

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

HOUSING REGISTER

&

ALLOCATIONS POLICY

October 2008

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Legislative Context

This policy has been written to meet the requirements of the Housing Act 1996, part VI and amendments made under the Homelessness Act 2002. The policy also takes into account the ***Allocation of Accommodation: the Code of Guidance for Local Authorities*** published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, November 2002.

1.2 Equal Opportunities

East Herts Council is firmly committed to providing and promoting equality for all its employees and the wider community. The Council believes in the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity in all that it does. The Council recognises the rich diversity of East Hertfordshire's population as a strength and aims to treat all people with respect whilst recognising the value of each individual and the positive contribution they make to the diverse community and workforce.

1.3 Data Protection

An application registered with East Herts Council and the details it contains will not be disclosed to any third party or member of the public without the applicant's consent. Consent is given, by the applicant on the initial Housing Register application form, for East Herts to make relevant enquiries with reference to their application to join the Housing Register.

1.4 Administration

East Herts Council has approved the Housing Register and Allocations Policy. Decisions under this Policy are delegated to appropriate officers in East Herts Council.

2.0 The Council's Housing Register & Allocations Policy

This is the Council's Scheme for assessing the priority of people who wish to be allocated an assured or introductory tenancy of a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) in the district of East Herts. The Housing Register is the primary access route into social housing in East Herts. The Register includes new applicants who have applied to the Council for housing and existing housing association tenants who need to transfer to alternative more suitable accommodation.

The Council no longer owns any housing itself, having transferred all the properties to Riversmead Housing Association and South Anglia Housing Association. However the Council has retained nomination rights to a percentage of the transferred homes that become empty. In addition the Council has nomination rights to the empty homes of a number of other housing associations with homes in the district.

The demand for housing exceeds supply and the Register exists to enable the Council to prioritise those households that are in the greatest need and to maximise their opportunities for rehousing. The Council prioritises applications by awarding points depending on an applicant's current circumstances. The greater the number of points awarded to an application the higher that applicant's need for re-housing.

In addition the policy describes the process whereby empty homes are allocated to applicants on the Housing Register under our Choice Based Lettings Scheme (CBL).

The policy also describes the process for applying for affordable housing, such as shared ownership and mid market rent properties.

The Council's Housing Options Team uses the Housing Register and Allocations Policy to assess an applicant's housing need and to allocate applicants to empty RSL accommodation under the choice based letting scheme.

The Housing Options Team is based at both Wallfields, Hertford and The Causeway, Bishop's Stortford.

3.0 The Housing Register

3.1 Eligibility to join the Register

Any person aged 18 or over can apply to join the Housing Register. This applies whether they are currently living in East Herts or outside of the district. Applicants aged 16 or 17 can also join the Housing Register if they have been accepted by the Council as homeless and in priority need, in accordance with the Homeless Act 2002.

Applicants that live outside the district and join the Housing Register will have their 'local connection' to East Herts assessed. This is because the Council's pointing scheme gives a preference to those applicants that have a connection with the district (see section 4.1.9)

3.1.1. Financial Resources

Applicants that own or part own a home can join the Housing Register but will not be considered for an offer of permanent accommodation unless:

- a) they have an urgent need to be rehoused and
- b) they no longer have an interest in the property and
- c) they cannot afford to purchase or rent another home

Applicants and their partners who have, or will receive, equity from the sale of a property or a business in which they have or had a financial interest will be assessed as to their ability to resolve their housing need within the private sector. They therefore may not be made an offer following a successful bid for a property under CBL.

3.1.2 Exclusions to the Housing Register

The following categories of applicant will be ineligible for the Housing Register:

- Persons subject to immigration control (except in those classes prescribed by the Secretary of State as being eligible for housing)
- Persons not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area (i.e. the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and the Republic of Ireland).

Any person making an application who is identified as falling under the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 (or other subsequent relevant legislation) will be assessed in accordance with the Act.

- The local authority may decide that an applicant (or a member of the applicant's household, or visitor) is guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant.

The behaviour which will be regarded as unacceptable for these purposes, is behaviour by the applicant or by a member of his household, or visitor that would - if the applicant had been a secure tenant of a Council owned home at the time - have entitled a Council to evict the tenant subject to the terms of the Housing Acts 1985 and 1996.

This includes people who are persistently in serious rent arrears for reasons over which they have control or those who wilfully damage Council property or those who are in serious breach of their conditions of tenancy.

3.1.3 Reviews of decisions to join the Housing Register

Applicants excluded from the Housing Register will be given written notification of their exclusion with details of the applicant's right to request a review of the decision.

The letter from the Council will give clear reasons for the exclusion and if applicable any conditions that need to be met before the Council will accept the applicant onto the Housing Register. Where an applicant wishes to request a review of the decision they must do so within 21 days of receiving the letter. Requests for a review of the decision need to be sent to the Housing Options Manager stating the reasons why the decision to exclude them is the wrong one. The address is at Section 7 of this document.

The review will be carried out by a more senior member of staff than those involved in the original decision to exclude the applicant. The review will be carried out within 14 days and the applicant will be notified in writing within 14 days thereafter. The letter will explain the result of the review and the reason(s) for the decision.

An application or re-registration will be considered if:

- a) An applicant's immigration status has changed
- b) The applicant can demonstrate good behaviour for a year from the date of the letter advising that the applicant is ineligible for the register.

- c) The applicant has made and kept to an arrangement to pay off debts to the Council or previous landlord for at least six months

If the applicant is still unhappy with the decision of the review they can pursue this further by making a complaint through the Council's Complaints Procedure.

3.2 How to apply for the Housing Register

3.2.1 Application Form

Applicants wishing to join the Housing Register are required to complete a standard application form. These are available from the Council's offices and also other agencies such as the CABs and registered social landlords. A copy can also be downloaded from the Council's website www.eastherts.gov.uk.

3.2.2 How to Get Help Completing Forms

Members of staff in the Council's Housing Options Team will provide assistance in filling in application forms to join the Housing Register. Appointments are not necessary during office hours.

3.2.3 Assessment of applications

People applying to join the Register will be asked to provide proof to support their application. This is proof of identity and eligibility as well as address for example, passports, birth certificates, proof of income benefit, recent utility bills etc.

The Council will make any other enquiries as they deem necessary in order to assess the application. This may involve contacting previous landlords, health or medical advisors, police etc.

Once an application has been assessed the applicant will receive a letter, within 10 days, confirming their application details. The letter will:

- Explain the number of points the application has been awarded and what the points are for
- Include a leaflet explaining the Housing Register and how to bid for a property under the Choice Based Letting Scheme
- Give the size (and if applicable the type) of property the applicant is

eligible for

- Include a reminder to inform the Council of any change in circumstances that might affect the points awarded
- Give a Housing Register registration number
- Confirm the effective date of application onto the Housing Register
- Give a contact address and telephone number at the Council
- If the application to join the Register has been unsuccessful, (see section 3.1.3) give details of the review procedure

3.2.4 Change in Circumstances

Applicants are required to inform the Council prior to or immediately after any material change in their households circumstances, such a new baby or change of address, so the Council can ensure that their records are up to date and that an applicant is prioritised correctly.

3.2.5 Households Split through Lack of Accommodation

Members of the same family who are forced to live apart through lack of accommodation should complete an application by assuming the family is living together in whichever accommodation offers the best living conditions.

However, the Council must be informed of the circumstances of the application and the details of the other less suitable accommodation that is available to the family.

3.2.6 Access to children

Contact rights to children, who are not living with the applicant as their primary home, does not entitle the applicant to family sized accommodation. Where there is equal shared care the Housing Option Team will consider each case individually and weight will be given to factors such as which parent or guardian is in receipt of child benefit.

3.2.7 False Information

It is an offence for anyone to knowingly give false information, or knowingly withhold information in connection with an application to the Housing Register.

Anyone committing such an offence can be removed from the Housing Register or if rehoused the Council can request that the landlord seeks possession of the tenancy. In both cases the Council may prosecute and if convicted an applicant could be fined up to £5,000.

3.2.8 Renewal of Registration

Every application is reviewed each year. Applicants will be contacted by the Council's Housing Options Team and invited to renew their application.

3.2.9 Home Visits

Applicants' circumstances will be verified by means of either a home visit or if this is not possible an office interview before an offer of accommodation is made. This interview is carried out before an applicant is likely to have sufficient points for a successful bid to be made. The interview is used to ensure that the points are correct and that the size and type of property that an applicant is eligible to bid for is correct. The interview is also used to ensure that applicants understand the Choice Based Lettings bidding process and to assess whether applicants will need assistance with the process.

3.3 Homelessness

If the applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness it is important that they contact the Council's Housing Options Team as soon as possible. Each case will be assessed and dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII.

4.0 Assessing Housing Need

4.1 The Points System

The Council's Housing Register is based on a points system. Points are awarded depending on an applicant's current circumstances and the type of home in which they currently live. The total points allocated indicate housing need.

4.1.1 Number of Bedrooms

In deciding the minimum number of bedrooms required, the following guidelines shall apply:

Single person aged 16 or over	1 bedroom (single or double)
Couple living together	1 bedroom (double)
2 children same sex under 16	1 bedroom (double)

Children aged 6 or over should not have to share a room with someone of the opposite sex who is aged 10 or over.

4.1.2 Bedroom Requirements

The following table shows examples of household types and the minimum number of bedrooms for each.

Single person of any age	Studio Flat (studio counts as bedroom in a self-contained flat for a single person)
Couple of any age or couple of any age plus 1 child under 1 year old	1 bedroom
Single parent or couple & 1 child over 1 year old	2 bedrooms
Single parent or couple and 2 children of the same sex both under 16 years	2 bedrooms
Single parent or couple and 2 children where a child of 6 or over is having to share a bedroom with a person of the opposite sex aged 10 or over	3 bedrooms
Single parent or couple and 3 children of the same sex all under 16	3 bedrooms

Single parent or couple and 3 children where a child of 6 or over is having to share a bedroom with a person of the opposite sex aged 10 or over	3 bedrooms
Single parent or couple and 4 children	4 bedrooms

20 POINTS will be allocated for each bedroom less than the above standard. Assured tenants of an existing social tenancy in East Herts, who wish to transfer to a smaller property, will have 20 points allocated to their application for each bedroom that is freed up by the move. The Council will take into account at least the minimum number of bedrooms guidelines when deciding on the number of points to be awarded

4.1.3 The Absence of Facilities

Points are awarded in the following circumstances:

	<i>Awarded for absence of:-</i>
5 POINTS	bath or shower in a bathroom
10 POINTS	Kitchen facilities
10 POINTS	toilet
5 POINTS	inside toilet
10 POINTS	piped water supply
5 POINTS	hot water supply
10 POINTS	electricity

4.1.4 Poor Housing

15 POINTS MAXIMUM, in steps of 5 POINTS will be awarded if the property is unsanitary or unsatisfactory because of its condition. The Council's Environmental Health Service will be consulted before these points are awarded.

4.1.5 The Sharing of Facilities

24 POINTS MAXIMUM will be awarded if a bathroom, kitchen or toilet is

shared with people not on the application. In these cases, 1 POINT is awarded for every such person sharing the facility up to the maximum.

4.1.6 Sharing Points

1 POINT	Bathroom
1 POINT	Kitchen
1 POINT	Toilet

For example if a bathroom and kitchen is shared with 3 other people not on the application points will be calculated as follows:

$$2 \text{ (kitchen and bathroom)} \times 3 \text{ (people)} = 6 \text{ POINTS}$$

4.1.7 Statutory Overcrowding

20 POINTS MAXIMUM will be awarded when a property occupied by an applicant is overcrowded as defined by Part X of the Housing Act 1985. This is in addition to the award of points for bedroom deficiency.

4.1.8 Caravans and Mobile Homes

5 POINTS will be awarded in addition to any other points awarded if the applicant's only residence is a caravan or mobile home.

4.1.9 Local Connection

50 POINTS will be awarded if the applicant meets one of the following conditions:

- The applicant is living in the East Herts area and has done so for 6 out of the last 12 months or 3 out of the last 5 years
- The applicant is owed a duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 by East Herts Council
- The applicant lives outside East Herts and has parents, adult children or brothers or sisters who have been resident for a period of at least five years prior to the date of the application
- The applicant is an elderly person (over 60 years) and has lived in East Herts for 10 years at any time in the past and has a close relative residing.

30 Points will be awarded if the applicant meets one of the following conditions:

- The applicant is working, for at least 16 hours per week, for a company in East Herts and has done so for at least one year. This includes category 2 key workers.
- Applicants who are designated category 1 key workers and are employed in the district

4.1.10 Persons with Limited Means

10 POINTS can be awarded where economic circumstances result in difficulties in obtaining accommodation.

If the applicant is on a means tested benefit, such as Income Support or Housing Benefit, proof will be required before the points are allocated.

If the applicant is not on a means tested benefit they will need to provide information on their income and financial assets to satisfy the designated allocations officer that they meet this criterion. If an applicants is in receipt of Tax Credits the Council will include the award when calculating total income.

4.1.11 Medical Assessment

If there are medical circumstances that are affected by the applicant's current accommodation and need to be taken into account, applicants must obtain an additional medical form from the Council's Housing Options Team. When this is completed the Council's Medical Adviser will make an independent assessment and the designated allocations officer will award points. To reflect cumulative need where more than one applicant in the household has a medical need that is exacerbated by their housing condition the points awarded to each member of the household on an application will be added together.

Accommodation that is unsuitable due to disability is also assessed and awarded points under this category. Applicants that have indicated on their form that they have a disability that means that their current home is unsuitable may be contacted by Papworth Housing Advice Agency. The Council has a contract with Papworth Housing Advice Agency and they may be able to assist with finding alternative already adapted accommodation or advising on adaptations.

Points will be awarded on a sliding scale as follows:

0 POINTS	for No priority
5 POINTS	for Low Priority (low detriment to health)
10 POINTS	for Low to Medium Priority (moderate detriment to health)
15 POINTS	Medium Priority (chronic health conditions)
30 POINTS	for High Priority (serious detriment to health)
50 POINTS	for Urgent Priority (not life threatening)
75 POINTS	for Urgent Priority (life threatening)

4.1.12 Vulnerable applicants and those Receiving Care or Support

10 POINTS, 25 POINTS or 50 POINTS awarded to applicants who are unable to find accommodation themselves because of physical or learning disability, severe mental illness or degenerative disease, young people leaving care and referrals from the probation service, can be awarded up to a maximum of 50 points.

The award of such points will only be given in exceptional circumstances and will be subject to detailed social and medical consideration and satisfaction by the designated allocations officer that the applicant will be able, with appropriate care and support, to live independently in accommodation requested.

4.1.13 Security of Accommodation

This covers instances where it is known that a household is about to lose the use of their present accommodation for example where a household is required to leave tied accommodation. In addition preference is also given to households where it is uncertain whether the present accommodation will continue.

200 POINTS awarded where an applicant is subject to a Demolition or Closing Order or possession under the Rent (Agricultural) Act 1976. There is a statutory duty upon the Council to rehouse in these circumstances and so a high number of points are awarded.

If the tenancy of the applicant's home is insecure, subject to there not being any other secure accommodation available, points will be awarded as follows:

60 POINTS plus an additional maximum of 30 POINTS	If housed as homeless in shared facilities accommodation (hostel or women's aid) with a duty to provide accommodation under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, Section 193. An additional 10 points will be awarded to the application each month, if after 3 months from the date of decision, a property has not been bid for successfully under CBL up to a maximum of 30 additional points.
40 POINTS	if housed as homeless in self contained accommodation with a duty to provide accommodation under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, Section 193
25 POINTS	if likely to lose accommodation from a Notice or Order in 2 months
10 POINTS	if likely to lose accommodation in 1 year
20 POINTS	assured tenants of an East Herts social tenancy who will vacate their existing home to transfer to another social tenancy. These points are awarded one year after the tenancy start date whether it is an introductory or assured tenancy.

Without supporting evidence these points are awarded at the discretion of the designated allocations officer.

If the applicant is temporarily housed by East Herts under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, Section 193 and points are awarded on their application for Insecure Accommodation, they will not be awarded points for the Sharing of Facilities or Bedroom Deficiency.

If there is a reasonable expectation that the applicant will be offered accommodation from the Housing Register in the next 3 months and they lose their current accommodation through no fault of their own then the points on their application for insecure accommodation may be retained.

4.1.14 No Fixed Abode

40 POINTS are awarded to applicants who have no fixed abode or people sleeping rough once the designated allocations officer is satisfied that an applicant does not have access to accommodation. Where points are awarded for No Fixed Abode points will not be awarded for either Lack of Facilities or Sharing of Facilities.

This category of points is separate to those where an applicant is found to be homeless and in priority need and has been accepted for rehousing under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

4.1.15 Children / Pregnancy

5 Points for first confirmed pregnancy and 10 POINTS if the applicant has on their application a dependant child or children aged 16 years or less who live with them permanently. An application can only have a maximum of 10 points.

4.1.16 Length of Time on the Housing Register

2 POINTS are awarded for each year on the Housing Register up to a maximum of 10 POINTS.

4.1.17 Social Factors

50 POINTS MAXIMUM in steps of 10, 25 and 50 POINTS will be awarded if there are a range of housing situations which do not easily fit into other points categories outlined above. For example:

- Accepted under the East Herts Homeless Prevention Scheme (points are time limited for two months)
- Applicants accepted by the Council as statutorily homeless and placed in a private sector leased property where the term is coming to an end
- Need to locate near a special facility
- Need to give or receive support from friends or relatives
- Domestic violence or threat of violence
- Harassment
- Where a registered social landlord has recommended a management

transfer, for an existing tenant, points will be awarded to the application depending on the degree of urgency, as assessed by the RSL.

5.0 How Properties are Allocated

From March 2008 the Council has chosen to allocate the vacant homes offered to it through a Choice Based Letting (CBL) system. Choice Based Lettings is a way of allocating housing through choice, giving eligible applicants on the Housing Register greater say over where they live.

The scheme enables Housing Register applicants to express an interest in available properties, which are advertised, via a 'bidding' process. The successful bidder is the one with the highest priority number of points and if two applicants have the same number of points then the applicant who has been registered the longest.

The Council has a contract with an agency that will administer the Choice Based Letting Scheme on its behalf. The agency manages a dedicated website that explains how the CBL process works and advertises the properties that are currently available to bid for. The website can be translated into a wide range of different languages. There is also a DVD that can be down loaded for applicants that have sight difficulties and a pictorial explanation of the scheme for applicants with learning difficulties.

5.1 Finding a home

5.1.1 Advertising

The Council will advertise the properties offered to it from its partner RSLs as widely as possible. Some RSLs in the district will also participate in the scheme and advertise their own vacancies. They will be clearly marked and any additional conditions, relevant to that Housing Association will be included.

To ensure applicants are aware of the properties available, properties will be advertised fortnightly:

- On a dedicated website www.homeoption.org . There will be a link from the Council's website at www.eastherts.gov.uk to the correct page for the East Herts' properties being advertised.

- At the Council and partner RSL offices, including the homeless hostels
- In a free property news sheet sent to all RSLs, and statutory and voluntary agencies who request it e.g. CABs and also libraries in East Herts including the mobile library service
- Applicants can request a copy of the news sheet to be sent to their home address but there will be small charge for this.

The adverts will provide details of the properties available including location, size and type, weekly rent, heating, any adaptations, landlord's name etc. If there are any legal requirements such as properties in rural locations for people with a strong local connection to that community this will be clearly stated. The advert will also include the type of applicant eligible to bid for the home, for example age, disability and, for some RSLs, income levels. Applicants must also be eligible for the size and/or type of property they are bidding for. This information will be in the letter sent by the Housing Options Team confirming an applicant's eligibility for the Housing Register.

5.1.2 Applying for a property

Provided an applicant meets the eligibility criteria they can apply for the property within the deadline stated. Applicants can bid for 3 properties in any one advertising cycle. Applicants can apply to register an interest in a property, with the Council's CBL provider, via several methods:

- Interactive telephone (24 hours) telephone 8707 270460 or by text telephone 07781 472726.
- On the dedicated website www.homeoption.org . There will be a link from the Council's website at www.eastherts.gov.uk to the correct page on the homeoption website for the East Herts properties being advertised.
- At the Council's offices in Hertford and Bishop's Stortford using the available online facilities
- By postal voucher. A batch of vouchers will be sent to applicants with their Housing Register acceptance letter.
- Using an advocate that an applicant has given authorisation to such as a family member or a support worker

Applicants must have their registration number, date of birth of the applicant

and the property reference to make a bid.

5.1.3 How an offer is made

Once the advert deadline has passed the Housing Option Team will have access to a report listing all the advertised properties and all the applicants that applied for each of them. The successful candidate for each property will be the applicant who is eligible, suitable, has the highest points, and the earliest confirmed application date. The first three applicants for each advertised property will be telephoned to inform them of their position i.e. first, second or third. The name of the three applicants will then be forwarded to the RSL or landlord that owns the property advertised.

Arrangements will be made by the RSL for the top applicant to view the property. There may be circumstances where an applicant will not be invited to view a property as they are not eligible, for instance if they have outstanding rent arrears with a landlord or if they have a Notice Seeking Possession or Notice to Quit from their housing association landlord. At the viewing the applicant will be given further details about the property, conditions of tenancy and date the property is expected to be available. The first placed applicant will then have one day to consider whether to accept the tenancy. If they refuse the verbal offer then the RSL will contact the second placed applicant and make arrangements for them to view the property. There is no penalty or deferral from the Housing Register for an applicant who refuses a property that they have successfully bid for; unless the applicant is homeless (further details are in section 5.1.5).

Some people who have been identified as vulnerable may be given longer time to consider the offer of the tenancy. Examples of this may include people who are in hospital or in respite care. The Housing Options Team and the Housing Associations will consider each request for extra time on an individual basis.

5.1.4 Feedback

At each advertising cycle feedback will be given, in the news sheet, on the results of the previous advertisements. The feedback will show:

- Property type
- Location

- Number of applicants who applied for each property
- The points level of the successful applicant
- Effective date of the top bidder

Regular feedback will also show any properties that were allocated outside of the choice based letting scheme and the reasons for that. Feedback is considered important as it will inform applicants where properties are more likely to come available and where their best chances are of making a future successful bid.

5.1.5 Homeless Households

All applicants accepted by the Council under the Homeless Legislation will be able to take part in the scheme and bid for up to three suitable properties in each bidding cycle. All Homeless applicants, other than those placed in one of the Council's private sector leased properties, will be expected to bid for suitable properties within three months of their application acceptance date. Where no bids are registered the applicant will be interviewed by a member of the Housing Options Team. Part of the interview process will be to confirm that the applicant understands and has access to the bidding process. If no properties, for which they are eligible, had become available in that three month period, or they bid unsuccessfully, the period for bidding will be extended for a further three months. To facilitate move on within the Council's hostel accommodation and Women's Aid the Council will award additional points to an application if after three months a successful bid has not been made up to a maximum of 30 points. After six months the Council will have the right to make an expression of interest on behalf of that applicant for the next suitable property.

If the expression of interest is successful, whether made by the applicant or the Council on their behalf, the applicant will receive only one offer of that property as fulfilment of the Council's homeless duty under part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and no further bids will be accepted from that applicant.

Applicants accepted by the Council under the Homeless Legislation who move into the one of the Council's private sector leased properties will not be expected to bid for a property for at least one year from the start of the tenancy. At the end of one year, or earlier if it is agreed that the accommodation is no longer appropriate, or if the lease is coming to an end, the applicant will be interviewed to discuss their housing options. If the applicant wishes to start bidding under the CBL scheme the points will be

increased to indicate that their accommodation is coming to an end. Once the applicant's points level has been increased they will be expected to start making bids and the bidding timetable will be the same as for all homeless applicants under the CBL scheme.

If the homeless applicant refuses a property they have successfully bid for property or do not reply to the offer the Council's duty to find secure accommodation may be ended. The Housing Options Team will advise the applicant of their right, under the Homelessness Legislation, to a review of the suitability of the accommodation offered. They will also advise the applicant to accept and move into the accommodation whilst the review is being undertaken. If the applicant refuses to move into the property it will be offered to the next eligible bidder. The property will not be kept available for the applicant whilst the suitability review is ongoing. Where an applicant requests a suitability review and does not move into the property and the property is found on review to have been a suitable one the applicant will lose their right to temporary accommodation and the duty to them under the homelessness legislation will come to an end. The applicant will then have to complete a new housing register application form reflecting their current status.

If on review the property is found to be unsuitable then the applicant will be eligible to bid for a more suitable property under the CBL scheme.

5.1.6 Keyworkers

Some rented properties will only be available to key workers to bid for. This is because they were built using money made available by the government for this client group. They will be clearly marked when the properties are advertised.

All shared ownership and mid market rented vacancies will be marketed to keyworkers as identified from information given on the Housing Register application form. The availability of these properties can be accessed via the Zone Agent whose contact details are available on the Council's website and also in the CBL magazine.

Keyworkers are defined as people providing services to residents of East Herts.

First Priority is Fire Fighters, Police, Teachers, Health Service and social care workers and key East Herts Council and Herts County Council employees. Key East Herts Council and Herts County Council employees are those where the employer is experiencing recruitment or retention problems associated

with the cost of accommodation in the district.

Second Priority is any other Public Sector or Private Sector workers on key workers incomes comparable with or less than those of the First Priority. Comparable incomes will be published annually on 1 April by the Council's Housing service.

5.1.7 Homeless Prevention Applicants

Where an applicant has been identified by the Housing Options Team as being in a crisis housing situation that is likely to lead to them being homeless in the very near future they may be deemed to be a priority case for housing. There will be a time limited award of points, initially for two months, for the purpose of applying for properties under the CBL scheme. The applicant will have to meet all the criteria and suitability for the property when bidding.

5.1.8 Applicants in Supported Accommodation

Where an applicant is living in a Supported Housing Scheme and they advise that their tenant is ready to move on and the Housing Panel agrees the Housing Options Team will assist with the bidding process if required. Where an applicant makes a successful bid but the Housing Panel do not agree that the applicant is ready to move on the bid will be deemed ineligible.

5.1.9 Management Transfer Applicants

Existing RSL tenants that require an urgent move should first contact their landlord. The applicant's housing association will decide if a management transfer is the most appropriate course of action. If it is agreed the housing association will facilitate a housing register application, if the applicant is not already on the register, and advise the Housing Options Team of the degree of urgency attached to the case. The Housing Options Team will then award the application the agreed appropriate level of additional points.

5.1.10 Young People leaving Care

The Housing Options Team will maintain a list of care leavers, as provided by the County Council's Leaving Care Team. Young people leaving care will have their details passed to the Housing Options Team following their sixteenth birthday. The Leaving Care Team will provide sufficient up to date information such that when the young person is seventeen and a half, and they are considered able to sustain a tenancy and have been provided with a support package, they can be placed onto the Council's Housing Register and will be eligible to bid under CBL.

5.2 Support for Vulnerable Applicants

The Council recognises that Choice Based lettings will mean that applicants will have to be far more active looking for vacancies than the previous system whereby applicants were offered what was considered to be a suitable vacancy by the Housing Options Team. The Council needs to ensure that the benefits of CBL are accessible to all applicants on the Housing Register right through the process from access to a bidding method to capacity to make decisions and strategies for bidding. We will try to do this via a variety of targeted methods. However we will continually update and address any concerns as they arise and tailor our approach where possible.

- Targeted mail outs of property information by post and email to geographically isolated people or people with mobility issues
- Send property information to agencies and advocates
- For applicants who may not be able to bid at all the system can place an automatic bid for properties that they are eligible for.
- Advocacy bidding will be allowed to make use of an applicant's existing networks of informal support from family, friends etc as well as formal agencies. There are no penalties, such as deferral on the Housing Register, for applicants that refuse properties (except in the case of statutorily homeless).

The agency managing the scheme will send the Housing Options Team regular monitoring reports, one of which will show applicants eligible for properties who have or have not bid. These reports will trigger a further assessment of housing need and assistance by the Housing Options Team.

5.3 Properties not included in the Choice Based letting scheme

5.3.1 Urgent need for re-housing

In exceptional cases there may be a need for allocating a property to a person who needs an urgent move. Urgent need to move is defined as significant danger to the health or safety of a person. In such cases a suitable property will be identified by the Council and matched to the applicant outside of the normal bidding process.

5.3.2 Applicants who may pose risk

It maybe agreed with partner agencies that an applicant, may pose risk to the community and should not be able to use the CBL system and that a direct offer of accommodation should be made by the Housing Options Team.

5.3.3 Nomination agreements with specialised housing providers

To help local agencies find more independent accommodation for their clients or residents the Council have agreed, each year, to provide them with a limited amount of accommodation. The current schemes included are:

- Vale House
- YMCA

These arrangements do not apply to people who have been accepted under the homeless legislation.

5.3.4 Local Lettings Policies

The priority for particular properties can be varied to take account of local circumstances, to achieve a better tenant mix and a more balanced or sustainable community.

6.0 Rehousing Outside the East Herts area

The Council does have access to a small amount of accommodation in some neighbouring local authorities and we can put forward applicants from our Housing Register when vacancies occur. These properties will also be advertised in the CBL magazine and will be clearly marked as being in another local authority area. Further details are available from the Council's Housing Options Team.

Existing housing association tenants that wish to move either within or outside of East Herts may be able to exchange their accommodation with another housing association tenant. Further details can be obtained from the appropriate landlord housing association.

7.0 Help and Advice

Any applicant who has questions about their application or the Choice Based Letting Scheme can contact the Council's Housing Options Team for advice or guidance. The Council's offices in Hertford and Bishop's Stortford are open 8:30am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Appointments should be made for visits, except in an emergency.

East Herts Council, Wallfields, Pegs Lane, Hertford, Herts. SG13 8EQ. (Tel 01279 655261).

East Herts District Council, The Causeway, Bishop's Stortford, Herts CM23 2EN (Tel. 01279 655261).