CENTRAL LINCOLNSHIRE PARTNERSHIP

CHOICE BASED LETTING SCHEME

TRACKING:
Other issues that need to be included:
- Partner Profile & Stock Summary
- Contact Details for complaints
- Armed Forces in housing need to be mentioned in bandings
- Travelling to work

Other Documents to do:
- Scheme Guide
- Equalities policy
- Information sharing protocol
- Equality Impact Assessment

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# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REFERENCE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>Description of Scheme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Our statement on choice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Partnership working</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>How the scheme works</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Housing Options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Service Standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Equal opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>Information sharing protocol between partners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Confidentiality &amp; access to information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Applications and Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Who can Apply</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Who cannot join the scheme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Providing information and documentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>False Statement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Housing support and independent living</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Carers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Sheltered housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Other supported accommodation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Assessment of Applications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>Assessment criteria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>Assessment of Housing Needs and Priority Bands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>Medical bandings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>Reasonable preference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>Rough sleepers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>No fixed abode</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>Housing related debts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>Financial capacity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>Credit checks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>Use of home visits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>Dating of registration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>Notification to applicants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>Cancellation of applications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>Change of circumstances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>Assisted persons scheme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>Property eligibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>Annual review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Accessing Housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Finding a Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Advertising vacant properties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Promotion of other Housing Options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Property Descriptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5 Bidding Process
3.6 Deadline for Bids
3.7 Non-qualifying Bids
3.8 Selection of successful bids
3.9 Making an Offer
3.10 Refusals of offers or non bidding
3.11 Feedback on lettings
3.12 Properties excluded from the Scheme
3.13 Property types
3.14 Sheltered Housing
3.15 Local connection
3.16 Direct lets
3.17 Local lettings policies and S106 agreements
3.18 Managing risk
3.19 Local community safety policies
3.20 Allocations to Employees
3.21 Adapted Properties
3.22 Reciprocal Arrangements
3.23 Tenancy Types
3.24 Withdrawing Offers and Adverts
3.25 Transfer Applications
3.26 Voids Repairs/Upgrades – Customer Choice

**Review of Decisions**

4
Reviews of decisions concerning an Application or Offer
4.1 Homeless Reviews
4.2 Complaints Procedure
4.3 Local Government Ombudsman
4.4 Partner Decisions

5.5

**Scheme Monitoring and Changes**

5
The Scheme
5.1 The Lettings Policy
5.2 Changes to the Letting Policy
5.3 Equal Opportunities
5.4 Audit trail for lettings/independent audit
5.5 Glossary of terms
5.6

**Appendices**

A Glossary of Terms
B Partner Profile and Stock Summary
C Priority Bands
D Property Eligibility
E Unacceptable Behaviour
F Succession – NEED TO MAKE APPLICABLE TO GRP
G Partner Contacts for Complaints

TO DO
1 DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHEME

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the allocations scheme (as required by the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) for the City of Lincoln Council, North Kesteven District Council, West Lindsey District Council and Acis Housing Group. It sets out the priorities and procedures that the partners will follow in the letting of housing to applicants on their common housing register.

These organisations have adopted a new approach to letting to give applicants access to affordable housing within the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) area.

The purpose of the Scheme is to make the process of registering for an affordable home as simple as possible and to give people greater choice in selecting where and in what property type and tenure they wish to live.

The new scheme will be called Lincolnshire Homechoice Central

This Letting Policy sets out:
- The objectives of the Letting Policy
- How the Common Housing Register operates
- Who is eligible
- How customer’s housing needs are assessed
- How social rented homes across the area are let
- How the Scheme operates

Each partner organisation will have a copy of this Letting Policy available at its head office for inspection. A copy of this Letting Policy is available free of charge from any of the Partners, or available to download from any of the Partners websites.

The following Partners will participate in this scheme, and herein as known as the Partnership:
- City of Lincoln Council
- North Kesteven District Council
- West Lindsey District Council
- ACIS Housing Group

In addition, the Partnership also works closely with other accommodation providers who offer supported short and long term housing to people with particular support needs;

Because of the nature of the accommodation provided and the support offered, not all housing providers will participate directly in the scheme. However, the Partnership can refer suitable applicants to these Providers.
1.2 OUR STATEMENT ON CHOICE

The Partnership is fully committed to enabling applicants to play a more active role in choosing where they live, whilst continuing to house those in the greatest need in the district. The Policy aims to be as open and transparent as possible and to offer the widest possible choice to people looking for an affordable home.

It is important to realise that the demand for accommodation is higher in some areas than in others. In making a decision about the choices available, applicants need to consider their housing need priority against the availability of properties in any given area.

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.

- To assist customers in the highest housing need

- To provide a full Housing Options service throughout the partnership in accordance with the scheme. This will offer scheme users a large range of other housing options, services and advice to best find the solution suited to their needs

- To prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation through an effective prioritisation system

- To ensure that the best use of limited housing resources is made and that balanced and stable communities are maintained.

- To welcome applicants seeking independent advice; this may include Shelter Lincolnshire and/or Citizens Advice Bureau’s.

- To ensure that quality and accessible advice about the Scheme is freely available to everyone, especially to those who may have difficulty in registering to join the scheme.

- To ensure all applicants are aware of and understand the Scheme and the ways in which they can apply for a home.

- To provide assistance to applicants of the Scheme who are unable, for whatever reason, to participate fully in the Scheme without help, support or advocacy.
• To ensure that good quality information leaflets and property details are easily available.

• To provide application forms that are easy to complete for all sections of the community.

• To provide a guide on the Scheme to all applicants giving them information on how to register and how to bid.

• To provide a bidding process that is easy to access for all applicants of the Scheme.

1.3 PARTNERSHIP WORKING
All Partners have signed up to this Policy and are committed to working together to deliver high quality housing services. The Partners will operate a single Letting Policy and a single Housing Register. The properties and housing options service will all be accessible through the same methods. This means that applicants will be able to apply to one partner but will be able to bid for and be considered for properties across the three areas.

1.4 HOW THE SCHEME WORKS
The common allocations scheme provides a new way of letting social housing and promoting shared ownership properties, and other housing options across Central Lincolnshire. The Partners will no longer use the traditional method of ‘matching’ applicants to properties, instead applicants will choose the tenure, property and area in which they wish to live.

The Scheme has been designed to be easy to use, provide the highest level of customer service and enable people to make the best choice for their needs from the full range of housing options available to them.

The Scheme will not however produce any more housing but will provide a fairer, more efficient and transparent way of letting the current social housing resources.

People who apply to join the scheme or are registered with the Scheme are known as applicants. By completing one application form, applicants needing an affordable home become eligible to bid for housing in the location of their choice.

Applicants are assessed and awarded a banding according to their need for a new, suitable home. Landlords advertise their vacant properties for rent and invite bids on each property from applicants who are registered.

Adverts will contain a detailed description of the property and will state which applicants are able to apply. Applicants can then bid for the property of their choice as long as they meet the qualifying criteria and are registered with the scheme.
The successful applicant will be selected from those who have bid for the property and who meet the qualifying criteria. Selection will be based on the relevant needs band, followed by the application date where there is more than one applicant from the same band. The landlord then offers the property to the successful applicant.

A range of other housing options may also be promoted to applicants through the Scheme, including shared ownership properties, mutual exchanges and private rented properties.

Feedback will be provided through a range of methods on the level of demand for recently advertised vacant properties. This will help applicants to make more informed choices including looking at the other housing options being promoted by the partners.

### 1.5 HOUSING OPTIONS

Due to the high demand on social housing some applicants may have to wait a considerable time before appropriate accommodation is made available to them, particularly in areas of high demand for social housing and/or where the partners has low priority. In some cases, applicants may have little prospect of ever being offered accommodation.

In order to give such applicants a wider choice the Partnership aims to provide information about other appropriate housing options which might be available to them. This might include:

- **private rented accommodation** - the private rented sector can provide types and sizes of dwellings which may not be readily available within the social rented sector. For those with a lower priority under the CBL scheme, and who may be waiting a considerable time before they are offered accommodation, a vacancy in the private rented sector may offer a quicker and equally suitable housing solution.

- **shared ownership schemes** – for those people who cannot afford to buy a home outright on the open market, shared ownership allows the applicant to purchase a share of a property and pay rent on the remainder.

- **mutual exchanges** – a quicker way of moving, rather than applying for a transfer. Tenants find another RSL or Council tenant to swap their homes with, providing they have the agreement of their landlord.

- **mobility schemes** – these are like mutual exchanges but enable applicants to move out of the district e.g. Homeswapper.

- **home improvement schemes or provision of aids and adaptations** – these may enable applicants to remain in their existing accommodation for longer.
1.6 SERVICE STANDARDS
The following Service Standards aim to promote excellence through taking a customer focused approach to the delivery of our services. Each Partner within the scheme will aim to work to these standards and have monitoring systems in place to measure performance:

- Provide an interpreter service for customers, where needed.
- Process a Registration Form within seven days of receiving it.
- Return incomplete applications forms within seven days of receipt with a letter explaining what the issues are and information needed to process the application.
- Send a review letter each year to those applicants who have not made a bid during the previous twelve months.
- Write to applicants informing them of any amendments made to their registration within seven days.
- Respond to customer’s emails and other communications within the standard set down by each Partner organisation.
- Use Plain English in all our correspondence.
- Promote equality of opportunity to all.
- Publicise details on the number of bids, priority banding and registration date of successful bidder for each vacancy advertised.
- Use private interview rooms when discussing personal details.
- Respect the confidential nature of information provided to the Partnership.
- Provide an accessible compliments, comments and complaint procedure.

1.7 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
The Partnership is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity for all existing and potential applicants wishing to access the Scheme. No one will be treated unfairly because of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, marital status, age, sexuality, health or other reason. This list is not intended to be exclusive, but indicative of the Partnership’s intention and commitment to ensuring equality.

The Partnership aims to promote good race relations and equality of opportunity throughout the community. Copies of each Partner’s equality policies are available on request.

In appropriate cases the Partnership will seek to provide wherever possible interpretation and translation facilities, as well as using alternative or additional methods of communication including:

- use of sign language interpretation
- Information on tape/braille/large print
- Translating guides and leaflets into languages other than English
- Loop system for the hard of hearing
- Staff to deal with any Type Talk calls that may occur.
1.8 INFORMATION SHARING PROTOCOL BETWEEN PARTNERS
This scheme is a partnership between the named housing providers across Lincolnshire. In order for the scheme to work effectively it will be necessary for the partners to share information about applicants. An information sharing protocol has been developed which sets out what information can be shared and how this will be done. All partners will abide by the protocol. A copy of the protocol is available on request.

1.9 CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION.
Everyone has the right to be informed about how to join the Scheme. Every applicant accepted has the right to be informed of the band into which they have been placed and the reasons why they have been placed into the particular band.

Applicants the have to right to request information regarding any decision about the facts of their case which is likely to be, or has been, taken into account in considering their application to join the Scheme.

When an applicant applies to the Scheme we will only seek information that we require to assess the applicant’s application and housing needs. We will collect and keep data in accordance with the guidelines on handling personal data. These guidelines are in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 that covers both electronic and manual records and the act governs everything we do with the data, including collecting, storing, using and disposing of it.

Confidential information held about applicants will not be disclosed to third parties apart from:
- Where the person(s) who is the subject of the confidential information has consented to the disclosure
- Where the Partnership is required by law to make such disclosures
- Where disclosure is made in accordance with an information sharing protocol
2 APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT

2.1 WHO CAN APPLY

Anyone has the right to make an application to join the Scheme. Applicants should generally be aged 18 years or over. In the case of joint applications, at least one should normally be aged 18. Special provisions apply to 16-17 year olds, see below. Applications from the following groups will be considered.

- Persons not subject to immigration control taking account of nationality and immigration. The main customer groups to whom properties will be let to are:
  - All existing secure and introductory tenants of a Local Housing Authority and assured tenants of an RSL.
  - 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.

- Persons subject to immigration control who have been granted:
  - 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.

- 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.
  - 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.
Applications from 16/17 year olds will also be accepted where they are:
- A single woman aged 16 or 17 who is expecting a child. Proof of pregnancy will be required in all cases.
- A single parent aged 16 or 17 who has a dependent child.
- A couple aged 16 or 17 who are expecting a child, or have a dependent child. In the former case, proof of pregnancy will be required.
- People aged 16 or 17 who are homeless. In such cases a joint assessment will be undertaken with Social Services to identify appropriate housing and support needs. This process may include other agencies such as Connexions, Health, Probation, and Youth Offending Teams. Such applicants will usually only be considered for appropriately supported housing schemes and not general purpose accommodation.

Some housing providers require 16/17 year olds accepted for housing to have a guarantor and/or sign up for support from the housing provider or their agent where satisfactory support is not in place from statutory agencies.

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.

2.2 INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS
Those who CANNOT join the Choice Based Letting Scheme are:
- Persons who are ineligible to reside in the United Kingdom.
- Persons granted exceptional leave to enter or remain but not to have recourse to public funds.
- The Partnership may also exclude someone from the scheme as a result of unacceptable/anti-social behaviour serious enough to make them an unsuitable tenant, examples are listed in Appendix E. We will take into account all relevant factors such as health, dependents and the individual circumstances of the applicant at the point of applying when making these decisions.
- The Partnership will only exclude from the register where such behaviour would have/did lead to a Possession Order being granted, an anti-social behaviour order being made or other enforceable court order being issued. Such exclusions may be made regardless of previous tenure.

When reaching a decision to refuse a registration because of unacceptable/anti social behaviour, the Partnership will take into account all the relevant factors that a Court would consider before making any order. A decision will also be made on the length of time that the application will be excluded stating the reasons why and the actions that can be undertaken to enable an application to be reconsidered earlier.
If the Partnership decides that an applicant for housing is ineligible it will notify the applicant in writing of the decision detailing the grounds and their right to a review of the decision, within 21 days of receipt of the decision.

If an applicant is found to be ineligible for the Housing Register they may make a fresh application when the grounds for ineligibility no longer apply.

2.3 PROVIDING INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION

Applicants are required to provide proof of their identity e.g. their National Insurance Number(s) and proof of residency for themselves and anyone they wish to be rehoused with. Without this information an application will not be accepted.

In accepting any application which includes anyone from abroad, proof of identification, nationality and immigration status will be required. Verification will be sought from the Immigration Service to safeguard the use and allocation of public funds.

In order to determine the priority an application receives, a duty is placed upon the applicant(s) to provide any and all information reasonably required by the Partnership. 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.

2.4 FALSE INFORMATION

It is important that the information provided by applicants is accurate to determine the correct priority that the application receives. It is also the applicant(s) responsibility to ensure they notify the Scheme Partnership of any change in their circumstances. The Housing Act 1996 section 171 states that a person commits an offence if, in connection with the exercise by a local housing authority of their functions under this Part – (a) s/he knowingly or recklessly makes a statement which is false in a material particular, or (b) s/he knowingly withholds information which the authority have reasonably required her/him to give in connection with the exercise of those functions.’

False information can include any information given on an application form, given in response to subsequent review letters, given during telephone conversations or interviews, or by other updating mechanisms or information submitted by applicants during the proceedings of a review.

The Scheme Partnership may seek possession of a property under Ground 5 of Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 if a tenant has induced the Council to grant a tenancy by knowingly or recklessly making a false statement. The offence is also punishable on summary conviction by magistrates by a fine of up to £5000.
2.5 HOUSING SUPPORT AND INDEPENDENT LIVING
A range of support services may be available throughout the area and are there to help vulnerable people live safely and independently within the community.

In assessing support needs, the Partnership will require risk assessments, support plans and other relevant information from organisations such as Social Services, Connexions, Addaction, Probation, Community Mental Health Team, Supporting People Team and other relevant agencies.

If this information is not provided by the agencies the application will be suspended, and the agency and applicant notified of the agency responsible. Where an identified support need cannot be met or the applicant refuses support, the relevant Partner may refuse the bid.

The Partnership reserves the right to refuse any bids from applicant’s for accommodation it deems unsuitable and where in its opinion, support plans are not sufficiently detailed to provide support to the applicant to ensure that their tenancy remains sustainable or they can maintain independent living.

2.6 CARERS
Applicants with a disability or other need who require an additional bedroom to accommodate a carer are required to provide an approved and detailed Care Plan. Such Care Plans will need to be shared with all providers so that appropriate accommodation can be considered.

2.7 SHELTERED HOUSING
Sheltered accommodation is normally allocated according to the following criteria:

a) applicants in need of supported accommodation who fulfill the Supporting People criteria, this will be determined by a sheltered housing needs assessment, to assess individual needs and independence to determine the ability of the “sheltered” service to meet those needs.

b) applicants or their partner be 60 years of age or over, taking into account the requirements of the scheme and community.

Such properties will be clearly advertised detailing who can bid and be considered for the vacancy. (Also see Section 3.14)

2.8 OTHER SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION
Some properties are within schemes that are designated for individuals with specific support needs this may include those aged 16 to 24yrs or with mental health issues. An appropriate support needs assessment must be completed prior to any offer of accommodation. This will determine individual needs and the suitability of the support available to meet those needs.

Such properties will be clearly advertised detailing who can bid and be considered for the vacancy.
2.9 ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS
Applications should be forwarded to, and appropriately processed by the Partner:
- Administering the area you currently live (if currently residing within Partnership area); or
- Administering the area you wish to live (if currently residing outside the Partnership area)

All applications will be processed and subject to the same assessment regardless of which Partner it is submitted to.

2.10 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA
The application form provides the basic information to enable an applicant to be registered with the Scheme and determine which Priority Band will be awarded. As a result of information given on that application, applicants may be asked to provide additional information to ensure their circumstances have been appropriately assessed.

For example, an applicant indicates they have been asked to leave their current private tenancy, applicant will be requested to provide copy of notice from landlord

The Partnership may also require supporting information from other agencies concerning an applicant’s household, current circumstances and needs. The Partnership will have due regard to confidentiality and data protection in accordance with Section 1.9, and applicants permission will be sought where appropriate.

2.11 ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING NEEDS AND BANDINGS
The Partnership has adopted a Banding Scheme to prioritise the current housing needs of applicants. These include the applicant’s current accommodation, physical and mental health, mobility, affordability, access and social wellbeing.

There are 5 Bands: Copper, Bronze, Silver, Gold and Emergency. These bandings have been adopted following guidance issued by the Secretary of State. All eligible applicants are placed in Bands in accordance with their housing needs assessment. More detailed information about each band is detailed in Appendix C.

Applications are prioritised first by band, and secondly by date see Section 2.22 for more details.

If an applicant is assessed as having two or more identified needs within a band, consideration is given to raising the application into a higher band. For example:
- An applicant who has been assessed as having three or more Bronze Band needs is placed into Silver
• An applicant who has been assessed as having two or more Silver Band needs is placed into Gold.

Space standards are contained in Part 10 of the Housing Act 1985 and the Housing Act 2004 which includes the Housing & Health Safety Rating Standard (HHSRS). The HHSRS is a tool for assessing the living conditions of a property; it is based on 29 possible hazards to the most vulnerable occupier and is structured around an evidence based risk assessment process. It is a two stage process which addresses firstly the likelihood of an occurrence and then the range of probable harm outcomes. These include space standards.

Housing Priority can be reduced or even taken away in certain situations, for example:
• Committing serious anti-social behaviour
• Housing circumstances have improved
• Applicant has worsened their circumstances
• Recovered from an illness which gave medical priority
• Can afford to buy or rent accommodation for themselves.

Where priority has been reduced applicants will always be informed in writing stating the reasons.

2.12 MEDICAL BANDING
An assessment of medical need is made by a medical professional or senior officer using an agreed criterion. 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.

The Assessor determines medical priority based on the current housing circumstances in relation to the illness or disability of the applicant or their household.

The Partnership 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.

2.13 REASONABLE PREFERENCE
The law states that certain groups of people have ‘reasonable preference’ within any scheme of allocation 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

2.14 HOMELESSNESS
In cases where the Local Authority have accepted a main housing duty as statutorily homeless, applicants will be placed into the appropriate band and are required to make bids to the first 2 suitable properties that they are eligible for, from the date that they have been accepted as homeless. Homeless cases will be monitored, and if applicants fail to make bids, the Partnership 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, the homelessness duty to them will be discharged. In such cases they will no longer have reasonable preference awarded and the application will be re-assessed.

Where statutorily homeless applicants have a housing related debt they may be placed into temporary accommodation under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996, during this time an affordable repayment agreement will be made with them to repay the debt. This will allow applicant(s) to place bids, however, they will not be offered a property unless the debt has been cleared or regular payments have been made to reduce the debt over a period of time determined by the Partnership.

Anyone provided with a temporary tenancy in pursuant to a homeless application will be required to complete a new application form and then will be placed into the appropriate band, as they are in temporary accommodation. Starter tenancies and demoted tenancies are not classed as being temporary accommodation in this sense.
2.15 ROUGH SLEEPING
The Partnership defines rough sleeping as being street homeless and having access to no accommodation at all. People of ‘No Fixed Abode’, who are for example staying at various locations on an ad hoc basis, are not regarded as rough sleepers.

2.16 NO FIXED ABODE
Applicants who claim that they are of no fixed abode have to satisfy the Partnership that they genuinely have no settled accommodation and are living at various locations for very short periods of time.

In confirming cases where applicants claim that they are of no fixed abode, proof may be sought from each address and/or other agencies with which they are registered.

2.17 HOUSING RELATED DEBTS
Where an applicant(s) has any current/former rent arrears or other housing related debt they will be accepted onto the housing register and placed in the appropriate band. This allows applicant(s) to place bids. However, they will not be offered a property unless the debt has been cleared or regular payments have been made to reduce the debt over a period of time determined by the Partnership (normally 13 weeks).

All applicants will be informed of this decision in writing, and how their application could be re-assessed, for example, by agreeing an arrangement to make regular payments to reduce the debt and maintain payments over a period of time as determined by the Partnership.

We expect applicants to clear any current/former rent arrears or other housing related debts before an offer of a tenancy is made, where it is clearly within their means to do this (for example where the debt is relatively low and the applicant has a reasonable disposable income or significant savings to draw on).

2.18 FINANCIAL CAPACITY
All households applying to the Choice Based Lettings Scheme are assessed for their ability to buy a suitable property within the area, or 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) as well as general applications.

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.
An offer of tenancy will not be made where an applicant(s) owns a property that would be reasonable for them to live in or where, if they sold it, they could afford to buy another property in the area.

In determining the priority an applicant receives within the scheme, the Partnership considers the following:
- Whether the applicant(s) can sell their current home.
- The expected equity after the proposed sale of the property.
- The applicant(s) current financial circumstances and commitments.
- Whether the applicant(s) will be eligible for a mortgage.
- The supply of accommodation suitable for the applicant(s) specific needs on the private market for either sale or rent.
- Whether the applicant(s) housing need can be met in the private market taking into consideration the cost of housing within the district.
- Whether adaptation of the present property is a viable option.
- Whether significant care and support needs would impact on the ability of the applicant to secure and maintain accommodation.

The Partnership will not make an offer of tenancy to an applicant who can afford a mortgage to buy a property within the area by using their assets and income. This criteria may be reviewed where a property is deemed to be in a 'low demand area' or at the discretion of the Partner who manages the relevant property.

2.19 CREDIT CHECKS
Credit reference checks are a useful tool to help identify applicants who may need to be suspended from the Housing Register because of rent arrears or housing related debts. They can also help to provide better information about prospective tenants who may be vulnerable and, or, need help with budgeting.

All applicants will be asked to give their authorisation to do credit checks on the housing application form. Checks will only be made on applicants who have some likelihood of being made an offer of housing and they will be provided with a copy of the credit check.

If a credit check provides information about other addresses further checks may be carried out on these as well.

2.20 USE OF HOME VISITS
It is sometimes necessary to carry out home visits to assist with the assessment of housing applications and also to provide an alternative way for customers to discuss their particular requirements.

They will only be carried out by prior appointment, unless exceptional circumstances.
The partners reserve the right to suspend applications where access to the home is denied and until such time as this can be given. The partners reserve the right to decline the request for a home visit where this may place a member of staff at risk or is otherwise considered unnecessary.

2.21 RENT (AGRICULTURE) ACT 1976
The Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976 and the Housing Act 1988 give certain agriculture workers (including retired workers and successors) living in farm cottages, security of tenure. However, under these Acts a farmer may apply to the Local Authority to have the protected worker re-housed, if they need the cottage for another worker in the interests of efficient agriculture. To assist the authority in considering the farmer’s application the 1976 Act provides for an Agricultural Dwelling Housing Advisory Committee (ADHAC) to give advice on, section the case made by the applicant concerning the interests of efficient agriculture and regarding the urgency of the application.

If the ADHAC considers that the farmer requires the farm cottage for a new employee, ADHAC may recommend that the local authority award priority re-housing to the retiring farm worker. If urgent re-housing is recommended, the application will be placed into the appropriate band.

2.22 DATING OF REGISTRATIONS
The initial registration date of an application form will be the date the housing application form is received at any of the Partners offices. All relevant documentation requested by the Partnership should be provided within 28 days of initial contact. Failure to provide relevant documentation may result in a later registration date.

Applicants will be placed within a band in date order.
- **new 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 the Partnership (leading to the re-assessment) not the child’s date of birth.
2.23 NOTIFICATION TO APPLICANTS
Upon acceptance to the Scheme applicants will be notified in writing of the following:
- Date of registration
- Assessment Band
- Property Eligibility
- Any confirmed local connection
- Right to Review of Decisions

Applicants will subsequently be notified in writing of any changes in their housing needs assessment, banding or status of their application.

2.24 CANCELLATION OF APPLICATIONS
The Partnership will cancel applications where:
- An applicant is housed as a result of that application
- An applicant fails to respond to the annual review within the set timescale
- An applicant has moved and failed to notify the Partnership

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

2.25 CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES
Applicants are required to inform the relevant Partner if their personal circumstance 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.

A specific form will be available for this purpose and this must be signed by each of the applicants.

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 be re-dated to the date the child was born.

Changes in circumstances that lead to re-banding will be dealt with in accordance with this policy. The relevant Partner 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.
2.26 ASSISTED PERSONS LIST
Some vulnerable applicants may require help to ensure that they have the same opportunity to access the scheme. The Partnership therefore offers an “Assisted List” to allow those who cannot participate fully without assistance, easy access to the scheme. This list will also extend to those who require help with applications for Registration.

The “Assisted List” seeks to provide a number of tailored services for vulnerable applicants, such as:
- Contact with applicants to advise them of available properties
- Referral to the appropriate local agency or support worker to enable proactive support for bidding, or bidding on the applicant’s behalf
- Lincolnshire Homechoice Central Magazine to be posted to the individual applicants home in their preferred format
- Regular contacts will be made to ensure needs are being met in terms of bidding support.

Referrals for admittance onto the Assisted List may come from a number of sources, although most would come from the following (however this is not exclusive);
- From the Registration Form – where a badly completed form may indicate literacy or language problems or where the applicant may indicate a particular disability such as hearing or sight impairment.
- Request from support worker – where a support worker specifically requests additional assistance for one of their clients.
- Self referral.
- From monitoring applicants who have not bid – where the Partnership identifies applicants who are not making bids for accommodation.

Examples of those who may require help include:
- Those with communication difficulties i.e. language / literacy
- Those with access to transport difficulties
- Those with Learning Disabilities
- Those at risk of Domestic Abuse
- Those with a support worker
- Those with sensory / physical disability

2.27 PROPERTY ELIGIBILITY
Applicants, upon acceptance to the Housing Register, will be notified in writing of the properties they are eligible to bid for. Property eligibility is based upon a households composition and their needs, Appendix D details which applicants are eligible for each type of property.
The advert will clearly state which applicants can bid for each property and which applicant will have priority for the vacancy.

Applicants may be offered accommodation not usually considered for their household type or size, where the list has been exhausted or availability of properties in a certain area are scarce. Examples include: property larger than required or level floor accommodation to those with now medical need.

**2.28 ANNUAL/ROLLING REVIEW**

The Partners are required to undertake an annual review of applicants on the Register. This helps to ensure that those on the register are still interested in applying for suitable properties and also reduces the amount of time and resources wasted in sending information to those applicants who are no longer looking to move house.

Each applicant will be contacted, in writing, on the anniversary of their application to ascertain if they still wish to be registered. Should there be no response to this letter **within 4 weeks**, the application will be suspended. A further letter 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.

Applicants who subsequently decide they wish to rejoin the Register will need to re-apply in the normal way and will have their current circumstances assessed. The application date will not be backdated under these circumstances.
3 ACCESSING HOUSING

3.1 FINDING A HOME
Once applicants are registered on the scheme they can start looking for a property of their choice across Central Lincolnshire. Applicants do not need to be registered to access some of the other housing options available through the scheme, for example, housing advice, shared ownership properties and privately rented accommodation.

3.2 ADVERTISING OF VACANT PROPERTIES
Social rented properties will be advertised on a fortnightly basis. They will be split into 2 main categories:
- For all applicants
- For existing (transfer) tenants of the scheme partners

Properties will be advertised in the following ways:
- **CBL Property Available List** – This is available on request and circulated to stakeholders and for a small fee (if not on the Assisted Persons List) be sent to applicants home.
- **Newspaper** – RSL’s may advertise their properties in the local press.
- **Website** – All Partner websites allow applicants to view available properties and apply ‘on-line’ for properties of their choice. Access to the website is available in some of the Partner’s reception areas.
- **Computer Access** – Is available in some of the Partners reception areas.
- **Reception Areas** – All Partners advertise all properties available within the Scheme in their reception areas.
- **Hotline** – A dedicated 24 hour phone number is available for applicants to call to hear what properties are available. Applicants will hear an options menu where a description of different properties can be heard. Applicants can make bids through this hotline, or if they are having difficulty in making a bid they can leave a message containing their reference number so that a member of staff can call them back. This service is important to the Partnership in our efforts to assist disabled applicants, particularly those who are blind or partially sighted to access the service. The Hotline service also benefits those applicants who are unable to read.

3.3 PROMOTION OF OTHER HOUSING OPTIONS
Information will also be provided about other housing options we are able to offer advice and assistance with, including:
- Help to stay in current home
- Rent Deposit Schemes and other ways to access privately rented properties
- Mutual exchanges
- Help to access private sale properties
- Shared ownership
3.4 PROPERTY DESCRIPTIONS
Properties advertised will, wherever possible, carry a photograph of the property (or similar) and will always have a full description of the property. This description will include the following information:

- The type of property (house, flat, etc)
- Rent charged/service charges
- Amenities in the area
- The tenure type for the property (social rented, shared ownership, etc)
- The number of bedrooms the property has
- The location of the property
- Services provided (e.g. warden, caretaker, cleaning)
- Any local connection criteria
- The level of accessibility the property has for people with mobility problems/wheelchair users
- Any adaptations (e.g. disabled facilities etc)
- The heating type
- Any age restrictions
- Indication of the estimated demand for the property (high/medium/low)
- Whether pets are allowed
- Availability of outside space (garden, etc)
- Availability of parking
- The rent for the property and any service charges
- Special information
- Property size qualification
- Whether the property is available to all applicants or transfer applicants only

Applicants must qualify for the size of the property. Applicants will have been informed of the size and type of property they qualify for when they registered with the scheme.

Adverts also give information on who will be eligible to bid for the property. For example if the property is a sheltered housing unit the advert may state that only applicants above a certain age or those with assessed support needs will be eligible to apply.

3.5 BIDDING FOR A PROPERTY
Where an applicant meets the bidding criteria they may bid for that property within the deadline given. Applicants may use any of the following methods to make a bid:

- By phone
- By text message
- Via the website
- On a public access terminal e.g. a computer placed in a reception area
- By post
- Through the assisted persons process (see section 2.26 for more details)
- In person at any of the Partners' reception areas
Where a property has been advertised and no bids have been received, the property may then be allocated on a first come first served basis providing that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria.

3.6 **DEADLINE FOR BIDS**
All property adverts will clearly state a deadline by which bids for those properties must be received. Bids received after the specified deadline will not be considered under any circumstances.

3.7 **NON QUALIFYING BIDS**
Applicants are restricted to making 2 bids in each bid cycle. Applicants will not be considered for any property without meeting the qualifying criteria. For example, a single person would not be considered for a three bedroom property.

3.8 **SELECTION OF SUCCESSFUL BIDS**
At the end of the advertising period, applicants who have bid for a property will be short listed according to the allocations policy criteria and any qualifying criteria on the property. The successful applicant for each property will be the one who qualifies for the property, with preference given to the relevant banding, and with the earliest application date, subject to the provisions set out below. Additional verification checks will be undertaken at this stage to ensure the applicant still qualifies for the offer of accommodation.

3.9 **MAKING AN OFFER**
At the close of the bidding process a list will be produced in priority and date order. The successful applicant will be contacted by the Housing Officer from the relevant partner landlord whose property they have applied for, to arrange for an accompanied viewing. They will then be offered the property.

Applicants will usually be contacted within 3 working days of the bid cycle for the property closing. If an applicant cannot be contacted following multiple attempts the next person on the shortlist will be contacted. It is, therefore, important that all applicants ensure they are contactable or else they may lose out on a property they have applied for.

Applicants have up to 2 working days to decide whether to accept the offer of accommodation. If no response is received after 2 days then the next person on the shortlist will be offered the property. If the applicant refuses the offer, the property will be offered to the next person on the shortlist, and so on until the property is let.
Scheme partners reserve the right to carry out an assessment on applicants to ensure the particular property is appropriate for their needs before contacting them or making an offer. If, following such an assessment, the scheme partner deems the property not to be suitable for the applicant, then it will be offered to the next applicant on the short list.

Offers of accommodation may be withdrawn if it is found that the information supplied by the applicant was incorrect or if they are deemed to be unsuitable to be a tenant due to their behaviour (e.g., they have accrued rent arrears that were not previously known about).

3.10 REFUSALS OF OFFERS OR NON BIDDING
If an applicant refuses 3 offers, (unless homeless, see section 2.14), they will be asked to attend an interview regarding their housing requirements. Following this the registration will be re-considered. We will contact the applicant to offer support and assistance and verify their circumstances.

All applicants in Gold Band will be monitored to establish if any suitable properties have been advertised. If eligible properties have been advertised the applicant may be interviewed to establish why they have not bid, and their assessment may be reassessed (see Section 4.4 on Partnership Decisions).

All other applicants who have not placed a bid during a 12 month period will be sent a review letter asking if they still wish to remain on the register. Applicants who fail to respond to this letter within 4 weeks will have their application suspended, a letter will be sent to notifying them and that should they not respond within 14 days be cancelled from the register.

3.11 FEEDBACK ON LETTINGS
An important part of the Scheme is the need to give applicants feedback on allocated properties. This will help applicants make an informed evaluation of their housing options. Partners will provide feedback, on the website detailing the results of the social rented properties that have previously been advertised. The information provided for each property will be:
- Property size and type
- The location
- The number of bids
- Band of the successful applicant
- Application date of the successful applicant
- Any local connection to the district or partnership
The partners will never include any personal details of the successful applicants in the feedback. This feedback is very important to applicants as it will help to identify which property types and areas are the most popular and so where their best chances are of making a successful bid. It will also allow applicants the knowledge of whether they would be better served by pursuing one of the alternative options to social housing we will be promoting through the scheme.

3.12 **PROPERTIES EXCLUDED FROM THE SCHEME**

The Partners reserve the right to exclude certain properties and housing schemes from the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Examples of where this may occur include (but are not limited to) where a property is needed urgently to deal with an emergency. Specialist accommodation for older people may also be let outside the CBL Scheme for example extra care schemes for the elderly.

The majority of vacant social housing properties in Partnership area will be let through the CBL Scheme.

3.13 **PROPERTY TYPES**

The Policy covers the letting of a range of property types throughout the area. These properties range from bed-sitting rooms to six bedroom houses. All properties will be advertised, stating who can bid for them.

Individual Housing Providers always endeavor 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 disability. Housing Providers may also choose to exercise some discretion and invite bids from couples with 1 child for a 3 bed house if, for example, a particular village or area only has 3 bed houses. The Partnership can amend the bid criteria of previously advertised properties to widen the eligibility and enable successful bids to be made.

Any local letting criteria will be specified on the advert: see section 3.17 of this Policy.

3.14 **SHELTERED HOUSING**

Sheltered Housing is accommodation designed specifically for people of retirement age. Residents pay an additional charge as well as the rent, for services provided by a Warden. In exceptional circumstances, younger people may be considered if they require the support of the support co-ordinator and cannot be housed in any type of accommodation.

The partners may have different age restrictions for sheltered housing. The minimum age for each sheltered property will be clearly stated in each advert.

Partners may carry out a needs and risk assessment for applicants who bid for sheltered housing properties to ensure the services provided are appropriate to their needs. This will be done as part of the offer process. Also see Section 2.7.
3.15 LOCAL CONNECTION
To ensure local housing needs are met properties advertised through this scheme will be labelled as available to applicants with a local connection to either, North Kesteven, City of Lincoln, West Lindsey or all of the Central Scheme. The relevant local connection requirement will be clearly labelled on the property advertisement. However, some properties will be advertised without a label for all applicants.

To be considered as having a local connection to a local authority area or Central Scheme one of the following must apply:
- Have been permanently resident in any partner district for at least the last TWELVE months
- Applicants have family members who are resident in any partner district. Family members are defined as parents, adult children or brothers or sisters who have lived here continuously for the last FIVE YEARS
- Have previously lived in any partner district area for a continuous period of TWELVE months (whilst aged 18 or over) in the last FIVE YEARS.
- Applicants main place of work in any partner district for a continuous period of TWELVE months.

Proof will be required in all of the above cases. Applicants will be sent confirmation of which area(s) the applicant has a local connection to.

This local connection definition does not apply to Local Lettings Policies or Section 106 agreement, See Section 26.

3.16 DIRECT LETS
The majority of available properties will be advertised and open for eligible households to place bids through the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. However, there are circumstances where a property may be let outside of the scheme by a direct letting.

This may be done for a variety of reasons and examples include:
- Households accepted as homeless who have previously failed to bid for properties that were available and suitable for their needs
- Existing tenants who need to be re-housed as a result of proposed redevelopment or because major work is required to their existing property, which would be unreasonable to carry out until it was empty
- Existing tenants who need to move because of a violent incident or the threat of violence that is likely to be carried out, and enforcement action has not resolved the matter
- In some instances where a Partner has entered into a reciprocal arrangement with another housing provider
- Higher levels of supported accommodation are needed or are no longer needed, such as extra care schemes
Each of the Partners will make reasonable efforts to assist other agencies that are required to help re-house people. This includes witness protection work undertaken by the Police where, in some cases, very limited information may be available before an offer of housing is made. These will be carefully recorded and monitored by each Partner to ensure that they are dealt with appropriately and consistently.

Applicants who are eligible for direct lettings will normally be made one offer of suitable accommodation. If they do not accept the property the relevant partner may decide to make no further offers to them. 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.

Properties let through direct lettings will not be advertised through the CBL scheme, but information will normally be made available to indicate that the letting took place. This will not be done if there is good reason, such as the need to re-house someone threatened with violence.

3.17 LOCAL LETTINGS POLICIES AND SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS

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 would have a criminal check completed to ensure they were suitable for the property.

There are a number of Local Lettings Policies throughout the area. To be considered for a property within one of these schemes, the applicant would have to meet the criteria listed in the advert. Applicants would usually need to have a local connection to the town or village of the advertised property. Suitable applicants for tenancies will be selected from those who bid for the properties and invited for interview with the Housing Provider, the Council or Police. Selection will be based on the interview, employment, current accommodation and history of applicants.

When new developments are advertised restrictions may have been set on the development by the Planning Department of the Local Authority, these are known as Section 106 agreements. These are legal agreements between local authorities and developers, which are linked to a planning permission. For example, the Planning Department may restrict a new development in a village by stating that only people with a local connection to that village can be housed in the available properties. In cases where restrictions have been placed on a development properties will be advertised appropriately.
3.18 MANAGING RISKS
The primary aim of the Partnership is to maintain balanced and stable communities. In working towards this vision, the Partnership recognises that all people have a right to a home that is more than just somewhere to live. However, there will always be people who are more difficult to integrate into mainstream housing.

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, the Partnership will therefore work closely with the Police, Social Care, Probation, Health and voluntary agencies.

For example, securing accommodation for a high-risk offender will be done in consultation and with the approval of the appropriate agencies with special arrangements apply in cases where an applicant is considered by the Multi Agency Public Protection Panel Arrangements (MAPPPA). 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 the relevant Partner explaining the reasons why this has happened.

An integral part of managing risks is to ensure that appropriate support networks are in place and are regularly monitored and reviewed by the Partners involved.

Any successful bid will be deferred if the relevant agencies have not provided a relevant Care Plan/Risk Assessment to manage the risk.

3.19 LOCAL COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP
The Partnership actively works 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. The Partnership reserves 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.

3.20 ALLOCATIONS TO EMPLOYEES
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 any Partner within the Scheme.

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 the relevant Partner will notify their appropriate Director(s) for approval.
3.21 ADAPTED PROPERTIES
Some properties have been specially adapted for people with disabilities or other special needs eg stairlift, level floor shower. In order to make best use of the housing stock, the partners will always attempt to match such properties to applicants who require these adaptations. Details of any adaptation will be included in the advert and priority will be given to applicants who have been assessed as requiring them.

3.22 RECIPROCAL ARRANGEMENTS
These can be of benefit to housing organisations where the supply of properties is insufficient to meet a particular housing need and other options such as mutual exchange are unlikely to be successful. They are also used to assist households who have been accepted as homeless, but either need or wish to live elsewhere.

Each of the partners may enter into a reciprocal arrangement with another Council or registered social landlord that is not part of the scheme.

Unless there is an overriding need for the household to move urgently they will be placed on the Housing Register, with the relevant priority and expected to use the bidding process.

If there is a particularly urgent need to move quickly the partner may choose to make a direct let.

3.23 TENANCY TYPES
The type of tenancy offered to an applicant may differ between Partner organisations. This is because not all Partners are governed by the same legislation. The type of tenancy offered could be:
- A Council Introductory Tenancy
- A Housing Association Starter Tenancy
- An Assured Shorthold Tenancy
- A Secure Tenancy
- An Assured Tenancy

The type of tenancy to be offered will normally be included in the advert and will be discussed in further detail with the successful applicant before any final decision is made to accept the tenancy.
3.24 WITHDRAWING OFFERS AND ADVERTS
Occasionally, a Partner may be required to withdraw a property advert, circumstances for this may include:

- if it becomes apparent that the property will let through direct lets in accordance with this policy (see section 3.16) or
- The current tenant has of the property being advertised has withdrawn their notice terminating their tenancy of that property, so the property is no longer available
- Significantly incorrect information had been advertised in respect of the property or applicants eligibility for that property.

Reasons for the withdrawal of any property adverts will be publicly available.

In exceptional circumstances a senior officer of a Scheme Partner may authorise the withdrawal of an offer. Circumstances may include, but is not limited to:

- where 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 when we ask them to sign a tenancy agreement or associated paperwork.
- The current tenant of the property being advertised has withdrawn their notice terminating their tenancy of that property, so the property is no longer available
- Where an applicant has failed to respond to contact from a Partner within 2 working days.

3.25 TRANSFER APPLICATIONS
Existing Council and Housing Association tenants in need of rehousing can make an application to join the Lincolnshire Homechoice Scheme. Tenants must have been in their current home for at least 12 months.

In exceptional cases tenants will be allowed to register if they have been in their current home for less than 12 months but each of these cases will be considered on an individual basis by the Lincolnshire Homechoice Panel.

3.26 VOIDS REPAIRS/UPGRADES – CUSTOMER CHOICE
Each Partner has a minimum lettings standard for empty properties. Applicants should refer to the appropriate partner for further information on these.

There are occasions where additional improvements to a property over and above the minimum standard are required. In such cases, it is likely that these will be carried out after the new tenant has moved in. Wherever possible, the new tenant will be given choice regarding colour, design, finish, etc.
4 REVIEW OF DECISIONS

4.1 REVIEW OF DECISIONS ON APPLICATIONS OR OFFERS
All applicants have the right to ask for a review of a decision, if they consider they have been unfairly or unreasonably treated having regard to the provisions of this Lettings Policy. For example, a decision about:
- Refusal or removal from the Housing Register
- Type of property applicant is eligible for
- Suitability of accommodation offered
- Information that has been taken into account when assessing the Housing Register application
- The band into which they have been placed
- Any decision taken in relation to their Registration

Request for reviews will be dealt with by the organisation within the Partnership that has been mainly dealing with that application, ie: the organisation that has notified the applicant on the issue they would like to be reviewed.

Requests for a review should be addressed initially to the Housing Needs Manager, preferably in writing. In some circumstances requests will be referred to the Housing Manager, for a review of a decision.

Requests for a review will be acknowledged within 2 working days and the applicant will be notified of the review decision, within 5 days of receipt of all relevant information. If an applicant is unhappy with the initial review decision they should notify the Housing Manager, in writing, within 21 days of receipt of that decision.

If the applicant is still unhappy, they may make a complaint via the organisations formal complaints procedure APPENDIX F.

4.2 HOMELESSNESS REVIEW
Requests for reviews of decisions made in respect of an applicant’s homeless application are subject to procedures outside this scheme, applicants should contact the Local Authority dealing with their application for further information or Shelter, Lincolnshire.

4.3 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE
Each organisation within this Scheme Partnership has a formal Complaint’s Procedure, please refer to APPENDIX G for contact details.

If your complaint is regarding more than one organisation within the Scheme Partnership or the Scheme Partnership as a whole please contact Lincs Homechoice Central Board. Complaints against the Scheme Partnership will be acknowledged within 2 working days and the applicant will be notified of the review decision, within 5 days of receipt of all relevant information.
4.4 OMBUDSMAN

The Local Government Ombudsman is independent of all government departments, councils and politicians. The Ombudsman examines complaints without taking sides.

Before a complaint can be considered by the Ombudsman, the complainant must have pursued the matter through the Council’s own complaints procedure. It is however, recognised that there will be some complaints where for one reason or another it would be inappropriate for this requirement to apply. The following complaints will normally be treated as exceptions to the general requirement:

- **Complaints where the subject means the matter is clearly urgent**
  - Complaints about homelessness – where the complainant is or will be imminently homeless

- **Complaints where the Ombudsman or the council decide that completing the council’s own procedure would be to the detriment of the complainant: these are:**
  - Complaints where there has been unreasonable delay by the council in processing a complaint - 12 weeks is generally sufficient time to conclude an investigation
  - Complaints where the council’s Chief Executive has exercised discretion not to investigate further
  - Complaints where the Ombudsman has exercised discretion to accept a complaint because he/she has good reason to believe the council would not handle it effectively
  - Complaints against more than one body – to avoid the possibility of different time scales for different procedures - a complaint which is made against two authorities within the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman, or within the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman and Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

- **Complaints where the complainant’s circumstances indicate a need for priority**
  - Complaints made by children and young people – up to the age of 21 or 25 if disabled
  - Complaints where referral to the council would disadvantage an already disadvantaged complainant - where the particular circumstances indicate vulnerability and/or the need for urgency; we will always provide reasons.

Contact details for the Local Government Ombudsman are

PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH or 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983
4.4 PARTNERSHIP DECISIONS
All Partners will aim to deal with individual enquiries at the initial point of contact including correspondence from Members of Parliament. Where necessary the Partners will meet to agree an appropriate response or decision(s).

The Partnership Steering Group will meet on a regular basis to consider the following:
- To agree Repayment Agreements and the length of time these will be expected to be kept to
- Managing Risks
- Recommendations for move-on to include support
- Complaints received
- All other cases that warrant consideration
5 MONITORING AND REVIEW

5.1 THE SCHEME
In order to ensure that the Scheme is achieving its aims of being as open and accessible as possible to all members of the community the Partnership will monitor the following:

- The number of applicants on the register by band each quarter
- The number of allocations in the financial year (cumulative) each quarter
  - By property type (and bedrooms)
  - Separate listings for general needs and sheltered housing
  - Whether Homeless, transfer or general
  - Whether restricted (i.e. eligibility criteria advertised)
  - Bids overlooked
  - Made to out of area applicants
  - How many allocations by banding
  - Properties let outside of the scheme
  - Local connection with Partners and Scheme
- Property Feedback for each allocation as follows weekly:
  - Address of property
  - No of beds
  - Type
  - General / Sheltered
  - Property band
  - No of bids
  - Refusals
  - Successful applicant bid
  - Application dates
  - Local connection with Partners or Scheme
- List of all properties let by the scheme for current financial year each quarter
- Refusals and number of complaints about the scheme each quarter
- Non bidders, customer satisfaction & performance against service standards annually
- The numbers accessing help to bid through the assisted list and the reasons for being on the assisted list each quarter.
- Monitoring will also take place to test equality of access and opportunity, and levels of satisfaction across:
  - All ethnic groups using the scheme
  - Applicants on the assisted list

5.2 THE LETTINGS POLICY
This policy will be reviewed annually to:

a) Ensure that every application is dealt with fairly and consistently in accordance with the Partnership’s Equal Opportunities Policy and relevant legislation.
b) Ensure that priority is given to those in the most housing need. For example: overcrowded, poor or unsatisfactory housing arrangements, urgent medical, social or financial difficulties.

c) Give adequate priority to homeless people, whilst maintaining a balance between the needs of the homeless and other applicants in housing need.

d) Ensure performance meets local and national performance indicators that will be made available and reported to the Partnership Board or other relevant bodies, as required.

The Housing Needs Manager at each organisation within the Scheme Partnership is responsible for ensuring that all lettings are made in accordance with the agreed policy.

5.3 CHANGES TO LETTINGS POLICY

The Partnership will consult with a wide range of stakeholders including existing applicants on any proposed changes to this Lettings Scheme and any implications of such changes.

5.4 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Partnership is committed to equal opportunities in the provision of its housing services. It will seek to ensure that no housing applicant receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, religion, disability, race, age, colour, ethnic or national origin, health, sexuality or other reason. This list is not intended to be exclusive but demonstrates the Partnership’s intentions.

The Partnership will have regard to and implement the provisions of the Race Relations Code of Practice in Rented Housing. The Council will also abide by the Race Relations Act 1976, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

To ensure that applicants are not discriminated against on the grounds of race, ethnic or national origin, sexuality or religion there is a system in place for recording allocations according to ethnic origin, whilst not enabling it to be taken into consideration at assessment or letting stages.

The Partnership subscribes to a language translation service. This service will be used to ensure that the applicants from different ethnic origin have fair and appropriate access to housing and related services.

The Lincolnshire Homechoice Central Board will ensure that the Lettings Policy, procedures and practices do not directly or indirectly discriminate. Changes will be made if it is established that practices or procedures may be contravening relevant legislation.

The Partnership aims to promote good race relations and equal opportunity throughout the community. Copies of each organizations equalities and diversity statements are available upon request.
5.5 AUDIT TRAIL FOR LETTINGS AND INDEPENDENT AUDITING ARRANGEMENTS
To ensure a consistent approach to application processing, assessment, shortlisting and letting, the scheme will be subject to a random cross-section of audit checks within the Partnership and subject to external audit checks in accordance with each Partner's organisational requirements.
### GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adequately Housed</td>
<td>Living in a property that is suitable for your needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant(s)*</td>
<td>A person or persons submitting an application for Registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>An application to be included in the scheme and considered for alternative housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>The area of City of Lincoln, North Kesteven or West Lindsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banding Scheme</td>
<td>How applicants are prioritised in the scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bid</td>
<td>The process of applicants saying which property they would like to live in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBL</td>
<td>Choice Based Lettings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints Procedure</td>
<td>The procedure followed to make a complaint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council</td>
<td>City of Lincoln Council, North Kesteven District Council or West Lindsey District Council being the Local Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td>People who can be reasonably expected to live with you, e.g. children dependent adults, carers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Related Debt</td>
<td>Rechargeable repairs, current or former rent arrears, rent advance/deposits or homeless prevention payments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFA</td>
<td>You have no fixed accommodation and are staying between friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>A member of this Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership</td>
<td>Organisations listed at Section 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>The Choice Based Lettings Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>The method of applying for housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration Form</td>
<td>The form which must be completed to apply for housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repayment Agreement</td>
<td>An agreement made between the Partners and the applicant to repay any housing related debt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSL</td>
<td>Registered Social Landlords, these are landlords that provide social housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rough Sleepers</td>
<td>Sleeping rough on the streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Standards</td>
<td>The service standards set out at Section XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>Other agencies/organisation with an interest or involvement with the scheme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PARTNER PROFILE AND STOCK SUMMARY

CITY OF LINCOLN COUNCIL
Profile:

Stock Summary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bedsit</th>
<th>Flats</th>
<th>Maisonette</th>
<th>Houses</th>
<th>Bungalows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>2600</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>3156</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>3655</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NORTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL
Profile: The District Council provides a comprehensive housing service to tenants and members of the public. The Housing and Property Services are responsible for all aspects of managing the Council’s 3811 units of housing stock including lettings, rent collection, repairs & estate management in general. In addition it provides housing advice, homeless, housing register and shared ownership services to all clients regardless of tenure.

Stock Summary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bedsit</th>
<th>Flats</th>
<th>Maisonette</th>
<th>Houses</th>
<th>Bungalows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1761</td>
<td>1621</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL
Profile:

ACIS GROUP
Profile:

Stock Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bedsit</th>
<th>Flats</th>
<th>Maisonette</th>
<th>Houses</th>
<th>Bungalows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CENTRAL LINCS SCHEME - BANDING SUMMARY

### EMERGENCY
8 week priority & ability to bid for all vacancies

Applicants with an urgent and immediate need to move required, examples
- Full Housing Duty Accepted, current property overcrowded and or medical problems
- Urgent hospital discharge where current property is completely unsuitable

### GOLD

Applicants with high housing needs requiring imminent move to more suitable property.
- Homeless Households – who are unintentionally homeless and in priority need
- High Medical Need to move
- High Welfare Need to move
- High Financial Need to move
- High Level of Disrepair

### SILVER

Applicants with medium housing needs requiring move to more suitable property.
- Homeless Households – who are unintentionally homeless but not in priority need
- Households threatened with homelessness and likely to be priority need if homeless
- Medium Medical Need to move
- Medium Welfare Need to move
- Medium Financial Need to move
- Medium Level of Disrepair
- Applicant(s) with “Gold” housing needs but who have deliberately worsened their circumstances
- Applicant(s) with “Gold” housing needs but with financial resources to resolve

### BRONZE

Applicants with identified need to move to more suitable property.
- Homeless Households – who are homeless and in priority need but intentionally homeless
- Low Medical Need to move
- Low Welfare Need to move
- Low Financial Need to move
- Low Level of Disrepair
- Applicant(s) with “Silver” housing needs but who have deliberately worsened their circumstances
- Applicant(s) with “Silver” housing needs but with financial resources to resolve

### COPPER

Applicants with no identified need to move to more suitable property.
- Applicant(s) that are financial able to resolve their own housing needs
- Applicant(s) that are adequately housed but expressing desire to move or preference for social housing
- Applicant(s) with “Bronze” housing needs but who have deliberately worsened their circumstances
- Applicant(s) with “Bronze” housing needs but with financial resources to resolve
## DETAIL OF BANDINGS

### 1 EMERGENCY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REF</th>
<th>BAND CRITERIA</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT/EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Homeless households – full housing duty accepted, with additional multiple needs ie: in overcrowded TA &amp; unsuitable on medical grds</td>
<td>Homeless Decision Letter with other supporting evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Urgent hospital discharge where current property is completely unsuitable</td>
<td>Occupational Therapist assessment and recommendation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Other exceptional cases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2 GOLD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REF</th>
<th>BAND CRITERIA</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT/EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Homeless Households - Accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need</td>
<td>Homeless Decision Letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Enduring Rough Sleepers</td>
<td>Verification to be agreed together with accepted support package from relevant agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>High Medical Needs</td>
<td>Partnership Medical Assessor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>High Welfare Needs</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team Assessment taking into account level of support by relevant agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>High Financial Difficulties - Experiencing significant financial difficulties that could be resolved through move to alternative accommodation.</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team - Financial Assessment of income and essential expenditure - Applicant will be required to provide documents to confirm income and expenditure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Approved ADHAC Cases</td>
<td>Determination from ADHAC Housing Solutions Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Applicants who have succeeded to a tenancy but current property is not suitable</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with Statutory Overcrowding</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Applicants lacking 2 or more bedrooms</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team - Evidence of Current Acomm - Evidence of household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>High Level of Disrepair</td>
<td>Private Sector Renewal Team - Copy of Prohibition Notice or Compulsory Purchase Order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>Applicants with a combination of 2 Silver Band Needs</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3  SILVER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REF</th>
<th>BAND CRITERIA</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT/EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Homeless Households – likely to be assessed as unintentionally homeless but not in priority need</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team - outcome of options interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Households threatened with Homelessness within 12 weeks through no fault of their own with no legal redress and likely to be priority need if actually homeless. Applicants will have to participate in a housing options interview with partner Housing Authority.</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team To determine likely to be in priority need and unlikely to be resolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Medium Medical Needs</td>
<td>Partnership Medical Assessor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Medium Welfare Needs</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team - Applicant will be required to provide evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Moderate Financial Difficulties - Experiencing financial difficulties that could be resolved through move to alternative accommodation</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team - Financial Assessment of income and essential expenditure - Applicant will be required to provide documents to confirm income and expenditure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with dependant children lacking access to essential facilities, or sharing facilities with a household not moving with applicant</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team Homevisit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Tenants of partnership Council/RSL accommodation under-occupying by 2 or more bedrooms and prepared to move to smaller accommodation leaving vacant possession of property</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Applicants currently occupying supported accommodation that is no longer required due to ability to maintain more independent accommodation</td>
<td>Confirmation from support agency and appropriate referral Housing Solutions Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>Applicants with a combination of 3 Bronze Band Needs</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>Applicant(s) lack 1 bedroom</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team - Evidence of Current Acomm - Evidence of household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>Medium Level of Disrepair</td>
<td>Private Sector Renewal Team - Copy of inspection/assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with “Gold” housing needs but who have deliberately worsened their circumstances, time limited award (6 months)</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with &quot;Gold&quot; housing needs but with financial resources to resolve their housing difficulties</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 4 BRONZE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REF</th>
<th>BAND CRITERIA</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT/ EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Homeless Households - Accepted as homeless and in priority need but intentionally homeless</td>
<td>Homeless Decision Letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Threatened with Homelessness within 12 weeks through no fault of their own with no legal redress. Applicants will have to participate in a housing options interview</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team to determine unlikely to be in priority need and unlikely to be resolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Low Medical Needs</td>
<td>Partnership Medical Assessor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Low Welfare Needs</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team - Applicant will be required to provide evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Low Financial Difficulties - Experiencing financial difficulties that could be resolved through move to alternative accommodation</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team - Financial Assessment of income and essential expenditure - Applicant will be required to provide documents to confirm income and expenditure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with NO dependant children lacking access to essential facilities, or sharing facilities with a household not moving with applicant</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team - Homevisit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Tenants of partnership Council/RSL accommodation under-occupying by 1 bedroom and prepared to move to smaller accommodation leaving vacant possession of property</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Low Level of Disrepair</td>
<td>Private Sector Renewal Team - Copy of inspection/assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with “Silver” housing needs but who have deliberately worsened their circumstances, time limited award (6 months)</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with “Silver” housing needs but with financial resources to resolve their housing difficulties</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 5 COPPER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REF</th>
<th>BAND CRITERIA</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT/ EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Applicant(s) adequately housed but expressing desire to move or for social housing</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Applicant(s) that are financial able to resolve their own housing needs</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team - Financial Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with “Bronze” housing needs but who have deliberately worsened their circumstances, time limited award (6 months)</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with “Bronze” housing needs but with financial resources to resolve their housing difficulties</td>
<td>Housing Solutions Team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### MEDICAL NEEDS
- Current accommodation has a detrimental effect on health of applicant(s) or member of their household. Only awarded by Partnership Medical Advisor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>Severe physical condition preventing applicants access to essential facilities situated on another level ie: bathing, toilet or appropriate sleeping facilities upstairs. Mental Health significantly exacerbated by current accommodation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>Severe physical condition restricting applicants mobility around their home but essential facilities situated on same level. Moderate physical disability restricting applicant(s) access to essential facilities situated on another level. Mental health moderately exacerbated by current accommodation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>Physical condition affecting general mobility around home. Mental health affected by current accommodation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### WELFARE NEEDS
- Support, lack of facilities/transport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>Significant impact on behavioural needs of child(ren). Established family forced to live separately due to housing conditions (previously having lived together as a household).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>Provide/Receive Support from family – high level support required and having to travel between 10 and 50 miles. Applicants living separately wishing to live together but unable to do so due to housing conditions (previously have not lived together as a household). No local shops or facilities. Does not have own transport and no accessible public transport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>Provide/Receive Support – low level of support required and having to travel between 10 and 50 miles. No local shops or facilities. Has limited access to public transport and has no use of own transport during the day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FINANCIAL NEEDS
- Current accommodation is causing financial difficulties

1) If an applicant is entitled to receive full HB/LHA but has to pay a top up charge award:
2) Where they have a shortfall in their income and they cannot cover essential expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>Has to top up £41 plus, per calendar month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>Has to top up £21 to £40 per calendar month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>Has to top up £5 to £20 per calendar month.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DISREPAIR
- Current accommodation in a state of disrepair, not applicable if applicant(s) have failed to satisfactorily maintain their home, caused the disrepair or have the financial means to resolve the disrepair, only awaited following inspection and assessment by appropriate Partner’s Private Sector Team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>Compulsory Purchase Order. Prohibition Notice. HHSRS Category 1 hazard (therefore property not decent).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>Non-decent home – bathroom &amp; kitchen not reasonably modern.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When allocating property, consideration is given to making the best use of the housing stock, the general availability of the property type, local conditions and the applicant(s) urgency for re-housing. It is important that applicants check each advert for individual properties for household eligibility before making a bid. The Partnership will not allow any offer of tenancy to applicant(s) that will lead to statutory overcrowding upon the creation of a tenancy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROPERTY SIZE</th>
<th>HOUSEHOLD COMBINATION CONSIDER FOR AN OFFER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bed-sitter</td>
<td>Single person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bed flat</td>
<td>Single person or couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bed flat</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with one child, or 2 children of same sex, or children of opposite sex under the age of 7yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bed maisonette</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with a proven medical need for a carer to sleep over on regular basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bed flat</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with up to 4 children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bed maisonette</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with up to 4 children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bed house</td>
<td>Single person or couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 bed house</td>
<td>Applicant(s) or couple with one child, or 2 children of the same sex, or 2 children of opposite sex under the age of 7yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 bed house</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with 2 or more children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 bed house</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with 3 or more children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 bed bungalow</td>
<td>Applicant(s) with medical need for ground floor accommodation. (For designated sheltered schemes applicants must require supported accommodation and normally over 60 years of age).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2 bed bungalow | Applicant(s) with a medical need for ground floor accommodation. (For designated sheltered schemes applicants must require supported accommodation and normally over 60 years of age). Examples: 
  - A medical need for a carer to sleep over on a regular basis. 
  - Couple. 
  - Applicant or couple, with another resident family member residing with them - E.g. son, daughter, brother, sister, parent. |
| 3 bed bungalow | Applicants with a medical need for ground floor accommodation. Normally, families with 2 or more children. |
| Specially adapted properties | E.g. dwelling with a stair lift, level floor showers, wheelchair access. Households with a proven need for the particular adaptation, having regard to the usual household letting criteria. |
Appendix E

Behaviour that could be regarded as unacceptable

Where the partnership is satisfied that an applicant (or member of the applicant’s household) is guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant, they may consider grounds that would have entitled a housing authority to an outright Possession Order under s.84 of the Housing Act 1985.

These include:
1. Serious rent arrears;
2. Breach of tenancy conditions;
3. Conduct causing or likely to cause a nuisance, annoyance or is anti-social to persons in the locality;
4. Conviction for using the property for an immoral or illegal purpose;
5. Conviction for an arrestable offence committed in the property or in the locality of the property;
6. Under-occupation of the property following the breakdown of a relationship, due to violence or threats of violence;
7. Deterioration in the condition of the property;
8. A false statement that induced the landlord to grant the tenancy;
9. The charging of or paying a premium on an exchange of a tenancy;
10. Inappropriate conduct in respect of a property occupied as an employee of the Council.
1. **INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND**

1.1 A secure tenancy can pass to another person (succession) who meets the requirements set out in Section 87 of the Housing Act 1985. Similarly, section 17 of the Housing Act 1988 sets out the rights of succession relating to Assured Tenancies.

1.2 The purpose of this policy is to set out who is able to succeed to an assured tenancy and how we reach this decision. It also specifies how customers who do not have the right to succeed should be dealt with. It is recognised that this issue can be quite complicated and involves customers at what is often a difficult time following the death of a relative. The policy therefore reinforces the need for staff to act in a sensitive and understanding way with customers at all times.

2. **RELEVANT LEGISLATION & REGULATION**

2.1 **Housing Act 1985 section 87 states that:**

A person is qualified to succeed the tenant under a secure tenancy if he occupies the dwelling-house as his only or principal home at the time of the tenant's death and either

a) he is the tenant's spouse, or;

b) he is another member of the tenant’s family and has resided with the tenant throughout the period of twelve months ending with the tenant’s death.

Unless, in either case, the tenant was himself a successor as defined in section 88.

2.2 **Housing Act 1988 section 17 states that:**

This gives a spouse the same rights to succeed as with a secure tenancy.

2.3 **The Housing Corporation guidance requires that:**

Registered social landlords are required to grant full assured tenants the same contractual rights as those held by secure tenants. They also have the discretion to grant a tenancy succession to another member of the household, such as a carer. These contractual rights are known as non-statutory successions.

2.4 **The Civil Partnerships Act 2004 has subsequently amended the law on succession.**

Same sex partners who have registered their relationship as required by the Civil Partnerships Act 2004 now have the same rights as spouses.
3. **SUCCESSION RIGHTS**

3.1 Where a joint tenancy exists and one tenant dies, the remaining tenant takes over the existing assured tenancy. This now becomes a sole tenancy and no further succession can take place.

3.2 Where a sole tenancy exists and the tenant dies, a spouse will succeed to the assured tenancy, if there has been no previous succession and the spouse occupied the property as his or her only, or principal home, at the time of the tenant’s death.

3.3 A non-statutory succession *may* be granted in the following circumstances:

   (1) Where a family member of a deceased tenant, who was a sole tenant and not a successor, occupied the property as his or her only, or principal home, continuously for a period of twelve months immediately prior to the tenant’s death. (Section 113 of the Housing Act 1985 sets out who is considered to be a family member).

   (2) Where a member of the household of a deceased tenant, who was a sole tenant and not a successor, occupied the property as his or her only, or principal home, continuously for a period of five years immediately prior to the tenant’s death. Such household members must have been providing essential care and support to the deceased tenant throughout this time.

3.5 The decision to grant a non-statutory succession to an assured tenancy for applicants who fall into one of the above categories will be based on a comprehensive assessment of the applicants’ housing needs in order to establish a clear understanding of the ties they have to their existing accommodation. This will include consideration of:

   - Length of residence
   - Medical circumstances
   - Employment
   - Ability to secure alternative accommodation
   - Social needs
   - Suitability of the property for their needs
   - Mobility

3.6 The decision to grant a non-statutory succession of an assured tenancy of the same property, or alternative suitable accommodation will be based on the factors in paragraph 3.5 above and the specific characteristics of the property they currently occupy. This includes the property type, size, location and any specific features, such as disabled adaptations.

3.7 If an offer of suitable alternative accommodation is refused the applicant will be interviewed to discuss their reasons for not accepting the property. If the property is still considered to have been suitable the Company will require the applicant to leave the property. However, sympathetic consideration of the applicant’s needs
and circumstances will be given, as well as advice on options available to the applicant. Depending on the assessment of the applicant’s needs, the applicant may be allowed to remain in the property for six months on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. During this time they would be eligible to be included on the Housing Register and considered for other properties that became available. In such cases they would then be given twenty-eight days notice. However applicants would be given full advice on their rights, including the fact that they would not have to leave after 28 days and that a court order would be required before they physically had to leave the property.

3.8 If an applicant did not leave the property after twenty-eight days the Company would commence possession proceedings under Ground 7 of the Housing Act 1988 to protect the Company’s interests.

3.9 The Company will look sympathetically at any request to extend any short term tenancy that has been given beyond the fixed term where the applicant has been actively seeking to find alternative accommodation and is being flexible about their housing requirements.

3.10 A new assured tenancy may be given where there is no right to succession in the following circumstances:

Where a family member of a deceased tenant, who was a sole tenant and a successor, occupied the property as his or her only, or principal home, continuously for a period of twelve months immediately prior to the tenant’s death. It is likely that this will mostly involve non-dependant children who have either always lived at home with their parents or returned home.

3.11 The decision to offer a new assured tenancy of the same property or alternative suitable accommodation would be based on the criteria set out in paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6. If an offer of suitable alternative accommodation is refused the applicant will be dealt with as set out in paragraphs 3.7 to 3.9.

3.12 Issuing a new assured tenancy of the same property would create further succession rights to the property.

3.13 Where the applicant has lived in the property continuously for less than twelve months prior to the tenant’s death, there is no right to succession. Staff will determine if the applicant has alternative accommodation, which is available and reasonable for them to occupy. If not, the applicant will be given advice about their housing options and will be visited to make a homelessness application, which will be fully investigated. If it is decided that a duty is owed, on behalf of West Lindsey District Council, to provide interim accommodation staff will decide whether to use the existing property or alternative accommodation.

3.14 If a duty to house is not owed the applicant would be served with a twenty-eight day Notice having had full regard to the personal circumstances and housing needs of the applicant. If the applicant fails to leave the property after twenty-eight days the Company may commence possession proceedings under Ground 7 of the
Housing Act 1988. The applicant will be given full advice on housing options available through Acis and other organisations and attempts to secure alternative accommodation will be made. Advice in respect of legal entitlements as set out in paragraph 3.7 will be provided. Whilst the applicant has no right to succeed, and no contractual obligation to pay rent exists, the Company is at risk of losing rental income for the property.

3.15 Every effort will be made to secure alternative accommodation for applicants who can’t remain in the existing property. Staff will also give careful consideration to and be sympathetic to any request to delay possession action because of an applicant’s personal circumstances.

4.0 APPEALS

4.1 If an applicant does not agree with a decision that has been made about the right to succeed they are able to ask for this to be re-considered. Any appeal should be made within ten working days of the original decision being received by the applicant, in writing, and setting out the grounds for the appeal.

4.2 The appeal will be considered by XXXX

4.3 The appeal decision will be made within fourteen working days of receiving the appeal documentation and will be given, in writing, to the applicant within five working days, setting out the reasons for the decision in full.

4.4 If an applicant wishes to appeal against the decision of the Panel, a request to the Housing Director, in writing, setting out the grounds on which the decision is being appealed, should be sent within five working days of the Panel decision being received.
PARTER CONTACTS FOR COMPLAINTS

ACIS
Post:  
Email:  
Tel:  

City of Lincoln Council
Post:  
Email:  
Tel:  

North Kesteven District Council
Post:  Complaints Officer at FREEPOST NKDC  
Email:  Complaints@n-kesteven.gov.uk  
Tel:  01529 414155 or 01522 699699  

West Lindsey District Council
Post:  
Email:  
Tel:  