



Sub-Regional Choice Based Lettings

Allocations Policy

Pennine Lancashire

With effect from 1st April 2016

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This document sets out the housing allocation policy for the Pennine Lancashire sub-region choice based lettings scheme known as B-with-us. This is a way of allocating homes to people seeking social housing from local authorities or registered social housing providers. It represents significant change in social housing allocation practice and introduces new and far greater choice to customers to enable them to make an informed decision about where they want to live, and the type of accommodation most suited to their housing needs.

The B-with-us scheme has been developed and expanded to cover the sub-region on the back of the government's 2005 publication – "Sustainable Communities: Homes for All – Five year plan" that all housing authorities should be operating a choice based lettings allocations scheme by 2010. The Pennine Lancashire Group, committed to meeting this target developed a partnership across the sub-region which consists of local authorities, registered housing providers, large scale voluntary transfer agents and other statutory and voluntary organisations. The B-with-us scheme is the agreed method of letting social housing across the sub-region.

This approach gives customers greater choice in selecting where and in what property type and tenure they wish to live.

Partnership Agreement

The five B-with-us partner local authorities (Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle and Rossendale), and their large scale voluntary transfer partners, registered housing providers and private rented sector as detailed in Section 3.2 (Partner Organisations), have agreed, by being signatories to memorandum of understanding document, to operate a common sub-regional CBL scheme.

Common Allocation Policy/Register

The B-with-us scheme is a sub-regional scheme, and operates a common method of letting social housing through a common allocations policy. B-with-us partner organisations have agreed to operate a common housing register and common allocation policy. The B-with-us scheme is subject to a partnership agreement and managed by a sub-regional steering group and an operational group represented by all partner organisations and stakeholders.

The allocations policy will be reviewed every three years to reflect changes in legislation or local housing priorities or more frequently if necessary due to changes in legislation.

Web based IT system

B-with-us scheme operates through a shared web based IT system centrally administered and coordinated through Twin Valley Homes, as agreed by the

B-with- us partner organisations.

The system is designed to be easy to use, and allows customers to have an understanding of their housing situation, enabling them to make the best choice from the full range of housing options available to them. This allows the five Local Authorities, registered housing providers, large scale voluntary transfer agents and other partner organisations to use a common housing register, and a common system of priority, offering a 'bidding' system with unrestricted movement, across local authority boundaries, wherever possible.

B-with-us scheme is an integrated system which provides applicants, applying for housing, to be supplied with details of available or vacant properties within the sub- region so that they can make an informed choice as to the most suitable location, tenure and type of housing which they wish to pursue.

Legal framework

The Housing act 1996 Part VI states that all local authorities and registered housing providers must have and publish an allocations policy and ensure that properties are let according to that policy. This policy adheres to these requirements and also to the Homeless Act 2002 and subsequent statutory instruments and regulations including amendments made by the Localism Act 2011.

Equality and diversity

B-with-us partners are committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and anti- discriminatory practices in the provision of services. The aim of this policy is to ensure that social housing customers are treated fairly. In the implementation of this policy, customers who are eligible to join the scheme will not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, ethnicity, age, disability, gender, religion / belief or sexuality.

Note: Throughout this document we refer to ALL local authorities, registered housing providers, large scale voluntary transfer agents, private rented sector and other participating organisations as partner organisations , and people seeking access to social housing for rent or low cost home ownership as 'customers'.

2.0 AIMS

The overall aim of this allocations policy is to offer customers real housing choice, while continuing to give reasonable preference for re-housing to those in the most urgent housing need.

The allocations policy key objectives are to:

- Continue to provide a complete housing options service to meet housing needs and prevent homelessness.

- Provide a modern policy that is clear and understandable by all across the sub- region.
- Extend choice and enable customer involvement.
- Balance housing needs against customer aspirations.
- Make best use of housing stock in the region.
- Continue to support most vulnerable customers through partnership working.
- Ensure a quality lettings service that embraces equality and diversity.
- Help create and maintain stable and sustainable local communities.

3.0 ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHEME

The B-with-us scheme has a single register for both new customers who want to move into a property and those who are existing tenants seeking to transfer.

The common housing register is divided into 4 Bands, according to housing need; with band 1 awarded to the highest priority and Band 4 to the lowest. Customers are prioritised within the bands according to their individual needs, circumstances and waiting time in line with the common allocations policy. (Section 6.0 - Calculating Which Band)

3.1 CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

B-with-us scheme allocations policy introduces a choice based lettings system for letting properties. In order to promote choice to customers, partner organisations will let properties via the B-with-us website (www.b-with-us.com). This scheme will see most of the available properties being widely advertised and people wishing to be considered for a particular property, expressing their interest by placing a 'bid' often called an 'expression of interest'.

Expressions of interest (bids) will be prioritised by a transparent system that uses four Priority Bands to reflect need, and an 'Effective Date' that usually reflects the time the applicant has been in that band, to differentiate between households with the same level of need. At the end of each bidding process there will be a 'Unique Queue' for each property and unless there are valid reasons not to, an offer of a tenancy will be made to the customer who has made a bid and is at the top of this queue. Additional information on how the b-with-us system will operate is detailed later within this Policy.

It is anticipated that several partner organisations operating in the Pennine Lancashire region will also make use of the www.b-with-us.com scheme to let their available homes and low cost home ownership properties such as Shared Ownership and Shared Equity homes will also be incorporated.

It is B-with-us policy that wherever possible customers wanting social housing should be able to choose the properties that they wish to be considered for

from those that will be advertised. However there may be some circumstances that mean it will be necessary to make a 'direct offer' of a property to a particular household, without that property having been advertised. Such circumstances may include offers made to discharge local authority statutory duties. (See section 11 on direct lettings for circumstances where this might apply.)

3.2 PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

The following partner organisations are participating in the scheme:

Housing Partners Organisations on the Scheme:

Accent Foundation Group Ltd
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Burnley Borough Council
Calico Homes Ltd
Contour Homes Ltd
Green Vale Homes
Great Places Housing Group
Guinness Northern Counties Housing Association
Housing 21
Housing Pendle
Hyndburn Borough Council
Hyndburn Homes
Irwell Valley Housing Association Ltd
Muir Group Housing Association Ltd
New Progress Housing Association
Pendle Borough Council
Places for People Ltd
Regenda Group
Rossendale Borough Council
Twin Valley Homes
Your Eaves Brook

Contact details for all partner organisations are available in [Appendix H](#).

3.3 GOVERNANCE

B-with-us scheme is subject to a sub-regional partnership agreement (Memorandum of Understanding), which ensures that the scheme is kept up to date and meets regional and national best practice guidelines. The B-with-us scheme will be managed by a sub-regional steering group made up of one representative from each partner local authority (5), large scale voluntary transfer agent (5), and two from other partner registered housing providers. The operational group will be represented by all the partner organisations representatives and other stakeholders. The steering group will meet at least four times and the operational group will meet at least four times in a given calendar year.

All partner organisations and stakeholders will contribute to monitoring, developing, funding and making policy decisions concerning the B-with-us scheme.

4.0 HOW THE SCHEME OPERATES

Customers who join the common housing register are placed in one of four bands to reflect their housing need.

- Most vacant homes are advertised for a set period of time on a regular basis called an 'advertising cycle'.
- Customers can only express an interest in homes advertised which they are eligible for up to a maximum of 5 per advertising cycle. For instance, they must need the number of bedrooms in the home. In some cases, at the discretion of the individual partner organisations, bids for more than the required size of accommodation may be accepted.
- They may express an interest by mail, telephone, email, digi TV, and through the website or by calling in person to a local office.
- Once the deadline of the advertising cycle is reached, a shortlist of the customers who have expressed an interest is provided by the IT system (B-with- us). The allocations policy is then used to determine who is prioritised for housing from the shortlist
- Feedback on lettings is made as soon as the property is let via the b-with-us website.
- Feedback will include information about the priority and effective date of the selected customer, but not any personal information relating to them.
- Applicants with reasonable preference are awarded the priority the law entitles them to. (See section 5.1 Reasonable Preference)
- Adheres to Equality and Diversity standards
- Complies with allocation and related legislation

4.1 HOW TO APPLY

Customers can only be placed on the common housing register by completing a B- with-us application form. These forms can be obtained from any B-with-us partners organisation office or by telephone request by calling **0300 123 22 00**. Forms can also be downloaded or apply online from our website at **www.b-with-us.com**.

Customers will be able to register an interest (bid) in a home by several methods:

- Website (www.b-with-us.com)
- In person at their local office
- In writing
- Agency / Advocate

All printed information can be made available in Braille, Audio and translations on request.

Additional support is available to those who need special help and to vulnerable people through:

- The availability of interpreters / language line, including British Sign Language and a loop system is available at all customer contact points
- Translation of documents
- Face to face office interviews to offer housing advice and/or help and support with completing forms
- Home visiting service for people who are unable to come into our offices

Data Protection – B-with-us partner organisations will make every effort to keep information provided by customers safe and confidential. All partner organisations will adhere to their own respective policies on Data Protection.

4.2 GETTING REGISTERED

The application form will require customers to provide information that will enable partner organisations staff to determine eligibility and assess priority for re-housing. It will also seek to identify customers who may require assistance or support to sustain a tenancy.

Customers will be expected to sign a declaration to:

- Confirm that the information given is correct and that the customer will notify B- with-us scheme of any changes in circumstances. This may change their priority / need and their banding.
- Confirm that customers will allow B-with-us scheme partner organisation staff to make enquiries into their circumstances for verification purposes.

- Give consent to provide information to another partner organisation who is also actively participating in the scheme.

The 1996 Housing Act makes it a criminal offence to give false information, or to knowingly withhold relevant information in a housing application. If a tenancy is granted on the basis of provision of false information, we may take action to gain possession of the property through the courts.

The registration process also involves verification checks:

- Checking if the customer is **Eligible**.
- Assessing if the household is in housing need and subsequently awarding one of the priority bands.

Obtaining References - One of these must be a current or most recent landlord, if the customer lives in rented accommodation. NB. If a customer has not had a previous landlord, references may be requested from a responsible member of the community such as an employer or teacher, including advocates from agencies involved with the customer, will be accepted. Alternatively we may accept a 'passport to housing' *qualification. References requirements for applicants will be assessed on a case by case basis by the partner organisation dealing with the customer to take into account individual circumstance. Information will be requested at registration stage and proof may be required at offer stage.

*Passport to housing programme, available in some areas of Pennine Lancashire, is a package of pre tenancy training designed to teach potential tenants how to maintain a tenancy successfully.

- A Ready to Move form from an approved supported accommodation provider will be accepted as a valid reference.
- Child Access - if a customer has access to children; they will need to provide proof such as copy of access agreement, court order, custody or residence order or details of their ex-partner where appropriate. (In some areas customers may only be offered certain property types to make best use of the available housing stock in the local area). Information will be requested at registration stage and proof will be required at offer stage.
- Requesting information about current or former tenant arrears and history of payment.
- Requesting information about any current or previous anti social activity or unspent* criminal convictions.

*** Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 after a certain period some convictions become spent. The length of time between the date of convictions and the date it becomes spent depends upon the nature of the sentence imposed, the age of the offender at the date of conviction and can be extended by subsequent convictions. Once convictions are spent they need not be disclosed for the purposes of a housing application. Convictions which can never become spent are those which for which a sentence of life imprisonment or a sentence over a 2 ½ years imprisonment or detention of youth custody or corrective training was imposed.**

4.3 CONFIRMATION OF APPLICATION

When an application to join the B-with-us scheme has been accepted, customers will receive written confirmation and be notified of:

- Their unique application number.
- Their current priority band status.
- Registration date.

If a customer feels that any details are incorrect, they should contact B-with-us partner organisation staff, where the application was submitted. If a customer feels that they have been placed in the wrong band, they will be given the opportunity to ask for a review of the priority awarded.

4.4 JOINT APPLICATIONS / HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

A customer may include anyone on their application form who may reasonably be expected to live with them. Where more than one eligible applicant wishes to have a shared application they will be joint applicants. Anyone 16 years of age or over, moving with the applicant may be subject to the same checks as the main applicant.

4.5 CANCELLING AN APPLICATION

An application will be cancelled from the housing register in the following circumstances:

- At the customer's request.
- If the customer becomes ineligible for housing.
- When the customer has been housed through the scheme.
- When a tenant of social housing completes a mutual exchange.
- Where a customer does not maintain their application through the re-registration process, or where they move and do not provide a contact address.
- If the customer fails to respond to a request for further information within 28 days.

Should a customer whose application has been cancelled wish to re-join the housing register they will receive a new effective date according to the B-with-us policy.

5.0 ELIGIBILITY

Anyone aged 16 or over is eligible to apply to be put on the common housing register unless:

- They are 'Persons from Abroad' who the Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government has deemed ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation.
- They, or a member of their household, have been proven guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour and they are not considered by the B-with-us scheme to be suitable tenants**.
- 16 & 17 yr olds can apply to go on the register but **will** be suspended* until they have reached their 18th birthday unless they are leaving care and/or the Local Authority has a statutory homeless duty.
- They have been rehoused through the scheme and reapply within the first 12 months of the tenancy start date and the tenant advised to
 - Register for a mutual exchange or
 - Reapply if they have a housing need when they have been a tenant for over 12 months***.

****There will be some exceptional circumstances for some tenants and these should be dealt with on a case by case basis by the current landlord but primarily the current landlord should be looking to resolve the situation **with a direct match or management transfer.******

*** Under no circumstances will the B-with-us policy override the LA partner organisation statutory obligation for re-housing.**

**Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended by Homelessness Act 2002 (Section 160A (7)) allows the local authority to treat a person as ineligible where:

“The customer, or any member of his household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him/her unsuitable to be a tenant”

“And at the time of the application, the customer is still unsuitable to be a tenant because of that behaviour”

The types of behaviour that may in some instances lead to a customer being considered ineligible includes:

- Evidence of causing nuisance and annoyance to neighbours or visitors.
- Being convicted of using a home for illegal or immoral purposes; for example prostitution or drug dealing.

- Conviction for an arrestable offence in or near home.
- Being violent towards a partner or family member.
- Allowing the condition of a rented property to deteriorate.
- Damaging / destroying or disposing of furniture provided by a landlord.
- Obtaining a tenancy by deception; for example, by giving false information.
- Paying money illegally to obtain a local authority or registered social landlord tenancy.

Each application to the common housing register will be considered individually and in deciding whether a customer is ineligible, we can only consider behaviour that would have entitled us to seek a Possession Order had the customer been a secure tenant at that time. In addition, the behaviour must have been serious enough that the outright order for Possession would have been gained.

N.B. It does not matter whether or not the customer was in fact a secure tenant or not, this is a notional test.

B-with-us scheme partner organisations must also consider whether at the time of the application the customer is still unsuitable to be a tenant, because of that behaviour.

The decision that a customer is ineligible will be made by the partner organisation where the application was originally submitted.

B-with-us scheme partner organisation will write, giving reasons to customers deemed ineligible to join the common housing register. Customers who are considered to be ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour have the right to request a review of that decision. (Section 7.0 – Requesting a Review)

A customer who has been deemed ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour may make a fresh application if s/he considers their behaviour should no longer be a factor due to a change in circumstances. It will be the customer's responsibility to show that his/her circumstances or behaviour have changed.

5.1 REASONABLE PREFERENCE

Under the Housing Act 1996, s167, (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 s16 and Housing Act 2004) Housing Authorities must give reasonable preference within the B-with-us policy to the following needs groups:

- People who are Homeless, as defined by Section 175 Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act.
- People that have been found in priority need for accommodation by the

local authority under Section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the Housing Act 1996 or under S65(2) or S68(2) Housing Act 1985.

- **People** that are occupying a property secured by local authority under Section 192(3) of the Housing Act 1996 [persons not in priority need who are not intentionally homeless].
- People living in unsanitary or overcrowded housing, or in unsatisfactory housing conditions.
- People who need to move for medical or welfare reasons including grounds relating to a disability.
- People who need to move to a particular locality within the region where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others.
- Additional preference will be given to serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families who fall within one or more of the reasonable preference categories and have urgent housing need.

Local housing authorities can frame their allocation schemes so that additional preference can be given to certain people falling into the reasonable preference categories who have urgent housing needs.

Priority for re-housing will be achieved by a combination of a **Priority Band** and an **Effective Date** if a member of the household has left (or is about to leave) the Armed Forces within the last 5 years. The priority banding system reflects the reasonable preference groups set out in the 1996 Housing Act.

5.2 TRANSFERS

All current tenants of partner organisations who wish to transfer to another property of their current landlord or another Housing Association within the B-with-us scheme will be treated as an internal transfer within the partnership. Transferring tenants must meet the following 5 transferring principles:

- ✓ Must have lived in their current property for at least 12 months
- ✓ No outstanding debt to their current housing provider e.g. rent arrears, court costs.
- ✓ No breach of conditions of the tenancy agreement e.g. no current or previous anti-social behaviour or nuisance within the last 2 years (or the length of the

tenancy if less than 2 years), domestic violence, using home for illegal or immoral purposes etc.

- ✓ Must have some housing need (must qualify under the reasonable preference criteria (band 3 priority or above which does not include community contribution)).
- ✓ There must be no damage to the property (other than fair wear and tear) which would incur a charge to the tenant and the property must be in a lettable condition including the garden areas on the day the property inspection takes place. It would normally be expected that only the safety checks would be required when the property became empty.

All transfer applicants with a housing need to be visited after registration to ensure they are meeting the above criteria. Applications are to be closed (made ineligible) if they do not meet all the criteria above. No transfers to take place without a reference from the current landlord at the point of offer.

In certain circumstances the partner landlord may agree to a transfer within its own stock only.

5.3 SUSPENSIONS AND RESTRICTIONS

In certain circumstances, the law allows housing authorities to take certain other factors into account when determining priorities between customers.

Under the terms of this policy and in line with legislation, suspensions or restrictions may apply when the customer, or member of the household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour which was not serious enough to justify a decision to treat the customer as ineligible, but which can be taken into account in assessing customers level of priority and suitability for a tenancy.

Customers who are suspended will be placed in the appropriate band on the common housing register but will not be eligible to receive an offer of accommodation or bid for advertised properties.

Under no circumstances will the B-with-us policy override the LA partner organisation's statutory obligation for re-housing.

Customers may be suspended if they or any member of their household:

- Has engaged in anti-social behaviour, whether or not they were at the time a tenant of a local housing authority or registered housing provider and has not made and maintained a satisfactory undertaking to address that behaviour.
- Is a current tenant of a participating landlord in the B-with-us scheme or any other social housing provider landlord and is or has been the subject of action for breach of tenancy.
- Owes rent arrears or any other housing related debt, excluding council tax, to a partner organisation or any other social housing provider landlord and has

not made and maintained a satisfactory arrangement to repay the debt. (See section on Debt – 5.4).

- Has deliberately or negligently caused damage to property belonging to a partner organisation or any other landlord, whether the tenant of that property or not.
- Has been convicted of using their home, or allowing it to be used, for immoral or illegal purpose.
- Has in the view of one or more of the partner organisation engaged in behaviour that affects his/her suitability to be a tenant and would prejudice their ability to maintain their responsibilities to their existing tenants.
- The applicant has refused 3 offers which are deemed to be unreasonable refusals in a 12 month period.

Examples of unreasonable refusals will include

- Area unsuitable.
- Failure to respond to offer
- Repeated bids on property type/area that the customer has previously refused or deemed unsuitable.
- Personal circumstances e.g. applicant says not ready to move.

Each refusal should be considered in relation to other offers and refusals and on a case by case basis.

- Failure to respond to an offer of accommodation within 3 days.
- 16 and 17 year olds unless they are leaving care and/or the Local Authority has a statutory homeless duty.
- Supported accommodation move on applicants will be notified that their application has been suspended and that they have the right to request a review of the decision. Supported accommodation 'move on' customers must have been in supported accommodation for a minimum of three months before the 'ready to move' form is completed and their suspension lifted. If customers from supported accommodation have rent arrears or any other housing related debt they will be required to meet the criteria as detailed in section 5.4 Debts.

Each suspension will be considered on a case by case basis. Where a suspension is applied to an application the customer will be notified in writing with details of their right to an appeal and reasons for suspension. All suspended applications will be subject to a review no later than 12 months, and where appropriate closed after 2 years, after the commencement of suspension. The review will seek to establish if the reason for the suspension has been resolved satisfactorily or if there is evidence of an improvement in the behaviour of the customers over a sustained period.

Participating landlords may restrict the location of properties that they are prepared to offer a member of the scheme in the following circumstances:

- The member or someone else in their household has been involved in conduct likely to cause a nuisance in a given locality.
- The member or someone else in their household has been convicted of an offence which affects or is likely to affect the well being of the neighbourhood or any individual member of the community in a given locality.
- The member or someone else in their household has a conviction which is not spent for a serious crime and there could still be a significant risk to some members of the community in a given locality.
- The member or someone else in their household cannot be offered a tenancy in a given locality under the provisions of the Landlord's domestic violence policy.
- The member is the subject of a court order that restricts the areas in which they can live or enter.

In some cases an applicant may be restricted from applying for any homes advertised by one of the partner organisation landlords because of previous unacceptable behaviour with that landlord.

5.4 DEBTS

Customers owing rent arrears or any other housing related debt to any B-with-us partner organisation or any other social or private landlord will be eligible to apply, but may have their application suspended. Each case will be considered on its own merits e.g. reasons for the arrears and previous steps taken to tackle arrears.

In order for customers to have their suspension removed a satisfactory arrangement to repay the debt(s) must be made and maintained until either the debt(s) is cleared, or in the opinion of the partner organisation dealing with the customer and the organisation that is owed the debt(s), significantly reduced normally by at least 50%. Some partner organisations may want the debt clearing in full.

Under no circumstances will the B-with-us Policy override the LA partner organisations statutory obligation for re-housing.

6.0 CALCULATING BANDS

This common allocations policy sets out as many circumstances as possible within the bands.

Customers are prioritised in each band according to the date accepted in the band (effective date) irrespective of their priority reason.

6.1 BAND 1

- Households who are found to be 'Statutorily Homeless' by a participating local authority - Households that have been accepted as unintentionally homeless, and in priority need, with a local connection with that area or households who are awarded such a banding via an established 'Homeless Prevention Scheme'.
- Any partner organisation's Homeless Prevention Procedures need to be agreed with the B-with-us partnership.
- Households who need to move urgently on medical grounds High Need (See [Appendix A](#))
- Care leavers over 18 years of age who are threatened with homelessness and who will continue to be supported by their local Leaving Care Team.
- Existing tenants of partner organisation's who are required to leave their property to allow for major improvement work, disposal or demolition.
- Households in owner occupied and privately rented homes within the scheme that will be displaced by renewal area or regeneration schemes. Customers living in a property which has been served with a clearance order or closing order by a participating local authority.
- Households who occupy properties served with a Prohibition Notice by a participating local authority and where discussions with the relevant Environmental Health Officer support the decision to award priority.
- Households living in partner organisation's accommodation within Pennine Lancashire under occupying by two or more bedrooms.

All Band 1 application, excluding medical and under occupation, will be ring fenced to their respective local authority areas. Exceptional cases will be dealt with, on a case by case basis, by the local authority and registered housing provider dealing with the customer.

6.2 BAND 2

- Overcrowded by two or more bedrooms.
- Households living in partner organisation's accommodation (within Pennine Lancashire) under occupying by one bedroom.
- Households who are at risk in their current home from harassment, violence, or threats of violence (including racial, homophobic and domestic violence) and can no longer stay there. This will only be awarded by a senior housing officer following liaison with local housing options service.

- Households 'moving on' from an approved B-with-us supported accommodation provider, who have been assessed as ready to live independently,
- Those leaving a Refuge (unless they meet Homeless Duty criteria in which case they will be awarded Band 1 priority)* *Note: Refuge customers must have stayed for a minimum of four weeks, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Occupational Therapist referred for significant** adaptations to the property.
** To be assessed on a case by case basis by B-with-us partner organisation housing staff.
- Cumulative Need -Households who qualify for two or more from the list in band 3 unless specified .See [appendix G](#) for details.

6.3 BAND 3

- Households that have been accepted by the local housing authority as homeless, but are either non- priority or intentionally homeless.
- Standard medical cases category - (See Appendix A).
- Households who need to move to a particular locality, to avoid hardship to themselves or others, on social, employment, training or welfare needs. (See [Appendix A](#)).

Or

Right to Move for social housing tenants - Households who need to move to a particular locality, to avoid hardship to themselves or others, on social, employment, training or welfare needs. (See [Appendix A](#)).

- Households living in overcrowded accommodation who have not been assessed as homeless or have not already been awarded threat of homeless priority and the home is overcrowded.

Or

- Households living in unsatisfactory or unsanitary accommodation who have not been assessed as homeless or have not already been awarded threat of homeless priority, but is a licensee and is sharing a living room, kitchen, bathroom or WC with non-household members (See [Appendix A](#))

- (Licensees are lodgers, people staying with friends, relatives, people living in B&B, hostels, caravans, tents etc).

For the purpose of this policy applicants living with parents will not be classed as Licensees.

- Households with insecurity of tenure who are threatened with or likely to be threatened with homelessness within 8 weeks.
- Households who qualify for Community Contribution increased priority as detailed in [Appendix E](#).
- Tenant Community Reward Scheme – Partner organisation tenants

For current tenants who wish to transfer and have held the same tenancy for 5 years and who have contributed to the community by way of volunteering (see community contribution for criteria) and meet the following transferring principles:

- ✓ No outstanding debt to their current housing provider e.g. rent arrears, court costs.
- ✓ No breach of conditions of the tenancy agreement e.g. no current or previous anti-social behaviour or nuisance within the last 2 years, domestic violence, using home for illegal or immoral purposes etc.
- ✓ There must be no damage to the property (other than fair wear and tear) which would incur a charge to the tenant and the property must be in a lettable condition including the garden areas on the day the property inspection takes place.

The Tenant Community Reward Scheme is not included in cumulative need.

6.4 BAND 4

All other customers who do not qualify for band 1, 2 and 3.

6.5 MULTIPLE NEEDS

We acknowledge that some customers or households may have more than one re-housing need and so could fall into a number of needs categories. To reflect this cumulative need customers meeting 2 or more of the criteria from Band 3 unless specified (see 6.3) will be awarded Band 2 priority status.

If a customer is in Band 2 and part of the cumulative need is due to the need to move to a particular locality, Band 2 will only apply if bidding for a property in that area.

6.6 EFFECTIVE DATE

On submitting an application a “Registration Date” will be awarded starting from the date the customer is accepted onto the common housing register. Customers will also have an “Effective Date” from the date a priority band was awarded.

The Effective Date will determine a customer’s position within a band.

6.7 MOVING UP A BAND

If a customer moves up a band, then their Effective Date will be the date they enter the higher band, not the original Effective Date as this would give them unfair advantage over an existing customer who is already in that higher band.

6.8 MOVING DOWN A BAND

If the customer moves down to the lowest band the original Effective Date will apply. E.g. original date the application was accepted onto the common housing register.

If a customer moves from a higher band to either band 2 /3, then the Effective Date will revert to the date that applied when they were previously in that band. If the customer had not previously been in the lower band, they will retain their former Effective Date.

7.0 REQUESTING A REVIEW

Under the terms of this Policy, a customer or their advocate has the right to request a review of their case if they are not satisfied with their decision.

PLEASE NOTE: Before doing so customers should contact B-with-us scheme on **0300 123 22 00** to discuss their application and/or make them aware of any additional information which may be relevant but may have not been considered in reaching any decision.

Right of a Review will be granted under the following circumstances:

- If a customer has been assessed as ineligible and therefore not included on the common housing register.
- If the customer believes they have not been given “Reasonable Preference” (see section 5.1).
- If the customer has had their application suspended, in accordance with section 5.2.

- If the customer believes that in reaching their decision B-with-us scheme have got the facts of their case wrong.

In order to request a review, the customer, or an advocate, are advised to forward in writing their request to B-with-us scheme partner organisation, dealing with their application, within 28 days of the date beginning with the day on which he/she is notified of any decision and reasons.

However, if a customer requests; or individual circumstances merit an extension beyond the 28 days. The decision to extend this 28 day period will be at the discretion of the partner organisation dealing with that customer.

Customers are advised to put any request for a review in writing but can do so in person or by telephone making it clear that they wish to request a review. Should you require any assistance in doing so you are advised to speak to B-with-us or contact your nearest housing options office. The customer will also be given an opportunity to submit any further information that they may want the reviewing officer to consider.

The review will be carried out by the partner organisation dealing with the customer, in accordance with their internal review procedure.

The review is a reconsideration of the case afresh and is not limited to the conduct of the original decision. The review decision will be made on the basis of all the relevant information available at the time of the review. In addition to any information provided by the customer, the partner organisation may ask for further information if this is needed to make a decision. The merits of each case will be considered on an individual basis.

B-with-us partner organisations aim to complete all reviews within 20 working days of all written information being received by the reviewing officer, and in any case within 8 weeks of the request for the review, unless a longer period has been agreed in writing with the customer.

The customer will be informed of the outcome of the review, in writing, by the reviewing partner organisation of the scheme. If the original decision is upheld, the customer will be fully informed of the reasons for this decision.

In addition to the right of review, there is in place a formal complaints procedure. (See Section 13.1 Complaints Procedure).

7.1 RE-ASSESSMENT OF PRIORITY

Each customer's preference band will be kept under review and altered to reflect any agreed change in circumstances. All applications in Band 1 will be subject to regular reviews by the partner organisation's that have awarded priority to ensure that bids/expressions of interest are being made for suitable properties. Failure by such customers to make bids/express an interest, in a twelve consecutive weeks period, may result in that customer's priority status being reduced. However, each customer's application will be reviewed on an individual case basis. We will also write to each customer annually to ensure that their circumstances have not changed and ask if they still wish to remain on our

register.

It is the customer's responsibility to notify us at all times of any changes to their circumstances which may affect their housing needs priority.

8.0 QUOTA SYSTEM

Local authorities are to decide their own quota system* for their area. This must be decided locally in agreement with the registered housing provider's operating in the area to meet individual local authority requirements. (See Appendices C and D)

* A quota system is where specific properties are advertised in specific bands or to earliest registration date to balance needs and to help develop sustainable communities.

8.1 LETTING OF PROPERTIES

Lettings criteria are the rules applied to decide who an available property is offered to, and the rules applied under similar circumstances for more than one customer eligible for the same property. (See Appendices C and D)

8.2 PURPOSE OF THE LETTINGS CRITERIA:

- To make best use of the available housing stock.
- To ensure community sustainability.
- To ensure that supported/sheltered housing schemes include a balance of needs.
- To help the local authority to fulfil its responsibilities to people in need.

Examples of Letting Criteria

- Size and composition of household that is eligible to bid. (See Table 1- on next page)
- Minimum age for some flats and bungalows.
- Preference given to customers with a mobility difficulty who need ground floor accommodation.
- Preference given to a customer who needs any adaptations

installed in the property – e.g. level access shower.

- Whether or not some pets may be kept in the property.
- Sheltered need identified.

8.3 TABLE 1 – Property / Need

<i>Size of accommodation</i>	<p><i>Partner organisations will never knowingly overcrowd a property.</i></p> <p><i>Each person over the age of 21—unless co-habiting as a couple will require a bedroom. However when a person reaches the age of 16 we will give the household an additional bedroom need. i.e. Couple and 2 sons aged 15 and 16 will be given a 2 to 3 bed need</i></p>
<i>Adapted properties</i>	<p><i>Properties that have been adapted for someone with a disability may be offered directly to customers known to require the adaptations concerned. The property will be offered, to the customer identified as most suitable for the property. This may not be the person with the highest priority and oldest Effective date.</i></p>
<i>Sheltered accommodation</i>	<p><i>Sheltered Accommodation will normally only be allocated to customers who are aged 50 or over (may vary locally). However in some case e.g. in areas of low demand, such properties may be advertised and let to people below the age of 50 in order to facilitate a positive letting of the property.</i></p>

It is essential that all letting criteria be placed on the advert, Applicants should not be skipped or match rejected from shortlists on any criteria that is not included in the advert

8.4 HOUSING NEED / PROPERTY SIZE

Partner organisations will always aim to make the best use of their housing stock.

Sometimes the customer with the highest priority may not be allocated a home if this would result in either overcrowding or under-occupation or if it would not make best use of ground floor or specially adapted accommodation.

An additional bedroom will be allowed in the following circumstances:

- Medical reasons
- Carer
- Child access

Evidence will be required for all of the above before the additional bedroom need is awarded. Some partner organisations may not grant a tenancy if the additional bedroom would lead to an under occupation charge.

In exceptional circumstances, and with the agreement of the landlord, a customer will be allowed to move into a home that is bigger than their needs, if doing so improves their situation. In these circumstances affordability checks will be undertaken.

9.0 MEDICAL ASSESSMENTS

As responsible partner organisations of B-with-us we will deal in a fair and equitable manner with customer needs.

If any medical priority is awarded to a customer they will be notified in writing. This will include the type of property they can bid for where appropriate

9.1 DETERMIING THE MEDICAL NEED

Accommodation is allocated on the basis of need. **High** and **Standard Need** system exists to determine the level of medical need. All customers should be assessed on an individual basis and decisions will be based on medical, social and environment needs by partner organisation staff dealing with initial application. Information will be sought from the customer to establish their level of medical need. Note – medical banding may be awarded for specific property types i.e. ground floor.

9.2 HIGH MEDICAL NEED

This may be granted to customers who have an urgent need to move from their current accommodation for medical reasons. This would include people whose life might be at risk due to their housing conditions or who are completely housebound due to the standard of accommodation they live in.

Examples of a **High** need would include one of more of the following:

- Severe disability or terminal illness resulting in them being unable to use facilities in the home e.g. bathroom or WC.
- Assessed as unable to leave hospital until suitable accommodation is found.
- A member of the household is elderly, disabled or has a progressive illness and is likely to require admission to hospital or residential/nursing care in the immediate future and re-housing would enable that person to remain living at home.

In the instance of a customer's circumstance being classified as High Need; all partner organisations will award Band 1 status.

9.3 STANDARD MEDICAL NEED

Standard Medical Need may be granted to customers, who have a significant or progressive disability but can cope with difficulty, and partner organisation staff have concerns about a customer not being able to function independently and this is causing significant discomfort and stress.

Examples of **Standard** Medical need would include one or more of the following:

- The current accommodation contributes to social isolation, restricts independence and re-housing is required to prevent deterioration.
- Having to share facilities e.g. sleeping in the lounge long term, if not able to get upstairs and there are other family members.
- Lack of amenities and privacy with no access to the bathroom. e.g. commode in the kitchen.
- Tenants whose mobility is so severely impaired that they have difficulty negotiating stairs or steps.
- Wheelchair users who have restricted access within and out of the property.
- It is too costly and not practical to adapt the existing property to alleviate the medical condition.

10.0 HOMELESS CUSTOMERS

This section applies to customers who are considered to be homeless under Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act. Under the legislation set out in the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Housing Act 2004, participating local authorities have a legal duty to secure suitable accommodation for some individuals and households who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Local housing authorities will assess each case to decide if the customer is owed a full legal homelessness duty and entitled to be re-housed. The local housing Authority will decide if the customer has become homeless through their actions, and are therefore classed as intentionally homeless.

In order to qualify for the full legal homelessness duty, the customer (or member of their household) must be assessed as being unintentionally homeless and have a local connection to that local authority.

Homeless people who are owed the full legal homelessness duty are known as statutorily homeless. Where the full homelessness duty applies, the local housing authority has a legal duty to secure the customer a suitable offer of accommodation. (Section 10.1 – One Offer Policy).

This common allocations policy awards preference to the

different legal categories of homeless people as follows:

Band 1

- Households who are found to be 'Statutorily Homeless' by a participating Local Authority - Households that have been accepted as unintentionally homeless, and in priority need, with a local connection with that area or households who are awarded such a banding via an established 'Homeless Prevention Scheme'.
- Any partner organisation homeless prevention procedures need to be agreed with the B-with-us partnership.

Band 3

- Households that have been accepted by the local housing authority as homeless, but are either non- priority or intentionally homeless.
- Households with insecurity of tenure who are threatened with or likely to be threatened with homelessness within 8 weeks (See Section 6.3).

10.1 ONE OFFER POLICY (Homeless Duty)

The B-with-us scheme will always aim to meet customers' housing aspirations in terms of property type and location. At the same time however, choices must be balanced against homeless people's urgent need to move and the high priority awarded in recognition of this, as well as the pressures caused by demand on the local housing stock. Some areas and types of home are in extremely high demand and waiting times can be lengthy. Therefore, it may not always be possible to re-house people according to their preferred options.

In order to reduce waiting times and to facilitate choice, statutorily homeless people will retain their homelessness priority until they receive one suitable offer of accommodation.

Homeless applicants have the right to request a review within the terms of the Housing Act 1996 (Part V11) as amended by the homelessness Act 2002 and appeal against any decision regarding their status or suitability of accommodations offered.

If a customer refuses a suitable offer, the local authority has no further legal duty to re-house them. This means that they would lose the band 1 preference awarded because of their homelessness and be reassessed and placed in a lower band according to their needs. They will still however, be able to make bids and receive offers in the same way as all other customers on the housing

register.

10.2 PROXY BIDDING

In order to balance choice with the partner organisation's legal duty to provide accommodation to statutory homeless people in urgent need we expect all Band 1 homeless customers to bid for all properties for which they are eligible. The relevant local authority will monitor all such customers to ensure bids are being made. If customers are found to have not made suitable bids the local authority will begin making proxy bids on behalf of that customer. The local authority will make bids on behalf of the customer for all properties which they are eligible for whilst giving due consideration to whether it would be a 'suitable offer' if the customer was to be successful.

We also acknowledge that there will also be a number of other vulnerable individuals and groups who may also be in need of a proxy to make bids on their behalf. Suitable arrangements will be in place to allow for this with agreement reached with the customer as to who can make bids on their behalf.

11.0 DIRECT LETTINGS

It is the intention of partner organisations, that the majority of properties becoming available to be let via the B-with-us scheme. There are however situations when a direct letting of a property will be made. In such circumstances the housing officer may offer it as a direct let following approval from a senior housing officer.

The housing officer will then make a direct offer of a particular property to a customer where there are specific or exceptional circumstances as to why the existing tenant may need to move, for example:

- Emergency re housing due to fire or flood.
- B-with-us partner organisation tenant giving up an extensively adapted property for a general needs property.
- Homes that have been significantly adapted for a disabled person.
- New build wheelchair accessible homes.
- Homes that are suitable for adaptation for an identified customer with a disability and has not been possible to identify an existing suitably adapted property.
- Succession of tenancy, mutual exchanges and transfers of interest made under a court order.

- Homes (including difficult to let and in low demand) previously advertised at least once.

This list is not exhaustive as circumstances will be considered on an individual basis

12.0 MAKING OFFERS

In most cases the customer who made an eligible bid and is at the top of the list for a property at the close of bidding will be matched to that property. An offer may be made subject to verification.

When making offers, the banding will determine who should be offered the property. In certain circumstances however, there needs to be some discretion to overlook a customer. If a customer is to be overlooked for any justifiable reason(s), this needs to be agreed and authorised by the partner organisation, dealing with the application, housing manager and local authority where applicable.

Information about such assessments will be collated and reported to inform the future ongoing review of the scheme.

12.1 CIRCUMSTANCES THAT WILL RESULT IN NO OFFER BEING MADE

There are however circumstances that may result in an offer not being made. These are:

- If since joining the scheme a customer has become ineligible.
- On verification of the customers' details, the priority band was found to have been incorrectly awarded.
- The customer's current circumstances are such that suspension of the application is appropriate, or that the customer should be restricted from bidding in the neighbourhood in which the property is located.
- The customer's circumstances have changed since the priority band was awarded and the customer is no longer entitled to the same level of priority.
- The customer's circumstances do not accord with the local lettings policy in operation (where applicable).
- The customer does not satisfy the advertised lettings criteria for the property.
- The customer has been assessed as needing support to sustain a tenancy and such support is not in place, has been declined or cannot be arranged

before the proposed tenancy commencement date.

- The level of support needed to sustain the tenancy at the relevant property would seriously undermine the support provider's ability to support other residents in the same neighbourhood or scheme.
- The customer could not be contacted by the landlord of the property (the application will be suspended).

12.2 NUMBER OF OFFERS AND RESTRICTIONS

In most cases customers will be able to refuse an offer of a tenancy without affecting their priority band status. **Note** -Refusal of an offer by customers in the groups described below may however result in their priority band being reviewed.

Awarded Band 1 Priority Because Of Homelessness

Customers awarded Band 1 priority because of homelessness will lose this priority status if they refuse a qualifying offer of suitable accommodation, whether made within the B-with-us scheme or directly by a landlord. (See section on One Offer Policy) This includes offers of tenancies resulting from bids placed by a member of the Housing Options Team. (See also section on Suitability of Offers)

Awarded Band1 Priority Because They Are 18 Year Old Care Leaver

Customers awarded band 1 priority because they are a 18 year old care leaver will lose their priority status if they refuse an offer of accommodation for which they or their proxy has bid and which is considered by B-with-us scheme, following discussion with the Leaving Care Team, to be appropriate for the young person concerned.

Awarded Band 1 Priority on Medical Grounds

Customers awarded High Need priority on medical grounds will lose their priority status if they refuse an offer of accommodation for which they or their proxy has bid and which is considered by B-with-us scheme to meet their needs. A property will be usually considered to be a reasonable offer for this purpose if:

- It is of sufficient size to accommodate the customer's household.
- The physical access to the property and the internal layout and facilities are appropriate.
- The property was accurately described in the property advert.

12.3 UNREASONABLE REFUSALS

Applicants who refuse three offers of accommodation within a 12 month period will be suspended if the refusal reasons are deemed to be unreasonable. Examples of unreasonable refusals are shown below:

- Area unsuitable.
- Failure to respond to offer
- Repeated bids on property type/area that the customer has previously refused or deemed unsuitable.
- Personal circumstances e.g. applicant says not ready to move

This list is not exhaustive as circumstances will be considered on an individual basis.

12.4 CUSTOMERS WHO DO NOT REPLY TO OFFERS

If a customer does not reply to an offer within 3 working days the customer may be suspended. This will be assessed on a case by case basis. Where there are reasonable reasons for non contact from a customer, or where there may be new information, a customer can request to be reinstated on the Housing Register. Upon reinstatement to the register their original banding and relevant time will be awarded. Requests must be made within 6 months of removal.

12.5 TENANT MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION – Where Applicable

The allocation of housing accommodation by the tenant management organisation must be in accordance with B-with-us common allocations policy under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 and the then Office of Deputy Prime Ministers (ODPM) office Code of Guidance on allocation of accommodation.

Tenant management organisations have agreed to operate the Allocations Service in line with this policy. Should the tenant management organisation at any time decide to alter this or introduce a local lettings scheme then agreement to do so must first be obtained from B-with-us scheme Steering Group. Any scheme proposed must be mutually agreed.

Under these arrangements, the tenant management organisation should ensure that, overall, additional and reasonable preference is given to customers in the categories listed and that the tenant management organisation has arrangements in place to monitor the allocation procedures and that these have been agreed with B-with-us scheme steering group.

13.0 MONITORING AND REVIEWING THE SCHEME

B-with-us operational group representatives from the partner organisation's will meet at least 4 times a year to monitor the operation of the sub-regional B-with-us allocations policy by regularly reviewing the policy to ensure that it meets its stated objectives and complies with legislative changes. This will be in addition to a full policy review every three years.

Rigorous and robust monitoring of the B-with-us policy is essential to ensure that, in practice, the B-with-us scheme:

- Meets the stated aims and objectives.
- Demonstrates trends that are legally compliant relating to the preference given to customers, i.e. ensuring that customers with one or more reasonable preference qualification are awarded the priority the law entitles them to.
- Adheres to Equality and Diversity standards.
- Complies with allocation and related legislation.

13.1 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

If a customer or their advocate is dissatisfied with any aspect of the management of their application, other than when a review can be made, they should contact the partner organisation where the application was submitted and follow their internal complaints procedure. The complaint will be dealt with by the partner organisation dealing with the customer and the details of the complaint will be made available to the B-with-us steering group for monitoring purposes.

However, if customer is not satisfied with the way the complaint has been dealt with they can contact The Local Government Ombudsman (See [appendix E](#)).

13.2 THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN

The Housing Ombudsman Service is set up by law to look at complaints about registered providers of social housing, for example housing associations, and other landlords, managers, and agents. The service is free, independent and impartial.

Details of the Housing Ombudsman Services can be found in [Appendix F](#) of this document.

Appendix A

Banding Criteria Descriptions

The descriptions below provide additional information about the criteria for awarding Band priority to certain groups. Detailed guidance to officers will be included in an operational procedure manual.

If any medical priority is awarded to a customer they will be notified in writing this will include the type of property they can bid for where appropriate.

Band 1 – Medical (High Need)

An immediately life threatening or progressive condition which is seriously affected by the current housing and where re-housing would solve or alleviate that medical condition or make it significantly easier to manage.

Or

A member of the household seeking accommodation cannot be discharged from hospital or rehabilitation accommodation until suitable housing is provided and: The household had settled accommodation in a partner organisation area prior to hospital admission.

Or

A member of the household is elderly, disabled or has a progressive illness and is likely to require admission to hospital or residential/nursing care in the immediate future and re- housing would enable that person to remain living at home.

Band 1 - Management Transfers

In some exceptional circumstances the appropriately authorised officer of the partner organisation involved may award Band 1 priority to their existing tenants (Management Transfer). The organisation awarding this priority would try to resolve the situation by direct matching the tenant to a property within their own stock rather than allowing the applicant to bid unless the type of accommodation required is not available within that organisation.

Applications awarded the priority should be reviewed after 6 months.

Band 2 Adaptations

A member of the household seeking accommodation is disabled and has been assessed by an occupational therapist to require significant adaptations that cannot be fitted in the existing home or it is not considered reasonable to do so.

Band 3 Medical / Standard

The customer has a diagnosed medical condition, which is caused, significantly affected by, or made difficult to manage by their current accommodation and where re-housing will solve or alleviate that medical condition, or make it easier to

manage.

Note – medical banding may be awarded for specific property types i.e. ground floor.

Or

A member of the household seeking accommodation is disabled and re-housing will enable that person to overcome physical barriers created by current accommodation e.g. steps and stairs.

Note: Additional priority for unsatisfactory accommodation will not be awarded as already included in the decision to award medical priority.

Band 3 - Customers Occupying Unsanitary or Overcrowded Housing or Otherwise Living in Unsatisfactory Housing Conditions

Customers have not been assessed as homeless or have not already been awarded threat of homeless priority, and the home is overcrowded. A home is considered to be overcrowded if there are insufficient bedrooms for the household having regard to the guidance below:

No more than two people should have to share a bedroom.

A separate bedroom is needed for:

- Each couple living together.
- A parent in a single parent family.
- Each permanently resident child aged 10 or over who is sharing a bedroom with a permanently resident child of the opposite sex.
- A resident carer where there is a confirmed need for such provision.
- Each single person 21 or over qualifies for a room*. *However when a person reaches the age of 16 we will give the household an additional bedroom need i.e. a couple and 2 sons aged 15 and 16 will be given a 2 to 3 bed need.*

A customer has not been assessed as homeless or has not already been awarded threat of homeless priority, but is a licensee and is sharing a living room, kitchen, bathroom or WC with non-household members. (Licensees are lodgers, people staying with friends, relatives, people living in B&B, hostels, caravans, tents etc).

For the purpose of this policy applicants living with parents will not be classed as Licensees.

Or

The home occupied by the customer is the subject of a notification of a Class 1

Hazard under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System and enquiries made with the relevant Environmental Health Officer support the award of reasonable preference priority.

Band 3 - Customers who need to move to a particular locality in the district to avoid hardship to themselves and / or others. And Right to Move for Social tenants.

Each application for Band 3 Priority for this reason will be considered individually, however examples of circumstances that may result in the award of Band 3 Priority are:

- Older people who need to move to sheltered accommodation and there is no such provision in the area in which they currently live.
- The household includes a person who needs to access medical assistance on a regular basis and cannot do so, or it is unreasonable to expect them to do so, from the area in which they currently live.
- An applicant has been offered and accepted permanent employment in the region in that they are unable to reasonably travel to.
- The household includes a person who provides essential care to someone in another part of the region and they cannot deliver that care effectively from their current location.
- The customer is elderly or disabled and needs to move to a specific area to receive care or support from a close relative who lives there.
- The household includes a child or young person with a disability or learning difficulty, who needs to access specialist education or training facilities and cannot do so from their present home.

It is important to remember that this priority is only valid for bids made on properties within a designated area.

APPENDIX B

Management Transfers and Direct Lets

Criteria	Description	Authorising Officer(s)
Anti Social Behaviour	In order to deal with exceptional cases of anti social behaviour and harassment, housing managers can allocate alternative property within their estate/area to either victim or perpetrator in order to diffuse an ongoing and exceptional level of anti-social behaviour or harassment. This to be done in clear view of alternative remedies and in line with broad principles of tackling anti social behaviour.	Housing Manager
Witness Protection Scheme	Formal Witness Protection Scheme referrals. Other cases with clear written support from the Police / Crown Prosecution Service or other clear requests from Police to assist with re-housing to protect the safety of a witness to a crime who is testifying / giving evidence. Referral being made by appropriate agency to Special Needs Housing Officer.	Housing Manager
Direct Matches	When "Available Now" properties are let to create a social housing advert and direct match the applicant to the property. This then changes the status if the application to housed and lets the property.	Neighbourhood officers
High risk offenders e.g. MAPPP(MultiAgency Public Protection Panel) process / PPO (priority Prolific offenders)	Where re-housing is identified by the Housing / Probation risk management protocol and MAPPA process. MAPPP information and individual risk assessments by Probation/Police / Social Services (as appropriate). Housing Options Team will liaise with appropriate Neighbourhood Housing Manager to secure suitable letting	Housing Options Team

APPENDIX C

Labelling properties

POs will label advertised homes to provide as much information as possible about the property and who is eligible to express an interest.

Where a customer does not meet the criteria outlined, they will not be considered for the advertised property.

Labelling criteria will include:

- **Local Connection:** If the home is only available to households with a local connection to a village or Local Authority, or with the sub-region.
- **Transferring tenant:** Sometimes registered housing providers may decide that a home will only be available for their own existing tenants.
- **Property Size:** Customers must be eligible for the size/type of property – they will be advised of their eligibility when they join the scheme.
- **Housing Needs Bands:** Some homes may only be offered to customers in particular bands. This to be agreed with the relevant LA.
- **Adapted Homes:** Homes particularly suitable for people with disabilities will have special symbols to help customers with those needs identify them. Adverts for adapted or accessible homes (for example those with wheelchair access) will specify that they are only available for people assessed as needing them.
- **Supported Housing:** Homes which have been developed for vulnerable groups who require support will be advertised to those customers who are eligible for such support – this will include homes in sheltered housing schemes.
- **Age Restrictions:** Some homes may have a minimum age requirement.
- **Local Lettings Policy:** To promote sustainable and settled communities, partner organisations may introduce specific lettings policies in some areas which will vary from this B-with-us policy. For example, where there is a need to balance the child to adult ratio or there are too many vulnerable residents in an area. (For more details see Appendix D)
- **Pets:** The advert will identify whether pets are allowed.
- **Home Type and Facilities:** The advert will show the home type, floor level, heating, service charges and any other relevant details.

Appendix D

Local Letting Policy

Introduction

In exceptional circumstances, the partner organisation's may decide to let properties on a slightly different basis from normal, in the interests of building a strong and sustainable community or to deal with particular local issues. The set of criteria where this applies will be called a "Local Lettings Scheme".

The decision to apply a local lettings scheme will be made by the B-with-us scheme partner organisations.

For existing developments there will need to be clear evidence of the need for a variation in the normal policy, and a time limit for review of not more than 2 years. The implications for equal opportunities and for the 'reasonable preference' criteria of the law will be considered.

On new developments, the partner organisation's may consider widening the eligible bands for home types on first lettings, again taking equal opportunities and legal issues into account.

Sometimes partner organisations may have agreed that they will allow a certain amount of their stock go to their own tenants. If so homes may be advertised accordingly.

Local lettings Policy – properties

Local lettings policies may be used in an area or a block of flats with significant management problems which put other tenants at significant risk, and where other actions have failed. In these circumstances action may be taken against the perpetrators and a decision made as to whether a local lettings procedure should apply.

Although customers will only apply once to the sub-region some partner organisations will still operate their own allocations policies and in such circumstances the highest bidder may not always fit the criteria for the letting.

Local Lettings Policy – people

The Local Lettings Policy will also be used if partner organisation's knows that a customer has committed serious offences, which restrict where they can live. This could include Registered Sex Offenders or those identified as posing a serious risk to a specific community. In such cases the partner organisations will consult fully with the Police, Probation Service and other interested parties.

APPENDIX E

Community/Economic Contribution Scheme

In November 2009 the CLG published its new statutory guidance for housing allocations 'Fair and Flexible'. Within this guidance the Government sets out its strategic view of the outcomes and objectives Local Authorities should seek to achieve in their Allocations Policies. Two of these objectives are supporting people in work and also adopting local priorities alongside the statutory reasonable preference categories.

A local priority for Pennine Lancashire is to build stable and cohesive communities where people contribute to and take pride in their local areas. It is felt that to achieve this Community / Economic Contribution Scheme should run within the CBL system.

How the Scheme will work:

The scheme seeks to run alongside the current banding system. It will have a cumulative effect on a person's band. In effect an applicant who qualifies for the contribution award will move up a band. E.g. a band 4 applicant will become a band 3 and a band 3 would become a band 2. This will be up to a maximum of band 2 so as not to affect the emergency band 1 category.

The contribution award will have two strands. People who are working (Economic contribution) and people doing community volunteering (community contribution).

Economic Contribution

Households where at least one adult household member is in employment. For the purposes of this allocations policy employment is described as having a permanent contract, working as a temporary member of staff or being self-employed. Applicants will only qualify if the worker has been employed for 9 out of the last 12 months. Verification may be sought at point of offer. Applicants will be required to provide either payslips, bank statements or a verifying letter on headed paper in order to qualify. Onus will be on the applicant to provide the required documentation for assessment / verification to take place.

Community Contribution

Volunteers must have been volunteering for a continuous period of at least 6 months up to the point of application and the same at point of offer. Volunteering must be for a not-for-profit organisation or a charity and must be for a minimum of 10 hours per month. N.B. Tenants and Residents Associations which are constituted are classified as not-for-profit organisation.

Evidence required for voluntary work: A letter from the Manager confirming the applicant's involvement in a minimum of 10 hours per month of voluntary work for over 6 months. This person must not be related to the applicant in any way.

Appeals

Applicants who are refused the community/economic contribution band enhancement but feel that they should qualify will have the right to appeal. Appeals will be dealt with in line with the B-with-us appeals procedure.

APPENDIX F

If a customer wishes to make a complaint against a scheme landlord (Housing Association) they should contact:

The Housing Ombudsman Service

81 Aldwych

London, WC2B 4HN

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

APPENDIX G

Cumulative Needs for Band 3

	Medical	Non stat	Particular locality	Overcrowded	Unsatisfactory/unsanitary	Threatened with homelessness	Community contribution
Medical	X	Band 2	Band 2	Band 2	Band 2	Band 2	Band 2
Non stat	Band 2	X	Band 2	Band 3	Band 3	Band 3	Band 2
Particular locality	Band 2	Band 2	X	Band 2	Band 2	Band 2	Band 2
Overcrowding	Band 2	Band 3	Band 2	X	Band 3	Band 3	Band 2
Unsatisfactory/unsanitary	Band 2	Band 3	Band 2	Band 3	X	Band 3	Band 2
Threatened with homelessness	Band 2	Band 3	Band 2	Band 3	Band 3	X	Band 2
Community contribution	Band 2	Band 2	Band 2	Band 2	Band 2	Band 2	X

APPENDIX H

B-with-us Partner Organisations

ORGANISATION	ADDRESS
Accent Group	2 nd Floor, Stephen House, Bethesda Street, Burnley, BB11 1PR
Blackburn with Darwen BC	Housing Needs, Town Hall, King William Street, Blackburn BB1 7DY
Burnley Borough Council	Town Hall, Manchester Road, Burnley, Lancs, BB11
Calico Homes	Centenary Court, Croft Street, Burnley, Lancashire, BB11 2ED.
Contour Homes Limited	Quays Plaza 2, 1 st Floor – Lowry Mall, Salford Quays, and Salford. M50 3AH
Great Places Housing Group	Barnfield House, Suite 4 and 5, Accrington Road, Blackburn, BB1 3NY
Green Vale Homes	Green Vale Homes, Green Vale Court, New Hall Hey Road, Rawtenstall BB4 6HR
Guinness Partnership	66 Pendle Drive Blackburn BB2 3DS
Housing 21	Housing 21, The Triangle, Baring Road, Beaconsfield, Bucks BH9 2NA
Housing Pendle Limited	Shackleton Hall, 32 Church Street Colne Lancs. BB8 0LG
Hyndburn Borough Council	Hyndburn Borough Council, Scaitcliffe House, Ormerod Street, Accrington. BB5 0PF

ORGANISATION	ADDRESS
Hyndburn Homes	1a Enterprise Way, Accrington BB5 0FL
Irwell Valley HA Limited	5 th Floor, Paragon House, 48 Seymour Grove Manchester M16 0LN
Muir Group HA Limited	2 nd Floor, Lodge House, Lodge Square, Burnley, BB11 1NW
Progress Housing Group	Sumner House, 21 King Street, Leyland PR25 2LW
Pendle Borough Council	No 1 Market Street, Nelson BB9 7LG
Places for People Homes	18 Craven Drive, South Rings Business Park ,Bamber Bridge ,Preston ,Lancashire , PR5 6BZ
Regenda Group	Regenda First (West Pennine), Regenda House, Enterprise Business Park, Northgate Close, Horwich, Bolton. BL6 6PQ
Rossendale Borough Council	Housing Market Renewal & Strategy Team, Rossendale Borough Council, Room 120, Kingfisher Centre, Futures Park, Bacup, Lancashire, OL13 0BB
Twin Valley Homes	Prospect House, Wharf Street, Blackburn BB1 1JD
Your - Eaves Brook	Hyndburn Rd, Accrington, BB5 1PY.

For more information please visit: www.b-with-us.com