

## Appendix A

# Lincs Homefinder

## Lettings Policy

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<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
1.1	<b>The lettings policy</b>
1.1.1	The lettings policy was agreed by the Council's Executive Committee on 23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2020 and implemented from 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2020.
1.1.2	The lettings policy states how: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lincs Homefinder operates</li> <li>• the Council assesses the housing needs of applicants</li> <li>• the Council allocates its properties</li> <li>• the Council nominates applicants to Registered Providers</li> </ul>
1.1.3	All allocations of Council homes and nominations to Registered Providers will be made in accordance with the lettings policy.
1.1.4	The lettings policy also links to the Council's Tenancy Strategy, Tenancy Policy, Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy.
1.2	<b>Legislative and policy framework</b>
1.2.1	This is the allocation scheme, as required by the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2012, Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. It sets out the framework within which the City of Lincoln Council will operate in the assessment of housing need on the housing register and the letting of social and affordable rented properties.
1.2.2	The principles set out in this policy are not absolute rules and all references to statutory legislation are not to be used as substitutes for the detail within the original.
1.2.3	The lettings policy is to be reviewed with the introduction of any new or amended legislation or new working arrangements within the Council. Any such reviews will be subject to the Council's constitution.
1.3	<b>Statement of choice</b>
1.3.1	The Council is fully committed to operating a choice based lettings scheme called Lincs Homefinder which enables applicants to play an active role in choosing where they live, whilst accommodating those in the greatest housing need.
1.4	<b>Equal Opportunities</b>
1.4.1	The Council is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity for all existing and potential applicants. No one will be treated unfairly due to age, gender, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, transsexuality, marital or partnership status, or being pregnant/on maternity leave. This

	list is not intended to be exhaustive but indicative of the Council's intention and commitment to ensuring equality.
1.5	<b>Data Protection, Confidentiality and Sharing Information</b>
1.5.1	The Council is what is known as a 'Controller' of the data you provide and is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office. The Council takes your privacy seriously and will not use the information you give for any purposes other than to administer your application, unless the law allows this.
1.5.2	<p>If you provide your personal information on the online application, you are consenting to the Council using this and any other information you provide as proof of your application, to process and consider your application. We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep your information accurate and up to date, with your assistance</li> <li>• Retain your information only for as long as necessary (minimum of 6 years from the end of your tenancy/application and longer in certain circumstances)</li> <li>• Store your information securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 at a level appropriate for its sensitivity. For further information see the Council's Data Protection Policy.</li> </ul>
1.5.3	We will not share your personal information with third parties without your consent, unless they are processing your information on our behalf or because the law allows this, for example to check the information provided by you or about you. This includes any sensitive personal information you provide for example regarding you or your family's health, although only where it is necessary.
1.5.4	We are also under a duty to protect the public funds we administer, and to this end may use the information you have provided for the prevention and detection of fraud. We may also share this information with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds for these purposes. The third parties may include but are not limited to, passing your information and receiving information about you, with the agencies/services listed in the Statement and Declaration on the application form.
1.5.5	If after providing consent for us to process your personal information for this purpose, you decide to withdraw your consent, then you must contact us immediately to confirm this. However, the consequences of this will be that your application will not be considered. We may also have already passed on your information, as the law allows, to other departments within the Council and other organisations.
1.5.6	If you want to know more about the information we hold about you and how we process this or have a complaint regarding the way we have handled your personal information please ask for the Data Protection Officer at the Council. If you however remain unhappy, then you have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner at: Information

	Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Telephone:01625 545 700. Website : <a href="http://www.ico.org.uk">www.ico.org.uk</a>
2.	<b>Lincs Homefinder</b>
2.1	<b>Aims and objectives of the lettings policy</b>
2.1.1	<p>The main objectives of this policy are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a fair, open and accountable framework with equality of access</li> <li>• Prevent homelessness and reduce the use of temporary accommodation</li> <li>• Ensure freely available and accessible advice and assistance, to ensure applicants' understanding and participation</li> <li>• Take account of the relevant legislation, statutory regulations and guidance</li> <li>• Reflect the Council's tenancy policies and strategies</li> <li>• Have due regard to the Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy</li> <li>• To assist households with a need to remain in, or move to a particular area of the city</li> <li>• To ensure effective use of social housing stock by reducing under occupation of Council accommodation</li> <li>• Reducing void times by advertising properties while on notice</li> <li>• To increase the supply of properties by advertising and nominating applicants for properties for Registered Providers and Supported Housing providers</li> <li>• To encourage customers to consider a variety of housing options by providing information on alternative solutions</li> <li>• To ensure the lettings process is transparent by making lettings in accordance with this policy</li> <li>• To ensure that customers are not treated unfairly on the basis of their age, gender, disability, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, transsexuality, marital or partnership status or being pregnant/on maternity leave.</li> </ul>
2.2	<b>Partnerships with Registered Providers and Private Landlords</b>
2.2.1	<p>Some Registered Providers and Private Landlords that manage accommodation within Lincoln are expected to request nominations for a proportion of the properties that they allocate to their tenants. The following lettings made are considered to be nominations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers from any band of Lincs Homefinder</li> <li>• Customers from a direct letting category</li> <li>• Any other groups as agreed between the Council and the Registered Provider or the Private Landlord.</li> </ul>
2.3	<b>Joining the housing register</b>
2.3.1	All customers must be registered on the Lincs Homefinder system before they will be considered for a Council property or a nomination to a

	Registered Provider. All customers should complete the online application to join the housing register.
2.3.2	The information provided on the application will be used by the Council to determine the size and type of property that the applicant requires and whether any further housing needs assessments are required.
2.3.3	The Council will only usually accept applications from customers and any other people who normally reside with them as a member of their family, or any other person that may be reasonably expected to reside with them.
2.3.4	An applicant can only be registered as the main or a joint applicant or a member of the household to be rehoused on one active housing application. Exceptions to this must be authorised by a senior manager. An example of an exception that will be considered is if there is shared care or access arrangements for children.
2.3.5	Any offer of housing made to City of Lincoln Council staff, elected members or staff working for or board members of a Registered Provider must be approved by a senior manager. This also applies to relatives and household members of these groups.
2.4	<b>Verifying information received on the housing application</b>
2.4.1	Where a housing application is completed with insufficient supporting information to enable the Council to process it the application will not be accepted. A list of acceptable required documents will be provided (see Appendix B). Without this information an application will not be processed.
2.4.2	For any application which includes someone from abroad, proof of identification, nationality and immigration status will be required. Verification may be sought from the Immigration Services to safeguard the use and allocation of public funds.
2.4.3	Once all information has been received and the assessment of the application is complete the main applicant will be sent an acknowledgement advising them of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their application reference number</li> <li>• The size of property they are entitled to</li> <li>• The housing need band that their application has been placed in</li> <li>• The band date</li> </ul>
2.5	<b>Keeping the housing register up to date</b>
2.5.1	The Council will update the housing register where appropriate, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the customer informs the Council of a change in their circumstances</li> <li>• Following periodic reviews</li> <li>• As a result of receiving no response to contact, for example to an offer of accommodation</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When updating information on the housing register, for example if during a data review it is noted that there are duplicate applications on the system</li> </ul>
2.6	<b>Dating of Application</b>
2.6.1	The initial registration date of an application will be the date the application is fully completed and submitted online. All relevant documentations requested should be provided within 14 days of initial contact. Failure to provide relevant documentation may result in a late registration date or cancellation of an application.
2.6.2	<p>The following explains how effective band dates will be awarded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>New application</b> – the effective date will be the same as the applicants registration date. Assuming all required documents are received within 14 days, if not, then the date will be when all required documents are actually received.</li> <li><b>Change of circumstances which results in a higher band assessment</b> – the effective date will be the date the applicant provides satisfactory evidence of the change of circumstances.</li> <li><b>Change of circumstances which results in a lower band assessment</b> – the effective date will revert back to the registration date in use.</li> <li><b>Homelessness applications</b> – the effective date will be the date the homeless duty (prevention duty, relief duty or full duty) has been accepted and notified to the applicant.</li> <li><b>Refusal of reasonable offers</b> – the Council reserves the right to amend the effective date to the date of the second refusal of a reasonable offer of accommodation.</li> </ul>
2.6.3	<p>The exceptions to this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Armed forces personnel leaving the services who will have their priority award backdated to the date on their Cessation of Occupation Certificate</li> <li>Care leavers – if it is the care leaver’s initial approach for rehousing their date will be backdated to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday</li> </ul>
2.7	<b>Cancellation of Application</b>
2.7.1	<p>The Council reserves the right to cancel a customer’s application from the register:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On the request of the customer</li> <li>If a customer does not meet the qualification criteria to be a tenant</li> <li>If the applicant is under 18 years old (unless permission has been granted by a senior manager)</li> <li>Where the customer has more than one application registered or appears on more than one application</li> <li>Where a reply to any application reminder or request is not received within the specified time</li> <li>If any correspondence is returned by the Post Office as undelivered</li> <li>When the customer has been rehoused by the Council or a Registered Provider, including shared ownership schemes</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If they complete a mutual exchange</li> <li>• Where a Council tenant completes the purchase of their home through the Council's right to buy scheme</li> <li>• When the Council is notified that a customer is deceased or has moved in to permanent residential care.</li> </ul>
2.8	<b>Suspension and cancellation of applications</b>
2.8.1	<p>We may suspend a housing application if there is good reason to do so, examples of this may be:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant has been asked, in writing, by telephone or by email for key information in relation to their application and we are waiting for a appropriate response</li> <li>• We have asked a support agency or support worker to provide additional key information about a household and are waiting for a reply from them.</li> <li>• If we are unable to contact an applicant following several attempts</li> <li>• Whist awaiting response to an annual review request</li> <li>• Where required, an applicant refused a home visit</li> </ul>
2.8.2	<p>The Council will contact the customer using the last known contact details they were provided with and inform the applicant that their application has been cancelled. In the event of a customer's death the Council will cancel the application after receiving written confirmation from the Registrar, the deceased applicant's executor, personal representative or next of kin.</p>
2.8.3	<p>Should a customer subsequently wish to re-join the register they will be required to complete a new application which will be processed based on their current circumstances and with the subsequent registration date.</p>
2.8.4	<p>If a customer's housing application was cancelled within 14 days of the date on their application the date will be backdated to that of the original application. Where the housing application was cancelled over 14 days after the date of registration it will not be backdated unless there are exceptional circumstances.</p>
2.9	<b>False statements and withholding information</b>
2.9.1	<p>It is an offence for anyone to knowingly or recklessly make a statement that is materially false, or to deliberately withhold information which the Council reasonably requires them to give, or fails to notify the Council of changes regarding their housing circumstances.</p>
2.9.2	<p>The City of Lincoln Council takes fraud seriously, including cases of people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying to the Council as homeless when they already have somewhere to live</li> <li>• Applying for council housing using false information or identity</li> <li>• Subletting or not living at their Council property, where this contravenes the tenancy agreement</li> </ul>

2.9.3	The Council will take legal action against customers who give false information or withhold information regarding their housing application which may include criminal prosecution under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013. If the customer has been allocated a property in these circumstances then the Council or other landlord may take court action to evict the customer.
3.	<b>Scope of the lettings policy</b>
3.1	<b>Definition of a let</b>
3.1.1	All lettings within Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 will be made as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An introductory tenancy</li> <li>• A secure tenancy</li> <li>• A fixed term tenancy</li> <li>• A temporary licence</li> <li>• A nomination to a Registered Provider</li> </ul> <p>Lettings will be made in accordance with the relevant legislation.</p>
3.1.2	The Council will normally grant an introductory or a secure tenancy. All new tenants will be introductory tenants unless they have transferred from another secure tenancy held with the City of Lincoln Council, another Local Authority or are a transferring tenant of a Housing Association.
3.1.3	Where more than one adult applies for housing together they can normally apply as joint tenants. Joint tenancies will only be granted where both the main and joint applicants are eligible and qualifying.
3.1.4	The housing register will include customers who may be eligible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service tenancies for employees of the Council</li> <li>• Non-secure Council tenancies created by the Housing Act 1985</li> </ul>
3.2	<b>Local lettings policies</b>
3.2.1	The Council may operate local lettings policies to enhance the sustainability of defined communities or to allocate a proportion of new build properties to existing tenants. Where a local lettings policy operates preference for offers of accommodation may be given to particular applicant groups outside of the reasonable preference categories. Local lettings policies will be approved by the Council for particular properties or groups of properties and will be reviewed regularly.
3.2.2	Overall, preference for allocations will be given to applicants using the priority banding system and local lettings policies will not discriminate unjustifiably, directly or indirectly, on equality grounds.
3.2.4	Should a property be subject to a local lettings policy the criteria will be clearly indicated when the property is being advertised through the choice based lettings scheme.



3.3	<b>Council tenancies granted outside of Part 6 of the Housing Act</b>
3.3.1	A customer may take over a tenancy outside of Part 6 of the Housing Act which is other than through the housing register. Reasons for this include succession, assignment, mutual exchange and through tenancy management where a joint tenancy becomes a sole tenancy or a sole tenancy becomes a joint tenancy.
4.	<b>Eligibility for offers of accommodation (under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996)</b>
4.1	<b>Eligible customers</b>
4.1.1	Applicants should be aged 18 years or over.
4.1.2	Applications from the following groups will normally be considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons not subject to immigration control taking account of nationality and immigration. The main customer groups to whom properties will be let to are:</li> <li>• British nationals who are habitually resident in the Common Travel Area (CTA) is United Kingdom, Channel Islands, Isle of Man or Republic of Ireland.</li> <li>• Commonwealth citizens who have the right of abode and are habitually resident in the CTA.</li> <li>• European Economic Area (EEA) nationals who have the right to reside in the UK and are habitually resident in the CTA.</li> </ul>
4.1.3	Persons subject to immigration control who have been granted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugee status</li> <li>• Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Protection, provided they are eligible for public funds</li> <li>• 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)</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
4.1.4	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person granted refugee status when his/her request for asylum is accepted.</li> <li>• Persons granted exceptional leave to enter or remain. This will be someone who has failed in the request for asylum, but has been</li> </ul>

	<p>given leave to remain where there are compelling, compassionate circumstances.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK who are regarded as having settled status. Applicants still have to establish habitual residence.</li> </ul>
	<p>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 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 advice and assistance to resolve the issue of eligibility.</p>
4.2	<b>Ineligible applicants</b>
4.2.1	<p>Those who cannot join the choice based lettings scheme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persons who are ineligible to reside in the United Kingdom</li> <li>• Persons granted exceptional leave to enter or remain but do not have recourse to public funds.</li> </ul>
4.2.2	<p>There may be cases where an ineligible person forms part of a household with others who are eligible. It is important to note that whilst the ineligible person cannot be granted a tenancy they may be taken into account in the size of accommodation to be offered, but the tenancy will only be granted to the individual who is eligible.</p>
4.3	<b>Qualification criteria to a council tenant</b>
4.3.1	<p>When an application is registered, or while it remains on the housing register, the council may decide the customer is non-qualifying. The council will consider whether the customer or a member of his/her household, should be considered to non-qualifying on the grounds of unacceptable housing-related behaviour.</p>
4.3.2	<p>Each case will be considered on its own merits following an assessment of the circumstances of the case. This will include whether there has been any modification in the behaviour of the applicant or their household and whether there are any extenuating circumstances such as vulnerability or safeguarding issues. This improved behaviour must be demonstrated for a minimum of 6 months.</p>
4.3.3	<p>Customers will be treated as meeting the qualification criteria unless subsequently found to be non-qualifying. If the customer does not meet the criteria to be a tenant their housing application will be cancelled.</p>
4.4	<b>Non-qualifying persons</b>
4.4.1	<p>The following will normally be considered to be non-qualifying persons and therefore unable to join the choice based lettings scheme:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants who cannot evidence a local connection – see section below</li> <li>• Existing social housing tenants who have not been in their current home for 12 months</li> <li>• Applicants that have purchased property via a Council’s Right to Buy scheme in the last 5 years</li> <li>• Applicants that have benefited from either a disabled facilities grant/adaption or renovation grant in the last 5 years</li> <li>• Applicants that have demonstrated serious unacceptable behaviour</li> <li>• Applicants with housing related debt</li> <li>• Applicants that have breached a condition of their current or a previous tenancy</li> <li>• Applicants or an applicant with a household member that has a history of causing anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Applicants that have used their home for illegal or immoral purposes</li> <li>• Applicants that have been convicted of an offence in the locality of their home</li> <li>• Applicants that caused their property condition to deteriorate</li> </ul> <p>Applicants that used false information to obtain a tenancy A senior manager is able to approve exceptions to the above.</p>
4.5	<b>Residency Qualification</b>
4.5.1	<p>To qualify for a local connection the applicant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be a current resident within Lincoln and have been for at least 24 months</li> <li>• Have had their current main place of permanent employment in Lincoln for a continuous period of at least 12 months. This must be the applicant’s main place of employment and not the head office of the company they are employed by.</li> <li>• Be an applicant who has been accepted under homeless duty with the City of Lincoln Council as a reciprocal arrangement with another housing organisation</li> <li>• Be a member of HM Armed Forces through Section 315 of the Housing and Regeneration Act (2008) who have established a local connection with the city during their service or before they joined their service</li> <li>• Be a refugee who have been granted leave to remain and have been dispersed to Lincoln</li> <li>• Be an applicant who has been accepted from outside of the area as part of a Witness Protection recommendation</li> <li>• Be an applicant from outside of Lincoln who is a victim of domestic abuse or fleeing other violence and/or harassment and who cannot return to the area where they were living in fear of harm and a homelessness duty has been accepted</li> <li>• Be a care leaver (who has been in care with Lincolnshire County Council and qualifies for rehousing under the Lincolnshire Care Leavers agreement) applying for their first permanent accommodation following their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or six months prior to</li> </ul>

	<p>their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, in preparation for them to be awarded a tenancy on or after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be awarded a local connection in other exceptional cases and this has been authorised by a senior manager. Examples of exceptional circumstances could include:</li> <li>• Have previously lived in Lincoln for at least 24 months (whilst aged 18 or over) within the last 5 years and are returning for employment or carer obligations</li> <li>• Be an immediate family member of a current resident of Lincoln (family members are defined as parents or guardians, adult children or brothers or sisters that have lived within the city for at least five years) and wish to live in Lincoln to provide essential care</li> </ul>
4.5.2	<p>The following do not give an applicant a local connection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living in bail hostels or approved premises</li> <li>• Occupying a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan which is not placed on an official mobile home or caravan park</li> <li>• Hostel residents from outside of Lincoln who have not otherwise lived in Lincoln for a period of 24 months</li> <li>• Those residing in supported accommodation</li> <li>• Those occupying student accommodation – hall of residence and all other accommodation sourced in connection to education</li> <li>• Those residing in prison within the area</li> <li>• Those residing in hospital, in-patient or residential care settings</li> </ul> <p>Those that cannot evidence a qualifying connection</p>
4.6	<b>Existing social housing tenants</b>
4.6.1	This policy aims to promote settled and sustainable communities, therefore social housing tenants who have not been in their current home for 12 months will be considered non-qualifying and not accepted on to the scheme.
4.6.2	Any exceptional cases where an applicant's household circumstances have significantly changed and the applicant was not aware or anticipating the change prior to taking their current tenancy can be considered by a senior manager.
4.7	<b>Right to buy</b>
4.7.1	Where an applicant or member of the moving household has benefited from a Right to Buy in the last five years they are not eligible to apply for rehousing on Homefinder.
4.7.2	This will not apply in exceptional circumstances, where it is considered that a household's circumstances or housing needs have changed significantly since the completion of the purchase.
4.8	<b>Disabled Facilities/Renovation Grants and Adaptations</b>

4.8.1	Where an applicant or member of the moving household has benefited from the either a disabled facilities grant/adaption or renovation grant they will not normally be accepted onto the housing register within the first five years.
4.8.2	This will not apply in exceptional circumstances, where it is considered that a households circumstances or housing needs have changed significantly since the completion of the relevant works.
4.9	<b>Serious unacceptable behaviour</b>
4.9.1	This can relate to anti-social behaviour, criminal behaviour, nuisance, property condition and/or any significant housing related debt.
4.9.2	When deciding whether or not to allow an applicant to join the scheme or to be offered a tenancy the council are entitled to take into account relevant current and previous behaviour of the applicant and or/ members of their household.
4.9.3	It is the responsibility of an applicant to provide reasonable information to enable their application to be processed and assessed. Applications will not be registered until the council have received all the required information and are satisfied that an applicant, and their household, is eligible and a qualifying person.
4.9.4	In determining the issue it is not necessary for the applicant to have actually been a tenant of the council when the behaviour occurred. Furthermore, the behaviour is not limited to that caused by the applicant and/or their household, it extends to behaviour caused by visitors to an applicant's home for which they were responsible.
4.9.5	The following contains examples of where we may consider applicants as non-qualifying and therefore not eligible to join the scheme, due to evidence of serious unacceptable behaviour as the council may consider them unsuitable as a tenant. This includes but is not limited to: Drug dealing Serious violent or sexual offences Serious ASB Eviction from a previous council tenancy due to rent arrears or ASB
4.10	<b>Housing related debt</b>
4.10.1	Housing related debt, generally determined, but not limited to the equivalent of 8 weeks rent liability or more. The definition of housing related debt includes rent arrears owed to any landlord, the costs of repairing damage to accommodation, mortgage arrears owed to the council or any other lender, other Registered Provider's debts including Housing Benefit overpayment and rent advance or deposit payments and court costs.

4.10.2	The council expects applicants with housing related debt to either pay the debt in full or reduce the debt to less than the equivalent to 8 weeks rent liability followed by regular payments of an acceptable amount to reduce the debt for a minimum of 13 consecutive weeks and ongoing to reduce the debt. Any exception to this must be authorised by a senior manager.
4.10.3	The qualification criteria will not normally be applied on the basis of rent arrears alone where the council has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessed the customer as fleeing violence</li> <li>• Assessed the customer as needing to move urgently due to suffering severe harassment (including racial, sexual or homophobic harassment, any form of hate crime or because of their disability or age)</li> <li>• Accepted the customer for rehousing under the Witness Protection Scheme</li> </ul>
4.11	<b>Breach of tenancy condition</b>
4.11.1	Any breach of tenancy for which possession action has been or is being pursued will result in the applicant not normally qualifying for the choice based lettings scheme. If the council has evidence that the applicant is breaking their tenancy conditions the council may not offer accommodation until the breach has been remedied. This includes, but is not limited to damaging the property, making structural alterations without consent, allowing the garden to become neglected or overgrown, poor internal decoration and cleanliness standard. This also applies to applicants whose landlord is another Local Authority, Registered Provider or Private Landlord. The City of Lincoln Council may visit their tenants to inspect their property before the offer of another tenancy is made.
4.11.2	If the applicant has previously been evicted from a Registered Provider they would normally be ineligible until they have demonstrated for a period of 12 months that their behaviour has improved to a standard that would not constitute a breach of tenancy or for enforcement action to be taken against the applicant.
4.12	<b>Anti-social behaviour</b>
4.12.1	If an applicant has been subject to or is subject to an Anti-Social Behaviour Injunction,, a Criminal Behaviour Order, a Community Protection Notice, a Closure of Premises Order, or has been in breach of any of those orders, or a Possession Order or notice has been served for anti-social behaviour. For an applicant to qualify for the scheme they must demonstrate that their behaviour has improved over a period of 12 months and that they are capable of being a responsible tenant before they are able to reapply,
4.13	<b>Use of the home for illegal or immoral purposes</b>
4.13.1	If the applicant or a member of their household has a conviction for using their home for illegal or immoral purposes they will not normally qualify for

	the scheme until they can demonstrate that their behaviour has improved and that they are capable of being a responsible tenant.
4.14	<b>Convicted of an offence in the locality of their home</b>
4.14.1	If the applicant, or a member of their household has been convicted of an offence that was committed in, or in the locality of, their home, or committed elsewhere against a person with a right to reside in, or occupy housing accommodation in the locality, or was committed elsewhere against the landlord of their home, or a person employed in connection with the exercise of the housing management function and the conduct affects those functions (either directly or indirectly).
4.14.2	For the purposes of this policy the locality is defined as within the city of Lincoln or within a 3 mile radius of the boundary of the city. If the offences were committed against a landlord or member of staff that did not operate within the city of Lincoln the locality is deemed to cover the location at which the offence was committed.
4.15	<b>Property condition</b>
4.15.1	Causing the condition of the property to deteriorate by a deliberate act of neglect.
4.16	<b>Making a false statement to obtain a tenancy</b>
4.16.1	Should an applicant have been found to obtain their current or a previous tenancy using a false statement they will not normally qualify for the scheme.
4.16.2	Each case will be assessed on its own merits and any exceptions to the qualification criteria must be authorised by a senior manager.
4.16.3	If the council decides that an applicant does not meet the qualification criteria to be a tenant the customer will be notified in writing of the decision and the reasons for it.
4.16.4	The customer may request a review of the decision to find them non-qualifying to be a council tenant.
4.16.5	If the customer considers that they should no longer be regarded as non-qualifying to be a tenant, they have the right make a fresh application for rehousing, providing evidence that this is no longer the case, ie cleared arrears (even if they have not requested a review).
4.17	<b>Reduced preference to be a council tenant</b>
4.17.1	A customer's behaviour, and that of any household member, will be taken into consideration when making an offer of accommodation. If the

	behaviour is not deemed to be serious enough to justify a decision to treat the customer as non-qualifying, a customer in the Gold or Silver bands may be given less preference in the allocation of a property than a customer in the same band as them without a record of such behaviour.
4.17.2	Each case will be considered on its own merits following an assessment of the circumstances. This assessment will consider whether there has been a modification in their behaviour and whether there are any exceptional circumstances such as vulnerability or safeguarding issues.
4.17.4	Customers who have deliberately worsened their circumstances may also have their priority reduced. For example, if a homeless applicant refuses a suitable offer of accommodation their banding may be reduced to Bronze Band for a period of 6 months from the date of the most recent unreasonable refusal.
4.17.5	If the council decides to reduce a customer's priority the customer will be notified in writing of the decision and the reasons for it. The customer may request a review of the decision to reduce their preference - see procedure below.
4.17.6	Once the Authority is satisfied that the behaviour is remedied or improved to a satisfactory standard the reduction in preference will be removed. An example would be an applicant reducing their rent arrears to below 8 weeks or demonstrating their behaviour has improved for a 12 month period.  This decision must be authorised by a senior manager.
4.18	<b>Exceptional circumstances</b>
4.18.1	The Authority will consider any request from households with exceptional circumstances who would not normally qualify for housing. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis.
5.	<b>Determining housing need</b>
5.1	<b>Housing needs bands</b>
5.1.1	Customer will have their housing needs categorised into one of the three bands on Lincs Homefinder to reflect the degree of housing need they have; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one</li> <li>• two</li> <li>• three</li> <li>• Transfer</li> </ul>
5.1.2	The Housing Act 1996, as amended, states that when determining priorities under the lettings policy, the council must give reasonable preference to certain categories of people. This currently includes those: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are homeless</li> <li>• Who the local authority has a duty to accommodate</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupying insanitary, overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing conditions</li> <li>• Who need to move on medical or welfare grounds</li> <li>• Who need to move to a particular locality to reduce hardship</li> </ul>
5.1.3	The Council normally assesses the customer's housing need based on their usual residence, but where the customer has a legal interest in another property, the council will consider whether the customer could reasonably be expected to move to or return to that property.
5.1.4	<p>The Government has issued statutory guidance regarding the rehousing of Armed Forces personnel. In summary, the council must give additional preference for lettings to the following groups, where they have urgent housing needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers in regular forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to their service</li> <li>• Customers who formerly served in HM regular forces</li> <li>• Customers leaving accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of their spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service</li> <li>• Customers in HM reserve forces and are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the applicant's service.</li> </ul>
5.1.5	The Council will normally prioritise Armed Forces personnel who have a connection to Lincoln ahead of those with a connection to another authority. The council may waive the local connection criteria for Armed Forces personnel in certain circumstances, for example, where the customer has links to the Lincoln area which fall short of satisfying the statutory definition, or where the customer is unable to demonstrate a connection to any other authority.
5.1.6	Where the Council has assisted a homeless household to obtain a tenancy in the private rented sector to prevent or relieve their homelessness, the applicant is able to remain on the housing register in the band (and with the application date) that they were awarded prior to securing a tenancy. This will be reviewed annually and if the applicant is assessed as having secured adequate accommodation, they may be contacted and advised that their priority is being reduced.
5.2	<b>Summary of bands on Lincs Homefinder</b>
5.3	<b>Band One</b>
	This band consists of customers requiring urgent rehousing where the council has a legal duty to consider them for accommodation.
5.3.1	<b>Homeless</b>

	<p>Where the City of Lincoln Council has accepted a duty in accordance with the Housing Act 1996, Part 7 as amended</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statutorily homeless customers that have been awarded a full duty ie eligible, homeless, in priority need, unintentionally homeless and with a local connection to Lincoln</li> <li>• Homeless applicants that are in the Relief stage and complying with their Personalised Housing Plan</li> </ul>
5.3.2	<p><b>Medical</b></p>
	<p>Where the customer or household member's medical condition is being severely affected or exacerbated by the property they currently reside in and it is not reasonably and practicably capable of being adapted. This must be verified by self-assessment and a medical professional.</p> <p>Examples include where the customer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In unable to return home from hospital or residential care because the property does not meet their medical needs (hospital discharges) and where a move to temporary accommodation would be inappropriate</li> <li>• Requires rehousing to prevent an admission to hospital, residential care or nursing home</li> <li>• Is unable to access any of the facilities in their current property</li> <li>• Has extreme difficulty mobilising within their current property</li> <li>• Has extreme difficulty accessing the property owing to steps or slopes leading to doorways</li> <li>• Requires an adapted property to meet their needs</li> <li>• Requires extra facilities on health grounds, for example a bedroom or a bathroom (see criteria for an extra bedroom)</li> <li>• Urgently requires older person's housing because of their medical history, vulnerability, being at risk in their current property and requires housing related support</li> <li>• Requires suitable adapted accommodation because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability which he or she, or a member of their household, has sustained as a result of service in the Armed Forces.</li> </ul>
5.3.3	<p><b>Housing conditions</b></p>
	<p>Where a customer, or their household, needs to move due to the condition of their property.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers whose property has been approved for clearance by a Council Executive decision, eg compulsory purchase order, prohibition order or emergency prohibition order (not due to wilful neglect/damage)</li> <li>• On referral from the council's Private Sector or Environmental Health teams where major works are required to a customer's</li> </ul>

	<p>property making it uninhabitable, eg private rented properties where there is no alternative measure to render the property habitable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On assessment of disrepair by the council the property is uninhabitable</li> <li>• Households assessed as being statutorily overcrowded in their last settled address</li> <li>• Households with dependent children who are overcrowded by two or more bedrooms.</li> </ul>
5.3.4	<b>Additional needs: General</b>
	<p>Where a customer, or a member of their household, needs to move on welfare or hardship grounds which do not fall into other categories.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers requiring rehousing due to their care or support needs where medical priority is not applicable but there is a demonstrable need to move eg to give or receive support, or to access specialised medical facilities. Approval for this must be given by a Senior Manager Customers requiring rehousing due to harassment, including racial, sexual or homophobic harassment or abuse, or other hate crimes where a need to move is agreed in conjunction with Police or Social Care eg to assist in the delivery of a care plan, witness protection, safeguarding procedures, or as a result of a Lincoln Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference</li> <li>• Customers under occupying in their current Lincoln council home where the move will achieve best use of social housing stock, leaving vacant possession</li> <li>• City of Lincoln Council service employees and service occupants required to move from service tenancies or service occupation, for example, due to retirement</li> <li>• Customers with dependent children who have moved into or are living in council high rise accommodation may be awarded this banding but only with the approval of a senior manager and/or the Tenancy Services Manager.</li> <li>• Where a need to move to prevent homelessness is agreed by the council as part of the customer's Personal Housing Plan under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018</li> <li>• Where a current tenant needs to move using a management transfer with the agreement of a senior manager</li> <li>• Where an applicant is residing in council accommodation under Use &amp; Occupation and the property is not of a suitable size for the applicant to qualify to stay there or they do not wish to stay there</li> </ul>
5.4	<b>Band Two</b>
	This band consists of those customers in non-urgent need that the council has a legal duty to consider for rehousing.
5.4.1	<b>Homeless</b>

	<p>All categories of homeless people who are not statutorily homeless.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not in priority need</li> <li>• Homeless applicants in the prevention stage and working on their Personalised Housing Plan</li> <li>• Intentionally homeless with priority need (if eligible for Homefinder)</li> </ul>
5.4.2	<p><b>Medical</b></p>
	<p>Where the customer, or household member, is experiencing difficulties in the property they reside in, and their current home is not reasonably and practicably capable of being adapted and this is verified by self-assessment and a medical professional.</p> <p>Examples include where the customer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has difficulty negotiating the stairs in the property</li> <li>• Has difficulty accessing the property owing to steps or slopes leading to doorways</li> <li>• Needs to move because the property is having a detrimental effect on their physical or mental well-being which could lead to a deterioration in their medical condition</li> <li>• Requires the facilities of older person's housing on age or individual needs for housing related support</li> <li>• Has a medical need for improved heating which cannot be secured in the current property</li> </ul>
5.4.3	<p><b>Housing Conditions</b></p>
	<p>Where a customer needs to move due to the condition of their property.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Households with dependent children who are overcrowded by one bedroom in their settled accommodation where they have permanent residency</li> <li>• Customers lacking essential services, for example, no cold running water, no inside WC or no utility connections to heat the house which cannot be rectified</li> <li>• Lacking essential facilities or sharing with a household that are not moving but have permanent residency of dependent children</li> </ul>
5.4.4	<p><b>Additional needs: general</b></p>
	<p>Where a customer, or member of the household, needs to move on welfare or hardship grounds which do not fall into the other categories.</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers requiring rehousing to recover from the effects or threats of violence or physical, emotional or sexual abuse (with evidence from relevant Agency)</li> <li>• Financial difficulties that could be alleviated by moving, but not due to own deliberate act</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Victim of neighbour nuisance with supporting evidence from the Public Protection &amp; Anti-Social Behaviour Team or Tenancy Services</li> </ul>
5.4.5	<b>Additional needs: children</b>
	<p>Where a customer needs to move because of the needs of a child in the household on welfare or hardship grounds which do not fall into the other categories.</p> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To facilitate fostering or adoption arrangements on referral from Children's Services</li> <li>To assist carers to find suitable accommodation</li> <li>Family living separately who have previously lived together but current housing circumstances do not allow</li> </ul>
5.5	<b>Band Three</b>
5.5.1	<p>This band consists of customers who can demonstrate a local connection to Lincoln and who do not meet the criteria for the Gold and Silver Bands.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers that have no assessed housing need</li> <li>Customers whose priority has been removed after they have refused two reasonable offers of accommodation</li> <li>Customers who have deliberately worsened their circumstances</li> <li>Homeless applicants that are assessed as being intentionally homeless</li> <li>Customers that are financially able to resolve their own housing situation (have savings, shares or property or are in receipt of a salary in excess of the national average salary)</li> </ul>
5.6	<b>Transfer Band</b>
5.6.1	<p>This band consists of current City of Lincoln Council tenants that wish to be rehoused into alternative council accommodation.</p> <p>The aim for this banding is to enable the council to facilitate an annually agreed percentage of transfers to aid the movement and flow of households to ensure that the housing stock is being adequately used.</p> <p>Applicants will be prioritised using the same criteria that is applied for all non-transfer applicants. This will ensure that transfer applicants that can demonstrate a higher level of housing need will be given a higher priority for rehousing.</p>

5.7	<b>Change of Circumstances</b>
5.7.1	An applicant will have their housing need reassessed following a change of circumstances but may also request that their housing need be reassessed at any time during the lifespan of their application.
5.8	<b>Deliberate worsening of circumstances and reduced preference</b>
5.8.1	<p>If an applicant has deliberately and knowingly made their housing situation worse so that they are awarded a higher housing needs band than the one that they would otherwise have been awarded, the applicant will be subject to reduced preference which will mean that those applicants will only be considered for offers of accommodation after all other applicants. These applicants will also not usually be considered for a direct offer of accommodation. This can be applied on acts or omissions by the applicant or a member of the household.</p> <p>The decision to reduce preferences will be reviewed if the applicant has a change of circumstances.</p>
5.9	<b>Permanent decants (clearance)</b>
5.9.1	Should an applicant's property be scheduled for demolition or purchase under a Housing related decision or Executive Committee decision, the council will award affected customers gold band: Housing Conditions and encourage the customers to bid for properties and also consider the customers for a direct offer of accommodation made by a direct letting.
5.10	<b>Length of time in a priority band</b>
5.10.1	<p>Applicants in bands one and two will normally be given 180 days preference for rehousing through the choice based lettings scheme. If the customer has failed to bid for a property they may lose their priority preference and be placed in Band 3.</p> <p>Where the Council has a duty to secure accommodation for a statutorily homeless applicant they will be considered for a direct offer of accommodation as soon as a suitable property has been identified.</p>
5.11	<b>Priority limit extension</b>
5.11.1	An applicant may request an extension of their priority award. All requests for extensions will be considered after the applicant has been in the priority bands for over 150 days.
5.11.2	<p>The decision on whether to extend the priority award will be determined by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there has been a change in the customer's circumstances since the priority was awarded</li> <li>• Whether the customer has been bidding for accommodation</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether the customer has any support needs relating to their rehousing</li> <li>• The number of properties being advertised that are suitable for the applicant's needs</li> <li>• The level of demand for suitable properties</li> <li>• The position for properties the applicant has expressed an interest on</li> <li>• If the customer has completed reasonable actions required by them as part of their Personal Housing Plan under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018.</li> </ul>
5.11.3	Notification of the decision of whether to extend the priority award will be sent to the customer and the customer has a right to request a review of the decision if it is not to extend their priority.
5.12	<b>Bedroom requirements</b>
5.12.1	The Council allocate their properties ensuring that the customers are considered for accommodation that is appropriate to the needs and size of their household. The number of bedrooms required is based on a calculation of how many people are to be rehoused and the ages and gender of any children.
5.12.2	<p>A separate bedroom should be available for:</p> <p>Each adult (age 18 years or over) except when living together as partners Two children, unless they are not the same gender and one is 10 years or over. In this case separate bedrooms should be available.</p> <p>In normal circumstances no more than two people will be expected to share a bedroom.</p> <p>For further information see Appendix A – Property Eligibility</p>
5.12.3	On receipt of a proof of pregnancy (a MAT B1 form or doctor's or midwife's letter) the pregnancy will be noted. Upon receipt of the birth certificate the child will be included in the bedroom calculation. For the purposes of their calculation, the child is assumed to be able to share a bedroom with adults or children up to their first birthday.
5.12.4	<p>The Council may also consider awarding an extra bedroom in certain circumstances should supporting evidence be provided.</p> <p>Examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where an applicant requires a carer (that is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and proof has been provided) to live with them or if medical equipment or adaptations require additional space</li> <li>• An applicant requiring additional space due to a medical condition</li> <li>• Where an adaptation is required and the property can be adapted</li> <li>• If a request has been submitted by Children's Services or an Occupational Therapist.</li> </ul>

5.12.5	The Council shall make a decision regarding which parent or guardian it deems has the primary care of a child. These decisions will be based on the individual merits of the case and will take into account receipt of the child benefit, court orders, percentage of time spent caring for the child, how regular and permanent the arrangement is and whether the Council already provides any accommodation for the primary carer.
5.12.6	Should a customer not have primary care of dependent children, but shares care, either as a result of an informal arrangement or a court order, the Council will consider the size and type of accommodation that is appropriate on a case by case basis.
5.12.7	In exceptional circumstances consideration may be given to permit customers to under occupy or over occupy a property. The customer must agree to this in writing and approval must be given by a senior manager.
5.12.8	In exceptional circumstances a customer may be considered for a range of property sizes to maximise their opportunity to secure suitable rehousing.
6.	<b>Choice Based Lettings</b>
6.1	<b>Property type</b>
6.1.1	The Council will allocate different property types to particular groups of customers.
6.1.2	Adapted properties are normally offered to customers requiring the adaptations, as assessed by an Occupational Therapist. The Council may advertise such properties as giving preference to applicants that require the adaptations.
6.1.3	Sheltered accommodation and older persons schemes are normally offered according to the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants in need of supported accommodation who fulfil any determined assessment criteria, this will be determined, where appropriate by a sheltered housing needs assessment, to assess individual needs and independence and the ability of the sheltered service to meet those needs</li> <li>• Applicants or their partner are 60 years or over, taking into account the requirements of the scheme and community.</li> </ul>
6.1.4	Houses and maisonettes with two or more bedrooms will normally be allocated to households with primary care of dependent children ahead of households made up of parents and guardians with access to children or households made up of adults only. Parents without primary care will normally be considered for flats. Houses and maisonettes will also be allocated to households with an appropriate medical recommendation if the property is reasonably and practicably capable of being adapted to their needs.



	Please see Appendix C – Property Eligibility for further information.
6.1.5	There may be occasions when the Council are required to apply a set of criteria when allocating a property and this is known as a sensitive letting. An example of this is bypassing an applicant during the shortlisting process if the applicant is known to be vulnerable to the behaviours of tenants already residing within the locality of the property.
6.2	<b>Properties suitable for customers with pets</b>
6.2.1	If an applicant or tenant wishes to keep a pet in a Council home they require written permission. The Council's Pet Policy contains further details.
6.3	<b>Carers, Prospective/Approved Adopters and Foster Carers</b>
6.3.1	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 Registered Providers so that appropriate accommodation can be considered. The Council will work closely with the relevant Children's Services departments, on an individual case basis to assist in meeting the needs of prospective and approved adopters and foster carers and duties under s22G of the Children Act 1989.
6.4	<b>Advertising Vacancies and Bidding</b>
6.4.1	<b>Advertising cycle</b>
6.4.2	Once applicants are registered they are able to start looking for a suitable vacancy. Vacancies will be advertised on a weekly basis from midnight on Wednesday to midnight on the following Monday (6 days). Adverts will include key property attributes, local facilities and eligibility criteria.
6.4.3	Vacancies will be advertised in the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lincs Homefinder Website</b> – <a href="http://www.lincshomefinder.co.uk">www.lincshomefinder.co.uk</a> The Council's website directs users to this website to 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.</li> <li>• <b>Reception Areas</b> – Registered Providers may advertise vacancies in their reception areas.</li> <li>• <b>Dispersed office locations</b> – the Council and Registered Providers may circulate a list of vacancies to assist with access should any applicant approach them for information.</li> </ul>
6.4.4	There are occasions when properties may not be advertised using the advertising cycle and will be allocated using a direct let process. A direct let is when an officer identifies a property as being suitable for the needs of an applicant that has a specific and urgent need for rehousing. Examples:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Council tenants requiring a transfer because they are at risk of violence</li> <li>• Current Council tenants whose homes are due to be demolished</li> <li>• Homeless applicants</li> </ul> <p>See Section 11 for additional information.</p>
6.5	<b>Withdrawing adverts</b>
6.5.1	<p>Occasionally, the Council may be required to withdraw a property advert, for instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If it becomes apparent that the property may be let through direct lets in accordance with this policy</li> <li>• 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,</li> <li>• Significantly incorrect information had been advertised in respect of the property or the applicants' eligibility for that property.</li> <li>• Where the property is required by the Council in an exceptional circumstance</li> </ul>
6.6	<b>Bidding for a vacancy</b>
6.6.1	Applicants are restricted to making 2 bids in each cycle. Where an applicant meets the property eligibility, bids can only be placed during the bidding cycle, and should be placed through the applicants individual online account by themselves or their advocates.
6.6.2	Where a vacancy has been advertised and no bids have been received, or been successful, the vacancy may be re-advertised and may be allocated on a first come first served basis subject to the usual eligibility criteria.
6.6.3	Bids for individual vacancies are ranked by banding and banding date, firstly those with a local connection to Lincoln.
7.	<b>Shortlisting and Offers</b>
7.1.1	At the end of the advertising cycle, applicants who have bid will be shortlisted according to their eligibility criteria and any local lettings or sensitive lettings criteria. Verification checks will be undertaken at this stage to ensure applicants still qualify and their circumstances have not changed.
7.1.2	Offers of Council accommodation are made on the basis of the information on the applicant's housing application and any associated assessments. It is the customer's responsibility to inform the Council of any changes in their housing circumstances.
7.1.3	Applicants will be made one offer of accommodation at any one time. Should they be made an offer they will not normally be offered other properties in the same bid cycle.

7.1.4	An offer of accommodation may be withdrawn, with the applicant's agreement or if there is a change in the applicant's circumstances that affects their application.
7.1.5	Prior to a formal offer of accommodation being made the Council may require proof of identification, eligibility or qualification to be provided. Applicants will be contacted and asked to provide the supporting evidence within a reasonable timescale.
7.1.6	<p>When signing their tenancy agreement the tenant(s) will be expected to provide proof of their identity, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised photographic identification eg passport, driving licence</li> <li>• A photograph of themselves</li> <li>• Agree to have their photograph taken by the member of staff present at the sign up.</li> </ul> <p>Photographs will only be taken with the applicant's consent but if the applicant refuses the reason for refusal will be noted and countersigned by the applicant.</p>
7.2	<b>Bypassing bids</b>
7.2.1	<p>In certain circumstances there may be exceptions to offering the applicant with the highest ranking for a property.</p> <p>Please see Appendix D for a full list of reasons for bypassing bids.</p>
7.2.2	Bids are updated to reflect the reason for being bypassed, so applicants are aware.
7.3	<b>Failure to respond to an offer</b>
7.3.1	The successful candidate will be contacted by an officer to be offered a tenancy and to arrange an accompanied viewing of the property.
7.3.2	If an applicant cannot be contacted following three attempts over different advertising cycles, their application will be cancelled. If the applicant fails to respond within 24hrs of contact regarding a specific vacancy, the Council reserves the right to move to the next eligible person on the shortlist. It is important that all applicants ensure they are contactable as their bid may be bypassed after reasonable attempts to contact them have been unsuccessful.
7.4	<b>Withdrawal of offers</b>
7.4.1	<p>In exceptional circumstances an offer may not be made or may be withdraw, this may include but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it is clear that an applicant is not capable of understanding the responsibilities associated with being a tenant or they do not understand what they are signing</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• current tenant of the property being advertised has withdrawn their notice terminating their tenancy of that property, so the property is no longer available</li> <li>• applicant has failed to respond to three contact attempts from a Partner</li> <li>• Partner or landlord believes the property is unaffordable from the onset.</li> <li>• Identifying information that affects the application</li> </ul>
7.5	<b>Tenancies</b>
7.5.1	<p>Joint tenancies will normally be offered to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married couples, civil partnerships, unmarried couples and same sex partnerships, provided that both are named on the application form, unless both parties request the tenancy to be granted in a sole name, stating their reasons</li> <li>• Adults wishing to live together as friends, if both names have been included on the application form</li> <li>• Applicants and their live-in carers, where the Council considers it to be justified.</li> </ul>
7.5.2	Joint tenancies are not usually given to a parent and adult child, unless there are formal caring responsibilities.
7.5.3	In all other circumstances sole tenancies will be offered to the eligible lead applicant. In cases relating to persons from abroad who are subject to immigration restrictions, the tenancy will only be granted to the individual who is eligible, whilst the ineligible person can still be taken into account in respect of size and type of accommodation offered.
8.	<b>Refusals of offers of tenancy</b>
8.1	Generally, if an applicant refuses two offers, they will be contacted to discuss their housing needs and circumstances. With the exception to applications assessed with Band 1 priority (excluding Accepted Homeless housing duty), the application will be reviewed after the refusal of 1 reasonable offer. Once reviewed, if it is deemed the reason for refusing the offer was unreasonable, the Council reserves the right to reduce their banding to Band 3, for a period of 6 months from the date of the most recent unreasonable refusal. Should an applicant in band 3 refuse an offer and it be considered that the refusal was unreasonable their date of registration may be amended to the date that the offer was refused.
8.2	<p>All decisions will be made on a case by case basis with the Council considering the following factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property size – based on the assessed bedroom requirements</li> <li>• Property type – based on the lettings policy criteria, medical housing or Occupational Therapist recommendation</li> <li>• Property condition – whether the property meets the required lettings standard or will meet it following repairs</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether the property has the potential to meet the applicant's needs following adaptation</li> <li>• Location of the property – whether the property is within a reasonable distance for support, schools, employment etc</li> <li>• The demand and supply of similar properties in the applicant's preferred areas</li> <li>• Whether the property was made as a direct offer.</li> </ul>
8.3	Applicants have the right to request a review of the decision to remove their priority or change their date of application following the refusal of an offer of accommodation. Statutorily homeless applicants have an additional right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation offered to discharge the Council's duty to them, regardless of whether or not they accept the offer.
8.4	An applicant failing to respond to an offer or a letter being returned as undeliverable will be considered to be a refusal of an offer. In these cases the housing application will normally be cancelled.
9.	<b>Non-Bidding</b>
9.1	All applicants will be monitored to establish if any suitable properties have been advertised. If suitable properties have been advertised the applicant may be contacted to establish why they have not bid. This will enable the Council to ascertain if any additional assistance is required to participate in the scheme. The Council reserves the right to review such applications.
10.	<b>Vacancies excluded from the scheme</b>
10.1	The Council reserves the right to exclude certain properties and housing schemes from this Scheme, but the majority of social housing vacancies in Lincoln will be advertised and let through this scheme. Examples of where this may occur include (but are not limited to) where a property is needed urgently to deal with an emergency. Specialist accommodation may also be let outside this Scheme for example extra care schemes for people with medical or support needs.
10.2	In exceptional circumstances properties may be withdrawn from an advertising cycle and those applicants who may have already expressed an interest in any such property will be notified of the reasons why if the applicant requests the information.
11.	<b>Direct lettings of City of Lincoln Council accommodation</b>
11.1	In some circumstances it may be necessary to directly match an applicant to a suitable property. This means that the applicant may not be able to bid for properties such as homeless applicants. If this applies, we will notify the applicant direct.
11.2	Applicants subject to a direct letting will normally be made one offer of suitable accommodation. If they do not accept the property the Council

	may decide to make no further offers to them, reduce their banding or discharge their homeless duty 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 of accommodation.
11.3	Properties let through direct lettings may not be advertised through this scheme, but information will normally be made available to indicate that the letting took place. This may not be done if there is good reason, such as the need to re-house someone threatened with violence.
12.	<b>Allocations to Employees and Relations</b>
12.1	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.
12.2	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 Team Leader or Senior Manager will check the processing and assessment. Prior to any offer of accommodation being made to such an applicant the Council will gain approval from a Senior Manager.
13.	<b>The Right to Review</b>
13.1	All applicants have the statutory right to request a review on certain Part 6 allocations decision and these include decisions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About the facts of the case</li> <li>• That the customer does not meet qualification thresholds or</li> <li>• That the applicant is ineligible for Council housing because of their immigration status.</li> </ul>
13.2	All correspondence to the applicant relating to their housing need award will advise them of their right to review and how to request a review.
13.3	A review must normally be requested by the applicant within 28 days of being notified of the decision.
13.4	The right to request a review is in addition to the statutory right to review for homelessness decisions (Housing Act 1996, Part 7). Customers must request a review under Part 7 within 21 calendar days of being notified of the decision. The review of the applicant's case will be considered and decided by senior managers who were not involved in the original decision.
13.5	The applicant will be notified of the review decision in writing within eight weeks of the request for the review being received (or longer if agreed in writing by both parties).

13.6	The applicant does not have the right to a review of a decision that was reached by an earlier review.
14.	<b>Role of Elected Members</b>
14.1	The Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997 prevent elected members from being part of a decision-making body or making an allocation at the time the allocation is made when either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The unit of housing accommodation concerned is situated in their electoral ward or</li> <li>• The person subject to the decision has their sole or main residence in the member's electoral ward.</li> </ul>
14.2	Where the above-mentioned circumstances do not apply the elected members involvement in allocation decisions are not prevented, nor do they prevent a ward member from seeking or providing information on a constituent's behalf.
14.3	Elected members are responsible for determining allocation policies and monitoring their implementation.
15.	<b>Compliments and complaints</b>
15.1	The City of Lincoln Council has a compliments and complaints procedure that is accessible for the public to use.
15.2	If an applicant is dissatisfied with how they have deal with, and feel they have been unfairly treated, discriminated against and/or the Council has failed to do something they should have done, then the applicant can make a complaint by contacting: <p>City of Lincoln Council  Post - City Hall, Beaumont Fee, City Hall, Lincoln, LN1 1DD  Email – <a href="mailto:housing@lincoln.gov.uk">housing@lincoln.gov.uk</a>  Telephone – 01522 881188</p> <p>The same contact details can be used for a compliment.</p>
16	<b>Ombudsman</b>
16.1	The Local Government Ombudsman is independent of all government departments, councils and politicians. The Ombudsman examine complaints without taking sides. In most cases the complainant must have pursued the matter through the Council's own complaints procedure before a complaint can be considered by the Housing Ombudsman. <p>Contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are:  Email – <a href="mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk">info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk</a>  Telephone – 0300 111 3000  Post – Housing Ombudsman Service, Exchange Tower, Harbour Exchange Square, London, E14 9GE</p>

