

Thanet District Council Housing Allocation Policy

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Thanet District Council Housing Allocation Policy Glossary

- **Choice Based Lettings (CBL):** A system used by the council whereby people on the housing register can place a 'bid' for a property that is suitable for their needs. A system that empowers people by giving them choice over their housing.
- **Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA):** a specialist domestic abuse organisation supporting housing providers to improve their response to domestic abuse, through a membership model, accreditation framework and training packages. Thanet District Council is a member of DAHA.
- **Enhanced Extra Care housing:** for those that need additional support, there are a few schemes in Thanet that provide tenants with independent living in a communal scheme along with 24-hour care and support services.
- **Housing Needs Assessment:** Is completed by an occupational therapist (OT) and is a comprehensive evaluation of a person's home environment to identify their functional abilities and limitations.
- **Independent living:** a concept of giving people the ability to exercise the greatest degree of choice about where they live, with whom they live, how they live, where they work, and how they use their time.
- **Kent Agency Assessment (KAA):** This should be completed where a service user requires enhanced extra care or specialist housing.
- **Kent Homechoice:** A website whereby people can apply to be on the Thanet Housing Register, upload supporting documents, and, if their application is successful, 'bid' on properties when they become available.
- **Local Lettings Plans (LLPs):** are agreed local plans, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Head of Housing & Planning, for the allocation and letting of homes within an agreed community / location or across a type of property.
- **Management transfers (also known as management moves):** If a council tenant has an urgent need for rehousing due to a confirmed and serious risk to the personal safety and wellbeing of themselves or others, the Tenant and Leaseholder Service may recommend a management move.
- **Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) also known as Housing Associations (HA's):** are independent housing organisations registered with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) under the Housing Act 1996. Most are housing associations, but there are also trusts, cooperatives and companies.
- **Senior Housing Officer:** This refers to the posts of *Housing Options Manager*, *Strategic Housing Manager* and *Housing Services Manager*.
- **Skipped (formally known as bypassed):** means that an applicant's bid for a property on the choice based letting (CBL) system was not successful. This may be because they didn't meet the property's criteria or because someone else was given preference.
- **Specialist Supported Accommodation:** typically defined as a housing service where housing, support and/or care services are provided to help people to live as independently as possible.

- **Tenancy Agreement:** a contract between the landlord and tenant which sets out the legal terms and conditions of a tenancy.
- **Thanet Housing Register:** is a list of people seeking housing from social landlords in the Thanet district, including existing tenants wishing to transfer.
- **The Banding System:** prioritises applicants on the housing register based on their specific housing situations, including medical and accessibility needs. Those with the highest priority are assigned Band A - Urgent and then followed by Bands B, C and D respectively. By categorising applicants into distinct Bands, the council aims to allocate housing resources effectively, ensuring that those with the greatest needs receive appropriate support.
- **Transfer Incentive Scheme (Thanet District Council tenants only):** a way to encourage council tenants who are under-occupying homes to move to smaller non-family housing, or if a tenant is occupying fully adapted, wheelchair accessible accommodation and no longer requires the use of these facilities, a grant of £1,000 is currently offered.

Policy Statement

This policy sets out our priorities for how social and affordable rented housing in the Thanet district is allocated, and the guidelines that determine entitlement and eligibility to that housing. This will supersede any existing and former policy relating to the allocations of housing and is in accordance with the requirements of Section 167 of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.

It also explains what help people can expect from us in meeting their housing needs, and sets out the system and processes by which we let council-owned homes and make nominations for housing owned and managed by housing associations.

The policy sets out:

- Who is eligible to be accepted onto the housing register
- How homes are allocated
- How to apply to Thanet's housing register
- How priority for housing applicants will be given
- How transfer applications will be assessed
- Eligibility for different property types

As at 1st July 2024, there were 4,777 properties owned by Registered Social Landlords within Thanet.

The Council is landlord of 3,078 properties which are broken down as follows:

Accommodation Type	No of Properties
Studio Flats	80
One bedroom flats/maisonette	579
One bedroom house	2
One bedroom bungalow	1
Two bedroom flats/maisonette	811
Two bedroom house	577
Two bedroom bungalow	5
Three bedroom flats/maisonette	40
Three bedroom houses	881
Four bedroom flats/maisonette	7
Four Bedroom houses	94
Five bedroom house	1

As of 1st July 2024 there are 1,444 households on the Councils housing register that are waiting for the following size homes.

Bedroom need required	No of households
One bedroom	729
Two bedroom	233
Three bedroom	354

Four bedroom	104
Five bedroom or more	24

During the period 1st July 2023 to 1st July 2024 there have been 351 allocated social homes of which the council allocated 157 homes which are broken down as follows:

Accommodation Type	No of Lets
Studio Flats	13
One bedroom flats/maisonette	109
One bedroom bungalow	10
One bedroom house	1
Two bedroom flats/maisonette	105
Two bedroom bungalow	5
Two bedroom house	48
Three bedroom flats/maisonette	2
Three bedroom bungalow	1
Three bedroom houses	54
Four bedroom flats/maisonette	0
Four Bedroom houses	3
Five bedroom house	0

There is evidently insufficient social housing in the Thanet district to meet the needs of every household on the housing register. The Council has bold ambitions to deliver more affordable housing to try and narrow the gap between supply and demand. It is therefore essential that we have a policy that enables us to make the best use of the stock we have available and that each household is assessed and given the appropriate priority against this new policy.

This policy has been amended in line with the latest Ombudsman guidance and by listening to service users as well as by discussing this area of work with a range of stakeholders.

1.0 Introduction

The Housing Register and this Allocations Policy operates under the provisions of the Housing Act 1996 – Part VI (as amended) and takes into account the three codes of guidance issued by the Government - Allocation of Accommodation: Code of Guidance for Housing Authorities 2002, the Allocation of Accommodation: Choice Based Lettings Code of Guidance for Housing Authorities 2008 and Fair and Flexible: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England 2009. This Policy will be reviewed annually and may have to be amended to reflect any legislative changes.

1.1 Policy Purpose

The Choice Based lettings policies and key objectives are:

- Empower applicants by offering a range of housing options, choice and information which will enable them to make realistic decisions in relation to their future housing prospects.
- To target scarce resources to those in the greatest need.

- To challenge the perception that social housing is the only suitable housing option and where possible create active incentives and affordable housing solutions for applicants within the private rental market.
- Ensure sufficient priority is awarded to transfers in order to make best use of the social housing stock.
- Promote the development of sustainable mixed communities and neighbourhoods of choice.

Households will only be eligible for social housing if they have an identified housing need, which could include but is not limited to: homelessness and medical reasons. Please see section 3 on Banding for more information.

2.0 Who is eligible?

This section outlines the criteria for households to be eligible for inclusion on the Housing Register. It details the residential requirements, who qualifies, and who may be excluded due to behaviour or other disqualifying factors. Special considerations are made for individuals such as Armed Forces personnel, victims of domestic abuse, and those owed a homeless duty.

2.1 Residential criteria

The following residential criteria are considered when assessing a household's application for the Housing Register. Households, who are Thanet residents and have been living within the Thanet district for a minimum continuous period of 3 years in settled accommodation, immediately prior to the date of their application. For households temporarily residing outside of the district and where their principal home was in Thanet prior to moving can be considered if they have been resident in Thanet for 3 non-consecutive years out of the last 5 years. Examples of this could be hospitals, HMP, temporary lodgings, and refuges. The Council will determine the applicants eligibility, taking into account any exceptional reasons for moving and the security of any temporary arrangements. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis.

Armed Forces Personnel and those who are currently occupying social housing within the Thanet district but are under-occupying the property will be exempt from this criteria.

Households that are owed a full homeless duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (Amended 2002) will be exempt from this criteria. Households that fled domestic abuse from another district and are coming through the refuge network or are at high risk and subject to MARAC will also be exempt.

2.2 Qualifying people

Qualifying people, all 'qualifying persons' are eligible to have their application added to the Housing Register. Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, (as amended), confirms that the Secretary of State may prescribe who are or are not qualifying persons. Currently, the following persons are entitled to join the housing register:

- Qualifying persons aged 16 or 17 (see Section 4 for further details)

- Any person aged 18 or over, and
- Their current home is their only home, or sole residence unless proven otherwise with reason and
- They do not have access to a suitable home elsewhere, and
- They are not already on the housing list, either on their own or with someone else, and
- They have lived in Thanet for at least 3 years or more before application
- The household's combined income does not exceed £60,000 per annum
- The household does not have savings and/or assets above the threshold for access to Benefits, such as housing benefit and child benefits.
- They are not ineligible for housing assistance under sections 160A(1) and (3), and 185(2) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), or any regulation prescribed by the Secretary of State. In general terms, a person from abroad who is subject to immigration control is ineligible for housing assistance, and
- They, or a member of their household, have not been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant.

Households who do not qualify for inclusion on the Housing Register will be given advice and information about other housing options that may be available to them. Where circumstances are exceptional the discretion of the Housing Options Manager will be applied.

2.3 Housing Need

Applicants must have an identified housing need for them to be considered eligible for the Housing Register. A housing need could include homelessness, medical needs, physical and sensory disabilities, overcrowding, domestic abuse survivors and other reasonable factors. In the application process to the Thanet Housing Register evidence of the applicants housing need will be required. For more information please view section 10.0.

Single person households living in bedsits or studio flats will be deemed as having their housing need met and will not be eligible to join the Council's housing register.

2.4 Ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour

Thanet District Council will reduce (or in certain circumstances even exclude) priority for households if they or a member of their household have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant or lose their home. Examples of unacceptable behaviour are;

- breach of tenancy agreement (including closure orders)
- nuisance or annoyance to neighbours
- conviction of using home for immoral or illegal purpose
- damage or neglect of the applicants home
- conviction for arrestable offence in the locality of the applicants home
- domestic violence causing the applicant or another household member to leave the home
- false statement to induce grant of tenancy

- premium paid for assignment
- subletting
- tied accommodation when dismissed for misconduct.

Where a person has previously been evicted they will be placed into Band D for one year. Thanet District Council can review this position at the applicant's request after that year if there is evidence that the person's behaviour has improved. This would be accepted, where an applicant has an identified housing need and can evidence good character references from a professional within social services, the probation service or a scheme provider, for example. After the year in Band D has elapsed, subject to good character references the applicant would be moved to Band C on the register but no higher, unless in exceptional circumstances, such as requiring an enhanced extra care placement.

2.5 Voluntarily worsening of housing circumstances

Where an applicant moves from accommodation, including temporary accommodation provided by Thanet District Council, that was deemed suitable for them to somewhere less suitable, then they will be placed in Band D.

For an applicant to be deemed to have intentionally worsened their circumstances there must be evidence that it would have been reasonable for the applicant to have remained in their original accommodation (such as surrendering a tenancy without a suitable property to move to). These households will be awarded Band D on the housing register for a period of 12 months. Again, after the year in Band D has elapsed the applicant would be moved to Band C on the register but no higher, unless in exceptional circumstances, such as requiring an enhanced extra care placement.

2.6 People owed a duty by another local authority

Only those people with a local connection will be eligible to apply for the Thanet Housing Register, this means that households must be Thanet residents and have been living within the Thanet district for a minimum continuous period of 3 years in settled accommodation, immediately prior to the date of their application. For further information please view section *2.1 Residential Criteria*.

It should be noted that this does not include households placed in temporary accommodation, within Thanet, under the homelessness legislation or Children Act within Thanet.

3.0 Assessment of need

This section details the approach applied by the council to assess housing needs among applicants to ensure fairness and transparency.

The assessment framework incorporates a Banding system, which prioritises applicants based on their specific housing situations, including medical and accessibility needs. By categorising applicants into distinct Bands, we aim to allocate housing resources effectively and fairly, ensuring that those with the greatest needs receive appropriate support. This section will provide a comprehensive overview of the criteria used in the assessment process, which determines housing eligibility and priority status.

3.1 The Banding system

To ensure fairness in allocating properties, we use a Banding system to determine re-housing priority. Applicants are assessed based on their housing circumstances, property suitability, and any long-term medical conditions.

Eligible applicants will be placed into one of four Bands (A, B, C, or D), with Band A receiving the highest priority and followed by Band B, C and D respectively. Further details on how an applicant's circumstances affect their Band placement are provided in Appendix 2.

Band A – Critical

Factor 1	Urgent medical or welfare needs.
Factor 2	Management Move for Thanet District Council tenants
Factor 3	Social housing tenants in Thanet who are under-occupying by two bedrooms or more

Band B – Urgent

Factor 1	People living in very unsatisfactory conditions in accordance with the Health and Housing Safety Rating System (HHSRS - category 1 hazards that cannot be resolved) or very overcrowded housing (lacking 2 or more rooms).
Factor 2	Social housing tenants in Thanet who are under-occupying by one bedroom.
Factor 3	Social housing tenants who no longer require an adapted property.
Factor 4	Armed Forces Personnel.
Factor 5	People leaving supported housing (see appendix 2).

Band C – Serious

Factor 1	Homeless
Factor 2	People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability.
Factor 3	People occupying overcrowded housing, such as lacking one bedroom.
Factor 4	People occupying overcrowded housing.

Band D – General

Factor 1	People who are intentionally homeless, or who have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances. After one year this will be reassessed.
Factor 2	Households that have a housing need but owe a former tenancy debt or are deemed to have unacceptable behaviour as outlined in section 2.4

3.2 Waiting time

The housing register will differentiate between people who are in the same priority Band according to their waiting time, taking into account the following:

- For new applicants, the date of their completed application.
- For transferring tenants, the date they applied for a transfer, and have provided all the information required by the local authority to make an assessment.
- For existing applicants or tenants, the date they notified the local authority of a significant change in their circumstances which improved their priority Band.
- For changes that lower their priority Band, the date of application applies.

In all cases waiting time will only start to accrue once all the information required by the Council to make an assessment has been provided and the application registered.

It is not possible to give a timescale on when the applicant will be allocated a property, as this depends on a number of factors, including the size of the property they require and the complexity of their medical needs.

The council is working incredibly hard to increase the number of homes it has available. It has an accelerated delivery programme that sees it acquiring or building at least 400 homes by 2027.

It is also working hard with registered providers (formerly known as housing associations) to ensure that any homes for affordable rent that they have available are being allocated to those people in the most need. We are also sourcing external advice to explore financial routes to deliver housing specifically for Temporary Accommodation.

3.3 Medical priority

Applicants who indicate in their application form that they consider their health or disability is adversely affected by their current housing conditions, will be asked to complete the Medical information category via their online account on Kent Homechoice. If applicants do not have access to the internet then a Medical and Welfare form will be provided to them. Additional information from a medical professional may also be submitted for consideration. Applicants should be aware that even if they provide supporting documents stating that a move to alternative accommodation is essential, it is for the council to determine the appropriate level of priority in accordance with the allocation policy (See Appendix 3 for more information).

All medical information supplied will be assessed by the Housing Options team. Cases that cannot be determined due to their complexity will be assessed independently by a specialist medical professional (see 3.4). Applicants will be advised of the medical priority awarded and the type of accommodation identified as being suitable for their needs. Priority will be awarded on medical and disability grounds as set out in appendix 3.

If we determine that a particular type of property is required on medical grounds; for example a home with no internal stairs, the applicant will be expected to bid for accommodation matching that criteria. Bids placed on accommodation that does not meet the required criteria may be skipped. If the applicant continues to bid on accommodation that does not meet their medical requirements any priority awarded on medical grounds will be reviewed and a fresh effective date may be issued. Properties that have been identified as being adaptable in the future may be advertised as such, and therefore may not be allocated to the highest bidder.

We are mindful that a number of applicants are living with neurodiversity. This will be taken into consideration when holistically assessing the household's needs. The applicant must ensure that they upload all care plans, Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or other relevant supporting evidence of a diagnosis when making the application. For additional bedroom requests please refer to section 3.7.

3.4. Kent Agency Assessment/Housing Needs Assessment

3.4.1 Kent Agency Assessment

The Kent Agency Assessment (KAA) process is a mechanism for Health or Social Services professionals, and their agents, to refer people who require specialist accommodation, with 24 hour on site support. The allocation of enhanced extra care accommodation is not made via the housing register by a panel, chaired by Kent County Councils localities commissioner to those most in need. However, an application for the housing register is required to ensure eligibility for these schemes.

3.4.2 Housing Needs Assessment

Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) is a report completed by an Occupational Therapist detailing their recommendations for property adaptations or property specifications that are required to meet the medical needs of an application with physical or sensory difficulties. A Housing Needs Assessment may not equate to a higher priority on the housing register however the assessment will be used for the allocation of properties to ensure suitability. This may include an inspection by an Occupational Therapist to ensure the property complies with the applicants Housing Needs Assessment recommendations before an offer is made.

Any bids on homes that are not suitable for the applicant's needs could result in them being 'skipped' for medical reasons.

3.5 Suitable size of accommodation

The council considers the suitable size of accommodation for a household to be as shown in the following table. We will only accept household members that are reasonably expected to live with the applicant, therefore friends or extended family will not be considered.

Properties that have specific adaptations such as a through floor lift, the social housing provider can disregard this as a bedroom.

If an applicant has any dependent children under 12 years old on the date of offer, the applicant will have priority over applicants with dependent children over that age (excluding transfer incentive Banded households) in the same Band for houses with private gardens. This usually applies to households with a 2 bedroom need.

Please note single person households living in bedsits or studio flats will be deemed as having their housing need met and will not be eligible to join the Council's housing register.

Single Person	Studio or one bedroom flat (inc up to 32 weeks pregnant)
Couple	One bedroom flat (inc up to 32 weeks pregnant)
Couple or Single person with an unrelated live-in carer	Two bedrooms flat, maisonette or house
Families with one dependent child (under 16)	Two bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Families with one dependent child (over 16)	Two bedroom flat and maisonettes only
Families with two dependent children of the same sex up to 16 years old	Two bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Families with two dependent children of the opposite sex where the eldest child is under 10 years old as in line with housing benefit/universal credit regulation	Two bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Families with two dependent children of the opposite sex where at least one child is 10 years old or over as in line with housing benefit/universal credit regulations	Three bedroom flat, maisonette or house
Families with two children both over the age of 16	Three bedroom
Families with three children regardless of age	Three bedroom flat, maisonette or house

Families with four or more children	three or four bedroom flat, house or maisonette
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Currently, Thanet District Council does not own many properties with more than four bedrooms (please see the foreword at the beginning of this policy). Larger families are expected to occupy four or five bedroom properties in the best way they can, provided the number of occupiers does not exceed the permitted number of occupants for the property.

If an applicant needs a larger home than this, social housing is unlikely to be available and we would advise to look at renting privately instead.

3.6 Accommodation Types

In order to make the best use of the available housing stock, it is essential to let vacancies to those who need that size and type of property. Examples include 3 bedroom homes with a dining room could be let to a household requiring 4 bedrooms, older persons housing being let to those age 55+ and properties that have been built or adapted for a person with a physical or sensory disability.

There are a variety of different types of accommodation as detailed in the table below:

Accommodation Type	Description
General Needs Housing	Flats, houses and other accommodation with no onsite support.
Independent living: Also known as: Sheltered Housing Warden assisted Older Persons	These are homes designed especially for older people. They offer independent living with security and peace of mind. To be eligible for this type of housing applicants must normally meet the age criteria and any other eligibility criteria. These properties will be labelled on choice based lettings so that only applicants who meet the required criteria may bid. Currently, Thanet District Council does not own any schemes of this type and therefore allocation for these schemes is carried out predominantly by Orbit.
Extra Care Also known as: Enhanced Extra Care Specialist Support Schemes	<p>The purpose of Extra Care Housing is to provide over 55 year old people with their own home and tenancy within a support and care environment ensuring that appropriate personal and housing support is available as required. All applicants will be registered and assessed for rehousing in line with Thanet District Council's Allocations Policy and be eligible to access social Housing.</p> <p>To be eligible for this type of housing applicants must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Over 55 years of age ● Prepared to agree to the scheme requirements and have a need for the care provider to meet any care needs ● Have a Kent Agency Assessment (KAA) outlining housing and social care needs and a medical/social history <p>Priority is not decided by the housing register banding alone. An</p>

	<p>assessment will be made for each vacancy and the property will be let after taking into account both housing and social care need via a panel meeting which is chaired by the Localities Commissioner for Kent County Council and representatives from relevant authorities. Applicants are not required to bid on these types of property.</p> <p>Places in Thanet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Copperfields, Ramsgate - 49 x 1 & 2 bed flats ● Bradstowe Court - 48 x 1 & 2 bed flats
<p>Supported Housing Schemes</p> <p>Also known as: Mental Health Supported Housing Specialist Support Schemes</p>	<p>The purpose of Supported Housing Schemes is to provide people with identified support needs with their own home and tenancy within a support and care environment ensuring that appropriate personal and housing support is available as required. All applicants will be registered and assessed for rehousing in line with Thanet District Council's Allocations Policy and be eligible to access social Housing.</p> <p>To be eligible for this type of housing applicants must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Known to social care services ● Prepared to agree to the scheme requirements and have a need for the care provider to meet any care needs ● Have a Kent Agency Assessment (KAA) outlining housing and social care needs and a medical/social history <p>Priority is not decided by the housing register banding alone. An assessment will be made for each vacancy and the property will be let after taking into account both housing and social care need via a panel meeting. Applicants are not required to bid on these types of property.</p> <p>Schemes in Thanet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Library House, Ramsgate - 9 x 1 bed flats ● George Culmer Court - 7 x 1 bed flats ● Alfred Dellar Court, Birchington - 7 x 1 bed flats
<p>Porchlight</p>	<p>Thanet District Council has secured additional units by working with Porchlight. Porchlight offers low support for clients that need a smaller amount of support. Referrals are made direct from Thanet District Council to Porchlight for those that are currently in temporary accommodation and/or we owe a Relief Duty to.</p> <p>The accommodation units include:</p> <p>Old School Lodge - 23 units Hereson Road - 3x rooms King Street - 4x rooms Albert Road - 2x rooms Queens Avenue - 4x rooms Devon Gardens - 6x rooms Southwood Road - 4x rooms</p>

3.7 Additional bedroom requests/carers

Where households request an additional bedroom due to medical or health needs we will only consider additional rooms for extensive medical equipment that cannot be accommodated within

the bedroom environment, or for the applicant or partner to occupy additional rooms where there is a physical disability that prevents a couple from sharing a bedroom. Where households make this request and are over 55 they will be considered for sheltered and older person accommodation only. This could include enhanced extra care accommodation.

One member of the couple will need to be in receipt of the middle or higher rate care component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Armed Forces Independence Payment (AFIP), the higher rate of Attendance Allowance (AA), plus confirmation from a medical practitioner that an overnight carer is required.

We understand the complexities Neurodiversity can impact a family makeup and appreciate the desire for extra bedrooms to alleviate the behaviour issues caused by sharing with a sibling. There may be very exceptional circumstances where this may be considered, such as cases that are supported by significant evidence including a medical professional report indicating that behaviours would require an additional bedroom. A final decision will be made by a Senior Housing Officer who will make a full assessment of the household need, and may seek independent medical guidance where appropriate.

We will only consider increasing the room requirement for a carer in line with housing benefits/Universal credit for a carer if:

- The carer is not already a household member (in which case they may be able to share with other members of the household, a partner perhaps, so being a carer doesn't entitle them to an extra room), or
- A resident carer is required for either the claimant or the partner and the claimant or partner receives disability living allowance/personal independence payment at either middle or highest rate or attendance allowance and supporting evidence is provided by a medical professional to confirm this requirement.
- Please be aware that increasing the size of the household (such as adding a carer) may also increase the wait time.

The final decision will be made by a Senior Housing Officer who will make a full assessment of the household need, and may seek independent medical guidance where appropriate.

3.8 National Witness Mobility Service (NWMS)

In order to assist the national police force to tackle serious crime and to support witnesses in the legal process, the council works in partnership with colleagues in the NWMS and will, as required, accept referrals from this source.

Such cases will have been assessed and verified by the NWMS managers and referrals will only be accepted with the agreement of the Housing Options Manager. There are particular confidentiality considerations for such cases and no personal information will be taken until the applicant accepts a direct offer of accommodation in the district. Any proposed offer will be checked for suitability by the NWMS before the offer is made and details of successful lettings may not subsequently be made available to the public.

4.0 Determining priority

This section outlines the council's criteria for determining housing priority among applicants. It details specific categories, including homeless households, survivors of domestic abuse, serious offenders, armed forces personnel, rough sleepers, and others, each with distinct conditions that influence their placement within the Banding system. The aim is to ensure a transparent process, where those with the greatest need receive appropriate housing support. The section also addresses unique circumstances, such as overcrowding and eligibility for younger applicants, providing clarity on how priority status is assigned.

4.1 Homeless households

Applicants who are owed a homelessness duty under s.193 (2) or s.195 (2) of the Housing Act (as amended) will be given reasonable preference and placed into Band C. Auto-bidding on Kent Homechoice is automatically enabled for homeless households. Any successful bids by this method will count as the final offer of accommodation. Homeless households will only receive **one** suitable offer of accommodation as in line with the policy and that will be the **final** offer (see 3.5 for suitability). The offer of accommodation can be anywhere. Where an offer of accommodation has been refused under Part 6, the homeless duty will be discharged and the applicant's housing register application could be moved to Band D for a period of 12 months before reassessment.

The Localism Act 2011 changed the way in which the duty on authorities to secure accommodation under section 193(2) of the 1996 Act can be brought to an end with an offer of suitable accommodation in the private sector. These changes allow local authorities to end the main homelessness duty with an offer of housing in the private rented sector. The duty can only be ended in the private rented sector in this way with a minimum 12-month assured shorthold tenancy (AST). If the household becomes homeless within two years of taking the tenancy then the reapplication duty (section 195A(1)) applies.

4.2 Domestic Abuse

If any household is experiencing domestic abuse they should report this to the police where possible.

Social tenants should notify their landlord, if they are experiencing domestic abuse or harassment and are in danger in their existing home.

Thanet District Council are Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) members, meaning we are working towards accreditation for our work on helping domestic abuse survivors and embedding processes to safeguard our residents. [More information about this on the Council's website.](#)

One option could be to secure accommodation in a refuge which will be a place of safety. Survivors in a local refuge will have their housing needs assessed and personal housing plans offered. Survivors in a local refuge will have their housing needs assessed and personal housing plans offered.

4.3 Separated households

If one member of the household is suitably housed and the 'partner' could move into the property without causing additional housing need then they may not be an identified housing need to apply for the housing register.

If however a partner moves into the property, causing a housing need then the housing application and housing circumstances prior to the households merging will be reviewed. Upon review, if it is deemed that voluntarily worsening has occurred, then a Band D priority could be awarded.

If shared custody of a child is on an application it is the person with 'main responsibility' who is normally eligible to claim Child Benefit. Children will only be considered on an application if they primarily reside with that household and Child Benefit is received. Evidence of the award will be requested.

4.4 16 and 17-year-olds and care leavers

Young people under the age of the age of 18 are ineligible to join the housing register (subject to exemptions).

If an applicant is aged 16 or 17 the law states that they are not old enough to hold an assured or secure tenancy. In exceptional circumstances an applicant aged under 18 may be eligible to join the housing register:

- If they are a non-dependent applicant aged 16 or 17, requiring independent accommodation, which is not provided by Specialist Children's Services (SCS)
- If they are a teenage parent aged 16 or 17
- If they are aged 16 or 17 and leaving local authority care
- If they are aged 16 or 17 and owed a homelessness duty by the council

Where an applicant aged under the age 18 and are eligible to be on the housing register and are successfully allocated a property, they must generally have an appropriate adult aged 18 or over, to hold their tenancy in trust until they reach the age of 18. This will be in the form of an "Equitable Agreement" where the trustee will hold the legal estate, but is not liable for the rent.

Young people who are accepted for a Thanet District Council property will also be asked to attend an interview with the Tenant and Leaseholder Service. This will ensure that they have the skills to sustain a tenancy. They may be required to attend tenancy training. In exceptional circumstances a 16 or 17 year old can be offered a property under licence.

People under 18 with a serious housing problem who are homeless, or in threat of becoming homeless, should contact Kent County Council Children's Services. Support will be provided to assist the young person to remain within their parental or family home. Where this is not appropriate Children's Services will arrange for a joint housing assessment (JHA) with housing options.

Care leavers - local connection criteria can make it difficult for some care leavers to establish a local connection to areas in which they wish to stay and feel most at home. In recognition of the changes to local connection criteria for care leavers seeking homelessness assistance, brought in

by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, care leavers will not be required to meet the local connection criteria if they are:

- A young person owed leaving care duties by Kent County Council, or
- A care leaver aged under 21 who is resident in the Thanet District and has done for the last 3 years, including some time before they turned 16, and are owed leaving care duties by another local authority.
- Where they have been identified as being ready to live independently in their Pathway Plan with their Personal Advisor.

4.5 Serious Offenders

Applications made by serious offenders, as defined by the Serious Crime Act 2007 will be subject to an appropriate assessment of their eligibility, which will take MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) guidance into account. Any allocation will only be made following a multi-agency risk assessment and where suitable and safe accommodation has been identified.

4.6 Armed Forces

Armed Forces Personnel means a person who is serving in the regular forces or a person who *has* served in the regular forces within five years of the date of their application for an allocation of social housing under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. The Regulations give effect to the Government's commitment to ensure that members of the regular forces, and their families, are given appropriate priority for social housing if they need it when serving or after they have left the Armed Forces.

The "regular forces" means the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular army or the Royal Air Force; as given by section 374 **of the Armed Forces Act 2006**.

These Regulations are made by the Secretary of State under section 166A(7) of the Housing Act 1996, inserted by section 147 of the Localism Act 2011. Section 166A(7) gives the Secretary of State power by regulation to amend the reasonable and additional preference provisions in section 166A(3) which determine who has priority for an allocation of social housing.

The Regulations and statutory guidance provide that local housing authorities must frame their allocation scheme to give additional preference to armed forces personnel (as defined above) if they fall within one or more of the statutory reasonable preference categories and are:

- a) All former members of the regular armed forces
- b) serving members of the regular forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.
- c) bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service.
- d) serving or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.

Members of the Armed Forces and those included in the criteria above who have a housing need will be awarded Band B priority and will be exempt from the local connection requirement. Clauses 6.3 and 6.4, relating to income and savings will not apply to armed forces personnel. However if they own their own home the normal housing assessment will take place. Where a spouse or civil partners of those serving in the regular armed forces have had a relationship breakdown and are required to leave the accommodation they will be prioritised in the same way.

A certificate of service will be required as evidence of eligibility for this consideration.

4.7 Rough Sleepers

The Labour Government elected in 2024 made a manifesto commitment to develop a new cross-government strategy to end rough sleeping and homelessness, when further details are published council policies, including the allocations policy, will be updated to reflect any relevant changes. Rough sleepers will have housing needs assessed by the multi-agency RISE Team in line with the policy. However, for vulnerable verified rough sleepers that do not have access to suitable housing options and that are actively engaging with the RISE team may be awarded additional priority through welfare needs. If there are opportunities of housing first then nominations will come directly from RISE.

4.8 Overcrowding

When considering whether a household is suffering from overcrowding, we will take into account the number of bedrooms and other rooms that could be used for sleeping in. Kitchens and living rooms are not bedrooms for the purpose of the housing register assessment. The *intended* function of the room will be considered rather than its current use. Any dining room will be considered as possible bedroom accommodation, if it is a separate room and no-one has to walk through it to get to another room. A single room can accommodate two children in bunk beds, even if this is not the applicant's preferred way of arranging their home.

5.0 Other Considerations

5.1 Other considerations in determining need

Because of the shortage of social housing and in order to make best use of all the available stock, there may be occasions when properties are restricted to applicants who have particular medical needs. Where possible, we will publicise any particularly noteworthy aspects of a property's design when advertising it on Kent Homechoice.

Regrettably, there is limited availability of purpose-built and adapted properties for people with disabilities. People with a need for such accommodation will be considered for suitable vacancies on the basis of medical priority. If a ground-floor property becomes available, and at the time of allocation there are no suitable applicants requiring ground-floor accommodation, the property may then be let to those registered for a house, maisonette or upper-floor accommodation, at the discretion of the Council.

When an applicant applies for the Housing Register and mobility issues - perhaps indicating they are unable to manage stairs, for example, they will be required to provide proof of this need. This proof will take the form of a medical diagnosis and relevant benefit awards such as PIP mobility allowance. This will be reflected in an applicant's property eligibility. At the point of allocating properties owned by Thanet District Council, all medical evidence on file will be taken into consideration and if the property in question has stairs then the applicant will be "skipped" on the shortlist and the relevant reason for skipping will be selected by the housing officer selecting the reason which will be detailed on Kent Homechoice. Please note that some housing associations process their own shortlists and so would be responsible for sharing their own reasons for 'skipping' applicants.

N.B If an applicant's medical need changes and there becomes a time when the applicant is able to manage stairs then their housing application will be reassessed. If there is still a housing need, the application will be updated and the applicant's 'effective date' will be amended accordingly.

Priority for houses will be given to applicants with dependent children under 12. If a household consists of adult children only, i.e. over the age of 16, the household may not be offered a house.

For households that include a pregnant person, they would be required to update their household profile on Kent Homechoice and provide a copy of their MATB1 form, to enable us to register Baby X. This will enable households to bid on suitable size accommodation 8-weeks prior to the birth of their baby. This will mainly benefit those who would require an additional bedroom following the birth.

N.B Bedrooms used as office space (such as for working at home) will not count in the assessment of lacking a bedroom.

5.2 Effective date

There are times where an applicant's circumstances may change while they are on the housing register which require them to move up or down the banding system, this can have an impact on their 'effective date'. The effective date is the start date of when an applicant has been placed on the housing register and affects their place in the queue within their relevant banding.

If an applicant's circumstance were to change to the extent that they required greater priority, i.e. move up a band from B to C. Then their 'effective date' would reflect the date they joined their new higher band. They would in effect be joining the back of the queue of their new band.

If an applicant's circumstances were to change to the extent where they were required to move down a band, i.e. move from C to D. Their effective date would **not** change.

5.3 Sensitive lettings

Where a vacancy arises in an area that has been subject to a significant level of anti-social behaviour or other factors such as the frailty and vulnerability of neighbours, the property may be advertised as a 'sensitive let'. This means the vacancy may not be given to the applicant in the highest priority where that applicant has an evidenced history of anti-social behaviour.

Where a household has complex needs, they may be skipped for accommodation such as tower blocks or where there are known issues that could impact their wellbeing or make them vulnerable. The applicant would be contacted to advise as to why their application had been skipped.

5.4 Direct lettings

Thanet District Council may allocate properties directly, outside of the bidding process as set out in some cases as shown below:

- Households living in temporary accommodation and accepted as homeless or supported in rough sleeping projects through RISE. The Council will make one reasonable offer of accommodation before duty is discharged (ended).
- Tenants who have highly specific requirements or who have failed to bid successfully could be made a suitable direct offer. If the offer is refused, the applicant will be removed from the housing register.
- Tenants who need to be temporarily decanted will be offered a temporary property. If the offer is refused, then the appropriate team of officers will review their priority. People will be offered the opportunity of returning to their former or remodelled property if it is appropriate for them to do so.
- Tenants who need a permanent decant will be made one reasonable offer. If refused, then the appropriate team of officers will review their priority.
- Under-occupiers who have succeeded to a tenancy will be made one direct offer of suitably sized accommodation. If refused, then the appropriate team of officers will review their priority.
- Tenants who have been awarded a management move.
- 'Housing First' lets that will be allocated to the RISE project.

5.5 Refusals

In the cases set out in 3.11 and for those set up on auto-bidding, the Council will make one reasonable offer which, as far as possible, matches the size and type of property the applicant qualifies for. The offer will not be in an area known to be unsafe for the household.

If refused, the applicant must give their reasons for refusal in writing within 14 days of being offered the property during this time the housing register application will be suspended until a decision has been made by a Senior Housing officer which can take up to 56 days. Failure to respond to the offer at all will be deemed a refusal. The property will not be held empty while the refusal is reviewed but will be let to the next applicant on the shortlist. A senior officer will determine whether there is an opportunity for future offers of accommodation or whether the applicant is removed from the Council's housing register.

N.B If the refusal reasons are accepted, the applicant could be issued with a warning clarifying the status of the application and what properties they are expected to be bidding on. For applicants who are removed from the housing register, they will be unable to reapply for 12 months from the date of their removal.

6.0 Housing for older people and supported accommodation

This section covers housing options for older individuals, including independent living, enhanced extra care, and specialist supported accommodation. It explains eligibility, support assessments, and the allocation process to ensure appropriate housing and care for older adults and those with disabilities. The focus is on providing safe, supportive environments that promote independence.

6.1 Independent living

Thanet District Council does not currently own this type of accommodation. These homes are owned and allocated by housing associations.

Independent living homes (also referred to as sheltered housing or warden-assisted accommodation) are homes designed for persons over 55 with housing-related support needs. Independent living will normally only be available to persons requiring the level of support offered in this type of accommodation. Eligible persons may be subject to an assessment by the landlord to establish their support needs and suitability for living in the scheme selected. Applicants over 55 years of age will be considered as well as applicants with a disability who require the accommodation and support provided within a sheltered scheme. In the latter case, some landlords will accept persons over 50 years of age.

Priority for allocations to ground floor accommodation will be given to current tenants on the housing register, living on an upper floor, within the same block, who have a medical/mobility need for ground floor accommodation. Allocations made thereafter will be based on individual need. This will then free up a property for another applicant. If the assessment indicates that the person requires a higher level of support than can be provided by independent living, they will be advised that independent living would not be appropriate and referred to Adult Social Services.

6.2 Enhanced Extra Care housing

Enhanced extra care is housing for older people where additional support and social care services are provided in accordance with assessed needs. Enhanced extra care housing is intended to enable older people to live as independently as possible for as long as possible and improve the quality of life. Enhanced extra care housing will be allocated via a panel, consisting of representatives from the District Council and Social Services. Allocations through this panel will be based on an assessment of the level of support and care required by the applicant as well as an active Housing Register application and Kent Agency Assessment (KAA). These units are usually for applicants aged 55 and over only.

6.3 Specialist Supported Accommodation

Specialist Supported Housing is housing to empower independence and support people with mental health support needs. Specialist Supported housing will be allocated by a dedicated allocation panel, consisting of representatives from the District Council, Social Services, Mental Health Services and scheme providers. Allocations through this panel will be based on an assessment of the level of support and care required by the applicant as well as an active Housing Register application and Kent Agency Assessment (KAA).

7.0 Financial criteria

This section outlines the financial requirements for applicants. It covers rent arrears, former tenancy debts, and income and savings limits. Applicants are expected to have a clear rent account and address any outstanding housing debts before being considered. Those with incomes over £60,000 or savings/assets that exceed the threshold to successfully receive housing benefit and child benefit are not eligible for the housing register. Homeowners, including those with mobile homes, are generally excluded unless there are significant reasons for a move, such as health needs.

7.1 Current rent arrears

If a tenant of a social landlord applies to be on the housing register they will be expected to have a clear rent account or have a payment plan in place before an offer of accommodation is made. A tenancy reference will be obtained from the current landlord at the point of application and offer.

7.2 Former debts

We may also take into account former TDC tenancy debts and other social landlords (registered social landlord or local authority). If an outright possession order was granted or we have reason to believe that an outright possession order would have been granted by the court, and no efforts have been made to clear this debt, the application will not be accepted onto the housing register until such time as appropriate steps have been taken to clear the outstanding debt, or have a payment plan in place which has been kept to for 12 months. We will ask the applicant's former landlord for a reference to confirm there is an agreement in place or that the debt has been cleared. This would apply to the applicant and any member of their household.

Housing associations participating in the choice-based lettings scheme may have policies which prevent them offering a tenancy to an applicant who has former/current tenant arrears with another local authority or HA.

We may also consider former debts owed to the council, which could include temporary accommodation charges and loans. Information will be provided to the applicant as to how repayments can be made.

7.3 Income

If a household's income exceeds £60,000 per annum, then they will not be eligible for the Housing Register, unless they are a member of the armed forces as defined in section 4.6.

7.4 Savings and Assets

If an applicant applies on the housing register and has savings and/or assets of over the threshold to successfully receive housing and child benefit they will not be considered on the housing register, in line with housing benefit regulations (Armed Forces Personnel will be exempt from this rule). The applicant will be expected to use this money to secure accommodation. If it is

considered that an applicant has purposely deprived themselves of capital in order to meet the criteria to apply on the housing register their application will not be considered.

7.5 Owner/Occupiers

If an applicant owns their home (this can include static caravans and mobile homes) they will not be considered on the housing register unless there is a substantial reason to move. If specific or specialist accommodation is required due to change in circumstances, each application will be considered based upon evidence on file such as a Kent Agency Assessment (see 3.4).

8.0 Allocations exceptions

8.1 Explanation and examples of exceptions

People who apply to join the housing register are assessed in accordance with the provisions of Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). There are a number of circumstances where people will be assessed outside of this and will have their applications managed by the local authority and/or housing association separately. These circumstances are:

- Mutual exchange.
- An application made under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) (Homelessness) and consideration for temporary accommodation under this Part.
- Transfers involving a temporary decant for major works, or other management reasons not involving an application from the tenant.
- Where a local authority secures the provision of suitable alternative accommodation under the Land Compensation Act 1973, section 39.
- The grant of a secure tenancy under the Housing Act 1985, section 554 or 555, regarding a defective home.
- Any duties arising from an application made under the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976, section 27 or 28.
- Where a secure tenant dies, the tenancy is a periodic one, and there is a person qualified to succeed the tenant under the Housing Act 1985, section 89.
- Where a secure tenant with a fixed term tenancy dies and the tenancy remains secure by virtue of the Housing Act 1985, section 90.
- Where a secure tenancy is assigned to someone who would be qualified to succeed to the tenancy if the secure tenant died immediately before the assignment.
- The grant of a secure sole tenancy to a former joint tenant, where the joint tenancy has been terminated by one joint tenant and the other tenant wants to remain in the property (when this is in accordance with eligibility for that specific property type).
- Where a secure tenancy vests or is otherwise disposed of in pursuance of an order made under:
 - a. the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, section 24 (property adjustment orders in connection with matrimonial proceedings);
 - b. the Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984, section 17(1) (property adjustment orders after overseas divorce); or
 - c. the Children Act 1989, Schedule 1, paragraph 1 (orders for financial relief against parents).

9.0 Transfer applications

This section outlines the procedures and guidelines for transfer applicants who have an identified housing need within the council's housing system. It provides the process for social tenants seeking to transfer to alternative council or housing association properties and the conditions under which discretionary management transfers are granted. These policies aim to address specific housing needs and encourage effective use of housing resources.

9.1 Thanet District Council tenants

The Council's tenants can apply to move to alternative Council and housing association-owned property, if they have an identified housing need. Applications for transfer may be made jointly by separate tenants of the Council (living in separate accommodation at time of application) who wish to apply for housing together as one tenancy. On the condition that both tenancies will be relinquished if the Council makes an acceptable offer of a transfer to an alternative property.

A joint tenant can obtain a new tenancy in their own right if they relinquish their existing tenancy. Transfer applications will be subject to checks relating to the condition of the applicant's property and their compliance with the conditions of their tenancy. Failure to adhere to the tenancy inspection will result in the removal of the application from the council's housing register.

9.2 Transfer Incentive Scheme (Thanet District Council tenants only)

In order to encourage council tenants who are under-occupying homes to move to smaller non-family housing, or if a tenant is occupying fully adapted, wheelchair accessible accommodation and no longer requires the use of these facilities, a grant of £1,000 is currently offered. Any debt owed to Thanet District Council will be cleared using this money prior to the remainder being paid to the tenant. This grant will only be payable if the move is as a result of a successful bid to alternative council or housing association property through the choice based lettings scheme and is subject to sufficient budget being available. For households downsizing from 3 bedrooms or more can be considered for a 2 bedroom house regardless of age of children.

9.3 Management transfers (also known as management moves)

The Council recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances where the only way a housing need can be resolved is through the use of discretionary management move.

If a Council tenant has an urgent need for rehousing due to a confirmed and serious risk to the personal safety and wellbeing of themselves or others, the Tenant and Leaseholder Service may recommend a management move. This will only be agreed if all other options have been exhausted and there are no other options available or feasible. Examples of exceptional circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- Threat to life.
- Emergency cases whose homes are damaged by fire, flood or other disaster may be provided with another tenancy if it is not possible to repair the existing home, or if any

repair work will take such a longer period of time that there will be serious disruption to family life.

- Households who, on police advice, must be moved immediately due to serious threats to one or more members of the household, or whose continuing occupation would pose a threat to the community.
- An applicant who has an exceptional need that is not covered in the Allocations Policy, for example, where child or public protection issues require re-housing or for severe domestic abuse or where there is evidence of serious detriment to a household's wellbeing, where all other options to remain in the home have been considered.
- Tenants where their flexible tenancy will not be renewed because their circumstances have changed necessitating a move to smaller accommodation.
- Where an intractable housing management difficulty or neighbour dispute exists that is severely impacting on the welfare of an existing resident and all other reasonable solutions have been exhausted. In the first instance applicants must be supported by the Housing Officer and be well documented and evidenced.

Decisions about management moves will be made jointly by the Housing Options Manager and Housing Services Manager. Any reviews will be determined jointly by the Head of Housing and Planning and the Head of Tenant and Leaseholder Services.

Because the circumstances are exceptional and rehousing considered urgent, the Management Move will have the following restrictions:

- Only one offer of suitable permanent rehousing will be made.
- This could be a direct offer to ensure that a household's urgent needs are met as quickly as possible or through a successful bid on KentHomeChoice.
- The offer will generally be on a 'like for like' basis, other than in exceptional circumstances. If the tenant still has a housing need, following the management move, they will be able to remain on the Housing Register, for a further move.
- Areas of choice for rehousing cannot be considered but the Management Transfer move will be away from the applicant's current home. Area restrictions will only be taken into account if there are proven factors that pose a risk to personal safety, relevant to the reason for transfer.
- Other medical and social factors which would normally qualify the applicant for a Housing Register transfer will not be taken into account.
- A refusal of a direct offer will be considered by the Head of Housing and Planning in consultation with the Head of tenant and Leaseholder Services.

In the event that the Housing Options Manager does not approve a management move this will be escalated to the Head of Housing & Planning and Head of Tenant and Leaseholder Services for an impartial review and final decision.

N.B, housing associations have their own processes regarding management moves.

10.0 How homes are let

This section outlines the processes and policies for how homes are allocated by the council. It includes details on the choice-based lettings (CBL) system, which allows applicants to bid for available social housing, and explains how bids are prioritised based on housing need. Local Lettings Plans (LLPs) are designed to promote balanced and sustainable communities by applying specific criteria in certain areas. Also, the Tenancy Strategy, which governs the terms under which tenancies are granted, renewed, or terminated.

10.1 Choice-based lettings

We are one of 13 Kent local authorities and 29 housing association partners involved in Kent Homechoice. This is the choice-based lettings service which is used to let social homes across the whole of Kent. As a partner of Kent Homechoice, we are committed to offering the greatest choice possible in the allocation of social housing in the district, while ensuring that housing goes to those with the greatest need.

Choice-based lettings (CBL) schemes are designed to introduce an element of choice for people who apply for council and housing association homes. Choice-based lettings allow people applying for a home, including existing tenants who want a transfer, to 'bid' for properties which become available. Available properties are advertised in various ways and the adverts will describe the property and which type of household can bid for it. For example, if it is for an elderly or disabled person, or for a household which needs a certain number of bedrooms.

Where an applicant may have difficulty in making bids for properties without assistance, they can be set up for auto-bidding, which will ensure bids are placed on social homes based upon the applicant's housing need. Households who are owed a duty by the local authority will automatically be set up for auto bidding.

Once bids have been made they are sorted in order of band and 'effective date', and once verified the person with the highest priority will be offered the property. If that person turns the offer down, the next person on the list will be considered, and so on.

There will be certain situations where choice in the allocation of housing has to be restricted – such as when the council or a housing association needs to re-house a household in an emergency. This could also be dependent on the applicant's medical needs. The circumstances when this may apply are set out throughout this policy. Apart from these exceptional cases, housing will be allocated to applicants who bid for a specific property, and all applicants will have the opportunity to bid for properties they are entitled to be considered for, having regard to household size and other eligibility criteria. At point of allocation, medical needs will be taken into consideration and unsuitable bids will be skipped.

Choice-based lettings enables those seeking housing in the district to:

- Identify the level of priority they have been awarded within the allocation scheme,
- Develop awareness of the availability of accommodation suitable to their needs within the district,
- Make informed decisions which balance their need for accommodation with the availability of properties that meet their requirements.

As a result applicants can decide whether to wait until they have sufficient priority to obtain their ideal property, or whether to bid for properties they are more likely to have a chance of obtaining. It also helps applicants to make an informed choice about whether they wish to seek alternative solutions to their housing needs.

10.2 Local Lettings Plans

Local Lettings Plans (LLPs) help to maintain and promote balanced and sustainable communities. The Council has the power under s166A(6)(b) of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, to allocate particular accommodation using criteria other than the reasonable preference categories as set out in part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). However, in operating LLPs, we need to ensure that, overall, reasonable priority is given to applicants in the reasonable preference categories and that other criteria do not dominate the policy, as set out in Paragraph 4.19 of the Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Authorities in England issued in June 2012. Examples of situations where an LLP may be used include:

- New developments where there is a need to achieve a balanced mix of households
- Direct lets, to enable the Council to house people to whom it owes a duty.
- Criteria that aim to reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in areas that have existing high levels of ASB.
- Rural Housing developments where a local connection is identified in the Section 106 agreement.

LLPs will set out the criteria and priorities for letting homes within the specific housing development. LLPs will be agreed by the Head of Housing and Planning in consultation with the relevant Cabinet member.

Following the implementation of an LLP on a development, any re-lets on the site will be subject to this allocations policy..

10.3 Tenancy Strategy

The [Tenancy Strategy](#) was adopted in October 2018 and updated in 2022 and details what tenancies are available and circumstances of when they are renewed or terminated.

11.0 Applying to the Thanet Housing Register

This section outlines the process for applying to the Thanet Housing Register, which is a list for individuals seeking social housing in the district, including current tenants wishing to transfer. Due to high demand and limited properties, priority is given based on housing needs.

It details the application steps, including completing a pre-assessment, providing necessary documentation for identity and eligibility, and engaging with the choice-based lettings (CBL) system to bid on available homes.

It is the applicant's responsibility to keep their application updated and report any changes in circumstances, as this could affect their priority. The section also specifies the conditions for application removal and guidelines for managing applications from council members and staff to ensure fairness and transparency in the allocation process.

Once the Kent HomeChoice portal has been created by the applicant, all correspondence will be sent via the portal. Applicants will be able to see any updates in real time on the portal. Anticipated waiting times etc can be seen on the Thanet District Council website.

11.1 What is the Housing Register?

The Housing Register is a list of people seeking housing from social landlords in the Thanet district, including existing tenants wishing to transfer. Due to high demand and limited availability, only those with identified housing needs will be prioritised, and applicants with no or low need may never be housed. We will only accept households who would reasonably be expected to reside with each other and joint tenancies will only be offered to cohabiting couples as recognised in law.

Applicants may want to consider other options, such as, to explore private rental options, and the council's Housing Options Officers can provide assistance. To manage the limited social housing resources effectively, the council prioritises households based on their housing needs, the criteria and rules that relate to this system are set out in (Appendix 2) of this policy.

11.2 How to apply for housing

People wishing to apply for housing should complete a pre-assessment for housing which will determine whether they are eligible to apply for housing with Thanet District Council. This is available on the Kent Homechoice website at www.kenthomechoice.org.uk.

It is important that all sections of the pre-assessment and subsequent full application are completed in full and that any evidence requested via the system is provided. Additional priority for length of time on the Housing Register will only start to accrue from the date that we receive all the information necessary to make an assessment. This is also known as the "effective date". Incomplete applications without supporting information may be closed. Once the form has been completed and all the required information has been provided, the Council may need to make additional enquiries.

In accordance with S171 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), a tenancy granted on the basis of information subsequently found to be false or because material information has been withheld, may result in legal action being taken by the landlord to recover possession of the property. In addition it may be decided that an applicant has committed a criminal offence where:

'he knowingly or recklessly makes a statement that is false and may lead the council to award priority for housing if the statement was relied on when assessing the application'.

A person guilty of such an offence would be liable on summary conviction to a fine.

11.3 Proof of identity and supporting information

Appendix 1 of this policy advises applicants of the documentation required to support an application. From 1 February 2016, all private landlords in England will have to make 'right to rent' checks. This means checking that tenants have the right to be in the UK. While there is no requirement on local authorities to undertake the same procedure, the Council does follow a similar process.

It is the applicant's responsibility to supply supporting information to evidence their eligibility and housing needs. Failure to supply required information will result in the application being cancelled.

11.4 Application correspondence and waiting times

The applicant will be updated in real time about their application through the Kent HomeChoice portal. It is the applicants responsibility to create their own Kent HomeChoice portal, through which they will receive all updates and correspondence related to their application.

Due to the number of factors that have to be considered when allocating a residence it is not possible to provide accurate waiting times. However the latest estimated times can be found on the council's website [here](#).

11.5 Placing bids

The CBL system requires applicants to actively engage with the process of bidding in order to obtain a new home. The Council advertises homes as they become available so it is important that applicants check Kent HomeChoice regularly in order to avoid missing homes. It is essential applicants place frequent bids on suitable properties and where applicants have not placed a bid when homes are available then the Council will warn the household they may be removed from the housing register.

If it is in the Council's interest for the applicant to move, then failure to bid regularly, or realistically, will constitute grounds to make a direct offer. (See 3.11 for information about direct lets and the consequences).

11.6 Renewing an application (Renewals)

Kent Homechoice and the Council regularly complete reviews which will be completed via the system. Please be advised that if we do not receive a response within 21 days of the date on this email, we will assume that the applicant no longer wishes to be considered for rehousing and their application will be cancelled.

11.7 Changes of circumstances

It is an applicant's responsibility to keep their Kent Homechoice application current to ensure any changes in circumstances can be taken into consideration, as this could affect their priority for housing, for example:

- A change of address, for themselves or any other person on the application.
- Any additions to the family or any other person joining the application.

- Any member of the family or any other person on the application who has left the accommodation.
- The health of any member of the family or any other person on the application, getting better or worse.
- A change in the applicants income or employment status.

Applications will be temporarily suspended from bidding while the Council re-assesses the information provided by the applicant and completes further enquiries that may be necessary. The Council will carry out an assessment of each applicant's entitlement and priority for housing on the basis of information which has been provided by the applicant or otherwise received in connection with the application. Some changes may result in a change in 'effective date'.

11.8 Removing applicants from the register

The council may revoke an application in the following instances:

- If an applicant refuses the offer of a property they have bid on their application may be cancelled. They would then need to reapply after a period of 12 months. For more information please refer to section 3.12 on refusals
- If we are awaiting additional information from the applicant and the applicant has not responded to requests for information.
- If an applicant is not responding to texts, emails or letters when offered accommodation
- The applicant has failed to respond to the renewal.

Prior to removal of an application the Council will consider any exceptional circumstances and will only remove an application from the register where it is reasonable to do so.

The Council will cancel applications to the register in the following circumstances:

- the applicant has accepted an offer of accommodation from the Council or a housing association.
- the applicant has completed a mutual exchange.
- the applicant is no longer eligible to remain on the housing register.

11.9 Members of the Council, staff members and their relatives

To ensure that we are seen to be treating all applicants fairly, any application from members of the council, employees of the council or associated persons must be disclosed on the application form. Such applications will be assessed in the normal way but in addition be passed to a senior officer to be audited. In order to ensure public confidence, any accommodation allocated to the applicant under the scheme must be approved by the Head of Housing and Planning, and the Council's appointed Monitoring Officer following appropriate checks. The term 'associated persons' above is as defined in S178 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

12.0 Homeless Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) is a significant legislation change and transformed the way homelessness services are delivered to ensure that all eligible applicants faced with homelessness within 56 days are given appropriate help and support. The legislation came into effect on 3rd April 2018.

The HRA sets out duties on English local authorities with the aim of preventing homelessness. The key duties introduced by the HRA can be summarised as follows:

- A duty to complete a Personal Housing Plan for all eligible households facing homelessness within 56 days.
- A 56 day prevention duty to provide meaningful homelessness prevention services to all eligible households facing homelessness.
- A 56 day relief duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible and homeless households. This includes taking reasonable steps to ensure accommodation becomes available for at least 6 months, with an absolute duty to secure accommodation for those households where there is reason to believe that they may be in priority need.

These duties are all subject to a right of review for applicants. There is also a duty on the applicant themselves to co-operate. Other public bodies have a duty to refer households at risk of homelessness to the local housing authority.

13.0 Reviews and Customer Feedback

This section details the applicant's right to request a review of any decision they contest, along with the associated procedures. The section also notes how the council welcomes feedback on how to increase or improve the service offered.

13.1 Right to a review

Applicants have the right to formally ask for a review of any decision made under the terms of this policy with which they do not agree. A request for a review must:

- Be In writing
- Be made by the applicant or advocate within 21 days of being notified of the decision.
- Indicate why they feel our decision is incorrect, in line with Thanet District Council's allocation policy

If a review is requested after 21 days it is the Council's discretion as to whether to proceed with the review.

Following the request for a review being received the Council has a maximum of 56 days to respond. An application will not be backdated and we will only review a decision once.

Please note that information that has already been supplied can be reviewed as well as additional relevant information. If an applicant is eligible for inclusion onto the housing register by virtue of this new evidence, priority will begin from the date that all the correct information is received.

The Council's decision on the review will be final and the applicant will not be entitled to a further review of that decision. Reviews of decisions requested under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 are outside the scope of this Allocations Policy.

13.2 Complaints, compliments and comments

We aim to provide a high standard of customer care and to treat every application equally. We appreciate feedback and would welcome any comments about how we can improve or increase the service that we offer. If an applicant is dissatisfied with any aspect of the way in which their application for housing is dealt with, other than one for which a review can be requested, they should contact the Council and, if the matter is not resolved to their satisfaction, make a formal complaint using the Council's corporate complaints procedure, detailed on its website.

14.0 Equality and diversity

We are committed to delivering a service that is accessible and equitable to all the communities that we serve. This policy will comply with best practice as outlined in the council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. Also, an Equality Impact Assessment will be completed as required. We will ensure that people will be treated with respect and dignity. We will monitor access to the housing list, and the assessment of need in accordance with our equality impact assessment. We will make certain that no-one is discriminated against on the grounds of the protected characteristics outlined in the Equalities Act 2010 :

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Sex (gender)
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

If the applicant needs information on the Kent Homechoice website in a different format, such as accessible PDF, large print, easy read, a different language, or braille then the applicant should contact the council who will make reasonable arrangements to accommodate the request.

In accordance with Gender Recognition Act 2004 until a child is 18 and has applied to change their gender legally, all bedroom assessments will be made on their gender assigned at birth.

15.0 Information sharing

15.1 Information Sharing Protocol

We will share data provided by a person applying for housing in accordance with the Information Sharing Protocol agreed by the Kent Choice Based Lettings Partnership. When completing an application form on-line, the person is asked to provide their consent to the sharing of personal data between the parties to the protocol. Personal data can be shared provided the person has given informed consent and the sharing is for the purposes for which consent is given. Informed consent means that the person has the capacity to give consent, is aware of what information is to be shared, whom it is to be shared with and what it is to be used for. Personal information is only disclosed to other parties with the person's consent or in exceptional circumstances where disclosure without consent is necessary. These reasons are:

- Where there are overriding legal, social or public interest considerations, for example there is a risk of serious harm to the person themselves or to others if the information is not disclosed.
- Where the information is required by a local authority department or external auditors to carry out a statutory function.
- Where the information is required by the police as part of a criminal investigation.

15.2 Personal Data

The Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) require the council, as a data controller, to inform housing applicants in a concise, transparent, intelligible and easily accessible form how we will process their personal data (information).

Personal information can be any information that relates to or identifies a living person. Typically and at its most simple it could include a name, date of birth, postal address, email address, telephone number and debit or credit card details.

The law regards some personal information as being in a special category. This special category of personal information is given more protection by the law and includes information about an individual's;

- Race
- Ethnic origin
- Politics
- Religion
- Trade union membership
- Genetics
- Biometrics (where used for ID purposes)
- Health
- Sex life
- Sexual orientation.

We are required to explain to applicants why we hold their personal information, how this information is processed, for what purpose and who it is shared with.

Applicants applying for housing will be provided with easy access to our privacy statement which sets out how we will use any personal information held, who we will share it with and how we will protect privacy. It also contains information about applicant rights as provided in the Data Protection Act 2018.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Application Checklist

Please check that the information F have given is correct, ensuring that:

- You have answered all the necessary questions

- You have included your name, address and postcode (if you are of 'no fixed abode' you must use state a care of or correspondence address)
- You have or will be providing the following items
 - Proof of Identity for you (and your partner and children if applicable), this means: passport **OR** birth certificate.
 - Proof of settled status (if EU, EEA national), this means: Online share code, ID card or Certificate of status / Decision letter.
 - Proof of current address for you (and your partner and any children over 18 if applicable), this means: utility bill **OR** bank statement **OR** a letter from an official agency i.e. DWP benefit letter.
 - Proof of child benefit for every child included in your application; e.g. child benefit award notification letter or **full bank statement** showing the child benefit credit and your name and address.
 - Proof of all income you (and your partner and any children over 18 if applicable) receive, this means: 3 months **full bank statements** with name and address showing wages or Universal Credit or Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payments.
 - Proof of Savings or Capital - (For people not receiving income-based Job Seeker's Allowance, Income Support, income-related Employment Support Allowance, or Pension Credit Guarantee)
 - Full statements for each account showing the last two months' transactions
 - Documents showing any stock, shares, bonds, or certificates owned
 - Proof of pregnancy **and due date** (this could be your MATB1 form or Pregnancy Record, but must include the due date / EDD).
 - Proof of Military Service with the dates of service, such as a copy of your Certificate of Service
 - Proof that you have lived in the Thanet area for the last **three** continuous years, this means: tenancy agreements, utility bills, official DWP award letters, bank statements, medical appointments, letter from an employer, etc. Your application will not be assessed without this information.

Additional Documentation

(You will also be required to supply additional documentation should any of the following apply)

- At least two valuations of any property owned in the UK or abroad and details or any outstanding mortgage or loans secured on this property.
- Notice to quit, possession order, notice of eviction or letter giving notice if you are being asked to vacate your current home.
- Proof of any medical diagnosis or health conditions, this could include any KCC Social Service assessments such a care plan, Kent Agency Assessment (KAA) or Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)

Without this information it will not be possible to process your application for housing, so you must provide everything as quickly as possible.

Appendix 2 – Priority Bands and criteria for reasonable preference

The Banding scheme reflects the legal requirement set out in the section 167(2) of the Housing Act 1996 which requires that the allocations system gives “reasonable preference” for people in five groups:-

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII (7) of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002)
- People who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2), or 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3)
- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability)

The local authority may award “additional preference” to particular individuals, provided that they have “urgent housing needs”. The authority may take into account a wide range of actions when considering whether to give an individual “additional preference” or whether to give a lesser priority, but it must be able to explain the reasons for the decision.

Band A – critical housing needs

Applications from persons who meet the following criteria:

Urgent medical or welfare needs.

Where an urgent medical need has been agreed with the local authority or a high priority referral has been accepted by the local authority.

Management Moves (for Council tenants).

Where the Council requires the tenant to move or the tenant needs to move due to violence, harassment, intimidation or threats of violence likely to be carried out, major works or other urgent management reasons.

Social housing tenants in Thanet who are under-occupying by two bedrooms or more

Band B – urgent housing needs

Applications from persons where none of the above in Band A applies but who meet the following criteria:

- People living in very unsatisfactory housing conditions as evidenced by the Council's private sector housing team in accordance with the Health and Housing Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
 - Where a Category One hazard exists under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, which cannot be resolved within a reasonable time frame, such as that which may be set out in an improvement notice. This excludes overcrowding as this is covered in the above.
- Social Housing Tenants living in Thanet who are under occupying by one bedroom
- Social housing tenants living in a specially adapted home, who no longer require the adaptations; this could include wetrooms, through floor lifts, widened doors or wheelchair accessible kitchens.
- Armed Forces Personnel in housing need
- People Leaving Supported Accommodation, who are verified as ready to move on after 6 months with a good rent account and a positive landlord/scheme reference.

Band C – serious housing needs

Applications from persons where none of the above in Band A or Band B applies but who meet the following criteria:

- People who are homeless.

All other homeless households as defined by either Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) or the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018.

- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability Where a medical need has been agreed with the local authority or a priority referral has been accepted by the local authority under the Kent Agency Assessment procedure.
- Mobility. People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the local authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or to others. For example, to give or receive care, or to take up employment.
- Major overcrowding, that is lacking two or more bedrooms.

Band D – general housing needs

Applications from persons where none of the above in Band A, Band B or Band C applies, or:

- People occupying minorly overcrowded housing, such as lacking one bedroom
- People who are intentionally homeless, or who have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances. Where a decision has been made by the local authority under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) or, where a person has deliberately worsened their housing circumstances and would have been found to be intentionally homeless if an application under Part VII had been made.
- Households that have a housing need but owe a former tenancy debt or are deemed to have unacceptable behaviour as outlined in section 2.4

Appendix 3 - People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (criteria may apply to any member of the household)

Medical or welfare priority is awarded where the current housing is adversely affecting the health or wellbeing of an applicant, or member of their household, and whereby a move would positively improve their health or wellbeing. Below are examples of where priority would be awarded.

Band A – Urgent

- Any life threatening illness being made worse by housing conditions
- A person who is housebound due to stairs or steps (e.g. using a wheelchair in an upstairs property)
- Any person who cannot be released from hospital until alternative accommodation is secured.
- Any person that is unable to access essential kitchen or bathroom facilities within their home due to a disability and where there is evidence they will need permanent alterations to the structure of their new home.
- High priority Kent Agency Assessment

Definition of 'Permanent alterations'

- *Wet Room / Flush floor shower*
- *Through floor lifts*
- *Lifting and hoisting equipment*
- *Lowered kitchen units due to wheelchair use*

Band C – People needing to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability

- Severe mental health problems affected by current accommodation.
- Elderly persons with moderate to severe arthritis which significantly affects mobility (e.g. spine, legs) living upstairs or on a steep hill.
- Conditions requiring ongoing medical treatment, being very severely exacerbated by living conditions (e.g. extreme cases of COPD).
- Conditions causing a reduction in mobility (e.g. breathlessness, dizziness) when combined with stairs or poor location.