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Introduction

Housing authorities need to develop working relationships with other organisations at a strategic and operational level to ensure that the housing, care and support needs of vulnerable people are appropriately met. These organisations will include Supporting People teams, Connexions partnerships, housing related support providers, health authorities, social services authorities, the police and probation service. (Code of Guidance on Allocations - revised 2002)

In framing their allocation scheme, housing authorities must ensure that reasonable preference is given to the following categories of people,

- people who are homeless
- people occupying unsanitary, overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing;
- people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds;
- people who need to move for reasons of hardship

Housing authorities should consider adopting a simplified system of applicant prioritisation in place of a complex points-based approach. An appropriate approach might include systems that:

(a) band applicants into a number of groups reflecting different levels of housing need, with prioritisation of applicants within these groups being determined by waiting time, and/or

(b) give people in the most urgent housing need priority over other applicants (often by using a time-limited priority card).

Where accommodation is allocated to a person who needs to move on medical or welfare grounds, it is essential to assess any support and care needs, and housing authorities will need to liaise with social services, the Supporting People team and other relevant agencies, as necessary, to ensure the allocation of appropriate accommodation.

Choice-Based Lettings

Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) are different from the traditional way of allocating housing via the waiting list. CBL allows applicants for social housing (and tenants who want to transfer) to apply for vacancies which are advertised widely in the neighbourhood (e.g. in the local newspaper or on a website).

Applicants can see the full range of available properties and can apply for any home to which they are matched (e.g. a single person would not be eligible for a 3-bedroom house).

Priority is given to those with urgent needs, but where possible properties are allocated on the basis of who has been waiting the longest. Authorities provide feedback that helps applicants to assess their chances of success in subsequent applications.

Since the introduction of CBL feedback about making applications is that it has proved difficult for people with a learning disability.

Some thought has been given to how CBL systems can take account of the needs of vulnerable people, ensuring that vulnerable people receive appropriate priority under a CBL scheme and get proper advice and support.

This can, in part be provided through local authority housing advice services. Another approach is to involve a wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations to provide advice and support and act as advocates for groups and individual households. A number of CBL schemes have developed collaborative approaches with social services, health agencies and voluntary sector organisations.

Joint Housing and Care Assessments

Section 47 of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 requires social services to carry out care assessments where it appears someone may be in need of services and it is also a duty for authorities to notify the local housing authority if there appears to be a housing need, and invite them to assist in the assessment.

The *Joint Circular on Housing and Community Care DoE 10/92 and LAC (92)12 Para 10* says Referral procedures will need to be developed and agreed locally. Housing and social service authorities should adopt joint arrangements to deal with assessments and consider the need to nominate particular officers to be responsible.

Where a community care assessment identifies 'ordinary accommodation' as an assessed need and this need will not be met by the housing department, then a duty to meet this need will arise and it will be for the local authority's social services department to meet this need. They must either place the individual in a registered care home, or facilitate a person who needs accommodation and care into a tenancy and then provide domiciliary care.

Homelessness

There is a duty under *S 184 of the Housing Act 1996* towards those who are homeless or threatened with homeless and in priority need (*S189*) as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap, physical disability or other special reason. When someone is assessed as homeless and in priority need for reasons of vulnerability this means they are eligible for assessment under the *Community Care Act 1990* for care services and caselaw suggests that any services recommended by such an assessment must be provided.

Equality of opportunity

Housing authorities should ensure that the views of groups which are currently under-represented in social housing are taken into account when consulting on their allocation scheme and developing their lettings plans. Housing authorities should also consider making realistic plans in respect of the allocation of accommodation to such groups, to monitor their lettings outcomes, and review their allocation practices where any group is shown to be disadvantaged.

We would like to thank the Housing and Support Partnership (www.housingandsupport.co.uk) for producing this factsheet and letting us use it on our site.

Although we try to ensure that statements as to the law and other facts are accurate this factsheet gives general guidance and does not aim to cater for individual cases. Housing Options and our sponsors cannot accept responsibility for any loss incurred as a result of relying on such statements, specific advice should always be obtained on individual cases.

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