



Housing Allocation Policy

How we allocate housing

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Section 1 **Introduction**

The way we allocate our properties can be complicated and confusing. This booklet should help you through the application process and help you understand how we select people for housing.

Section 2 **The allocation scheme**

Why do you have an allocations scheme?

Every year, many people ask us for help with housing. We can't offer a home to everyone who asks for help so we have a system for deciding who to give properties to. In some parts of the district we only have a small number of properties and these are in high demand, which can mean long waiting times.

The Government issues guidelines which tell us which groups of people should receive some priority on our housing register. We follow these guidelines when we write our allocations policy.

We keep the details of everyone who applies on our housing register which is held on computer.

Can anyone apply to the housing register?

Anyone aged 16 or over can apply to join the housing register. You do not need to live in the West Lancashire area to apply.

We will assess your circumstances from the information you have provided on your form and place your application in the most appropriate band. For further information see the booklet 'a guide to the banding scheme'.

If you are 16 or 17 years old, you will be referred to a support service to help you when you first move into your home. This service will help you work out how best to manage your money and make sure you understand the responsibilities of being a tenant. If you refuse to co-operate with the service, we may refuse to offer you a tenancy until you are 18.

Non UK citizens

If you are not a UK citizen, you may not be eligible to apply for a Council property. There are different rules depending on which country you are from. Once you have applied to join the register, we will assess your application and tell you if your application can be accepted.

Unacceptable behaviour

We can also refuse to accept you onto the register if you or a member of your household has been responsible for unacceptable behaviour. Your application will be assessed and if you are excluded from the register, you will have the right to appeal.

If your behaviour is not serious enough to exclude you from the register but we think you are not suitable to be a tenant, we may reduce the priority awarded to you on the housing register.

Rent arrears

If you have rent arrears of more than £1000 your application will not be accepted.

If the amount owed is less than £1000 but more than £100, your application will be placed in band D until you have kept to a payment plan.

The table below shows how the payment plan works.

Amount Owed	Length of time you must pay for
£0- £100	Application will be accepted and placed in the most relevant band based on your circumstances
£101 - £250	Application will not be approved and placed in band D until payments have been made for 2 months
£251 - £500	Application will not be approved and placed in band D until payments have been made for 3 months
£501 - £1000	Application will not be approved and placed in band D until the amount owed has been reduced to £500 and then additional payments made for 3 months
£1001 +	Applications will not be accepted where more than £1000 is owed. Once the arrears have been reduced to under £1000 an application can be made which will be left unapproved and placed in band D until the debt has been reduced to under £500 and additional payments have been made for 3 months

Once you have kept to the agreed payment plan, your application will be approved and placed in the most appropriate band. You must continue with the payment plan until all the arrears have been cleared. If you stop paying at any time, your application will be cancelled.

Section 3 How do I apply?

You can collect a housing application from one of our customer service points, download one from the Council's website or by phoning the housing options team.

You will need to attach a suitable reference. The reference can be from a current or previous landlord, a current or previous employer or teacher. The reference cannot be from a family member.

What type of property can I apply for?

You can ask to be listed for any type of accommodation that you think is suitable for your family. However, single people and couples without children or with children over 16 will only be considered for flat or maisonette accommodation. People with children under 16 can ask to be listed for flats, maisonettes and houses.

What size of property can I apply for?

All of our properties are classified depending on the number of bedrooms they have and the number of people who can live there comfortably.

We must show that we are making the best use of our housing by allocating properties to people who make the best use of the space.

We use the Government's bedroom standard to work out how many bedrooms you need. The table below shows how the bedroom standard works.

Married or cohabiting couples (including same sex couples)	One bedroom
Adults aged 21 years or more	A bedroom each
A pair of same sex children aged between 10 & 20 years	One bedroom
A pair of children where both are aged under 10 regardless of sex	One bedroom
Any unpaired person aged 10-20 years will be paired if possible with a child under 10 of the same sex. Where this is not possible separate bedrooms will be allocated.	

Can I be allocated a property that is bigger than I need?

If we have a property available and there is nobody on the waiting list who needs that size of property in that area, we can offer the property to the person at the top of the next list down.

For example, if a three bedroom house becomes available and there is nobody on the list, we will offer the property to the person at the top of the list for a two bedroom house in that area.

Section 4 How are properties allocated?

When a property is ready to let, the voids & allocations team will print a list from the computer of all the people on the housing register who:

- need that type of property;
- need that size of property;
- are asking to be housed in that area; and
- meet the local connection criteria (where a local connection is required)

We will offer the property to the person at the top of that list. If they refuse, we will offer it to the next person and so on until someone accepts the property.

How long do I get to accept an offer when it is made?

If we make you an offer you will have two days to contact the voids & allocations team to tell them whether you would like to view the property. Once you have viewed the property you will be asked to make a decision.

How many offers will be made?

There is no limit on how many offers can be made. However, if your application has been placed in band A or B and you refuse three offers, your application will be placed in band C.

If you have been assessed as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need, you will be made **one** offer if accommodation. If you refuse the offer, your homeless case will close and your application will be placed in band C.

What type of tenancy will I be offered?

All new tenants will be offered a 12 month introductory tenancy. This will be converted to a secure tenancy at the end of the 12 months as long as the tenancy has been conducted satisfactorily.

Section 5 Local connection

In some parts of West Lancashire there are only a small number of council homes. This means that people who live in or have a connection to those areas, find it difficult to get council housing.

We want to make sure that communities can stay together by giving reasonable preference to people who have a local connection with that area of the district as well as giving people in housing need the chance to choose where they want to live.

To be considered as having a local connection to an area, you must show that you meet one of the following conditions:

- you have lived in that area for 3 out of the last 5 years;
- you have close family who have lived in that area for at least 2 years prior to the date of your application and you are moving to be near them;
- you need to move to or stay in that area to receive support from organisations that would not be able to support you if you moved;
- you have been permanently employed in that area for at least 12 months.

If you are moving to be nearer family, you must currently live at least 3 or more miles away.

If your connection is based on employment, only permanent work will be considered.

Anyone working on a casual basis will not qualify.

If you initially satisfy one of the local connection criteria but you stop qualifying before you are housed, the local connection preference will be removed from your application.

Which areas have the local connection criteria?

We have identified certain areas where we will give preference to people who have a local connection with the area. If there is nobody on the housing register with a local connection to that area, we will offer the property to the person at the top of the list.

The following table will tell you the percentage of allocations that will go to people with a local connection to that area. Please use the table to work out how likely you are to be offered a home in your chosen area.

Area	Percentage of offers we make to people with a local connection
Altcar	100%
Appley Bridge	100%
Banks	100%
Bickerstaffe	100%
Halsall	100%
Haskayne	100%
Hesketh Bank	100%
Newburgh	100%
Parbold	100%
Rufford	100%
Scarisbrick	100%
Tarleton	100%
Westhead	100%
Wrightington	100%
Aughton	50%
Burscough	50%
Ormskirk	50%
Upholland/Roby Mill	50%
Old Skelmersdale	50%

The remaining areas of Ashurst, Birch Green, Clay Brow, Digmaor, Holland Moor, Little Digmaor, New Church Farm, Tanhouse and Yewdale do not require a local connection.

Section 6 Sheltered housing

Some of our properties are designed for elderly people. These properties are known as sheltered housing. Sheltered housing can be flats or bungalows. Some flats are in grouped schemes which means they have a shared main front door and communal areas on the ground floor with individual flats on the first floor. There is sometimes a warden living within the scheme.

Some bungalows and flats are not in grouped schemes which means you have your own front door and a mobile warden who visits you. There are no shared facilities but most of the neighbours will be about the same age as you.

To qualify for sheltered housing you have to be over 60 years old.

Section 7 **Furnished tenancies**

Moving into your first home can be difficult as well as exciting. To help people who may not have basic items such as a bed, sofa, fridge and so on, we have a furnished tenancies scheme.

If you require a furniture package, you must tell the officer when you view the property.

There is an additional charge weekly charge on top of the rent for a furniture package.

Section 8 **Housing association properties**

We have nomination agreements with most of the housing associations in the area. This means that when they have properties available, they will ask us to nominate a suitable person from our register.

If you want to be considered for a housing association property you must tick the appropriate box on the housing application.

Section 9 **Shared ownership properties**

Shared ownership properties are properties that you part own and part rent. A housing association will own a percentage of the property which you rent off them, you then get a mortgage for the remaining share which you will own.

You have to be able to get a mortgage for the amount of the property you buy and the housing association must approve you to rent the remaining share.

If you are interested in shared ownership accommodation, you can request a separate application form from the Housing Strategy Team on 01695 577 177.

Section 10 **What do I do if I am homeless?**

If you are homeless or due to become homeless in the next 28 days, you can contact the Homelessness Advice & Prevention Team. A homeless officer will make an appointment for you to have a homeless assessment. The outcome of that assessment will determine what the Council can do to help you.

The Homelessness Advice & Prevention Team can be contacted on 01695 577 177.

Section 11 **Appeals**

Do I have the right of appeal?

Yes. You have the right to appeal against any decision we make regarding your housing application. You can appeal against not being accepted onto the register, the band we have put you in and so on.

How do I appeal?

If you want to appeal against a decision we have made about your application, you must **write** to the Service Manager (Voids & Allocations) within 21 days of receiving the decision.

Your letter should explain why you think our decision is unfair and against Council policy and you should include any evidence you have to support your appeal.

Within 10 working days, the Service Manager (Voids & Allocations) will reply to your letter to confirm it has been received. You will then have 20 working days to send us any more supporting information.

If you do not want to provide more supporting information, you can write to the Service Manager (Voids & Allocations) and ask for the review to start immediately.

A final decision will be issued within 8 weeks from the date the request for appeal is received.

Can I appeal if I am unhappy with the decision on appeal?

There is no further right of appeal if you are unhappy with the decision on appeal. Any further appeal would be to the courts using a procedure called Judicial Review. If you wish to apply for Judicial Review, you will need the help of a solicitor or specialist housing advice service.

Section 12 Useful addresses

West Lancashire Borough Council Customer Contact Points

52 Derby Street
Ormskirk
West Lancashire
L39 2DF

Unit 142 The Concourse (First Floor)
Skelmersdale
West Lancashire
WN8 6LJ

Section 13 Contact us

Housing Options Team

Housing application enquiries

Voids & Allocations Team

Letting Council properties across the district

Homelessness Advice & Prevention Team

Enquiries relating to homelessness, homeless prevention and landlord and tenant issues (private sector).

For telephone enquiries, please contact Customer Services and ask for the relevant team.

Telephone: 01695 577 177