

Proposed Changes to the Housing Allocations Policy

	CURRENT RULES (What we do now)	NEW RULES (What we're recommending)	Potential impact on households on the housing register
1.	<p><b><u>Bedroom Eligibility</u></b></p> <p>A separate bedroom is allocated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each married or cohabiting couple or single parent</li> <li>• Any other person aged 21 years or more</li> <li>• Each pair of people of the same sex aged 0-20, provided the age gap between the two is no more than 10 years</li> <li>• Each pair of children under 7</li> <li>• Any person who cannot be paired</li> </ul>	<p>Revised Bedroom eligibility (in line with HB criteria that will be introduced on the 01/04/2013)</p> <p>A separate bedroom is allocated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each married or cohabiting couple or single parent</li> <li>• Any other person aged 16 years or more</li> <li>• Each pair of children of either sex under 10 years</li> <li>• Each pair of people of the same sex aged under 16 years.</li> <li>• Any person who cannot be paired</li> </ul> <p><b>(IN RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION FEEDBACK)</b></p>	<p>Under the current bedroom eligibility criteria families with children of the opposite sex aged 7 years and over are eligible for an additional bedroom. However this differs from the criteria used for housing benefit purposes where children of the opposite sex are expected to share up to the age of 10 years.</p> <p><b><i>IMPACT: This means if we continue the current policy of allocating 3 bedroom accommodation to families with 2 children of the opposite sex when one of the children reaches 7 years, the family would have to make up the shortfall in their rent payments as the revised housing benefit criteria will only pay HB on the basis of a 2 bed need.</i></b></p> <p>We recognise that this change is likely to increase the demand for 2 bedroom accommodation and remove the choice option of a larger home (especially for families who are not benefit dependent).</p> <p>In the last year, 2 bedroom accommodation that became available were:</p> <p>%age flats %age houses</p>

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2.	<p><b><u>Access to Children</u></b></p> <p>At present where a parent has part week overnight access to their children following a relationship breakdown, they can be considered for an additional bedroom. In the case of single parents it will be a 2 bedroom flat only.</p>	<p>People who have part week overnight access to their children. , <b><i>will only be considered for the number of bedrooms based on their household who live together on a fulltime basis</i></b></p>	<p>IMPACT This would impact on circa 135 households with part week overnight access to children on the housing register <b><i>but could benefit families with 1 or 2 children as this could free up the supply for 2 bedroom flats.</i></b></p> <p><u>Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on family live</li> <li>• Mainly estranged fathers who live on their own and have part time access to their children, that will be affected</li> </ul> <p><u>Our rationale for this change</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The HB criteria will be applied strictly with little/no discretion</li> <li>• If we continue to allocate extra bedrooms where only access arrangements exist then there will be financial hardship for council tenants</li> </ul>

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			<p>( that are benefit dependent) as there will be a shortfall in HB payable. We know that this shortfall will place a burden on the tenant and can lead to the tenant getting into arrears with rent and ultimately risk losing their home.</p>
3.	<p><b><u>Families with 2 Children</u></b></p> <p>Families with two children who are under the age of 7 years can <i>choose to be considered for 2 and 3 bedroom accommodation under the current rules*</i>. This is a flexibility permitted under current rules.</p> <p>*A separate bedroom is allocated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each married or cohabiting couple or single parent</li> <li>• Any other person aged 21 years or more</li> <li>• Each pair of people of the same sex aged 0-20, provided the age gap between the two is no more than 10 years</li> <li>• <b>Each pair of children under 7</b> <b>Any person who cannot be paired</b></li> </ul>	<p>Families with two children who are of the age/sex where they under the age of 10 years can only be considered for 2 bedroom accommodation under the new rules*.</p> <p>*A separate bedroom is allocated to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each married or cohabiting couple or single parent</li> <li>• Any other person aged 16 years or more</li> <li>• <b>Each pair of children of either sex under 10 years</b></li> <li>• Each pair of people of the same sex aged under 16 years. Any person who cannot be paired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This would impact on circa 780 households on the housing register</li> <li>• Will reduce the demand for 3 bedroom accommodation</li> <li>• Remove the choice option of a larger home to families who are working.</li> <li>• It will increase demand for 2 bedroom accommodation.</li> </ul> <p><u>Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children of either sex, up to the age of 10, having to share a bedroom</li> </ul> <p><u>Our rationale for change</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The HB criteria will be applied strictly with little/no discretion</li> <li>• If we continue to allocate bedrooms in accordance with our current Housing Allocations Policy rules, this will place a</li> </ul>

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			<p>financial burden on households as HB rules will only consider paying benefit when children reach the age of 10 and over. This will place families at risk of rent arrears and risk losing their home very quickly.</p>
4.	<p><b><u>Families</u></b></p> <p>The unborn child is treated as if the child was already born and considered part of the household for bedroom eligibility purposes <b>when the mother is over 20 weeks pregnant.</b></p>	<p>Unborn children <b>will only be considered as part of the household for bedroom eligibility purposes when the baby is born.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is likely to impact on circa 410 households on the current housing register and would relay the demand for family accommodation.</li> <li>• Where parents live in one bedroom accommodation, babies will need to sleep in the same bedroom. This is common in first year for many babies.</li> <li>• The Housing Allocations Policy currently gives Band 2 priority to families living in 1 bedroom accommodation. There is an average 6 – 8 month waiting time for an allocation of 2 bedroom accommodation with this priority.</li> </ul> <p><u>Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families may be regarded as overcrowded when the baby is born</li> </ul>

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			<p>and this may place additional stress until a new home is offered.</p> <p><u>Our rationale for change</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The HB criteria will be applied strictly with little/no discretion</li> <li>• Financial strain on family as they will have to make up any rent shortfall as HB payments will not cover extra bedroom where child is not born</li> <li>• We have mitigated this impact by awarding Band 2 priority on Housing Register when baby is born and the family are living in one bedroom accommodation. With this priority there is a good chance of the family achieving an offer after 6-8 months waiting on the register.</li> </ul>
5.	<p><b><u>Under-occupation</u></b></p> <p>Social tenants under-occupying 4 bedroom or more accommodation can choose 1, 2 or 3 bedroom accommodation irrespective of their family size and are in Band 1</p> <p>Social tenants under-occupying 2 &amp; 3 bedroom accommodation are given Band 3 priority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Band 1 priority is extended to include any social tenant who is living in family sized accommodation and               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) under-occupying by two or more bedrooms</li> <li>or</li> <li>b) singles/childless couples under-occupying 2 bedroom accommodation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>This would impact on circa 250 households on the current housing register. It could give a net gain of 2 and 3 bedroom accommodation through people moving into 1 bedroom</p> <p><u>Our rationale for change</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is to enable social tenants living in accommodation where HB is restricted under the new rules to have a good</li> </ul>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social tenants under-occupying 3 bedroom accommodation who require 2 bedrooms will be given Band 2 priority.</li> </ul>	<p>chance of securing more appropriate size accommodation with their priority.</p>
6.	<p><b><u>Access, Health, Care &amp; Support Assessments</u></b></p> <p>Consideration is given for an additional bedroom under the Access, Health, Care &amp; Support assessment criteria for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Space required for life sustaining equipment</li> <li>Severe behavioural problems</li> <li>A need for an overnight carer</li> </ul>	<p>Continue with the current policy and families made aware of the HB rules which may mean there could be a shortfall in their HB.</p> <p><b>(IN RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION)</b></p>	<p>This would impact on circa 20 households on the housing register and would reduce the demand for family accommodation</p>
7.	<p><b><u>Unaffordable Housing</u></b></p> <p>People who approach the Service on the grounds that their current property is unaffordable undergo a comprehensive financial assessment to determine if their current home is affordable and sustainable. Options are considered following the assessment.</p>	<p>People who approach the Service on the grounds their current accommodation is unaffordable and in priority need will be considered for inclusion in Band 2. This proposal will help private tenants</p>	<p>The number of households this will impact on is currently unknown but it is expected there will be a significant increase in the number of households applying for housing due to affordability issues as a direct result of the benefit changes. We are unlikely to be able to meet the demand for 2 bedroom accommodation.</p>
8.	<p><b><u>Armed Forces Personnel</u></b></p> <p>Persons returning from service in the armed forces must meet the local connection rules of the Housing Allocations Policy.</p>	<p>All persons who have previously served in the armed forces will be exempt from the local connection requirement where the housing</p>	<p>Additional priority to be given to those leaving the armed forces within the last five years who are in urgent housing need and may not have a</p>

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		<p>register application is made within 5 years of discharge (mandatory).</p> <p>Where it is identified they are also in housing need they will be given Band 2 priority.</p>	<p>previous local connection to the City.</p> <p><u>Our rationale for change</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is to meet the legislative requirement to give additional priority to ex-service personnel in housing need.</li> </ul>