

# PEMBROKESHIRE HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

## POLICY

### ACCESS TO HOUSING

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

##### 1.1 Pembrokehousing's principal aim is the provision of quality homes at affordable rents.

The Welsh Government as regulator seeks a delivery outcome, that we let homes in a fair, transparent and effective way. We are asked to demonstrate that:

- We manage our homes to ensure that they are in demand, maintained, modernized and adapted, as people's needs change.
- We ensure that our adapted homes are available to those who need them
- We keep empty homes to a minimum to maximize the number of homes available and our revenue.
- We work with other organisations to prevent and alleviate homelessness.
- We ensure that access to our homes is fair and open, and we work with others to ensure routes into our housing are well publicized, easy to understand and simple to use.
- We give reasonable preference to those in greatest housing need or are homeless, maximizing choice and sustaining communities.
- We let homes we are proud of. Our ready to let homes meet resident expectations prior to moving in or as soon as practicable thereafter.

##### 1.2 Pembrokehousing currently operates a common choice based allocation policy known as ChoiceHomes@Pembrokehousing (CH@P) with other social housing providers in Pembrokehousing. Participating landlords operate similar, but not identical, allocation policies.

##### 1.3 A separate allocation process applies to "Homes for Life" older persons' housing schemes, see Appendix 1, section 2.

#### 2. THE POLICY

The policy is set out on the attached document, Appendix 1. This document is freely available.

#### 3. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Pembrokehousing's current equal opportunities and diversity policy applies to this service.

#### 4. LIAISON WITH PEMBROKESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

##### 4.1 Pembrokehousing understands the important contribution that it can make towards addressing local housing need in the context of the Pembrokehousing County Council's overall strategic and operational role. Under the new common choice based allocation scheme the local authority have advised that nominations will no longer be required.

##### 4.2 Pembrokehousing is also a partner to the common Choice Based Allocation Scheme known as ChoiceHomes@Pembrokehousing, and will comply as appropriate in the procedures laid down by the User Group. Pembrokehousing will take an active role in periodic reviews of ChoiceHomes @ Pembrokehousing.

## **5.0 TRANSFERS**

- 5.1 Pembrokeshire Housing recognises that the housing needs of its tenants can change as their personal circumstances change. Changes in household size, relationship breakdown, illness or disability, employment or schooling relocation may result in a family's type, size or location ceasing to meet their housing need.
- 5.2 In such circumstances, and subject to availability of appropriate accommodation types, transfer requests will be considered using the Common Choice Based Allocation Scheme known as ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire.
- 5.3 Where tenants are adversely affected by welfare reforms e.g. bedroom tax, we will help people to move to a "right sized" home.

## **6 HOMES MOBILITY**

- 6.1 Pembrokeshire Housing recognises the importance of mobility for employment and social reasons. Pembrokeshire Housing subscribes to [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk), so our tenants can access this service for free.

## **7 HOMELESSNESS AND HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION**

- 7.1 Pembrokeshire Housing, by way of ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire and working with others to meet local objectives within the Council's homeless strategy, will assist Pembrokeshire County Council in assisting to re-house homeless applicants. Where people have been given homeless prevention priority, the Association will assist people into their new home using CH@P
- 7.2 Pembrokeshire Housing's Board of Management will set percentage targets in respect of the number of households with homeless or homeless prevention priority offered permanent homes each year.

## **8 REFUGE**

- 8.1 Liaison between Housing and Hafan Cymru staff will ensure that women leaving the refuge and 2<sup>nd</sup> stage accommodation are re-housed appropriately.

## **9. SUPPORTING PEOPLE PROJECTS**

Pembrokeshire Housing, through the arrangements made in Management Agreements with its Supporting People Partners and as laid down by National Assembly Circular 4/92 will provide, as a minimum, 2.5% or a figure laid down annually by the Board of Management of its net lettings to Move On Accommodation.

The common choice based allocation service, ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire, gives additional priority to people who live in supported housing projects when they are ready to move on to a home of their own

## **10. SPECIAL ALLOCATIONS/ HM FORCES/ KEY WORKERS/ VETERANS**

The majority of applicants re-housed will be dealt with through ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire. Occasionally Pembrokeshire Housing may be required to offer accommodation to persons for whom the usual circumstances do not apply but for whom circumstances warrant their immediate re-housing, such as returning HM Forces or key workers.

Pembrokeshire Housing has been given Social Housing Grant by the Welsh Government specifically to assist veterans. We will work with veterans and veterans organisations to

assist veterans to meet their housing needs using direct lets, in addition to our normal allocation schemes.

In order to ensure the effective and efficient management of dwellings the Housing Director may on occasions, consider departure from the policy. Such departure from the policy will be aimed at ensuring effective management of the dwellings and form part of an overall strategy on sustainable communities.

Examples of instances where discretion may be used are indicated below. The list is not exhaustive and will be amended from time to time at the Housing Director's total discretion.

- To allow particular lettings to particular groups of applicants such that lifestyles do not conflict e.g. letting to similar aged clients.
- To reduce or increase child density of estates or areas within estates.
- To assist long-standing tenants achieve a modest improvement in their accommodation (eg. Move from bedsit to 1 bed flat).
- To let a home where there is no demand from applicants using the normal CH@P allocation criteria e.g. allowing a household to under-occupy a home, where no household of the right size bids.
- To address serious anti-social behaviour/domestic abuse.

10.5 Such cases are approved by the Housing Director or the Housing Manager in her absence.

## 11 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

11.1 Pembrokeshire Housing wishes to help as many people as possible to be appropriately housed in quality affordable homes. It recognizes that:

- (1) Some people in low pay employment do not apply to Pembrokeshire Housing for help to meet their housing needs,
- (2) Smaller rural communities would prefer a more sensitive local lettings policy. Pembrokeshire Housing will make available up to 1 in 2 properties, to be advertised with preference for local people in accordance with our rural local lettings policy
- (3) Sheltered housing schemes provide much more than just a home and tenants who need to transfer to another home value the opportunity to stay within the scheme if possible.
- (4) Older people renting family houses may wish to move into a bungalow or flat and release their former home for letting to another family.
- (5) People wanting to move to home which is the right size for their household, especially those households adversely affected by welfare reform.

11.2 In response to this Pembrokeshire Housing will pilot new approaches to letting a proportion of it's letting to target groups. All schemes will be advertised to meet their target audience. Pembrokeshire Housing's Board of Management will set target lettings figures for each pilot. The outcome of each pilot will be monitored and evaluated. In 2015 seven schemes are proposed:

- (1)the "local worker scheme" to assist people in housing need in low paid employment,
- (2) "local rural lettings schemes" for the first time letting of new homes in rural communities,
- (3) "local lettings schemes" for the first time letting of new homes in Neyland (our first urban local lettings scheme).

(4) a “sustainable community scheme” for the first time letting of new bungalows for older tenants currently living in family houses.

(5) a “sheltered housing priority transfer scheme” to give preference to existing sheltered housing tenants who have a medical or housing need to move to another flat within the same scheme

(6) a “welfare reform priority transfer scheme (new homes) giving priority to existing PCC and PH tenants who are adversely affected by the bedroom tax when letting new smaller homes for the first time

(7) a “welfare reform priority transfer scheme (existing homes) giving priority to existing PCC and PH tenants who are adversely affected by the bedroom tax when re- letting existing smaller homes.

## **12 RECORDING, REPORTS AND MONITORING**

- 12.1 Pembrokeshire Housing will maintain proper records at all stages of the Selection and Allocation process, including full records of Applications received, Home Visits, banding assessments, Transfers, mutual exchanges, Supported Housing move on, and a record of the successful bid which will be filed in the property file.
- 12.2 Performance monitoring reports will be provided to the Board of Management on a quarterly basis.
- 12.3 Equal Opportunities monitoring will be reported to the Board of Management every 12 months. Pembrokeshire Housing’s board of management will set, and periodically review, appropriate targets for lettings to Black Minority Ethnic (BME) households. Comprehensive equality monitoring will be developed as the information is captured, this requires revisions to the application form and the computer software used for CH@P
- 12.4 The Board of Management will receive reports on any proposal to admit to the housing register and/or offer rented accommodation to persons identified in accordance with Welsh Government determination of Schedule 1, Paragraph 2 of the Housing Act 1996, following the guidance set out in Housing association circular RSL 005/10. These will be noted in the permitted payments and benefits register. The Welsh Government will receive an annual monitoring report.

## **13 ADVERTISING**

- 13.1 Pembrokeshire Housing may advertise schemes nearing completion in the local press, and with other local agencies.
- 13.2 Pembrokeshire Housing may bring new developments to the attention of tenants and applicants, via newsletters, leaflets, or special publicity when local lettings schemes are being promoted.
- 13.3 Pembrokeshire Housing will promote sheltered housing and extra care housing for older people, using information leaflets, special publicity e.g. local radio, and raising awareness amongst related health and social care professionals.
- 13.4 Pembrokeshire Housing will co-operate with Pembrokeshire County Council and other partner organisations to jointly promote ChoiceHomes @ Pembrokeshire.

## **14 ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

14.1 Pembrokeshire Housing's current "Information" policy applies to this service.

**15 CUSTOMER FEEDBACK**

15.1 Pembrokeshire Housing welcomes feedback from our customers, whether they are compliments, suggestions for service improvements, or complaints. Pembrokeshire Housing's current customer feedback, rewards, and compensation policy applies to this service

**16 TRAINING**

16.1 All members of staff involved in the administration of Choice Homes @ Pembrokeshire will receive appropriate training in the operation of the system.

**17 REVIEW**

17.1 This policy was approved by the Board of Management in February 2015 and will be subject to review every 12 months.

## **Appendix 1**

### Introduction

This document describes in detail the policies for the allocation of Pembrokeshire Housing's housing within Pembrokeshire. Additional information leaflets are available for special/pilot projects.

Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire Housing, and Cymdeithas Tai Cantref are partners in administering a common choice based allocation policy known as ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire. This means that applicants only need to complete one form to be considered for housing, and use ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire to find their new home with any of these landlords.

Within ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire each landlord has their own allocation policy. These policies are similar to each other, but not identical.

Pembrokeshire Housing owns approximately 2400 houses, flats, and bungalows located in the various towns, villages and hamlets throughout the area. The number and type of properties which become available and the length of each register vary considerably from one area to another.

ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire allows applicants to see what properties become available, bid for properties they are interested in, and get regular feedback on the outcome of these bids. In this way applicants can make informed choices.

This document sets out the rules under which applicants can apply for housing, express choice and preference for housing, and the criteria which will be followed when decisions are made regarding which applicant will be offered vacant properties.

The document is divided into the following sections, each describing a particular aspect of the allocation policy and procedures.

SECTION 1 Finding your new Pembrokeshire Housing home using ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire

SECTION 2 "Homes for Life"

SECTION 3 Mutual Exchanges

SECTION 4 Housing and employment mobility scheme

SECTION 5 Homelessness

SECTION 6 The Allocation Procedure



ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire  
Cartrefi Dewisedig@Sir Benfro



# Finding your new Pembrokeshire Housing home using ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire



## Contents

Section	Page
1. Introduction	9
2. How ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire works	9
3. How to ask for a review	10
4. Joining the Register	10
5. Existing tenants who would like to exchange their home	11
6. Advice on completing an application to join the Register	11
7. Customers living outside Pembrokeshire	11
8. Customers who cannot be allocated accommodation	12
9. Customers who may have special conditions to their application	13
10. Customers with medical reason to move	13
11. How many bedrooms can customers have?	14
12. Can customers have an extra bedroom for health reasons?	15
13. Rural Local lettings Policy	16
14. Urban Local lettings Policy	17
15. Help for older or disabled customers	17
16. Help for others	18
17. Verifying customers information	19
18. What happens if a customer's circumstances change?	19
19. Annual application review	19
20. What happens if a customer provides incorrect information?	20
21. Reasons to suspend a customer from the Register	20
22. What happens when a customer is suspended from the Register	21
23. Placing customers into 'bands'	21
24. The Bronze band	22
25. The Silver band	22
26. The Gold band	22
27. Reducing a customer's banding	23
28. Priority Status	24
29. How properties will be advertised	25
30. How customers bid for advertised properties	25
31. Offers of accommodation	25
32. Withdrawing an invitation	27
33. Once an offer of accommodation has been accepted	27



## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. There are approximately 8,200 houses, flats and bungalows located in the various towns and villages throughout Pembrokeshire that are classed as social housing. The number and type of homes vary considerably from one area to another.
- 1.2. These homes are owned by the different social landlords that operate in Pembrokeshire (the Housing Partners). At the time this policy was agreed the Housing Partners are Pembrokeshire County Council, Pembrokeshire Housing and Cantref. Each of the Housing Partners manages their own stock of homes and have different; terms and conditions of tenancy, rents and service charges, allocation policies and service standards. For further information please contact the individual landlord.
- 1.3. This document describes in detail the policy for the allocation of homes by Pembrokeshire Housing when taking part in the ChoiceHomes@ Pembrokeshire scheme. It gives guidance on who can apply for accommodation and what is likely to happen after they apply. Throughout this document the term Housing Partner refers to something that is common practice across all the landlords referred above, and the term Pembrokeshire Housing refers to things that we do, that other landlords do not necessarily do.
- 1.4. The Housing Partners are committed to providing equality of opportunity and all applicants and tenants will be treated equally and without discrimination. We will deal with all our customers reasonably and will not discriminate on the grounds of a person's race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, cultural background, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability or illness, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity. In order for the Housing Partners to monitor equal opportunities, applicants are requested to complete all relevant parts of the application form.
- 1.5. The Housing Partners will provide reasonable assistance to applicants and tenants requiring assistance to complete the application form. Further information is available on supporting documents.

## 2. How ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire works

- 2.1. Customers who apply and are accepted onto the scheme will join the ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire Register (the Register). The Housing Partners manage the Register as a joint partnership. This means that customers will need to complete only one application form to seek properties owned by any of the Housing Partners.
- 2.2. When a customer is accepted onto the Register they will be placed in one of three 'bands'. Which band will depend on the customer and their households housing need, based on the information provided on their application form and any other information provided. The bands are Bronze, Silver and Gold, with customers in the Bronze band having the lowest priority and those in the Gold band having the highest. More information on the bands can be found in **Sections 23-26**.

2.3. Some customers may be given extra priority for housing for a short period of time because of their circumstances. More information can be found in **Section 27 – Customers with Priority Status**.

2.4. When a property is advertised, customers on the Register who would like to live there can apply (make a 'bid') for the property. The customer with the highest need and the earliest date of application who has bid for the property will then be offered a tenancy.

### 3. How to ask for a review

3.1. During the process decisions will have to be made by the Housing Partners in relation to the customer's application. If a customer does not agree with any of these decisions they should, to begin with, contact a housing officer at the Housing Partner they passed their application to. The officer will check the information and try to resolve the issue.

3.2. Customers who are still dissatisfied have the right to request a review of any of the following decisions made by the Housing Partners under this Policy:

- a. Admission to the Register
- b. Suspension from the Register
- c. Removal from the Register
- d. Assessment of banding
- e. Reduction in banding
- f. Award of Priority Status
- g. Removal of Priority Status
- h. Eligibility for an allocation
- i. Suitability of accommodation offered to customers with Priority Status
- j. Any other decision about the facts of the customer's case

The above list is not exhaustive.

3.3. A request for a review of any of the above decisions must be made within 21 days of the original decision. In the request the customer should explain why the decision is wrong and provide any additional evidence that may be relevant to the review. The review will be undertaken on the basis of all facts known at the time. The Housing Partners aim to give customers written notification of the review decision within 8 weeks of the date the request for the review was made.

3.4. Reviews will be undertaken by a senior housing officer or manager who was not involved in the original decision.

### 4. Joining the Register

4.1. Anyone aged 16 and above can apply to join the Register subject to the exclusions in **Section 8 - Customers who cannot be allocated accommodation**.

4.2. Introductory or assured shorthold tenants of any social landlord cannot join the Register unless they have held their existing tenancy for at least 12 months. The

Housing Partners may reduce this period having regard to the social, financial and medical circumstances of the customer and members of their household.

4.3. Secure or Assured tenants of any social landlord cannot join the register unless they have lived in their current home for at least 12 months. The Housing Partners may reduce this period having regard to the social, financial and medical circumstances of the customer and members of their household.

4.4. If at any time a customer does not wish their name to remain on the Register the customer must inform in writing one of the Housing Partners.

## **5. Existing tenants who would like to exchange their home**

5.1. Secure or Assured tenants of any social landlord have the right to exchange their home with another secure or assured tenant, and may do this at any time after their tenancy has commenced. To access this service customers do need to join the Register, and should contact and receive written consent from their landlord before undertaking an exchange.

## **6. Advice on completing an application to join the Register**

6.1. Customers must be on the Register before they can bid for homes. Application forms to join the Register can be obtained from any of the Housing Partners.

6.2. If a customer has any difficulty understanding or completing the registration form, or requires assistance, this can be obtained from the Housing Partners or other agencies.

6.3. The application form must be completed in full as all the information asked for on the form is required for customers to join the Register and proof of identity will be required. If the form is not fully completed, the application will not be registered until all information is provided.

6.4. If at any point information comes to the attention of the Housing Partners which will affect a customer's banding or right to be on the Register, the customer will be notified in writing of the change of banding or removal from the Register.

6.5. If a customer on the Register signs a tenancy agreement for a property let by one of the Housing Partners, their current application will then be finished and will be removed from the Register. This will not apply if the property is 'move-on' or supported accommodation or an interim solution.

## **7. Customers living outside Pembrokeshire**

7.1. Customers living outside the County can still apply to join the Register and will be considered in the same way as current residents. However as there is high demand for properties in Pembrokeshire, customers with the same banding and/or priority status (see **Sections 23 to 28**) who meet the following criteria will be considered first:

- a. Customers who have lived continuously in Pembrokeshire as their principal residence for 12 months prior to making an application.
- b. Customers who need to move to a specific area of Pembrokeshire to provide or receive essential support. 'Essential support' will be support provided to or by a family member which allows the receiver to continue living independently with little or no additional help from health or social services.
- c. Returning armed forces personnel with a family connection to Pembrokeshire or guaranteed permanent employment prior to discharge.
- d. Customers escaping domestic abuse.
- e. Customers released from prison who were resident in Pembrokeshire for 12 months immediately prior to detention and are not subject to **Sections 20 and 21**.
- f. Customers who have to move to Pembrokeshire to take up key positions, which contribute to the provision and expansion of certain industries, e.g. agriculture and public services, for which there is a shortage of local people with the necessary skills (subject to confirmation from the Local Authority's Economic Development Team) and for whom social housing is the only option.
- g. Customers who are to be re-housed as part of arrangements set out by the Multi Agency Public Protection Panel (MAPPP) (see **Section 9 - Customers who may have special conditions attached to their application**).
- h. Customers who were previously resident in Pembrokeshire but moved outside the county to move-on accommodation or supported housing that addressed their support needs, and who wish to return to Pembrokeshire when that support finishes.

## **8. Customers who cannot be allocated accommodation**

- 8.1. Certain people, by law, are not allowed to be allocated accommodation. These include:
- a. most people who are subject to immigration control, i.e. they need the permission of the UK government to enter and remain in the United Kingdom and
  - b. people who have not made their usual home in the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Irish Republic.
- 8.2. For those customers who subsequently become eligible to be allocated accommodation the registration date of their application will be the date they became eligible (this date will be used to determine their position within the bands relative to other customers).
- 8.3. If customers are uncertain whether they are eligible for an allocation or require further information, they should contact one of the Housing Partners. Please note that the Housing Partners operate similar, but not identical housing allocation schemes, and customers may wish to refer to individual landlords for details of each policy e.g. Pembrokeshire Housing operates a Local Worker Scheme to assist people in local employment to find their new home
- 8.4. A customer awaiting a MAPPP assessment will not be able to join the Register until such an assessment has been carried out and any recommendations have been adhered to (see **Section 9** for further information).

## 9. Customers who may have special conditions attached to their application

- 9.1. Partnerships are in place between relevant agencies to manage high risk offenders in the community.
- 9.2. The Housing Partners will have due regard for the safety of residents to ensure a responsible approach is taken to housing such offenders.
- 9.3. A customer who is recognised to be a person who presents significant risk to others, or themselves, will not be able to bid for accommodation until the MAPPP has assessed the risks associated with them. The Housing Partners will co-operate in considering suitable accommodation options in these cases. The customer must accept any recommendations from the MAPPP. No accommodation will be allocated if the customer refuses to consent to a risk assessment being completed.
- 9.4. Some customers who are identified via the MAPPP may not be able to bid for properties in the normal way. Suitable properties will be identified, and where necessary, offers will be made under **Section 15 - Help for others**.
- 9.5. Consideration will be given to the customer's support package, the availability of suitable accommodation, as well as the risk of re-offending. Further consideration will be given to the location of possible accommodation. This will take into consideration the type of offence and the risk to the local community if the offender is re-housed.

## 10. Customers with medical reasons to move

- 10.1. A customer's banding may be increased if they have a medical reason to move.
- 10.2. When a customer indicates that there are medical issues affecting a member of the household to be taken into account in the assessment of their application, the Housing Partners will consider the effect of the medical issues faced by individual household members on the whole household.
- 10.3. Any health information provided by the customer may be verified by a home visit or by requesting confirmation from a doctor or other health professional. Confirmation may be required from a medical professional that the customer's medical condition is affected by their current housing situation and that moving will alleviate their condition.
- 10.4. The Housing Partners may refer an application and medical information to a medical professional for further advice and guidance where the nature and impact of a medical condition on the customer's housing circumstances is not immediately apparent. However the final decision will rest with the Housing Partners.
- 10.5. A medical condition, however severe, will not be taken into account in the banding of the application if:
  - a. moving to different accommodation will not improve or alleviate the condition,
  - b. the customer already lives in suitable accommodation, or

- c. it is reasonable and practical to tailor the current accommodation within a reasonable time such that it becomes suitable for the customer or the member of their household.

10.6. The medical assessment will consider the severity of the medical condition, the effect current housing has on it and the level of improvement moving will have on the condition.

10.7. If a change in banding is awarded on medical grounds it will only apply to suitable accommodation that will alleviate the medical condition. E.g. if a person has mobility problems (stairs), the increase in banding will only apply to ground floor flats or bungalows or adapted properties.

## 11. How many bedrooms can customers have?

11.1. Customers are entitled to one bedroom for each of the following within their households:

- a. A married couple or two people cohabiting as if they were married
- b. Civil partners or two people cohabiting as if they were civil partners
- c. Each person aged 16 or over not falling within sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) above
- d. Two children of the same sex under the age of 16
- e. Two children regardless of sex under the age of 10
- f. Any additional child who cannot share with another child

11.2. For example, a married couple with sons 12 and 6, and daughters 5, 3 and 1 require accommodation as follows:

Married couple	1 bedroom	4 bedroom property required
Sons aged 12 & 6	1 bedroom	
Daughters aged 5 & 3	1 bedroom	
Daughter aged 1	1 bedroom	

11.3. The customer's current accommodation will be assessed in accordance with paragraph 11.1 above and an increase in banding will only be awarded where there are not enough bedrooms or too many. The banding will be:

- a. Silver if they need one extra bedroom.
- b. Gold if they need two or more extra bedrooms.
- c. Gold if they are a Housing Partner Tenant and have more bedrooms than their assessed need and wish to move to a property that meets their assessed need.

11.4. The relevant Housing Partner may carry out a home visit to assess the customer's housing need.

11.5. Where a customer or a member of their family is pregnant, an additional bedroom in line with the rest of this policy will be considered from 4 months prior to the expected date of birth.

11.6. If separated parents share childcare, the child will only be considered when calculating the number of bedrooms for the household of the designated main carer. If care is shared equally the main carer will be the parent that receives child benefit for that child.

11.7. A parent with access to children from a previous relationship will be eligible to one additional bedroom (regardless of the number of children in the household), subject to:

- a. Those with other children in the permanent household will only be considered for an extra bedroom if the 'Access Child' is unable to share, based on the bedroom criteria within this policy.
- b. Proof of contact arrangements must be provided from the court, solicitor, social worker or the parent who is entitled to the child benefit payment to indicate that there is regular and frequent overnight access to children (3 nights per week or more).
- c. In areas where there are flats in the social housing stock, parents with access children will only be considered for this type of property.
- d. The landlord explaining all the likely costs involved in renting and running the property, discussing the prospective tenant's income and ability to pay these costs, and allowing them to decide whether they can afford to rent the property. Pembrokeshire Housing may not offer a tenancy if there is evidence that the prospective tenant would not be able to sustain their tenancy e.g. arrears or other debts at the current home
- e. The allocation of a property under this section would only be made where the properties have received no bids from households who directly match the size of the property under the eligibility criteria.

11.8. Customers whose age qualifies them for state pension credit may be considered for designated older persons accommodation that has 1 bedroom more than their assessed need.

11.9. Customers may not be considered for properties that have 1 or more bedrooms less than the households needs, unless in the opinion of the relevant Housing Partner the property will better meet their needs than their existing property, e.g. same number of rooms but rooms are larger; or currently have 2 bedrooms, have a need for 4 bedrooms, so 3 bedrooms would be an improvement. Applicants banding will be adjusted to reflect their new "assessed need."

## **12. Can customers have an extra bedroom for health reasons?**

12.1. Customers may be considered for an additional bedroom where accommodation for a non-resident carer is needed. The person in need of care must in the opinion of the relevant Housing Partner be so severely disabled physically or mentally ill that they need a carer to attend on them for prolonged or repeated periods at night to be eligible. Proof of carer arrangements will be required.

12.2. Customers may be considered for an additional bedroom on medical grounds. The medical condition must be in the opinion of the relevant Housing Partner so severe that it means that the person cannot share with any other member of the household, as set out in Section 11. This also includes where an additional bedroom is required for a significant amount of equipment. Supporting evidence will be required. If an additional bedroom is awarded the Landlord will explain the likely associated costs. Customers bidding for Pembrokeshire Housing homes are subject to these requirements:

- a. Families with children aged up to 18 years will be given preference to adult only households when bidding for Pembrokeshire Housing family houses.
- b. The landlord explaining all the likely costs involved in renting and running the property, discussing the prospective tenant's income and ability to pay these costs, and allowing them to decide whether they can afford to rent the property. Pembrokeshire Housing may not offer a tenancy if there is evidence that the prospective tenant would not be able to sustain their tenancy e.g. arrears or other debts at the current home
- c. The allocation of a property under this section would only be made where the properties have received no bids from households who directly match the size of the property under the eligibility criteria.

### **13. Rural Local Lettings**

13.1. This policy provides for customers with a local connection to a rural area to be given an additional preference in respect of properties available for letting in that area in order to sustain rural communities and assist those who require or provide support.

13.2. For the purposes of this policy, a rural area is those areas specified for the purposes of section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985 in the Schedule to The Housing (Right to Acquire and Right to Buy) (Designated Rural Areas and Designated Regions) (Wales) Order 2003. This includes all areas in Pembrokeshire except Haverfordwest, Merlins Bridge, Pembroke, Pembroke Dock, Fishguard, Goodwick, Neyland and Milford Haven.

13.3. Pembrokeshire Housing will during the period April 2015 to March 2016 make available a maximum of 1 in 2 available rural homes for letting under Pembrokeshire Housing's Rural Local Lettings policy

13.4. Additional preference under the Rural Local Lettings Policy will generally be given to customers in the Silver and Gold bands and those with Priority Status. Customers who are currently private sector tenants who have at least a Bronze Band will also be given additional preference.

13.5. A customer will qualify for a local connection to the rural area (electoral ward) if you or a member of your household:

- a. Have lived within the area as your only or principal home, continuously for the last 5 years, or



- b. Can demonstrate that you lived in the area for at least 10 years previously, before moving away, and that you have one of the following reasons to return:
  - i. Your permanent job (at least 16 hours per week), or unpaid work for the emergency services or coast guard, is located within the area, and you have a need to live close to work. This can include volunteering for the emergency services and RNLI.
  - ii. A child who is a member of your household attends a school that is located within the area, and they currently have to travel more than 10 miles each way to attend this school. The child must be expected to attend this school for at least the next 3 years.
  - iii. You have a parent or close family member (grandparents, parents, siblings, child) who lives in the area as their only or principal home and who would provide support to or receive support from you. This support:
    - 1) must not be provided by others (including professional care), and
    - 2) would dramatically improve the quality of life of the person receiving the support, and
    - 3) must not currently be sustainable because you currently live too far away to reasonably provide or receive this support.

13.6. When a property is advertised under the Rural Local Lettings Policy:

- a. A customer with a local connection with the rural area in which the property is situated and whose needs match the property will be given priority over customers who do not have a local connection to that area.
- b. If two or more customers with a local connection bid for the same property, the process in **Section 30 - Offers of accommodation** will be applied to those customers.
- c. If no one with a local connection bids for the property, the process in **Section 30 - Offers of accommodation** will be undertaken with those customers who have placed a bid.

13.7. When new properties are built in rural areas the Housing Partners may operate a separate local lettings policy to allocate these homes for the first time.

## 14. Urban Local lettings Policy

14.1. When new properties are built in urban areas Pembrokeshire Housing may operate a separate local lettings scheme to allocate these homes for the first time

## 15. Help for older or disabled customers

15.1. A number of properties managed by the Housing Partners have been specifically developed or adapted to meet the needs of customers who require specialist housing. When these properties become available they may not be advertised in the usual way outlined in this policy. Instead the Housing Partners will match the specific needs of the customer to a specialised property that is available and offer

it directly to the customer without going through the bidding process. This will assist the Housing Partners in making the best use of limited stock.

15.2. The types of property this type of letting may apply to are limited to:

- a. Homes for life schemes
- b. Specialised furnished tenancies
- c. Disabled adapted properties
- d. Sheltered Housing
- e. Supported Housing schemes

## **16. Help for others**

16.1. Where a customer has been identified by a Housing Partner as having a need for housing which cannot be met through the normal operation of this policy, the relevant Housing Partner may allocate a property to the customer without going through the normal advertising and bidding process.

16.2. Such an allocation must be recommended by one of the Housing Partners and agreed by another Housing Partner.

16.3. This may apply to a range of cases, for example where there is exceptional hardship, a change from a joint tenancy to a sole tenancy, for the effective management of housing stock or where the safety of residents is a concern. Each case will be considered on its individual merit.

16.4. This does not apply where the case falls within **Section 14 - Help for older or disabled customers**.

16.5. Where a customer has been placed in temporary accommodation to enable the Local Authority to meet its homelessness duty to them, the relevant Housing Partner may grant the customer an introductory, assured shorthold or assured tenancy of the property the customer occupies.

16.6. Where a customer who is a tenant of a Housing Partner has been temporarily decanted to alternative accommodation to enable building works to be carried out, the Housing Partner may at their discretion grant the customer an introductory, secure, assured shorthold or assured tenancy of the alternative accommodation provided it meets the customer's housing needs and they are on the Register.

16.7. Where a customer has been left in a home let by a Housing Partner following the death of the tenant and they meet all the following conditions;

- a. The customer is a family member (as defined by s113 Housing Act 1985) of the deceased tenant.
- b. The customer resides in the property.
- c. The customer resided in the property for at least 12 months immediately before the tenant died.
- d. The customer has no right to succeed to the tenancy.
- e. The customer's bedroom eligibility directly matches the size of the property.
- f. To move would cause exceptional hardship.

The Housing Partner may at their discretion grant the customer an introductory, assured or assured shorthold tenancy.

## 17. Verifying customers information

17.1. At any point before a customer becomes a tenant, checks may be carried out by the Housing Partners as a minimum to:

- a. Confirm information provided on the application form.
- b. Confirm that they meet the eligibility criteria for the property they have been offered.
- c. Verify there are no current, or previous, rent arrears or other breaches of tenancy.
- d. Verify there is no current, or previous, property damage.
- e. Verify there has been no harassment/anti-social behaviour or relevant criminal activity.
- f. Ensure the customer can afford the rent charged for the property.

## 18. What happens if a customer's circumstances change?

18.1. It is important that the information provided by the customer relating to the application is accurate and updated at all times as this can affect the band customers are placed in, and therefore their chances of being housed.

18.2. If a customer's circumstances change after applying to join the Register, for instance, they move or their household composition changes, they must contact any of the Housing Partners to complete a Change of Circumstances Form or update application form. Once the completed form is returned the application will be re-assessed and the customer will be informed of any changes to their assessed need or banding.

18.3. If a member of the customer's household makes a separate application to join the Register in his/her own right, they will no longer be considered a part of the customer's household for re-housing and will be removed from the customer's application.

18.4. Where the Housing Partners have been notified that the customer's circumstances have changed and are awaiting a completed Change of Circumstances Form, the customer will be suspended from the Register (see **Section 21 - What happens when a customer is suspended from the Register**). If the Change of Circumstances Form is not returned within 2 months of the notification, the customer's application will be removed from the Register. The customer will be given written notification of this decision and have the right to request a review (see **Section 3 - How to ask for a review**).

## 19. Annual application review

19.1. The Housing Partners will review each application on the Register every 12 months to ensure that information is current and up-to-date. Customers will be sent a review form which they must complete and return. If the customer does not return a completed review form within 4 weeks, the Housing Partners will send the customer a reminder letter. If the completed review form is not returned within 4 weeks of the date of the reminder letter, their application will be cancelled.

Customers will then need to complete a new application form if they wish to be considered for housing and the date the new form is received will become the date used to determine a customer's position within the bands relative to other customers.

19.2. Customers have the right to request a review of a decision to remove their application from the Register (see **Section 3 - How to ask for a review**).

## **20. What happens if a customer provides incorrect information?**

20.1. If a customer knowingly or recklessly makes a false statement in connection with an application for an allocation, or knowingly withholds information which the Housing Partners have reasonably required the customer to give in connection with an allocation of accommodation:

- a. they commit an offence, the maximum penalty for which is currently a fine of £5,000;
- b. their application may be suspended from the Register; and
- c. their landlord will seek to recover possession of any property let to them as a result of that allocation.

20.2. Customers have the right to request a review of a decision to suspend their application from the Register (see **Section 3 - How to ask for a review**).

## **21. Reasons to suspend a customer from the Register**

21.1. The Housing Partners may suspend a customer from the Register where satisfied that the customer, or a member of their household, committed unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him unsuitable to be a tenant.

21.2. The customer does not need to have been a tenant of one of the Housing Partners when the unacceptable behaviour took place.

21.3. The unacceptable behaviour must be behaviour that would have entitled a Housing Partner to a court order for possession had the customer been a secure or assured tenant at the time.

21.4. Unacceptable behaviour is:

- a. Non-payment of rent.
- b. Breach of a tenancy condition.
- c. Causing nuisance or annoyance
- d. Conviction for immoral or illegal use of the premises.
- e. Conviction for a criminal offence committed at the premises or in its locality.
- f. Domestic violence.
- g. Damaging the property.
- h. Damaging the landlord's furniture (if provided).
- i. Obtaining a tenancy by deception.
- j. Paying a premium on mutual exchange.
- k. Being guilty of inappropriate conduct as a service tenant.

This list is not exhaustive.

21.5. In deciding whether the behaviour is serious enough to make the customer unsuitable to be a tenant, the Housing Partners will take into account how much time has elapsed since the behaviour was committed and the customer's recent behaviour.

21.6. A customer who is suspended from the Register will be notified in writing of the suspension and its length and may request a review of that decision (see **Section 3 - How to ask for a review**).

## **22. What happens when a customer is suspended from the Register**

22.1. A customer who is suspended from the Register has no right to be allocated a property or to participate in bidding for a property.

22.2. Customers suspended from the Register will normally be suspended for a minimum period of 6 months.

22.3. If a customer is suspended from the Register the Housing Partners will inform them:

- a. When a review of their suspension will take place; and
- b. What they need to do to have their suspension lifted

22.4. Customers may ask the Housing Partners to review their suspension earlier if they believe they have met the requirements to have their suspension lifted.

22.5. The new registration date of the application will be the date the suspension is lifted (this date will be used to determine their position within the bands relative to other customers).

## **23. Placing customers into 'bands'**

23.1. Customers will be awarded priority for an allocation by being placed in the Bronze, Silver or Gold band, with customers in the Bronze Band having the lowest priority and those in the Gold Band having the highest

23.2. Some customers may be given extra priority for housing for a short period of time because of their circumstances. More information can be found in Section 28 – Customers with Priority Status.

23.3. Within each band, priority will be in date order of when their housing application form was received. Therefore those customers who have been waiting the longest will be placed highest within each band.

23.4. The Housing Partners may review a customer's banding at any time. If a customer's banding is changed, they will be notified of this in writing.

23.5. Customers have the right to request a review of a decision on which Band to place them in (see Section 3 - How to ask for a review).

## 24. The Bronze band

24.1. Customers will be placed in this band for one or more of the following reasons:

- a. The customer occupies rented accommodation, they have been assessed as needing accommodation of the same size and they have no pressing medical, financial or social need to move.
- b. Customers financially equipped to deal with their own housing needs. For this we will look at the household earnings, value of the customer's existing property (if they own it), savings and other assets.
- c. The customer is an owner-occupier and has no pressing medical, financial or social need to move.
- d. The customer lives in 'move on' accommodation or supported housing and has not been assessed by their current support/housing provider as being ready to move to alternative accommodation.

## 25. The Silver band

25.1. Customers will be placed in this band for one or more of the following reasons:

- a. The customer needs social housing in a specific area of Pembrokeshire because of a need to move for medical or welfare reasons.
- b. The customer is sharing accommodation with family and/or friends and/or others who will not to be rehoused with the customer. This does not include customers who are lodgers.
- c. Customers who are determined to be intentionally homeless.
- d. An environmental health officer has decided that a category 2 Hazard as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System exists at the accommodation that the customer occupies.
- e. The customer has a medical condition where re-housing would assist in alleviating that condition (medical evidence may be required to show how re-housing would alleviate the condition) (this is subject to the conditions in **Section 10 - Customers with medical reasons to move**).
- f. The customer needs to move because they cannot afford to live at their current accommodation.
- g. Customers at risk of homelessness as established by the Local Authority e.g. served with a valid notice.
- h. Customers in accommodation that has 1 bedroom less than their assessed need.

## 26. The Gold band

26.1. Customers will be placed in this band for one or more of the following reasons:

- a. Customers who are currently determined to be unintentionally homeless by the Local Authority. This priority will be awarded for 6 months after which their banding will be adjusted to reflect their current circumstances. The Local Authority may increase this period having regard to the social, financial and medical circumstances of the customer and members of their household.
- b. The customer has been left in a home let by a Housing Partner following the death of the tenant. The customer must also meet all of these 4 conditions;

- i. The customer is a family member (as defined by s113 Housing Act 1985) of the deceased tenant.
  - ii. The customer resides in the property.
  - iii. The customer resided in the property for at least 12 months immediately before the tenant died.
  - iv. The customer has no right to succeed to the tenancy.
- c. The customer has been left in a home let by a Housing Partner, after the tenant has been admitted to residential care and there is no reasonable prospective of the tenant returning to reside at the property. The customer must also meet all of these 4 conditions;
  - i. The customer is a family member (as defined by s113 Housing Act 1985) of the tenant.
  - ii. The customer resides in the property.
  - iii. The customer resided in the property for at least 12 months immediately before the tenant was admitted into residential care.
  - iv. The customer has no right to be assigned the tenancy.
- d. The customer is a tenant of a Housing Partner, is under-occupying the property and wishes to move to accommodation that meets their assessed need.
- e. Households with children under 18 years who are tenants in private rented sector accommodation and who are sharing a kitchen, bathroom and/or toilet with other households (not including lodgers and/or friends) not related to the customer.
- f. An environmental health officer has decided that a category 1 Hazard as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System exists at the accommodation that the customer occupies
- g. The customer is experiencing severe harassment or threats of violence which are likely to be carried out where moving out of their existing accommodation is the only reasonable way of alleviating the harassment or threats.
- h. The customer has a medical condition where re-housing is essential to alleviating the condition (medical evidence may be required to show how re-housing would alleviate the condition) (this is subject to the conditions in **Section 10 - Customers with medical reasons to move**).
- i. Customers in accommodation that has at least 2 bedrooms less than their assessed need.
- j. The customer meets five or more criteria in the Silver band.

## 27. Reducing a customer's banding

27.1. Any customer who deliberately makes their situation worse in order to increase their banding will have their banding reduced to what it would have been before.

27.2. A customer who is a tenant of a Housing Partner and who is subject to a suspended possession order will have their banding reduced to the Bronze band until the order has been complied with or expired.

27.3. When deciding whether to reduce a customer's banding, the Housing Partners will take into account, amongst other things, the social, financial and medical circumstances of the customer's household.

27.4. Any reduction in banding will normally be for a minimum period of 6 months.

27.5. If a customer's banding is reduced the Housing Partners will inform them:

- a. When a review of their reduction will take place; and
- b. What they need to do to have their reduction lifted

27.6. Customers may ask the Housing Partners to review their reduction in banding earlier if they believe they have met the requirements to have it lifted.

27.7. The Local Authority's statutory homeless duty will take precedence over a reduction in banding.

27.8. Customers have the right to request a review of a decision on to reduce their banding (see **Section 3 - How to ask for a review**).

## 28. Priority Status

28.1. The purpose of the Priority Status is to help certain customers in specific situations to access social housing. Priority Status is separate to a customer's Bronze, Silver or Gold banding and gives priority over other customers without Priority Status when bidding. All of the reasons for granting Priority Status to a customer are equal. One reason will not take precedence over another. Customers can only be granted Priority Status for one reason at a time.

28.2. A customer may be awarded Priority Status if:

- a. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to secure accommodation for a customer under homeless legislation.
- b. The customer is engaging with the Local Authority to prevent future homelessness.
- c. The customer is a young person leaving the care of Pembrokeshire County Council and a referral has been made by the Social Services Department.
- d. The customer is in move-on accommodation or supported housing, is engaged with the local authority to look at their housing options, and where the support agency involved has advised the Housing Partners that the customer is ready to move on.
- e. The customer is in hospital and their home is unsuitable for them to occupy on leaving hospital for health reasons.
- f. The Local Authority is under a duty to rehouse the customer (other than under homelessness legislation).
- g. Pembrokeshire Housing is under an obligation or duty to rehouse the customer

28.3. Priority Status will normally be granted to a customer for a maximum period of 6 months but the Housing Partners may grant it for a longer period in exceptional circumstances.

28.4. If two or more customers with Priority Status bid for the same property, the customer who was first awarded their current Priority Status will be successful. Where such customers were granted Priority Status on the same date, the customer who was first placed on the Register will be successful.



28.5. The Housing Partners may remove a customer's Priority Status if they are satisfied that there is no entitlement to it. If they are minded to do so, they will inform the customer of this and their reasons for the decision and invite the customer's views before making their decision. If they decide to remove the Priority Status, they will give the customer written notification of the decision and the reasons for it.

28.6. The Housing Partners may bid for a property on behalf of a customer with Priority Status if the customer has not made any bids for suitable accommodation for 2 void editions (2 adverts) and suitable properties have been advertised during that time. The Housing Partners may extend this timescale in exceptional circumstances.

28.7. If a customer's bid for a property (or one made on their behalf by the Housing Partners) is successful and they refuse an offer of that property, their Priority Status will be removed if the Housing Partners decide that the property is suitable for them. The Housing Partners recommend that any customer with Priority Status thinking of refusing an offer should first discuss this with a housing officer.

28.8. Customers have the right to request a review of a decision to remove Priority Status (see Section 3 - How to ask for a review). The property may not be held available pending the outcome of the review.

## **29. How properties will be advertised**

29.1. Properties which customers may bid for are currently advertised on the ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire website, at the offices of the Housing Partners and by email to different agencies and organisations that support vulnerable groups. Other ways of advertising are likely to be developed during the life of this policy.

## **30. How customers bid for advertised properties**

30.1. Customers may bid for a property by contacting one of the Housing Partners or bidding on the ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire website. In order to bid, customers will need their 'customer number' which appears on correspondence from the Housing Partners. Other ways of placing bids may be developed during the life of this policy.

30.2. Bids must be placed before the closing date which will appear in the advertisement for the property.

## **31. Offers of accommodation**

31.1. After the closing date, the Housing Partners will compile a shortlist of eligible customers who have bid for the property based on their banding, if they have Priority Status, and the length of time on the Register.

31.2. For customers bidding on Pembrokeshire Housing homes getting a good match between the type and size of home and type and size of household is a

consideration. In addition to the conditions specified previously in this policy, Pembrokeshire Housing will;

- a. give reasonable preference to households of right size for the size of home,
- b. give reasonable preference to families with (full time) children (aged 18 and under) who bid for family houses,
- c. give reasonable preference to adult only households who bid for flats, and families with children aged 10 or over, recognising that this type of home is more difficult for families with younger children.
- d. give reasonable preference to people of statutory retirement age who bid for our older person's and retirement housing.

31.3.If a customer is successful they will be contacted by the relevant Housing Partner to tell them they are being considered for the tenancy of the property. (This is referred to below as the 'invitation').

31.4.Customers will not be considered for a property if they, or a member of their household, owe:

- a. more than 8 weeks 'net rent', or
- b. more than £100 in other charges e.g. damage/former tenants arrears

in respect of a property which is, or has been, let to them by one of the Housing Partners or another landlord. 'Net rent' is the rent which the tenant is liable to pay after deduction of any housing benefit which has been awarded. In applying this policy regard will be made to the social, financial and medical circumstances of the customer's household, at the discretion of the Housing Partners.

31.5.Customers must indicate they would be willing to take up the tenancy of any property they have been considered for within a set period from the date of the invitation. The relevant Housing Partner will inform the customer how long this period is when the invitation is made. The period may be extended at the discretion of the Housing Partner. If the customer does not indicate they would be willing to take up the tenancy, the invitation will be withdrawn and made to the next successful customer on the list.

31.6.A Housing Partner may obtain character and financial references about the customer and/or members of the customer's household.

31.7.A customer who has indicated they would be willing to take up the tenancy of a property will be invited to view it, before a tenancy is offered to them.

31.8.Customers who do not indicate they would be willing to take up the tenancy of a property or do not accept the offer of a tenancy will remain on the Register.

## **32. Withdrawing an invitation**

32.1.A Housing Partner may withdraw an invitation at any time if the Housing Partner is not satisfied that:

- a. the customer is eligible for an allocation; or
- b. the information supporting the application is not true.

32.2. There may be other reasons for withdrawing an invitation, for example if the current tenant withdraws their notice to leave the property.

32.3. Customers have the right to request a review of a decision to withdraw an invitation (see **Section 3 - How to ask for a review**).

### **33. Once an offer of accommodation has been accepted**

33.1. Once a customer has satisfied any verification checks under **Section 16 - Verifying customers information** and has accepted an offer of accommodation, the Housing Partner involved will explain to the customer the process of taking up their new tenancy.

33.2. When a customer is granted a tenancy by one of the Housing Partners as a result of an allocation under this policy their application is no longer needed and will be removed from the Register.

# SECTION 2 “HOMES FOR LIFE”

## 1.0 Eligibility criteria

- 1.1 “Homes for Life” housing is for older persons. Applications will normally only be accepted from single persons aged 55 years or older, and 2 or more person households where all persons in the household are aged 55 years or older and,
- 1.2 Persons should be eligible to join the Pembrokeshire Common Housing Register and,
- 1.3 A person in the household should have had an adult social care needs assessment, and be in receipt of or be eligible for adult social care services, and where a move from their current accommodation to the “Homes for Life” scheme would reduce the need for provision of existing service for the individual.

## 2.0 Application process

- 2.1 All applicants should apply to be assessed for both housing and social care needs.
- 2.2 The standard application form for the Pembrokeshire Common Housing Register will be used to assess the applicants’ housing needs. This assessment will be undertaken by housing staff from any of the social landlords participating in the Pembrokeshire Common Housing Register. Normal service standards will apply e.g. time take to process the application.
- 2.3 Applicants’ assessment of need to care services is normally undertaken by Pembrokeshire County Council using the unified assessment process. Pembrokeshire County Council’s eligibility criteria will apply, as will normal service standards.
- 2.4 Once both housing and care needs have been assessed, applications will be assessed to see if they are eligible for “Homes for Life” housing. Applicants who are assessed as ineligible; will receive advice on other potential options, and will have the opportunity to appeal the decision.
- 2.5 Applicants with a high priority for allocation will be invited to visit the extra care scheme, this will help people find out more and decide whether extra care is right for them before offers are made. Some offers will be made before the scheme is completed, and those applicants will have the opportunity to view their new home before deciding whether to accept or refuse the offer.
- 2.6 Applicants who are eligible but have a low priority, with no reasonable prospect of an offer, will be advised of this, and receive advice on other potential options and what to do if their circumstances change.
- 2.7 Transfer applications will be considered from existing residents of a “Homes for Life” scheme, who may need to move to larger or smaller accommodation within the scheme.
- 2.8 Mutual exchanges involving existing residents of a “Homes for Life” scheme will be considered. It will be a requirement that anyone moving into a “Homes for Life” scheme fulfils the eligibility criteria before a mutual exchange can be approved.

## 3.0 Allocation Panel

3.1 The allocation panel shall comprise of:

Representative from Pembrokeshire County Council Housing (Senior Housing Officer)

Representative from Pembrokeshire County Council Social Care (Customer Services Manager, Adult Assessment Care Team)

Representative from Pembrokeshire Housing (Supporting People Manager) and Chair of the Panel

3.2 In addition the relevant scheme manager and relevant care manager will attend Panel meetings in an information providing role.

3.3 Administrative support to the allocations panel shall be provided by Pembrokeshire Housing.

3.4 The allocation panel shall normally make decisions on who is offered accommodation within a “Homes for Life” scheme. The only exceptions are mutual exchanges and internal transfers of residents within a particular scheme, these will be dealt with by Pembrokeshire Housing.

#### 4.0 **Overall purpose of “Homes for Life” housing schemes**

4.1 Each “Homes for Life” housing scheme shall seek to create and maintain a balanced community, a mix of older people with different levels of care needs, who can benefit from the accommodation, facilities, and opportunities for social interaction that extra care brings.

#### 5.0 **Factors that the allocation panel will take into account when selecting applicants**

##### 5.1 **Social Care Assessment**

5.2 To ensure a balanced community, tenancies will be allocated so as to ensure an equal balance between low, medium and high levels of need for social care support.

5.3 Customers will be eligible for consideration in each category where the move from their current accommodation to the “Homes for Life” Scheme would reduce the need for provision of services for the individual.

5.4 Low Needs:

- Eligible for Meals on Wheels and,
- In receipt of low levels of Home Care support (under 5 hours FTE per week) or
- In receipt of Day Care Services or
- Currently occupying sheltered housing that does not meet their needs or
- Needing disabled adaptations in their current accommodation

5.5 Medium Needs

- In receipt of Home Care Support of 5 to 15 hours FTE per week

5.6 High Needs

- In receipt of Home Care Support of over 15 hours FTE per week

5.7 FTE = full time equivalent e.g. a person who has 2 carers each providing 4 hours a week would have 8 FTE hours per week of home care support

## **5.8 Housing needs assessment**

5.9 Within each list applications will be assessed according to housing circumstances using Choice Homes @ Pembrokeshire. This places applicants into GOLD, SILVER, or BRONZE bands, and then within each band sorts applicants depending on the time on the list.

## **6.0 Allocation decision making process.**

- 6.1 For each vacancy the allocation panel shall first establish what type of applicant is required to maintain a balanced community, whether to choose someone from the low, medium, or high care needs list.
- 6.2 When considering who to choose from the relevant list, the panel shall choose the applicant who can most benefit from the housing and care mix that the “Homes for Life” housing scheme provides.
- 6.3 Benefits of a move to the “Home for Life” housing scheme are defined as;  
Improvements in housing circumstances, where this has a positive effect on the applicant’s health, or reduces their care needs, or would alleviate the need to undertake physically adaptations to their existing home.  
Improvements in quality of life, where this has a positive impact on the applicants’ mental or physical health, or reduces their care needs.
- 6.4 The decision of the allocation panel when making offers of accommodation within the “Homes for Life” housing schemes is final.
- 6.5 To make the best use of a valuable resource it is expected that the allocation panel will meet at regular intervals to pre select a shortlist in priority order of applicants. So each time a vacancy occurs it will not be necessary to call a meeting of the panel, the offer can be made to the applicant already pre selected by the panel who is at the top of the shortlist.

## **7.0 Complaints**

7.1 Complaints will be dealt with according to the receiving organisations’ complaints process. Normally complaints relating to allocation panel decisions will be dealt with by Pembrokeshire Housing, and complaints relating to social care will be dealt with by Pembrokeshire County Council.

## Section 3 Mutual exchanges

Secure or assured tenants have the legal right to exchange their home with another secure tenant of the Council, or another Council or a Housing Association, subject to first obtaining the written consent of the respective landlords.

Pembrokeshire Housing will not withhold its consent unreasonably, but it may do so on one of the grounds specified in Schedule 3 of the 1985 Housing Act.

The grounds for withholding consent are as follows:-

- a) One or other of the tenants is obliged to give up possession of the dwelling following a Court Order.
- b) Proceedings have begun for the possession of the dwelling of which either tenant is the secure tenant.
- c) The exchange would result in substantial under-occupation (two or more spare bedrooms).
- d) The extent of the accommodation is not reasonably suited to the needs of the incoming tenant.
- e) The accommodation concerned is provided by the landlord in connection with the tenant's employment.
- f) The dwelling has features which are substantially different from those of ordinary dwellings and which are designed to make it suitable for occupation by a physically disabled person and, if the exchange took place, there would no longer be such a person living in the dwelling.
- g) The accommodation consists of sheltered accommodation and, if the exchange were to take place, there would no longer be a person residing in the accommodation who requires the special facilities available.

When an exchange takes place, Pembrokeshire Housing will not be held responsible for the cleanliness, decorative condition, repair or replacement of any item in either property that is the result of damage for which the individual tenant remains responsible. It is therefore in the interest of each tenant to check carefully the property to which they propose to move before they arrange to move.

Written consent must be obtained from your landlord before any arrangement to move is made.

**Note:** Tenants who wish to exchange from a dwelling with features specifically provided for the physically handicapped must themselves provide these facilities if they are subsequently required in their new dwelling.

Applications to exchange should be made in writing to the appropriate Area Officer.

### **Local mutual exchange service**

Secure or assured tenants who wish to consider moving by way of a mutual exchange may register on Pembrokeshire Housing's "Mutual Exchange Register", their details will then be made available publicly online through the ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire website, and in the offices covering the areas of their choice.

### **Local and national mutual exchange service**

Secure or assured tenants who wish to exchange their home with tenants either locally or in other parts of the United Kingdom can register with [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk). Pembrokeshire Housing subscribes to this service as a landlord so our tenants can use the service without paying the normal charge.

This new internet based service notifies subscribers of potential matches through e-mail or text message.



## Section 4 Housing & Employment Mobility Scheme

The HEMS Scheme was designed to help tenants move to other areas of the United Kingdom for employment or social reasons. The scheme, which covered most of the UK, was open to applicants and secure and assured tenants of Councils, New Towns and Housing Associations. The UK government terminated the contract for this scheme in 2007.

The main categories of applicant covered by the former HEMS scheme were as follows:-

- Moves to take up an offer of employment beyond reasonable daily travelling distance for the applicant.
- Moves for social or medical reasons, including the need to give or receive support or to escape harassment or domestic violence.

Without a national scheme tenants who wish to move have the following options.

- Apply for accommodation in the area of their choice directly with social landlords in that area.
- Seek a mutual exchange with another tenant; possibly using one of the internet based home swop services. Pembrokeshire Housing subscribes to one of these services [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk) so our tenants can use this service without paying the normal charge.

## Section 5 Homelessness

Pembrokeshire Housing will refer all cases of homelessness to the Council who are under a legal obligation to secure accommodation for certain applicants who are considered to be homeless or threatened with homelessness and for whom no other suitable accommodation is available. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 was passed by the National Assembly for Wales in July 2014 and received Royal Assent in September 2014. Currently the Welsh Government is consulting on statutory instruments associated with this legislation.

Applicants to whom this duty may apply are:-

1. A person with dependant children who live with them or can be expected to live with them.
2. A woman who is pregnant, together with any person with whom she might reasonably be expected to live.
3. A person who is vulnerable due to old age, mental illness or handicap, physical disability or other special reason or someone who lives with a vulnerable person.
4. A person who has become homeless due to an emergency such as fire, flood or other disaster.
5. A looked after child or former looked after child or person at particular risk of sexual or financial exploitation 18 years or over but under the age of 25.
6. A 16 or 17 year old.
7. A person fleeing domestic violence or threatened domestic violence.
8. A person homeless after leaving the armed forces.
9. A former prisoner homeless after being released from custody.

Accepted homeless applicants will normally be rehoused initially in temporary accommodation.

The application will then be assessed using the criteria set out in the ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire scheme

Applicants who consider themselves homeless or likely to become so shortly should discuss their circumstances with Pembrokeshire Housing staff.

**Note:** The acceptance of a duty to assist a homeless applicant does not require the Council to provide a secure tenancy.

# Section 6 Allocation procedures

Pembrokeshire Housing properties are allocated under delegated authority to the Housing Director, and exercised on a day-to-day level by the Housing Manager through the Housing staff. A quarterly report is made to the Board of Management of allocations made in the previous quarter.

## Assessment of Housing Need

Each application will be acknowledged upon receipt, and subsequently administered by a Customer Service Advisor, who will enter applicant details onto the common choice based allocation computer system, seek additional information as required, and assess the priority band. Customers will be informed of the outcome of the assessment

## Home Visits

Applicants may receive a home visit by an Area Officer to verify information and assess the condition of the applicant's accommodation, as well as providing both the applicant and the visiting officer with the opportunity to discuss the applicant's housing needs.

In cases where home visits are difficult to arrange, because of an applicant's employment or social circumstances, alternative arrangements will be made as appropriate.

In normal circumstances a banding assessment will be made within 18 working days of the receipt of a housing application.

## Allocation decisions based on the type of home

To make the best use of our homes and to help build sustainable communities Pembrokeshire Housing will seek to find a good match between household and type of home. The Association will;

- a. give reasonable preference to families with (full time) children (aged 18 and under) who bid for family houses,
- b. give reasonable preference to adult only households who bid for flats, and families with children aged 10 or over, recognising that this type of home is more difficult for families with younger children.
- c. give reasonable preference to people of statutory retirement age who bid for our older person's and retirement housing.

Pembrokeshire Housing reserves the right to allocate a property of any type that meets the needs of a particular household in exceptional circumstances

## Allocation decisions based on the size of a home

To sustain tenancies and make the best use of available homes Pembrokeshire Housing will give reasonable preference to finding the right sized household when letting homes. Our policy; Section 1, paragraph 10, sets out the normal accommodation size eligibility criteria. Pembrokeshire Housing reserves the right to allocate a property to an applicant whose household size falls outside these

criteria if there are reasonable grounds to do this e.g. there are no bids from “right sized” households.

### **The Allocation Process**

Annually Pembrokeshire Housing sets overall targets to meet various housing needs. When a property becomes available the Area Officer will, having regard to the overall lettings targets, decide whether to advertise it to applicants through ChoiceHomes@Pembrokeshire, or to offer it to an applicant through another approved scheme e.g. local worker scheme.

### **Withdrawing an Offer of Accommodation**

The Housing Manager may withdraw an offer of accommodation if there are reasonable grounds to do this.

The reasons for withdrawing the offer of accommodation will be explained in writing to the applicant. Should the applicant seek a review of the decision, this will be dealt with by the Housing Director.

### **Update of Housing Data**

It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that Pembrokeshire Housing is made aware of any changes in their circumstances; applicants who wish to notify Pembrokeshire Housing of such changes should write in to Pembrokeshire Housing’s office. The information will be considered by Pembrokeshire Housing who will then amend the application if necessary.

If Pembrokeshire Housing makes any alteration to an application it will notify the applicant of the amendment.

### **Removing applicants from the register**

The scheme Partners will write to each applicant on an annual basis to ensure that the register is kept up to date. If there is no response to these review letters Pembrokeshire Housing will remove the application from the register. Such applications can be re-instated within 6 months of removal. Other circumstances in which an application will be removed are:

- a) A failure by the applicant to respond to a request for further information
- b) At the applicant’s request
- c) Following re-housing by either the Council or Housing Association.
- d) If the applicant no longer qualifies to be registered

Before removing the application Pembrokeshire Housing will notify the applicant in writing giving 28 days notice of their intention to remove the application from the Register.