

Housing Allocation Policy

Consultation Summary Report

November 2020

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1.0 Background to the consultation

- 1.1 This report details the consultation mechanisms used regarding the Housing Allocation Policy. The main purpose behind this consultation was to provide residents and partner organisations with the opportunity to make comment regarding proposed changes to the Housing Allocation Policy.
- 1.2 Gedling Borough Council transferred its housing stock to Gedling Homes in 2008, and so is no longer stock holding. However, the statutory duty to manage the allocation of social housing was retained by the Council and these obligations include the need to have an allocations policy.
- 1.3 The current allocation policy was approved in 2013 and describes the mechanisms by which the Council assesses applications to join the housing register. This will enable the relevant housing provider to allocate the properties from a shortlist of potential applicants.
- 1.4 As reported to Cabinet on 9th October 2019, the proposed changes to the Allocation Policy are being made to reflect legislative requirements and also to:
- Continue to house those in the greatest need within Gedling
 - Support stable and vibrant communities
 - Reflect local priorities
 - Make the best use of limited housing stock available
 - Have a clear system in place setting out a framework of eligibility, qualification and priority to social housing
 - Fulfil the Councils' obligations under the legislation
 - Deliver the principles of demand management
 - Not raising unrealistic expectations
 - Reduce the Councils use of temporary accommodation, including B&B.
 - Comply with good practice for B&B use
- 1.5 Following this approval, a full 12 week consultation was held from January to April 2020 was undertaken.
- 1.6 Following this, a historic matter was identified during internal consultations, linked to people who are over 55 and do not have a local connection and are only bidding for sheltered accommodation can be included on the waiting list. This was a policy decision made previously, when demand for sheltered accommodation was very low and suffered from high voids rates. As this is no longer the case, Officers sought to undertake a further 4 week consultation to remove this from the allocation policy. This consultation was undertaken during October 2020.
- 1.7 A total of 89 responses were received through both consultation processes.

2.0 Consultation

2.1 As stated, the consultation process included a full statutory 12 week consultation and a further 4 week consultation.

Initial Consultation: 12 week public consultation

2.2 A range of mechanisms were utilised over a 12 week period to gain feedback from residents, partner organisations and other stakeholders regarding proposed changes to the Allocation Policy. The image below shows the information used for consultation purposes:



2.3 There were a number of methods used, including:

- Utilisation of an online SnapSurvey which has been widely publicised
- Contacting all households on the housing register. Where an email address was registered on the housing register, residents were alerted to the consultation via email. Where there was no email registered or the email bounced back, residents were contacted via letter. Over 600 households were contacted by email or letter;
- Utilisation of the screens in the Civic Centre to advertise the consultation period and where to find the information;

- Presentations at a range of partner forums, this included the Nottinghamshire-wide homelessness executive, attended by Adult Social Care, Children and Young People Services, Public Health, neighbouring local authorities and health colleagues; the Nottinghamshire Youth Homelessness Forum, attended by a range of partners and stakeholders with an interest in youth homelessness and the South Nottinghamshire Homelessness Forum, attended by stakeholders with an interest in homelessness in the Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe areas;
- Utilisation of the Have Your Say web pages;
- Dedicated phone line and email address for queries;
- Dedicated web page which included the proposed draft allocation policy, proposed changes, the Cabinet paper and a link to the online survey;
- Where residents were unable to respond online or did not understand the consultation, support was available; and
- Utilisation of an article in Contacts Magazine.

2.4 Whilst residents, partner organisations and other stakeholders were able to make any general comments on the changes to the Allocation Policy, a focus for soliciting responses was in relation to the key proposed changes to the Policy. As reported to Cabinet in October 2019, these were in relation to changes in:

- How the Council prioritises homeless applicants
- Use of the housing register auto bid system
- Local Connection Criteria
- Grounds for exclusion from the housing register

How the Council prioritises homeless applicants

- 2.5 In order to fully comply with new legal requirements and guidance relating to homeless applicants, we are proposing to place applicants who we assess as homeless and in priority need of housing in band 1 of the housing register (the highest priority) once the Council has accepted a full duty to rehouse to accommodate applicants as soon as possible. We are also proposing to use the auto bid system which allows bids to be placed on behalf of such applicants in recognition of their urgent housing requirements. The auto bid facility will place bids on those properties where the applicant is most likely to be successful. It is also important to note that the auto bid facility works on the number of bedrooms as opposed to the property type, for example, someone who is eligible for a 2 bedroom property could have bids placed on 2 bedroomed, houses, flats and bungalows.
- 2.6 Where applicants make a homelessness application and are found to not have a priority need for housing but have a local connection to the Gedling Borough Council area, they will be awarded an extra 6 months waiting time, in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018.

Use of the housing register auto bid System

- 2.7 The housing register auto bid system will place bids automatically on behalf of the households on the register. We propose to place all applicants on band 1 on the auto bid system in view of their urgent need for housing. The exception to this is where applicants are downsizing by 2 or more bedrooms and are placed in band 1. In view of the need to incentivise households to free up larger properties, the Council considers it appropriate to give such households choice of the type and location of properties they bid for.

Local Connection Criteria

- 2.8 Due to the limited supply of Social Housing in the Borough, the Council is proposing to increase the local connection criteria from one to three consecutive years. This means that in order to be accepted onto the Housing Register, it is necessary to have a local connection for the last three consecutive years. This is in line with neighbouring local authorities. There are some exceptions to this, for example, that the applicant has served in the armed forces, or is fleeing from another area.

Additional grounds for exclusion from the housing register

- 2.9 The draft policy identifies certain situations where applicants could be removed from the Housing Register, for example:
- Not actively bidding
 - Have deliberately providing misleading / inaccurate information on their application form
 - Post application have behaved in a way which would make them ineligible to be on the Councils Housing Register, e.g. anti-social behaviour

Second Consultation: 4 week public consultation

- 2.10 On 2nd September, a Portfolio Holder report was presented to update the Portfolio Holder on the outcome of the Council's public consultation on the Council's revised draft Housing Allocation Policy and to seek approval to consult for a period of 4 weeks on a further revision to the Housing Allocation Policy.
- 2.11 The reason for the additional short consultation was that initial consultation identified the potential to remove the element from the current allocations policy which allows people who are aged over 55 and do not have a local connection and are only interested in sheltered housing to apply for housing in the Borough. Officers then sought further feedback from Registered Providers on this emerging matter separate to the first round of the consultation. The comments received suggested that housing providers had housed relatively few people as a result of this specific criterion, and there is a concern that it unrealistically raises people's expectations that they will be

offered accommodation in the Borough. There is also the associated work load, in terms of registering applications and responding to enquiries etc.

2.12 Advice received from the Council's legal services team recommended that to seek to enact this change, a further consultation period covering 4 weeks would be required to seek the views of stakeholders and, in particular, those on the housing register. All applicants on the housing register were contacted as part of this consultation process.

2.13 There were a number of methods used, including:

- Contacting all housing applicants to make them aware of the consultation. This was done via email where an email was registered on the application or by mail where no email was registered or where the email bounced.
- Use of the Have Your Say pages of the Council's website.
- An on-line SNAP survey
- Presentation at housing liaison meetings with partners where these were held, including with Jigsaw Homes.

3.0 Feedback

Initial Consultation: 12 week public consultation

- 3.1 Overall, there were 69 comments received as part of this first consultation by 60 respondents (see Appendix A) and the proposed changes have been well received. The following is a summary of the responses received.

Online survey consultation

- 3.2 There were 69 responses. Respondents were given the option to state whether they were currently Gedling residents; currently residents in another area or responding on behalf of another organisation. Of the 60 respondents who responded to this question, 73% (44) were Gedling residents; 23% (14) were residents of another areas and 3% (2) were responding on behalf of a partner organisation.
- 2.3 The feedback received was generally positive, with the changes being well received. The following is a summary of these responses.
- How the Council prioritises homeless applicants - 91% of respondents agreed to the changes.
 - Use of the housing register auto bid System - 82% of respondents agreed to the changes.
 - Local Connection Criteria - 89% of respondents agreed to the changes.
 - Additional grounds for exclusion from the housing register - 94% of respondents agreed to the changes.
- 2.4 Those respondents who did not agree were asked to comment on the reasons why. These comments are summarised as follows.

How the Council prioritises homeless applicants

Issue	Response/ amendment
Factors should be on a case by case basis	Whilst there is some discretion based on individual circumstances and a right of appeal, it is essential to have in place a policy to define how social housing is allocated

Auto bid system

Issue	Response/ amendment
Generally that auto bid takes away choice	Auto bid does remove choice, however it places bids on those properties that the applicant has the greatest chance of being offered.

Local Connections criteria

Issue	Response/ amendment
Too long for continuous local connection	In line with other LA's and the need to better match demand to supply, hence we acknowledge that we are reducing the number of people who will be eligible. However, this is balanced against limited supply of affordable housing

Additional grounds for exclusion from the housing register

Issue	Response/ amendment
Anti-Social Behaviour needs to be better defined	For someone to be excluded on the grounds of ASB, there would need to be clear evidence of ASB, such as a court order or similar, or having lost a previous tenancy due to ASB, it cannot be just allegations.
Issues around being excluded for not bidding and lack of suitable properties to bid on	Each case is assessed on its own merits, and that applicants would be contacted prior to their application being removed from the register. We should also advise that we need to maintain an accurate and up to date housing register, and this is part of that process, as often, we find that people have moved, and therefore no longer need to be on the waiting list. Lastly applicants always have the right of appeal.

Additional comments

- 2.5 Further comments were received which reinforced earlier comments made in the consultation. The exception to this was as follows:

Issue	Response/ amendment
Domestic Violence policy needs 'tightening up'	There is guidance in place, and supporting evidence is requested, however due to the nature of DV not always available, and cases need to be determined on a case by case basis.

Additional stakeholder consultation

- 2.6 As part of the consultation, there were a number of stakeholders actively targeted to secure their feedback through the online survey. This included housing providers: government advisors; housing needs team and other local authorities. The feedback was generally positive, but there were a number of matters that required further consideration, including a view from the MHCLG advisor that the policy was comprehensive and well written, MHCLG asked the Council to consider two elements as part of the allocation policy. Firstly, to consider use of part 6 and 7 of homelessness legislation to address incidences of anti-social behaviour also to consider additional preference to those homeless applicants without a priority need but who are both

eligible and homelessness through the awarding of an additional 6 months priority. The Council considers that this has now been address via the awarding of an additional 6 months waiting time.

Summary

- 2.7 In summary, the overwhelming response to the proposed changes in the first round of consultation were positive. Where consultees responded that they disagreed with the changes or further clarity was required, this was considered further. A summary of these considerations is included in points 2.4 and 2.5.

Second Consultation: 4 week public consultation

- 2.8 A total of 20 responses were received to the second consultation (see Appendix B), of which 16 were completed through the electronic SNAP survey. Broadly, these were in favour of the proposed changes with many recognising the challenges of housing people with a local connection and the need to prioritise those with a local connection for the limited supply of affordable housing.
- 2.9 Two questions were asked to consultees. Firstly, specifically relating to the proposed amendment to the eligibility of those aged 55+ with no local connection and secondly to ask for any other comments.
- 2.10 Relating to question 1 (comments on the proposed change), 9 comments were received. Of these, 7 were positive and 2 were neutral or unclear as to supportive.
- 2.11 Relating to question 2 (overall comments), 7 comments were received as shown in Appendix B.

4.0 Summary and next steps

- 4.1 In summary, feedback from both consultation were very positive. As a result of the comments received, there are no further changes planned to the Housing Allocation Policy.
- 4.2 The revised Housing Allocation policy will be updated and taken back to Cabinet for approval to be amended and published.

Appendix A: Consultation 1 feedback received

Housing_Allocation_Policy_2020

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This report was generated on 04/05/20. Overall 69 respondents completed this questionnaire. The report has been filtered to show the responses for 'All Respondents'.

The following charts are restricted to the top 12 codes.

In order to fully comply with new legal requirements and guidance relating to homeless applicants, we are proposing to place applicants who we assess as homeless and in priority need of housing in band 1 of the housing register (the highest priority) to seek to accommodate applicants as soon as possible. We are also proposing to use the auto bid system which allows bids to be placed on behalf of such applicants in recognition of their urgent housing requirements.

Where applicants make a homelessness application and are found to not have a priority need for housing but have a local connection to the Gedling Borough Council area, they will be awarded an extra 6 months waiting time. (Do you agree?)



Please explain why:

It should depend on the case circumstances,

People are already abusing the system using domestic violence claims to jump the waiting time. Homelessness is increasing due to people not paying their rent from their benefits, this change will encourage this as it awards a higher priority for social housing

People need to bid first of all and chose the place where to live.

99 percent of people only go into homeless hostels to get a property faster however dont really use the hostel and just get s higher pioraty into housing coasting the government more money while in a hostel . While being homeless at home dose not give any piorates to people who have issues with living and bringing there children up in a hostel setting .

Severe medical conditions should always get the very highest priority! Homeless people should be placed in private rented homes and then go on to get a council home, don't see any point in giving them an extra 6 months waiting time if the council are giving them the very highest priority, seems silly.

The housing register auto bid system will place bids automatically on behalf of the households on the register. We propose to place all applicants on band 1 on the auto bid system in view of their urgent need for housing. The exception to this is where applicants are downsizing by 2 or more bedrooms and are placed in band 1. In view of the need to incentivise households to free up larger properties, the Council considers it appropriate to give such households choice of the type and location of properties they bid for.

(Do you agree?)



Please explain why:

I feel that all people should be treated equally where possible and I feel it should be a choice that you can have auto bids in band 1 or choose as those in band 2 do at present. This is because if you put someone in band 1 in a property that you feel is suitable but they don't you are increasing the chance of them becoming homeless again or being isolated or in accommodation they don't like which could lead to anxiety and depression.

I think that people who are under occupied by more than 2 bedrooms should have auto bid because they may take years to find somewhere they like when people are in need of bigger accommodation

I don't feel that such applicants should get band 1 placing simply by downsizing. If they are downsizing, but have no health or other urgent requirement, they should be assessed on their other circumstances like I have been. Otherwise the system is unfair to those on the register who are moving from one property to the same type of property.

Every person should be able to decide which area they want to be in. A lot needs to be considered, culture, religion and race etc. If you place them in an area that could be a racist area. Causing further problems then a need to move again.

give such households choice of the type and location of properties they bid for

Unfair process there should be houses selected separately for priority need band ones

I get that there is a need for large houses but everyone should have a fair chance of getting accommodation so it should be a level playing field.

Yes, downsizing is fair if they don't need the extra bedrooms, in fairness it's good that these folks are being honest and giving families the chance to housing but putting these people above everyone else waiting for a one bedroom property isn't fair. Those that are over 60 already have priority on homes with age restrictions, but those of us who are just over 50, are disabled and have been waiting and waiting shouldn't be pushed aside coz of downsizing folks. The whole point of having an 'urgent' band 1 is to help urgent cases..folks who are either on the street or those who are crippled and have to move etc...not those who are already comfy in their home but just need a smaller place!

Due to the limited supply of Social Housing in the Borough, the Council is proposing to increase the local connection criteria from one to three years. This means that in order to be accepted onto the Housing Register, it is necessary to have a local connection for the last three years. There are some exceptions to this, for example, that the applicant has served in the armed forces. This is outlined in further detail on pages 12-13 of the draft policy.

(Do you agree?)



Please explain why:

Within a year children will be settled into schools and friendships made thus support networks. Some families may have had an unsettled lifestyle so to settle should be encouraged.

This risks excluding a much larger number of people who have moved between the City area and Gedling, and depending on other allocation policies, it might mean that people do not have a local connection to any of the areas they have previously lived in. This change would maybe be more appropriate in areas which are self-contained, and which is not part of a larger urban urban area.

How is this fair

Sofa surfing from friend to man I have sex with to sleep over odd occasions

Due to the amount of people homeless in Nottingham we need house to live in I myself live with my sister in 3 bed room house with my 6 nephews 4 girls and 2 boys the reason I can't go on homeless is because she doesn't want me to live in the street and I have a family who are living abroad in Portugal 2 years old son and I have 2 adults one with 16th years and s girl 18th years old I can't afford to rent a 3 bed on private property so I have this option and I would do anything to be accepted to shortlist

This strict policy doesn't allow for people born in the area who move away for a few years and then return, automatically dismissing their connection to the area

The draft policy identifies certain situations where applicants could be removed from the Housing Register, for example:

Not actively bidding for a property

Have deliberately providing misleading or inaccurate information on the application form
Following having being accepted onto the housing register to have behaved in a way which would make the applicant ineligible to be on the Councils Housing Register, e.g. anti-social behaviour.

(Do you agree?)



Please explain why:

The definition of anti social behaviour is too wide and discriminatory, it doesn't take into account individual circumstances

I would only disagree with people being removed for not bidding. We can only bid if there is a suitable property. For example, very often there are only 2 bedroom properties available, which I am not allowed to bid on. I do agree that those who provide false information, or have anti social behaviour reports should be considered for removal.

Just because a person doesn't actively bid doesn't mean they do not look. It may be that due to domestic violence, schools or work they need to be in a certain area and the houses are not available. This is Completely unfair and should be if people log on and actively look and should not be penalised for not bidding.

people bid in them on time.

Do you have any other comments regarding the proposed changes to the Allocation Policy? If so, please state below:

Test survey completed by Ally Bennett

3 years is a bit too long when it comes to consider social connection

Only having 6 weeks to choose before going onto auto I'd was very stressful and unfair. Why should you have less rights as a homeless person than someone who is already housed.

Please do we still have a chance with illness

Thier should b a section relating to families supporting each other. Eg family supporting daughter with long term condition and then farther needing support due to death of partner leaving a child under 18

I imagine the first question on 'homelessness' is going to cause some controversy as it depends on what people's interpretation of that is! Without sounding cruel, someone from the UK that has been paying into the system all their lives and have fallen on bad times for whatever genuine reason, like veterans, disabled, elderly and infirm or those who are suffering domestic violence and are 'at risk' or evicted for no reason of their own who have been waiting a period of time for Social Housing in band 1 or 2 shouldn't be discriminated against and made to wait even longer and be brushed aside by those who have just come into the UK and been given 'priority!'. I also think the system is incredibly 'flawed' when it comes to those who are already in Social Housing and have occupied a house for years with regards to a change in their financial situation! For example: A couple that are occupying a Social Housing property and paying for example £78 per week in rent, who's situation has changed over the years and the pair now bring in over £40k! But lying about their income! And please do not tell me that this doesn't happen, because there's a couple down the road from me that are loving this arrangement! He is a full time bus driver and she is a Duty Manager in a local well known frozen food store! The pair of them bring in over 40 thousand pounds, can afford a mortgage or private rent, yet have no intention of perusing this, for obvious reasons! Because of this abhorrent behaviour, the poor sods who should be entitled to Social Housing are never offered anything, because of people like the bus driver and his Mrs! So those that cannot afford private rent and have no other choice are often stuck in badly managed, unsuitable properties, paying over the odds to greedy Landlords who are getting away with it! So you can see how twisted and unfair the situation is. Hope this has helped!

Yeah, house families with young children that live with a parent quicker

The domestic violence policy needs tightening up, I'm aware of at least one person who has abused this to get themselves immediately housed multiple times. I have made the council aware of this but as nothing was done I'm assuming this person knows someone in the council? Other staff and councillors wont step in

Do you have any other comments regarding the proposed changes to the Allocation Policy? If so, please state below:

I feel that there should be people already in social housing should be in band 2. If we are bidding on a property and we are already in social housing we are vacating a property as well as occupying a new one. Therefore the number of available properties remains unchanged and more people can be housed. This would make it easier for people to be removed from the register, by being rehoused, which would further reduce the need for properties.

I don't agree with forcing people to live where you tell them. I have been put in an area where we face racism and I am bidding for other properties however there are no houses in the area I can go. So does that mean I am to be kicked off the register. Unfair. I look every single day for properties and I will be penalised for not bidding. Absurd

Im in band 3 and find it hard to get anywhere near the front of the que also barely any property comes up in my area

I believe all people should get what they need but things cud be done more fast .Thank you.

Priority needs to be given to disability people,when the property they live in becomes inaccessible

I have been on the housing list since October 2019 in Band 3 and have only been able to apply for one property. I check on a daily basis and there are always 0 houses to bid for!

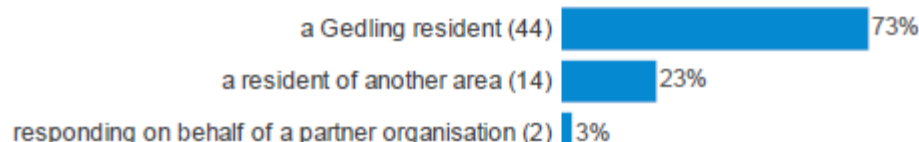
I have been on the list for 4 years. I am in private renting in Basford. Have to stay with gedling borough. And only see bidding for way out. When asked for gedling or Carlton areas. As my daughter is in gedling and she takes me to all hospital and doctors appointments. Due to having health issues and requires no stairs. That's my worries.

No but mental health issues need to be taken more seriously. My 21 year old son has been suicidal due to us having to go into temporary accommodation, and I also have mental health issues, but none of this has been acknowledged or support offered.

Don't always assume that because people have not placed a bid that they are not looking to be rehoused! It could be that the homes advertised are not to their liking or in the area they want.

Stop advertising what 'number' people are at on the waiting list! Unless they are in position 1, 2 or 3 as it is pointless having folks at No 53 on the list as you and I both know they have no chance what so ever of securing a council tenancy! It's like dangling a carrot in front of someone! It's cruel and should stop. There must be a better way of letting folks know they have no chance at the moment! Allocations policy clearly states that the person at position No1 will be offered the property, and if they don't want it, it goes to No2 and so on...so if No 52 suddenly gets offered a place, if I was No52, I'd start asking questions why! Is this place dangling on the edge of a cliff or something?! Plus, I've noticed that over 2/3 of all the properties in my area advertised on Homesearch are for over 60's! I would have been housed 6 months ago if I was over 60! It's fantastic that the elderly are being looked after, I applaud you on that, but not enough of the housing trusts are taking into consideration folks that are in their 50's and disabled and could very easily be put into one of these over 60 places if they are not taken by the over 60's. Gedling Borough Council should be changing the rules on that and insisting that if a property isn't taken by someone within the age group advertised, it should consider offering it to someone a little younger with a disability etc. Yes, some do, but not enough and folks like me are left in limbo being told that 'there isn't a suitable property' as we slip through the gaps!

Are you:



Additional emailed comments

A number of responses were received on the dedicated allocation policy email address specifically relating to individual cases rather than the allocation policy consultation. These were forwarded to the Housing Needs Team.

Appendix B: Consultation 2 feedback received

Housing_Allocation_policy_amendments_2020

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Housing Allocation policy amendments 2020

Housing Allocation policy amendments 2020

This report was generated on 20/10/20. Overall 14 respondents completed this questionnaire. The report has been filtered to show the responses for 'All Respondents'.

The following charts are restricted to the top 12 codes.

If you have any comments on this proposed change, please state below:

After being in this situation myself I think this is a fantastic idea and hopefully will go ahead
i think its a good idea for people of this age
I believe that this is suitable for the over 55s and families due to having more opportunities to get a housing association property and private rented. However with young people choices are limited especially if they have no family to rely on for extra support when it comes to private rented properties.
I think we should remove this aspect of the policy.
This aspect of the policy should be removed.
I'm glad no change for 55+ with a local connection
I have noted the changes raised in the draft paper. The findings in regard to over 55's housing surely highlight a need for the borough to invest in the building and supply of new housing to applicants in this age group thus freeing up under occupied properties in other boroughs co-joined under the Homeseach Scheme. M Miller, aged 64 currentl
Good idea
I think locals should come first. Especially if the applicant is not a UK resident.

If you have any other comments regarding the housing allocation policy please state below:

I don't think that people with drug habits should be housed with elderly people. Or screaming kids.
no
I think that if someone has lived in a house for longer than 10 years they should be able to move (if they need to) to a new house of their choice in the area.
I think that if someone has lived in a house for longer than 10 years they should have a right to move if the need to.
No other comments
na
Until all UK citizens are fully housed in suitable accommodation, housing to asylum seekers cease.

Additional emailed comments

A number of responses were received on the dedicated allocation policy email address specifically relating to individual cases rather than the allocation policy consultation. These were forwarded to the Housing Needs Team.