

Summary of Joint Allocations Policy between Torfaen CBC and Bron Afon

1. Why have a policy?

- This policy sets out how Bron Afon will prioritise applicants for the homes we rent. It is a joint policy with the Council, which will enable Bron Afon and the Council to work closely together to meet housing need in Torfaen.
- Pending a comprehensive review of the sheltered housing allocation policy, sheltered housing will continue to be allocated using the latest Council policy.

2. What are the main objectives of this policy and strategy?

- To use our limited housing resources to best effect in meeting the greatest housing need in the Borough.
- To provide an open and accountable system of prioritising applicants that is understandable to applicants and gives due weighting to housing need.
- To allow applicants to exercise choice in their accommodation where possible and appropriate.

3. Who makes up the Homeseeker Team?

- The Homeseeker Team consists of staff from Bron Afon and the Council responsible for administering the application of this policy. Day to day decisions required on individual cases will be determined by a panel made up of staff from both Bron Afon and the Council.
- The Homeseeker Team will report to an overview steering group.

4. How do I join the Homeseeker Scheme?

- The Homeseeker Team intends to work with housing associations renting homes in Torfaen to develop a common housing register for those seeking housing.
- Anyone over the age of 16 is eligible to join the Homeseeker Register unless they fall within one of the groups of ineligible applicants set out in paragraph 5.
- Two people who are a married or cohabiting couple, siblings, a parent and son or daughter or two people where one is a carer for the other can apply to join the register and obtain housing as joint tenants.
- All register entries will be regularly reviewed by the Homeseeker Team and applicants will be asked to advise whether they wish to remain on the register. Those who do not respond within 28 days of their review will have their application cancelled.

5. Who can't apply to join the Homeseeker Scheme?

- People with restrictions or conditions on their leave to enter or remain in the UK, who are not habitually resident in the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man or Republic of Ireland, or who have no recourse to public funds are ineligible to join the register.

6. How are homes advertised?

- All homes for letting by Bron Afon will be advertised, other than homes required to house people in the case of an emergency.
- Applicants and authorised advocates will be able to apply for properties online, by telephone, or by completion of a coupon.
- Adverts will be posted on a weekly basis with a specified period within which all bids must be submitted.

7. What is the procedure for assessing priority for housing?

- The Panel will assess each applicant on the register and determine their priority for housing in accordance with the Bands set out in section 9. Certain applicants will be awarded no/reduced preference because of their past conduct or the conduct of someone who would live with them.
- Decisions about eligibility under this section will be made by the Panel for each individual case and there is a right of appeal against the decision.

8. What are the priority bands?

- A Priority Banding system applies to determine who will be allocated homes (except where applicants are emergency cases).
- There are three bands of housing need: Gold Band 1 (priority housing) and Gold Band 2 (accepted as statutory homeless priority), Silver Band with moderate priority, and Bronze Band with low priority.
- Within each band, priority will be based on the time spent in the band.
- If an applicant moves up a priority band their registration date will start from the time they enter the new band.
- Applicants with Emergency Priority status will have priority over all other applicants.

9. How do I bid?

- Applicants (or advocates) may bid for up to 4 properties during each advert, and must rank the bids in order of preference.
- The size of home that an applicant can bid for depends on household size.
- Where properties have had adaptations that make them particularly suitable for a tenant with particular needs, priority may be given or bidding may be restricted to applicants needing accommodation that has been adapted in this way.

10. How is an offer for a home made?

- The bids received for a Bron Afon property will be prioritised by Bron Afon.
- Unless there are exceptional circumstances, applicants who are transferring from an existing home with Bron Afon will only be permitted to transfer if they have no outstanding debt to Bron Afon and if Bron Afon is satisfied that their existing home meets the Bron Afon standard for the letting of homes.

11. Do you operate a local lettings arrangement?

- There may be occasions where an individual or group of properties needs to be considered and let under a local letting policy agreement for a time limited period.
- This will be done for a specific identified purpose such as to promote community safety and cohesion.

12. How is the allocation of the home made?

- For each property advertised, Bron Afon will have a shortlist of applicants.
- Applicants will be given no more than one working day to make a decision following the viewing of the property, except in exceptional circumstances.
- If the applicant accepts the property, the tenancy start date will be agree.
- If the applicant refuses the offer of the property, they must provide a reason. If an applicant refuses two properties without good reason they will move down a priority band. They will be notified of the decision and can appeal.

13. How can I appeal?

- All applicants have a right to appeal under this policy if their application to join the register is refused or suspended, if they disagree with their current banding, or if their priority is withdrawn.
- Applicants will have no right to appeal if they knowingly give false information.
- An applicant who wishes to appeal must do so in writing to the Homeseeker Team within 21 days of being notified of the decision against which they are appealing.
- Where an applicant or tenant has requested an appeal they may request an oral hearing or a written review.