



Housing Register Review Phase 3

Housing Scrutiny Commission

11th March 2019

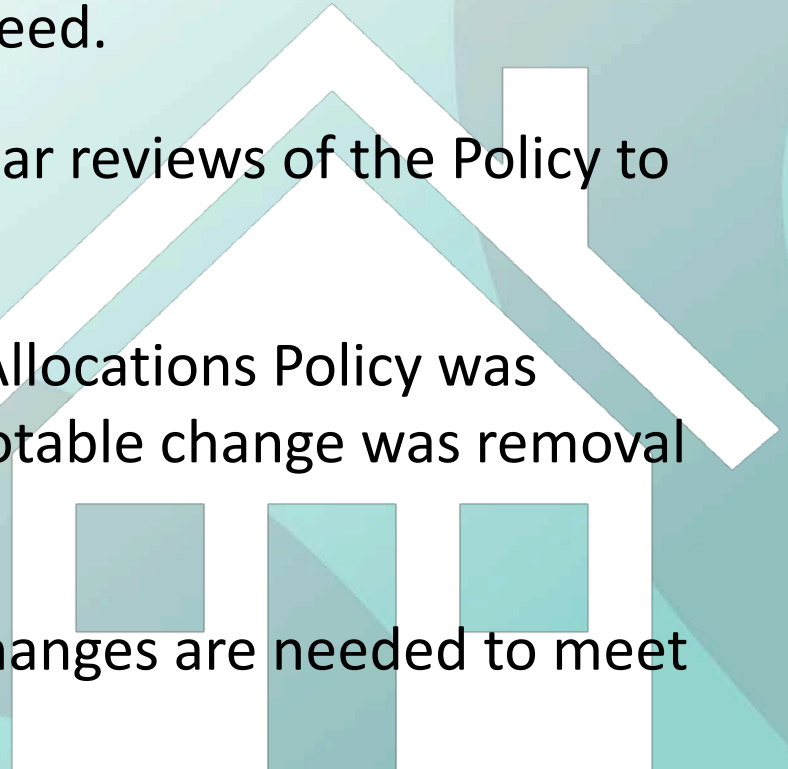
Introduction

The Housing Act 1996 requires that Housing Allocations Policies must be designed to give reasonable preference to certain categories of people. The primary purpose is to ensure that homes go those in the most housing need.

We are under a duty to carry out regular reviews of the Policy to ensure that this remains the case.

The last major review of the Housing Allocations Policy was undertaken in June 2016. The most notable change was removal of Band 4 and 5.

Almost two years on, another set of changes are needed to meet new challenges.

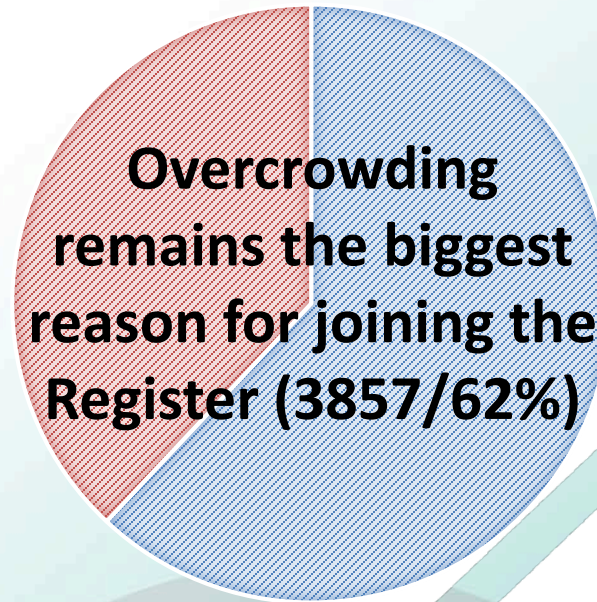


Current Housing Register Position

(As at October 2018)



Households on the
Housing Register



Within Band 2,
788 (36%) are
Homeless or
facing
homelessness.



Highest demand is for 2-bedroom
accommodation (2029/33%) of total demand

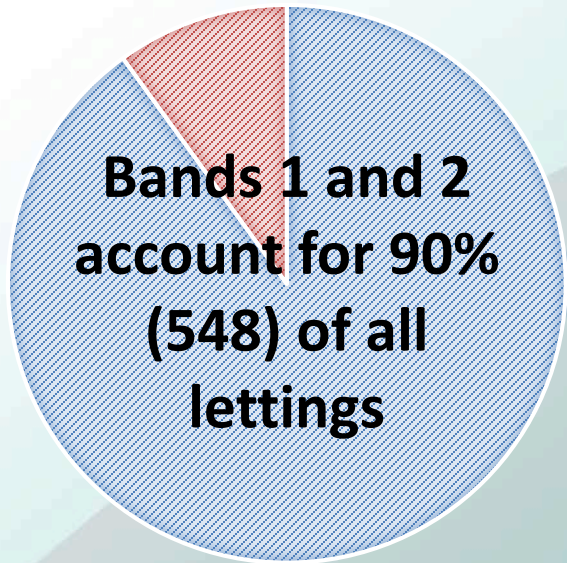
Headline Data for Lettings



**610 lets between
April & September 2018**



**9% decrease on
same period last
year.**



**Bands 1 and 2
account for 90%
(548) of all
lettings**

**Band 3 lettings account for 10% of
lettings, but mainly 1 bedroom
accommodation.**

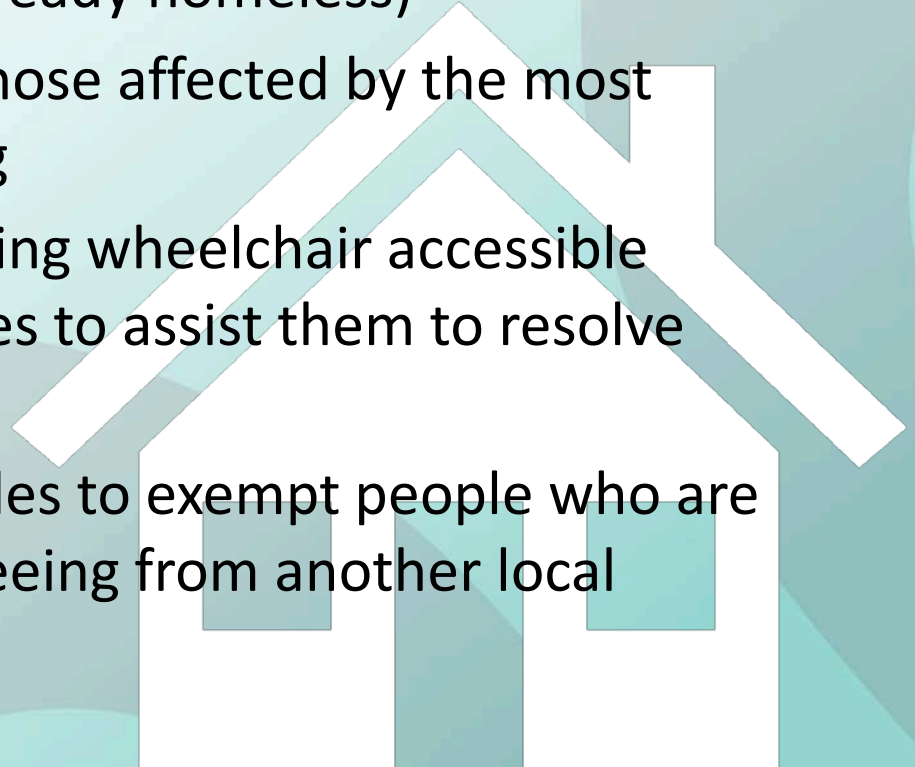
Purpose of today's presentation

- To summarise the content of the circulated report
- To seek feedback from Housing Scrutiny on the proposals outlined within this report



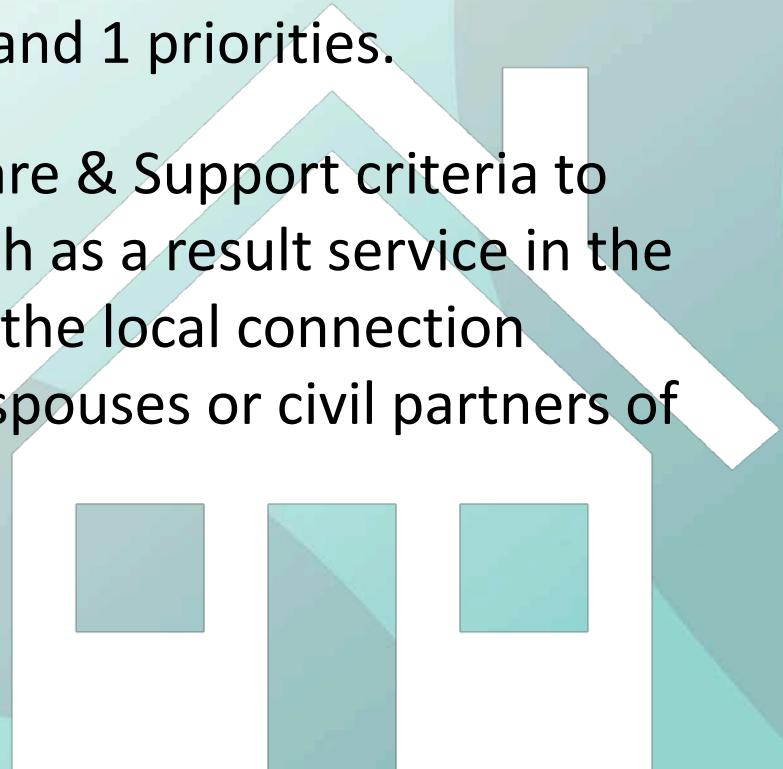
Summary of Proposals

1. Giving increased priority to people who are owed a homeless duty (includes those at risk of losing their home in the near future, and those already homeless)
2. Giving increased priority to those affected by the most severe levels of overcrowding
3. A review of households needing wheelchair accessible accommodation and initiatives to assist them to resolve their needs
4. Changing local connection rules to exempt people who are victims of domestic abuse, fleeing from another local authority area



Summary of Proposals

5. A review of applications with Insecure Accommodation priority
6. A review of all applications with Band 1 priorities.
7. A change to the Access, Health, Care & Support criteria to specifically include ill mental health as a result service in the Armed Forces, and a relaxation of the local connection criteria for divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel.



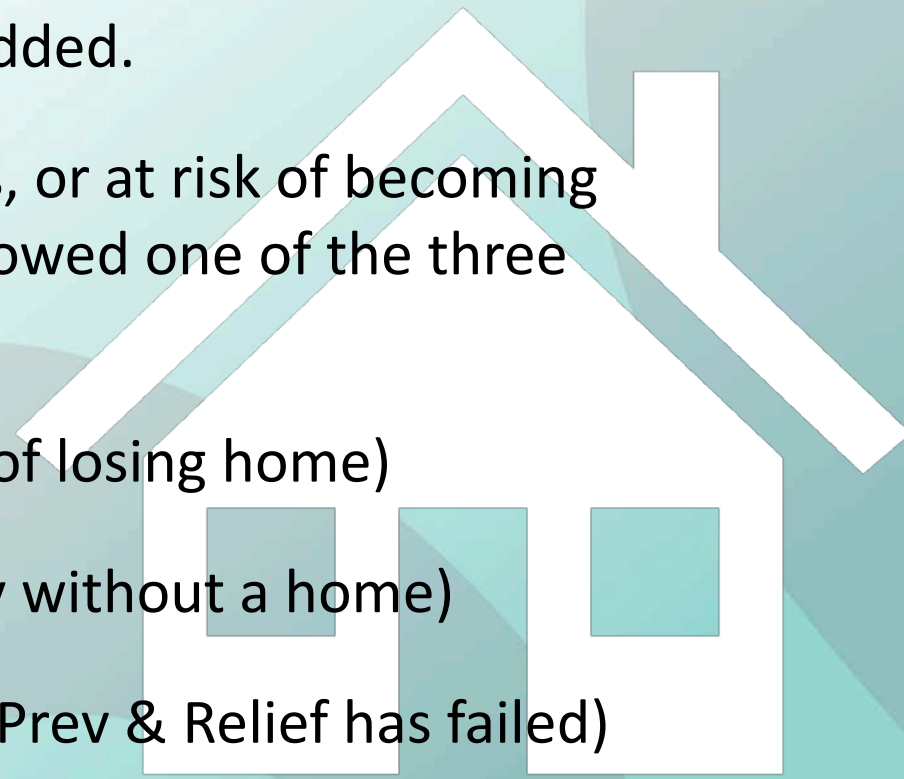
Homelessness Priority Need for Change

Brief background

In April 2018 the Homelessness Reduction Act came into force and new homeless duties were added.

All households who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless in the near future, are owed one of the three homeless duties:

- **Prevention** (for those at risk of losing home)
- **Relief** (for those already without a home)
- **Main** (for those where Prev & Relief has failed)



Homelessness Priority Need for Change

Why is a change needed?

Two new categories were added in April 2018 to give reasonable preference to the two new duties. These awards are time-limited by nature of the circumstances under which they are awarded.

- positive impact for Singles and Childless Couples
- **but** negligible impact on Families due to the length of time it takes to receive an offer of accommodation – not achievable within the lifecycle of a typical homeless application
- difficulty moving families on creates additional pressure on temporary accommodation
- disparity between the two groups (those with children, and those without)

Homelessness Priority Need for Change

Proposal

We propose to increase banding priority (giving time-limited Band 1) to certain households who are owed a Homelessness duty.

Impact

Expected to;

- further enable the opportunity for households who are facing homelessness to achieve an offer of alternative accommodation before they lose their current accommodation.
- enable those who are already homeless to achieve a quicker move-on from temporary accommodation.
- reduce need for Temporary Accommodation, and its associated costs

Severe Overcrowding Need for Change

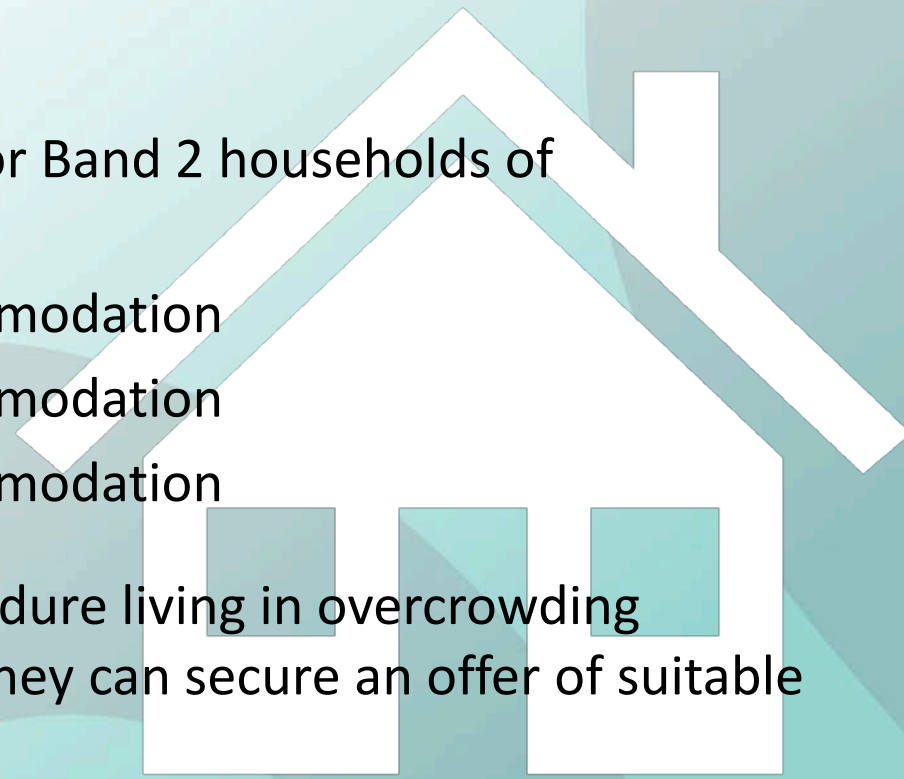
Brief background

Households with the highest levels of overcrowding are currently given a Band 2 priority.

The current average waiting times for Band 2 households of approximately

- 17 months for 2-bedroom accommodation
- 21 months for 3-bedroom accommodation
- 57 months for 4-bedroom accommodation

This means families are having to endure living in overcrowding conditions for several years before they can secure an offer of suitable accommodation.



Severe Overcrowding Need for Change

Proposal

We propose to move those households who are the most severely overcrowded to Band 1.

Impact

Expected to;

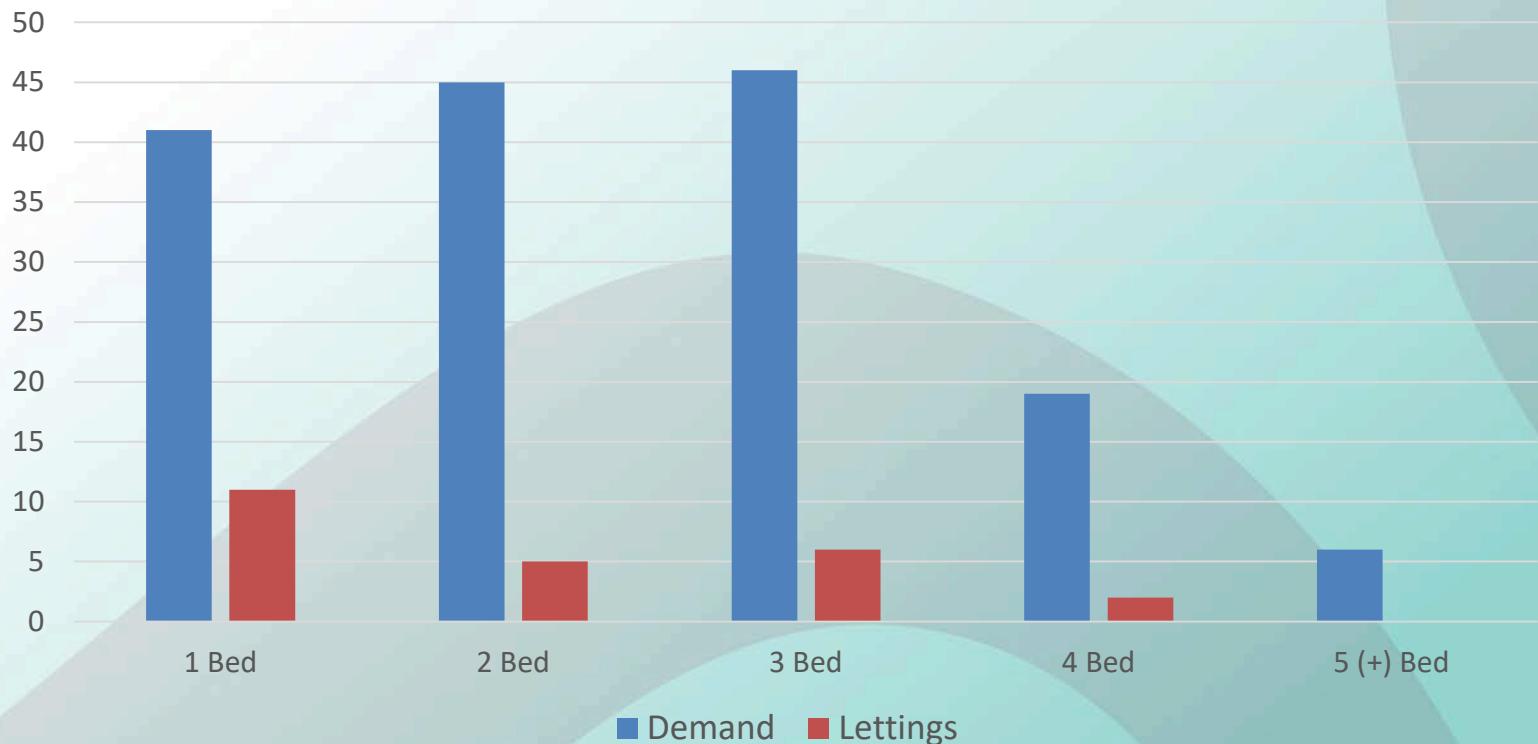
- ensure that the register reflects the different levels of overcrowding and that those who are most severely/statutorily overcrowded receive the highest priority



Wheelchair Adapted Housing Need for Change

Brief background

The demand for wheelchair accessible accommodation outstrips the current supply of wheelchair adapted housing.



Wheelchair Adapted Housing Need for Change

Proposal

We propose to conduct a review of all households seeking wheelchair accessible accommodation could potentially lead to resolution of often difficult cases by considering different options.

Options include adapting existing general needs accommodation or adapting the disabled person's current property where possible.

Pathways already exist via OT Assessment to identify this need, and to identify the property's suitability/viability for adaptation. Further to this, joint working arrangements have been established with Adult Social Care to ensure that the most urgent cases are identified and options for these cases fully considered.

Victims of Domestic Violence / Abuse (DVA) from other Local Authority Areas

Brief background

Statutory guidance encourages local authorities to consider exempting from their residency requirements those who are currently living in a refuge or other form of temporary accommodation having fled from domestic violence in another local authority area.

Proposal

We propose to relax the local connection rules for victims of DVA.

Impact

Those who need to escape from domestic abuse will be enabled to apply to this housing district so they can re-build their lives away from abuse and harm.

Veterans and their families

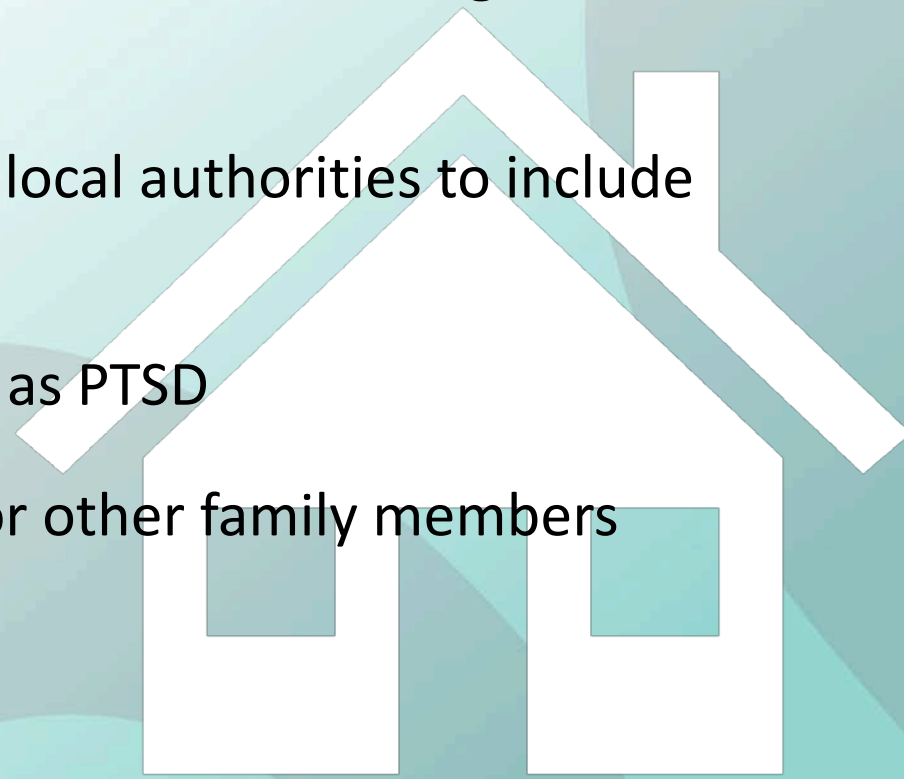
Need for Change

Brief background

Priority is currently awarded to Veterans and serving members of the Armed Forces.

Recent guidance has encouraged local authorities to include specific consideration of;

- related health conditions such as PTSD
- local connection restrictions for other family members following separation.



Veterans and their families

Need for Change

Proposal

We propose to introduce two changes affecting veterans and their families in order to comply with impending Guidance (currently under consultation).

1. Include a reasonable preference for veteran 'medical and welfare' within the Access, Health, and Support criteria. This would be in line with guidance to reflect mental ill health conditions commonly affecting veterans of the Armed Forces. The priority would sit within Band 1.
2. Write an exemption into the Connection requirement, to exempt divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who are required to move out of accommodation provided by the MOD.

Impact

It is not expected that this will impact on the Housing Register in any significant way as numbers are expected to be very low.

Impact & Risks

As with all changes to the Housing Allocations Policy where banding priorities are reconfigured, there will be impacts to waiting times for households on the Housing Register.

With any reconfiguration of banding schemes there will always be winners and losers. However, the main aim and objective of any change is to ensure that social housing continues to be allocated to those in the highest housing need.

The changes proposed within this report will give more preference to those with the highest need for housing, most notably giving higher preference to those without a home at all.

Currently the vast majority of lettings go to those households in Band 2

Questions?

