

## Factsheet

# Housing Allocations Scheme

## Changes to the Allocations Scheme

### When will this change start?

From 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018 changes will be made to the Housing Allocations Scheme.

### Why is the Allocations Scheme being changed?

Recent changes to Housing legislation have meant that the Council needs to amend its allocations scheme to ensure it complies with these legal requirements.

### What are the changes:

Currently, in order to qualify and bid on general needs properties, applicants must meet the **residency criteria** as well as meet the criteria for **Band 1 or Band 2** housing need.

The residency criteria states that applicants must live in Central Bedfordshire continuously for the last three years or be permanently employed in the area for the last six months. If applicants meet these criteria and the conditions for Band 1 or Band 2, they will be permitted onto the Housing Register.

The amended Allocations Scheme will introduce a **new priority** called **Band 3**. Band 3 is for those who do not meet the residency criteria.

The amended Allocations Scheme will also include reviewed **income thresholds**. Therefore, if you have previously been excluded from the Housing Register due to having a high income, you may now qualify. You can find information about the income thresholds on page 22 of the Allocations Scheme which can be found on the Central Bedfordshire Council website.

Please complete Section 3 of the Band 3 enquiry form if you think you may now qualify for the Housing Register.

### What is the criteria for Band 3 and does it affect me?

If you do not meet the criteria for Band 1 or 2 but meet the following criteria, you may qualify for Band 3. The criteria for Band 3 is as follows:

- Homeless households owed a rehousing duty – applicants who are owed a rehousing duty under Section 193 of the 1996 Housing Act\*
- Homeless households – applicants who are threatened with homelessness\*
- Overcrowded – Living in accommodation without enough bedrooms to accommodate all of those living in the household
- Medical grounds – Living in accommodation that is unsuitable on medical grounds
- Property in a seriously defective condition – Living in accommodation that poses a risk to health e.g. the property has damp, major structural defects (an assessment of the property will need to be carried out)

- Need to move on from supported living – applicants residing in supporting housing, hospital or other institution and in need of permanent accommodation.

**Please be aware that you will still need to meet other qualifying criteria in order to qualify for Band 3. These qualifying criteria are outlined on the following webpage on the Council's website:**

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/housing/apply/qualify.aspx>

\* Applicants who are threatened with homelessness should contact 0300 300 4370 to receive advice from a Housing Options Officer

### **I think I may qualify for Band 3 – how do I get my application reassessed?**

If you think you meet one of the Band 3 criteria then you will need to complete the 'Band 3 enquiry form' available on the Central Bedfordshire Council website and return it to the following address:

*Housing Solutions Team, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Beds, SG17 5TQ*

A member of the Housing Solutions Team will reassess your application and if it is likely that you will qualify for Band 3, you will receive a letter to outline the documents you need to provide to verify your application.

Once all the requested information has been provided and your application has been verified, you will receive a letter to confirm whether you qualify for Band 3.

### **How long will this take?**

It is anticipated that a large volume of 'Band 3 enquiry forms' will be received. Therefore, it could be up to six weeks until you are contacted by the Housing Solutions Team.

### **I do not meet the criteria for Band 3**

If you or someone on your application are over 50 then you may qualify for the Older Persons Register.

If you are under 50 and you do not meet one of the criteria for Band 3 then it is unlikely you will qualify for the Housing Register. This means you will only be permitted to bid on Hard to Let properties. These are properties that are not let during the weekly bidding cycle.

Due to the extent of housing need in Central Bedfordshire, it is unlikely that there will be many properties that are not let first time, but please use your log in details to look on the Bedfordshire Homefinder Website to see if there are any properties available. For more information on Hard to Let properties please see page 40 of the Allocations Scheme which is available on the Central Bedfordshire Council website.

Central Bedfordshire Council will retain your details for one year following the date you first made your Housing Register Application to provide you with an opportunity to bid on Hard to Let properties. After one year your application will be cancelled.

### **I am already on the Housing Register what should I do?**

If you are already on the Housing Register and have been awarded Band 1 or Band 2 then you will not be affected by these changes.

When bidding for properties applicants will continue to be prioritised by their Band award and application date. This means that applicants in Band 1 will be considered for accommodation before those in Band 2 and applicants in Band 2 will be considered for a property before those in Band 3.

### **How long will it take for me to be re-housed?**

Applicants will be prioritised for each property by their Band award and application date. This means applicants in Band 1 will be considered for accommodation before those in Band 2 and applicants in Band 2 will be considered for a property before those in Band 3. Applicants in Band 3 will be considered for accommodation before those on the Older Persons Register with no housing need (4OP).

There are a lot of applicants on the Housing Register and properties in certain areas such as Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Houghton Regis, Biggleswade and Sandy attract a lot of bids.

We cannot say how long it could be until you are rehoused but to maximise your chances, we recommend you place bids on properties with fewer bids.

### **I am on the Older Persons Register (4OP) what should I do?**

If you are on the Older Persons Register these changes may affect you. If you do not meet the residency criteria but meet the criteria for Band 3 then you should request to have your application reassessed as you could be transferred to Band 3. If you think you meet the criteria for Band 3 you should follow the advice above which outlines how you can request to have your application reassessed by competing and returning the enclosed Band 3 enquiry form.

Once all the requested information has been provided and your application has been verified, you will receive a letter to confirm whether you qualify for Band 3.

This means that you may now qualify for the General Needs Housing register. You can still bid on Older Persons Accommodation but with higher priority.

### **I do not currently qualify for the Housing Register – what should I do?**

If you currently do not qualify for the Housing Register but meet the criteria for Band 3 then you should request to have your application reassessed by following the advice above.

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### **I am going to be homeless – what do I do?**

If you are threatened with homelessness you should contact the Housing Solutions Team immediately on 0300 300 4370

There is additional advice about the housing options available on the Council's website. Please follow this link:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/housing/homelessness/prevention.aspx>

### **How do I find out more?**

For more information visit the Council's website:

[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/housing/apply/qualify.aspx](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/housing/apply/qualify.aspx)

Or contact the Housing Solutions Team:

**Email: [housingregister@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:housingregister@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)**

**Telephone: 0300 300 8302**

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