Salford City Council’s Allocation Scheme 2016
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Policy aims and objectives

The Housing Act 1996 requires a local housing authority to have a scheme, which sets out how housing is allocated within the area and how applicants on the housing register are prioritised, and publish a summary of that scheme.

Salford City Council (“the council”) is the local housing authority and this scheme was developed by the council and its partners in consultation with elected members, applicants and other stakeholders.

The council retains full responsibility for the scheme and will be responsible for amendments and consultation processes. However, the management of the scheme has been contracted out by the council to Salix Homes.

The policy is based on the following principles:

- To have a fair system for the allocation of housing accommodation, which is transparent and easy to understand
- To make best use of increasingly scarce social housing stock
- To prevent homelessness
- To give priority to applicants with the greatest housing need
- To manage customer expectations by supporting people to make realistic and informed choices about where they live
- To create sustainable tenancies in the light of welfare reform
- To create balanced and stable communities

The scheme seeks to achieve these aims by:

- Ensuring housing accommodation is allocated to the most appropriate person
- Supporting under-occupiers to downsize into accommodation more suitable for their needs
- Ensuring adapted properties are allocated to the person in greatest need of that accommodation
- Ensuring people move from supported accommodation to independent living in a timely way
• Encouraging partners to undertake affordability assessments for prospective tenants to ensure they can meet their housing costs prior to being successful for a tenancy
• Creating communities which support the local economy
• Reducing the risk of anti-social behaviour

The council will deliver the scheme as part of a housing options approach that will identify those people in greatest need and provide advice on a range of options to access suitable accommodation. The option used will be dependent upon individual circumstances, level of need and the choices people express with regard to receiving support from the council and other agencies. Options may include:

• Help and support to remain in current accommodation
• Advice on securing alternative private rented accommodation
• Advice on mobility schemes that may help a household move out of the area
• Advice to current social housing tenants on mutual exchange
• Advice on low cost home ownership options

1.2 Legal Framework

The Housing Act 1996 part 6 (“the Act”) requires the council to make all allocations of housing accommodation in accordance with a published scheme. This document is the full scheme, a summary of this scheme is available free of charge to anyone who asks for a copy, and can be found on the council’s website.

The Act provides the framework for allocating housing accommodation, and defines categories of people who must be given reasonable preference when allocating accommodation. These categories are called the ‘reasonable preference categories’, (see section 3.3 below).

The Act also requires the council to outline its position with regard to giving applicants choice on the housing offer or to allow households to make a statement of preference on the area in which they wish to live.
The provisions of the Localism Act 2011 allow the council the freedom to determine who qualifies for housing accommodation in its area, and develop solutions, which make best use of its social housing stock.

Although the Localism Act maintained the reasonable preference categories, which ensures priority for social housing is given to those in greatest need, it also creates opportunities for the council to better manage its housing register to meet local need and prevent people without a housing need from joining the register.

‘Guidance for Local Authorities in England on the Allocation of Accommodation’ was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in June 2012. Local authorities are required to have regard to this guidance when exercising their functions under Part 6 of the 1996 Act.

‘Providing social housing for local people: statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England’ was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in December 2013. Local authorities are required to have regard to this guidance when exercising their functions under Part 6 of the 1996 Act.

‘Right to Move: statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local housing authorities in England’ was published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in March 2015. This provides for an exclusion from local connection qualification requirements where there is a work-related ‘right to move’.

1.3 Related Strategies

In developing this policy the following strategies have been taken into account:

- Housing Strategy
- Tenancy Strategy
- Homelessness Strategy 2015-2018

1.4 Statement on Choice

This policy recognises the importance of allowing applicants to express a preference for the area that they would like to live in and the type of property.
However this policy also recognises that social housing is a scarce resource and that it will not be possible to offer applicants unlimited choice.

Section 176A of the Act requires the allocation scheme to describe the council’s policy about offering applicants choice over where to live. This should not be confused with applicants having a right to choose or express preferences on where to live for which there is no legal requirement.

The Allocation Scheme allows customers to express a preference for both area and property type. Salford Home Search is a choice based lettings scheme managed by Salix Homes on behalf of the council. Partner landlords advertise properties on a weekly basis and applicants registered with the scheme are able to express an interest in up to three properties each week. Applicants must satisfy both the qualification and the eligibility criteria in order to be registered.

Applicants are expected to accept any reasonable offer of accommodation suitable for their households needs. One refusal of an offer without good reason will result in removal from the housing register for a period of 12 months. Applicants will have the right to request a review of the decision to remove their application from the register. (See Reviews section 5.6).

1.5 Equality of Opportunity

Statement

Salford City Council is committed to providing quality housing and services to our customers. The council recognises its statutory duties under the Equalities Act 2010 to ensure that no person will receive less favourable treatment than others because of age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, marriage or civil partnership pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation or gender reassignment.

It is the aim of Salford City Council to ensure that our services are fair and equitable for all our customers who may utilise them and we want our services to be accessible to everyone.

The council will not tolerate any unfair or unlawful discrimination that provides a lower standard of service to any group or individual.
2. ELIGIBILITY AND QUALIFICATION

2.1 Eligibility Criteria

The Act and associated legislation states that some applicants are not eligible for an allocation of social housing (except for certain existing social housing tenants including those seeking a transfer who are to be given reasonable preference). Ineligible households currently are:

- People from abroad who are subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 unless they fall into one of the categories of people set out in regulations who are allowed to apply.
- Other classes of people from abroad whom the Secretary of State has prescribed as being ineligible for the allocation of social housing by local authorities in England.

Eligibility for an allocation may change over time therefore acceptance on to the register does not guarantee that the person will be allocated accommodation. Eligibility will be confirmed again at the point of consideration of making an offer of accommodation. Where a person’s circumstances have changed and they are no longer eligible, their application will be removed from the housing register.

2.2 Qualifying Criteria

Applicants aged under 16 years of age do not qualify.

Applicants aged 16 or 17 years will be able to register an application with Salford Home Search but it will be suspended until they reach their 18th birthday. Exceptions may be made for example, young people leaving care, however this will only apply where appropriate support is in place to assist the young person with sustaining a tenancy and the young person agrees to accept the support.

People are qualifying people if they are not excluded by statute or another part of this policy and fall into one of the following categories:
People who have been assessed as being in housing need and who belong to one of the statutory reasonable preference groups

People who are under-occupying social housing

People who are living in temporary or supported accommodation in the city. This will usually be accommodation provided where the person is homeless and has no other accommodation available to them and the intention of the accommodation provider and of the person is that they will be resettled to alternative accommodation when any support needs have been met. It includes move-on supported accommodation funded by Mental Health Services.

People who need to move due to the council undertaking a compulsory purchase order on their home or who require alternative accommodation due to regeneration initiatives of the council within the city

People who have served in the Armed Forces

Care leavers who have been the responsibility of Salford City Council

Households where the addition of some priority to their application will prevent them from becoming homeless

Foster carers approved by the local authority

Households where a child/children are assessed as being in need or on a Child Protection Plan and alternative accommodation is required to safeguard the child/children

Applicants who can demonstrate a community connection by volunteering for a minimum of 16 hours per month for a registered charity, a recognised community group or a not for profit organisation.

2.3 Who is not a qualifying person?

In addition to being in housing need the council has decided that criteria relating to local connection, unacceptable behaviour and income/capital thresholds will also be taken into account before a person can register with Salford Home Search.
2.4 Local Connection

In order to ensure that the needs of the local community are met, a person who does not have a local connection to Salford is not a qualifying person under this scheme.

The local connection requirement does not apply to certain existing social housing tenants who are to be given reasonable preference because of a need to move to a particular locality in the authority’s district, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship; and has a need to move for work-related reasons, as set out in regulations. Applicants should seek detailed advice if this might apply to them.

For the purposes of this Allocations scheme a local connection is defined below. This definition varies to that used for the purposes of a homelessness assessment as defined in section 199 of the Housing Act 1996 part 7, which will still be used for determining local connection where the full housing duty is owed.

**Residence**: the applicant must have lived in Salford in settled accommodation for a period of 2 years.

**Employment**: the applicant must have a contract of permanent employment and work within the city. It is not sufficient that the employers’ head office is located within the city or that the applicant is seeking work. The applicant must have been in continuous employment for a period of 6 months.

**Family association**: the applicant must have a parent, adult sibling or adult child living in Salford in settled accommodation for a minimum of five years.

**Former asylum seekers**: the applicant will have a local connection to Salford if their application for asylum was determined whilst living in accommodation in Salford provided under section 95 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 and they have been granted the right to remain.

**Other special circumstances**: there may be circumstances that do not meet any of the above criteria but on consideration the applicant is deemed to have a local connection. These cases will be considered on a case by case basis and
the decision will be made by the Service Manager. Such circumstances might include, but are not limited to:

- Applicants fleeing violence and to whom the local authority owe a duty because they are homeless
- Applicants who are not currently resident in Salford but who need to move in order to give or receive care and support
- Members or former members of the Armed Forces who do not meet the criteria below but who might be in housing need

**Armed Forces:** the following applicants will be exempt from the local connection criteria –

- Current or former members of the armed forces who left the service within five years of their application for an allocation.
- Persons who are serving or who have served in the armed forces and who suffer from a serious injury or disability which is attributable in whole or part to that service; and,
- A spouse or civil partner who is or was living in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence and whose former spouse or civil partner was a serviceman whose death was attributable in whole or in part to their service.

### 2.5 Unacceptable Behaviour

A person is ineligible under this scheme if he or a member of his household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him unsuitable to be a tenant of the council; and in the circumstances at the time his application is considered, he is unsuitable to be a tenant of the council by reason of that behaviour.

The following list, although not exhaustive, provides examples of unacceptable behaviour. Applicants will be considered on a case by case basis.

- Owing significant rent arrears, either current or former, to any council, registered provider or private landlord, amounting to more than £200. Applicants will be asked to provide evidence of clear rent accounts,
current and previous. Where evidence comes to light following acceptance onto the housing register that rent arrears are owed, the application may be removed from the housing register.

- Owing rechargeable repairs on a current or former tenancy with any council, registered provider or private landlord.
- Owing significant mortgage repayments amounting to more than one month’s repayment.
- Serious nuisance/annoyance to neighbours where there is evidence that a member of the household and/or visitors to the property have committed serious anti-social behaviour and are the subject of an ASBO, injunction or other legal proceedings due to a breach of tenancy conditions or anti-social behaviour order.
- Having unspent criminal convictions which the council considers makes the applicant or a member of their household unsuitable to be a tenant due to the threat they would pose to neighbours and/or the community.
- Being convicted of using current or former accommodation (or allowing it to be used) for illegal and/or immoral purposes such as drug dealing.
- Serious neglect, damage or abandonment of a previous property.
- Allowing furniture, fittings and other installations provided by the landlord to deteriorate due to ill treatment.
- Abusive or threatening behaviour towards members of staff at the council or any partner providing accommodation under this policy.
- Obtaining a tenancy by deception for example by giving false information or withholding relevant information.
- Having lost previous accommodation provided in connection with employment due to misconduct that meant the applicant could no longer live there.

Any applicant who is ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour will be notified of the decision and the grounds for it in writing, and will be informed of their right to request a review of the decision. Further information on the review process is contained in section 5.6.
2.6 Income/Capital Threshold - To be implemented 01 April 2017

Any applicant who exceeds the income or capital threshold, including equity in any property they own is not a qualifying person. The thresholds for income, capital and equity are:

- Income – joint gross income of the household not to exceed £60,000 per annum
- Any other capital including equity in property owned not to exceed the value of £60,000

Exceptions may be made for owner-occupiers with in excess of £60,000 equity where there are health needs that require sheltered housing although other options will be explored with the applicant.

2.7 Deliberate Worsening of Circumstances

Any applicant who has deliberately made their situation worse to increase their housing need and consequently improve their chances of rehousing is guilty of unacceptable behaviour and is therefore ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation.

Examples of deliberately worsening circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- Vacating a property in the private rented sector without good reason then moving in with family resulting in overcrowding
- Selling or transferring a property that is affordable and suitable for the applicant’s needs without good reason
- Moving additional household members into a property

3. HOW APPLICANTS ARE ASSESSED

3.1 Initial Assessment

Every application received will be considered according to its facts. Because every applicant’s situation is different, applications will be considered on an individual basis and individual circumstances will be taken into account.
Accepted applications will be placed in a housing need band following application and any further assessment of the applicant’s household’s needs as required.

The initial assessment can be completed on-line by the applicant or by a Housing Options Advisor as part of an overall housing options assessment.

The purpose of the initial assessment is to determine firstly is the applicant eligible as defined within this policy. If the applicant is eligible the second stage of the initial assessment will determine if the applicant is a qualifying person as defined within this policy.

Where an applicant is found to ineligible and therefore unable to proceed to the second stage of the assessment they will be notified in writing of the decision and the reasons why. The applicant will have the right to request a review of that decision, (see Reviews, section 5.6).

### 3.2 Verification of Information

Information provided by the applicant on their application will be verified. Applicants will be required to provide the following:

- Two forms of identification one of which must include a photograph
- Proof of residence at current address
- Identification and proof of address for all household members included on the application
- A reference from current or previous landlord or mortgage company
- Proof of eligibility
- Confirmation of employment where applicable

A home visit may be carried out to verify information given about current accommodation and household members.

Enquiries may be made of third parties, for example, previous landlords or health professionals.

Applications will remain at initial assessment stage until all the required documentation has been provided and any further verification has been completed.
3.3 Stage Two – banding of applications

If an applicant is both eligible and qualifying a full assessment will be completed to determine what band the application will be placed in. Full details of the procedure for carrying out an assessment are contained in the procedure manual that accompanies this policy.

Applicants who are not eligible and/or qualifying for the housing register will still be entitled to receive advice and assistance with regard to their housing options.

Applicants will be placed into one of five bands on the housing register as follows:

**Band A**

Applicants who require alternative accommodation due to regeneration initiatives within the city. Accommodation will be offered based on the need of the household at the time they are required to move and not on a like for like basis. Priority within the band will be based on waiting time since registration.

**Band B**

Applicants who have been assessed by Salford Housing Options Point (SHOP), and who are owed the main housing duty under the Housing Act 1996, part 7 (as amended). Priority within the band will be based on waiting time since registration.

**Band C**

Applicants who according to the Housing Act 1996, part 6, section 167(2), fall within a reasonable preference group. These are:

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002); this includes people who are intentionally homeless and those who do not have a priority need for accommodation
- People who are owed a duty by any local authority under section 190(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985)
or who are occupying accommodation secured by any local authority under section 192(3)

- People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the local authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others)

In addition to the statutory reasonable preference groups the following groups will be awarded priority and will be placed in band C:

- Social housing tenants under-occupying their current accommodation
- Those needing to move to smaller accommodation on grounds of affordability, (any move must not create overcrowding)
- Members and former members of the Armed Forces who are exempt from the local connection criteria
- Households where the awarding of priority on the housing register will prevent them from becoming homeless
- Foster carers approved by the local authority
- Households where a child/children are assessed as being a child/children in need or on a Child Protection Plan and alternative accommodation is required in order to safeguard the child/children
- Applicants who can demonstrate a community connection by volunteering for a minimum of 16 hours per month for a registered charity, a recognised community group or a not for profit organisation

Applicants falling in to a reasonable preference category will have needs added to their application according to the criteria met however this will not exceed the level of need awarded to those applicants in the additional preference categories. Priority will be determined by those with the highest number of needs followed by waiting time since registration.
Additional Preference – band C

- Residents of temporary accommodation provided under homelessness legislation and residents of supported accommodation who are deemed ready to move on to independent living and who have completed a tailored support package
- Care leavers
- In exceptional circumstances additional preference may be awarded to applications in order to meet housing need within a reasonable timescale. Such cases will be agreed by the Allocations Review Panel and a record kept. This might include, but is not limited to, those who need to move urgently because of a life threatening illness or sudden disability, families in severe overcrowding which poses a serious health hazard, those who are homeless and require urgent rehousing as a result of violence or threats of violence, including intimidated witnesses, and those escaping serious anti-social behaviour or domestic violence.
- People who fall within one or more of the reasonable preference categories and who have urgent housing needs and are:
  (a) Former members of the Armed Forces
  (b) Serving members of the Armed Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service
  (c) Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner
  (d) Serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service

The number of additional needs added to an application for those in the additional preference categories will be determined on a case by case basis. Priority will be determined by those with the highest number of needs followed by waiting time since registration.
Band M

Applicants who have completed the medical questionnaire for Salford Home Search and who have been independently assessed as requiring level access, ground floor or wheelchair accessible accommodation. Applicants will be placed in one of three categories, SN1, SN3 or SN4 according to the specific type of accommodation required.

Applicants registered in band M might also fall into a reasonable preference category. Where this is the case the applicant will be awarded needs in line with those applicants in a reasonable preference category in band C. Priority will be determined by those with the highest need followed by waiting time since registration.

Band D (Mutual Exchanges)

The council is committed to making best use of social housing stock in the city and therefore actively promotes mutual exchange as a means of achieving this. Where social housing tenants would otherwise be unable to register with Salford Home Search as they do not qualify for the register, use of this band enables those tenants to secure alternative accommodation while supporting the council’s strategic aim.

Mutual exchanges do not fall within the definition of an allocation within Part 6 of the Act but have been included here as in order to register for an exchange applicable tenants must register with Salford Home Search.

Applicants registered with Salford Home Search will automatically be registered for mutual exchanges as part of the registration process.

Applicants who are eligible but do not qualify to go on the housing register may still register with Salford Home Search on the Mutual Exchange Register.

Applicants will require the consent of their landlord before being permitted to enter into a mutual exchange.

3.4 Transfers for existing social tenants

Transfers for existing social tenants who do not fall within a reasonable preference group are not defined as an allocation within Part 6 of the Act.
Individual social landlords will have existing transfer policies which will administer lettings of this type.

3.5 Data Protection

Application information will be held on a computer system. Information about an application and personal details will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

3.6 False Statements

It is an offence for anyone to knowingly or recklessly make a statement that is materially false, or to deliberately withhold information which is reasonably required, or to fail to notify SHOP of any changes in their housing circumstances. If the applicant has been allocated a property under these circumstances the relevant partner of Salford Home Search may take court action to evict the applicant.

4. HOW THE HOUSING REGISTER WILL WORK

4.1 Definition of an Allocation

Under the terms of the Housing Act 1996 part 6 the allocation of accommodation by housing authorities is defined in section 159 as:

- Selecting a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation held by a local authority
- Nominating a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation held by another person (i.e. one of the authorities or bodies fulfilling the landlord condition mentioned in section 80 of the Housing Act 1985) or
- Nominating a person to be an assured tenant (including of an assured shorthold) of housing accommodation held by a registered provider.

4.2 How Properties will be Allocated

Landlords who are a partner in Salford Home Search advertise properties each week on the Salford Home Search website.
Properties that can meet the needs of applicants in band M, for example properties with adaptations for wheelchair users, will be placed in band M.

The remainder of the properties will be placed in one of the bands using a quota system based on the numbers in each band registered with Salford Home Search. Partner landlords will be provided with data on a monthly basis giving the number of applicants registered within each band further subdivided by the number of one, two, three and four bedrooms required within each band.

The quotas will be determined by the CBL Partners Group and any change to the quotas will be agreed by that group.

This process ensures equitable distribution of available properties between bands and does not therefore promote one band as being more favourable than another. This allows the council to meet its statutory duties whilst also addressing housing need within the city.

The band in which a property is advertised is determined by the landlord.

At the end of the bid cycle a shortlist of bidders is generated for each property advertised. The sort order for the shortlist is:

- applicant band
- number of bedrooms
- size of moving group
- number of needs
- date registered with Salford Home Search

It is the responsibility of the relevant landlord to complete pre-allocation checks to determine if the applicant is still eligible and qualifying and if so to make a provisional offer of the accommodation.

Applicants will be given a reasonable period of time to accept an offer of accommodation that they have successfully expressed an interest in. Additional time may be granted to those applicants who are vulnerable or who have difficulty in responding due to their circumstances.
4.3 Nominations from Registered Providers not Partners in Salford Home Search

Registered providers who are not a partner in Salford Home Search but have entered into a nomination agreement with Salford City Council will provide SHOP with the details of properties to be allocated.

SHOP will generate a shortlist for the property on the landlords behalf, the rest of the process remains the same as for partners in Salford Home Search.

4.4 How the Size of Property Required will be Decided

In the interests of making best possible use of the available social housing stock, applicants will be offered accommodation that meets the needs of their household and is affordable.

The following rules will be applied when determining the size of property required:

- One bedroom will be allowed for a single person household
- One bedroom will be allowed for a couple
- One bedroom will be allowed for any two children of the same sex up to the age of 21 years
- One bedroom will be allowed for any two children regardless of sex up to the age of 10 years
- One bedroom will be allowed for any other child

Children of an appropriate age and sex within the same households are expected to share a bedroom regardless of relationship, for example step children and foster children.

Unborn children will not count as requiring a bedroom. Applicants can register with Salford Home Search twelve weeks before the expected due date of the baby however the application will be suspended until after the birth of the child.

Where applicants have shared care arrangements for children, they will only be allocated an additional bedroom if they are the recipient of the child benefit for that child unless there are extenuating circumstances.
Provided it will not constitute statutory overcrowding and should the applicant agree, in certain circumstances a household will be allowed to occupy a property smaller than they would be entitled to under this policy. This would normally apply to households needing five bedrooms or more.

4.5 Property Types

Applicants who have an assessed medical need and have been registered in band M as a result will only be considered for properties advertised in band M.

Only applications where the applicant or their partner is 55 years of age or older will be considered for properties which are designated as sheltered housing. Exceptions may apply for those applicants assessed as requiring the support services provided in this type of accommodation.

Single applicants or couples with no children will not be considered for houses or bungalows with more than one bedroom. Where applicants request an additional bedroom to accommodate medical equipment, or because a resident carer is part of the household, applicants should complete a medical support application for this need to be considered.

Applicants with one child under the age of 10 years will be considered for properties in multi-storey blocks where these properties have been advertised as being suitable for these households. Individual circumstances of households, for example families with children with serious learning disabilities who may be at risk from climbing and falling, will be taken into account when considering the suitability of the property.

4.6 Expressions of Interest

Applicants can express an interest in, or bid on, a maximum of three properties per bidding cycle.

Once an applicant has been made an offer of accommodation and the applicant has accepted the offer, the applicant will be unable to express an interest in any further properties advertised during future bid cycles.

Applicants who refuse an offer of accommodation with no good reason that was suitable for their needs will be removed from the housing register for a
period of 12 months. Applicants will have the right to request a review of the decision to remove their application. (See Reviews, section 5.6).

Applicants who are registered on the housing register but who do not express an interest in a property that has been advertised with Salford Home Search in a twelve month period for an appropriately sized property will be removed from the housing register for a period of 12 months. Applicants will have the right to request a review of the decision to remove their application. (See Reviews, section 5.6).

4.7 Joint Applicants

Where household members have a long term commitment to the home for example, when adults share accommodation as partners (including same sex partners, friends or live-in carers), landlords are able to grant a joint tenancy.

Each of the joint tenants will be responsible for the payment of the rent and ensuring that tenancy conditions are adhered to.

A joint tenancy may be terminated in writing by either joint tenant following which the remaining joint tenant will have no legal right to remain in occupation at the property. Court action for recovery of possession of the property may be taken by the landlord.

Landlords may use their discretion in deciding whether to grant the remaining tenant a sole tenancy. In exercising discretion, landlords will ensure that there are no adverse implications for the use of the housing stock and its ability to meet other housing needs by applying the lettings criteria.

4.8 Direct Allocations (Discretionary Allocations)

As far as possible the banding scheme will be used to allocate properties. However this scheme recognises that there may be circumstances where the choice based lettings system, Salford Home Search, is unable to meet the needs of certain applicants. In these circumstances an offer of accommodation will be made direct to the applicant without the property being advertised with Salford Home Search and therefore without the need for the applicant to have expressed an interest in that property.
Circumstances that might be appropriate for a direct allocation include, but are not limited to:

- Statutory homeless applicants who are failing to exercise choice through the choice based lettings process or who are failing to express an interest in appropriate accommodation through the choice based lettings process
- Care leavers supported by the city council’s Next Step team.
- Applicants requiring specially adapted properties
- Sheltered accommodation
- Where child or public protection issues require urgent rehousing or where the Multi Agency Public Protection Panel or National Witness Mobility Scheme has recommended that applicants be excluded from certain areas due to them being inappropriate
- Where in the interests of community cohesion there is a need to exercise extra sensitivity when letting certain properties in order to minimise the potential for anti-social behaviour

Direct allocations will be agreed by the Allocations Review Panel on a case by case basis taking into account individual circumstances and will be recorded as such. The Allocations Review Panel membership consists of the Service Manager from Salford Housing Options Point, the Empty Homes Manager from Salix Homes and the Head of Housing Services from City West Housing Trust.

Where a direct allocation is agreed by the Allocations Review Panel, the applicant will be made one reasonable offer of accommodation suitable for the households’ needs and not in an area known to be unsafe for the household.

Where an offer of accommodation is refused the applicant will have the right to request a review of the suitability of the offer, (see Reviews, section 5.6)

If following review the offer of accommodation is deemed to be suitable, or where no review is requested, the registration with Salford Home Search will be considered within the criteria for registration and may be cancelled on the basis that the applicant is no longer a qualifying person for the housing register and/or on the basis that a reasonable offer has been refused.
4.9 Local Lettings Policies

Local lettings policies are designed to respond to specific local issues. These may include particular concerns on estates and areas or other social issues in the community. Only a small proportion of the housing stock should be affected by local lettings policies.

Good practice guidelines encourage local authorities to aim for the following in developing local lettings policies:

- Protecting balanced and mixed communities
- Reducing property void rates and tenancy turnovers
- Improving community cohesion and stability
- Tackling low demand areas
- Reducing anti-social behaviour

All local lettings policies must be signed off by Salford City Council. Salford City Council will maintain a central register of all agreed local lettings policies to be monitored by the Strategy and Enabling Team.

Local lettings policies must be published and each policy must include the following:

- The scope of the policy, for example geographical coverage, property void levels, tenant profiles where appropriate
- Clear reasons and evidence of why a local lettings policy is required
- An assessment of any possible negative impacts of the local lettings policy
- How the policy will be monitored
- How the policy will be reported on and reviewed

Local lettings policies are to last no longer than six months without being reviewed.

In order to best meet the council’s statutory duties and strategic objectives the following groups will be excluded from local lettings policies:

- Statutory homeless households
- Care leavers
• residents of supported accommodation

5. ADMINISTRATION OF THE POLICY

5.1 Applicants who are ineligible or do not qualify If the Authority decide that an applicant is ineligible or not qualifying, the applicant will be notified of the decision and the grounds for it in writing. Applicants have the right to request a review of the decision, (see section below).

5.2 Decision Making

All decisions taken in relation to the scheme are to be taken by Housing Officers unless otherwise indicated.

5.3 Requests for Information

Information relating to the successful applicant for properties advertised previously can be found on the website for Salford Home Search. The information provided shows the band the property was advertised in, the band of the successful applicant and the number of needs that the successful applicant had.

Applicants can also see the information relating to the expressions of interest they have placed by logging in to their own registration with Salford Home Search. For every property that the applicant has expressed an interest in the total number of applicants expressing an interest, together with the applicant’s position in relation to those other applicants is given.

Applicants wanting further information in relation to any decision about their application can request the information using the contact details as shown on the website.

5.4 Changes in Circumstances

All applicants registered with Salford Home Search are required to notify SHOP of any changes in their circumstances and to provide any relevant supporting evidence of the change. It is the responsibility of the applicant to notify any changes.
 Applicants who fail to notify SHOP of any change and this is subsequently found to be the case may have their registration suspended or cancelled depending upon the nature of the change in circumstances.

Where a change in an applicant’s circumstances results in a change to the band that they are registered in, the applicant will be notified in writing of this change.

Where a change in an applicant’s circumstances results in their registration being cancelled, the applicant will be notified of this in writing.

5.5 Cancellation of Applications

Applications will be cancelled in the following circumstances:

- The applicant requests that the application is cancelled
- The applicant is housed through the Allocations Policy
- The applicant completes a mutual exchange
- The applicant becomes ineligible for an allocation
- The applicant ceases to be a qualifying person for an allocation
- The applicant is found following an investigation to have made false or deliberately misleading statements in connection with their application
- An applicant fails to respond to a request for further information within a reasonable time, usually 14 days unless there are extenuating circumstances. These will be considered on a case by case basis.

Applicants will be notified in writing that their application has been cancelled and the reason for the cancellation.

Applicants will have the right to request a review of the decision to cancel their application, (see Reviews, section 5.6).

5.6 Reviews

Applicants have the right to request a review of certain decisions on the following grounds or in the following circumstances:

- Their application has been refused or cancelled on the grounds that they are not eligible
• Their application has been refused or cancelled on the grounds that they are not a qualifying person
• Their application has been cancelled as they have been found to have made false or deliberately misleading statements in connection with their application
• Their application has been cancelled because they failed to respond to a request for further information
• A decision has been made about the facts of a particular application which have been taken into account to assess where an applicant should be placed on the banding system, the size of the property they should be allocated or whether an allocation should be made.
• The applicant has refused a direct allocation of accommodation which was considered to be a reasonable offer. In cases where the council have discharged the housing duty after the applicant has refused a reasonable offer, any requests for a review will be dealt with under the statutory homelessness review procedures under Part 7 of the 1996 Act.

Requests for reviews must be made within 21 days of being notified of the decision. Details of where to send the request will be included in the written decision letter received by the applicant.

Requests for reviews can be submitted by a representative of the applicant on their behalf.

Reviews will be carried out on behalf of the council by someone more senior than the person who made the original decision and who was not involved in making the original decision.

The applicant will be informed of the outcome of the review in writing, as soon as practicable.

5.7 Complaints

An applicant who is not happy with the service that they receive may register a complaint in writing to the city council via the website, www.salford.gov.uk or to the following address: Housing Strategy and Enabling Team, Unity House, Chorley Road, Swinton, M27 5BY.
6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

6.1 The effectiveness of the Allocations Policy will be monitored by:

- Publishing the results of allocations made through the choice based lettings system on the website of Salford Home Search
- Monitoring partner agreements and performance
- Reporting on allocations, including performance information from the housing register, to appropriate bodies

The Allocations Policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if required by new legislation or government guidance.

Any major amendments arising from a review will be subject to full consultation.