



Chorley Community Housing Allocations Policy 2009

(Third draft as at 27.2.09)

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Aims of Policy

1. Chorley Community Housing (CCH) aims to provide affordable housing for rent for people in housing need and to create sustainable, balanced communities.
2. We aim to:
 - ensure that customers in need are provided with accommodation
 - contribute to balanced communities
 - create sustainable communities where people want to live and feel safe
 - promote choice to customers
 - ensure that no group or individual is discriminated against as a result of this policy and to promote equal opportunities.
3. CCH will aim to let all properties via choice based lettings, except where it is necessary to make a positive letting. CCH will, from July 2009, advertise and let the properties it manages in Chorley, South Ribble and Preston via the SelectMove choice based lettings scheme.

Who Can Apply?

4. Anyone who is a UK resident or British citizen who has recourse to public funds and over the age of 18 years can apply to be rehoused.
5. Customers under the age of 18 but over 16 may apply for re-housing subject to providing a rent guarantor, an individual case by case assessment on ability to hold a tenancy shall be carried out.
6. Existing tenants of CCH can apply to transfer to another property or area if they have lived in their property for over 12 months. The only exceptions to this rule will be where the tenant is fleeing domestic violence, racial or homophobic harassment or other exceptional circumstances.
7. Owner occupiers can apply for housing, but will be subjected to a means test.
8. Customer checks will be carried out at the time of application on all members of the household applying to be re-housed. These checks will be made to confirm:
 - identity e.g. passport, identity card (issued to certain foreign nationals), photo-driving licence, birth certificate or written confirmation from a professional person or support agency
 - their conduct as a tenant by obtaining landlord references (where the customer has previously held a tenancy with a local authority, housing association or private landlord)
 - police checks where customers have indicated an “unspent” conviction
 - details as to income and assets (owner occupiers).

Schedule 1

9. Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Housing Act 1996 restricts payments and benefits which RSLs can give to employees and their close relatives. The granting of a tenancy is a benefit and, therefore, before an employee (or a close relation of the employee) of CCH is accepted on to the housing register or before a tenancy can be granted, this must be approved by the Board of CCH.

Joint Applications

10. A customer may include anyone on their application form who may reasonably be expected to live with them. Where more than one eligible customer wishes to have a shared application they will be joint customers.

Cancelling An Application

11. An application will be cancelled from the housing register in the following circumstances:
 - at the customers' request
 - if the customer becomes ineligible for housing
 - when the customer has been housed through the scheme
 - when a tenant of social housing completes a mutual exchange
 - where a customer does not maintain their application through the annual re-registration process, or where they move and do not provide a contact address
 - if the customer fails to respond to a request for further information within a reasonable time (20 working days)
 - if the customer fails to respond to an offer of accommodation within 5 working days
 - where it transpires that false information has been provided by the customer.
12. Should a customer whose application has been cancelled wish to re-join the housing register they will receive a new effective date. However, if a customer contacts CCH within 6 months of the cancellation of their application and asks to be reinstated, the application can be reinstated without the loss of their waiting time.

Vulnerable Customers

13. Customers with special needs or who are vulnerable will be provided with appropriate assistance to ensure that they:
 - understand how the choice based lettings scheme works
 - have information on vacancies that are available in any lettings cycle

- can express an interest in any vacancy advertised
- understand the feedback on completed lettings cycles
- understand the priority banding system
- know how to obtain advice and assistance
- understand the appeal process and can access such a process
- understand the offer process and their responsibilities as a future tenant

Customers Whose First Language Is Not English

14. For customers whose first language is not English, translation facilities will be provided via Language Line.

Sheltered Housing

15. Customers for sheltered housing must normally be aged 60 or over or have a need for sheltered accommodation due to vulnerability or disability. It is a condition of all tenancies in sheltered housing schemes that tenants agree to take the Support Service. Separate charges are made for these services in addition to the rent.

False or Withheld Information

16. Under Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996, a criminal offence may be committed if an customer knowingly gives false information or knowingly withholds information which has reasonably been requested on the housing registration form, in response to correspondence at the renewal of the application, or relating to any other review of the application. An offence is also committed if the customer allows a third party to provide false information on his or her behalf, or at this or her instigation.
17. Where false information is provided or information is withheld, applications will be cancelled and customers suspended should they reapply for housing within two years if it is found false information has been provided prior to offer. CCH may also take action including termination of a tenancy granted as a result of such actions and, following consultation with the local authority and police, criminal proceedings.

Requests To Defer Applications

18. Customers who do not wish to be immediately considered for housing can request to be placed on a deferred list and will not be considered for housing until they request that their application is placed on the active housing register. During the deferred period, customers will continue to gain time on list.

Change Of Circumstances

19. Customers are required to notify CCH in writing of any change in their circumstances, for example:

- a change of address, for themselves or any other person on their application
- any additions to the family or any other person they would wish to join the application (N.B. it is for CCH to decide whether they will allow a person/s to join the application).
- any member of the family or any other person on the application who has left the accommodation
- any change in income or savings that may affect their ability to purchase appropriate housing on the open market.

Owner Occupiers

20. Customers who are home-owners can apply for re-housing but they will be treated as having no immediate housing need and will be placed in Band 4. The exceptions to this are:
 - people who require sheltered or supported housing schemes;
 - owners who are not residing in their home, because their parents are still in residency (e.g. the property was purchased under the right to buy scheme, by a member of the household).
21. CCH will require homeowners to provide full details of their income and their assets in order to decide whether a home owner has an immediate housing need or whether they are considered to have sufficient means at their disposal following the sale of their property to enable them to purchase a suitable property on the open market,
22. This means test will be applied having regard to:
 - prevailing housing market conditions and prices;
 - any equity or savings that the customer has or may reasonably be expected to have;
 - the customer's ability to obtain a mortgage based on 3 times a sole income or 2.5 times a joint income (in the case of a couple); and
 - the suitability of housing that is available to meet their housing needs.
23. CCH will publish guidelines annually (or more frequently, should the housing market be in a period of rapid change) on the level of prices that it will apply in carrying out this means test.

Suspensions / Exclusions

24. Customers who are suspended will be placed in the appropriate band on the housing register but will not be eligible to receive an offer of accommodation/ bid for advertised properties for a period of two years.
25. Customers will be suspended if they or any member of their household;

- has engaged in anti-social behaviour, whether or not they were at the time a tenant of a local authority or registered social landlord and has not made and maintained a satisfactory undertaking to address that behaviour.
 - is a current tenant of CCH or any other social landlord and is or has been the subject of action for breach of tenancy;
 - owes rent arrears or any other housing related debt, excluding council tax, to CCH or any other social landlord and has not made and maintained a satisfactory arrangement to repay the debt. Their application will be suspended until they have reduced the debt to below £500 and satisfactorily maintained a repayment agreement for a minimum of 6 months;
 - has deliberately or negligently caused damage to property belonging to CCH or any other social landlord, whether the tenant of that property or not;
 - has been convicted of using their home, or allowing it to be used, for immoral or illegal purpose;
 - has in the view of CCH engaged in behaviour that affects his/her suitability to be a tenant or would prejudice their ability to maintain their responsibilities to their existing tenants, eg. the customer has conducted serious anti social behaviour (which warranted injunctive, possession or tenancy demotion action) or conducted a significant breach of their current tenancy (examples of this would be: violence, racist behaviour, criminal activity in properties, drug dealing, domestic violence, arson etc). Customers who have recent convictions or criminal proceedings pending will have their application suspended for a period of up to 24 months.
26. Customers will be notified that their application has been suspended and that they have the right to request a review of the decision. The review will seek to establish if the reason for the suspension has been resolved satisfactorily or if there is evidence of an improvement in the behaviour of the customers over a sustained period.

Serious Offenders

27. CCH will work with the Police & Probation Services to assess and manage risk and will apply special arrangements where cases are referred through the Multi- Agency Public Protection Panel (MAPPA) or the Probation Protocol. Officers will attend case conferences with the Police, Adult Social Care & Health professionals. A comprehensive support package will be agreed, managed and monitored.
28. This may result in restrictions being placed on the choice of property that is open to an customer. Where this is the case, the customer will be advised of the restrictions, but will whenever possible be given the opportunity to exercise some choice.

How Applications Are Assessed

29. Customers applying for rehousing with CCH are placed in one of four banding groups according to their assessed needs as follows:

Band 1 – Priority need	Band 2 – Some need	Band 3 – Low need	Band 4 – no immediate need
<i>Homeless customers (Non stat homeless, threatened homeless) – Insecure tenancy. These customers will be nominated by the local authority</i>	Customers leaving tied accommodation	Under occupying by one bed space	Owner occupiers, who have equity in the property, and may be able to buy a home on the open market
Management transfers (Agreed in exceptional circumstances)	Threatened homeless (sharing with friends / relatives) asked to leave		
Domestic violence victims (if legal action is not feasible)	Customers leaving supported housing / leaving care 18+	Have secured employment in the Chorley area (not key workers) and live more than 1 hour travelling time from place of new employment	
Racial harassment victims (race hate crimes), subject to satisfactory proof	Customers living in tenancies of a limited period	Some support needs – To be near family / friends	
Serious harassment victims (homophobic crimes, etc), subject to satisfactory proof	Limited housing amenities (no bathroom, no internal toilet, no hot water supply, no kitchen, no adequate heating etc)	Housing Condition – Property has all required amenities, but needs modernisation (poor state of repair)	
Serious medical – Only when the customer has a serious medical condition which is seriously affected by their current housing, or their home cannot be accessed due to ill health or disability	Overcrowding – see 4.1 for description on customers considered adequately rehoused. Customers who lack two or more bedrooms in comparison with the bedroom standard		

Band 1 – Priority need	Band 2 – Some need	Band 3 – Low need	Band 4 – no immediate need
Witness protection scheme (customers who have witnessed a crime and have to move for safety reasons)	Key Workers (GPs, teachers, police, firefighters, nurses, etc) who have secured permanent employment in the area and live more than 1 hour travelling time from place of new employment		
Decants (permanent or temporary) – customers who have to move because their existing home is due to be renovated or demolished	Customers leaving H/M forces		
Under occupation – customers who are underoccupying their current social rented home by 2 or more bedrooms and who would free up a family home if they moved	Medical condition – Where the customers quality of life will be improved by moving to an area where support can be accessed (closer to family / friends, GP surgery etc)		
Supported Housing – customers who may have been residing with a partner living in sheltered accommodation. If they do not meet the age criteria for sheltered accommodation then a move would be warranted			
Release of an adapted unit – where the existing tenant does not have any use for the adaptation and there is immediate demand.		Release of an adapted unit – where the existing tenant does not have any use for the adaptation but there is no immediate demand	

Effective date

30. On submitting an application an effective date will be awarded starting from the date the customer is accepted onto the housing register. The effective date will determine a customer's position within a band and their waiting time on the housing register.
31. Customers will normally have an effective date from the date the priority band was awarded. However, customers given priority because they are 'moving on' from supported housing will have an effective date of the date they moved into that supported housing scheme. This must be supplied by the accommodation provider.

Assessment Of Priority

32. CCH's assessment of customers housing need is reflected by placing them in one of the 3 priority groups in date order. CCH re-house customers in date order in their group in the proportions as follows:

Band 1	50%
Band 2	30%
Band 3	20%
Band 4	0%

33. These quotas will be reviewed every six months.

Changing Bands

34. If a customer moves up a band, their effective date will be the date they enter the higher band, not their original application date. If a customer moves down a band the effective date will remain as the date they joined the housing register.

Re-Assessment of Priority

35. Each customer's preference band will be kept under review and altered to reflect any agreed change in circumstances. All applications in Band 1 will be subject to regular reviews to ensure that bids/expressions of interest are being made for suitable properties. Failure by such customers to make any bids in a twelve consecutive weeks period, may result in that customer's priority status being reduced.

Size Of Accommodation Offered

36. It is important that maximum use is made of the stock owned by CCH and the following table is a guide to the size of property we will offer customers.

Property	With children	Without children
Bed sit (sheltered)	Not suitable	Single person or couple
1 bed flat	Not suitable	Single person or couple
2 bed house / flat	Expecting child (26+ weeks pregnant) or 1/ 2 children of same sex	2 people sharing
3 bed house	2 or 3 children	3 people sharing
4 bed house	3 or more children	4 or more people sharing

37. In some areas where we have limited demand or a sensitive let is required we may use discretion and allow the property to be under occupied. Some examples of when this would be appropriate are:

- an additional bedroom is required to provide respite care
- the tenant has joint custody for the children.

How We Allocate A Property

38. When a property becomes vacant it should firstly be determined whether the property should be offered to an customer from our own waiting list or for the local authority to nominate an customer.

Positive Lettings

39. CCH will advertise and let the majority of its properties becoming available in Preston, South Ribble and Chorley via the Select Move CBL Scheme. There are however situations when a direct letting of a property will be made:

- Direct lets in circumstances where there would be a risk to the customer by being required to take part in the bidding process.
- Properties that have been fitted with 'level 3 Sanctuary' target hardening measures
- Homes that have been significantly adapted for a disabled person.
- New build wheelchair accessible homes
- Homes that are suitable for adaptation for an identified customer with a disability and it has not been possible to identify an existing suitably adapted property.
- Lettings made in partnership with other statutory or voluntary sector agencies to meet specific needs.
- Extra Care/Very Sheltered Housing.
- Succession of tenancy, mutual exchanges and transfers of interest made under a court order.

Local Lettings Schemes

40. CCH may apply local lettings schemes where, following consultation with tenants and other stakeholders, including the local authority, it considers that

would benefit the local community and would help to address wider management issues in an area.

41. Local lettings schemes will be subject to a review at least every 12 months, or as and when changes in the community necessitate such a review. They will take into account the agreed nominations rights of the local authority and will be publicised to ensure fair access to all applicants.

Suspension Due To No Contact Or Repeat Refusals

42. If a customer does not reply to an offer letter within 5 working days, the customer will be removed from the housing register. Where the customer has refused two reasonable offers within the past 12 months the application will be cancelled and the customer will be required to re register on the waiting list after a 6 month suspension, thus losing their time on the waiting list.
43. Where there are reasonable reasons for non contact from a customer or repeat refusal, or where there may be new information, a customer can request to be reinstated on the Housing Register. Upon reinstatement to the register their original banding and relevant time will be awarded. Requests to be reinstated on the Housing Register must be made within 6 months of removal.

Requesting a Review Of A Decision

44. A customer has the right to request a review of their case if they are not satisfied with any decision. A review will be granted if the customer:
 - has been assessed as ineligible under Immigration Law, and therefore not included on the housing register.
 - has had their application suspended
 - believes that in reaching its decision, CCH has not understood the facts of their case
 - has been nominated by the local authority but refused by CCH
 - has been refused priority group status, extension of priority group status or a special management letting
 - disputes the reasonableness of an offer made under priority group or special management letting processes.
45. In order to request a review, the customer (or advocate) shall forward in writing their request to CCH within 20 working days of the date of notification of the decision.
46. However, if a customer requests or individual circumstances merit an extension beyond the 20 working days, the decision to extend this 20 working day period will be at the discretion of the PO dealing with that customer.

Complaints Procedure

47. If a customer is dissatisfied with any aspect of the management of their application, other than when a review can be made, they should contact CCH and ask for their complaint to be dealt with under CCH's complaints procedure. A copy of CCH's complaints policy is available upon request.