

Appendix 3 - Assessment Scheme for Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Assessment Scheme is common to all local authorities participating in the Oxfordshire Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme
- 1.2 It sets out the way each authority will assess applications. This seeks to ensure that applicants from the different districts will be assessed using a shared method and that decisions as to the relative priorities of applicants are fair and consistent across the sub-region
- 1.3 Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District and Vale of White Horse District Council have formed a partnership and have entered into agreements concerning the operation of the Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Each Authority is represented at a Steering Group that meets quarterly to monitor and oversee the operation of the scheme

2.0 Assessment of Applications

- 2.1 Eligibility to join the waiting list will be determined by the district that the applicant applies to. The districts have an agreement that only eligible and “active” applicants on their Housing Register will be able to bid through the sub regional scheme
- 2.2 The partners have agreed a set of banding criteria for those wishing to apply through the sub-regional arrangement. The criteria reflect the need to give priority to applicants in the reasonable preference groups, together with the partnership’s desire to promote mobility for those in social housing in the sub region
- 2.3 Applicants will be assessed by the district authorities and banded within the district priority schemes. In addition, they will be assessed according to the agreed set of sub regional banding criteria as follows

3.0 Sub-Regional Banding Criteria

- 3.1 Applicants are assessed using a 5 Band system for Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings
- 3.2 Priority is by Band (with Band 1 being the highest priority and Band 5 being the lowest priority)
- 3.3 Priority within bands is by the Registration Date of the application

Band 1	
Exceptional cases	Any applicant awarded an exceptional (band 1) category by the agreed sub-regional protocol ('life and limb' cases; multiple composite need cases, 'place of safety' homeless cases and other exceptional cases)

Under occupation by 2 or more rooms	Any social housing tenant applicants giving up family accommodation with 2 or more bedrooms in excess of their housing requirements
Statutory overcrowding	Any application from a household that has been declared Statutorily Overcrowded in their current accommodation
Prohibition or demolition order	Any application from a household where a statutory notice such as Prohibition Order or Demolition Order have been made by Environmental Health

Band 2	
Health /Disability award	Any applicant awarded a band 2 health/ disability category by the agreed sub-regional protocol
Additional Priority award	Any applicant awarded a band 2 priority award by the agreed sub-regional protocol (serious harassment cases, multiple composite needs cases not otherwise addressed through the banding system and any other urgent cases)
Overcrowded 2 or more bedrooms short	Applicants that are two or more bedrooms short of their accommodation requirements as assessed through the originating Council's assessment criteria
Under occupation by 1 room	Any social housing tenant applicants giving up family accommodation with 1 bedroom in excess of their housing requirements
Compound needs	Any applicant who meets 2 or more categories in Band 3

Band 3	
Health /Disability award	Any applicant awarded a band 3 health/ disability category by the agreed sub-regional protocol
Additional Priority award	Any applicant awarded a band 3 priority award for special welfare or hardship needs through the agreed sub-regional protocol (harassment cases, high priority cases, welfare and hardship cases, multiple composite need cases not otherwise addressed through the scheme)
Statutory homeless in temporary accommodation	Applicants to whom the originating district has accepted a statutory homeless duty and placed in temporary accommodation
Insecure Tenancies	Applicants whose private rented sector landlord has commenced court possession proceedings against them
Tied accommodation	Applicants who are in tied accommodation relating to their employment (this can include service personnel), and who have received formal notice of termination of their employment and

	tenancy
Unsatisfactory housing/ Lacking facilities	Applicants living in accommodation that the Environmental Health department has assessed under the HHSRS and is deemed to have a category 1 hazard where the most satisfactory course of action is the service of an Improvement Notice, or Applicants that lack either a bath/ shower, a toilet, cooking facilities, running hot water supplies, electric/gas, or adequate heating
Compound needs	Any applicant who meets more than one category in Band 4

Band 4	
Health /Disability award	Any applicant awarded a band 4 health/ disability category by the agreed sub-regional protocol
Additional Priority award	Any applicants awarded a band 4 priority welfare award by the agreed sub-regional protocol
Homeless (non statutory)	Applicants who are deemed to be homeless, but to whom the originating Council has not accepted a full homeless duty
Overcrowded – 1 Room Short	Applicants that are one bedroom short of their accommodation requirements as assessed through the originating Council's assessment criteria

Band 5	
Adequately housed	Applicants who are adequately housed or do not fall into any of the above bands
Sufficient financial resources	Applicants who have sufficient financial resources to secure alternative accommodation
Nil priority	Applicants who do not fall into the above bands or who have been given a "nil priority award

Additional Guidance	
Time Limited Priority	In certain cases, placement in a band will be time limited. For example, additional priority through the agreed sub-regional procedure may only be awarded for a limited time period. When this is reviewed, consideration will be given to there having been a reasonable amount of time available to the applicant to bid for alternative accommodation
Change Of Circumstances	If a applicant is moved into a different priority group due to a change in circumstances, their application will retain its registration date
Additional Priority Awards	An award given by the body awarding additional priority cannot be compounded with another need to qualify for a higher band as

	the award already takes all the applicant's circumstances into account
Additional Priority Awards	Additional priority awards will be made by the district procedures in accordance with the subregional protocols
Statutory Homeless	Applicants accepted as statutory homeless and placed in temporary accommodation cannot have this criteria compounded with another criteria in Band 3 to move the applicant to a higher band
Local Connection (General Needs)	Priority will be given to applications from the other sub-regional districts over applications from the district which has the void
Local Connection (Sheltered & Disabled Adapted)	Applicants that have a local connection to that district will be prioritised over those that do not

4.0 Protocol for the Award of Additional Priority

Banding Scheme	Most aspects of housing need are taken into account through the banding scheme. However the scheme cannot take account of every circumstance, and in cases of circumstances which are not adequately assessed through the banding scheme, an assessment may be made to assess additional priority within each district
Assessment	Each partner authority will determine their own assessment methods, as the most appropriate in their local circumstances. The assessment methods may include assessment by a panel or by officers who are delegated to award additional priority to people in serious need who are not adequately prioritised within the allocation system
Overseeing	The Steering Group will oversee applications which are referred for an award of additional priority. The awards will be monitored by the Steering Group
Evidence	Applicants should provide evidence to support their application for an award of additional priority. This can include (though not exclusively) a summary of events which led up to the application being made, reports from police, education professionals, social and community services, or other agencies involved with the case, details of any action being taken against alleged perpetrators, if applicable and a proposal for future action to resolve the situation. Independent evidence must be produced for the Officer or Panel to be able to review the case
Scope	The Officer or Panel role is to review cases of exceptional housing need. They will judge each case on the basis of the evidence presented to them

Awards	<p>The Panel or delegated Officer can make the following awards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Band 1 - Exceptional cases • Band 2 - Additional priority • Band 3 - Additional priority • Band 4 - Additional priority <p>The banding scheme lists examples of the type of circumstances, which would qualify for the awards of additional priority. These lists are not exhaustive</p> <p>Band 1 - Exceptional cases</p> <p>Any applicant awarded an exceptional (band 1) category by the protocols of the sub-region ('life and limb' cases; multiple composite need cases, 'place of safety' homeless cases and other exceptional cases)</p> <p>Band 2 - Additional Priority award</p> <p>Any applicant awarded a band 2 priority award by the protocols of the sub-region (serious harassment cases, multiple composite needs cases not otherwise addressed through the banding system, and any other urgent cases)</p> <p>Band 3 - Additional Priority award</p> <p>Any applicant awarded a band 3 priority award by the protocols of the sub-region (harassment cases, high priority cases, welfare and hardship cases, multiple composite need cases not otherwise addressed through the scheme)</p> <p>Band 4 - Additional Priority award</p> <p>Any applicant awarded a band 4 priority welfare award by the protocols of the sub-region. This award may be made through an officer assessment even where a Panel may be used for other assessments</p>
Time Limited Awards	<p>Any additional priority awarded will usually be made for 3 – 6 months in the first instance. The applicant's circumstances will be monitored and the award can be renewed if appropriate, or withdrawn where the applicant's circumstances have changed, making them ineligible for the award. In cases where suitable properties have been advertised but the applicant has failed to place a bid, a direct offer may be made by the applicant's district council</p>

5.0 Protocol for Health and Disability Awards

Banding Scheme	Health and disability are dealt with in the banding scheme by making an individual assessment of the applicant's circumstances. This is done by making a referral to the body assessing additional priority for health, welfare and disability within each district
Assessment	Each partner authority will determine their own assessment methods, as the most appropriate in their local circumstances. The assessment methods may include assessment by an independent medical practitioner or assessment by officers based on evidence supplied by health professionals who have had direct contact with the applicant
Overseeing	The Steering Group will monitor applications which are made a Health and Disability priority award to ensure consistency of decision making between partner authorities
Evidence	Applicants should provide evidence to support their application for an award of additional priority. This can include (though not exclusively) reports from health professionals, education professionals, social and community services, or other agencies involved with the case, Independent evidence must be produced for the District to be able to review the case
Scope	These bodies exist to review cases of exceptional housing need due to health or disability. They will judge each case on the basis of the evidence presented to them
Awards	The following awards can be made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Band 2 - Health and Disability • Band 3 - Health and Disability • Band 4 - Health and Disability <p>The banding scheme lists examples of the type of circumstances, which would qualify for these awards. These lists are not exhaustive</p>
	<p>Band 2 Health and Disability</p> <p>There is a very high risk to the health of the applicant that makes the current accommodation totally unsuitable. They should be moved to other accommodation as soon as possible</p>
	<p>Band 3 Health and Disability</p> <p>The current accommodation cannot be altered or improved to resolve the health problem and there is a considerable risk to the applicant's health that will get worse unless they move to other accommodation</p>

	<p>Band 4 Health and Disability</p> <p>Applicant's health problem is exacerbated directly by the current housing conditions and requires some priority over a person living in the same circumstances whose health is not affected.</p> <p>Band 4 awards may be made by an officer assessment</p>
Time Limited Priority	The applicant's circumstances will be monitored and the award can be renewed if appropriate, or withdrawn where the applicant's circumstances have changed, making them ineligible for the award

6.0 Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings Rules

6.1 Sub-Regional Properties

Properties available for sub-regional bidding will be clearly identified by the authority in which that property is located. The Allocation Scheme of that authority, including this Sub-Regional Assessment Scheme, will govern the allocation of that property

6.2 Deemed Applications

Should an applicant bid for a property through the sub-regional scheme for a property in another local authority area, then that applicant will be deemed to have joined the housing register of that authority at the time of making the bid. The assessment relating to that application, by the authority to which the original application for housing was made, will be used by the authority in which the property is located, in determining the shortlist for the letting, as if the application had been made to it directly

6.3 Number of Bids

One bid may be made for sub regional properties. This is in addition to the bids allowed in the applicant's own district scheme

6.4 Penalties and Sanctions

There will be no sanctions or penalties imposed on applicants that bid for a sub-regional property and then go on to withdraw their interest or refusal the offer of accommodation

6.5 Direct Offers

There will be no direct offers to void properties while they are identified as part of the sub-regional property pool

6.6 Property Size Matrix

The partners have agreed a property size matrix to ensure that applicants are treated consistently by all authorities in relation to the sub-regional scheme, as follows:

	Bedsit/ Studio	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	2 bedroom older persons accommodati on	3 bedroom	3 bedroom 'parlour' house	4 bedroom	5 bedroom	6+ bedroom
Single Person	X	X							
Couple		X							
Older person	X	X							
Older couple		X		X					
Applicant(s) & one dependant or 2 adults			X						
Applicant(s) & two dependants of same gender			X		X				
Applicant(s) & two dependants of different genders					X				
Applicant(s) with three dependants					X	X			
Applicant(s) with four dependants*					X	X	X		
Applicant(s) five dependants*							X	X	
Applicant(s) with 6 dependants*							X	X	X
Applicant(s) with 7+ dependants*							X	X	X

*dependant on size and makeup of family

(definition of "older person" may vary depending on the property)