

Housing Register Allocations Policy Booklet

This booklet provides a summary of the Housing Register Allocations Policy and was updated in 2017



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Introduction

We no longer own any council housing but we do have access to many social rented and affordable homes in the borough through partnerships with housing associations. We hold the register for home-seekers and transfer tenants who would like to apply for available homes.

This booklet tells you how you can apply for social and affordable rented homes in the Tunbridge Wells borough and how these properties will be allocated.

Choice based lettings

Rather than the Council allocating available homes, we will continue to give more choice about where people live. Through Kent Homechoice we work in partnership with other Kent councils and a number of housing associations, to allow applicants to apply or bid for available homes they are interested in. In order to do this you must first apply to join the housing register.

Available properties will be advertised on the Kent Homechoice website kenthomechoice. Free access to the internet is available in libraries across the borough, and at the Gateway.

Who can join the housing register?

Anyone can approach us for housing advice and assistance, however as the amount of social housing in the borough is limited we no longer hold an open housing register. To apply for housing, an applicant must be eligible, meet the qualification rules, have a local connection to the borough and have a housing need. The rules for all of these are explained in this booklet.

Both home-seekers and transfer tenants can only include family members, dependants, spouses or people they are in a relationship with on their application. Friends and other acquaintances are not able to apply together unless there is evidence that there is a need for 24 hour live-in care, and the other person provides this care.

Eligibility

Applicants must be habitually resident in the United Kingdom, and we are unable to accept applications from people who are subject to immigration control and who do not have access to public funds in the UK. Family members not currently living in the United Kingdom cannot be included on an application.

Local connection

Applicants must have a local connection to the borough to be able to apply for housing. A local connection is gained through either the main or joint applicant meeting one of the following criteria:

- have been living in settled accommodation in the borough for the last three years (definition of settled accommodation is detailed in the full policy);
- have previously lived in settled accommodation in the borough for five out of the last 10 years;
- have immediate family (mother, father, brother, sister, children aged over 18 years old) who have lived in the borough continuously for the last five years;
- be employed in the borough, with a permanent contract of paid employment that has been continuous for the last six months, or self-employed for the last six months where there is evidence that the main area of work is in the borough;
- serving or former members of the armed forces (honourably discharged within the past five years), injured members of the reserved forces or bereaved spouses/civil partners of the armed forces who lost their partner due to military service and have to leave Ministry of Defence family accommodation.

Housing need

Only applicants who have a housing need will be able to apply for housing. To be considered to be in housing need, the applicant must meet at least one of the housing need criteria set out in the four bands. Should more than one of the housing need criteria be met, then the applicant will be placed into whichever band has the highest priority. Information about the bands can be found in the banding system section on page 6.

Qualification requirements

As social housing is very limited, the following qualification requirements are in place to make sure that the households in the highest need are prioritised:

- household income, savings, capital or investments must not exceed the financial limits in the policy. These limits will be reviewed annually and may change, so check the full policy or contact us for more information;
- in most circumstances, applicants who own their own property will not be able to apply;
- applicants who have or have had significant housing related debt with a private/social landlord or council will not normally qualify to apply unless there is robust evidence of a regular payment plan in place, which will be monitored;
- applicants who have been involved in committing on-going anti-social behaviour (including any member of their household) will not qualify to apply;
- applicants who do not have a local connection to the borough will not qualify to apply;
- applicants not living in the UK, except certain members of the armed forces, will not qualify;
- applicants who are under 16 years of age will not qualify.

How to apply to join the Housing Register

You will need to complete an application form and provide identification and proof of residence for each person on the application form.

Application forms can be completed online at [kenthomechoice](https://kenthomechoice.org.uk) by clicking 'Register'. Once you have submitted a form online, we will be unable to proceed with the application until you provide copies of the relevant identification and supporting information listed at the end of the application form.

In exceptional circumstances a paper version of the application form can be requested from the Housing Needs team by contacting us at allocations@tunbridgewells.gov.uk. You can bring copies of your identification and supporting information for your online application into the Gateway, or send them by post to Housing Register team, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS.

How your application is assessed

We will assess your application using the information you give us on the application form, so it is important that you complete it as accurately as possible. Once the relevant identification and supporting information has been provided we will aim to assess the application within 15 working days and confirm the assessment in writing, along with your reference number, band details, priority date and size of accommodation you are registered for.

If you do not qualify to join the housing register, you will be advised in writing and will still be able to receive advice on alternative housing options, such as privately renting and mutual exchange by contacting us.

To make sure that tenancies are as secure and affordable as possible, it is important that households are not allocated a property larger than they need.

We have used criteria from the Welfare Reform Act 2012 to assess the size of property that a household needs.

One bedroom will be allocated to the following:

- main applicant who is aged 16 years and over or a married/cohabiting couple who are both aged 16 and over;
- two children aged less than 16 years of the same gender;
- two children aged less than 10 years regardless of their gender;
- additional family members aged over 16 years where it is appropriate to apply to be housed with the main or joint applicant;
- for disabled tenants who require a non-resident carer to stay overnight, the tenant will be allowed one extra room (medical evidence of this will be needed);
- an additional bedroom will be allowed for those who have been approved as foster carers or prospective adopters (evidence of this will be required).

Tenants that are over the state pension age will not be subject to the size criteria. It should be noted that the state pension age is subject to increase.

The table below shows the size of accommodation that a household would normally be eligible for.

| Household size | Size of home |
|--|-------------------------|
| Single person or couple | One bedroom or a bedsit |
| Pregnant women with or without partner and no other children Parent/s with one child or one non-dependant Parent/s with two children under 10 years Parent/s with two children of same gender where the eldest is aged less than 16 years. | Two bedrooms |
| Parent/s with two children of different genders where the eldest is aged 10 years or over Parent/s with two non-dependants/children where at least one is aged 16 years or over Parent/s with three children up to 16 years Parent/s with four children of any gender under 10 years Parent/s with four children of the same gender up to 16 years | Three bedrooms |
| Parent/s with four children of different genders up to age of 16 years | Three or four bedrooms |
| Parent/s with five children up to the age of 16 years Parent/s with three or more non dependants/children over 16 years | Four bedrooms |

There is a limited supply of four bedroom properties, and larger families would be expected to occupy these in the best way they can. Where three or four bedroom properties have two living rooms, these will be advertised as having an additional bedroom, as the second living room would be expected to be used as a bedroom. Children will be expected to share rooms with other children in the household regardless of whether they are siblings.

The banding system

When you apply to join the register, you will be assessed as either a home-seeker or a transfer tenant.

Home-seekers include applicants who are not currently a housing association tenant in the borough, or are council or housing association tenants outside of the borough.

A transfer tenant is an applicant who is a housing association tenant in this borough.

You will be placed in one of the following four bands according to your housing situation.

| | Home-seekers housing need criteria | Transfer tenants housing need criteria |
|--------|---|---|
| Band A | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the armed forces, leaving services family accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner where the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service. 2. Serving or former members of the armed forces or reserve forces personnel who need to move urgently and are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service. 3. Category 1 hazards which landlord is unable to address within six months including people living in insanitary or unsatisfactory conditions. 4. Short term supported accommodation. 5. High medical or welfare need to move. 6. Those who are threatened with homelessness (through no fault of their own) or have no fixed abode. 7. Overcrowded households according to Welfare Reform Act bedroom criteria. 8. Tenants in private rented accommodation where it has been evidenced that the property is unaffordable to them. | <p>Overcrowding of a housing association property, according to Welfare Reform Act bedroom criteria</p> |
| Band B | <p>Those who have been accepted as homeless, have a local connection through the housing register allocation policy and have been owed a main homelessness duty by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for a period of more than six months.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High medical or welfare need. 2. Transfer applicants occupying an adapted property which is no longer needed. 3. Transfer applicants who require adaptations to be carried out to their property, where their current home has been deemed unsuitable for adaptations. |

| | Home-seekers housing need criteria | Transfer tenants housing need criteria |
|--------|---|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Under occupation of a housing association property according to Welfare Reform Act bedroom criteria. 5. Category 1 hazards which landlord is unable to address within six months including people living in insanitary or unsatisfactory conditions. |
| Band C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Serving or former members of the armed forces or reserve forces personnel who urgently need a suitable adapted property due to a serious injury/ medical condition sustained in service. 2. Urgent medical and welfare grounds. 3. Fleeing domestic abuse, extreme violence or harassment. Evidence needed to show urgent risk and that it is safe to live in the borough. 4. Made homeless due to disaster, fire, flood. 5. Housing association tenants outside of the borough who need to move to the borough to take up an offer of employment or training under 'right to move'. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Urgent management transfers. 2. Urgent medical / welfare grounds. 3. Fleeing domestic abuse, extreme violence or harassment. Evidence needed to show urgent risk and that it is safe to live in the borough. 4. Need for rehousing as home due to be demolished as part of regeneration programme. |
| Band D | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Low medical or welfare issues. 2. Those who have approached the local authority as homeless, whilst the homeless application is pending. 3. Those who have been accepted as homeless and in priority need but have been found to be intentionally homeless. 4. Those who have been accepted as homeless, are owed a main homelessness duty by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, have been owed that duty for six months or less and for whom a placement into the private rented sector is being sought. | Low medical or welfare issues. |

| | Home-seekers housing need criteria | Transfer tenants housing need criteria |
|--|--|---|
| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Those who have been accepted as homeless, are owed a main homelessness duty by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, have no local connection under the Housing register allocation policy and for whom a placement into the private rented sector is being sought. 6. Those who have been accepted as homeless, are owed a main homelessness duty by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and have been successfully placed in private rented accommodation by the Council. 7. Those owed a main homelessness duty by any other local authority. 8. Applicants who have been living in the private rented sector for over five years and have had to move a number of times due to no fault of their own. | |

Medical grounds

There are three categories of medical grounds:

Urgent medical grounds

This is where a member of the household has been assessed as having a critical need to move as they are unable to remain or return to their current accommodation on medical grounds. Details are available in the full policy, but an example could be an applicant who is unable to be discharged from hospital until more suitable housing is found, as living in or returning to their property would be seriously harmful or life threatening.

High medical grounds

This is where there is evidence that a move to more suitable accommodation will improve a significant or serious health condition substantially. Details are available in the full policy, but an example could be a person who is not housebound and their life is not at risk due to their current housing situation, but their housing conditions are directly contributing to causing serious ill health.

Low medical grounds

This is where a member of the household has a moderate need to move. Details are in the full policy, but an example could be the need to move closer to family on medical grounds.

Welfare grounds

There are three categories of welfare grounds:

Urgent welfare grounds

This is where the household has been assessed as being unable to remain in their current accommodation and has a critical need to move on welfare grounds. Details are available in the full policy, but an example could be an exceptional need to move which is supported by the Police or a housing association.

High welfare grounds

This is where the household can remain in their property but where there is evidence that that a move to more suitable accommodation will improve the household's situation substantially. Details are in the full policy, but an example is severe bullying of children in the family by local children, that is supported by the Police or the school.

Low welfare grounds

This is where the household can remain in their property but where there is evidence of a moderate need to move. Details are in the full policy, but an example could be a family with children under ten years old living in a property without a garden where there is no open play space, or a park in the local area.

Overcrowding and under-occupation

In deciding whether a household is overcrowded or are under-occupying a property, we use the criteria set by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the housing benefit/local housing allowance bedroom allowances. Under these criteria, one bedroom will be allocated as set out in the earlier section "How your application is assessed".

A household will only be recognised as being overcrowded at the point the household bedroom need as calculated by the bedroom criteria exceeds the number of bedrooms available in their property by one or more. For example, a family with two children of the same gender who live in a two bedroom property would only be considered to be overcrowded once one of the children turns 16 years old.

All applicants who are living in overcrowded conditions will be placed in the band appropriate to them, according to whether they are a transfer tenant or home-seeker.

Under-occupation is only assessed for transfer tenants. A household will be recognised as under-occupying a property if they have one bedroom or more than they need as calculated by the bedroom criteria.

Property types

We will aim to ensure that any housing with particular features is allocated to those who are most suited to the property, as follows:

Houses and gardens

Priority for houses and/or family sized properties with gardens will normally be given to applicants with dependent children aged less than 12 years old.

Ground floor flats

Priority for ground floor flats will normally be given to applicants who are considered to be in need of this type of accommodation on medical grounds.

Bungalows

Priority for bungalows will normally be given to applicants with a physical disability or who are considered to be in need of this type of accommodation for medical reasons.

Sheltered housing

Applicants for sheltered housing will normally need to be of pensionable age unless the scheme has a different age restriction.

Mobility assessment

If a member of the household has a substantial and permanent physical disability which restricts their mobility accessing or moving around the home, details of this will need to be provided on the application form and we will assess the level of mobility based on the three categories below:

- Category 1 - people who use wheelchairs indoors and outdoors;
- Category 2 - people who cannot manage steps or stairs and may occasionally use a wheelchair;

- Category 3 - people who are independent but can only manage a few steps.

This assessment will then be used to match the household to properties that are suitable for them.

If an applicant has been assessed as having one of the three mobility levels, and is in need of certain types of adaptations (such as stair lifts, level access showers, ramps or hoists), they will be given preference for any properties which already include these features.

Properties which include these adaptations will be advertised showing their suitability for the three mobility levels. This type of accommodation will normally be prioritised for people who need it.

Choice of areas

As part of the application process, you will be asked to specify your top three choices of the areas in which you would like to live. We collect data on the housing need within the borough and this information is used for the future planning of social housing. The borough is broken down into 30 smaller areas for you to choose from. You can bid for properties anywhere in the borough regardless of the areas you choose on your application, it is purely for our information.

The 30 smaller areas are set out in the following table:

| | Area of the borough |
|-----|-----------------------------|
| 1. | Royal Tunbridge Wells Town |
| 2. | Sherwood, Tunbridge Wells |
| 3. | Showfields, Tunbridge Wells |
| 4. | Ramslye, Tunbridge Wells |
| 5. | Hawkenbury, Tunbridge Wells |
| 6. | Rusthall |
| 7. | Langton Green |
| 8. | Speldhurst |
| 9. | Ashurst |
| 10. | Bidborough |
| 11. | Southborough |
| 12. | Barnetts Wood, Southborough |

| | Area of the borough |
|-----|----------------------------|
| 13. | High Brooms |
| 14. | Brenchley |
| 15. | Matfield |
| 16. | Horsmonden |
| 17. | Cranbrook |
| 18. | Sissinghurst |
| 19. | Frittenden |
| 20. | Goudhurst |
| 21. | Kilndown |
| 22. | Lamberhurst |
| 23. | Hawkhurst |
| 24. | Sandhurst |
| 25. | Benenden |
| 26. | Iden Green |
| 27. | Paddock Wood |
| 28. | Capel |
| 29. | Five Oak Green |
| 30. | Pembury |

Rural housing schemes

Some housing association homes have legal restrictions due to the planning agreement made before the property was built. These homes can only be let to home-seekers or transfer tenants who have a proven local connection to the specific parish where the property is based or in some circumstances the immediately neighbouring parishes as a back-up.

These homes will be clearly advertised to invite bids from home-seekers or transfer tenants that meet the local connection criteria. Only bidders who meet the parish or back up parish connection will be considered for those properties.

The local connection rules for parishes can vary, but generally the household must meet one or more of the following:

- have lived in the parish continuously for the last three years or have previously lived in the parish for a total of five years out of the last 10 years;
- have immediate family (mother, father, brother, sister or children over 18 years old) who currently live in the parish and have continuously done so for the last five years;
- be in or about to take up full time employment in the parish;
- provide an important service that requires residence in the parish.

Only a certain number of areas in the borough are considered to be parishes, and in many cases have their own parish council. The areas where a local connection would apply are:

- Benenden
- Bidborough
- Brenchley/Matfield
- Capel/Tudeley/Five Oak Green
- Cranbrook
- Frittenden
- Goudhurst
- Hawkhurst
- Horsmonden
- Lamberhurst
- Paddock Wood
- Pembury
- Rusthall
- Sandhurst
- Speldhurst/Langton Green

Community contribution scheme

We want to support those who take responsibility for themselves and their community and consider that it is important to contribute to creating balanced communities which include a diverse range of people. This includes those who are working or trying to get back into work as well as those who are in receipt of benefits.

The community contribution scheme will give applicants who meet the community contribution criteria in bands A and D only increased priority for housing.

The scheme will operate by advertising approximately one quarter of properties that are prioritised for applicants in bands A and D to those who are working, volunteering or contributing to their communities. The property advert will state which properties are prioritised for these applicants, and any households who do not meet the criteria may not be eligible for these particular properties.

Community contribution criteria can be granted to the following applicants:

- working households;
- those who are actively looking for work;
- those who are volunteering;
- those who have been approved for fostering or adoption;

- armed forces personnel.

The details of who is included in these categories can be found in the full policy.

We recognise that certain applicants may not be able to meet the community contribution criteria for personal reasons. As such community contribution criteria will be automatically given for the following applicants:

- single parent households with a child under the age of five years of age;
- applicants who are disabled.

Each case will be looked at on an individual basis.

Community contribution criteria will not be awarded to applicants in bands B or C.

Targeted allocation plan

We need to make sure that in general, applicants with the highest needs are housed the quickest, whilst also giving applicants with differing housing needs across all bands a chance of gaining accommodation. We will allocate approximately 60% of all vacancies to home-seekers, with the remaining 40% of vacancies going to transfer tenants.

We also want to ensure that applicants within each of the four bands are allocated a certain number of vacancies per year. The targeted allocation plan sets out how many properties on average will be allocated towards each band as shown in the following two tables:

This table sets out the targeted allocation plan for home-seekers (approximately 60 per cent of vacancies):

| Band | Percentage |
|-------------|--|
| A | 85 per cent (approximately one quarter will go to applicants who meet the community contribution criteria) |
| B | 10 per cent |
| C | 3 per cent |
| D | 2 per cent (approximately one quarter of this will go to applicants meeting the community contribution criteria) |

This table sets out the targeted allocation plan for transfer tenants (approximately 40 per cent of vacancies):

| Band | Percentage |
|-------------|--|
| A | 40 per cent (approximately one quarter will go to applicants who meet the community contribution criteria) |
| B | 30 per cent |
| C | 20 per cent |
| D | 10 per cent (approximately one quarter will go to applicants meeting the community contribution criteria) |

The following tables show total property numbers and number of properties per band for home-seekers and transfer tenants, rather than percentages. This is based on approximately 400 properties becoming available in a year.

This table sets out the allocation of properties for home-seekers (60% of 400 properties = 240 properties):

| Band | Percentage of properties |
|-------------|---------------------------------|
| A | 85% = 204 properties |
| B | 10% = 24 properties |
| C | 3% = 7 properties |
| D | 2% - 5 properties |

This table sets out the allocation of properties for transfer tenants (40% of 400 properties = 160 properties):

| Band | Percentage of properties |
|-------------|---------------------------------|
| A | 85% = 204 properties |
| B | 10% = 24 properties |
| C | 3% = 7 properties |
| D | 2% - 5 properties |

Local lettings policies

Some properties advertised may be subject to a local lettings policy. This may mean that the property or some of the properties in particular developments are targeted to applicants of a certain age range, families with children of a certain age or specifically to working households.

These policies assist in helping the housing association to achieve a balanced sustainable community within a development, and to prevent there being higher than usual concentrations of vulnerable households with high support needs. It can also help them to deal with any issues in an existing development or road where there are currently management problems.

Properties subject to a local lettings policy will be advertised as such, and applicants will be able to click on a link in the advert to access the full details of the policy in place, or request a copy from the Tunbridge Wells Gateway or the Housing Needs team.

How to make bids

If you are interested in one of the properties advertised and meet all of the criteria listed in the advert, you will need to place a bid on the property.

You will only be able to bid for properties that are an appropriate size for your household. You can have up to three open bids at any one time. Once one of the properties closes for bidding, you will be able to bid on another property.

Please think carefully before placing a bid as you are only allowed up to three reasonable refusals of accommodation. Any more than this and you will go to the bottom of your current band and will face a longer wait for housing.

The following rules tend to apply for certain types of property:

- properties with disabled adaptations will be reserved for bidders who need the specific adaptations available;
- ground floor or level access homes will be prioritised for bidders who have medical or mobility needs for this type of home;
- sheltered homes are only available to bidders who meet the minimum age requirement, which is normally either 55 or 60 plus years old.

You can make bids online at www.kenthomechoice.org.uk. On the top right of the page, choose TUNW in the first box and enter the number part of your reference in the following box. Choose your date of birth in the boxes below and click on 'login'. Once logged in, go to 'Make a bid';

Alternatively you can contact the Gateway office or the Housing Needs team.

If you want a family member, friend or support agency to make bids on your behalf, this can be done by providing them with your Kent Homechoice details and date of birth.

How will you know if your bid is successful?

There is a feedback section on your Kent Homechoice homepage that shows a list of all of the bids you have made with the most recent at the top. You will also see the total number of bids made on the property, and the status of the property which will be one of the following:

Open for bids

The property is still being advertised.

Bidding closed, property not yet offered

The bidding cycle has ended and the housing association have not yet shortlisted any bidders for the property. This may be because it is not yet ready and they will do so closer to the time;

Property under offer

This means that the property has been offered to either the highest or the most appropriate bidder for the property type or restrictions. The band and priority date of the successful bidder will be shown, and you will be able to compare this to your own.

If the band is higher than yours or the priority date is earlier, they have either been waiting for longer or have a higher housing need.

If the band is lower than yours or the priority date later, you may have been bypassed for the property. This could be because you do not meet the particular requirements as stated in the advert, such as priority being given to a particular band, or mobility need.

If the band and priority date match yours, it could be that you have been successful. If this is the case, the housing association will contact you directly when they are ready to do so either by post or by phone. You do not need to do anything, but it is recommended that you check the 'My details' tab on your Kent Homechoice page and make sure that your contact details are up to date so that you are easily contactable.

Property let

The property has been accepted by the successful bidder and a tenancy has started. The band and priority date of the successful tenant will be shown;

Property withdrawn

The property has had to be withdrawn by the housing association. This could be for a number of reasons including the outgoing tenants deciding or being allowed to remain in the property, or it may be required by the landlord for an urgent management move.

If you have not been successful this time, you can check in the 'My details' tab of your Kent Homechoice member page. At the bottom of the page, you can click on a link to see some information on waiting times for rehousing based on the number of properties let within the last year. You will be able to see the average waiting time by band and property size. Please bear in mind that this time is based on the length of time you have been in your current band and not the whole time you have been registered.

Refusing an offer of accommodation

If you decide to refuse an offer of accommodation, you will need to let the housing association know, and then notify us of the written reasons for the refusal, by email/post or at the Gateway. Once you have turned it down, the property would then normally be offered to the next suitable bidder.

You will only be allowed up to three refusals, after which, your application will go to the bottom of your current band and the priority date will change to match. This will mean that you will have much longer to wait for another offer.

If you turn down a property, and based on the reasons you give, we consider that you have reasonable reasons for doing so, such as the property being unsuitable on medical grounds, this would not be counted as a refusal.

The exceptions to this would be for applicants assessed as having an urgent housing need and also those to whom we owe a main homelessness duty. In this case, these applicants would be expected to accept the first suitable and reasonable offer of accommodation.

Re-joining the housing register

Once you have been rehoused by a housing association, there will be a 12 month restriction on re-joining the register.

There will be exceptions to this in certain cases if there is evidence that the property or the immediate location is putting the family at risk.

Right to request a review

You may request a review for the following reasons:

- your application to join the housing register has been refused, which includes the decision that you do not meet the housing need criteria;
- you feel that the band that you have been placed in is incorrect or your banding has changed;
- an offer of accommodation was considered to be reasonable and will count as one of your refusals;
- it has been decided that you are not eligible for an offer of a particular property;
- you have been removed from the housing register;
- we have discharged our homelessness duty to an applicant who has refused a reasonable offer of accommodation.

To request a review, you must contact us in writing or by email within 21 days of being informing of our decision. It is important that you tell us of any new information that you wish to be considered, the reasons why you disagree with the decision, and provide any relevant supporting evidence to back up your case. You may ask somebody else to do this for you.

The review will be carried out by a different officer to the one who made the original decision, normally the Housing Register & Development Manager or their equivalent.

To request a review please write to:

Housing Register & Development Manager

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Town Hall

Royal Tunbridge Wells

Kent

TN1 1RS

Alternatively, you can email allocations@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Responsibilities of housing register applicants

When you have been accepted to join the housing register, there will be a number of things that you will be expected to do. These are:

Active bidding

To make sure that all who are on the register are actually in need of housing, you will be expected to regularly bid on properties. Anyone who does not bid for 24 months or more will be contacted and may be removed from the register.

Changes to your application

We expect you to inform us of any changes in your circumstances, and to complete a change of address form if you move.

Annual review

We expect you to respond to our yearly register review letter to confirm that nothing has changed and that you still want to remain on the register. If you do not respond, we will close your application and write to you to let you know that we have done so.

Accurate information

It is an offence under Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 for a person to make a statement which is false, or knowingly withhold information which may be relevant to their application. We may remove the application and not allow the applicant to re-join, or in some cases we may prosecute applicants that are found to have made a false statement. This could be either

on the application form, in response to requests for further information or during the proceedings of a review.

Additionally, a housing association may seek possession of any tenancy that has been granted as a result of a false statement by the tenant or a person acting at the tenant's request.

Alternative housing options

It is important for those who are able to join the housing register to consider alternative options that could help them to find housing more quickly. The housing register is not a quick option for finding accommodation, and applicants may face a very long wait for a suitable property, or may not be successful in achieving an offer at all.

Private rentals

The borough has an active private rented sector, and renting through a private landlord or letting agent is a good option to consider. The Council operates various schemes to assist people to access the private rented market, and further information on these are available from the Council or the Tunbridge Wells Gateway.

There will be an expectation on applicants to whom we have accepted a full homelessness duty and are living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, to work with our Tenancy Officers to find accommodation through the private rented sector.

Buying a property

For those who are working and on a low income, and applicants who do not qualify to join the register as they exceed the financial assessment limits, there are a number of affordable home ownership scheme options available. For more information applicants should contact the Help to Buy agents through www.helptobuyese.org.uk.

Mutual exchange

For transfer tenants, mutual exchange where tenants 'swap' their properties could be a much quicker option to being rehoused through the housing register.

Tenants do not have to be living in the same borough or have the same landlord to do a swap. However they will need to get permission from their landlord before doing the swap.

There may be situations where this is not possible, such as certain planning conditions attached to the property or because of the tenants' circumstances (if they are in arrears for example).

For transfer tenants interested in mutual exchange, you can register your accommodation details on www.exchangelocata.org.uk and also look at other properties that are available for mutual exchange.

Information on the policy

You have the right to request the following information from us:

- information to show you how your application will be assessed and the details of the banding structure;
- information about whether it is likely that suitable accommodation will be found for you through the housing register, and if so, an estimate of how long it will be until that accommodation is available.

By clicking on the declaration at the end of the online application form, or signing the paper version, you give consent for us to make relevant enquiries with regard to your housing need and potential ability to maintain a tenancy. It also gives consent for us to share your information with partner housing associations or other social housing providers when nominating you to be a tenant in one of their properties.

Personal information is only disclosed to other parties with your consent or in exceptional circumstances, such as the information being required by the Police as part of a criminal investigation.

Circumstances may arise where changes or updates need to be made to the Housing Register Allocation Policy. The Head of Housing, Health and Environment or equivalent is authorised to make minor changes. A brief summary of any changes along with the updated policy will be made available on our website.

More significant changes that would affect a large number of applicants would be made in consultation with the housing providers in the borough. We would take all reasonable steps to ensure that applicants are made aware of the changes, and anyone directly affected would be contacted in writing to advise them of the impact to their application.

Accessing this information

If you require this information in large print, on audiotape or in any other format, please contact us by calling 01892 526121.

If you need help translating this information, please contact us on 01892 526 121.

यदि आप को इस जानकारी के अनुवाद के लिए सहायता चाहिए तो कृपया हम से 01892 526 121 पर संपर्क करें। - Hindi

اگر آپ کو اس معلومات کے ترجمہ کیلئے مدد چاہیے تو براہ کرم ہم سے 01892 526 121 پر رابطہ کریں۔ Urdu

Si vous avez besoin d'aide pour traduire ces informations, veuillez nous contacter au 01892 526 121. - French

Jeśli potrzebują Państwo pomocy w przetłumaczeniu tej informacji, prosimy o kontakt na numer telefonu 01892 526 121. – Polish

如果你需要将这一信息翻译成你的母语，请致电 01892 526 121 联络我们。 - Mandarin

Kung kinakailangan po ninyo ng tulong na maisalin sa ibang wika ang impormasyong ito, paki-tawagan lamang po kami sa numerong 01892 526 121. - Tagalog

এই তথ্য অনুবাদ করার জন্যে যদি আপনার সহায়তার প্রয়োজন হয় তাহলে আমাদেরকে 01892 526 121 নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন।