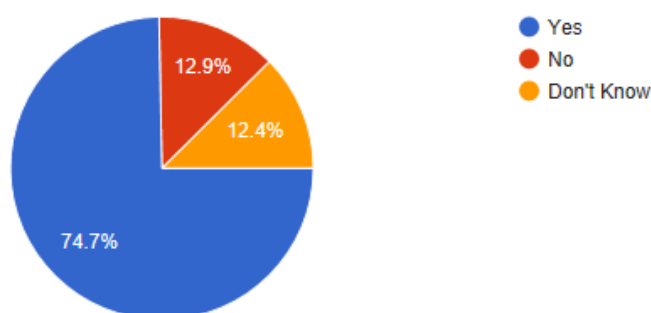


HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY - SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Proposed Change: Qualification

Do you agree that the qualification criteria as described above should be introduced?

249 responses



COMMENTS: These were some of the comments made by those who agree with the Council's proposals: *"this is a good idea because it will definitely approve (sic) the amount who NEED to be housed..."* and *"I hope this will mean a fairer qualification system"*.

Those who did not agree felt that it would have an unfair impact on applicants who were adequately housed in the private sector but who have been on the waiting list for a number of years: *"I have been on the housing list for 8 years. It would make my life so much easier to have a Council house..."* and *"the time spent waiting for an allocation should not be ignored. It is not fair that people who cannot afford to buy are delayed their right to social housing."* Others felt that those who were in privately rented accommodation who could not afford the rents would be adversely affected: *"I completely disagree, just because we rent privately doesn't mean we can afford it..."*.

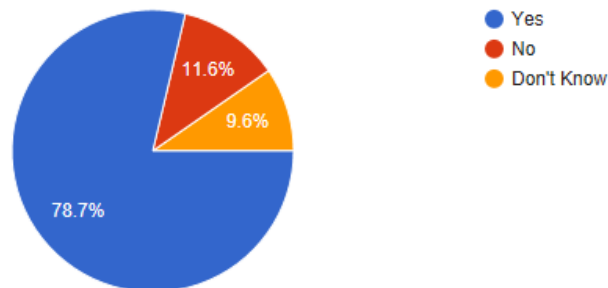
COUNCIL'S RESPONSE: Social housing is not an entitlement or a right but is a scarce resource that the Council has a statutory duty to allocate with reference to housing need. The Council also recognises that it needs to be proactive in creating affordable housing for those in its District. This is the reason why under its newly adopted Housing Strategy it has made a commitment to building more Council housing, at least 600 for the period up to 2026. These will be of differing tenures, including affordable rents and shared ownership schemes. Where appropriate, this will give those who are currently housed in privately rented accommodation an opportunity to get onto the property ladder. It should also be noted that

the Council would not expect those who cannot afford their private rents to remain living in them as any such applicant would come under the statutory definition of homeless.

Proposed Change: Bedroom Need Assessment

Do you agree that it is correct to set bedroom need assessment in this way?

249 responses

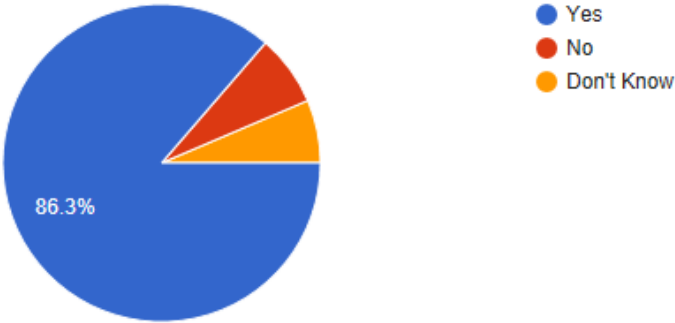


COMMENTS: Some respondents felt that consideration needed to be given to step families or grandparents with grandchildren who came to visit. Some of the comments made were as follows: *“There are circumstances like step children that stay but aren’t classed as living with you, which I think is wrong that they cannot have their own space in the family home when they stay every weekend...”* and *“As a single person I would like the option to have my grandchildren to stay over sometimes, just having one bedroom would not allow me to do this”*. Some respondents felt that it was important for the Council to include extra rooms for carers and those who needed an extra bedroom due to illness/disability.

COUNCIL’S RESPONSE: The Council has to consider how to effectively use its family sized accommodation. There is a great demand for family sized properties and it would not be appropriate to allocate such properties to those applicants who only have an occasional, rather than a full time, need for the extra bedrooms. The proposed new allocation policy makes provision for those who live in carers or who need extra bedrooms due to illness or disability at paragraphs 5.2.3 and 5.3.5.

Is it correct for the Council to set household membership in this way so that there is effective use of family sized accommodation in the Council's District?

249 responses

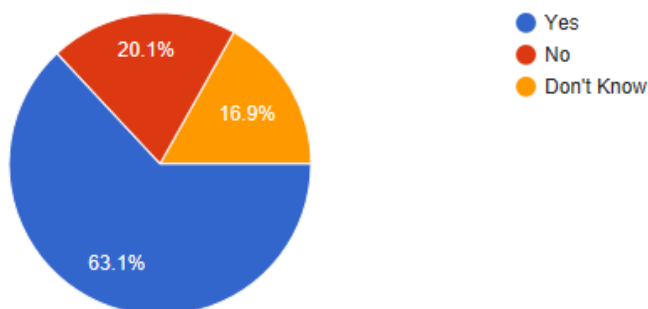


COMMENTS: Respondents felt that it was necessary to take individual circumstances into consideration. Some of the comments made included: *“family circumstances are especially diverse in the 21st century and the lack of affordable housing in the area means that it is not unusual to find adult children living with their parents past the age of 35...”* and *“As I just stated an elderly person might need family help in later life as opposed to going into a home...”*

COUNCIL’S RESPONSE: The Council recognises that there will be circumstances where it will be appropriate to allow children aged over 35 to be included in an applicant’s housing application and where it will be necessary to include other members of the applicant’s extended family in their application, for example elderly relatives. The new draft allocation policy makes specific provision for this at paragraphs 5.3.5 and 7.6.1. The Council took into consideration the age at which an individual would qualify for housing benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit for a self-contained property in their own right, when setting the age of 35 for adult dependants.

Is it correct for the Council to allocate scarce social housing, where demand far outweighs the supply, with reference to an applicant's housing need in accordance with the new proposed priority bands?

249 responses

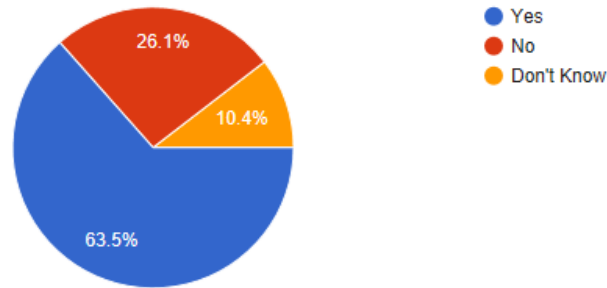


COMMENTS: Those who agreed with the Council's proposals made the following comments: *"Like I said before it isn't fair because there is people who newly join the register needs its (sic) a lot more"*, *"Housing need should be on assessed need, not just on time spent on list (sic)..."* and *"Accommodation should be weighted on need and not time on the list..."* and *"If a person/family have been on the register for X amount of years and a less healthy/more needy person comes forward, the most poorly is more worthy, I would say. I have no problem stepping aside for someone more poorly than me"*. Those who disagreed with the Council's proposal felt the new system would be unfair to those who had been on the list for numerous years but who were adequately housed in the private sector. Some of the comments received included: *"I feel that I have been penalised for continuing to pay private rent through hard work..."*, *"Not if that means people who have been on the list for a long time gets (sic) moved to the back as that's unfair"* and *"Everyone deserves there (sic) chance to get a council property. I think the current way is the fairest..."*

COUNCIL'S RESPONSE: The Council has a statutory duty to allocate social housing with reference to housing need. There is no automatic right or entitlement to social housing. However, the Council recognises that residents need more affordable housing options. In the Council's newly adopted Housing Strategy, the Council has committed to the development of at least 600 new council properties of differing tenures. Where appropriate, this will give families who are currently living in privately rented accommodation an opportunity to get onto the property ladder by way of shared ownership. Some respondents were also concerned that the time they had spent on the waiting list would be lost; however, under the proposed new allocation policy, all current Homesearch applicants will retain their original application date unless their housing need has changed (paragraph 5.4.1 (b)(ii)).

Is it correct for the Council to manage applications on the housing register by suspending or removing applications due to conduct; for example, if an applicant fails to make bids or refuses suitable offers of accommodation?

249 responses



COMMENTS: Some respondents felt that applicants should not be removed for failing to make bids in a 12 month period. In particular, the following was said: *“Months if not a year or more can pass without a suitable property (eg a property with bedroom Nos suitable to the applicant’s family size in the area or within appropriate travelling distance to place of employment...”*, *“I agree with conduct, but not for not making an application within 12 months, as this can be due to lack of suitable accommodation rather than willingness to apply...”*

COUNCIL’S RESPONSE: Under the proposed new allocation policy, the Council would not remove an applicant for failing to bid within a 12 month period. An applicant may have their application suspended for a period of 6 months if they fail to bid within a 12 month period. However, if an applicant’s application is suspended, they will have a right to request a review of the decision. If they have a justifiable reason for failing to make bids they can request a review of the suspension. The lack of suitable properties in this period would be considered as part of this review. Any decision made by the Council on an applicant’s housing application can be reviewed on the applicant’s request. The reviews process can be found at paragraph 7.5 of the draft allocation policy.

COMMENTS FROM GROUPS:

RADIAN (a private registered provider of social housing within the Council’s) agreed with all the proposed changes, but felt that it was necessary to provide limits when undertaking the financial assessment as other Councils had done.

COUNCIL’S RESPONSE: The Council felt it was not appropriate to set financial limits but that it was important to have the flexibility to treat each individual case on its own merits.

The Council has specifically excluded from qualification those who have the financial resources to afford to purchase a property.

THE TENANT INVOLVMENT GROUP: felt that allocations need to be judged on a case by case basis, that there should be justification for the “35 years old” limit for dependants, that there needs to be an appeal process and that banding for exceptional need should be a decision for more than 1 Officer. They also felt that families should be assessed for extra bedrooms if their children are nearing the age criteria to avoid having to move to another property shortly afterwards. They considered that it was necessary to consider community cohesion and children being settled into local schools when assessing the need for bedrooms.

COUNCIL’S RESPONSE: The Council has a discretion that will allow it to treat each individual case on its own merits; including if appropriate, for a family to be assessed as needing an extra bedroom because their children are nearing the age criteria for an extra bedroom (paragraph 7.6); the Council has set the dependant age limit to 35, with reference to when an individual qualifies for housing benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit for a self-contained property in their own right. There is a right of review of any decision that the Council makes on an application (paragraph 7.5).

RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL: Councillors felt that the Household criteria needed to reflect that some families may have adult children with disabilities, that the Rural Connection should also apply to towns and felt that people may be removed for refusing “suitable accommodation” which was at a distance from an area in which they had a connection and in which they needed to remain.

COUNCIL’S RESPONSE: The Council has the discretion to include other family members in an applicant’s household if appropriate; this would allow a child over 35 with a disability to be included in an applicant’s household (paragraph 7.6 and 5.3.5). The Council considers that the specific characteristics of rural parishes provides for a justification to have local connection criteria; however, it would not be manageable to apply such criteria to all towns within the District area. All applicants have the right to request a review of a decision made on their application. Accordingly, any applicant who had refused accommodation because it was not suitable would be able to provide their reasons for refusal (including distance from an area in which they needed to remain) and would have the ability to have those reasons considered.

NEW MILTON TOWN COUNCIL: It was suggested that it would be appropriate to move those who were under-occupying social housing by 1 or more rooms into Band 2. It was also felt that those who were homeless (whether or not owed duties under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996) should be in Band 1 or 2; particularly as the Armed Forces Covenant may apply to them. It was also suggested that it was necessary to take into consideration medical reasons for anti-social behaviour when deciding whether or not an applicant should qualify to join the housing register.

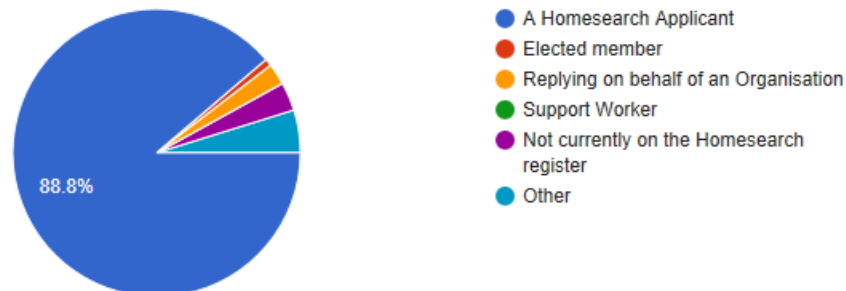
COUNCIL’S RESPONSE: The Council needs to set priorities for those who have a housing need. Those in Band 2 have been assessed by the Council as having a serious housing need; in particular those who are under-occupying by 2 bedrooms will have a greater need to be rehoused than those who are only under-occupying by 1 bedroom. The Council has placed only those to whom it has a statutory duty to secure alternative housing within Band

2. Those who are in the armed forces have a special category within Band 3; any such applicant who satisfies the criteria of Band 1 or 2 will be placed into those bands. At paragraph E(3)(ii) of Appendix 2: Eligibility and Qualification, the Council states that applicants will qualify to join the housing register if they demonstrate a commitment to improving their behaviour. Provision has also been made to ensure that individual circumstances (which would include medical causes for behaviour) are taken into consideration when determining whether someone qualifies to join the housing register due to unacceptable behaviour (paragraph E(4) of Appendix 2).

Information About You

Are you?

249 responses



If from an Organisation or other, please state below which one

13 responses

Together

The You Trust

The Handy Trust Charity (Youth Service)

Acts 4 Sharing

Radian

I am my son's appointee. My son is on the register.

Agreed comments from Tenant Representatives who attended the TIG meeting on 8.2.19

NFDC Employee

I am a volunteer for St Thomas's Good Samaritans group in Lymington but completed the form as an individual, not a representative of the group.

New Milton Town Council

Two Saints Limited

14426

mother of an applicant

Are you?

249 responses

