

# Social Housing Allocations Scheme consultation

## Customers

### **Background**

Our Allocations Scheme explains the rules, criteria and procedures that determine how we allocate social housing to residents in the borough.

We last reviewed our scheme in 2016. Since then there have been changes in Government policy and legislation.

We also now have more than 22,000 households on the Housing Register and last year only 1,400 homes became available for re-letting.

In view of these changes, and the growing demand for social housing, it's time to review and make changes to the scheme:

We'd welcome your comments and views on our proposals for change, which are in line with legislation, new government policy and housing market changes.

We will consider all the comments made after the consultation has closed. Cabinet will then review the new policy later this year. If approved we aim to implement the new policy early in the New Year.

The consultation will close at 5pm on 30 November.

# Housing Register

## Background

Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 states that when framing an allocation scheme to determine allocation of priorities, we must ensure that certain groups of applicants are given 'reasonable preference' including:

- People who are homeless
- People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability; and
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others)

In addition to the groups shown above, Oldham Council accepts applications from people who have no recognised housing need but would like to rent a social housing property. There are over 22,000 households on the Housing Register and more than 19,000 have no recognised housing need. At the same time the number of annual lets in the borough has fallen from over 2,000 down to 1,400.

This means that the demand for social housing is nearly 16 times the number of properties available to rent!

## Our Proposal

The Council therefore believes we should prioritise allocation only to those who qualify for Reasonable Preference and accept new applications from only those who have a recognised housing need.

Q1 **To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?**

Strongly agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Q2 **Why do you think this? Please include any suggestions for change you may have.**

# Households with no recognised housing need on the Housing Register

## Background

Under the new proposals the existing 19,000 households with no recognised housing need will not be entitled to social housing.

## Our proposal

Instead of removing these households from the register entirely, their details will be kept on a mailing so that the Council and its registered provider partners can promote other types of housing products which may be of interest to them, for example, shared ownership, private rented, etc.

### Q3 To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal?

Strongly agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

### Q4 Why do you think this? Please include any suggestions for change you may have.

# Revised Priority Banding Structure

## Background

We prioritise households using a banding system by grouping applicants into a number of bands, which reflect differing levels of housing needs. We use this method because its easier for the applicant to understand, and simpler for us to administer.

## Our proposal

In the revised structure we will have four bands. Band 1 is the highest priority, and band 4 is the lowest priority.

<p><b>Band 1: Urgent need to move due to Reasonable Preference Plus Additional Preference</b></p>	<p><b>Band 2: Need to Move due Reasonable Preference Plus WorkingXtra</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospital discharge</li> <li>• Serious medical, welfare or disability</li> <li>• Severe overcrowding</li> <li>• Exceptional need to move</li> <li>• Armed forces personnel</li> <li>• Private Sector property which has one or more Category 1 Hazard (excluding Overcrowding) and a Prohibition Order has been served</li> <li>• Under-occupation</li> <li>• Adapted property</li> <li>• Statutory homeless</li> <li>• Move on from Supported Accommodation or Care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcrowding</li> <li>• Children living at height</li> <li>• Medical grounds</li> <li>• Welfare grounds</li> <li>• Hardship grounds</li> <li>• Fostering and Adoption</li> <li>• Unsatisfactory housing conditions in the Private where there one or more Category 1 Hazard (excluding Overcrowding)</li> <li>• Homeless prevention</li> </ul>
<p><b>Band 3: Need to Move due to Reasonable Preference but does not meet WorkingXtra criteria</b></p>	<p><b>Band 4: Need to Move due to Reasonable Preference but with Reduced Priority</b></p>
<p>Same as Band 2 but these households don't meet the WorkingXtra criteria – <a href="#">click here</a> for more information WorkingExtra</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homeless (intentional)</li> <li>• Housing arrears or other housing related debt defined within this scheme</li> <li>• Refusal of a reasonable offer</li> <li>• Unresolved breach of a tenancy agreement</li> <li>• Equity, income or savings above threshold (£60k)</li> </ul>

More details on our reasonable preference criteria can be found at [www.oldham.gov.uk/shas](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/shas)

Q5 **To what extent do you agree or disagree with our revised banding structure?**

Strongly agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Q6 **Why do you think this? Please include any suggestions for change you may have.**

# Refusal of suitable offer policy

## Background

Our proposals will continue to support households who are assessed in housing need to have the opportunity and choice to bid on suitable properties to meet their needs. However, we continue to experience difficulties in contacting applicants who have bid and/or experienced applicants arranging viewings that they do not attend and making offers of tenancies which are then not accepted. These actions place an administrative burden on the council and our partners, as well as having the potential to increase void periods which has a financial impact.

## Our Proposal

We propose that an applicant who refuses an offer of accommodation that was considered suitable for their needs without good reason will have their banding priority downgraded to Band 4 and will remain in that band for 12 months. They will be able to ask for their application to be re-instated after 12 months. Any request for re-instatement will be subject to a re-assessment of their housing needs.

### Q7 To what extent do you agree or disagree with our refusal policy?

Strongly agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

### Q8 Why do you think this? Please include any suggestions for change you may have.

# Refusal of suitable offer policy

## **Our Proposal**

If an applicant refuses a second suitable offer of tenancy whilst in Band 4, their application will be removed from the register.

**Q9 To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?**

Strongly agree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

**Q10 Why do you think this? Please include any suggestions for change you may have.**

# Choice Based Lettings advert cycle policy

## Background

Properties available for rent from the council and its registered provider partners are uploaded daily on to the Council's My Move Oldham website, which is the Council's choice based lettings scheme, and are advertised for either 3 or 5 working days.

## Our Proposal

We propose to keep the policy of advertising properties on a daily basis (excluding weekends and bank holidays).

Q11 **To what extent do you agree or disagree with our policy of advertising properties daily on the My Move Oldham website?**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q12 **Why do you think this? Please include any suggestions for change you may have.**



# Length of advert

## **Background**

The length of advert is determined by type, size and location of the property. For example, a 3 bedroom house in popular area will be advertised for 3 days. All sheltered housing and newly built homes will be advertised for 5 days.

## **Our Proposal**

We are proposing to keep the advert cycle of advertising all homes for either 3 or 5 working days.

Q13 **To what extent do you agree or disagree with our policy on the length of advert?**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q14 **Why do you think this? Please include any suggestions for change you may have.**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey