

EXECUTIVE MEMBER - ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Date: Monday, 9 June 2025 Time: 10.00 a.m. Venue: Spencer Room, Town Hall
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AGENDA

1. Declarations of Interest
2. Letting Affordable Housing - Policy Update 3 - 70
3. Any other urgent items which in the opinion of the Chair, may be considered.

Charlotte Benjamin
Director of Legal and Governance Services

Town Hall
Middlesbrough
Friday, 30 May 2025

MEMBERSHIP

Councillor J Rostron

Assistance in accessing information

Should you have any queries on accessing the Agenda and associated information please contact Scott Bonner/ Chris Lunn, (01642) 729708/ 729742, scott_bonner@middlesbrough.gov.uk/ chris_lunn@middlesbrough.gov.uk

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MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Report of:	Director of Adult Social Care & Health Integration
Relevant Executive Member:	Executive Member for Adult Social Care
Submitted to:	Single Member Executive
Date:	9 June 2025
Title:	Letting Affordable Housing – Policy Update
Report for:	Decision
Status:	Public
Council Plan priority:	A successful and ambitious town
Key decision:	Yes
Why:	Decision(s) will have a significant impact in two or more wards
Subject to call in?	Yes
Why:	Non-urgent report

Proposed decision(s)
That The Executive approve proposed changes to the Common Allocation Policy.

Executive summary

This report is regarding the Common Allocation Policy (CAP) for social Housing across the Tees Valley.

Each Local Authority is required by the Housing Act 1996 to operate a Housing Register. Middlesbrough operates a joint register with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Redcar & Cleveland Council. Two Registered Providers, Beyond Housing and North Star are also part of this partnership referred to throughout as the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership (TVLP).

The lettings platform used is called Tees Valley Home Finder (TVHF). Applicants are placed in a banding to reflect their circumstances and need, and “bid” for properties which are added to the system.

Due to the demand for social housing (almost 3000 live applications for Middlesbrough) along with the low weekly number of properties advertised (average of 14 per week in

2024/25) the partners agreed that it was time to review the allocation policy to ensure it is best supporting those in the greatest needs, reflects customer feedback and remains relevant and compliant with regards to national policy.

Representatives from the partnership met and reviewed the policy in detail and drafted a new Common Allocation Policy (CAP) (Appendix 1).

Consultation was held on the proposed policy in October and November 2024 and the proposed changes were well received.

At the point of implementation of the new CAP, live applications in a priority banding will remain in their current priority band, meaning there will be no detrimental impact on the applicant. Applicants who will benefit from the proposed changes are currently being identified so the necessary amendments can be made to their application. All applications will then be subject to the new CAP moving forward, whether it be a new application or a change of circumstances.

It is recommended that the changes to the CAP be approved so that implementation can begin right away. The only alternative would be to continue in using the current policy which was written in 2019 and is no longer fit for purpose, hence the suggested changes.

1. Purpose of this report and its contribution to the achievement of the Council Plan ambitions

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to give context and outline to the proposed changes to the Common Allocation Policy (CAP) **(Appendix 1)**
- 1.2 The proposal supports the ambitions of 'A Successful and Ambitious Town' by ensuring allocation of social housing meets the demand of those in housing need.
- 1.3 Due to rising demand for social/affordable rented housing, it is essential that the Common Allocation Policy (CAP) remains relevant, adheres to national policy and, vitally, meets our local housing needs. The Partnership has recently undertaken a review of the current CAP to ensure we have a policy that is fair, clear and helps those who need social/affordable housing most. The review was informed by consultation with applicants registered on Tees Valley Home Finder, key partners and stakeholders.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Executive approves proposed changes to the Common Allocation Policy.
- 2.2 The Executive are asked to note the recent consultation exercise which was undertaken to inform an updated Tees Valley Common Allocation Policy (CAP) and approve the proposed new Common Allocation Policy. **(Appendix 2)**

3 Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3.1 By approving the amendments this will:

- Help the Council to ensure consistency of the policy across the sub region.
- Give clarity and transparency for all scheme applicants across the partnership.
- Ensure that the policy is aligned with statute which has emerged since the previous policy was implemented.
- Ensure that the policy is reflective of stakeholder feedback provided during the consultation process.

3.2 Although Middlesbrough Council is not a stock holding authority, we are required to operate a housing register along with an allocation Policy. In partnership with Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, Beyond Housing and North Star (known as the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership (TVLP)) we operate a Common Allocation Policy (CAP). The Partnership is committed to working collaboratively to ensure a fair and transparent CAP. The recent CAP review was undertaken to ensure that the housing needs of residents across the boroughs of Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees are met.

4. Background and relevant information

Background

4.1 As noted previously Middlesbrough Council is a member of the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership and collectively we operate a CAP, housing register and digital lettings platform, [Tees Valley Home Finder](#). Tees Valley Home Finder is an online web portal allowing those seeking accommodation in the partner boroughs to register and 'bid' for housing. The two Registered Provider Partnership members, Beyond and North Star advertise/let their properties through this route. A further 12 Registered Providers are signatories to a Nomination Agreement. These Registered Providers advertise / let a minimum of 50% of their vacant rented properties via the Tees Valley Homefinder platform.

4.2 There is high demand for social/affordable rented housing and availability does not match this demand (as summarised below). This was the reason a review of the policy has been undertaken, with the aim of maximising the council's ability to best address our local and prioritised housing need:

4.3 Housing Register:

The number of applicants on the Housing register for Middlesbrough at the end of Q4 2024/25 was 2878.

4.4 Average Number of properties advertised as available for letting:

Whilst the weekly number of properties does fluctuate, between April 2024 to the end of Qu. 4 2024-25 the average number of advertised properties per week was 14 in Middlesbrough.

Review & Consultation

5.0 In addition to the issues of demand mentioned above, the policy review took place to also ensure that the Council is in a good position to assist those in the greatest housing need and reflect on customer feedback. It also gave the opportunity to address another driver for the review of the CAP was to ensure compliance regarding changes in national policy, including the Government's commitment to ensure appropriate priority and support is given to our Armed Forces Communities including veterans, those who are young care leavers and those who have experienced domestic abuse.

5.1 Representatives of the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership undertook a review and identified several potential changes which the consultation exercise subsequently sought views on. Pages 17-30 of the CAP Consultation Report (**Appendix 2**) detail the consultation questions asked, and sought views on 12 proposed changes which are summarised below. Please note that the page number in brackets at the end of the summary is where you can find more detail of this in the CAP (**Appendix 1**).

5.2 Changes proposed are as follows:

- Local connection: Due to increased demand this change means that anyone wishing to join the register must have a local connection to at least one of the three partner areas (Page 9).
- Serious cases of anti-social behaviour: Due to the significant impact this has on communities, there is to be an increase in the length of exclusion from the Housing Register from 12 to 36 months for households containing perpetrators of unacceptable behaviour (Page 11).
- Regular review of applicants with a banding priority: With the potential to remove a priority banding if suitable properties have been advertised and the applicant has failed to place a bid over a six-month period (page 21).
- Loss of home due to demolition: Introduction of a new *Band 1 plus* to be given to those on the Housing Register who are losing their home due to demolition (page 16).
- HM Armed Forces Community: Introduction of a new *Band 1 plus* for those leaving the armed forces communities with an urgent need for housing, as assessed by Local Authority Homelessness Teams (page 17).
- Homeless households: To be placed in *Band 1* when applicants are owned a main duty and are resident in temporary accommodation, *Band 2* when

applicants are owed a prevention or relief duty or *Band 3* where after 56 days, the applicant has been determined as intentionally homeless or not in priority need. This will be determined by the local authority Homelessness Teams to ensure compliance with homelessness legislation (pages 17, 19 & 21).

- Care Leavers: Young people who leaving the care of the Local Authority and have been assessed as ready for independent living will be awarded a *Band 1* (Page 17).
- The introduction of a new Emergency Medical: For those applicants with an emergency housing need which is being exacerbated by their current housing situation (for example people ready for discharge from hospital where their current housing is unsuitable / cannot be made suitable through property adaptations), to be awarded a *Band 1*. Urgent Medical need will remain band 2 (Page 17).
- Child Protection: A new category will be introduced where there is evidence of a serious threat to the well-being of a child and their accommodation is a significant contributory factor in the risk will be awarded *Band 1* (Page 18).
- Adoptive parents or prospective adoptive parents/foster carers currently living in unsuitable accommodation: This category is to be expanded to include 'specialist guardianship', to be awarded a *Band 2* (Page 19).
- Overcrowding: A new category of 'acute overcrowding' to be introduced in instances where an applicant is severely overcrowded requiring 2 or more additional bedrooms, a *Band 2* will be awarded. Overcrowding by 1 bedroom will continue to secure a Band 3 (Page 19).
- Senior Management Discretion: Whilst the majority of allocations will be made in accordance with the CAP scheme banding rules, there will be *exceptional* circumstances which does not fit into the banding categories (Page 22).

5.3 The consultation exercise for the proposed changes ran for 6 weeks between 07.10.24 to 18.11.24 with the consultation exercise promoted by:

- Direct contact with all applicants with a live Tees Valley Home Finder application at any point during the time the consultation was undertaken. In total 8409 contacts were made via email and/or letter across the 3 local authority areas.
- Direct contact with a range of partner organisations including VCSE sector partners, 15 Registered Providers, local elected members in the three local authorities, local MP's and internal colleagues.
- Promoting the online consultation via the 5 partner websites.

5.4 We received 682 consultation responses in total. The vast majority (597) were from residents living within the Tees Valley Housing Partnership areas. Page 4 of **Appendix 2** provides a breakdown of consultation replies.

5.5 As **Appendix 2** details, all consultation proposals were supported by the majority of those who responded.

5.6 Analysis of consultation replies (both the questions and open narrative replies) had led to no further changes to the proposed policy, other than those consulted on.

5.7 Executive is asked to note that all applicants with a live application at the date the new CAP is introduced will not have a banding reduced, the banding will remain for the period the application is live and there is no change in the applicants circumstances. However, there may be instances where current live applicants may potentially secure a higher banding i.e. for acute over-crowding / young people leaving care. Work is ongoing to identify these potential applicants to ensure their banding is revised to as close as possible to the new CAP implementation date. All new applicants made after the date the new CAP is formally implemented will be banded according to the new assessment criteria.

5.8 Following consideration of the consultation replies Executive is asked to approve the new Tees Valley CAP (**Appendix 1**).

6. Ward Member Engagement if relevant and appropriate

6.1 All ward members were notified and given the opportunity to respond to the recent Tees Valley Common Allocation Policy consultation exercise

7 Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

7.1 The alternative of Middlesbrough ceasing to be part of the Tees Valley Lettings partnership has been considered but discounted. There are benefits to having a consistent approach across the Tees Valley as often applicants move between local authority areas. Additionally in terms of the support costs of managing a choice based lettings service, the current arrangement is more cost efficient to the Council.

7.2 An alternative to the suggested changes would be to continue to operate allocation of social housing via the current Common Allocation Policy, which has been in place since 2019 and not reflective of current needs and demand.

7.3 Following consultation this has proven to not be fit for purpose and proposed changes have been generally well received.

7.4 Please note that this new policy has been given approval as necessary by all other partners in the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership, including Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton Borough Councils.

8 Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)



Topic	Impact
Financial (including procurement and Social Value)	No financial implications expected due to the policy update.

Legal	S.167, Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 determined that each local authority is required to set up and maintain an allocation scheme. This system allows the authority to determine priority for those in housing needs.
Risk	Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.
Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion	An impact assessment has been completed and there is no expected impact with regards to these categories.
Reducing Poverty	An impact assessment has been completed and there will not be a negative impact regarding poverty as this policy is for the allocation of social housing, which by its nature is more affordable, thus should help to reduce poverty.
Climate Change / Environmental	No impact
Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers	An impact Assessment has been completed. There will be a positive impact on those who are cared for by the local authority including bandings for those being cared for by the local authority where housing is a key contributing factor to risk, and improved bandings for Care Leavers.
Data Protection	No impact – all agreements and process underpinning the management of the Tees Valley Home Finder System will remain in place.

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
A detailed Project Delivery Plan is already ongoing in preparation for approval. This will be implemented, and further communication will be sent to affected customers once this is approved.	Rachel Jenkins	30.06.2025
To implement the new policy at an agreed time with all partners. *Please note all other partners have had the policy approved through their required channels.	Rachel Jenkins	11.07.2025

Appendices

1	Final draft of proposed updated Common Allocation Policy  CAP Final Draft 2025.pdf
2	CAP Consultation report 2024  CAP Policy Consultation Appendi:

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
None		

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Tees Valley Lettings Partnership

Common Allocation Policy



Tees Valley Homefinder

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Glossary of Terms

Adapted properties

Homes which have been designed or adapted to meet the needs of people with physical or sensory disabilities eg level access shower (las), wet room, widened doorways or changes to access the property

Advocate

Someone who an applicant has given permission to act on their behalf to deal with their application eg a support worker or family member, etc

Affordability

At the point of a tenancy being offered, an affordability check will be carried out to confirm the applicant is able to afford and sustain the tenancy.

Applicant

A person who applies for housing on the lettings scheme

Autobid

An automated process built into the digital letting platform in which Tees Valley Homefinder operates which, when activated, will bid for properties that fit the applicant's identified needs on behalf of the applicant

Band

The system used for giving priority for housing

Common Allocation Policy

A single set of rules covering the way we give priority for housing, shared by all the Partner organisations

Eligibility (Adverts)

Set criteria used to determine who can or cannot bid for an advertised property based on the characteristics of their household.

Eligibility (Applicant)

Rules governing who can or cannot be accepted on to the Tees Valley Common Allocation Policy.

Older Persons Accommodation

Specific types of homes which are made available only to applicants meeting assessed needs for such eg adapted or accessible homes, sheltered and extra care homes which may carry an age restriction.

Family Type Accommodation

Properties which are advertised as suitable for households comprising one or two parents with one or more children of any age, or an applicant who is expecting a child

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Habitual residency

Your main home is in the Common Travel Area and you do not have plans to live anywhere else. The Common Travel Area means the UK, Republic of Ireland, Channel Islands or Isle of Man as defined in Appendix 2 of [Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England](#)

Housing Register

A single list of all the applicants who have registered and been accepted on to this scheme

Interpreter

A person or organisation who can provide a translation service for non-English speaking applicants or, a sign language service for applicants with a hearing impairment.

Local connection

Connections to a Local Authority area because of residency, employment or close family.

Live application

An application will become 'Live' once all checks/evidence have been approved and a Band award has been made. It is only at this stage an applicant can begin to 'bid' on properties

Local Lettings Plan

A set of criteria in addition to the Common Allocation Policy that will determine eligibility for certain properties, for example new-build developments or to create more sustainable areas. A quota may also be set giving preference to specific Bands.

Nomination agreement

This details how the Local Authority and Registered Providers will co-operate and work in Partnership to address housing need and prevent homelessness

Non-qualifying person

Someone who is not allowed to register with the scheme due to their behaviour or the behaviour of a member of their household

Quota Banding

Some Partnership RPs may use a quota system, which means that a percentage of their properties may give preference to Band 2, 3 or 4 first. This will be made clear within the property advert.

the Partnership

The Tees Valley Lettings Partnership

Priority Date

The date when an applicant was given a priority band.

Reasonable Offer

An Offer of a property that meets the applicants identified needs, such as number of bedrooms, property type, relevant adaptations deemed suitable for their needs, etc

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Reasonable preference

The phrase used in the Housing Act to describe applicants who should be given priority in a Local Authority's Common Allocation Policy, eg ex-service personnel

Registered Provider Partner

A Registered Provider (RP) that advertises the majority of their vacant homes through this lettings scheme and the Local Authority (Council) area.

Registered Providers (RPs)

A housing association or housing company registered with the Regulator of Social Housing

Registration date

The date the application is received by one of the Partners

Renewals

An annual renewal of an application that an applicant will need to complete on the anniversary of their registration date their application to remain live.

Shortlist

Produced at the end of the advertising period and ranks applicants 'bids' in order of priority. This may not always be in order of Band 1 to 4 as it is dependent on whether the advert has specified a Band preference.

Tees Valley HomeFinder

The IT system used by the Partnership for registering applications and advertising properties.

Unreasonable Refusal

A refusal of an 'Offer' would be considered unreasonable if an offer was deemed to be appropriate and suitable for the applicant and his/her family's needs. Unacceptable or 'unreasonable' reasons for refusal include such things as internal decoration, inadequate outside space, etc

The Lettings Partnership

This policy has been developed by the Tees Valley Lettings Partnership (referred to as the Partnership throughout this document), and is made up of 3 Local Authorities and 2 Registered Provider Partners (RPs) who manage housing stock across the local authority areas:

- Middlesbrough Council
- Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council
- Beyond Housing
- North Star

Beyond Housing and North Star will aim to advertise and let the majority of their available general need homes via this scheme. The contact details for all these organisations are listed in Appendix 1

There are additional RPs who are not Partners in the Partnership. These are known as 'Nomination RPs' who will advertise and seek to let at least 50% of their available homes in the Partnership local authority areas via this scheme. The Nomination RPs are listed in Appendix 3

Aims and objectives

By working together, we will strive to

- Provide a consistent approach to allocating available homes of both Partner and Nomination RP properties
- Improve access to safe and secure homes across the Partnership local authority areas
- Provide help for applicants to address barriers to housing and to tackle and prevent homelessness
- Provide more choice in housing to residents in the Partnership local authority areas and help to create sustainable, mixed communities where people choose to live, and
- Ensure that anyone applying for a home is provided with a first-class housing service and a choice of housing which best suits their long-term housing needs

The shared aims and objectives of this policy are

- To meet our legal responsibilities as set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, Localism Act 2011 and Homelessness reduction Act 2017)
- To assist local authorities in preventing and reducing homelessness
- To let homes of Partner and Nomination RPs in a fair and transparent way by empowering applicants and supporting them to make informed choices about where they want to live.
- To provide bespoke services for people who may find it difficult to apply for housing and offer help in maintaining a successful tenancy
- To improve local and sub regional mobility across the Partnership local authority areas and to encourage balanced and sustainable communities, and
- To make efficient use of the social housing stock in meeting housing needs.

Relevant legislation

Our policy has been written to meet the legal requirements for the allocation of housing as set out in the [Housing Act 1996](#) Part V1 as amended by the Homeless Act (2002), the [Localism Act 2011](#) and the [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#)

This policy also has regard to the following

- [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Guidance - GOV.UK](#)
- [Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England](#)
- [Providing social housing for local people - GOV.UK](#)
- [Right to Move and social housing allocations - GOV.UK](#)
- [Children Act 1989](#) and [Children Act 2004](#)
- [Children \(Leaving Care\) Act 2000](#)
- [Public sector equality duty - GOV.UK](#)
- [The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness \(Eligibility\) \(England\) and Persons subject to Immigration Control \(Housing Authority Accommodation and Homelessness\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2022](#)
- [Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse - GOV.UK](#)
- [The Housing Act 1996 \(Additional Preference for Armed Forces\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

This policy will be regularly reviewed and revised in the light of any relevant legislative changes or regulations issued by the Secretary of State and changes to the Codes of Guidance.

We will ensure that our policy meets our legal obligations, in addition, we will ensure that our policy is compatible with local, sub-regional and regional housing strategies, together with existing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategies

The Housing Register (referred to as the 'Register' throughout this document) is a single list of all the applicants who have registered and been accepted on to this scheme.

Information sharing, confidentiality and data protection

All information received relating to an applicant's housing circumstances will be treated as confidential in accordance with [Data protection: The Data Protection Act - GOV.UK](#) Data Information will only be shared in accordance with our Information Sharing Protocol.

In dealing with an application for housing, we may need to contact other relevant agencies or organisations for further information (eg medical professionals, probation services, former or current landlords, etc). This information may be shared with other Partners as part of the registration process.

Where an applicant has difficulty directly communicating themselves, they can name an advocate (or interpreter) to communicate on their behalf.

Equality and fairness

We will ensure that our policies and practices do not discriminate, in line with the [Equality Act 2010](#)

We will take measures to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to housing opportunities.

Advice and information

A copy of this policy is available from any of the Partner offices or can be downloaded from the [Tees Valley Homefinder](#) website

Information about the scheme will be provided in a range of formats and languages to applicants upon request.

Applicants who do not have internet access can visit or call their local housing office and/or local authority for assistance or use the self-services access points (where available)

Joining the Register

Referred to as 'the Register' throughout this document, this is a single list of all the applicants who have registered and been accepted on to this scheme

Anyone over the age of 16 years can apply to join the register, providing they are 'eligible' (as below).

Persons who are eligible

- UK nationals who are habitually resident and are 16 years of age or older
- Non-UK nationals with a Right to Remain and access to public funds
- Have a Local Connection in line with Homelessness Legislation ie connection to one of the Partnership local authority areas

Local connection

Applicants will be counted as having a local connection to Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland or Stockton local authority Partnership areas if they fit into one or more of the following categories:

- Live in the local authority area and have lived there for 6 out of the past 12 months or 3 out of the past 5 years
- They have close family connections with someone who has been resident in the local authority area for a minimum of 5 years. A close family connection is defined as a parent, adult child, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, legal guardian; or
- Their regular place of work is located within the local authority area.

* Exclusions would apply to accommodation that an individual may have been directed to reside such as Approved Premises, Prison and Bail Hostels. It also would not include Care Homes and Hospitals.

Exceptions

Applicants leaving the Armed Forces, divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence will also be exempted from local connection requirements. A local connection will be applied across all 3 Partnership local authority areas for these applicants.

Victims of domestic abuse will not need to have a local connection in line with statutory guidance [Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse - GOV.UK](#)

Applicants eligible under the current Homes for Ukraine scheme¹ will have a local connection to the local authority of the host family that they were placed with.

¹ [Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme \(Homes for Ukraine\) and Ukraine Extension Scheme visa data - GOV.UK](#)

EEA applicants

The Partnership follows UK Government Guidance in relation to applications from EEA citizens and applicants subject to Immigration Control. A copy of this guidance can be viewed by accessing the following website: [Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England](#)

Persons who are not eligible

Applicants need to meet the requirements of section 160Z of the [Housing Act 1996](#) which deals with the Immigration status of people who have come to the UK from abroad. For example, we cannot allow people to join the Register who fall into one of the 'ineligible' groups as below:

- People who have no access to public funds eg failed asylum seekers
- People who are subject to immigration control unless they have been granted refugee status, exceptional or indefinite leave to remain or are subject of a sponsorship undertaking
- Some EEA nationals that are not eligible for social housing
- EU nationals required to leave the UK by the UK Government
- An EEA national who has entered the UK as a job seeker or a family member of a job seeker
- An EEA national with an initial right to reside in the first 3 months of residence, or
- An EEA national with a derivative right to reside to the basis of being a non-EEA national who is the primary carer of a British Citizen child or dependant adult where such child or dependent adult would be unable to live in the UK or another EEA state if their carer left the UK (a 'Zambrano carer')

Non-qualifying for 'unacceptable behaviour' reasons

An applicant, or member of their household, will not qualify/be denied access to the Register if they have been found responsible for unacceptable behaviour, and will be excluded from the Register for 12 months.

At the end of the non-qualification period, the applicant will need to submit a new application which will be assessed by the relevant Partner. If the applicant has rectified the behaviour that originally led to the non-qualification decision, they will be permitted onto the housing register. If the applicant has not demonstrated improvement in their behaviour, their application will not be accepted for a further 12 months.

Some examples of unacceptable behaviour are listed below:

- Convictions for some drug related offences, which would be considered a threat to the community *
- Convictions for violent offences which would be considered a threat to the community*
- Convictions for sex offences which would be considered a threat to the community*
- Any other conviction which we would consider would pose a threat to the community*
- Perpetrator of domestic abuse-
- Perpetrator of abuse, violence, or threats towards a member of staff
- History of anti-social behaviour
- Outstanding housing debt of more than £1,500.00 which include rent arrears, court costs, rechargeable repairs

- An eviction from accommodation as a result of a breach of the tenancy agreement or licence, and
- Providing false or misleading information

**Spent convictions will not be considered during an assessment as per Guidance on the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Exceptions Order 1975*

Each case will be considered on an individual basis and exceptional circumstances will be considered. Before we decide whether to make an applicant non-qualifying, we will suspend the application while we gather evidence such as references from current or previous landlords, rent statements, photographic evidence of damage, information from Policy/Probation or carry out any other investigation required to make our decision.

When an applicant is made non-qualifying, they will be informed via letter or email of the reasons for this decision, the period of non-qualification and what they can do to rectify the situation. Applicants can request a review of this decision within 21 days of the date of notification. (See Right to Review a Decision on page 14)

During the period of non-qualification, further applications will not be accepted unless the applicant provides evidence to suggest that the reasons for the non-qualification decision are no longer valid.

Suspended Applicants

Applicants who are responsible of less serious behaviour may have their application suspended for a specified time period. This means that applicants will still be allowed to register but would not be able to apply for a home until they have provided evidence of their modified behaviour.

If an applicant is to be suspended, the applicant will be informed of the reasons for the decision, the period of suspension and what can be done to rectify the situation. See Appendix 5 for some examples of suspension reasons. Applicants can request a review of this decision within 21 days of the date of notification (See Right to Review a Decision on page 14)

Cases of Serious Anti-Social Behaviour

Due to the impact of anti-social behaviour and the impact this has on communities, applicants will be excluded from joining the register for 36 months when the applicant or any member of the household who has been served notice, evicted or has been subject to a property closure due to anti-social behaviour.

If the applicant has rectified the behaviour that originally led to the non-qualification decision, they will be permitted onto the housing register. If the applicant has not demonstrated improvement in their behaviour, their application will not be accepted for a further 12 months.

Joint applications

Joint applications will be accepted provided all applicants are eligible, aged 16 years or over and intend to occupy the property together as their only or main home. The joint application will be assessed and placed in a Priority Band using the details of the household member with the greatest housing need.

Multiple applications

Multiple applications are not allowed. A person can only be on the Register with one 'Live' account.

Re-applying for housing

If an applicant has been housed via the scheme and then wishes to move to an alternative property, they would need to register a new application which will be assessed based on their new circumstances.

Applicants who already rent from one of the Partners (a current tenant) can register to move and will have their housing application considered by the relevant Partner landlord and may be subject to checks in line with their Tenancy Management Policies.

Applications from employees/members and their close relatives

Applications can be accepted from employees, board/elected members and their close relatives of the Partnership, provided they meet the eligibility criteria set out within this document. Applicants must tell us about any such relationship at the time of registration. To ensure fairness, checks will be completed before any offer is made to people in this category.

Giving false information or deliberately withholding information

It is a criminal offence for anyone applying for housing from a housing authority to knowingly or recklessly give false information which is relevant to their housing application (Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996).

Anyone found guilty of such an offence may be fined up to £5,000 and could lose the tenancy if they have been rehoused as a result of providing false information or deliberately withholding information eg withholding criminal convictions, falsifying documents, etc

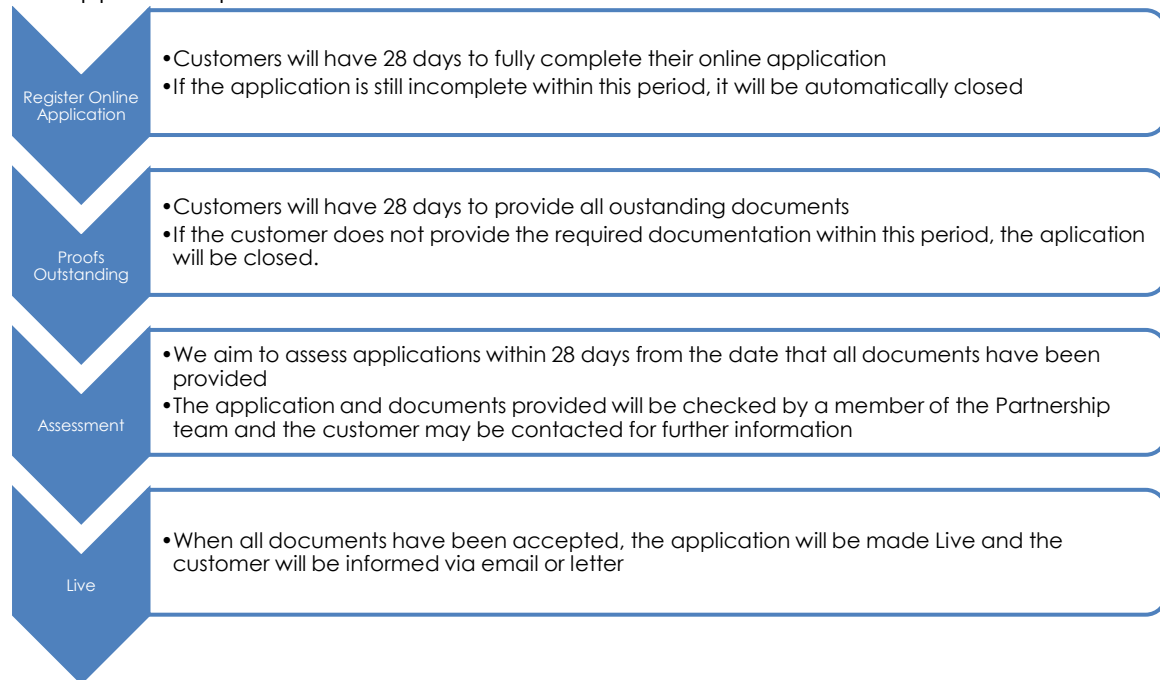
The Partnership will consider taking further action against a professional/voluntary organisation that provides false information or deliberately withholds information on behalf of an applicant they are representing.

Applicants who have yet to be rehoused and are found to have given false information will be made non-qualifying for 12 months and will need to submit a new application after this time

How to apply

Applications can be registered online by accessing the digital letting platform called [Tees Valley Homefinder](#) or by contacting one of the Partners for an appointment. Contact details can be found at Appendix 1

The application process is as follows...



Once the applicant has received notification that their application is **Live**, they will be able to apply for advertised homes for rent. Our adverts will include good quality information about the property features to allow applicants to make informed choices about which homes they would like to live in. The information on the [Tees Valley Homefinder](#) lettings platform will also include links to other useful information.

Changes in circumstances

It is the responsibility of the applicant (or their advocate) to tell us about any change in applicant/household circumstances. Failure to do so could affect any future housing offer made to you

The following are examples of a change in circumstances that could affect your application or affect how Landlords can contact you. Note: You may be asked to confirm if there are any change of circumstances at the point of offer.

- Change of address
- Change of work location – where used for local connection
- Change of family address – where used for local connection
- Immigration status
- Adding/removal of household member from application
- Conviction status

- Change of email address/contact telephone number

Keeping the Partnership's Housing Register up to date

To assist the Partnership with keeping the housing register up to date, applicants will be asked to renew their application each year via the Tees Valley Homefinder site to confirm they wish to remain on the register.

Failure to respond to this review will result in the closure of their application. If closed for this reason, the applicant has 28 days in which to request their application is reinstated.²

Closing applications

Applications will be closed in the following circumstances:

- Notification that the sole applicant is now deceased
- No response to housing register annual renewal/loss of contact
- Failure to provide requested documents
- Failure to complete application after 28 days (including provision of documents)
- Applicant is assessed as non-qualifying
- Applicant is classed as not Eligible
- Loss of contact with applicant
- Closed at request of applicant
- Applicant advises that they no longer require housing

Deliberate worsening of circumstances

Any applicant who deliberately worsens their housing circumstances will have any Priority band removed and will be placed into Band 4 for a period of 6 months

Examples of deliberate worsening of circumstances may include (*this list is not exhaustive*):

- Giving up a tenancy/secure housing for no good reason
- Moving from a property that has been adapted for the needs of someone in the household to a property that does not have the required adaptations, or
- Moving into a property that is too small or large to meet the needs of the household.

The applicant can ask for a re-assessment of their Band after 6 months but would be responsible for providing evidence to support their current housing needs.

Right to Review a Decision

Applicants have the following rights, if they ask, about decisions made about their housing application on the following

- Their Band award
- Reason for being overlooked for a property
- Reason for suspension
- Reason for non-qualification
- Eligibility for a property

² **Note:** The email address relating to TV Homefinder may be from Housing Jigsaw ie @housingjigsaw.co.uk. Recommendation to check the Junk mailbox also.

Applicants should request a review in writing within 21 days of being notified of a decision. The review will be carried out by the Partner organisation that received the original application in line with their review procedure and a determination will be made within 56 days.

Applicants may also be entitled to a further review by the relevant local authority, and they will be informed where this is the case.

The applicant must provide supporting evidence to demonstrate, to the Partner organisation, why they believe the decision is not valid.

Contact details can be seen in Appendix 1

Assessing Housing Need

Legal background

Reasonable Preference

To ensure applicants with the highest level of housing need are given preference, we have considered the categories of people that must be given 'reasonable preference' by local authorities, as set out in S166A of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002. These are:

- People who are statutorily homeless
- People who the local authority owe certain homeless duties to
- People who live in insanitary or overcrowded homes
- People who need to move for medical or welfare reasons, and
- People who need to move to avoid hardship

Additional Preference

HM Armed Forces Personnel

Armed Forces who have urgent housing needs. Additional preference means they may receive the highest Priority band award – ie Band 1⁺

We have taken into account Government guidance from [The Housing Act 1996 \(Additional Preference for Armed Forces\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) Statutory Instrument No. 2989 that came into force of 30/11/2012 and the updated Guidance: [Improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces - GOV.UK](#) This allows us to give an additional preference to people who have served in the Armed Forces.

This additional preference will be awarded to members of the HM Armed Forces community (serving or has formerly served in the regular reserve forces; a bereaved spouse/civil partner) who are identified as having an urgent need for housing within 5 years of discharge.

The Priority Bands

The scheme has 4 bands. All eligible applicants will have their circumstances assessed and will be placed in the relevant band, according to their 'evidenced' level of housing need.

Band 1⁺

Decants: People living within the Partnership local authority areas who are losing their home due to demolition or regeneration

This includes tenants of council, registered providers or private landlords and owner occupiers living within the boundary of a defined regeneration area who are required to move home, provided they have lived there, as their sole or main home, for at least 12 months. Proof of residency will be requested. Affected residents will be contacted directly by their landlord

Applicants will be awarded Band 1⁺ priority for the local authority area where they live.

People leaving HM Armed Forces community

Applicants leaving the HM Armed Forces (as defined above) with an urgent need for housing would be provided with the highest priority banding (Band 1⁺). These applicants will be assessed by the Local Authority Homelessness Teams before this priority will be awarded.

Evidence of discharge papers dated within the last 5 years and risk of homelessness will be required.

Band 1 – Urgent Housing Need

Applicants owed a Main Duty and is in Temporary Accommodation

Applicants assessed by a Partner Local Authority in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Housing Act 1996, you are owed a main duty or a relief duty *and* are owed an emergency accommodation duty due to being in a priority need category.

People at risk of Domestic Abuse

Victims of domestic abuse (DA) who have lost/or are at risk of losing their accommodation due to violence or the threat of violence.

NOTE: When looking at safety, moves within the same or neighbouring postcode would not be considered as this may not sufficiently reduce the risk of DA.

People in this category may receive a direct offer of housing

Care Leavers who are Ready for Independent Living

As defined by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 where a child is confirmed by the relevant Local Authority as ready for independent living, has an ongoing support plan in place and in need of urgent rehousing.

Referrals will only be accepted from the allocated Social Worker or Care Leavers Team

Emergency Medical

This banding will only be awarded to applicants with an emergency housing need due to medical problems which are exacerbated by their current housing situation eg people discharged from hospital or care home where their housing is deemed unsuitable and cannot be made suitable through adaptations

Each case will be assessed individually, and applicants will be referred to the relevant Local Authority Team for assessment by a Social Worker or secondary Mental Health Service before and band award is made under this category. The assessment does not review the applicant's health but how their accommodation affects their health or welfare ie **the impact of the property will be assessed and not the prognosis of the illness.**

Child Protection

Households where the current accommodation has been identified within a formal Child Protection Plan as a significant contributory factor or serious risk to the wellbeing of a child/children within the household and all other avenues to rectify have been exhausted.

Referrals will only be accepted from the allocated Social Worker.

Band 2 – High Housing Need

People who need to move on urgent medical grounds

People who have been assessed by one of the Partnership as requiring alternative accommodation due to their medical condition (physical or mental health) and/or disability is having a significantly detrimental effect on their ability to live in their current home.

The applicant would need to complete a medical referral form, which will be provided upon request, and provide supporting documentation or assessment from relevant healthcare professionals before any band award would be considered (*Note: a letter from a GP is not considered sufficient*). The information you provide may be reviewed by an Occupational Therapist before any Band award is made under this category.

Applicants who live outside the Partnership local authority areas and have a local connection will be required to provide an Occupational Therapy assessment from their own Local Authority before being considered for a Medical Banding. This must include the name and contact details of the Occupational Therapist.

People assessed as ready for Independent Living

People who need to move as part of an agreed plan to re-integrate into the community eg people leaving supported and temporary housing projects.

People with learning disabilities who are required to move to receive support or where their current housing is having a detrimental effect on their quality of life or ability to live independently.

Applicants will need to provide confirmation that they are ready for independent living from the accommodation provider before this banding can be awarded.

This priority will not be awarded for applicants living with family or friends.

A household with a Child in Need

As defined in the Children's Act 1989, where a formal referral has been made by Social Services with the aim of safeguarding the welfare of the child or children and accommodation has been highlighted as a key factor and all other options have been exhausted.

Care Leaver - seeking accommodation

A child leaving care of the local authority under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

This priority only applies to a Care Leavers first social housing tenancy, who do not qualify for Band 1 status.

Adoptive/Foster Carer/Special Guardianship

Applicants who need to move due to their current accommodation being unsuitable or who need to move to a different location to safeguard or promote the well-being of the child/ren they have adopted/foster are planning to adopt/foster/in foster care or, have guardianship where a family court order places a child or young person in long-term care with someone other than their parent(s) (Adoption and Children Act 2002).

Evidence to confirm their adoptive/foster/guardianship status and ongoing support will be required from the local authority's Adoption/Fostering Service

People living in unacceptable housing conditions

People who are living in Private rented accommodation or in Owner Occupation but are unable to maintain their home to a safe standard will be referred to the relevant Partnership local authority team to carry out a property inspection. This banding will be awarded where the assessment has concluded that the property contains unacceptable hazards (defined as Category 1 Hazards) and it has a duty to take action.

Tenants who are in Social Rented homes must first pursue issues relating to property conditions with their landlords to have the issues rectified. These tenants will only be considered under this category if they have exhausted the official complaints procedure with their landlord and there is no other action that can be taken to rectify the adverse property conditions.

Applicants who are awarded a banding in this category must engage with the Local Authority Team and allow access for agreed repairs to be completed by their landlord (and/or the appointed contactors) or risk the removal of this banding.

Tenants of North Star and Beyond Housing that are under-occupying their accommodation by 2 or more bedrooms

Calculation for under-occupancy will be based on the number of people within the household and the criteria set out by the [Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England](#). This band will only be awarded to current tenants of Beyond Housing or North Star

Applicants will only be considered for properties that fit their household's identified need.

Applicants Owed a Prevention or Relief Duty but do not qualify for Band 1 category

Applicants assessed by a Partner Local Authority in accordance with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the Housing Act 1996, and you are owed a prevention duty or relief duty but do not meet the criteria for Band 1.

An example of this would be someone who has been determined as owed a homeless relief duty, but do not have a priority need, in accordance with the above legislation.

Acute over-crowding by 2 bedrooms or more

Overcrowding will be assessed on the number of people within the household and according to the best use of bedrooms and sleeping spaces available as per the [Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England](#)

Applicants will be required to provide evidence of overcrowding before any Band award will be made under this category

Band 3 - Medium housing need

People who need to move due to a high medical need

People who have been assessed by one of the Partnership as having a medical condition (physical or mental health) and/or disability where a move to alternative accommodation would significantly improve their health.

The applicant would need to complete a medical referral form, which will be provided upon request, and provide supporting documentation or assessment from relevant healthcare professionals before any band award would be considered (*Note: a letter from a GP is not considered sufficient*). The information you provide may be reviewed by an Occupational Therapist before any Band award is made under this category.

The relevant Partnership local authority may refer the applicant for assessment by an Occupational Therapist before any Band award is made under this category

Applicants who live outside the Partnership local authority areas and have a local connection will be required to provide an Occupational Therapy assessment from their own Local Authority before being considered for a Medical Banding. This must include the name and contact details of the Occupational Therapist.

People living in overcrowded conditions by 1 bed bedroom

Overcrowding is assessed on the number of people within the household and according to the best use of bedrooms and sleeping spaces available as per the [Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England](#)

Tenants of North Star and Beyond Housing that are under-occupying their accommodation by 1 bedroom

Calculation for under-occupancy will be based on the number of people within the household and the criteria set out by the [Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England](#)

Applicants will only be considered for properties that fit their household's identified need.

This banding will only be awarded to current tenants of Beyond Housing or North Star.

People who need to move on hardship grounds

A hardship award will be considered for applicants;

- Suffering financial hardship eg if their income is insufficient to cover the costs of their current home. A financial assessment will be carried out considering rent, utility costs, service charges and council tax.
- Who need to move for employment or education where failure to relocate is causing or would cause hardship.
- Who need to be nearer to family or friends to give or receive support and it would be unreasonable for them to commute from their existing home.

The relevant Partnership local authority will complete a Hardship Assessment before any Band award is made under this category. Any band awarded may only be given for a move to a specified area.

People sharing facilities with persons not of the same household

People sharing facilities with other people who are not members of the same household, for example:

- People living in houses in multiple occupation (HMO)
- Bed & Breakfast
- Hostel, and
- Applicants who continue to live together following a relationship breakdown

Note: Gypsy and Traveller communities will be considered under this category if they are sharing communal facilities eg showers or WC whilst residing on an authorised site.

Applicants living with family or friends will not be awarded this priority under this category.

Intentionally Homeless/No Priority Need

Applicants assessed by a Partner Local Authority in accordance with the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 and the Housing Act 1996, you have been found to be intentionally homeless or not in priority need at the end of your 56-day relief period.

In such cases, applicants will remain in Band 3 for a maximum of 6 months in acknowledgement of their ongoing housing need if they remain homeless.

People leaving the HM Forces community with no urgent housing need

Applicants leaving the HM Armed Forces community, as defined in the [About the Covenant - Armed Forces Covenant](#) within the last 5 years with no urgent need will be allocated Band 3 Priority on their first social housing tenancy only

Applicants will be required to provide discharge documentation

Band 4 – Low Housing Need

This band will be awarded to the following applicants:

- Applicants whose current home is adequate to meet their basic housing needs in terms of lifestyle, size, design and location, or
- Applicants who have refused a reasonable offer of accommodation or worsened their own circumstances

Applicants may also be placed in this Band to enable the applicant to continue to 'bid' for properties until further assessment is completed.

Reviewing Applicants in Priority Bands

Applicants who are awarded Band 1, 2 or 3 will be required to actively seek rehousing and housing applications will be monitored to ensure applicants are placing bids on all suitable properties that are advertised on Tees Valley Homefinder.

Applicants will be given up to 6 months to place bids on the Tees Valley Home Finder system on properties that meet the assessed needs of their household. Applicants who do not place bids may be placed on automated bidding after this period time period.

If the applicant is offered a property that meets their assessed need, regardless if this is an autobid, and subsequently refuses a reasonable offer, they will have their priority banding removed and be placed into Band 4 for a minimum period of 6 months after which you will need to apply for a reassessment of your circumstances – unless there is evidence of a significant change in that period.

Customers can request a right to review the decision – see page 13

Applicants must ensure that they are considering as wide an area as possible.

Senior management discretion

Stockton and Middlesbrough local authority areas only: Whilst it is expected that the majority of allocations will be made following the allocations scheme rules according to priority banding, there may be exceptional circumstances where the only way an exceptionally urgent housing need can be resolved is by using senior management discretion. It is important, in fairness to all applicants, that these discretionary powers are used in genuinely exceptional cases.

Within the boroughs of Middlesbrough and Stockton these cases will be reviewed on an individual basis by a senior officer in the Local Authority Housing Service Team and a priority banding may result.

Note: Within the borough of Redcar and Cleveland there is a quota system in operation which ensures that a proportion of lettings are made available to applicants within each band. The category of Management Discretion is therefore not applicable within Redcar and Cleveland.

How the Tees Valley Homefinder system works

Advertising properties

Available properties will be advertised daily on the scheme's interactive lettings platform.

Adverts will be clearly labelled to show the property features, local neighbourhood information and the types of households that can apply. A photograph will usually be included.

Adverts will clearly state who is eligible to apply for them and eligibility criteria will be either 'Essential' or 'Priority'. The essential criteria must be met for the applicant to be able to place a bid on a property advert.

Eligibility criteria is used to determine who can or cannot bid for an advertised property. We use the following types of eligibility criteria on our property adverts:

- Age – Sometimes properties may be in schemes that have an age criteria that applicants must meet in order to be able to bid. for example, a designated older person accommodation which usually requires applicants to be aged 55+ years
- Bedroom Need – Properties advertised on Tees Valley HomeFinder will be allocated by bedroom need (see Appendix 4 for how we calculate this) as determined by the type and size of an applicant's household.
- Adapted or Ground floor need properties – Properties that have features such as level access showers, ramps etc may be restricted to applicants who have an assessed need for these adaptations.
- Family Type Accommodation – Landlords may specify that the property they are advertising is suitable for families with children

Note: The use of the eligibility criteria is defined by the landlord advertising the property.

Properties are sometimes advertised during an existing tenant's 4 weeks termination period and may be withdrawn if the tenant changes their mind about moving. In this case, the advert will be withdrawn

Where there is more than one property of the same description in the same location, sometimes only one advert will be displayed. The property advert will show that there are X properties of the same type available at the same time eg if there are 2 or more flats available in a block or where there are several new build properties on the same development.

Shortlisting and selection

At the end of the advertising period, a shortlist of applicants will be produced. An applicant's final queue position will only be known when the advert closes.

Applications will usually be placed in Band order (ranked 1-4). If there are two or more applicants with the same Band, the date they entered the Band (their priority date) will be used as a tiebreaker.

Some Partnership RPs may use a quota system, which means that a percentage of their properties may give preference to Band 2, 3 or 4 first. This will be made clear within the property advert. This allows for applicants across the range of bands to have a chance of securing accommodation, including those in non-priority bands.

Local Lettings Policies (see below) may also affect the order of the shortlist.

Viewing properties and refusing offers

When an applicant has been selected for an offer, the landlord will contact them to arrange to view the property before deciding to accept it. Sometimes, more than one applicant may be invited to view.

If an applicant who has been given a Priority Band 1, 2 or 3 for housing refuses an offer that meets their identified housing need (ie is appropriate and suitable) and this refusal is deemed unreasonable, they may have their priority removed and be placed in Band 4 for a period of 6 months.

Time allowed for accepting an offer

Applicants will usually be allowed 2 working days to respond to an offer, but individual circumstances will be considered and applicants with specific need will be given more time eg if an assessment for adaptation work is needed or someone with a disability needs more time to consider the offer made.

Additional Information

Local lettings policies

In some cases, a property may be advertised with a Local Lettings Policy (LLP). This means that there may be certain qualities or characteristics that the landlord will be looking for when allocating the property. A quota may also be set giving preference to specific Bands.

An LLP is usually developed between the landlord, local authority and other agencies in order to achieve a specific aim for an area/estate or new build development eg

- Where there is an issue with anti-social behaviour on a estate, and a LPP can be used to ensure that no more households with a history of ASB are housed there until the area stabilises, or
- For new build developments, an LLP can help create a mixed and balanced community on an estate.

Where a property has an LLP in place, we will state this within the advert and make it available for the applicant to read.

Making direct offers without advertising

Alongside applicants applying for advertised properties on the system, there will also be circumstances in which some applicants will receive a direct offer from an RP.

A direct offer may be made in exceptional circumstances, eg

- Applicants being assessed by the local authority as being owed a homelessness duty
- People who need emergency accommodation due to fire, flood or major repairs
- Ex-offender subject to Multi Agency Public protection Agency (MAPPA), where a full support package is in place with other relevant statutory and voluntary agencies to enable them to be returned to the community, and
- People who are at imminent risk of violence or a threat of violence eg victims of domestic abuse, hate crimes or through a witness protection scheme

If an applicant refuses a direct offer of accommodation, they will only be given a second offer in exceptional circumstances

Affordability checks

Applicants may be subject to affordability checks when they are offered a property to ensure that it is affordable for them. If a property is found to be unaffordable, the offer will be withdrawn.

Appendix 1

Lettings Partnership Contact Information

Any queries in relation to this policy can be directed to Partner organisation via the contact details as below:



Letting & Nominations Team (for Middlesbrough & Stockton)
Dunedin House
Columbia Drive
Thornaby
Stockton on Tees
TS17 6BJ
01642 524345
tvlp@stockton.gov.uk



Letting & Nominations Team (for Middlesbrough & Stockton)
Dunedin House
Columbia Drive
Thornaby
Stockton on Tees
TS17 6BJ
01642 524345
tvlp@stockton.gov.uk



Housing Advice & Information Team
Seaford House
Kirkleatham Street
Redcar
TS10 1SP
01287 612444
Housingclientservices@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk



PO Box 138
Blyth
NE24 9FL
0345 0655656
enquiries@beondhousing.co.uk
www.beyondhousing.co.uk



Endeavour House
St Marks Court
Thornaby
Stockton on Tees
TS17 6QN
customerservices@northstar.co.uk
www.northstar.co.uk

Appendix 2

Local Authority Homeless Team Contact Information



Middlesbrough House
50 Corporation Road
Middlesbrough
TS1 2RH
01642 726800
housingsolutions@middlesbrough.gov.uk



Dunedin House
Columbia Drive
Thornaby
Stockton on Tees
TS17 6BJ
01642 528389
Housing.Options@stockton.gov.uk



Housing Advice & Information Team
Seafield House
Kirkleatham Street
Redcar
TS10 1SP
01287 612444
Housingclientservices@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

Appendix 3

Non-Partner (Nomination) Registered Providers

Detailed below are Registered Providers with property across the Partnership local authority areas who will advertise and seek to let at least 50% of their available homes using this Lettings scheme

- Anchor-Hanover Group [Anchor - Later Life is for Living](#)
- Believe Housing [housing association in durham and the north east | believe housing](#)
- Bernicia [Homes to rent | Bernicia Homes](#)
- Broadacres Housing Association [Broadacres Housing Association](#)
- Habinteg Housing Association [Home | Habinteg Housing Association](#)
- Hellens Residential [Hellens Residential | Affordable Homes to Buy and Rent](#)
- Home Group [Home Group | Welcome to Home Group](#)
- Karbon Homes [Karbon Homes: Providing a strong foundation for life](#)
- Livin Housing [Home | www.livin.co.uk](#)
- Newalk CIC [New Walk CIC – Social housing for vulnerable people in Teesside](#)
- Places for People [We are Places for People, the UK's leading social enterprise - Places for People](#)
- Railway Housing Association [Railway Housing Association: providing homes for over 100 years](#)

Please note that Appendix 3 will be updated on a regular basis to reflect new Registered Providers who may acquire existing or build new homes across the Partnership local authority areas.

Appendix 4

Calculating Bedroom Need

Household bedrooms will be assessed based upon the number of people within the household and according to best use of the bedrooms to reflect the criteria set out under the DWP Bedroom standard

One bedroom will be considered suitable for:

- One adult/adult couple
- Two children of the same sex under the age of 16 years
- Two children under the age of 10 years regardless of sex
- Any other person aged 16 years or over, or
- Any other child that cannot be matched with the above eg who cannot share due to a medical condition/disability

This assessment does not include living room space unless there is a second living room which could be used as a bedroom and doesn't breach health and safety standards. Where a bedroom is being used for another purpose eg a study or toy room, its original function as a bedroom will be used in assessing the level of occupation/overcrowding.

The main householder(s) will be expected to share a bedroom with a child under the age of 12 months old.

Applicants who have more or less bedrooms than they need will be assessed for under occupation or overcrowding (for tenants of Beyond Housing or North Star) as per the banding categories details in this Policy.

As a general rule, singles and couples will only be eligible for 1 bed accommodation on Tees Valley Homefinder.

Additional Bedrooms

There may be some circumstances where a household is allowed an extra bedroom as detailed below:

- Health reasons which mean that the main and joint applicant are not able to share a room or for an additional room to store essential medical equipment
- Bedroom for an overnight carer, or
- Joint custody or overnight access to a child/children

Where one of the above applies, supporting information will be required and an affordability check may need to be completed to make sure the applicant can afford the additional bedroom (under occupation payment).

Applicants will also be subject to an affordability check to ensure they can afford the additional bedroom(s).

Where applicants qualify for overnight access only to a child/ren they may not be eligible to bid on 'Family Type' accommodation and will need to provide evidence to support this request

Appendix 5

Non-Qualifying/Suspended applications

If an applicant is to be suspended, meaning they are still able to Register but will be unable to apply for a home, the applicant will be informed of the reasons for the decision, the period of suspension and what can be done to rectify the situation. Each case will be considered on an individual basis where exceptional circumstances will be considered.

Applicants are expected to try to modify their behaviour before they can apply for available properties. If the applicant is suspended on the basis of non-payment of former arrears or have failed to comply with a regular repayment agreement, the suspension will not be removed. After the initial suspension period, the application will be reviewed.

Convictions that have been 'spent' as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 cannot be taken into account when assessing an application under this scheme.

The table below gives some examples of non-qualification/suspension periods which may be implemented for applicants with housing debt and low level anti-social behaviour (ASB).

*Note: Housing debt includes rent arrears, court costs, recharges due to repairs, damages or clearances of rubbish, etc. During any period of suspension or non-qualification, applicants will be required to put in place a repayment plan and maintain **consecutive** repayments for the period of suspension or non-qualification, or until the outstanding debt has been repaid in full. Any instances of missed payments will result in the required repayment period being recommenced.*

BEHAVIOUR	CONSEQUENCE
Housing debt of £1,500 or more where no effort has been made to repay	Non-qualifying for 12 months
Housing debt of £1,500 or more where the applicant is making repayments	Suspended for 12 months or less if the debt has been repaid in full
Housing debt between £500 and £1,499 where the applicant is making repayments	Suspended for 6 months or less if the debt has been repaid in full
Housing debt of less than £500 where the applicant is making repayments	Suspended for 3 months or less if the debt has been repaid in full
Moderate to low level anti-social behaviour	Suspended for 3 to 6 months

Tees Valley Home Finder Common Allocation Policy Consultation 2024

Review of Responses Received

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Background

The Tees Valley Lettings Partnership consisting of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council, Redcar & Cleveland Council, Beyond Housing and North Star Housing operate a Common Allocations Policy for the allocation of social/affordable housing. The partnership conducted a review of the current Common Allocations Policy.

The review exercise took place between April 2024 and August 2024, representatives from all the partnership areas were invited to join a review task and finish group. The group met in person on several occasions and a detailed review of each section of the current policy was undertaken to establish if the policy was creating any obstacles to customers in housing need securing suitable housing.

In 2024 in Stockton-on-Tees there has been an average of 16 properties advertised per week, each advert attracts on average 113 bids, and in Middlesbrough an average of 13 properties advertised per week attracting on average 97 bids per property.

The outcome of the review was a proposal of several changes which were subject to consultation. The consultation was open for responses from Monday the 7th October until 12 noon on Monday the 18th November.

A full copy of the consultation can be found in Appendix B.

Contacts

Customer Contacts Made		
Organisation	Emails	Letters
SBC/MBC	5787	60
North Star	115	5
Beyond & RCC	2406	36
Total	8409	

Registered Providers contacted:

Thirteen Housing Group	Bernicia	Housing 21
Anchor	Broadacres	Karbon Homes
My Space	Habinteg	Livin
Accent	Hellens Residential	Places for People
Believe Housing	Home Group	Railway Housing Association

A full list of commissioned service providers and VCSE representatives who were contacted can be found in Appendix A.

Responses

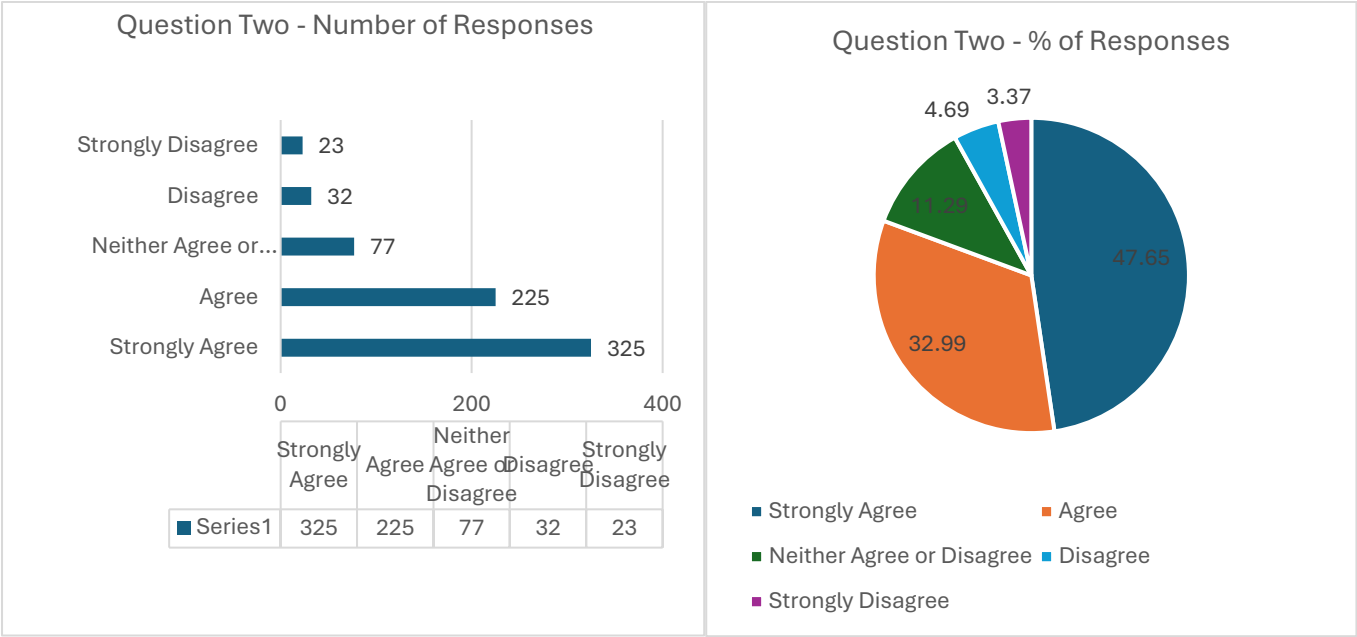
Question One

The consultation received responses from individuals identifying as:

Residents living within the Tees Valley Home-Finder partnership area	597
Staff members of a Tees Valley Home-Finder Partnership organisation	27
Representative of the Registered Provider sector.	10
Representative of the VCSE Sector	2
Other individuals (e.g. an advocate acting behalf of an applicant)	46
Total Responses Received	682

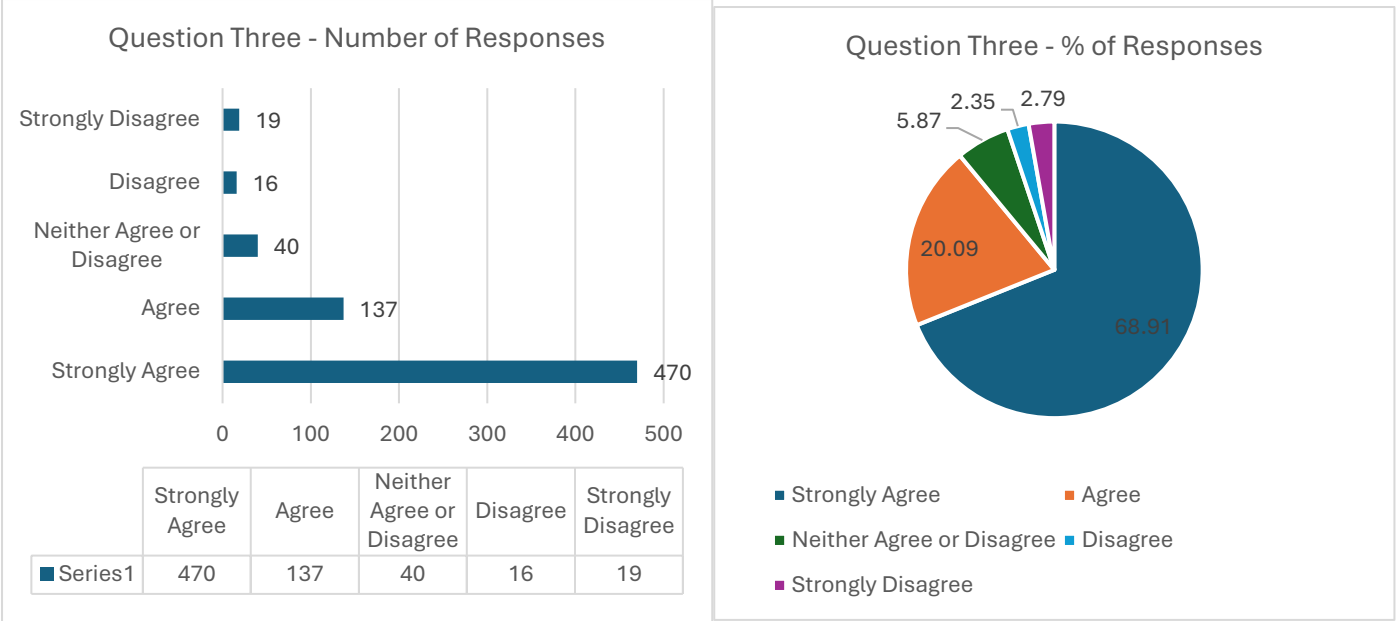
Question Two: Local Connection

A total of 80% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.



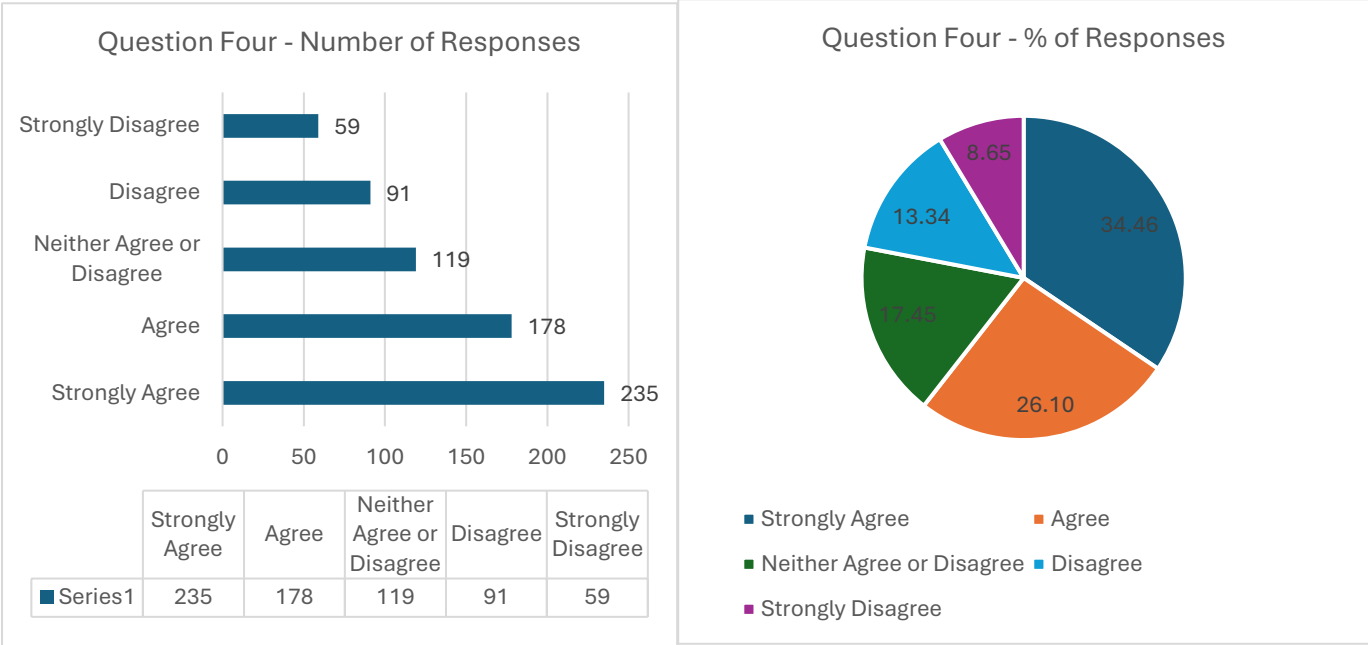
Question Three: Anti-Social Behaviour

A total of 89% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.



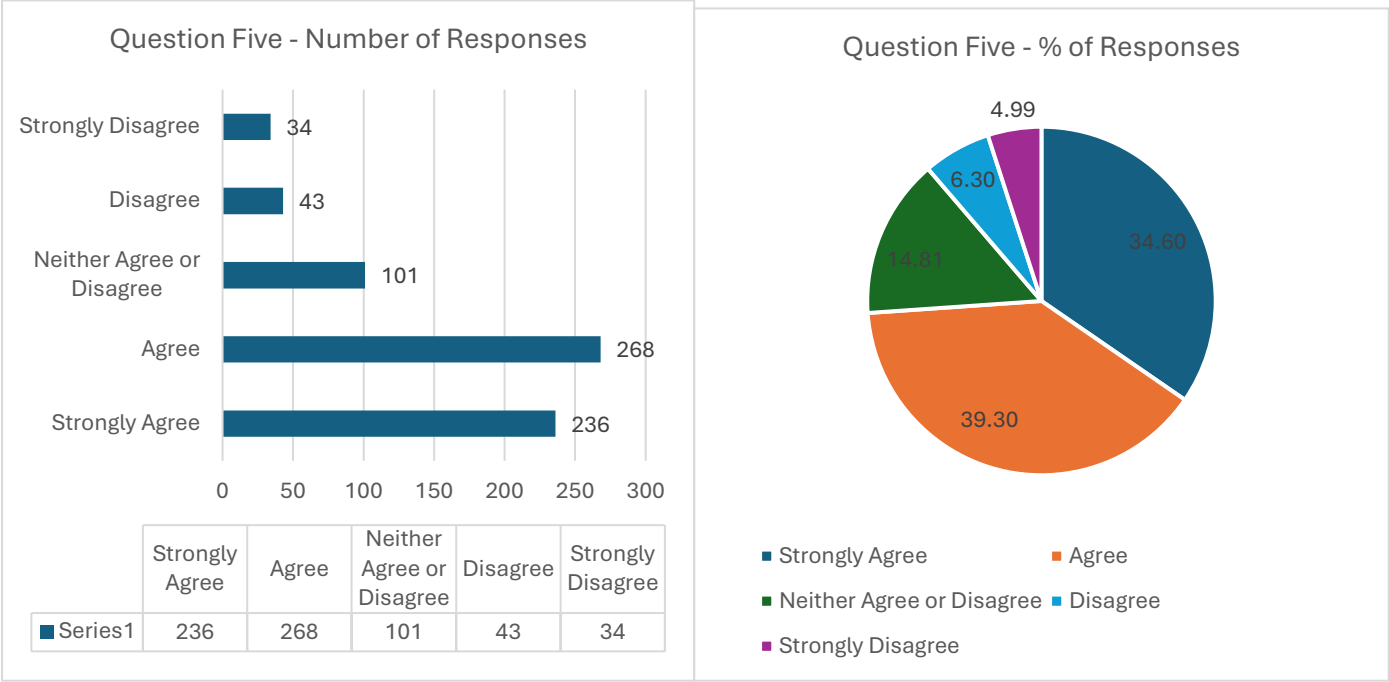
Question Four: Priority Bidding

A total of 60% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.



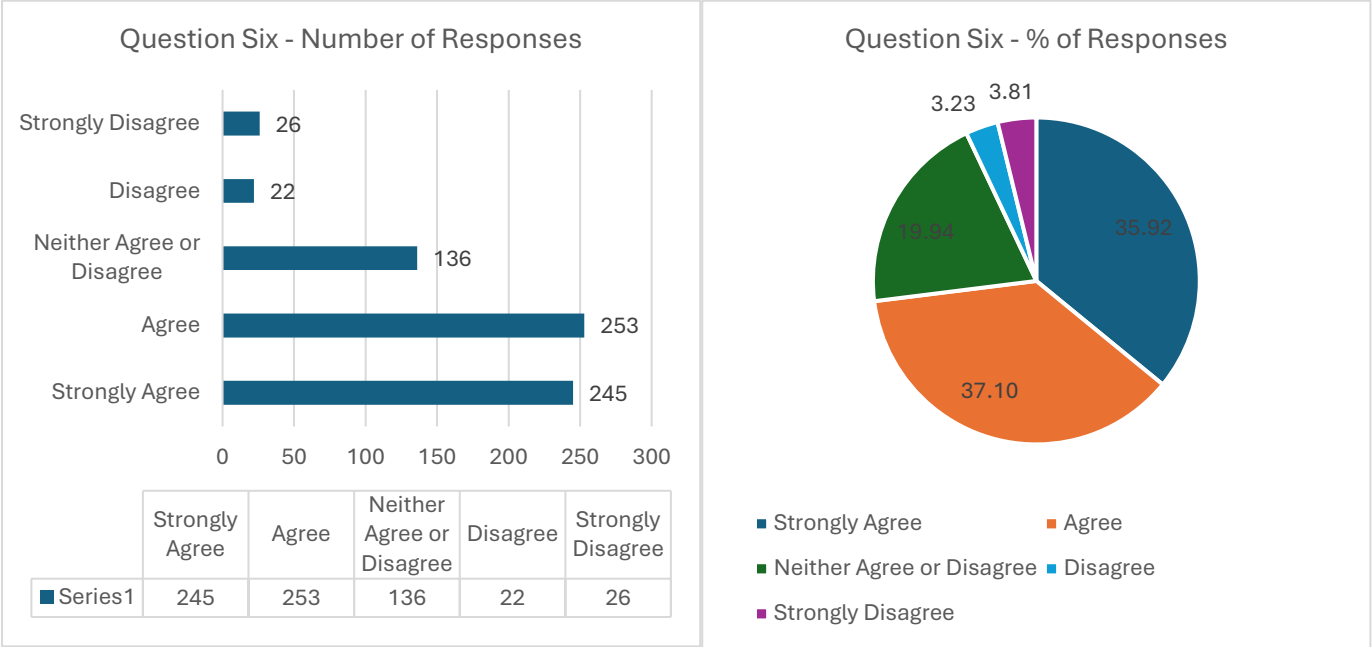
Question Five: Band One Plus Demolition or Regeneration

A total of 74% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.



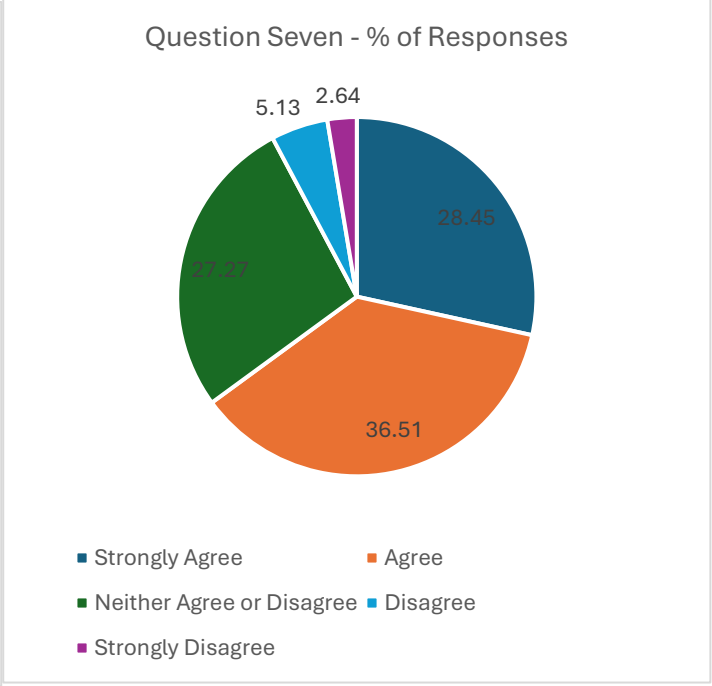
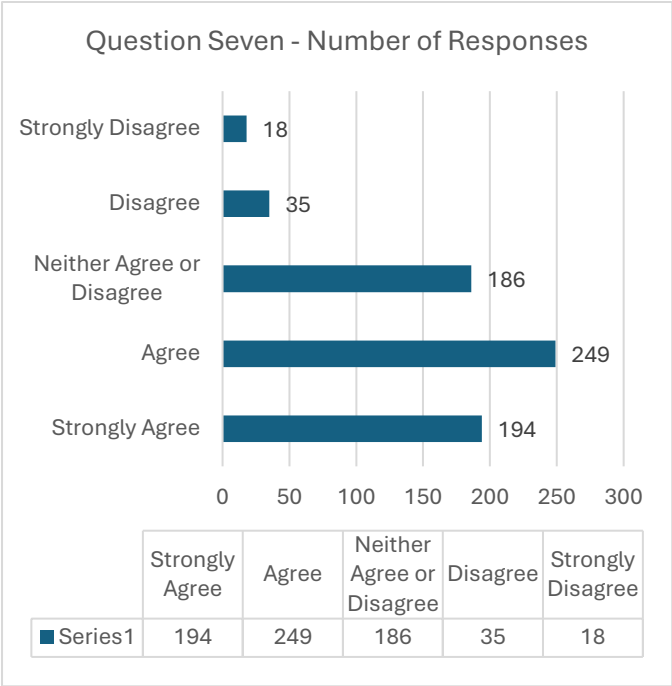
Question Six: HM Armed Forces Community

A total of 73% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.



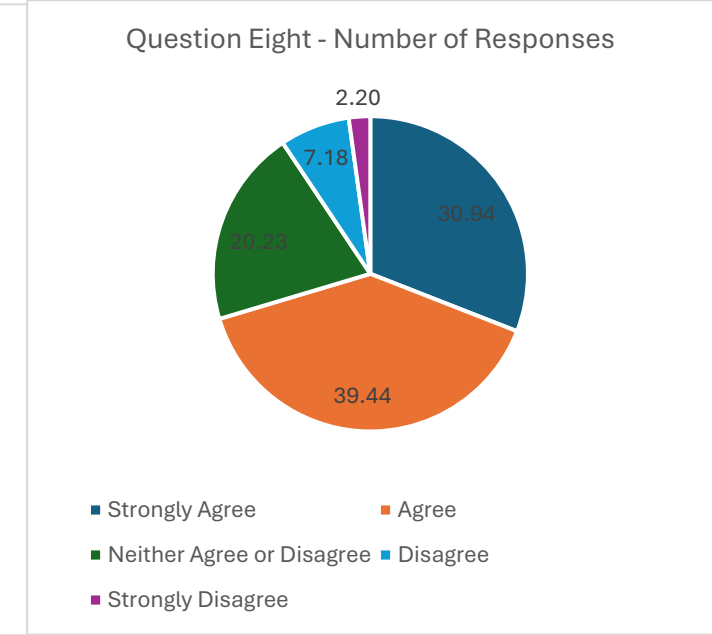
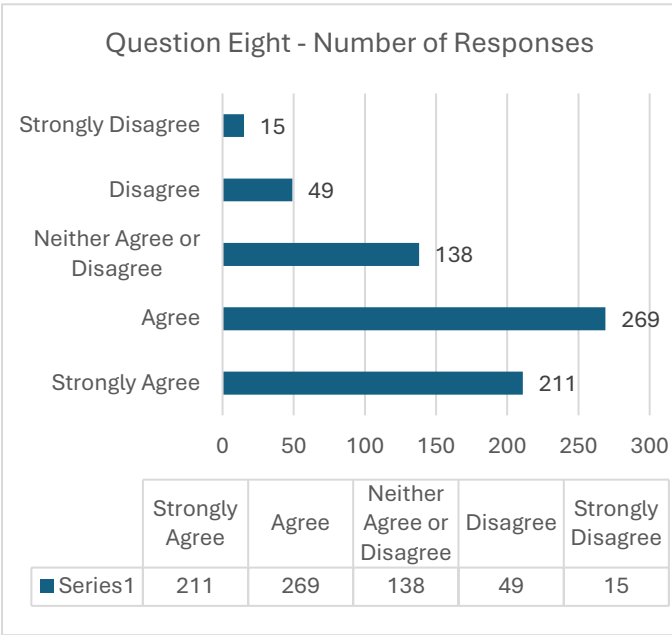
Question Seven: Homelessness

A total of 65% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.



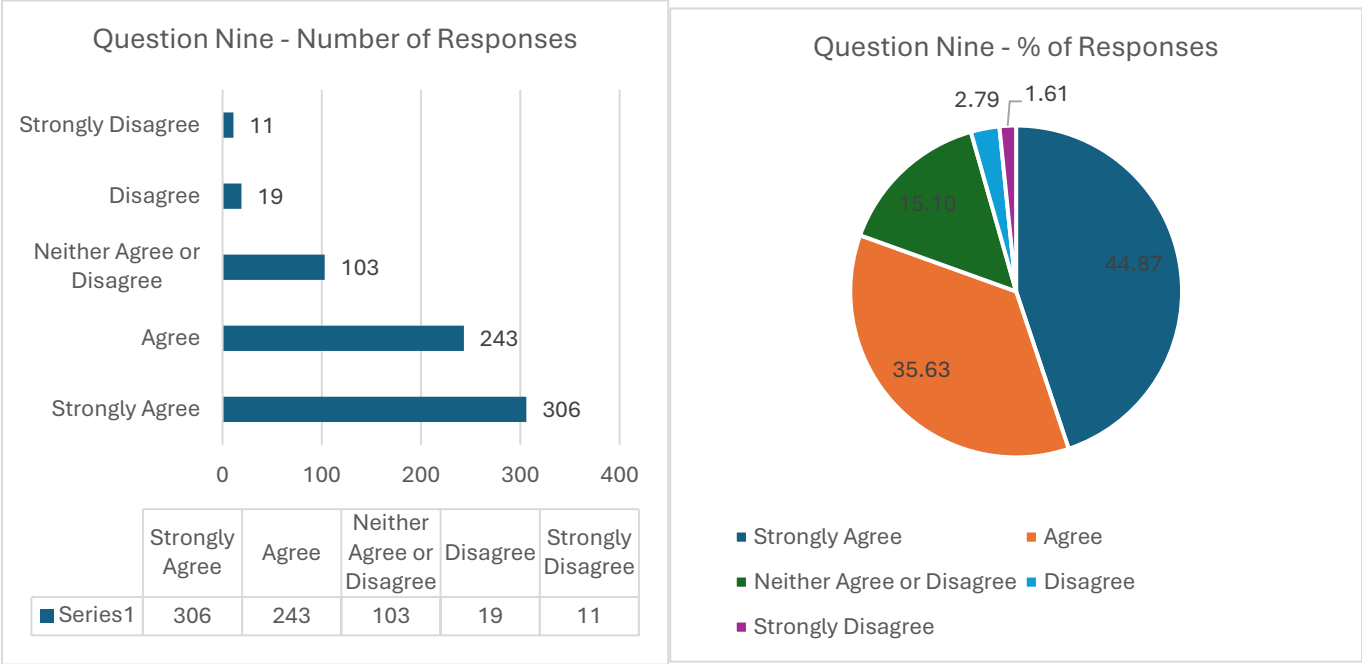
Question Eight: Young People Leaving the Care of the Local Authority

A total of 70% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.



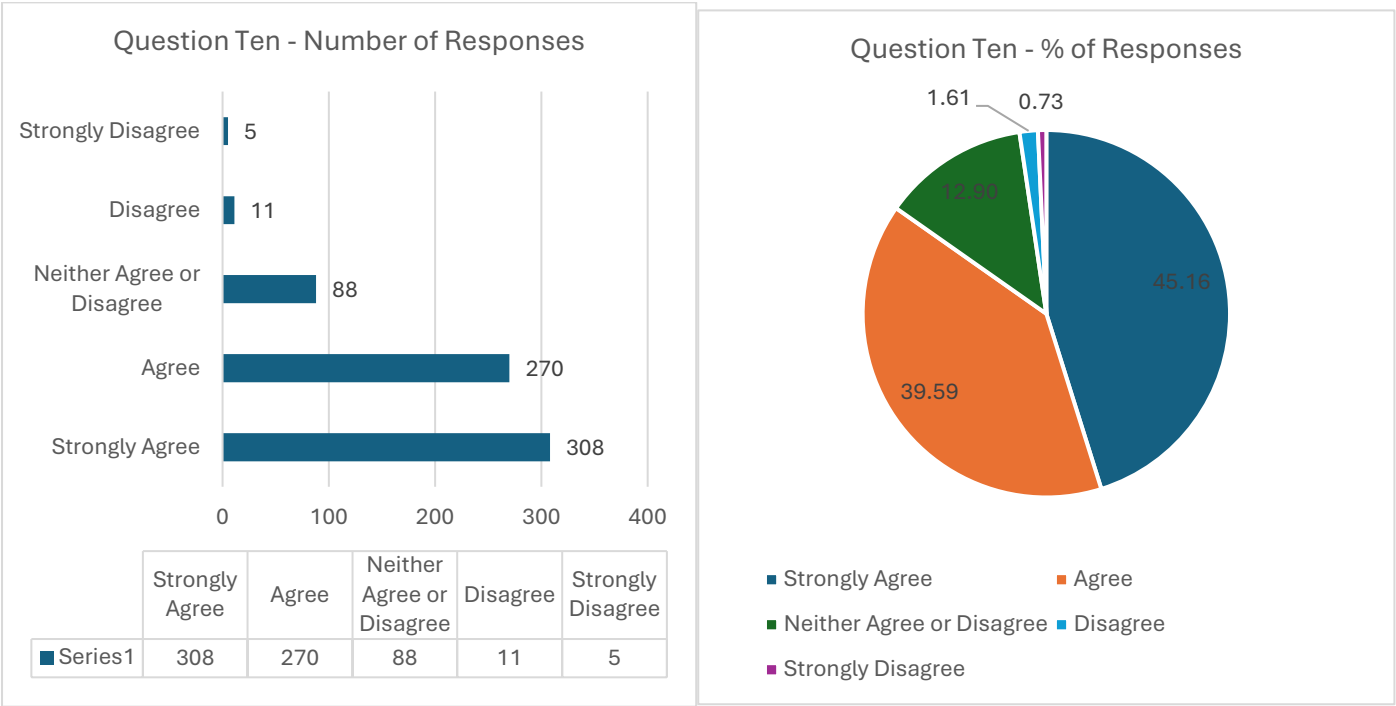
Question Nine: Medical Grounds

A total of 80% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.



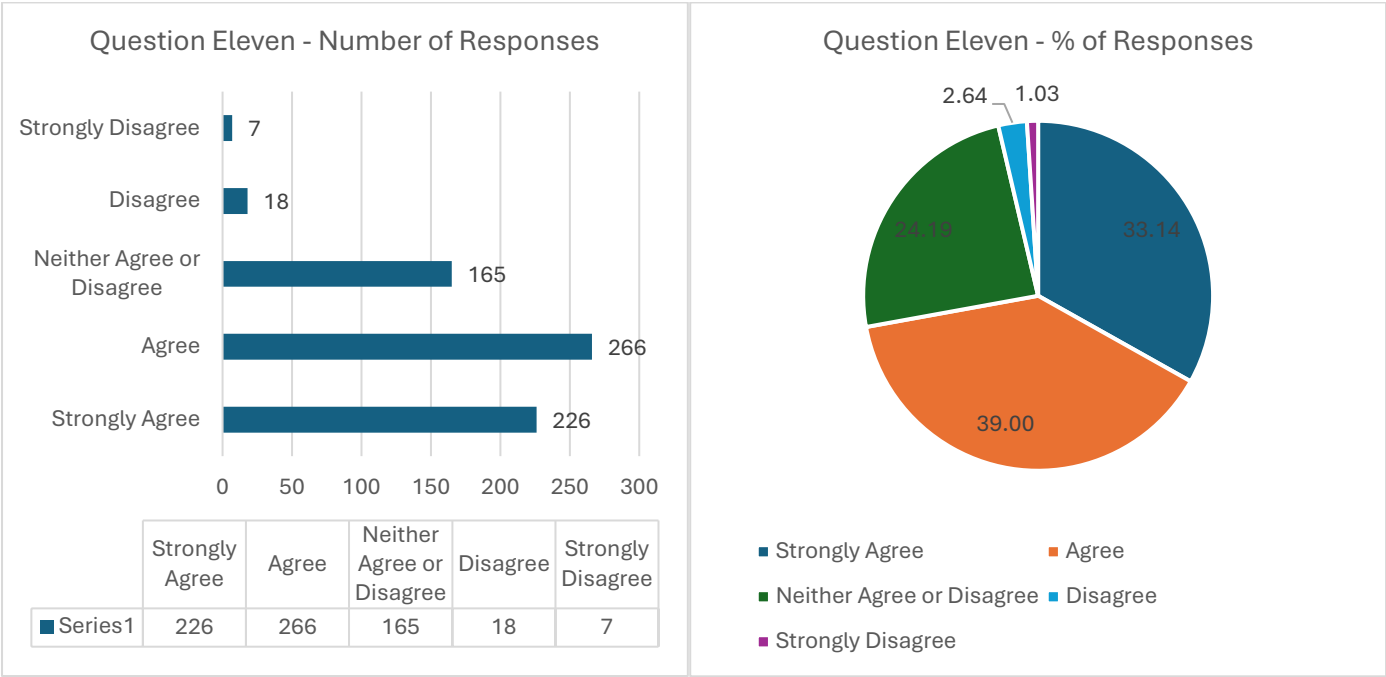
Question Ten: Child Protection

A total of 85% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.



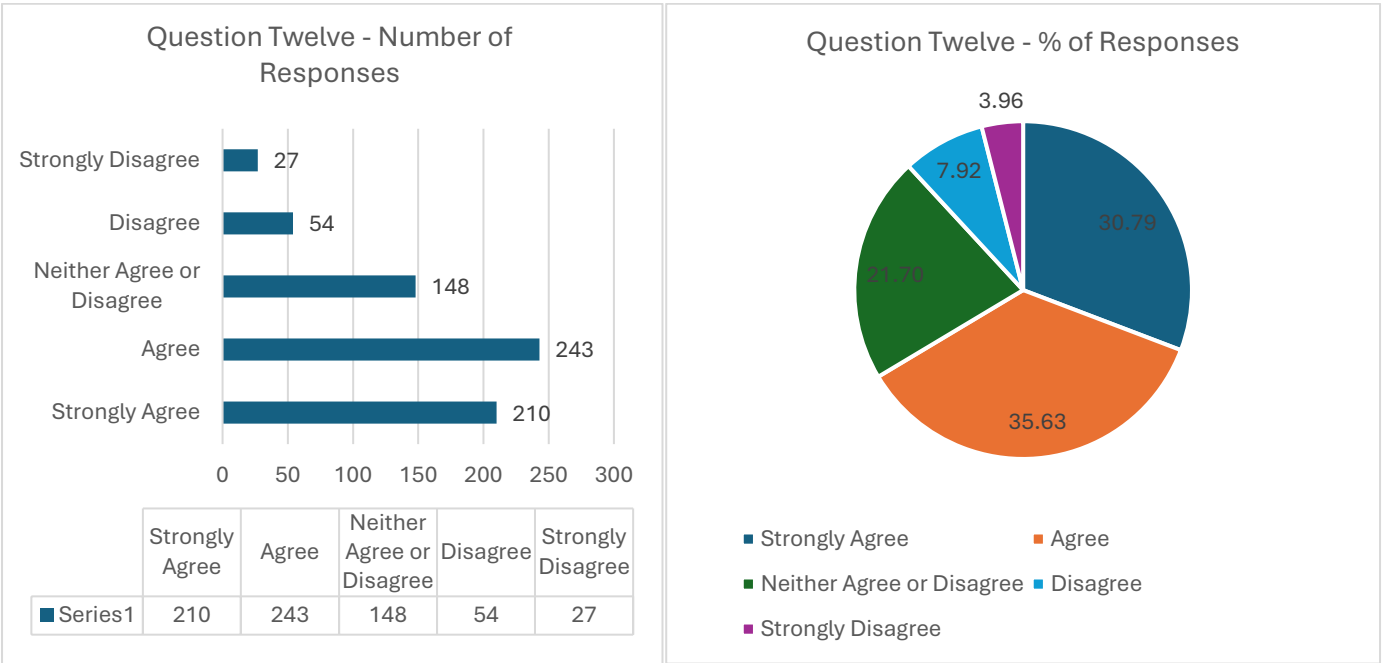
Question Eleven: Special Guardianship Order

A total of 72% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.



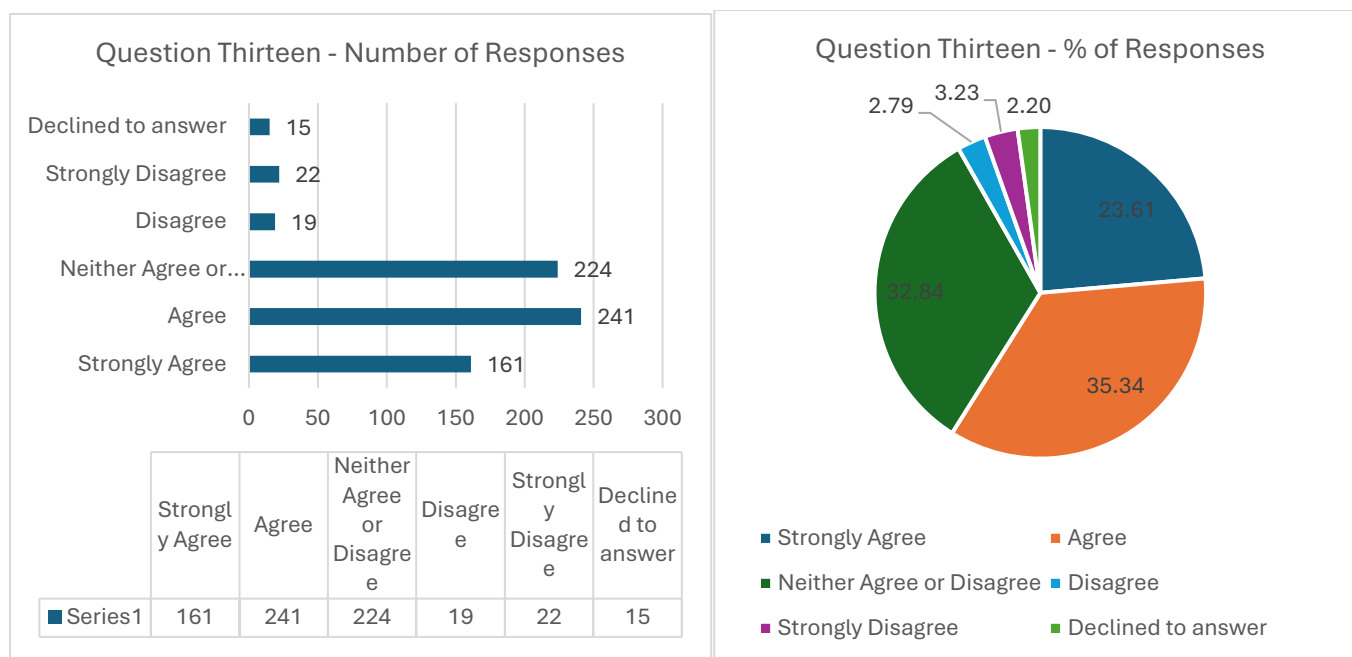
Question Twelve: Acute Overcrowding

A total of 66% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.



Question Thirteen: Management Discretion (SBC & MBC only)

A total of 59% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.



Question Fourteen: Open Comments

The consultation received a total of 190 comments. The comments were analysed and placed into comment categories as detailed in the table below.

Category	Sub Category	Total	Category
		No of Comments	Total
In Agreement	A general comment agreeing with the proposals	22	23
	Agreement with Management Discretion	1	
Dissatisfied with Consultation	Unhappy with the format of the consultation	1	1
Availability of Housing	Insufficient number of available housing	17	27
	Use of accessible homes	2	
	Size of housing	1	
	Empty Homes in the Borough should be utilised	7	
Advertising	Issues with advertising	2	7
	Floor plans included within adverts	1	
	More properties advertised at band 4	2	
	Band 4 - No Support	1	
	Age restrictions on adverts to be abolished	1	
Allocations	Bungalow Allocations	3	3

Application Process	Reduce waiting times for medical assessment	1	13
	Disagree with the use of auto bid	1	
	Notified of reason for unsuccessful bid	2	
	length of time on waiting list	4	
	Local connection Agreement	1	
	Dr to assess Medical Need not OT	1	
	Exclusions from homelessness entitlement	1	
	Improvement needed to the time taken to assess applications	1	
	R&C to include discretion	1	
ASB	Action against ASB is required	2	3
	Agreement with extension	1	
Bedroom Need	Abolish bedroom need criteria	21	21
Communication	Improvements to communication needed	5	7
	Publish data	2	
Exclusions	Substance addiction should be excluded from housing register.	1	1
Fairness	Ensure rules are followed	1	8
	Fairness required	7	
Immigration	Impact of immigration on local need	15	15
Medical Need	Autism & ADHD taken into consideration	2	9
	Medical Needs Band 1	3	
	Higher priority for medical needs	1	
	Children with SEN higher priority	3	
Priority	Couples' priority	1	41
	Working people higher priority	17	
	Care Leavers Band 1 Plus	1	
	Anti-Social Behaviour Victim Priority	7	
	Band 4 should be the same as band 3	1	
	Abolish banding	1	
	Single parent priority	4	
	Pregnant women priority	1	
	DV should be band 3	1	
	Homelessness Prevention cases should be higher priority	1	
	Intentionally Homeless should not be provided banding	1	
	Allowances for ASB	1	
	Area priority	2	
	Armed Forces term in service	1	
	Banding provided on highest need if customers meet multiple criteria	1	
Rightsizing	Rightsizing	11	11
Total		190	

Registered Providers, Commissioned Housing Services and VCSE Responses

In total seven separate registered providers and commissioned services providers responded to the consultation.

1. Thirteen Housing Group
2. Home Group
3. Livin
4. Stockton Churches Mission (Bridge House)
5. Broadacres Housing Association
6. Habinteg Housing Association
7. New Walk CIC

In total two representatives of the VCSE sector responded to the consultation.

1. EVA Womens Aid
2. Changing Lives

Each provider was emailed directly on the 7th October 2024 with a reminder email being issued on the 7th November. The details of the providers responses can be found in Appendix B.

Summary

- Over 59% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with all questions.
- Positive response from residents.
- Disappointing response from the RP and VCSE sector.
- The question which provoked the strongest positive response was question 2, Anti-Social Behaviour. 68.91% of respondents strongly agreed with the proposal.
- The question which provoked the strongest negative response was question 4, Priority removed due to inactivity. 8.65% of respondents strongly disagreed with the proposal.
- A total of 190 individual comments were received, the top five categories were:
 1. A general comment agreeing with the proposal.
 2. Bedroom need criteria should not be included in the policy.
 3. Working individuals and families should be given a higher banding priority.
 4. Insufficient number of available properties.
 5. Immigration has had a negative impact on local housing need and supply.

Next Steps

The Task and Finish Group will meet in person on the 28th November 24 and the Steering Group will meet virtually on the 4th December 24 to review the consultation responses and decide upon next steps.

Appendix A

Registered Providers, Commissioned Housing Services and VCSE Responses

The commissioned services and VCSE sector representatives contacted are detailed in the table below.

Homeless SA Contract:

Stockton Churches Mission
New Walk
Turnaround Homes
Sanctuary
Community Campus
NACRO

VCSE Sector operating in Stockton & Middlesbrough:

Catalyst
Open Door NE
CAB
Red Cross
Refugee Futures
Refugee Voices
Diversity Inside Us
Stockton Baptist Church
Justic First
City of Sanctuary
One Community Link
Stockton Family Action
Salvation Army
Little Sprouts
SSAFA
Veterans Gateway
Royal British Legion
Probation Service
Harbour
EVA
My Sisters Place
Zoes Place – Normanby/Eston

Registered Provider	Question 2 - Local Connection	Question 3 - ASB	Question 4 - Inactivity - Removal of Banding	Question 5 - Regen plus Regen/Demo	Question 6 - Armed Forces	Question 7 - Homelessness	Question 8 - Care Leavers	Question 9 - Medical Grounds	Question 10 - Child Protection	Question 11 - SGO	Question 12 - Overcrowding	Question 13 - Management Discretion	Further comments
New Walk CIC	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Disagree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Neither Agree/Disagree	None
Habinteg Housing Association	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Agree	I Agree	N/A
Broadacres Housing Association	I Strongly Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Agree	I Neither Agree/Disagree	n/a
Thirteen	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Disagree	I Neither Agree/Disagree	I Agree	I Disagree	I Agree	I Disagree	I Neither Agree/Disagree	See Thirteen Response Document.
Bridge House	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	We have no objections to the proposition's being made
Livin	I Agree	I Neither Agree/Disagree	I Disagree	I Strongly Agree	I Neither Agree/Disagree	I Neither Agree/Disagree	I Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	No further comments
Home Group	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Agree	I Neither Agree/Disagree	I Neither Agree/Disagree	I Strongly Agree	I Strongly Agree	I Agree	I Strongly Disagree	n/a
VCSE Sector													
WVA Women's Aid	I Agree	Strongly Agree	I Agree/Disagree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree/Disagree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I agree with the proposals
Changing Lives commissioned by Middlesbrough Local authority	I Agree	Strongly Agree	I Disagree	I Agree	I Agree	I Agree	I Disagree	I Agree	I Disagree	Strongly Agree	I Disagree	I Strongly Agree	There should be allowances made for young people who are aged 18 and a student leaving temporary/supported accommodation this has caused multiple issues leaving vulnerable 18 year olds trying to better their life in a position of homelessness. Also in allocating bedrooms for young people allowances could be made for adult children who are staying in halls of residence but returning to the family home in non term time. People who intentionally withhold rent payments they receive from universal credit from their landlord and are then made homeless should not be given a priority banding.

Thirteen Housing Group provided a detailed response to the consultation as detailed below.

Q2 Local Connection Strongly Agree

Whilst we strongly agree with this proposal, we are aware of instances where support networks are not necessarily family members, and we hope this proposal would apply to these applicants. In addition, governments recent announcements around removing local connection for veterans and young care leavers is not referenced in these proposals and they may need amending if/when guidance is changed.

Q3 ASB Strongly Agree No further comments.

Q4 Priority Bidding Strongly Agree

We agree with this proposal, but we would like to highlight the importance of taking circumstances into account before removal of priority. For example, not bidding due to a hospital stay/illness should not lose someone their priority status and we ask that discretion is applied.

Q5 Band One Plus Demolition or Regeneration Agree

We agree with this proposal however we would like to seek clarification as to which customers in the partnership area would qualify e.g. Does this just apply to customers of partner organisations or to customers of other providers? We would suggest this proposal is tenure blind as this would give all residents support when needed.

Q6 Armed Forces Agree

We agree with this proposal however we feel the amendments do not recognise where an armed forces veteran may need to move where they have not settled into their new accommodation due to issues such as PTSD and environmental factors triggering this e.g. noise from neighbours, dogs etc.

Q7 Homelessness Disagree

We agree with the proposals from a homelessness prevention point of view however we think those in temporary accommodation should be given a priority one plus banding. We also feel the conditions on which each band would apply need to be more clearly explained in any customer facing documents and perhaps examples given. This is particularly the case for a band three priority.

Q8 Young People Leaving the Care of the Local Authority Neither Agree/nor Disagree

We feel proposals in this section would benefit from an example as we feel unable to answer the question. It is not clear in which circumstances a care leaver would be given a band two priority.

Q9 Medical Grounds Agree

However, we would like to highlight the importance of considering the prognosis of degenerative illnesses such as motor neurone disease etc as these illnesses will more than likely require additional adaptations/moves in the future and these could be prevented if the correct property is allocated first time.

Q10 Child protection Disagree

We feel that a child who is facing a serious threat should be allocated a band one plus priority. We would also like to see more clarity on the definition of significant risk vs key risk. Customer documents may benefit from an example.

Q11 special guardianship order Agree No further comments.

Q12 Acute Overcrowding Disagree

We would like to see a higher banding for those who are living in acute overcrowding.

Q13 Senior Management Discretion Neither Agree/nor Disagree

We agree in principle with the ability of using discretion for some cases, but we would welcome discussion around when this would occur. We feel the example of witness protection is not the best example to use as would these people not fall within one of the other classifications e.g homeless? We have had instances where the above discretion could be applied to resolve a housing need. A customer needed a five bedroom adapted property (which are rare) however we had a customer living in such a property. The current customer in the five bed property would have moved to a two bed bungalow to free up this property for the customer in need but they would not have been given the priority that would have enabled them to secure a property. However, had the customer have been given additional priority, this would have freed up the five bed adapted property for the other person who had high priority. Another example where discretion could be used is where somebody needs several different adaptations. Often, properties with all the adaptations needed are not available and they do not get an offer of a property as those that do come up do not exactly match their adaptations requirements. We feel some allowance should be made whereby a person is offered a property and further adaptations are carried out to fully meet their need.

Q14 Any further Comments

Whilst we appreciate the proposed changes will go some way to alleviating the most acute need, we feel that there should be further provisions to help people free up properties where they are under occupying. If there was a broader policy to help people downsize through a proportion of people wanting to downsize receiving a direct let for instance, then this would help alleviate demand in the priority groups. Allowing people to right size may also go some way in easing affordability pressures for customers and potentially reduce the discretionary housing payment bill for local authorities. We would like to propose that customers of non-partner organisations are given the same ability to downsize as those in partner organisations under the current allocations policy. Currently our customers cannot down size and if they could, this may help reduce pressure on the Tees Valley waiting list.

Appendix B

Common Allocation Policy Review 2024 Consultation Questions

Question One

Please select which option best represents you:

- ☐ I am a resident living within the Tees Valley Home-Finder partnership area.
- ☐ I am a staff member of a Tees Valley Home-Finder Partnership organisation.
- ☐ I am a representative of the Registered Provider sector.
- ☐ I am a representative of the VCSE Sector
- ☐ Other (e.g. an advocate acting behalf of an applicant)

(To appear when options 2,3 or 4 are selected above)

Please state the name of the organisation you are completing the consultation on behalf of:

Open text box restricted to 30 characters

Do you currently have a Live Tees Valley Home-Finder account application?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Question Two

Local Connection

Currently applicants do not need a local connection to register an account on Tees Valley Home-Finder and bid for housing within the partnership area. However, priority for housing is given to those with a local connection.

The Proposal

Considering the current significant demand for housing and an increase in applications from outside the partnership area, it is proposed that a local connection is required in order for an applicant to register and apply for housing via Tees Valley Home Finder across the three Local Authority partnership areas.

Applicants will be counted as having a local connection to a Local Authority area if they fit one or more of the following categories:

1. They live in the Local Authority area and have lived there for 6 out of the past 12 months or 3 out of the past 5 years*
2. They have close family connections with someone who has been resident in the Local Authority area for a minimum of five years. A close family connection is defined as a parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, sibling, legal guardian; or
3. Their regular place of work is located within any of the Local Authority areas.

**Exclusions would apply to accommodation that an individual may have been directed to reside such as Approved Premises, Prison and Bail Hostels. It also would not include Care Homes and Hospitals.*

Applicants leaving the armed forces and victims of domestic abuse will not need to have a local connection. Divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence will also be exempted from local connection requirements. A local connection will be applied across all 3 Local Authorities areas for these applicants.

Applicants eligible under the Homes for Ukraine scheme will have local connection to the Local Authority of the host family that they were placed with.

Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.

- ☐ I Strongly Agree
- ☐ I Agree
- ☐ I Neither Agree/Disagree
- ☐ I Disagree
- ☐ I Strongly Disagree

Question Three

Anti-Social Behaviour

The current policy states the following in relation to anti-social behaviour:

If the applicant (or a member of their household) is found to be guilty of 'unacceptable' behaviour (which includes a history of anti-social behaviour), they may be excluded from the partnership housing register for **12 months**.

The Proposal

Due to the increase of anti-social behaviour and the impact this has on communities it is proposed that this timeframe is extended to **36 months**. This will impact individuals who have been served notice, evicted or had a property closure due to anti-social behaviour only.

Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.

- ☐ I Strongly Agree
- ☐ I Agree
- ☐ I Neither Agree/Disagree
- ☐ I Disagree
- ☐ I Strongly Disagree

Question Four

Priority Bidding

The current policy states the following in relation to keeping the partnership register up to date:

Applicants with a priority for housing will be reviewed regularly to ensure they are not having difficulties with the scheme and to check that they are applying for suitable properties as they come up.

The Proposal

Customers who are in Bands 1, 2 and 3 will be expected to bid for suitable properties using the priority awarded to them. Applicants who do not bid **may** have their priority removed if there have been suitable properties advertised and they have failed to place bids on them.

Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.

- ☐ I Strongly Agree
- ☐ I Agree
- ☐ I Neither Agree/Disagree
- ☐ I Disagree
- ☐ I Strongly Disagree

Question Five

Band One Plus Demolition or Regeneration

Currently people living in the partnership area who are losing their home due to demolition or regeneration are allocated Band One housing priority in the area which they live.

The Proposal

It is proposed that a new Band One Plus banding is created and those customers who are losing their home due to demolition or regeneration would be provided with the higher priority banding.

Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.

- ☐ I Strongly Agree
- ☐ I Agree
- ☐ I Neither Agree/Disagree
- ☐ I Disagree
- ☐ I Strongly Disagree

Question Six

HM Armed Forces Community

The current policy states:

People leaving the HM Armed Forces community. This will include a member of the Armed Forces (serving or has formerly served in the regular forces; serving or has formerly served in the reserved forces; a bereaved spouse/civil partner; divorced spouse/civil partner*) are allocated Band One Priority.

Applicants will need to be assessed by the Local Authority Homelessness Teams before this priority will be awarded.

The Proposal

It is proposed that a new Band One Plus banding is created and those customers leaving the armed forces community (serving or has formerly served in the regular forces; serving or has formerly served in the reserved forces; a bereaved spouse/civil partner; divorced spouse/civil partner*) with an **urgent need** for housing would be provided with the higher priority banding. Applicants will need to be assessed by the Local Authority Homelessness Teams before this priority will be awarded.

And:

Those leaving the Armed Forces community (serving or has formerly served in the regular forces; serving or has formerly served in the reserved forces; a bereaved spouse/civil partner; divorced spouse/civil partner*) within the last five years with **no** urgent housing need will be allocated Band Three Priority on their **first tenancy only**.

** For this purpose, “the regular forces” and “the reserve forces” have the meanings given by section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006(2).”.*

Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.

- ☐ I Strongly Agree
- ☐ I Agree
- ☐ I Neither Agree/Disagree
- ☐ I Disagree
- ☐ I Strongly Disagree

Question Seven

Homelessness

The current Policy States that homelessness applicants are awarded Band One housing regardless of their assessed priority need:

People assessed as statutorily homeless and in priority need

People who have been accepted as statutorily homeless and in priority need and where the main homeless duty is owed (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996). People in this category may receive a direct offer of housing.

Applicants will need to be assessed by the Local Authority Homelessness Teams before this priority will be awarded.

Applicants who, following assessment, are owed the homelessness prevention or relief duty. *

* If duty has been discharged through the refusal of a reasonable offer of accommodation, the applicant will be placed into Band 4. If the duty is discharged for any other reason, the applicant will be placed into the Band appropriate to their assessed housing needs.

Applicants will need to be assessed by the Local Authority Homelessness Teams before this priority will be awarded.

The Proposal

It is proposed that homelessness applicants following assessment by the Local Authority Homelessness Teams would be split across **three** priority bands.

Band One Priority would be allocated only to those applicants who are homeless living in temporary accommodation arranged by one of the partner Local Authorities, or are owed a main or relief duty and are in priority need as in accordance with Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (the homelessness legislation) and there is an urgent need to free up the temporary accommodation, or move in order to fulfil the above duties.

Band Two Priority would be allocated to those applicants who, following a homeless assessment are owed a prevention or relief duty with no priority need.

Band Three Priority would be allocated to those applicants where a relief duty has ended after 56 days, and it has been determined the applicant has been deemed to be intentionally homeless.

Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.

- ☐ I Strongly Agree
- ☐ I Agree
- ☐ I Neither Agree/Disagree
- ☐ I Disagree
- ☐ I Strongly Disagree

Question Eight

Young People Leaving the Care of the Local Authority

The current policy states

As defined in the Children Act 1989, where a formal referral has been made by Social Services with the aim of safeguarding the welfare of the child or children or a child/children leaving the care of the Local Authority under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 are awarded Band Two housing priority.

The Proposal

An individual leaving the care of the Local Authority under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 who have been assessed as ready for independent living will be awarded Band One Priority.

And:

Those individuals who do not qualify for Band One Priority would be awarded Band Two Priority for their first tenancy only.

Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.

- ☐ I Strongly Agree
- ☐ I Agree
- ☐ I Neither Agree/Disagree
- ☐ I Disagree
- ☐ I Strongly Disagree

Question Nine

Medical Grounds

The current policy states

Applicants who have been assessed by one of the Partners as requiring alternative accommodation because their medical condition (physical or mental health) and/or disability is having a significantly detrimental effect on their ability to live in their current home.

Applicants will be referred to the relevant Local Authority Team for assessment by an Occupational Therapist before any Band award is made under this category.

Currently applicants assessed under the category of Urgent Medical are awarded Band Two Priority.

The Proposal

It is proposed that a new category of Emergency Medical Grounds is created and applicants who are assessed as requiring emergency accommodation are allocated Band One Priority.

This banding will only be allocated to those individuals with an emergency housing need due to medical problems which are exacerbated by their current housing situation, and applicants being discharged from hospital where their housing is unsuitable and cannot be made suitable through adaptations. Other urgent medical cases will remain in Band Two.

Each case will be assessed individually, and applicants will be referred to the relevant Local Authority Team for assessment by an Occupational Therapist or Secondary Mental Health Service before any Band award is made under this category. The assessment is not of the applicant's health but how their accommodation affects their health or welfare therefore **the impact of the property will be assessed and not the prognosis of the illness.**

Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.

- ☐ I Strongly Agree
- ☐ I Agree
- ☐ I Neither Agree/Disagree
- ☐ I Disagree
- ☐ I Strongly Disagree

Question Ten

Child Protection

Currently only applications with a “child in need” are allocated priority housing at Band Two.

The current policy states:

As defined in the Children Act 1989, where a formal referral has been made by Social Services with the aim of safeguarding the welfare of the child or children.

The Proposal.

A new category of Child Protection will be introduced as a Band One Priority. This will be allocated where there is evidence of a **serious threat** to the well-being of a child and their accommodation is a **significant** contributory factor to the risk. Referrals will be made by allocated Social Worker's only.

The child in need Band Two Priority will remain and allocated to those assessed where the accommodation is being a key factor to the risk of the child.

Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.

- ☐ I Strongly Agree
- ☐ I Agree
- ☐ I Neither Agree/Disagree
- ☐ I Disagree
- ☐ I Strongly Disagree

Question Eleven

Special Guardianship Order

The current Policy States

Adoptive parents or prospective adoptive parents/foster carers

Those who need to move due to their current accommodation being unsuitable or who need to move to a different location to safeguard or promote the well-being of the child or children they have adopted or are planning to adopt or foster children in foster care.

Applicants will be required to provide documentation from the Local Authority to confirm their adoptive/foster carer status before any Band award is made under this category.

Applicants assessed under this category are awarded Band Two Priority.

The Proposal

It is proposed that Special Guardianship a family court order that places a child or young person in long-term care with someone other than their parent(s) (Adoption and Children Act 2002) is also included within this category.

Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.

- ☐ I Strongly Agree
- ☐ I Agree
- ☐ I Neither Agree/Disagree
- ☐ I Disagree
- ☐ I Strongly Disagree

Question Twelve

Acute Overcrowding

The current policy states people living in overcrowded conditions are awarded Band Three Priority Banding.

Overcrowding is assessed on the number of people within the household and according to the best use of bedrooms and sleeping spaces available. The calculation shown below is used to determine overcrowding.

Under-occupation and overcrowding will be assessed based upon the number of people within the household and according to best use of the bedrooms to reflect the criteria set out by the Department of Work and Pensions.

One bedroom will be considered suitable for:

- An Adult /Adult Couple.
- Two children of the same sex under the age of 16.
- Two children under the age of 10 regardless of their sex.
- Any other person aged 16 or over; or
- Any other child that cannot be matched with the above.

Please note: This assessment does not include living room space unless there is a second living room which can be used as a bedroom, and it does not breach health and safety standards. Where a bedroom is being used for another purpose e.g., study or toy room, its original function as a bedroom will be used in assessing the level of under occupation or overcrowding. The main householder(s) will be expected to share a bedroom with a child under the age of 12 months.

Additional Bedrooms

There may be some circumstances where a household is allowed an extra bedroom as detailed below:

- Health reasons.
- Bedroom for an overnight carer.
- Joint custody or overnight access to a child/children; or
- Prospective adopters and foster carers.

Where one of the above applies, evidence will be requested, and an affordability check may need to be completed to make sure the applicant can afford the additional bedroom.

The Proposal

It is proposed that a new category of Acute Overcrowding is introduced and awarded Band Two priority. This category will be awarded where an applicant household is severely overcrowded requiring two or more additional bedrooms according to the criteria set out by the Department of Works and Pensions stated above. Other cases of overcrowding will remain in Band Three.

Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.

- ☐ I Strongly Agree
- ☐ I Agree
- ☐ I Neither Agree/Disagree
- ☐ I Disagree
- ☐ I Strongly Disagree

Question Thirteen

Senior Management Discretion

This category applies to Stockton Borough Council and Middlesbrough Council only.

There is no current policy which allows for senior management discretion.

The Proposal

Both Stockton and Middlesbrough Local Authorities expect that the vast majority of allocations will be made following the allocations scheme rules according to priority banding. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where the only way an **exceptionally urgent** housing need can be resolved is using senior management discretion. It is important, in fairness to all applicants that these discretionary powers are used in genuinely exceptional cases for example witness protection cases.

Within the Boroughs of Middlesbrough and Stockton these cases will be reviewed on an individual basis by the Local Authority, Housing Service/Team (TBC) and a priority banding may be awarded.

Within the Borough of Redcar and Cleveland there is a quota system in operation, which ensures that a proportion of lettings is made available to applicants within each band. Therefore, the category of Manager's Discretion is not applicable in Redcar and Cleveland.

Please select the option which best represents your opinion on this proposal.

- ☐ I Strongly Agree
- ☐ I Agree
- ☐ I Neither Agree/Disagree
- ☐ I Disagree
- ☐ I Strongly Disagree

Question Fourteen

Any further comments

If you have any further comments regarding the consultation and the proposals, please detail them in the box below.

Please do not provide any comments on individual circumstances or provide any personal information.

Free text box, restricted to 100 characters.

If you have any concerns regarding a current live application on Tees Valley Home Finder, please direct these to the Partner Agency who manages your application.

Contact details for the Tees Valley Letting Partnership are:

Partner Agency	Email	Telephone
Stockton Borough Council	tvlp@stockton.gov.uk	01642 524345
Middlesbrough Council	tvlp@stockton.gov.uk	01642 524345
Redcar & Cleveland Council	housingclientservices@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk	01642 774774
North Star Housing	customerservices@northstarhg.co.uk	0300 0110011
Beyond Housing	enquiries@beyondhousing.co.uk	0345 0655656