

South Tyneside Council
Allocations Policy 2021

South Tyneside... an outstanding place to live, invest and bring up families



South Tyneside Council

Spread the word!

**THIS IS
SOUTH
TYNESIDE**

Contents

	Page
Foreword	5
Section 1 - General Information	
1. Introduction	6
2. What is the Housing Register?	6
3. Legislative Framework	7
4. What is an Allocation?	7
5. Policy Objectives	7
6. Statement of Choice	8
7. Equality and Fairness	8
8. Confidentiality Statement	8
9. Tyne and Wear Homes	9
10. Review of the Policy	9
Section 2 - Applying for Housing	
11. Assessing applications	10
12. Suspension from Bidding	10
13. Eligibility	11
14. Qualification Criteria	11
15. Owner Occupiers	12
16. Unacceptable Behaviour	12
17. Pre-Tenancy Support – Affordability and Support Offered	14
18. Matching Accommodation	14
19. Housing Plus Accommodation	15
20. Application Form	15
21. Verification	15
22. Giving False Information	15

23. Applicants who have deliberately worsened their circumstances	16
24. Staff and Elected Members	16
25. Changes in Circumstances	17
Section 3 - Assessing Housing Need	
26. Reasonable Preference/ Housing Need	18
27. Medical, Welfare and Hardship Priorities	18
28. Priority Band Definitions	19
29. Local Connection Definition	22
30. Exceptions to the Local Connection Criteria	22
Section 4 - Property Eligibility	
31. Bedroom Calculations	24
Section 5- Allocations	
32. Advertising properties	26
33. Placing a bid	26
34. Short-listing and Selection	26
35. Failure to bid	27
36. Offers	27
Section 6 - Miscellaneous Allocations	
37. Local Lettings Policies	28
38. Sensitive Lets	28
39. Direct Lets and Exceptional Circumstances	28
40. Adapted Properties	28
41. Garage Allocations	29
42. Successions and Assignments	29
43. Review and Appeals procedure	30
Section 7 - Additional Information	
44. Accessing Information and Data Protection	32

45. Accessing Information in Alternative Formats	32
46. Comments, Compliments and Complaints	32
Section 8 - Appendices	
47. Appendix 1: Current Local Lettings Policies	33
48. Appendix 2: Eligibility Criteria	34
49. Appendix 3: Medical, Welfare and Hardship Priorities	36

Foreword

Foreword by Councillor Jim Foreman, Lead Member for Housing and Transport

Welcome to our Housing Allocations Policy. I hope you will find it clear, helpful and informative. This is a living document which will be kept under review in order to reflect changes locally or within Government Policy.

Public services have seen significant changes over the last few years, many of which have affected how we provide our services and no doubt we will have many more challenges ahead of us. As Lead Member for Housing and Transport, I am confident that by continuing to work together and making the best use of resources we can tackle these challenges with innovation and creativity whilst effectively addressing the needs of the borough's residents.

In 2012, the Localism Act came into force, giving Local Authorities greater freedom to better manage their waiting lists. Since then we have had some fundamental changes in national legislation, in particular the changes brought about by welfare reform. Many of these changes have resulted in housing becoming less affordable for specific groups of people and therefore we need to respond appropriately to support those seeking accommodation.

In addition, the passing of Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has placed greater obligations on Local Authorities to support those who are at risk of homelessness at the earliest opportunity. By working in partnership with a range of service providers we will carry out our duty to prevent homelessness.

This policy has been written in order to support residents in a sustainable way to meet the housing and support needs of households as effectively as we possibly can. Our aim is to make the best use of our housing stock for the benefit of the whole borough. This includes working closely with our neighbouring authorities and other partners that make up Tyne and Wear Homes.

Social housing is a limited resource and therefore it is vital to strike a balance between creating sustainable communities and supporting those in greatest need of accommodation.

The demand for many of our properties is high and this policy will enable us to ensure that those who are in the greatest housing need are given priority for suitable housing which will best address their situation.

“By working together we can make South Tyneside an outstanding place to live.”

Section 1 - General Information

1. Introduction

This document explains South Tyneside Council's Policy for allocating its social housing. It forms part of a suite of Policies and Strategies including the:

- Tenancy Strategy
- Tenancy Policy
- Homelessness Strategy

These documents should be read in conjunction with one another, and will be kept under review.

The Policy will be implemented by South Tyneside Homes (the Council's Arm's Length Management Housing Company).

The Policy sets out who is eligible and qualifies for housing, the application process, priority bandings, bidding and offers of accommodation. It details what the Council's Housing Register is and its effective operation.

In addition to the Council's housing stock, we can also help people access a range of housing options from other housing providers through the Tyne and Wear Homes Partnership.

Through South Tyneside Homes, the Housing Option Service provides appropriate advice and support to find suitable accommodation depending on the specific needs of the individual household. This includes homelessness prevention, affordability and the registration of applicants.

Following a full review of your housing needs and aspirations a range of suitable housing options will be set out in order for you to make an informed choice. This may include support to remain in your home, mutual exchange, private sector housing, shared ownership, low cost home ownership or accommodation provided by other social housing partners.

We will also provide help and advice on alternative housing options and how to address any issues you may have in order for you to qualify for the scheme.

One of the main aims of the policy is to offer choice. However, we have a duty to meet housing need and because of this we will band people according to their need. The banding system will ensure that those in the greatest housing need are given greatest preference for re-housing.

2. What is the Housing Register?

The Housing Register is an electronic database of those Applicants who wish to be rehoused and either qualify or are eligible for social housing within the Borough. All

successful Applicants, including existing tenants are placed on the Register once the appropriate checks have been undertaken, this would include identification and details of housing history. Applicants who are accepted onto the Housing Register can bid for homes they are eligible for, meet their household size and can afford. The list of Applicants who bid for a property is organised according to priority and need.

3. Legislative Framework

The legislative framework is set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and the associated statutory codes of guidance.

In preparing, modifying and operating this policy, we have followed the relevant Legislation. We have also had regard to our Homelessness Strategy, our Tenancy Policy and Strategy and the Allocation of Accommodation Code of Guidance for local housing authorities in England that was issued by the Government in July 2012. We have also considered relevant case law and regulations.

4. What is an Allocation?

An allocation is where a Local Authority:

1. Selects a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by that authority.
2. Nominates a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by another housing authority.
3. Nominates a person to be an assured tenant of accommodation held by a Private Registered Provider.

Social housing may only be allocated to 'qualifying persons' and through the Localism Act 2011, the council now has the power to determine those that are or not to be allocated housing. The Local Authority has the ability to set their own transfer policy for those households who are currently social rented tenants and have no housing need and no reasonable preference.

These qualification requirements are in addition to the provisions on eligibility in respect of persons from abroad which continue to be set by Central Government.

The legislative framework applies to the Council and requires Registered Social Landlords to co-operate in offering accommodation and to assist the Council in discharging its statutory duties to homeless people. The council also has statutory duties to customers with medical and welfare need, Domestic Abuse, financial hardship and addressing the housing needs of residents in need.

5. Policy Objectives

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Provide housing that is suitable for those who are eligible and qualify.

- Prioritise housing to Applicants who are in the most need with a local connection to the Borough.
- Provide those looking for housing in South Tyneside with a fair, flexible and transparent system by which they are prioritised for social and affordable housing.
- Offer suitable and sustainable housing that meets the needs of the applicant
- Prevent homelessness and help people to solve their housing problems by giving advice and assistance.
- Make the best use of the housing stock and reduce avoidable stock turnover.
- Create safe and sustainable communities.
- Offering choice within a fair and transparent process.

6. Statement of choice

We aim to give all applicants who qualify or are eligible to join the Housing Register choice in where they live. Applicants have the opportunity to express preference by being able to bid for areas and types of housing. However, this must be balanced with the need for the Council to meet its legal duties as a local authority in relation to addressing local housing need and ensuring the efficient management of its housing stock. This means we may give priority to households who need a particular property size or type when we place our adverts

7. Equality and Fairness

South Tyneside Council and South Tyneside Homes will ensure its Policies are non-discriminatory and will aim to promote equal opportunity by protecting and eliminating discrimination in line with the Equality Act 2010. This includes gender, transgender, colour, race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, age, HIV status, sexual orientation, marital status or pregnancy and maternity. Staff will value and promote equality and diversity in the delivery of the lettings service.

The Policy will be monitored and analysed to ensure it promotes equality of opportunity to individuals and minority groups. In order to achieve this, all Applicants will be asked to provide details of their ethnic origin and any other demographic information at the time of application.

Although all information is kept confidential there may be need to share your information with other departments or partners, such as Department of Work and Pension, Department of Community, and Local Government and other housing providers.

8. Confidentiality statement

We will treat the information you provide as confidential. It will only be available to those employees who are managing and monitoring allocations and lettings, which includes local authorities and registered housing providers participating in the Tyne and Wear Homes. Your details are also subject to the controls of the General Data

Protection Regulations regarding unauthorised disclosure. Any other sharing of information will only happen with your consent or in circumstances that the law provides to protect people from harm or prevent crime. Hence, if you wish someone to act on your behalf, you will be required to provide authorisation for this to happen.

9. Tyne and Wear Homes

The Council is part of the Tyne and Wear Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme, "Tyne and Wear Homes". This is a partnership between South Tyneside, Gateshead, Newcastle and North Tyneside Council's and their respective housing organisations along with many Registered Housing Providers who have stock within Tyne and Wear.

Tyne and Wear Homes allows Applicants to search and apply for homes across Tyne and Wear. For example, a resident in Gateshead could make an application for housing in South Tyneside if they meet the local criteria.

Any application for housing made through Tyne and Wear Homes is subject to this Policy.

10. Review of the Policy

An annual review of the Allocations Policy will be undertaken and presented by the Lead Member for Housing to the Council's Housing Performance Panel for approval. Any full review of the Housing Allocations Policy will be required to go to Cabinet for approval.

Section 2 - Applying for Housing

11. Assessing Applications

All applications to join the Housing Register are considered by South Tyneside Homes, Housing Options Service.

On receipt of the application, the Housing Options Service will assess the application to determine:

1. Whether the Applicant is eligible.
2. Whether the Applicant qualifies.
3. The level of housing need, the existence of a local connection and the priority banding they should be awarded.
4. Affordability and whether there is need for pre-tenancy support and how this will be best delivered to support sustainable tenancies.

Anyone aged 16 years or over can apply whatever their current housing circumstances are. However, there will be some people who will not be eligible or qualify for housing in South Tyneside. If you are under 18, any offer of accommodation will be linked to a support package and you may need a trustee who can hold the legal title of your tenancy.

In the case of joint applications both Applicants must be eligible for housing and must satisfy all qualification criteria, in order that a Joint Tenancy to be granted.

Applicants wishing to transfer to another property will be assessed in the same way as all other Applicants.

12. Suspension from Bidding

Applicants who are a tenant of a social housing landlord, either South Tyneside Homes or your landlord will make contact to ensure that you have conducted your tenancy in an appropriate manner.

If your application has been assessed and you have little or no housing need, having been placed in our lowest Band and found to have breached your tenancy, then you will be suspended from bidding until you can demonstrate that you have remedied any breach. Examples of the type of behaviour which could result in you being suspended from bidding include:

- Any previous or current rent arrears.
- Any other housing related debt.
- Any outstanding work required to your property for which you are responsible.
- Failure to maintain your property to an appropriate standard, which would incur cost to your landlord in order for them to re-let the property.

- You or a member of your household committing anti-social behaviour in or around your neighbourhood. For example, nuisance or annoyance to neighbours, discriminatory behaviour, harassment, violence and intimidation.
- Unacceptable behaviour towards South Tyneside Council, South Tyneside Homes staff, elected members, board members as well as partners and their employees.

If you have housing need which results in you being awarded a higher band we will not suspend your application as long as you remain eligible and qualify for the Scheme.

If we decide you should be suspended from bidding, the officer who made the decision will write to you and tell you the reasons why, what information they have considered and what you can do to put right the problem and have the suspension lifted. You have the right to appeal this decision and can request this within 21 days of the date of a decision. You can also request a review at a later stage should you be able to provide evidence that the reasons for your suspension have been addressed.

13. Eligibility

The Housing Act 1996, as amended by Homelessness Act 2002, defines the categories of persons who may not be eligible for an allocation.

Housing law sets out who can and cannot be considered for social housing under what is called “eligibility”.

You may not be eligible to join the scheme if you are from abroad or subject to immigration control. The terms ‘person from abroad (PFA)’ and ‘person subject to immigration control’ (PSIC) have a housing specific meaning. There are two categories of person from abroad:

- Persons subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act (AIA) 1996.
- Persons who are not PSIC but are ‘other persons from abroad’ for example a British or Commonwealth citizen who has failed the habitual residence test.

Applicants in either category may be eligible as determined by the Secretary of State. Further details of the eligibility criteria are detailed within Appendix 2.

14. Qualification Criteria

South Tyneside Council has decided that it will not consider certain applicants for social housing. Applicants **will not** qualify to join the Housing Register if:

- They are an owner occupier with the financial resources to meet their own housing need; or
- They have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour (including housing related debt).

- Current South Tyneside Council tenants who are not in housing need and have not met the criteria outlined above.
- Current South Tyneside Council Tenants who have lived within their current home for less than 12 months and their housing needs are being adequately met.

15. Owner Occupiers with the Financial Resources to Meet Their Own Housing Need:

You will not qualify for an allocation of social housing if you are an owner occupier and the equity in your home is estimated in excess of £80,000 unless it can be shown:

- You have a medical condition that requires specialist medical accommodation, or
- You are assessed by a Council approved Occupational Therapist as suitable for Band 1+ or Band 1, or:
- South Tyneside Council has decided that they require your home to allow demolition or redevelopment to take place and you do not have the financial means to purchase an alternative property.

Owner occupiers should note that where, according to the criteria above, they do qualify to join the Housing Register, only those owner occupiers with a local connection to South Tyneside will usually be awarded a priority banding above Band 4. See Appendix 3 for information.

16. Unacceptable Behaviour

Applicants will not qualify to join the Housing Register, or be allocated a home, if they have been guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour (including housing related debt and conduct), which is serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant.

This will look at recent and relevant behaviour and the period which this behaviour was sustained. Each case will be considered on merit and your individual circumstances will be fully considered when deciding if you should be disqualified from the scheme.

The Council, its partner landlords and residents have a right to expect certain standards of behaviour. Therefore, before we accept you onto the scheme and/or make a firm offer of a property, we may seek references to help us decide whether or not you qualify for the scheme. These will usually be from previous landlords.

South Tyneside Council has decided that the test of unacceptable behaviour is behaviour which would, if the person was either a council tenant or a member of a council tenant's household, entitle the landlord to take possession proceedings under certain grounds contained in the Housing Act 1985.

Some examples of the type of behaviour that could result in you not qualifying for the scheme could be as follows. However, this list is not exhaustive:

- Being made subject to or named in a Civil Injunction
- Being made subject to a Possession Order (including those suspended or postponed on terms).
- Being made subject to a Criminal Behaviour Order or CRASBO.
- Being made subject to a Premises Closure Order.
- Being prosecuted for an offence under s80 EPA.
- NOSP for absolute ground s84A.
- Rent arrears or housing related debt. Housing related debt is classed as serious unacceptable behaviour. Those Applicants who have existing rent arrears, ex-tenants arrears, re-chargeable repairs, mortgage debt would be classed as having housing related debt.
- An Applicant, occupier or visitor to the property being involved in serious anti-social or criminal activity in or in the area of the property. For Example, nuisance or annoyance to neighbours, discriminatory behaviour or harassment, violence and intimidation. Domestic violence or abuse or threatening and controlling or coercive behaviour.
- A conviction for using or allowing a property to be used for illegal or immoral purposes, including offences involving illegal drugs.
- An Applicant being served with a Notice of Seeking Possession, Demotion Notice, Notice of Possession Proceedings or Notice of Seeking Possession for the Absolute Ground for possession (s84A) concerning a tenant or anyone residing, occupying or visiting the property.
- An Applicant has been prosecuted for Fly tipping, untidy gardens which are a statutory nuisance, Noise and any other relevant prosecution.
- Being prosecuted for a breach of CPN – Being served with a CPN.
- Previous/current property damage or other breached of tenancy.
- A conviction for an offence in the property or in the area of the property.
- Making a false statement in order to obtain accommodation dishonestly or fraudulently.
- Failing to provide relevant information that has been reasonably requested to verify an application for housing.

The test is whether you or a member of your household were guilty of behaviour serious enough to make you unsuitable to be a tenant of the council (whoever your landlord was at the time).

In some instances we will obtain information from the Northumbria Police via the Safer Estates Agreement. We can request further information in the following circumstances:

- An applicant admits to criminal convictions
- There are significant gaps in housing history

- The applicant is known to the organisation, in that there is previous history of anti-social behaviour/criminality

If we decide you should be suspended from bidding, the officer who made the decision will write to you and tell you the reasons why, what information they have considered and what you can do to put right the problem to have the suspension lifted. You have the right to appeal this decision and can request this within 21 days of the date of a decision. You can also request a review at a later stage should you be able to provide evidence that the reasons for your suspension have been addressed.

17. Pre-tenancy Support – Affordability and Support Offered

We will carry out a pre tenancy assessment with all applicants to help determine whether they are able to financially manage and sustain a tenancy. This assessment helps determine appropriate housing options for you and whether any additional support services will be needed to help you maintain your tenancy.

The assessment will include a review of:

- Your ability to pay your rent now and in the future, including help with setting up a bank account so you can pay your rent by Direct Debit.
- Working in conjunction with welfare support to undertake a benefit check.
- Your ability to meet all obligations under the tenancy agreement
- Any support needs you may have in order to meet your obligations.
- Any tenancy training needs you may have.

Where the pre tenancy assessment identifies any needs, help will be offered with the following:

- Maximising income and managing debt.
- Arranging for appropriate support services to be put in place.
- Providing tenancy training on how to manage a tenancy successfully.
- Recommending appropriate housing options to meet need.
- Setting up rent payment systems.
- Providing training on budgeting.
- Providing support to find employment.

18. Matching of Accommodation

Restriction from bidding on unsuitability properties, following on from a pre-tenancy assessment will be made so we can best meet your needs based on elements such as, your health and affordability.

There may be circumstances where your support needs are such that we may restrict your bidding to a particular housing option and in some cases we may not have an appropriate housing option to meet your needs. If this is the case we will offer advice and assistance on other services and agencies that may help you meet your needs.

If you have a housing need which results in you being awarded a priority banding, your application will not be suspended as long as you remain eligible and qualify.

All new and adequately housed council tenants will be disqualified until one year after their tenancy start date unless they have had a material change of circumstances since their tenancy start date.

It also may be determined from previous behaviour or due to perceived or actual threat; restrictions may be placed on applicants for the locations in which they can be rehoused.

19. Housing Plus Accommodation

Housing Plus accommodation will normally only be allocated to those in need of the services provided and will not normally be awarded to those under 60 years or unless one of the Applicants is over the age of 55 and in receipt of Personal Independence Payment or a Local Lettings Policy is in operation.

20. Application Form

Applicants can complete an application for housing online at www.tyneandwearhomes.org.uk.

Should an applicant require any support they can complete an application:

- Over the telephone with South Tyneside Housing Options Service on 0300 123 6633
- In person by visiting the Housing Solutions Service
- Or by contacting any partner of Tyne and Wear Homes

Application forms that are incomplete will not be assessed and will be deleted once our retention period has been reached.

21. Verification

Applicants will be required to provide all information in connection to their application to satisfy the eligibility and qualification criteria. Incomplete applications will not be assessed.

Applications are reviewed again at Offer Stage to ensure the Applicant(s) remain eligible and qualify and there has been no change in circumstances, in order that an appropriate offer is made. In awarding a Priority Banding local connection will also be re-assessed.

22. Giving False Information

It is an offence for anyone applying for housing to knowingly or recklessly give false information or withhold information which has been reasonably requested in relation to:

- Their application for housing
- Subsequent review information
- Other updating mechanisms e.g. change in circumstances

Appropriate action may be taken against any Applicant who knowingly provides false information or as a result of a false statement provided by a person acting at their instigation. This could include, the Applicant(s) being removed from the Housing Register, a prosecution and/or taking action to recover possession of the property allocated.

23. Applicants who have Deliberately Worsened their Circumstances

Applicants must not deliberately worsen their circumstances in order to move into a higher band or obtain priority within the band for example, by moving into an unfit property when it was reasonable to continue to occupy their previous accommodation. If an Applicant is found to have deliberately worsened their circumstances, they will be placed in the band corresponding to their original situations and any additional priority will be revoked.

24. Staff and Elected Members

Applications for housing from the following Applicants will be overseen by a Senior Manager at South Tyneside Homes (or those delegated to deputise):

1. An employee of South Tyneside Council or South Tyneside Homes
2. An Applicant who is a family member of an employee of South Tyneside Council or South Tyneside Homes
3. A South Tyneside Council Elected Member
4. An Applicant who is family member of a South Tyneside Council Elected Member
5. A South Tyneside Homes Board Member
6. An Applicant who is a family member of a South Tyneside Board Member
7. An employee of a Tyne and Wear Homes partner

All offers of accommodation for the above must be approved by a Senior Manager at South Tyneside Homes.

25. Change in Circumstances

Applicants should contact South Tyneside Homes Housing Options Team as soon as possible to inform them of any change in circumstances and provide relevant supporting information. You will receive a letter informing you of the outcome of the change. Failure to inform South Tyneside Homes Housing Options Team of any change in circumstances may result in your Applicant being removed from the Housing Register.

Section 3 - Assessing Housing Need

26. Reasonable Preference/Housing Need

The law requires that reasonable preference for an allocation must be made in the following cases:

- People who are homeless (within meaning of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996);
- People who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2), or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985, or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3);
- People occupying insanitary (unhealthy) or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability; and
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).

27. Medical, Welfare and Hardship Priorities

Council approved Occupational Therapists will award medical, welfare and hardship priorities based on whether you or any member of your household's condition/situation could be improved by rehousing. For example:

- A mental illness or disorder
- A physical or learning disability
- Chronic or progressive medical conditions for example, Multiple sclerosis
- Dementia
- Infirmity due to old age
- The need to recover from the effects of violence or threats of violence, or physical emotional or sexual abuse
- Young people at risk
- To give or receive care
- To access specialised medical treatment
- To take up a particular employment, education or training opportunity

This list is not exhaustive. More detail is set out in Appendix 3 of this policy.

In assessing medical, welfare or hardship we consider the impact someone's home is having on them, specifically in relation to accessing essential facilities, support or other services. Supporting information may be required from medical professionals and other organisations as necessary.

It is normal practice that if you are awarded a medical band, you will only be able to bid for the type of property that has been recommended to you. Generally, you will not be able to defer from this. Each case will be considered on its own merit.

Further guidance on medical, welfare and hardship priorities is contained in Appendix 3.

28. Priority Band Definitions

Applicants accepted on to the Housing Register are awarded a band based on their housing need. Please see below for details of the banding.

Band 1 + (Critical Need Category) – Awarded for 6 Weeks

A local connection to South Tyneside is required for all awards of priority in this banding except paragraph c, d and e.

- a. Applicants with a critical medical need and need to move to alternative accommodation.
- b. Applicants requiring immediate hospital discharge and not able to return to their previous residence.
- c. Homeless cases where the Council needs to discharge its statutory duty as a matter of urgency. The Council may discharge its statutory duty by making a direct offer.
- d. Applicants who are experiencing severe harassment or fleeing abuse and are in imminent danger unless rehoused.
- e. Other circumstances considered extreme or unique by the Council or South Tyneside Homes. (Those extreme needs not met through the Policy).

A Direct Offer can be made for relevant cases and where appropriate. Whilst, this is likely to be one offer of suitable accommodation, applicants are still entitled to appeal the suitability of any Direct Offer and this will not affect their entitlement to be accessed for banding.

Band 1 (High Need Category) – Awarded for 3 Months

A local connection to South Tyneside is required for all awards of priority in this banding except paragraph i:

- a. Those Applicants at risk of becoming homeless unintentionally but not in immediate need within 56 days.
- b. Applicants with a high medical, welfare or hardship need. (This may apply to any member of the household).
- c. Cases where the South Tyneside Council's Cabinet has resolved that South Tyneside Council needs possession of the Applicant's accommodation to

enable regeneration or refurbishment to be undertaken where the Applicant is being rehoused on a permanent basis.

- d. Cases where it is decided that major works require the temporary decant of the tenant, where the tenant has 'medical hardship' and where it is assessed that more than one move would impact negatively upon their health. Tenants accepted under this criterion will normally be given Band 1 three months prior to the planned start of the programme's scheme of works.
- e. Households living in statutorily defined overcrowded housing according to the legislation. For example, if two people of the opposite sex who are not married or cohabiting and are over 10 years old living in a bedsit. Or those occupying insanitary (unhealthy) housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- f. Cases where the Corporate Director of Children, Adults and Families has made a written recommendation that permanent accommodation must be provided to ensure that adoption can take place.
- g. Cases where the Corporate Director of Children, Adults and Families has made a written recommendation that accommodation must be provided to ensure that fostering can take place.
- h. Applicants living in private rented accommodation deemed as "prejudicial to health" as defined by the Environmental Protection Act 1990 or where a Prohibition Order or Emergency Prohibition Order has been made under the Housing Act 2004 on the dwelling.
- i. Members of the Armed Forces and former Service Personnel who have left the armed forces provided an application is made within 5 years of discharge.

Bereaved spouses and civil partners of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner. Or, serving or former member of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service.

These Applicants will have the time served in the Forces added to their date of application.

- j. Applicants leaving care.
- k. Applicants leaving supported accommodation (excluding Housing Plus or Extra Care) needing to move into independent settled housing.
- l. Applicants leaving South Tyneside Council/South Tyneside Homes tied accommodation.

Band 2 (Medium Priority Category) – Awarded for 6 Months

A local connection to South Tyneside is required for all awards of priority in this banding.

- a. Households residing in South Tyneside Council accommodation who must leave that accommodation because no-one is entitled to succeed to the tenancy.
- b. Applicants with a medium medical, welfare or hardship need. (This may apply to any member of the household).
- c. Applicants with disabilities needing to move into independent living and supported by the Council's Head of Adult Social Care.
- d. Households that can prove they need to give or receive care that is substantial and ongoing. Each case will be considered on its own merit.
- e. Tenants of South Tyneside Council who are required by the Council to leave their home because it has been built or adapted for a person with special needs who no longer lives there.
- f. Tenants of South Tyneside Council who can demonstrate they are suffering genuine financial hardship as a result of Welfare Reform, who wish to downsize to a smaller property suitable for their needs. Applicants will be required to complete a financial assessment, tenancy check and property inspection

Failure to Bid

Where an Applicant is placed in either Band 1+, 1 or 2 and a suitable property is available to bid on during the timescale specified in the banding criteria above and they fail to place a bid, the Applicant's priority may be demoted to Band 4. Such Applicants will be entitled to request a review of this decision.

Band 3 (Low Priority Category)

A local connection to South Tyneside is required for all awards of priority in this banding.

- a. Intentionally homeless Applicants with or without priority need.
- b. The departing partner of a couple with dependent children, at least one of the couple is a Council tenant, have lived together for at least 12 months and wish to separate with the children remaining in the family home.
- c. Applicants who have been, or will soon be, released from prison, to whom the Housing and Resettlement protocol applies and have been accepted by the Council.
- d. Applicants wishing to be housed independently who don't currently have security of tenure. For example, Applicants living in who wish to live independently in their own home.
- e. Applicants living in non-statutorily overcrowded accommodation for example, an adult living with a child in a one bedroom flat.
- f. Applicants from two different households sharing either a kitchen or bathroom.
- g. Applicants who have been approved by the Local Authority as foster carers within the last 12 months.

- h. Applicants who have been approved by the Local Authority as adopters within the last 12 months.
- i. Tenants who wish to downsize due to current home being too large to manage

Band 4 (General Category)

All other qualifying Applicants. A local connection to South Tyneside is not required.

Failure to Bid

Where an Applicant is placed in either Bands 3 or 4 and a suitable property is available to bid on within 12 months from the date of being accepted on to the Register and they fail to place a bid, they will be removed from the Register and will be required to re-apply. Such Applicants will be entitled to appeal this decision.

Where an Applicant falls in to more than one priority banding because of their housing need an award will be made to the highest of the bandings.

Applicants will be awarded a priority banding based on their housing need and local connection to South Tyneside. In the case of joint Applicants, only one Applicant is required to have a local connection to South Tyneside. Those without a local connection to South Tyneside will only be awarded Band 4 priority.

29. Local Connection Definition

In respect of this Allocations Policy local connection is defined as:

- Being a resident with permanent accommodation in South Tyneside for at least 6 months out of the last 12 months, or 3 years out of the last 5 years (Not including time spent living in hospital or hostel accommodation).
- Being in employment within the Borough.
- Being in training or education in the Borough
- Having 'close family' living in South Tyneside for at least the previous 5 years. Close family means, parents, grandparents, children, siblings, step parents, step children, grand children or adoptive parents and children. In exceptional circumstances and where support is required, 'close family' may be extended to aunts, uncles and in laws.

30. Exceptions to the Local Connection Criteria

No local connection is required for the following Applicants:

- Former members of the Armed Forces
- Serving members of the Armed Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service.

- Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner.
- Serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service.
- Divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence.
- Cases involving domestic abuse.

All of the above Armed Force cases will have the time they have served in the Armed Forces added on to the date they joined the Housing Register and will be supported through the process by the Armed Forces Outreach Officer to best address their housing and support needs.

Section 4 - Property Eligibility

31. Bedroom Calculations

The criteria listed below will usually be used when deciding what property Applicants can bid for. Applicants should be aware that if they are in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and will be under occupying a home using the Government's Department for Work and Pensions bedroom criteria, they will see a reduction in the amount of benefit received from April 2013. **The Applicant will therefore be required to make up the shortfall in rent.**

A bedroom assessment will be made, based on the make-up of the household and this will enable applicants to bid for suitability sized properties, subject to any Local Lettings Policies. An affordability assessment will also be undertaken to ensure that applicants can afford the properties which they are bidding for.

In considering who is included in the bedroom calculation, only household members where there is evidence that their principal home will be with the household can be included. As part of this an unborn child will be included once the MATB1 form is provided. Where a member of the household has access to other children, only those children where there is a formal shared care arrangement of over half of the week will be included. Where a household member has access for less than this and the children's principal home is elsewhere, they will not be included.

In some instances, Housing Plus accommodation will be allocated to Applicants under the age of 60 years, for example those 55 years old or over and in receipt of Personal Independence Payment or where a Local Lettings Policy has been introduced.

Applicants who would suffer genuine financial hardship will only be able to bid for properties that matches their bedroom requirements and is affordable following pre-tenancy assessment.

Children under 16 years will not normally be allowed to occupy high rise blocks above four storey. Each case will be considered on its merits.

Those who require an additional bedroom for a non resident carer to provide overnight care for the Applicant will be assessed on their individual needs.

Applicants or members of the household with a long term disability or illness may be allocated a home with an additional bedroom. Individual circumstances of the Applicant and their family will be assessed and will involve considering not only the nature and severity of the disability but also the nature and frequency of care required. Each case will be considered on its merit.

All awards of an additional bedroom where any occupier is in receipt of Housing Benefit may in certain circumstances be subject to the under-occupation charge.

We will make best use of our housing by making sure applicants are matched to the specific property type that meets their needs. This means we will normally tell you a

minimum or maximum size of household that the property is suitable for. When deciding the size of property you can bid for, we will take into account the number of people included in the application that would reasonably be expected to live with you, their gender and relationships. Our policy on bedroom entitlement is based on the Government's bedroom standard. One bedroom will be allocated for each of the following:

- A cohabiting couple
- An adult (over 16 years)
- Two children under 16 years of the same sex (including future adoption or surrogacy)
- Two children under 10 regardless of sex (including future adoption or surrogacy)
- To allow for overnight care provision where a member of the household has a disability and a recognised support need
- For a child with a disability where there is medical evidence that they need their own room
- A foster child
- A bedroom is required for a child where there is shared care for more than half of a week. This does not include access arrangements.

In some circumstances, we may choose to under occupy properties where:

- A property is not in high demand, or
- A Local Lettings Plan is in place, and
- An applicant has the financial means to under occupy a property

There are specific management reasons why this might happen. This includes where:

- A property has special features that make it particularly suitable for certain applicants
- A property is in a neighbourhood which has a shortage of a particular property type
- An applicant is able to meet the rent for the property

Only those applicants who bid and who fit the criteria will be considered. However, where no specific criteria are attached to a property, then any customer who bids will be considered.

Section 5 – Allocations

32. Advertising properties

Available properties will be advertised on a weekly basis.

Properties will be advertised at:

- www.tyneandwearhomes.org.uk
- South Tyneside Housing Solutions office

Properties will be advertised from 00.01 on a Thursday until 23.59 the following Monday. This period is known as the lettings cycle. Lettings cycles are subject to change or cancellation to accommodate Bank Holidays and other holidays.

As part of our existing agreement with Tyne and Wear Homes, information about recent lets will be published (whilst respecting confidentiality). The information will show the priority band and registration date of Applicants to whom properties have recently been let.

33. Placing a Bid

Applicants can place up to three bids per lettings cycle:

- By telephoning Tyne and Wear Homes on 0300 777 7245 (24 hour automated service)
- Via the website www.tyneandwearhomes.org.uk
- Via text on 07537404367

For those applicants who require support to make a bid they can bid:

- By telephoning the Housing Services Centre on 0300 123 6633
- By email to HomeSolutions@southtyneside.gov.uk
- In person by visiting the Housing Solutions Service

34. Shortlisting and Selection

Once the lettings cycle closes a shortlist of Applicants who have bid for the property is generated.

The property will be allocated to the Applicant who:

- Meets the bedroom criteria, and
- Pre-tenancy assessment indicates sustainability
- Is in the highest priority band, and has
- The earliest banding date

In the event of a tie breaker, the Applicant with the earliest registration date will be successful.

For those being rehoused to enable regeneration or refurbishment, the Applicants tenancy start date will be used as a third tie-breaker

35. Failure to Bid

Where an Applicant fails to bid within the timescale of their priority banding or have refused suitable offers of accommodation, they will be demoted to a lower band. It is important for Applicants to note that South Tyneside Housing Solutions Service can in some circumstances make assisted bids on an Applicant's behalf.

Those not bidding within Bands 1+, 1 and 2 within the requisite timeframe will be demoted to Band 4 if suitable properties were available to bid on within the timeframe of the banding award.

Those placed in Bands 3 or 4, failing to bid within 12 months from the date they are awarded the priority will be automatically removed from the Housing Register.

All decisions leading to an award of a lower priority or removal from the Register will have the right of appeal.

36. Offers

Successful Applicants will be contacted by their preferred method. Applicants will be asked to provide an email or mobile number and in the first instance offers will be made via either email or text to ensure viewings can take place as quickly as possible after a short list has closed.

It is the applicants responsibility to keep their contact details up to date. If South Tyneside Homes does not receive a response to an offer within a reasonable timeframe the offer will be withdrawn and offered to the next suitable applicant.

Once the property has been viewed the Applicant will be expected to make an immediate decision. However in some circumstances applicants may be given 48 hours to accept the offer. If it is declined or there is no response within 48 hours then the offer will be withdrawn as a refusal and offered to the next suitable Applicant on the shortlist.

Offers of accommodation may also be withdrawn if it is found that the information supplied by the Applicant was incorrect or if the customer has not informed South Tyneside Homes of any changes and their current situation does not accurately reflect their Priority Banding.

Section 6 – Miscellaneous Allocations

37. Local Lettings Policies

The Council may introduce Local Lettings Policies in exceptional circumstances for housing management reasons. These may include the need to enable regeneration, to deal with specific property types and to encourage community cohesion or sustainability. Any new Local Lettings Policy will be subject to agreement by the Housing Performance Panel. Lettings will be monitored to ensure that each Local Lettings Policy is complied with. Please refer to Appendix 1 for details of current Local Lettings Policies.

38. Sensitive Lets

There are certain circumstances, in order to ensure community cohesion and sustainability of estates, where a void property can be let outside the normal allocations system. The Assistant Head of Housing - Housing Solutions or Operational Manager for Housing Strategy will determine whether it is appropriate in the circumstances to authorise a sensitive letting.

39. Direct Lets for Exceptional Circumstances

South Tyneside Council's Housing Allocations Policy sets out the general policy assessment of applications and the allocation of housing in South Tyneside. To ensure fairness, the policy is applied consistently. The individual circumstances of each Applicant are considered in every case using the information provided by the Applicant on their application form.

The Policy allows for any provision to be considered and waived in exceptional circumstances and are not required to advertise all vacant properties through Tyne and Wear Homes. Although it is anticipated that most of the available properties will be advertised, there will be circumstances where South Tyneside Council or South Tyneside Homes will need to allocate a property directly to an Applicant without it being advertised. This is done where there are exceptional circumstances. For example, statutorily homeless cases where we may make one direct offer to discharge our housing duty. This is known as a Direct Let.

Each Direct Let will be at the discretion of the Assistant Head of Housing - Housing Solutions (or more senior officer) at South Tyneside Homes. Direct Lets will usually only be used in exceptional circumstances and only one offer of suitable accommodation will be made.

40. Adapted Properties

There are certain types of properties in the Borough that have been purpose built or adapted for people with disabilities.

Properties with any major adaptations will firstly be matched against Applicants needing specialist type of accommodation using the information held by South

Tyneside Council or South Tyneside Homes. Examples of major adaptations include, ramped access, a stair lift, through floor lift and level access shower.

In the event of there being no suitable Applicants requiring this type of accommodation then it will be advertised in the normal way.

Adapted properties that are advertised will state what adaptations have been made to the property and that it is not always possible for the equipment to be removed. Preference will however still be given to the Applicant that best fits the need of the property.

41. Garage Allocations

The Council has garages to let in most areas of the Borough and maintains a waiting list for the allocation of vacant garages. Applicants can apply for a garage online at www.southtyneside.info or they can collect an application form from any local housing office.

Allocations will be made in strict date order. For example, if a garage becomes vacant, then it would be offered to the Applicant (regardless of tenure) from the waiting list, therefore who has waited the longest for a garage in that particular location.

If the garage is refused, then it would be offered to the next in turn on the waiting list.

No garage will be offered to an Applicant who is in arrears with their housing rent (if applicable).

Applicants will be expected to provide proof of vehicle ownership (V5 registration document) as well as appropriate personal identification.

42. Succession and Assignment

The Localism Act reduces the automatic statutory rights of succession for all new secure tenancies from April 2012. There is now only a statutory right of succession to a spouse or partner. There is no statutory right of succession for other family members.

These changes do not affect tenancies that began before 1st April 2012.

Where there is no statutory right of succession, the Council may exercise discretion to offer the tenancy to the person left in occupation on the death of a tenant, or offer an alternative tenancy. Each case will be considered on its own merit. The decision will be made by the relevant Area Manager.

For further information, please telephone South Tyneside Homes or visit one of the local housing offices.

If an occupant of the property is not allowed to succeed to that tenancy they will be asked to join the lettings scheme and be considered under this Policy.

Under some circumstances, customers are also allowed to assign their tenancy to someone else by way of a Mutual Exchange. Applicants can apply for a mutual exchange by visiting www.houseexchange.co.uk.

43. Review and Appeals Procedure

Applicants have the right to be informed about certain decisions that are taken about their application and the right to request a review of these decisions. We will notify applicants of our decisions in writing and provide the reasons why we have reached a decision.

The following decisions all have the right to request a review:

- A decision not to allow someone to join the Housing Register due to eligibility or qualification
- A decision to award reduced Banding or not to extend a Banding
- A decision not to award someone a Direct Let
- A decision to remove a person from the Register other than at the person's request
- A decision relating to being denied a local connection
- A decision on the suitability of the offer of accommodation or a recommendation about the type of property someone can bid for
- Other exceptional circumstances

Applicants have 21 days from the date they are notified of the decision to request a review. This request must be in writing to the person who made the original decision. Applicants should explain why they think the decision was wrong and provide evidence if available. Advice can be provided about external agencies where an Applicant requires assistance to request a review.

The Officer will reconsider their original decision based on the Applicants written submission. If their decision remains the same, the review will automatically be forwarded as an appeal to be dealt with by a more senior independent officer not involved in the original decision.

This appeal will be completed in 21 days. The Applicant will be informed in writing of the outcome, setting out the reasons for the decision and what information has been considered.

Further discretionary appeal

In the event that the Applicant remains dissatisfied with the decision of the Senior Officer then they have the right to request a further discretionary appeal. There is no statutory right to a second appeal and this will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that there are exceptional circumstances or where someone raises a point of principle or law that has not been included within the policy.

Applicants have 21 days from the date they are notified of the appeal decision to request a further discretionary appeal. This request must be in writing to the person who made the original decision. Applicants should explain why they think the decision was wrong and provide evidence of exceptional circumstances or points of principle of law that has not been included within the policy.

A Senior Officer, not involved in the original decision will determine whether there are grounds to grant a further appeal. Where this is not granted they will write to Applicants within 21 days explaining their decision and what information has been considered.

Where an appeal is granted, the appeal will be considered by a panel of three elected members. At the appeal hearing the panel can decide to uphold the appeal or not or vary the review decision. It will only do so on the basis of sound and reliable evidence.

In order to comply with the provisions of S167 of the Housing Act 1996, no Elected Member may participate in a review when (a) the unit of housing accommodation concerned is situated in their electoral ward, or (b) when the person subject to the appeal has their sole or main residence in the Elected Member's electoral ward.

If a customer is not happy with the outcome of their appeal they can either seek a Judicial Review or complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Reassessment of any decision

Applicants may request a review of any decision at any time after the 21 days if they can provide new additional information not considered when the original decision was made. This should be sent to the Officer who made the original decision, who will consider and review their decision.

If the decision remains unchanged as they feel the Applicant has not provided any new information the Applicant will not have the right of review. However, if they have provided new information not previously considered and the decision remains unchanged they will have the right of review. A response will be sent within 21 days.

Section 7 – Additional Information

44. Accessing Information and Data Protection

Applicants on the Housing Register have the right to see any information about them held on either manual or computer records, apart from information provided by a third party, for example a letter from a neighbour. This information can only be disclosed with the third party's consent. Applications should be made in writing. For more information on the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998, please contact South Tyneside Council on 0191 424 6538 or email foi@southtyneside.gov.uk.

45. Accessing Information in Alternative Formats

Applicants who require this document in another language, format or require the use of an interpreter, should contact South Tyneside Council on 0191 424 7385.

46. Comments, Compliments and Complaints

We encourage feedback on all of the services offered by South Tyneside Council and South Tyneside Homes. You can do this by telephoning us on 0191 427 7000 or visiting our website www.southtyneside.info.

Section 8 – Appendices

47. Appendix 1: Current Local Lettings Policies

Current Local Lettings Policies:

Durham Court, Hebburn

Only Applicants aged 55 years or over would be considered for an allocation. Priority will however be given to Applicants 60 years old or over.

Gibson Court, Boldon Colliery

Allocations to the flats in Gibson Court, Boldon Colliery to be restricted to persons aged 55 years or over unless the property is a first floor flat and there is no demand for it from such Applicants, in which case it may be let only to a person or persons aged 40 years and over.

One Bedroom Bungalows, Whitburn

Applicants aged 50 years or over will be able to express their interest in vacant one bedroom bungalows in Whitburn. Priority will however be given to Applicants 60 years old or over.

Extra Care Schemes

The allocation of accommodation to any of the Extra Care schemes in the borough is undertaken through an Extra Care panel, through the allocations protocol following on from a referral from Adult Social Care. The local lettings policy for this accommodation is covered separately within the Extra Care Allocations Protocol, which can be requested from Adult Social Care.

Housing Plus Schemes

Applicants aged 60 years or over will only be eligible for Housing Plus accommodation. Applicants 55 years or above may be considered if they are in receipt of PIP (Personal Independence Payment).

48. Appendix 2 – Eligibility Criteria

An eligibility criterion is set by Central Government and is subject to change. The information below is not exhaustive. Officers implementing the Allocations Policy will assess eligibility in accordance with the most up to date information.

Persons Subject to Immigration Control

A person subject to immigration control is defined as a person who under the Immigration Act 1971 requires leave to enter or remain in the UK. A person subject to immigration control will be ineligible unless they are:

- Already a secure or introductory tenant or an assured tenant of accommodation allocated by a local authority or
- Falls within one of the following classes, as prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State:
 - A person granted refugee status in the UK or humanitarian protection (granted from 6th October 2006)
 - A person with exceptional leave to remain, humanitarian protection (granted prior to 6th October 2006), or discretionary leave and who is not subject to a 'no recourse to public funds' condition, or
 - A person with unconditional leave to remain in the UK (settled status) as long as s/he is habitually resident in the Common Travel Area, other than a person who has been given leave on the basis of a sponsorship undertaking and who has been resident in the UK for less than five years (unless the sponsor has died).

For applications made before 20th April 2006 only, persons who are nationals of a state that was signatory of the European Convention on Social and Medical Assistance (ECSMA) or of the European Social Charter, provided they are habitually resident in the Common Travel Area and lawfully in the UK (Class D) will be eligible. Of the signatories if ECSMA and/or CESC only Turkey, Croatia and Macedonia are not member states of the EEA. The Common Travel Area consists of the UK, the Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Asylum seekers are not eligible persons for allocations because they are subject to immigration control and are therefore not eligible persons unless they fall within the exceptions specified in the regulations.

Other Persons from Abroad

A person who is not subject to immigration control – principally British citizens and certain European Union (EU)/European Economic Area (EEA) nationals – must be habitually resident in the Common Travel Area in order to be eligible for an allocation of accommodation – unless they are exempt from the habitual residence test.

The following people are not subject to immigration control are exempt from the habitual residence test:

- EEA nationals who are classed as workers or self-employed persons the family members of EEA nationals who are classed as workers or self-employed persons.
- EEA nationals who have a right to reside permanently in the UK. These are:
 - Those who have legally resided for a continuous period five years in the UK workers or self-employed persons who have retired or are permanently incapacitated.
 - The family members of the above two categories a person who is in the UK because s/he was deported, expelled or compulsorily removed from another country to the UK.
 - A person who left Montserrat after 1st November 1995 as a result of the volcanic eruption.
 - A person who left Lebanon on or after 12th July 2006 because of the armed conflict there
- British people who were residents of Zimbabwe and who accepted an offer of assistance from the UK Government to settle them in the UK, and who arrive in the UK on or after 28 February 2009 but before 18 March 2011 (The offer of resettlement was only made to people aged 70 years and over, and to younger people who are not able to look after themselves due to health and social care needs).

49. Appendix 3: Medical, Welfare and Hardship Priorities

Critical Medical Need

Where the Applicant or a member of the Applicant's household has an immediately life threatening or progressive condition which is seriously affected by their current housing; Applicants requiring immediate hospital discharge and not able to return to their previous residence in the long-term.

High Medical Need

A high medical need which results in a need to move because current accommodation is not suitable and cannot be made suitable. If there is an imminent risk of health deteriorating as a result of the unsuitability of the Applicant's accommodation should they remain or the unsuitability is such that daily living is severely affected and a change of accommodation could be reasonably expected to alleviate the problem. There is a clear expectation, supported by relevant health professionals and where appropriate, that a change in their accommodation will have significant impact on their health and wellbeing.

High Welfare or Hardship need

A high welfare or hardship need where there is an urgent need to move and where a change of accommodation could be reasonably expected to alleviate the problem.

Medium Medical need

A medical need to move where the applicant's current home is not suitable and it may not be reasonable to be made suitable. The accommodation is causing the Applicant significant problems, but they are managing to some extent. A change in accommodation could reasonably be expected to alleviate or significantly improve the problem.

Medium Welfare or Hardship Need

Medium welfare or hardship need is identified where there is not an urgent need to move but a change of accommodation could be reasonably expected to alleviate the problem.

While taking into account information from other organisations and professionals, the assessment of housing need in relation to the scheme's bandings is made by South Tyneside Homes.