

Consultation questionnaire for the review of the Peterborough Homes Allocations Policy

You can also complete this survey online at
<http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/housingregisterconsultation>

Overview

Peterborough City Council is required by law to have a housing allocations scheme which shows how the council prioritises applications for housing and the procedures they follow in allocating those homes.

Although the council no longer owns or manages any social housing in the city it has existing agreements in place with 10 registered social landlords (RSL), which allows us to allocate their available properties.

The Localism Act 2011 made an amendment to the Housing Act 1996, which gave local authorities the power to set their own qualifying criteria for people who are allowed to join the housing register. This allows councils to restrict their housing register to allow entry to only those who are in the most urgent housing need as well as allowing exclusions for other reasons based on other locally set criteria.

In addition recent government guidance highlighted that councils have the power to frame their allocations policies to give additional preference to particular groups of people. The guidance recommends councils consider how they can use their allocation policies to support those households who want to work, as well as those who, while unable to engage in paid employment, are contributing to their community in other ways, for example, through voluntary work.

The introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 has made changes to housing benefit which will impact on social housing tenants (council and housing association tenants) from 1 April 2013. The changes will mean tenants of a working age will only receive housing benefit according to the number of bedrooms a household needs.

Why we are consulting

Your views are important to us. This consultation will help the Council to decide what changes will be made to the Housing Allocations Policy.

We would welcome the views of anyone who lives or works in Peterborough and of any organisations or professionals with an interest in this issue.



Give us your views

Please give us your views on the proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Policy by completing and returning this form to the Housing Needs Service. The consultation will close at midnight on the 30 December 2012.

Q1. To help us make best use of the information you provide, please tell us if you are a:

- Member of the public Representing an organisation

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please can you provide your name and contact details:

ELIGIBILITY TO JOIN THE HOUSING REGISTER

We are proposing to restrict entry to the housing register to those who are in the most urgent housing need, this includes:

1. Homeless households
2. Those who are threatened with homelessness
3. Those living in insanitary or unsatisfactory housing conditions
4. Those who need to move for social/welfare reasons, or
5. Those for whom failure to assist in moving will cause particular hardship

Why are we making this proposal?

Currently Peterborough operates an open Housing Register, which means it is open to all who may wish to apply as long as they are 16 or over, except where:

1. They do not have a right to reside in the UK, or
2. They have previously been guilty of unacceptable behaviour, which would make them unsuitable to be a tenant.

Having such an open register has meant that over the last few years we have seen a large increase in the number of live applications. In July 2012 there were 9324 live applications being considered, these were prioritised into 5 bands (where band 1 is the highest priority) determined by the applicant's housing need and were broken down as follows:

- 311 Applicants in band 1
- 3137 Applicants in band 2
- 1280 Applicants in band 3
- 3338 Applicants in band 4
- 1258 Applicants in band 5

Last year April 11- April 12 we allocated 1258 properties through our choice based lettings scheme. In the same time we accepted 2678 new applications.

Unfortunately such is the demand for general needs accommodation most of the applicants in band 4 & 5 will never be successful for an allocation of accommodation.

Q2. Do you agree with the proposal to restrict entry to the housing register as above?

- Yes No Don't know

If you would like to say why you gave this answer, please tell us below:

LOCAL CONNECTION

In addition it is proposed that we will only accept applications from those who have a connection with Peterborough. A connection will be established by:

1. having lived in the area for six of the last 12 months or three of the last five years, or
2. having immediate family members who live in the area and have done for the last five years, or
3. those who are working in the city, or
4. those who need to move to the area for special reasons e.g. in order to receive specialist medical care

Why are we making this proposal?

As previously demonstrated social housing in Peterborough is in significant demand and most who register will never be successful in being allocated a property. We propose that the people from Peterborough or those with a connection should be given priority over those that don't.

Q3. Do you agree with this proposal?

- Yes No Don't know

If you would like to say why you gave this answer, please tell us below:

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

We also propose that those who have previously behaved in an unacceptable manner, which would make them unsuitable to be a tenant of a social landlord will also be excluded from applying.

Unacceptable behaviour would be defined as follows:

1. Behaviour, which is considered serious enough that if the applicant or a member of their household were a council tenant there, would be sufficient evidence for the council to obtain at least a suspended possession order. Such behaviour may include:
 - i. failing to pay the rent
 - ii. breaking the terms of a tenancy agreement
 - iii. causing nuisance to neighbours or anti social behaviour
 - iv. being convicted of using the home for immoral or illegal purposes
 - v. being convicted of an arrestable offence committed in, or in the vicinity of the home
 - vi. causing the condition of the property to deteriorate by a deliberate act, or by neglect
 - vii. making a false statement to obtain a tenancy, or
2. The applicant or a member of their household has been served with an injunction by a council or their landlord to stop them behaving in a way which causes nuisance or annoyance to others, or
3. The applicant or a member of their household has current tenancy arrears in excess of 8 weeks rent, or
4. The applicant or a member of their household has any outstanding former tenant arrears

Why are we making this proposal?

As previously demonstrated social housing in Peterborough is in significant demand and most who register will never be successful in being allocated a property. We propose that the people who behave in an anti-social manner or do not meet their primary obligations as a tenant and ensure their rent is paid should not be permitted to apply for another property.

Q4. Do you agree with this proposal?

- Yes No Don't know

If you would like to say why you gave this answer, please tell us below:

SUFFICIENT RESOURCES

Currently we do not look at applicant's assets or savings when deciding if they can join the housing register. We propose that those applicants who own a property or have sufficient resources from savings or income to secure and sustain alternative accommodation by way of outright purchase, obtaining a mortgage or renting privately should not be permitted to join the housing register.

Why are we making this proposal?

With demand so great we are only in a position to assist those in the most urgent housing need. Those who can afford to secure accommodation from other sources should not be denying accommodation from those who can't.

Q5. Do you agree with this proposal?

- Yes No Don't know

If you would like to say why you gave this answer, please tell us below:

In deciding the level of sufficient resources we will look at applicants' savings and income. It is proposed that those with savings in excess of £16,000 or those with a household income in excess of £60,000 per annum should not be allowed to apply.

Q6. Is the savings level of £16,000:

- Too high Too low About right

Q7. Is the household income level of £60,000 per annum:

- Too high Too low About right

If you would like to say why you gave this answer, or make suggestions on what you feel is the sufficient income level please tell us below:

BEDROOM ELIGIBILITY

We are proposing that, when determining the number of bedrooms a household needs, we will allocate a separate bedroom to:

- Each married or cohabiting couple or single parent
- Any other person aged 16 years or more
- Two children of either sex under 10 years
- Two children of the same sex aged under 16 years
- Any person who cannot be paired

Why are we making this proposal?

By making this change we will ensure that we do not allocate bedrooms above the bedroom criteria. This will mean that both prospective and current tenants who experience a change in circumstances and require housing benefit assistance will not be left with a financial shortfall if their property is deemed larger than they need thereby causing financial hardship.

Q8. Do you agree with this proposal?

- Yes No Don't know

If you would like to say why you gave this answer, please tell us below:

UNDER OCCUPATION

We are proposing that social tenants who are under-occupying their property will be given Band 1 priority.

Why are we making this proposal?

This proposed change will give greater priority to existing social tenants who are under-occupying their homes. Those who are under-occupying accommodation and in receipt of housing benefit will be at risk of financial hardship if they are not given assistance to move. In addition we are committed to making the best use of the limited housing stock available. Family sized homes released through this additional priority will be allocated to other households on the Housing Register.

Q9. Do you agree with this proposal?

- Yes No Don't know

If you would like to say why you gave this answer, please tell us below:

ACCESS, HEALTH, CARE AND SUPPORT ASSESSMENTS

We are proposing consideration is only given for an additional bedroom on health grounds where there is a need for an overnight carer.

Why are we making this proposal?

Housing benefit payments will only cover bedrooms where there is an assessed need for overnight carers. It will not cover payments for other health needs i.e. extra bedrooms for storage of medical equipment or additional bedrooms for behavioural reasons etc.

Q10. Do you agree with this proposal?

Yes No Don't know

If you would like to say why you gave this answer, please tell us below:

ADDITIONAL PREFERENCE

We are proposing that applications received from certain groups of people are given priority over others who may be in a similar level of housing need. These groups are:

1. Armed Forces Personnel
2. Working Households
3. Those making a voluntary contribution to their community
4. Those with a long standing local connection with Peterborough

Why are we making this proposal?

Peterborough City Council believes that those who have a long-standing connection with the city, those who are working or actively seeking work and those who are playing a part in making their neighbourhood a good place to live should be rewarded for doing so. In addition we are now required to give additional preference to those serving and former members of the armed forces.

Q11. Do you agree with this proposal?

Yes No Don't know

If you would like to say why you gave this answer, please tell us below:

Q.12 Prior to implementation of any amended allocations policy we will undertake a full equality impact assessment to determine whether any of the most vulnerable groups of people would be disproportionately affected. To assist us in this assessment can you please advise us whether you think any of these proposals will have a negative or positive impact on the groups below?

Equality Group	Do you believe this group will be disproportionately affected?	Notes on positive / negative effects
Particular Age Groups	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Don't Know	
Disabled People	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Don't Know	
Married Couples or those entered into a civil partnership	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Don't Know	
Pregnant women or women on maternity leave	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Don't Know	
Particular ethnic groups	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Don't Know	
Those of a particular religion or who hold a particular belief	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Don't Know	

Equality Group	Do you believe this group will be disproportionately affected?	Notes on positive / negative effects
Male/Female	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Don't Know	
Those proposing to undergo, currently undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Don't Know	
Sexual orientation	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Don't Know	

EQUALITY MONITORING

Your Age

- Under 16 16-24 25-34 35-44
 45-54 55-64 65-84 85+
 Prefer not to say

Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) defines a person as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities and has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months. Since 2005 people with HIV, cancer, multiple sclerosis (MS) and severe disfigurement are covered by the DDA.

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

- Yes No Prefer not to say

Religion or belief

Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?

- No Religion Christianity Hindu Jain
 Jewish Islam/Muslim Sikh Buddhist
 Other

Sex

- Male Female Prefer not to say

Sexual Orientation

- Heterosexual or straight Gay or lesbian Bisexual Not Sure Prefer not to say

Ethnicity

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> White: British | <input type="radio"/> White: Irish | <input type="radio"/> White: Gypsy or Traveller | <input type="radio"/> White: Any other background |
| <input type="radio"/> Dual/Multiple Heritage: White & Black Caribbean | <input type="radio"/> Dual/Multiple Heritage: White & Black African | <input type="radio"/> Dual/Multiple Heritage: White & Asian | <input type="radio"/> Dual/Multiple Heritage: Other |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian/Asian British: Indian | <input type="radio"/> Asian/Asian British: Pakistani | <input type="radio"/> Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi | <input type="radio"/> Asian/Asian British: Chinese |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian/Asian British: Other | <input type="radio"/> Black/Black British: African | <input type="radio"/> Black/Black British: Caribbean | <input type="radio"/> Black/Black British: Somali |
| <input type="radio"/> Black/Black British: Other | <input type="radio"/> Other Ethnic Group: Arab | <input type="radio"/> Any other Ethnic Group | |

If you said your ethnic group was one of the 'other' categories, please tell us what it is:

Please return this completed survey to:

Allocations Consultation, Housing Needs, Peterborough City Council, 4th Floor, Bayard Place, Broadway, Peterborough, PE1 1HZ