

A GUIDE TO THE HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY



www.rotherham.gov.uk

DEFINITIONS

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| Applicant | Somebody who wants a home from Rotherham Council or a housing association. |
| Application form | An online form to fill out with your information. |
| Bid | This is how you tell us you are interested in a home. |
| Housing Online | A website where you can fill in an application form, update your application and place bids on properties you are interested in. |
| Tenancy agreement | A legal document that says the terms and conditions between the landlord and person living in the home. |
| Housing register | A list of everybody who has said they want a home from Rotherham Council or a Housing Association. |
| Policy | A document that tells you what we will do and how we make decisions. |
| Tenancy | When someone rents a property to live in, they sign an agreement saying that they as the tenant will pay money to their landlord in exchange for living at the property. |
| Adaptation / adapted | When parts of a home have been modified to better suit those with disabilities or special requirements. |
| Housing association | A non-profit organisation that provides affordable housing. |

INTRODUCTION

This is a guide to Rotherham Council's Housing Allocation Policy. The policy says how the Council will help those who need housing the most find suitable homes, and how our properties are let in a fair way.

If you want to read the full Housing Allocation Policy, then you can find it online:

www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/download/453/housing-allocation-policy

If you need a new home quickly, then you need to consider all of your housing options, such as private renting, as we have a lot of people on our housing register and only so many properties to re-let.

The Housing Allocation Policy considers various legislations and guidance to ensure that we allocate our properties fairly, as well as give reasonable preference to some groups.

During the allocation process, all customers will get helpful and quality information to help them make informed decisions about their future home.

HOW TO APPLY FOR THE HOUSING REGISTER IN ROTHERHAM

Local Connection

Applicants over the age of 16 with a local connection to Rotherham, may be eligible to join the housing register.

A person has a local connection where:

- They have lived for the last three years in Rotherham Council's geographical boundary through their own choice.
- They are currently employed in Rotherham and have been for the last three years.
- They have a close family relative or primary carer who live in Rotherham and have done so for the last three years. The applicant will be required to provide proof of address and a letter of confirmation from the relative that they are in regular contact.

There are certain circumstances where applicants are exempt from local connection criteria, such as current/former members of the armed forces and care leavers. The full list is available in the policy.

How to Register

You can register for a Council home online: housingonline.rotherhamcouncil.org.uk

You will need to fully complete an application online and upload the following documents:

- Two forms of ID for all household members (passport or birth certificate).
- Proof of local connection (proof of your / close family members address history dating back at least three years).
- Proof of address (such as a bank statement or recent utility bill).
- Proof of income (wage slip, proof of benefits or bank statement).
- Signed consent form.

Applications are verified in line with the Housing Allocation Policy. Applicants who are eligible will have a pre-tenancy interview to discuss their housing circumstances and placed in a band dependent upon their housing needs.

Applicants who will not qualify

The following applicants will not qualify to go on the housing register and will need to consider other housing options.

- Current or former Council, housing association and private rented tenants with breaches in their tenancy conditions, in the last five years, and that in the opinion of the Council, affects the applicant's suitability to be a tenant.
- Applicants who have previously been evicted from a council or housing association secure tenancy in the last five years due to breaches of their tenancy conditions.
- Applications with no local connection to Rotherham.
- Applications that have been cancelled will not qualify to re-join the Housing register for 12 months.
- Applicants owing a cumulative outstanding debt over £800 to council, housing associations or private landlords.

BANDINGS

You will be placed into one of the following bands depending upon your individual circumstances. It is important that you notify us of any changes in your circumstances as it could affect your banding and effective date. Failing to do so could result in a property offer being withdrawn.

Band 1:

- Homeless main housing duty.
- Households living in Rotherham Council temporary accommodation.
- Households living in commissioned housing related supported accommodation.
- Care leavers in need of rehousing and ready to live independently.
- Armed Forces Covenant.
- Severe social and welfare circumstances.
- Housing management lettings.
- Severe medical need.
- Service sector leaving employment and have no accommodation.
- Applicants who live in an adapted property or disabled person unit who no longer require the adaptation.
- Multiple priority needs
- Homes Subject to Repair, Renewal or Emergency Prohibition Order, or where demolition through regeneration schemes results in only 25% of the scheme remaining occupied.
- Households that are prospective foster carers, guardians or adopters that require suitable accommodation.
- Ex-offenders who wish to voluntarily terminate their Council tenancy on sentencing as their prison sentence is more than six months. Housing Assessment Panel will consider the voluntary termination and determine the level of priority that will be awarded one month prior to being released.

Band 2:

- Homeless relief duty accepted.
- Homeless prevention duty accepted.
- Homes subject to Repair, Renewal, Demolition or Prohibition Order.
- Medical needs.
- Current Rotherham housing association or Rotherham Council tenants who need to move for work related reasons and where failure to move closer to work would cause hardship.
- Households who are in low paid work or attending college or university who cannot afford to access or maintain housing options such as home ownership or private rented.
- Victims of domestic abuse not subject to MARAC
- Statutorily overcrowded.
- Households who are under occupying a Council or housing association tenancy

Band 3:

- Homeless - under investigation
- Homeless households who refuse a suitable/affordable offer of Council, housing association or private rented sector offer, and the homelessness duty have ended.
- Homeless households who have received an intentional decision.
- Homeless cases in non-priority need when relief duty has ended.
- Households that have been moved from Band 1 having refused an offer (Council Tenants will be moved from Band 1 to the Transfer Band)
- Households who are not employed or attending college and lack amenities or where the applicant cannot afford to access or maintain the rent or mortgage or where their current housing is unsuitable for their individual circumstances.
- Families forced to live apart.
- Mobile caravans or boats with no static amenities.
- Overcrowded as defined by the bedroom space standard.
- Living in a Council or housing association flat in Rotherham for applicants with dependants under the age of 21 (this includes a flat or a bedsit at all floor levels)
- If a homeless applicant chooses to accept a private rented property to prevent or alleviate their homelessness (this includes non-commissioned supported housing providers).
- Applicants who wish to be considered for Council or housing association accommodation who are living on a permanent basis with family or friends and are ready to move on.

Band 4:

- Applicants who are eligible for the housing register but do not qualify for Band 1, 2, 3 or the Transfer Band will be placed in this Band.

Transfer Band:

- Existing Council and housing association tenants who have been a good tenant and have had no breaches in their current tenancy conditions in the last 12 months.
- Council or housing association tenants that have been moved from Band 1
- Current Council or housing association tenants who live outside Rotherham and are seeking to transfer to Rotherham to take up a job offer of long-term work and need to move to avoid hardship.

BEDROOM REQUIREMENTS

The table below shows you what type of property you are eligible for based on your household.

| | Bedsit | 1 Bed flat | 2 Bed flat | 3 Bed flat | 2 Bed maisonette | 3 Bed maisonette | 1 Bed house | 2 Bed house | 3 Bed house | 4 Bed house | Bungalows |
|--|--------|------------|------------|------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Single Person | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES | NO | NO | NO | NO | Assessment or age limit applies |
| Two Individual adults | NO | NO | YES | YES | YES | YES | NO | NO | NO | NO | Assessment or age limit applies |
| Three Individual adults | NO | NO | NO | YES | NO | YES | NO | NO | NO | NO | Assessment or age limit applies |
| Single person with overnight access to children | NO | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES | NO | NO | NO | Assessment or age limit applies |
| Couple | NO | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES | NO | NO | Assessment or age limit applies |
| Households with one child or single mums expecting their first child on production of a MATB1 | NO | NO | YES | YES | YES | YES | NO | YES | YES | NO | Assessment or age limit applies |
| Households with two children or dependents | NO | NO | YES | YES | YES | YES | NO | YES | YES | NO | Assessment or age limit applies |
| Households with three or more children or dependents | NO | NO | NO | YES | NO | YES | NO | NO | YES | YES | Assessment or age limit applies |

HOUSING OPTIONS

Staying with friends or family

It might be an option for you to live with friends or family, which can be useful for you to save up money for a deposit, be in education or find employment. The costs of renting or buying can be high, so living with friends or family means that you may be able to save money until you can live independently. You may also want to stay with family or friends to be supported, or to support them.

Private renting

One of the quickest ways to find accommodation may be to find a home you can rent privately.

You can find a private rented home by doing a quick internet search, or by visiting high street lettings agents in Rotherham. You can also try the following websites:

- **Rightmove** – www.rightmove.co.uk
- **Zoopla** – www.zoopla.co.uk
- **Open Rent** – www.openrent.co.uk
- **On the Market** – www.onthemarket.com/to-rent
- **Spare Room** – www.spareroom.co.uk (you could also look for a spare room in a shared house or flat)

Housing associations

We work alongside 21 housing associations who provide over 5,000 affordable homes within the borough. To be eligible for a housing association property, you will need to be registered on the Council's housing register, as a lot of their properties are advertised through us, and you still have to have a need to move. The housing association will check that the applicant meets its own rehousing rules before any property is offered. A list of housing associations can be seen on the full policy or online:

www.rotherham.gov.uk/homelessness/housing-associations

Mutual exchanges

If you are a current Council or housing association tenant anywhere in England, then you can complete a mutual exchange if you find somebody who wants to swap properties with you.

There are various websites you can use, such as Homeswapper (www.homeswapper.co.uk), which is an independent website to assist you with finding a suitable property.

Extra care housing schemes

Extra care accommodation is longer term housing for those that want to live independently but might require a bit of support. It is usually reserved for those that are 55+ or for those with disabilities, such as dementia. The accommodation is usually small and easy to manage, but there is staff available where needed.

There are three extra care housing accommodation within Rotherham that are owned by Together Housing. To be eligible for these extra care properties, you would need to apply and be eligible to join the housing register, as well as applying to be rehoused on medical grounds. There is a high demand for these properties.

Shared ownership and other home ownership

If you are wanting to buy a home but can't afford it or don't have enough for a deposit, there are options available to you to help you.

You can use the tool on Own Your Home (www.ownyourhome.gov.uk) to identify if any government schemes are right for you. The website offers information on the Mortgage Guarantee Scheme, Shared Ownership, and First Homes.

If you are wanting to buy your own home without assistance from government schemes, then you will need to look on websites such as Zoopla (www.zoopla.co.uk) or Rightmove (www.rightmove.co.uk), as well as contacting local estate agents.

ADAPTED PROPERTIES

To be eligible for an adapted Council property, you will need to apply and be accepted onto the housing register, as well as apply and be accepted as having a medical need to move by completing a medical assessment form:

www.rotherham.gov.uk/council-social-housing/apply-rehousing-medical-grounds

If you have been assessed as needing a property which has been adapted to meet certain needs, you will be able to bid for these properties as they are advertised. Make sure you read the full details of the advert before you bid to make sure that the adaptations in the property are suitable for you.

You can also speak to Adult Social Care (01709 382121) to see if your current home can be adapted. Adaptations to private and Council properties are done in line with the Aids and Adaptation Assistance Policy 2023.

HOMELESSNESS

If you are homeless or worried about losing your home, the Housing Solutions Team are here to help you. They will assess your housing circumstances and suggest the most appropriate actions to be taken to assist you to either stay in your home or explore your other housing options with you. You can find advice and contact information relating to homelessness on our website: www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing

DIRECT LETS

There are certain circumstances when vacant properties may not be advertised on Housing Online, and on some occasions, properties may have been advertised but then the advert is removed. Direct lets are a small proportion of total lets, and we will only do direct lets for the following reasons:

- Direct offers to homeless applicants living in Rotherham Council temporary accommodation.
- Housing management lettings, which are considered at Housing Assessment Panel.

ADVERTS AND SHORTLISTING

We operate a choice-based lettings scheme, and properties are advertised on the following advert cycles:

- Friday to Monday
- Tuesday to Thursday

You do not need to wait up to bid, we allocate properties based on the order of a shortlist. Shortlists are ordered automatically by the date of your application, and priority banding and not when you place your bid.

You can only place bids on properties you are eligible for. Some properties will be advertised with the following restrictions, if these apply to you, these will be discussed with you as part of your pre-tenancy interview:

- Rural connection.
- Adapted properties.
- New build properties will be advertised with a Council tenant priority.
- Age restrictions will apply to certain properties.
- Preference for bungalows will be given to those applicants who are age eligible or have an assessed need.

Once the advert cycle has ended, a shortlist is generated. Successful applicants will be contacted to verify their housing circumstances and to check their eligibility.

VIRTUAL VIEWINGS

You will be sent a video link to a virtual viewing of the property. This is the only viewing of the property you will have. If you have any medical requirements and a physical viewing with an Occupational Therapist is required, you will be informed of this at the point we make an offer.

OFFERS

Applicants on the housing register will be subject to two offers of accommodation.

Applicants in Band 1 will be time limited to three months from the date of the award. If no bids are made within three months or one offer is refused the application will move to Band 3 (for current council tenants your application will be placed in the Transfer Band).

Applicants who are owed a homeless duty, will receive one offer. If refused, your application will move to Band 3 (for current council tenants your application will be placed in the Transfer band). Additionally, your homeless duty will be ended.

RIGHT NOT TO OFFER

The Council reserves the right not to offer a property, examples of these are:

- Requests an area where they may be unable to sustain a tenancy from lack of support.
- Requests a property that is too small for their family circumstances.
- Requests a property that does not meet medical requirements.
- Where there is no local letting policy and the applicant or members of the household have been involved in anti-social or criminal behaviour in the last 12 months.
- Where there is no local letting policy and the applicants has breached a condition of their current tenancy, eg, rent arrears.
- Where the applicant cannot afford to take on the tenancy.

FURNISHED HOMES

If you are offered a Council tenancy, you will have the option to join Rotherham Councils Furnished Homes Scheme. The furnished scheme allows you to select furniture and appliances as well as floor coverings, to help make your home a home. There is a charge for this service, which would be added to your rent account and would be payable along with your rent. The charge varies depending on the furniture scheme you have requested. Further information on the Furnished Homes Scheme can be viewed online: www.rotherham.gov.uk/council-social-housing/furnish-council-home

TYPES OF TENANCIES

- **Introductory tenancy** – A tenancy under Part 5 of the Housing Act 1996, which usually covers a period of 12 months.
- **Periodic tenancy** – If no clauses of the tenancy agreement are breached, a periodic tenancy is usually a tenancy for life.
- **Fixed term tenancy** – A tenancy agreement which has a fixed term end date.

CANCELLING APPLICATIONS

Applications will be cancelled in the following circumstances:

- People who complete a Right to Buy application.
- Is granted a tenancy by the Council or housing association and has voluntarily terminated their secure tenancy
- Has been evicted from a Council or housing association tenancy.
- Has abandoned their Council or housing association home.
- Does not reply to a waiting list review letter within four weeks.
- Has more than one application registered.
- Has been nominated to a Shared Ownership Scheme.
- Has succeeded or been assigned a Council tenancy.
- On accepting and signing a Mutual Exchange.
- Has applied and accepted major adaptation work that meets their long-term needs.
- Has refused two suitable offers of Council or housing association accommodation.
- Has told us to close their application.

Once an application is cancelled for any of the above reasons the applicant will not be allowed to re-join the Housing Register for 12 months.

Applicants who have been evicted from their Council or housing association property will not be allowed to re-join the Housing Register for five years from the date of eviction.

RIGHT TO REQUEST A REVIEW

The applicant has a right to request a review if an applicant disagrees with the Council's decision for the following:

- If an applicant believes that they are in the wrong band, or that their band has been changed unfairly.
- Cancellation following a Housing Register Review.
- Date of application.
- An offer has been withdrawn because the authority believes that the applicant has provided false information or has taken action which has made their circumstances worse.
- Where applicants have been suspended or excluded unfairly in the customer's view.
- Offers of property made; if an applicant believes that a property has not been allocated according to the allocation policy. For instance, if they expressed an interest for a home, and were in the same priority band and had longer waiting time than the successful applicant.

The applicant must submit a right to review request within 28 days of the applicant receiving the decision letter concerning their application.

The Right to Review will be reviewed by the Housing Assessment Panel and the applicant must be informed of any decision in writing and given the reasons for the action taken.

