

A Summary of West Berkshire Council's Housing Allocations Policy



This guide is a summary of West Berkshire Council's
Housing Allocation Scheme



WestBerkshire
C O U N C I L

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Introduction

This guide is a summary of West Berkshire Council's proposed Housing Allocation Policy. You can find full details about how we will allocate social homes by reading the full policy here www.westberks.gov.uk/drafthap2020

The policy sets out how West Berkshire Council will prioritise applications for social housing to make sure that lettings are fair and transparent, and ensure that those with the greatest housing need can access housing.

Eligibility to join the register

Eligibility to join a housing register is determined by legislation and central government regulations.

If you have a right to reside in the UK and you have recourse to public funds and do not fall within the 'ineligible' categories set out in the Housing Act 1996, Parts VI and VII as amended in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and are aged 18 or over, you can join West Berkshire's housing register.

Qualification

In addition to being eligible, you must also qualify to join West Berkshire Council's housing register. You would qualify to join the register, if you are in one or more of the following categories:

- You have been living in West Berkshire district for at least 2 consecutive years.
- You have a parent, adult sibling or adult child who has lived in West Berkshire and has done so for 5 consecutive years, and you need to give them or receive essential support from them for the foreseeable future.
- You have been employed in meaningful paid employment within the district, for 16 hours or more a week, for at least the last 2 consecutive years.
- You are homeless and the council has agreed to help you find accommodation
- You are a young person who has recently left the care of West Berkshire Children and Families Service
- You are a serving member of the armed forces or reserved forces or have served in the last five years

You will not qualify to join the housing register if:

- You have enough money to secure your own accommodation
- Your need to move does not qualify you for priority under the Housing Allocations policy (e.g. you are living in a property which is adequate for you and your family)
- You give us false or misleading information
- You (or anyone who lives or likely to live with you) are guilty of serious anti-social behaviour or physical/verbal abuse of council staff or our registered providers.
- You have not lived in the district for 2 consecutive years

How needs are assessed

When you apply for social housing in West Berkshire, we will assess your application based on your housing needs, housing legislation and supporting information. If you are eligible and qualify to join the housing register, you will be told what priority band you have been placed in and the number of bedrooms you are entitled to bid for.

Only children in your household aged 20 or under will count towards the number of bedrooms we calculate that you need, unless they live with you either to give or to receive care.

The council operates a banding system from A to D that will place applicants in bands based on the applicant's assessed housing need.

If we find that you have no priority for social housing, you will be able to find out about alternative housing options on our website.

If you disagree with our decision, you can ask us to review it. If your circumstances change at any time (e.g. you have another child or you move house) you should complete a "Change of Circumstances" form and we will re-assess your application. You can access this by logging in to your online bidding account.

When you bid for a property, it is placed alongside other people's bids in band and date order. The person with the highest priority band and earliest priority date within that band is considered first.

On the following pages are the priority bands. You can find out more by reading the full scheme at www.westberks.gov.uk/drafthap2020 or by asking a member of the housing team on **01635 519530**.



“Applications will be placed in bands based on the applicant's assessed housing need.”

The Banding Scheme

Where Band A will be awarded - *Emergency need to move*

Medical Grounds:

1. Unable to continue to occupy their current accommodation due to severe or life threatening medical need or disability recommended by the GP, hospital consultant or other health practitioner

Armed Forces Criteria

2. Serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of service in the Armed Forces

3. Recently ceased to be entitled to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence, following the death of their spouse or civil partner who served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service

Under Occupancy

4. Social tenant who has agreed to downsize by two bedrooms or more.

Management Transfer

5. RP Management transfer on a like for like basis in accordance with RP's policy.

Release of Adapted Property

6. Social tenant who has agreed to transfer to a property without adaptations

Succession

7. Where a succession has been agreed and the succeeding tenant has agreed to move into smaller accommodation.

Domestic abuse, Fear of violence, Witness Protection

8. Where an individual is fleeing domestic abuse or other forms of violence assessed by relevant agencies and assessed as being in immediate danger and needing to move urgently for the safety of themselves and any dependent children

Statutory Notices

9. Where a tenant occupies a rented property where a Prohibition Order has been served or other statutory notice requiring an immediate move due to safety risks.

Decants

10. Property is subject to major works or demolition or Compulsory Purchase Order for redevelopment by RP.

Where Band B will be awarded – *Urgent need to move*

Medical Grounds:

1. Current housing conditions worsens a severe medical condition or disability.

Overcrowding by 2 bedrooms or more

2. Severely overcrowded defined as being either statutory overcrowded or requiring 2 or more additional bedrooms to reach the bedroom standard.

Move on from care

3. A former “Relevant Child” as defined by the Children Leaving Care Act 2002 at risk of homelessness confirmed by leaving care service in West Berkshire Council.

Under Occupancy

4. Social tenant who has agreed to downsize by one bedroom.

Unsatisfactory housing conditions

5. Occupies a private sector property that has multiple Category 1 Hazards (excluding overcrowding) under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) that cannot be resolved within 6 months and there is a serious risk to the occupant’s health.

Foster Carers

6. To enable fostering or adoption by West Berkshire residents where agreement has been reached to provide long term accommodation on the recommendation of the Head of Children and Family Services and agreed by the Housing Services Manager.

Where Band C will be awarded – *Medium need to move*

Applicants owed a statutory homeless duty

1. Verified rough sleeper in West Berkshire and meets the local connection rules
2. The full housing duty under Section 193
3. The prevention of homelessness duty under Section 195(2)
4. The relief of homelessness duty under Section 189B(2)
5. The intentionally homeless temporary accommodation duty to provide reasonable opportunity to find alternative accommodation (Section 190(2) duty)

Domestic abuse

6. Fleeing domestic abuse assessed by MARAC (or any subsequent multi agency arrangement) as needing to move but not in immediate danger.

Need to move for reasons of welfare

7. High social/welfare needs (identified by a relevant professional practitioner)
8. Applicants who need to move closer to relatives in order to give or receive care or support that has been assessed as being essential and where moving would prevent significant physical or psychological hardship
9. Need to access specialist facilities in the district (e.g. specialist school) identified and approved by a relevant professional practitioner

Note: not every circumstance can be captured thus the policy only sets examples of welfare circumstances that may be awarded Band C priority under this category. Whether the award is granted will be determined by the assessing officer, manager or panel

Move on from supported housing

10. The individual is ready to move on from supported to independent housing. On-going support needs have been assessed and support plan is in place.

Where Band D will be awarded – *Low need to move*

Overcrowding and insecure accommodation arrangement

1. Sharing with family or others who are not part of their household but not statutorily overcrowded.

Overcrowding and secure accommodation arrangement

2. Lacking one bedroom in own rented accommodation but not statutorily overcrowded i.e. requiring one additional bedroom to reach the bedroom standard

Right to Move

3. Existing social tenants of accommodation in England who wish to exercise their Right to Move (under the Government's Right to Move regulations) to a social tenancy in West Berkshire.

Allocation to applicants who qualify is limited to a maximum of 1% of properties allocated each year, amounting to an estimated 4 properties per year.

No priority for Housing

If you register for social housing in West Berkshire, but do not qualify for band A, B, C, or D, you will not be able to bid for properties through our website. See "Further information" below for more details.

Further Information

For further information, please refer to the full proposed allocation policy on our consultation pages at www.westberks.gov.uk/drafthap2020