

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Briefing Note:	Section:	Housing Strategy
Allocations Policy 2023 consultation results	Date:	8th December 2023

Background

It is a statutory requirement under the Housing Act 1996 – Part VI for Councils, whether they are a stock holding Council or not, to have an Allocations Policy in place which outlines how social housing located within their authority will be allocated.

The current Cheshire East Council (CEC) Allocations Policy was implemented in 2018, so therefore some sections of the Policy needed amendment in light of feedback from officers, customers, and partners.

A 12-week period of consultation on the proposed changes to the Allocations Policy was undertaken from 1st September to 30th November 2023, using a number of mechanisms, including on-line questionnaire, internal and external briefing sessions, promotion through social media, press releases, and direct communication with existing customers and landlord organisations. The final draft Policy will be presented to the Council for adoption.

This briefing looks at the online questionnaire and responses received. There were 300 online responses.

The online questionnaire asked 10 questions about proposed changes to the Allocations Policy. The responses are shown below. *The data highlighted below focuses on 'agree' and 'disagree' responses.*

Included is also a considered response from the Royal British Legion with points about veteran provision, and also a summary of the qualitative comments, left by 95 online respondents.

Proposed changes	Page
The allocation of accommodation of houses to families with children under 16.	3
New Build criteria	4
Homeless band C+	5
Urgent Housing need	6
Overcrowding	7
Welfare	8
Local Connection	9
Property size for allocations	10
Transfers in social housing	11
Reviews and appeals	12
Royal British Legion response	13
Summary of comments received	14
Respondent demographic and equalities data	22

1. The allocation of accommodation of houses to families with children under 16.

Presently the policy gives priority for houses to households with children under 16, in line with Public Health Guidance indicating that young children benefit from access to a garden and outside space. Families with children are also eligible for flats but this priority means that children will not miss out on a 2-bedroom house to an older household type. However, larger families with older children are staying at home for longer and we are struggling at times to accommodate them as there are often very few 3-bedroom flats and maisonettes available. Increasing the age for priority for the allocation of houses may lessen the delay for these households.

Proposed revision:

Increase the eligibility to 18 years old

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	33.78% 100	40.88% 121	8.78% 26	7.77% 23	7.09% 21	1.69% 5	296
						answered	296
						skipped	4

Agree: 74.66%

Disagree: 14.86%

2. New Build criteria

Currently the Policy gives priority on first let to workers with a local connection, which then cascades to non-workers with a local connection and finally workers no local connection and non- workers, no local connection. This is coming under increasing scrutiny and challenge from those who are not in work for a number of reasons including caring responsibilities and disability. The recommendation is to revise this criteria to ensure that new build developments retain a balance in the community by continuing to give options to working households, but not to exclude households with disabilities, caring responsibilities or that work voluntarily.

Proposed revision:

Change the terminology of the policy to remove references to employment / work and replace with: “Positive Community Impact”. Definitions of positive Community impact would be:

- **Workers**
- **Committed and frequent voluntary work**
- **People with a disability (in receipt of PIP or attendance allowance)**
- **People committed providing care for a relative/ friend (in receipt of carers allowance)**

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	37.29% 110	32.54% 96	9.49% 28	7.80% 23	12.54% 37	0.34% 1	295
						answered	295
						skipped	5

Agree: 69.83%

Disagree: 20.34%

3. Homeless band C+

The current approach to awarding priority to households with a lack of secure tenure requires a refined definition

Proposed revision:

The band C+ criteria needs to be adjusted and enhanced to reflect some legislative requirements to give reasonable preference to some homeless people.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	14.92% 44	29.49% 87	27.46% 81	6.10% 18	11.19% 33	10.85% 32	295
						answered	295
						skipped	5

Agree: 44.41%

Disagree: 17.29%

Note that the percentage agreeing is so low because over 25% (27.46) answered 'neither agree nor disagree', which could mean the question was confusing, or that respondents think that the policy should remain as it is and / or that the proposed policy change is desirable.

4. Urgent Housing need

A very small change to the wording of this area of the Policy to reference the broader definition of Domestic Abuse rather than specifically just Domestic Violence.

Proposed revision:

Wording changes to the words 'domestic violence' to 'domestic abuse' to be consistent with the Domestic Abuse Act

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	59.32% 175	28.14% 83	8.47% 25	1.69% 5	1.69% 5	0.68% 2	295
						answered	295
						skipped	5

Agree: 87.46%

Disagree: 3.38%

5. Overcrowding

The policy assessments for bedroom eligibility are based on eligibility to Child Benefit. There is a need to be clear in the Policy that this is the assessment criteria. This will align assessments with that of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Housing Benefit Team.

Proposed revision:

The Policy needs to be clearer about the assessment criteria for bedroom eligibility, bungalow eligibility for disabled applicants, and overcrowding. If the intent is to use Child Benefit eligibility, then the Policy should be clear on this evidence being required. The same goes for bungalow eligibility and defining CEC determined need. Under both sections, refer to the criteria that CEC use as a measure.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	30.07% 89	40.20% 119	17.57% 52	3.72% 11	3.38% 10	5.07% 15	296
						answered	296
						skipped	4

Agree: 70.27%

Disagree: 7.1%

6. Welfare

Qualification for priority under this criterion is based on applicants who are experiencing anti-social behaviour, financial hardship, or poor property condition. Partners would like to add the capacity to look at domestic abuse and access to care and support from family members to these assessments.

Proposed revision:

There are some people who are not accounted for in the band C assessments under 'welfare', such as people in refuge due to domestic abuse who have not made a homeless application to CEC, and those moving closer to relatives to receive support.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	36.49% 108	41.22% 122	10.14% 30	4.05% 12	4.39% 13	3.72% 11	296
						answered	296
						skipped	4

Agree: 77.71%

Disagree: 8.44%

7. Local Connection

The Policy presently has a broad category termed as 'any other significant reason' for a connection to Cheshire East alongside the more prescribed residency / work and family categories. This is open to interpretation and is an area often challenged in reviews, appeals and complaints. To define this category more carefully will give clarity and reduce complaints and lessen demand from outside of CEC.

Proposed revision:

Make it clearer that the applicant needs to be specifically in CEC and not just because people need to leave where they are living.

There is a lot of challenge on this criterion because people do not feel safe where they live. People at risk of significant harm would be referred to us under witness / victim protection programmes and would be managed through homeless applications rather than as a direct Part 6 application.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	43.73% 129	43.39% 128	6.10% 18	3.73% 11	2.37% 7	0.68% 2	295
						answered	295
						skipped	5

Agree: 87.12%

Disagree: 6.1%

8. Property size for allocations

Siblings of the same sex become eligible for their own bedroom at age 16; this creates an automatic priority for a much larger home.

Proposed revision:

Consider two siblings of the same sex being permitted to share a room beyond 16. Currently children over 16 get their own room. Is it reasonable for 2 siblings of the same age to share up to any age?

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	42.57% 126	25.34% 75	9.12% 27	9.46% 28	12.84% 38	0.68% 2	296
						answered	296
						skipped	4

Agree: 67.91%

Disagree: 22.3%

Note that 22.3% is the highest percentage 'disagree' for any question, with 12.84 (38 respondents) being the highest 'strongly disagree' for any question.

9. Transfers in social housing

Social housing in Cheshire East is a very limited resource and demand significantly outstrips supply. It is essential that best use is made of current housing stock.

Proposed revision:

To include anti-social behaviour as a reason why tenants might be overlooked for a transfer within existing housing stock that is not covered in the current policy.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	48.81% 144	33.56% 99	9.49% 28	2.71% 8	2.37% 7	3.05% 9	295
						answered	295
						skipped	5

Agree: 82.37%

Disagree: 5.08%

10. Reviews and appeals

Applicants have the right to request a review against decisions made in the assessment process.

Proposed revision:

Add text to explain to applicants how they appeal a decision when their bid is overlooked by a Registered Provider.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this suggested revision?							
Answer Choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Unsure / don't know	Response Total
	33.11% 98	47.30% 140	14.19% 42	2.03% 6	1.01% 3	2.36% 7	296
						answered	296
						skipped	4

Agree: 80.41%

Disagree: 3.04%

Royal British Legion response

We recommend that Cheshire East Council urgently review the implications of the Covenant Duty in the drafting of its Allocations Policy and provide evidence that due regard has been paid to the Armed Forces Covenant. Cheshire East Council should regularly review staff training processes to ensure that all relevant staff are aware of the housing policies specific to the Armed Forces community.

Identifying the Armed Forces Community

Cheshire East Council should ensure that all residents approaching housing services are asked a question that will identify members of the Armed Forces community.

2. New Build Criteria

We recommend that, in its New Build criteria, Cheshire East Council recognises recipients of CAA and AFIP supplementary payments in the same manner as 'Applicants with a disability and in receipt of PIP or attendance allowance.'

3. Homelessness Band C

We recommend that Cheshire East Council be participant to carrying out and publishing the results of a mechanism, CHAIN or other, that records the number of ex-Service personnel sleeping rough in the local authority area.

6. Welfare

We recommend that Cheshire East housing service should be aware of and linked into other tailored services available to veterans, including health and care support provided by the local Integrated Care System, Op Fortitude and Op Courage, and identified vulnerable veterans should be provided with points of contact and referred into those services where appropriate.

Cheshire East Council should engage with national organisations, such as RBL and Veteran's Gateway, and create pathways of housing support for the Armed Forces community.

7. Local Connection

We encourage Cheshire East Council to use discretion in waiving the five year limit and allow veterans to access housing support with exemption from the local connection requirement regardless of the time elapsed since they left Service.

We further recommend that the local connection exemption apply to divorced or separated spouses or partners of Service personnel who are separating or have done so.

9. Transfers in social housing

We recommend that Cheshire East Council should consider setting aside housing stock specifically for ex-Service personnel and their families and explore partnership opportunities with Stoll's Veteran Nomination Scheme.

Summary of comments received

The allocation of accommodation of houses to families with children under 16.

I am aware that housing is limited across Cheshire East and therefore I would worry that increasing the age to 16+ could increase the wait time for a property for families with younger children and I worry about the impact of living in inappropriate accommodation for extended periods for the most vulnerable/youngest children in our community. However, I do recognise the need for families with 16+ children and wonder whether the priority would include stipulations around the types of properties that could be bid on e.g., priority for houses given to families with younger.

New Build

New Build priority must be given to people in work. The concept of volunteering to be considered as work is false as there are more jobs than people looking for jobs. Eligible people need to be in paid work.

Priority should be given to employed tenants to reduce the financial demands of applicants.

As well as seeking to provide social housing CE Council should ensure that new builds are providing greater numbers of affordable properties for people to aspire to. There should also be greater numbers of small bungalows built to provide suitable retirement properties. Not all mature residents wish to live in apartments with no outside facilities.

Concern around affordability. One of the reasons for some new builds having an 'employment only' criteria is due to the higher rents on new build affordable rented homes. Could there be an extra line in there to say that all applicants would be subject to passing an affordability check to ensure the tenancy is sustainable and affordable for the applicant?

There needs to be support for people who work full-time have kids and support themselves but who have bad credit due to being on benefits and pulled their life back. I don't want to be on the housing list, but I cannot get private accommodation due to me being single with 3 kids but working full-time

I think using the term 'Positive community impact' is possibly not clear, and those in employment might not actually bid. Perhaps a re-word to something like 'employment / positive community contribution'?

New build lets is a bit unclear. Do you mean only local connection has 1st priority or local connection with positive contribution?

We strongly agree under the assumption that domestic abuse victims would be given priority need overriding local connection. Anecdotally we have heard of long handover time on new builds which has a negative impact on victims/s, leading to

bed blocking in refuge in some cases. We would hope to see that flexibility could be applied when it's a victims of domestic abuse and that they are not locked into the offer. Furthermore, of consideration for victims is whether housing benefit would cover new build rent in full or would there be a shortfall.

We feel that applicants who are in further education/ full time education should be considered under 'positive community impact'.

The naming of 'positive community impact' feels wrong - most people do that. Other councils call it 'working plus', and this is easier to understand why you are overlooked.

Homeless band C+

I would like to see a revision for people leaving custody, currently they are excluded from accessing social housing for 12 months, but quite often this is leaving people being placed in unsuitable accommodation, for example hostels, where it would increase the chance of re-offending. If a person being released has shown whilst in custody, they have made positive changes to their lives and behaviours and can be backed up with references from the prison and probation and any other professional involved then this period could be looked at being reduced to help support their release and rehabilitation.

If a refusal of an offer is due to a safety concern because of domestic abuse and/or VAWG, we would hope to see consideration of this, for the assessors to be supportive of decisions made around a person's safety and for the duty not be discharged. Due to the nature of DA, victims often have to move out of the area where they have local connection due to risk and then move back when they are in need of their support network. We would hope to see consideration of this and for staff to explain the homelessness assessment process clearly so victims are aware of the issues around having homelessness duties owed by another LA so they can make more informed decisions.

I would like to confirm part regarding awarding Band C for welfare needs. I completely agree with awarding Band C for Domestic Abuse, etc. but not with people wishing to move to be closer to support or provide support.

The number of applicants awarded Band C is enormous. They stand little chance of being offered accommodation due to the massive number in that banding.

I feel that a bigger push on mutual exchanges would be a better option for getting applicants moved and the register reduced.

There are too little properties and too high demand, so we need to look at other options.

I also think that we should close applications where there is no confirmed local connection as the register is overwhelmed with applications from people who have no LC whatsoever. It distorts the actual figure of applicants who have a housing need and a connection to Cheshire East.

Ex-Armed Forces veterans are veterans for life, not just 5 years after they leave the service.

In situations where Veterans have left prison early on good behaviour, they shouldn't be downgraded in banding.

Urgent Housing Need

We would hope to see the statutory definition of domestic abuse outlined in the new DA act included in the policy and consideration of how this policy can maximise access to social housing for victim/survivors of domestic abuse. Refer to the Statutory Guidance published on this matter in November 2018 -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-access-to-social-housing-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse/improving-access-to-social-housing-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse>

Overcrowding

Child benefit can be used as form of post separation abuse by perpetrator to continue economic abuse against victims. Need to ensure policy does not enable this or punish the victims twice. For a victim where the children's main home is with the perpetrator because a family court decision went against them this could be an additional hurdle to keeping their second bedroom. Perhaps in cases of DA additional evidence could be considered i.e., support from local DA services, school records, legal orders for ex 'live with' orders, non mols or occupation orders.

Welfare

It is important that any proposed changes to policy reflect any equality impact assessment findings. We are concerned that there does not appear to be any consideration or specific prioritisation given to local people with lived experience of disability as part of suggested revisions. We hear from disabled people that they are more likely to remain in unsuitable accommodation that does not meet their needs as they tend not to be prioritised over a family with small children, but there may be disabled people who are also disabled parents. Equally, for sole occupiers or couples that are disabled people, they will have specific access needs that need to be considered as part of each of the policy revisions so it evidences how disabled people are prioritised in Cheshire East.

We would like to see this revision broaden to all people experiencing domestic abuse in order to improve access to social housing for victims of DA. Not all victims will be able to access refuge and our current understanding is that those moving on from refuge are awarded band B as part of the move on process. We would also need clarification on the definition of refuge and whether this covers both commissioned and non-commissioned? Again, our understanding would be that those in non-commissioned will be allocated C+. Seemingly there is a gap for victims not in

refuge and not currently within 6 months of a MARAC hearing, who need a move. Additionally, widening the eligibility criteria for claims under 'moving closer to support from relative' so this is not restricted to eligibility for social care support would be a lifeline for victims who need to access vital support from family crucial for their long-term recovery.

We hope to see a revision of the 4-week out rule for victims of DA and VAWG. This rule prevents residents from applying through Home Choice for 4 weeks after a refusal of an offer of supported housing or following an eviction. There have been recent examples of where this has been a significant risk issue. Residents needing supported accommodation are some of CE's most vulnerable and when a refusal of an offer is based on a safety concern over mixed services for ex, we would like to see consideration of this to avoid victims being further victimised or re-traumatised. Experience of domestic violence and abuse is in fact near-universal among women who become homeless and nearly 1 in 4 women have been sexually assaulted whilst sleeping rough. When a victim is evicted from a service it is crucial to find alternative accommodation again to prevent the victim being further victimised

Re: applicants who have an OT report for an adaptation and have been banded E. My family is in the bordering area to Cheshire East and I am in Cheshire West. Your homes are closer, but due to boundaries I am not given a health banding. Would it not be appropriate to do a 'miles from relative' check for carers and disabled people as many properties on WCH are very far away.

Recently, banding would only be increased if it was a MARAC action. I feel it would be positive if it could also include a reference from a relevant organisation (My CWA, DAFSU, Social Care and so on). Not every case where a client needs to flee is heard at MARAC and this would allow for clients' needs to be met.

When allocations are made any persons over 65 need to be housed as close to family as possible. Older people are often overlooked due to their age and usefulness to the community. 55 is outdated as the retirement age has gone up. I think 55 should be scrapped and 65 brought in. I know a woman of 55 who is in community housing where they could be renting privately,

You refer to the mobility element of PIP to evidence a need for adaptation. This is a high threshold, and neglects to take account of other disabilities which may necessitate a property with adaptations, eg neurological and mental health conditions. It also fails to take account of Attendance Allowance which is the benefit payable to older people.

Local Connection

Give priority to people who live in overcrowded homes out of the area, but work full time in Cheshire East and are wasting their wages on public transport.

If the increased preferences towards working parents are not maintained the motivation to work is lessened due to many parents solely on benefits being considerably better off financially and able to access the best housing.

Local connection – Have a permanent contract of employment where the place of work is within Cheshire East.

Might need to clarify if this is also awarded with just an offer of employment or do they actually need to have started employment.

I believe the 'local connection' should include where a child attends school. For example, I have previously bid for a new build in Macclesfield. I am classed as not having a local connection but my eldest goes to All Hallows which is in Macclesfield and I think this should play a big part in the decision.

I have strong views on the 5-year local connection criteria, and I think this is too long. I think 3 years is more reasonable. 5 years in some cases is a big part of someone's remaining life span, and creates a longer than is deemed appropriate wait for family cohesion to take place.

Consideration should be given to the flexibility of a "permanent contract of employment", many persons can prove long term agency work in the CE area but given the nature of their work do not have a permanent contract of employment.

In line with the DA Act, we would like to see clarification for those using the policy that victims who have fled to CE do not have to prove local connection in order to be owed a duty, and that the 2 consecutive years criteria doesn't apply to this group. We would also like to see that settled accommodation includes living with family/friends without a tenancy agreement as our data has found that the majority of victims were living with family and friends when last settled and at application of homelessness.

Property size for allocations

The allocation of a 2-bed property to those who are pregnant - We have received mixed messages on when a pregnant applicant is eligible to bid on a 2-bed property. We've been told that eligibility starts at 32 weeks pregnancy but then been told separately that it is only when that person gives birth. This policy needs clarity.

On occasion, some properties on Cheshire Homechoice are advertised for those over the age of 25. My assumption is that mobility/adaptations are not cited as the reasons for this policy, rather that it is an issue related to ASB. As someone that works with young people, this allocations policy feels discriminatory as I have known young people to miss out on certain properties due to this policy even though they have no links or history of ASB.

"The recent allocations of bungalows by Guinness and the ability to be able to bid for such needs to be addressed. The age limit is 55 years of age. There have been recent allocations of such by people clearly not 55, with no disability whatsoever living in a three-bed fully adapted bungalow with a large garden in one case. That person works in Sussex as a full-time live-in carer, and is rarely occupying the bungalow.

Another bungalow case - the couple are fully able to basically fully decorate, do electrics, put in a new kitchen and put back in a bath rather than use the wetroom in that bungalow. The requirement for eligible for mobility pre-requisite to have mobility PIP is rubbish (these examples don't have blue badges or problems walking, bending, moving, driving). Care component should also be considered for PIP, and not everyone wants to apply for benefits to help (self-respect).

Disabled people under 55 have asked to be moved or be able to apply for a bungalow but Guinness prevent this. Why, when clearly they don't stick to their own policies?

Why are people allocated bungalows when they don't get PIP and work full-time in an active job?

We believe that persons over 16 should have their own space. They could be in employment and feel that the possibility of having to share with a much younger sibling could negatively impact them.

There is one area that is overlooked by these changes is mental health/illness. When a family has more than one child with mental illness and they come under the category of sharing rooms, this should be looked at/considered as a separate issue, possibly under a specific / special review and take into account a doctor's recommendation.

Throughout this survey you have failed to mention any provision for families with children with additional needs... as an example. Nowhere does it state that overcrowding includes a child with additional needs... it should. So, if somebody has 2 boys under 10 but one cannot share then they should be eligible but you've not included this which is discrimination.

Your policy that absolutely prohibits households without children under 16 being allocated a house, even though they would fully occupy is a serious misinterpretation of 'prioritising' and there is case law on this. This priority is intended to give such families a step up and should not be used to provide an absolute ban on families who fall outside of these criteria, especially when you do not have flats big enough to accommodate them. This needs to be looked into and used correctly. Families are being made homeless unnecessarily, due to the interpretation of your housing officers.

I think the change of how many 16-year-old same sex children can share will greatly reduce the need for families to move to a bigger property.

This should be clarified - is it to allow applicants to bid on smaller properties or to reduce their ability to qualify for larger properties? Consideration should be given for the overcrowding of properties and any considered timescale to remedy the overcrowding in the near future.

We would like to see consideration made for children who are transitioning to not have to share a bedroom with a sibling beyond the age of 16.

On the provision of the number of bedrooms: One family, two children aged 8 and 9 deemed suitable to share one bedroom. One year later they are not in that category and entitled to a bedroom each. Do you house them? I don't see that happening.

Priority should be given to people who live in an area, people who want to move to a "nicer" area are being offered houses because they fall into your categories, but then people who come from a town are being overlooked, therefore less desirable areas have lots of empty homes. There are a lot of contradictions in your housing procedures. Why is it a person with same sex siblings over the age of 16 cannot get a 3-bedroom house? Why is it that siblings over the age of 16 cannot get a 2-bedroom property as they are for up to 3 people? What do these families do? In your policy it says nobody can be discriminated against over age, gender but this is being done all the time. Why does there have to be an age limit, children are living at home for longer and not all young adults are mature enough to live on their own, so why can't families with children living at home over the age of 20 get re-housed? Priority should be given to people who come from an area regardless of how old their children are and anyone wanting to re-locate should have a good reason for doing so, i.e., domestic abuse, have connections with an area.

Same sex children between the age of 16-18 should be able to share a room, unless there is a need, pregnancy, disability etc. families with older children would end up having a larger property allocated to them and more likely to not need it within a few years as the children become adults and leave home. Whereas a family with younger children would occupy the property longer

So my concern is the allocating bedrooms. Because of your child benefit rule that stands in place already, I live in a 3-bed house. With me and my partner in one room, my 6- and 9-year-old boy in one, my 13-year-old son in the other...but then child protection gave me and my partner his eldest child from his ex-wife. She now sleeps in the hallway. She's 16. I share my boys 50/50 with my ex-husband and he has the child benefit for the eldest boy who's 13. I can't get a house to accommodate us all because I don't have my eldest child's child benefit. I work, they go to 3 different schools and barely have their own quiet space to study.

The age for siblings of the same gender does need to be higher.

Is there any scope for bedroom allocation for children who change gender / identify as a different gender?

Transfers in social housing

With regards to transfers, unless you have a housing need (e.g. overcrowded, under-occupation, medical, severe ASB, DA, or any other serious welfare need) then people should explore mutual exchanges more, and this is something we do in Halton, to manage our housing stock more effectively. We do also identify parlour properties at notice stage, so they are advertised with an additional bedroom, as we have a limited supply of 4 and 5-bed properties.

The criteria for being overlooked is highly generic and should be considered on a case-by-case basis - for example - an individual with poor mental health / physical health who has not been in receipt of services may have been unable to tend to their property or garden or has been unable to contact the provider for support independently to get issues sorted, etc.

Individuals experiencing multiple disadvantages are also more likely to be exploited / targeted and having an option for transfer within the housing stock may provide a swift response to these concerns - without having to make applications for multiple other providers, wait to bid on Homechoice etc - effectively reducing the amount of time the person remains within the address at which they are vulnerable and acts promptly to minimise further risk.

Transfers in social housing are a vital lifeline for survivors who need to escape abuse whilst retaining their secure social housing tenancy. Rent arrears, poor property condition, a poorly maintained garden and a recent history of anti-social behaviour are also all key indicators of domestic abuse. Survivors are four times more likely than the general tenant population to receive ASB complaints and one study has found that 60% of victims / survivors had arrears of over £1,000. We would like to see added to this revision a note for users of this policy to look at applications with a domestic abuse lens, liaising with colleagues in CEDAH and across the DA partnership to ensure victims aren't being wrongly penalised and these crucial pathways to safe and stable housing are enabled.

Strongly agree with the revision proposed. I used to live near social housing residents in Wistaston who were regularly committing anti-social behaviour and making the lives of the street a misery. I strongly agree that a recent conviction or sanction for anti-social behaviour should warrant that household being overlooked. I would extend this to any charges or criminal sanction on any residents of the property under 18.

Reviews and appeals

Could it be made clear that a registered provider would not hold a property empty whilst an appeal was taking place? Timescales on this are quite long and we would be losing rent.










When it comes to a review or appeal - what level of independence is afforded?





40 days is a long time for a victim who has been incorrectly banded and needs to move. We would like the appeals decision time to be shortened where there is an urgency such as DA to 20 working days to match the applicants timeline.










The 40 days for council to reply to tenant, does that mean they will be left homeless whilst the review is taking place and who and how decides an appeal?







We believe that by stating appeals must be in writing may be excluding people who struggle to write, or are unable to write. We think another option should be given (i.e., to log an appeal over the telephone).






Consultation respondents' demographic and equalities data




Which of the following best describes who you are you responding as?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	A Local Resident		59.60%	177
2	A person on the CEC Housing Waiting List		15.15%	45
3	Cheshire East Employee		12.79%	38
4	Registered housing provider		3.03%	9
5	A local business		0.34%	1
6	A member of a voluntary or community organisation		2.69%	8
7	An elected town or parish councillor in Cheshire East		3.03%	9
8	An elected Member of Cheshire East		0.67%	2
9	Other (please specify):		2.69%	8
			answered	297
			skipped	3

Gender identity				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Male		30.74%	87
2	Female		63.96%	181
3	Prefer not to say		4.95%	14
4	Other gender identity, please specify:		0.35%	1
			answered	283
			skipped	17

Age				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	16-24		1.41%	4
2	25-34		8.80%	25
3	35-44		19.01%	54
4	45-54		20.07%	57
5	55-64		21.48%	61
6	65-74		17.25%	49
7	75-84		7.39%	21
8	85 and over		0.35%	1
9	Prefer not to say		4.23%	12
			answered	284
			skipped	16

Ethnic origin				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish		88.97%	250
2	Any other White background		2.14%	6
3	Mixed: White and Black Caribbean / African / Asian		2.49%	7
4	Asian / Asian British		0.00%	0
5	Black African / Caribbean / Black British		0.71%	2
6	Prefer not to say		4.27%	12
7	Any other ethnic group, please specify:		1.42%	4
			answered	281
			skipped	19

Religious belief / faith				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Buddhist		1.08%	3
2	Christian		51.97%	145
3	Hindu		0.00%	0
4	Jewish		0.00%	0
5	Muslim		0.00%	0
6	Sikh		0.00%	0
7	None		37.28%	104
8	Prefer not to say		7.89%	22
9	Other religious belief / faith, please specify:		1.79%	5
			answered	279
			skipped	21

A woman, pregnant, on maternity leave or returning from maternity leave?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		2.74%	6
2	No		89.04%	195
3	Prefer not to say		8.22%	18
			answered	219
			skipped	81

Sexual orientation				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Heterosexual (straight)	<div></div>	83.94%	230
2	Bisexual	<div></div>	1.09%	3
3	Gay/Lesbian	<div></div>	2.55%	7
4	Prefer not to say	<div></div>	11.31%	31
5	Other (please specify):	<div></div>	1.09%	3
			answered	274
			skipped	26