



Housing Allocations Policy



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Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Section 1: Introduction	3
Section 2: Eligibility	6
Section 3: Application processes	11
Section 4: The group scheme and priority criteria	18
Summary of group and points scheme	27
Section 5: Allocation of housing	30
Section 6: Appeals, Reviews and Complaints	43
 <u>Appendices</u>	
Appendix 1: Confidentiality and Data Protection	46
Appendix 2: Service Standards for applicants	47
Appendix 3: Officer roles and responsibilities	48
Appendix 4: Supported Accommodation Schemes	50
Appendix 5: Contact Details (Wigan & Leigh Housing)	51
Appendix 6: Local Lettings Policies	52

Section 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview of Allocations Policy

1.1.1 Wigan and Leigh Housing (WALH) manage the allocation of Council housing and nominations of applicants for properties owned by other partner landlords on behalf of Wigan Council.

1.1.2 The allocations policy is the framework for:

- The assessment of applications for Council housing including tenant transfers.
- The allocation of Council property.
- Nominations to a tenancy of a property owned by a Registered Social Landlord, or other organisation (including WALH's own housing stock) with which the Council has entered into a lettings or nominations agreement.

1.1.3 The objectives of the Policy are:

- To meet housing need
- To deliver the Council's statutory duties under the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002 and other relevant legislation
- To ensure the best use of the housing stock
- To maximise tenant mobility
- To maximise choice
- To support the development of cohesive communities through appropriate lettings

1.2 Legal and Policy Framework

1.2.1 The Housing Act 1996 Part 6, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Housing Act 2004, requires local authorities to have an allocations policy that sets out:

- Who is eligible to apply for housing
- How the Council prioritises applicants for rehousing ensuring that 'reasonable preference', is given to certain people who fall within the statutory preference categories set out in S167(2) of the 1996 Act
- The basis on which the Council will allocate accommodation
- The Council's policy on applicant choice and preference
- How the Council will prioritise tenant transfers

1.2.2 The term 'allocation of housing accommodation' is defined by Section 159 of the Housing Act 1996 as:

- Selecting a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by the Council
- A nomination to an assured or starter tenancy of accommodation held by a Registered Social Landlord (Housing Association)

- 1.2.3 This Allocations Policy has been developed to comply with the requirements of Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended in relation to the letting of social housing. It also conforms to the Codes of Guidance currently in force, in respect of the allocation of housing and choice based lettings.
- 1.2.4 The policy seeks to ensure that “reasonable preference” is given to those tenants and applicants in the greatest housing need and to help applicants and tenants to be housed or rehoused in an area of their choice, as far as is reasonably possible.
- 1.2.5 This Policy supports and complements other Council strategies and policies including the Sustainable Communities Strategy, the Housing Strategy (‘Vision 2026’), the Homelessness Strategy 2008-13, the Older Persons Strategies, the Affordable Housing Policy, Anti-Social Behaviour Guidance, Reduction in Temporary Accommodation Strategy, Overcrowding Pathfinder Action Plan and the Empty Properties Strategy.

1.3 Choice for applicants and tenants

- 1.3.1 The Council aims to maximise choice for applicants and tenants applying for housing or transfer. There are over 25,000 social rented sector properties throughout the borough and the Council will actively seek to form partnership arrangements with private sector providers. Applicants can express an interest (also known as a ‘bid’) for any available accommodation that matches the needs of their household, in any part of the borough. There is no restriction on the number of bids placed at any one time, however if the applicant is ‘next in turn’ for two or more properties, WALH will decide which one to offer in the interests of effective management of housing stock.
- 1.3.2 For most applicants there is no restriction on the number of tenancy offers they may refuse. However, applicants to whom a statutory duty is owed under the Homelessness legislation may lose priority if they refuse a ‘suitable offer.’
- 1.3.3 Information regarding the choice of properties available in each rehousing area and average waiting times is available online, at: propertyshop.walh.co.uk, or at WALH Property Shops and Area Offices (See appendix 5 for contact details).

1.4 Monitoring and Review of the Policy

- 1.4.1 The Allocations Policy will be subject to review from time to time, particularly in response to significant changes to legislation, housing market conditions and/or other local circumstances.
- 1.4.2 Any major changes to the policy, such as those which affect the priority of a significant number of applicants or changes to the eligibility criteria, will require consultation with all relevant statutory and voluntary sector organisations and tenant representatives, and must be approved by the Council.

- 1.4.3 From time to time minor changes may be required to the policy, such as adjusting the quota percentages or applying special criteria to a small number of properties. Approval of these may be delegated to the Executive Director of Environmental Services, or such Council officer as s/he sees fit, in consultation with Wigan & Leigh Housing and other partners.

Section 2

Eligibility

- 2.1** All applications from eligible applicants will be entered on to the housing register and prioritised under the group scheme details in Section 4. Once their application is active, applicants may then express an interest (bid) for available properties that meet the needs of their household in terms of size and facilities. Applicants may however be restricted from bidding for properties which are specifically reserved for residents of a certain age group, including sheltered accommodation, or which has been built or adapted to meet medical or disability needs unless they meet the specific eligibility criteria for these properties. Such eligibility criteria will be clearly indicated when available properties are advertised.
- 2.2** Applicants who have been involved in criminal activity or anti-social behaviour, or are subject to a court order or MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) in a particular location may be restricted from bidding for properties in this location and/or other locations as considered appropriate by WALH or advised by the police or probation service.
- 2.3** Applicants may be restricted from bidding for properties in a location where WALH consider it would be detrimental to the wellbeing of the local community or to the applicant themselves to live there. This may apply where either existing residents or the applicant (or members of their household) are considered to be especially vulnerable, or where there are serious concerns about discrimination against or intimidation of minority groups, or where there is a previous history of poor relations between the applicant and existing residents.
- 2.4** Applicants may be restricted from bidding for properties where it is considered they would be unable to manage a tenancy successfully, or where there are issues of health and safety. For example, bids from wheelchair users would not be accepted for multi-storey flats above the second floor because of the difficulty of evacuating the premises in an emergency; or an applicant who is unable/unwilling to maintain a garden may be restricted from bidding for properties with private gardens. Some properties may also have restrictions on keeping pets.
- 2.5 Ineligible applicants**
- 2.5.1** The Council must not, by law, allocate housing to anyone (or jointly with someone) who is not an eligible person. The following persons are not, for the purpose of this policy, considered as eligible for Council housing or for nomination to a partner organisation with whom the Council has a nominations agreement.

2.6 Persons from Abroad

- 2.6.1 Persons from abroad who are subject to immigration control and not re-included by Regulations are not eligible to be offered Council housing or to be nominated on behalf of the Council.
- 2.6.2 People who are subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 are not eligible to be offered Council housing or to be nominated on behalf of the Council.
- 2.6.3 People who are not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area (which covers the British Isles including non-UK territories such as the Channel Islands and the Republic of Ireland) are not eligible to be offered Council housing or be nominated on behalf of the Council. This may include British citizens.
- 2.6.4 The Government may from time to time prescribe other persons as ineligible.
- 2.6.5 Ineligible persons from abroad may be offered a tenancy directly by an RSL or private sector landlord as these organisations are not bound by the same laws. Persons from abroad who already have a Secure, Assured, Introductory or Starter tenancy with the Council or RSL are not subject to these eligibility rules.
- 2.6.6 An asylum seeker living in the Wigan Borough will be allowed to register whilst ineligible but their application will remain excluded awaiting a decision on their entitlement to remain in the UK. If they receive 'leave to remain' from the Home Office, their application will be made active from the date they submitted their housing application.

2.7 Unacceptable Behaviour

- 2.7.1 The Council will not accept onto the housing register an application from a household containing persons of any age, that it considers ineligible for an allocation because of unacceptable behaviour.
- 2.7.2 In accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002, the Council will only deem an applicant not eligible on the grounds of unacceptable behaviour if, at the time of application:
- It is satisfied that the applicant (or a member of his/her household) is guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant;
 - and that the applicant's circumstances and behaviour at the time of their application have not changed and improved since the unacceptable behaviour occurred;
 - and it is satisfied that the unacceptable behaviour or arrears of rent would have been serious enough, if the household had held a social housing tenancy, to have led to the housing authority being granted an outright possession order (not a suspended or postponed order) under

s84 of the Housing Act 1985 in relation to any of the discretionary grounds in Part 1 of Schedule 2, (including rent arrears and nuisance) other than Ground 8.

- 2.7.3 Anti-Social Behaviour, serious arrears of rent, property damage, criminal behaviour affecting the community including domestic violence, or other serious breaches of tenancy conditions can all constitute unacceptable behaviour.

Convictions for certain criminal offences are likely to indicate that an applicant's behaviour has made them unsuitable to be a tenant. A conviction for such an offence would not, however, be sufficient evidence by itself to make a decision and each case will be considered on an individual basis, including whether the offence has been 'spent' according to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

Current and past Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, and whether the applicant has complied with the terms of such orders, may also form part of a consideration whether to exclude an applicant from the register.

- 2.7.4 Applicants, or members of their household included in the application, whose unacceptable behaviour is serious enough to make him/her unsuitable to be a tenant will be excluded from the housing register until WALH is satisfied that the behaviour is unlikely to re-occur or the applicant has successfully appealed their exclusion.
- 2.7.5 An applicant who is excluded on the grounds of unacceptable behaviour or outstanding debt will be advised in writing of the reasons for this, and given an indication of what changes/action would be required to convince WALH that the risk of unacceptable behaviour has been sufficiently reduced, or to repay the outstanding debt.
- 2.7.6 Excluded applicants may appeal against the decision of WALH at any time by writing to the Director of Housing Needs and giving their reasons, as detailed in Section 6 of this policy.
- 2.7.7 If a previously excluded applicant makes a new application, an assessment of recent behaviour by all members of their household will be considered. In addition, the applicant or members of their household may be invited to attend workshops to discuss the effects of anti-social behaviour on neighbours and the community and how to manage a tenancy. If appropriate, a support service may also be offered to assist the applicant in setting up and managing a tenancy. WALH's decision whether to exclude the applicant at the time of the new application will take the applicant's participation in the workshop and engagement with support into account. If the applicant fails to attend the workshop, or his/her behaviour is still considered to be unacceptable, he/she will not be accepted onto the register.

2.7.8 If it is established that an applicant or member of their household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour after they have been accepted as eligible to join the register, WALH may make a decision that the household is no longer eligible for an allocation.

2.7.9 Where it can be established that an applicant has accrued former tenant arrears from a previous tenancy or tenancies, this may be considered as unacceptable behaviour. Any applicants with former tenant arrears may have their case reviewed by WALH, taking all relevant circumstances into account. Following a review, a decision will be made about whether they can be placed on the housing register. All decisions will be subject to the provisions outlined in Section 6 of this Policy, Appeals, Reviews and Complaints.

2.8 Applications from people living in a suitably adapted property

2.8.1 Applications from people already living in a property which has been adapted to meet their needs and is suitable for them will normally be assessed as being in no housing need unless there are special circumstances.

If there is an accepted special need to move, the applicant will be assisted to move to another adapted property wherever possible.

2.8.2 If an applicant with no established need to move takes up a new Council tenancy in a property which requires a fresh set of adaptations to meet their needs, the request for these will be considered along with other such requests from existing tenants by the Council's Occupational Therapy Team. This assessment will take into account the urgency of each case and prioritise them accordingly, but may also take into account any recommendations from the WALH Director of Housing Needs.

2.9 Applications from 16 and 17 year olds

2.9.1 In law someone aged under 18 years cannot hold a legal estate in land and therefore cannot sign a Secure Tenancy Agreement. If a young person is homeless; threatened with homelessness; is ready to leave local authority care, or there are other special circumstances then they will be offered advice and support and may be provided with accommodation under an appropriate form of tenure, until they are 18. It is expected that most young people aged under 18 will require some form of housing support or to be accommodated in specialist supported accommodation.

2.9.2 Wigan & Leigh Housing will work with Wigan Council's Children & Young People's Services Department to help them deliver their duties under the Children Act 1989 and to co-ordinate services.

2.10 Homeless households

- 2.10.1 If, following a full assessment under the Homelessness legislation, the Council has accepted a statutory duty to rehouse an applicant, their housing application will be placed into Group A on the register.
- 2.10.2 The applicant will be able to bid for available properties they are interested in through the WALH Property Shops and website.
- 2.10.3 To ensure that their urgent housing need is rapidly met, the Council may also make a 'direct let' to this group of applicants. This means that the available property need not be advertised, and the tenancy will be offered to the applicant directly and exclusively, as detailed in Section 5.2

2.11 Applications from people in hospital or in short term residential care

- 2.11.1 Each application will be assessed on a case by case basis taking into account matters such as:
- Whether the applicant can return home with relevant aids and adaptations, or support provided
 - Whether the applicant cannot return home as their property is no longer suitable
 - If the applicant is likely to be homeless following discharge from hospital
 - If discharge from hospital is being delayed, for non-medical reasons, because there is no suitable accommodation for them to go to.
- 2.11.2 WALH staff will follow Wigan Council's Hospital Discharge Protocol including where appropriate, visiting the applicant in hospital to assess their housing circumstances and taking the necessary action to ensure that the right level of priority is awarded on the housing register. This may involve liaison with NHS staff, Social Services, Occupational Therapists and any other agency involved with the care of the applicant, as appropriate.

2.12 Applications from employees of WALH, the Council, Board Members, Councillors and their relatives

- 2.12.1 To ensure that allocations are made in accordance with this policy and no favour is given to applicants with close links to the Council, WALH or any partner organisation, some offers must be specifically authorised.
- 2.12.2 The Chief Executive of WALH will authorise any offers of Council tenancies or nominations to partner landlords to applicants who are Wigan Councillors, WALH Board members or their relatives.
- 2.12.3 The relevant WALH Director will consider and authorise allocations to WALH or partner employees or their relatives.

Section 3

The Application process

3.1 Joint applications

- 3.1.1 This document refers to 'applicant' which includes joint applicants.
- 3.1.2 Joint applications can be made by two or more adults wishing to form a household together.
- 3.1.3 For the purpose of assessing housing applications, WALH may take other household members into account even if they indicate they do not wish to be a joint applicant.

3.2 The application process

- 3.2.1 Subject to the details of this policy, anyone who is aged 18 or above and who is an eligible person (as defined in Section 2) can apply for housing. Applications from people who are aged 16 or 17 may be considered depending on their circumstances (see Section 2.9)
- 3.2.2 All applications for housing or tenant transfer must be made in writing on the application form provided by WALH. Free and confidential advice will be made available for people who may have difficulty making an application.
- 3.2.3 All applications will be assessed to determine whether the applicant or tenant is eligible for an allocation in accordance with Section 2 of this policy.
- 3.2.4 All eligible households will be assessed in accordance with the Council's housing need group system outlined in Section 4 of this policy to determine their priority.
- 3.2.5 Registered applicants, including existing tenants, will be eligible to be offered a property of the type and size appropriate to their household's needs, in accordance with Section 5.6 of this policy.

3.3 Homeless applicants

- 3.3.1 If an applicant has lost or is about to lose their home, they will be offered support and advice, and given assistance wherever possible to prevent them becoming homeless. Where such efforts are unsuccessful however, the application will be assessed under the Homelessness legislation.

- 3.3.2 The Homelessness legislation sets out the criteria for assessing the duties that the Council may owe to a homeless applicant and currently comprises the Housing Act 1996, Part 7 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. The Government also issues a statutory Code of Guidance.

The criteria and duties in the Homelessness legislation may change if the Government enacts new laws or issues new guidance, and Wigan Council is obliged to comply with this.

3.4 Supporting Information

Provision of References

- 3.4.1. All applicants that are not currently a Wigan Council tenant must provide two suitable references before they are accepted onto the housing register.
- 3.4.2 Joint applicants need only provide two references between them unless they have lived together for less than 12 months in which case they should provide two references each.
- 3.4.3 References are requested to try and make sure that new tenants are able to maintain a tenancy and keep to the tenancy conditions. The references will help in identifying any tenancy or support issues that the applicant may have.
- 3.4.4 These should be from a landlord or former landlord, employer or former employer or any other professional person.
- 3.4.5 In cases where the applicant either cannot provide two references or the reference(s) they have provided is unacceptable the applicant may be required to attend either:
- an office interview to discuss their responsibilities as a tenant
or
 - workshops to discuss how to establish and manage a tenancy
- 3.4.6 Following this, unless there is a significant issue that causes their application to be excluded from the housing register, the application will be made active and the applicant will then be able to bid for properties
- 3.4.7 If appropriate, a support service may also be offered to assist the applicant in setting up and managing a tenancy.
- 3.4.8 An applicant who fails to provide two references, attend an office interview or workshops as requested, may have their application cancelled.

3.5 Confirmation of Circumstances

- 3.5.1 All applicants will be asked to provide proof of identity before their application is made active on the housing register. Depending on individual circumstances, the applicant may be asked for additional supporting information in order for the application to be assessed correctly on the list.
- 3.5.2 WALH staff may also need to conduct a home visit in order to check circumstances and housing conditions.

3.6 Managing Housing Applications

- 3.6.1 The application form will be assessed and given one of the following statuses:
- I. Pending – additional information needed from the applicant before the application is made active on the housing register.
 - II. Excluded – due to immigration status or unacceptable behaviour (see section 3)
 - III. Active – the applicant can bid for properties or be made a direct offer of a tenancy.
 - IV. Active (deferred) – the applicant does not wish to move at present or is currently unable to take up a tenancy.
 - V. Cancelled – the applicant has failed to respond to the review letter, cannot be contacted or has informed WALH that he/she no longer wants a property.
- 3.6.2 The date the application is made active is known as the registration date. The registration date is the date the application form is received by WALH, provided that all supporting information has been submitted within 42 days of the application. This is counted from the date of the first request letter sent out by WALH.
- 3.6.3 The registration date will determine how applicants are ordered within Group C and at each points level of Group B of the group priority scheme as detailed in Section 4.
- 3.6.4 Active applicants in Group A will be ordered according to the date they were awarded the qualifying priority for this group.
- 3.6.5 Applicants with an ‘active’ status will be contacted annually to see if they wish to remain on the housing register. This is known as the annual review.
- 3.6.6 If the applicant fails to respond to the initial review letter within 42 days, the application will be cancelled. If an applicant is known to be especially vulnerable every effort will be made to contact them, either by telephone, visiting them at home or contacting a support agency to confirm whether a move is still required.

- 3.6.7 The original application will not be re-instated, if it has been cancelled for longer than 3 months, unless the applicant has good reason why he/she was unable to respond within the timescale. Any re-instatement must be approved by a WALH Principal Officer.
- 3.6.8 If an applicant is rehoused in suitable accommodation which meets their needs, by Wigan Council or a Registered Social Landlord, the application will be closed. Any request for a subsequent move would require a new application.
- 3.6.9 If an applicant is rehoused in private sector accommodation which affords a less secure form of tenancy than with the Council or an RSL, the application may remain on the register, with the original registration/priority date, but will be re-assessed and may be given lower priority according to the circumstances of the case.
- 3.6.10 If a homeless applicant accepts a qualifying offer under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 the housing application form will be cancelled, subject to a suitability review as detailed in Section 5.2.1. Any request for a subsequent move would require a new application.
- 3.6.11 At the discretion of WALH, where an applicant has been rehoused in accommodation which does not meet their needs adequately, their application may remain active on the register, with the original registration/priority date and priority group/points, and be eligible for further bids or direct offers.
- 3.6.12 Applicants should inform WALH of any change in circumstances, such as change of address, as this may affect their position on the housing register and may result in the application being cancelled if WALH are unable to contact the applicant.
- 3.6.13 If the application is held in 'pending' status but the applicant fails to respond to a request for additional information within 42 days, the application will be cancelled. If an applicant is known to be vulnerable every effort will be made to contact them, either by telephone, visiting them at home or contacting a support agency (if there is one) to obtain the relevant details to properly assess the application.
- 3.6.14 The registration date would not normally be before an applicant's 18th birthday.
- 3.6.15 The registration date of an applicant whose exclusion has been lifted, will be the date the exclusion was lifted with the exception of asylum seekers who receive Refugee status. Their registration date will be the date the application was received, subject to providing any supporting information as requested within the timescales outlined in 3.5.

3.7 Communication with applicants

3.7.1 WALH will:

- Confirm receipt of an application for housing in writing.
- Notify households if a decision is made that the household is not eligible for an allocation and explain why.
- Notify households if additional information or supporting evidence is required.
- Provide households with confirmation of the housing priority group and points awarded if applicable.
- Communicate by telephone, in writing, via email or where the household has indicated a preference, by text message.
- Communicate with authorised agents, including support workers.

3.8 False or misleading information, or non-disclosure of information, including sub-letting of a Council property

3.8.1 The Council reserves the right to refuse, cancel or reduce priority on the housing register for any application, which it considers to be based on false or misleading information.

3.8.2 The Council will seek possession of any tenancy that it considers to have been granted on the basis of false or misleading information, the withholding of relevant information, or if it has been sublet without consent of the Council.

3.9 Deliberately altering circumstances

3.9.1 Applicants must not deliberately worsen their circumstances to gain greater priority under the scheme. Where there is evidence of this, an applicant may have their priority reduced.

3.10 Applications from households with no local connection to the Wigan Borough

3.10.1 Applications from households who have no local connection with Wigan borough will be accepted onto the housing register provided the household contains eligible persons, but will have their housing need points reduced to 2 as detailed in Section 4 (B.18), if they are placed into Group B on the list.

3.10.2 Local Connection is defined in Section 199 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) as a connection which the applicant has with an area:

- a. because he is, or in the past was, normally resident there, and that residence is or was of his own choice,
- b. because he is employed there,
- c. because of family associations,
- d. because of special circumstances,
- e. because the applicant is serving in the Armed Forces and is either employed or resident in the district.

- 3.10.3 In assessing whether an applicant's household has a local connection with Wigan borough, the Council will also consider whether any person who might reasonably be expected to live with the applicant has such a connection.
- 3.10.4 Residence within the borough arising from being an inmate at H.M.P. Hindley or living in a bail hostel will not confer a local connection on an applicant, but they may have a connection from residence previous to beginning their sentence.
- 3.10.5 Residence within the borough arising from being detained under the Mental Health Act 1983, or a stay in any hospital will not confer a local connection on an applicant, but they may have a connection from residence prior to admission.
- 3.10.6 A posting within Wigan borough for a significant duration as part of the UK Armed Forces may confer a local connection on an applicant even after they have been posted elsewhere, depending on individual circumstances.
- 3.10.7 A placement in the borough in supported accommodation provided under the Nationality, Immigration & Asylum Act 2002 during an application for asylum in the UK can confer a local connection on an applicant, even where the location of the accommodation was not a direct choice of the applicant.
- 3.10.8 A local connection may be derived from employment based entirely within the borough or where the majority of duties are carried out within the borough, e.g. where the employer's office address is outside the borough but services, deliveries, visits etc are undertaken by the employee within the borough at least 50% of the time. It is not sufficient to establish a connection where an applicant's employer has premises within the borough but less than 50% of their actual job is carried out there.
- 3.10.9 Family associations that may confer a local connection include: parents, step-parents, children living with a former partner or relative, adult children, siblings including from a step-family, grandparents, grandchildren, uncles, aunts or cousins, provided the applicant has sufficiently close links in the form of frequent contact, commitment or dependency. Family associations may extend equally to couples not in a legal marriage or Civil Partnership provided that the relationship is sufficiently enduring, including same sex couples.
- 3.10.10 Special circumstances that may confer a local connection include needing to be near medical facilities or support that is not available outside the borough.

3.11 Applications from vulnerable people

- 3.11.1 A wide range of services is available to help vulnerable applicants access accommodation and live independently.

- 3.11.2 Someone who needs additional help and support may be referred to WALH via a third party e.g. Adult Services, or may contact one of WALH offices directly. Assistance will be given in completing the housing application form and informing them of their housing options and the Homefinder scheme, which is managed by the Property Shops, if appropriate.
- 3.11.3 If an application is received via the post, it should allow staff to identify those applicants who need help in finding accommodation via the Homefinder Service. This service is for those people who:
- Do not have access to a computer or cannot use a computer and
 - Do not have family, friends or a support worker to help them search for suitable properties and
 - Have difficulty or are unable to use the telephone or call into either a Property Shop or Area Office on a regular basis.
- 3.11.4 Property Shop staff will arrange to place bids for suitable properties on the applicant's behalf and keep the applicant informed of progress.
- 3.11.5 If/when the applicant is offered a property but indicate that they may find it difficult setting up and managing a tenancy, a referral may be made to a Tenancy Support Service either within WALH or an external agency.
- 3.11.6 WALH will also make arrangements for decisions and assessments to be explained in person on request, or where it is apparent that the applicant or tenant may have difficulty in understanding the reasoning behind or implications of any decision made by WALH in relation to this policy.

3.12 Applications from people experiencing domestic abuse

- 3.12.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that all customers can access services easily and on equal terms. Domestic abuse often has consequences for the housing situation of those affected and WALH will ensure that all staff offer advice, guidance and assistance to customers experiencing domestic abuse. A place of safety may be offered immediately if the applicant is unable or unwilling to return home.
- 3.12.2 Safety and confidentiality are paramount. WALH will only involve other agencies or divulge information to a third party with the consent of the person, unless required to do so by law or unless that information is necessary for the protection of people at risk.

Section 4

The Group Scheme and priority criteria

4.1 Applicants and Tenants will be placed in either Group A, Group B or Group C where they are able to demonstrate that they meet the appropriate criteria in either their permanent or temporary home.

4.2

GROUP A – URGENT HOUSING NEED

4.2.1 This priority can be awarded to applicants in the categories below who have a local connection with Wigan borough, or to whom a statutory rehousing duty has been accepted, including by accepting a referral from another local authority.

4.2.2 Applicants in Group A will be prioritised by the date their application was placed in Group A. Where applicants have the same Group A entry date, they will be ordered by the date their application was made active.

4.2.3 Applicants with outstanding housing-related debts may be awarded Group A priority as long as they agree to a repayment plan. Failure to keep up with the agreed repayments may result in a review of this priority.

4.2.4

Qualifying criteria – Group A

A.1 Statutory Homeless or threatened with homelessness

Applicable where an investigation has been carried out by a Housing Options Advice Officer and either:

- A.1a • The Council has assessed that the applicant is owed a statutory rehousing duty under the Homelessness legislation
- A.1a • The Council has accepted a referral from another local authority who has assessed the applicants as being owed a statutory rehousing duty under the Homelessness legislation
- A.1b • A formal homeless decision has not yet been made, but it is considered that homelessness is imminent and inevitable

A.2 Regeneration schemes and demolition

Applicable to tenants, owner-occupiers and verified lodgers living in the Wigan Borough in confirmed clearance areas or properties subject to Compulsory Purchase Orders (including those where a CPO could be made, but the owner agrees to sell their property to the Council by agreement) or subject to Prohibition, excluding emergency prohibitions, or Demolition Orders.

N.B. Residents subject to emergency Prohibition Notices will be supported under the Council's homelessness duties.

Applicable also to Council tenants and verified lodgers where the Council requires them to move, for example to demolish the properties.

A.3 Young People leaving Local Authority Care

Applicable to young people who have been 'looked after' by the Council and are due to leave their care home or foster home. Applications will be accepted on or after the young persons 17th birthday but accommodation would normally only be offered after the young person is over 17 and a half years old.

A rehousing and support plan will be agreed with the young person, which may include an offer of a social rented tenancy or a stay in supported accommodation before moving on to independent living. Group A priority is dependent on the young person continuing to engage positively with their rehousing and support plan, and may be reviewed in consultation with the Council's Children in Care and Care Leavers' Team.

A.4 Former Armed Forces personnel leaving the services

Applicable to people with a local connection with the Borough as defined in Section 3.11 above. Not applicable to people who have been dishonourably discharged from the Armed Forces.

Housing applications from Members of the Armed Forces will be held in Group C pending evidence from the Commanding Officer of the date of discharge. On receipt of this, the application will be re-assessed and placed in Group A two months prior to discharge date or as soon as possible thereafter.

After 6 months from the discharge date, if the applicant has not bid for any available accommodation, the application will be re-assessed and given the relevant priority according to housing need, as any other applicant.

A.5 Household suffering severe hardship

Applicable to exceptional cases, at the discretion of WALH Director of Housing Needs, where urgent rehousing is required, for example because their housing situation is life threatening or seriously damaging their welfare or community safety

A.6 Foster carer / Supported Lodgings host

Applicable to people who have been approved by the Council's Children & Young People's Services Department to be a Foster carer or Supported Lodgings host, but whose current accommodation is unsuitable to provide this service.

Written confirmation will be required from the Children in Care and Care Leavers Team, along with details of why rehousing is required, e.g. to a larger property, a property with specific adaptations to accommodate a disabled child.

4.3

GROUP B – HOUSING NEED

Points Scheme

4.3.1 Applicants in Group B will be prioritised by the number of points awarded. Where applicants have the same number of points they will be ordered by the date their housing application was made active on the register

4.3.2

Qualifying criteria – Group B

B.1 **Overcrowding** (4 points for each bedroom lacking. Additional point if applicant overcrowded in a one bedroom property)

Applicable to households whose current accommodation has fewer bedrooms than are needed as defined in Section 5.7.

When calculating overcrowding, account will be taken of all persons in the household, including those who do not wish to move, where this applies. Applications from households which include a pregnant women will be assessed as though the baby had been born.

B.2 **Priority for rehousing on medical grounds, including needs relating to a disability** (10 or 8 points)

Applicable to people whose medical condition or needs are adversely affected by their current accommodation. Evidence will be required to establish the impact on the applicant's well being, lifestyle and management of daily living activities and how rehousing may be able to resolve or alleviate the circumstances.

The applicant will be asked to complete a medical form, with assistance if required. This, together with any supporting information will be considered by a WALH Principal Officer. If he/she needs further advice about the medical condition, enquiries will be made with an external agency that specialises in housing and medical issues. Based on the information provided, the Principal Officer will make one of three decisions:

- B.2a
 - Urgent housing need – 'Medical 1' (10 points) – the applicant needs to be urgently rehoused to reduce the impact of their current housing situation on their health or wellbeing
- B.2b
 - High housing need – 'Medical 2' (8 points) - the applicant needs to be rehoused as a high priority to reduce the impact of their current housing situation on their health or wellbeing

- No Action - the applicant's current housing situation does not have a sufficient impact on his/her health or wellbeing to justify additional priority.

A restriction may be attached to the medical award - for example a 'ground floor recommendation' in which case the applicant will only be considered for ground floor accommodation - or a first floor flat which can be accessed by a lift - because of their health and mobility. If the applicant does not want to be tied to such a restriction e.g. wants to be offered a house, then the medical priority will be removed.

If there is a relevant change in the applicant's circumstances, for example a change of address, or the household member who was awarded the medical priority has died, the medical award will be removed and the applicant's priority re-assessed. It may be necessary to complete a fresh application.

If an applicant has been awarded Medical priority and subsequently refuses three offers of suitable accommodation, without apparent good reason, the priority may be reviewed and/or removed.

B.3 Priority for rehousing on welfare or social grounds (10 or 8 points)

Applicable to cases where the applicant's housing situation is considered to be having a detrimental impact on their safety or wellbeing which is not adequately reflected by their priority under the group and points scheme.

This priority can be used to reflect an applicant's need to move to another area where they are otherwise adequately housed in their current accommodation.

An applicant may request an award of welfare priority directly or it may be requested on their behalf by WALH staff, their RSL/landlord, a Councillor or any other agency who provides support or is familiar with their circumstances. A welfare application form may be completed, although requests can also be made in writing or verbally and will be subject to a detailed assessment including consideration of supporting information where appropriate. Evidence will be required about the impact of the current situation and how rehousing could resolve or alleviate this.

Based on the information provided, a WALH Principal Officer will make one of three decisions:

- B.3a ▪ Urgent housing need – 'Welfare 1' (10 points) Where the applicant or tenant can demonstrate a need that requires urgent rehousing to resolve or alleviate the situation.
- B.3b ▪ High housing need – 'Welfare 2' (8 points) Where the applicant's wellbeing would clearly benefit from a move.

- **No Action** - the applicant's current housing situation does not have a significant impact on their well being and/or the circumstances are adequately reflected in the priority or points they have been awarded.

Welfare priority may be reviewed at any time if there is a relevant deterioration or improvement in the applicant's circumstances after they register for rehousing, or if the applicant refuses three offers of suitable accommodation without apparent good reason.

B.4 Insecurity of Tenure (6 or 3 points)

B.4a High level (6 points) applicable to households who are not tenants or owner-occupiers but who have no priority need under the Homelessness legislation who are living in a bed-and-breakfast hotel, living in non-residential accommodation (such as an office or shop) or who have no fixed abode.

B.4a High level (6 points) applicable to applicants with a child or children under 10 years old who are lodging.

B.4b Standard level (3 points) applicable to lodgers including adult children of tenants or owner-occupiers.

B.4b Standard level (3 points) applicable to people living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council, where the Council has deemed that it does not have (or no longer has) a statutory rehousing duty, including:

- Where, following investigation, the Council has determined that the applicant is not homeless.
- Where the Council's duty has been discharged – for example, the applicant has refused a suitable offer of accommodation.
- The applicant is found to have no 'priority need' under the Homeless legislation.
- The applicant is found to be 'intentionally homeless'.

Where an applicant is still living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council after a discharge of duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, additional points would not normally be awarded under any additional category.

B.5 Relationship breakdown but still living with former partner (5 points)

Applicable to people who are still living with their former partner in their shared home. Where the other partner is the sole legal tenant or owner-occupier, and the applicant has been given a fixed time to vacate the property, the applicant will be treated as potentially homeless. Where the property is held on a joint tenancy, or is jointly owned, the applicant's proposed arrangements with their former partner will be taken into account. Where this priority applies, additional points would not be normally awarded for insecurity of tenure, e.g. lodging with family or friends

B.6 Moving on from short term supported housing (10 points)

Applicable to people who have successfully completed a programme of support in specialist accommodation and/or who are now ready for independent living. Evidence will be required from the accommodation provider that the applicant is capable of maintaining their own tenancy, and any on-going support needs. If required, the applicant will be given assistance with setting up new support arrangements. Appendix 4 gives details of supported accommodation available within the borough.

B.7 Split Households (5 points)

Applicable to established couples or families who are obliged to live apart because there is no suitable accommodation available to them. The application will be registered in the name of one partner/parent as though both applicants are living in one property, and awarded priority according to whichever will give them the greatest priority.

B.8 Lack of facilities / poor property condition (9 points)

Applicable to people living in accommodation which lacks normal facilities such as for washing, cooking etc or where the property is in a dangerous or otherwise poor condition and efforts have been made to address this through Environmental Health.

Wherever possible, the Council will seek to remedy the situation through negotiation and enforcement of standards, including legal action where necessary. Evidence will be required that in the view of an Environmental Health Officer, the situation is so severe - or the property owner has been unresponsive to enforcement measures and these are likely to be protracted - that it is not reasonable that the applicant should continue to live in the property long-term.

This priority will not usually be applicable where facilities are adequate but applicant is obliged to share them, e.g. house in multiple occupation.

B.9 Under-occupation (10 or 5 points)

B.9a Applicable to existing Council or RSL tenants who wish to transfer from a four bedroom house to any smaller suitable property type, subject to the general lettings principles detailed in Section 5.6.

B.9b Applicable also to existing Council or RSL tenants moving from a two or three bedroom house to a flat or bungalow. Tenants wishing to move to another house will not normally be eligible for this priority.

B.10 Child(ren) above ground floor level (6 points)

Applicable to households with one or more children aged up to 7 years, living in a flat above ground floor level, where this is the child/children's main residence.

B.11 Social housing tenants who no longer need adaptations (10 points)

Applicable to Council or RSL tenants whose current property has been significantly adapted to meet the medical or disability needs of someone who is no longer part of the household or who no longer needs the adaptations. An assessment, including a home visit, will be carried out of the applicant's current requirements, and of the layout and adaptations of the property.

B.12 Bedsit occupiers with child/ren (3 points)

Applicable to people living in bedsit or 'studio' accommodation and who have regular overnight access/custody of a child or children.

B.13 Tied tenants of Council/RSL accommodation (8 points)

Applicable to employees of the Council or a Registered Social Landlord who retire, are made redundant or voluntarily leave their job and will as a consequence lose the accommodation that is provided to them as part of the employment, e.g. Scheme Managers, school caretaker. Not applicable to employees who are dismissed for misconduct.

B.14 Waiting Time (1-5 points)

An additional point will be awarded to applications which are still active on the register 12 months after registering, and on each anniversary thereafter to a maximum of 5 points. Waiting time points cannot be accrued by applicants whose priority has been reduced for any of the reasons detailed in Section 4.3.3, unless/until the applicant has successfully appealed the reduction or an agreement has been reached and is being maintained regarding earning reinstated priority.

4.3.3 Points reduction – Group B applicants

B.15 Modifying factor: Behaviour – debt

A reduction may be applied for any outstanding housing-related debts accrued in the private or public sector, including current rent arrears, former tenancy arrears, sundry debts relating to damages or re-charges on a property, reclaimed housing benefit, Court Costs, warrant fees and Council Tax arrears .

Points may be deducted on a sliding scale, according to the level of debt:

- £100-£199 owing – point deduction is 2
- £200-£299 owing – point deduction is 4
- £300 - £399 owing – point deduction is 6

And so on in steps of £200 until points are reduced to 1

Points will be incrementally re-instated when the debt is reduced within the above thresholds. So, for example if the debt is reduced from £320 to £280 the points deducted will reduce from 6 to 4.

The applicant will be expected to enter into and maintain an agreement to reduce the debt. An offer of accommodation will not normally be made if the debt has not been reduced in line with the agreement.

Current Council or RSL tenants will not normally be allowed to transfer until all housing debts are cleared (see Section 5.5).

B.16 Modifying factor: Behaviour – anti-social/criminal behaviour

A reduction may be applied, to 1 point, where there is evidence to support serious concerns about the potential adverse impact of rehousing an applicant, for themselves, or to existing residents. Applicants will be advised in writing of the reasons for this and given an indication of what improvement in behaviour, engagement with support, or other change might reduce the potential risk in rehousing them. Applicants who can provide evidence that relevant changes have been made can ask for this reduction to be reviewed at any time. WALH may remove the reduction but it may also place restrictions on the area(s) or properties that the applicant can bid for, as detailed in Sections 2.1-2.4 of this policy.

B.17 Modifying factor: Behaviour – other

A reduction may be applied, to 1 point where it can be shown that the applicant deliberately worsened their circumstances to gain priority on the housing register or they gave false or misleading information or failed to disclose relevant information.

The reduction will usually be applied for a period of six months and the application re-assessed. If the applicant has still failed to provide full and accurate information, or is continuing to deliberately worsen their circumstances, the reduction may be retained for a further period.

B.18 Lack of local connection

A reduction to 2 points may be applied where the applicant cannot demonstrate a local connection to the Wigan borough as detailed in Section 3.11.

B.19 Financial Resources

All applicants who own one or more residential properties must provide evidence of the expected profit, once all mortgages and charges have been cleared, that would be realised on its sale. Until this evidence is obtained, owner-occupiers will be placed in Group C or in Group B with 2 points.

After the assessment of the application is complete, (and if they qualify for Group B priority), a reduction to 2 points may be applied where the applicant has equity expected to exceed £85,000 in a property they currently own or have sold within the preceding 12 months.

Where the applicant has a special need for a property types, facilities or support services that can only be provided in social rented housing however, WALH may at its discretion waive this reduction.

4.4

GROUP C – NO HOUSING NEED/LOW PRIORITY

4.4.1 Applicants in Group C will be prioritised by the date their housing application was made active on the register.

C.1 No recognised housing need

Applicable to people who wish to be rehoused in social rented property, but who have no housing need that would qualify under the statutory 'reasonable preference' categories. This group is likely to comprise mainly owner-occupiers or tenants who are adequately housed.

C.2 Holding Category

Applicable to people who are not yet ready to take up a social housing tenancy, e.g. prisoners, members of HM Forces, or applicants living in supported housing who are not yet ready to move. Evidence may be required from a third party to indicate when the applicant is ready to be considered for rehousing, at which point the application will be reviewed and placed in the relevant Group.

4.4.2 Applicants in Group C who have an outstanding debt will be expected to enter into and maintain an agreement to reduce the debt. An offer of accommodation will not normally be made if the debt has not been reduced in line with the agreement.

4.5

Summary of the Grouping Scheme

Group A		
A.1	Homeless or threatened with homelessness	
A.2	Demolition / regeneration scheme resident	
A.3	Young people leaving local authority care	
A.4	Leaving the UK Armed Forces	
A.5	Severe hardship	
A.6	Foster carer or Supported Lodgings host requiring a move	
Group B		
B.1a	Overcrowding: each bedroom lacking	4 points
B.1b	Overcrowding: additional point for one bedroom property	1 point
B.2a	Medical 1: urgent priority	10 points
B.2b	Medical 2: high priority	8 points
B.3a	Welfare 1: urgent priority	10 points
B.3b	Welfare 2: high priority	8 points
B.4a	Insecure tenure: high level	6 points
B.4b	Insecure tenure: standard level	3 points
B.5	Relationship breakdown but still living with former partner	5 points
B.6	Moving on from short term supported housing	10 points
B.7	Split family/couple	5 points
B.8	Poor property condition	9 points
B.9a	Under-occupation: releasing 4-bedroom house	10 points
B.9b	Under-occupation: moving from house to flat	5 points
B.10	Child(ren) above ground floor level	6 points
B.11	No longer require adaptations	10 points
B.12	Bedsit occupier with parental access to child/ren	3 points
B.13	Tied tenants of Council/RSL accommodation	8 points
B.14	Waiting time	1 point
Group B – Points reduction		
B.15	Behaviour – housing debts (incremental)	To 1 point
B.16	Behaviour – anti-social/criminal behaviour	To 1 point
B.17	Behaviour – other	To 1 point
B.18	Lack of local connection	To 2 points
B.19	Financial resources – equity over £85,000	To 2 points
Group C		
C.1	No housing need	
C.2	Holding/deferred applicants	

4.6 Lettings Quotas

- 4.6.1 Approximately 80% of advertised properties will be let on a ‘needs basis’, that is, according to the applicant’s position in the Grouping Scheme as shown above.
- 4.6.2 Approximately 20% of advertised properties will be let according to the quotas detailed in sections 4.7- 4.9.

4.7 Social Sector Tenant Transfers

- 4.7.1 5% of available houses to be let to Wigan Council or RSL tenants who can demonstrate 'a good tenancy record': i.e.:
- There is no history of involvement in anti social behaviour in the last 5 years by any household member or their visitors
 - There has been a clear rent account for at least 12 months prior to the date of the offer (NB: arrears which occur due to the housing benefit application being processed will not be taken into account where this results in a clear account when benefit is awarded)
 - There is no outstanding Council debt including current arrears, former tenancy arrears and Council Tax at the time of the offer
 - There are no other breaches of tenancy conditions
- 4.7.2 Bids from qualifying applicants for these properties will be prioritised in order of their registration date.

4.8 Pinpoint – Sub-regional Choice-Based Lettings Scheme

- 4.8.1 Pinpoint is a sub regional Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme for Greater Manchester. It is a partnership of the 10 local authorities, including Wigan, and RSLs working in the city region. All participating organisations refer a percentage of their vacant properties to be advertised through Pinpoint.
- 4.8.2 Its aim is to offer greater mobility and housing options to the people of Greater Manchester, particularly those who need to move across local authority boundaries.
- 4.8.3 5% of available properties will be referred to Pinpoint, representing a spread of the property types, sizes and locations available except those in particularly short supply such as houses with 4 bedrooms or more; or 3 bedroom bungalows.
- 4.8.4 Applicants registered with any partner organisation can bid for properties advertised on the Pinpoint website and applicants on Wigan's housing register may bid for properties anywhere within Greater Manchester through Pinpoint.
- 4.8.5 Referred properties will be advertised on www.pinpoint.org.uk as well as through the usual channels with WALH, and bids must be registered via Pinpoint.

4.9 Waiting Time on the Register

- 4.9.1 10% of available bungalows, flats and sheltered accommodation will be let in order of the date the application was made active on the housing list.
- 4.9.2 Bids will be accepted from applicants with no housing-related debts, breaches of any tenancy conditions, and who are not involved in anti-social behaviour.

4.10 Sheltered Accommodation – special preference

- 4.10.1 When a property in a Sheltered Scheme becomes vacant, first consideration will be given to transferring any existing residents wishing to move within the scheme, e.g. from a first floor flat to a ground floor flat, provided that the move will benefit their health and well being.
- 4.10.2 If two or more residents in similar circumstances wish to move, priority will be given to the person who has lived in the scheme the longest.

Section 5

The Allocation of Housing

5.1 Choice-Based Lettings

5.1.1 Most available properties will be advertised on a weekly basis, usually from Thursday at 9:00am to the following Tuesday at 5:30pm. Applicants will be invited to bid for available properties and must normally satisfy the general lettings principles (see Section 5.6).

5.1.2 Every property that is advertised will be labelled as either:

- Needs based – Groups A to C (80%);
- Houses for existing tenants only (5%)
- Time based: flats, bungalows; sheltered (10%)
- Pinpoint – properties where bid will be accepted from any eligible applicant registered with a partner in the Pinpoint scheme. (5%)

5.1.3 Details of currently available properties can be found on:

propertyshop.walh.co.uk

or in newsletters available at all WALH Area Offices and the Property Shops. Applicants who cannot access the website or contact a housing office will, on request, be sent a weekly newsletter by post.

5.1.4 Applicants can access the website by entering their unique reference number and surname and can then place bids for suitable properties. Alternately, they can contact the Area Offices or Property Shops for a staff member to place bids on their behalf.

5.1.5 Final checks will be made prior to a formal offer being made to ensure that all the details are up to date and correct. This may include a home visit.

5.2 Direct lets

5.2.1 Some properties may not be advertised and will be offered directly to a registered applicant who has high priority (usually Group A priority) for this type, size and location of property. 'Direct let' offers will be carefully matched to the applicant's needs but the applicant will have the right to refuse the property if they feel it is unsuitable for them. If the applicant is owed a statutory rehousing duty, a 'direct let' offer may be made as a discharge of this duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996.

5.3 Offers made under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (Homeless duty)

- 5.3.1 One 'suitable offer' of accommodation will be made – either following a bid via the choice-based lettings process or by a direct offer.
- 5.3.2 If the offer is unreasonably refused, the Council will advise the applicant that its duty has been discharged and the housing application will be re-assessed. The applicant is entitled to request a 'suitability review' of the offer of accommodation. If the review finds that the property was not in fact suitable, the application will be reinstated in Group A with the original group entry date and the applicant will be able to make further bids or receive a further direct offer.
- 5.3.3 If the review finds that the property was suitable and the offer is upheld, the application will be re-assessed and placed in another priority group according to the applicant's needs. It would generally be expected that most such applications will go into Group B after an unsuccessful review and be awarded 3 points. Additional welfare or medical points may be awarded, according to the applicant's circumstances.

5.4 Prioritising Needs Based Applicants (Groups A-C)

- 5.4.1 Properties that have been advertised under the choice-based lettings system will be offered to the bidder whose application has been in Group A the longest. If there are no bids from Group A applicants, the property will be offered to the bidder in Group B with the highest number of points. If two applicants have the same number of points, the property will be offered to the person with the earliest registration date. If there is no-one in Group B, the property will be offered to the person who has been in Group C with the earliest registration date.
- 5.4.2 If the offer is refused or withdrawn, the next highest priority applicant on the bid list will be made the offer, and if that is refused, the next applicants, and so on.

5.5 Number of bids

- 5.5.1 There is no limit on the number of bids an applicant can make in any one week, however, if the applicant is 'next in turn' for two or more properties, WALH will decide which property to offer in order to best match available properties to the needs of applicants.

5.6 Council and RSL Tenants

- 5.6.1 Tenants will be permitted to transfer to alternative accommodation if the following transfer standard is met:
- The property is in a clean condition and satisfactory state of decoration
 - The property shows no signs of damage caused by the tenant, members

- of their household or visitors to their home
- Any garden is reasonably cultivated and free from rubbish and/or overgrowth
- There is a clear rent account
- The tenant or any members of their household are not involved in criminal activity or anti-social behaviour

5.6.2 Tenants may be exempt from the above requirements in the following circumstances :

- Disabled or vulnerable tenants with a need to move
- Current tenants who have been awarded points for urgent or high priority medical or welfare circumstances
- Where there is a risk of violence to the tenant or any member of their household

WALH will have the discretion to waive the transfer standard

5.6.3 Tenants who have sufficient priority to be offered the available property but who do not meet the transfer standard will be contacted by WALH and given the opportunity to address any issues within a reasonable timescale, depending on the circumstances.

5.7 The size and type of accommodation to be offered

5.7.1 WALH will take into account the household size, age, composition and circumstances of each application to determine the size and type of accommodation that the applicant or tenant may bid for, in order to make best use of available stock.

5.8 General property types/size entitlement principles:

Type of Property	Household composition
Studio flat/bedsit	Single person
One bedroom flat	Single person or couple – including those with access to a child
Two bedroom flat on the ground floor	Single person, couple, two adults, a person who has access to one or more children or family who need two bedrooms.
Two bedroom flat above the ground floor	Single person, couple, two adults, a person who has access to one or more children or family who need two bedrooms and the youngest child is at least 12 years old.
One bedroom bungalow	Single person or couple. At least one of the occupants must be over the age of 60 years

Two bedroom bungalow	At least one of the occupants must be over the age of 60 years and the size and nature of the household means that two bedrooms are required
Sheltered accommodation (bedsit flat)	Single person over the age of 60 years
Sheltered accommodation (one bedroom flat or bungalow)	Single person or couple. At least one of the occupants must be over the age of 60 years
Two bedroom house	Families who need two bedroom accommodation.
Three bedroom house	Families who need two or three bedroom accommodation
Three bedroom parlour houses	Families who need three or four bedroom accommodation
Four bedroom or more houses	Families who need at least the number of bedrooms in the house
Properties purpose built or adapted for the disabled	A member of the household must need the adaptations.

Notes:

- 5.8.1 Two bedroom bungalows. If there is no household in urgent housing need – that is, in Group A or with 10 points or more in Group B - who can use all the bedrooms the property will be offered to an applicant in urgent housing need but who may not make use of all the bedrooms. If there are no applicants with 10 points or more, the property will be offered to the ‘next in turn’ irrespective of whether they require two bedrooms.
- 5.8.2 Where there is a medical/disability need, WALH will register households for up to one additional bedroom, e.g. to accommodate a carer, or where a couple require two bedrooms to sleep apart or to accommodate medical equipment.
- 5.8.3 ‘Families’ are households comprising one or two parents with a main caring responsibility for one or more children of any age, including fostered and adopted children; or an applicant who is expecting a child – the applicant will qualify for a house once proof of pregnancy is received.
- 5.8.4 Council or RSL tenants living in a four bedroom property, but who only need one bedroom can be considered for a two or three bedroom property.
- 5.8.5 Provided it will not constitute statutory overcrowding (which is a stricter standard than the Council’s overcrowding definition) and should the applicant agree, in certain circumstances the Council will allow a household to occupy a smaller property than they would normally be entitled to under this policy. Tenants will be entitled to housing need points in the normal way should they subsequently re-apply for a transfer.

- 5.8.6 Adapted properties may not always be offered to the bidder with the highest priority under the group scheme. The household who has the greatest need for the specific adaptations, and number of bedrooms which the property has, will be taken into account.
- 5.8.7 Houses with four or more bedrooms will not always be offered to the bidder with the highest priority under the group scheme. The type and size of their current property and the composition of the household, including any special needs of any of its members, will be taken into account.
- 5.8.8 An assessment of suitability will be carried out for an applicant who wants sheltered accommodation before an offer of accommodation is made.
- 5.8.9 The criteria may be widened if there is no demand for a specific property e.g. sheltered accommodation may be offered to someone under the age of 60 years provided that an assessment of their needs shows that they would benefit from sheltered accommodation.
- 5.8.10 Subject to the rules on room sharing in Section 5.7, households in which either of the partners have parental access to one or more children will be entitled to an additional bedroom.
- 5.8.11 If a Local Lettings Policy (See Section 5.10) is applied to any property, this will be indicated when it is advertised.

5.9 Rules on room sharing – Bedroom Standard

- 5.9.1 This set of rules relate to both:
- How initial applications for accommodation are assessed to determine the extent of overcrowding and under occupation and
 - The number of bedrooms needed by the household in their new home.
- 5.9.2 The Bedroom Standard is based on the ages and composition of the family. A notional number of bedrooms is allocated to each household in accordance with its composition by age, sex and marital status and relationships of family members. A separate bedroom is allocated to each:
- 5.9.3
- Couple (married/civil partnership or cohabiting)
 - Adult aged 21 years or more;
 - Pair of children/young people aged under 21 years of the same sex;
 - Pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of sex.
- 5.9.4 Any unpaired person aged 10-20 years is paired, if possible, with a child aged under 10 years of the same sex or, if that is not possible given a separate bedroom. The same applies to any unpaired child aged under 10 years.

- 5.9.5 Children of an appropriate age and sex within the same household are expected to be able to share a bedroom regardless of relationship, e.g. step-children, foster children. Children from different households (.e.g. in lodging situations) will not be expected to share in this way for the purposes of calculating overcrowding and the appropriate size of property to be offered.

In assessing the number of bedrooms needed by the household in their new home, account will be taken of any unborn child (as if the child had been born).

5.10 Main caring responsibility for children

- 5.10.1 In cases of separated or divorced parents, WALH will decide on a case by case basis, which parent has the main caring responsibility for the child/ren. Evidence will be required to demonstrate residence and access arrangements and/or any court orders affecting these. Applicants who have the main caring responsibility for children will be entitled to bid for a family-sized property. Applicants who have access to children but who do not have the main caring responsibility may bid for 'non-family' flats with one or more bedrooms (See Section 5.6) but will usually not be eligible to bid for houses.
- 5.10.2 Child(ren) will not be taken into account (e.g. for overcrowding/child above ground floor priority) when assessing an application from a separated parent who does not have full parental access, although points will be awarded if the applicant is living in a bedsit/studio flat.

5.11 Tenants with lodgers

- 5.11.1 Current tenants who have lodgers residing in their property, who do not wish to move with them, will not be allowed to transfer to alternative accommodation unless the tenant has confirmed that the lodger will leave when they transfer.
- 5.11.2 The lodger must have left the property before the tenant enters into a tenancy agreement for a new property.
- 5.11.3 In exceptional circumstances the lodger may be allocated a new tenancy for the property, if they meet the criteria in Section 5.14

5.12 Local Lettings Policies

- 5.12.1 Section 167(E) of the Housing Act 1996 enables housing authorities to allocate accommodation to certain categories of applicant, whether or not they fall into the reasonable preference categories. Where operating local lettings policies, housing authorities will need to ensure that overall 'reasonable preference' for allocations is given to applicants in the statutory categories set out in the Housing Act 1996; and that local lettings policies do not discriminate, directly or indirectly, against minority groups or women.

5.12.2 Local Lettings Policies may be operated for :

- **New build and/or regeneration schemes**
- **A group of properties of a particular type or in a particular neighbourhood.**
- **Individual properties** – in the following circumstances:
 - a) Reducing the minimum age criteria for certain hard to let bungalows or sheltered schemes.
 - b) Imposing temporary restrictions, e.g. a minimum age, on new tenants in a block of flats which may have been subject to anti-social behaviour from former tenants.
 - c) Introducing an upper or lower age limit on a block of flats to help prevent a clash of lifestyles.
 - d) Giving additional preference to applicants who meet certain criteria, e.g. working people, to achieve strategic aims

5.12.3 Local Lettings Policies, where adopted, may apply to properties owned by the Council, WALH or any other partner organisation with whom the Council has a nominations agreement. Where the local lettings policy is likely to affect 50 or more properties in a neighbourhood comprised predominantly of existing Council or RSL tenants, for example the first round of lets on a newbuild scheme, consultation will be carried out with Elected Members for the ward.

5.12.4 All Local Lettings Policies will be regularly reviewed to monitor effectiveness against their aims and objectives.

5.12.5 WALH will ensure that when vacant properties which are subject to a Local Lettings Policy are advertised, the criteria applying will be made clear on all publicity materials and staff will be in a position to advise enquirers about these.

5.13 Sensitive Lettings

5.13.1 Where WALH is able to demonstrate that an allocation to the household who has the highest priority for the available property would have a detrimental effect on existing residents or to the applicant as defined in Sections 3.2-3.4, the property may be allocated to the next highest priority applicant.

5.13.2 Where the highest priority bidder is not offered the available property, a record will be kept of the reasons for this decision, which must be authorised by an Area Manager, for monitoring purposes. The affected applicant will be assisted to find a suitable alternative property.

5.14 Readily available properties and general offers

5.14.1 Some areas or properties may be designated as 'readily available' if there is only a very small number, or no interested applicants on the register.

5.14.2 If a property has been advertised as 'readily available' for two cycles without attracting a bid, WALH staff will pro-actively seek out potential tenants for the property. Such lettings will be considered as 'choice based lettings' and not direct lettings.

5.15 Private Sector properties

5.15.1 From time to time, properties belonging to private sector landlords may be advertised alongside social sector properties. The management of these properties will have been accredited by the Council and they will be clearly indicated. WALH Property Shop staff will advise interested applicants of the lettings criteria that the landlord will use to allocate these properties and the differences from social sector tenure and services that they could expect if they were to accept the tenancy.

5.16 Allocation to non-tenant occupiers

5.16.1 There will be instances where the occupier may have no statutory right to the tenancy, but may have been occupying that accommodation as his or her home for some time and wishes to remain there.

5.16.2 Section 5.16 policy deals with statutory succession and assignments to a person who would be qualified to succeed if the tenant had died immediately before the assignment.

5.16.3 This section deals with circumstances under which an assignment of tenancy and 'second successions' (which in effect, will create a new tenancy) may be approved. The non-tenant must satisfy the person conditions and the property conditions as outlined below.

5.17 Person Conditions

5.17.1 An assignment of tenancy or the granting of a new tenancy would generally only be considered if the outgoing tenant had to leave their home because it was no longer suitable for their needs e.g. to go to a nursing or residential home where the necessary support would be provided or there are other extenuating circumstances which forced the tenant to move.

5.17.2 The non-tenant would have to satisfy the qualifying criteria for succession as outlined in Section 5.16 in order for the property to be assigned or a new tenancy created.

5.17.3 In addition a non-relative who has lived with the tenant for a continuous period of two years ending with the termination of the tenant's interest may be granted a new tenancy of the property.

5.17.4 If the person has not lived in the property for the required period then the tenancy may only be granted if, in the opinion of WALH, the person was likely to have been the highest bidder had the property been advertised.

5.18 Property Conditions

5.18.1 An assignment (or 'second succession') will not normally be allowed in the following circumstances:

- (a) Where the accommodation is designed or adapted for the elderly or disabled and there will no longer be such a person living there.
- (b) Where it will result in the new tenant under occupying a property by two or more bedrooms unless the person is the deceased tenant's spouse or civil partner.
- (c) Where there has been a serious breach of tenancy conditions and in the judgement of the Area Housing Manager, the breach will continue if the property is assigned or a new tenancy is created.

On a case by case basis, the Area Housing Manager may approve an assignment, even where the above circumstances apply e.g. potential assignee is almost 60 years of age and therefore would soon be eligible for the bungalow.

5.19 Termination of a joint tenancy by one of the joint tenants

5.19.1 Where one joint tenant has terminated the tenancy, by serving four weeks notice to quit on the Council, and the other joint tenant remains in their home, consideration will be given to creating a new tenancy to the remaining former joint tenant . Each request will be considered on a case by case basis.

5.20 Succession to a Tenancy

5.20.1 Succession can only occur on the death of the secure, introductory or demoted tenant.

- The Housing Act 1985 section 87 provides that when a sole tenant dies the tenancy may be passed to a "qualified" successor
- Only one statutory succession is allowed
- Only one person may succeed

5.20.2 The Housing Act 1985 section 88 provides that if the tenant who is a secure joint tenant dies the remaining tenant qualifies for the tenancy under The Right of Survivorship.

5.21 Criteria to Succeed

- 5.21.1 1. The person must be a "qualified" successor
2. Except for the spouse or civil partner, the person must have resided at the property for 12 months prior to the death of the tenant.

5.22 Persons qualified to Succeed

5.22.1 1. The tenant's spouse or Civil Partner

Must have been living at the property as their only and principal home at the time of death of the tenant. There is no time limit on the length of residence

2. The tenant's 'common law' partner

The partner (including in same sex couples) at the time of death, must have been living with the tenant and lived at the property for 12 months prior to the death of the tenant.

3. A member of the deceased tenant's family

Must have been residing at the property with the deceased tenant for at least 12 months before the tenant's death.

Section 113 of the Housing Act 1985 as amended, defines members of the family as: -

- Spouse or Civil Partner
- Parents
- Grandparents
- Children
- Grandchildren
- Brother / sister
- Uncles / aunts
- Nieces / nephews
- Step-relations (relationship by marriage or civil partnership is treated as relationship by blood)
- Half-relation (treated as equal to whole blood relationships)
- Illegitimate Child (treated as a legitimate child)

5.23 More than one potential successor

- 5.23.1
- The spouse or civil partner takes precedence
 - If there is no spouse or civil partner the eligible relatives decides who takes tenancy
 - If there is no agreement the landlord decides
 - There can be no joint succession

5.24 Suitability of the Property

5.24.1 A succession may not be denied even if the new tenant would not normally satisfy the lettings criteria for the property e.g. the property is substantially adapted for the disabled, but there is no-one in the household needing those adaptations or the property is substantially larger than is reasonably required.

5.24.2 In such circumstances the tenant will be offered a management transfer to a more suitable property. If the tenant refuses, consideration will be given to obtaining possession under one of the grounds within Section 2 of the

Housing Act 1985. Such possession proceedings must be approved by WALH's Director of Housing Management, and will not be commenced earlier than 6 months after the death of the tenant.

5.25 Assignments

5.25.1 Generally, a Secure Tenancy is incapable of being assigned except in the following circumstances: (Housing Act 1985 Section 91):

1. Assignments by way of exchange (see Section 5.18 below)
2. Assignments under property adjustment orders in connection with matrimonial proceeding or other relevant court orders
3. Assignments to a person who would be qualified to succeed if the tenant had died immediately before the assignment.

5.25.2 This deals with the third form of assignment.

Assignments to a person who would be qualified to succeed if the tenant had died immediately before the assignment

Unlike successions the person does not have the automatic right for an assignment of tenancy.

5.25.3 S3.6(a) of Wigan Council's Tenancy Agreement does not permit an assignment without the written permission of the Council.

5.25.4 Section 5.16 of this policy deals with the criteria that should be met in order for approval for property assignment.

5.25.5 If an assignment of tenancy is carried out without the permission of the Council, then retrospective permission may be granted provided that the person and property conforms with the conditions outlined in 5.14

5.25.6 If the conditions are not complied with consideration will be given to obtaining possession due to breach of tenancy conditions or other relevant grounds. Possession proceedings must be approved by WALH's Director of Housing Management.

5.26 Mutual Exchanges

5.26.1 Council and RSL tenants have a statutory right to seek a mutual exchange and are not required to meet the criteria for priority contained in this policy.

5.26.2 The Council has joined a national web-based mutual exchange scheme – Homeswapper: www.homeswapper.co.uk. Wigan Council tenants can register on the site for free to search for another Council or RSL tenant anywhere in the country to swap homes with. RSL tenants may be required to pay a small fee for this service, which is charged directly by Homeswapper.

5.26.3 During 2010 the Council will continue to run its own in-house mutual exchange register for the benefit of those tenants who do not have access to a computer. The mutual exchange service will be reviewed in December 2010 to determine whether to continue using Homeswapper; discontinue the in-house scheme or continue to use both schemes. Tenants who are registered on both schemes at the time will be consulted before a final decision is made.

5.26.4 WALH will ensure that information about the right to exchange, and procedures for seeking exchange partners and applying for the Council's consent to exchange is publicised. This will be achieved in a variety of ways, including posters at Offices, articles in "Housing Matters", and information on the tenant transfer application form.

5.26.5 The Council will not refuse an application for exchange unless:

- The tenant or assignee is obliged to give up possession under a court order
- Proceedings have been commenced for possession against the tenant or assignee or a notice of seeking possession has been served
- The accommodation is substantially more extensive than is reasonably required by the assignee
- The extent of the accommodation is not suitable to the assignee and their family
- The accommodation was let to the tenant in consequence of employment related to non-housing purposes e.g. school caretaker houses, park-keeper houses etc
- There is conflict with the purposes of a charity landlord
- The property has been adapted for a disabled person and there is no disabled person who will, in future, utilise the adaptations
- There is conflict with the purposes of a specialist housing association or trust
- The accommodation is sheltered accommodation

In addition, the landlord is entitled to require payment of any rent arrears or the remedying of any breach of tenancy condition before consent to exchange is given.

5.27 Emergency Situations and Meeting Strategic Aims

5.27.1 This Allocations Policy and any applicable Local Lettings Policies will normally apply to all allocations of Council housing and nominations to properties owned by partner organisations with whom the Council has a nominations agreement. There may be occasions however when the Council needs to withdraw properties from allocations under this Policy, or move people from their homes for special reasons e.g. major repair programmes ("decants"), to meet strategic priorities, or following disaster or emergency.

- 5.27.2 Alternatively the Council may give preference for a transfer to a tenant in low priority, in order to release a property and re-let this to an applicant in high housing need, or to create a chain of lets which meets high housing need or a strategic priority.
- 5.27.3 In these cases, the Council reserves the right to withdraw suitable properties from the allocation scheme.

Section 6

Appeals, Reviews and Complaints

6.1 Appeals and the review process

6.1.1 All applicants including existing tenants have the right to appeal against decisions made by Officers of WALH in any part of the application process, including:

- The facts of their case and their Group/points assessment.
- If they have been found not eligible for an allocation due to their immigration status or unacceptable behaviour and the grounds for that decision.
- A decision made in respect of a medical or welfare award.
- Any decision to cancel an application.

6.1.2 A request for a review must be made within 28 days of the date of the decision or assessment. It may be submitted by the applicant or a representative of the applicant.

6.1.3 All such requests must be in person or in writing to WALH outlining the reasons for requesting the review:

Director of Housing Needs
Wigan & Leigh Housing Ltd
Unity House
Westwood Park Drive
Wigan WN3 4HE

Requests for review can also include any supporting evidence or information to help the case, including statements from agencies providing a support service to the applicant.

6.1.4 Where appropriate, applicants will be given assistance in requesting a review by WALH staff. They may also approach an independent advice agency, e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau, for help and WALH will liaise with their advisor, subject to consent being given by the applicant to exchange the relevant information.

6.1.5 The formal review under this policy will be carried out by a Principal Officer in WALH who was not previously involved in the application or assessment and who is senior to the officer who made the original decision

- 6.1.6 Applicants will be informed in writing of the decision on review and the grounds for that decision. WALH will usually complete the review process within 4 weeks of receiving all the necessary information. If it is not possible to gather all the necessary information in a reasonable time, the applicant will be informed in writing and offered the opportunity to have the review carried out with the information that is available.
- 6.1.7 If the applicant remains dissatisfied with the decision on review, an appeal can be made within 28 days of the being notified of the decision to:

Wigan Council
Housing Strategy Team
Gateway House
Standishgate
Wigan WN1 1AE

The appeal will be considered by a Principal Officer of the Council and the applicant will be notified of the outcome within 6 weeks of receiving all the necessary information to consider the appeal.

6.2 Homeless applicants

- 6.2.1 Applicants who have requested housing assistance under the terms of the Homelessness legislation have additional statutory rights to ask for a review of decisions made about their case, including their eligibility, the duties that may be owed to them, their local connections and any referral made or received from another local authority, the provision of temporary accommodation, and/or any offers of permanent accommodation in discharge of homelessness duties.
- 6.2.2 WALH will comply with all statutory requirements to notify and advise applicants about homelessness assessment decisions, the reasons for decisions and the applicant's rights of review.
- 6.2.3 Appeals or requests for review of homelessness decisions, or offers of accommodation under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 should be addressed in the first instance to WALH:

Housing Advice Manager
Housing Options Advice Centre
Templeton Road
Platt Bridge
Wigan WN2 5PD

6.2.4 Applicants who are unsure of their legal rights in respect of homelessness decisions or asking for a review of any aspect of their case may ask for advice from the Housing Options Advice Centre staff at any time. They may also approach an independent advice agency, e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau, for help and WALH will liaise with their advisors, subject to consent being given by the applicant to exchange the relevant information.

6.3 Complaints

6.3.1 Applicants may also use WALH Complaints procedure if they feel:

- Something has been done badly or wrong
- If something has not been done that should have been done
- If the service has not been delivered in accordance with the policy and procedures
- If they have been treated in an impolite or discourteous manner

6.3.2 All customers who make a complaint will be treated fairly and objectively.

6.3.3 Any complaint received will be responded to within 10 working days of receiving the complaint.

6.3.4 If the applicant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint or the way their case has been dealt with, after they have exhausted WALH's complaints procedure, they can write to the Local Government Ombudsman or apply for a judicial review.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

- 1 All information provided by applicants on the application form, and/or provided by a third party in connection with their application will be used for the sole purpose of enabling WALH to assess the application for housing in accordance with this Policy, and the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 2 Applicants and tenants are entitled to see any information that WALH holds on them, except information provided in confidence by a third party or confidential information regarding a member of their family and/or household. Applicants will need to make their request for information in writing, and there may be a charge to reflect any additional work involved in providing this information.
- 3 The duty of confidentiality may be waived in circumstances where the disclosure is considered to be in the wider public interest e.g. the prevention or detection of crime, or in the provision of relevant information at ward or wider geographical level.

Freedom of Information Act 2000

- 4 Anyone can request 'recorded information' from WALH in any format, e.g. paper, compact disk, e-mail messages, and reports.
- 5 Advice and information will be available free of charge to all applicants and tenants on a variety of issues relating to housing, and in a range of formats.
- 6 Some information is exempt from public access under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA 2000). Certain data will be absolutely exempt while other information will be withheld or released subject to a qualified decision whether the public interest is best served by withholding or releasing the information requested.
- 7 Personal data requests by the applicant or tenant are exempt from the disclosure provisions of the FOIA 2000 and are instead dealt with under the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 8 Personal data requested by someone other than the applicant are dealt with under the FOIA 2000. However, such requests are likely to infringe the data protection principles and, therefore, this data would be exempt information under the FOIA 2000.

Wigan & Leigh Housing Service Standards for Applicants.

WALH will consider every application received and:

- ✓ Make sure we meet the Council's legal obligations in allocating accommodation.
- ✓ Provide free advice and information about the right to apply for accommodation.
- ✓ Provide free assistance to applicants who may have difficulty when making an application including help for any applicant to complete the application form if they need assistance.
- ✓ Make sure any information provided is easy to understand and is readily accessible.
- ✓ Outline and explain how the Council will offer choice and the ability for applicants to express a preference for an area/s.
- ✓ Provide information to all applicants of what types of accommodation are available throughout the district.
- ✓ Provide information about how long an applicant is likely to have to wait before being allocated accommodation.
- ✓ Make available a full copy of this Allocation Policy to all households who request it and will always provide a summary of the scheme to all who are accepted as being owed a full duty as statutory homeless.
- ✓ Treat each applicant equally in accordance with their need, regardless of race, religion or creed, ethnic or national origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation or marital status.
- ✓ Regularly monitor ethnic origin and disability of applicants who apply for accommodation.

Ensure that all information provided by applicants will be treated in strictest confidence.

Officer Roles and Responsibilities

The power to operate the Allocation scheme in Wigan borough is a power delegated by Wigan Council in accordance its powers for delegation.

Wigan Council has charged WALH to manage the allocations policy on behalf of the Council.

Under Section 167 Housing Act 1996 as amended by 2002 Homelessness Act -
 “Every local Housing authority shall have a scheme (their allocation scheme) for determining priorities and as to the procedure to be followed, in allocating housing accommodation. For this purpose ‘procedure’ includes all aspects of the allocations process, including the persons or descriptions of persons by whom decisions are to be taken.”

To meet this legal requirement the following table sets out which officers (in terms of post and level of responsibility) will take decisions under the Council's Allocation scheme.

Role	Responsibilities
Housing Needs staff & Area Housing Offices staff - WALH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of advice and assistance including telephone advice and interviewing • Day to day administration of all housing applications and lettings • Inputting data relating to individual applications. • Answering general queries by telephone, in writing, and in person • Verification of documents and applicant circumstances • Processing of incoming applications against the Council's scheme. • Making direct lets to applicants in Group A
Principal Officer – WALH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking Reviews • Monitoring allocations and nominations • Deciding on complicated or exceptional cases that require referral to the Director of Housing Needs • Authorising exclusions (persons from abroad) • Referring cases for potential exclusion (behaviour only) to the Director of Housing Needs • Authorising Group A entry for applicants who are threatened with homelessness, in priority need, not intentionally homeless but who have not been given a decision under the Homelessness legislation • Authorising of restriction from bidding in certain areas or for certain property types.

Principal Officer – WALH (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorising a reduction in points due to behaviour. • Authorising the lifting of a reduction in points for behaviour • Approving the letting of properties in very short supply, e.g. adapted properties, 4-bedroom houses • Approving suitability assessments and offers for sheltered accommodation
Principal Officer - Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering appeals • Authorising Local Lettings Policies • Authorising minor amendments to the Allocations Policy under the Council's delegated powers
WALH Director of Housing Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarding hardship priority • Authorising exclusions (behaviour) • Lifting exclusions (behaviour)

**Short Term Supported Accommodation
available in Wigan Borough as at Jan 2010**

Provider	Description of service	Number of clients
Adactus (Young persons' hostels)	Temporary accommodation and support for young people (aged 16-25) to enable them to acquire independent living skills and move on to appropriate accommodation within the wider community. 5 hostels across Wigan borough	28
Adactus (Bamber Court)	Temporary accommodation and support for young mothers (aged 16-25) to enable them to acquire independent living skills and move on to appropriate accommodation within the wider community.	16
Arena Options (Coops Foyer)	Safe and secure temporary accommodation, onsite training, assistance with accessing employment and personal development opportunities for young people (aged 16 to 25)	24
Arena Options (Tiernan Lodge)	Safe and secure temporary accommodation, practical advice/assistance and emotional support for homeless people to help them manage effectively until permanent accommodation becomes available.	20
Arena Options (Refuge accommodation)	To provide support / information to women and their children who have experienced domestic violence, to gain control of their own lives, to enable them to make decisions about their future and obtain safe and suitable accommodation.	30
ECHG (Railway Road)	Temporary accommodation for single homeless men and women who have a variety of needs and require a period of support prior to accessing a permanent tenancy	22
ECHG (Bond Street & Prestwich House)	Temporary accommodation for single men (offenders and those at risk of offending) who have a variety of needs and who require a period of support prior to accessing a permanent tenancy	26
WALH (Brecon Close)	Temporary accommodation for people faced with homelessness while a permanent housing solution is found.	15
Wigan Council (Brookfield)	To support individuals with mental health problems to gain confidence and develop daily living skills to enable them to live independently in the community.	14
Wigan Council (Fourways)	To provide short term accommodation for people with physical disabilities, sensory impairment and acquired brain injury.	14
Supported Lodgings Scheme	To provide short term accommodation and support for young people aged 16-24 to enable them to acquire independent living skills before moving on to appropriate accommodation in the wider community.	Up to 25

Wigan and Leigh Housing – Contact Details

Housing Options Property Shops	
<i>Property Shops deal with the processing of housing applications, assist with placing bids and offer advice on the housing options available to people.</i>	
<p>Leigh Property Shop 4-6 Market Street Leigh WN7 1DS (01942) 409091 07797 806546 (text/SMS) propertyshop@walh.co.uk</p>	<p>Wigan Property Shop 1-3 Library Street WIGAN WN1 1NN (01942) 404128 07797806546 (text/SMS) propertyshop@walh.co.uk</p>
Area Housing Offices	
<i>Area Housing Offices allocate council properties in accordance with this policy.</i>	
<p>Atherton Area Housing Office Ena Mill, Atherton Business Centre Flapper Fold Lane Atherton Manchester M46 0HB (01942) 705040 Housing-AthertonAHOGen@wiganmbc.gov.uk</p>	<p>Leigh Area Housing Office Chapel Street Leigh WN7 2EF (01942) 705040 Housing-LeighAHOGen@wiganmbc.gov.uk</p>
<p>Pemberton Area Housing Office 101 - 107 Ridyard Street Pemberton Wigan WN5 9RQ (01942) 705040 Housing-PembertonAHOGen@wiganmbc.gov.uk</p>	<p>Platt Bridge Housing Office 617 Liverpool Road Platt Bridge Wigan WN2 5BD (01942) 705040 Housing-PlattBridgeAHOGen@wiganmbc.gov.uk</p>
<p>Wigan Housing Office School Lane Scholes Wigan WN1 3QX (01942) 705040 Housing-WiganAHOGen@wiganmbc.gov.uk</p>	<p>Housing Options Advice Centre Templeton Road Platt Bridge Wigan (01942) 487717</p> <p><i>HOAC deal with homelessness prevention and investigation of statutory duties</i></p>
Central Offices	
<p>Wigan & Leigh Housing Housing Needs Directorate Unity house Westwood Park Drive WIGAN WN3 4HE (01942) 486686 allocations@walh.co.uk</p>	<p>Wigan Council Housing Strategy Team Gateway House Standishgate Wigan WN1 1AE (01942) 828952 hst@wigan.gov.uk</p>

Local Lettings Policies (as at Jan 2010)

1. Age restrictions on Council properties

a) Sheltered housing

This accommodation is specifically designed for older people and is usually built as a self-contained scheme of properties, with communal facilities and the services of a scheme manager also available to the residents. The minimum age restriction is therefore not usually reviewed unless there is a marked increase or reduction in demand for this type of housing. There are 47 Council sheltered accommodation schemes in the borough, comprising 1,317 properties (5.7% of the total stock).

Scheme	Flats	Bungalows	Total units	Management Area	Min. age
Acton House	14	7	21	Wigan	60
Alexandra House	13	6	19	Wigan	60
Atherton House	11	0	11	Atherton	60
Blakeborough House	11	0	11	Atherton	60
Brackley House	31	5	36	Pemberton	55
Brookdale Court	25	0	25	Leigh	60
Cherry Trees	0	71	71	Atherton	60
Clifton House	13	14	27	Pemberton	55
Devonshire Place	0	18	18	Atherton	60
Dunoon Road	0	19	19	Wigan	60
Frodsham Close	0	10	10	Wigan	60
Furness Crescent	0	34	34	Leigh	60
Gantley Court	12	26	38	Pemberton	60
Greenbank Court	0	31	31	Atherton	60
Greenfields	32	12	44	Wigan	60
Greenwood Road	8	24	32	Wigan	60
Hesketh Manor	26	9	35	Atherton	60
Hindley House	13	0	13	Pemberton	55
Hollydene	17	0	17	Wigan	60
Kildare Grange	37	0	37	Platt Bridge	60
Leonard Court	23	0	23	Leigh	60
Linden Court	15	10	25	Pemberton	60
Lunedale	23	0	23	Platt Bridge	60
Manor Court	36	1	37	Platt Bridge	60
Marshdale	23	0	23	Leigh	60
Mealhouse Court	20	6	26	Atherton	60
Millervale House	12	0	12	Platt Bridge	60
Moss Bank Court	34	14	48	Leigh	60
Northfield Court	8	24	32	Platt Bridge	60
Oakland Court	5	26	31	Platt Bridge	60

Pagefield House	13	10	23	Wigan	60
Peter Street	0	20	20	Pemberton	60
Pool Street	0	20	20	Pemberton	60
Prodesse Court	0	35	35	Platt Bridge	60
Regency Court	23	0	23	Wigan	60
Roadside Court	0	26	26	Platt Bridge	60
The Rowans/Lindale Road	24	70	94	Atherton	60
Samwoods House	14	0	14	Pemberton	60
Station Avenue	0	17	17	Pemberton	60
The Hollins	0	50	50	Platt Bridge	60
Thorburn House	17	0	17	Pemberton	60
Walkden House	24	0	24	Platt Bridge	60
Westfield Road	0	15	15	Atherton	60
Westwood Grange	0	34	34	Wigan	60
Wharfdale	23	0	23	Leigh	60
Winster House	21	0	21	Pemberton	60
Withington Grange	32	0	32	Wigan	60
Totals	653	664	1317		

b) Non-sheltered bungalows

Allocations to non-sheltered bungalows are currently restricted throughout the borough to applicants/tenants over 60 years, with these exceptions:

Management Area	Address	No. of properties	Min. age
Pemberton	Marsh Green (mixture of bedsit & 1-bedroom bungalows)	17	30
Pemberton	Crabtree Rd, Closebrook Rd, Broom Rd, Laithwaite Rd, Worsley Hall	56	30
Pemberton	Norley Hall	48	55

This Local Lettings Policy currently applies to 2,155 units, comprising 9.4% of the total Council stock. These restrictions will be reviewed regularly to ensure continued fit with overall strategic aims and in the context of changing housing needs in the borough.

c) Blocks of flats (general needs)

Allocations to these designated blocks are restricted to applicants/tenants above the specified minimum age in order to prevent a clash of lifestyles and to reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviour.

Management Area	Address	No. of properties	Min. age
Atherton	34-44 Bag Lane	12	40
Atherton	8-30 Bolton Road	36	30
Atherton	Mealhouse Court - 3, 4, 5, 8, 12, 13, 15,16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 25, 26, 29, 30, 34, 35, 41	19	40

Atherton	Devonshire Road 9 - 11B, 13 - 15B, 17 - 19B, 21 - 23B, 25-27 B , 26 - 28B, 29 - 31B, 30 - 32B, 33 - 35B,	54	30
Atherton	Walsh House 1 - 12	12	30
Atherton	Loveless House 1 - 10	10	30
Atherton	Brooklands Ave 1 - 2A, 3 - 4A, 5 - 6A, 7 - 8A, 9 - 10A,	20	30
Atherton	The Courts area in Tyldesley Town Centre	56	30
Atherton	The Willows	12	40
Leigh	Lancaster Court	34	55
Leigh	Leonard Place - 1a, 2a & 3a	3	40
Leigh	1-27a Hope Carr Lane and 284-290a Warrington Road	36	30
Leigh	2-16a Young Street	16	30
Leigh	16-34 and 1-19 Cecil Street	40	30
Leigh	1-7a Coral Grove	8	30
Leigh	2-12a Kilburn Close	12	30
Leigh	5-15a and 6-16a Chaucer Grove	24	30
Leigh	Westwell Street, Westwell Grove, Northwell Street	8	30
Leigh	Richmond Drive 11-39a. Imperial Drive 9-27a. Coronation Drive 9-13a. Sunningdale Grove 1-7a. Carisbrooke Road 9,9a,11,11a,13,13a,42. Waverley Grove 5-7a. 132 - 138a Coronation Drive	77	55
Leigh	Manor Court (2 -60) Golborne Road (5 - 21)	29	40
Platt Bridge	Westcroft, Woodcock Drive, Platt Bridge	9	30
Platt Bridge	Communal flats at Wentworth Road, Ashton	96	30
Pemberton	Elton House & Thursby House	45	30
Pemberton	Gantley Court Gantley Crescent - 3, 7, 11, 15, 19, 23 Gantley Avenue - 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, 28	12	40
Pemberton	Flats at Logwood House Place, Worsley Hall	54	30
Pemberton	Keats Avenue Flats; Flats above shops on St Pauls Ave; Huxley Place communal flats, Worsley Mesnes	63	30
Pemberton	Block flats at Blake Close Worsley Mesnes	26	30
Pemberton	Block flats at Dryden Close, Worsley Mesnes	36	30
Wigan	Multi Storey Blocks (Douglas House, Woodcock House, Crompton House, Brook House, Derby House, Mannion House)	631	40

Wigan	Lower Longshoot flats	16	40
Wigan	Bolton Square flats	30	40
Wigan	Central Flats, Cemetery Road Flats	4	40
Wigan	Kendal House flats	7	30
Total		1547	

This Local Lettings Policy currently applies to 1,547 properties throughout the borough, comprising 6.8% of total Council stock. These restrictions will be reviewed regularly to ensure continued fit with overall strategic aims and in the context of changing housing needs in the borough. Analysis of applications and lettings from people of all age groups is undertaken as part of the review to ensure that these age restrictions do not disproportionately exclude younger people from being able to access social rented flats.

2. Newbuild properties (Overcrowding Pathfinder) - *in development*

The Council has 100% nomination rights to the first round of lets in newbuild schemes, or for newly purchased/renovated properties brought into use as social rented housing for the first time.

A specific Local Lettings Policy is currently being developed in consultation with Wigan & Leigh Housing that will give additional preference for under-occupiers whose move would release high demand properties (“down-sizing moves”), and for severely overcrowded applicants, for some of the first lets on newbuild schemes which are planned to be completed during the life of the Overcrowding Pathfinder project.

3. Tackling Worklessness - *in development*

Wigan Council has adopted a priority target in its Local Area Agreement to address high levels of worklessness in the most deprived areas of the borough:

NI 153 Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods.

The DWP has identified 32 ‘lower super output areas’ in the borough where the current worklessness rate is above 25%. In addition, the Centre for Cities Outlook Report for 2010 identified Wigan as one of the top ten worst boroughs nationally for unemployment amongst young people, and there are certain neighbourhoods where inter-generational worklessness has become the accepted norm, leading to entrenched deprivation.

Local Lettings Policies are currently being developed in consultation with both Wigan & Leigh Housing and other local authorities in the Manchester City Sub-Region to address worklessness in these key areas.