

Housing Register and Nomination Policy

Ref	Section	Page
1.	Introduction	3
2.	Statement of Choice	3
3.	Partnership working	3
4.	Equal Opportunities	4
4.	Data protection, Confidentiality and Sharing Information	4
5.	Eligibility	5
6.	Ineligible Applicants	6
7.	Non-Qualifying Persons	6
8.	Processing Applications	11
9.	How we Prioritise Applications	14
10.	Local Connection	15
11.	Property Eligibility	17
12.	Advertising Vacancies and Bidding	18
13.	Shortlisting and offers	19
14.	Reviews and Complaints	22
Appendix1	Banding Criteria	24
Appendix2	Property Eligibility	36
Appendix3	Glossary of Terms	38

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document is the allocation scheme (as required by the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and Localism Act 2011) for West Lindsey District Council. It sets out the framework within which we operate in the assessment of housing need on the common housing register and the nomination from that register to social rented properties.
- 1.2 We will work with all registered providers who manage properties within the area and utilise this policy to nominate to properties advertised through our Choice Based Lettings Scheme West Lindsey Home Choice.

2. Statement of Choice

- 2.1 West Lindsey District Council is fully committed to enabling applicants to play an active role in choosing where they live, whilst continuing to accommodate those in the greatest housing need in the district. This Policy aims to be open and transparent.
- 2.2 It is important that applicants are aware that the demand for accommodation is higher in some areas than in others, as is property availability and turnover. In making a decision about the choices available, applicants need to consider their housing need against the availability of properties in any given area.
- 2.3 The main objectives of the Policy are to:
 - Provide a fair, open and accountable framework in which everyone has equality of access when seeking an affordable home
 - Prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation
 - Assist applicants in the greatest housing needs, whilst ensuring the best use of limited housing resources and that balanced and stable communities are maintained
 - Ensure quality and accessible advice and assistance about the scheme is freely available, to ensure applicants understand and can participate
 - Take account of the relevant legislation and statutory guidance
 - Have due regard to the Lincolnshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

3. Partnership working

- 3.1 The day-to-day administration of the housing register is the responsibility of West Lindsey District Council and we will shortlist applicants for properties via the choice based lettings system however letting homes through the scheme is the responsibility of the individual housing providers in accordance with their own lettings policies.
- 3.2 Social housing providers generally have to advertise between 50% and 75% of their vacant properties through the scheme however they are encouraged to exceed this percentage.

4. Equal Opportunities

- 4.1 West Lindsey District Council are committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity for all existing and potential applications. No one will be treated unfairly due to gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, marital status, age, sexuality, health or other reason. This list is not intended to be exhaustive but indicative of our intention and commitment to ensuring equality.

5. Data Protection, Confidentiality and Sharing Information

- 5.1 West Lindsey District Council is known as a 'Controller' of the data you provide and when you provide your personal information (whether on the paper and / or online application), you are consenting to us using this and any other information you provide as proof of your application, to process and consider your application. We will:
- Keep your information accurate and up to date, with your assistance
 - Retain your information only for as long as necessary (minimum of 6 years from the end of the tenancy/application and longer in certain circumstances)
 - Store your information securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 at a level appropriate for its sensitivity. For further information see the council's Data Protection Policy
- 5.2 We will not share your personal information with third parties without your consent, unless they are processing your information on our behalf, or because the law allows this, for example to check the information provided by you or about you. This includes any sensitive personal information you provide for example regarding you or your family's health, although only where it is necessary.
- 5.3 We are also under a duty to protect the public funds we administer, and to this end may use the information you have provided for the prevention and detection of fraud. We may also share this information with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds for these purposes.

- 5.4 The third parties may include but are not limited to, passing your information and receiving information about you, with the agencies/services listed in the Statement and Declaration on the application form.
- 5.5 If after providing consent to process your personal information for this purpose, you decide to withdraw your consent, then you must contact us immediately to confirm this. However, the consequences of this will be that your application will not be considered. We may also have already passed on your information, as the law allows, to other departments within council and organisations.
- 5.6 If you want to know more about the information we hold about you and how we process this or you have a complaint regarding the way we have handled your personal information please ask for the Data Protection Officer at our main office at Guildhall, Marshalls Yard, Gainsborough. If you however remain unhappy, then you have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Telephone: 01625 545 700 Website: www.ico.org.uk

6. Eligibility

- 6.1 All applicants must be aged 16 years or over.
- 6.2 Some Registered Providers require 16/17 year olds accepted for housing to have a guarantor and they will have their own requirements for the guarantor. This will be articulated by the Registered Provider and not West Lindsey.
- 6.3 Applications from the following groups will be considered:
- 6.3.1 Persons not subject to immigration control taking account of nationality and immigration. The main customer groups to whom properties will be nominated to are:
- British nationals who are habitually resident in the Common Travel Area (CTA)
 - i.e. United Kingdom, Channel Islands, Isle of Man or Republic of Ireland.
 - Commonwealth citizens who have the right of abode and are habitually resident in the CTA.
 - European Economic Area (EEA) nationals who have the right to reside in the UK and are habitually resident in the CTA.
- 6.3.2 Persons subject to immigration control who have been granted one of the following:
- Refugee status
 - Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Protection, provided that there is no condition that they shall not be a charge on public funds
 - Indefinite Leave to Remain, provided that they are habitually resident in the CTA and their Leave to Remain was not granted in the previous five years on the basis of sponsorship given in relation to maintenance and accommodation (or if their sponsor has died)
 - Persons subject to immigration control who are nationals of a country that has ratified the European Convention on Social and Medical Assistance (ECSMA)

or the European Social Charter (ESC) provided that they are habitually resident in the CTA and lawfully present in the UK.

6.3.3 In addition to European Nationals who are habitually resident in the UK, and can prove they have a current British National Insurance Number, applications from the following groups of people will also be considered: -

- A person granted refugee status when his/her request for asylum is accepted. o Persons granted exceptional leave to enter or remain. This will be someone who has failed in the request for asylum, but has been given leave to remain
- where there are compelling, compassionate circumstances.
- Persons granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK who are regarded as having settled status. Applicants still have to establish habitual residence.

6.4 Under the Housing Act 1996, local authorities must consider whether applicants are eligible for housing assistance. This relates to some people who may have been living abroad or who do not have permanent permission to remain in the UK. Any person making an application who is identified as falling under the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 will be assessed in accordance with the Act. We reserve the right to seek independent advice and assistance to resolve the issue of eligibility.

6.5 There may be cases where an ineligible person forms part of a household with others who are eligible. It is important to note that whilst the ineligible person cannot be granted a tenancy, they may be taken into account in the size of accommodation to be offered, but the tenancy will only be granted to the individual who is eligible.

7. Non-Qualifying Persons

7.1 Not everyone who is eligible to apply for housing will qualify to join the scheme.

7.2 The following will be considered to be non-qualifying persons, and therefore unable to join this Choice Based Lettings Scheme:

- Existing social housing tenants who have not been in their current home for 12 months. A reviewing officer will consider exceptional cases where an applicant's circumstances have significantly changed or if the applicant is at serious risk of harm in their current home (Appendix E)
- Applicants guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour (7.3)
- Applicants with rent arrears or other housing debt (7.4)
- Applicants or a member of the moving household who have benefited from a Right to Buy, Disabled Facilities Grant/adaptation or Renovation Grant in the last 5 years. A reviewing officer will consider exceptional cases where an applicant's circumstances have significantly changed or if the applicant is at serious risk of harm in their current home (Appendix E)

7.3 Serious Unacceptable Behaviour

- 7.3.1 We are committed to tackling anti-social behaviour and enabling our communities to become safer places to live. The behaviour of applicants will be a factor to be taken into account as part of the assessment process.
- 7.3.2 Unacceptable behaviour is not limited to behaviour caused by the applicant - it extends to behaviour caused by a member of the applicant's household and visitors to the applicant's home.
- 7.3.3 In the case of new applications, we expect applicants to provide us with some proof that they have behaved responsibly. We will ask for references for the applicant's current or most recent tenancy to ensure the applicant has behaved as a responsible tenant. We may also consider references from an employer or any other professional person. It will be the applicant's responsibility to obtain the reference.
- 7.3.4 A person may be excluded from the scheme as a result of unsuitable behaviour or conduct defined as anti – social within the definition of the Anti – Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014, the severity of which makes them unsuitable to hold a general needs tenancy.
- 7.3.5 Behaviour that can be regarded as unacceptable includes:
- conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person,
 - conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or
 - conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.
 - Causing the condition of the property to deteriorate by a deliberate act, or by neglect
 - Making a false statement to obtain a tenancy
 - Being convicted of an offence (which carries with it a custodial sentence, whether or not custody was imposed) committed in, or in the locality of, their home, or committed elsewhere against a person with a right to reside in, or occupy housing accommodation in the locality, or was committed elsewhere against the landlord of the home, or a person employed in connection with the exercise of the council's housing functions, and that the conduct affects those functions (either directly or indirectly). Offences that we take into account are:
 - Aggravated burglary
 - Aggravated vehicle taking
 - Any offence where racial motivation has been proved
 - Arson
 - Any offense resulting in a person's death
 - Any firearms offence
 - Breach of criminal behaviour order or anti-social behaviour order
 - Burglary
 - Criminal damage endangering life
 - Cultivating, dealing, being concerned in the supply of or intending to supply any controlled drug
 - Indecent assault
 - Rape
 - Offences against children including sex or violence

- Robbery
- Wounding/GBH with intent
- Wounding/GBH without intent
- Sexual or stalking offences
- False imprisonment or kidnapping
- Homicide and attempted murder

7.3.6 We will make an assessment of risk to the community of any applicant who has been convicted of a serious offence. The assessment will determine that either:

- The risk is low enough or is well managed such that the applicant will be allowed to join the housing register
- The risk is too great because the behaviour of the applicant makes them unsuitable to be a tenant therefore the applicant does not qualify to join this scheme.

7.3.7 Convictions that have been “spent” under the Rehabilitation or Offenders Act 1974 cannot be taken into account.

7.3.8 A person will be excluded from the housing register where such behaviour:

- Would likely have or did lead to a possession order (outright or suspended) being granted
- Would likely have or did lead to the tenancy being demoted
- Lead to a court granting an injunction to prevent nuisance and annoyance, a Criminal Behaviour Order, a Public Spaces Protection order or any other enforceable court order
- Lead to the local authority enforcing a noise abatement notice

Such exclusions may be made regardless of previous tenure. This list is illustrative, not exhaustive.

7.4 Rent Arrears and other Housing Related Debt

7.4.1 West Lindsey is committed to ensuring that applicants are supported to address issues of debt / rent arrears and prevent future issues occurring. West Lindsey will exclude applicants where the level of rent arrears / debt exceeds the equivalent of 8 weeks rent. The policy allows for consideration of exceptional circumstances and mitigating factors (section 7.5.)

7.4.2 Applicants will be asked to produce a rent book and/or other documentation (for example, a bank statement) to demonstrate whether or not rent payments are up to date. Failure to provide some proof of reasonable behaviour will not necessarily prevent an applicant from proceeding with an application for accommodation but the applicant would have to have a good reason for not being able to do so.

7.4.3 Applicants will be encouraged and supported to reduce their rent arrears as much as possible to have the best chance of securing accommodation. We work with a number of Registered Providers, who may operate their own policies in respect of rent arrears and housing related debt. Applicants should be aware that these may require lower levels of debt than access to the Housing Register specifies and offers of

accommodation may not be made to applicants with levels of debt in excess of those accepted by individual providers.

- 7.4.4 When an applicant is disqualified from the housing register, they will be notified of the reasons for disqualification, the relevant conditions and right of appeal.

7.5 Mitigating circumstances

- 7.51 We will act reasonably when deciding whether to disqualify an applicant. All relevant information will be considered before a decision is made. Where we have reason to believe that poor behaviour is due to a physical, mental or learning difficulty, the person will not be determined as disqualified without first considering whether they would be able to maintain a tenancy satisfactorily with appropriate care and support. In such cases we may consult as appropriate with any relevant agencies, including Social Services and providers of support services. We will consider the interests of the applicant and their household, but consideration will also be given to the interest of the people who live and work in our communities. We will also have due regard to the Care Act (2015) when determining whether an applicant has capacity to hold a tenancy.
- 7.5.2 If at any time we receive information that leads us to believe that an applicant already on the housing register is ineligible, we will inform the applicant in writing. The applicant will be given 28 days to provide information showing that they are eligible, their application will be suspended for that period and unable to place bids, bids already placed may be bypassed. If they do not reply within this period, or if they reply but we remain of the view that they are ineligible, they will be removed from the housing register i.e. their application will be cancelled.
- 7.5.3 We will write to an applicant explaining why we have decided to disqualify them from the Housing Register. Any applicant notified that they are being treated as non-qualifying may request a review of the decision.
- 7.5.4 If the review confirms that the applicant is to be treated as non-qualifying, the applicant may still make a fresh application at a future date, when the applicant feels they should no longer be treated as non-qualifying. We will consider this fresh application on its merits. It will be for the applicant to show that their circumstances or behaviour have changed substantially.
- 7.5.5 For the purpose of rent arrears or other charges, the applicant will need to demonstrate they have reduced the amount outstanding to under 8 weeks of the rental value.
- 7.5.6 When an applicant is excluded due to serious unacceptable behaviour, they will need to show that they have maintained a tenancy with no issues for at least six months or that they are engaging with support to ensure that they can successfully manage a tenancy.

8. Processing Applications

Providing Information and Documentation

- 8.1 Applicants are required to provide acceptable evidence of their identity e.g. their Driving Licence, Passport and proof of residency for themselves and anyone they wish to be rehoused with. They must also provide their National Insurance Number in order for the application to proceed. Without this information an application will not be processed. Any delay in providing the required documents may affect an application's registration date.
- 8.2 In accepting any application which includes anyone from abroad, proof of identification, nationality and immigration status will be required. Verification may be sought from the Immigration Service to safeguard the use and allocation of public funds.
- 8.3 In order to determine the priority an application receives; it is the applicant(s) responsibility to provide any and all information reasonably required. Such information may extend beyond that requested on the Application Form. Until all required information is provided the application will not be registered and/or will NOT be eligible to bid.

Dating of Applications

- 8.4 The initial registration date of an application form will be the date the application is submitted on the Home Choice website or in cases where applicants are unable to complete the online application the registration date will be the date the application is completed over the phone or in the office by the Home Choices team. All relevant documentation requested should be provided within 28 days of initial contact. Failure to provide relevant documentation may result in a later registration date, or cancellation of application.
- 8.5 Applicants will be placed within a band in date order as follows:
- **Date of application** - the banding date will be the same as the applicant's registration date.
 - **Change in circumstances which results in a higher band assessment** - the banding date will be the date the applicant provides satisfactory evidence of the change in circumstances.
 - **Change in circumstances which result in a lower band assessment** - the banding date will revert to the original application date.

For example: birth of a child may cause a household to be lacking 1 bedroom and may therefore move up a band. The banding date is the date that the birth certificate was provided to us (leading to the re-assessment) not the child's date of birth was corrected.

Cancellation of Applications

- 8.6 We will cancel applications where:

- An applicant is housed as a result of that application
- An applicant fails to respond to a review within the set timescale
- An applicant has moved and failed to notify us
- An applicant persistently fails to respond to our communication or requests for information within 14 days of last contact.

8.7 Should an applicant subsequently wish to re-join the register they will be required to complete a new application which will be processed based on their current circumstances and with the subsequent registration date.

Suspension or pending of Applications

- 8.8 We may suspend (put “on hold”) your housing application if, for example:
- You have been asked, in writing, by telephone or email for key information in relation to your application and we are waiting for your reply
 - We have asked another support agency or worker, to provide additional information about you and are waiting for a reply from them.
 - If we are unable to contact you following 3 attempts (details will be recorded against the applicant’s record).
 - Whilst awaiting the outcome of a referral to the Home Choices Team Leader.
 - Whilst awaiting response to annual review

Landlord References

- 8.9 We may contact an applicant’s current or former landlord(s) for information on how that tenancy was conducted. This will cover payment of monies due, condition of property, anti-social behaviour and other tenancy conditions. This information will be used to determine eligibility and banding, of which applicants will be informed.
- 8.10 In the event that an applicant disputes the contents of a reference, an officer will make a decision taking into account individual circumstances and supporting information available to them.

Financial Capacity

- 8.11 Households applying to this Scheme may be assessed for their ability to buy/rent a suitable property within the area or improve/adapt their own home to meet their assessed needs. This includes applicants who have been accepted under homelessness legislation to whom the Local Authority owes a duty under sections 193(2) or 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996 as well as general applications.
- 8.12 Assets that may be taken into consideration when assessing financial capacity may include but are not limited to savings, shares, bonds, commercial property, residential property, property abroad and money apportioned through the proceeds of a divorce settlement, inheritance or any form of cash windfall.
- 8.13 For applicants from the Armed Forces who receive a lump sum as compensation for injury or disability sustained on active service, this settlement amount will be disregarded for the purposes of financial assessment.

- 8.14 Applicants assessed as having the financial resources to resolve their own housing difficulties, may have their housing priority reduced.
- 8.15 We may also ask for financial information to allow registered providers to make affordability assessments when offering a property. Applicants may be refused for properties if it is felt they cannot afford the ongoing financial commitments needed to maintain a property.

Change of Circumstances

- 8.16 Applicants are required to inform us if their personal circumstances change and it may reasonably be expected to have an effect on their Housing Register application. This includes any change in their address or household composition or contact details. Examples of this include:
- Housing circumstances have improved
 - Recovered from an illness which previously gave medical priority
- 8.17 When a child is born and a copy of the birth certificate has been provided there will be a re-assessment of the banding and if the banding results in a higher band it will have a band date of when we received confirmation of the child's birth.
- 8.18 Changes in circumstances that lead to re-banding will be dealt with in accordance with this policy. We will re-assess an application where there has been a change of circumstances and will notify the applicant in writing that this has been done. If the change results in the applicant's priority changing this will be explained in writing to the applicant.
- 8.19 It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure they provide up to date contact details. Failure to do so may lead to their application being suspended or cancelled and could mean their bids on vacancies are bypassed, after reasonable attempts to contact them are unsuccessful.

Review of Applications

- 8.20 We will undertake a regular review of applications on the common housing register. This helps to ensure that those on the register are still interested in applying and circumstances are up to date.
- 8.21 Each applicant will be contacted to ascertain if they still wish to be registered. Should there be no response to this contact within 14 days, the application will be suspended. A letter or email will be sent to the applicant notifying them their application is suspended and should they not respond within 14 days, their application will be cancelled.
- 8.23 Applicants who subsequently decide they wish to re-join the Register will need to re-apply in the normal way.

Help to access the scheme

- 8.24 Some applicants may require help to ensure that they have the same opportunity to access the scheme.
- 8.25 Where possible we will enable applicants to access the scheme themselves or by a family member or other advocate.
- 8.26 For those who have no other support available to them, we can complete housing register applications in person at The Guildhall or over the phone and can advise applicants of available properties and place bids over the phone or during a visit to The Guildhall.

9. How we assess and prioritise applications

Bandings

- 9.1 This scheme uses Bandings to prioritise the housing needs of applicants, taking into account the above groups and local housing issues to ensure the schemes objectives are met, these include but are not limited to physical and mental health, affordability, employment, social wellbeing etc. and whether a move to more appropriate accommodation will alleviate these housing needs.
- 9.2 There are 5 Bands, with band 1 for those with the highest priority. Applicants are placed in the band in accordance with their housing needs assessment details which can be found at Appendix A.

Reasonable Preference

- 9.3 The law states that certain groups of people have reasonable preference within any housing allocation scheme operated by a Local Housing Authority, these groups are:
- People who are homeless (within Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002); this includes people who are intentionally homeless, and those who are not in priority need.
 - People who are unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness and who are in priority need who are owed a duty by any housing authority under section 193 (2) or 195 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 (or under Section 65 (2) or 68 (2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under Section 192 (3).
 - People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.
 - People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds.
 - People who need to move to a particular locality in the area, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).
 - Those leaving the Armed Forces who are in housing need

Medical banding

- 9.4 Medical banding is awarded to housing applicants or those to be rehoused with them who can demonstrate that their medical condition (physical or psychological) is currently being adversely affected by their housing situation AND that a change to more

appropriate housing would benefit them medically.

- 9.5 An assessment of medical need is made by us after receipt of a completed medical assessment form and list of medication. Supporting evidence and reports from medical professionals will be taken into account if provided but these are not usually necessary and there might be a charge which we will not pay.
- 9.6 If the assessment places an applicant into a higher band, then the registration will be re-dated to the date of the assessment. If the assessment does not change the band into which the registration falls, the existing effective date and banding remains unchanged.
- 9.7 The Assessor determines medical priority based on the current housing circumstances in relation to the illness or disability of the applicant or household member (who is moving with them) as well as considering measures that could be taken to make the current home more suitable.
- 9.8 We will consider a request for a further medical assessment if it is satisfied that there has been a significant change in the medical circumstances of the applicant or their household.

Households living separately

- 9.9 Where an application is received from a household that is not currently living in the same home the assessment will be based on their circumstances if they were all to move into one home. We would base our assessment on them living together in the most suitable home available to them.

Examples include:

- Where a person living in a two-bedroom house with one child applies as a household with their partner who lives in a shared house/one bedroom flat or with family or friends we would consider it reasonable to expect the partner to move into the two-bedroom house and that they are adequately housed.
- Where a person living in a two-bedroom house with two children aged under 10 applies as a household with their partner who lives in a two-bedroom house with one child we would consider that the household overall is lacking 1 bedroom.
- Where a household moves in together into the less suitable home we will consider that they have worsened their circumstances (9.5)

Worsened Circumstances

- 9.10 Where we determine that an applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances and gained additional priority, we reserve the right to reduce the priority awarded by 1 band for up to 6 months. Examples include, but not limited to:
- Giving up suitable accommodation that was available to them
 - Moving into an unsatisfactory arrangement e.g. sharing facilities or overcrowded
- 9.11 We will take into account the current needs of the household before reducing any priority and in setting the period of time. Where priority has changed applicants will always be informed in writing stating the reasons, any time restrictions and their right

to review of that decision.

Managing Risks

- 9.12 We recognise that all people have a right to a home that is more than just somewhere to live. However, there are occasions where people find it more difficult to integrate into mainstream housing.
- 9.13 It is important to manage the needs of individual applicants with the needs and rights of neighbours and the local community. In order to manage risks to individuals and communities a multi-agency approach must be taken, we will therefore work closely with the Police, Social Care, Probation, Health and voluntary agencies.
- 9.14 For example, securing accommodation for a high-risk offender will be done in consultation and with the approval of the appropriate agencies and special arrangements may apply in cases where an applicant is considered by the Multi Agency Public Protection Panel Arrangements (MAPPA). In order to achieve this there may be occasions when the applicant with the highest priority in the scheme may not be offered a particular property. In such cases they will be written to by us explaining the reasons why this has happened.
- 9.15 We actively work with the Local Community Safety Partnership in addressing a range of issues that impact upon community safety. These issues include drugs misuse, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse amongst others. We reserve the right to liaise with the Local Community Safety Partnership when considering any exclusion, letting or other issues which have an impact upon community safety.
- 9.16 An integral part of managing risks is to ensure that appropriate support networks are in place and are regularly monitored and reviewed by us. Any successful bid will be declined if the relevant agencies have not provided a relevant Care Plan/Risk Assessment to manage the risk.

Homelessness

- 9.17 In cases where we have accepted a housing duty under the relevant homelessness legislation, applicants will be placed into the appropriate band and are required to bid for suitable properties for which they are eligible.
- 9.18 Homeless cases will be monitored, and if applicants fail to make bids, we will then bid on their behalf for the next suitable property they are eligible for. If an applicant refuses a successful bid that is considered suitable and reasonable, the homelessness duty to them may be discharged. In such cases the application will be re-assessed.
- 9.19 We reserve the right to make direct matches to homeless households, where they consider a property is suitable and reasonable for the household.

10. Local Connection

10.1 A local connection with West Lindsey will prioritise your bids over applicants who do not have a local connection. To qualify for a local connection to West Lindsey the applicant must provide supporting evidence that demonstrates one of the following:

- They have been resident in the district for six out of the last twelve months
- Have previously lived in the West Lindsey area for a continuous period of three years (whilst aged 18 or over) in the last five years.
- Have family members who are currently resident in the West Lindsey area. Family members are defined as parents or guardians, adult children or brothers or sisters who have lived here continuously for the last five years,
- Have their current main place of permanent work in the West Lindsey area. Casual work for a very short time will not count and work has to be in the district, it is not enough that a head office is located in the district.
- You have a local connection if you're under 21 and were previously in care in Lincolnshire for at least 2 years (even if placed there by another council). You also have a local connection if you're under 25 and you get advice and support from the Lincolnshire County Council's leaving care service.

10.2 In exceptional cases we have the discretion to award a local connection to West Lindsey.

Other local connection circumstances

10.3 These circumstances include:

- Applicants who have been accepted by us under the homeless law
- Applicants who have been accepted for priority re-housing as a reciprocal arrangement with another local council
- HM Armed Forces applicants through Section 315 of the Housing and Regeneration Act (2008) who have established a local connection with West Lindsey before they joined the services
- Members of the Armed Forces, former service personnel applying within five years of discharge, bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces and serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move for medical reasons
- Refugees who have been granted leave to remain and have been dispersed within the West Lindsey area
- Applicants who have been accepted from outside West Lindsey as part of a Witness Protection recommendation
- Applicants from outside West Lindsey who are victims of domestic abuse or fleeing other violence and/or harassment, who cannot return to the area where they were living for fear of harm

What does not give you a local connection?

10.4 People living in bail hostels or approved premises

10.5 Occupying a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan which is not placed on an official mobile home or caravan park

- 10.6 Hostel residents from outside West Lindsey who have not lived in the area for six months

Local Letting Plans

- 10.7 Local Lettings Policies are usually introduced to meet a particular local need and have an overall positive effect on estates. For example, if an estate had a high level of anti-social behaviour, applicants who bid for the advertised property may have enhanced checks on their previous behaviour, or in areas of low employment status priority may be given to those in current employment, or households of a certain age.
- 10.8 There are a number of Local Lettings Policies throughout the West Lindsey area. To be considered for a property subject to local lettings criteria, applicants would need to meet the usual eligibility criteria AND the additional local lettings criteria, failure to meet both criteria may lead to the bid being bypassed.

Section 106 agreements

- 10.9 Where affordable housing units have been secured through the planning system by way of a S106 or S1 agreement the local connection cascade detailed in the relevant agreement will take precedent over the usual housing need priority criteria. Where these are applicable, the property advert will clearly display this with a link for the customer to find further information.
- 10.10 Where a S106 or S1 agreement references being born in a town or village we will accept applicants whose first address after their birth was in that town or village as meeting that criterion.
- 10.11 New properties that are subject to a S106 or S1 will be advertised for two weeks to give the best chance for those that meet the local connection criteria to place a bid.

11 Property Eligibility

- 11.1 Applicants, upon acceptance to the housing register, will be notified in writing of the property types they are eligible to bid for. Property eligibility is based upon a household's composition and their needs, See Appendix B. The policy covers the letting of a range of property types throughout the area. These properties range from bed-sitting rooms to five-bedroom houses.
- 11.2 It is important to note that property eligibility may differ between landlords, individual Registered Providers endeavour to make the best possible use of their stock in terms of size and suitability when setting the criteria for eligibility. For example, ground floor flats may be reserved for people with a physical disability. Housing Providers may also choose to exercise some discretion and invite bids from particular household compositions to contribute to sustainable communities. The advert will clearly state which applicants can bid for each property and which applicants will have priority for

the vacancy.

- 11.3 We reserve the right, in exceptional circumstances, to offer applicants accommodation not usually considered for their household type or size, for example where availability of properties in a certain area are scarce or those with no medical need may be considered for level floor accommodation.

Access to children

- 11.4 For the purposes of this policy, we consider that access to children must be regularly and for at least three nights a week for property eligibility to be amended. Single people or couples with access to children may be eligible for a two- bedroom flat as opposed to a one bed flat, but we may give preference to applicants who would fully occupy the vacancy on a permanent basis.
- 11.5 Single people or couples with children living with them permanently and with access to children may be able to bid for properties with an extra bedroom. However, we may give preference to large families who would fully occupy the property permanently.
- 11.6 We will also have regard to any legal documentation that specifies residency requirements, as part of an overall assessment of the applicants housing situation and needs.
- 11.7 We may also contact carers, schools and other placements for further information on residency of children

Carers

- 11.8 Applicants with a disability or other need who require an additional bedroom to accommodate a carer are required to provide supporting evidence such as a Care Plan or report from social care or occupational therapy.
- 11.9 The person requiring care should also receive at least one of these benefits:
- Attendance Allowance
 - The middle or higher rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance
 - The standard or enhanced rate of the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment
 - Armed Forces Independence Payment
 - The standard or enhanced rate of the daily living component of Adult Disability Payment
 - The middle or highest rate of the care component of Child Disability Payment

Adapted properties

- 11.10 Applicants with a need for an adaptation/s will be given a priority over applicants who have a general housing need when a property with their required adaptation/s is advertised.

- 11.11 Housing register applicants will be expected to provide a report from an occupational therapist to show a need for adaptations.
- 11.12 When an applicant is homeless or at risk of homelessness we may consider other supporting information if no occupational therapist report is available.
- 11.13 Applicants who require a specific adaptation will normally only be allowed to bid for a property with that adaptation. If applicants consider they can manage without the adaptation, their application will be reviewed. For example, an applicant who needs a wet room who wishes to bid for a property without a wet room would either not be allowed or would have their priority for properties with wet rooms reviewed.

12 Advertising vacancies and bidding

Advertising Cycle

- 12.1 Once applicants are registered, they are able to start looking for a suitable vacancy across the West Lindsey area. Vacancies will be advertised on a weekly basis from 11.59pm Tuesday to 11.59pm on the following Monday (6days). Adverts will include key property attributes, local facilities and eligibility criteria.
- 12.2 Bid cycles affected by public holidays will usually run for two weeks. We will advertise any changes to bid cycles on the West Lindsey District Council website and on social media.
- 12.3 New properties that are subject to a S106 or S1 will be advertised for two weeks to give the best chance for those that meet the local connection criteria to place a bid.
- 12.4 Vacancies will be advertised on the Home Choice website.

Withdrawing Adverts

- 12.5 Occasionally, we may be required to withdraw a property advert, for instance:
- If it becomes apparent that the property may be let through direct lets in accordance with this policy (see section 13.7) or
 - The property is no longer vacant
 - Significantly incorrect information had been advertised in respect of the property or applicants' eligibility for that property.

Bidding for a Vacancy

- 12.6 Applicants are restricted to making 2 bids in each cycle. Where an applicant meets the property eligibility, bids can only be placed during the bidding cycle, and should be placed through the applicant's individual online account by themselves or their advocates, over the phone or in person at The Guildhall
- 12.7 Where a vacancy has been advertised and no bids have been received, or been successful, the vacancy may be re-advertised and may be allocated on a first come

first served basis subject to the usual eligibility criteria.

- 12.8 Bids for individual vacancies are ranked by banding and banding date. If both of these are the same, this will then refer back to the original application date.

13 Shortlisting and Offers

- 13.1 At the end of the advertising cycle, applicants who have bid will be shortlisted according to their eligibility criteria and any local lettings criteria. Verification checks will be undertaken at this stage to ensure applicants still qualify and circumstances have not changed.

Bypassing Bids

- 13.2 Bids may be bypassed for several reasons. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list, but the following are common:
- Household doesn't require ground floor property and vacancy is ground floor
 - Household does require ground floor property and vacancy is upper floor
 - Applicant is now under offer or first nomination to another vacancy
 - Household has housing related debt
 - Household has experienced a change of circumstances
 - Unable to contact the applicant
 - Applicant does not meet specific criteria for the vacancy i.e.: additional local letting criteria

Making an Offer

- 13.3 The successful candidate will be contacted by an officer from the landlord whose vacancy they have bid for to be offered an accompanied viewing of the property which could then turn into an offer of a tenancy.
- 13.4 If an applicant cannot be contacted following three attempts within a reasonable timeframe, their application will be suspended pending further action in accordance with section 13.1, the next eligible person on the shortlist will then be contacted and offered the tenancy. It is important to note that all applicants ensure they are contactable as their bid may be bypassed after reasonable attempts to contact them have been unsuccessful.
- 13.5 In exceptional circumstances we may not make an offer or may withdraw an offer to a successful bidder, this may include but is not limited to:
- it is clear that an applicant is not capable of understanding the responsibilities associated with being a tenant or they do not clearly understand what they are signing
 - the property is no longer vacant
 - an applicant has failed to respond to three contacts from us
 - We believe the property is unaffordable for the applicant from the onset.

Refusals

- 13.6 If an applicant refuses 3 offers, they will be contacted to discuss their housing needs and circumstances. If we consider such refusals were made unreasonably by the applicant, we reserve the right to change the banding date to the date of the most recent unreasonable refusal.

Non-bidding

- 13.7 All applicants in Band 1 will be monitored to establish if any suitable properties have been advertised. If suitable properties have been advertised the applicant may be contacted to establish why they have not bid. This will assist us in ascertaining if any additional assistance is required to participate in the scheme. We reserve the right to review such applications and reduced Banding priority.
- 13.8 Bids may be placed on behalf of persons in band 1 by our officers in cases of non-bidding

Vacancies excluded from the Scheme

- 13.9 We reserve the right to exclude certain properties and housing schemes from this Scheme, but a majority of social housing vacancies in the West Lindsey area will be advertised and let through this scheme. Examples of where this may occur include (but are not limited to) where a property is needed urgently to deal with an emergency or when a property has extensive adaptations. Specialist accommodation may also be let outside this Scheme for example extra care schemes for the elderly.
- 13.10 In exceptional circumstances properties may be withdrawn from an advertising cycle or scheme, those applicants who may have already expressed an interest in any such property will be notified of the reasons why.

Direct Match

- 13.11 In some circumstances it may be necessary to directly match an applicant to a suitable property. This means that the applicant may not be able to bid for properties. If this applies, we will notify the applicant direct.
- 13.12 Applicants subject to a direct letting will normally be made one offer of suitable accommodation. If they do not accept the property, we may decide to make no further offers to them, reduce their Banding or discharge a homeless duty. They will be able to request a review of any decision on the suitability of a property or a decision not to make a further offer.
- 13.13 Properties let through direct lettings may not be advertised through this scheme, but information will normally be made available to indicate that the letting took place. This may not be done if there is good reason, such as the need to re-house someone threatened with violence.

Allocations to Employees and Relations

- 13.4 The Scheme's application form requires applicants to declare if they or a member of their household are either a member of staff/Councillor/Board Member or related to a member of staff/Councillor/Board Member of the council.
- 13.5 In such cases there will be stringent procedures and checks in place to ensure the application is processed in accordance with this Policy and other applications. A Senior Officer will check the processing and assessment. Prior to any offer of accommodation being made to such an applicant we will notify their appropriate Director or Head of Service for approval.

14. Reviews and Complaints

Reviews of Decision

- 14.1 Initial decisions relating to an application will be made by the Home Choices Team. Reviews of decisions or consideration of exemptions will be referred to the Home Choices Team Leader.
- 14.2 All applicants have the right to request a review of a decision if they consider this policy has not been applied correctly, for example a decision about:
- Exclusion or removal from the Housing Register
 - Type of property the applicant is eligible for
 - Band awarded
 - Application status and applicable dates
 - Reasonableness of refusals
- 14.3 If an applicant wishes to request of a review of the initial decision, they should notify us of the issue they would like to be reviewed. This will be dealt with by an officer not involved in the original decision-making process.
- 14.4 Applicants must be aware that the letting of a property will not be delayed pending a review, the outcome of the review will only be applicable for future vacancies.
- 14.5 If an applicant wishes to continue to pursue the matter following a decision by the reviewing officer, they can approach the Ombudsman (see section 14.3).
- 14.6 Where an applicant wishes to provide new information that has not previously been available to us for consideration, this will be dealt with as a 'change of circumstances' and subject to a reassessment and not considered as a review.

Complaints

- 14.7 If an applicant is dissatisfied with how they have been dealt with, and feel they have been unfairly treated, discriminated against and/or we have failed to do something we should have done, then the applicant can make a complaint.
- 14.8 Complaints will be dealt with by the council and in accordance with the Corporate Complaints Policy. This can be found on the West Lindsey District Council website.

Ombudsman

14.9 The Local Government Ombudsman is independent of all government departments, councils and politicians. The Ombudsman examines complaints without taking sides. In most cases the complainant must have pursued the matter through the Council's own complaints procedure before a complaint can be considered by the Ombudsman

Contact details for the Local Government Ombudsman are Email advice@lgo.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Text 'call back' on 0762 480 4299.

Fax us on 024 7682 0001.

Write to the **Local Government Ombudsman**, PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH.

Contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are:

Email info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Fax: 020 7831 1942

Write to: **Housing Ombudsman Service**, Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London. E14 9GE

Homelessness Reviews

14.10 Requests for reviews of decisions made in respect of an applicant's homeless application are subject to review procedures outside this policy. Applicants should contact the local Authority responsible for their homelessness application for further information and assistance.

Policy Review

14.11 This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it:

- a) meets legal requirements and is consistent with related policies and strategies
- b) meets the needs of West Lindsey District Council and addresses local housing needs
- c) achieves its objectives

14.12 The council is responsible for ensuring all allocations within their organisation are made in accordance with this agreed Policy. The council will monitor the overall performance and effectiveness.

14.13 We will consult with a wide range of stakeholders including existing and potential applicants on any proposed major changes to this Allocation Scheme and the implications of such changes.

Version control

Version	Approved by	Approved date
---------	-------------	---------------

V1	WLDC Prosperous Communities Committee	XX
----	--	----

Appendix A - Banding Criteria

Ref	Band 1	Ref	Band 2
1.1	Homeless Households – unintentionally homeless & priority need decision by us	2.1	Homeless Households – likely to be assessed by us as unintentionally homeless but not in Priority need
1.2	Urgent Medical – permanent condition & unable to continue to reside in current home	2.2	Threatened with homelessness within 12 weeks through no fault of their own with no legal redress, working through a Personal Housing Plan with us and likely to be priority need
1.3	Urgent Welfare		
1.4	Succeeded to a tenancy but current home not suitable	2.3	Formal discharge notice of leaving the Armed Forces
1.5	Statutory overcrowding	2.4	Medical need
1.6	Lacking 2 or more bedrooms (permanent household & main residence)	2.5	Applicant(s) WITH dependent children or pregnant lacking access to essential facilities, or sharing facilities with a household not moving with applicant (if awarded 2.6 will not apply)
1.7	High level disrepair (not through willful neglect/damage)		
1.8	Those with combination of 2 x “Band2” (excluding those who have deliberately worsened their circumstances)		
1.9	Social housing tenants within the West Lindsey area under- occupying by 2 bedrooms, leaving vacant possession	2.6	Applicant(s) lacking 1 bedroom (a medical need for additional bedroom, or with permanent residency of child)
1.10	Any household currently in temporary accommodation and likely to be assessed by us as unintentionally homeless	2.7	Occupying supported accommodation with a positive notice to move on to more independent living
1.11	Any household known to have experienced repeated and enduring periods of rough sleeping	2.8	Family living separately
		2.9	Financial Difficulties – that could be alleviated by moving
		2.10	Applicants with a combination of 3 “Band 3” Needs (excluding intentionally homeless/ deliberately worsened circumstances)
		2.11	Band 1 housing needs but demonstrated unacceptable behaviour

Ref	Band 3	Ref	Band 4
3.1	Homeless Household – decision by us as intentionally homeless	4.1	Adequately housed
3.2	Threatened Homeless within 12wks through no fault of their own, no legal redress, completed a Personal Housing Plan with us & unlikely to be priority need	4.2	Financially able to resolve their own housing needs
		4.3	Band 3 housing needs but have deliberately worsened their circumstances, time limited award (up to 6 months)
3.3	Medical Need	4.4	Band 3 housing needs but demonstrated unacceptable behaviour
3.4	Welfare Need – to provide/receive support, isolation		
3.5	Households with NO dependent children lacking access to essential facilities or sharing them with household not moving (if awarded 3.6 will not apply)		Band 5
3.6	Lacking 1 bedroom – including those with regular overnight access	5.1	Those applicants with no local connection to West Lindsey
3.8	Employment – to improve access to current permanent employment		
3.9	Level of disrepair – not caused by willful damage/neglect		
3.10	Band 2 housing needs but have deliberately worsened their circumstances, time limited award (up to 6 months)		
3.11	Band 2 housing needs but demonstrated unacceptable behaviour		

Appendix B - Property Eligibility

Please note that eligibility may differ between landlords, please check individual vacancy adverts for full eligibility criteria for individual properties

	Bedsit	Bungalow	Ground floor flat	Flat/ Apartment	House	Bungalow	Ground floor flat	Flat/ Apartment	Maisonette	House	Bungalow	Ground floor flat	Flat/ Apartment	Maisonette	House	House	House	House
Bedrooms	1					2					3					4	5	6
Single person aged 18-55 with no medical need	Y			Y	Y			Y										
Single person aged 18-55 with medical need	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y											
Couple aged 18-55 with no medical need	Y			Y	Y			Y	Y	Y								
Couple aged 18-55 with medical need	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y											
Single aged 55+		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y										
Couple aged 55+		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y										
Single/couple pregnant								Y	Y	Y								
Single/couple no children but access to children				Y	Y			Y	Y	Y								
Household with 1 child								Y	Y	Y								
Household with 2 children same gender:																		
-both under 10								Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y			
-both aged 10-16								Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y			
-one under 16 and one over 16								Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y			
-both over 16								Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y			

	Bedsit	Bungalow	Ground floor flat	Flat/ Apartment	House	Bungalow	Ground floor flat	Flat/ Apartment	Maisonette	House	Bungalow	Ground floor flat	Flat/ Apartment	Maisonette	House	House	House	House
Household with 2 children different gender:																		
-both under 10								Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y			
-one under 10 and one over 10													Y	Y	Y			
-both over 10													Y	Y	Y			
Households with 3 children													Y	Y	Y	Y		
Households with 4 children													Y	Y	Y	Y		
Households with 5 children or more																Y	Y	Y
Sharing adults (not partners)								Y	Y				Y	Y				
2 people (2 adults or single person + adult child)								Y	Y									
3 people (couple + 1 adult child)								Y	Y				Y	Y				
3 people (single person + 2 adult children)													Y	Y				
4 people (couple + 2 adult children)													Y	Y				
4 people (single person + 3 adult children)													Y	Y				

Appendix C – Glossary of Terms

Term	Explanation
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order
Adequately Housed	Living in a property that is suitable for your needs
Applicant(s)”	A person(s), submitting an application, or member of household
Application	Form to be included in the scheme and considered for housing
Area	The area within the West Lindsey boundary
Banding	How applicants are prioritised in the scheme
Bid	Process stating which vacancy they are interested in
CBL	Choice Based Lettings
Complaints Procedure	What is a complaint, how to make a complaint and how it will be dealt with
The Council	West Lindsey District Council
Household	Individuals with intention of living together
Housing Related Debt	Works for which tenants are responsible, current or former rent arrears, rent advance/deposits payments, all other repayable payments
No Fixed Abode (NFA)	You have no fixed accommodation. Applicants who claim that they are of no fixed abode have to satisfy us that they genuinely have no settled accommodation and are living at various locations for very short period of time.
Policy	This West Lindsey Housing Register and Nomination Policy
Registration	Method of applying for housing
Registered Provider	An organisation that lets social housing
Repayment Agreement	An agreement made between landlords and applicants to repay and reduce housing related debts
Rough Sleepers	Those sleeping, about to bed down or actually bedded down in the open air or those in buildings (or other places) not designed for habitation
Stakeholders	Other agencies/organisations with an interest or involvement in the scheme or individual applications

Appendix D – Proof requirements

Proofs checklist – these are the documents required for all housing register applications.

Proof of Identity for adults (1 required for each adult to be re-housed)

- Birth Certificate
- Passport
- NHS Medical Card
- Driving License
- Benefit book/formal notification of benefit
- National insurance card (UK)

Residency for adults (1 required for each adult to be re-housed)

- ***Tenancy agreement for current address – if you are renting a property from a private landlord we must see a copy of your tenancy agreement.***
- Utility Bills (phone, gas, electricity) dated within the last 3 months
- Bank, building society, credit card statements dated within the last 3 months
- Driving license with current address
- Medical card with current address
- Benefit letters or pension books dated within the last 3 months

Proof of children's identity (1 required for each child to be re-housed)

- Birth certificate
- Medical card
- Passport

Proof of children's residency (1 required for each child to be re-housed)

- Tax credit notice dated within the last 3 months
- Medical card with current address
- Child benefit letter dated within the last 3 months
- Bank statement in child's name addressed to your current address dated within the last 3 months
- Proof that you receive Universal Credit support for the child

Proof of Pregnancy

- Maternity notes with estimated date of delivery and midwives signature

Proof of notice served

- Any documents from your landlord/mortgage lender relating to them asking you to leave your current address

Appendix E – How is this policy applied?

This appendix provides additional information and conditions in relation to how the policy is applied in practise. It will be regularly updated to include examples of where a situation has arisen which illustrates how the policy has been implemented in certain circumstances.

Existing social housing tenants who have not been in their current home for 12 months

Examples of when an application would be accepted onto the register include:

- Where there has been a change to the number of people in the household that affects their property eligibility
- Where there has been a change to the medical circumstances of the household that means they now require a ground floor or adapted property
- Where there is a risk of domestic abuse or other violence

Welfare needs

People who have an extenuating need to receive care and support. This will only be considered if the extenuating need is to provide or receive on-going and substantial care which can be evidenced and without doing so exceptional hardship would be caused to the applicant or others.

The applicant must demonstrate:

- That they or the person they are moving near to needs to be cared for and are dependent on the person who will provide the care
- The person in need of support has been assessed as eligible for carers allowance and are in receipt of personal independence payments.
- That other satisfactory arrangements cannot be made
- That the arrangement is ongoing rather than short term

Local connection

Outside of the policy for local connection, there are examples of exceptional circumstances where a local connection may be awarded which include:

- Where an applicant can evidence that they have an offer of permanent employment in the district.
- When an applicant can evidence that they are receiving support from someone in the district and that support cannot be provided by anyone else in the district where they live. This might be that someone in the district is receiving carers allowance for that person.
- Where an applicant can show that they do not have a connection with any district, but they have previously lived in West Lindsey, worked in West Lindsey or have immediate family in the district.