



Housing Register and Allocation Policy

This booklet contains a short summary of the Council's Housing Allocations Policy 2015. A copy of the full Housing Allocation Policy is available on our website.

January 2020

Introduction

The Council does not own any council housing but does have access to social rented and affordable homes in the borough through housing associations. The Council holds the register for 'Homeseekers' and 'Transfer tenants' applying for available homes.

This booklet tells you how you can apply for social and affordable rent homes in the Reigate and Banstead borough and how these properties will be allocated.

Choice Based Lettings

We will continue to give choice to most applicants about where they live. Home Choice enables applicants to apply or 'bid' for the available homes they are interested in. To use HomeChoice you must first apply to join the Housing Register.

Available homes are advertised weekly on the website www.rbbc-homechoice.org.uk. Free access to the internet is available from libraries across the borough and at the Town Hall in Reigate.

Who is able to apply to the Housing Register?

Anyone can approach the Council for housing advice and assistance. To apply for the housing register, an applicant must be eligible, meet the qualification rules, have a local connection to the borough and a housing need. An outline of the rules for these is explained in this booklet.

Eligibility

We cannot accept applications from people who are subject to immigration control and who do not have access to public funds in the UK. An applicant must be habitually resident in the UK. Any family members who are not currently living in the UK will not be included on an application.

Local Connection

Applicants must have a local connection to the borough in order to be able to apply for housing. A local connection is gained through either the main or joint applicant meeting one of the following:

- Be continually resident in the Borough of Reigate & Banstead for three years at the date of application and thereafter
- Be continuously employed in the borough for 12 months at the date of application and thereafter

Housing Need

Only applicants with a housing need will be able to apply for housing. To be considered to be in housing need, you must meet at least one of the housing need criteria detailed in the five bands.

Qualification rules

The following qualification rules have been set to ensure that households with the highest need are prioritised:

- In most circumstances, applicants who own their own property will not qualify
- Applicants who have previously exercised the Right to Buy will not qualify
- Household income, savings, capital or investments must not exceed the financial limits set in the policy
- Applicants who do not have a local connection with the Borough will not qualify (subject to specific exceptions)
- Applicants who have rent or Council Tax arrears will not qualify
- Applicants who have been involved in anti-social behaviour will not qualify
- Applicants not living in the UK, except certain members of the armed forces, will not qualify
- Applicants who are under 16 years of age will not qualify
- Exceptions to the rules will be considered for older people in need of Extra Care housing

How to apply to join the Housing Register

The process for applying is in three parts:

1. Complete the online self-assessment to establish whether you are likely to qualify
2. Complete the main application form
3. Provide the documentation requested at the end of the form within 21 days of submitting your application

The online self-assessment can be found online at www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk on the Housing Register webpage. Once you have completed the assessment you will be given the opportunity to complete an Application Form. Once you have submitted a form online, we will not be able to proceed with the application until you provide copies of the relevant identification and supporting information.

You can drop off or post copies of your identification and supporting information to the Council: Housing Register Team, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council, Town Hall, Castlefield Road, Reigate, Surrey, RH2 0SH. Please do not send original documents as we accept photocopies.

How your application will be assessed

We will assess your application using the information you give us on the application form. It is important that you complete it as accurately as possible. Once all the relevant information has been received, we will aim to assess your application within 21 working days and confirm in writing our assessment, along with reference number, effective date, band and size of accommodation you are registered for.

If you do not qualify to join the register, you will be advised in writing. You can access the Housing Wizard on the Council's website for information on other housing options.

The priority banding system

You will be assessed as either a homeseeker or a transfer tenant when you join the register:

- *Homeseeker* – Applicants who are not currently a housing association tenant within the borough
- *Transfer tenant* – Applicants who are currently housing association tenants in the borough or applicants who live outside the borough and need to move into the borough to be closer to their place of employment or take up permanent employment.

Each applicant will be placed into the following bands in accordance with their housing need.

Band A – Urgent Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgent medical and/or welfare grounds.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving or former members of the regular Armed Forces or serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move urgently due to serious injury/medical condition/disability sustained in service.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer tenants who have notified their home is to be demolished or redeveloped.

Band B – High Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households with high welfare or medical need directly linked to their housing.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household occupying a property with an assessed Category 1 Hazard.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants of Registered Social Landlords in the Borough willing to move to a property with fewer bedrooms.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants or Registered Providers in the borough moving from general needs to older people's accommodation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants of Registered Social Landlords in the borough moving from an adapted property that is no longer required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants lacking two or more bedrooms.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants requiring a larger home for foster children.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons succeeding to an assured or secure tenancy of a Registered Provider in the borough but is entitled to a smaller property.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless households who are discharged to the private sector and that tenancy becomes under threat within 2 years through no fault of their own.

- Bereaved spouses or civil partners of Armed Forces personnel that died in service and can no longer reside in MoD accommodation.
- Home seeker who is a care leaver referred by Surrey County Council and within 12 months of leaving their care placement.

Band C – Medium Priority and Community Contribution

- Applicants who are serving or former members (left within the last 5 years) of the armed forces who have a housing need.
- Applicants lacking one bedroom.
- Transfer tenant living in a flat without a garden and the youngest child is 12 years old or younger.
- Households who are homeless within the meaning of Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act to whom the Council has not accepted a full housing duty (including those who are intentionally homeless and those not in priority need). This is subject to the household meeting the local connection and local qualification criteria.
- Applicants in supported housing meeting local connection rules.

Band D – Low Priority band C without Community Contribution / others

- Households with a housing need as assessed in band C but do not fulfil at least one community contribution category.
- Transfer applicants from outside of the borough who need to move to take up permanent employment in the borough or move closer to work.
- Transfer tenants with a good tenancy record but have no housing need as defined in bands A - C.

Band H – High Priority

- High priority homeless households for whom the Council has accepted a duty to provide housing under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

Health and Welfare Assessment

If you have a health or medical condition that you believe is affected by your housing or you need a specific type of property must complete an on-line Medical Assessment Form via the Council's website. This will be assessed by the Housing Register Team and may be referred to the Council's Independent Medical Advisor for further assessment.

Urgent health or welfare need

You will be considered to be in urgent health or welfare need if you are faced with a serious risk to health or welfare which could quickly lead to a life-threatening situation.

High medical or welfare need

This level of priority will be given if it is considered that your health is being affected by your current accommodation, but it is unlikely to deteriorate significantly within a short period of time or full recovery is likely within one year, or where there is more than one member of the household with a non-urgent medical or welfare need.

Community Contribution

The Council is committed to supporting residents to take further responsibility for themselves and their communities. It gives applicants with a qualifying housing need increased priority if they are making a contribution to the economic growth of the Borough or contributing to the local community.

You must meet at least one reasonable preference criteria in Band C in order to be considered for a community contribution award. Households meeting the criteria for band C but do not meet any of the community contribution categories will be placed in band D. Exceptions will apply to: applicants of retirement age, carers, applicants with disabilities and single parent households with children aged below 5.

Community contribution includes:

- Employment – 16 hours per week for lone parents and at least 30 hours per week for couples and single people.
- Volunteering (for a non-profit organisation) – for a continuous 6-month period for a minimum of 20 hours per month.
- Training or education – Courses should be for a continuous period of at least 6 months and must lead to an accredited, recognised qualification or certification by a registered awarding body.

Assessing Property Size

Applicants will be assessed to determine what size and type of property they qualify for based on their family size and structure. Under and over occupation are assessed by working out how many bedrooms a household needs and comparing it to the table below:

Household Size	Property size
Single person	1 bedroom / bedsit
Single pregnant woman	1 bedroom
Couple	

Household (couple/single parent) with:

One child	2 bedrooms
2 same sex children (under 18)	
2 opposite sex children, eldest under 10 years	
2 opposite sex children, eldest 10 years +	3 bedrooms
3 children	3 / 4 bedrooms depending on ages and sex
4 children	3 / 4 / 5 bedrooms depending on ages and sex
5 children +	4 / 5 bedrooms depending on ages and sex

A limited supply of larger homes means applicants eligible for 4 or 5 bedroom properties may also be offered large 3 or 4 bedroom properties which have two reception rooms. One reception room will be advertised as an extra bedroom.

Applying for Homes

Properties are advertised on a weekly basis on Home Choice and applicants are able to place bids on suitable homes.

Bidding open at midnight on a Thursday and closes at 23.59 on the following Wednesday. Bids are placed via the website www.rbbc-homechoice.org.uk

Applicant choice

Applicants may bid for up to three properties per advertising cycle, providing your application is active, you meet the eligibility criteria and the properties match your band.

Most applicants will be able to choose the type of accommodation that they wish to be considered for which includes:

- Location of property
- Type of property
- Floor level (if applicable)

Home Choice bidding rules

Band A	One direct suitable offer, bidding not allowed
Band B	Can bid for up to 3 properties a week through Home Choice
Band C	Can bid for up to 3 properties a week through Home Choice
Band D	Can bid for up to 3 properties a week through Home Choice – Except transfer tenants moving from outside the borough, they will receive one direct suitable offer

Band H	One direct suitable offer, bidding not allowed.
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Applicants (who are eligible for bidding) will be given two suitable offers in total.

Property types

The Council ensures that specific types of properties are prioritised to applicants who are most suited to its formation, as described below:

- **Houses**
Houses will normally be prioritised to applicants with dependent children (youngest aged 12 or under) and in exceptional circumstances to households on health grounds.
- **Ground floor flats**
Normally prioritised for applicants with a medical need for ground floor accommodation.
- **Bungalows**
Usually allocated to applicants aged 50 or over, or to applicants given priority for this type of property on medical grounds.
- **Accommodation for older people**
Sheltered housing applicants (and, if applicable, their partner) must be aged 55 or over, or be aged 50 or over and have a registered disability. Some non-sheltered housing is also designated for applicants aged 50 (or 55) and over.
- **Adapted properties**
Directly allocated to the most appropriate household outside of any normal band, date or bedroom-need criteria.
- **Extra Care housing**
Each scheme determines its criteria for residents and support needs in partnership with Surrey County Council. Applicants wanting to live in Extra Care may be on the Housing Register, although referrals will also be made by statutory agencies. Allocations to Extra Care schemes are jointly undertaken by the Council, the Extra Care housing provider and Surrey County Council.

Local lettings policies

The Council may apply the local letting policy to properties for initial lettings, which means applicants in the highest band may not be considered first and preference may be given to applicants with a lesser housing need or later effective date. The purpose of the local lettings policy is to create sustainable and balanced communities whilst making the best use of affordable housing.

Sensitive lettings

In some instances, a housing provider may request that a property is advertised as a 'sensitive let' this may be for example because of the need to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour in an area or to ensure vulnerable people are not placed in an inappropriate area. The Council may also decide not to advertise the property and will make a direct nomination.

Direct Offers

The Council will make a single suitable direct offer to applicants in band A, H and a specific group in band D (transfer tenants from outside the borough with an employment connection).

Nominations to Housing Associations

The Council will provide details of the highest priority bidder directly to the housing association. The association will contact the applicant directly when they are ready to conduct pre-tenancy interviews, viewings, or tenancy sign ups.

Many housing associations retain their own allocation policies and applicants will be assessed in accordance with them. Sometimes this results in the refusal of an applicant. Amongst the most common reasons for refusal are former tenant arrears, history of anti-social behaviour and household size not meeting the association's own policy rules. Applicants can request the association undertakes a review of a decision.

Refusals of Offers of Accommodation

With the exception of bands A, H and out of borough transfers in band D, all applicants will be entitled to refuse one suitable offer. If you decide to place a bid it will be treated as your agreement to be offered the property. A refusal of an offer at any point following closure of the bidding cycle will be deemed as the first refusal.

If you refuse an offer, you must provide a written explanation for this decision. If the Council believes you had reasonable cause for refusal (e.g. property unsuitable on medical grounds) then the offer will not count as a refusal. If you refuse a second reasonable offer, you will be removed from the Housing Register. Applicants can request a review of this decision and can re-apply to join the Housing Register.

Feedback on advertised properties

After each weekly advert of properties, Home Choice will upload feedback giving details of the properties allocated. Personal details of successful applicants will not be disclosed. However, it will include:

- Property locations
- Property size and type
- Number of applicants who applied for each property
- Band of successful applicant
- Application/priority date of successful applicant

Applicants will be able to see where properties are most likely to become available and where they may have the best opportunities of making a successful bid.

Renewal of Applications

Applicants will be invited to renew their application either six monthly or annually depending on their band and circumstances, where they must provide information that is requested of

them. Failure to complete the renewal within 28 days of receiving the reminder will indicate that the applicant no longer requires housing and their application will be closed.

Change of circumstances

Applicants should inform the Housing Register team immediately if they have a change in their circumstances for example a new address, a change in income/employment.

If following a renewal of an application leads to a band change, this will result in a new priority date which the applicant will be informed of in writing. The applicant has the right to request a review of this change.

Right to Review

Every applicant has the right to request a review of a decision that they are ineligible, do not qualify for housing, or their application has been cancelled. Review requests must be made in writing or by e-mail within 28 days of receiving the Council's decision. The Council will notify the applicant in writing of the outcome of the review within eight weeks. Applicants do not have the right to request a further review. In the event the applicant is not satisfied with the outcome they can make a complaint to the Council. Applicants can make a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Right to information

Every applicant has the right to request information regarding their application and its assessment process.

For more detailed information, please refer to our full Housing Register and Allocations Policy available on the Council's website www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk