

Summary of Housing Register & Nominations Policy

This booklet contains information about the Council's Housing Register and Nominations Policy. If you have any further questions about our policy after you have read this, please contact the Housing Register Team at the Town Hall. The telephone number is 01737 276791 or email: housing.register@reigate-banstead.gov.uk

Who can join the Register?

Anyone aged 16 years and over is eligible for the Register unless they are a person from abroad who is subject to immigration control, or not habitually resident.

How can I join the Register?

You will need to complete a Housing Application Form. These are available from:

- **The Housing Register Team**, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council, Castlefield Road, Reigate, Surrey, RH2 0SH Tel: 01737 276791
- **The Help Line** Tel: 01737 276000
- **The Help Shops** at:

Merstham Help Shop	26 Portland Drive, Merstham RH1 3HX
Banstead Help Shop	The Horseshoe, Banstead SM7 2BQ
Redhill Help Shop	26 – 28 Cromwell Road, Redhill RH1 1RT
Horley Help Shop	Victoria Square, Consort Way, Horley RH6 4AF
Reigate Customer Services	Town Hall, Reigate RH2 0SH

In addition, **Citizens Advice Bureaux** are willing to assist with completion of forms, although they do not keep supplies of forms. They also have information about Home Choice advertisements.

Citizens Advice Bureaux:

Horley Bureau	Victoria Square, Consort Way, Horley RH6 4AF
Redhill Bureau	24 Cromwell Road, Redhill RH1 1RT Tel 0870 126 4072
Banstead Bureau	The Horseshoe, Banstead SN7 2BQ Tel 0870 126 4009

Application forms can also be downloaded from the Council's website at www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk. If you need help to fill in the form, please ask at one of the Help Shops listed, or contact the Housing Register Team at the Town Hall.

What will happen when I send in my form?

The Housing Register Team at the Town Hall will assess your application in line with the Housing Register and Nominations Policy. Within 10 working days of receiving the form, and all the information we have asked for, we will write to you with your application reference number and tell you in which band you have been placed.

What is the Housing Register and Nominations Policy?

The Council runs a list for people who need affordable rented social housing, and this is the Housing Register. The Housing Register and Nominations Policy sets out the way we decide how to operate our Housing Register.

The **Housing Register** is made up of Waiting List applicants who need rented social housing, including sheltered housing for elderly people, Transfer applicants, and Key Workers. There are 6 bands in the Housing Register.

What are the bands for, and how do they work?

The bands sort applicants by the urgency of their need to move. When we receive your Housing Application Form we will assess your circumstances very carefully and decide in which band your application should be included. We may need to ask for extra information about health and financial resources.

Applications are listed in date order within the appropriate band, so the applicant who has been in that band for the longest will be in first place, and the most recent applicant to join the band will be in last place. When an applicant is housed from the top of the list all the other applications move up. If an applicant leaves the Housing Register, perhaps because they have found their own accommodation privately, or because they did not renew their application when they were invited to do so, the people on the list behind them move up to fill the gap.

The bands in the Housing Register are:

Band A This band is for applicants who need housing very urgently because:

- they have an urgent and overriding medical priority or
- their life is in danger unless they move or
- they have circumstances which are exceptional and/or emergencies, but which don't fit into the above or
- they are tenants of a social landlord and have been notified their home is to be demolished or redeveloped or
- they are tenants of a social landlord willing to move to a home with two or more bedrooms less than their current property or
- they are persons succeeding to a social tenancy, but to smaller property, upon the death of the tenant.

Band A is the smallest band.

Band B This band is for applicants who are social housing tenants in priority need or who are homeless or threatened with homelessness:

- they have been accepted as homeless and the Council has a legal duty to provide accommodation or
 - they have accepted a short term tenancy to prevent homelessness or
 - they have been sleeping rough or
 - they are vulnerable and are retiring or leaving HM Forces within 12 months or
 - who have to leave their jobs because of very serious illness, and lose their tied accommodation or
 - they are vulnerable adults and there is an issue of community safety or
 - they are young people leaving care within 12 months who are referred by Social Services or
 - they are tenants of a social landlord who need to move on welfare grounds or
 - they are tenants of a social landlord with insufficient bedrooms for their needs or
 - they are tenants of a social landlord wishing and qualifying for sheltered accommodation or
 - they are tenants of a social landlord supported by social services for fostering or adopting children or
 - they are tenants of a social landlord wishing to move from an adapted property which they no longer need or
 - they are tenants of a social landlord with a medical condition that would be improved by a change of accommodation as recommended by the Council's Medical Advisor.
-

Band C This band is for applicants with any kind of other housing need, for example they may:

- lack basic facilities – kitchen, bathroom or WC, or suffer disrepair etc
- share their home with others who are not part of their household
- have too few bedrooms for the size of their family, or lack a living room
- have a tenancy with limited security
- be homeless, but not be in priority need, need to move so that they can give or receive support, take up an employment, education or training opportunity, or to recover from violence or abuse or
- be care leavers or vulnerable people who may have to leave their foster placement or tied accommodation in the future, but not within 12 months
- have health problems which may be improved by moving.

Band C is the biggest band.

Band D This band is for applicants with a housing need as mentioned in bands A, B or C and have no local connection with Reigate and Banstead.

Band E This band is for applicants with no housing need:

- they have no local connection and no housing need as detailed in bands A - D
 - have sufficient income or assets to secure their own accommodation
 - have within 5 years of the date of their application, disposed of an asset which they could reasonably have been expected to use to resolve their housing difficulties.
-

Band K This band is for Key Workers who are willing to accept an Assured Shorthold Tenancy in a property designated for Key Workers.

How will you assess my income and assets?

There are questions on the Housing Application Form about income and about debt. We also ask whether applicants are homeowners or have ever owned a property. If we need more information to assess your income and assets fully, we will ask you to provide us with further details. Before we nominate you for a property, we will also carry out a credit reference check.

Applicants with a total household income of more than £50,000 per year, or assets, savings or equity exceeding £75,000 will usually be placed in band E. These figures are reviewed from time to time to make sure they keep up with market forces and average incomes.

What is a local connection?

A local connection is living or working in the Borough of Reigate and Banstead, or having a close relative who lives here and has done so for at least 5 years. (A close relative means mother, father, brother, sister, adult son or daughter.)

What is unacceptable or anti-social behaviour?

Examples include:

- significant rent arrears or breach of tenancy rules in a current or previous tenancy
- creating serious nuisance or annoyance to neighbours
- a conviction for using accommodation, or allowing it to be used for immoral or illegal purposes such as drug dealing
- serious damage or neglect of a property.

If a person in the applicant's household is guilty of any of these, and a Council or Registered Social Landlord would be entitled to an outright possession order if they were their tenant, and we consider that they are still unsuitable to be a tenant, the application will be placed in band E.

Once the applicant can show that they have put right the rent arrears, or that the person causing the nuisance or damaging property or dealing in drugs is no longer a member of their household, the application will be reassessed and reactivated from the date of the reassessment.

If I have health problems, how will these be assessed?

If you believe that a health problem suffered by you or someone in your household could be improved by a move to different accommodation, you may be asked to complete a medical self-assessment form. On this form, you can tell us about the health problems and we will make an assessment of the information, or ask an Independent Medical Advisor for advice about whether your application should be given medical priority.

Medical priority may be awarded when the health of a member of the applicant's family is being affected by their current home, but it is not life threatening and unlikely to get very much worse within a short time. Waiting List applications awarded medical priority will usually be placed in band C, and Transfer applications in Band B. Very occasionally the Medical Advisor will tell us that an application should be given overriding medical priority.

Examples of when this may happen would be when:

- a household cannot live in their property because of a medical problem, and the property cannot be adapted - for instance, a wheelchair user who lives in a first floor flat with no lift;
- a household's continued occupation of their home is likely to cause their health to get so bad that they will be in a life threatening situation if they are not moved quickly.

Applications awarded overriding medical priority will usually be placed in band A.

What choices do I have?

The Council operates a choice based lettings scheme called Home Choice. Available Home Choice properties are advertised via our Council website and newsletters. Transfer and Waiting List applicants can apply for any homes advertised provided they are eligible. Applicants have free choice about the areas in which they would prefer to live.

Because there are so many applicants waiting to be housed, and very few properties become available each year, there are rules about the amount of bedrooms and the type of home you can choose:

- a single person may choose a studio or one bedroom property (this is likely to be a flat or maisonette and may be above the ground floor unless there are medical reasons why it needs to be at ground floor level);
- an elderly person or couple may choose a flat or bungalow with one bedroom and this may be a sheltered property;
- a couple without dependent children may choose a one bedroom property (this is also likely to be a flat or maisonette and may be above the ground floor unless there are medical reasons why it needs to be at ground floor level);
- a family may choose a two, three or four bedroom property depending on the number, ages and sex of the children (this may be a flat, maisonette or house). Because there are very few houses available an applicant may have to wait for a very long time before a Home Choice bid is successful.

All Waiting List applicants and Transfer applicants will be asked to choose a new home from properties that we advertise through **Home Choice**.

Home Choice

Home Choice is the way for Waiting List and Transfer applicants to find a new home. Every week, from midnight on a Thursday, we advertise homes on the Reigate and Banstead Home Choice website: www.rbbc-homechoice.org.uk and at our Help Shops, the Town Hall and Citizens Advice Bureaux.

In the advertisements we say whether we will give preference to a Transfer or Waiting List applicant, the band A, B, etc. or whether only band K are eligible. Applicants then have until 11.59pm on the following Wednesday to bid for the home of their choice. Applicants may place up to three bids per weekly cycle. No bids can be placed during the day on a Thursday: the new cycle will begin at midnight (the end of the day on Thursday).

Once the 11.59pm Wednesday deadline has passed each week, we will have a list of applicants who are interested in each property. We check that the applicants are eligible for the size and type of home on offer, and then, after carrying out checks, including credit reference checks, we nominate the eligible applicant who has been registered on the list for longest to the Housing Association that owns the home they chose.

Full details of the Home Choice scheme are sent to all applicants on the Housing List.

East Surrey Home Choice

East Surrey Home Choice is a joint scheme between Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate & Banstead and Tandridge Councils.

The aim of the scheme is to help Waiting List applicants and Transfer applications apply for social rented homes located in any of the four East Surrey authorities. Up to ten percent of all social rented homes that become empty each year will be made available for applicants who want to move to a different Borough within the scheme. This means, for example, that an applicant on the Reigate & Banstead housing register will be able to apply for advertised homes in any of the four East Surrey authorities.

East Surrey Home Choice properties are advertised each week on the Reigate & Banstead Home Choice website: www.rbbc-homechoice.org.uk and at our Help Shops, the Town Hall and Citizens Advice Bureaux.

What happens if I refuse a property that I have placed a successful bid for?

If a Transfer or Waiting List applicant decides to refuse an offer of accommodation, whether at an accompanied viewing, or when an initial verbal offer is made, the property will be offered to the next eligible applicant.

Applicants will not normally be penalised for the refusal of offers, although checks are likely to be made if several properties have been refused. Special conditions apply to some band B Waiting List applicants regarding reasonable offers and refusals.

What are the special conditions for Waiting List band B applicants?

Waiting List band B applicants for whom the Council has accepted a homeless duty or has facilitated a Short Term Tenancy in order to prevent homelessness can bid for up to two properties per week. If your bid is successful, you will be expected to accept the offer provided it is reasonable. If such a Waiting List band B applicant fails to make bids via Home Choice, after a period of 6 months the Council reserves the right to make bids on the applicant's behalf. If a second reasonable offer is refused the Council will have discharged its duty towards you and if you are occupying temporary accommodation or a short-term tenancy arranged by the Council you will be evicted. You will then have to find your own accommodation privately.

What if I move home, or my family circumstances change?

You must tell us immediately, in writing, if you change your address or if your personal or financial circumstances change.

What will happen if my circumstances change and I need to change bands or bedroom requirement?

If your application is moved into a different band or your bedroom requirement changes, your date of application will change to the date it moves, so in effect, you would start again from the bottom of the new band or bedroom requirement list.

Do I need to do anything else once I have been registered?

Every year, during the month when you were originally registered, you will be sent a Housing Register Renewal Form. It is essential that you complete this form with all the information we ask for, even if things have not changed. If you don't send the form back to us, your housing application will be cancelled. If you want to join the register again, you will have to start at the bottom of the list.

Where can I find more information about the Council's Housing Register and Nominations Policy?

This booklet is only intended to provide a summary of the Council's policy for the allocation of affordable social housing. If you would like any further information, or a copy of the full Housing Register and Nominations Policy, please contact us at the Town Hall. The telephone number is 01737 276791, or you can email the Housing Register Team on housing.register@reigate-banstead.gov.uk. You can also download copies of the Policy from the Council's website www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk.

If you would like this in an alternative format, such as large print, on tape or in another language, please call 01737 276000

