



Guidance Title: **Choice Based Lettings Guidance**

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The HomeHunt Choice Based Lettings System (CBL)

This system is in operation in the North East of Scotland. This guidance sets out any additional information on the allocation of properties using this system, or any different approaches to those set out in the Letting Policy where referenced.

Choice Based Lettings Housing Need Priority Pass

CBL registered applicants who are eligible for housing are awarded priority passes if they need to move for particular reasons and are then ranked according to the 'pass award' of Gold, Silver, Bronze or No Priority depending on their circumstances. The definition of each category of pass, and the criteria for the award of Gold, Silver and Bronze passes are set out in **Appendix 1**. As at 10.5.19 a new Silver+ pass award may be introduced for applications who have a valid Notice to Quit. This would give the applicant priority over other applicants holding silver pass for other categories.

Passes are determined by housing need and applicants must apply pass themselves. The evidence requirements for each pass are set out in **Appendix 2**.

Passes are available for:

- housing circumstances;
- medical;
- overcrowding/under occupation;
- personal circumstances; and/or
- lacking facilities.

Applicants may apply for more than one pass. Where an applicant is entitled to more than one pass, we will activate the pass which we determine will give the applicant the best chance of being housed. Any other pass the applicant is entitled to will be awarded, but not activated. If an applicant loses a pass due to a change in circumstance or through not bidding, any other pass which was not originally activated can then be activated, and the date of award will be the date the pass was originally approved.

If an applicant is assessed as having no housing need then they will not be given a pass.

Annual targets are set for the percentage of lettings to be made to applicants from each category of pass. This will be achieved through the development of CBL protocols with local authority partners where they exist.

Prioritising pass awards

When assessing bids from applicants with the same pass award, applications will be prioritised based on the length of time they have had their priority. Applicants will be prioritised if they meet one or more of the following:

- the applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness;
- the applicant's health is affected by their current housing situation;

- the applicant is overcrowded or under-occupying a social rented property;
- the applicant's current house is in very poor repair (for example it does not meet the tolerable standard as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006) or lacks facilities;
or
- the applicant has other personal reasons for a move.

Specially adapted properties

For CBL schemes, Sanctuary or applicants themselves, can apply property feature limits for specific property types so that they are only deemed eligible for homes that include these features. See also 'Property feature limits' on page 4 below.

If specially adapted properties are advertised but no CBL applicants on the shortlist have a medical need suitable to occupy the property, then the Housing Manager or Senior Housing Officer will consider the following options:

- re-advertise the property;
- request a nomination from another organisation, such as a local authority, housing association or advocacy agency; and/or
- allocate the property directly to another applicant who does not have a medical need for the property.

Pass Validity

Gold passes are valid for six months (with the exception of passes for vacating disabled adapted properties). This means applicants will lose their pass if they have not applied for one or more properties that they could have within 6 months. If no suitable properties have been advertised, or the applicant has applied for suitable properties but been unsuccessful, then we will renew the pass for a further six months.

Limitations on passes

It is possible for an applicant's pass to be limited to a specific area or areas (an area limit), or to a particular type or types of property (a feature limit). When a pass is limited by HomeHunt, the applicant may still bid for properties outwith these limitations, but we will not recognise the pass affected when shortlisting for the property. The local authority may also limit an applicant's pass to particular areas when they make a homelessness decision.

An applicant may decide to put their own area and/or feature limit on a pass. This will limit the number of properties becoming available that are suitable for the applicant.

An applicant may choose to do this to reduce the possibility that their Gold pass expires after six months because they have not made any bids for suitable properties.

House sizes

These variations to the Lettings Policy are applied to CBL applicants as agreed with HomeHunt:

- Couple = 1 bedroom and this includes a young person who is 14+ years being allocated their own room.
- Children of the same/opposite sex under age eight will normally be allocated one bedroom to share.
- Once a child reaches the age of 14, he or she will be classed as an adult and will be allocated a separate bedroom.
- Two children of the same sex both under the age of 14, unless there is an age gap of 10 years or more will be allocated a separate bedroom.

Extra rooms

If a CBL applicant needs an extra bedroom for a medical reason, they will not be eligible to apply for properties that are too small to meet their assessed medical need. For all non-medical need CBL applicants, they will only be permitted to move into a property which gives them an extra bedroom when there are no suitable bids from applicants with a household size that matches the vacant property size.

Area limits

Area limits can only be applied by HomeHunt, the local authority (LA) and applicants for specific pass types. The table below sets out who may apply an area limit to each type of pass.

Who can limit passes to specific areas:			
Pass type	Applicant	HomeHunt NE	Local Authority
Housing Circumstances		√	√
Medical		√	
Overcrowding/ Under occupation	√		
Lacking Facilities	√		
Personal Circumstances		√	

Property feature limits

We can apply property feature limits for all the features set out in the table below. Applicants can only apply a feature limit to the features shown in the table below.		
Who can limit passes to property features:		
Property feature	Applicant	HomeHunt NE
House Type (e.g. bungalow, flat, house, etc.)	√	√
Ground Floor Accommodation	√	√
Wheelchair Accessible	√	√
Sheltered Housing		√
Very Sheltered Housing		√
Amenity Housing		√

Suspensions

In addition to the suspension reasons set out in the Letting Policy, an applicant may be suspended if they are being considered for accommodation with housing support provided by other agencies while their support needs assessment is completed.

Any HomeHunt applicant with a gold award for Homelessness is exempt from the suspension reasons.

Change of circumstances

It is the applicants' responsibility to update their application with changes of address and other changes of circumstances on the CBL system.

Losing a pass

If a change results in an applicant losing a pass, then HomeHunt will determine the level and date of priority based on other passes which have been awarded. If after losing a pass the applicant holds no pass, then an applicant's date of priority will be their date of registration.

CBL applicants will be encouraged to apply for all relevant passes to ensure they are not disadvantaged if a change of circumstances means that an existing pass is lost. Any new pass approved by the HomeHunt team will have a priority date of the date the pass was approved.

New passes

If an applicant changes address a new pass application needs to be made. For any new pass awarded the priority date will normally be the date the HomeHunt team approve the change of pass. The only exception to this is for applicants with Gold award for homelessness; the date of award can be retained as long as they retain their pass.

Change of award within a pass

A change in circumstances may mean an applicant keeps a pass but the level of award (Gold, Silver or Bronze) is changed. Sanctuary will not allow applicants to keep a pass awarded in the Personal Circumstances category when there is a change of circumstances.

When there is a change in circumstances for an applicant which means that the applicant will get a higher priority of award, the applicant's date of priority will be the date the change in circumstances has been approved by the HomeHunt team.

Where there is a change in circumstances for an applicant which means that the applicant remains at their current address but will get a lower priority of award, the applicant will normally get to keep their original date of priority.

If an applicant appears to be unfairly disadvantaged by applying the guidelines set out in this section, the Housing Manager will be asked to review the case.

Applicant Bids

CBL applicants can bid for multiple properties that they are eligible for (unless a formal offer has already been made) but will only be considered for one property at a time. If the applicant qualifies for more than one offer at the same time, it will be assumed that the property the applicant applied for first is their first choice. Sanctuary will aim to inform the applicant if they have made a successful bid for a property within 5 working days of the bidding closing.

Making, receiving, accepting and refusing an offer for housing

In addition, CBL applicants may have other people who are placing bids for them, for example because they lack the skills or confidence to use the technology, or are not able to adopt an appropriate bidding strategy. Where this is the case, special consideration will be given to the applicant's circumstances when deciding if a bid made was reasonable.

Applicants will be given 24 hours from the date of an offer letter to respond either by refusing the offer, or by making an arrangement to view the property. Failure to do so will result in the offer being withdrawn in writing by Sanctuary and recorded as a refusal.

Appendix 1 - Definition of Categories and Priorities Housing Circumstances Category

Definition

Housing circumstances categories exist to recognise an applicant's current housing situation and the degree to which they can be considered secure or otherwise.

Homelessness (Gold Pass)

Applicants who have been assessed by a local authority as unintentionally homeless. People who claim to be 'roofless', 'sleeping rough' or 'no fixed abode' should be encouraged to present themselves as homeless to their local authority, as no Gold priority award will be given without relevant verification.

The Gold Priority Pass will be limited to applicants with a homelessness award from the local authority in which the advertised property is situated.

Impending Homelessness (Silver Pass)

Where **six months' notice or less** has been given to vacate current accommodation as defined below:

- In Care
- Lodgings
- Privately rented accommodation
- Bed and Breakfast, Boarding House or Hotel
- Owner Occupation (only where sale necessary)
- Short stay hostel
- Refuge
- Tied Accommodation
- HM Forces with confirmed leaving date

Priority	Time limit	Area limit applied by *	Definition
Gold	6 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HomeHunt NE • Local authority 	Statutorily Homeless
Silver	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HomeHunt NE • Local authority 	Impending Homelessness

Lacking Facilities Category

Definition

The Housing (Scotland) Acts 1987 and 2001 defines when accommodation should be considered to meet reasonable standards. This has been used in this category and states that housing is below reasonable standard if it fails to meet the following:

- is structurally stable;
- is substantially free from rising or penetrating damp;
- has satisfactory provision for natural and artificial lighting, for ventilation or heating;

- has an adequate piped supply of wholesome water available within the house;
- has a sink provided with a satisfactory supply of both hot and cold water within the house;
- has a water closet available for the exclusive use of the occupants of the house and suitably located within the house;
- has a fixed bath or shower and a wash hand basin for the exclusive use of the occupants of the house, each provided with a satisfactory supply of both hot and cold water and suitably located within the house;
- has an effective system for the drainage and disposal of foul and surface water;
- has satisfactory facilities for the cooking of food for the exclusive use of the occupants within the house; and
- has satisfactory access to all external doors and outbuildings.

Priority	Time limit	Area limit applied by*	Definition
Silver	None	None	If three or more of the above definitions are not met
Bronze	None	None	If two of the above definitions are not met

* See **Limitations on passes** section above for information on feature limits

Overcrowding Category

Definition

Overcrowding priority will be given where the applicant's current property does not meet the minimum size requirement set out in Section 10. Priority will only be applied when the applicant bids for properties which would solve overcrowding.

Priority	Time limit	Area limit applied by *	Definition
Gold	6 Months	Applicant	3 or more bedrooms short
Silver	None	Applicant	2 bedrooms short
Bronze	None	Applicant	1 bedroom/bedspace short

Under Occupation Category

Definition

This category will be awarded to tenants of Registered Social Landlords only to promote effective asset management and maximise the opportunity for existing tenants to move to smaller accommodation should they wish to do so.

Under-occupation will be calculated in relation to the minimum size requirements set out in Section 10.

Priority	Time limit	Area limit applied by *	Definition
Silver	None	Applicant	Two or more bedrooms surplus
Bronze	None	Applicant	One bedroom surplus

* See paragraph **Limitations on passes** section above on feature limits

Medical Category

Definition

Applicants who have a medical condition that they consider to be relevant to their application for housing will be assessed on the severity of the medical condition and the degree to which their housing circumstances affect this. A medical banding will first be awarded and then this will be translated into a CBL banding.

Medical bandings are defined as follows:

X-medical	Medical condition that requires immediate housing or re-housing
Sevwho	Severe condition that is wholly affected by present circumstances
Modwho	Moderate condition that is wholly affected by present circumstances
Minwho	Minor condition that is wholly affected by present circumstances
Sevmod	Severe condition that is moderately affected by present circumstances
Modmod	Moderate condition that is moderately affected by present circumstances
Minmod	Minor condition that is moderately affected by present circumstances
Sevmar	Severe condition that is marginally affected by present circumstances
Modmar	Moderate condition that is marginally affected by present circumstances
Minmar	Minor condition that is marginally affected by present circumstances
Assnil	No medical condition or suitably housed for medical condition

Where it is considered that a medical condition is only marginally affected by current housing or where there is a nil assessment then no banding will be awarded under this category.

We can request evidence of medical priority or a need for a separate bedroom. Examples of evidence requested may include supporting information from a GP, occupational therapist or other medical professional, or evidence of medical treatment. However, verification from other agencies is not a condition required for an applicant to be given the appropriate priority.

Priority	Time limit	Area limit applied by *	Definition
Gold	6 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HomeHunt NE • Applicant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • X Medical • Sevwho
Silver	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HomeHunt NE • Applicant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modwho • Minwho • Sevmod • Modmod

As at 10.5.19, a Bronze pass is to be introduced but details are not confirmed. Refer to [HomeHunt](#) for further information

* See **Limitations on passes** section above on feature limits

Personal Circumstances Category

Definition

This category recognises personal circumstances that require to be taken into account when assessing an application for housing:

Vacating Adapted Disabled

This recognises households who are vacating an RSL tenancy that is adapted for disabled use because the adaptations are no longer required. There must be significant, permanent adaptations to secure a Gold Priority, for example where a property is fully suitable for a wheelchair user.

Harassment or Domestic Abuse

Where a member of the applicant's household needs accommodation due to domestic abuse, or where a member of the applicant's household is suffering serious harassment at their current accommodation and being rehoused will help to alleviate this.

Where the applicant needs accommodation due to domestic abuse, confirmation may be requested with the applicants' consent from relevant agencies such as the Police, Health Professional, Social Work, Women's Aid, etc. However, verification of domestic abuse from other agencies is not a condition required for an applicant to be given priority.

Harassment can take many forms including intimidating, threatening or aggressive behaviour, both verbal and physical, and can involve attacks on property as well as people. Incidents of harassment can include sexual comments or gestures, offensive or racist graffiti, abusive language and behaviour, violence towards people of all ages, damage to homes or possessions and threatening letters or phone calls. Harassment is often premeditated and reoccurring. Confirmation may be requested with the applicants' consent, either from agencies such as the Police, Social Services and Health Organisations or from other witnesses which can include staff. Where appropriate, confirmation can also be provided by the customer's advocates, i.e. local councillors, Members of Parliament, Members of the Scottish Parliament, advice workers and from voluntary organisations. However, verification of harassment from other agencies is not a condition required for an applicant to be given the appropriate priority.

Financial Hardship

Where a household's monthly rental/mortgage payments exceeds 30 per cent of monthly income.

Separated Family

Where due to housing circumstances a family **has no choice** but to live separately.

General Assistance

This recognises where an applicant requires to live in a particular area to access or to give assistance to a relative or family member. General assistance priority will only apply to areas where moving improves the applicants ability to provide or receive assistance.

Priority	Time limit	Area limit applied by *	Definition
Gold	None	HomeHunt NE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacating Disabled Adapted
Silver	None	HomeHunt NE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harassment or Domestic Abuse • General Assistance • Financial Hardship
Bronze	None	HomeHunt NE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separated Family • Current Neighbour Problems • Travel time to work/education • Isolation from Services • Relationship Breakdown

* See **Limitations on passes** section above on feature limits

Appendix 2 - Evidence requirements

Evidence to obtain pass Need/ Circumstance	Evidence at verification stage	Evidence at allocation stage
Housing Circumstances pass - Gold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter from local authority; or Confirmation from Apply4Homes 	Confirmation from local authority
Housing Circumstances pass - Silver		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notice to quit; or Local authority temporary lease agreement; or Note of sale from a solicitor
Lacking Facilities pass - Silver/Bronze		Established at home visit
Overcrowding pass		Established at home visit
Under-occupation pass		Established at home visit
Medical Pass	See Appendix 1	
Extra bedroom for disabled use/medical needs	See Appendix 1	See Appendix 1
Vacating Disabled Adapted		Established at home visit
Harassment or Domestic Abuse		See Appendix 1
General Assistance		Assessment by Housing Officer
Financial Hardship		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All evidence relating to household income; for example Wage slip Bank statement Benefit entitlement letter Tax credit entitlement letter Maintenance entitlement and At least one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenancy agreement Rent statement Mortgage agreement Mortgage statement
Separated Family		Established at pre-allocation visit
Current Neighbour Problems		Supporting evidence e.g. from the police, health professional, social worker or housing officer

Evidence to obtain pass Need/ Circumstance	Evidence at verification stage	Evidence at allocation stage
Travel Time to Work/Education		Supporting evidence of services required e.g. letter from employer or education provider
Isolation from Services		Supporting evidence of services required e.g. letter from GP
Relationship Breakdown		Confirmation from a legal representative or the Court
Custody of children		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child benefit award; or • Confirmation from the partner with full access; or Confirmation from a solicitor