

Common Housing Allocations Policy

April 2010



Perth and Kinross

**Common
Allocations
Policy**

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Foreword

Welcome to the Perth and Kinross Common Allocation Policy. This is a partnership document between Perth & Kinross Council, Perthshire Housing Association and Hillcrest Housing Association.

This policy sets out the process for applying for social rented housing with any of the partner landlords, how housing need will be assessed, and how empty houses are allocated.

Affordable rented housing is in short supply in Perth and Kinross. All of the partners in this Common Allocations Policy are committed to applying the assessment and allocation process fairly and consistently, to ensure that the properties which do become vacant are offered to the applicants who are in the greatest need of housing.

The Allocations Policy has been developed to fulfil the legal and corporate standards of each of the partner organisations. The policy was developed in consultation with tenants, residents, elected members, and other stakeholders, such as other Council services and social housing landlords.

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1. Policy context

This is the Common Housing Allocations Policy for the partners of the Perth and Kinross Common Housing Register. This includes:

- Perth & Kinross Council (the Council)
- Perthshire Housing Association Ltd. (PHA)
- Hillcrest Housing Association Ltd. (Hillcrest)

This policy applies to all applicants for housing, including applicants currently on the waiting list, and those who have previously applied as homeless. It comes into effect from 26 April 2010. Applicants already registered at that date will have their application re-assessed under the new policy. A letter will then be issued confirming the details of the application and explaining the priority banding level awarded. The original application date will be used where the date of applications is a factor in deciding priority for a vacancy.

1.1 Strategic context

The Common Allocations Policy forms part of the Council's corporate policy framework and is linked to other Council strategies such as the [Corporate Plan](#), and the [Anti Social Behaviour](#), [Homelessness](#) and [Local Housing](#) strategies.

The policy support the Council's corporate aims to provide:

A Safe, Secure and Welcoming Environment;

Healthy, Caring Communities;

A Prosperous, Sustainable and Inclusive Economy.

1.2 Policy statement

There is a huge demand for affordable rented housing in Perth and Kinross. The purpose of this Common Allocations Policy is to define a consistent framework which can be used to allocate the limited number of vacancies which become available each year. The guiding principle is to ensure that properties are allocated fairly and efficiently, taking into account the individual needs and preferences of applicants, whilst ensuring that the legal obligations and local priorities of the partner organisations are met.

1.3 Key policy objectives

The objectives of the Common Allocations Policy are:

- **To recognise people in housing need**

The policy differentiates between housing "need" and "want". The definition of housing need is based on the reasonable preference groups set out in the Housing (Scotland)

Acts of [1987](#) and [2001](#). The needs criteria used aims to identify households in the greatest housing need, and ensure that the limited number of vacancies which become available each year are offered to those people who would most benefit. Where sufficient supply exists applicants with lesser housing need or housing want will have access to the additional vacancies. For new applicants an assessment of their individual housing needs will be undertaken at the time of first contact as part of a housing options interview conducted by a trained Housing Officer. This will ensure that applicants with lower housing need, who are unlikely to have that need met by any of the partners, will be given the opportunity to explore more realistic options for housing.

- **To be responsive to applicants in acute housing need**

The policy is targeted towards those in greatest need. This will ensure that the statutory obligations of the partners are fulfilled, and that local priorities are met.

- **To assist in supporting vulnerable households**

An integrated assessment of housing needs will enable the identification of vulnerable households who may require assistance or housing support to enable them to sustain their tenancies.

- **To make the best use of all types of tenure in Perth and Kinross**

The Council will provide access to a pool of properties in terms of location and tenure. This will include properties available for letting from:

- *Council stock;*
- *Stock managed by Registered Social Landlords;*
- *Private rented accommodation.*

This also includes supporting applicants to access shared ownership schemes and other forms of low cost home ownership.

- **To be open and factual about the housing situation in Perth and Kinross to help people make informed choices, and to provide information which does not raise false expectations**

Details of housing prospects and the turnover of housing in preferred areas, and of preferred types, will be made available as part of the housing options service. The housing options service will also be available to provide housing advice to people who are not in housing need, but are in housing want. This advice might include signposting to other specialist agencies, or general advice on finding a home.

- **To seek to make the best use of social housing stock**

Tenants who are living in properties which are too large for their current and/or future needs, or in properties which have been adapted for wheelchairs and are no longer necessary for their household will be assisted to move.

- **To help and develop sustainable communities which provide affordable housing in the areas where people choose to live**

Local Lettings Plans will be used to achieve sustainable communities where people want to live. This will ensure that turnover and tenancy management issues are minimised.

- **To prevent homelessness**

The policy recognises the causes of homelessness.

2. Legal and regulatory requirements

The policy has been established to meet the relevant legal requirements and good practice standards.

2.1 Legal requirements

In accordance with the legal requirements of the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#) (as amended), the Council gives “reasonable preference” when allocating houses to applicants who are:

- in housing below the tolerable standard;
- in overcrowded houses;
- have large families;
- in unsatisfactory housing conditions, and;
- homeless, or threatened with homelessness.

In addition to these groups, we also take account of other needs and relevant factors. These are detailed in Section 5 [The Allocations Scheme](#) of this policy document.

2.2 Regulatory standards

The policy has established allocation practices to meet the regulatory standards of the [Scottish Housing Regulator](#). These cover:

- **Access to Housing (Activity Standard 1.1)**

“We make sure that people have fair and open access to our housing list and assessment process. We work with others to maximise and simplify access routes into our housing.”

- **Lettings (Activity Standard 1.2)**

“We let houses in a way that gives reasonable preference to those in housing need; makes best use of available stock; maximises choice; and helps to sustain communities.”

2.3 Access to the housing list

Any person aged 16 years or over is entitled to register on the housing list unless they are subject to immigration control within the meaning of the [Asylum and Immigration Act 1996](#), except for:

- an existing secure tenant, or an assured tenant allocated by a housing authority, or;
- are a class of persons prescribed in legislation as being eligible for allocation. These include:
 - persons granted refugee status;
 - persons granted exceptional leave to remain;
 - persons granted indefinite leave to remain;
 - persons who are nationals of EU countries who are employed or have the right to reside in the UK or, who are normally resident.

The law on eligibility is complex and subject to regular change. Staff can advise applicants on how the current law applies to their individual circumstances.

If a person is found to be ineligible to access the waiting list they will be notified in writing of the decision. The right to seek a review of a decision applies in all cases.

Admission to the housing list does not automatically mean that a person has the right to be housed. The priority given to an individual's housing application depends on their housing situation and where their application is placed within the banding system. This is explained in Section 5.

2.4 Factors which cannot be considered

The [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#) (as amended) requires the Council to ignore certain factors when assessing applications. These are:

- the length of time an applicant has lived in the Perth and Kinross area;
- any housing debt that is not owed by the applicant, for example rent arrears or repairs charges owed by a former partner;
- former housing debt which has been paid;
- the applicant's age, unless we are allocating a house specifically designed or adapted for people of a certain age, such as sheltered housing;
- the applicant's income or property owned, including income of other members of the household.

The legislation also states that when selecting tenants the Council must take no account of rent arrears that are equal to less than one month's rent. Where more than one month's rent is owed applicants will be required to:

- make an affordable arrangement with the **landlord** to repay the debt;
- have made payments for a minimum period of three months;
- continue to make payments.

2.5 Residence factors

It is also the case when assessing an application that the Council cannot take account of whether an applicant currently lives in Perth and Kinross if the applicant:

- is employed, or has been offered employment, in the area;
- wishes to move into the area to seek employment;
- wishes to move into the area to be near a carer or relative;
- has a special social or medical reason for requiring to be housed in the area;
- wishes to move into the area to escape harassment;
- wishes to move into the area to escape the risk of domestic violence.

2.6 Specific restrictions

The law also covers three specific requirements that the Council must not impose. These are that:

- applications are on the waiting list for a minimum period of time before an offer can be made;
- a divorce or judicial separation is obtained, or;
- applicants have lived apart from someone else before they are considered for housing.

2.7 Role of elected members

Elected members (councillors) have key roles to play in determining the Allocations Policy, setting targets and monitoring outcomes. However, their role in decisions on allocations, and nominations to other social housing landlords, is restricted by Section 20(3) of the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#). They are still entitled to provide relevant information in support of, or on behalf of, a constituent's housing application.

2.8 Applications from employees or their household/relatives

All staff employed by partners in the Common Housing Policy, members of their households and relatives must declare their interest on the Common Housing Register application form.

When an offer of housing is made to a member of staff, a member of their household or a relative, the offer must be approved by the Service Manager – Housing Access and Partnerships.

The Council expects a high standard of conduct from all employees. The standards are set out in the Employee Code of Conduct and all Council staff are made aware of these during their employment.

2.9 Information for applicants

The Council will publish the Housing Allocations Policy in a variety of formats and languages and make these available from all local housing offices. The policy will also be available on the Council's website at www.pkc.gov.uk/housing and at other Council offices and from relevant agencies.

2.10 Confidentiality

The Council is registered under the [Data Protection Act 1998](#). All applications under the Common Housing Register are treated in accordance with legal requirements and partners will ensure that records containing personal details are kept confidential. The consent of an applicant will always be sought before any contact is made with a third party. This will only happen where it is necessary to discuss or seek information on housing or other related circumstances of an application.

In terms of the Data Protection Act 1998 all applicants are entitled to know what personal information Perth & Kinross Council holds about them, on payment of a fee of £10. Applications should be made to the Executive Director (Housing & Community Care), Perth & Kinross Council, 2 High Street, Perth PH1 5PH or by emailing dataprotection@pkc.gov.uk

2.11 Equalities and diversity

Housing & Community Care services of the Council aim to ensure that all services, including those delivering this policy and related actions, take positive steps towards the equalities agenda. This means that the Council will strive to encourage equal access opportunities, responding to the different needs and service requirements of individuals regardless of gender, race, colour, disability, age, nationality, marital status, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender re-assignment.

3 Housing choices

3.1 Housing options

The Allocations Policy operates within a housing options framework. This is a process through which people seeking social rented housing are enabled to make a realistic assessment of the housing options available to them. It assists people to differentiate

between housing need and housing want, and to consider options such as private renting and low cost home ownership rather than view social renting as their only option.

All new applicants for housing will initially be offered a confidential housing options interview with a trained Housing Officer. The purpose of the interview is to discuss their individual housing needs, and to look at whether it would be appropriate for them to apply for social housing under the Common Allocations Policy. This will take into account their eligibility as described in Section [2.3 Access to the housing list](#) and the likelihood of them being offered suitable housing.

3.2 Common Housing Register

The partners of this Common Allocations Policy maintain their housing registers as part of a larger register known as the Perth and Kinross Common Housing Register (CHR). This means that by filling in a single application form they can apply for housing with the following landlords:

- Perth & Kinross Council
- Hillcrest Housing Association Ltd
- Perthshire Housing Association Ltd

By making an application to be put on the housing register the applicant consents to their information being accessed by all CHR landlords.

3.3 Nomination agreements

The Council has nomination agreements with local registered social housing landlords who have housing stock in the Perth and Kinross area. The agreement allows the Council to nominate applicants from the waiting list for a percentage of empty properties with the local registered social landlord where they have houses of the type, and in the area, which matches an applicant's need.

Nominations will be selected on the basis of the priority banding the applicant has been awarded within the Common Allocations Policy and where there is an assessed need which fits within the other landlord's allocation's criteria. Applicants are asked to give their permission to be considered for nominations to other registered social landlords as part of their Common Housing Register application.

3.4 Referrals under Section 5

In addition to nomination agreements the Council also has referral arrangements with local registered social housing landlords in terms of Section 5 of the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#).

The aim of this arrangement is to prevent homeless in the Perth and Kinross area. Referrals will be made on behalf of applicants who have lost, or are likely to lose, their accommodation.

3.5 Mutual exchanges

Applicants who live in Perth and Kinross and are currently secure tenants of a registered social housing landlord can apply to swap homes through the Mutual Exchange Scheme, where they meet the eligibility criteria. The scheme can also extend to private tenants with the written permission of the Neighbourhood Services Manager and the relevant private landlord. Details of the scheme are available from the Council's local housing offices, or on the website at www.pkc.gov.uk/housing

3.6 Support to stay

Applicants who would prefer to stay in their current home, but feel they need to move because of difficulties with, for example:

- managing the home;
- paying the rent or mortgage;
- neighbours, or;
- accessing facilities.

will be referred for a housing options interview. This can be arranged in a local council office or can be carried out during a home visit.

4 Applying for housing

4.1 Registration

Individuals who are advised to, or wish to, apply for social rented housing with any of the Common Allocations Policy partners, will complete the standard application form. Receipt of the form will be acknowledged in writing within five working days. The acknowledgement will give applicants:

- their housing application number;
- contact details for more information during the assessment process;
- a timescale for when they can expect a decision on their application, this will normally be within 20 working days of receiving the application. The decision may be delayed if required information or relevant supporting documents have not been provided.

Application forms are available on request from the public offices of any of the Common Allocations Policy partners. Forms are also available to complete online on the Council's website at www.pkc.gov.uk/housing

If the applicant requires assistance in completing the form this can be requested from any Council local housing office. Advice will also be given at this time on realistic prospects for being offered housing.

4.2 Home visits

A home visit may be carried out to assess applications where:

- the applicant is housebound or potentially vulnerable, or;
- it is necessary to confirm household/personal circumstances and these cannot otherwise be established, or;
- an initial assessment indicates that the applicant has an acute housing need.

4.3 References and verification

The Council may seek references from current and former landlords for the previous three years. References help housing applications to be assessed more efficiently, and to provide information about how applicants have maintained their conditions of tenancy in the past. Applications may be suspended if the reference received is unsatisfactory and show that one of the circumstances listed in Section [4.8 Suspensions](#) applies.

Applicants who refuse to give permission for references will not have their application suspended, but will be required to provide satisfactory references before any future offer of housing is made.

Applicants who are not existing Council tenants must provide their birth certificate or another proof of age, and two forms of proof confirming the address of their permanent and principal home. This may include, but is not limited to:

- official letters/bills/statements from a local authority, public agency or private utility (gas, electric, telephone), government department, bank or building society;
- current driving licence;
- current National Health Card.

4.4 Joint/Multiple applications

Applications will be accepted from joint/multiple applicants, provide they are all 16 years of age or older. All applicants must be provided with the appropriate advice and information.

4.5 Household composition

Family members, other than the applicant's partner/spouse, who are included on an application form and are aged 16 years or over, must confirm in writing that they wish to be included as permanent members of the applicant's household.

A child from a former relationship, cannot be treated as a permanent member of two households unless a shared arrangement exists for 50% of the week. However, where such

an arrangement exists an applicant will only be eligible for one additional bedroom irrespective of the number of children covered by the access agreement.

Due to the shortage of family sized housing and the need to make best use of stock the priority for this policy is to provide accommodation for households where a child or children lives with them on a permanent basis.

4.6 Assessing applications

Assessments of applicants' circumstances are normally completed within 20 working days of the application being received, subject to all relevant information/supporting documents being provided.

Applicants will be assessed against the criteria for the priority banding scheme. The assessment will be based on the suitability of the applicants' current accommodation and any specific needs that they have. It will reflect any additional information provided by applicants, or by other services and agencies on their behalf.

Where full information has not been provided in the initial application form, or further enquiries have to be made, applications will be admitted onto the register and a first stage assessment undertaken with interim priority awarded. This will be followed by a final assessment when full information is received or enquiries are concluded.

4.7 Area of choice

Applicants can specify on their housing application up to six areas in which they wish to be considered for housing. As Perth and Kinross faces high demand pressures on most social housing stock applicants will be provided with detailed information about their housing prospects to ensure that they:

- are not applying for housing in areas that do not have the types of property they need;
- have a realistic idea of waiting times and the availability of properties in their preferred areas;
- are able to maximise housing options through information on other types of homes which may suit their needs, such as specialist housing association properties, affordable housing and privately rented homes.

Applicants with a requirement to remain in, or move to, a specific locality must select areas falling within a 10 mile radius of the locality in which they need to live.

Members of the Council's Area Housing Teams and the Needs Assessment team will work with all applicants to find the best solution to their individual housing needs and preferences.

4.8 Suspensions

Under the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#) there are a limited set of circumstances where the Council can suspend applications. During periods of suspension no offers of housing will be

made. If an application is suspended the applicant will be written to and the reasons for suspension given. Applicants will also be informed of the period of suspension, and how this can be lifted.

The following table outlines the reasons for suspending an application, and the action required for the suspension to be lifted.

Reason for suspension	Period of suspension	Criteria for ending suspension
Providing false or misleading information on the application form	Six months from date discovered	Application automatically reinstated after six months
Left secure accommodation and made housing situation worse	Six months from date accommodation left	Suspension automatically lifted after six months
In rent or service charge debt for more than 1/12 th of the annual rent	Subject to applicant repaying their debt	Evidence that rent or service charge debt reduced to less than 1/12 th of the annual rent
Not kept to a repayment arrangement	Subject to applicant maintaining agreement	Evidence that arrangement maintained for a continuous period of three months
Evidence of anti social behaviour where the Anti Social Investigations Team are investigating/monitoring behaviour short of legal action being taken	Reviewed after six months	Evidence that behaviour has improved
Having seriously breached tenancy conditions and received a legal notice or court order	Duration of notice/order	Behaviour has to be satisfactory for duration of notice/order
Refusing two reasonable offers of accommodation	12 months from date of second refusal	Application automatically reinstated after 12 months

Suspended applications will be monitored and reviewed at periodic intervals, and at least once every 12 months.

4.9 Review of applications

In order to keep the Common Housing Register up-to-date, the Council reviews applications every 12 months according to the original application date, ie where someone applies in March their application will be reviewed in March of the following year. At the time of review

the Council writes to the applicant to ask if there have been any changes to specific circumstances, or to their preferred type of accommodation or location.

Applicants will have 28 calendar days in which to supply the information required. If applicants fail to respond a reminder is issued allowing a further seven calendar days to respond.

If applicants still fail to respond their applications are removed from the list. However, to protect vulnerable applicants steps will be taken to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by the review process.

Applicants placed into priority banding A will be subject to ongoing monitoring and more frequent reviews of circumstances to ensure that the acute level of priority awarded is unchanged and that housing preferences can continue to be met within a reasonable timescale.

4.10 Changes of circumstance

Applicants must notify any change in relevant circumstances, for example, when a household member leaves and moves to other accommodation. Applicants who wish to report a change can do so by completing a change of circumstances form, which is available from any local office, or from the Council's website at www.pkc.gov.uk/housing You can also notify us of changes in writing, by telephone to 01738 474500 or by emailing HousingAllocation@pkc.gov.uk

4.11 Cancellations

The Council will cancel an application from the Common Housing Register:

- on the applicants request;
- on the death of the applicant;
- where the applicant repeatedly fails to provide essential information, or fails to respond to requests to contact.

All applicants will be informed in writing that their application has been cancelled. In the event of death the Council will write to the applicant's executor or personal representative to confirm that the applicant has been removed from the waiting list.

Care will be taken where applicants are known to be vulnerable, or have literacy difficulties. Where possible contact will be made with a key worker or agency, if they are known to be working with the applicant.

Where, following cancellation, an application is reactivated, the original priority banding will still apply subject to any change in the applicant's circumstances. Requests to be reactivated must be made within three months of cancellation; otherwise a fresh application will have to be made. The date of reactivation becomes the effective date for consideration for offer.

4.12 *Deferred status*

Applicants who are not actively seeking housing at the time they complete an application form will be given a deferred status and bypassed for offer. Those not seeking housing immediately may include employees in tied accommodation, and current members of the armed forces.

The Council will review this situation with the applicant annually. Otherwise it is the applicant's responsibility to request that the deferred status is lifted and their application is actively considered for housing.

5 The Allocations Scheme

5.1 *Purpose of the scheme*

There is a huge demand for affordable rented housing in Perth and Kinross which far exceeds the number of social rented properties which become available each year. Therefore, the purpose of the Allocations Scheme is to provide a consistent framework which can then be used to allocate the limited number of properties which do become available fairly and efficiently, taking into account individual needs and preferences. The scheme also operates to prevent homelessness by demonstrating to applicants that there is a greater chance of being offered a property where acute circumstances exist. This will help applicants move from their current situation without having to make a statutory homeless application to be re-housed.

The scheme applies to lettings by the Common Allocations Policy partners, and letting of properties managed by other local registered social landlords for which the Council has nomination and referral rights.

5.2 *The banding scheme*

In order to provide a fair system the Common Allocations Policy prioritises applicants on the waiting list according to their housing need. This is managed by splitting the register into four priority bands.

The bands are groupings of applicants with broadly similar levels of need and comprise the statutory reasonable preference groups as set out by the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 1987](#) and listed in Section 2.1 Legal requirements.

The priority bandings also include consideration of some local need issues identified as a priority for the council, for example existing tenants who would be willing to give up a larger property and move to a smaller one. These applicants will be given a higher priority banding than their needs alone would merit.

The priority bandings are:

Priority banding A	Acute housing need
Priority banding B	High housing need
Priority banding C	Moderate housing need
Priority banding D	Low housing need

Each priority banding comprises a set of needs categories and sub-categories as described in the following tables.

Priority banding A – acute housing need

This banding is where acute circumstances have been assessed, and applicants have the most urgent and immediate need to move.

Needs Category	Sub-Category
Medical	<p>Where there is an urgent need for housing and the applicant or household member's medical condition is being severely affected or exacerbated by their current accommodation, and where the person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is unable to return home from hospital because their accommodation does not meet their medical needs and they are bed-blocking, or; • requires urgent re-housing to prevent admission to hospital, residential care, nursing home, or; • is unable to access any of the facilities in their current accommodation, or; • has extreme difficulty in accessing the property due to steps or slopes leading to doorways, or; • has extreme difficulty moving around the property, or; • requires an adapted property to meet their needs and their current home cannot be adapted.
Unsuitable accommodation	<p>Where an applicant's accommodation is no longer suitable for them to continue to occupy, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the applicant is a social housing tenant in Perth and Kinross and under-occupies their accommodation by two or more bedrooms, and they live in an area of high demand and low supply, or; • the applicant is a social housing tenant and is releasing a wheelchair adapted property where adaptations are no longer required, or is releasing property that can be adapted and is in an area of high demand and low supply, or; • the property is overcrowded and lacks two or more bedrooms.

Needs Category	Sub-Category
Lack of or insecure housing	<p>Where an applicant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is homeless, or threatened with homelessness, and owed a duty under the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and living in unsuitable temporary accommodation, or has been in temporary accommodation for more than six months, or; • has been in supported accommodation for more than six months and is ready to move on, or; • is to lose their tied/service/private rented/owner-occupied accommodation within three months.
Social/Welfare need	<p>Where an applicant or household member has an urgent need to move on social or welfare grounds as they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are at risk of harm from serious racial harassment, domestic or external violence/abuse or need to be re-housed urgently because of witness/child protection or community safety issues, or; • has suffered a significant trauma within the property or in the immediate area making it unreasonable to continue to live there.
Unsatisfactory accommodation	<p>Where an applicant is living in extremely poor housing conditions, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the property has been approved for demolition within the coming 12 months, or; • the property has been deemed uninhabitable by Environment Services and a Closing Order or Compulsory Purchase Order served.

The key policy objective is to ensure that this priority banding is closely monitored and assessments verified and that the most urgent and severe cases are helped within the constraints of the limited stock available.

Priority banding B – high housing need

Applicants placed into this band will have been assessed as having a high priority for a move, but are not in the most urgent need as identified under priority banding A.

Needs Category	Sub-Category
Medical	Where the applicant or household member has a chronic medical condition or disability and re-housing is essential for longer term health and welfare.
Unsuitable accommodation	Where an applicant's accommodation is unsuitable, and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are a social housing tenant in Perth and Kinross and under-occupies their accommodation by one bedroom, or; • is overcrowded and lacks one additional bedroom, or; • is a Council tenancy which has been inherited or assigned and is too large for the new tenant's needs.
Lack of or insecure housing	Where an applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is homeless, or threatened with homelessness and owed a duty under the provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 and living in temporary accommodation for less than six months, or is "homeless from home", or; • has been in supported accommodation for less than six months and is ready to move on, or; • is to lose their tied/service/private rented/owner-occupied accommodation through no fault of their own within six months, and the landlord/owner is actively pursuing possession, or a Short Secure or Assured Tenancy is coming to an end.
Social/Welfare need	Where an applicant or household member has a high need to move on social or welfare grounds as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two existing Council tenants who wish to become one household, and neither tenancies are suitable for them both to occupy, or; • a former Council tenant who surrendered a tenancy and was guaranteed future re-housing and there was no breach of tenancy conditions during the term of the tenancy, or; • providing long term care/foster care to "looked after" children and current accommodation is unsuitable.
Unsatisfactory accommodation	Where an applicant is living in poor housing conditions, and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the property is below the tolerable standard or in serious disrepair but no Closing Order has been served, or; • the property is a caravan, mobile home or tent and is not resident on a Council or other registered site.

Priority banding C – moderate housing need

This band is for applicants who have an assessed housing need and who would benefit from a move.

Needs Category	Sub-Category
Medical	Where an applicant or household member has a medical condition that is moderately affected by the current accommodation.
Lack of or insecure housing	Where an applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has no settled accommodation, and/or is living at a “care of” address, or; • is living in private rented/tied/service accommodation, or; • has had a relationship breakdown and is unable to remain in the home.
Social/Welfare need	Where an applicant has a moderate need to move on social/welfare grounds as they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have extended residential access to children from a former relationship for at least half of the week, or; • need to remain in, or move into, an area in order to access/maintain specialist education, give support/care, maintain employment, or; • need to remain in an area in order to maintain mainstream education.
Unsatisfactory accommodation	Where an applicant’s accommodation is in some minor disrepair and/or the property fails the repairing standard.

Priority banding D – low housing need

This band is for applicants with a low housing need who would marginally benefit from a move, or those who have no housing need and merely aspire to move to alternative accommodation.

Needs Category	Sub-Category
Medical	Where the accommodation has a minimal or nil impact on the applicant or household member.
All other categories	Nil assessed need.

5.3 Assessing housing need

On receipt of a fully completed application form the Needs Assessment Team will make decisions about an applicant's priority for housing based on their assessed need for housing. Applicants will be allocated a band according to their circumstances, with priority banding A being the highest assessed need, and priority banding D the lowest.

Within each band an applicant's placing will be determined by the level of cumulative need. For example, an applicant who only meets one need category will have less overall priority than an applicant who meets two or more need categories. It is also possible to meet more than one sub-category of need in any category.

Where an applicant has varying levels of need and could arguably be placed in different bands, they will be placed in the highest band for which priority has been awarded.

The assessment of priority is carried out using a variety of methods depending on the nature of the housing need indicated. These methods are set out below.

5.3.1 Medical need

The Council has adopted a self assessment process following consultation with the independent Tayside Medical Advisory Service and GPs. The process allows applicants to tell the Council more about their health and housing problems and how it affects the way that they live in their home. It also allows the applicant to state why they think that re-housing would make a difference to their health and wellbeing.

Applicants who indicate on their application form that someone in the household has a health or disability need will be required to complete a Medical Needs Assessment form. The Council's Needs Assessment Team will assess priority based on the signed declaration made on the self assessment form, and, in accordance with the circumstances outlined in [Section 5.2 The banding scheme](#). Where it is not possible to make a decision on priority or where the self assessment shows an acute or high medical need for housing, then further investigations will take place. This might include seeking the opinion of other health professionals (e.g. doctor, occupational therapist, health visitor, etc). In more complex cases a referral may be made to the Needs Assessment Panel.

The Needs Assessment Panel is made up of representatives from Perth & Kinross Council, Tayside Medical Advisory Service and NHS Tayside. The panel meets at regular intervals and considers more complex medical cases and makes recommendations as to the type of accommodation required. The panel will also consider circumstances where more than one member of the household suffers from a medical condition and will take the needs of the entire household into account.

The medical assessment process does not take into account overcrowding or other adverse social/welfare circumstances as these situations are the subject of separate needs assessment processes included in the policy.

Applicants will be entitled to a review of their medical assessment at 12 monthly intervals, or where there is a change of circumstances relating to a medical condition. In all cases, applicants will be informed of the outcome of their medical assessment in writing. If they disagree with the assessment there is a right to appeal in writing and provide additional evidence so the case can be reconsidered. The information will be sent to the Council's independent medical advisory service whose decision will be final.

Further information about the medical assessment process is available in the factsheet available from the Council's local area housing offices or on the website at www.pkc.gov.uk/housing

5.3.2 Unsuitable accommodation

In assessing applications on the grounds of overcrowding, a comparison is made of the total number of bed spaces required by the applicant's household compared to the number of bed spaces available. The household circumstances are normally evidenced by confirmation from the landlord or by a home visit. The assessment also takes account of "best use" of bedrooms/bed spaces available to the applicant, regardless of how the bedrooms are actually being used.

Bed spaces are calculated on the basis of bedroom size:

- rooms measuring from 6.5 to 10.1sq metres are treated as single bedrooms (one bed space). Rooms measuring less than 6.5sq metres are excluded from the calculation;
- rooms over 10.1sq metres are treated as double bedrooms (two bed spaces).

In calculating overcrowding the Council considers it reasonable for the following household members to share a double bedroom:

- couples;
- same sex household members;
- two mixed sex household members, provided that they are both under 10 years of age.

In certain circumstances the relationship between those sharing a bedroom will be taken into account when calculating overcrowding (for example, where a significant age gap exists between two same sex household members).

5.3.3 Lack of or insecure housing

Applicants who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness within two months, will be given a special assessment to determine if the Council has a statutory duty to provide accommodation, and placed into either priority banding A or B depending on the overall level of need. Accepted homeless applicants who are in unsuitable temporary accommodation, or in temporary accommodation for more than six months, will be placed into priority banding A.

5.3.4 Social/Welfare need

To be assessed for this need evidence will be required from statutory services/agencies, employers, legal or health professionals that there is a significant risk to the household and that this cannot be reduced or resolved to an acceptable level within a reasonable timescale.

5.3.5 Unsatisfactory accommodation

Where applicants are living in property which is in disrepair an inspection will be undertaken by the Council's Environment Services inspectors. Priority will be awarded where properties fail to meet the legal standard and matters cannot be rectified quickly. Where priority is awarded and the disrepair put right, then on receipt of a report to this effect from Environment Services any banding priority awarded on this basis will be removed.

Tenants of Perth & Kinross Council and registered social landlords will not normally be awarded priority on these grounds. There are other policies and procedures that will be used by individual landlords to assist where there is disrepair in these properties.

Applicants may appeal against decisions on priority using the appeals process set out at Section 9.1 Appeals if they consider that the priority awarded does not reflect their needs.

5.4 Housing support

The Council will provide support to households in council tenancies.

As part of the assessment process housing support needs will be identified, assessed by specialist services and support plans produced. Housing support services are available to a range of vulnerable people, including:

- the frail and elderly;
- the young;
- people with a physical disability;
- people with a visual impairment;
- people with a learning disability;
- people with a mental health issue;
- families.

5.5 Reduced priority

Applicants placed into priority banding A who refuse a reasonable offer of accommodation will have their priority reduced to priority banding B for a period of six months from the date of refusal. By reducing the level of priority rather than suspending the applicant the opportunity for a further offer exists where there is no suitable match in priority banding A or where there is an excess in the supply of housing.

At the end of six months, subject to there being no change in circumstances, the applicant will be reinstated into priority banding A and the date of reinstatement becomes the effective date for consideration for offer.

6 Allocation of housing

6.1 Priority for offers of housing

The Council will allocate housing within a framework which reflects its legal duty and, which ensures that offers of accommodation are made to those with the greatest need and, which makes best use of stock.

Therefore, priority for offers of accommodation will normally be made to the applicant with the greatest level of housing need in the highest band, starting with banding A through to banding D. In the event that two or more applicants with the same level of need and entry date into a band are reached for offer, the applicant with the earliest application date will be given priority.

6.2 Making a “reasonable offer”

Offers of accommodation will be made on the basis of what is considered to be reasonable for the applicant to occupy. In deciding what is reasonable account will always be taken of the applicant and their household, their choices and preferences, balanced against the supply of suitable properties, and the urgency of the need for housing.

In recognition of the urgent need for housing for applicants placed into priority banding A it may be necessary where problems of supply exist to offer housing in an adjoining area/another property type where it is clear that preferences will not be met within a reasonable timescale.

When an offer is made of a suitable property in terms of size, type, condition and geographical location (taking into account supply and demand), the Council will generally consider a refusal to be unreasonable.

6.3 Number of offers and refusals

Applicants in priority bandings B to D who are eligible to be considered for housing will be entitled to receive two offers of accommodation within a 12 month period.

After a first offer is refused applicants will be invited to attend a housing options interview to discuss and update their circumstances and preferences. This is to ensure that applicants are made fully aware of their realistic housing prospects and that refusals are kept to a minimum.

Applicants in priority banding A are in the most advantageous position, and as they require relatively quick re-housing they will only be made one offer whilst awarded this banding priority. Applicants in this banding who refuse a reasonable offer of accommodation will have their priority reduced to banding B but will remain entitled to a second offer within the 12 months following from the date the first offer was refused where there is no demand in banding A.

Statutory homeless applicants in priority banding A will also only be entitled to receive a single offer whilst awarded priority for this need category. If an appropriate offer of housing is

refused the statutory homeless award will be removed. The application will then be re-assessed against the banding scheme and the applicant entitled to receive two offers within a 12 month period based on the re-assessed level of housing need and preferences.

In all cases statutory homeless applicants will be advised of the single offer policy and the consequences of refusal.

An applicant may appeal against any offer they feel is not reasonable – please see Section 9.1 Appeals.

6.4 Property size and type criteria

The Council will normally allocate properties according to the following size criteria:

Household size	Property eligibility
Single person	Bedsit or 1/2 bedrooms*
Couple	1/2 bedrooms*
Family with one child	Two bedrooms
Family with two children of the same gender, or both under 10 years of age	Two bedrooms
Family with two children, of different genders, and at least one aged over 10 years of age	Three bedrooms
Family with three children	Three bedrooms
Family with four children of the same gender, or all under 10 years of age	Three bedrooms
Family with four children or more	Four or five bedrooms

**Priority for two bedroomed housing will be given to applicants who can fully occupy the property or who have a specific medical need for an additional bedroom.*

Situations frequently arise where a parent or guardian does not have full custody of their child or children, but does have them to stay on a regular basis. The priority for this policy is to provide accommodation for households where a child or children will be staying on a permanent basis. This is due to the shortage of family sized housing and the high demand from applicants with dependant children permanently within the household.

However, where a parent or guardian has extended residential access to a child or children, and there is overnight access for at least 50% of each week, priority will be given for one additional bedroom where this arrangement can be confirmed by:

- a joint legal Minute of Agreement, or;
- a joint Residence Order, or;

- a solicitor's letter from both parties confirming that extended access arrangements are in place.

Adapted and ground floor properties will normally be offered to applicants with specific disability and/or medical requirements. Likewise applicants assessed as requiring a specific type of accommodation due to their particular needs will only be considered for vacancies of this type of property.

6.5 Offer bypass

In certain circumstances it might be necessary to bypass the applicant with the greatest overall priority for offer. The reasons for this could include:

- to enable a high demand property to be offered to an applicant with full time dependant children ahead of an applicant with part-time access, or;
- where a medical recommendation makes the property unsuitable for assessed medical needs and the property is not suitable for adaptation, or;
- where the letting would result in a known and proven perpetrator of domestic abuse/violence, racial abuse or serious harassment being re-housed in the vicinity of their victim.

Bypass reasons on individual cases will be documented and monitored.

6.6 Tenants' Incentive Scheme

The Council aims to make best use of its housing stock. Council tenants who under-occupy larger properties in areas of high demand and low supply will be eligible for a package of practical and financial assistance through the Tenant's Incentive Scheme where qualifying conditions are met. Further information about the scheme is available from the Council's local housing offices or on the website at www.pkc.gov.uk/housing

6.7 Tenancy agreements

Generally successful applicants will be offered a Scottish Secure Tenancy. In some cases, under the [Housing \(Scotland\) Act 2001](#), a Short Scottish Secure Tenancy will be offered. For example where the applicant has been evicted for anti social behaviour within the past three years. In such circumstances the tenancy will be offered with appropriate support measures and reviewed every six months.

7 Local Lettings Plans

One of the aims of the Common Allocations Policy is "to help and develop sustainable communities which provide housing in areas in which people choose to live".

The policy allows for the introduction of Local Lettings Plans where there are issues that have occurred within an established community, and action is required to assist that

community to become more sustainable. Examples of where this might be considered include where there is a high turnover of tenancies, refusal rates and anti social behaviour. The need for a plan will be agreed upon by local tenants and residents, local housing staff and elected members and will be formally approved by the Council's Housing & Health Committee.

Where introduced Local Lettings Plans will operate within the statutory framework, be published, and will run for a fixed period of time.

8 Sheltered housing

The Council has sheltered housing schemes which are specifically designated for older people who can live independently. To be eligible the applicant must normally be aged 60 years old or over. In the case of a couple at least one partner must be aged 60 years old or over. Exceptions may be made where a person is under 60 years old and suffers from ill health or a disability and would benefit from the features of the accommodation. Applicants who have care needs will also be considered if their existing needs are supported, or a care package is to be put in place.

Sheltered housing is also available from other registered social housing landlords operating in the area and details of these, and the Council's schemes, are available on request from local offices or on the Council's website at www.pkc.gov.uk/housing

Applicants can indicate their preference for sheltered housing when they complete the Common Housing Register application form.

9 Appeals and complaints

9.1 Appeals

If an applicant is unhappy about a decision that has been made with regard to their application, they can appeal using the allocations appeals process. Appeals will be considered where an applicant thinks that:

- the priority awarded does not reflect their level of need, or;
- an unfair suspension has been applied, or their application unreasonably cancelled, or;
- priority has been removed following a review or a refusal of a reasonable offer of housing, or;
- housing offered was in an unacceptable condition, or;
- the Council has refused admission onto the housing waiting list.

The appeals process has three stages:

First stage

Initially an applicant who is dissatisfied should discuss the situation with a member of staff at their local housing office.

Second stage

If an applicant remains dissatisfied they may write to the Social Housing Access Manager at the Housing Advice Centre, 10-16 York Place, PERTH PH2 8EP, or by emailing HousingAllocation@pkc.gov.uk A review will be carried out within five working days, where all relevant information is provided or available.

Third stage

If an applicant is still dissatisfied a final appeal may be made in writing to the Service Manager – Housing Access & Partnerships, as the Council's senior housing allocations adviser, who will reconsider the appeal and respond to the applicant within 10 working days. There is no further right to appeal within the process.

9.2 Complaints

Additionally an applicant who is dissatisfied with the way in which their application has been dealt with can make a complaint. For example if:

- the standard of service has been poor, or;
- there has been delays in responding to an enquiry or a request, or;
- a failure to follow the Council's policy or procedures.

The applicant may wish to use Perth & Kinross Council's [Corporate Complaints Procedure](#). In such circumstances applicants will be reminded that an appeal against an allocations decision is not the same as a complaint.

Applicants can make a complaint in one of several different ways:

- telephone the Customer Service Centre on 01738 475583
- email us on customercomplaints@pkc.gov.uk
- write to the Complaints & Governance Officer, Perth & Kinross Council, 2 High Street, PERTH PH1 5PH

If an applicant remains dissatisfied they have the right to refer their concerns to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman for investigation.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Melville Street
EDINBURGH
EH3 7NS

Tel 0800 377 7330
Fax 0800 377 7331
Email ask@spsso.org.uk
www.spsso.org.uk

10 Quality assurance and performance management

10.1 Quality assurance

A quality assurance process operates to ensure the efficient, consistent and high quality assessment of all applicants. Each month:

- A 10% random audit will be made of new housing applications to ensure that the assessment process and outcome is fair and in line with performance management targets and standards, and in compliance with statutory requirements and policy.
- A report will be produced on the number of complaints received, appeals and outcomes. Performance information about service standards will be routinely published and made available on the Council's website at www.pkc.gov.uk/housing and in local area housing offices.

10.2 Performance management

The policy will be monitored by the Senior Management Team of Housing & Community Care on a monthly basis. The basis of the monitoring is to provide updates about how the allocations scheme is performing and, intends to perform, against statutory and local responsibilities. Key aspects covered include:

- compliance with the statutory and regulatory framework;
- meeting local priorities and objectives for housing allocations;
- ensuring that strategic report and analysis on housing need and demand are produced to inform future planning and development;
- information to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of operational processes;
- information to measure applicants' needs, and equality of access;
- information to measure the performance of registered social housing landlords.

The monitoring reports are divided into the following categories:

Accessing the housing register

- number of new applications received;
- number of new applications registered;
- time taken to register an application;
- number of new applications by ethnicity, gender, disability, age, religion/belief, sexual orientation.

Assessment of applications

- time taken to process an application;
- number of visits to vulnerable households;
- number of referrals to the housing options and homeless services;
- number of applicants suspended including banding and grounds for suspension;
- number of applicants electing to defer their application.

Outcomes

- number of applications in each banding, and primary category of need;
- time taken to offer housing to applicants in priority banding A;
- number of offers accepted and refused, by banding and reason for refusal;
- number of applicants nominated to a registered social housing landlord and re-housed and, reasons for refusing a nomination;
- number of statutory homeless applicants referred through Section 5 and re-housed and, reasons for refusing a referral;
- number of nominations offered by property type and location;
- number of applicants re-housed through a mutual exchange;
- number of applicants under-occupying by one or two bedrooms who are re-housed;
- number and reason for by-passing an applicant for an offer of housing.

