



**Tenancy Strategy
2022 - 2027**

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Strategic Aims	4
3. Population demographics within Gateshead	5
4. Social Housing in Gateshead	6
5. Rent Levels and Affordability	9
6. Discharge of Homelessness Duty	11
7. Granting of Tenancies	12
8. Tenancy Sustainment	14
9. Succession	15
10. Tenant Mobility	15
11. Purchasing a socially rented Home	16
12. Measuring the impact of the Tenancy Strategy	17
13. Equalities	17
14. Implementation of the Strategy	17

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Localism Act 2011 places an obligation on each local authority to have a tenancy strategy which is drafted in consultation with the housing providers. It sets our expectations and of registered providers in the borough and provides guidance on our preferred approach to tenure and affordability with specific consideration on:
- the types of tenancies they will grant
 - the circumstances under which different types of tenancies will be granted
 - when they grant fixed-term tenancies, the length of the fixed term and whether they grant a further tenancy when the fixed term expires.
- 1.2 Gateshead Council has a strategic vision to ‘make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives,’ the principles of which are:
- put people and families at the heart of everything we do
 - tackle inequality so people have a fair chance
 - support our communities to support themselves and each other
 - invest in our economy to provide opportunities for employment, innovation and growth
 - work together and fight for a better future for Gateshead
- 1.3 We value the rights of households some of whom are in the direst need, to be housed in the most suitable accommodation, and to receive the right kind of support in a tenancy which is aimed at providing them with a home which will promote their health and wellbeing. We value the need to listen to our tenants when identifying the support required and the delivery of housing services and we also value the need to identify and delivery long term housing solutions.
- 1.4 We have recently introduced a new homelessness and rough sleepers strategy and homelessness charter following a review in 2021. The main conclusions were:
- The need to develop youth homelessness joint working protocols with colleagues in social care for 16/17-year-olds and care leavers
 - Early intervention and greater homelessness prevention focus for victims of domestic abuse i.e. home security and outreach support
 - To undertake further needs analysis (Domestic Abuse, Young People and those with Multiple and Complex Needs) and review/remodel supported accommodation and floating support to better match need/demand. This includes 24/7 access to accommodation to prevent rough sleeping/use of bed and breakfast accommodation.
 - To develop a new homelessness pathway where referrals are made/coordinated via a central ‘Gateway’ with ‘trusted assessments,’ a performance monitoring framework and a better understanding of needs/demand.
 - To work with registered providers and private landlords to increase housing options for those who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness.

- To implement a changing futures programme for those with multiple and complex needs, to inform learning and system change in Gateshead as well as regionally and nationally.
- 1.5 In 2021 we also undertook a comprehensive review of allocations and tenancy management within Council stock. The review identified the need to introduce a new Gateshead Housing Model which will encompass:
- A whole system response – that includes support commissioners, registered providers and private landlords.
 - Policies and processes focused on delivering solely to meet the needs of Gateshead.
 - Consolidated ‘pool’ of specialist and general housing.
 - A digital marketplace, which enables self-service.
 - A coordinated approach to assessing housing and support needs, commissioning and allocating solution, with oversight of the customer journey.
 - Improved formalised partnership working with accommodation registered providers through a new Tenancy Strategy.
 - A single allocations scheme/policy with registered providers working with us collaboratively.
- 1.6 The Social Housing Green Paper, published in 2018, proposed a new deal for social housing. In November 2020. The Government published its White Paper, The Charter for Social Housing Residents, which affirms social rented homes as places where residents can put down roots and build communities. It also recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of people’s homes, communities and neighbourhoods.
- 1.7 Gateshead wants those allocated social housing to see their homes as genuine places to settle, not as temporary welfare provision. Residents should have control over their lives and homes as this can help to build thriving, cohesive communities. Offering lifetime tenancies at social rent levels best supports this in most cases.

2. Strategic Aims

In introducing this Tenancy Strategy we intend to deliver a number of aims:

- Aim 1:** To set out our expectations for our partner registered providers when formulating their own housing policies.
- Aim 2:** To provide a clear development mandate across the borough and specifically with areas subjected to local plans.
- Aim 3:** To assist affordable housing developers to understand what the council requires of social housing landlords who own, let and manage stock

- Aim 4:** To ensure that the supply of affordable housing is genuinely affordable and built to a good standard to meet the needs of local residents, specifically of those on low income. The development of this supply will be linked to the aims set out in the housing strategy in response to climate and net zero.
- Aim 5:** To support communities to thrive through the creation of sustainable social housing offers.
- Aim 6:** To meet housing need, whilst recognising that need changes and evolves and the service needs to be able to flex with that evolution.

3. Population demographics within Gateshead

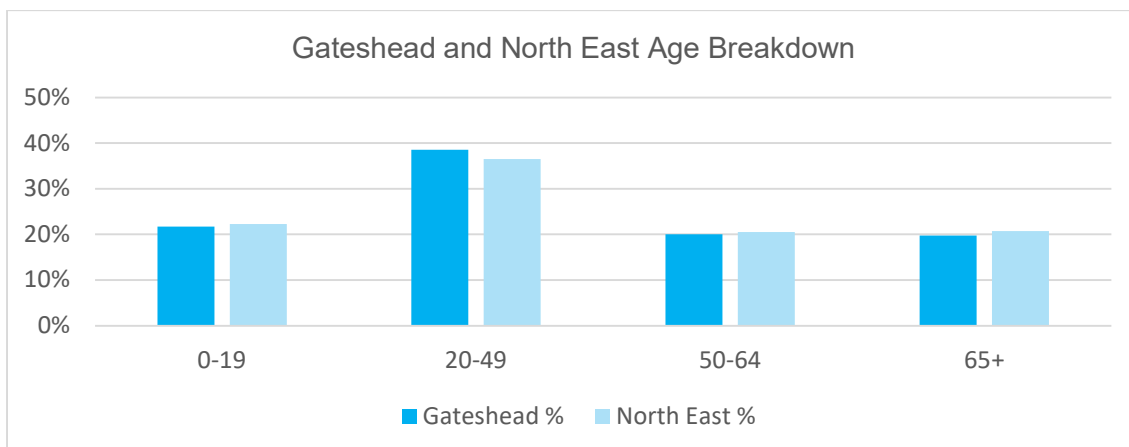
- 3.1 The borough of Gateshead is in the metropolitan county of Tyne and Wear, North East England. It includes Gateshead, Rowlands Gill, Whickham, Blaydon, Ryton, Felling, Pelaw, Dunston and Low Fell. The borough forms part of the Tyneside conurbation, centred on Newcastle upon Tyne. It is bordered by the local authorities areas of Newcastle upon Tyne to the north, Northumberland to the west, County Durham to the south, the City of Sunderland to the south-east, and South Tyneside to the east.
- 3.2 In 2021, Gateshead recorded a population of 202,823 people. The table below shows the population of Gateshead and the North East of England together with predictions until 2027.

	Gateshead	North East
2021	202,823	2,681,149
2022 (prediction)	202,807	2,687,238
2023 (prediction)	202,782	2,693,063
2024 (prediction)	202,750	2,698,668
2025 (prediction)	202,696	2,704,000
2026 (prediction)	202,630	2,709,320
2027 (prediction)	202,589	2,714,451

**Office of National Statistics 2021*

The prediction for population growth is a diminishing which is contrast with the North East a whole which expects rises between 3,000 to 5,000.

- 3.3 When we look at the age of the population in Gateshead, we can those falling between 20 – 49 years old are slightly higher in proportion to the region, whereas 50 – 64-year-olds are same across the region and those in 0-19 and above 65 are slightly lower than for the region.

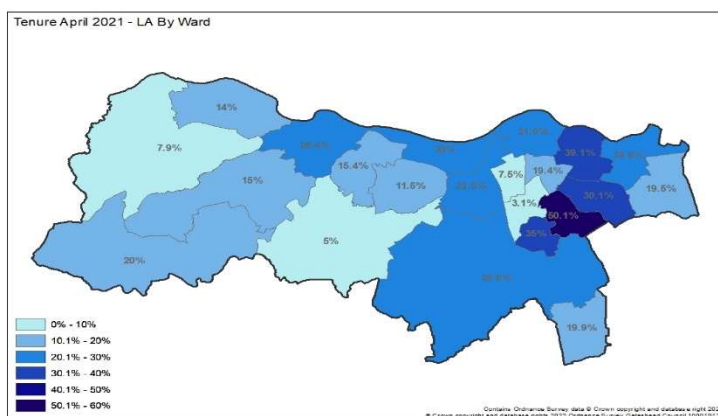


*Office of National Statistics 2021

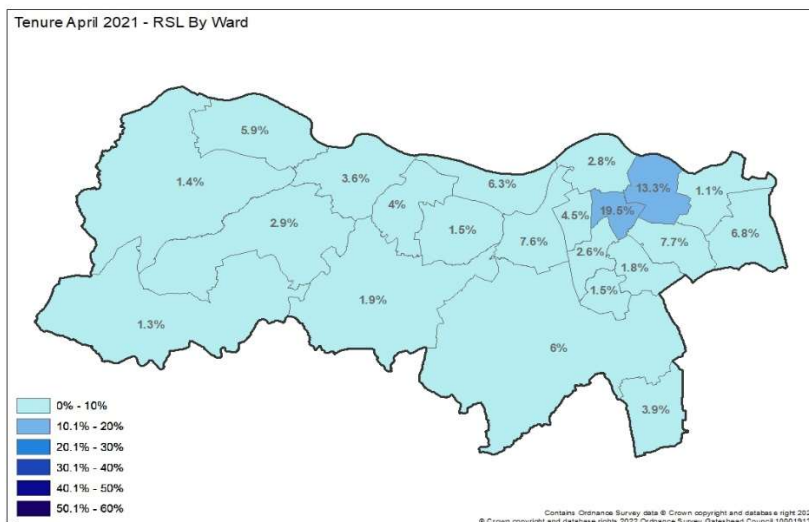
- 3.4 The 2011 census shows that 95% of the population was white British and less than 10% of the population is made up of people from other ethnic groups. The North East of England shows a similar position. The 2021 census data is imminent, and we will capture these figures once this has been published.
- 3.5 Properties in Gateshead had an overall average price of £149,949 over the last year. The majority of sales were semi-detached properties, selling for an average price of £164,130. Terraced properties sold for an average of £147,439, with flats fetching £101,290. Overall, prices were 2% down on the previous year and 1% up on the 2018 peak of £148,008.
- 3.6 Average earnings in the borough were £468 per week with the North East as a region being £528 which shows that many in Gateshead earn 11% lower than others in the region. Purchasing a property on these weekly averages will prove problematic for many residents in the borough.

4. Social Housing in Gateshead

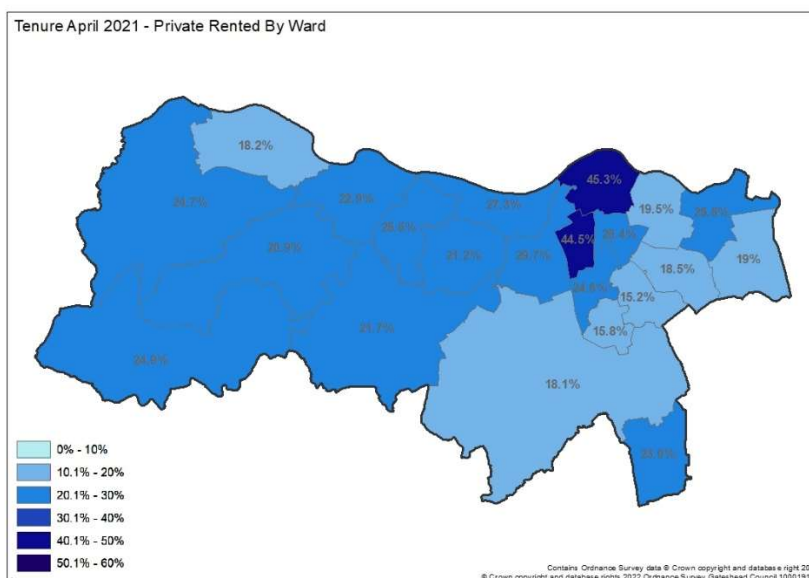
- 4.1 We can demonstrate through a series of ward maps the properties density for council stock, registered providers, private sector rented and owner occupier.
- 4.2 Council properties by ward are shown in the map below and we can see that they are fairly evenly distributed across the borough with the exception of the west. The darkest blue wards show the highest property density for council stock.



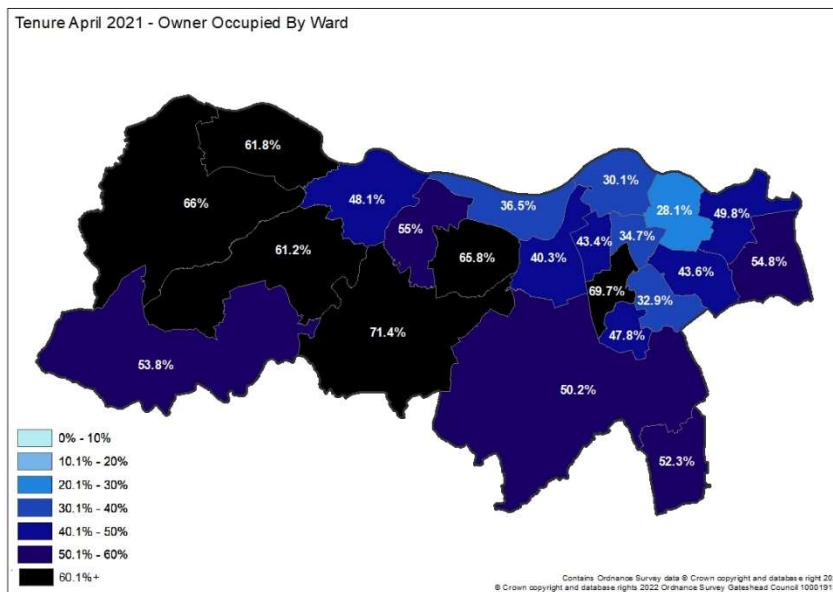
4.3 The map of registered properties by ward shown below, demonstrates that these properties only significantly appear in the north east and then primarily in two wards. There are no wards where registered providers properties exceed 20% density.



4.4 Seen below the map of private rented properties by ward shows that there a high presence of this type of accommodation with much of the borough showing density levels of 30% and some wards as high as 50%. There are no wards below 10%.



4.5 The final map (below) shows the owner occupiers by ward. We can see that that the east and south of the borough where social rented properties are fewest in number are heavily populated with significantly high numbers of owner-occupied properties; the density levels often exceeding 60%.



- 4.6 We will work with our landlords and community-led housing developers to maximise the opportunities to deliver affordable properties including social rented properties and will seek to leverage funding through Homes England funding regimes to support this where scheme viability is an issue. The priority, driven by the severe affordability issues in areas within our borough, is to protect and increase the supply of social housing in Gateshead alongside the provision of other affordable housing options.
- 4.7 We are working to deliver the aims and objectives of the Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan which is located on our website: [Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan for Gateshead and Newcastle 2010-2030 - Gateshead Council](#). This is targeting the delivery of family homes which are in high demand. We are balancing this with the need to protect our green spaces and even replace what is lost by development all of which is captured in part 3 of the strategy; Making Spaces for Growing Places: [Making Spaces for Growing Places - Gateshead Council](#)
- 4.8 There is currently a pipeline of sites identified for development which incorporate affordable housing. Of those under development it is anticipated that over 400 affordable units will be built including 286 for affordable rent. The range of affordable tenures will allow some people to get onto the property ladder and include 72 units for shared ownership and another 15 for discounted market sales.
- 4.9 Of the affordable units under construction, a range of property types will be provided. These will primarily be 2 and 3 bed houses and 1 bed flats. The Council works proactively with registered providers and developers to influence property type; this is informed by the housing register.

- 4.10 We also recognise that our registered providers may have to dispose of stock where it is not cost effective to maintain it to the Decent Homes Standard, or it is hard to let, either because of the type of accommodation or area in which it is located. Where this becomes necessary, particularly where a property has been given in trust, or where Gateshead or Homes England have invested in the property, the full gain (less any transaction and ancillary costs) from disposal should be reinvested back into the borough.
- 4.11 Social housing may be repurposed where disposal is not the most effective solutions, and the Council will work with the relevant landlord to obtain the best possible outcome.
- 4.12 The partnership between the Council and landlord ensures that adequate notice is given of any proposed disposal, thereby allowing the Council to consider the variety of options available to it.
- 4.13 To avoid property disposals as a result of poor property standards, we expect all social landlords to maintain their property portfolios to the Decent Homes Standard or equivalent or higher standard. This will also promote the benefits of better health and wellbeing.
- 4.14 There is growing evidence that by joining up planning for housing with planning for health and wellbeing, significant benefits both to individuals and communities can be seen, helping people to thrive. This is one of the Council's priorities, and our commitment together with registered providers is to:
- Deliver social homes to the Decent Homes Standard or higher.
 - Build genuinely affordable places to live where residents can settle and develop a commitment to their local community.

5. Rent Levels and Affordability

- 5.1 The government promotes work to reduce dependency on benefits, so it is important that rent levels in Gateshead are affordable and do not deter the tenant from entering employment.
- 5.2 Our Housing Strategy developed with planning sets out the delivery aims for an affordable housing programme that has the right mix of social housing products and sets out the measures that we employ to achieve the desired outcomes. We recognise a coordinated approach with registered providers is essential to deliver those outcomes.
- 5.3 Each scheme that is considered will aim for the most affordable rent level. A social rent comparison will be undertaken in order to determine whether the rents will be formula rents or affordable rents set at 80% market rent level. We have to consider scheme viability and the cost to the tenant overall in terms of rent and service charge when considering the rent level.
- 5.4 If we look at rent levels now it gives an indication of where we are and the need to keep a downward pressure on rent levels when we take into consideration the average weekly income. Rents for social housing should be based on social rent levels and ideally should be no more than 30% of a household 'take home' pay where this is viable and achievable. Higher than this and it will prove a barrier to those on low incomes including people on apprenticeships, key workers.

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Council	£75	£84	£91	£96
Register Provider	£77	£81	£89	NA
Private – 30 th percentile	£97	£115	£137	£207
Private – 80% median	£82	£101	£120	£188
Private – Median	£103	£126	£150	£235
Private - Upper Quartile	£126	£150	£173	£300

The Council also has larger units with average weekly rents of:

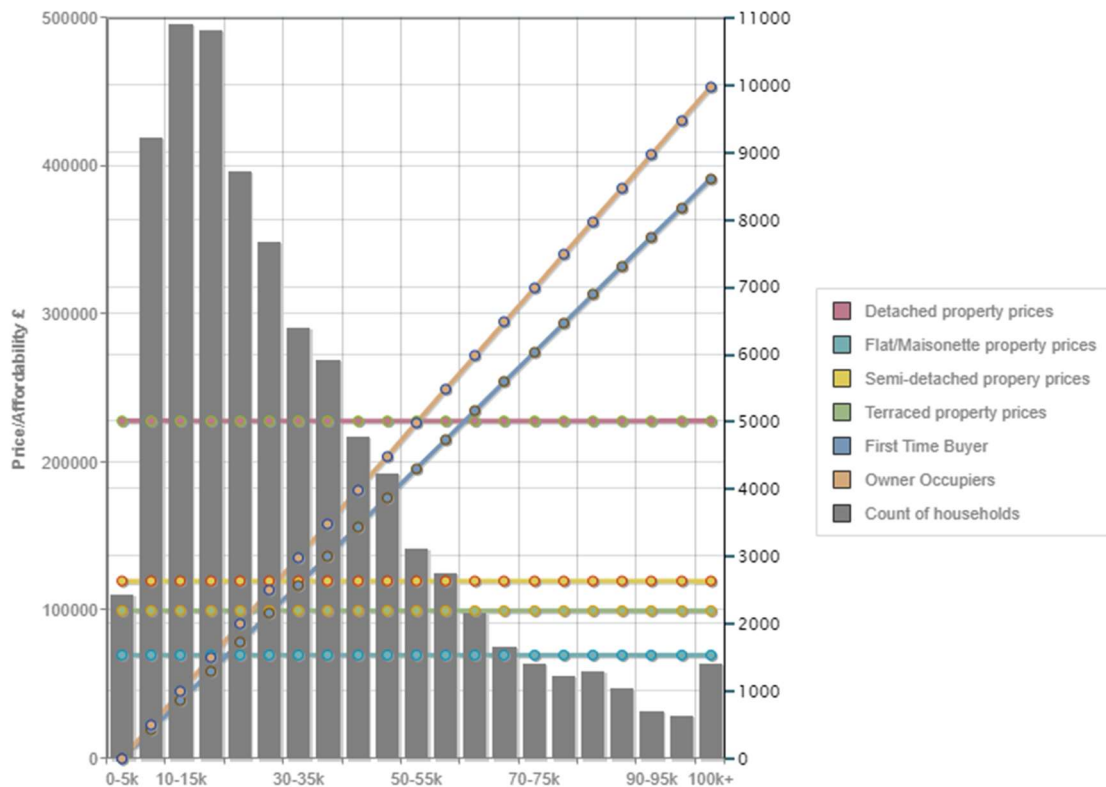
- 5 bed £106
- 6 bed £109
- 7 bed £123
- 8 bed £118

5.5 We can also look at shared ownership weekly rents in terms of affordability. The percentages represent the equity owned by the tenant. The tenant pays rent based on the equity they own and their mortgage.

	Lower Quartile			Median		
	25%	50%	75%	25%	50%	75%
1 bed flat	£44	£52	£63	£51	£62	£73
2 bed flat	£50	£61	£72	£57	£70	£82
3 bed house	£81	£98	£115	£106	£128	£151

Figures are derived from median house prices and do not include ground rent or service charges. Rents are assumed at 2.75% and mortgages payments are derived from average bank and building society rates. Loan-to-value is assumed at 90% in all cases i.e. it is assumed that the buyer has made a 10% deposit on the portion of the property they have bought. Homebuy assumes a 75% purchase with a 25% equity loan on which no payments are made.

5.6 In order to put affordability into context we may review the diagram below.



This chart shows the number of households in different household income bands in the area (bars) compared to the lower quartile price for different property types in the same area (horizontal lines). The diagonal lines rising from left to right show the value of property that can be afforded at different income multiples by a first-time buyer and former owner occupier. The affordability calculations are based on a multiple of the average household income adjusted by the average loan to value for the different types of buyer. The house price data is based on data from the Hometrack Automated Valuation Model and the incomes data is supplied by CACI.

5.7 New tenants are unlikely to have sufficient savings to secure a deposit or pay rent in advance. We ask that registered providers reflect the payment of rent in advance at sign up in their policies and have a flexible payment approach to allow the tenant to build the sufficient level of credit over time.

6. Discharge of Homelessness Duty

6.1 Since the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, local authorities can discharge their homelessness duties through an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector. Where properties of a suitable standard can be found at the right cost, Gateshead will undertake a suitability check and if successful, will make an offer of private sector accommodation in line with the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities and the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012.

- 6.2 We are working to understand the numbers of private sector landlords in Gateshead in order to secure a supply of good quality properties. Where budgets allow, we offer incentives and grants to private sector landlords to help them improve their properties and maintain them to safe standards appropriate for letting. We seek to establish affordable rents within the private sector with capping at the Local Housing Allowance. This is an area of work we would like to make strides on developing over the next few years.
- 6.3 Over the next 12 months we are seeking to build a partnership framework with registered providers which will enable us to work together to discharge our homeless duty in both council and register provider stock. As we develop the partnership agreement, we will scope the arrangements around how refugees are housed and the allocation and letting of homes from the housing register. It is intended that registered providers will be able to advertise their property on the Gateshead choice-based lettings system which is due for completion by April 2023.

7. Granting of Tenancies

Rights and Responsibilities

- 7.1 All tenants need to be able to make informed choices about their housing options. We will work with our registered providers to make the process of offering tenancies as clear and transparent as possible. It is essential that applicants understand what they are being offered. All registered providers understand the need to explain the rights and responsibilities in a pre-tenancy session usually called a sign up or tenancy determination.

Licence to Occupy

- 7.2 Tenants in our temporary accommodation are signed up on non-secure tenancies, usually a licence to occupy. The home is not permanent and only available to the household whilst the Council assesses their duty under the Homelessness legislation.

Introductory or Starter Tenancies

- 7.3 Starter or Introductory tenancies are usually offered to someone who has never held a social tenancy before or someone who requires support during the initial period of their tenancy.
- 7.4 The initial period is for 12 months, after which it will convert to a lifetime tenancy unless the relevant notices have been served to extend the introductory/starter period for a further 6 months. This may be done where the tenant would benefit from further support or intensive management.
- 7.5 The landlord must hold regular reviews with the tenant and provide them with every assistance and support to sustain the tenancy including signposting them to external agencies where necessary.
- 7.6 Where the initial 12 months has been extended or a decision has been made to commence possession proceedings, the tenant has a statutory right of appeal, and the landlord must invest in the resources to undertake these effectively.

Lifetime Tenancies

- 7.7 Social rented homes support our strategic objective to provide residents with long term, genuinely affordable homes. Lifetime tenancies are the preferred tenancy type in most circumstances and in our view, this should be the default offer to tenants.
- 7.8 Landlords are asked to offer assured (non-shorthold) tenancies (as defined by the Housing Act 1988). These can only be ended if the tenant breaches the tenancy conditions, and the landlord obtains possession through the Court.
- 7.9 Social housing tenants with lifetime tenancies that were issued before 01 April 2012, and who have remained social housing tenants, have their security of tenure protected by law. The Localism Act 2011 s.154 and regulatory framework for social housing require all landlords to offer lifetime tenancies when these tenants move to another social rented home. This includes mutual exchanges, transfers, or moves as a result of major works or regeneration. Where a social housing tenant has been given a lifetime tenancy on or after 01 April 2012, and they swap their home with a social housing tenant who has a fixed term tenancy, they will lose their lifetime tenancy.
- 7.10 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires in cases of domestic abuse, that landlords issue new lifetime tenancies, where a tenant previously had a lifetime tenancy. We expect this to be undertaken by their own landlord. but where this is not possible or they need emergency rehousing, this will be assessed under the homelessness legislation by the local authority.
- 7.11 We expect lifetime tenancies to be issued to vulnerable tenants with long term support or care needs. This may include the following:
- those with enduring mental health needs
 - those with a learning disability
 - some types of physical disability
 - older people in supported accommodation (but not adapted properties)
 - older people moving into specialist, sheltered or extra care housing, particularly those giving up a larger home and a lifetime tenancy
 - those needing specialist care

Flexible Tenancies

- 7.12 Most Registered Providers, but not all, offer fixed term tenancies, particularly when letting at Affordable Rent or the property is adapted. The Regulator of Social Housing expects that fixed term tenancies should be for a minimum of five years or no later than the 19th birthday of the oldest child wherever sooner. They may also be granted a fixed term tenancy for a minimum of two years where the initial 12 months of an introductory tenancy has been concluded.
- 7.13 Landlords who issue fixed term tenancies must have a policy supported by an Equalities and Communities Impact Assessment, stating clearly under what circumstances they will be granted.

- 7.14 Fixed term tenancies which are less than five years are used exceptionally in some of the following cases:
- for short term supported housing designated as move-on;
 - where it is linked to employment or educational opportunities such as key worker accommodation, where the renewal of tenancies should take place at the renewal of an employment contract subject to suitability of the accommodation.
- 7.15 We support the use of fixed term tenancies in properties that have been purpose built or substantially adapted for disabled occupants. Such adaptations can be expensive, and it is important that adapted homes are made available and let to those who need them. We would expect that the tenancy is automatically renewed if there have been no changes in the household circumstances. However, if there has been a change, and the adaptations are no longer needed, the household should be re-housed by their landlord.
- 7.16 Fixed term tenancies; at nine and six months before the tenancy end date. At nine months they should be given an indication as to whether their tenancy will be renewed. They must receive notice by six months if their tenancy is not going to be renewed and the reasons should be explained clearly together with an alternative housing solution plan; one of the avenues being, a referral to the Council in line with the provision made by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- 7.17 Exceptional circumstances where a tenancy is not renewed may include:
- where a tenant wishes to end their own tenancy
 - where the home has been adapted but those adaptations are no longer required, and the home would meet the needs of another household on the housing register
 - where the behaviour of the tenant is prohibitive, and the landlord has exhausted all measures to provide tenancy support.

8. Tenancy Sustainment

- 8.1 We are committed to helping tenants to maintain their tenancy in both temporary accommodation, private rented and council accommodation. The council's tenancy management policy sets our remit in relation to tenancy sustainment, and we have the same expectation of our landlords in relation to:
- a range of targeted visits during the lifespan of a tenancy
 - rehousing where financial hardship would lead to tenancy failure
 - a housing support service, covering a range of advice and assistance
 - tenant orientated employment opportunities
 - tackling anti-social behaviour through a range of measures
 - making it easier for tenants to manage their own homes.
- 8.2 The aim whether delivered by the Council or one of its partner landlords, is to provide the right aid at the right time and at times this may be bespoke to a household. Tenants who have been allocated a general needs property may need supported housing and this will be assessed as one of the measures.

- 8.3 Where a tenancy is failing but has not yet met the threshold for eviction, we may consider a safe surrender agreement if rehousing is the only way to assist the tenant and the landlord has exhausted all other ways to keep them safely in their home. The agreement would be between the landlord, the homeless service and the tenant who surrenders their tenancy on a voluntarily basis thereby allowing the Council to pick them up under a prevention duty rather than an intentionally homeless.
- 8.4 Safe surrender agreements and possession of a property should be a last resort and every effort should be made to sustain the tenancy where possible. We recognise that may not be possible where the housing needs of the individual may be complex and not suited to the accommodation. We will work with registered landlords and private landlords to find a way to keep tenants in their home and where this is not possible to identify a satisfactory solution.
- 8.5 Where domestic abuse is identified, a solution that looks at the best outcome for the survivors including children will be sought. Where relocation of the perpetrator would provide the best remedy, this may be considered as an option on a case-by-case basis.

9. Succession

- 9.1 Legislation has a provision for statutory succession rights for secure and assured tenants. There is one right to succeed. The law does not grant a further succession right if the successor then dies.
- 9.2 Historically, there were significant differences between the succession rights of assured and secure tenants. The Localism Act 2011 introduced changes to harmonise succession between the two, however there remains significant differences, the Localism Act changes affect tenancies granted from April 2012 onwards, but not those granted before that date.
- 9.3 Some landlords offer more generous succession rights than the statutory legal minimum, allowing tenancy rights to be passed on a second time or to be conferred in circumstances when the tenant would not normally qualify for a statutory succession. The rights may contractual, i.e. written into their tenancy agreement or discretionary and assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- 9.4 The Tenancy Standard governed by the Regulator of Social Housing, requires social landlords to have a succession policy which explains all the succession rights that apply to their tenants.

10. Tenant Mobility

Downsizing

- 10.1 The Council needs family sized accommodation and expects all landlords to provide incentives and assistance to any of its tenants who wish to move to a smaller property. They should be encouraged to join the housing register and their application will be awarded a priority that reflect the demand for larger properties.

- 10.2 Residents who claim benefits in under occupied units are subject to the Spare Room Subsidy (also known as bedroom tax), which can have a negative impact, making affordability an issue and having a detrimental effect on health and wellbeing. Anyone who is a permanent part of the household but not living with them at the time of the application will be taken into account before moving them to a smaller property.
- 10.3 We will work with landlords to aid in this activity and promote the available funding options to facilitate small works or adaptations to meet identified needs.

Moving for employment, social or welfare reasons

- 10.4 It is important for tenants who wish to move for employment, or for support and welfare reasons, to be able to do so easily. Applicants on the housing register wishing to transfer for these reasons will be awarded suitable priority.
- 10.5 Registered providers should enable suitable moves to support the recruitment and retention of essential key workers, health and support workers in the borough.
- 10.6 Consideration and support should be given to the priority awards set out in the Council's Allocation Policy.

11. Purchasing a socially rented Home

- 11.1 As a local authority, we are supportive of creating new opportunities for those who wish to own their own home. However, we are also acutely aware of the need to maintain the availability of genuinely affordable rented accommodation.
- 11.2 Tenants who are eligible will be able to purchase their home from their landlord provided it is not exempt.
- Council tenants will have a Right to Buy.
 - Registered provider tenants may be able to purchase through the voluntary Right to Buy or the Right to Acquire schemes.
- 11.3 Registered providers will keep the Council informed of any purchases through these schemes in order for us to maintain the data of available social rented stock in the borough.
- 11.4 As part of our working relationship with registered providers, we ask that the following properties be exempt from purchase:
- properties in rural locations, where the number of available properties are low, and the aim is to preserve current community stability
 - designated accommodation for Older People; where this accommodation is in short supply
 - specialist or supported housing
 - disabled adapted properties secured through planning obligations
 - shared accommodation.

12. Measuring the impact of the Tenancy Strategy

12.1 Gateshead will monitor the delivery of this strategy via:

- Discussions with residents of the borough
- Tenancy sustainment reviews by Registered Providers.
- Feedback from the Private Rented Sector
Annual appraisals with Registered Providers and the effectiveness of their own tenancy policies.

12.2 In addition to the above, the Council has regular Registered Provider partnership meetings throughout the year. The effectiveness of the strategy will be discussed at prescribed intervals at these meetings.

12.3 This strategy will be reviewed every 5 years – unless legislation, business or sector developments require otherwise – to ensure that it continues to meet the stated objectives and takes account of good practice developments.

12.4 We aim to mitigate any risk associated with the delivery of this strategy and its implementation by landlord tenancy policies through discussion and negotiation.

12.5 Rent levels and affordability on new and existing properties will be subject to scrutiny and aligned with the housing strategy.

12.6 The action identified by the homeless review will be planned and executed to achieve the highest possible outcome. Equally Gateshead will take the necessary measures to embed the new Housing Model.

13. Equalities

Under the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 of the Public Sector Equality Duty, Councils are required to give due regard to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, when exercising a public function such as a landlord. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This strategy complies with the Council's Equal Opportunities policy [Equal Opportunities Policy1.pdf \(gateshead.gov.uk\)](#) which sets out our commitments to ensuring in equality in service delivery. It was subjected to an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) before it has being adopted. The impact will continue to be monitored throughout the administration of the strategy.

14. Implementation of the Strategy

We will produce a delivery plan with our partners, using the aims and the actions identified within the strategy. We have a shared commitment across our key partners and stakeholders to support the delivery of this strategy, as the achievement of our vision is dependent upon their contribution. The Strategic Housing Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board will have oversight of the implementation of the strategy and will monitor and review progress.

Gateshead Council and the Housing Providers Partnership will jointly own the strategy. The intention is to establish a formal partnership to be responsible for delivery and it will include other partners. A project team will be established to drive the changes and lead partners will be identified for the delivery of specific actions.



Allocations Policy

October 2022

Table of Contents

Part 1: Introduction.....	5
1.1 Allocations and Lettings in Gateshead.....	5
1.2 The Legal Framework.....	5
1.3 Allocation of a Tenancy	6
1.4 Right to Move	6
1.5 Statement of Choice.....	6
1.6 Data Protection.....	6
1.7 Equalities, Access and Monitoring.....	7
1.8 Force Majeure	7
1.9 Changes to the Allocations Policy	7
Part 2: Allocations Delivery Model	8
Part 3: Nationwide rules on Eligibility	9
3.1 Eligibility	9
3.1.1 Special arrangements for 16 – 18-year-olds	9
3.1.2 Persons from Abroad	9
3.2 Refugees and Asylum Seekers	10
3.3 Gypsies and Travellers.....	10
3.4 The Armed Forces Covenant.....	10
Part 4: Registration for the Gateshead Housing Register.....	11
4.1 Help and Assistance.....	11
4.2 Qualification Rules	11
4.3 Non-Qualification Rules (Exclusions).....	12
4.3.1 Financial Exclusion.....	12
4.4 Applicants Demoted under Reduced Preference	13
4.5 Exceptional Circumstances	14
4.6 Making an Application	14
4.7 Verification Checks and References.....	14
4.8 Household Splits	15
4.9 False Information.....	15
4.10 Change in Circumstances	16
4.11 Cancellation of Applications.....	16
4.12 Deliberate or Worsening Circumstances.....	16
4.13 Elected Members & Employees (incl: close relatives).....	17
Part 5: Assessment of an Application.....	18
5.1 Allocation by Household Type and Property Size.....	18
5.1.1 Size Allowance	18

5.1.2	Property Allocation Table	19
5.2	Assessment of Housing Need	20
5.3	Housing Need Categories	20
5.3.1	Homelessness	20
5.3.2	Witness Protection	21
5.3.3	Public Protection	21
5.3.4	Property Condition	22
5.3.5	Medical Priority	22
5.3.6	People with Carers	25
5.3.7	Anti – Social Behaviour	25
5.3.8	Decants	26
5.3.9	Overcrowding.....	26
5.3.10	Foster Carers and Safeguarding Children.....	27
5.3.11	Young People and Care Leavers (age 16 + extended to age 24 if in further education).....	27
5.3.12	Financial Hardship	28
5.3.13	Under Occupation	28
5.3.14	Releasing or Needing a Specialist (adapted) Property	28
5.3.15	Service Accommodation	28
5.3.16	Succession	29
5.3.17	Children in blocks with lifts	29
5.3.18	Move On Agencies and Key Worker Schemes.....	29
5.4	Housing Priority Bands	30
5.5	Placement in the Band.....	31
5.6	Determination of Effective Band Date	31
5.7	Notification of your Assessment	31
Part 6: Advertising and Lettings		32
6.1	Choice Based Lettings (Advertised Properties).....	32
6.2	Direct Lets Protocol	32
6.3	How will you know which properties are available?	32
6.4	How will you know which properties you can express an interest in?.....	33
6.4.1	Assisted Bidding	33
6.4.2	Auto Bidding	33
6.4.3	Grouped Bids.....	33
6.4.4	Retrospective Bids	33
6.4.5	Failure to Bid.....	34
6.5	How are applicants' bids ranked?.....	34
6.6	How will you know if your expression of interest has been successful?	34

6.7	Offer of Accommodation	35
6.8	Refusals	35
6.9	Sensitive Lets	35
6.10	Housing with Support or Extra Care	36
6.11	Local Letting Provision	36
6.11	Tenancy Determination	37
6.12	Tenancy Sustainment.....	38
6.13	Publicising Lettings.....	38
Part 7: Decisions, Complaints and Reviews		39
7.1	Making a Decision	39
7.2	Complaints	39
7.3	Reviews.....	40
7.3.1	Registration Reviews	40
7.3.3	Legal Review	41
Appendix 1: Lettings outside of the Allocations Policy.....		42
Appendix 2: Current Resettlement Schemes.....		43
Appendix 3: Definition of Overcrowding.....		44
Appendix 4: Property Age Restrictions.....		45
Appendix 5: Percentage of Advertised Properties		48
Appendix 6: Local Lettings Plans.....		49

Part 1: Introduction

1.1 Allocations and Lettings in Gateshead

We operate a housing register also known as a waiting list for applicants who require social housing. In order to allocate properties fairly in accordance with priority need and also giving people already housed the opportunity to move, the housing register awards priority and acknowledges waiting time. The Council has properties of its own and works with a number of other housing providers who own and manage stock of their own.

1.2 The Legal Framework

The Allocations Policy is a requirement of Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. It has been framed in accordance with the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Housing Strategy, and Tenancy Strategy and embraces the principles of the Council's Thrive Agenda.

We have followed and fully considered the following housing legislation, regulations, and statutory guidance:

- The Housing Act 1996, Part 6 as amended by Localism Act 2011 (England)
- The Housing Act 1996, Part 7 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local housing Authorities in England (2012, DCLG) "the Code"
- Providing social housing for local people: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England (DCLG, December 2013) "Supplementary Code"
- Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997, SI 1997/483
- Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002, SI 2002/3264
- Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006/1294 and all subsequent amendments
- Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, SI 2012/1869
- Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, SI 2012/2989
- The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015
- 'The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/861)'
- Equality Act 2010.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and contained within the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR).
- Care Act 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

1.3 Allocation of a Tenancy

The allocation of housing by a housing authority is defined in s.159 of the 1996 Housing Act as:

- a) Selecting a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation held by them.
- b) Nominating a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation held by another housing authority.
- c) Nominating a person to be an assured tenant of housing accommodation held by a registered provider.

Social housing may only be allocated to ‘qualifying persons.’ Through the Localism Act 2011, the Council has the power to determine who qualifies for housing. [Lettings outside of the Allocations Policy are summarised in appendix 1.](#)

1.4 Right to Move

We reserve the right to give preference to the residents of Gateshead when accepting applicants onto the Housing Register. However in accordance with the Right to Move statutory guidance on housing allocations for local housing authorities in England (Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2015), we removed local connection as a qualifying criteria for housing under Part 6 of the Housing Legislation thereby enabling people who need to move to Gateshead for work or education to be considered. [Further details can be found at: Right to Move and social housing allocations - GOV.UK \(\[www.gov.uk\]\(http://www.gov.uk\)\)](#)

1.5 Statement of Choice

We aim to give all applicants who are eligible to join the housing register choice in where they live. Applicants have the opportunity to express preference by being able to bid for areas and housing that are deemed suitable for their housing need. However, this must be balanced with the need for the Council to meet its legal duties as a local authority in relation to addressing local housing need and ensuring the efficient management of its properties.

1.6 Data Protection

We will ensure personal information of all applicants (new, existing and deleted) is:

- a) Stored lawfully
- b) Processed in a fair and transparent manner
- c) Collected for a specific, explicit and legitimate purpose
- d) The data will be kept up to date and held until it is no longer required
- e) Shared only with other organisations for legitimate processing, the prevention of fraud or with the person’s explicit consent.

Our Privacy Notice which can be located at: [URL required.](#)

1.7 Equalities, Access and Monitoring

We are committed to ensuring this policy is non-discriminatory and that all applicants are able to access the service, especially taking account of any vulnerability or other specific needs, and also the needs of different groups protected by the Equality Act 2010; the Human Rights Act 1998; and for Children, Section 11 of the Children Act 2004. To identify the needs of our applicants the application contains specific questions relating to vulnerability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability and other relevant criteria. The information obtained will be used to monitor the impact of the policy on minority and specific needs groups and to evidence the need for amendments, as may be required.

Under the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 of the Public Sector Equality Duty, we are required to give due regard to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, when exercising a public function such as an Allocations Policy. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This policy complies with the Council's Equal Opportunities policy [Equal Opportunities Policy1.pdf \(gateshead.gov.uk\)](#) which sets out our commitments to ensuring equality in service delivery.

This policy was subjected to an Integrated Impact Assessment (IiA) before being adopted. The impact will continue to be monitored throughout the administration of the policy.

1.8 Force Majeure

We will not be liable for any delay in performing our obligations under this policy if the delay is caused by a Force Majeure (chance occurrence or unavoidable accident for example), provided that reasonable action and notification to customers is taken by the Council. More fully, this means, circumstances beyond reasonable control of that party, including without limitation, strikes, lock outs, acts of God, the act or omission of any governmental or other competent authority, war or national emergency.

1.9 Changes to the Allocations Policy

We reserve the right to expand, change or alter any element of this policy, as and when required, to meet changes in housing need, capacity, resources and legislation. Where a change is considered an impact assessment will be undertaken, if the change is considered to be minor with no significant impact to individuals or communities, then it may be approved by senior management within the Council. Major changes will require approval by Cabinet with statutory consultation prior to the main decision with all known stakeholders.

Where we need to regularly review information on an annual basis and set targets, we will attach the information as an appendix. This is demonstrated within the current appendices.

Part 2: Allocations Delivery Model

This section will be drafted as we expand the next phase of work within the next 12 months. We ask that Cabinet approve the policy subject to a further document being presented to them outlining the model in more detail, and that if it is then approved be merged with this document to comprise a single document.

This section will cover the mode of delivery, the key components of the way we work with registered providers and the emphasis placed on choice-based lettings and direct lets.

Part 3: Nationwide rules on Eligibility

3.1 Eligibility

Gateshead ensures that that only those who are eligible for housing or homelessness and meet the qualification rules will be placed on the housing register. The government set this out in Regulations 3 and 4 of the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006/1294 and all the subsequent amendments.

3.1.1 Special arrangements for 16 – 18-year-olds

- a) Anyone over the age of 16 is eligible to join the Housing Register if their current address is their only home, or sole residence, and they are not already registered through someone else's housing application.
- b) Applicants under 18 cannot legally hold a tenancy. If they are under the jurisdiction of children services and owed a duty under the Children Act, children services will act as a guarantor for those within 6 months of their 18th birthday under an existing protocol. This is subject to their ability to live independently and manage their tenancy. Children services will need to provide a support package to prevent the risk of losing the tenancy. The tenancy will be held in trust until they reach 18.
- c) Those not owed a duty of care under the Children Act, may still be granted a tenancy provided they can nominate a suitable person to act as a guarantor such as a parent, legal guardian or relative and also show a willingness to engage with the levels of support identified to help them sustain the tenancy. The guarantor will accept responsibility for the tenancy and for the support where necessary, whilst the tenancy is held in trust until the applicant reaches 18.

3.1.2 Persons from Abroad

Some persons from abroad may not be eligible to join the housing register and we will capture this on our application form, and you will be asked to provide evidence for the following:

- a) Under sections 160ZA (1), (2) and (4) of the Housing Act 1996 we cannot allocate a tenancy, or nominate a person for housing, if their immigration status makes them ineligible for public sector housing.
- b) They do not have the right to rent.
- c) Someone who does not live habitually in the Common Travel Area (UK, Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or Northern Ireland).
- d) Someone who does not have the right to live in the UK.
- e) Someone who does not have the right to reside in the UK as laid out in EU law unless they meet one of the exemptions such as provision of care to someone residing in the UK or Channel Islands or they have a temporary visa.
- f) Someone who is a Hong Kong National (oversees) status holder.
- g) Other categories of people who the Government may in the future, decide are not eligible for housing assistance.

3.2 Refugees and Asylum Seekers

We will comply with any government directives in relation to resettlement schemes for refugees or asylum seekers. We review these annually to ensure that we are compliant. [The current resettlement schemes are shown in appendix 2.](#)

3.3 Gypsies and Travellers

Assessment of applications from gypsies or travellers for a Council pitch on a recognised travellers site is covered under a separate policy but will be in accordance with Gypsy and Traveller Site Management Good Practice Guide (Published by Communities and Local Government July 2009) and will include consideration of the balance and mix in the community, therefore prioritising the long-term cohesion of the site.

3.4 The Armed Forces Covenant



Gateshead Council is signed up to the North East of England Armed Forces Charter and the Armed Forces Covenant. It is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and the local armed forces community.

We have created a Covenant Pledge to demonstrate our support, as an employer of choice, to the armed forces community. We believe that those who served in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who were honourably or dishonourably discharged, those who have served in the past, , their families and anyone living as part of their household in ministry of defence accommodation, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved and the appropriate medical priority will be awarded. We will disregard a local connection and accept them under a duty to refer. All relevant reasonable and additional preference will be awarded. In order to give former armed forces the ability to accrue waiting time, their enlistment date will be used as their registration date.

A new covenant duty is due at the end of 2022 which will require the Council to give due regard to the following:

- The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces
- The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages for service people arising from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces
- The principle that special provision for service people may be justified by the effect of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces

Part 4: Registration for the Gateshead Housing Register

4.1 Help and Assistance

Advice and assistance is available to all applicants who apply for housing. You can get help to complete your application form and/or get support to bid for properties. Information will be made available in a format to suit you.

4.2 Qualification Rules

We operate a hybrid housing register. This means that in most cases we will accept you onto the list in line with the rules set out in [Part 4 of the Allocation Policy](#). However in some circumstances you may be excluded ([section 4.3](#)) from joining the register or demoted under reduced preference ([section 4.4](#)).

Housing is available to all applicants including existing social landlord tenants who have held their tenancy for a period of one year. If you have held your tenancy for less than a year but your housing need has changed since the start of your tenancy, you may be considered depending on your circumstances.

- You must be 18 or over. If you are under 18, [see section 3.1.1](#)
- You can register alone, or jointly with your partner. In most cases where the application is joint, the tenancy will also be joint. The property criteria may also dictate the named tenant, for example a couple who has been allocated to an age restricted property will be in the name of the partner who meets the age criteria
- Carers cannot be a joint applicant unless they are already a member of the permanent household and are providing a carer role in addition to their prior and existing relationship with the applicant
- Applicants without a fixed address can request for correspondence about their application to be sent to the care of another address. If no other address is available, the Council will hold the correspondence and take reasonable steps to contact the applicant to inform them that correspondence needs to be sent to them and to agree a way of sharing the correspondence

4.2.1 Out of Borough Applicants

We will accept out of borough applicants in band 4 general needs. Where there is a local connection, they will sit above those without one. Additional preference will be considered where the applicants can demonstrate a clear need to be housed in Gateshead. This is likely to be restricted to anyone making an application under the homeless legislation or where there is a clear medical need.

4.2.2 Local Connection

A local connection is defined as one or more of the following:

- Have lived in Gateshead for 6 of the previous 12 months.
- Have lived in Gateshead for 3 of the previous 5 years.
- Have a current contract of employment in Gateshead.
- Likely to be in education in Gateshead for six months or more.
- Have family residing in the borough.
- Been placed out of borough by Gateshead Council.
- Been living in supported housing in Gateshead or be living in accommodation provided by one of the agencies that the Council works with for at least 6 months.
- Be either giving support or receiving it from someone living in the borough and it is only possible if they live in Gateshead and have evidence to support this.
- Have one of the above prior to incarceration or institutionalisation
- You have been discharged from the armed forces

4.3 Non-Qualification Rules (Exclusions)

We will only exclude applicants where all other viable options are unavailable. Each case is assessed to ensure that they are not the victims of behaviour that was outside of their control. Applicants with very high level of housing related debt, serious anti-social behaviour or criminal behaviour will be considered for exclusion where:

- The debt or behaviour is serious enough to meet the threshold applied by courts to grant a possession order.
- The applicant refuses to engage with the Council and therefore we cannot consider them for demotion under reduced preferences. [See section 4.6](#)
- The decision to exclude will be taken at a senior or panel level.
- Where the case may be managed instead, we will consider suspension of the application first, whilst we implement a plan to reduce any risks
- We will consider all other measures before excluding an applicant who would qualify for a critical or urgent priority award.

4.3.1 Financial Exclusion

With the exception of those showing a demonstrable hardship, vulnerability or where you may qualify for specialist accommodation, we may ask you to find your own housing solution if your savings, income, investments or equity levels exceed the thresholds in the table below. The thresholds are reviewed annually and in line with average earnings and average property prices including those sold on the open market and through the Right to Buy scheme to existing tenants. The thresholds do not apply to former members of the armed forces.

Type	Financial Threshold
Savings	Applicants (both single persons and couples) who have total savings of £25,000 or more.
Income	Applicants whose total gross household income from all sources exceeds an annual income of £25,000 or more (for single persons) or joint income of £50,000 or more (for couples).
Investments	Applicants (both single persons and couples) who have total investments including property in the UK and abroad of £50,000 or more.
Equity	Applicants who have equity £50,000 or more to the property.

Where you exceed the thresholds, we may consider you for low-cost home ownership schemes, such as rent to buy, shared ownership, discounted market sale and starter homes.

4.4 Applicants Demoted under Reduced Preference

If you have been excluded, but wish to apply for reassessment, and the reasons for the disqualification are due to housing related debt, criminal behaviour or anti-social behaviour, we may consider your application under reduced preference as covered by the Localism Act 2011. In Gateshead we do this where we deem your behaviour is unacceptable in a current or former property, or if you have not been a tenant but should you have been one and your behaviour would have allowed us to evict you should we have taken you to court. In accordance with s166A(5) of the Housing Act 1996 you will be considered to be guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make you unsuitable to be a tenant of a social landlord.

- a. Anti-social behaviour; where you or someone in your household perpetuates anti-social behaviour, thereby breaching the terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement and where you show an unwillingness to address this behaviour.
- b. Criminal behaviour; where you or someone in your household perpetuates criminal behaviour, thereby breaching the terms and conditions of your tenancy agreement.
- c. Housing related debt in excess of £500; where you are in arrears or persistent arrears of rent or mortgage rechargeable repairs, court costs, housing and council tax benefit overpayments, and any other debt related to a current or former home. Debts which are no longer legally recoverable including debt included in a Debt Relief Order or Bankruptcy order will still be taken into consideration when assessing an applicant's suitability to be a social landlord tenant.

We will assess your priority award, but where your behaviour is deemed unacceptable, we will demote your application and you will be placed at the bottom of your qualifying band. [We will not demote applicants who have been assessed](#)

[under a critical or urgent priority; or where they are vulnerable and need to move to accommodation that will significantly alleviate their housing circumstances.](#)

However we are reviewing how we work with tenants who have breached their tenancy conditions and are seeking to introduce a range of measures over the next 12 months. Consequently we may review our policy on demotions for applicants in the critical or urgent band.

If you willing to enter into an arrangement to address your behaviour, the demotion may be of short duration. This will be monitored, and we may consider removing your demotion and allowing you sit in your normal position within your qualifying band where you have met the conditions of the arrangement. The shortest arrangements are likely to be for a period of 6 months and these are likely to increase in duration depending on the severity of the behaviour. The arrangement will be made with your own landlord, and we will obtain reports or rent statements where relevant to verify your adherence to the arrangement.

4.5 Exceptional Circumstances

Each application will be assessed individually, and either accepted onto the housing register or demoted as an application under reduced preference. Your application will be assessed under this policy and only in the rarest of circumstances will it be deemed exceptional and then only after the policy has been exhausted.

4.6 Making an Application

You must complete a housing register application and if you wish to be considered under medical grounds a medical assessment form. When we register your application, we will provide you with a housing register application number and provide you with a list of evidence we need in order to verify your application. [Please see the Council's website for guidance on how to make an application.](#)

4.7 Verification Checks and References

When you register an application, we will undertake checks on all adult members of the household before you are made an offer of a new home.

- If you meet the eligibility rules set out in [Part 3 of the Allocations Policy](#).
- If any of you have held a tenancy in the last 2 years, we will ask the landlord to provide us with a reference on how you conducted your tenancy and 6 months' rent statement. If this is likely to cause problems, we will discuss alternative ways that we can check the information we need.
- We will ask to see documents that confirm your identity.
- We will carry out Police vetting checks under the Safer Estates Agreement where you have disclosed criminal convictions, or there are significant gaps in your housing history, or you have a history of anti-social behaviour or criminal activity.
- We may visit you in your current home.
- Existing tenants will receive a pre-termination visit at the point of an offer. This is to ensure that the property has been maintained and there are no tenancy breaches.

- Demoted applicants must be able to demonstrate that they can manage their tenancy in accordance with the terms of their tenancy agreement, with support and advice provided where it is needed.

We may verify your information again if we need to and originals of all documentation will need to be provided on request.

- a) At the point of making your application.
- b) At the point of a review to confirm the assessment.
- c) At the point of a change of circumstances to make a reassessment.
- d) At the point of offer of accommodation if either the last review was over 6 months or confirmation of new circumstances comes to light. If these are not supplied within the time requested, you may be bypassed for an offer.

If you fail to provide the information we have requested, your application may be suspended to allow you to produce it within a specific timescale. If you still do not provide it your application will be cancelled. If you have extenuating circumstances, we may assess your application without the information and each case will be considered individually.

4.8 Household Splits

Where children are split between two households, the main carer will be considered to be the one in receipt of child benefit. If you have overnight access to children, and they are part of your application and with you 4 or more nights a week, they will be allocated a bedspace on the basis of access only and this may not be a family home but a smaller property suitable to your needs. A family home will only be considered for the main carer, or the household where the children are deemed to be part of the permanent household when we consider the allocation of a home. We will consider all evidence in relation to children including any residence orders, habitual residence, school records and the time spent with each carer. Where there are medical issues, we will consider the circumstances under our medical priority.

4.9 False Information

The application form states that under s171 Housing Act 1996, it is a criminal offence for anyone to knowingly give false information or to withhold relevant information if reasonably required to give it, on any matter regarding the allocation of housing. In addition, applicants will be advised that should an applicant be successful in obtaining a tenancy by knowingly or recklessly making a false statement then the landlord would seek possession of the property and may result in prosecution leading to a fine and/or imprisonment as laid out in s2 Fraud Act 2006.

4.10 Change in Circumstances

It is your responsibility to notify the Council of all changes in circumstance and provide the necessary evidence and contact details. We rely on contact details in order to make an offer of accommodation. If we do not have up to date information, we may not be able to make an offer, or take any further housing need into consideration. Once we have received your updated information, we will reassess your application.

4.11 Cancellation of Applications

Your application will be cancelled if:

- a) You request it
- b) Your circumstances change, and you are no longer eligible to join the housing register.
- c) You fail to respond when we review your application.
- d) You are found to have made a false or deliberately misleading statement, or to have withheld information.
- e) You fail to provide the information needed for the verification checks despite a period of suspension and repeated attempts to contact you.
- f) You are rehoused or are assigned a social tenancy.
- g) You purchase a home.

It is your responsibility to keep us informed of any change of circumstance, including any forwarding addresses. If you do not, then we may cancel your application. It will not be reinstated, and if you still wish to be housed you will need to submit a new application and it will not benefit from any waiting time accrued from the previous application.

4.12 Deliberate or Worsening Circumstances

Where there is evidence that an applicant has knowingly and deliberately made their housing situation worse in order to gain a higher priority on the register, the assessment of their priority need will be based on the circumstances before their situation changed.

Some examples are listed below:

- a) Applicants who have allowed family members or others to move into their property, who previously had suitable accommodation or the financial means to secure their own accommodation, and this has resulted in the property being overcrowded.
- b) Applicants who have moved from previously suitable or more suitable accommodation which it was reasonable for them to continue to occupy, into a less suitable property.
- c) Homeowners who have intentionally transferred their property to another family member in order to join the housing register.

- d) Applicants who have given up affordable and suitable private rented accommodation which they are able to maintain, to move in with other relatives or friends, creating a situation of overcrowding and/or sharing of bathroom/kitchen and/or a split household.
- e) Requesting or colluding with a landlord or family member to issue them with a Notice to Quit.
- f) Homeowners who have transferred the title to their property to a trust but remain the beneficiaries of that trust.

4.13 Elected Members & Employees (incl: close relatives)

It is Gateshead Council's policy to carry out procedural checks on applications of people who may be related to Council employees or influential partners of the Council. This is to ensure that everyone is treated fairly.

High Risk – assessed by a director who is unrelated to the applicant

- Gateshead Council Employees & immediate family linked to Housing
- Former ALMO /Housing Services Employees
- Gateshead Councillors & MP's & their immediate relatives

Medium Risk – assessed by the head of service

- Distant relatives to Gateshead Council employees linked to housing
- Employees of Gateshead partner agencies linked to housing
- Other Relatives of Gateshead Councillors
- Immediate family of former ALMO/Housing Services Employees

Low Risk – assessed by the lettings manager

- Gateshead Council Employees not working in Housing
- Relatives of Gateshead Council Employees not working in Housing
- Relatives of employees of partner agencies linked to housing

Part 5: Assessment of an Application

5.1 Allocation by Household Type and Property Size

We allocate property using the following criteria:

- The size of the property must be suitable for the household need
- Landlords must make best use of their stock
- The property must be affordable for the applicant it is allocated to
- The tenancy should be sustainable
- The household's circumstances must be fully considered
- The property is allocated in accordance with this policy
- The existence of a local lettings plan for the property
- The existence of an age restriction for the property

5.1.1 Size Allowance

Gateshead uses the space standard when allocating a property by size as defined in the legislation, for more details especially when considering overcrowding [see appendix 3](#).

The current size allowance is shown below:

- A couple will be awarded a double bedroom (2 bedspaces)
- An adult aged 18 and over will be awarded a bedspace.
- Same sex siblings can share provided they have a bedspace each.
- Opposite sex siblings under the age of 10 can share provided they have a bedspace each.
- An unborn child will not be considered for a bedspace until it is born.
- A parent will not be expected to share with a child.
- Where there is a household split, we will only consider the household size for the application of the main carer. [See section 4.8](#)
- If a child is the main carer for an adult with medical priority, they will be allocated their own bedroom.
- For people living away from home, they will be considered as part of the household in alignment with the rules on the award of benefit, child placement and domestic abuse legislation.

For more detail [see the table in 5.1.2](#).

Bedrooms large enough to hold a standard double bed and wardrobe will be counted as 2 bed spaces (or a double bedroom). Rooms smaller than this, but large enough to hold a standard single bed and wardrobe would count as 1 bed space (or a single room). A parlour will be considered as a bedroom provided it is separate and not accessed through another room.

Bungalows are mostly subject to a local lettings plan [see section 6.11 a\)](#) or age restrictions [see appendix 4](#).

5.1.2 Property Allocation Table

The table below shows the type of property an applicant will qualify for. The green indicates a direct match. The white indicates that will only be considered if there are no qualifying green applicants.	Studio/ Bedsit	1 bed flat	1 bed bungalow	1 bed house	2 bed flat (own entrance)	2 bed flat/maisonette (shared entrance)	2 bed bungalow	2 bed house	2 bed maisonette (own entrance)	3 bed flat (own entrance)	3 bed flat/maisonette (shared entrance)	3 bed house	3 bed lower maisonette (own entrance)	3 bed upper maisonette (own entrance)	4 bed house/flat/maisonette (3 bed with separate parlour)	5 bed house
	Single person	Green	Green		Green	Green	Green			Green						
2 adults – couple		Green		Green	Green	Green		Green	Green	Green	Green			Green		
2 adults – non couple					Green	Green		Green	Green	Green	Green			Green		
Household with 1 child					Green	Green		Green	Green	Green	Green			Green		
Household with 2 children					Green	Green		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green		
Household with 3 children										Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Household with 4 children										Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	
Household with 5 + children												Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
1 adult + overnight access to children	Green	Green		Green	Green	Green		Green	Green	Green				Green		
couple + overnight access to children		Green		Green	Green	Green		Green	Green	Green	Green			Green		
Single person > 60	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green		Green							
2 adults – couple (at least one >60)		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green			Green		
2 adults - (at least one >60)					Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green			Green		

5.2 Assessment of Housing Need

All applicants who are eligible and qualify to join the Housing Register will be assessed for housing need. The law requires that reasonable preference for an allocation must be made in the following cases:

- a) People who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act.
- b) People who are owed a duty by a housing authority under relevant housing and homelessness legislation.
- c) People occupying unsanitary (unhealthy) or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions with the exception of out of borough.
- d) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability.
- e) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).
- f) We reserve the right to prioritise local housing for local people and will give additional preference to local connection specifically in relation to:
 - Properties built under a s106 agreement
 - Local lettings plans
 - Rural lettings schemes
- g) Applicants will be assessed for reasonable and additional preference.

5.3 Housing Need Categories

5.3.1 Homelessness

Where the Council has a Statutory Homeless Duty under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017), we will award housing need based on that duty. If you are homeless but do not habitually reside in Gateshead, you will be asked to present as homeless to your own Council, unless we owe you a homeless prevention duty.

Members of the armed forces who are due for discharge within 56 days will be assessed under a prevention duty. If you have already been discharged, we will assess you under both a main (full) and relief duty.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse and need emergency housing or a refuge placement, or the perpetrator needs to be rehoused urgently to allow you or your children to remain in your home we will direct your application for a homeless assessment

For a homeless assessment, [check our website for details](#). **URL needed**

Critical Housing Need: You will be placed in this category if you have been awarded a main (full) homelessness duty under s193 of the legislation or a relief homelessness duty under s198. You will be placed in this category if, under our duties, we have provided you with emergency homelessness accommodation i.e. Statutory Temporary Accommodation. We will continue to monitor this priority award and where your circumstances change, we may reassess you and this may result in a lesser priority

Urgent Housing Need: You will be placed in this category if you have been awarded a prevention duty under the legislation which means you are threatened with homelessness within at least the next 56 days.

Substantial Housing Need: You may be placed in this category if you have been assessed as having made yourself homeless intentionally under the Housing Act 1996, which means you are homeless as a result of your own actions i.e. Eviction, we will only consider this at a main duty stage. You may also be placed in this category if you are deemed non-priority homeless at a main duty stage. We will always take your presenting circumstances into consideration. The Council is committed through the Allocation Policy to assisting tenants to modify their behaviour thereby enabling all tenants to live peacefully in their homes whilst meeting the conditions of their tenancy agreement.

Safe Surrender Agreements: Where a tenancy is failing but has not yet met the threshold for eviction, we may consider a safe surrender agreement if rehousing is the only way to assist you and we have exhausted all other ways to keep you safely in your home. The agreement is between the landlord, the homeless service and the tenant who surrenders their tenancy on a voluntarily basis and on the proviso that they are willing to accept support. Surrenders under this type of agreement allow the Council to assess your application under a homeless prevention duty rather than an intentional homeless. You must first speak to your landlord before surrendering your tenancy.

Homeless Offers: You will be expected to bid for a property, and we may make bids on your behalf or make you a direct offer of suitable accommodation. Refusal may result in the Council discharging duty.

5.3.2 Witness Protection

Where a customer has been referred as part of the witness protection scheme, a critical priority will be awarded.

5.3.3 Public Protection

Where an allocation is required to ensure protection of the public, for example, following a panel decision made by Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) or to fulfil agreements made with offender management services, a critical priority will be awarded where the risk identified is critical. They will be managed through assisted bidding.

5.3.4 Property Condition

Priority is awarded where the condition of the property is deemed to be in disrepair or lacking in amenities. A surveyors report will be required in order to verify the level of disrepair.

Award	Property Condition Criteria
Critical	Where the condition of the property is such that it may cause a threat to life it will be deemed critical. An emergency prohibition order if applied for is usually given where the property is regarded as unsafe.
Urgent	Where the condition is serious but there is no immediate risk of harm, an urgent priority will be given.
Substantial	Where there is disrepair but there is no requirement for immediate intervention a substantial award will be given.

Lack of amenities will be considered depending on whether they are deemed essential for the type of household and any underlying health conditions. The presence of children or older people be factored into the household type.

5.3.5 Medical Priority

The Council will make an assessment of housing need in conjunction with health professionals and may include a home visit. The assessment will be based upon the criteria specified below. In order to qualify for rehousing on medical grounds, you must be asking for a home that will eliminate or substantially minimise the risks associated with your present home. Your assessment for priority will be made upon a long-term basis and not in response to a temporary condition.

If you are applying to move from outside the borough a medical award will only be considered where only a move to Gateshead will alleviate the condition and this cannot be met by your own authority.

Support moves: you will need to demonstrate that you have no support where you currently live, and that the provision of that support will make a considerable improvement to your ability to manage in your own home. You will receive a double assessment, involving both the applicant and the person providing the support. Distance to support and the means of travel will also be a deciding factor in any award given.

Award	Medical Criteria
Critical	You will qualify for critical priority, if you are currently in hospital and the hospital's occupational therapy service consider you unable to return to your present home, as your life would be at risk, or you may be unable to access essential amenities.

	<p>This also includes where you may have been moved from a hospital bed to respite care, intermediate care or other short-term solution as a temporary measure. It also covers where “step up” arrangements have been made to provide additional support in order to prevent admission.</p> <p>This level of priority is only intended to address situations where you have been assessed, as having a critical risk to your life were you to move back into your existing home.</p> <p>Mental Health: A mental health or medical professional currently supporting you has confirmed that you are at imminent risk of hospitalisation as a direct result of the impact your current home has on your mental health, and that moving to another property will alleviate that need for hospitalisation. This award can also be used to resolve bed blocking where it has been confirmed that discharge cannot be made to your present home.</p>
Urgent	<p>This priority applies where you have a degenerative illness or have an impairment, which may be physical, mental, learning or sensory which has progressed to a stage where you are no longer able to cope in your present home. You are unable to gain access to basic facilities within your home.</p> <p>An urgent award can be given to move closer to support or for a carer to move closer to provide support. The carer must be the main carer and be able to demonstrate this by being eligible for a carer’s allowance. This award will only be given where it is evident that if the care is not provided the applicant will be in danger of being admitted to hospital.</p> <p>Mental Health: A mental health or medical professional has confirmed (and provided their clinical reasoning) that you are at imminent risk of significant harm to yourself or others as a direct result of your current home, and that risk will be considerably alleviated by a move to another property. The risk assessment will take into account a diagnosis and is unlikely to be awarded on environmental factors that can be resolved either through time such as a normal grieving period or by other actions, such as the resolution to ASB through the police and council.</p>
Substantial	<p>You will qualify for a substantial priority if have a degenerative illness or have an impairment, either physical, mental, learning or sensory which could be eased or improved by rehousing, but the severity is not enough to merit an urgent priority. It would apply where you have some difficulty gaining access to basic facilities within your home.</p> <p>Mental Health: A mental health or medical professional has confirmed that your present home is having a negative impact on</p>

	your mental health and that a move to another property will significantly improve this. As in the urgent assessment, outside actions to resolve and time factors will be considered.
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Specific consideration when allocating a property to someone with a medical priority:

- a) The award you are given will specify what property type and size you are eligible for; it may also specify the type of adaptations that you require. If you were to be assessed as needing a level access shower, you will not be able to use your award for a property that does not have this. If you have a need for multiple adaptations and it is unlikely that we will be able to meet that need fully from a vacant property, we will assess on an individual basis if the property that you have applied for will be suitable, it should have at least two of the recommended adaptations. We reserve the right to withdraw an offer of property if we deem it to be unsuitable, this will take into account the cost and time to assess and fit new or alternative adaptations. If you have been assessed with a specific medical need that can only be addressed by a specific property type, we also reserve the right to withdraw offers of unsuitable properties that have been won by using other housing priorities or waiting time.
- b) Some properties have an age requirement. This can be waived on medical grounds if there is medical evidence to show that you would not be able to manage in any other property.
- c) The tenancy of an adapted property will be in the name of the person requiring the adaptations. If that person is under 18, a flexible tenancy may be used to ensure that the person requiring the adaptations can remain in that property on a long-term basis.
- d) If you are already living in a property that has been adapted by the Council and request to move to an alternative property that is not adapted to meet your needs, the Council may refuse to fund additional adaptations. You must give due consideration to your needs and how you will manage in your new home if it is not adapted. Upon applying for rehousing you must declare the fact that you are in an adapted property to ensure that your ongoing needs are considered and that you receive advice regarding your rights and responsibilities regarding provisions within your new home.
- e) Adapted properties are let firstly to those with a medical priority need, where there is no demand, it will be let to those requiring the adaptations but have no priority need. In this way we are able to house those who are suitably housed but need the adaptations.

5.3.6 People with Carers

Full-Time Carers: people with full-time, live in care provided by family or friends are required to include the carer on their application. The carer will be subject to registration checks and will be counted in terms of eligibility for property size and type. A carer will not be added to the application if the individual’s details are not provided.

Where a Social Care ‘Assessment of Need’ has identified a need for overnight care, which is to be provided by a support provider and does not include “sleepover” i.e. the carer is working and required to stay awake: the carer will be looked upon as conducting a nightshift. As they would not be expected to sleep during this time additional bedroom requirements would not be recognised.

Where a Social Care ‘Assessment of Need’ has identified a need for regular, long term or permanent overnight care, which is to be provided by a support provider and includes “sleepover” duties. The eligibility for property size and type will be amended accordingly.

Part-time Carers: Carers who provide casual or occasional assistance when required will not be recognised as a household member and additional bedroom requirements will not generally be recognised.

Priority Award: The award looks at the bedroom requirement because of the need for a carer if there is a health priority and/or the locality of both households and their need to be in a particular area, they can:

- a. Live together and be assessed for an additional bedroom.
- b. Live in their own homes but relocate to be closer together. If one lives in Gateshead and the other lives in another borough, they may consider a home in each other’s areas to see who is successful first. Or it may be that one area is better for you both because it is near a particular doctor, or hospital, or other support.

Verification: in order to verify the need for a full time or part time carer, we will use a variety of sources. This may include any of the following; confirmation of carer allowance, medical advice, recognition by a professional body or confirmation by social care.

5.3.7 Anti – Social Behaviour

We assess ASB in terms of priority need as follows:

Priority Band	ASB description
Critical	Where someone has experienced or been threatened with violence which poses a threat to life.
Urgent	Where the ASB has a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of the victim, and this is supported by a medical or health professional
Substantial	Where the ASB is ongoing and unresolved.

We will look at the circumstances of each case and consider whether housing the perpetrator, victim and/or any witnesses should be taken into consideration. The severity, the threat to life and the quality of life are all considered when making an assessment. We will investigate the nature of the case and may rely on third party reports to provide us with the evidence needed to assess the application.

5.3.8 Decants

Where a social landlord identifies a property for demolition, sale, regeneration or major repairs, and the tenant needs to be rehoused either permanently or temporarily, alternative accommodation will first be sought within the landlords own stock. If this is not possible, the tenant will be asked to complete an application in order to find them alternative accommodation of a size suitable to their household size. The move will be identified as permanent or temporary. If you need to move within 6 months, you will be placed in the critical band and if you have more time than 6 months you will be placed in the urgent band. We rely on landlord reports to evidence the level of priority.

In order to prioritise between bids from applicants within this category consideration will be given to the date that the priority was awarded. In circumstances where more than one applicant with the same award date bids for the same property, the applicant with the longest tenancy at their current home will be considered first. In the unlikely situation whereby the length of tenancy is equal, the length of registration on the housing register will be used as the deciding factor.

5.3.9 Overcrowding

You will only be deemed overcrowded if you exceed the allocation rules set out in [section 5.1](#). The severity of the overcrowding will be determined by the number of bedspaces you need.

Award	Overcrowding Criteria
Critical	If you require 3 or more bedspaces and/or you meet the definition of statutory overcrowding as defined in the Housing Act 1996.
Urgent	If you require 2 bedspaces, or a child is sharing a bedroom with a parent due to a lack of the bedspace.
Substantial	If you require 1 additional bedspace.

We will apply the following rules when making an overcrowding award:

- Members of a household will be included in overcrowding assessments once they have been living there on a permanent basis for 6 months. The exceptions to this rule are babies born into the household, people leaving institutional settings and people who have deliberately worsened their circumstances
- If a member of the household has given up suitable housing they will **not** be included when an assessment of overcrowding is made for 6 months
- An assessment would be carried out taking into account how many bed spaces are available to you, compared to how many bed spaces you need

- Best use of space would be taken into consideration; therefore where an adult can sleep in a single room to free up a double room for two children this would be an expectation of the household and would be taken into account
- Where larger homes are advertised, the council reserve the right to allocate to the largest families first
- For families wanting to be housed together but who have to currently live apart, due to lack of space, an overcrowding assessment will be completed as though all persons were living in the largest home
- Anyone living outside of Gateshead will not be eligible for an overcrowding assessment. These applicants will need to speak to their own landlord for confirmation of the arrangements in their area
- Where a household contains adult children who are requesting their own accommodation, they will be assessed as above and all members within the household will be taken into account. However if other members of the household are applying to move, only those members with a long-term intention to remain in the household will be counted. Those with their own applications who have been awarded an overcrowding priority will not be included
- We will not award an overcrowding priority where the household splits following a relationship breakdown

5.3.10 Foster Carers and Safeguarding Children

A priority award will be given where a recommendation is made within the Council in the following circumstances:

- a) fostering arrangements have been confirmed but the home of the foster carer, connected carer who live as part of the permanent household or adoptive parent is too small - urgent.
- b) children in households with domestic abuse will be routinely referred to children services and their recommendation will be factored into priority awarded.
- c) to prevent a child going into care - critical.
- d) to safeguard a child covered under the legislation - critical.
- e) placement of a child by the Council where the guardian, parent, connected carer who live as part of the permanent household or adoptive parent does not have a suitable property - urgent.

5.3.11 Young People and Care Leavers (age 16 + extended to age 24 if in further education)

Young people in local authority care will be assessed for housing into permanent accommodation when children services have agreed the young person is ready. An urgent priority will be awarded once we have been notified that the young person is ready to move, and an application has been submitted.

Young people referred via our supported pathway will be considered under urgent priority.

5.3.12 Financial Hardship

If you are experiencing financial hardship which is directly affected by the cost of your housing and a move to a property with a lower rent would alleviate or eliminate this problem, we will consider awarding an urgent priority. You will need to demonstrate that you have been in receipt of debt advice and provide us with an income and expenditure form which demonstrates that moving you is the only option and there are no other expenses that can be eliminated.

5.3.13 Under Occupation

If you are an existing tenant and are currently under occupying your home and wish to surrender it for a smaller property suitable to your housing need, you may be considered for an urgent priority award.

The following criteria will be used to assess your suitability but may be disregarded (in part) if your home is needed urgently for another household:

- You have no breaches of tenancy and no pending investigations
- Your property is in a reasonable condition
- Your current home is not scheduled for sale or demolition
- You have at least one more bedroom than you need.
- You are requesting a move to a property type that is frequently available

5.3.14 Releasing or Needing a Specialist (adapted) Property

We will award an urgent priority in order to release adapted or supported housing which is in short supply in order to allocate it to someone who needs it and is currently on the housing register.

The following circumstances apply:

- If you live in an adapted property and have no further need of the adaptations and would like to be rehoused
- If you need an adapted property, it will be reviewed alongside your medical assessment. Where no medical award is given you will not be prioritised for an adapted property.
- If you live in supported accommodation and have no further need of this type and wish to be rehoused
- You are releasing a high demand property

5.3.15 Service Accommodation

Council Officers who have accommodation as part of their employment are said to be in tied accommodation. They may join the housing register in one of the following situations:

- a) They are retiring, resigning or being redeployed
- b) They have been dismissed
- c) They have died and their partner or family member who have lived with them as a permanent member of the household for at least 2 years needs to be rehoused
- d) The property has been identified for redevelopment, demolition or sale

Officers or their families needing rehousing will be placed in a priority band that reflects the urgency of their need to move. If it is possible to allocate them to the property, they are in, and it meets their need this will be their permanent offer of accommodation. The property will become part of the general housing stock. Where they are moving to another property, they will pay a use and occupation charge in their current property following the end of their employment until they vacate. Officers who have been dismissed will receive an offer of accommodation within 4 weeks of their dismissal date. If they refuse, the Council may take legal action to gain possession of the property.

5.3.16 Succession

There are two scenarios where a new tenancy may need to be granted to an existing tenant around succession and both will fall into the urgent priority band.

- a. An occupant is not entitled to succeed, but where they have applied for a discretionary succession where we may offer them a tenancy in the same or a different property.
- b. An occupant is entitled to succeed, but the property is underoccupied or reserved for older people or those needing adaptations. In these circumstances we can offer alternative accommodation and if they refuse to move, we can issue possession proceedings.

5.3.17 Children in blocks

Children under the age of 5 in multistorey blocks and children under the age of 5, who live in blocks on or above the third floor with no lift will be awarded a substantial priority. We will not allocate properties of this kind to households with children under the age of 5.

5.3.18 Move On Agencies and Key Worker Schemes

The Council provides permanent housing to people in specialist short term housing who have completed a period of support to allow them to live independently. We also work with external agencies to rehouse applicants who are referred directly to us. Where they are ready to move, we will award an urgent priority and where they are not yet ready to move, we will award a substantial priority. This may include applicant with mental health, young people or people with complex and multiple needs or people coming from supported accommodation.

Key workers are defined as those people who provide essential services necessary for continued economic growth or to sustain the quality of life within the borough. They too will be awarded a substantial priority award in recognition of the difficulty in recruiting and retaining key workers. Where there is a skill shortage involving groups of people a strategic decision will be made at director level. We do not have schemes of this nature at present.

5.4 Housing Priority Bands

Each application is assessed in accordance with their housing need as outlined in the previous section. Once they have been assessed they are placed into one of the four priority need bands.

Critical Priority	Urgent Priority	Substantial Priority	General Priority
households in emergency need with an immediate threat	urgent need but no immediate threat to the household	housing need with no requirement for urgent intervention	No priority housing need
s193 full homeless duty	homeless prevention duty	intentional homeless duty (at main duty stage)	all other applicants
s189 relief homeless duty	under occupation	non-priority homeless duty (at main duty stage)	out of borough applicants
witness protection public protection	fostering/social care placements succession	children – blocks with a lift	
property condition – serious risk of harm	Property condition – serious disrepair or lacking essential amenities	property condition – disrepair or lacking amenities	
critical medical priority – discharge from/avoid being taken into hospital or respite care	urgent medical priority – serious and/or debilitating illness	substantial medical priority	
threatened with being taken into care	care leaver/move on (ready to move)	care leaver/move on (not ready to move)	
ASB – threat to life	ASB – significant impact on health and wellbeing	ASB - ongoing	
decants - need to move in the next 6 months	decants – need to move is more than 6 months away	key workers	
overcrowded – by 3 or more bedspaces	overcrowded – by 2 bedspaces	overcrowded – by 1 bedspace	
	serious financial hardship		
	adapted property – needed or releasing		
	service accommodation – imminent end of contract	service accommodation – non imminent end of contract	

5.5 Placement in the Band

Accumulative Need: We operate an accumulative need banded system. This means if you have more than one priority award for being in a band you will sit above someone with a single priority award.

Time Waited: You will be placed in the priority band in effective band date order.

Demotions: If you have a demoted application, we will place you at the bottom of the band that you qualify for by effective band date.

Application Review: Your applications will be reviewed in line with the band you have been placed in, [please see section 7.3.1](#).

5.6 Determination of Effective Band Date

In order to determine your effective band date, and provided verification is not delayed, we use the following:

- a) When you submit your first application, your registration date will be your effective band date. For members of the armed forces your registration date will be your enlistment date. For officers who were provided accommodation as a condition of the employment, their employment date will be their registration date.
- b) If there is a change of circumstances and your priority need changes and you go up a band, we will use the date you were assessed for your new priority.
- c) If there is a change of circumstances and your priority need changes and you go down a band, we will use the same effective band date you had in your original band not the date we moved you down.
- d) If you have more than one priority need award in the same band, the one that was awarded earliest will be your effective band date.
- e) Our housing register is contained within a system that takes into account the date, hour, minute and second. Therefore it is extremely rare for someone to have the exact same effective band date in the same band. In the unlikely event that it does happen, we will consider the type of priority awarded and the urgency of the priority to determine who will be allocated the property.

5.7 Notification of your Assessment

Once an application has been assessed the applicant will be notified in writing of the following:

- a. The priority you have been awarded and the effective band date.
- b. The size and type of property you qualify for.
- c. How to place a bid for a property.
- d. Your housing register number.
- e. Your review date.
- f. What to do if you disagree with the decision. [See Part 7](#).

Part 6: Advertising and Lettings

6.1 Choice Based Lettings (Advertised Properties)

The majority of properties will be advertised through the choice-based lettings system. Once advertised and anyone who is registered can express an interest in these properties by placing a bid.

A proportion of the properties will be advertised for households with a priority need and a proportion will be advertised to applicants with waiting time. The proportions may vary in order to enable the Council to meet its statutory duties. Adapted homes are not included in this proportion. We will give consideration to property availability and demand before deciding the proportions.

The proportionality is reviewed annually. [The current proportion is shown in appendix 5.](#)

6.2 Direct Lets Protocol

If you have a critical housing need you will be expected to bid for properties that have been advertised. In **addition** to this we will consider a direct let on the basis of need rather than preference where this would:

- Rehouse you quickly where there is an imminent need
- Assist with the placement of vulnerable households
- Assist with the management of properties identified as sensitive
- Reduce the cost of temporary housing
- Reduce the risk of harm to a household

Only a small proportion of properties will be let in this way. The direct let will be made to households already on the housing register. Where someone is vulnerable or needs careful placement for their protection or the protection of the community, assistance will be provided when they bid to ensure the property is suitable. A direct let will be made only if necessary to meet the criteria listed above.

6.3 How will you know which properties are available?

Properties will be advertised in a number of different ways. Upon registration you will be informed of how and where to find this information. Registered Providers will also advertise their properties on the same system. Each advert will contain the name of the landlord.

6.4 How will you know which properties you can express an interest in?

Applicants can express interest in up to three advertised properties per week. The advert will contain a description of the property, name the landlord so you know if it is council or another landlord, provide the rent and service charge so you will be able to assess if you can afford it and confirm any arrangements for pets. The advert will say if it is a priority need advert or a time waited advert; all applicants with a housing need can bid on properties advertised as priority need, however we will prioritise those with a need above those with no priority need. Similarly if the property is to be targeted for someone with a medical need or adaptation only households that match the property criteria will be able to bid for these properties.

6.4.1 Assisted Bidding

Where someone is vulnerable or needs additional help placing bids to ensure the property is suitable for their needs, you will receive assistance, either from the homeless team, your support worker, your advocate, the probation service (if relevant) or the lettings service. This is because we recognise that it is important to manage the process to get the best result for you when bidding for a suitable property, especially when assisting homeless households. This is called assisted bidding.

6.4.2 Auto Bidding

Where some who is vulnerable or unable to bid for themselves and has no one to do it for them would like their assisted bidding to be done automatically we will allow them to register for auto bidding. The system is given instructions on the properties that will match your housing need and then it bids on your behalf. This will assist greatly with the rapid placement of bids for households that need to be housed quickly. The auto bids are like an advance expressions of interest.

6.4.3 Grouped Bids

We will use a single advert for identical properties. Where there are grouped advertisements, applicants who place one bid will be considered for all properties within the group.

6.4.4 Retrospective Bids

Where the choice based letting system is unavailable for 30 minutes or more, we may allow a retrospective bid to be placed after the closing date. These are rare and only by prior arrangement with the Council and the landlord who has advertised the property. Retrospective bids cannot be placed later than 24 hours after the closing date.

6.4.5 Failure to Bid

If you are registered in the critical, urgent or substantial bands, we have recognised your need to move to another property. If you do not bid for a suitable property, your application may be reassessed and assigned a lower priority award. We will consider the reasons you have failed to bid and professional advice before lowering any awards.

6.5 How are applicants' bids ranked?

For those properties advertised with preference to housing need, preference will be given to those with priority need, eligible bids are ranked by band and then the effective band date within it. We will give preference to those who have multiple priority awards over those with a single priority need. In bands 3 and 4 demoted applicants will be considered after undemoted cases. The order will run from band 1 to band 4.

Some properties advertised with preference to housing need may be prioritised for applicants with a medical need. The advert will indicate where this is the case. We will also give preference for the largest families to be allocated the largest properties.

For those properties advertised with preference to longest waiting time, eligible bids are ranked in order of earliest date of registration, regardless of band. Bids from demoted applicants will only be considered and ranked after bids from non-demoted applicants have been considered first.

On the rare occasions where we exhaust the list and are unable to allocate a property from the bids, we will readvertise it and may consider a relaxation of the lettings criteria to enable us to let the property. If the property belongs to a registered provider, their agreement with the council will govern this area.

To ensure that best use is made of the housing stock, where an adapted property is advertised applicants will be ranked in order of the need for the adaptations, the need for the type and size of property and the effective band date. If there are no appropriate bidders, we will endeavour to identify other housing applicants who may benefit from the type and size of property as well as any adaptations installed before consideration is given to applicants with no recognised priority need.

6.6 How will you know if your expression of interest has been successful?

If your bid is successful, you will be contacted shortly after the closing date to arrange a viewing of the property. If the property belongs to a registered provider, you will follow their lettings process and they will contact you direct.

We will not contact you if you are unsuccessful. However, our publications will give general feedback on all lettings to help you make more informed expressions of interest in the future.

6.7 Offer of Accommodation

An offer of accommodation must be deemed suitable. This will take into consideration:

- Household type and size
- Property type, size and condition
- Medical need
- Area in relation to employment and education
- Affordability

Only one property can be offered at a time - An applicant successfully bidding for more than one property in one week or across several weeks will be allowed to choose which property is to proceed to an offer. However that decision must be made at the point of being informed of the second or subsequent successful bid.

An offer is made in writing (often sent by email) containing all the details of the property. If you view before an offer is made an offer letter will be sent after the viewing. It will be subject to a clear rent account or where the applicant is reducing the debt in line with a repayment arrangement.

Transfer offers are subject to a successful pre – termination visit to ensure they have adhered to the terms and conditions of their tenancy agreement when handing their property back to their landlord.

6.8 Refusals

The Council does not penalise applicants who refuse an offer of accommodation with the exemption of homeless applicants who receive one offer only and refusal may result in a discharge of duty. However we do expect applicants to understand that by refusing they will increase their waiting time and if they are currently awarded critical or urgent priority need, they may receive a direct offer which if refused will trigger a review of their application and may result in a lower priority.

6.9 Sensitive Lets

Sensitive lets are rare and likely to be due to two main reasons:

1. Where a household requires careful placement for their safety or the safety of others, we may need to consider where we place in order to minimise any risks.
2. Where a property has a management history which requires the careful selection of the next tenant to ensure harmony in the area where it is located. In these cases we may target the advert and select only the most suitable applicants.

6.10 Housing with Support or Extra Care

Some accommodation is designed specifically for older people or people who need a specific type of care or support. There is a charge in addition to the rent. They may also have extra care provision. If the property is advertised as choice-based letting, the advert will be clear who can apply. Some schemes are not advertised and are subject to a direct let.

The older people schemes are designed for those with a minimum age. Gateshead actively sets age restrictions on some of its properties in order to meet demand. The properties with these restrictions are [listed in appendix 5](#)

In exceptional circumstances, younger people may be considered for older people schemes, if they require support, and other types of accommodation are not suitable. Applicants for these schemes will be subject to a landlord need and risk assessment to ensure they meet the eligibility for the scheme.

6.11 Local Letting Provision

Sometime areas or property types are subject to local lettings arrangements; agreed with the Council at the time the property was built or subsequently once they are in management. These are monitored annually and measured for their impact on the main policy.

a) Local Lettings Plans

Section 167(2E) of the 1996 Housing Act enables housing authorities to allocate particular accommodation to people of a particular description, whether or not they have a priority need. Specific allocations may be considered when made to a particular estate or community. They are used to achieve a wide variety of housing management and other housing policy objectives and are usually developed where there is a wish to alter the balance of the community or ensure a balanced community. [For a list of the current local lettings plans see appendix 6.](#)

b) Rural Letting Schemes

In areas which are officially defined as either villages or rural parish the rural lettings scheme may apply. The allocation will be made to the applicant with the highest priority, where there is equal priority, the allocation will be given to the applicant that demonstrates the greatest connection to the community which is assessed by:

- a) how long the applicant has resided in the community.
- b) how long the applicant has been employment in the community.
- c) how long the applicant has been involved in voluntary work within the community.

c) Section 106 Agreements

Section 106 Agreement Letting Scheme Properties developed on sites that incorporate a Section 106 agreement determining the allocation of housing on that site will be let in accordance with the terms of the agreement. Such agreements have been developed to ensure that secure mechanisms are in place to restrict the occupancy of the dwelling both on first occupation and in perpetuity to those who have a local community need for an affordable dwelling.

6.11 Tenancy Determination

A tenancy determination involves identifying what type of tenancy you will be granted. Each landlord will have a tenancy management policy which will outline the tenancies they grant. You will be told in advance of the tenancy type and the conditions attached to the agreement.

The general principles will be:

1. If you have never held a social tenancy before, or we feel you will benefit from support in the first year of your tenancy, you will be granted an Introductory Tenancy for 12 months; and provided you adhere to the terms of the tenancy agreement, this will convert to a secure tenancy at the end of the period. For registered providers this will be a starter tenancy for 12 months and if this has gone well, it will convert to an assured tenancy. Both introductory and starter tenancies are subject to periodic reviews and if things have not gone well, the landlord may extend this for a further 6 months provided they have given notice.
2. If you currently hold a lifetime tenancy, you will be granted another lifetime tenancy. This will be a secure tenancy for council tenants and an assured tenancy for registered providers.
3. If you have come through a homeless scheme and a flexible tenancy is one of the conditions, you will be granted a flexible tenancy for a period of time to allow you to settle in to your home and adhere to the conditions stated in your tenancy agreement. Flexible tenancies are usually short term and granted a fixed term ranging between 2 or 5 years. Provided the everything has gone well; a lifetime tenancy will be granted in the same property where possible.
4. Flexible tenancies may also be used in very large properties where they are in very short supply or adapted properties where the landlord has spent large amounts of money to install the adaptations. In most cases these will be for 5 years and as they approach the end, you will be assessed for your housing need. If you still need this type of accommodation a further flexible tenancy will be granted. If you no longer need this type of accommodation, your priority need will be assessed you will be placed back on the housing register so that you can bid for a more suitable property.

6.12 Tenancy Sustainment

We want people to be live happily in their homes and recognise that you may need support and assistance to sustain your tenancy. The Allocations Policy is designed to sort our longer-term solutions for people, and this means making it possible for them to stay in the home of their choice and one that meets their need.

We wish to ensure that we everything practically possible to promote tenancy sustainment by:

- Ensuring a household is correctly routed to the right team when they approach the Council for housing
- That we consider the support need, both immediately and longer – term when you have your new home
- We take all necessary measures to safeguard you and your household
- We signpost you to employment, education and health advice where you have indicated a need
- That we work across all landlords to promote this approach
- That we assess your housing priority correctly
- If your application is demoted that we work with you and your landlord to provide you with the support and skills to address the behaviour that resulted in the demotion.
- If your tenancy is failing and it is not possible to save it, that we work with you and your landlord to find a solution which may include a safe surrender agreement.
- That we us grant the right kind of tenancy for your needs
- Ensure you can afford the rent.
- Ensure the property suits your need
- If you need specialist housing that we assess this at the earliest opportunity
- We safeguard community balance when allocating properties.

6.13 Publicising Lettings

We will review our performance and use it to predict the type of accommodation needed by people on the housing register, and to provide you with information on the time you may wait for certain types of properties.

Part 7: Decisions, Complaints and Reviews

7.1 Making a Decision

When we make a decision in relation to your application we will do in writing/email, giving a reason for the decision and the information we used to base the decision. Where we are aware that additional support is needed in conveying the decision, we will take all practical steps to ensure we communicate the decision in a format that is acceptable to the applicant.

Listed below are the types of decisions we might make:

- The decision that confirms or denies your eligibility to join
- The decision that confirms or denies whether you qualify
- The decisions to accept or refuse a duty under the homeless legislation
- The decision that awards your priority housing need
- The decision that confirms the type of property your priority award makes you eligible to bid for
- The decision to reassess your application as reduced preference
- The decision to reassess your application following a change of circumstance
- If you are homeless and refuse a property; the decision as to whether that refusal was unreasonable and whether to limit future offers
- The decision to cancel your application
- The decision to deny or uphold a review.

It is important to understand the following:

1. If you provide evidence that you did not provide for your original assessment. ***This is a change in circumstance.***
2. If you think we failed to follow our policy or stated process, or you simply feel we could have handled your application better. ***This is a complaint.***
3. If you disagree with a homeless decision under Part 7 of the legislation. ***This is a statutory right of review s202.***
4. If you disagree with your priority award under Part 6 of the legislation or the decision to place you in reduced preference. ***This is a statutory right of review.***
5. If you have complied with terms applied to your reduced preference and we then reassess your application. ***This is a registration review.***

7.2 Complaints

If you think we failed to follow our policy or stated process, or you simply feel we could have handled your application better and you wish to make a complaint, then you should follow the Council's published complaints procedure, available on the Council's website at:

[Complaints and compliments](#) - Gateshead Council.

If you wish to complain about your landlord or the landlord of the property you have been allocated to, please use their complaints policy.

7.3 Reviews

Reviews fall into one of the following categories:

Review Type	Description
Application Review	This review is initiated by the Council in order to manage and maintain an application on the housing register and review your banding.
Statutory Right of Review (formerly known as appeals)	Where an applicant disagrees with a decision in relation to their housing application, you have a statutory right of review. Requests for reviews received after the 21-day timescale will be refused unless there are extenuating circumstances.
Legal Review	This review is initiated in Court where an applicant has taken legal action or lodged a s204 review following an upheld decision on a s202 review.

7.3.1 Registration Reviews

In order to ensure that applications on the housing register are maintained in accordance with their given priority need we review applications. It is important that you respond within the time permitted otherwise you risk having your priority removed and/or having your application cancelled. The table below shows the frequency of registration reviews.

Review Type	Review Frequency
Critical	These applications will be reviewed every 4 weeks. This ties in with homeless prevention and relief duties. These are critical cases and should not retain the highest level of priority indefinitely as factors in relation their circumstances usually change rapidly.
Urgent	These applications will be reviewed every 6 months. In this way the priority need can be monitored as circumstances often change rapidly.
Substantial	These applications will be reviewed every 12 months in line with good practice.
General	These applications will also be reviewed every 12 months in line with good practice.
Spontaneous Reviews	These arise from time to time as a result of being alerted to a change in circumstance.
Reduced Preference	Applicants on reduced preference terms will be reviewed at 6 months to see whether they now qualify.

7.3.2 Statutory Right of Review

All applicants who have received a decision in relation to their housing have the right to a statutory review which must be done in writing within 21 days of the decision setting out the reason(s) for the review. Typical decisions are covered in [section 7.1](#). New evidence will not be treated as a review but a change in circumstance. Statutory reviews will be handled by a senior officer who was not involved in the original decision and their findings will be approved by a senior manager in the Council. The decision is final.

The possible outcomes will be:

Outcome	Description
Decision Upheld	The reviewing officer agrees with the original decision, and it stands.
Decision Partially Upheld	The reviewing officer agrees with part(s) of the original decision which may force a reassessment, or it may be decided that there is no material impact and the original decision stands.
Decision Denied	The reviewing officer disagrees with the original decision and a reassessment will be undertaken.

The review types in relation to homeless decisions are called section 202 and are set out in section 19.3 of the Homeless Code of Guidance for Local Authorities which also outlines the timescales for each prescribed review.

7.3.3 Legal Review

Where an individual or organisation feels the council's Allocations Policy is unfairly prejudicial, or their case has been dealt with a prejudicial manner, they may wish to take legal action. They should seek independent advice before doing so.

Where an applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of a s202 review, they should take legal advice.

Appendix 1: Lettings outside of the Allocations Policy

Lettings where a tenancy is created outside of the Allocations Policy include:

- a) **Conversion of an introductory tenancy:** to a secure tenancy under S125 Housing Act 1996).
- b) **Family intervention tenancies:** Introduced by the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, these are a form of residential tenancy without security of tenure. They may be offered by either a local housing authority or a registered provider to anyone who is a tenant of a lifetime tenancy subject to or could in the future be subject to a possession order on the grounds of anti-social Behaviour or domestic abuse.
- c) **Discretionary succession (tenancies):** Tenants who are awarded a new tenancy under the landlord's discretionary succession provision.
- d) **Non-Secure tenancies or temporary accommodation:** Any accommodation that is provided to meet an interim duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.
- e) **Temporary decants:** Tenants who need to be moved temporarily whilst major work is carried out on their home will be granted a license to occupy.
- f) **Mutual exchanges:** Between existing tenants under S92 of the Housing Act 1985 or under S158 of the Localism Act 2011.
- g) **Assignment:** To a person who would be qualified to succeed the tenant under S92 of the Housing Act 1985 (secure tenancies) or S134 Housing Act 1996 (introductory tenancies).
- h) **Transfers of tenancies by a court order:** Made under certain provisions contained within matrimonial, family, children, and partnership legislation.
- i) **Land Compensation Act:** Allocation to a person entitled to rehousing under section 39 of the Land Compensation Act 1973.
- j) **Repurchased Homes:** Allocation to a person whose home is repurchased under sections 554 or 555 of the Housing Act 1985 (defective dwellings).
- k) **Transfers:** Within a landlord's stock, where the unit has not been made available to the Council.

Appendix 2: Current Resettlement Schemes

United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)

The resettlement scheme includes families from Syria and other areas of the Middle East and Northern Africa. The programme runs over a five-year period with families and individuals entitled to support for up to 5 years.

Afghan Relocation Programme (ARAP)

The resettlement programme is for those who were working with the British Army. It was introduced to assist with the relocation of former locally employed staff and runs over a three-year period, with individuals entitled to support for up to 3 years.

Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)

The resettlement programme is for Afghan Citizens fleeing the war in Afghanistan. The programme runs over a three-year period, with individuals entitled to support for up to 3 years.

Homes for Ukraine (HFU)

The Home Office launched Homes for Ukraine in March 2022. This scheme differs from the normal resettlement programmes as it relies on members of the public hosting individuals and families from Ukraine. The local authority is responsible for completing all safeguarding checks, including disclosure and barring (DBS) and property checks. The hosts are required to commit to a six-month hosting period, after which individuals and families have three options:

Option	Description
Option 1	Stay with their current host for a further six months
Option 2	Are re-matched to another host for six months
Option 3	Leave the scheme and look for their own accommodation either via the homelessness route or private rented accommodation.

Appendix 3: Definition of Overcrowding

Under the legislation and regulation and for the purposes of defining overcrowding, two standards can be applied:

The Room Standard: The room standard is contravened when the number of persons sleeping in a dwelling and the number of rooms available as sleeping accommodation is such that two persons of opposite sexes who are not living together as partners must sleep in the same room. Children under the age of ten excluded from this definition. A room is available as sleeping accommodation if it is of a type normally used in the locality either as a bedroom or as a living room.

The Space Standard: The space standard is contravened when the number of persons sleeping in a dwelling is in excess of the permitted number, having regard to the number and floor area of the rooms of the dwelling available as sleeping accommodation. A child under the age of 1 year and a child aged 1 year or over but under ten shall be reckoned as half of a unit. A room is available as sleeping accommodation if it is of a type normally used in the locality either as a living room or as a bedroom. Gateshead uses the Space Standard.

No account shall be taken for the purposes of either standard of a room having a floor area of less than 50 square feet.

Floor Area of Room (square feet)	Number of Persons
110 or more	2
90 or more but less than 110	1.5
70 or more but less than 90	1
50 or more but less than 70	0.5

Appendix 4: Property Age Restrictions

Due to changes in demand for property types throughout the borough of Gateshead age limits exist for certain property types. The table below shows the age restrictions.

PENSHER STREET	Bungalow	1BED	No Age Restriction
ELLISON MAIN GARDENS	Bungalow	1BED	No Age Restriction

DENESIDE	Bungalow	1BED	40
WEST ACRES	Bungalow	1BED	40
CHESHIRE AVENUE	Flat	1BED	50
EMMAVILLE	Flat	1BED	50
LEYBURN PLACE	Flat	1BED	50

BENSHAM COURT	Flat	All Flats	50
REGENT COURT	Flat	All Flats	40

CROCUS CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
DAFFODIL CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
LILY CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
MOSSPOOL	Bungalow	1BED	60
BOLTONS BUNGALOWS	Bungalow	1BED	60
SIMPSON MEMORIAL HOMES	Bungalow	1BED	60
DENTON VIEW	Bungalow	1BED	60
A J COOKS COTTAGES	Bungalow	1BED	60
WILLIAM MORRIS AVENUE	Bungalow	1BED	60
SOUTH LEA	Bungalow	1BED	60
SPRINGWELL CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
HAWESDALE CRESCENT	Bungalow	1BED	60
RYDAL CRESCENT	Bungalow	1BED	60
BURNSIDE ROAD	Bungalow	1BED	60

LEAZES VIEW	Bungalow	1BED	60
WOODLANDS ROAD	Bungalow	1BED	60
BROOM CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
CONIFER CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
WHINNEY CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
KELLS WAY	Bungalow	1BED	60
SOUTH SHERBURN	Bungalow	1BED	60
GARESFIELD GARDENS	Bungalow	1BED	60
LILLEYCROFT	Bungalow	1BED	60
NORWOOD CRESCENT	Bungalow	1BED	60
SOUTHWOOD CRESCENT	Bungalow	1BED	60
THISTLEY GREEN	Bungalow	1BED	60
WOOD GREEN	Bungalow	1BED	60
HALL GARDENS	Bungalow	1BED	60
RECTORY ROAD EAST	Bungalow	1BED	60
SQUIRES GARDENS	Bungalow	1BED	60
GARVEY VILLAS	Bungalow	1BED	60
KAYS COTTAGES	Bungalow	1BED	60
SQUARE HOUSES	Bungalow	1BED	60
JOYCE CLOSE	Bungalow	1BED	60
YETHOLM ROAD	Bungalow	1BED	60
ALLERDENE WALK	Bungalow	1BED	60
LOWFIELD WALK	Bungalow	1BED	60
ALBERT PLACE	Bungalow	1BED	60
BOLDON GARDENS	Bungalow	1BED	60
EASINGTON AVENUE	Bungalow	1BED	60
EBCHESTER AVENUE	Bungalow	1BED	60
HEDWORTH PLACE	Bungalow	1BED	60
SIMONSIDE PLACE	Bungalow	1BED	60

WASHINGTON GARDENS	Bungalow	1BED	60
GREENFIELDS	Flat	1BED	60
MILVAIN CLOSE	Flat	1BED	60

- All other bungalows are available to anyone over the age of 50
- All other flats will be advertised to anyone over the age of 18

Appendix 5: Percentage of Advertised Properties

To meet the Council's statutory duties, a proportion of properties will be advertised indicating that preference will be given to those applicants with a recognised housing need.

The table below indicates the current proportion of advertised with preference to those who have a recognised housing need. The remaining properties are advertised and let based on longest waiting time (regardless of category of housing need).

The first figure in the proportion refers to the number to be advertised with preference to those with a recognised housing need. E.g., for every 5 two bed bungalows available to let, four will be advertised with preference to those in the highest category (4 in 5).

	Size	Proportion
Houses	4 Beds	100% to need
Houses	3 Beds	4 in 5
Houses	2 Beds	2 in 3
Houses	1 Bed	3 in 5
Bungalow	2 Beds	4 in 5
Bungalow	1 Beds	3 in 10
Flats	3 Beds	1 in 10
Flats	2 Beds	1 in 5
Flats	1 Beds	1 in 5
Bedsit Flat	0 Bed	1 in 4
Maisonettes	All	100% to waiting List
Sheltered	2 Bed	1 in 2
Sheltered	1 Bed	4 in 10

Appendix 6: Local Lettings Plans

Angel Court

To be considered for Angel Court applicants must:

- Be aged 60 or over.
- Have a need for supported housing.
- Have a daily need for assistance with personal care.

Applicants will receive written confirmation from the Council's Social Care Assessment Team stating if they meet this criteria.

Stage 2

Each customer will be assessed based on the information they provide and on the level of care required with the following award levels:

High need: Requiring support three or more times a day.
Medium need: Requiring support twice a day.
Low need: Requiring support once a day.

Allocation of individual apartments

Vacancies will be allocated based on a quota to all three levels of need. Most vacancies will be advertised but there will be discretion to allocate some as a direct let where appropriate to meet urgent and/or exceptional circumstances where care is needed.

Deneside and Westacres

8 x 2 bed bungalows at 31-33 Dene Side, 9-11 West Acres and 14-15 East Acres to be advertised and let to people over 60s or in medical need.

19 x 1 bed bungalows on the flatter part of the site at 5-11 Dene side, 34-37 Dene side, 10-13 East Acres and 12-15 West Acres to be advertised and let to people over the age of 50.

22 x 1 bed bungalows on the steeper part of the site at 16- 20 West Acres, 1-7 West Acres, 38-43 Dene Side and 1-4 Dene Side to be advertised and let to people aged over 40

Within the scheme residents over the age of 50 in the one-bedroom bungalows in Area 3 will be given preference for the bungalows on the flatter parts of the site in Area 2 over applicants who live outside the current scheme. Transfers would be allocated through ranked order of length of tenancy.

Emmaville

20 flats available to applicants over the age of 50. The properties are: 17 - 20, 21 - 24, 25 - 28, 29 – 32 and 33 - 36.

All tenants living in the first-floor flats will be given preference to move to the ground floor flats provided they have registered a transfer and the flats have been advertised in band 2.

Kibblesworth

There are 148 houses and bungalows built on the site of the council's Airey homes in Kibblesworth Village. 54 are being built for sale, and 94 for rent, of which 13 will be advertised as intermediate tenancies. The rent for the intermediate tenancies is set at 80% of market rent value and are intended for people who will buy them within 5 years. Existing Kibblesworth tenants were originally given the right to return, and the remaining units were advertised through choice-based lettings.

Preference is listed below and will give consideration to local connection which is classified as anyone:

- living in Kibblesworth **village** (and lived here for over 12 months)
- working in Kibblesworth
- needing to move into Kibblesworth to give support
- needing to move into Kibblesworth to receive support.

Bungalows

There are four specially designed disabled bungalows, and any vacancies will be advertised with preference to those with a medical need.

There are fourteen two bed roomed bungalows and vacancies will be advertised as follows:

1. Preference to housing need
2. Preference to housing need plus local connection
3. Preference to housing need
4. Preference to Kibblesworth tenant downsizing
5. Waiting time.

Two-bedroom Houses

There are nineteen two bed roomed houses and vacancies will be advertised as follows:

1. Preference to housing need
2. Waiting time
3. Preference to housing need plus local connection
4. Preference to housing need
5. Preference to housing need
6. Waiting time plus local connection

7. Preference to housing need
8. Preference to housing need plus local connection
9. Waiting time
10. Preference to housing need.

Three-bedroom Houses

There are 45 three bed roomed houses and vacancies will be advertised as follows:

1. Preference to housing need
2. Preference to housing need plus local connection
3. Waiting time
4. Preference to housing need

Every third waiting time advert will be advertised as waiting time plus local connection.

Four-bedroom Houses

There are ten four bed roomed houses and vacancies will be advertised as follows:

1. Preference to housing need (three or more children)
2. Preference to housing need (three or more children) plus local connection
3. Preference to housing need (three or more children).

Five-bedroom Houses

There are two five bed roomed houses and vacancies will be advertised for housing need to households with 5 or more children.

Regent Court

Properties within Regent Court are actively marketed and let to new tenants aged 40 or over. Existing tenants within Regent Court aged less than 40 have the ability if they wish, to respond to adverts and transfer within the block subject to compliance with their existing tenancy. In addition, properties in the block that have had the benefit of disabled adaptations will be advertised to applicants with medical need and will not be subject to an age restriction.

Bensham Court

Properties within Bensham Court are actively marketed and let to new tenants aged 50 or over. Existing tenants within Bensham Court aged less than 50 have the ability if they wish, to respond to adverts and transfer within the block subject to compliance with their existing tenancy. In addition, properties in the block that have had the benefit of disabled adaptations will be advertised to applicants with medical need and will not be subject to an age restriction.

Tenancy Strategy, Tenancy Management Policy, and Allocations Policy – Formal Stakeholder Consultation Report

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide a report on the formal stakeholder consultation which took place as part of the delivery of a new tenancy strategy, new tenancy management policy and a revised lettings policy now known as the allocations policy.
2. This report is an addendum to the main report titled “Tenancy Strategy and Allocations Policy.”

Background

3. Following the reviews in 2021 it was agreed that we would produce 3 key housing documents.
 - **Tenancy Strategy**, which sets out the expectations of all social housing providers in Gateshead in terms of the tenancies that will be granted, succession, affordability of rents and the development of affordable housing.
 - **Tenancy Management Policy**, which sets out the management of tenancies within Council stock.
 - **Allocations Policy (revised Lettings Policy)**, which sets out how the Council will manage the housing register, award priority, allocate and let properties, and work with registered providers.
4. The production of these documents requires the Council to undertake a statutory (formal) stakeholder consultation process. This has taken part as internal consultation with key sections of the Council and external consultation as a formal 28-day consultation process. Both are captured in this report.
5. The Council is also required to undertake an impact analysis to introduce these documents. This has been captured in a separate addendum report titled “Tenancy Strategy, Tenancy Management Policy, and Allocations Policy – Impact Analysis Report.”

Consultation Methodology

6.

Timeline	Description of Event	Status
February 2022	Produce a consultation plan	Complete
12 April 2022	Agree the consultation plan with the Residents Influence Panel	Complete
May 2022	Finalise the plan and complete internal consultation	Complete
June 2022	Produce the consultation material	Complete
30 June to 28 July 2022	28-day consultation period LIVE	Complete
July 2022	Analyse results	Complete
16 August 2022	Share results with Residents Influence Panel and further instructions	Complete
1 September 2022	Tenant workshop	Complete
16 September 2022	Tenants Survey; for anyone unable to attend the workshop.	Complete
27 September 2022	Return to Residents Influence Panel with the results of the tenants workshop.	Complete

7. Internal consultation took place with the following teams either through one of discussions or a series of working group meetings.

- Lettings
- Customer Service
- Homelessness and Housing Options
- Neighbourhoods
- Adult Social Care
- Children Services
- Public Health
- Legal
- Data Protection
- Equality & Diversity

The discussions were captured and supported the production of the draft documents which were signed off by the Core Project Team overseeing the workstream on the 28 June 2022 as being ready to enter into formal consultation.

8. External consultation took place as follows:

Stakeholder	Method
Housing Register Applicants	<p>We had two approaches:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. For applicants that we had an email address for, we undertook an online digital survey. ii. For applicants where we did not have an email address, we conducted the survey by post. <p>The survey consisted of a summary of the changes being proposed and they were invited to agree, disagree or state other and provide comments. Both groups were offered Officer assistance if they needed it.</p>

Gateshead Residents	A public consultation exercise took place. All three documents were uploaded onto the Council's consultation website. Residents were informed of the consultation via social media and subscriptions and asked to provide feedback via the consultation portal.
Elected Members of the Council	A series of 4 workshops were held with Members of the Strategic Housing Board. They took place on the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 7 April 2022: set the scene ▪ 13 April 2022: set out the key changes ▪ 25 April 2022: agreed the key changes ▪ 14 July 2022: discussed exclusions, local connection and out of borough applicants. <p>The april workshops were used to support the production of the draft documents. The July workshop was to obtain a steer on 3 key outstanding areas.</p>
Register Providers	Register providers were approached in three ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ By email with a letter from the Director of Strategic Housing and Residential Growth together with the Tenancy Strategy and Allocations Policy. ▪ Attendance at a partnership providers meeting on the 13 July 2022 where the documents were presented. ▪ All providers were offered an individual meeting by prior arrangement. <p>Further partnership discussions are planned to continue to develop a partnership arrangement under the Gateshead Allocations Model.</p>
External Stakeholders	These included voluntary agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and other organisations that advocate on behalf of residents. It also included neighbouring local authorities. They were emailed a letter from the Director of Strategic Housing and Residential Growth together with the Tenancy Strategy and Allocations Policy. They were asked to provide their feedback by email.
Internal Stakeholders	This was in addition to the internal consultation that had already taken place. They were emailed a letter from the Director of Strategic Housing and Residential Growth together with the Tenancy Strategy, Tenancy Management and Allocations Policy. They were asked to provide their feedback by email.
Health and Wellbeing Board	The draft documents were presented to the Board on the 15 July 2022 for comment.

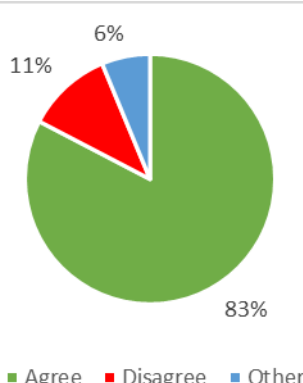
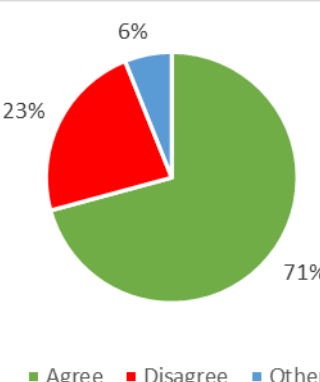
9. **Residents Influence Panel** were presented with the consultation plan in April 2022 which they embraced. They were presented with the results of the applicant

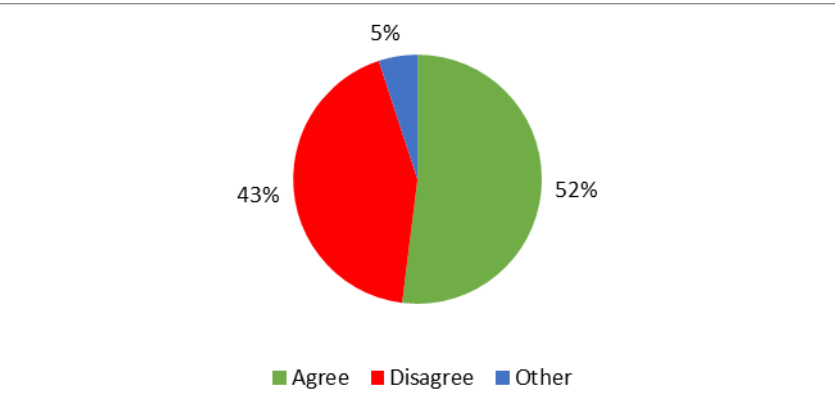
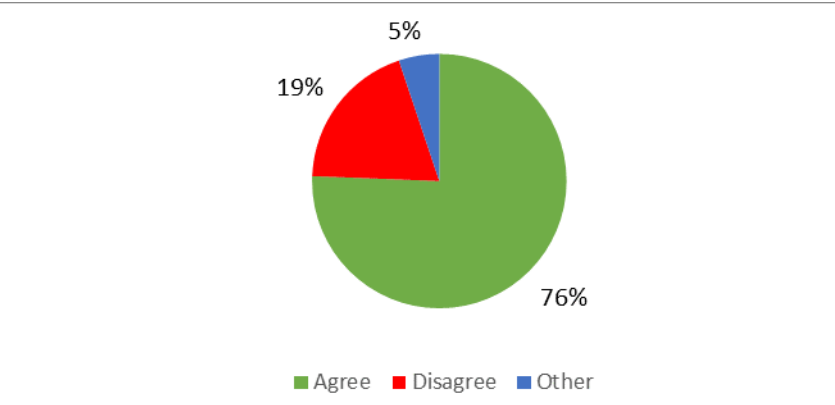
surveys and residents' public consultation on the 16 August 2022 for them to understand how the consultation and opinion had influenced the final drafts being presented to the Strategic Housing Board.

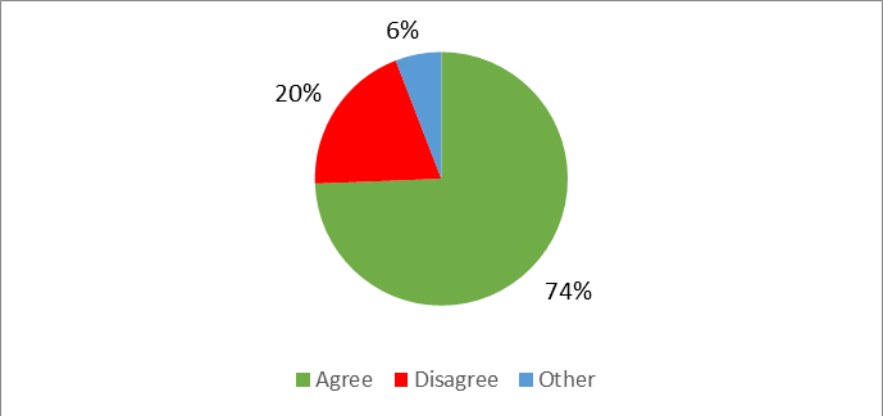
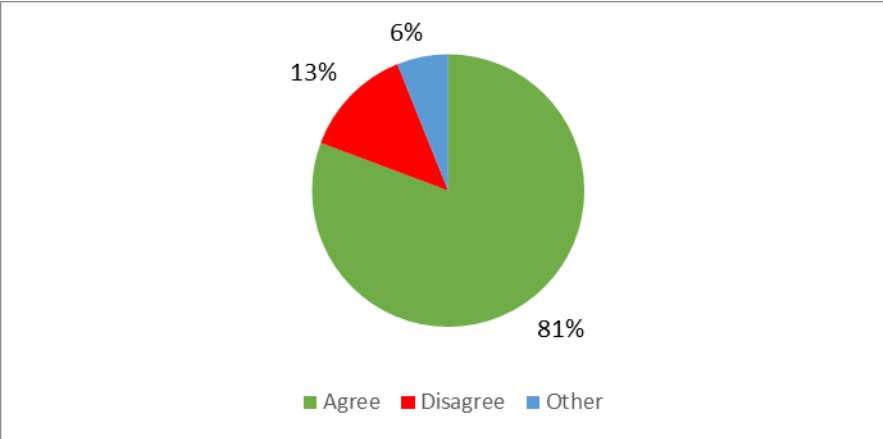
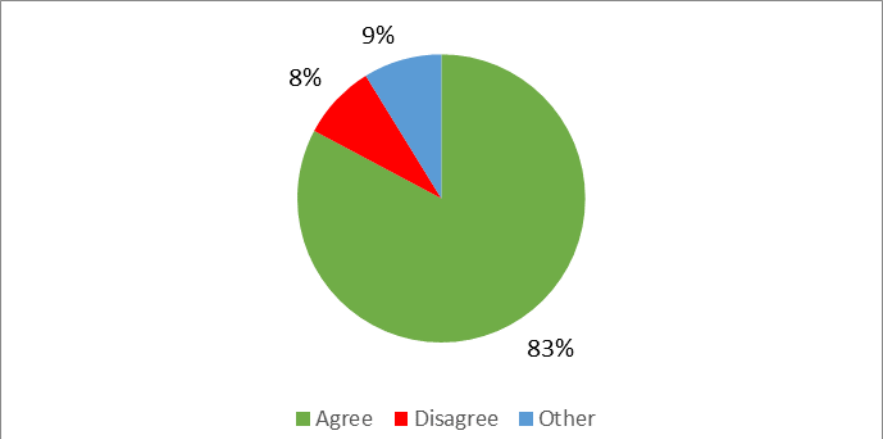
10. **Internal Steering Groups and Project Meetings** were presented with the consultation plan and the results of the stakeholder consultation on the 12 August 2022 and the 24 August 2022.

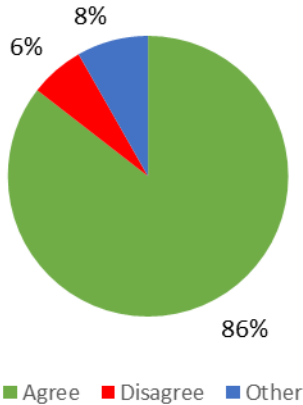
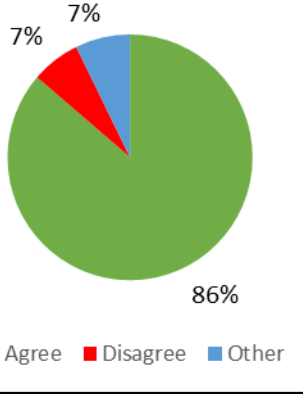
Analysis of the Results

11. **Housing Register Applicants Survey**, the table below sets the proposed change, the result and the direction of travel when formulating the final draft. There were 1,750 respondents out of a total of 9,500 applicants which represents 19% which indicative of the sample size.

Armed Forces									
<p>Proposed Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5-year post discharge removed. ▪ No distinction between honourably or dishonourable discharge 	<p>Result:</p>  <table border="1" style="display: none;"> <caption>Armed Forces Survey Results</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Agree</td> <td>83%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disagree</td> <td>11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	Agree	83%	Disagree	11%	Other	6%
Response	Percentage								
Agree	83%								
Disagree	11%								
Other	6%								
<p>Direction: 83% agreed and the change has been adopted.</p>									
Out of Borough									
<p>Proposed Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local connection was removed, so all OOB cases are in Band 4 and no preference. ▪ Additional preference remained unchanged 	<p>Result:</p>  <table border="1" style="display: none;"> <caption>Out of Borough Survey Results</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Agree</td> <td>71%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disagree</td> <td>23%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	Agree	71%	Disagree	23%	Other	6%
Response	Percentage								
Agree	71%								
Disagree	23%								
Other	6%								
<p>Direction: 71% agreed and the comments overall were that housing should be prioritised for Gateshead residents; with out of borough applicants having the opportunity to apply. Further discussions with staff and members resulted in retention of the current policy which states that out of borough applicants will be assessed for band 4, those with a local connection will sit above those without one. The local connection rule was strengthened in line with industry standards and retained. The main reason for retaining it is to give transfers preference over out of borough applicants without a local connection.</p>									

Exclusions							
<p>Proposed Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exclusions removed because it was felt it contradicted thrive and thresholds were considered counterproductive ▪ Extreme cases section built in to manage high risk cases 	<p>Result:</p>  <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px; width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">Agree</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Disagree</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Other</td> </tr> <tr> <td>52%</td> <td>43%</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> </table>	Agree	Disagree	Other	52%	43%	5%
Agree	Disagree	Other					
52%	43%	5%					
<p>Direction: 52% agreed and 43% disagreed which meant the result was inconclusive. Applicants and members felt exclusion should be rare with a formal decision process and only where there is no other viable option but that they should not be removed entirely. There should be a greater degree of management of high-risk cases and that those that engaged with the Council could be demoted; those that did not may be suspended whilst a plan was constructed to minimise any risks.</p>							
Financial Exclusions							
<p>Proposed Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduced thresholds for those with savings, investments, income or equity ▪ Vulnerable residents will be exempt 	<p>Result:</p>  <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px; width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">Agree</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Disagree</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Other</td> </tr> <tr> <td>76%</td> <td>19%</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> </table>	Agree	Disagree	Other	76%	19%	5%
Agree	Disagree	Other					
76%	19%	5%					
<p>Direction: 76% agreed; although there were general comments about the thresholds. There has been further discussion internally and the thresholds have been reviewed in line with average earnings and average property prices following right to buy discounts. The change has been adopted.</p>							

Demotions									
<p>Proposed Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Demotion will now be within band rather than at the end of the waiting list ▪ If they adhere to an arrangement to address their behaviour, the demotion will be removed 	<p>Result:</p>  <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <caption>Demotions Survey Results</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Agree</td> <td>74%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disagree</td> <td>20%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	Agree	74%	Disagree	20%	Other	6%
Response	Percentage								
Agree	74%								
Disagree	20%								
Other	6%								
<p>Direction: 74% agreed; and this only applies to bands 3 and 4, so those demoted in band 3 will sit above general needs, their priority need is therefore preserved. The change has been adopted.</p>									
Overcrowding									
<p>Proposed Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Those short of 1 bedspace in band 3 ▪ Short of 2 bedspaces in band 2 ▪ Short of 3 or more in band 1 	<p>Result:</p>  <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <caption>Overcrowding Survey Results</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Agree</td> <td>81%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disagree</td> <td>13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	Agree	81%	Disagree	13%	Other	6%
Response	Percentage								
Agree	81%								
Disagree	13%								
Other	6%								
<p>Direction: 81% agreed and this recognises severe overcrowding. The change has been adopted.</p>									
Homeless Priority Need									
<p>Proposed Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full and relief duty in band 1 ▪ Prevention duty in band 2 ▪ Intentionally homeless band 3 	<p>Result:</p>  <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <caption>Homeless Priority Need Survey Results</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Agree</td> <td>83%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disagree</td> <td>9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	Agree	83%	Disagree	9%	Other	8%
Response	Percentage								
Agree	83%								
Disagree	9%								
Other	8%								

<p>Direction: 83% agreed and this recognises the need for the Council to reduce the costs of temporary accommodation. The change has been adopted.</p>									
<p>Change of Tenancy</p>									
<p>Proposed Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transferred tenancy changes to the tenancy management policy. ▪ Where a new tenancy is required for a succession has been retained 	<p>Result:</p>  <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <caption>Survey Results for Change of Tenancy</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Agree</td> <td>86%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disagree</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	Agree	86%	Disagree	6%	Other	8%
Response	Percentage								
Agree	86%								
Disagree	6%								
Other	8%								
<p>Direction: 86% agreed; as tenancy changes is part of tenancy management and not the allocations policy. The change has been adopted.</p>									
<p>Tenancy Determination</p>									
<p>Proposed Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secure tenants will be granted a secure tenancy ▪ Introductory tenancies have been retained. ▪ Adapted and large units needed by people in high need will be given flexible tenancies 	<p>Result:</p>  <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px;"> <caption>Survey Results for Tenancy Determination</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Agree</td> <td>86%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disagree</td> <td>7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>7%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	Agree	86%	Disagree	7%	Other	7%
Response	Percentage								
Agree	86%								
Disagree	7%								
Other	7%								
<p>Direction: 86% agreed and those on flexible tenancies will be reviewed at renewal. If they still need the property, they will be given a new flexible tenancy. If they do not, they will be rehoused. The change has been adopted.</p>									

12. **Gateshead Residents public consultation**, where residents were encouraged to comment on the documents as a whole. This yielded very low results; a total of 8 across all three documents. The feedback received was:
- **Tenancy Strategy**, had 2 respondents where there was general agreement and they wanted ASB history to be factored in when considering rehousing. This has already been accounted for in exclusions and demotions.
 - **Tenancy Management Policy**, had 3 respondents where there was general agreement and they wanted tenancy audits to cover property inspections which it already does.

- **Allocations Policy**, had 3 respondents where they wanted more clarity on overcrowding rules which we have made even clearer. They indicated that homeless and local people should be put first which we had reflected in the change in homeless priority changes and the retention of local connection for out of borough applicants. They were worried about the impact of ASB and this has been addressed by retaining a modified version of exclusions. They felt that choice based lettings as a overall policy is a failure, but both the current policy and the proposed policy are blended policies where direct lets are used to manage critical and high risk cases. They queried whether the policy was deliverable. It is good practice to monitor all key policies whilst they are bedding in and adjust as necessary. This has already been identified within the main report and the policy. Concern was expressed that young people are being allocated near sheltered accommodation. This has not been expressed in the policy but the usual safeguards will remain in place to allocate sensitively. There was a suggestion that British people should be given priority over refugees and asylum seekers. Asylum and refugee initiatives are government directives and the Council is bound by these directives.
13. **Members workshops**, discussed armed forces, out of borough and local connection, exclusions, demotions within band, affordability, tenancies granted, underoccupation and succession, financial exclusion and adverts based on priority need and time waited. The outcomes of these discussions were used to inform the formal draft of the documents before stakeholder consultation. Further ratification was undertaken on local connection and exclusions in the fourth and final workshop in July. Demotion of a secure tenancy was also discussed with members as it was previously approved by cabinet but never implemented. It was agreed it would be retained. In addition members did not accept the following and they were discarded:
- **Penalties**, for refusing a property
 - **Limited offers**, to allow applicants lower down to receive a opportunity to move
14. **Registered Providers and External Stakeholders**, were asked to comment on the tenancy strategy and the allocations policy. A summary of the feedback is captured below:
- **Tenancy Strategy**, is very strong and compared to other local authorities the direction is positive. They welcome the partnership arrangements that the Council is seeking to develop. They are committed to the discharge of homelessness in social housing. They suggested some wording around tenancy sustainment which we have reflected in the final draft and they suggested a rent deposit scheme which the Council does not currently have and will be investigated further.
 - **Allocations Policy**, much of the feedback was on the delivery model which has yet to be scoped in full and partnership arrangement discussions are planned to take this forward. They raised concerns around continuing the permit time waited adverts but embraced the move to have adapted unit adverts. They have reservations around allowing under occupation even in low demand areas and this will need to be teased through over the next few months. They wanted domestic abuse strengthened which we have done and they also wanted local connection back in for out of borough applicants. They also asked for the offer of accommodation section to be strengthened which we have done.

15. **Internal Stakeholders**, were asked to comment on the tenancy strategy, tenancy management policy and the allocations policy. A summary of the feedback is captured below:
- **Tenancy Strategy**, also feel this is a strong document and like the direction it is taking.
 - **Tenancy Management Policy**, many of the comments were procedural and outside the scope of the policy, however we did tighten up the wording on the tenancy start date and the tenancy end date following recommendations.
 - **Allocations Policy**, social care wanted the threshold removed for financial exclusion and extra care which we have done. They also wanted the verification of carers strengthened so that we recognised professional advice. This too has been accommodated. They like the assisted bidding emphasis and the strengthening of the fostering and child safeguarding section. They also asked for clarity around domestic abuse. With respect to armed forces a further covenant duty is being introduced at the end of 2022 and they wanted this referred to. They wanted failure to bid to trigger a review which took into account professional advice which has also been incorporated.
16. **Health and Wellbeing Board**, the documents were welcomed and it was recognised that a lot of work had gone into removing the barriers in the current lettings policy taking on board the need to address poverty and priority need. They wanted the wording strengthened around fostering and child safeguarding but have not yet provided formal feedback.
17. **Tenants Workshop**, the proposed changes were presented to 25 tenants in a workshop on the 1 September 2022. The results were fed back verbally to the Strategic Housing Board in the afternoon of the same day. The results align with the results of the applicants survey. The table below compares the results of applicants with tenants and also covers off the main comments received in the session.

Proposed Change	% Agree	% Agree	Tenant Comments
	Applicant	Tenant	
Armed Forces	83%	96%	General agreement
Out of Borough Applicants	71%	80%	Retain current policy
Exclusions	52%	68%	There is a still a blend of opinion. Most want the exclusions, but they understand the need to house people who may need to be in their host borough.
Financial Exclusion	76%	68%	Overall agreement and the need to exempt vulnerable residents, but the need to sell even though this is in the current policy before being offered specialist accommodation raised some concern.
Demotions	74%	84%	Positive direction but want criminality and ASB to be

			treated differently to debt.
Overcrowding	81%	88%	Positive direction but we should be building larger properties.
Homeless Priority	83%	92%	Positive direction but waiting times on available properties are detrimental.
Tenancy Changes	86%	92%	Positive.
Tenancy Determination	86%	88%	Positive – meets tenants needs/aspirations, but the policy needs to be followed accordingly.

18. The results of the applicant's survey align with the results of the tenant's workshop. No further postal surveys were returned following the workshop.



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Title of proposal: Tenancy Strategy	Age	Race	Sex	Gender reassignment	Disability	Religion or Belief	Pregnancy and Maternity	Sexual Orientation	Marriage and Civil Partnership	Description of potential mitigation
<p>Equality impact: (✓ all that apply. The assessment should also consider impact on council employees and carers where applicable)</p> <p>Description of impact: The new tenancy strategy promotes the use of flexible tenancies in the following circumstances:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Heavily adapted properties 2. Very large family units 3. Funded homeless schemes <p>Lifetime tenancies (assured and secure will continue to be issued as they currently are. If someone is already on a lifetime tenancy, they will remain on one in their new property. Consideration may be given to adapted properties and flexible tenancies used where a household member and not</p>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	<p>In theory the use of flexible tenancies may impact any of the groups identified within the Act with the exception of disability which will only be affected in adapted units. The Council must make best use of stock which is why adapted units and very large units have been identified. Funded homelessness schemes are outside of the Council's discretion as the flexible tenancy is a stipulation of the funding.</p> <p>We will ensure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure tenancies are of 5 years duration in line with good practice and the housing regulator unless the funding regime stipulates a different period. 2. Monitor who is being granted a flexible tenancy and review.



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<p>the tenant is in need of the adaptations. Effectively when a tenant transfers, a new tenancy agreement is entered into, and all rights will be preserved where the tenant has a right to ongoing protection of those rights.</p> <p>There is no change proposed to introductory tenancies. They will remain.</p> <p>RTB qualification periods will be considered for consecutive fixed term tenancies so the whole period will qualify but not for an under occupied or heavily adapted property.</p>										<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Ensure adverts, offers and sign ups publicise the flexible tenancy. 4. Have a robust fixed term tenancy renewal process in place which stipulates the review should take place 9 months before it is due to end. A needs assessment will be undertaken and if they still need the property, we will renew the tenancy for a further 5 years. If not, they will be allowed to re-join the housing register for a suitable property and their priority will be in line with best use of stock criteria to give them the maximum possible award. 5. They will be allowed a reasonable time to be rehoused and preference will be taken into consideration. 6. Possession of the property will only be taken in very rare circumstances and where the tenant has been made every possible suitable offer.
<p>Health impact: (e.g. physical, mental health, wellbeing, substance misuse) The needs assessment at 9 months before the tenancy ends will take into account the full circumstance of the household when a decision is made, including any health and wellbeing impact.</p>										<p>A Fixed Term Renewal Process will be introduced.</p>



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<p>Socio Economic impact: (e.g. neighbourhood, ward, area of deprivation, household group, income, wealth) This is not likely to be a factor but will be covered at the 9 month needs assessment. Tenancy sustainment – support offered (para 8.1) will include positive impact on households / tenants who are struggling financially. Support for downsizing (para 10.1 & 2) will also have a positive impact on tenants currently being charged underoccupancy tax.</p>	<p>A Fixed Term Renewal Process will be introduced.</p>
<p>Environmental impact: (does the proposal impact on climate change and the Council’s commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030? Is the proposal in line with the Council’s Environmental Policy? Does the proposal increase natural resource use? Does the proposal increase waste? Does the proposal increase pollution? Does the proposal impact on wildlife? Does the proposal increase car use? Does the proposal increase energy use?) Yes, but positively because it ensures that the very largest properties are only to be used for households that meet this need. Hence their fuel bills will be in line with their family consumption.</p>	<p>None required</p>
<p>Cumulative impact: (consider impact based on successive budgetary decisions relating to the proposal or is the proposal part of wider budgetary considerations that may collectively have an impact on service users and is potentially at odds with the Thrive agenda). Downsizing will still be available to tenants in very large units if they wish to move before the end of the fixed term tenancy period by mutual consent. Where there is financial hardship, this will factor in the priority award. We will consider the wellbeing of the tenant at renewal as part of the impact assessment, and we must also consider the needs of applicants who are waiting for these types of units and balance their need as well.</p>	<p>This is covered in the new Allocations Policy</p>
<p>Summary of consultation/data/research undertaken to inform the assessment: (e.g. feedback and engagement with service users, trade unions, employees, partners, public, benchmarking, case studies) We have considered an impact analysis for cases which have been let in the last 6 months which would under the new strategy have been considered for a flexible tenancy either for a heavily adapted unit or a very large unit. The Council has an issue with data accuracy at this point in time as flexible tenancies are not currently given and the data is not captured as part of the existing lettings policy. The new allocation policy will capture this data and therefore it was agreed to monitor the granting of flexible tenancies for a 12-month period following approval of the Tenancy Strategy and new Allocations Policy to see if any further measures are needed by way of mitigation.</p>	



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We undertook public consultation between 30 June and 28 July 2022. This was undertaken with the following:

- All applicants on the housing register.
- Residents in Gateshead via a public consultation
- Members
- Registered providers in Gateshead
- External stakeholders
- Internal stakeholders

Applicants were in agreement with the use of flexible tenancies for these types of units. We had 1750 respondents out of 9500 applicants and 86% of the respondents agreed. The public consultation was low but those that did respond agreed. Registered providers and external stakeholders felt the tenancy strategy was strong and compared to other local authorities the direction was very positive. Internally there has been no disagreement. Members were not comfortable with flexible tenancies in very large units but understood that no existing tenants will be affected by this new policy. They were in favour of flexible tenancies in adapted units. We have since carried out a tenants workshop on the 1 September 2022 which was attended by 25 tenants; 88% agreed with the new policy for both adapted and very large units. They also understood that tenants on existing tenancies would not be affected by the policy. The policy has now been incorporated.

Signed: (completing officer) Rachel Khan (Campbell Tickell Ltd) with Vicky Sibson, Strategic Housing Services Manager, Gateshead Council.

Date: 30 August 2022

Service Director: (approved) Kevin Scarlett, Director of Strategic Housing and Residential Growth

Date: 2 September 2022



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Title of proposal: Allocations Policy (formerly Lettings Policy)	Age	Race	Sex	Gender reassignment	Disability	Religion or Belief	Pregnancy and Maternity	Sexual Orientation	Marriage and Civil Partnership	Description of potential mitigation
<p>Equality impact: (✓ all that apply. The assessment should also consider impact on council employees and carers where applicable)</p> <p>Description of impact: The new allocations policy introduces the following changes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Armed forces. The 5-year cap has been removed and both honourably and dishonourably former members of the armed forces will be considered. 2. Out of Borough. The rules around OOB applicants remain unchanged for the present but we have strengthened the local connection rules in line with legislation and industry good practice. 	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	<p>In theory the changes has the possibility of impacting any of the groups covered by the Act. However the impact is a positive one overall.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ By removing the 5-year cap and not discriminating between honourable or dishonourable at the point of application we have lowered thresholds and will consider priority need alone. Former members of the armed forces continue to benefit from the current covenants and new covenant duty being introduced at the end of the 2022. ▪ The local connection has been strengthened and places less of burden to evidence a connection. However an exercise is due to take place where we quantify the number



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<p>3. Exclusions. These remain but with a formal decision process to consider the health and wellbeing of both the individuals and the community balance. They will not apply to bands 1 and 2 where the housing need is critical or urgent.</p>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	<p>of OOB applicants with no local connection with a view to giving consideration to continuing as we are or closing the list. This will be brought to Cabinet at a later stage once the new policy has bedded in for at least a year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exclusions have been strengthened and all viable options will be pursued before an exclusion is agreed. This promotes Thrive and the need to explore better management of cases which might previously have been excluded. They will not apply to those in critical or urgent need. ▪ Financial exclusion will not apply to vulnerable households or those needing specialist accommodation so will not penalise those most in need. ▪ Demotions recognises the need for those in band 3 to sit above those in band 4 thereby recognising their priority need. ▪ By recognising the need for large properties for overcrowded households we have sought a remedy that addresses need by bedspace shortfall. ▪ By recognising the need to place those in B&B and TA into critical
<p>4. Financial Exclusions. This has been strengthened. Those with equity, income, savings and investments above thresholds set in line with RTB discounts, average house prices, private rents and average earnings will be expected to find their own housing solutions unless they are vulnerable or need specialist accommodation.</p>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
<p>5. Demotions. These will now be within the qualifying band rather than at the end of the housing register. They will not apply to bands 1 and 2 where the housing need is critical or urgent.</p>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
<p>6. Overcrowding. The pressure on very large households in overcrowded accommodation has been recognised. Those</p>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	



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<p>needing 3 or more bedspaces will sit in band 1 (critical). Those needing 2 bedspaces will sit in band 2 (urgent) and those needing 1 bedspace will sit in band 3 (substantial).</p> <p>7. Homeless Priority Need. This has been adjusted to recognise the need to move those in B&B and temporary accommodation quickly and reduce the stress to the applicants and the cost to the Council. Full and relief duty will now be band 1 (critical). Prevention duty will be band 2 (urgent) and intentionally homeless will be band 3 (substantial).</p>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	<p>need we recognise the thrive agenda and the cost to the Council. We will need to monitor the savings for a full letting year post approval of the policy to understand the full impact of those savings.</p>
<p>Health impact: (e.g. physical, mental health, wellbeing, substance misuse) We have considered the impact to health and wellbeing when introducing the changes around homeless priority, overcrowding and armed forces.</p>										<p>NA</p>	
<p>Socio Economic impact: (e.g. neighbourhood, ward, area of deprivation, household group, income, wealth) Overcrowded households moving to larger properties will need to find them affordable where they are not in receipt of benefit or there is a benefit cap. We will monitor the impact of releasing B&B and TA quicker by awarding a critical need over the next 12 months. By introducing a financial exclusion policy for those who can afford to seek their own housing solutions we reduce the pressure on the existing housing register and those who are vulnerable or in need of specialist accommodation.</p>										<p>We will need to monitor the impact of financial hardship overall over the next year. Further changes may be introduced where there is a negative impact. However with overcrowding we are also seeking to move dependents who are 18 and over to their properties in order to alleviate the</p>	



Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance

INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

	<p>overcrowding to the main household which in itself mitigate the costs to the main household.</p>
<p>Environmental impact: (does the proposal impact on climate change and the Council’s commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030? Is the proposal in line with the Council’s Environmental Policy? Does the proposal increase natural resource use? Does the proposal increase waste? Does the proposal increase pollution? Does the proposal impact on wildlife? Does the proposal increase car use? Does the proposal increase energy use?) None</p>	<p>NA</p>
<p>Cumulative impact: (consider impact based on successive budgetary decisions relating to the proposal or is the proposal part of wider budgetary considerations that may collectively have an impact on service users and is potentially at odds with the Thrive agenda). Where there is financial hardship, this will factor in the priority award. A further impact assessment will be undertaken once the impact analysis and savings have been monitored and completed.</p>	<p>A final impact analysis will be submitted 12 months after the approval and implementation of the new policy to understand the effects of savings, further work on whether to close the housing register, monitor financial hardship, monitor the effects of banding changes and demotions within qualifying bands.</p>



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Summary of consultation/data/research undertaken to inform the assessment:

(e.g. feedback and engagement with service users, trade unions, employees, partners, public, benchmarking, case studies)

A full impact analysis is underway as follows:

1. Banding Migration. We are looking at the full effect of banding changes, for the households that move and also the impact to the band they move from and to. This work is due for completion by mid Sept and the results will be sent to Cabinet with the new Allocations Policy.
2. Demotion within Qualifying Band. We are looking at the full effect of demotion within qualifying band. This will cover the exemptions for critical and urgent, the impact to moving the demotion from the bottom of the list into the qualifying band and the impact to band 3 and 4 where there is no exemption. This is due for completion by mid Sept and the results will be sent to Cabinet with the new Allocations Policy.
3. Demotion housing related debt threshold of £250 changing to £500. The work is complete. Around 25% of applicants who are currently demoted will not be demoted with a higher threshold for housing related debt. Further this will not apply to those in critical or urgent need. Demotion will not apply to applicants who find themselves in debt through no fault of their own.
4. Financial Exclusions. We looked at the rehoused owner occupiers in the last 6 months. Data is not currently collected for savings, income or investments, it will be in the future. The threshold that was applied was £100,000 and 9 applicants were over it and would not have been rehoused. The threshold has now been revised following consultation to £50,000 and more would apply so we are revisiting the exercise which is due for completion by mid Sept.
5. We will do a costs savings exercise over the next 12 months for households owed a relief duty.
6. We will do a quantitative exercise over the next 12 months for households who are out of borough without a local connection. This is to look at the numbers of the housing register and whether by accepting them this is having a detrimental effect on rehousing transfer applicants. It is also to understand whether the original trend of housing OOB applicants with no local connection into lower demand properties has changed and needs to be further evidenced.
7. A partnership agreement is being developed with Registered Providers over the next 12 months.
8. A further IIA will be submitted once all the above are complete.

We undertook public consultation between 30 June and 28 July 2022. This was undertaken with the following:

- All applicants on the housing register. We had 1750 respondents out of 9500 applicants which represents 19%.
- Residents in Gateshead via a public consultation. We are undertaking a tenants workshop on the 1 September 2022.
- Members
- Registered providers in Gateshead
- External stakeholders
- Internal stakeholders



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The results on the proposed changes so far:

1. Armed forces. 83% agreed and the change has been adopted.
2. Out of Borough. 71% agreed and the comments overall were that housing should be prioritised for Gateshead residents; with out of borough applicants having the opportunity to apply. Further discussions with staff and members resulted in retention of the current policy which states that out of borough applicants will be assessed for band 4, those with a local connection will sit above those without one. The local connection rule was strengthened in line with industry standards and retained. The main reason for retaining it is to give transfers preference over out of borough applicants without a local connection. Further work is planned as detailed in 6 above.
3. Exclusions. At the time of consultation were considering removing exclusions. 52% agreed and 43% disagreed which meant the result was inconclusive. Applicants and members felt exclusion should be rare with a formal decision process and only where there is no other viable option but that they should not be removed entirely. There should be a greater degree of management of high-risk cases and that those that engaged with the Council could be demoted; those that did not may be suspended whilst a plan was constructed to minimise any risks. A modified version of exclusions was retained.
4. Financial Exclusions. 76% agreed; although there were general comments about the thresholds. There has been further discussion internally and the thresholds have been reviewed in line with average earnings, private rents and average property prices following right to buy discounts. The change has been adopted.
5. Demotions. 74% agreed; and this only applies to bands 3 and 4, so those demoted in band 3 will sit above general needs, their priority need is therefore preserved. The change has been adopted.
6. Overcrowding. 81% agreed and this recognises severe overcrowding. The change has been adopted.
7. Homeless Priority Need. 83% agreed and this recognises the need for the Council to reduce the costs of temporary accommodation. The change has been adopted. Further work is planned see 5 above.

Signed: (completing officer) Rachel Khan (Campbell Tickell Ltd) with Kevin Johnson, Head of Customer Services, Gateshead Council.

Date: 27 August 2022

Service Director: (approved) Kevin Scarlett, Director of Strategic Housing and Residential Growth

Date: 2 September 2022