

North Northamptonshire

Keyways Housing Allocation Scheme

February 2021

HELPING YOU TO UNDERSTAND OUR HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME

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1 INTRODUCTION

All local housing authorities are required by law to have a scheme for determining priorities and procedures when allocating social housing.

This document sets out the housing allocation scheme for the newly formed North Northamptonshire Council. The scheme sets out who is eligible and qualifies for social housing, and how the Council decides who should have priority for those properties that are available.

The new scheme supersedes the previous schemes covering Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough.

North Northamptonshire, like many areas nationally, is facing increasing demand for social housing that far outstrips supply. In that context, the housing allocation scheme offers households with a housing need (as defined by the scheme) some choice in bidding for a home while giving reasonable preference to those in the greatest housing need and with a local connection to North Northamptonshire.

This housing allocation scheme applies to:

- New applicants
- Existing social rented housing tenants who have a need to transfer from one tenancy to another with their current landlord
- Existing social rented housing tenants who need to transfer from one tenancy to another with a different social landlord.

The accommodation allocated through this scheme includes housing for social and affordable rent which is owned and managed both by North Northamptonshire Council and by housing associations operating in the area.

North Northamptonshire Keyways, the Council's choice-based lettings scheme, provides a single access point to good quality, affordable housing for people in housing need and aims to make the task of applying for social housing as simple as possible. On a day-to-day basis, landlords advertise their vacant properties on the Keyways website and applicants, who would like to live in those properties, register their bids on the Keyways website at www.keyways.org.uk. Properties are then allocated in accordance with the procedures and priorities set out in the housing allocations scheme.

As well as operating a housing allocation scheme, North Northamptonshire Council also provides a housing options service which works to prevent homelessness and provides housing applicants with advice on a range of alternative housing options including:

- Mutual exchange
- Low cost home ownership
- Renting in the private rented sector
- Options to remain in the current home

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In addition to meeting the Council's statutory duties, the aim of this housing allocation scheme is to provide good quality, affordable housing to those in the most need whilst promoting sustainable tenancies and communities.

The objectives are:

- To provide clear, and transparent information to people who need to find a home about the social housing that is available so that they can make realistic, informed and affordable housing choices
- To support all Keyways landlords in making the best use of their housing stock in North Northamptonshire, ensuring that larger homes, specialist housing, and homes adapted for disabilities, are made available to those who need them most
- To support Keyways landlords in managing their homes effectively, by ensuring properties can be let quickly and that tenants are given the best chances of maintaining their tenancies in the long term
- To help prevent homelessness and enable the discharge of the Council's statutory homelessness duties, minimising the use of temporary accommodation
- To ensure and promote equality of opportunity in accessing safe, secure and affordable housing via the Keyways scheme, both to local people in housing need and to other categories of people that do not satisfy a local connection to North Northamptonshire including those that have served in the armed forces, care leavers, those fleeing domestic abuse and people who are looking to continue or take up employment

This housing allocation scheme will be monitored and reviewed when necessary (at least annually) to ensure that it continues to meet local needs, responds to changes in the local housing market, meets to council's strategic objectives and remains legally compliant. As part of the development of this new North Northamptonshire scheme (completed in 2020), the Council has consulted with existing social housing tenants in the North Northamptonshire area, applicants on the Keyways Housing Register, Keyways landlords, and other interested client groups and partner agencies.

3 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Council's housing allocations scheme sits within a tight legal framework which is summarised in this section. The legislative framework applies to North Northamptonshire Council directly and requires Registered Providers to 'cooperate to such an extent as is reasonable in the circumstances in offering accommodation to people with priority under the authority's scheme'.

The primary legislation governing the allocation of social housing is Part 6 Housing Act 1996 (as amended). Any reference to legislative sections contained within this scheme are sections contained within the 1996 Housing Act. This legislation requires councils to make all allocations and nominations in accordance with a published housing allocation scheme which determines priorities between applicants for housing and sets out the procedure to be followed when allocating housing.

Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 requires local authorities to frame their housing allocation schemes to give "reasonable preference" to certain categories of people namely:

- a) People who are homeless as defined in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996

- b) People who are owed a particular statutory duty by any local housing authority under certain provisions of homelessness legislation
- c) People occupying insanitary, overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory housing
- d) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability
- e) People who need to move to a particular locality within the district to avoid hardship to themselves or others

In addition to the primary legislation, North Northamptonshire Council's housing allocation scheme takes full account of the associated statutory codes of guidance and statutory instruments. In developing the scheme, the Council has also had regard to its Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Tenancy Strategy.

The housing allocation scheme has been developed to be compatible with other relevant legislation, regulations and guidance including, but not restricted to:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000
- The Localism Act 2011
- Armed Forces Covenant
- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Public Sector Accessibility Regulations 2018
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

A summary of this housing allocation scheme is available free of charge to any person who asks for a copy. It can be downloaded free of charge from the North Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Keyways websites. If requested a hard copy can be provided on payment of a reasonable fee (to be confirmed at time of request).

3.1 Scope of the Scheme

The following are defined as allocations within this scheme:

- The selection of a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of council accommodation or
- The nomination of a person to be a starter or assured tenant of Registered Provider accommodation

The housing allocation scheme does not apply to the following lettings:

- Succession of tenancy
- Assignment of a tenancy through mutual exchange
- Assignment of a tenancy to a person who would be qualified to succeed to the tenancy
- Assignment of a tenancy in pursuance of a relevant court order
- Progression from an introductory to secure tenancy
- Sole to joint tenancy changes and vice versa
- Temporary decants in order to complete repairs

- Lettings made by Registered Providers outside of the North Northamptonshire Keyways nomination agreement
- Properties leased to a partner agency (e.g. support provider)

4 ELIGIBILITY AND QUALIFICATION

Any person can approach the Council for advice and assistance regarding housing however, due to the high demand for social and affordable rented housing in North Northamptonshire, the Council does not maintain an 'open' housing register.

In considering an application, the Council will firstly assess if an applicant is eligible for accommodation, and secondly, whether an application qualifies for an allocation of accommodation. Any applicant assessed as either not eligible or who does not qualify will not be considered for an allocation and will therefore not have access to the North Northamptonshire Keyways register.

4.1 Applicants who are not eligible

The legislation and accompanying regulations regarding eligibility for housing are complex and subject to regular change. This section provides an overview of the main rules.

The main law on eligibility in England is contained in the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Localism Act 2011, which allows the government to introduce regulations about eligibility for allocations. North Northamptonshire Council will determine whether applicants are eligible for housing assistance ensuring compliance with UK immigration and nationality regulations.

Some classes of people are not eligible to join the housing register, specifically those who are:

- Subject to immigration control (unless in a class re-included by regulations made by the Secretary of State – see reference to Regulation 3 in section 4.2 below)
- Not habitually resident in the UK, Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland
- Other persons from abroad excluded by regulations made by the Secretary of State including
 - EEA nationals whose only right to reside is derived from their status as an EEA jobseeker or as the family member of an EEA jobseeker
 - EEA nationals whose only right to reside is the initial three-month period under Regulation 13 of the EEA Regulations
 - Non-EEA nationals whose only right to reside is as the parent of a UK citizen child who has no other rights to reside in the UK (known as a 'Zambrano carer')
- Persons granted limited leave ('pre settled status') under the EU settlement scheme where their only other right to reside is a non-qualifying right (i.e. as a jobseeker, is within his/her first three months or as a Zambrano carer)
- Required to leave the UK by the Secretary of State.

4.2 Applicants who are eligible

The following groups are eligible for an allocation of housing:

- British Citizens
- Certain Commonwealth citizens with a right of abode in the UK
- Irish citizens, who are not subject to immigration control in the UK

- EEA nationals with an EEA 'right to reside' that qualifies for housing (including but not limited to those that are working or self-employed)
- Classes of persons subject to immigration control who are eligible for an allocation of accommodation as set out in Regulation 3 of the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended. These groups include but are not limited to:
 - people granted refugee status
 - people granted exceptional leave to enter or remain without a 'no public funds' condition
 - people granted humanitarian protection
 - EEA nationals who have been granted settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme and who are 'habitually resident' in the British Isles or Ireland

APPLICANTS WHO DO NOT QUALIFY

The Localism Act 2011 enabled local housing authorities to decide which classes of persons are, or are not, qualifying persons for the purposes of allocating housing. This section sets out the classes of persons which are not considered to be qualifying persons and will therefore not be accepted to join the North Northamptonshire Keyways register for an allocation of housing.

4.3 Homeowners

All applicants must declare whether they own a home or have a legal interest in any land or property in the UK or abroad, so that it can be assessed whether this home is suitable for their needs and considered reasonable to occupy.

The definition of a home is a freehold or leasehold property, a static caravan situated on a site open all year round or a boat which has a mooring.

Homeowners (including joint homeowners) will be exempt from the scheme unless they have an urgent housing need to move (Bands A and B) and have insufficient equity, capital or assets to resolve their housing difficulties. This will include the possibility of adapting their current home. Applicants who have a beneficial interest or home rights in a property will be classed as a homeowner and will be exempt from the scheme.

Elderly homeowners who are accepted as eligible for sheltered housing will qualify to join the North Northamptonshire Keyways register but are exempt from bidding for bungalows and are eligible for sheltered complex properties only.

Homeowners who sell or transfer their property in the UK or abroad within the last 5 years and received (or would have received) equity of £16,000 or above will be excluded for 5 years from the date of sale, unless they are eligible for sheltered housing.

In addition, household income level and savings (including any deliberate depreciation of savings) may be considered where an applicant has an urgent housing need and could resolve their own circumstances with their income/savings. This includes cases where a homeowner's property is subject to a Compulsory Purchase Order.

Please note that passport benefits and non-contributory disability benefits are not included for the purposes of income in this definition. Any lump sum received by a member of the Armed Forces as a compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service will be disregarded as savings.

4.4 Persons with no local connection

Applicants who do not establish a local connection to North Northamptonshire will not qualify to join the North Northamptonshire Keyways register. A local connection to North Northamptonshire will be established by virtue of any permanent member of the household meeting any of the criteria set out in the table below:

Criteria	Additional Detail
<p>Current residency in North Northamptonshire with a past residency of at least two years out of the last five years prior to acceptance onto the North Northamptonshire Keyways register</p>	<p>Applicants must be currently resident in North Northamptonshire at the point of application and at the point of nomination. In addition, their 5-year address history must detail a past residence in North Northamptonshire totalling at least 2 years.</p> <p>Residency may be verified by way of tenancy references, electoral roll, information held on any local authority or third-party database, such as Experian and will be verified at the point of application and at the point of nomination.</p> <p>This includes those people who currently live in an institution, hospital or are serving a custodial sentence outside of the area but were resident in the area for at least two out of the last five years prior to entering that institution, hospital or custody.</p> <p>Households placed into accommodation as a discharge of any homeless duty under Part VII of the Housing Act by a local authority outside of North Northamptonshire will not qualify to join North Northamptonshire Keyways until all homeless duties have expired (i.e. 2 years if a full homeless duty was discharged through the private rented sector) and they have established an additional 2 years residency. This means such households will require 4 years residency before being accepted to join the North Northamptonshire Keyways register.</p>
<p>Employment in North Northamptonshire for a minimum of 16 hours per week.</p>	<p>The main or joint applicant must be working regularly, at the point of application and at the point of any nomination.</p> <p>For the purposes of establishing this local connection, regularly means 16 hours per week or more, and either have a permanent contact (and passed any probationary period), or, be able to demonstrate they have worked for at least six months and there is no reason to believe this arrangement is due to cease.</p> <p>Applicants who are self-employed, or their profession requires them from time to time to work outside the area, will need to demonstrate that their employment has mainly been based in North Northamptonshire for a minimum of six months prior to application and at the point of any nomination.</p> <p>Applicants on leave due to maternity or sickness who remain employed will qualify for this criterion if there is no reason to believe their employment is due to cease.</p>

Right to Move	This applies to current social tenants in England who are employed, or who have been offered permanent employment in North Northamptonshire AND who need to move to avoid hardship.
Armed Forces personnel	<p>Certain members of the Armed Forces community are exempt from any residency / local connection requirements, by virtue of regulations made under section 160ZA(8) which prevent local authorities from applying a local connection test to disqualify such applicants. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Those who are currently serving in the Regular Armed Forces or who were serving in the Regular Forces at any time in the 5 years preceding their application for an allocation of social housing. b) 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. c) Serving or former members of the Reserve Armed Forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service. d) Divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence. <p>The above definition of Armed Forces personnel also applies to the Priority Banding criteria called 'Armed Forces' detailed in section 6.4. Verification will be required from the Armed Forces.</p>
Immediate family members currently resident in North Northamptonshire i.e. parent, sibling or child, who has lived in the area for a minimum of five years continuously prior to acceptance onto the North Northamptonshire Keyways register	Residency may be verified by way of tenancy references, electoral roll or information held on any local authority database. Relationship may be verified by Birth Certificates or information held on any local authority database.
Current tenant of a Keyways landlord resident in North Northamptonshire, whose application is supported by the landlord	Although it will not be necessary for the tenant to have completed two years residency in the area, the applicant must have a housing need as identified in the Priority Bands defined by bands A-D (see sections 6.4–6.7), and the transfer be supported by the applicant's current landlord.

Applicants owed a homeless duty by North Northamptonshire Council	<p>Applicants owed a homeless duty as specified in the reasonable preference categories outlined in S166A(3)(a) and (b) of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S190(2) – Priority Need but Intentionally Homeless • S193(2) – Main Duty • S195(2) – Threatened with homelessness, and eligible • S192(3) – Power to secure for non-priority and not intentionally homeless • S189B – Relief Duty
Other special circumstances as approved by a senior housing officer	<p>In some special circumstances, the Council will accept people onto the North Northamptonshire Keyways register who cannot demonstrate a local connection as defined above. These circumstances include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those needing to move in order to provide or receive essential care and support in North Northamptonshire • Applicants who were resident in the area for two years or more before moving to supported housing / care placements out of area to prevent homelessness • Applicants who do not have a clear local connection anywhere • Applicants who cannot live in the area in which they have a local connection because of harassment, violence or abuse or the need to move elsewhere for reasons of rehabilitation or personal safety. This includes applicants subject to MAPPA arrangements or the National Witness Mobility Scheme.
Local Connection to a Section 106 / Village exception site	<p>Applicants who satisfy an established local connection to a Section 106 or village exception site (as defined in relevant legal agreements) and that do not meet any of the other local connection qualifying criteria detailed in section 4.4. Verification of an applicant satisfying this criterion will be required at point of application and at point of nomination. Applicants accepted as qualifying due to this criterion will only qualify to bid on properties within the village development to which they satisfy a local connection.</p>

4.5 Persons who have behaved in an unacceptable way

Applicants who have previously behaved in a way which led to them losing a tenancy, or which could have led to such action being taken by a landlord, will only qualify for an allocation via North Northamptonshire Keyways if they can demonstrate that such behaviour is unlikely to occur again. Applicants may not qualify to join the register due to the behaviour of any member of the applicant's household, including partner and children.

Behaviour which may lead to someone failing to qualify to join North Northamptonshire Keyways includes (but is not limited to):

Criteria	Further Information
Outstanding housing related debt	<p>Applicants with outstanding housing related debt within the last 5 years, totalling more than the equivalent of 2 months rental liability will fail to qualify for the North Northamptonshire Keyways register.</p> <p>Housing related debt is defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current and former rent arrears (owed to social or private landlords) • Recharge arrears • Court costs (against social or private tenancies) • Homeless prevention funds or other similar schemes <p>Households owed a homeless duty will be exempt from this non-qualifying criterion, however, a suitable repayment plan must be in place and strictly adhered to in order to satisfy North Northamptonshire Council that applicants are proactively addressing past unacceptable behaviours.</p> <p>The two month's rent liability threshold will be defined utilising the rent liability figure at the applicant's current or most recent address. Cumulative debt within a 5-year period in excess of this threshold, will fail to qualify.</p> <p>Debt Relief Orders</p> <p>Housing related debts included in a Debt Relief Order will remain as outstanding until 12 months from the date of issue, at which point the debts are formally written off by creditors and the debtor is discharged. Households owed a statutory homeless duty will be exempt from the 12-month criteria.</p>
Serious breaches of tenancy or unacceptable conduct within a tenancy	<p>Applicants will fail to qualify where there is evidence of a serious and deliberate breach of social or private tenancy within the last 5 years. Breaches of tenancy are considered serious when, had the applicant been a tenant of the local authority, the authority would have been entitled to a possession order under Section 84 of the Housing Act 1985 on any ground detailed in Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Act, with the exception of ground 8.</p> <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent arrears • Breach of tenancy agreement • Nuisance or annoyance to neighbours including anti-social behaviour • Illegal or immoral use of the property • Damage or neglect

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conviction for an arrestable offence committed in the locality of the premises • Domestic abuse • Making a false statement to gain a tenancy <p>Applicants evicted from a social tenancy for sub-letting or abandoning a property within the last 5 years will also fail to qualify.</p>
Other breaches of tenancy	<p>The applicant has a history of other unacceptable behaviour relating to tenancy conduct including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistent / repeated breaches relating to property condition • Persistent / repeated breaches relating to garden condition • Not allowing reasonable access for statutory safety checks • Other non-engagement in essential activities e.g. preventing housing officer visits and repairs <p>Existing tenants may be subject to an inspection of their property prior to being accepted onto the North Northamptonshire Keyways housing register. Applicants who fail the inspection, or do not engage with their landlord to complete the required actions will not be accepted onto the Keyways register.</p>
Guilty of criminal offences relevant to rehousing	<p>Any offence that is not spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (amended by the Legal Aid and Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012) must be declared. Cautions should also be declared.</p> <p>Relevant criminal offences include but are not limited to the following serious arrestable offences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violent offences including GBH and ABH, explosions and riots • Harassment, threats of violence or intimidation including racially motivated and domestic abuse offences • Offences relating to offensive weapons (firearms and certain offences involving knives) • Offences against property, including offences under the Theft Act 1968 such as robbery and burglary, and an offence under Section 1 of the Criminal Damage Act 1971 of destroying or damaging a property • Drug-related offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (restriction of production and supply of controlled drugs and possession of controlled drugs with intent to supply)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual offences • Offences under Part 2 Serious Crime Act (encouraging or assisting one of the above offences to be committed)
Antisocial behaviour	<p>Acts of antisocial behaviour are defined as acts where the applicant has been subject to some level of formal warning and/or enforcement action. This includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closure Order granted as a result of antisocial behaviour in or near the applicant's current or previous property • Civil Injunction such as injunctions preventing nuisance and annoyance • Criminal Behaviour Order • Notice or an Order to abate noise served under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 • Community Protection Warnings and Notices • Convictions for breaching any of the above • Any other enforcement action / prosecution under the Antisocial Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. <p>Antisocial behaviour also includes any act whereby an applicant has been proved to have interfered with security and safety equipment or landlord's electricity supply to communal blocks.</p>
Demonstrated unacceptable behaviour towards any officer, official agent or property of the Council or North Northamptonshire Keyways partner landlord	<p>This includes having received any warning letters from the Council or any North Northamptonshire Keyways partner, and/or criminal or civil action.</p> <p>Unacceptable behaviour includes verbal and physical abuse, intimidation, violence and/or threats of violence by any form and harassment. Damage, defacing or graffiti upon any property is also included.</p>

North Northamptonshire Council does not operate a blanket policy in relation to the above considerations but will consider each case on its own merit. Applicants are invited to provide evidence of a change of behaviour. This could include, for example, evidence of regular payments towards a previous housing debt; evidence from a support agency of undertaking training to develop the skills necessary to manage a tenancy or being ready to move on from supported housing.

4.6 Persons who are incapable in law of holding a legal tenancy

Applications will not normally be accepted from persons who are aged under 18. However, the following may be considered:

- The applicant is in the care of the Council, or is a care leaver
- The applicant has been defined as a child in need as a result of a S17 Children Act 1989 statutory assessment
- The applicant is owed a full statutory homeless duty following a S20 Children Act 1989 statutory assessment
- The applicant has an adult or adults who will act as a trustee(s) and hold a legal tenancy until the legal incapacity to hold a tenancy ends, and the Council accepts the adult as a suitable trustee

4.7 Persons with no assessed housing need

Persons/households assessed as having no housing need as defined in the Priority Bands will not qualify to join the North Northamptonshire Keyways register.

Applicants to whom another local authority has accepted a rehousing duty under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 or any other duty to suitably accommodate are regarded as having no housing need and will therefore not qualify for North Northamptonshire Keyways.

4.8 Refusals of offers of social housing

Applicants who have refused two offers of suitable accommodation in any 12-month period will fail to qualify for the North Northamptonshire Keyways register. See section 8.4 for more information. Households owed a homeless duty will fail to qualify after refusing one offer of suitable accommodation. Those who do not qualify by virtue of this category will not have a reapplication considered for 12 months from the date of non-qualifying decision.

Applicants can request a review of this decision if there has been a significant change in their circumstances through no fault of their own which adversely affects the household or would otherwise result in the North Northamptonshire Keyways band increasing.

4.9 Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances, an applicant who would not ordinarily qualify for the Housing Register but who has an urgent housing need (defined by being awarded Bands A or B under this housing allocation scheme) may be allowed to join. The decision to allow a non-qualifying applicant to join the register, will be determined by a panel of senior housing officers. Other professionals, for example, those with social care expertise, may be invited to contribute to the panel and decision making where relevant.

The council retains a discretion to deal with individual cases where there are exceptional circumstances, for example where such circumstances arise in relation to the wider Armed Forces community.

4.10 Community Safety

North Northamptonshire Council works in partnership with the Police, Probation Service, Community Safety Partnerships and housing providers to manage risk to the community. If there are any details pertaining to an applicant or application which leads the Council to believe there may be implications for community safety, the Council may refuse an applicant

housing in certain areas. The Council may also apply local lettings policies to specific areas or developments for reasons of community safety. Section 7.10 provides more detail on local lettings policies.

5 REGISTRATION

5.1 How to apply

Applicants can apply for an allocation by completing a housing application form online at www.keyways.org.uk. Should applicants require assistance in completing the form or require the form to be made available in other formats this can be requested by telephone or by prior arrangement at the Council offices. Following receipt of an application, applicants may be required to provide supporting documentation.

Once a fully completed application form has been received along with any required supporting documentation, the form will be assessed to determine if applicants are eligible and qualify for an allocation (see section 4), followed by an assessment of their housing need (see section 6), and a determination of property eligibility (see section 7).

5.2 How North Northamptonshire Keyways works

North Northamptonshire Keyways advertises available social and affordable housing throughout North Northamptonshire. All available properties are advertised online at www.keyways.org.uk from 00:01hrs (one minute past midnight) on a Thursday through to 23:59hrs on a Tuesday.

During the weekly advertising cycle, applicants can express their interest in up to three properties that are the right size and type for their household requirements. Expressing an interest in a property means that the applicant will be included on the shortlist for that property.

Applicants should only bid on properties after reading all the attribute and locality details in the advert. Bids on suitable properties which are later refused may incur a penalty (see section 8.4) If applicants do not express an interest in a property, they will not be considered for the allocation of that property.

Some North Northamptonshire Keyways applications may be set to Autobid. This means that the Keyways system will automatically place their bids after midnight on a Wednesday when all other bids have been placed. Applicants who are owed a statutory homeless duty will be subject to an Autobid process whereby up to five bids per cycle will be made automatically on their behalf.

When a property is shortlisted, it is usually offered to the applicant with the highest band and who has been waiting in that band for the longest time (determined by an effective date). Applicants can view their bid queue position and bid outcome on their online account. Only successful applicants are contacted directly

North Northamptonshire Keyways will publish information on accepted offers of accommodation from previous bidding cycles at www.keyways.org.uk. The following information will be published on advertised properties:

- Property address
- Property type
- Closing date for bids

- The band of the successful bidder
- The date they were placed in that band
- The number of bids received

Please note, under no circumstances will any personal details of the successful bidder be published.

‘Any time’ adverts

North Northamptonshire Keyways also has the functionality to create ‘any time adverts’ which will sit outside of the weekly advert cycle and bidding process described in this scheme. ‘Any time adverts’ can be added on any date and for any length of time. North Northamptonshire Council will utilise this facility for properties that are regarded as difficult to let in order to avoid multiple and repeated duplicate adverts week on week. In North Northamptonshire this applies mainly to some sheltered properties. Bidding opportunities in respect of ‘any time adverts’ will be in addition to the core bidding opportunities described in this scheme. An applicant that has three bids per bidding cycle will therefore have three bids plus any additional bids that are eligible to be placed on ‘any time adverts’. In addition to difficult to let properties, the Council may utilise the ‘any time advert’ facility in other circumstances including but not limited to adverts and lettings that need to be fast-tracked. Decisions to utilise the ‘any time advert’ facility for any reason other than for a difficult to let property will be made by a senior housing officer.

5.3 Types of tenancies

There are a variety of different types of tenancies that are advertised on North Northamptonshire Keyways. These include introductory/starter tenancies, secure tenancies, affordable rent tenancies and fixed term tenancies. Applicants are responsible for deciding which properties and which types of tenancy they wish to express an interest in. However, in addition to the tenancy type advertised, the type of tenancy offered to applicants will often depend on a number of factors including:

- Their current tenure and landlord
- Their current circumstances
- The landlord of the property
- The type of property
- The location of the property

5.4 Verification

In order to assess and verify housing applications, the Council may make additional enquiries with current and former landlords and other relevant agencies. Council officers may also need to arrange a home visit or office interview. Where this is necessary, a council officer will contact the applicant to arrange a convenient appointment. If, after a 28-day period, applicants have not provided information that has been requested, the Council will cancel the application.

Verification includes checks on an applicant’s full circumstances including their eligibility, qualifying criteria, housing need, property eligibility and community contribution. Circumstances will be verified at the point of application and at the point of nomination prior to a formal offer. It is the applicant’s responsibility to notify North Northamptonshire Council of any significant changes to their circumstances which may affect their application. An applicant’s circumstances can change at any point and accordingly can be reassessed by the Council at any time.

Prior to any formal offer of accommodation, North Northamptonshire Keyways landlords will also conduct a tenancy assessment and other checks to verify an applicant's circumstances. This will include an affordability assessment. Applicants that fail the verification checks and/or affordability assessments will not be offered the accommodation for which they have been nominated. The application may then be reassessed depending on the reasons for refusal.

5.5 Disability, mobility and medical needs

If an applicant or joint applicant, or other member of the household identified on the North Northamptonshire Keyways application have any of the following then it is the applicant's responsibility to provide any medical evidence that they would like to be considered in assessing their application:

- A permanent physical disability
- A mobility problem
- A medical condition, or
- A mental health condition

The Council may need to contact the applicant for further information regarding the condition to help the Council to assess and establish in which band to place the application and what type of property is suitable. In some circumstances the Council may need to seek independent medical advice to help inform this decision and specifically to explore:

- Whether the applicant's current home is having a detrimental impact on the health or mobility of anyone in the household, and the extent of the detrimental impact
- What type of accommodation would suit the needs of the households or if a move is necessary
- What adaptations the household may require

If, after the Council's enquiries it is established that the applicant requires specific adaptations to a property, the application will be amended to reflect this. Households that require specific adaptations will only be nominated to accommodation that is suitable for their needs.

It is recognised that applicant's circumstances are individual and that the medical banding criteria cannot specify every circumstance that might apply. Exceptional banding decisions pertaining to medical issues that sit outside of the normal banding criteria will be made by the manager that oversees the North Northamptonshire Keyways team or an officer of equivalent level.

5.6 Application processing standards

When a North Northamptonshire Keyways application is received, the Council will:

- Contact the applicant within 10 working days of receiving the application to confirm if any additional supporting information is required
- Contact the applicant to confirm that the application is active within 10 working days of receiving a fully completed application form including any relevant supporting information that is required
- Let the applicant know if it cannot register the application within 10 working days of receiving the fully completed application form due to delays which may be caused by the Council requiring additional information from another agency or other administrative reasons.

5.7 Contacting applicants

Once all necessary enquiries have been made and the North Northamptonshire Keyways application has been processed, the Council will email / write to the applicant to inform them:

- If the applicant does not qualify to join the North Northamptonshire Keyways register, the reasons for this and their right to a review of the decision or;
- That we have accepted the application and the applicant can start to place bids for properties advertised on North Northamptonshire Keyways
- The applicant's unique housing reference and log in details
- The North Northamptonshire Keyways band in which we have placed the application
- The date on which the application was placed into the band – the effective date

5.8 Change of circumstances

Applicants must inform the Council if the circumstances of any person included in the North Northamptonshire Keyways application changes as this may affect their eligibility or qualification status, priority band or property eligibility.

Changes in circumstances include but are not limited to:

- A change in eligibility status
- A change in assets or savings including home ownership / beneficiary of a property
- The accrual of new housing related debt
- New criminal convictions
- A change of address
- A change of contact details
- People leaving the household or new household members
- A change in a household member's health or wellbeing

If the Council later discovers a change in circumstances that has not been disclosed to the Council, this may result in a housing application being cancelled, an offer of accommodation being withdrawn, or possession action being taken to recover a property allocated under this scheme.

North Northamptonshire Council will endeavour to process changes of circumstance within 10 working days.

5.9 Reviews of the North Northamptonshire Keyways housing register

Annually, all applicants are required to complete an online review. The review is to ensure:

- The number of applicants on the North Northamptonshire Keyways register reflects the immediate needs for social housing
- Applicants still want to stay on the North Northamptonshire Keyways register and
- Applicants' details are accurate and up to date.

If an applicant fails to respond to a review within 28 days, the application will be cancelled.

If an applicant fails to place bids on suitable properties over a period of six months their application may be cancelled or their banding reviewed.

5.10 Cancelling a housing application

North Northamptonshire Keyways applications may be cancelled if, for example, the applicant:

- Becomes ineligible for an allocation
- Requests their application is cancelled
- Fails to respond to a review
- Has been re-housed by a North Northamptonshire keyways landlord
- Moved and did not inform the council of their new address
- Fails to respond to a request for information within 28 days
- Provides false or misleading information
- Refuses offers of suitable accommodation
- Fails to qualify for the North Northamptonshire keyways register
- Fails to place bids on suitable properties

WHO CAN BE INCLUDED ON AN APPLICATION?

The applicant should include on their housing application other persons who normally reside with them or who would reasonably be expected to reside with them as a member of their household. All household members who will be living in the new tenancy must be included on the application in order that qualification checks can be conducted. Applicants and household members can only be on one North Northamptonshire Keyways application.

The following can be included on an application if they normally live with the applicant(s) or could reasonably be expected to do so:

- Partner or spouse,
- Children dependent on the applicant / joint applicant
- Adult sons and daughters
- Other adults who are dependent on the applicant / joint applicant

Other people will only be considered if there are demonstrable extenuating circumstances that require them to live with applicants; for example, to provide or receive ongoing and substantial care which can be evidenced.

In all circumstances, the Council may decide whether a person is normally resident as a member of the applicant's family and whether they will be considered for rehousing as a member of the applicant's household. The Council will consider each applicant's individual circumstances when deciding whether to allow persons to be included on the application.

5.11 Dependent children

A dependent child is defined as being aged 0-15 years, or 16-18 years and attending or enrolled in full-time approved non-advanced education or training. The Council will usually expect that an applicant receives Child Benefit in respect of dependent children.

In determining whether a dependent child can be considered as part of the household where there is shared parental responsibility, the Council will consider whether there is a sufficient degree of permanence or regularity to constitute normal residence as a member of the family. The Council may also take into account the demand for and supply of accommodation, as well

as any under occupation which may result where a child spends part of a week with one parent and part of a week with another.

Factors that the Council will consider include:

- Who has the main parental responsibility of the child / children?
- What is the child's main and principal home?
- What address is registered with GP/School/Nursery?
- Who predominantly cares for the child?
- What is the frequency and length of residence at the applicant's property?
- Does the child have other accommodation available to them which it is reasonable for them to occupy?
- Is there an order of the court pertaining to the child's residency?

If a child has no suitable accommodation with either parent, then both parents can include the child on their North Northamptonshire Keyways application until such time as suitable housing for the child has been secured. At this time, the other parents' North Northamptonshire Keyways application will be reassessed accordingly. For clarity, only one social / affordable rented property with a garden will be offered for the children.

Singles parents/couples with a housing need, with access to children who do not permanently reside with them can be considered for properties with up to two bedrooms (excluding family accommodation with its own garden), however they will only be offered a two bedroom property if there is no demand from households who require that size of property. Household income may be assessed by the landlord of the property against their affordability criteria to ensure that the property is affordable before an offer of tenancy is made.

5.12 Adult sons and daughters, and other non-dependents

Non-dependent children are defined as any children of the applicant or joint applicant who do not meet the definition of a dependent child. A non-dependent child is usually aged 18 years or over or aged 16/17 and who is not attending or enrolled in any full-time approved non-advanced education or training.

Where the household includes people aged 18 years or over that are capable of living independently, the Council will assess the needs of the whole household and may refuse to allow them to be included on an application, for example if it is unable to meet the need through existing social housing in the North Northamptonshire. The Council may require such non-dependent members of the household (including adult sons and daughters, or extended family members) to apply for housing separately.

North Northamptonshire Council will allow children living with their parents who are serving in the armed forces or resident at university to be included on an application. In these circumstances their parental home will be considered as their principal home.

Where it is determined that an adult son or daughter, or other non-dependent is not capable of living independently, for example as a result of a disability or severe learning difficulties, family accommodation may be awarded if it benefits the wellbeing of the household.

5.13 Family members not resident in the UK

If applicants are applying to include family members who are not living in the UK, the application may be registered but applicants cannot be allocated together until the family has been reunited in the UK.

5.14 Children in care

Children in compulsory or voluntary care can be included on an application subject to written confirmation from social services that the children are to live on a permanent basis with the applicant(s).

Households currently undertaking fostering may be able to include foster children as part of their application. Written confirmation from social services of the fostering arrangement will be required and considered to inform the decision.

5.15 Provision / receipt of care

Applicants or applicant household members, who require a full-time residential carer which is evidenced by social services or a primary health care professional, may include the carer on their application.

People who provide substantial long-term care to another person which requires that person to live with an applicant in order to receive the care, may include that person on their application. Care needs which cannot be provided by visiting carers must be verified by social services. The care needs must be substantial, i.e. a need for personal care with basic daily activities (dressing, feeding, bathing, toileting), or an inability to live independently certified by a medical professional.

5.16 Split and non-traditional households

The Council will consider applications from households where the main and joint applicants do not currently reside at the same address, or applications from non-traditional households, e.g. friends sharing. In reaching a decision whether to accept applications from non-traditional households, the Council will consider, amongst other factors, the relationship between applicants and the demand for and availability of the property type and size required.

If accepted, both applicants will need to meet the eligibility and qualifying criteria and the priority awarded to the application will be based on the housing circumstances of the applicant in the highest priority band.

6 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

Only applicants who have been assessed as eligible and who qualify will have their housing need assessed.

6.1 Reasonable preference

The Council is required by law to determine the relative priority that housing applicants are awarded. This is particularly important as the demand for social housing is 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). Applicants with reasonable preference must be given a reasonable head-start in terms of accessing housing over those who do not have reasonable preference. Reasonable preference does not mean that applicants will have an absolute priority over all other applicants.

The statutory reasonable preference categories in section 166A(3) (a) to l of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) are:

- a) People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part VII of the 1996 Act)
- b) People who are owed a duty by any 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 housing authority under section 192(3)
- c) People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- d) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability
- e) People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).

6.2 Additional preference

The Council can grant 'additional preference' to applicants where the Council is satisfied that applicants who have been assessed as having a reasonable preference also have other exceptional or urgent housing needs.

There are special provisions for such additional preference in relation to armed forces personnel who have urgent housing needs (see section 6.4).

6.3 Other specified groups

The Council includes other local priorities alongside the statutory reasonable preference categories. Local priorities can be included providing:

- That they do not dominate the housing allocation scheme, and
- Overall, the scheme operates to give reasonable preference to those in the statutory reasonable preference categories over those who are not

THE PRIORITY BANDING SYSTEM

The Council awards each housing application a level of priority for housing using Priority Bands: A, B, C, D and E (No housing need exceptions). Applications in Band A have the highest of priority for rehousing.

6.4 Band A

The Council will place an application in this band if the applicant's circumstances fall into one or more of the following criteria:

Criteria and additional details
<p>S193(2) Main Homeless Duty</p> <p>The applicant is homeless and owed a S193(2) Main Homeless Duty because they are assessed as being in a priority need, unintentionally homeless and establish a local connection as outlined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. There are additional rules associated with this priority band (see section 8.2).</p>
<p>Hospital Discharge</p> <p>The applicant or a member of the household cannot be discharged from hospital or a rehabilitation centre because they have no accommodation, or their current accommodation has been deemed hazardous to their health and the situation cannot be rectified to enable them to continue to live there, and they are accepted by North Northamptonshire Council as being able to sustain their own independent accommodation (with or without tenancy support).</p>
<p>Severe Medical Need</p> <p>The applicant or a member of the household must have a permanent medical condition or disability AND remaining in the current property is a major and direct contributory factor to pose a severe and life-threatening risk to the member of the household. It will only apply where the current property cannot be made suitable or adapted within 3 months. It is expected that this criterion applies to those few exceptional cases only specifically where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A household member is receiving palliative care• A household member is unable to escape their current property in an emergency due to being permanently housebound <p>Households will only be considered for properties which meet all their housing needs and improve their condition / quality of life. See section 5.5 for more details regarding medical needs.</p>
<p>Armed Forces</p> <p>The applicant or a member of the household has a reasonable preference as a member of the armed forces and an urgent housing need. The definition for armed forces is set out in section 4.4. The definition of an urgent housing need for the purpose of this criteria is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serving and Former members of the Regular Armed or Reserve Forces, who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.• 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.

Risk of Harm

The applicant or a member of the household is at serious risk of harm (physical or emotional trauma) resulting from violence or threats of violence, or other abuse or serious trauma and needs to relocate to ensure their safety. This will be verified by the Police and/or other agencies as necessary. This may include a move to protect a witness of criminal acts under the National Witness Mobility Scheme. Any offer of accommodation from this criterion will have restrictions attached in terms of eligible areas to minimise any risk as far as is reasonably practical.

Category 1 Hazard

The applicant is a private sector, housing association tenant or owner occupier and North Northamptonshire Council has determined that their current accommodation poses a Category 1 Hazard (excluding overcrowding) under the Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme, the problem cannot be rectified within a reasonable period of time i.e. six months and by continuing to live there poses a significant risk to health.

Demolition

The applicant needs to move because their home is about to be demolished or redeveloped. This only applies when the demolition or redevelopment is beyond the applicant's control.

Major Repairs

The applicant is a tenant of a social or affordable rented property living in North Northamptonshire who needs to move because their accommodation needs major renovation or extensive repairs. This does not include temporary decants.

Natural Disaster

The applicant's home is uninhabitable due to flood, fire or natural disaster through no fault of the applicant and there is no prospect of the problems being remedied within a reasonable period of time i.e. six months.

Under Occupying Tenants with Medical Need

The applicant is under occupying social or affordable rented accommodation in North Northamptonshire, but also has an urgent medical need as defined within Band B criteria. Households awarded this band will only be considered for properties that offer fewer bedrooms than their current accommodation.

Releasing Adapted Property

The applicant is occupying a social or affordable rented property in North Northamptonshire that is either fully wheelchair accessible or offers a level access shower/wet room and is willing to transfer to suitable non-adapted accommodation. This band will not apply where the adaptation does not offer a realistic solution to others i.e. a level access shower in a first floor flat.

Releasing Large Family Property

The applicant is a social or affordable rented tenant under occupying a property in North Northamptonshire that offers four or more bedrooms (including 3-bedroom parlour type houses) and is willing to transfer to suitable smaller accommodation. Households awarded this band will only be considered for properties that offer fewer bedrooms than their current accommodation.

Priority Sheltered Move

The applicant is a social rented tenant living in a sheltered, supported or assisted living scheme allocated through North Northamptonshire Keyways with an urgent medical need as defined within Band B criteria, and their needs would be resolved by moving within their current sheltered/supported scheme or a similar scheme nearby.

Supported Move On (with local authority nomination rights)

The applicant is ready to move on from an approved supported accommodation provider or care in North Northamptonshire, where there is a formal arrangement in place that enables North Northamptonshire Council nomination rights to vacancies. The applicant must have been accepted as ready for independent living by a relevant support provider. This band will not apply to those applicants who do not have sufficient awareness and/or mental capacity to be able to accept and manage a tenancy and live in a reasonably independent way.

Where the supported accommodation or care is out of North Northamptonshire, this band will not apply, unless the placement in that accommodation was due to it being the only suitable specialist placement (e.g. residential care or refuge) available to meet the needs of the applicant at the time, and the applicant has a local connection to the North Northamptonshire Keyways partnership area.

Band A priority is only awarded with the documented approval of a senior housing officer.

In addition to the Band A criteria above, the Council may also award Band A status to households in emergency circumstances not covered by the priority groups above. In such exceptional circumstances, the Assistant Director of Housing and Communities or their delegated representative has discretion to determine whether an applicant has a need to move which is sufficient to warrant placing an application in Band A.

6.5 Band B

The Council will place an application in this band if the applicant's circumstances fall into one or more of the following criteria:

Criteria and additional detail

S195 Homeless Prevention Duty

The applicant is threatened with homelessness and owed a S195 Homeless Prevention Duty. The applicant is believed to be in a priority need, deemed not to have worsened their housing circumstances and establishes a local connection as outlined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. There are additional rules associated with this priority band (see section 8.2).

S189B Relief Duty

The applicant is homeless and owed a S189B Relief Duty. The applicant is believed to be in a priority need, deemed not to have worsened their housing circumstances and establishes a local connection as outlined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. There are additional rules associated with this priority band (see section 8.2).

Overcrowding

The applicant's household has been assessed as being overcrowded which is defined as requiring at least one additional bedroom based on the Council's minimum bedroom standard. The minimum bedroom standard (see section 7.2) states that a separate bedroom shall be required for the following persons:

- A single person (sole applicant)
- A married or co-habiting couple
- Two children both aged under 10 years regardless of gender
- Two children of the same gender regardless of age (unless there is a 10-year age gap AND one child is at least 16 years old)

Urgent Medical Need

The applicant or a member of the household has a permanent medical condition or disability which is seriously adversely affected by their current accommodation. This band will apply in the following circumstances for example:

- A household member requires ground floor accommodation (or a stairlift) AND requires alternative bathing facilities to that in their current accommodation
- A household member is a permanent wheelchair user and their current property is ground floor with suitable bathing facilities, however, it does not have suitable floor space, widened door frames or ramp access and the property cannot be made suitable or adapted
- A household member requires medical equipment supplied by a health authority/hospital and the current property/living conditions cannot be altered to make sufficient space (this does not include mobility scooter storage)

Households will only be considered for properties which meet all their housing needs and improve their conditions/quality of life. See section 5.5 for more details regarding medical needs.

Essential Care and Support

The applicant or a member of their household needs to give or receive essential care and support that is substantial and ongoing and that cannot be provided from or in their current accommodation. Applicants must either be in receipt of Carers Allowance or have a carer who is in receipt of Carers Allowance, or have had an assessment by social services or similar support agency, so it can be established that care and/or support is substantial / essential.

Supported Move On

The applicant is ready to move on from an approved supported accommodation provider or care in North Northamptonshire, but the local authority cannot make use of the supported accommodation that will result from the applicant moving on. The applicant must have been accepted as ready for independent living by a relevant support provider. This band will not apply to those applicants who do not have sufficient awareness and/or mental capacity to be able to accept and manage a tenancy and live in a reasonably independent way.

As well as applying to those in supported accommodation schemes and to young people leaving care who are in local authority accommodation, this band criteria also applies to vulnerable applicants who live in a supportive home environment which is not sustainable in the medium to long term, for example, a vulnerable applicant who lives with elderly parents who are their carer's.

Where the supported accommodation or care is outside North Northamptonshire, this band will not apply, unless the placement in that accommodation was due to it being the only suitable specialist placement (e.g. residential care or refuge) available to meet the needs of the applicant at the time, and the applicant has a local connection to North Northamptonshire.

Under Occupying

The applicant is under occupying a two or three bedroom social or affordable rented property in North Northamptonshire and is willing to transfer to suitable smaller accommodation. Households awarded this band will only be considered for properties that offer fewer bedrooms than their current accommodation.

Successor

The applicant is a successor or non-statutory successor of social rented accommodation, approved for an offer of alternative suitable accommodation. If after six months from the date of qualification as a successor, the applicant has not secured alternative accommodation, the Council reserves the right to bid on the applicant's behalf, or to make a direct offer, to ensure that the applicant receives one reasonable offer of accommodation within the twelve month statutory time limit.

Employment Hardship / Right to Move

The applicant or a member of the household needs to move in order to take up or continue permanent employment in North Northamptonshire for 16 hours a week or more, and to avoid hardship. Hardship as a result of employment includes commuting distance, the availability and affordability of transport and other factors such as medical conditions or childcare. A commute between home and work of 60 minutes each way is considered reasonable. The applicant's circumstances must be able to be improved to qualify under this criterion.

6.6 Band C

The Council will place an application in this band if the applicant's circumstances fall into one of the following criteria:

Criteria and additional details
<p>S195 Homeless Prevention Duty</p> <p>The applicant is threatened with homelessness and owed a S195 Homeless Prevention Duty. The applicant is believed to have no priority need, deemed not to have worsened their housing circumstances and establish a local connection as outlined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. There are additional rules associated with this priority band (see section 8.2).</p>
<p>S189B Relief Duty</p> <p>The applicant is homeless and owed a S189B Relief Duty. The applicant is believed to have no priority need, deemed not to have worsened their housing circumstances establish a</p>

local connection as outlined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. There are additional rules associated with this priority band (see section 8.2).

Non-Statutorily Homeless

The applicant has received a S184 decision finding them to be homeless but have no priority need as outlines in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

Low Level Overcrowding

The applicant's household has been assessed as having a low level of overcrowding defined as:

- Requiring an additional bedspace within a bedroom
- Having two children of the same gender sharing a bedroom and
 - There is at least a 10 year age gap between the children; or
 - One child is at least 16 years old

For the purposes of assessing overcrowding, single parents are regarded as requiring 1 bedspace and can utilise a single bedroom.

Sharing with Others (with Dependents)

The applicant's household has at least one dependent child or a pregnant woman with a confirmed due date, sharing accommodation with their family or another household and is otherwise adequately housed.

Non-Urgent Medical Need

The applicant or a member of the household must have a permanent medical condition or disability which is adversely affected by their current accommodation. The band may apply in the following circumstances:

- A household member requires either ground floor accommodation (or a stairlift) OR requires alternative bathing facilities to that available in their current accommodation
- A household member is currently receiving ongoing treatment from primary and secondary mental health services for a diagnosed mental health condition which is made worse by their current accommodation, and would be resolved by moving to alternative accommodation

Households will only be considered for properties which meet all their housing needs and improve their conditions/quality of life. See section 5.5 for more details regarding medical needs.

Ongoing Care and Support

The applicant or a member of their household needs to give or receive care and support that is ongoing and that cannot be provided from or in their current accommodation. Ongoing care and/or support does not have to be substantial in that applicants may not be in receipt of qualifying care benefits or have social services involvement. It may include practical and/or emotional support that is essential to the physical or mental wellbeing of the person receiving the care/support.

6.7 Band D

The Council will place an application in band D if the applicant's circumstances fall into one of the following criteria:

Criteria and additional details
<p>S195 Homeless Prevention Duty</p> <p>The applicant is threatened with homelessness and owed a S195 Homeless Prevention Duty but deemed to have worsened their housing circumstances and/or do not establish a local connection to North Northamptonshire as outlined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. There are additional rules associated with this priority band (see section 8.2).</p>
<p>S189B Relief Duty</p> <p>The applicant is homeless and owed a S195 Homeless Relief Duty but deemed to have worsened their housing circumstances and/or do not establish a local connection to North Northamptonshire as outlined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. There are additional rules associated with this priority band (see section 8.2).</p>
<p>Sharing with Others (without Dependents)</p> <p>The applicant (or a couple) has no dependents and is sharing accommodation with their family or another household and is otherwise adequately housed. This will also apply when applicants have experienced a relationship breakdown where a move would prevent the homelessness of any dependent children.</p>
<p>Intentionally Homeless</p> <p>The applicant has received a S184 decision finding them to be homeless but intentionally so within the definition of the Housing Act 1996, Part 7 as amended 2002.</p>

6.8 Band E

The Council will place an application in band E if the applicant's circumstances fall into one of the following criteria:

Criteria and additional details
<p>Seeking Sheltered</p> <p>The applicant and any other members of their household have no housing need but are eligible to be considered for, and are seeking, sheltered, supported or assisted living accommodation. The applicant's current housing tenure will determine which property type they are eligible for. Homeowners are exempt from bidding for sheltered bungalows and are eligible for properties in sheltered housing complexes only. See section 4.3 for further details on homeowners.</p>
<p>Local Connection to a S106/Village Exception Site</p> <p>The applicant has no housing need but establishes a local connection to a S106 or village exception site whether the connection is to the specific village where the development is located, or a surrounding co-terminus village. Local connection to such sites will be verified at the point of application and at the point of nomination.</p>

6.9 Demoting of priority band

Once we have assessed an applicant's priority for rehousing, the Council may reduce that priority if the applicant or a member of their household has done something that has deliberately made their housing circumstances worse.

The applicant's band may be reduced by one band if they have:

- Abandoned or terminated previous accommodation without securing suitable alternative accommodation first
- Sold a property or given notice on a tenancy without securing alternative accommodation first
- Accepted a property owned by a North Northamptonshire Keyways landlord which the applicant now claims is unsuitable despite there being no change to their circumstances
- Moved into accommodation which is unaffordable when being aware of the associated financial implications
- Previously had their application cancelled for failing to bid
- Been found to have deliberately disposed of assets or capital that would have enabled them to secure suitable accommodation
- Ending of any homeless duty due to a deliberate and unreasonable refusal to co-operate

There may be other circumstances where an applicant has moved to new accommodation that is 'worse' than their previous accommodation and where this appears to be without good reason. North Northamptonshire Council will consider the facts of such cases on an individual basis to determine whether an applicant's decision to move accommodation was made solely or largely in order to acquire a housing need for the purposes of securing accommodation via the housing allocation scheme. Decisions to move from suitable accommodation into accommodation that is overcrowded, insecure or lacks basic amenities for example, will be scrutinised.

When a decision is made to demote an application by one priority band, the Council will reduce the applicant's priority for a period of twelve months from the date of the decision. Applicants may ask for a review of this decision.

6.10 Effective date

The 'effective date' is used to prioritise between applicants within the same band. The 'effective date' of an application is normally the date that a complete application is accepted onto the North Northamptonshire Keyways register. If there is a change in circumstances after initial registration, then the application will be reassessed, and the applicant may:

Change in circumstances	Effective date
Gain greater priority and be placed in a higher priority band.	The date at which the higher band applies will be used
Be assessed as being in the same band.	The original effective date will be used

Lose priority due to their circumstances and be placed in a lower priority band	The original effective date will be used
Become ineligible or may no longer qualify for an allocation.	The application will be removed from the North Northamptonshire Keyways Housing Register. Applicants may reapply at a later date if circumstances change and a new effective date will then apply.

7 ALLOCATING PROPERTIES AND PROPERTY ELIGIBILITY

7.1 Statement of Choice

The Council operates a Choice Based Lettings system. To support choice, available social and affordable rented housing vacancies within the North Northamptonshire local authority area will be advertised on North Northamptonshire Keyways. Applicants are able to register a bid for properties that are deemed suitable for their needs. There are some circumstances in which this will not apply, and the Council will restrict access to bidding, make bids on behalf of an applicant, or make direct offers.

Keyways landlords are committed to offering the greatest choice possible in the allocation of social and affordable rented housing within North Northamptonshire. The amount of choice that the Council is able to offer is limited by the fact that the demand for social housing in North Northamptonshire, far outstrips supply, and the legal responsibilities owed to some groups of applicants in housing need.

The amount of choice available to applicants will also be affected by the priority given to applicants under the scheme, the type of property the applicant is eligible for, and the availability of suitable properties. The Council will offer assistance to applicants with identified support needs in using the Choice Based Lettings system.

Where an applicant is on multiple shortlists, the Council reserves the right to determine which property is offered to an applicant.

7.2 Household composition

The size and type of property for which applicants are eligible will depend on the individual household composition and needs.

If an applicant's household composition or circumstances fall outside the rules detailed in this section, a senior housing officer will determine what size and type of property the household is eligible for. Circumstances where this might apply include where there is an evidenced need for an additional bedroom on urgent medical grounds, to discharge homelessness duties and make best use of stock.

As a minimum, the applicant's household is entitled to one bedroom each for:

- A single person (sole applicant)
- A married or co-habiting couple
- Two children both aged under 10 years regardless of gender

- Two children of the same gender regardless of age (unless there is a 10-year age gap AND one child is at least 16 years old)

This is referred to as the Council’s minimum bedroom standard. Some applicants will also be eligible to bid for properties that offer an additional bedroom to the minimum entitlement detailed above, although they will receive a lower preference for this larger accommodation.

The table below explains what size properties applicants can bid for:

	Minimum bedroom entitlement	Maximum bedroom entitlement
Single person	0 (bedsit)	2
Couple	1	2
1 child	2	2
2 children	2 or 3*	3
3 children	3 or 4*	3 or 4*
4 children	3 or 4 or 5*	4 or 5*

**depending on the age and gender of the children – see rules above*

For the purposes of property eligibility, the term ‘children’ refers to both dependent and non-dependent children. Extended family members that are considered as members of the applicant household (e.g. stepsiblings, cousins) are expected to share bedrooms.

7.3 Pregnancy

Households assessed as having a housing need who are expecting their first child will only be considered for family accommodation once the pregnancy has reached its third trimester (27 weeks). Similarly, households assessed as having a housing need who are expecting a child will have their property eligibility reassessed once the pregnancy has reached its third trimester (27 weeks).

Households who are otherwise adequately housed will not incur a housing need as a result of pregnancy. An assessment of housing need will be carried out once the baby is born.

7.4 Family accommodation

Family accommodation is defined as a house, or a flat offering 2 or more bedrooms with its own garden.









Households only containing adult sons/daughters, and/or other non-dependents are not eligible to be considered for family accommodation except in exceptional circumstances, for example, they require disabled adapted accommodation and their need can only be met with an offer of adapted family accommodation, or where it is determined that the adult sons/daughters are not capable of living independently as a result of a severe learning disability and would benefit from a garden.

Where a three-bedroom property offers two reception rooms, this is referred to as a parlour-type property. Households with a minimum need for 3 or 4 bedrooms are eligible to bid for parlour-type properties. Households with a minimum 4-bedroom need can utilise the second reception room as a fourth bedroom.

Where applicants are occupying and wish to downsize from a property in high demand and/or short supply such as 3-bed parlour, 4 bed or 5 bed social / affordable rented property, they may be able to bid for properties larger than that defined in section 7.2. Such decisions will be made by a senior housing officer.

7.5 Adapted Properties

Properties advertised on North Northamptonshire Keyways may have the following adaptations:

	Full Mobility Adaptations
	Wetroom
	Level Access Shower
	Stairlift
	External Ramp
	Shower Over Bath
	Minor Adaptations
	Lift

Where a property has been adapted, the Council reserves the right to let the property directly rather than advertising on North Northamptonshire Keyways in the first instances. This is in order to make best use of specialist social housing stock.

Where an adapted property is advertised on North Northamptonshire Keyways, households with a need for all the adaptations and who will utilise all other property attributes will be identified via a filtering process first. If no household meets this criterion, the Council will filter the shortlist according to which household will make best use of the adaptations and/or other attributes (such as utilising all the bedrooms) taking into consideration band and effective date.

This may mean a household requiring a three bedroom family home is offered a three bedroom house with a wet room over a household requiring a two bedroom property with a wet room.

Properties situated on the ground floor with an adaptation will first and foremost be offered to households requiring ground floor accommodation due to a disability.

7.6 Bungalows

General need bungalows (not sheltered accommodation) offering no adaptations have a minimum age preference of 60 years of age applied in the first instance. Such properties will be allocated in the following order:

1. Households over 60 years of age with a ground floor need
2. Households of any age with a ground floor need
3. Households over 60 without a ground floor need

General need bungalows (not sheltered accommodation) **offering disabled adaptations** will be allocated in the following order:

1. Households of any age with a ground floor need requiring adaptations
2. Households over 60 years of age with a ground floor need
3. Households of any age with a ground floor need
4. Households over 60 without a ground floor need

Where there are joint applicants, the minimum age preference of 60 years referred to in this section need only apply to one applicant. For example, if an application is received from a couple with one individual aged under 60 years and one individual over 60 years, these joint applicants will be eligible to receive a preference for general need bungalows as described in this section.

7.7 Sheltered accommodation

Sheltered accommodation is usually only available to older people with a support need. Dependent on the sheltered scheme the advert may stipulate an age criterion. While sheltered housing provides some support, it is not suitable for people with high care and support needs. Sheltered housing is a form of independent living, so residents must be able to leave the building unaided in the event of an emergency.

Depending on an applicant's circumstances, some applicants such as homeowners and those with no housing need are restricted to bidding for properties in sheltered housing complexes only. See sections 4.3 and 6.8 for more information.

Applicants who bid for sheltered accommodation will be subject to further eligibility assessments conducted by the specific landlord / provider if they are nominated for sheltered accommodation. This is to check factors such as support needs, suitability and risk issues in line with the individual provider's policies. Landlords of sheltered accommodation reserve the right to refuse nominations if their criteria are not met – see section 8.3 for more information.

7.8 Not offering a tenancy to the highest bidder

The Council has discretion not to offer a tenancy to the highest bidder for advertised properties when taking all circumstances into account. This discretion may be exercised when the

Council decides that it would not be in the interest of the applicant, another party or the good management of the housing stock to do so. Examples where this may happen include:

- Where there is a history of domestic abuse and the property is deemed by the Council to be too close to the perpetrator so as not to resolve the applicant's housing need
- Where the Council deems there to be implications for community safety as defined in section 4.10
- Where the applicant cannot access or adequately use the property because of mobility problems, in particular where their health and safety would be endangered
- Where on completion of a financial assessment, the North Northamptonshire Keyways landlord and Council has determined that the property would be unaffordable to the applicant
- Where an offer of accommodation would be counter to an applicant's stated housing need. For example, where an applicant is awarded priority due to a need to move to a particular area to provide / receive care and support, they will not be considered for areas that do not resolve this housing need
- Where an applicant's individual support needs are such that they are likely to severely impact upon other residents in a housing scheme and affect a landlord's ability to manage the applicant's needs / risk within that scheme.

7.9 Direct offers

In some circumstances, the Council will not advertise available properties on North Northamptonshire Keyways. Instead, a direct offer of accommodation may be made to an applicant. Any direct offer will constitute a formal and suitable offer, and if refused will be subject to the same sanctions for refusal as set out in section 8.4.

Decisions regarding direct offers will be made by two senior housing officers. A senior housing officer is defined in the glossary.

The circumstances in which direct offers may be made include:

- Where the Council considers that it is inappropriate for the applicant to participate in choice-based lettings. For example, applicants who are placed in North Northamptonshire through the National Witness Mobility Scheme or are subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA). In these cases, applicants are considered on a case by case basis, and the full range of housing options will be considered;
- Where the Council makes a direct offer by way of discharging a housing duty. This may include but is not limited to statutory homeless households.
- Where it is necessary for the Council or a Keyways landlord to move (decant) one of its tenants on a permanent basis in order to carry out major modernisation or rehabilitation works to the property.
- Where it is necessary for the Council to provide an alternative property to a successor tenant within the 12-month statutory time limit.
- Where a joint social tenant has given notice to quit, and the property is suitable for the remaining tenant to continue to occupy and this allocation is supported by the landlord.
- Where the property offers a specialist housing solution and/or is in particularly short supply e.g. large properties / disabled adapted properties
- In cases where North Northamptonshire Council or a Keyways landlord requests an urgent move due to serious antisocial behaviour issues that cannot be resolved via any other housing management intervention

- Where the Council considers it necessary to suspend choice-based lettings for a period of time, for example due to a public health emergency or another similarly significant event. Such decisions will be taken by the Assistant Director of Housing and Communities, or an officer of equivalent or higher seniority within the Corporate Leadership team.
- Any other circumstance that enables the Council to make best use of housing stock and/or to respond to emerging local housing needs

7.10 Local Lettings Policies

North Northamptonshire Council may from time to time agree a local lettings policy for specific areas or developments to reflect local circumstances. Local lettings policies allow the Council to support particular communities to become or remain safe, cohesive communities where people want to live.

The Council may also use a local lettings policy to support people who contribute to their communities such as people in employment, to encourage working people to move to particular areas, or to encourage people who contribute to their local community through volunteering.

Some local lettings policies giving a preference to residents with a local connection to a specific town or village may also be applied. This is usually because there is a legal requirement to do so as a result of the original planning consent for the property. Advertisements for these properties will highlight that preference will be given to applicants who fulfil the criteria set out in the legal agreement.

For existing communities, any local lettings policy will be drawn up in consultation with existing tenants and residents, and will have regard to housing management considerations such as the social mix of tenants, density, age range, vulnerability of tenants, for example, because of insufficient facilities for vulnerable people, as well as community stability.

Once implemented, local lettings policies will remain in force for a fixed period specified within the policy. Upon expiry, the allocation of properties in the area will be made in accordance with the normal housing allocation scheme, unless there is an evidenced need for a further local lettings policy.

Any local lettings policies in place will be advertised in the property advert on North Northamptonshire Keyways. Please see the North Northamptonshire Keyways website www.keyways.org.uk for current local lettings policies applicable in North Northamptonshire.

Community Contribution

Some local lettings policies stipulate that a proportion of allocations must be made to applicants who satisfy the Council's community contribution criterion. This includes people who play a part in making their neighbourhood a good place to live, work and play. The Council believes such people should be allocated social housing so that they can continue contributing to their sustainment of their local communities. For the purpose of this section 'applicants' means the main and/or joint applicant on an application and not any other household member.

To qualify for the community contribution criterion, applicants must:

1) Have a current positive residence history

A positive residence history is defined as:

- No on-going culpable involvement in anti-social behaviour or criminal activities.
- No breaches of tenancy within the last three years
- No recoverable housing related debt
- Having no outstanding unspent convictions

AND

2) Contribute to the economic growth, or make another valuable contribution in their community

A contribution to economic growth / community includes although is not limited to:

- Working households
- Volunteers
- Applicants in training or education
- Armed Forces
- Registered foster carers
- People with disabilities and older residents

Additional information on each of the categories above and associated minimum requirements is available upon request.

7.11 Property advert details

To help applicants choose the properties that would best suit their needs, North Northamptonshire Council will advertise all properties with information on size, location and property features. The adverts will also include:

- At least one image of the front of the property
- Which North Northamptonshire Keyways landlord owns the property
- Weekly rent and any other applicable charges
- If known, an estimated date that the property will be available to move in to
- The closing date for applicants to express an interest
- Other available information such as the type of heating supply, adaptations, number of steps leading to the property, priority floor level and restrictions on pets
- Whether a local lettings policy is applicable

At times, similar properties may be grouped together and advertised with one property identification number. In these cases, applicants only have to express an interest once to cover all the properties grouped within the adverts. This may happen when advertising a new build development which includes a number of the same size and type of property.

8 MANAGEMENT OF SCHEME

8.1 Bidding and Autobidding

Most applicants on the Keyways housing register are entitled to select which properties they will bid for. However, applicants are expected to place bids regularly. If bids have not been placed within a six-month period and suitable properties have been advertised during this time, their housing application may be closed.

Band A applicants

Applicants awarded Band A priority will receive additional support to ensure a timely resolution of their emergency housing needs. All applications accepted as Band A have their choice removed and are placed onto Autobid (note additional duties owed to homeless households detailed in Section 8.2).

Autobid means that the North Northamptonshire Keyways system software will place bids on an applicant's behalf. The system places bids on suitable properties which provide the best possible chance of a nomination i.e. the best queue position as at the end of the bidding cycle. Autobids are placed at one-minute past midnight at the end of the bidding cycle once all other bids have been placed.

In order to inform the autobid process, Band A applicants may be required to provide additional evidence to ensure that the autobid functionality is able to provide a suitable accommodation offer in terms of property attributes and geographical area.

Any successful bid will be classed as a formal offer of accommodation and the refusal sanctions set out in section 8.4 will apply.

The table below summarises the bidding mechanism and number of bids that different categories of applicants are entitled to:

Band and criteria	Bidding mechanism	Number of bids per cycle
Band A, B, C and D where a Statutory homeless duty is owed (main duty, prevention and relief duties)	Autobid (no choice)	Up to 5
Band A where a statutory homeless duty is not owed	Autobid (no choice)	Up to 3
Bands B, C, D and E where no statutory homeless duty is owed	Manual bidding - Choice	Up to 3

8.2 Households owed a Homeless Duty

The Localism Act 2011 and Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 permit North Northamptonshire Council to end any homeless duty by providing one offer of suitable accommodation of any tenure to homeless households. This includes a Private Rented Sector offer which complies with the Suitability of Accommodation Order 2012 (S193(7F)) and a PRSO under Relief - s.193(7AA)(a).

All applications accepted as being owed a homeless duty have their choice removed and are placed onto 'autobid'. This is to ensure the Council prevents and relieves homelessness where possible at the earliest opportunity.

If an applicant believes any final offer to be unsuitable, they are entitled to ask for a review. The applicant may ask for a review whether or not they accept the final offer of accommodation, but the Council may require the household to vacate any temporary accommodation provided whilst the review is conducted. Any applicant considering refusing a final offer should first discuss this with a Housing Options Advisor.

When reviewing a final offer and before making a final decision, the Council will check that:

- The property is the right size and type for the applicant's household
- The property is safe for the applicant's household to live in
- The property is affordable for the applicant
- Consideration has been given to the location of the property
- Consideration has been given to any special needs the applicant and their household members may have
- Consideration is given to any other relevant circumstances that the applicant has told the Council about

A failure to engage in the nomination, viewing, or verification process which results in a property offer being withdrawn, will be regarded as an implied refusal of a final offer.

Applicants owed a statutory homeless duty (main duty, prevention duty or relief duty) will receive up to five autobids per cycle whilst all other households will receive three bids.

Where applicants may be successful on more than one property shortlist the Housing Options team will determine which property will constitute the applicant's final offer. This is likely to be based on the individual circumstances of the applicant, which property is ready to let soonest and/or a decision that allows the council to maximise the number of allocations to homeless households in that cycle

8.3 Offers

If applicants are successful with a bid they will be contacted by the North Northamptonshire Keyways team directly. If the Council is unable to contact an applicant within 24 hours they will no longer be considered for the property and will be bypassed on the shortlist.

If an applicant verbally accepts the offer, the North Northamptonshire Keyways landlord that owns the property will then contact the successful applicant with details of the potential offer. Each North Northamptonshire Keyways landlord may have a different process that they follow.

All North Northamptonshire Keyways landlords reserve the right to:

- Request suitable identification for all household members
- Carry out checks on the information the applicants have provided as part of the North Northamptonshire Keyways application. Usual checks include whether the applicants have rent arrears or criminal convictions. If the applicant's circumstances have changed and they did not inform the Council of the change(s), they may not receive an offer until the changes have been fully assessed
- Withdraw an offer if checks reveal issues that are not included in the North Northamptonshire Keyways application
- Withdraw an offer of sheltered accommodation if an applicant does not meet the landlord's own eligibility criteria
- Withdraw an offer if a notice to vacate a property is withdrawn or the property becomes unavailable for letting
- Withdraw an offer if verification checks confirm that the applicant(s) would be a non-qualifying person
- Carry out a financial assessment of the household to establish if the rental payments will be affordable

- Withdraw an offer if, following a financial assessment, it is established that the household cannot afford the required rental payments
- Carry out a property inspection of the household's current home
- Withdraw an offer if the applicant has failed a property inspection
- Withdraw a property from advertisement if advertised incorrectly
- Request up to 4 weeks rent in advance
- Request rent payments are paid by direct debit only
- Request the applicant(s) complete a tenancy workshop / pre-tenancy training or equivalent

Applicants must tell the North Northamptonshire Keyways landlords whether they wish to accept an offer of a tenancy. The time limit for responding to offers may differ between landlords. If the applicant does not contact the landlord or the Housing Options Team within the timescale given, the Council will assume that the applicant does not wish to accept the tenancy and the offer will be withdrawn.

8.4 Refusals

There are special suitability/refusal rules that apply to applicants where the Council has accepted a homeless duty (see Section 8.2).

All other applicants are entitled to:

- place up to three bids per bidding cycle
- refuse one suitable offer of accommodation without any sanctions

Applicants who refuse two offers of suitable accommodation within any 12-month period will fail to qualify for the North Northamptonshire Keyways register. For the purposes of this scheme, an offer of accommodation can include a formal written offer of accommodation from a North Northamptonshire Keyways landlord or a verbal offer of a nomination from the North Northamptonshire Keyways /Housing Options team. In the case of joint applications, the main or joint applicant can refuse the offer, and this will constitute as a refusal (i.e. agreement of both is not required).

A failure to engage in the nomination, viewing, or verification process which results in a property offer being withdrawn, will be regarded as a refusal for the purposes of this section, albeit an implied refusal.

All applicants that refuse their final offer of accommodation will not qualify for the North Northamptonshire Keyways register for a period of 12 months. The Council may consider a re-application within the 12 month non-qualifying period if there has been a significant change in their circumstances through no fault of their own which adversely affects the household or would otherwise result in the Keyways band increasing.

8.5 Landlord Rejection

In some circumstances Keyways landlords may refuse to offer a tenancy to a nominated applicant in accordance with their own policies. If a Keyways landlord rejects an applicant they will inform the applicant in writing how they have reached decision and if the applicant wishes this to be reviewed, the applicant or their representative must make a written request directly to the landlord concerned within 21 days of receipt of the decision. Contact details can be found in Appendix C.

9 THE APPLICANTS RIGHT TO A REVIEW

The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, gives applicants the right to ask for a review if the Council decides not to allow the applicant to join the North Northamptonshire Keyways register or makes any decision that affects their housing application.

Any applicants who believe they meet an alternative band must initially submit a banding enquiry in writing explaining the reasons they believe they meet an alternative band. This will be initially reassessed by an officer senior to that of the original decision maker. If the applicant remains unsatisfied with the decision, they will have a right to a review.

9.1 To request a review of the outcome of a North Northamptonshire Keyways application

The applicant, or the applicant's representative, must make a request to a Senior Housing Officer at North Northamptonshire Council in writing within 21 days of receiving a written decision. The applicant, or the applicant's representative, may give the reasons for requesting a review in person, if it is difficult to tell the Council these reasons in writing.

9.2 The decision about a review

A Senior Housing Officer will review the decision and consider the reasons for the review being requested. A decision on the review will be based on the known facts at the time of the review. In some cases, a Senior Housing Officer may need to request more information from the applicant in order to inform a decision which will be made in line with the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

A Senior Housing Officer will provide the applicant with written confirmation of the outcome of the review and reasons for the decision within eight weeks of the request for the review. A longer period may be agreed with the applicant.

The Council's decision on review is final and can only be challenged by way of a judicial review.

9.3 To request a review of a North Northamptonshire Keyways landlord rejection of a nomination

In some circumstances, North Northamptonshire Keyways landlords may refuse applicants the offer of a tenancy. Reasons for this may include if an applicant fails the verification checks or it is demonstrated that the applicant cannot afford the rental payments following a financial assessment conducted by the landlord. If an applicant wishes for this decision to be reviewed, the applicant or the applicant's representative must make the request in writing direct to the given North Northamptonshire Keyways landlord within 21 days of receiving their written decision.

9.4 Compliments, Comments and Complaints

Applicants who wish to give a compliment, comment or complain about North Northamptonshire Council or the Keyways scheme can do this by contacting North Northamptonshire Council. Applicants who wish to make a compliment, comment or complaint about any partner North Northamptonshire Keyways landlord should contact them directly – contact details are provided in Appendix C.

North Northamptonshire Council's Customer Compliments, Comments and Complaints policy which is available at www.northnorthants.gov.uk/your-council/comments-compliments-and-complaints.

Applicants who remain unhappy can make a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman or the Independent Housing Ombudsman. They are independent services run by central government to make sure that local authorities and housing providers provide a certain standard of service to their customers (see below for contact details).

- The Local Government Ombudsman for complaints about councils

Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

- The Independent Housing Ombudsman for complaints about Registered Providers (RPs)

Housing Ombudsman Service
Exchange Tower
Harbour Exchange Square
London
E14 9GE

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

10 GENERAL PROVISIONS

10.1 Data Protection and Information Sharing

The General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (known as information legislation) provide a statutory framework which sets out the responsibilities of the Council as a data controller when it is collecting and processing applicants' personal data. It also defines applicants' rights in relation to their data and provides them with control over how their information is used in various circumstances.

North Northamptonshire Council will, through appropriate management, ensure compliance with information legislation, the Housing Act (1996), and the Council's Privacy and Data Protection Policies. More information on North Northamptonshire Council's data protection and privacy policies can be found at www.northnorthants.gov.uk/your-council. The Council will process applicants' data within the confines of the law and will only share applicants' data where there is a lawful basis to do so.

Below are the seven key data protection principles that will be followed when processing personal data. Applicants' personal information will be:

1. Processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner

2. Collected for a specified, explicit and legitimate purpose and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with that purpose
3. Adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary
4. Accurate and kept up to date
5. Not kept for longer than is necessary
6. Processed securely, using technical and organisation measures
7. The Council will demonstrate accountability with principle 1

The information that the Council collects from applicant's, together with information that is gathered from third parties during an application will be used to assess and administer a request for housing. Applicants' information may also be used for other purposes where the law permits such as those relating to child protection, public protection, and preventing and/or detecting fraud or other criminal activities. The privacy notice for the Keyways housing register can be found on the Council's website at www.northnorthants.gov.uk/service-privacy-notice.

Applicants have the right to access their personal data processed by the Council including electronic and hard copy files. Applicant's personal data is information that relates to an applicant as an identifiable individual. Personal data can be accessed by contacting the Council's Information Governance Team on 0300 126 3000.

10.2 Fraudulent Activity and withholding Information

Applicants must supply full information about their circumstances and must provide supporting evidence where required to do so. It is a criminal offence for applicants and/or anyone providing information in relation to this scheme to knowingly or recklessly make false statements or knowingly withhold reasonably requested information relevant to their application (section 171, Housing Act 1996). An offence is also committed if a third party provides false information whether or not on the instigation of the applicant. This would apply at any stage of the application process.

Where there is suspicion or an allegation that a person has either provided false information or has withheld information, the application will be excluded from being considered for offers during the investigation and until an outcome is reached.

In addition, the Council reserves the right to take legal action including prosecution under any relevant legislation including fraud where it possesses the evidence. If the outcome of any investigation is that an applicant did not provide false information or did not withhold information or was not found to be withheld knowingly, then the application will be reinstated from the date of registration, meaning the relevant applicant should not suffer prejudice.

If the Council determines that an applicant directly, or through a person acting on his or her behalf, has given false information or withheld required information it may result in an applicant being disqualified from an allocation.

Ground 5 in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the 1996 Act, S146) enables the landlord to seek possession of a property where it has been granted as a result of a false statement by either the tenant or a person acting at the tenant's instigation. Where this is the case the Council will actively pursue recovery of possession.

10.3 Councillors, board members, employees and their close relatives

Councillors, board members and employees of North Northamptonshire Council, partner North Northamptonshire Keyways landlords and their close relatives, can apply to the North Northamptonshire Keyways Housing Register. However, applicants must make their position

or relationship with the Council or with the North Northamptonshire Keyways landlord known at the point of application. If the applicant does not do this and it is discovered later that such a relationship exists, the application/tenancy may be adversely affected. Applicants who declare an interest will neither be advantaged nor disadvantaged.

10.4 Equality and Diversity

North Northamptonshire Council and partner landlords are committed to promoting equality of opportunity in housing services. We aim to implement, maintain and deliver quality services which ensure that no potential or current applicant is treated less favourably on the grounds of gender, marital status, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, age or sexual orientation, nor is disadvantaged by the application of a rule, condition, or requirement, which has a discriminatory effect which cannot be justified by law. Allocations will only be made to those persons who are eligible. The policy fully complies with the Equality Act 2010 and an Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is available to view on the Council's website. For more information on North Northamptonshire Council's Equalities policy and scheme, please visit www.northnorthants.gov.uk/your-council.

10.5 Monitoring of the scheme

The Council recognises that it is important for applicants for housing and the wider community to understand how social housing is allocated and who is getting social housing. Therefore, information on the Housing Register and lettings outcomes will be published and made available on the North Northamptonshire Keyways website.

The Council will also regularly monitor to ensure that the scheme remains relevant and continues to prioritise the allocation of affordable rented housing to those people in the most need. Reviews of this policy will be undertaken by the Council annually in response to any policy issues identified and/or changes in legislation / national guidance.

APPENDIX A: PROPERTY ELIGIBILITY TABLE

Please note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a household's circumstances do not fit any of the criteria outlined in this matrix, a senior housing officer will decide what size and type of property the household is eligible for Applicants bidding for a property with more bedrooms than their minimum need will receive a reduced preference Applicants that will be under-occupying any property defined in this matrix can be refused on the grounds of affordability. See section 5.4 for further information Whilst households expecting their first child can bid for family accommodation, this will only apply from the third trimester of the pregnancy (27 weeks). See section 7.3 for further information Bungalows may have additional age or disabled adaption eligibility restrictions. See section 7.6 for further information 	Bedsit	1 bedroom bungalow	1 bedroom flat	1 bedroom house	2 bedroom bungalow	2 bedroom flat (no garden)	2 bedroom flat (with garden)	2 bedroom house	3 bedroom bungalow	3 bedroom flat/maisonette	3 bedroom house	3 bedroom parlour house	4 bedroom house	4 bedroom flat/maisonette	5 bedroom house
Single person	X	X	X	X	X	X									
Couple without children	X	X	X	X	X	X									
Household expecting first child					X	X	X	X							
Household with 1 child					X	X	X	X							
Household with 2 children					X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Household with 3 children									X	X	X	X	X	X	
Household with 4 children									X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Household with 5 or more children												X	X	X	X

APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY

Adaptations	Adjustments to a property to assist a disabled member of the household access the property or facilities such as a stair lift, wet room, level access shower or ramp.
Affordable Rent	Rented housing let by Registered Providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social housing. Affordable Rent is not subject to the national rent regime but is subject to other rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent.
Applicant	A person who applies to go on the North Northamptonshire Keyways housing register.
Autobid	Homeless households and Band A applicants are placed on Autobid. Autobid means that the North Northamptonshire Keyways system software will place bids on suitable properties which provide the best possible chance of a nomination i.e. the best queue position as at the end of the bidding cycle. Auto bids are placed at one-minute past midnight at the end of the bidding cycle.
Band	The Council categorises North Northamptonshire Keyways applications into one of five bands which reflect the level of priority for housing. These bands are A, B, C, D and E. Applications in Band A have the highest level of priority.
Bid	The term used when an applicant expresses an interest in a property advertised on North Northamptonshire Keyways.
Choice based lettings	A scheme like North Northamptonshire Keyways that allows applicants to express a choice about where they want to live from within their eligible properties.
Co-terminus village	A term to describe a group of villages that are usually located in close proximity. The allocation of properties on some rural housing developments are governed by legal agreements which may stipulate that housing must be allocated to households with a connection to that village or surrounding (co-terminus) villages. Earls Barton and Great Doddington are examples of co-terminus villages, as are The Harrowdens, Oringbury, Hardwick and the Irchester's.
Decant	The term used to describe the process whereby a tenant of one of the scheme's partner landlords has to temporarily move out of their home into another property to enable the landlord to complete essential repairs / maintenance to the property.
Declaration form	The main and joint applicant (if applicable) must sign this in order to show their understanding and acceptance to adhere to the North Northamptonshire Keyways Allocations Policy. It also provides the local authority permission to make further checks in order to fully assess the application.
Effective date	The date at which a North Northamptonshire Keyways application is registered or escalated into a higher band.

Eligibility	Eligibility determines who is eligible to join the North Northamptonshire Keyways register under the provisions of the Housing Act 1996 and related legislation. A person who is not eligible will not be able to join the register, or to bid for properties.
Feedback	An applicant's personal bid history will be available for them to view when they log into their account on the North Northamptonshire Keyways website.
Fixed Term Tenancy	A type of tenancy granted by social landlords that are for a fixed length of time, usually five years.
Habitual residence test	The test looks at whether the applicant's residence in the United Kingdom is of a settled nature. For example, it looks at the length and continuity of residence, work/work prospects or family ties.
Housing allocation scheme	This explains the rules that determine how North Northamptonshire Council and the North Northamptonshire Keyways landlords in North Northants allocate social housing properties.
Intermediate Housing	Housing at below market price. These can include shared equity products (e.g. HomeBuy/Shared Ownership) and other low-cost homes for sale.
Keyways Nomination Agreement	An agreement that North Northamptonshire Council has with some Housing Associations (Registered Providers) that stipulates the proportion of lettings to be made through the North Northamptonshire Keyways housing allocation scheme.
Keyways Landlord	The term for a social landlord with housing stock in North Northamptonshire that advertises vacancies on the Keyways allocation system. This term includes North Northamptonshire Council and Housing Association's (also known as Registered Providers).
Letting / Bidding cycle	New properties will be advertised each week from 00:01am on a Thursday to 23.59pm on a Tuesday. There are no social/affordable properties advertised on a Wednesday with an exception of 'any time' adverts (see section 5.2).
MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements)	The framework which joins up agencies, including Probation, the Prison Service and local housing authorities, tasked with the management of offenders who pose a serious risk of harm to the public.
Mutual exchange	A swap of accommodation between two social housing tenants. The two households swap homes and each move permanently into the other tenant's property.
Non-statutorily homeless	A term that refers to homeless people or households to whom local housing authorities do not have a legal duty to make an offer of settled housing.
Nomination	The term used when a local housing authority provides from its housing register, the name and details of an applicant to a landlord for an offer of housing.

Prevention Duty	A duty owed to households who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days.
Rechargeable repairs	This is damage caused by a tenant or their family or visitors) or arising as a result of negligence to a property during a tenancy.
Registered Provider (RP)	A housing association or a not-for-profit company registered by the Homes and Communities Agency to provide social or affordable housing.
Relief Duty	A duty owed to households where they are within the first 56 days of having become homeless.
Right to Move	Government statutory guidance from March 2015 enabling social tenants that are employed, or have an offer of employment, and need to move to avoid hardship to (a) establish a local connection, and (b) receive a level of priority for rehousing.
Qualifying Person	A local housing authority can decide what classes of persons are, or are not, qualifying persons for joining the North Northamptonshire Keyways register. Only qualifying persons are permitted to join the housing register.
Queue position	When placing a bid, North Northamptonshire Keyways will calculate an applicant's position in the shortlist as at the time of the bid. This can alter (go up or down) throughout the letting cycle (Thursday-Tuesday). The higher up the shortlist for the property an applicant is, the more likelihood there is of that applicant being allocated it. On occasion, an advert will specify if there is a preference criterion therefore the queue position may be affected. i.e. adapted properties will be offered to those requiring the adaptations in the first instance.
Senior Housing Officer	An officer that manages a North Northamptonshire Keyways team or an officer of an equivalent or more senior level
Sheltered housing	Usually housing for older people with a support need.
Shortlist	A list of those applicants that have expressed an interest in a particular property advertised on North Northamptonshire Keyways.
Skipped	Term used when an applicant has bid on a property and been bypassed. Reasons for being bypassed may include but are not limited to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The property is unsuitable for the applicants needs • Enquiries reveal a change in circumstances including housing related debt owed • Local lettings policy or priority criteria apply i.e. preference offered to specific groups of applicants • Adaptations suitable for disabled clients
Social housing	Housing owned by a local authority (council) or Housing Association (Registered Provider) and rented to tenants at rents restricted by national rent controls.

<p>Statutorily Homeless / Main Homeless duty</p>	<p>A term that refers to people or families to whom a local housing authority has a duty to make an offer of settled housing.</p>
<p>Succession of tenancy</p>	<p>When a secure tenant dies, the tenancy will automatically pass to their spouse, civil partner, or other partner living as though they were a spouse or civil partner. Some tenancy agreements include the provision for other family members to succeed to a tenancy on the death of the tenant. These rights vary between different landlords, depending on what the tenancy agreement says. Anyone who takes over the tenancy in this way is called a successor. Any permission to succeed should be formally confirmed by the landlord.</p>

APPENDIX C: CONTACT DETAILS

North Northamptonshire Council

Sheerness House
41 Meadow Road
Kettering
NN16 8TL

Telephone: 0300 126 300

Website: www.northnorthants.gov.uk

North Northamptonshire Council local offices are currently situated in the areas of Corby, East Northants, Kettering and Wellingborough:

CORBY

One Stop Shop

The Corby Cube
Parkland Gateway
Corby
Northamptonshire
NN17 1QG

EAST NORTHANTS

Homes Direct

50 High Street South
Rushden
Northamptonshire
NN10 0QX

Tel: 0345 600 5050

nominations@midlandheart.org.uk

KETTERING

Municipal Offices
Bowling Green Road
Kettering
Northamptonshire
NN15 7QX

WELLINGBOROUGH

Swanspool House
Doddington Road
Wellingborough
Northants
NN8 1BP

Registered Providers Advertising Properties on North Northamptonshire Keyways

ABBNEYFIELD SOCIETY

St. Peter's House
2 Bricket Road
St. Albans
Herts
AL1 3JW

01727 857536

www.abbeyfield.com

ACCENT HOUSING

Manor House
57 Lincoln Road
Peterborough
PE1 2RR

01733 295400

www.accentgroup.org

ANCHOR HANOVER

The Heal's Building
Suites A and B
Third Floor
22-24 Torrington Place
LONDON
WC1E 7HJ

0330 4331111

www.anchorhanover.org.uk

BEDFORDSHIRE PILGRIM HOUSING ASSOCIATION (BPHA)

Bedford heights
Manton Lane
Bedford
MK41 7BJ

0330 100 0272

www.bpha.org.uk

CROSS KEYS HOMES

Shrewsbury Avenue
Peterborough
Cambridgeshire
PE2 7BZ

01733 385000

www.crosskeyshomes.co.uk

EAST MIDLANDS HOUSING ASSOCIATION

1 Barton Close
Grove Park
Enderby
Leicestershire
LE19 1SJ

0300 123 6000

www.emhhomes.org.uk

GRAND UNION HOUSING GROUP (GUHG)

K2

Timbold Drive
Kents Hill
Milton Keynes
MK7 6BZ

0300 123 5544

www.guhg.co.uk

GREATWELL HOMES

12 Sheep Street
Wellingborough
Northamptonshire
NN8 1BL

01933 234450

www.greatwellhomes.org.uk

THE GUINNESS PARTNERSHIP

30 Brock Street
Regent's Place
London
NW1 3FG

0303 123 1890

www.guinnesspartnership.com

HOME GROUP

2 Gosforth Park Way
Newcastle Upon Tyne
Tyne and Wear
NE12 8ET

0845 155 1234

www.homegroup.org.uk

HOUSING 21

Tricorn House
51-53 Hagley Road
Birmingham
B16 8TP

0370 192 4000

www.housing21.co.uk

HYDE HOUSING

Jubilee House
92 Lincoln Road
Peterborough
PE1 2SN

0800 328 2282

www.hyde-housing.co.uk

LONGHURST GROUP

1 Crown Court
Crown Way, Rushden
Northamptonshire
NN10 6BS

0300 123 1745

www.longhurst-group.org.uk

MASONIC HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Masonic Housing Association
c/o Eldon Housing Association
2nd Floor North Wing
Legion House, 73 Lower Road
Kenley
Surrey
CR8 5NH

020 8668 9861

www.masonichousing.co.uk

METROPOLITAN THAMES VALLEY HOUSING (MTVH)

The Grange
100 High Street
Southgate
London, N14 9PW

020 3535 3535

www.mtvh.co.uk

MIDLAND HEART HOUSING ASSOCIATION

20 Bath Row
Birmingham
B15 1LZ

0345 602 0540

www.midlandheart.org.uk

NCHA

Camberley Court
Bulwell
Nottingham
NG6 8GE

0800 013 8555

www.ncha.org.uk

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE RURAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Whitwick Business Centre
Stenson Road
Coalville
Leicestershire
LE67 4JP

0330 123 4009

www.northamptonshirerha.org.uk

OPTIVO

Building 1060
Cornforth Drive
Kent Science Park
Sittingbourne
ME9 8PX

0800 121 60 60
www.optivo.org.uk

ORBIT GROUP

Garden Court,
Harry Weston Road,
Binley Business Park,
Binley,
Coventry,
CV3 2SU

0800 678 1221
www.orbitcustomerhub.org.uk

PA HOUSING GROUP

3 Bede Island Road
Leicester
LE2 7EA

0300 123 2221
www.pahousing.co.uk

PLACES FOR PEOPLE GROUP

PO Box 2070
Preston
PR5 9BY

01772 667002
www.placesforpeople.co.uk

PLATFORM HOUSING GROUP

1700 Solihull Parkway
Birmingham Business Parkway
Solihull
B37 7YD

0333 200 7304
www.platformhgeast.com

RIVERSIDE

49 Western Boulevard
Leicester
LE2 7HN

0845 111 0000
www.riverside.org.uk

SANCTUARY HOUSING ASSOCIATION

164 Birmingham Road
West Bromwich

B70 6QG

0800 131 3348

www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk

STONEWATER

Suite C, Lancaster House

Grange Business Park

Enderby Road

Whetstone

Leicester

LE8 6EP

01202 319119

www.stonewater.org