

Bristol City Council

HomeChoice Bristol Housing Allocation Scheme

February 2012

INTRODUCTION

This document details Bristol City Council's Allocation Scheme, agreed by cabinet on 12th October 2006, detailing how the Council and partner Housing Associations will allocate vacant properties. Any subsequent amendments that have been agreed are outlined in the scheme.

Queries on the policies and practices detailed in this scheme, or any aspect of the provision of the rehousing service, can be directed to:

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For further information on finding accommodation see:

- Bristol City Council's Fact Sheets for Home-seekers

These booklets are available from any Council office and the Council website www.bristol.gov.uk

CONTENTS		page
1	Policy statement	5
2	Qualification for the Housing Register	6
2.1	Eligibility on the Housing Register	6
2.2	Persons suspended from BCC consideration on the Housing Register	6-7
3	Banding Assessment	8
3.1	Band 1	9
3.2	Band 2	9-10
3.3	Band 3	10
3.4	Band 4	11
3.5	Band 5	11
3.6	Reasons for relegating a band	11
3.6.1	No local connection with Bristol	12-13
3.6.2	High income and savings	13
3.6.3	Home ownership and former home ownership	14
3.6.4	Unacceptable Behaviour	14
3.6.5	Debt	14
3.6.6	Bankruptcy orders	15
3.6.7	Administration order	15
3.6.8	refusal of a reasonable offer	15
4	Allocations	16-20
4.1	Direct Offers	16
4.2	Proxy/automated bids	17
4.3	Allocation Property Size Rules	17
4.3.1	Bedroom entitlement	19
4.3.2	Sharing with another household	19
4.4	Local Lettings Policies	19
4.5	Lettings Restrictions	20
4.6	Adapted properties	20
4.7	Very Sheltered Housing	20
4.8	Sensitive Allocations	20
4.9	Under-occupation Scheme	20

5	Casework Monitoring	21-22
6	Other Banding Policy	23-24
6.1	Changes in, and confirmation of, applicants requirements	23
6.2	Right to Review	23
6.3	Officers authorised to allocate council properties	23
6.4	Housing officer responsibilities	23
6.5	Priorities for the allocation of prefabricated bungalows	23-24
6.6	Bristol City Council employees in tied accommodation	24
6.7	BHP tenants going to prison	24-25
6.8	Applicants moving out of suitable accommodation	25
6.9	Household members	25
6.10	Deferring applications	25
Appendix 1	Glossary of Terms	26-27

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Policy aims to:

- comply with the Council's statutory duties in Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996,
- assess applications according to the applicant's needs; an application will not be treated less favourably on the grounds of sex, marital status, nationality, ethnic or national origin, colour, creed, religion, disability or sexual orientation,
- provide a high quality service for all those in need of advice and assistance,
- ensure that vacated Council/Housing Association properties are relet as soon as possible,
- ensure effective use is made of Council/Housing Association properties and enable the maximum number of tenants to live in the area with type of property they want
- reduce both any under-occupation of Council/Housing Association properties and any overcrowding in any social or private housing in Bristol,
- reduce the cost of homelessness and to reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast and temporary accommodation for homeless applicants.

2. QUALIFICATION FOR THE HOUSING REGISTER

2.1 Eligibility on the Housing Register

The Council will not allocate accommodation to a person who is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by virtue of section 160A Housing Act 1996 as amended.

The Council will not allocate housing accommodation to:

a) Ineligibility due to immigration status

a person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by virtue of section 160A subsection (3) or (5);

b) Ineligibility due to unacceptable behaviour

to a person who the authority have decided is to be treated as ineligible for such an allocation by virtue of section 160A subsection (7); or

c) to two or more persons jointly if any of them is a person mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) above

Before making a decision to regard a person as ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation the Council shall:

- i. require the person to provide the authority with such information as they reasonably require to enable them to decide whether to remove him/her from the register;
- ii. specify a period of not less than 14 days, beginning on the day on which the person receives the notice, within which the information must be provided; and
- iii. inform the person that the authority may decide to regard him/her as ineligible if;
 - the information is not received within the specified period, or
 - it is considered, that in the light of the information received, there are reasons why s/he should be considered ineligible.

Applicants who are considered as ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by virtue of section 160A subsection (3) or (5) shall be notified of this decision.

Applicants who are to be treated as ineligible for an allocation by virtue of section 160A subsection (7) shall be notified of this decision and may (if he/she considered that he/she should no longer be treated as ineligible by the Council) make a fresh application to the Council for an allocation of housing accommodation.

Applicants have the right to a review of this decision (see 6.2 Right of Review)

2.2 Persons suspended for consideration on the Housing Register

The following applicants qualify for the Housing register but may be suspended from consideration for an allocation of housing accommodation:

a) Persons under 16 years of age

Where a person under 16 years of age applies to the Council for an allocation of Housing either as the main or joint applicant, his/her circumstances will not be taken into account in the assessment of the application and a referral will be made to Children and Young

Peoples Services

b) Bristol Housing Partnership tenants who have been served with a demotion of tenancy order. Exceptional circumstances may apply

Applicants who are suspended for consideration on the Housing Register will be notified in writing of this decision, the period of suspension and the grounds for it.

Applicants have the right to a review of this decision (see 6.2 Right of Review)

3. Banding Assessment

An applicant is placed into one of five bands according to her/his housing need.

The following officers within the Council's Rehousing Team make these decisions (unless otherwise stated):

Band 1	Rehousing Manager
Bands 2 & 3	Rehousing Team Leaders
Bands 4 & 5	Rehousing Advisors
Health issues/support need	Health and Housing Team
Homelessness applications	Homelessness Officers

Applicants are considered in band order (band 1 being the highest and band 5 the lowest) and then in date order within the agreed band. The date of the application will either be the date it was agreed to place the application in that band or backdated by 6 months if the applicant has one or more composite needs. When taking into consideration composite need, an application will only ever be backdated for a maximum of 6 months. The date for applications in band 5 will be the application date.

Composite Needs

- a If an applicant falls into more than one band category, which relates to a housing need (indicated by **HN**), then s/he will be placed in the higher of the 2 bands and his/her application will be backdated by 6 months (giving the application an earlier effective date, resulting in greater priority)
- b If an applicant falls into more than one category in the *same* band, which relates to a housing need (indicated by **HN**), then his/her application will be backdated by 6 months (giving the application an earlier effective date, resulting in greater priority)
- c If an applicant's *household* has more than one person who falls into a category which relates to a housing need (indicated by **HN**) then his/her application will be backdated by 6 months (giving the application an earlier effective date, resulting in greater priority)

Assessment from Primary Residence

All applications will be assessed from the applicant's primary residence, ie the accommodation the household would normally occupy. If an applicant is unable to occupy their home (for example due to domestic abuse or threats of violence) the application will still be assessed from their primary residency while the applicant retains the rights to occupy that property (while they are still the tenant or owner).

Their application will be assessed based on the threat of harm or harassment they would have faced should they have remained in occupation, eg priority may be awarded to reflect the domestic abuse or credible risk of harm.

3.1 Band 1 An applicant will be placed in Band 1 if:

- a) S/he needs to be decanted by the Council or RSL within 3 months. A decant is a move by the authorised occupier of Council or RSL property whom the Council or RSL needs to rehouse in order to redevelop, rehabilitate, refurbish, repair, demolish or dispose of.
- b) S/he needs to be rehoused or housed by the Council or RSL because s/he is:
 - i A Bristol City Council approved foster carer who needs larger accommodation to foster more children who are the responsibility of the Council's Children and Young People's Services, or
 - ii Intends promptly to become a foster carer for Bristol City Council's Children and Young People's Services department, and requires larger accommodation in order to perform this role.
- c) S/he is a Bristol Housing Partnership tenant and is under occupying accommodation by at least 2 rooms and requesting a move to accommodation with 2 rooms less than s/he currently occupies.
- d) S/he is severely overcrowded in that s/he is at least 3 rooms short of his/her bedroom entitlement. **HN**
- e) S/he is a provider of the Bristol City Council Supported Lodgings scheme as confirmed by the Children and Young Peoples Service and Neighbourhoods and requires a larger property in order to perform this role.
- f) S/he does not come within any of the categories already reflected within the scheme but, in the opinion of the Rehousing Manager, has an exceptional and urgent need to be rehoused within 3 months.

3.2 Band 2 An applicant will be placed in Band 2 if:

- a) An applicant and/or member of his/her household has a serious and/or life threatening physical or mental health problem which is directly linked to their current housing.
The priority is to reflect an urgent need to move to a different type of housing or area to enable the person to function independently and safely and/or to carry out normal activities of daily living and/or to reach essential facilities. The applicant's current property cannot be reasonably adapted to meet their needs. **HN**
- b) S/he is seriously overcrowded in that s/he is 2 rooms short of his/her bedroom entitlement. **HN**

- c) S/he qualifies under the move-on procedure. For applicants to qualify for the move on procedure they must have occupied
- i. specific supported housing project for more than 6 months and
 - i. be ready to move to independent social housing *to be agreed by Single Point of Access Team Leader*

d) S/he qualifies under the Supported lodgings Scheme and is ready to move to independent social housing

3.3 Band 3 An applicant will be placed in Band 3 if:

a) S/he or a member of his/her household requires urgent rehousing in order to avoid serious harassment or credible threat of harm. **HN**

b) S/he or a member of his/her household requires urgent rehousing in order to live near a relative to:

- i. Receive support that will benefit significantly his/her welfare, or
- ii. Provide support that will benefit significantly the relative's welfare. **HN**

c) Young person leaving care as referred by Children and Young People's Services.

d) S/he is owed a duty by Bristol City Council under s193(2) of the Housing Act 1996 and not in temporary accommodation. (but including emergency accommodation) *see glossary

e) S/he is owed a duty by Bristol City Council Council under s193(2) of the Housing Act 1996 and has been in temporary accommodation for more than 12 months pursuant to this duty. **HN [to be agreed by a Homelessness Officer]**

f) S/he is a permanent member of a household where the main household is severely overcrowded (ie 2 bedrooms short of their requirement and requiring 4 or more bedrooms) and moving them will help alleviate the overcrowding within the main household. **HN**

g) An applicant will be placed in band 3 where it is felt that s/he is occupying unsanitary or unsatisfactory housing conditions that are so serious, in terms of the threat posed to health and welfare, as to require rehousing. These are cases where an Environmental Health Officer has provided written evidence that the property should not be occupied due to a category 1 hazard where an emergency prohibition notice or prohibition notice has or would be made. **HN**

h) S/he is a Bristol Housing Partnership tenant who is overcrowded in that s/he is one room short of his/her bedroom entitlement and an assessment has been carried out into their housing situation which shows there to be a category 1 space and crowding hazard. **HN**

3.4 Band 4 An applicant will be placed in Band 4 if:

a) S/he is a Bristol Housing Partnership tenant and is under occupying accommodation by one room and requesting a move to accommodation with one room less than s/he currently occupies

b) S/he is overcrowded in that s/he is one room short of his/her bedroom entitlement. **HN**

c) s/he is homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 **and** is owed a duty by Bristol City Council under section 190(2), 192(3) or 195(2) or who is occupying accommodation secured by Bristol City Council under section 192(3) or s/he is owed a duty by Bristol City Council under s193 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 and has been in temporary accommodation for less than 12 months pursuant to this duty. **HN [to be agreed by a Homelessness Officer]**

d) An applicant and/or member of his/her household has a physical or mental health problem that is in part related to their current housing and could be helped by rehousing to a different type of accommodation or area. The property cannot be reasonably adapted and the problem does not meet the criteria for band 2. **HN**

e) S/he or a member of his/her household needs to move to a particular locality in the City of Bristol, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others. **HN**

3.5 Band 5 An applicant will be placed in Band 5 if s/he does not come within any other band.

3.6 Relegating an application

An application will be relegated by one band if it falls into any of the criteria listed in 3.6.1 to 3.6.8

Where an application is relegated the application will keep the same effective date. An application remains relegated until the Rehousing Service notifies the applicant that it is satisfied that the reasons for relegating the application no longer apply. When this happens a new banding assessment will need to be carried out taking into account any subsequent changes in circumstances.

There is a right of review against the decision to relegate an application (see section 6.2 *Right of Review*).

If an applicant has an urgent housing need for housing the Council may waive the need for relegation.

3.6.1 No local connection with Bristol

Applicants who have no local connection with Bristol will be relegated one band.*

A person has a local connection with Bristol if s/he or someone who might reasonably be expected to reside with him/her has a connection with Bristol because:

a) s/he is, or in the past was, normally resident in Bristol, and that residence is or was of his/her own choice**,

The length of residence in Bristol required to establish local connection in Bristol is as follows:

- i. residence within Bristol for six out of the last twelve months;
- ii. residence within Bristol for three out of the last five years; or
- iii. residence within Bristol for the majority of his/her lifetime

b) s/he is employed in Bristol,

c) s/he has a family association in Bristol. Family associations may extend beyond parents, adult children or siblings. They may include associations with other family members such as step-parents, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts or uncles provided there are sufficiently close links in the form of frequent contact, commitment or dependency. Family associations may also extend to unmarried couples, provided that the relationship is sufficiently enduring, and to same sex couples.

d) s/he has a special circumstance. This might include the need to be near special medical or support services, which are only available in Bristol.

e) s/he does not have a local connection anywhere else and has made an application to the Council.

f) s/he has resided or worked in Bristol while serving in the Armed Forces

Former asylum seekers are covered by the provisions of s199 (6)-(7) of the Housing Act 1996.

A person has a local connection with the West of England authorities if s/he or someone who might reasonably be expected to reside with him/her has a connection with the West of England authorities because:

a) s/he is, or in the past was, normally resident in the West of England authorities, and that residence is or was of his/her own choice***,

The length of residence in the West of England authorities required to establish local connection in the West of England authorities is as follows:

- iv. residence within the West of England authorities for six out of the last twelve months;

- v. residence within the West of England authorities for three out of the last five years; or
- vi. residence within the West of England authorities for the majority of his/her lifetime

b) s/he is employed in the West of England authorities,

c) s/he has a family association in the West of England authorities. Family associations may extend beyond parents, adult children or siblings. They may include associations with other family members such as step-parents, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts or uncles provided there are sufficiently close links in the form of frequent contact, commitment or dependency. Family associations may also extend to unmarried couples, provided that the relationship is sufficiently enduring, and to same sex couples.

d) s/he has a special circumstance. This might include the need to be near special medical or support services, which are only available in the West of England authorities.

e) s/he has resided or worked in the West of England authorities while serving in the Armed Forces

*This relegation will be waived when the applicant is applying to Bristol for properties advertised across the West of England authorities (see glossary) and s/he can demonstrate a connection with the West of England authorities.

**Residence in Bristol is not of a person's own choice if:

s/he, or a person who might reasonably be expected to reside with him/her, becomes resident in Bristol because s/he is detained under the authority of an Act of Parliament.

***Residence in West of England authorities is not of a person's own choice if:

s/he, or a person who might reasonably be expected to reside with him/her, becomes resident in the West of England authorities because s/he is detained under the authority of an Act of Parliament.

3.6.2 High income and savings

An applicant with a dependant child or children with a combined annual income or combined savings above £30,000 (gross) and an applicant without dependent children with a combined annual income or combined savings above £25,000 (gross) will be relegated one band. Savings include, but are not limited to, money held in banks/savings accounts, building societies, National Savings Certificates, Premium Bonds, stocks and shares. Equity in any property owned will be taken into account to arrive at a total savings sum.

3.6.3 Home ownership and former home ownership

The following applies to applicants who are owner-occupiers or applicants who have owned a home in the last three years. An owner-occupier (with a dependant child or children) with more than £30,000 equity in his/her property will be relegated one band. An owner-occupier (without children) with more than £25,000 equity in his/her property will be relegated one band.

3.6.4 Unacceptable behaviour

Where there is evidence that an applicant or a member of his/her household has been involved in anti social behaviour, the applicant will either be found ineligible for consideration on the housing register or relegated one band. The following refers to applicants who are relegated one band. Where a decision is made that the application is ineligible for consideration on the Housing Register see *section 2.1 Eligibility on the Housing Register*.

Where there is evidence of an applicant or household member being involved in ASB which is not serious enough to bring them within 2.1 of the scheme, they will be relegated one band for 6 months. At the end of the period they will be subject to a reinstatement interview.

The decision to relegate and /or reinstate an application will lie with the Rehousing Advisor who will consider all relevant evidence.

3.6.5 Debt

Applicants or household members with a Bristol Housing Partnership debt from a former or current tenancy/licence of £300* or more will be relegated one band and will be required to sign and keep to a written agreement to repay the debt. Applicants will be relegated for six months and will be reinstated to their correct band if the repayment agreement has been maintained for six months or the debt is reduced to under £300, whichever is sooner.

Bristol Housing Partnership debts include:

- a Current or former tenant/licensee rent/charge arrears in respect of a dwelling or garage;
- b Current or former tenant/licensee defects charges;
- c Current or former tenant/licensee heating (or any other metered) charges;
- d Court costs in respect of possession proceedings anti-social behaviour or any proceedings relating to the applicant's occupation of his/her home or former home; and
- e Charges arising from occupation of temporary accommodation in any Bristol Housing Partnership hostels for homeless households.
- f Council housing revenue account debt.

Once reinstated into the correct band, if the debt is still outstanding applicants will be expected to continue to make repayments. If the repayments cease, the applicant may be relegated one band for another 6-month period. Applicants will only be relegated if the

debt is greater than £300.

*NB Current Bristol Housing Partnership tenants with debts owing to their landlord may be relegated for 6 months unless an agreement to repay the debt has been made and maintained for at least 6 months to the satisfaction of their landlord

Statutorily homeless applicants with debt

An applicant, who is statutorily homeless and has a Bristol Housing Partnership debt over £300 will be offered temporary accommodation only, until a written agreement has been made to repay the debt and regular payments have been made over 6 months or the debt has been reduced to under £300, exceptional circumstances to be considered by the Homelessness Service Manager, in consultation with the landlord or Rent Management Service. There is a right of review against this decision (*see 6.2 Right of Review*).

Debts owing to BCC Private Renting Team

An applicant who has been housed in private rented accommodation with the help of Bristol City Council's Privately Renting Team will be relegated one band if they are found to be in breach of their tenancy conditions, which would lead to a financial loss to the Council.

3.6.6 Bankruptcy orders

Any debts owed to the Bristol Housing Partnership at the time of bankruptcy, will be disregarded when considering a rehousing request.

Applicants with debts owing to the Bristol Housing Partnership, which accrued after the date of bankruptcy order will be subject to the relegation policy, the application will be relegated until a written agreement has been made to repay the debt and the debt has been reduced to under £300, except where there is an urgent need to be rehoused.

3.6.7 Administration orders

Provided that after 3 months from the date the administration order is issued:

- a) The court confirm that payments on the order/s are being made as ordered and
- b) No further debt/s to the Bristol Housing Partnership have been incurred.

The applicant should not be penalised for any previous debts when considering a rehousing request.

Applicants with debts owing to the Bristol Housing Partnership, which accrued after the date of administration order, will be subject to the relegation policy, the application will be relegated until a written agreement has been made to repay the debt and the debt has been reduced to under £300, except where there is an urgent need to be rehoused.

3.6.8 Refusal of a reasonable offer

Where an applicant makes a successful bid for a property and refuses it s/he will be relegated by 1 band for 6 months (*see 6.2 Right of Review*).

Offers of accommodation to applicants who have expressed an interest in that property

(bid on the property) would be considered a reasonable offer (exceptional circumstances may apply).

4. Allocations

All properties will be advertised and allocated to the bidder whose application is in the highest band who has the oldest effective date [*unless there is an agreed Local Lettings Policy see 4.4 or the property has adaptations see 4.6*]. The following exceptions also apply:

- i properties allocated by a direct offer from the Council [*see section 4.1 Direct Offers*],
- ii properties allocated as part of the under-occupation scheme
- iii 25% of Housing Associations' true voids

Where a property is being advertised with restrictions on who can bid or to whom priority will be awarded, this will be outlined in the advert.

5% of all properties will be advertised via HomeChoice West.

If an applicant does not agree with an allocation decision s/he should contact the landlord who made the decision, directly.

4.1 Direct Offers

In the circumstances listed below, allocations are not made on the basis of bids. In these circumstances the Council/RSL offers a vacant property to the applicant. Offers will be made on a city-wide bases with regard to suitability. Applicants will have the right to a review (*see 6.2 Right of Review*).

4.1.1 Offers to homeless households

If the Council is discharging its statutory homelessness duty under s193(2) of the Housing Act 1996 and if the homeless applicant has not secured accommodation under Part 6 of the Act, within the given time scales in the table above, then the Council will seek to discharge its duty under s193 by making a direct offer. The period of time may be extended where no suitable properties have become available or bids have been made but higher band cases have been successful.

4.1.2 Landlord Agreed Transfers

Up to 5% of the Council's vacancies* may be offered directly to cases where an applicant has succession rights but the property is too large, or to resolve low level intractable disputes.

*Housing Associations allocate a certain proportion of their properties as internal transfers.

4.1.3 Bristol Housing Partnership urgent decant cases, e.g. new build replacement bungalows (*also see section 6.5*).

4.1.4 Referrals made by the Police, Probation Service or Home Office. At the discretion of the service manager.

4.1.5 The applicant occupies Council tied accommodation and the Council requires vacant possession. (see section 6.6).

4.1.6 Health and Hazard Safety Rating Scheme (HHSRS)

Where a suspended prohibition notice has been issued to a BHP landlord and the tenant has been in band 3 for 6 months. A direct offer may be made to ensure the situation is resolved within 9 months.

4.1.7 Key Ring Supported Living Scheme

S/he qualifies under the Keyring supported living network as confirmed by the Keyring supported living manager.

4.1.8 Other exceptional circumstances

S/he does not come within any of the above categories, but in the opinion of the Housing manager requires a direct offer in order to resolve an urgent need to be rehoused.

4.2 Proxy/Automated Bidding

Where necessary it will be possible to identify a person to bid on the applicants behalf. This person will be called a 'proxy bidder'.

Where someone has an identified support need and there is no support available to help him/her bid, automated bids can be made on his/her behalf. This will be reviewed on a regular basis. S/he must give written consent.

4.3 Allocation Property Size Rules

The size of property s/he is eligible to bid for is based on bedroom entitlement [see section 4.3.1]. S/he will normally only be eligible to bid for the size property s/he is eligible for. There may be occasions where a landlord requires smaller households to bid, for example for hard to let properties, or the property size restricts the size of household that may bid. This will be outlined in the advert.

Household	Size of property that can be bid for
Single Applicant	Studio or 1 bed
Single applicant aged over 60 years	Studio or 1 bed (including sheltered accommodation)
Couple [Couples can bid for studios that are large enough for 2 people. This will be specified on the advert.]	1 bed or studio
Couple aged over 60 years	1 bed or studio (including sheltered accommodation)
Single applicant or couple expecting a child	1 bed or 2 bed
Single applicant or couple with 1 child	2 bed
Single applicant or couple with 2 children (mixed or same sexes under 10 years)	2 bed

HCB Allocation Scheme February 2012

Single applicant or couple with 2 children (same sexes both under 21 years)	2 bed
Single applicant or couple with 2 children (mixed sexes at least 1 over 10 years)	3 bed
Single applicant or couple with 3 children (mixed sexes, all under 10 years)	3 bed
Single applicant or couple with 3 children (same sexes, all under 21 years)	3 bed
Single applicant or couple with 3 children (mixed sexes, all under 21 years)	3 bed
Single applicant or couple with 3 children (same sex, 2 under 21 years and 1 over 21 years)	3 bed
Single applicant or couple with 3 children (same sex, 1 under 21 years and 2 over 21 years)	3 or 4 bed
Single applicant or couple with 3 children (same sex, all over 21 years)	3 or 4 bed
Single applicant or couple with 3 children (mixed sexes, all over 21 years)	3 or 4 bed
Single applicant or couple with 3 children (1 over 21 years and 2 mixed sexes 1 under 10 years and 1 over 10 years).	3 or 4 bed
Single applicant or couple with 4 children (same sex, all under 21 years)	3 bed
Single applicant or couple with 4 children (mixed sexes, all under 10 years)	3 bed
Single applicant or couple with 4 children (2 of each sex, all under 21 years)	3 bed
Single applicant or couple with 4 children (same sex, 3 under 21 years and 1 over 21 years)	3 or 4 bed
Single applicant or couple with 4 children (3 same sex under 10 years and 1 opposite sex over 10 years)	4 bed
Single applicant or couple with 4 children (3 mixed sexes under 10 years and 1 over 21 years)	4 bed
Larger families may bid for large 3 bedroom , 4, 5 and 6+ bedroom properties. NB: The Council's Health and Housing team may restrict the size of property or increase the size of a property a household can bid for due to health reasons.	

4.3.1 Bedroom entitlement

Each of the following is entitled to one bedroom:

- a An adult
- b 2 adults that live together as partners (unless the Council's Health and Housing Officer recommends they require separate bedrooms)
- c 2 same sex siblings under 21 years of age
- d 2 siblings of the opposite sex under 10 years of age

When establishing if an applicant is short of a bedroom, a second living room, that is suitable to be used as a sleeping accommodation, will be treated as a bedroom.

Where an applicant and children are occupying a studio flat/bedsit, the property will be classed as having '0' bedrooms.

NB: a studio flat is considered to be suitable for a single person and if occupying such accommodation will not normally be considered a bedroom short. Expectant mothers may be considered for 1 and 2 bedrooms but not studio flats.

Applicants applying for rehousing are able to request assessment for an extra bedroom on health grounds, either for a partner, child or carer.

There are guidance notes provided with the Application for Extra Bedroom on Health Grounds form.

4.3.2 Sharing with another household

Where a household applying for rehousing is sharing a property with another household that will not be moving with them, the bedroom entitlement will be applied to all people living in the property. The application will be assessed on the basis that children of appropriate ages and gender can share a bedroom regardless of whether they belong to the same family unit.

4.4 Local Lettings Policies

3 Local Lettings policies have been agreed in Bristol, with the aim of creating more sustainable communities. Full copies of the policies are available.

i) Barton Hill Local Lettings Policy

40% of new build Housing Association properties priority will be available for bidding by applicants who live in the area in bands 4 and 5, with highest priority being given to tenants living in the multi-storey flats.

For Bristol City Council properties, priority will be given to applicants in bands 4 and 5 for 50% of 1 bed flats and 25% of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom properties.

ii) Kingsdown Local Lettings Policy.

Tenants who live in Carolina, Freemantle, Armada and Francis House will have priority to transfer to any vacancies that become available within these four multi-storey blocks.

iii) St Pauls Renewal Local Lettings Policy

For all deconverted and new build social housing in the St Pauls area, 50% of properties will be allocated to applicants in bands 4 & 5 who currently live in the St Pauls area and 50% will be allocated to applicants who bid for the properties and are in the highest position on the shortlist.

4.5 Lettings Restrictions

Some properties have lettings restrictions, for example 'no pets' or 'no children under 10 years old' due to sound insulation. Any restrictions will be explained in the advert and applicants who do not meet the criteria will not be eligible to bid.

4.6 Adapted Properties

Applicants who have a recognised need to move to a property with adaptations will have preference for properties that have been adapted.

4.7 Very Sheltered Housing

Applicants who wish to be considered for Very Sheltered Housing must have a recognised support need. Very Sheltered Housing accommodation is primarily for people over 65 years of age, but if you are disabled, have learning difficulties or have mental health issues then you may be eligible if you are over 55.

Properties will be allocated to people on the Health and Social Care 'waiting list'. To be included on this list the applicant should contact Care Direct to request an assessment for Very Sheltered Housing. Applicants applying for Very Sheltered Housing who already have a social worker assigned to them must advise Care direct of this. To contact Care Direct, please telephone 0117 922 2700.

4.8 Sensitive Allocations

Some BHP properties will be allocated as a sensitive let. Properties that are being allocated as part of the sensitive let policy must be advertised as being let in this way.

The full sensitive allocation policy is available.

4.9 Under-occupation scheme

Properties vacated as part of the Under-occupation scheme will be allocated in accordance with the under-occupation policy.

The full under-occupation policy is available.

5. Casework Monitoring

Applications will be monitored after the time periods listed in the table below. The application may be re assessed, a direct offer made, or continue in the same band. During casework monitoring the Rehousing Officer will establish whether the applicant requires any support with bidding (see 4.2 Proxy/Automated Bidding). If s/he already has a proxy/automated bidder this will also be reviewed.

Band	Monitor Bidding After	Direct Offer/Reassessment
1a	3 months	Decision to make a direct offer will be based on the need for vacant possession of property.
1b, 1c, 1e	3 months	No direct offer – application to remain in band 1 (as long as circumstances remain unchanged)
1d	3 Months	No direct offer
1f	1 month	After 3 months*
2a	6/9 Months	No direct offer - after 12 months application will be reassessed into band 4*
2b	3/6 months	No direct offer
2c	3 months NB Monitored by Move on Officer	No Direct Offer -monitoring will be carried out by the move on Officer. Band 2 status will be removed and application reassessed if the applicant does not bid appropriately
3d, 3e	1 month NB monitored by Homeless Officer	3 months* based on availability of suitable properties.
3d, 3e	2 months NB monitored by Homeless Officer	6 months* based on availability of suitable properties.
3a, 3b, c	3/6 months	No direct offer – application to be reassessed after 6 months*.
3f	6 months	No direct offer
3g	6 months	No direct offer
3h	6 months	No direct offer

*This time may be extended based on availability of suitable accommodation or may be shortened if there is an urgent need for the applicant to be housed. This time period may be shorter where s/he is occupying emergency accommodation.

NB: Exceptional circumstances may lead to a direct offer being made.

6. OTHER BANDING POLICY

6.1 Changes in, and confirmation of, applicants requirements

An applicant must notify the Council of changes to his/her circumstances as soon as possible and must renew his/her application annually.

On renewal, applicants may be required to provide proof of their continued eligibility on the Housing Register.

On applying for rehousing, all applicants will be required to provide identification.

In the event that the applicant is offered a property, he/she will be required to provide proof of household details.

Proof of household details will be sought for all applicants who are likely to be assessed as being overcrowded in their current accommodation, at the point of application.

6.2 Right of review

An applicant has the right to request a review of the Council's decision:

- a) that s/he has been determined as not eligible for assistance.
- b) as to which band s/he is in
- c) that s/he be relegated to a lower band
- d) that s/he be suspended
- e) that s/he has been overlooked for a property s/he has bid on
- f) that as a statutory homeless household s/he will only be offered temporary accommodation due to having a Bristol Housing Partnership debt
- g) that his/her application has been deferred until such time that he/she is able to sustain a tenancy

Anyone wishing to seek a review must do so in writing within 21 days of being notified of the relevant decision. His/her review request must give reasons as to why the decision is considered to be wrong. An officer more senior than the one who made the original decision will consider the review.

6.3 Officers authorised to allocate council properties

The Director of Neighbourhoods, relevant Heads of service, the voids manager and voids supervisor are authorised to allocate council dwellings.

6.4 Housing officer responsibilities

A housing officer who knows an applicant personally will not be involved in the assessment of the application, in the allocation of property to that applicant, or in a nomination. The housing officer is required to notify his/her line manager of the situation.

6.5 Priorities for the allocation of housing to existing prefab tenants

In September 2003, the Council agreed to redevelop all 12 remaining occupied and empty prefab sites across the city, with a developer. All current Council tenants of the prefab sites who need to be rehoused within 3 months will be placed into Band 1 (see 3.1 **Band 1**) Applicants will be considered in date order, subject to their eligibility (see 2.2 *Persons suspended from BCC consideration on the Housing Register*).

Prefab tenants are normally considered for another 2-bedroom property, and have automatic priority for any new bungalows that become available for re-letting. It is a condition of any offer that vacant possession is given of their existing prefab.

Owner Occupiers

Owner occupied properties, where possible, will be retained. However, some owners may have to move and their prefabs demolished to enable suitable, cost effective redevelopment. Those occupiers whose properties will be retained may request temporary rehousing whilst site work is taking place.

6.6 Applications from Bristol City Council employees in tied accommodation.

Bristol City Council employees in tied accommodation will be placed in band 1 in instances of:

- redundancy
- ill health retirement
- retirement
- resignation where service has been satisfactory for a minimum of five years
- redeployment or promotion to a non-residential post.

Partners of employees who die in service also qualify for band 1.

Rehousing applications from **people who resign before completing 5 years service** are to be considered on their individual merits.

Employees will be eligible to bid for accommodation that is appropriate to the size of their household (see section 4.3.1).

Owners who become wardens/caretakers

People who own residential accommodation at the time of being offered a post are to be made aware that band 1 will not be awarded when the period of employment ends (unless there are exceptional circumstances). The application for housing will be assessed on the employees housing need.

Council tenants who become wardens/caretakers

Where a council tenancy is relinquished in order to take up such a job offer the applicant is to be advised that they may only bid for accommodation of a size, and type, appropriate to the households needs at the end of the period of employment (as specified above) and not the same type of accommodation they lived in previously. Full policy available.

6.7 BHP tenants going to prison - future rehousing requests

Where a BHP tenant is about to serve a prison sentence, s/he will be encouraged to surrender her/his tenancy where that tenancy is not sustainable during the sentence. The Tenant will:

- be issued with a letter explaining the process upon their release
- be issued with a housing register application form, and advised to return it (to the city council) with a copy of the letter (as above) before their expected release

from prison.

The application for rehousing will be considered in band 1 s/he will be allowed 3 months to successfully bid for a property after which time the application will be assessed into the relevant band according to her/his housing need.

*However, if their prison sentence relates to an offence that could have resulted in proceedings to regain possession of their tenancy, further enquiries will need to be made to ascertain if the applicant is eligible for consideration on the Bristol Housing Register (see 2.2 - **Persons suspended from consideration on the housing register**).*

6.8 Applicants moving out of suitable accommodation

If an applicant moves out of suitable accommodation to accommodation that is unsuitable for her/his needs, and the Council are satisfied that the original accommodation was surrendered in order to increase her/his chances of being rehoused in other accommodation, her/his application will be assessed from the suitable accommodation and the applicant will be advised to return where possible.

6.9 Household members

Other people will only be included on her/his application where they normally reside with her/him as a member of the family or might otherwise reasonably be expected to reside with her/him. (for example close blood relatives, marital relationships and cohabiting partners).

For example an applicant could not include a friend to her/his application if there is no recognised need to live together (ie support/care need). Extended family members will not be included on her/his application where they do not currently live together and/or do not have a proven need to live together (ie support/care need).

If a household member is included on an application and they have a Bristol Housing Partnership debt from a former or current tenancy of £300 or more the application will be relegated or if their debts combined with the applicants amount to more than £300 the application will be relegated.

6.10 Deferring applications

Where it is considered that a homeless applicant is unable to sustain a tenancy in independent accommodation s/he will be offered supported accommodation only and the application deferred until such time as the supported housing provider confirms the applicant is ready to move on to independent living, with a view to sustaining a tenancy. The decision to defer an applicant will be made by the Homeless Officer. Applicants will have the right to a review (see 6.2 *Right of Review*).

Appendix 1

Glossary of terms

Bedroom Entitlement – how many bedrooms the applicant will be considered.

Effective date- The date the case is agreed for band allocation

Emergency accommodation - A range of accommodation including B&B, hostels and alternatives to B&B usually provided under s188 interim duty which may continue under s193 pending an offer of temporary accommodation or an offer to end the full duty.

Foster Carer – Someone who looks after a child or young person in their home, as agreed by Bristol City Council Children and Young People's Services, who cannot live with their parents.

Hard to let – where a property has been advertised and there have been no successful bids

Homeless applicant - an applicant is owed a duty by Bristol City Council under part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by Homeless Act 2002.

Housing Need- Applicant who needs to be rehoused because his current living arrangements are detrimental to his (and or member of his household) health and welfare.

RSL – Registered Social Landlord (Housing Association)

Regular armed forces of the Crown - the Royal Navy, the regular forces as defined by section 225 of the Army Act 1955, the regular air force as defined by section 223 of the Air Force Act 1955 and Queen Alexandra's Royal Navy Nursing Service.

Serious illness or disability - Cases that have been assessed, by the Health and Housing Team, as having acutely serious overt health problems with unequivocal need for change of accommodation to alter the course of daily functioning e.g. a wheelchair user who lives in a top floor flat with no lift or who has extreme mental health issues living in a neighbourhood which is overtly contributing to destruction of independent living.

Serious unacceptable behaviour- behaviour would allow the landlord to obtain an immediate Possession Order.

Temporary accommodation – accommodation provided or secured by the Council as temporary licence to occupy or as an Assured Shorthold Tenancy for temporary period, usually as a temporary solution to an applicant who has an urgent need to be rehoused.

Tied accommodation – accommodation occupied by employees of the Council where their contract of employment requires them to occupy dwelling houses for the better performance for their duties.

True voids – The total number of vacancies, minus internal transfers, gives the number of true void.

Under occupying – a person under occupies when s/he occupies accommodation that is larger than their maximum room entitlement.

Urgent Housing Need- As above but the applicant needs rehousing within 3 months.

West of England Authorities - includes the following Authorities: Bristol City Council; South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset (BANES), North Somerset.