

Housing Lettings Policy – Summary

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Service: Allocation Team, Housing



If you need help with reading or understanding this document, please take it to the Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent or phone: 01233 331111. We will try to provide a reading service, translation or any other format you may need.

Ashford Borough Council's Housing Register

Introduction

Ashford Borough Council holds a Housing Register which is intended to be a single point of entry into Social Housing for the whole of the borough of Ashford.

This document summarises the Lettings Policy which Ashford Borough Council has adopted to let all available property that it has responsibility for. A copy of the complete Lettings Policy for Ashford Borough Council is available on-line at www.ashford.gov.uk.

Eligibility to be considered for an Allocation

1. You have a housing need as defined by these policies
2. You are aged 16 years or over (See section 9.3)
3. You must not be ineligible by virtue of s.160ZA (2) or (4) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011).
4. You must be a Qualifying Person (s.160ZA(6)(a)) as defined by this policy (see section 13.0)
5. No allocation can be made to 2 applicants jointly if either of them is ineligible by virtue of s 160ZA(1)(b)

Introduction to how the housing register works

To apply for housing, you need to submit a Choice Based Lettings Application form online at www.kenthomechoice.org.uk. Paper forms are no longer in use. All the information requested separately must be provided either online, by post or at the Civic Centre. Please don't post originals.

How we assess your application

The Lettings Policy operates with a Band system to measure the level of housing need for each application. All applicants are placed in the Homeseeker, Transfer or Homeless group. The higher the need under our policy the higher the Band. The longer the wait the higher the priority within the band. If an applicant moves up a band whilst registered their priority date changes to the date they enter it. The majority of applicants are placed with Band C.

We tell you, by letter, the Band that we have awarded and the basis for awarding it to you and try to give you an indication of how long it may take to get a property

based on regular bidding activity. If you are ineligible for the housing register or have your band downgraded we will write and explain why.

If your circumstances change, you can reapply, or if you feel that the assessment of housing need is wrong you can ask for a reassessment by way of a review..

Because of the high demand for housing, and the large numbers of applicants waiting for housing, being on the Housing Register does not guarantee an offer of accommodation.

Groups on the Housing Register

All applicants will be placed in one of three groups which record housing need.

HWL - Housing Waiting List (Homeseeker)

TRF - Transfer

HML – Homeless Group

The criteria for being placed within these groups are in the full edition of the Lettings Policy.

How we Decide which Group is Offered Each Property

Applicants place bids via Kent Homechoice or the system places their bids automatically. Please advise us if you require automated bidding. It is also mandatory for some groups on our register.

When allocating a property that does not have a specific local connection stipulation, or is not earmarked for applicants meeting special criteria (e.g. key workers or households with a need for an adapted property) a quota system will be operated.

The aim of the quota system will be to offer the properties advertised through the Choice Based Lettings system to applicants in different groups on the register, consistently with the statutory duties to high priority applicants.

HML 25% of properties to be offered to Homeless applicants

HWL 37% of properties to be offered to Housing Waiting List applicants

TRF 38% of properties to be offered to transfer applicants

Property Categories

The table below shows the size and type of property suitable for different family groups.

Property	
One bedroom flat or studio flat	Single Person or Couple (any age) including expected baby unless stated otherwise.
Flat or maisonette with two bedrooms	Family with one or two children of same sex* /2 adults who do not live as a couple e.g. parent and adult child, adult siblings, person needing care and carer. Pregnancies not included.*

Property	
Flat or maisonette with three bedrooms	Family with two, three or four children. Pregnancies not included*
House with two bedrooms	Family with one or two children of same sex. Pregnancies not included.*
House with three bedrooms	Family with two, three or four children. Pregnancies not included*
House with four or more bedrooms	Family with four or more children. Pregnancies not included*
Bungalow with one or two bedrooms, or a general needs property appointed for those over 50	Couple/Single Person (over 50). ABC tenants over 50 and under occupying may apply for two bedroom older person's accommodation if it is deemed to be affordable.
Property within a sheltered housing scheme	Couple/Single Person (over 50) Applicants may need to have a need for supported housing as determined by a Lettings Officer or Scheme Manager.
A specialised property for those with permanent physical disability	Applicants with a permanent need for this property as confirmed by a medical professional.
<p>*This applies to those who have children permanently living with them and would not normally include pregnancies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional criteria are set out in full within the Lettings policy. 	

The Next Stage

Once your application has been assessed and entered onto the Housing Register, you will receive an email or letter, normally within 6-8 weeks of receipt of your application confirming your application details.

Housing Need Bands

The following table is a description of housing needs bands applicable to all groups on the housing register and the circumstances in which they can be awarded.

Band A – Urgent housing needs

Applications from persons who meet the following criteria:

	Tick
Acute medical / welfare needs as agreed with this authority (see section 18.1 above)	
Management Transfer (section 21.0) including social tenants in Ashford under-occupying and releasing four bedroom accommodation	
Land / Rent Act - Where it is not possible to provide a permanent tenancy immediately but where subject to the Land Compensation Act 1973 or The Rent Agricultural Act 1976	

Band B – Serious housing needs

Applications from persons where none of the above in Band A applies but who meet the following criteria:

Major overcrowding - Lacking two or more bedrooms.	
Living in supported housing where support is no longer required under MOP.	
Category one hazard exists which cannot be resolved within a reasonable time. Must be confirmed by this authority	
High medical or welfare need as agreed with this authority	
Social tenants in Ashford under-occupying and releasing family size accommodation of two or three bedrooms.	
Social tenants in Kent (outside Ashford) under-occupying by two or more bedrooms.	

Band C – Reasonable preference

Applications from persons where none of the above in band A or band B applies but who meet the following criteria:

People who are Homeless.- Main Duty Accepted section 193 Housing Act 1996	
Those that have been identified as being owed a Prevention or Relief Duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996	
Sharing basic facilities (kitchen, bathroom/WC)	
Minor overcrowding - Lacking one bedroom	
Lacking Basic facilities (kitchen, bathroom, inside WC)	
Social tenant in Kent (outside Ashford) under-occupying by one bedroom.	
Property in disrepair, with a Category 1 hazard that can be resolved within a reasonable timescale.	

Property Unfit - Lacking cold / hot water supplies, electricity, gas, or adequate heating	
Living in insecure housing - Where an applicant is required to leave supported accommodation which is not covered by the MOP. Or care leavers who lack secure accommodation.	
A medical/welfare need	
Mobility within Kent where hardship would occur / is present without a move i.e. in order to give or receive care, access specialised medical treatment, or to take up a particular employment, education or training opportunity where failure to meet that need would cause hardship. Social tenants may instead be assessed as Right To Move (see below)	
Right To Move – Social tenants only where hardship would occur / is present without a move in relation to “work” where failure to meet that need would cause hardship. See section 30	

Band D – General

Applications from persons where none of the above in band A, band B or band C applies, or:

Adequately Housed (Has local connection and is without means)	
People who are intentionally homeless or worsened circumstances	
People who are homeless (owed duty) by another local authority under	

section 193(2) or occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 193(3) of the Housing Act 1996 or owed equivalent duty under housing act 1985.	
Where band A, B or C applies but the applicant is unreasonably non-compliant with their personal housing plan and have received adequate warning	
Where band A, B or C applies but they have no local connection with the district.	
Where band A, B or C applies but they meet or exceed the financial threshold	

Band E – General without priority

Applications from persons where none of the above in band A, band B or C applies, and:

No local connection with the district	
Meet or exceeds the financial threshold	

Qualifying Persons

Ashford Borough Council may allocate to individuals who are defined as “Qualifying Persons” under the policy.

Ashford Borough Council may consider the following when deciding upon whether an applicant is a Qualifying Person. If they are found not to be a Qualifying Person this authority has the power to refuse them entry to the register.

- Serious negative behaviour
- Financial means to secure accommodation
- Local Connection
- Adequate Accommodation

Reduction in Priority

We may alter the housing priority of an applicant whose behaviour or the behaviour of a member of their household has affected their suitability to be a tenant.

Therefore we may reduce priority for the following reasons:

- Debts – Rent Arrears and Former Tenant Arrears
- Financial Means
- Worsened Circumstances
- Local Connection
- Non-compliance with personal housing plan

Appeals & Complaints

We operate a two stage review procedure which is detailed in the full edition of the Lettings Policy. Full a full explanation of our complaints procedure please refer to the full edition of the Lettings Policy.

A copy of the complete Lettings Policy for Ashford Borough Council is available on-line at www.ashford.gov.uk or by telephoning 01233 331111.