but ineligible to be offered accommodation through the scheme) for current or former rent arrears or any recoverable housing related debt.

For the purpose of this policy the Council, when carrying out an assessment, will take into consideration all property related debts that are both recoverable and not statute barred. This includes any:

- (i) Current or former tenancy rent arrears;
- (ii) Outstanding re-chargeable repairs;
- (iii) Current and former housing related service charge arrears;
- (iv) Bed and breakfast or other temporary accommodation charge arrears

- (v) Housing benefit overpayments; and
- (vi) Associated court costs.

Recoverable property related debts apply to both the applicant and any members of their household included in their application for housing.

The following procedure will be applied to applicants whose housing needs mean that they would be awarded a priority band but where there are current or former rent arrears, or any recoverable housing related debt:

- This will be a decision of the Letting Assessment and Exclusions Panel
- The Council will consider whether the applicant still owes arrears/debt, and if they do, the extent of the arrears/debt and whether any housing related debt is recoverable.
- Any recoverable arrears/debts of over £500 may result in the applicant being ineligible for an allocation of the scheme depending on the level of arrears. However, wherever possible the applicant will be allowed to join the register but will be awarded no priority until the arrears/debts have been resolved. This will mean that once the arrears have been resolved an applicant who would have been awarded a priority band gold or silver will join that band with the effective date they joined the register and not the date the arrears/debt had been resolved.
- The Council will also consider whether the claimant has taken debt advice acted on it, and entered into and begun to implement any arrangement to clear the arrears.
- The Council will also consider whether an arrangement has been made, the amount of arrears paid off, any debt outstanding, and the regularity of any payments made.

Where the current or former rent arrears or any recoverable housing related debt is over £500 exits an applicant who is found to be ineligible, or an applicant who is eligible but has been awarded no priority, must meet the following criteria before they can be considered to be eligible on a subsequent application or to have the no priority status removed. They will need to have:

- (i) Entered into a repayment plan
- (ii) Made a minimum of 13 consecutive weekly payments, at an agreed level; and
- (iii) Repaid a minimum of 25% of the debt.

Where the debt is repaid in full. However, in order to encourage good financial management and discourage applicants from using doorstep lenders, who may charge excessively high interest rate loans, lump sum payments of above 25% of the total debt owed would not apply unless the 13 - week minimum repayment period has been satisfied.

Applicants with a housing related debt up to £500 will be allowed to qualify if their housing needs or circumstances qualify but they may be awarded no priority (depending on the level of debt and the actions they have or are committed to take to resolve that debt) and may only be considered for housing providing that they had agreed and were actively following a repayment plan. Adherence would normally be considered to be adherence with a repayment

plan over a 13-week period. This process can only be circumvented where the debt is repaid in full. In order to encourage good financial management and discourage applicants from using doorstep lenders, who may charge excessively high interest rate loans, lump sum payments of above 25% of the total debt owed would not apply unless the 13 - week minimum re-payment period has been satisfied.

2 - The criteria to be applied for considering whether an applicant is not eligible or is eligible but will be granted Bronze Band for serious behaviour including non-compliance with a current or former tenancy agreement:

This applies where the Council is satisfied, having considered all available evidence that an applicant (or a member of their current or prospective household) has:

1. Failed to adhere to the terms of any current or previous social housing or private rented sector tenancy agreement. This includes failing to maintain any previous social rented or private sector rented property within the terms of their tenancy agreement, or committing acts causing or likely to cause nuisance or annoyance to neighbours or others in the locality of where they live or where they previously have lived. It includes serious breaches of a social or private sector tenancy agreement – for example operating a business from the premises, having an unreasonable numbers of pets at the property despite being warned of the breach of tenancy.
2. A decision that the applicant is not eligible to be registered will normally apply until the applicant (or a member of their prospective household) has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the Council, that circumstances have changed such that the previous conduct is unlikely to reoccur. In many cases this could include demonstrating cooperation with support agencies leading to a substantial improvement in behaviour.
3. Conduct likely to cause nuisance or annoyance – this is conduct or behavior that does not only relate to a previous social housing or private rented sector tenancy agreement. This includes where an applicant or a member of their current or prospective household is the subject of actions being taken by the Council (or some other competent body) on grounds of alleged Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). It includes criminal behaviour that was relevant to the tenancy and/or locality, for example being in possession of illegal drugs, acts of public disorder. This also includes behaving in a threatening, abusive or obstructive manner towards staff of the Council and or their contractors.
4. Where on the facts it is decided that despite the unacceptable behavior an applicant is able to qualify for the register they will normally be granted no priority and will not be made any offer of accommodation until they have addressed the unacceptable behavior to the satisfaction of the Council
5. Where an applicant is found to be ineligible any new application will normally only result in eligibility where there has been no reasonable cause for complaint or concern against the applicant (or members of their prospective household) for a continuous period of 12 months. It will be the applicant's responsibility to approach the Council where the applicant feels this criteria has been met making them now eligible for an offer of social housing.

Appendix 3: How will any local lettings policy be applied and reviewed?

Local Letting Initiatives may be applied to meet the particular needs of a local ward or to address sustainability and community issues to ensure that the housing allocation scheme is able to contribute to building sustainable communities.

The Vale of Glamorgan has developed several local lettings policies in collaboration with community councils and our partner housing associations. This allows the local housing need to be met. In rural areas people are often concerned about their young people being forced to move away because of the lack of affordable housing. A local letting policy ensures priority is given to local people who can continue to live near their support networks and help maintain local amenities and services. In other areas, there might be a need to devise a policy that is sensitive to local circumstances, for example to reduce population density on an estate or prevent anti-social behaviour.

They will be tailored to fit local situations in well-defined communities (such as a particular block of flats, an individual street, or new housing development. Or may be applied to a parish or a village in a rural area). Each local letting initiative will be based on a detailed analysis of relevant information gathered from a variety of sources and may include for example evidence from internal departments, partner Housing Associations, local Councillors, and the community itself. (Evidence may include information such as tenant profiling, the incidence of anti-social behaviour, and stock turnover in a particular block, street or area, or the need to provide housing for local people in rural villages and parishes).

The following are examples of local letting policies that may be deployed under the Allocation Policy. The list is for illustrative purposes and is not exhaustive.

- Age restrictions.
- Policies that are geared towards encouraging applicants who work or volunteer to live in an area where for example there may be an area, or street with high numbers of working age households not in work.
- Prioritising applicants who are key workers as defined by the Council.
- Restrictions on lettings to vulnerable households where there are already a concentration of supported tenants/residents in a street or block.
- Lettings to childless households where there are high concentrations of children and young people living on a specific estate, street or block.
- Disregarding household type or property matching rules to allow for example under-occupation to reduce child density or to account for future family growth
- Ensuring that there is a balance of working and non-working households allocated to a new build scheme.

How will a local letting policy be assessed and agreed?

The Council and the Housing Association Partner will come to an agreement on the villages, estates, blocks or streets where a local letting policy may be appropriate and why.

There must be a clear evidence base for adopting a local letting policy. Agreement as to whether a local letting policy is appropriate will be based on the following test:

1. That there is a clear definition of the objective to be achieved by that particular local letting policy
2. That there is a clear evidence base to back up the need for a local letting policy.
3. That any potential equality impact has been considered.
4. How long the local lettings policy is intended to operate
5. When the policy should be reviewed

A written record of each policy adopted or rejected should be kept.

It is the intention that local letting policies will be fluid with new policies being added as are required and existing policies being deleted once the objective for that policy has been met.

All current local letting policies will be listed as a link to the online version of the Council's Allocation Policy so the public can see which policies are in operation at any point in time."

Appendix 4: The Exclusions Policy – An agreed policy for when an applicant may be excluded for consideration for an offer of social housing by a Registered Housing Association

This appendix to the Vale of Glamorgan County Borough allocation policy sets out the circumstances when a Registered Housing Association Provider (referred to in this document as an RHA) may bypass an applicant who is next in line to be offered accommodation.

It is agreed between the parties to the common policy that:

1. Blanket bans should not be used.
2. A decision by the Council or any partner housing association to bypass an applicant who would be next in line for an offer of accommodation will only be taken according to the criteria agreed and set out in this policy
3. Any local letting initiative that the Council or a partner housing association wish to apply must only be applied according the procedure agreed by the Council and the RHA name and set out in this policy
4. Where a housing association partner to this policy may wish to retain exception rules that do not form part of the common policy, (for example, rules relating to the size of accommodation to be offered; or rules relating to offers of accommodation from applicants with former rent arrears or behaviour that has not yet been addressed or resolved) these rules should be transparent and will be recorded for each housing association as an appendix to the common allocation policy so it is clear when a named housing association will bypass an applicant and why.

All parties have agreed as far as possible to set a common set of rules and to keep exceptions to a minimum but all recognise the need for each association to manage their dwellings appropriately.

It is important that the needs of vulnerable applicants are recognised and arrangements are made for care and support to be available to enable vulnerable tenants to sustain tenancies. The allocations policy is inclusive and is not intended to exclude vulnerable people from social housing but to ensure that vulnerable applicants can be housed with the right support where required so that their tenancies can be sustained.

To support the efficient operation of the common policy an Exclusions Panel consisting of a senior representative of the Council and representatives of the RHAs will meet monthly (and more frequently if both parties agree) to review cases where high priority cases may be due an offer of housing and where their circumstances may lead to the applicant being bypassed or where there are exceptional circumstances that do not fit the examples set out in this policy but where there may still be a possibility of an applicant being bypassed. The objective of setting up a panel is to anticipate problem cases and agree whether the applicant may or may not yet be considered for an offer of social housing.

Clearly it is not possible to describe every situation where an applicant due an offer of social housing might be bypassed. The following are the most

common situations and this policy sets out the agreed criteria that will be applied.

a) The household is of the wrong size for the property.

Where a household does not fit the size criteria rules for an association despite meeting the size criteria for matching applicants set out in the common policy. This could be for example where an association has adopted different rules with regard to the ages of children for calculating bedroom size, or their own rules for when an applicant who would be subject to the single room subsidy DWP rules can be allocated accommodation that is under occupied. Where different rules apply they will be recorded for that association in the appendix to the common allocation policy.

b) The applicant has a social housing tenancy related debt.

An Applicant guilty of serious behaviour to make them unsuitable to be a tenant will not qualify to be a member of the common allocation scheme or will be allowed to qualify and given no priority until their former or current rent arrears have been addressed. This will include serious former or current rent arrears that would result in an outright possession order being granted by a court. How this test will be applied is set out in the eligibility section of the common policy (appendix 2).

There will however, be applicants who do qualify but nevertheless have some former tenant arrears. Arrears might include current or former rent arrears damage to a former social housing property or legal costs arising from court action in connection with a current or former tenancy.

At the point when the applicant has successfully bid for an offer of accommodation or it is anticipated that due to their high housing priority they will be likely to be successful soon the following procedure will apply for an applicant for former current or former rent arrears:

- a. The RHA will consider whether the applicant still owes arrears, and if they do, the extent of the arrears.
- b. Whether there are exceptional circumstances, which should lead to their being offered accommodation despite those arrears.
- c. Whether the claimant has taken debt advice, acted on it, and entered into and began to implement any arrangement to clear the arrears.
- d. Where an arrangement has been made, the amount of arrears paid off any debt outstanding, and the regularity of any payments made.
- e. The case will then be brought to the Exclusions Panel for consideration
- f. Normally this will require either the full arrears to have been paid off or at least eight weeks of regular payments towards clearing the current or former arrears.

Where no arrangements have been made by the applicant to address their current or former arrears they will be informed of the actions that they need to take to rectify the problem before they can be considered for an offer by that association.

Cases can be submitted to the monthly Exclusion panel meetings to decide whether sufficient action has been taken by the applicant under the policy for the name RHA to make an offer of accommodation.

Where information on former tenant arrears only emerges after an offer has been made that offer may be withdrawn by that association and the policy for arrears applied.

c) Non-compliance with current or previous tenancy agreement

Applicants guilty of serious behaviour to make them unsuitable to be a tenant will not qualify to be a member of the common allocation scheme or will be allowed to qualify but awarded no priority until they have resolved any behaviour issue to the satisfaction of the Council. The criteria is fully set out in the Common Allocation Policy (section on eligibility appendix 2). This will include serious former breaches of a tenancy agreement, or serious anti-social behaviour or criminal activity that would result in an outright possession order being granted by a court. There will however, be applicants who do qualify for the common register but nevertheless there may still be concern over current or past behaviour issues. The aim of this Exclusions Policy is to ensure that applicants do not receive a blanket ban from social housing but are informed of the actions they have to take to satisfy partners that they can maintain a tenancy without any further behaviour problems.

The following criteria will apply where an RHA partner is satisfied that the applicant (or a member of their prospective household) has failed to maintain their current or any previous social rented or private sector rented property within the terms of their tenancy agreement, or has committed acts causing or likely to cause nuisance or annoyance to their neighbours or others in the locality of where they live or where they previously have lived.

At the point when the applicant has successfully bid for an offer of accommodation or it is anticipated that due to their high housing priority they will be likely to be successful soon the following procedure will apply:

The case should be submitted to the monthly Exclusion Panel meetings to decide whether sufficient action has been taken by the applicant to address the issue so that an applicant can be considered for an offer of accommodation once the behaviour has been addressed.

In most cases the status will be reconsidered when there is clear evidence that the applicant has addressed their behaviour to the satisfaction of the exclusions panel and there has been no cause for complaint against the applicant (or members of their prospective household) for a continuous period of 6 months from the point where action has been agreed with the applicant to address their behaviour or other identified problems.

Where the Panel are not satisfied that sufficient action has been taken by the applicant to address their behaviour the applicant will be informed of the action that they will need to demonstrate before an RHA will consider them for an offer. This may include co-operation over a period of time with support agencies, social services or other organisations where the express outcome is that there is a significant improvement in their conduct.

d) Applicants who are vulnerable and have high support needs or applicants who require a sensitive letting such as MAPPA cases.

There are a number of circumstances where the Council or an RHA partner may need to bypass an applicant who is imminently due an offer of social housing. This may be where:

- ✓ An applicant may be vulnerable and considered not yet ready to sustain a tenancy;
- ✓ It is considered there may be a risk to the applicant or others where for example a MAPPA case needs to be housed and a sensitive let may need to be planned.

It is not possible to describe every situation where an applicant may be bypassed. Individual cases that fall outside the criteria will need to be discussed by the Exclusion panel. However it is important that such applicants do not end up being bypassed because of a lack of pre offer planning resulting in an offer not being made because of a lack of information, or of an appropriate support package. Where there are applicants who are extremely vulnerable or considered to pose a risk to themselves or others the case should be submitted to the monthly Exclusion Panel meeting to decide whether they are ready to sustain a tenancy and what support package is required so that an offer of accommodation can be made.

The type of information to be considered by the panel may include:

- Details of any long-term illness, health problem, or disability that requires specific or specialist housing, care or support
- Details of other care and support needs, for example because of vulnerability due to learning Difficulties.
- Details of proposed, existing and previous packages of care provision provided by statutory or other bodies where known.
- Relevant and reasonable information with regard to previous history of anti-social behaviour that might impact on the safety of the community.
- Type of accommodation moving from and any additional available accommodation history.

*It is also important that no individual housing association houses a disproportionate number of vulnerable or MAPPA cases and a system based on transparency and evidence needs to be established. Therefore the number of empty properties; profile of vacancies by area; profile of vulnerable cases previously housed by area and a clear evidence based justification as to why any property cannot be used for a vulnerable or MAPPA applicant needs to be considered by the panel and recorded where it is agreed a specific property cannot be used or an individual's risk or vulnerability means they will be bypassed for a property which their housing needs status would mean they are due to be offered.

e) Circumstances where it is considered that an applicant is unable to afford to pay their rent and housing costs

With the further reduction in the Benefit Cap and existing and proposed changes to welfare reform the ability of an applicant to be able to afford their rent and other housing costs is naturally a concern for an RHA. It is important that any decision to bypass an applicant on the grounds of their ability to afford to pay their housing costs is consistently applied and follows a clear and robust assessment process.

The objective is to have a common affordability assessment framework used by the Council at the point of an applicant applying to join the register and each RHA which will be applied at the point of a potential offer being made. Where there is a difference of opinion on the applicant's ability to afford the rent a case will be submitted to the panel for consideration. This includes where an applicant cannot afford to pay rent in advance and there are exceptional circumstances payment options are to be discussed with the applicant during the verification interview to ensure the property will be affordable.

Dispute procedure where a party does not agree

Any dispute arising as to the refusal by an RHA to make an offer of accommodation to an applicant, or consider making an offer to an applicant whose priority means they are due an offer, where either the Council or the RHA believes this is contrary to the agreed policy shall be resolved in accordance with the following procedure:

- (a) Within 2 days of a concern being raised, the Association's Nominated Officer and the Council's Nominated Officer (as the Council is the party ultimately responsible for the allocation policy) shall meet and all parties shall use all reasonable endeavours to settle the dispute amicably and in good faith, if they cannot resolve the dispute then.
- (b) If the dispute cannot be resolved through a) above it will be referred to the Council's Senior Officer with overall responsibility for the Housing Allocation Policy and the Association's Chief Executive who shall use best endeavours to discuss the matter within 2 days of the dispute being referred to them and shall use all reasonable endeavours to settle the dispute amicably and in good faith.

Appendix 5: The Housing Letting Assessment and Exclusions Panel

The Housing Letting Assessment and Exclusions Panel will meet on as often as is appropriate. The role of the Panel will be to consider and make decisions on applications that have been forwarded to it by the Council.

The Panel will be responsible for considering the circumstances where an applicant or a member of their prospective household. This list is not exhaustive. Written representations can be received from an applicant and their representative and or professional body:

- 1) Applicants with medical problems that are not sufficient on their own to confer priority, but where there are other relevant social factors.
- 2) Needing more settled accommodation in order to deal with child protection issues arising under the Children Act:-
- 3) The household seeking accommodation has welfare needs so severe that the protection of vulnerable adults or children is only possible if the household were to move to a new home and where the present circumstances could deteriorate to such an extent as to place household members at risk, or in need of residential care unless re-housing is offered.
- 4) Families with a child with behavioural difficulties, which may require an additional bedroom or particular type of accommodation.
- 5) Requiring additional space such as for a carer or to foster.
- 6) The risk level of a potentially vulnerable person continuing to live in his/her current address.
- 7) The need for rehousing due to irreconcilable neighbour difficulties.
- 8) Requests to agree exceptions to established policies e.g. reduced preference due to former or current rent arrears, where to adhere to the policy would cause special hardships.
- 9) Requests to agree an applicant for any type of special housing provision, for example, floating support, supported housing because of a learning difficulty, mental health problems, alcohol or drug misuse, sensory difficulties, a need for low-rise or low density accommodation or accommodation in specific areas of the borough to give or receive support etc.
- 10) Requests to transfer following harassment including, verbal abuse, insults, intimidation, damage to property or possessions, threatening or abusive behaviour, racist, homophobic or other abusive graffiti, unprovoked assaults including common assault, actual bodily harm and grievous bodily harm, use of dogs, arson and attempted arson, threatening letters, witnesses of crime, or victims of crime, who would be at risk of intimidation amounting to violence or threats of violence if they remained in their current homes.

- 11) Requests for a transfer or rehousing where there has been a bereavement or personal tragedy in the property or area.
- 12) May be ineligible due to unacceptable behavior including rent arrears and a recoverable debt;
- 13) May be allowed to qualify but be given no preference due to unacceptable behavior or any other criteria outlined in the policy
- 14) Worsens their own circumstances to increase priority;
- 15) Knowingly or recklessly makes a statement which is false, or knowingly withholds information;
- 16) Requires a risk assessment before being rehoused
- 17) The Panel will also review cases that may be due an offer of accommodation where circumstances exist that may lead to the applicant being bypassed under the agreed exclusions policy set out at appendix 5.

Composition of the Panel

The Panel will consist of the following Officers:

- Local Authority Manager with responsibility for Housing
- A minimum of 2 Housing Association representatives.

Additional members will be co-opted as and when required.

Frequency of Panel Discussions

The Panel will discuss cases as frequently as required. The Panel Officers will receive the case on the standard Lettings Panel form along with any supporting evidence via email.

All decisions and reasons for that decision will be recorded and an applicant informed of the decision. In exceptional cases an applicant may be asked to attend and meet with the relevant panel members to provide clarification on their case.

Monitoring

The number of cases dealt with by the Panel, along with the decisions made and reasons will be monitored and reported annually to the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee and boards of relevant Registered Social Landlords.

Appendix 6: Information that will be provided to applicants on how applicants who are eligible to be registered can bid for properties and how their bid will be considered

Step 1 – Confirmation of membership

We will write to every applicant to advise that they are registered, what the membership date is, what the membership priority band is and what size homes you can bid for. If you feel the decision is not correct, you must write to us stating why, so we can reassess your application.

Step 2 – Finding your Home

We advertise homes that are made available in local press however for the efficiency of the Council and Scheme this may be subject to change in future where homes may only be advertised on the HOMES4U website and other forms of social media.

Details of the homes are available from any of the participating organisations, partner voluntary sector agencies or by visiting the Council website – www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk. You can also call the HOMES4U hotline on 01446 709840. Adverts are opened every other Thursday at 8.30 a.m. and remain open until the following Wednesday at 5.00pm. This current advertising process is for example only and may also be subject to change in response to demands on the Scheme

Step 3 – Bidding for a Home

You can bid for homes at any time when the advert is 'live'. You can bid in order of preference for the homes you wish to be considered for. This can be done by calling HOMES4U on 01446 709840, bidding online at www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk, by calling in or writing to:

HOMES4U
Environment & Housing
Civic Offices, Holton Rd
Barry
Vale of Glamorgan
CF63 4RU

Remember to bid for a home you have to be a member of HOMES4U! If there's more than one bidder for a home, and they are all in the same band, the one who has been in that band the longest will be selected.

Step 4 – Selection

When a bid is successful, an officer will contact you to check the details held by HOMES4U are up to date and accurate, and most importantly that the correct priority band has been awarded. Checks will also be made with partner organizations confirming any previous unacceptable behaviour or outstanding

debts. Only when these checks have been completed will a formal offer of accommodation be made.

Step 5 – Allocating HOMES4U Properties

The applicant who is eligible for the property type, in the highest priority band and with the earliest registration date is offered the property. All the offers made by the partnership are conditional on applicants passing the verification process.

Verification means that we will visit you at home to confirm the details you provided are accurate. If they are not, then the offer may be withdrawn. Following successful verification, an appointment will be made for you to view the property.

Members of HOMES4U wishing to be housed in an advertised property must bid for that property.

Bids must be made during the period (8:30AM Thursday to 5:00PM the following Wednesday) that the property is on advert.

Members of HOMES4U can choose to bid for as many properties as they wish, in line with the HOMES4U matrix. In doing so the applicant must bid in order of preference.

All allocations will be based on the priority of bids received as follows:-

If more than one bid is received from applicants with the same priority banding, then the person who has been registered longest will be offered the property.

The size of home that an applicant will be offered will depend on the family size. If the applicant needs an extra bedroom for medical or other reasons, (e.g. if they have a full time carer), this decision will be made by the HOMES4U Lettings Panel at the point of assessment and the applicant/s will be notified in writing. The size of property that Members will be offered is outlined in Appendix A – HOMES4U Property Allocation Matrix Guideline. If no bids are received from applicants that meet the Property Allocation Matrix Guideline, then the property will be offered to the family that most closely matches the bedroom need, has the highest priority banding and earliest registration date.

If an applicant has bid for two or more properties in one advert they must identify at the bidding stage their preference in the event that they are successful for more than one property. The property not chosen first will then be offered to the applicant with the next greatest priority in line with Priority Bandings listed.

All applicants who have bid for a home and have been successful in their bid will not be eligible to bid for further properties that are advertised until they have decided to accept or refuse this property.

A Home Visit will be arranged for each successful bidder who is to be allocated a property in order that the application details are verified prior to a formal offer of accommodation being made. The following statement will be read at each visit:

'Before I start to verify your application, I need to make you aware that any offer of accommodation is subject to this verification process. I must advise that if this process, for whatever reason, uncovers information which we were previously unaware of, has changed or is materially different to information that is currently held, this may affect your application with HOMES4U and, may result in the offer being withdrawn. You should also be aware that knowingly or recklessly giving false information, or withholding information is an offence under Part 6, Section 171 Housing Act 1996, which is punishable by a fine, loss of any accommodation gained, or both'.

A standard HOMES4U Verification Form will be completed, the HOMES4U membership date and Priority Band of the applicant confirmed. Home visits are not carried out where the award is made on the basis of statutory homelessness cases.

Within 1 day of the completed Verification Visit the HOMES4U details will be registered/records updated and confirmed on the computer system, an offer of accommodation made to the applicant and a viewing of the property arranged (where feasible). If the Applicant accepts the property, the tenancy commencement date will be agreed and all relevant paperwork completed. If the Applicant refuses the property then the property will be offered to the applicant with the greatest priority in line with Priority Bandings listed.

If no bids remain for the property, then the home will be considered for re advertising in a future advert.

Step 6 – Feedback will be provided on a monthly basis and can be found on the HOMES4U pages of the Council's website www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk.

In each fortnightly advert we will publish how many people bid for the previously advertised homes and the membership registration date of the successful bidders. This ensures we maintain transparency in the allocation process, and allow applicants to establish where they have the best chance of being re-housed.

