

Key changes and amendments to the Housing Allocations Policy April 2024

Section	Change	Reason
2.5 (new)	<p>Date in Band</p> <p>Residents of supported housing in Breckland, or who have been referred to supported housing outside Breckland by a Breckland Council Housing Officer, who are ready to move on, will have their application backdated by 6 months from the date that evidence is provided to show that they are ready to move on.</p>	<p>Supported Housing residents struggle to be housed through the Housing Register currently due to the high demand for the small number of 1 bed properties. This has a detrimental affect on their wellbeing and mental health as they have worked hard to be ready to move on and then are stuck.</p> <p>By backdating their application by 6 months, they will have more chance of being successful more quickly.</p> <p>This also means that much needed bed spaces in supported housing are 'blocked', reducing move on from temporary accommodation options (where supported housing is the appropriate housing solution).</p>
3.3	<p>Qualifying categories of applicants</p> <p>Applicants will not qualify for the register if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are adequately housed, as assessed by an officer (i.e. if they do not meet the Emergency, Gold or Silver Band criteria); • they own a property, including in another country, other than in exceptional circumstances that must be agreed by the Housing Manager or the Housing Solutions Team Manager; • they have sufficient financial resources to resolve their housing situation themselves through purchasing a property or renting privately. There may be exceptions to this in some cases. 	<p>There is high demand for social housing in Breckland and, therefore, applicants without a housing need do not have any hope of being successful through the housing register. There is no benefit in being on the register 'just in case the situation changes' as they would gain no waiting time advantage.</p> <p>Officer time is precious and needs to be focused on customers with a housing need.</p> <p>Due to the high demand for social housing in Breckland it must be prioritised for those with the greatest need and who cannot resolve their situation easily themselves.</p>
3.4	<p>Connection to the local area criteria</p> <p>Applicants who do not meet the residency criteria for Breckland but have close family members living in Breckland will only qualify if they:</p> <p>Have a close family connection* with someone who currently lives in the district and has done so for 3 or more</p>	<p>This restricts the family connection to relating to a need to be near them rather than a desire to be.</p>

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	years and needs to move to either provide or receive essential care and support that cannot be given by anyone else.	
4.5.2	<p>Emergency banding</p> <p>Remove the following reasons for Emergency Band:</p> <p>Urgent Transfer</p> <p>Urgent Health and Safety Risk</p> <p>Threatened with Serious and Immediate Violence</p> <p>Urgent Multiple Needs</p>	<p>This is the responsibility of the landlord and can be normally achieved by a 'management move' within their own stock.</p> <p>This situation is so serious and urgent it is more appropriately addressed through Homelessness legislation and processes, with temporary accommodation being considered.</p> <p>This situation is so serious and urgent that it is more appropriately addressed through Homelessness legislation and processes, with temporary accommodation being considered.</p> <p>This removes the 'band chasing' that some applicants do and it also ensures those in Emergency Band are truly in an emergency /urgent situation.</p>
4.5.3	<p>Gold Band - High Priority</p> <p>Remove the band reason of High Multiple Needs</p>	<p>This removes the 'band chasing' that some applicants do and it also ensures those in Gold Band truly have a high housing need in relation to other applicants.</p>
4.5.5	<p>Bronze Band – Low / No Priority</p> <p>New Bronze Band Reason:</p> <p>Applicants for properties on exceptions sites where priority is given to people with a local connection to a parish in which the properties are situated. Bronze Band will be awarded to them if they do not meet any of the</p>	<p>This would ensure that homes that are developed on sites that fall outside of normal development boundaries but are allowed in order to provide homes for local people who cannot afford to buy or rent their own place privately, are let to the people they are intended. This is required as someone could be considered adequately housed, living with family within the parish, and would not normally qualify to be on the housing register.</p>

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	<p>urgent or reasonable preference criteria in Emergency, Gold or Silver but meet the 1st level of the cascade in the planning agreement.</p> <p>This will apply only to bids for these properties and for a time limited period until they are let.</p>	<p>The process for this will need to be developed in conjunction with the Strategic Housing service.</p>
<p>4.5.5</p>	<p>Bronze Band – Low / No Priority</p> <p>New Bronze Band Reason:</p> <p>Reduced Preference</p> <p>An applicant will be given reduced preference if the council is satisfied they:</p> <p>Are a current or former tenant of any landlord with rent arrears but these are not at a level where possession action would normally be taken or there are other housing related debts owed to the landlord or council</p> <p>Are a current or former tenant of any landlord who has failed to maintain a rented property in a proper and reasonable condition or has otherwise breached their tenancy conditions but where possession action would not normally be taken.</p> <p>Appendix XX provides guidance on what an applicant should do and evidence in order to be given relevant additional preference again.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances, applicants will be given additional preference despite meeting one of the criteria outlined above. Examples of where this may be appropriate are:</p> <p>Where a scheme landlord seeks discretion as current rent arrears are caused by welfare reform due to under-occupation and the applicant is seeking to downsize, is keeping to a repayment arrangement and is working with the landlord to address arrears.</p> <p>Where a person is fleeing violence and has rent arrears.</p>	<p>This will address low level housing related debt and anti-social behaviour, where it is not at a level for the applicant to not qualify for the housing register, in a way that encourages behaviour change</p>

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5.10	<p>Direct Lets can be made</p> <p>Most properties will be advertised through the Housing Allocations scheme. However, in certain circumstances some properties may be let directly to applicants and these properties will be let outside of the allocation scheme.</p> <p>A new reason is: Where an applicant in Relief Duty (Gold Band) or Main Duty (Emergency Band) has not bid on a property within 56 days of their start date and suitable properties were available.</p>	<p>To ensure that applicants who are homeless are re-housed with urgency where they have not been pro-active. This includes applicants who have not had a Main Duty decision.</p>
7.3	<p>Bedroom requirements</p> <p>Add the following:</p> <p>Applicants who live in 4 or 5 or 6 bedroom housing association properties but are underoccupying by 2,3, 4 or 5 bedrooms can be considered eligible for a property though the scheme that would give them one extra bedroom than their needs. This would be following an affordability assessment.</p>	<p>There is great demand for 4, 5 and 6 bedroom properties and these are scarce. People living in these are reluctant to move to a property that, technically, matches their need, as they do not want to give up the space they are used to and cannot be made to do so. Allowing one spare bedroom (if affordable) could provide enough of an incentive.</p>

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The following is the additional change, included following public consultation feedback and subsequent agreement with Registered Providers		
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5.4	<p>Amend Staying contact with children to the following:</p> <p>Breckland Council understands the importance of children spending quality time with both parents in their respective homes and want to support this wherever possible. Therefore, parents who are not considered the 'main carers', for example, they do not receive the child benefit or if they do not have the children stay with them for more than 50% of the week, are able to apply for both a property size that would give them one additional bedroom for their child(ren) and one that would not. This would normally mean being eligible for both 1 or 2 bedroom properties but it could be a different combination, allowing one additional bedroom.</p> <p>As with all housing register applications, proof will be required of this need.</p> <p>It is also important that the rent is affordable and landlords need to take this into account when letting properties. The ultimate decision on whether to offer and let the larger property to the applicant will lie with the landlord and will be dependent on their own policies and/or an affordability check. Any incident of a property not being offered for this reason would result in a conversation with the applicant about what is realistic at that time.</p>	<p>To provide more opportunity for parents to have their children stay with them in a home that gives them their own bedroom(s).</p>