

CHARNWOOD HOMESearch BANDS

This leaflet provides more information about the categories in each band, as set out in Charnwood Borough Council's Allocations Policy.

PRIORITY HOUSING NEED

Homeseekers who have been assessed as having an emergency need to move will be placed in the priority need band. Homeseekers will qualify for this band if they fall into one of the following categories:

- Homeless households to whom the council has a statutory duty to secure accommodation under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 (part VII) as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002
- Emergency welfare need – circumstances could include (this is not an exhaustive list):
 - Homeseekers who are subject to severe harassment, threats of violence or actual violence or threats of physical, emotional or sexual abuse
 - Homeseekers living in a property where the conditions are classified as unsafe or where there is a risk of imminent harm which cannot be remedied within a reasonable time (not resulting from damage caused by the applicant). This will be assessed in partnership with Private Sector Housing
 - Homeseekers living in a property that is statutorily overcrowded
 - Care leavers and other vulnerable homeseekers whose social or economic circumstances are such that they have difficulty in securing settled accommodation. The homeseeker will have been through their housing options with the council and all other options will have been exhausted
- Emergency medical need – circumstances could include (this is not an exhaustive list)
 - A homeseeker with a progressive or chronic medical condition combined with other difficulties such as the need for adapted accommodation or the inability to be discharged from hospital to their current accommodation
- Complex needs – resulting in an urgent need to move:
 - Would include a number of high need factors which when assessed together would indicate an emergency need to move. Such cases will be referred to the Housing Needs Manager
- Management need – circumstances could include (this is not an exhaustive list):
 - Tenants needing an emergency transfer because their current property is in need of urgent repair (includes demolition)
 - Homeseekers succeeding to a tenancy that is not suitable to their needs
 - Homeseekers who have lived in their current accommodation with a council or Housing Association (RSL) tenant for at least 12 months but they have no right of succession and the council has agreed to re-house them
 - Tenants occupying a wheelchair adapted property or other adapted property they no longer need
- Displaced agricultural workers who qualify for assistance under the Rent (Ag) Act 1976

Homeseekers are initially placed in the Priority housing need band for 12 weeks and are expected to bid for all suitable properties which become available during this period. If the homeseeker has not been successful by the end of the 12 week period, their application will be reviewed. An extension to the time in this band may be granted where the homeseeker has bid for suitable properties within this period, but has been unsuccessful OR where no suitable properties have become available. The length of the extension will be determined by the Housing Needs Manager.

In the case of homeless homeseekers, one suitable offer of accommodation will be made and if this is not accepted, the homelessness duty will have been discharged and their application will be re-assessed based on their other circumstances.

The relevant date for shortlisting homeseekers placed in the Priority housing need band will not be the date they joined the Housing Register – it will be as follows:

- Homeless households – their registration date will be the date they presented as homeless
- All other priority households – their registration date will be the date a decision on priority was made

HIGH HOUSING NEED

- A homeseeker who has been assessed as having two or more needs from different sections of Medium housing need as listed below:
 1. Homeless households
 2. Poor housing conditions
 3. Medical need to move
 4. Welfare need to move
- Homeseekers where there is overcrowding by two or more bedrooms short of the assessed need
- A homeseeker who is living in supported accommodation and the council has a formal move on agreement with the housing provider and their key worker has agreed that independent accommodation would now be appropriate
- Transfer homeseekers who are under-occupying a home which is in high demand from other homeseekers and where assistance is available from a tenants' incentive scheme

Homeseekers are initially placed in the High housing need band for 24 weeks and are expected to bid for all suitable properties which become available during this period. If the homeseeker has not been successful by the end of the 24 week period, their application will be reviewed. An extension to the time in this band may be granted where the homeseeker has bid for suitable properties within this period but has been unsuccessful OR where no suitable properties have become available. The length of the extension will be determined by the Housing Needs Manager.

MEDIUM HOUSING NEED

Homeseekers will qualify for this band if they fall into one of the following categories:

- Homeless households – this could include:
 - Homeless households who are deemed eligible for assistance but do not qualify for a full housing duty because they do not have a priority need or they made themselves intentionally homeless
 - A homeseeker who has been assessed as being threatened with homelessness in less than 56 days and is considered to be in priority need and has been through homeless prevention options with the council and all other options have been exhausted
- Poor housing conditions – households living in insanitary, overcrowded or unsatisfactory housing conditions. This could include:

- Households lacking adequate toilet, bathing or cooking facilities
- A property that, although not unfit for habitation, is in a serious state of disrepair and poses a high health and safety risk to the homeseeker. This could include properties where there is inadequate lighting, heating and ventilation or where there is ineffective drainage for waste and surface water. This will be assessed in partnership with Private Sector Housing who will consider using the powers available to ensure that the property is made fit
- In exceptional circumstances, other poor housing conditions will be considered. These will be considered where there is evidence that the housing conditions are having a detrimental effect upon the welfare or health of the household
- Medical need – households with a medical, disability or mobility problem. This could include:
 - Verified high medical need where a move will improve or prevent the deterioration of a condition. This will apply when a homeseeker's condition is currently directly affected by their accommodation and a move is needed to have a positive effect on their condition or where, as a result of their condition, their current accommodation is not suitable to their needs. An assessment will be carried out
 - Level access accommodation is required and there is no prospect of adaptations to the homeseeker's current property within 12 months. Suitable proof will be required, i.e. confirmation from an occupational therapist and landlord. The homeseeker may be referred to local agencies for assistance with adaptations
- Welfare need – this could include:
 - Homeseekers suffering from harassment or neighbour nuisance such as verbal abuse or damage to the property. The problems will have been reported to the landlord and/or the police for action but a satisfactory conclusion has not been reached. The harassment is not at a level whereby the homeseeker has an emergency need to move
 - The need to be near relatives to give or receive support. This would only apply where NOT moving would cause emotional, physical or financial hardship to either party
 - The need to move closer to specialist educational or other organisation, agency or institution. This would only apply where NOT moving would cause emotional, physical or financial hardship
 - Has found permanent employment in the district and needs to move closer to work, or will otherwise lose their employment. Confirmation of this employment will be required

For applicants given priority using this category, restrictions may be placed on their bidding to limit choice to the areas they have demonstrated a need to move to.

- Short term accommodation – this could include:
 - Currently renting accommodation privately either on an assured shorthold tenancy or as a lodger
 - Living with family or friends
 - Households accommodated for a limited period on non-secure tenancies or on licence agreements in hostels or other supported accommodation
- Other medium need – this could include:
 - Owners of residential property where a member of the household has a medical, social or economic reason to move. This would include applicants unable to maintain their current property but with insufficient equity to purchase or rent suitable accommodation, elderly people living in isolation and/or requiring an element of care

- Transfer homeseekers seeking different size accommodation
- Transfer homeseekers seeking a like for like transfer who have a medical, mobility or social need to move

As with “Welfare,” need above restrictions may be placed on an applicants choice of area where a social need to move has been awarded as an applicant needs to move to a particular location.

LOW HOUSING NEED

Applications will be accepted but placed in the lowest band if the homeseeker and/or joint homeseeker:

- Does not have a qualifying local connection to any of the districts within the Leicestershire sub-region
- Has the financial resources available to meet their housing costs. This would include households whose income or savings were over the current approved levels or with sufficient equity in their property to purchase or privately rent suitable accommodation (see definition of affordability in the full Allocations Policy at <http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/pages/housingpoliciesandinformation>)

The approved level of income and savings will be reviewed annually. This information will be included on Charnwood Borough Council’s Housing Services website and will be available on request.

- The home seeker is a new applicant with security of tenure and no welfare or medical need. is the owner or joint owner of a residential property This may include home owners or joint home owners, private tenants with security of tenure, home seekers with statutory property rights under the Family Law Act 1996 and social tenants from outside of the sub-region.
- Owes more than £300 to any partner council or another social landlord and there is no satisfactory arrangement to repay the debt or where regular payments have not been maintained in accordance with an agreed payment plan for at least 12 consecutive weeks at the time of application and at the time of bidding. When the homeseeker is able to demonstrate that they have maintained an arrangement for more than 12 consecutive weeks, they should inform the Housing Needs team so that their application can be re-assessed. Housing related debts include rent arrears on a current or former property and sundry debts such as court costs, rechargeable repairs, repayments required on rent deposit schemes or other homelessness prevention measures. Outstanding debts with private sector landlords may also be included, unless there is evidence of genuine hardship
- Is guilty of behaviour which affects their suitability to be a tenant. The behaviour is serious enough that enforcement action would normally have been taken but does not warrant exclusion from the Housing Register. This relates not only to the homeseeker but also other members of their household. They will remain in the low housing need category for a period of 12 months. The application will then be re-assessed. If there is a change in the household’s circumstances during the 12 month period, the application will be re-assessed at that time
- Is a transfer homeseeker who is only eligible for a move to the same size of property and who does not have a welfare, medical or other exceptional need to move. This is termed a ‘like for like’ transfer
- Is a joint tenant of a Housing Association property where the other party does not wish to move
- Only wishes to be considered for low cost home ownership schemes
- Has deliberately worsened their circumstances to gain an unfair advantage over other homeseekers on the Housing Register. They will remain in the low housing need category for a period of 12 months. The application will then be re-assessed. If there is a change in the household’s circumstances during the 12 month period, the application will be re-assessed at that time