

## Housing Register

# Allocation Scheme

This leaflet lets you know how we assess you so that you can apply (bid) for social housing under the Kent Homechoice scheme.



### Aims and priorities

The Allocation Scheme has been designed to ensure that access to social housing supports the corporate aims of Maidstone Borough Council, as well as reflecting the current legislation. The council's vision is for economic prosperity and to have a growing economy. In order to support this ambition, the council has decided to award additional priority to applicants in work or who assist their local community in other ways, such as serving in the Armed Forces and through charitable work. There is an extremely limited supply of stock of social housing within Maidstone and this policy is designed to work with our housing providers to make best use of the stock available and promote Maidstone as a decent place to live.

Maidstone Borough Council's Allocation Scheme is designed to treat all applicants for social housing in a fair and equitable manner. The allocation scheme is designed to offer applicants some choice in their accommodation and the ability to express preference on their accommodation type and location. This individual choice and preference must be balanced with the needs of all applicants and the need for the council to offer best value through its housing services. In cases of acute need e.g. homelessness, Maidstone Borough Council may prioritise the need for accommodation whilst responding to choice. Applicants should be aware that the housing stock in Maidstone is limited and that they may be moved to a more suitable property faster if they are more flexible in the type or location of the property that they require.

### Entry to the Housing Register

In order to be accepted onto the Housing Register, applicants must meet 2 qualifying criteria. These

are local connection and housing need. If an applicant does not meet both of these requirements, they will not be allowed onto the register.

### **Local Connection**

The Local connection criteria are as follows:

- Resident - lived in Maidstone for the last 2 years
- Family - a parent, sibling or adult child is a resident of the borough
- Employment - works or has an offer of work within the borough (minimum 16 hours per week for at least 6 months)
- Returning Resident - lived in the borough for 2 of the last 5 years, but does not currently live there

Evidence of local connection must be provided and the council will confirm this information with other internally held information. In exceptional cases the Housing Options Team Leader can override the local connection criteria.

### **Housing Need**

The Housing Need criteria are as follows:

- Medical and Welfare - an applicant or member of the household is unable to access the bedroom, bathroom, kitchen or living room, or the whole property because of a medical or welfare issue
- Hardship - an applicant or member of the household needs to move in order to give or receive care
- Unsatisfactory Housing - applicants are living in unsatisfactory housing conditions

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- Overcrowding - an applicant household is overcrowded according to the bedroom standard
- Under-occupying - an applicant has one or more spare bedrooms in their property

Evidence of housing need will need to be provided and applicants will be informed of what proofs are required when they apply.

If an applicant claims unsatisfactory housing, a referral will be made to the Private Sector Housing Team. They will determine what action to take and whether an applicant qualifies on these grounds.

### Financial Circumstances

Details of all bank accounts, investments and savings held by the applicant and their household must be supplied in order to access the housing register. If an applicant household has more than £30,000 in capital, investments or savings or an annual income in excess of £60,000 per annum before deductions, they will not be allowed access to the register.

### Household Members

Household members who will be moving with you must be declared on the application.

The only people who can be considered part of an application are:

- Partner
- Children
- Relatives
- Carers
- Anyone residing with the applicant at the time of application

An applicant cannot add someone onto their application who does not meet these criteria.

### **Bedroom Allocation**

1 bedroom will be allocated for each of the following:

- Married or cohabiting couple
- Person aged 16 years or over
- 2 children of the same sex up to the age of 16
- 2 children aged under 10 regardless of gender

Extra bedrooms may be allotted in cases of exceptional circumstances where an overnight carer is required. It is up to the Housing Options Team Leader to authorise this.

### **Pregnancy**

A pregnancy should be reported as a change of circumstances to the council with accompanying proof. For purposes of bedroom allocation, a pregnancy will count as an additional child at the start of the third trimester.

### **Being on the Register**

All applicants (including those currently tenants of social landlords) who qualify to access the register will be placed in one of 4 bands. The bands are as follows:

#### **Band A - Community Contribution**

This band is for those who provide a service to the community. In order to qualify for this band an applicant must meet one of the following criteria:

- Employment - an applicant or member of the household is employed (minimum of 16 hours per week for 6 months)

- Charity Work - an applicant or member of the household must volunteer for a registered charity (minimum of 10 hours per week for 6 months)
- Carer - an applicant or member of the household must be a in receipt of the carers allowance
- Foster Carers and Adopters - an applicant or member of the household must be a KCC approved adopter or foster carer
- Armed Forces - an applicant or member of the household must fulfil the Armed Forces criteria.

An applicant household must fulfil these requirements when they are placed into this band as well as when an offer of accommodation is made. The Housing Options Team Leader will assess any applicant who believes that they provide a service to the community that is not covered above. Relevant proofs of these claims must be supplied to the Council

### **Band B - Assistance**

This band is for those who are unable to access their bedroom, bathroom, kitchen or living room, or their entire property due to a medical or welfare issue. All applicants must provide proof of medical conditions and this information may be sent to an independent medical advisor for an assessment. Applicants are entitled to one free medical assessment for each member of the household. Any additional medical assessments will be charged at £75 unless the Housing Option Team Leader agrees to waive the fee.

### **Band C - Reasonable Preference**

This band is for those who qualify to go on the register but who do not meet the requirements of any other band.

## **Band D - Homeless**

This band is for those who meet the definition of Homeless as defined in the Housing Act 1996 part VII and those who are rough sleepers as verified by an external support organisation. Priority within each band will be determined by the date of application.

### **Bidding for Properties**

All applicants are expected to bid on properties via Kent Homechoice. In every bidding cycle, properties will be allocated to each band.

The adverts on Kent Homechoice describe the properties available and it is up to an applicant to bid on properties that are suitable for them. If an applicant does not place bids on 2 or more cycles, the council may place bids on their behalf.

An applicant who refuses a property which they are offered will have their application date set to the date of the refusal. This will have the effect of sending the applicant to the back of the list.

If an applicant believes the property is unsuitable, it is up to the Housing Options Team Leader to review this and determine whether the application date should be reset.

### **Ineligibility for an offer**

An applicant may be ineligible for an offer of accommodation in the following circumstances:

- Rent arrears equivalent to 8 weeks rent or more and where no payment plan is in place
- A history of anti-social behaviour
- Not all information has been provided by the applicant
- The applicant's circumstances have changed and the council have not been informed.

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