

## **Housing Allocations Policy Phase 2 - Frequently Asked Questions about the proposals in the draft policy**

Aimed at: current / future housing register applicants and current tenants

### **When will the proposed Policy be implemented?**

This is a draft policy and nothing will change for housing register applicants at this point. Responses to the proposals in the policy will be analysed and the proposed policy will be amended if necessary. We therefore encourage you to give your feedback on the policy as set out.

We have already consulted on this issue in 2025 and the feedback from this first consultation has informed this draft consultation policy. Following the second consultation, we will use your feedback to make further amends if appropriate to improve the final policy.

Once any amends are finalised, the final policy will be agreed in Autumn 2026.

We will work closely with our Registered Provider Partners to ensure we have an implementation plan for the new policy to come into effect.

We aim to have the Policy implemented early 2027 across the DKO Partnership.

### **Why has the proposed policy introduced a local connection rule to qualify for the register?**

In the first phase of the consultation, 80% of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the suggestion that we should introduce a requirement for people to have a local connection to County Durham to qualify for the register.

We have considered this feedback and introduced a local connection rule so that people must have lived in County Durham for a minimum of two years before they can join our housing register.

The new rule also covers those people employed in County Durham for a minimum of six months (where their current address is too far for a commute) and those with caring responsibilities (the person needing care must have been resident for at least two years). If they do not continue to live / work in County Durham, they would be removed from the register.

There are some exemptions to the recent connection rule including for care leavers, domestic abuse victims, Armed Forces veterans and their family and people with a homelessness connection.

### **How will I be notified if my band changes as a result of the adopted policy?**

Any changes made to the policy that would affect your application would be communicated to you with the reasons why.

### **The policy proposes the retention of band 4 and will re-categorise people as being in a 'lower housing need'. Will my banding change?**

If you don't have a housing need as described in bands 1, 2 and 3, but are eligible and qualify to join the Housing Register, you will still be placed into band 4.

**The policy proposes that an applicant could be removed for lack of active bidding following annual checks, how will they be notified?**

If the proposed policy is approved we will send alerts to clients to say we are doing an annual check and if you have not bid in the previous 12 months you will be removed.

**Why has it been proposed to reduce the number of suitable offers from three to two?**

If someone on the housing register has turned down 2 suitable offers in a rolling 12-month period, then they will be disqualified from our register for a period of 6 months. This change to the current policy is because of much higher demand for social housing stock in County Durham.

**Why has it been proposed within the policy that some groups are removed from band 2 and placed in band 3?**

Although the Council believes everyone on the Housing Register may have a need for a better home, we also believe that some reasons for needing to move are relatively more important than others. This means that we prioritise some reasons for needing to move above others. We are required by law to give reasonable and additional preference to certain groups.

To prioritise people at risk of domestic abuse, ex-armed forces, and those with significant health issues, we are proposing placing some of the reasonable preference groups who are currently in band 2 and moving them into Band 3 (moderate need).

**I am currently in Band 2 due to medical reasons, how would any changes to the policy affect my application?**

Any changes made to the policy that would affect your application would be communicated to you with the reasons why. Any applicant needing to move due to medical reasons would be placed in the most appropriate band based on housing need and personal circumstances.

**The proposed policy proposes that victims fleeing domestic abuse will be placed in either Band 1 or Band 2, based on severity of the circumstances. How will it be decided which Band an applicant will be placed into?**

If you are fleeing domestic abuse and have been assessed as needing to move urgently for the safety and security of yourself or a member of your household, you may be allocated Band 1.

Band 2 will be awarded where any current risk has been mitigated (reduced risk to those awarded Band 1), which could include working with support agencies, effective safety planning and target hardening and it is evident that the perpetrator is not in the immediate vicinity.

**The proposed policy includes a category in Band 2 for applicants who are seeking to move to a suitable property so they can foster, adopt, be a special guardian or kinship carer. Why has this been included?**

This has been included because of feedback received from phase one of the consultation to assist those households caring for children and young people to source secure long-term accommodation.

### **Will I be forced to downsize as a result of the proposed policy?**

No, the purpose of the consultation on downsizing is to explore any opportunities to support those people currently living in a social rented property who may wish to downsize but may not be aware that they can or may not know how to go about downsizing into a more suitable home.

### **What are Local Letting Policies (LLPs)?**

LLPs introduce additional specific criteria for letting property in a defined area on the basis that there are important local issues that must be addressed when allocating housing.

LLPs must be specific to a local area and address specific issues. Our partner landlords may introduce a local letting policy (LLP) for the following reasons:

- in areas where there is a shortage of a specific type of housing i.e bungalows
- to ensure balanced and sustainable communities
- prevent anti-social behaviour
- to take into account local related issues concerning the demand for and affordability of housing.

### **What is the difference between the countywide Housing Allocations Policy and a Local Lettings Policy (LLP)?**

The Housing Allocations Policy is a county wide policy to determine the priorities and define the procedures that will be followed when allocating social housing.

A Local Lettings Policy covers smaller areas or developments to address issues specific to that area and addresses the needs of those residents to ensure that the community is balanced.

### **What will happen to my data if I am removed from the Housing Register?**

All data will be dealt with according to our General Data Protection policies and protocols.

### **Will my feedback be confidential?**

Yes, all feedback is confidential. We do encourage you to register your details so that we can keep you informed of progress with the housing allocations consultation and development of the new policy. Any personally identifiable details you provide when registering will be separated from your response when we come to complete the consultation analysis.

### **Where can I get a copy of the allocations policy when it is finalised?**

You can get a copy of the Allocation Policy by e-mailing [choicebasedlettings@durham.gov.uk](mailto:choicebasedlettings@durham.gov.uk)