



Rushmoor Housing Allocation Scheme

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Introduction

The aims of the allocation scheme

This document describes the criteria that Rushmoor Borough Council uses to prioritise housing applicants for the social housing that we allocate to homes owned by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in Rushmoor (*these allocations are known as 'nominations'*).

Social housing in Rushmoor is housing owned by RSLs for which guideline rents are determined through the national rent regime.

In Rushmoor, the demand for social housing is greater than the number of homes available.

This allocation scheme describes how the Council prioritises housing applicants to ensure that those in greatest housing need (*as described by the legal definition of 'reasonable preference'*) are given help to access available social housing, compared with those who have no housing need, but who want to move to or within social housing.

The allocation scheme sets out in detail who is and is not eligible under the scheme and how this assessment is made. It also sets out how applicants can apply for and access housing.

The principles of the Rushmoor Housing Allocation Scheme are to:

- Provide those looking for housing in Rushmoor with a fair and transparent system by which they are prioritised for social housing
- Prevent homelessness and help people to solve their housing problems by giving advice and assistance
- Enable people to make informed choices about their housing options
- Treat everyone fairly, taking steps to avoid discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation, employment or marital status
- Help those in the most housing need
- Provide housing that is suitable for those who are eligible and in housing need, as described in our scheme as soon as possible
- Make the best use of Rushmoor's social housing
- Create sustainable communities through lettings plans

We will allocate housing through our choice based lettings system, which allows applicants to view available properties and express interest by making bids. The system will be supported by a housing options approach giving applicants realistic prospects, advice and promoting other housing options, such as low cost home ownership options and private sector renting. It will also link to complementary services, such as other sub-regional choice based lettings services and supporting applicants if they want to move across our borders into Hart, Waverley and Guildford.

We are committed to providing a fair and transparent service to anyone eligible for housing under the Council's allocation scheme and to allocate accommodation, in the majority of cases, to those households with the greatest need. In doing so we are also committed to ensuring that the allocation of homes is done in such a way as to promote social cohesion and balanced, sustainable communities.

The legal context

The Rushmoor Housing Allocation Scheme sits within a tight and complex legal framework.

The 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act) requires local authorities to make all allocations and nominations in accordance with an allocations scheme. A summary of the scheme must be published and made available free of charge to any person who asks for a copy. A summary of the scheme and general principles is available at the council offices and online. This document is the full version of the Scheme and is available for inspection at the Council Offices, Farnborough Road. A full version will be available on request for a reasonable fee.

The Housing Act 1996, (as amended) requires local authorities to give reasonable preference in their allocations policies to people with high levels of assessed housing need. This includes homeless people, those who need to move on welfare or medical grounds, people living in unsatisfactory housing and those who would face hardship unless they moved to a particular locality within the local authority's area.

The Act also expects local authorities to state within the policy what its position is on offering applicants a choice of housing accommodation, giving them the opportunity to express their preference about the housing accommodation to be allocated to them.

The Rushmoor Housing Allocation Scheme complies with the requirements of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) and takes into account the three codes of guidance - Allocation of Accommodation: Code of Guidance for Housing Authorities 2002 issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 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, issued by the Communities and Local Government Department (DCLG).

The scheme is also drawn up to ensure that it is compatible with the council's equality responsibilities including the duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote good relations between different ethnic groups, as well the duty to promote equality. The council has carried out an equality impact assessment for the scheme.

The scheme has considered:

- The council's statutory obligations and discretion as to who is eligible for housing allocation
- The council's statutory obligation to provide reasonable preference to certain categories of applicants set down by law i.e. those who must be given a 'head start' under the council's allocation scheme
- The council's statutory discretion to grant additional preference and/or to determine priority between applicants with reasonable preference.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the scheme applicants must be 16 years old or over and resident in the UK.

The council allocates housing accommodation to people who are eligible under this allocation scheme.

The following people are **not** eligible:

- People who are “subject to immigration control” *(unless they fall within a class prescribed by regulations as eligible)*
- People who are not subject to immigration control, but are prescribed by regulation as being “persons from abroad” *(this may include British citizens)*
- Any other person as prescribed by the Secretary of State
- Applicants *(or a member of their household)* who have been guilty of “unacceptable behaviour” and at the time of their application for housing they are still considered unsuitable to be a tenant because of that behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour is defined as behaviour, which would, if an applicant or member of their household were a secure tenant, entitle a landlord to possession under any of the Grounds 1 to 7, Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985.

Unacceptable behaviour can include:

- Owing significant rent arrears and/or failing to comply with a current or past tenancy agreement with a council, Registered Social Landlord (RSL) or private landlord to such an extent that a court would grant a possession order
- Conviction for illegal or immoral purpose
- Causing nuisance and annoyance to neighbours or visitors
- Committing certain criminal offences in or near the home and still posing a threat to neighbours or the community
- Being violent towards a partner or members of the family
- Allowing the condition of the property to deteriorate
- Obtaining a tenancy by deception, for example by giving false information

In determining whether a person is ineligible due to “unacceptable behaviour”, the council will consider:

- If a member of the household has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour
- If the unacceptable behaviour was serious enough for the landlord to get an outright order for possession
- At the time of the application, if the applicant is still unsuitable to be a tenant due to that behaviour, or the behaviour of a member of their household

A person’s eligibility to join the allocations scheme will be kept under review during the assessment process. They may become ineligible at any time during the process if the council decides that they are ineligible. Those classified as being ineligible through “unacceptable behaviour” can apply for accommodation in the future if they can demonstrate a change in behaviour. It is for the council to determine whether the changed behaviour claimed makes the person eligible under the scheme. This is carried out at the point of re-application to the scheme.

We will assess each person on their merits and make a decision on eligibility accordingly. Anyone subsequently made ineligible from the scheme will be provided with a full written explanation for the decision and can request a review of the decision.

At the point of asking for housing, all applicants are asked for information about their housing history and legal status, including whether they are from abroad or subject to immigration control. We then carry out checks to establish eligibility to the scheme under the relevant legislation.

Who has priority for social housing in Rushmoor?

Rushmoor Borough Council is required by law to determine the relative priority that housing applicants are awarded. This is particularly important in Rushmoor, as the demand for social housing is far greater than the availability of homes.

The law, as it applies to local housing authorities, requires that reasonable preference for housing must be given to those in the categories set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The statutory reasonable preference categories cover:

- All homeless people as defined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (*whether or not the applicant is owed a statutory homeless duty and regardless of whether such cases have any local connection with*)
- People who are owed a duty 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 housing authority under section (192 (3))
- People occupying unsanitary, overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory housing
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (*including grounds relating to a disability*)
- People who need to move to a particular locality to avoid hardship to themselves or others

Determining priority between people with reasonable preference

The council determines priority between people with reasonable preference by taking into account various factors including:

- The financial resources available to a person to meet their housing costs
- Any behaviour of a person (*or member of their household*) which affects their suitability to be a tenant (*which can include both good and bad behaviour*)
- Any local connection (*as set out in s199 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)*) that a person has with the borough

The application of Additional Preference

In addition, the scheme also grants additional preference (*or an extra head start*) to certain people if the council is satisfied that these applicants also have other exceptional or urgent housing needs.

The assessment process

People can ask to join the allocation scheme in person, by telephone, in writing or by email to our housing options team.

There are no application forms to complete, as we no longer hold a housing register.

The team will arrange a confidential interview to discuss your housing circumstances. The interview will help us to understand your housing need and to decide how best we can help resolve it.

There is a big demand for housing association homes in Rushmoor, which means for most people, this is not a realistic housing solution. We will aim to give practical advice about the chances of being allocated a housing association property. This also includes clear advice when there is no prospect of re-housing.

We will provide advice on alternative housing options, such as:

- Renting in the private sector
- Low cost home ownership
- Schemes to move out of the area
- Mutual exchange options for existing tenants
- Home improvement schemes or adaptation schemes so people can stay in their current home
- Supported/sheltered accommodation for older and disabled people

Shared Ownership Allocation Scheme

We may advise people to consider low cost home ownership schemes run by housing associations. To access this type of housing they will need to register with the Government Help to Buy agent for Hampshire (Help to Buy South), and we can help you do this.

Once people have registered with Help to Buy South they are considered to have been nominated for low cost housing schemes through the Rushmoor Housing Allocation scheme.

The banding scheme

The council uses a banding scheme to allocate social housing. In assessing housing need we will give priority to those applicants who fall into the statutory categories of reasonable preference. We will consider relevant information provided by the person or any relevant agency acting on their behalf.

The council will award reduced priority to the following:

- Those who are subject to a court order for domestic violence, harassment, threats or actual violence
- Those who have not paid their housing costs despite having the income/means to do so
- Those who have any form of housing debt, including council tax arrears
- Those who have capital or income above the council's threshold
- Those who own their own home
- Those whose breach of tenancy is unresolved
- Homelessness applicants found to be intentionally homeless
- Those without a local connection to Rushmoor

The bands

There are four housing allocation bands, which are fully explained in Appendix 1.

Band one

This band is for people who need to move because of exceptional circumstances. This may include life-threatening situations due to medical or social reasons. This could also include housing association tenants in Rushmoor, who by moving, will release an urgently-needed property. Placement into this band is limited to three months. After three months, we will review a person's circumstances and we may make a direct match to accommodation if a person is not actively seeking accommodation. Anyone that refuses a suitable offer of accommodation may be moved to band four A or B.

Band two

This band is for people who have an urgent need to move, and who have been assessed as having a high priority.

Band three

This band is for people who have been identified as having a housing need but assessed as having a medium priority.

Band four A or B

This band is for people assessed as having limited housing need or reduced priority.

How we decide whether to reduce a person's priority

The council has a right to reduce a person's priority under its allocation scheme.

In certain circumstances, as described below, we may choose to reduce a person's priority for housing.

In the circumstances described over the next few pages, people awarded a reduced priority will be awarded band four A or B. A person will remain in band four until issues relevant to their circumstances have changed or been resolved.

Reduced priority will apply under the following circumstances

Reduced priority due to having no local connection policy

Any eligible person is able to apply for social housing in Rushmoor or from anywhere in the UK. However, in order to ensure that the council meets the needs of the local people, reduced priority will be given to those without a local connection.

The council has decided that the following people will be considered as having a local connection with the borough:

- Those that have lived in the borough continuously, for one year and are still resident
- Those that have lived in Rushmoor for three out of the last five years
- Those that are retired living in unsuitable accommodation and needing to move to Rushmoor for essential medical reasons or essential family support
- Members of the armed forces living and/or working in the borough

- Those that have a close relative (mother, father, sister or brother) who currently live in the borough and has done so for five or more years
- Those that need to provide essential support to an elderly or critically ill relative who has lived in the borough for the last year
- Those that need to receive essential support from a relative who has lived in the borough for the last year

People who do not have a local connection with Rushmoor but have been determined as being owed the full homelessness duty under section 193(2) of the Housing Act 1996 by the council will not be subject to any reduction in their priority as the council is under a statutory duty to provide long term settled housing regardless of local connection.

Reduced priority due to rent arrears or other housing related debt

This would include current or former rent arrears (including temporary accommodation), damage to a former social housing property or legal costs arising from court action in connection with a current or former tenancy.

This will be assessed at the point when priority is being assessed unless new information comes to the council's attention after their initial assessment.

The following procedure will apply:

- The council will consider whether the arrears/debt are still owed, and if they do, the extent of the arrears/debt
- The council will consider whether there are exceptional circumstances, as described below. If there are exceptional circumstances then the applicant may not be subject to reduced priority despite the arrears/debt
- The council will consider whether the person has taken debt advice, acted on it, and entered into and begun to implement any arrangement to clear the arrears
- The council will consider whether an arrangement has been made, the amount of arrears paid off, any debt outstanding, and the regularity of any payments made

After applying the above procedure concerning rent arrears or housing related debt, the council may reduce the person's priority to band four A or B. The council will carry out reviews of those in band four to ensure that people who fail to address the reason for their demotion are made ineligible for the scheme.

We will review a person's situation at their request and if we are satisfied that appropriate action has been taken to address the arrears, we may decide to remove the reduced priority and place them in the band relevant to their housing need. The decision to reduce priority is made as soon as we have full information on the situation. If, having checked, the person falls into any of the following arrears categories, the council will take the appropriate action set out below:

- A person who owes between £100 and £1000 in a housing debt will have their priority reduced and be demoted to band four A/B. Before they can be placed into a higher band, they must make regular payments over a 13-week period and have reduced their debt by at least half. These payments may be weekly, fortnightly, four weekly or monthly payments as agreed but must not be missed. If these requirements are met the applicant may be placed into a higher band on the condition that they continue to make regular payments to clear the debt. Should they default, while in a higher band it is likely they will be demoted to band four A or B.
- A person owing over £1000 in housing debts will be deemed ineligible except for exceptional personal circumstances that will be considered on a case-by-case basis. At this level of arrears, they are considered by the council to be guilty of unacceptable behaviour and to be unsuitable as a tenant.

The only exceptions to the policy of reduced priority for those who owe a housing debt with arrears of over £100 are:

- Those who can demonstrate that either they or their family face life-threatening circumstances and therefore require immediate rehousing.
- Those in need of temporary rehousing because of fire or flood damage, together with other tenants we may agree to move for other reasons, from time to time.
- Those with medical needs, who have a band one or band two priority to reflect that, and who have made regular agreed payments for a minimum of six weeks.
- Those awarded priority for being a victim of violence.

Council officers, delegated as appropriate, on receipt of sufficient supporting evidence, will place an applicant in the appropriate band according to their circumstances.

Please note that most housing associations in Rushmoor will not rehouse a person with a housing debt.

Reduced priority due to refusal of three reasonable offers of accommodation

If on three occasions during a 12-month period a person chooses a property and they are offered it, but decline it, they will be demoted to band four A or B for one year. This does not apply to people accepted under the law on homelessness.

Reduced priority for homeless applicants

We reserve the right to select a property on behalf of a homeless person if they have not selected a property within three months of the date they were accepted as homeless, or if during the first three months they have made selections and been successful but have refused the properties. If our selection is successful but refused, we may

discharge our homelessness duty if we consider the property is suitable. This means the person will be demoted to band four A or B. If we have provided temporary accommodation this accommodation would stop. There is a right to request a review of the council's decision about the suitability of the property.

Reduced priority due to not bidding

This applies where a person has not bid for accommodation through the Home Finder Scheme. We reserve the right to reassess their circumstances and we may reduce their priority to band four A or B.

Reduced priority due to worsening circumstances

We reserve the right to reduce a person's priority to band four A or B if we consider that they have deliberately worsened their housing circumstances in order to gain priority for housing.

Reduced priority due to non-compliance with the tenancy agreement

This applies where the council is satisfied, having considered all available evidence, that a person (*or a member of their current or prospective household*) has failed to keep to the terms of any current or previous social housing or private rented sector tenancy agreement.

This includes:

- Failing to maintain a previous social rented or private sector rented property within the terms of their tenancy agreement
- Committing acts causing or likely to cause nuisance or annoyance to neighbours or others in the locality of where they live or where they have previously lived

In such cases, priority will be reduced to band four A or B. This will apply until the person (*or a member of their prospective household*) has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the council, that circumstances have changed such that the previous conduct is unlikely to reoccur. In some cases, this could include demonstrating co-operation with support agencies leading to a substantial improvement in behaviour.

The status will be reconsidered at the request of the applicant and only where there has been no reasonable cause for complaint or concern against them (*or members of their prospective household*) for a continuous period of six months.

Regular reviews of band four will be carried out and applicants whose behaviour continues to be unacceptable will be made ineligible if it has reached a point at which possession of the property has been or may be achieved.

Reduced priority due to capital assets

Owner-occupiers who are adequately housed or people with sufficient financial resources available to them to meet their housing needs will be given reduced priority. These people without reasonable preference will be placed in band four B. Those with reasonable preference will be placed in band four A.

We will also take into account any previous disposals of assets or capital when calculating the financial resources available which will include disposals for nil (for example, transfer of ownership) or below market rate value. The council considers £60,000 total capital/asset to be sufficient financial resource to buy a home or pay market rent in the borough.

Reduced priority due to income threshold

The council considers £60,000 per annum household income to be sufficient financial resource to buy a home or pay market rent in Rushmoor.

Anyone on income higher than this, and without reasonable preference will be placed in band four B. A person with reasonable preference will be placed in band four A.

Reduced priority due to Intentional Homelessness

Those found to be intentionally homeless will be placed into band four. If they have a reasonable preference category they will be placed into band four A and if not, four B.

Notification of reduced priority

Those people whose priority is reduced will be advised in writing of the following:

- The reasons for the decision
 - The band that their housing circumstances would have warranted and the band that they have been placed in as a result of the council's decision (*This will normally be band four A or four B*)
 - Their right to appeal against the decision
 - What they have to do before they can be considered again for any higher band
- That any appeal against the decision must be made in writing within 21 days of written notification of the decision
 - That a senior officer not involved in the original decision will deal with any appeal. All appeals will be dealt with within eight weeks, and the applicant advised of the outcome
 - That they may request that their application be removed from the reduced priority band at any time. The request must be made in writing and must set out how and why they believe that the removal of the reduced priority is now justified

Change of circumstances

Any change of circumstances should be notified to the housing options team **immediately**, for example (*this is not an exhaustive list*):

- Change of address
- Changes in the household
- Any change in income, assets or savings

A change in circumstances may lead to a change of band either up or down.

When a person applies to the allocation scheme, they will be accepted once all information is received. They will be assessed and placed in a band with the date of acceptance as their eligible date. This is the date that will be used for any offers of accommodation to be made.

If there is a change of circumstances, they will be reassessed and one of the following outcomes will apply:

- They may gain greater priority on the scheme and enter a higher band, or
- They may lose priority or preference due to their circumstances and enter a lower band, or
- They may be assessed as being in the same band, or
- They may become ineligible for the allocations scheme

Anyone moving from a lower band to a higher band will receive a new eligible date - the date they moved from band two to three. (See appendix 2)

Anyone moving down a band will keep their eligible date from their previous higher band. If a person stays in the same band their eligible date will not change even if new information has been assessed.

Exceptions to this are as follows:

If an applicant has their priority reduced after refusing three reasonable offers of suitable accommodation, in a 12 month period, then they will enter band four A or B and their eligible date will be the same as the eligible date from the band they were in previously. After 12 months, they will be reinstated back to their original band with their original higher band date (*as long as there has been no change of circumstances*).

Anyone that requires overnight essential support from a carer will be asked to confirm this by providing supporting evidence from Hampshire County Council Adult Services or a health professional showing that they have been assessed as needing essential overnight care.

Moving on from support housing with Rushmoor

Rushmoor has a number of supported housing schemes located within the borough or schemes for which we have nomination rights.

To help vulnerable people to move on from these supported schemes they will qualify for reasonable preference if all the following circumstances apply:

- They are ready to move to independent settled housing
- The applicant is in need of medium to long term rather than short term; ongoing tenancy support

- A support package has been assessed and is in place
- Their vulnerability is such that accommodation in the private rented sector would (through its nature) have a detrimental effect on their vulnerability and the case has been presented at Rushmoor and Hart's Supported Panel and the above criteria has been agreed

Anyone moving on from supported housing outside of Rushmoor without a local connection will be placed into band four A or B.

Moving on from care

These are people who are a former relevant child as defined by the Children Leaving Care Act 2002. As with the need to move on from supported accommodation, not all care leavers will qualify for reasonable preference. They must be vulnerable and have an urgent housing need that is best met by the provision of long-term settled housing. All other cases will not be owed reasonable preference under this category and will be expected to be assisted by Hampshire County Council's Children's Services with support from the housing options team to move on to private rented sector accommodation. The criteria for an award of reasonable preference is as follows:

- A care leaver is ready to move to independent settled housing and is genuinely ready for a move to independent living
- They possess the life skills to manage a tenancy including managing a rent account
- The care leaver is in need of either a long term or medium term tenancy support
- A support package has been assessed and is in place and
- Their needs are such that accommodation in the private rented sector would, through its short term nature, have a detrimental effect on their transition to independent living

Medical assessment

If a person has health issues we will ask them to provide information to confirm and in some circumstances, we may write to a GP, consultant and or social worker for more details. We may also ask the council's health advisor to assess information on a person's health or a member of their household.

We will consider the degree that the health of a person, or a member of their household, will improve by a move to alternative accommodation.

The assessment is not based on the seriousness of a medical condition, but the impact of their current housing on their condition and whether this would improve significantly through a move to alternative housing.

The council will decide which band to place a person in based on the information.



Housing for older people

Many older people who feel that they can no longer cope in their existing home will consider a move to accommodation more designed to meet their needs. This will generally be some form of sheltered housing. There are many sheltered housing schemes for rent and sale in Rushmoor provided by housing associations and private developers.

Housing for older people, usually flats, are only available for letting to people over the age of 55. These properties may previously have been part of sheltered housing schemes, but no longer provide a support service as a requirement of living in the accommodation. Older people who find that they require support while they are living in this type of accommodation can access community support services by contacting their housing association landlord.

Sheltered housing for rent

Sheltered housing for rent is a housing scheme that has been designed for older people, with communal facilities and support services. This type of housing is principally for older people who are able to live independently with low support needs.

The accommodation will usually consist of flats for people who are independent but either want a smaller home, which is more convenient to manage or the security and company that this style of living can provide.

Most flats will have a separate bedroom, with their own kitchen, toilet and bathroom. The majority are unfurnished, so that they can be decorated and furnished to individual tastes. Some communal facilities, such as a lounge or laundry facilities may also be provided.

Sheltered housing schemes provide support to residents through a community support service that is available during office hours between Monday and Friday. All flats have an alarm system installed that link individual flats to a 24 hour call centre.

The cost for sheltered housing will include rent and a service charge. Depending on your financial circumstances, you may qualify for help to meet some of these costs.

This accommodation is advertised through the council's Home Finder Scheme.

Enhanced sheltered housing

Some sheltered housing schemes provide an enhanced range of services and facilities. Enhanced sheltered housing for rent provides increased levels of care and support, sometimes from a care team based on site. Additional facilities, such as a bathroom for assisted bathing may be available.

Allocations to this type of accommodation are made through a joint housing and adult services panel.

Extra care housing

Extra care housing is designed to meet the needs of frailer older people and can provide an alternative to residential care. It can also be known as assisted living.

Extra care housing provides an extension of the established forms of sheltered housing. All flats have a separate bedroom, kitchen, shower room and toilet and are provided unfurnished.

Facilities provided in extra care housing include a communal lounge, a laundry, a guest room and adapted bathrooms with specialist equipment for assisted bathing. Meals are available seven days a week in a restaurant.

A team of dedicated care workers are based on site to ensure that the support and care needs of frailer residents are met on a 24-hour basis and that they can respond flexibly to the changing needs of residents.

An assessment procedure is in place for the allocation to extra care housing provided by housing associations, agreed by Hampshire Adult Services, the local housing authorities and the housing associations. A panel of representatives makes allocations from these organisations. Depending on your financial circumstances, you may qualify for help with the rent and other charges.

Removal from the banding scheme

Removal from the scheme will happen for one or more of the following reasons:

- A person asks to leave the scheme
- A person's circumstances change and they are no longer eligible under the scheme
- Failure to respond to a review request
- Being rehoused in a secure or assured tenancy by the council or another local authority, or an RSL in or outside of the Rushmoor area

Allocation of vacant and new housing association homes

Once a week, we will advertise the housing association vacancies at:

- Our council offices
- Aldershot and Farnborough libraries
- Citizens Advice in Aldershot and Farnborough
- First Wessex Housing Group, Gordon House, Gordon Road, Aldershot

We also advertise on our website, www.rushmoor.gov.uk and on a recorded 24 hour telephone line, **01252 398 227**.

Information on properties will be available from midnight on Wednesday and bidding will close at midnight on Sunday. Once accepted onto the scheme, applicants will be given a number, which will allow them to bid for a suitable vacancy by:

- Calling **01252 398 227**
- Texting **07781 486 687**
- Visiting our website www.rushmoor.gov.uk

Applicants can make up to three bids for properties each week.

Properties available for letting will be offered first to those in the highest need. This means first to band one, then to band two, band three and finally to the band four priority between people in the same band will be decided by the longest length of time in the band. In the case of new applicants, this will normally be the date of their original application or date into the band, and in the case of transferring applicants from the Rushmoor Housing Register, the date they applied to join the register.

The labelling of a property is an essential part of the lettings process which allows the council to identify who can apply for vacancies and whether any households will be given preference over others. Property labelling also provides information about the property available for letting. When labelling properties, we will aim to give as much information as possible to give clear indication of the type of household who are able to apply. We aim to strike a balance between the need to make the best use of housing stock, the requirement of those in greatest need and the aim of giving as much choice as possible to help create sustainable communities.

Where possible, we will try to meet a household's choice for accommodation, in terms of property type, floor level and area. If we do not believe that we can meet your requirements in a reasonable timescale, we may suggest alternative housing options outside of the rented social housing.

Anyone who does not regularly bid for accommodation will be moved down to band four.

We will help vulnerable people to apply for accommodation if they wish.

The size of home for which a person can apply for is based on the number of bedrooms we consider that they need, which is set out in the Rushmoor Bedroom Standard. We will also use this standard to determine overcrowding. See Appendix 1.

Some types of property are designated for specific categories of people and therefore will not be open to everyone. The main examples are:

- Designated sheltered housing schemes with an age restriction, which applies to tenants and members of their households
- Ground floor accommodation will be designated to households needing mobility access or other special requirements
- Homes that have been purpose built, adapted or that are considered accessible by people with mobility needs will be offered to these households first
- Houses may be allocated to households who have a pressing need for such accommodation - for example those with children under the age of 14
- Many flats and maisonettes have restrictions on the ownership of pets. This will affect the time it takes to re-house households who have pets they want to keep
- In exceptional medical or social circumstances, our Head of Environmental Health and Housing may use discretion to make a decision.

The offer process

If you have successfully bid for accommodation through the scheme, the housing association will invite you to view the property.

If you refuse suitable offers of accommodation, we may decide to move you down to band four.

Households considered homeless under the homelessness legislation, will be advised that if they refuse suitable housing, our duty to them maybe brought to an end. This will result in the loss of any temporary accommodation we are providing.

Choice and limitations

The huge demand for housing limits the amount of choice that the council is able to offer to some groups in housing need such as those found to be statutorily homeless. We believe that any applicant considered eligible under this scheme

should be able to express a preference over the type of property and the area in which they would like to live. However, applicants should be aware that the council's ability to satisfy their expressed preference may be severely limited.

New developments

From time to time, new housing association developments are built in Rushmoor. As these will create new communities, we will ensure that there is a mix of different households.

This means that we may invite only certain categories of household for new developments. We will issue a lettings plan to show who will be considered for these properties.

Adaptations and ground floor accommodation

Occasionally the council will identify properties that may be suitable for people with substantial disabilities. It may be a property that has been purpose built or adapted for disabilities, ground floor or bungalow. We may decide to label such a property so only people with special requirements may bid for it.

Under occupying and releasing necessary properties

Making the best use of stock: under occupation scheme

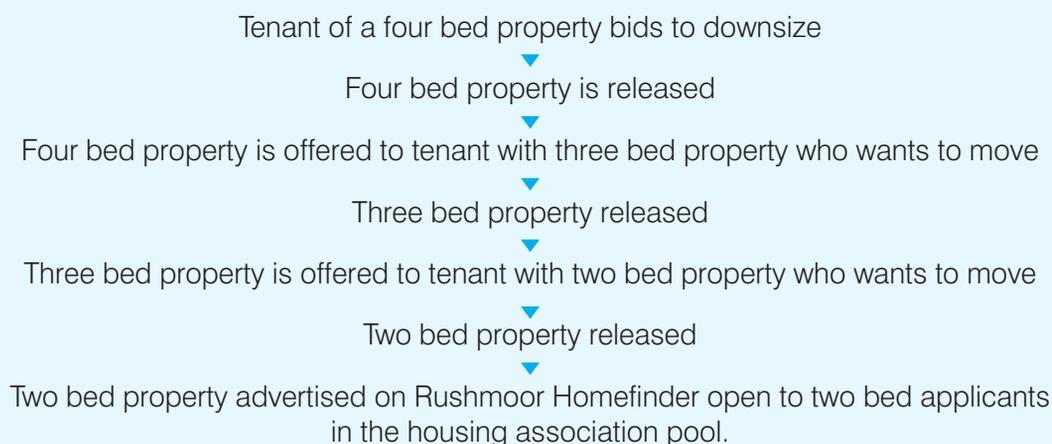
The under occupation scheme allows us to give priority to existing housing association tenants who release a family sized property or a property that is in short supply, such as a home that has been adapted.

Currently, there is most demand from the housing allocation pool for one and two bedroom properties. We wish to encourage the release of family size homes in a way that produces one and two bed vacancies to meet our highest needs.

From time to time to make best use of the housing stock available, we may advertise properties for existing housing association tenant only. This will help us achieve a chain of lettings from the property being released. In these circumstances we may overlook the applicant with the highest priority from the housing allocations pool so we can achieve the maximum number of lettings.

Examples of chain lettings

Two bed property advertised through Rushmoor Homefinder for an existing housing association tenant who is an under occupier.



This chain letting will meet the needs of the tenant who wants to downsize, other housing association tenants who need to move and a two bed applicant from the housing associations' pool.

Urgent cases and discretion

In cases of an extreme emergency, we may make a direct match of an applicant to property. This will be at the discretion of our Head of Environmental Health and Housing. A situation may arise where the council's banding scheme does not adequately address a person's urgent housing need in such

cases the council's Head of Environmental Health and Housing reserves the right to override the scheme. These cases will be few in number and closely monitored to ensure that the duty to achieve reasonable preference overall is not compromised.

Local connection

People will receive a higher priority in the scheme if they have a local connection. They will need to prove that their household satisfies one or more of the local connection criteria:

- You have lived in the borough continuously, for one year and are still resident
- You have lived in the borough for three out of the last five years
- You are a retired person living in unsuitable accommodation and needing to move to Rushmoor for essential medical reasons or essential family support
- You are a member of the armed forces living and/or working in Rushmoor
- You have a close relative (your mother, father, sister or brother) who currently live in Rushmoor and has done so for five or more years
- You need to provide essential support to an elderly or critically ill relative who has lived in Rushmoor for the last year.
- You need to receive essential support from a relative who has lived in Rushmoor for the last year.

Those with no local connection cannot join Band one, Band two or Band three

Right to information

There is the right to request general information to enable a person to assess:

- How they will be treated and whether they will be given any preference
- Whether housing accommodation appropriate to their needs is likely to become available and how long they may have to wait for an allocation of such accommodation

Reviews and appeals

A person has the right to request the following information that will enable them to assess how they will be treated:

- Whether they are in a reasonable preference category
- Information that will enable them to assess whether housing, appropriate to their needs is likely to be made available and if so, how long it is likely to be before such accommodation becomes available
- The right to be informed of any decision about the facts of their case which are likely to be taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing to them and
- The right to be informed of any decision that they are unsuitable to be a tenant which is likely to be taken into account in considering whether to allocate housing to them

The council recognises the importance of operating formal review and appeals procedures and acknowledges its statutory duties in this area. The following decisions all have the right to request a review:

- A decision not to allow someone to join the scheme
- A decision to award reduced priority
- A decision to remove a person from the scheme other than at the person's request and
- A decision on the suitability of the offer of accommodation made
- Reviews and appeals will be carried out by a senior officer

Confidentiality and access to information

- The council will take reasonable steps to check the information you provide to support your circumstances. This may include carrying out a home visit and making enquiries of third parties such as health professionals or previous landlords.
- We will keep your information securely and confidentially
- We will ask you for a signed consent form to allow us to share and request information about you from other agencies
- You have a right to ask for a copy of the information we hold about you (*for which we may charge a fee*) and to correct any inaccuracies

False or misleading information

It is an offence to make a false statement and/or knowingly withhold information. The maximum fine for this is £5,000. Anyone who gives false information may be excluded from the allocation scheme.

Special help

If someone needs special help, we will help them in the most appropriate way we can. This may include:

- Translation
- Interpretation
- Lip-reading
- A loop system
- An advocacy service
- Signing

How to complain

If you have a complaint about how you have been dealt with you should write first to the Housing Options Manager at the council offices. If you are still not satisfied, you should write to the Head of Environmental Health and Housing.

If you are again not satisfied, you should ask for a copy of the council's complaints procedure or download it from our website www.rushmoor.gov.uk

Review of allocation scheme

We will review the allocation scheme every two years or sooner if necessary and we will monitor and evaluate the scheme on a quarterly basis.

Service standards

We are committed to providing high quality service. These standards are outlined below and tell you about what you can expect from us.

Keeping in touch

We will:

- Answer your phone calls within five rings
 - Reply to your letters within ten working days
 - Reply to your emails within five working day
 - Keep our appointments with you and see you within ten minutes of your appointment time.
 - We will let you know if we are running late
 - Be respectful
 - Treat you fairly
 - Tell you the name of the person who is responsible for dealing with your enquiry
 - Give you clear and correct answers and explain your housing rights
 - Keep your personal records in line with current data protection requirements
 - Produce all our documents in plain English
 - Produce documents in other languages, larger print, Braille or audio tapes, although we may need ten days' notice for some versions.
 - Provide you with clear guidelines on the way we decide who is offered vacant housing association properties
 - Every month provide information on the number of people offered housing association homes and which bands they were in
 - Provide you with information about your application on request
-

Keeping you informed and involved

We will:

- Review how satisfied you are with our services
 - Reply to your comments
 - Deal promptly with any complaint you have and explain the council's complaints procedure
 - Tell you how to ask for a review of a housing decision
-

Keeping you informed and involved

We ask you to:

- Give us the information we request
- Keep your appointments with us and let us know if you wish to cancel
- Be courteous, respectful and polite to us

Appendix 1 - Rushmoor Bedroom Standard

Household type	Number of bedrooms							
	Bedsit	1	2	3	3 (two living rooms)	4 (also three bed with two living rooms)	4 (two living rooms)	5 (also four bed with two living rooms)
Single Person	●	●						
Cohabiting or married couple (including same sex couple) and pregnant women who are less than 28 weeks pregnant with no other children		●						
Pregnant woman where woman is 28 weeks pregnant with no other children			●					
Parent(s) with one child			●					
Parent(s) with one girl and one boy under 7			●					
Parent(s) with two same sex children where both are under 16			●					
Parent(s) with two same sex children where one is under 16				●				
Parent(s) with one girl and one boy where the oldest child is over 7				●				
Parent(s) with three children regardless of age or sex				●				
Parent(s) with four children					●	●	●	
Parent(s) with five or more children					●	●	●	●

Appendix 2 - Rushmoor Bedroom Banding Scheme

Band type	Summary of criteria
Band one	Exceptional need to move band due to reasonable preference plus additional priority. Time limited to three months.
Placement into this band is where exceptional circumstances have been identified. These include life-threatening situations, an overriding priority on medical or social grounds, or to release an urgently needed housing association property. Placement into this band is subject to meeting the local connection criteria.	
Emergency medical or disability	<p>Where a person's condition is expected to be terminal within a period of 12 months and rehousing is required to provide provision of essential care.</p> <p>A person's condition is life-threatening and their accommodation is a major contributing factor.</p> <p>The person's health is so severely affected by their accommodation it is likely to become life threatening.</p> <p>A household that includes someone with a life-threatening medical condition, which is directly linked to unsuitable living conditions and is living in seriously overcrowded situation, i.e. lacking three plus bedrooms or lacking two bedrooms with inadequate facilities.</p> <p>A person's accommodation is directly contributing to the down turn in their health, such as a severe lung condition requiring intermittent hospitalisation as a result of extreme damp and mould in the accommodation and it cannot be remedied usually within six months.</p> <p>Where chronic overcrowding in the accommodation leaves a person at risk of infections for example a person with HIV.</p>
Adapted properties	<p>A person who has an exceptional need to move into accessible accommodation when adaptations cannot make their current accommodation suitable, with inadequate facilities.</p> <p>Where a person is waiting for accessible or sheltered accommodation before being discharged from hospital and no other suitable accommodation is available.</p>
Release of adapted properties	Housing association tenants living in Rushmoor, who want to move from a disabled person's or mobility unit, which they no longer require, subject to the council's agreement.
Exceptional need to move	Those who need to move due to serious risk to life and limb as confirmed by the police.

Band type	Summary of criteria
Band two	Reasonable Preference
<p>This band is for those with an urgent need to move and have been assessed as having a high priority. Placement into this band is subject to meeting the local connection as defined in our housing allocation scheme.</p>	
Home to be demolished	<p>Housing association tenants, living in Rushmoor, who need to move because their home is about to be demolished, redeveloped or subject to major works, with the agreement of the council.</p>
Ready to move on from supported housing schemes in Rushmoor	<p>Vulnerable people, living in supported accommodation*, who are ready to move on to independent living and meets all the following conditions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person is ready to move to independent settled housing, • They are in need of medium to long term rather than short term ongoing support, • A support package is assessed and in place • Their vulnerability is such that accommodation in the private sector would, through its short-term nature, have an adverse effect on their vulnerability. <p><i>* Where applicants have been placed into supported accommodation by another council, they will not be given priority under this category.</i></p>
Move on from care	<p>Applicants must be a former 'relevant child' as defined by the Children's Leaving Care Act 2002. They must have vulnerability and an urgent need for housing that is best met by medium to long-term settled housing.</p> <p>The criteria for an award into band two is at the care leaver meets all the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are a care leaver is ready to move to independent settled housing and are genuinely prepared for a move to independent living, • They have the skills to manage a tenancy including managing a rent account, • They are in need of medium to long term tenancy support and • A support package is assessed and in place and their needs are such that accommodation in the private rented sector would through its nature have a detrimental effect on their transition to independent living.

Band type	Summary of criteria
<p>Medical grounds (Reasonable Preference category s1672(2)(d))</p>	<p>A household that includes someone assessed as having an urgent need to move to an accessible property, where it would be detrimental to their health to remain where they are.</p> <p>A household, which includes a person with severe conditions such as autism or cerebral palsy where their long-term needs cannot be met without settled accommodation.</p> <p>A household that included someone with a serious medical condition which is directly linked to unsuitable housing conditions and whose accommodation is inadequate lacking either two bedrooms or one bedroom with inadequate facilities.</p> <p>Where the condition of a property is seriously affecting existing health conditions or causing a serious health condition, as recommended by our private sector housing team, following an Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) assessment. A recommendation is only likely to be made when all options to improve the property have been exhausted.</p> <p>Ex-armed forces personnel being discharged due to being wounded or suffering serious post-traumatic stress without suitable accommodation.</p>
<p>Overcrowding</p>	<p>Those living in seriously overcrowded accommodation where they lack either three or four or more bedrooms or they lack two bedrooms and have inadequate facilities.</p>
<p>Reasonable Preference on welfare grounds</p>	<p>A household that includes dependant children still in full-time education who has moved three or more times in the last five years, through no fault of their own. This excludes applicants living in tied accommodation. The household must demonstrate a further move would seriously affect the household.</p> <p>Those approved by the head of Hampshire County Council Children's Services who wish to foster or adopt children and whose current accommodation we have assessed as unsuitable.</p>
<p>Repeat Prevention Reasonable Preference</p>	<p>Those previously given prevention status (see band three) who are re-assessed as homeless in 28 days, in priority need and not intentionally homeless where no other housing options are available.</p>
<p>Homeless households</p>	<p>Those that we have accepted under the homelessness legislation, where no other housing options are available.</p>
<p>Under-occupation Reasonable Preference category on welfare</p>	<p>Housing association tenants, living in Rushmoor, in rented three, four or five bedroom houses, who want to move to a smaller property, giving up two or more bedrooms and who qualify for priority in accordance with the under-occupation scheme.</p>

Band type	Summary of criteria
Unsatisfactory/unsuitable housing	<p>A person who occupies accommodation, which is in disrepair or not suitable for occupation and is subject to a prohibition order and recovery of the premises is required to comply with the order.</p> <p>A statutory notice has been served by Rushmoor Borough Council's private sector housing team, which requires the tenant to move out of their property for the duration of the repairs. The repairs are likely to take longer than 16 weeks and all other housing options have been exhausted.</p> <p>A private property where a demolition order under Part IX of the Housing Act 1989 has been served.</p>
Band three	Reasonable Preference
<p>This band is for applicants who have an identified housing need and have been assessed as having a medium priority. Placement into this band is subject to meeting the local connection as defined in our housing allocation scheme.</p>	
Adapted property	<p>A household that includes someone assessed as needing to move to a more accessible property. All other options such as adaptations have been explored.</p>
Overcrowded accommodation	<p>Those living in overcrowded accommodation where they lack either two bedrooms or they lack one bedroom and have inadequate facilities.*</p>
Medical	<p>A household, which includes someone with a medical condition, which is directly linked to unsuitable housing conditions and where a move would significantly improve their health.</p> <p>A person suffering from mental illness or disorder, where the medical condition would be significantly improved by a move to alternative accommodation.</p> <p>A person with a terminal illness or long-term debilitating condition whose accommodation is not adversely affecting their health but their quality of life would be significantly improved by a move to settled accommodation or closer to support.</p>
Under-occupation	<p>Housing association tenants living in Rushmoor who want to move to smaller accommodation and who qualify for priority within the under occupation scheme.</p>
Welfare Reasonable Preference Category	<p>Those who need to move to a particular area where failure to meet this need would cause hardship to themselves or others. We will assess each case individually and may ask for supporting evidence. To include those:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who need to move to give or receive care that is substantial and ongoing • Who need to access services and are unable to travel

Band type	Summary of criteria
Prevention reasonable preference	Those given homelessness prevention status - assessed to be homeless in 28 days, in priority need and not intentionally homeless and have taken up a housing prevention option.
Homeless households owed a full homelessness duty under section 193(2) or 195(2)	Those who are owed a full homelessness duty under section 190(2), 193 (2), or 195 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 or under section 65 (2) or 68 (2) of the Housing Act 1985 or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under section (192(3) Note for cases owed a full homelessness duty by another council they will receive a reduced priority and be placed into Band four A.
Unsatisfactory/unsuitable	<p>Private sector tenants and residents of properties that the council's private sector housing team has determined pose a category one hazard under the health and safety rating system. The council must also be satisfied that it cannot be remedied within six months and continuing occupation will pose a considerable risk to the applicant's health. This includes a property with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • severe damp • major structural defects flooding • a collapsed roof or • living conditions which are a statutory nuisance.
Band four A	
Need to move with a reasonable preference or those without a local connection, or with a reduced priority	
Overcrowded	Those living in overcrowded accommodation where they lack one bedroom.
Lacking facilities	Those living in accommodation which lacks facilities*
Homeless applicants	<p>Those households who the council has determined are homeless under the homelessness legislation, and not in priority</p> <p>Those who are owed a full homelessness duty by another housing authority</p> <p>Those households who the council has determined are homeless under the homelessness legislation, and not in priority</p> <p>Homelessness applicants found to be intentionally homeless</p>
Reduced priority due to behaviour	<p>Those whose behaviour means that they are not to be given priority, for example they are subject to a court order for domestic violence, harassment, threats or actual threats of violence</p> <p>Those who have not paid their housing cost despite having the income/means to do so</p> <p>Those who have any form of housing debt, including council tax arrears</p> <p>Those that have a breach of tenancy, which is unresolved</p> <p>Those who have deliberately worsened their circumstances to gain priority</p>

Band type	Summary of criteria
Reduced priority due to income	<p>Those who have capital or income that is above the council's threshold of £60,000</p> <p>Those who own their own home</p>
Reduced priority due to no local connection with the Borough	<p>Those without a local connection will receive a reduced priority regardless of their housing need.</p> <p>Unless a household meets one of the following criteria they will be considered to have no local connection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those that have lived in the borough continuously, for one year and are still resident • Those that have lived in the borough for three out of the last five years • Those that are a retired living in unsuitable accommodation and needing to move to Rushmoor for essential medical reasons or essential family support • Members of the armed forces living and or working in the borough • Those that have a close relative (mother, father, sister or brother) who currently live in the borough and has done so for five or more years and continues to do so • Those that need to provide essential support to an elderly or critically ill relative who has lived in the borough for the last year and continues to do so • Those that need to receive essential support from a relative who has lived in the borough for the last year and continues to do so
All other households	All other households who have not been included in band 1,2 or 3
Band four B	
As above but with applicants with no Reasonable Preference	

Band four is split into sub-bands A and B so that applicants with a reasonable preference are given a head start within the band over those without a reasonable preference.

**Inadequate facilities means accommodation that lacks a kitchen, bathroom or toilet, or where such facilities are shared with non-related occupiers who are not part of a person's household.*

