



Northumberland
County Council

Common Allocation Policy Review

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Common Allocation Policy (CAP)

The aims of Northumberland CAP are-

- Increase housing choice and meet housing need.
- Create a single point of access through a Common Housing Register to all social housing, including accredited private sector properties and low-cost home ownership options in Northumberland.
- Provide an open, fair and transparent housing allocations system that is easily understood, accessible and easy to use.
- Ensure consistency in the way each applicant access accommodation.
- Help prevent and tackle homelessness in Northumberland.
- Create sustainable communities.

Common Allocation Policy (CAP)

- Introduced in 2002 and has not had a fundamental review – review is well overdue
- Main areas of concern and for discussion relates to the following
 - Assessment/Banding
 - Local Connection
 - Rural Allocations
 - Homelessness Applicants
 - Financial eligibility

Assessment

Applications are assessed based on their housing need which fall into a specific category. Banding categories detailed below.

Band P- Homeless Priority/Full housing duty, statutory duty to rehouse, demolition and regeneration cases (decants), Compulsory purchase order, high medical/welfare/hardship need, Supported housing move on, statutorily overcrowded, severe disrepair.

Band 1- Homeless not in priority need, medium medical/welfare need, severe overcrowded, insecure accommodation, under occupation, medium disrepair/lacking facilities, medium hardship.

Band 2- medical/welfare need, sharing facilities, overcrowded, hardship, keyworker, transfer applicant with preference.

Band 2R- No local connection, anyone on application owns a property, deliberately worsening.

Band 3- Adequately housed.

Bandings

Currently have 14247 applicants registered

- Band P - 349
- Band 1 - 1926
- Band 2 - 2674
- Band 2R - 837
- Band 3 – 8461

40% of all applicants have no assessed housing need

Bandings

- Propose to:
 - Delete band 3 – if an applicant does not have a housing need they will not be registered, this allows for more staff time to deal with vulnerable and complex applicants.

This would ensure that we would be dealing with those in housing need and currently this would **reduce the Housing Register to 5786 genuine applicants in some form of housing need.**

Local Connection

Currently those without a local connection are placed in either Band 2R or Band 3
Propose that if an applicant does not meet the following, they cannot be registered

- Normally be resident in Northumberland. Local Government Association guidelines define this as having resided in the area for 6 of the last 12 months, or 3 out of the last 5 years, where residence has been out of choice.
- Work in Northumberland. The Local Government Association guidelines define this as employment other than of a casual nature. For the purposes of this policy this will be defined as having had permanent work with a minimum of 16 hour contract per week for the previous 6 months, and without a break in employment for more than 3 months.
- Family connections in Northumberland. The Local Government Association guidelines define this as the applicant, or a member of their household has parents, adult children or siblings who have been resident in Northumberland for at least 5 years. Only in exceptional circumstances would relatives other than those listed above be taken into consideration.
- Special circumstances for moving to Northumberland. This could be special medical needs and the only/most appropriate treatment is available in Northumberland.

Local Connection

However, exceptions to this will include where:

- They have been accepted as statutorily homeless, and the requirement of a local connection has been waived for specific reasons
- Persons from outside of Northumberland fleeing domestic abuse and who are at the time of the application living in Northumberland, in a refuge or other similarly provided emergency accommodation
- People fleeing domestic abuse from another part of the country who would be at risk in the area where they have a local connection
- They need to move to Northumberland to give or receive support where failure to do so would cause hardship
- There are special circumstances such as health or support needs that are only available within Northumberland

Local Connection

- There are currently 1178 applicants registered with no local connection
- Majority are in Band 3
- 250 are in band 2R

- If we introduce no Local Connection Criteria this would mean that we would reduce the numbers on the Housing Register **5526 genuine applicants within Northumberland in Housing Need**

Rural Connection

Northumberland Homefinder recognises that there may be a lack of affordable homes in rural parishes and aims to support rural communities by awarding additional preference to families with a strong local connection. A rural allocations criterion may be used to let homes in rural parishes where the landlord, or a Section 106, indicates that this is appropriate.

A close connection to the parish or surrounding parish is defined as the applicant meeting one of the following criteria:

- Living in the parish continually for at least 3 years immediately prior to the date of selection for an offer;
- Be in continuous full or part-time employment within the parish;
- Lived continuously in the parish for at least 3 years immediately prior to being accepted as homeless but have been placed in temporary accommodation outside of the parish for up to 2 years;
- Having parents, adult children or siblings who have lived continually in the parish for at least 3 years immediately prior to the date of selection for an offer.

Rural Connection

- Currently no priority, if meet criteria then earliest registration date is successful
- Recently a young family living in a parish, the mother and father had lived there all their life bid on a property however property was allocated to an applicant whose Sister lived in the surrounding parish, both Band 1 but Sister had earlier registration date – Family may now need to move out of the parish
- Should we prioritise the criteria i.e. those currently living in the Parish have priority for those moving in to be near siblings for example?

Homeless Applicants

- Currently all Band P Homeless Clients are eligible to bid on relevant properties. This is encouraging applicants to be selective, raises unrealistic expectations in high demand areas & introduce inefficiencies in low demand areas. Applicants may be encouraged to wait longer for an ideal property as opposed to expressing interest on a property they have a high likelihood of being awarded. Results in lengthy stay in Temporary Accommodation
- 1 April – 31 December - £255,000 was spent on Temporary Accommodation for homeless applicants

Homeless Applicants

Proposal

To Direct let a property - Homeless Legislation allows for Local Authorities to directly offer a Homeless applicant a suitable offer of accommodation

One suitable offer would reduce waiting time, reduce TA Bill and reduces void times.

The Localism Act also allows Local Authorities to fully discharge their full housing duty by a 'private rented sector offer'

We look to discharge our duty to the private rented sector as another option.

Financial Eligibility

Currently if an applicant has more than £100k in equity or savings they are not eligible to join the register, unless exceptional circumstances, i.e. Health/disability

Propose the following:

The capital, savings and equity available to a household will be assessed. If it is determined that a household can resolve their own housing need within their local housing market they **will not** be eligible to register. This assessment will be based upon:

- The household's capital, savings and equity
- The size and composition of the household
- The local housing market (prices to rent or buy).

The capital, savings and equity thresholds would need to be agreed.

- Next steps
- Questions
- Any further issues/concerns

Thank you