



THE KENNET HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

KENNET HOUSING REGISTER

HOMES @ KENNET POLICY

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KENNET DISTRICT COUNCIL
BROWFORT, BATH ROAD
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KENNET HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

KENNET HOUSING REGISTER

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KENNET HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

POLICY

THE KENNET HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Kennet Housing Register

Established in April 1997, the Kennet Housing Register is intended to be the single register of housing need for all the Kennet district. The Register is the primary access route into social housing in Kennet. The demand for housing exceeds supply and the register exists to enable all households who are in need of rehousing to be included on one waiting list and to maximise their opportunities for rehousing. The Register also acts as an index of the level and nature of housing need locally.

1.2 Kennet Housing Partnership

The Kennet Housing Partnership is made up of Kennet District Council and 17 housing associations. The partnership was formed to offer a unified application and allocation service to those wishing to be housed in Kennet. The housing partners are:

- Downland Housing Society
- English Churches Housing Association
- Guinness Trust Housing Association
- Hastoe Housing Association
- James Butcher Housing Association
- Jephson Housing Association
- KASH
- Kennet District Council
- Kennet Housing Society
- Kingfisher Housing Association
- Knightstone Housing Association
- L & Q Beacon
- Raglan Housing Association
- Sanctuary Housing Association
- Sarsen Housing Association
- Shaftesbury Housing Association
- Sovereign Housing Association
- Wiltshire Rural Housing Association
- Western Challenge Housing Association

Kennet District Council and all the housing associations above provide, directly or indirectly, social housing in Kennet. By joining the Kennet Housing Register those in housing need can be considered for vacancies which occur in properties owned or managed by any of the partners. The aim is to make the task of

applying for housing as simple as possible requiring only one form to be completed for all social housing opportunities.

The Kennet Housing Register is managed for the partners by Kennet District Council, through their sub-office, 'homes@kennet'. The Register is used for the purpose of making Council nominations to housing association tenancies and for filling vacancies with other housing associations where no formal nomination arrangements exist.

Aims and Objectives

The agreed aims and objectives of the Kennet Housing Partnership are

- ◆ Effective use of all housing stock
- ◆ Partnership working to meet housing need in Kennet
- ◆ Sustainable communities
- ◆ Meet the objectives of Kennet District Council's Housing Strategy
- ◆ Commitment to anti-discriminatory practice and promotion of equality of opportunity in housing services.

The agreed objectives of the Kennet Housing Partnership are to:

- ◆ ensure the widest possible choice of homes is available to people on the Kennet Housing Register;
- ◆ share eligibility criteria;
- ◆ use a common housing application form;
- ◆ consult on changes to the allocations policy to be applied by Kennet District Council;
- ◆ to co-ordinate policies on allocations, including the Council's responsibilities under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996;
- ◆ provide a shortlisting service for all partners by a variety of means;
- ◆ eliminate formal nominations by identifying applicants qualifying as nominees on all shortlists;
- ◆ to reduce duplication of visits by different associations whenever practical and to share visit reports between the partners;
- ◆ ensure homeless applicants are given fair access to all housing association stock, and;
- ◆ co-ordinate housing needs assessment with the assessment of need for care and support.

The Kennet Housing Partnership Panel meets regularly to consider policies and procedures for the operation of the register and to consider requests for the review of decisions relating to access to the register and eligibility for offers.

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HOMES @ KENNET

2.0 CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

From February 2002 the Kennet Housing Partnership has operated a choice based approach to lettings. The service is called 'homes@kennet'.

Applications to the register are allocated into 3 separate bands –

- Band A Customers with an urgent need to move to affordable accommodation in the Kennet District;
- Band B Customers with a genuine reason for seeking affordable accommodation in the Kennet District;
- Band C Customers who want to move to affordable accommodation in the Kennet District.

In the first instance, all vacancies will be made available through the 'homes@kennet' scheme to those in Bands A & B. If a property cannot be let to a customer in Bands A & B it will be offered direct to customers in Band C. *Priority for direct offers of accommodation will be given to those who have a genuine reason for seeking affordable accommodation but have no local connection to Kennet.*

Shared ownership properties are available to customers in any band who meet eligibility criteria and have registered an interest in shared ownership.

2.1 MISSION STATEMENT

The service aims to provide affordable housing opportunities to those wishing to live in the Kennet Area and who have housing needs which they cannot afford to meet.

The service, as far as is consistent with our legal and other obligations, offers those looking for housing the ability to choose those properties they are interested in.

The service ensures that there is an effective safety net for those who are homeless or have other urgent housing needs but also offers housing opportunities to existing tenants and others.

The service aims to be fair, simple to understand and transparent in its rules.

2.2 PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

- To operate a lettings system that offers realistic, informed choice for all applicants while continuing to meet housing need and homelessness.
- To operate a lettings system that is fair, transparent and easy to understand.
- To maximise the participation of all applicants in the lettings process.
- To achieve sustainable communities and minimise refusals by allowing people to choose where they want to live.
- To include vulnerable applicants in the lettings process and ensure that they have choices.
- To promote equality of opportunity in housing services.

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3.0 REGISTRATION

Before anyone can apply for vacancies advertised through the scheme they must first join the Kennet Housing Register.

3.1 Who can register?

Anyone can join the Kennet Housing Register for Rented Accommodation unless they have a history of serious rent arrears or anti-social behaviour. However, only those customers who are capable of maintaining a tenancy without specialist support and who have a genuine reason for seeking affordable accommodation in the Kennet Area will join Bands A and B and will therefore be able to bid for vacancies advertised through 'homes@kennet'. Applicants from outside the Kennet Area will have to demonstrate that they have a genuine reason to move to the district (See Appendix 6 – Genuine Reason to move to the Kennet Area).

Other applicants will be able to register but their applications will be kept in a separate band, Band C. Applicants in this band will be contacted direct if a suitable opportunity to rent arises. *Priority for direct offers will be given to applicants who have a genuine reason for seeking affordable accommodation but have no local connection to Kennet.*

Applicants, with available capital or assets in excess of £25,000 will also be placed in Band C and advised to rent privately but they will be considered for “difficult to let” accommodation **and shared ownership homes**.

Examples of what circumstances would give someone a genuine reason to move would include the following:

- Underoccupation or lack of accommodation based on a lack or surplus of bedroom accommodation, assuming that a separate bedroom is needed for each of the following who are, or will be permanently resident:
 - (i) A couple or single parent
 - (ii) Each additional adult aged 18 and over
 - (iii) Two children of same sex under 10 years of age
 - (iv) Children over 10 years of opposite sex
 - (v) Two children of same sex where they are both over 10 years and with an age difference of more than 5 years.
- The current accommodation is unsuitable for the household's needs because:
 - (i) a child under 10 years is living above the 1st floor
 - (ii) a child under 10 years is living above the ground floor
 - (iii) a child under 10 years is living in accommodation that has no garden

- the applicant has to share amenities i.e. kitchen, living room, bath/shower, internal toilet with a separate household and needs independent accommodation
- the applicant is roofless, living in temporary or otherwise insecure accommodation
- the applicant is living in a privately rented shorthold tenancy or tied accommodation
- the applicant is an owner-occupier but does not have sufficient income and/or savings to meet their essential living and mortgage costs without dependence on welfare benefits.
- The applicant is not able to afford to buy a property in the private housing market. Affordability will be determined by whether the applicant would be able to obtain a sufficient enough mortgage to buy the size of property they need within the district, on the basis of their savings and income. As part of the assessment, 'homes@kennet' will consider whether a households' debt is affecting their ability to obtain a mortgage.
- a member of the household has a medical need to move to other accommodation
- there are defects or environmental problems with the applicant's current accommodation which has an effect on the health, safety or comfort of the household
- a member of the household needs to move for one of the following social reasons: education reasons; lacking transport and living in an isolated rural location; employment reasons; neighbour harassment; relationship breakdown; other reasons where quality of life is moderately or severely affected by remaining in the home.

3.2 Age Limits

Applications can be accepted from those over the age of 16 years. However, applicants who are aged under 18 years would normally need to be referred by a recognised social welfare or health agency. Applicants who are still below the age of 18 years at the time of receiving the offer of accommodation will be asked to provide a guarantor of the tenancy until their 18th birthday.

A Joint Protocol has been agreed with Wiltshire County Council Social Services to facilitate the joint assessment of the needs of young vulnerable people. Those under 18 years would normally be dealt with under homelessness legislation rather than through the Housing Register.

Applicants for Sheltered Housing (grouped housing with warden assistance) must be aged 55 years or over or registered disabled, although age restrictions may vary between individual associations.

3.3 Owner Occupiers

Owner-occupiers are only accepted into Bands A or B of the Register, if they do not have available capital or assets in excess of £25,000 and one of the following applies:

- They are threatened with homelessness.
- They are in need of specialist housing for medical reasons which is not available to buy and it is not possible to carry out the disabled adaptations required, to their home.
- Their house is in a serious state of disrepair and they do not have sufficient income or savings to maintain it or to buy alternative accommodation elsewhere.
- They are overcrowded and cannot afford to buy a larger home.
- Wherever possible, independent advice confirming the extent of disrepair will be sought e.g. Environmental Health, Care & Repair.

If none of the above applies the applicant will be registered in Band C.

3.4 Armed Forces Service Occupants

Applications from those living in Armed Forces Accommodation will not be registered in Bands A or B more than 12 months before the date of discharge.

To be eligible to join Bands A or B applicants or their spouses must have originated from an address in the Kennet District immediately prior to enlisting or have some form of local connection other than residence e.g. permanent employment or close family connection.

Close family connection is defined as having a parent, grandparent, brother, sister or children living in the Kennet Area who has had normal residence in the area for more than 6 months.

Applicants from the Armed Forces who have more than 12 months to go before their date of discharge will be registered in Band C. Applicants with less than 12 months to go before their date of discharge where no one in the household has a local connection to Kennet will be registered in Band C.

3.5 Applicants Who Are Statutory Homeless

Applicants who are homeless, or believe they are under threat of losing their homes will also be assessed under separate arrangements by 'homes@kennet' acting for Kennet District Council. It will be established whether there is a duty to provide temporary accommodation until a permanent home can be found. Where such a duty is accepted, applicants will automatically be included on the Kennet Housing Register.

Applicants who are found to be unintentionally homeless but not in a priority need category will also be automatically included on the Kennet Housing Register. They can then apply for advertised vacancies for longer-term accommodation.

3.6 Intentional Homelessness

Applicants who have been found to be intentionally homeless can register their need unless they or a member of their household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant (see Appendix 3 – Policy & Guidance on Non-Qualifying Persons).

3.7 Applicants Needing Care & Support

The Kennet Housing Partnership will work closely with Health and Social Services to identify opportunities to rehouse those in need of housing with care packages or other means of support. Where such a package is not immediately available, the Kennet Housing Partnership reserves the right not to offer accommodation until care or support arrangements are agreed and the client has signed up to the package.

3.8 Move on from Supported Housing

Applicants who are currently living in supported housing are not normally eligible to register for at least 6 months from the date they moved into the accommodation (see Appendix 4). Priority will be given through the priority card system (see Section 5).

3.9 Existing Housing Association Tenants

All existing tenants of the Kennet Housing Partnership living in the Kennet District can register for transfer. However, only those who have a genuine reason to move will be able to join Bands A or B and will therefore be eligible to apply for advertised vacancies.

'homes@kennet' may request the current landlord's assistance in assessing whether a tenant has a genuine reason to move.

Condition of Property: Where the landlord is dissatisfied with the condition of the tenant's current home their transfer application will be suspended until the property has been returned to good decorative order.

If an applicant is a joint tenant of a housing association and wishes to give up their part of the tenancy to live elsewhere they will be registered in Band C until they have:

- Agreed in writing to relinquish their interest in the tenancy, or
- The application is supported by the housing association landlord, or
- Made a successful application as a homeless household in a priority need group.

3.10 Rent Arrears

- **General Needs Applicants** with rent arrears or other forms of indebtedness to a former landlord will be allowed to register but will be informed that they will be **ineligible to bid** for advertised vacancies until all debts are cleared.
- **Medical/Social/Welfare Priority Card Holders**: Where the applicant with former tenant arrears has an urgent need to find accommodation, a panel, selected by members of the Kennet Housing Partnership will decide whether to make an exception to this rule, based on the individual merits of the case.
- **Statutorily Homeless Applicants** with rent arrears or other debts to a former landlord will be offered temporary accommodation. They will be issued with a 3 month priority card with their S184 decision letter. However, they will be **ineligible to bid** for advertised vacancies and therefore unable to use their card, until the debt is repaid in full or until they have consistently maintained a satisfactory agreement to repay their debt for at least 3 – 4months.

If after 3-4 months of maintaining the repayment agreement, the debt is still outstanding, 'homes@kennet' will review the homeless household's case to assess whether they should become eligible at that stage for one reasonable offer of accommodation.

As part of the assessment, consideration will be given to the household's personal circumstances, the level of the debt, the applicant's history of arrears and any other factors that in 'homes@kennet's' opinion may be relevant.

- **Existing Housing Association Tenants** with rent arrears or other forms of indebtedness to any of the partners will be allowed to register. However, they will be **ineligible to bid** for advertised vacancies until they have cleared all debts.

Where the tenant with arrears has a high need to move the landlord will consider whether to make an exception to this rule based on the individual merits of the case.

- Applicants with a persistent history of rent arrears in any accommodation may have their application **excluded** from the Kennet Housing Register. The decision to exclude any application because of rent arrears will be taken by 'homes@kennet'.
- If at the point of nomination a debt is discovered discretion will be used to allow the nominee to clear it before a decision to withdraw the nomination is made.

3.11 Anti-Social Behaviour

Applicants with a history of violent or anti-social behaviour may be **excluded** from the Register if there is sufficient evidence that this behaviour is likely to continue and create problems for neighbouring households. The decision to exclude any application because of a history of anti-social behaviour will be taken by 'homes@kennet'.

3.12 Harassment/Racial harassment

The Kennet Housing Partnership is committed to anti-discriminatory practice and promoting equal opportunity of housing services and will not tolerate any form of harassment, including racially motivated harassment against its tenants.

The Kennet Housing Partnership considers harassment, including racially motivated harassment to be serious anti-social behaviour and applicants with a history of harassment against others may therefore be excluded from the Register if there is sufficient evidence that this behaviour is likely to continue.

3.13 Fraudulent Applications

Anyone who deliberately provides false information in their application for housing may be **suspended** or **excluded** from the Kennet Housing Register. The decision to suspend or exclude an application because of false information will be taken by 'homes@kennet'.

3.14 The Right to a Review of Decisions

Any applicant refused registration will be given a written explanation. If the applicant disagrees with the decision they have the right to request a review of this decision by a panel of at least three members of the Kennet Housing Partnership (See Section 15.0 – Right to Review of a Decision).

3.15 People from Overseas

Some people travelling to the United Kingdom to settle are not entitled to be nominated for rehousing by the Local Authority. Those who do not have a legal right to stay in the Country and those who are Asylum Seekers will not therefore, be included on the Kennet Housing Register. However, they will be advised which housing association are able to consider a separate application from them.

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4.0 PRIORITISING APPLICATIONS FOR VACANCIES - WAITING TIME

The register will operate fundamentally as a queuing system, although there are distinct priority categories for different levels of housing need as follows:

Band A	Those with an urgent need to seek affordable accommodation in the Kennet District;
Band B	Those with a genuine need to seek affordable accommodation in the Kennet District;
Band C	Those who want to move to affordable accommodation in the Kennet District.

Where more than one application is received for a particular property, priority will be based on the length of time they have been waiting on the register.

- For general needs applicants – date of original application
- For transfer applicants – start date of current tenancy

If more than one application at the top of the shortlist, shares the same registration/tenancy start date, priority for the vacancy will be given to the older customer. If the vacancy is very popular and a high demand threshold applies, (see 11.0), then priority for the vacancy will be given first to a priority cardholder and then to the older customer.

For Housing Association tenants who are applying for transfer from an Assured Shorthold Tenancy or Licence Agreement, the date of their original application to the register will be taken rather than the start date of their tenancy.

5.0 PRIORITY CARD SYSTEM

Applicants with an urgent housing need will be awarded a priority card in order to help them resolve their immediate housing crisis as quickly as possible. For certain groups this will be for a time limited period.

5.1 3 month time limited homeless priority card

Homeless households who Kennet District Council has a legal duty to accommodate, under the terms of the Housing Act 1996, Part VII, will be provided with a priority card for a 3 month period.

If the applicant has not found accommodation during this time Kennet District Council will reserve and offer a suitable vacancy as soon as the opportunity arises. This will be dependent on others whose cards have

expired and ensuring that a range of properties remains available for all customers.

5.2 Renewable Homeless Priority Card

Homeless households who Kennet District Council does not have a legal duty to accommodate, under the terms of the Housing Act 1996, Part VII will be provided with a 6-month priority card, initially.

Kennet District Council do not owe a duty to accommodate the following groups of homeless people:

- **Those who are statutory homeless but not in priority need, as defined by the Housing Act 1996, Part VII (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002).**
- **The applicant is intentionally homeless but he/she is not guilty of unacceptable behaviour that was serious enough to make them unacceptable as tenants.**

The card will only be awarded following a full homelessness investigation for an initial period of 6 months. After three months the Housing Adviser will contact the cardholder to ensure the following:

- **that they are receiving the support they need to be able to apply for suitable properties.**
- **that their circumstances have not changed and that they are still entitled to hold the card.**

The Housing Adviser will closely monitor the cardholder's search for housing throughout this period.

5.3 Medical/Social Priority Cards

The following groups will be awarded a priority card for a 6 month period, initially. If the applicant has been unsuccessful in finding suitable accommodation and they continue to have an urgent need to move, the card will be renewed for a further 6 months.

- Applicants with an urgent medical need to move, verified by professional medical assessment (See 8.0 Urgent Medical Need – Explanatory Notes).
- Applicants with an urgent social/welfare need to move (See 9.0 Urgent Social Need – Explanatory Notes).
- Existing Housing Association Tenants whom the landlord need to rehouse because of urgent housing management reasons.
- Applicants who having successfully held their tenancy for a minimum 6 month period, need to move on from supported accommodation.

5.4 Medical Priority Card Sub-Categories

Priority cards awarded for medical reasons will be sub-divided between the following:

- Mobility Needs
- Other Needs

5.5 Renewal of Medical/Social/Welfare Priority Card

The medical/social/welfare priority card will be awarded for an initial period of 6 months. After five months the Housing Adviser will contact the cardholder to ensure the following:

- that they are receiving the support they need to be able to apply for suitable properties.
- that their circumstances have not changed and that they are still entitled to hold the card.

The Housing Adviser will closely monitor the priority card holder's search for housing throughout this period.

5.6 Eligibility for Types of Dwelling

Where an applicant has been awarded a priority card because of a severe medical need to move to specially adapted or ground floor accommodation they can only use the card on applications for that type of dwelling. i.e. they can apply for non-adapted properties but their priority card will not have any effect and their placing for that property will be entirely determined by their length of tenancy or time on the waiting list.

However, landlords will have the right to refuse applications, which are unsuitable, for health & safety reasons (see Section 7.0 Right to Refuse an Application).

5.7 Deliberately Worsening Circumstances

Where there is evidence that an applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances in order to qualify for higher priority on the Kennet Housing Register, no additional priority will be given.

Examples of where someone may have deliberately worsened their circumstances would include:

- **Selling a property that is affordable and suitable for the applicant's needs in order to qualify for Bands A or B of the housing register. In this event the customer would remain in Band C.**

- **Moving from an assured tenancy to insecure, overcrowded accommodation with family or friends in order to qualify for a priority card. In this event, no priority card would be awarded.**

For an applicant to have deliberately worsened their circumstances there must be evidence that it would have been *reasonable* for the applicant to have remained in their original accommodation.

5.8 Right to a Review of a Decision not to award a Medical/Social/Welfare Priority Card

An applicant has the right to a review of a decision not to award them a social/welfare or medical priority card.

Applicants seeking a review must advise the 'homes@kennet' Office in writing within 21 days, giving their reasons for requesting the review.

A different 'homes@kennet' officer from the officer responsible for the original decision will carry out a review.

If the applicant does not agree with the outcome of the review, they have no further right of appeal.

5.9 Multiple Playing of Priority Cards

Applicants will be able to play their priority card on as many vacancies as they wish during any given advertising period.

However, as with all other applicants who bid for more than one property in any given advertising period, they will have to indicate their 1st, 2nd, 3rd choices of property in order to speed up the process and minimise the time that properties remain vacant.

5.10 Ranking of Priority Cards

The 3-month time limited Homeless Card, the Medical Card and the Social/welfare Card are all ranked equally.

If more than one cardholder within the above group applies for the same property, priority will be decided by time, i.e. original date of registration/length of tenancy.

The Renewable Homeless card for non-priority and intentionally homeless households is ranked below the other types of card.

Priority Cards will continue to be considered before local connecton and all other preferences where bids are at or below the threshold level However, where bids are below the threshold in a village and more than one priority card holder bids, the card holder with a local connection will be considered first, although non-priority card holds will continue to be ranked below all other card holders.

If more than one renewable homeless cardholder applies for the same property, priority will again be decided by time, i.e. original date of registration/length of tenancy.

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6.0 REFUSALS OF OFFERS

6.1 3 Month Time Limited Priority Cards

- **Statutory Homeless**
Should a statutorily homeless applicant successfully bid for a property but subsequently refuse the offer made, Kennet District Council will discharge their duty under the terms of homelessness legislation, to provide them with accommodation, providing the offer was reasonable.
- They will have the right to continue to play their priority card for the remainder of the three-month period. If they have been unsuccessful in finding accommodation before the end of that period, they will then have to rejoin the waiting list without any priority status.

6.2 Renewable Priority Cards

Applicants with renewable priority cards do have the right to refuse offers of accommodation.

However, on the 6 monthly review the Housing Adviser will check to ensure that the applicant does have a genuine need to be rehoused urgently.

6.3 Waiting Time Applicants

There will be no penalty for refusing an offer of accommodation which has been made solely because of the applicant's length of time on the Kennet Housing Register or length of tenancy i.e. no priority card has been played.

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7.0 RIGHT TO REFUSE A NOMINATION

- Where there is reasonable evidence that an applicant might endanger the health and safety or well being of neighbouring residents because they have a history of violent or abusive behaviour against particular individuals in the Kennet Area, the Kennet Housing Partnership will reserve the right not to offer them accommodation in a particular location.

For example, where an applicant has been prosecuted for assaulting a local resident or where the applicant is a Schedule 1 Offender and there are a number of young children living locally.

- The Kennet Housing Partnership also reserves the right not to offer accommodation where there is reasonable evidence that it is unsuitable for the applicant for health and safety reasons.

For example where the applicant has mobility needs that cannot be met without making considerable adaptations being to the property.

- Where there is reasonable evidence that an applicant has provided false information in their application for housing, the Kennet Housing Partnership reserves the right not to offer accommodation.

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EXPLANATORY NOTES

8.0 URGENT NEED TO MOVE ON MEDICAL GROUNDS

- 8.1 The applicant or other member of the household suffers from a severe continuing or intermittent medical condition that is substantially exacerbated by the living circumstances and which would only be alleviated by a move to more suitable accommodation, rather than the provision of aids or adaptations.
- 8.2 The applicant or member of their household is unable to make use of all their accommodation because of mobility problems (i.e. unable to climb stairs or reach amenities such as WC, bathroom or kitchen) and a move to alternative accommodation would alleviate these problems.
- 8.3 The accommodation is too small or lacks basic amenities for essential home therapy or treatment (e.g. kidney machine, exercise mat) and these amenities cannot be provided by adaptation of the accommodation.
- 8.4 In the opinion of the Medical Panel, the home circumstances taken together contribute substantially to the difficulties experienced by someone with a medical condition or their carer and the Medical Officer believes that the difficulties would be lessened by a move to more suitable accommodation.
- 8.5 The applicant or other member of the household suffers from a progressive illness and the prognosis would lead to problems with their accommodation even though it is acceptable at present.
- 8.6 The applicant is dependent on a named voluntary carer who does not live with them for regular care and whose care would benefit from being nearer to the carer.

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EXPLANATORY NOTES

9.0 URGENT SOCIAL/WELFARE NEED

- 9.1 The applicant's or a member of their household's quality of life and/or safety is severely affected by serious and persistent neighbour harassment/intimidation.
- 9.2 The applicant's or a member of their household's quality of life and/or safety is severely affected by racial harassment/intimidation.
- 9.3 The applicant's quality of life and/or safety are severely affected by actual or threatened domestic violence.
- 9.4 Other reasons which in Kennet Housing Partnership's opinion, severely affect the applicant's or a member of their household's quality of life, for example where a family cannot live together.
- 9.5 The applicant needs to move to a particular locality in the district to avoid extreme hardship to themselves or to others.
- 9.6 The applicant is vulnerable and intentionally homeless but he/she is not guilty of unacceptable behaviour that was serious enough to have made them unsuitable as a tenant.
- 9.7 **The applicant is living with a child under 5 years old and occupies a flat on the second floor or above.**

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10.0 PROPERTY LABELLING

10.1 System Criteria

Advertisements will state the type of household that is eligible to apply for the particular size/type of property.

- State eligible household number per size of property
- Appropriate age range for type of accommodation e.g. people over 55 years for sheltered housing
- Established local connection where there is a s106 agreement.
- Disabled adapted properties for people with restricted mobility.

10.2 Landlord Criteria

For certain vacancies, landlords may wish to specify other eligibility restrictions in order to meet their organisation's own internal lettings policy or for housing management reasons.

Examples of these criteria might include the following:

- Established local connection to the area
- No pets allowed
- Age restrictions

10.3 Local Lettings Arrangements on New Schemes

In order to meet local lettings targets on new schemes RSLs can advertise phases of the scheme, with a covering note stating the community mix that they aim to achieve e.g. mix of age ranges, numbers of children etc. They could also apply labelling criteria that restricts maximum occupancy or age ranges (see Section 10.0 & Appendix 6 - Property Labelling).

Please note that on a third of vacancies in new schemes, the high demand threshold will not apply (see Section 11.2 – New Build Properties).

10.4 Preference Criteria

In some cases, whilst other households may still be eligible to be offered the property, preference will be given to certain types of applicant. For example, local residents in villages or people over a certain age.

However, whilst preference criteria will take precedence over time, they will not take precedence over priority cards. Therefore, a customer with a priority card who has no local connection to a particular parish would be selected before a customer who has a local connection but no card, except where the property is in high demand. (See 11.1).

Where the number of bids is below the high demand threshold, the priority card holder with a local connection will have preference over a cardholder without the connection.

10.5 Local Connection

Local Connection to a parish is established by the following:

- Normal residence in the parish for at least 6 out of the last 12 months or 3 out of the last 5 years.
- Close family association with parent, grandparent, sibling or child who has been living in the area for at least 6 out of the last 12 months. Consideration will be given to applicants who have a closer connection to other relatives living in the parish e.g. aunt, uncle, step children rather than to their parents, grandparents, siblings or children.
- Permanent employment in the parish.

10.6 Monitoring of Labelling and its Effect on Lettings

Kennet District Council will be responsible for monitoring the effect of property labelling, to ensure consistency and fairness throughout the lettings process.

The allocation policies of individual RSLs should complement the Lettings Policy agreed by Kennet Housing Partnership Members. Labelling policy is intended to be sufficiently flexible to allow RSLs to work within their own allocation policies.

Any dispute will be referred to a panel, elected by KHP Members.

THE KENNET HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

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11.0 HIGH DEMAND THRESHOLD

The purpose of the priority cards is to help people with an urgent housing need to move as quickly as possible.

However, a key aim of the Kennet Housing Partnership is to give all customers the opportunity to apply for affordable housing and to give everyone a choice of the most popular properties in the district.

Demand varies considerably between different types of properties in different parts of the district.

We have therefore introduced a system of bidding limits or high demand thresholds, to reflect this variety. The type and location of properties so affected will be reviewed annually depending upon demand. It is intended that between 66 and 75 per cent. of properties made available through the bidding system will allow the use of priority cards.

In the case of new build properties, as a result of the popularity of these, the priority limit will not apply to a third of all such properties on any one site. This is to give as many customers as possible a chance of bidding successfully for such a property.

The table at Appendix 7 lists the various threshold levels, as they are currently set.

11.1 APPLYING THE THRESHOLDS

If a property is in high demand and receives more than the specified number of bids for that property type and location, although all customers can apply, (including priority cardholders), the successful customer will be selected entirely on waiting time.

For example, if a priority cardholder applies for a 2 bed house in Marlborough and more than 30 bids (current threshold limit – See Appendix 7) are received for that property, their card will give them no advantage. The successful bidder would be selected entirely by waiting time.

11.2 NEW BUILD PROPERTIES

Thresholds will not apply on a third of newly developed properties, which will be advertised as available to priority cardholders only.

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12.0 RESERVING VACANCIES FROM CHOICE BASED LETTINGS SYSTEM

On the following occasions, suitable vacancies will be excluded from advertisement.

- a vacancy is required to enable Kennet District Council to discharge their duty to a statutorily homeless household
- a vacancy is required for a customer with acute support needs from the Supported Accommodation Register. (See point 13.0).
- a vacancy is required to enable an RSL to decant their tenant from a property due for redevelopment
- a vacancy is required to enable a tenant to move-on from accommodation that has been provided through The Farm Cottage Scheme.
- a vacancy is required to enable the Kennet Housing Partnership Members to assist with nominations from other agencies.
- a vacancy is required because a Kennet Housing Partnership Member has serious management reasons to provide other accommodation.

THE KENNET HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

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13.0 EXCLUDED DWELLINGS – SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

13.1 Registration for Supported Accommodation

- Supported accommodation will be excluded from advertisement. 'homes@kennet' will maintain a separate register of applicants who need this type of accommodation.
- The supported accommodation register will again operate fundamentally as a queuing system, although there will be a distinct priority category for those who need to move urgently.
- Supported accommodation can be any of the following:
 - Accommodation within a particular scheme that is dedicated for use by a particular client group e.g. young homeless people, people with learning disabilities, people with mental health problems etc.
 - Housing Association accommodation that is leased to another statutory agency or managing agent for use by a specific client group.
 - Private sector leased accommodation that is for use by a specific client group
 - Housing Association accommodation that is let to a client with acute support needs and a comprehensive package of support.

13.2 Move-on from Supported Accommodation

- Tenants in supported accommodation can join the 'homes@kennet' Register on the following criteria:
 - a) they have lived in supported accommodation for a minimum of 6 months.
 - b) The housing provider supports their need to move on to independent accommodation.
- The effective date of their registration will be the date that they joined the supported housing register and **not** the date they moved into their supported accommodation.
- They will be awarded a **renewable priority card** to help them move-on to suitable accommodation as quickly as possible, to avoid supported accommodation becoming blocked up.
- Their search for housing will be closely monitored and supported by the Housing Advisers as part of the card review process.
- **Statutory homeless** tenants living in supported accommodation, whom Kennet District Council still have a legal duty to house, will be

given a **3 month time limited priority card** to assist with their search for accommodation.

- If unsuccessful in finding accommodation within that period, 'homes@kennet' will reserve and offer a suitable vacancy as soon as the opportunity arises. This will be dependent on others whose cards have expired and ensuring that a range of properties remains available for all customers.

14.0 PROTECTING VULNERABLE APPLICANTS

14.1 Identification

- **Application Form:** The application form will seek information about health and disability needs, which might cause an applicant to be vulnerable.

The form will seek information about any involvement with social services, health, education authority or voluntary bodies that might suggest an applicant needs additional support.

All application forms will be checked to ensure that support needs are identified. Where the officer suspects that the applicant may be vulnerable, they will refer the case to the Housing Adviser.

Housing Advisers: One of the key roles of the Housing Advisers is to publicise the 'homes@kennet' to Social Services, the Health Authority and the Education Authority and the various local voluntary organisations working with potentially vulnerable applicants.

They will need to establish close working relationships with key workers in these fields to ensure that applicants with additional support needs are being identified and being referred for additional monitoring and assistance.

14.2 Support

- **Housing Adviser:** Potentially vulnerable applicants will be contacted by the Housing Adviser and invited for a home visit or interview. A telephone interview may be sufficient.

The Housing Adviser will seek to establish what the support needs are and to identify ways of enabling the applicant to participate in the Lettings System.

- **Professional/Voluntary Advocacy & Support:** If the applicant agrees, the Housing Adviser will contact any Health or Social Services Professional or voluntary worker with whom the applicant is involved to ensure that they understand procedures and that necessary support is provided.

This could be through monitoring through regular contact or by providing one nominated person to receive correspondence on the vulnerable person's behalf or to assist with applications for vacancies.

- **Advocacy/Support from Family & Friends:** The applicant can nominate a family member or friend to receive correspondence or make applications on their behalf.

14.3 Applying for Vacancies on Vulnerable Person's Behalf

Vulnerable customers will be offered the option of Kennet Housing Partnership automatically putting their application forward for any suitable vacancy that arises.

Where a customer needs supported accommodation because their housing related support needs are acute, they will be registered for supported accommodation only and will not be eligible to bid for advertised vacancies.

THE KENNET HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

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15.0 RIGHT TO REVIEW OF A DECISION

An applicant has the right to request a review of a Kennet Housing Partnership decision:

- a) not to include their application on the Kennet Housing Register ;
- b) to remove someone from the Kennet Housing Register other than at his or her own request;
- c) not to prioritise someone's application under the terms of the allocation policy because their behaviour or that of a member of their household affects their suitability as a tenant.

An applicant will be advised in writing by the Homes @ Kennet of the reasons why they have not been put on, or why they have been removed from, the Kennet Housing Register.

Applicants will be notified of their right to request a review of this decision. Applicants seeking a review must advise the Kennet Housing Partnership office in writing within 21 days, giving their reasons for requesting the review.

A review will be carried out by a more senior officer than the one who was involved in the the original decision.

If the applicant does not agree with the outcome of the review, they have a further right of appeal to a Review Panel comprising officers from Kennet District Council and two other Kennet Housing Partners. The Panel is chaired by Kennet District Council. The entire review process should be carried out within 8 weeks of the original notice.

In advance of the Review Panel meeting, an applicant will be invited to make written representations in connection with his/her request for a review. Representations can also be made by a person acting on behalf of the applicant. Further enquiries may be necessary as a result of any additional information provided. The Review Panel will invite an applicant to attend the Panel meeting.

The Review Panel, in considering a case, will take into account facts known to them at the date of the review. The applicant will be advised in writing of the decision within five working days from the date of the Panel meeting.

The right to a review of a decision does not prejudice an applicant's right to direct their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman the Housing Ombudsman or other appropriate body.

**KENNET HOUSING PARTNERSHIP
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SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

The following performance targets have been set for the operation of the Joint Housing Needs Register:

<u>Task</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Acceptable Performance Level</u>
From receipt of application form to issue of status confirmation and on-line computer record.	15 working days	90%
All vacancies notified in full to Homes @ Kennet by Thursday, 17:00pm will be advertised in local newspaper the following Thursday		100%
Nominee provided to partner association following close of bidding	2 working days	100%
Notification to Homes @Kennet office of offer, refusals, acceptances etc.	2 weeks	90%
From notification of change of circumstances to computer record amendment.	3 working days	90%
<i>Issue of paper file information to partner associations from file holder.</i> To be removed once all partners have access to IBS system	<i>3 working days</i>	80%
<i>Home visit (or checks) completed and recorded at least one partner association.</i>	<i>Prior to offer</i>	100%
Nominations (i.e. acceptances by applicants meeting the Kennet nominations criteria).	75% of net relets	
Joint housing register monitoring reports issued by Kennet District Council.	Quarterly	

Task

Target

Response to request for a review of decision to exclude an application from the Housing Register

Acknowledgement within 5 working days giving date for response.

This will be within eight weeks of the application.

Response to a request for a review of a decision on priority status

3 weeks from receipt of the application of an application

KENNET HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

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NOMINATIONS UNDER THE KENNET HOUSING REGISTER

- ◆ Applicants receiving offers will count as Kennet District Council nominations provided the following conditions are met:-
 1. The application meets the group eligibility criteria.
 2. Selections have been made in order of the bidding shortlist.
 3. The application has been registered on the Kennet Housing Register.
 4. A home visit or other application check has been carried out.
- ◆ 'homes@kennet' will provide, on behalf of Kennet District Council, one nominee. This will effectively be the applicant at the top of the list of applicants for an advertised vacancy, according to either length of time on the waiting list, length of tenancy or the longest standing priority card holder.
- ◆ Should the nominee refuse the property, 'homes@kennet' will provide a second nominee within one working day of notification of the refusal by the Partner Association.
- ◆ Should the Partner Association have a justifiable reason not to offer the property to the applicant nominated, 'homes@kennet' will provide a second nomination within one working day of this decision being agreed by the Partner Association and Kennet District Council.
- ◆ *'homes@kennet' will provide, on behalf of Kennet District Council, information in summary form, on qualifying nominees. This could be by post, FAX, computerised link (including E mail) or data disk.*
This information to be provided electronically in the future.
- ◆ Associations who wish to allocate according to their own criteria and policies can do so either by using their own sources of information or by using the details from the joint housing register.
- ◆ Transfer applicants will be included on the joint housing register but will be dealt with by a separate assessment procedure to new applicants.
- ◆ Kennet* undertakes to consult with the group of partner associations on the development of the allocations policy to be applied to nominations and its nominations procedures. The Council reserves the right to determine its own policy should agreement not be possible.

- ◆ The level of qualifying nominations achieved will be monitored by Kennet District Council. A group target of 100% of net relets has been set which means that partners will be expected to post all of their vacancies onto the system and accept the priority established by the 'homes@kennet' Policy.

KENNET HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

HOMES@KENNET

POLICY AND GUIDANCE ON NON-QUALIFYING PERSONS

1. The Policy Context

The Kennet Housing Register has been established under the terms of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

Regulations made under the Acts prohibit local housing authorities from allocating housing to the following classes of people :

- A person subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, unless he is of a class of persons prescribed for consideration, by regulations made by the Secretary of State.
- A person from a class of persons from abroad whom the Secretary of State has prescribed as being ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation.

The regulations also permit local authorities to decide that an applicant is to be treated as ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by them if they are satisfied that: -

- (a) he, or a member of his household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority; and
- (b) in the circumstances at the time his application is considered, he is unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority by reason of that behaviour.

The only behaviour which may be regarded by the authority as unacceptable is

- (a) behaviour of the person concerned which would (if he were a secure tenant of the authority) entitle the authority to a possession order under section 84 of the Housing Act 1985 (c68) on any ground mentioned in Part 1 of Schedule 2 to that Act (other than ground 8); or
- (b) behaviour of a member of his household which would (if he were a person residing with a secure tenant of the authority) entitle to authority of such a possession order.

Applicants with a history of rent arrears, violent or anti-social behaviour that was serious enough to make him unsuitable to be a tenant for the reasons described above will be refused entry to the Kennet Housing Register.

The purpose of this policy is to refuse access to social housing to individuals or households who would be likely to commit offences against others in the neighbourhood or otherwise cause severe disruption within the local community. The policy may also be used to restrict access to those who have been violent (or threatened violence) towards staff of the Partners.

The policy is intended only to be used in exceptional cases. The overriding objective of the Kennet Housing Partnership is to identify and rehouse those in greatest housing need. However, this objective must be balanced by considering the effect on existing tenants of allocations decisions. The allocation of housing to an applicant should not, in turn, have an impact which will create a need for rehousing by other households in the immediate neighbourhood (because of disruptive or criminal behaviour).

Criteria for Non-admission

The following criteria will be applied in determining whether an individual or household should be refused admission or be removed from the register.

1. There must be reliable evidence from known (not anonymous) sources of the serious rent arrears, violent or anti-social behaviour.
2. The behaviour need not have led to possession, prosecution or other enforcement action by a statutory agency, provided there is a reasonable probability that had the applicant been a tenant of the authority, possession would have been granted because of that unacceptable behaviour.
3. In normal circumstances the behaviour concerned should have occurred recently (i.e. within the last two years). In cases of a more serious nature, for example those involving criminal prosecution, a longer timescale may be appropriate.
4. There must be reasonable grounds for believing that the behaviour could continue or be repeated. For example, the applicant may have issued threats or there might be a history of repeat offending.
5. The behaviour in question, if repeated, must represent a real (and not just a perceived) threat to the safety or peace of mind of those already living in social housing. Alternatively, exclusion would also be justified under this policy if there was a threat of continuing violence or extreme abuse against members of staff in the Council or one of its housing association partners if the applicant was accepted onto the Housing Register.

3. Procedures to be Followed

Where there is sufficient information available to suggest that an applicant might not be eligible to be on the housing register, their application will be suspended or excluded.

The Kennet Housing Partnership will consult with any relevant statutory or voluntary sector agencies about the applicant's circumstances and any support mechanisms available to control the unwanted behaviour.

The applicant will be written to by the Kennet Housing Partnership office (for general applicants) or the appropriate member of the Kennet Housing Partnership (for transfer applicants) informing them of the suspension.

Applicants will be notified of their right to request a review of this decision. And inviting them to make representations. They should be informed of the likely timetable for reaching a final decision.

If the applicant appeals the decision the Kennet Housing Partnership will present a report, together with any representations received by or on behalf of the applicant, to a meeting of the Kennet Housing Partnership officers' panel (usually the first one following suspension of the application).

The Panel will decide whether to accept the recommendation, refuse it, or seek further justification. This may involve gathering further evidence or interviewing the applicant or others.

A decision may be made to accept an application but restrict the area or type of housing to which an individual may be rehoused.

As an additional level of scrutiny over the use of this policy, a report will be made periodically to the Housing Committee of Kennet District Council on the use of this policy.

Where an applicant has been refused in this way, they may re-apply after 12 months or earlier if they have the support of a sponsoring agency which will provide assistance to reduce the likelihood of the unwanted behaviour occurring.

KENNET HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

HOMES@KENNET

MOVE ON ACCOMMODATION

Applicants housed into supported housing will be considered adequately housed. They will not be eligible to move on until they have lived in the accommodation for six months and the housing provider supports their need to move on.

If they are accepted onto the Register, they will be awarded a renewable priority card to assist them to move on as quickly as possible.

Statutory homeless tenants living in supported accommodation, whom Kennet District Council still have a legal duty to house, will be given a **3 month time limited priority card** to assist with their search for accommodation.

If unsuccessful in finding accommodation within that period, 'homes@kennet' will reserve and offer a suitable vacancy as soon as the opportunity arises. This will be dependent on others whose cards have expired and ensuring that a range of properties remains available for all customers.

KENNET HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

Kennet District Council and its partner associations are committed to promoting equality of opportunity in housing services.

We aim to deliver quality services without prejudice and discrimination to meet the needs of all the community, regardless of age, cultural or ethnic background, disability, gender, marital status, religious or political persuasion or sexual orientation.

The Kennet Housing Partnership members will adhere to the Commission for Racial Equality's "Code of Practice in Rented Housing."

Kennet Housing Partnership will continue to offer a translation service to anyone who needs to access housing services.

Kennet District Council has adopted a corporate policy and action plan aimed at eliminating racial discrimination and valuing cultural diversity, that includes obligations on contractor organisations. Further policies and action plans are being developed to address the needs of other disadvantaged and under represented groups.

Effective monitoring of homelessness, the register and lettings outcomes will be routinely undertaken and the evaluation of this fed back into policy and service developments.

KENNET HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

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GENUINE REASON TO MOVE TO THE KENNET AREA

Circumstances which would give someone a genuine reason to move to the Kennet Area would include the following:

- **a member of the household has been resident in Kennet, by their own choice, for at least 6 out of the last 12 months or 3 out of the last 5 years.**
- a member of the household has a parent, brother, sister or child **who has been living in the Kennet area, for at least 6 out of the last 12 months.**
- a member of the household will provide intensive care & support to a close relative living in the area.
- a member of the household has employment or a firm offer of employment in the area.
- a member of the household is likely to need long term specialist health, education or other support services that are available in the Kennet Area.

Adequately housed applicants living immediately outside of the district who have access to affordable transport that would enable them to commute into Kennet, would not normally be regarded as having a genuine reason to move.

Where relevant, some evidence of an existing address, a local connection or a reason to move will need to be produced.

Supplementary policy for the Homes@Kennet service

Intermediate Housing for Rent

As well as subsidised affordable housing to rent (social renting), the Council will work with housing providers to supply additional rented housing at sub-market rents.

These properties will be open to people on the Housing Register but may have certain restrictions applied in terms of who can bid for them.

Bidding Restrictions

1. Bids will only be accepted from those who are registered on the Intermediate Housing Register (formerly the Low Cost Home Ownership Register). A separate application form is provided, which asks for information about income and savings.

Those only registered for subsidised affordable housing to rent will be eligible to bid only if there are no interested applicants on the intermediate Housing Register.
2. Applicants must have a current employment connection with the District and be unable to afford to buy or rent property on the open housing market. Existing owner-occupiers may register only if they satisfy this requirement.
3. Priority will be determined in the same way as for other rented property i.e. by means of priority card, date of registration or tenancy start date (for transfer applicants).
4. Sarsen tenants with a preserved Right to Buy are not eligible to bid.
5. In considering bids by registered customers, preference will be given to those in defined priority needs groups, including key worker categories to be determined from time to time.
6. Customers must be under 50 years of age.

Priority Need categories for Intermediate Housing

When considering bids for Homebuy and Intermediate tenure renting applicants with the following characteristics will be given first consideration after those holding a priority card.

1. Key Workers

1.1 Those employed locally (within the Kennet District) in essential public services, as defined by the Government (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, ODPM). That is, front line staff who are:

- Police
- Teachers
- Nurses
- Other essential health workers (including ancillary professions).

1.2 Other categories of public sector workers identified as essential for the provision of priority local services by the Regional Housing Body (None at the moment).

1.3 Employees in the following categories within the Kennet District.

- Agricultural workers (other than Farm owners)
- Youth Centre staff
- Firefighters
- Careworkers

1.4 In addition to the above, where Kennet District Council has provided development funding for intermediate housing new employees of Kennet District Council, who need to move may be offered a temporary tenancy (up to 12 months) as part of the Council's recruitment incentive package, to assist them in relocating to the area.

PRIORITY CARD THRESHOLDS

		MARLBORO	DEVIZES	PEWSEY	TIDWORTH/ LUDGERSHALL	ALL VILLAGES
House	3 or 4 Bed	35	50	40	30	30
	1 or 2 Bed	30	65	20	30	30
Flat	2 or 3 Bed	60	60	30	30	50
	1 Bed	40	45	30	20	40
Bungalow	3 Bed	35	60	40	30	30
	2 Bed	30	60	35	25	35
	1 Bed	15	25	20	15	20
Sheltered	2 Bed	0	0	0	0	0
	1 Bed Flat/Bedsit	0	0	0	0	0