

Access to Local Authority Housing (ref 26)

- 1.** There are 2 main ways to access Local Authority Housing these are: As a homeless applicant or Via the Housing Waiting List.
- 2.** Homeless applicants take priority over those on the waiting list as they are considered to be in more immediate housing need.
- 3.** Being 'homeless' doesn't have to mean that an applicant is sleeping on the streets for example an individual might be living in unsuitable accommodation, or accommodation which is in poor condition.
- 4.** To be housed through the homelessness route applicants must meet a number of other criteria as follows:
 - Priority Need - there are clear definitions of the groups of people whose needs take priority. This includes individuals who are vulnerable because of physical or mental illness or disability.
 - Local Connection - this means that you are living or working in an area or have family in an area. There may also be other special reasons which give a 'local connection'.
 - Eligibility for Assistance - theoretically, anyone who doesn't have the resources to get their own housing is eligible. In practice the degree of need takes priority.
 - Intentional Homelessness - the Local Authority does not have a duty towards an individual who has done or failed to do something to remain in an existing tenancy. Good practice recommends that, in most cases a person with learning difficulties or who is mentally ill should not be found intentionally homeless.
- 5.** A homeless applicant is not usually offered permanent housing straight away and may have to move in to some form of temporary accommodation. Many Local Authorities use homes rented from private landlords and managed by Housing Associations to meet this need.
- 6.** When suitable accommodation becomes available an offer will be made. It is usual for a limited number of offers to be made to homeless applicants. Two is usual but some Local Authorities have a one offer only policy. Each local authority must have a 'Scheme of Lettings Priorities' and you should ensure you have a copy of this when you make an application.
- 7.** If you turn down an offer, which you consider to be unsuitable, then you have the right to appeal. If the appeal is upheld then your position remains unchanged. If you are unsuccessful then, the Local Authority can discharge its duty (subject to its Lettings Priorities) as some will make more than one offer of accommodation to applicants.
- 8.** The *Waiting List Application* is separate to the *Homeless Application*. Even if the Local Authority has discharged its duty to you as a homeless applicant you can still be housed from the waiting list.
- 9.** Many Local Authorities operate a points system to decide who will be housed and when. Points are awarded for overcrowding, lack of amenities, medical reasons and time on the spent on the list for example. In effect the greater and more urgent your housing need the more points you will get. Not all Local Authorities operate a points system.
- 10.** Choice Based Lettings – A pilot of 27 housing providers has been set up to offer Choice Based Lettings. Under such schemes applicants are invited to 'bid' for vacant properties advertised on a regularly updated list for example a magazine or a website. In order to be eligible to bid for a property the applicant must be on the Housing Register or registered as Homeless with the appropriate Local Authority. Allocations are made to the bidder nearest to the top of the list.

11. The Local Authority in question must give reasons for any decision reached and the processes employed.

Local Authorities have a duty to provide housing advice including a 24 hour emergency service. Advice may not be provided in house but contracted out to other agencies such as housing advice centres. For more on this see the *Quick Brief Advice and Information from Local Authorities (ref 21)*.

If you require further information or have other queries contact Housing Options.

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